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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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- CHP – Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party)
- COM – European Commission
- CUP – Committee of Union and Progress
- ECHR – European Court of Human Rights
- EU – European Union
- GATA – Gülhane Askeri Tıp Akademisi (Gülhane Military Medical Academy)
- HTP-Test – House-Tree-Person Test
- İHD – İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association)
- ILGA – International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Organization
- LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
- MMPI – Minnesota Multiple Personal Inventory
- TCK – Türk Ceza Kanunu (Turkish Penal Code)
- TSK – Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri (Turkish Armed Forces)

## ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with the close linkages between the hegemonic militarist discourse on idealized citizenship and military service in Turkey, taking up a critical gender perspective. Primarily based on the analysis of thirteen different narrations about people's personal experiences with the military in Turkey, it explores how mandatory conscription is an institution that both justifies and solidifies a gender regime in which manhood is inextricably linked to being a defender of the 'national family' – a concept of manhood that comprises features such as strength, discipline, and love for the nation.

Within this framework this study closely follows the "regulatory practices" (Judith Butler) included in the institution of military service in Turkey that have impact on the (re)construction of hegemonic masculinity as well as its discursive counterpart, what I will term the 'rotten body'; an expression deriving from a health report that is issued by Turkish military doctors as a proof for someone's ineligibility to perform military service, colloquially referred to as *Çürük Raporu* (rotten report). This "ineligibility certificate" at the same time depicts the only possibility for a male citizen of Turkish nationality to get legally exempted from compulsory conscription. The military medical examination procedures that are applied in order to determine whether a conscript is 'fit' to perform his military service or shall be exempted as 'rotten' constitutes one major focus of this study. The second focus on the other hand is set on the disciplinary and regulatory practices that, in the context of military service, are exercised on the recruits bodies and minds, socializing 'boys' to 'real men'.

Presuming that in the context of the hegemonic militarist discourse on idealized citizenship military service constitutes a *rite of passage towards manhood*, the exemption process enables me to analyze the discursive (re)production of the 'ideal Turk/man' as well as its constitutive counterpart, the 'rotten body'. This 'Constitutive Other' is primarily to be found in those who receive their *Çürük Raporu* on the basis of a so called 'psychosexual disorder' that is "explicitly apparent in their whole life". The major hypothesis of this thesis is that mandatory military service and the respective examination procedures are a social practice that discursively differentiates between the 'real' and the disorderedly 'effeminate man', the latter one serving as a primary projection surface against which hegemonic masculinity is defined.

## INTRODUCTION

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In spring 2010 Turkey's Minister for Women and Family Affairs Selma Aliye Kavaf attracted much media attention when she made the following statement during an interview with the daily *Hürriyet* newspaper: "I believe that homosexuality is a biological disorder, a disease. It is something that needs to get treated."<sup>1</sup> In immediate response to this, both domestic as well as international media outlets showed their indignation (or applause),<sup>2</sup> a short but heated debate between politicians from different factions flared up, and LGBT activists and supporters were marching along Istanbul's *İstiklal Caddesi* to call for an apology. Only a few weeks later, the issue, together with the concomitant discussion whether homosexuality was to be considered a 'disease' or perhaps 'just' an abnormality, quickly fell into oblivion again.

Change of scene: 36 years old radio moderator Halil İbrahim Dinçdağ from Trabzon used to be a passionate hobby referee – until his call-up for military service in 2008 all of a sudden changed his life dramatically. In early 2009, after having declared his homosexuality during the military medical check-up, he was referred to the Gülhane Military Medical Academy in Istanbul for further examinations. Shortly afterwards, he received his exemption documents. Diagnosis: ineligible for military service due to a *psikoseksuel bozukluk* (psychosexual disorder). Only a few months later the *Türkiye Futbol Federasyonu* (Turkish Football Federation) decided to withdraw his referee license.<sup>3</sup>

Quite apparently, a close connection between both stories exists: What Minister Kavaf openly declared as her personal conviction was at the same time the basis for the military doctors' decision that Halil Dinçdağ was not eligible to perform his military service – namely

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<sup>1</sup> ["Ben eşcinselliğin biyolojik bir bozukluk, bir hastalık olduğuna inanıyorum. Tedavi edilmesi gereken bir şey bence."]; Bildirici, Faruk (2010), "Eşcinsellik hastalık, tedavi edilmeli", *Hürriyet*, 07.05.2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/pazar/14031207.asp?gid=59> [28.05.2012]; see also *Hürriyet* (2010), "'Homosexuality is a disease' says Turkish minister", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 03.07.2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=8216homosexuality-is-a-disease8217-says-minister-2010-03-07> [28.05.2012]; unless otherwise indicated, all translations to English are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, conservative newspapers such as the German *Die Welt* instantly took the opportunity to again polemize against Turkey's accession process to the European Union (EU); see Kálnoky, Boris (2010), "Türkische Ministerin hält Schwulsein für krank", *Welt Online*, 11.03.2010, <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article6729324/Tuerkische-Ministerin-haelt-Schwulsein-fuer-krank.html> [28.05.2012].

<sup>3</sup> Strittmatter, Kai (2011), "Grobes Foul", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Nr. 87, 05.09.2011, p. 11; see also Başaran, Kenan (2011), "Başkanla futbolcu da aşk yaşamıştı", *Radikal*, 30.10.2011, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1067935&Date=30.10.2011&CategoryID=84> [28.05.2012]; for an overview of international newspaper article on the issue see Wikipedia, "Halil İbrahim Dinçdağ", [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halil\\_%C4%B0brahim\\_Din%C3%A7da%C4%9F](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halil_%C4%B0brahim_Din%C3%A7da%C4%9F) [28.05.2012].

the perception that homosexuality cannot be reduced to a sexual orientation, but rather constitutes a *disorder* with direct impact on the ‘affected’ person’s body and mind. While officially homosexuality, in contrast to many other European countries, has never been subject to legal discrimination in Turkey, the Turkish military’s decision to exempt Halil Dinçdağ from mandatory conscription still finds its grounding in a legal provision: the *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Sağlık Yeteneği Yönetmeliği* (Turkish Armed Forces Health Regulation). Under the section “Mental Health and Diseases” Article 17 of the regulation explains that in the case of “advanced sexual disorders” which are “explicitly apparent in the person’s whole life” and that could cause “objectionable situations in the military environment” this must be “determined by documents or observations/ investigations”.<sup>4</sup>

In Turkey military service is mandatory for all citizens of male sex – who are eligible for conscription between the age of nineteen and forty – without any (legal) alternative. Although recent years have seen a significant rise in critical discussions about the issue, most government as well as military officials still seem to vigorously oppose the idea of changing Turkey’s conscription system.<sup>5</sup> Mainly since the ECHR’s ruling in the case of conscientious objector Osman Murat Ülke the topic has received increasing attention from both inside Turkey as well as abroad. In Article 61 of the Court’s final decision it faults that the Turkish TCK as the relevant legal framework “is evidently not sufficient to provide an appropriate means of dealing with situations arising from the refusal to perform military service on account of one’s beliefs”.<sup>6</sup>

However, as by now this has not led to any significant changes within the Turkish legal system, those who oppose to perform their military service are facing three rather unpleasant options: they can decide to become a *kaçak* (deserter) by either leaving the country<sup>7</sup> or trying to find other ways to escape the grip of the state; they can declare to be a *vicdani retçi* (conscientious objector), a decision which is in any case followed by legal persecution in the form of a prison sentence;<sup>8</sup> or they can try to find a way to get (legally) exempted within the

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<sup>4</sup> Art. 17, *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Sağlık Yeteneği Yönetmeliği* (Turkish Armed Forces Health Regulation, No. 86/11092), <http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/20176.html> [28.05.2012].

<sup>5</sup> As, inter alia, Erdoğan’s reaction to the latest ruling on conscientious objection of the ECHR in the *Erçep vs. Turkey* case (CJ 22.11.2011, no. 43965/04) has again clearly shown.

<sup>6</sup> *Ülke vs. Turkey* (CJ 24.04.2006, no. 39437/98).

<sup>7</sup> Those who manage to work for three years abroad have the possibility to shorten their service period to four weeks, see section II.1.1.

<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, an increasing amount of people have chosen to declare their conscientious objection. Most of them publish their declarations on website of the anti-militarist organization *Savaş Karşıtları* (at the time of

framework of the aforementioned health regulation. In this context the possibility to get exempted on the basis of a ‘psychosexual disorder’ appears to many as the least inconvenient way to avoid military service. But also this way is, of course, not free from obstacles. In order to get exempted the conscripts have to prove during the military medical examination procedures that, in line with the above quoted regulation, the ‘disorder’ is “explicitly apparent in their whole life”. In other words, they have to perform the ‘real homosexual’ convincingly enough to persuade the doctors that they are actually ‘disorderedly’ gay. The military doctors, on the other hand, have come up with a range of examination methods in order to decide whether an applicant’s declaration to be homosexual is actually true: consultation with medical specialists (military psychiatrists), various psychological testing methods, requesting proof in the form of pictures depicting the applicant during anoreceptive anal intercourse or wearing women clothes in public spaces, rectal examinations, and, in doubtful cases, intensive observation of the respective person during a prescribed psychiatry stay of up to a few weeks. When during these various examination procedures the according conscript successfully manages to perform the ‘real homosexual’, he then gets exempted from military service. As a future proof he is issued an ‘ineligibility certificate’ by military officials, colloquially referred to as *Çürük Raporu* (rotten report).

Based on these premises, this thesis focuses on the intersectionality between military service and militarist discourses in Turkey, taking up a critical gender perspective. This is, by implication, to say that all the following considerations and analyses will be accompanied by one central research question: How and to which extent has military service impact on the, to say it with Reckwitz, “social production of a, seemingly unquestionably, given individual-entirety”?<sup>9</sup> The *Çürük Raporu* and the medical examination procedures that precede its issuance will thereby constitute one major focus of interest. I argue that, when analyzed within the context of a hegemonic discourse defining military service as an inevitable ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood, the ‘rotten report’ issue turns out to be a, as Judith Butler terms it, “regulatory practice of gender formation and division”.<sup>10</sup>

Inasmuch as military service constitutes a primary feature of masculinity in Turkey, reflecting a concept of normative masculinity that is embedded into a militarist and

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writing 165 declarations had been published there); see <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2> [28.05.2012].

<sup>9</sup> [“die soziale Produktion einer scheinbar fraglos gegebenen Individuen-Entität”] Reckwitz, Andreas (2008), “Subjekt”, Bielefeld: transcript, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, Judith (1990), “Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity”, New York: Routledge, p. 23.



nationalist discourse on the ideal citizen/Turk, the discursive production of the 'real homosexual' during the examination procedure is to be regarded as a 'Constitutive Other' for the (re)construction of this very concept of masculinity. Hence, the military in general and the military doctors' "medical gaze" in particular appear to be central for the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, a masculinity that is inextricably linked to the word pair soldier/Turk, as they play a crucial role in setting the demarcation line between the 'real male' and the 'effeminate/rotten (un)male'. Within this context the homosexual man as the primary bearer of subordinated masculinity gets discursively assigned to the latter category that comprises features such as physical and mental weakness (read also: irrationality), emotionality, vulnerability, and passivity. It will be a major hypothesis of this thesis that the process of reconstructing hegemonic masculinity within the institution of military service and the process of reconstruction the 'real homosexual', i.e. effeminate/subordinated masculinity during the military medical examination procedures work in mutual interdependence with each other. In other words, the subordinated 'real homosexual' is the major projection surface against which hegemonic masculinity is defined.

But before moving on, there are some methodological questions arising in this context that should be clarified beforehand: Quite apparently, any empirical social research on the construction of gender identities will inevitably face the problem of the omnipresence of institutionalized social discourses shaping these very identities. An assessment which is rooted in the fact that gender identities and relations are present and, thus, shaped and reconstructed in virtually every social interaction.<sup>11</sup> The obvious result seems to be a dilemma: the near impossibility to set the adequate criteria and frame a research design suitable to produce a meaningful outcome. In other words, if the discursive constitution of gender identity is omnipresent, how can we conduct beneficial empirical research which must always focus on only a few pixels of the whole picture?

Although this problem is definitely to be handled with care and needs to be taken into account when choosing both the research field and the research method there is still no reason to get too concerned about it. Clifford Geertz already pointed out in the early seventies that "cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete".<sup>12</sup> This is due to the fact that cultural analysis is always caught between the expectation of producing statements as meaningful as possible

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<sup>11</sup> See Hönig, Katharina (2004), "Propädeutische Begriffsklärung. Gegenstandsbereich und Methodologie der Geschlechterforschung (*Gender Studies*), in: Rosenthal, Caroline / Steffen, Therese F. / Väth, Anke, *Gender Studies. Wissenschaftstheorien und Gesellschaftskritik*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Geertz, Clifford (1973), "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture", in: id. (Ed.), *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, p. 29.

while at the same time being required to conduct in-depth analyses – what Ryle calls “thick description[s]”<sup>13</sup> – which always forces the researcher to limit the focus. As a surprisingly simple solution for this problem Geertz proposed to regard the outcomes of qualitative research as what they actually are: microscopic descriptions whose validity is always highly disputable. Accordingly, he regards as “the essential task of theory building [...] not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them”.<sup>14</sup> This means that the task of any study can (and should) never be the provision of an all encompassing approach on how gender and gender identities are (re)constructed in a certain (cultural/social/geographical) field, but rather an attempt to afford a “thick” analysis of distinctive processes within central institutions that, although the analysis focuses on a very small part of a big whole, the outcomes seem to be meaningful.

Although the amount of empirical research critically assessing the Turkish military and affiliated institutions has significantly risen throughout recent years, as an institution widely regarded as “synonymous with Turkish national identity”<sup>15</sup> it still has an almost ‘sacred aura’ which makes it difficult for any researcher to directly approach it. Military medical archives, which would undoubtedly allow an interesting insight into past ‘rotten report’ cases, are not open to the public. Furthermore, any critical discussion about the military in general and military service in particular quickly runs the risk of falling under Article 318 of the Turkish Penal Code (see section I.2.2). As a consequence, sources on the ‘rotten report’ continue to be very limited and any empirical research on the issue requires the detour of producing its own empirical data. Following these presumptions, I decided to base my work primarily on the evaluation and interpretation of empirical research data from qualitative interviews.

The concomitant rejection of a quantitative study design is rooted in my conviction that the most suitable way to critically approximate gender identity is in a research design as open as possible which – at least initially – aims to discover rather than to verify hypotheses. Without going into the complex debate on the pros and contras of quantitative and qualitative research methods I agree with Bogdan and Taylor’s general proposition that “qualitative methods enable us to explore concepts whose essence is lost in other research approaches” as

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<sup>13</sup> Ryle, Gilbert (1968), “The Thinking of Thoughts. What is ‘Le Penseur’ Doing?”, [http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/CSACSA/Vol14/Papers/ryle\\_1.html](http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/CSACSA/Vol14/Papers/ryle_1.html) [28.05.2012].

<sup>14</sup> Geertz (1973), p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Speech delivered by the former Turkish Minister of Culture İstemihan Talay at a press conference, *Hürriyet*, 11.08.1999, quoted in Altınay, Ayşe Gül (2004), “The Myth of the Military Nation. Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey”, New York: Palgrave Mcmillian, p. 1.

“the subject of a study, be it an organization or an individual, is not reduced to an isolated variable or to an hypothesis, but is viewed instead as part of a whole”.<sup>16</sup>

The major selection criterion for potential interviewees was to cover as diverse an array of approaches towards the military as possible. The underlying idea is that a conceptually limited sample of interviewees would contradict my basic aim to frame the process of generating hypotheses with a maximum level of flexibility and openness. A restriction of potential interviewees to men who received a *Çürük Raporu* for ‘suffering’ from a ‘psychosexual disorder’ (as it was applied in two past master theses on the topic<sup>17</sup>) inevitably runs the risk to take a rather one-sided stance. Therefore, I chose not to restrain the spectrum of potential interviewees to people exempted from military service due to a ‘psychosexual disorder’, but extended it to those who got a ‘rotten report’ for further – be it physical or psychological – reasons, those who actually performed their military service or even work as professional soldiers as well as both male and female conscientious objectors. In other words, the selection process was primarily guided by reflections on *typology* rather than by the aim to achieve the maximum amount of *representativity*, drawing a theoretical instead of a random sample.<sup>18</sup>

Interviewees were acquired through personal contacts as well as through various social networking sites<sup>19</sup> and with the help of human rights organizations such as *Lambdaistanbul* and *Amnesty International Turkey*. Altogether thirteen interviews were conducted in as natural an atmosphere as possible (at home, in a bar/café) and lasted between forty-five minutes and two hours. All interviews were audio recorded producing altogether more than fourteen hours of interview material. For the interviews I decided not to use a questionnaire as I wanted the interview-situation to be as natural and as open as possible. Still, the interviews were roughly structured into two different parts: first I asked the interviewee questions about his/her personal biography: where he/she was born and grew up, what his/her

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<sup>16</sup> Bogdan, Robert / Taylor, Steven (1975), “Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings”, New York: Wiley, pp. 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> See Biricik, Alp (2006), “Diagnosis...Extremely Homosexual: (Re)Constructing Hegemonic Masculinity through Militarized Medical Discourse In Turkey”, Master Thesis submitted to Central European University, Budapest; the thesis was published in 2008 as “Rotten Bodies / Idealized Masculinities: Reconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity Through Militarized Medical Discourse in Turkey” by VDM Saarbrücken (following references will refer to the original paging of the thesis); see also Başaran, Osman (2007), “Militarized Medical Discourse on Homosexuality and Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey”, Master Thesis submitted to Boğaziçi University, Istanbul.

<sup>18</sup> For some general guidelines for the selection process of interviewees within a qualitative research see Lamneck, Siegfried (1993), “Qualitative Sozialforschung”, Weinheim: Beltz, pp. 91-92.

<sup>19</sup> Mainly the group “Istanbul Gay & Lesbian - Istanbul Queer Scene” of the hospitality exchange and social networking site *CouchSurfing*; see <http://www.couchsurfing.org/group.html?gid=15790> [28.05.2012].

profession is etc. The aim was to get some basic information about the interviewee's personal background and at the same time to create an eased atmosphere. In the second part I then asked more specific questions about the person's relation to the Turkish military, whereby the questions varied according to the type of interviewee, meaning whether he/she performed military service, received a *Çürük Raporu* or refused to perform military service for reasons of conscientious.

In addition to this empirical material, I have grounded my analysis on the interpretation of data already available from various further sources, namely Pinar Selek's interview-based study on masculine identity in Turkey *Sürüne Sürüne Erkek Olmak*<sup>20</sup> (to become a man by crawling), Nadire Mater's *Mehmedin Kitabı*<sup>21</sup> (Mehmet's book) on eye-witness accounts of soldiers in Turkey's South-East, Ulrike Böhnisch's interview-transcripts from her worth watching documentary *Çürük - The Pink Report*,<sup>22</sup> which she was kind enough to place at my disposal. However, I agree with Glaser and Strauss' proposal that there is no reason to artificially limit the idea of "data". Rather, as they argue, "all is data",<sup>23</sup> meaning that an interview transcript should principally be handled the same as the researcher's field notes, taken after a random conversation on the street or in a café.

This study is subdivided into two core chapters, the first one being primarily literature-based, the second one being primarily based on the analysis of my empirical data. In the first chapter I initially elaborate a theoretical framework presenting a range of critical approaches that have proven to be useful in the broader context of studies on gender identity in general and masculine identity in particular. The focus will be set on the interplay between (gender) identity, social practices and modern institutions on a general theoretical level. The following historical part then looks to trace the exclusive position the Turkish military holds within Turkish national identity. We will see how during the age of Turkish nationalism a distinct and rather exclusive notion of the 'real Turk' evolved that got inextricably linked to a hegemonic militarist discourse on ideal citizenship, thereby at the same time establishing a strongly diverging relation of the male and the female citizen towards the nation-state.

The second chapter then, taking up the theoretical and historical assumptions as they were elaborated in chapter I, provides an in-depth analysis of the gendering aspects of the

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<sup>20</sup> Selek, Pinar (2010), "Zum Mann Gehätschelt, Zum Mann Gedrillt. Männliche Identitäten", Berlin: Orlanda.

<sup>21</sup> Mater, Nadire (2001), "Mehmet's Buch. Türkische Soldaten berichten über ihren Kampf gegen kurdische Guerillas", Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.curuk-film.de/home\\_en.html](http://www.curuk-film.de/home_en.html) [28.05.2012].

<sup>23</sup> Glaser, Barney / Holton, Judith (2004), "Remodeling Grounded Theory", *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 5(4).

institution of military service in Turkey. Based on my interviews the first section sets the focus on military service as a 'rite of passage' towards manhood, closely following the recruits from the conscription process through their service period. In the second section the focus then switches on the discursive production of the 'rotten/homosexual body' during the military medical examination procedures. By taking a close look at the examination procedures it analysis the authority of the military doctors' "medical gaze" to discursively produce the 'real homosexual/rotten body' as the constitutive counterpart for the 'real man/soldier'.

## CHAPTER I

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The first section of this chapter develops a theoretical framework for the following analysis of the gendering aspects of the military and military service in Turkey. As my hypotheses and conclusions essentially presume that gender identity is not to be taken as a naturally given entity, but rather is a historically and culturally changeable phenomenon, it will be my first task to provide a theoretical backup for this assumption. Hence, this first section deals with the question of how the subject in general and the (gender) identity that is inscribed into it in particular is shaped and (re)constructed in interdependency with modern institutions, social discourses, and the respective power mechanisms. The section opens with an introductory discussion of a range of concepts in the realm of what has vaguely been labeled as ‘post-structuralism’ and the implications these concepts and their radical rejection of classical theory of subjectivity have for a critical approach towards gender identity. The major focus of interest will be on the one hand Michel Foucault’s remarks on the interplay between the body and modern institutions and on the other hand, as one of his most prominent followers in the context of questions on gender identity, Judith Butler’s deconstructivist approach towards the idea of prediscursive, i.e. naturally given identities. The following subsection then, based on the previously outlined approach towards gender identity as the outcome of discourse/social practice, introduces Raewyn Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity as a further theoretical tool that has proven to be particularly useful in the field of so called critical studies on men and masculinities. This theoretical approach will help me analyze the military as a primary bearer and (re)producer of a distinct type of idealized/normative masculinity – an identity that will turn out to stand in a relationship of mutual interdependence with a feminine ‘Constitutive Other’ in the form of both women as well as subordinated masculinity. Finally, the last subsection brings into play an array of approaches that discuss the interdependence between nationalism, militarism and gender roles on a theoretical level in order to understand the mechanisms of mutual influence at work between them.

Within the second section the focus will then be set on the conjunctions between the concept of the idealized citizen – the ‘real Turk’ – as it has been embedded in the tales of Turkish nationalism and the powerful militarist discourse in Turkey. We will see how the “myth of the military nation”<sup>24</sup> has evolved and, in particular, how the implementation of Turkish nationalism has established an idea of normative citizenship comprising distinct

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<sup>24</sup> Altınay (2004).

notions of both woman- and manhood in which the Turkish military and the institution of military service both play crucial roles. In order to trace this ideological construction of the 'real Turk' the first subsection provides a brief overview of the evolution of Turkish nationalism and the according concept of national identity. The second subsection then switches the focus towards a gender perspective while it closely follows the historical evolution and discursive establishment of the legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus* (military nation) – a myth that since its creation has continuously been fed and cradled fondly by both military and public authorities. The underlying research question can be phrased as: What concept of idealized/normative (masculine) citizenship is incorporated in the narrations on Turkish national identity and how got this concept discursively merged with the concept of the soldier as the 'national family's' primary bearer of honor?

## I.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: LOCALIZING GENDER IDENTITY

*There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result.*

- Judith Butler

### I.1.1 'No Agent without Structure': Post-Structuralist Identity Issues

The much evoked “death of the subject” is doubtlessly one of the central leitmotifs of 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural sciences. As popular critical theorist Slavoj Žižek ironically remarks it even seems like “all academic powers have entered into a holy alliance” following a single aim: to “exorcize this spectre [which] is haunting western academia”: the Cartesian subject.<sup>25</sup> While this assessment might sound a bit overstated it is nonetheless right to note that during the last century the idea of the subject as “a substance whose whole essence and nature is to be conscious and whose being requires no place and depends on no material thing”<sup>26</sup> was put on defense along many frontlines. Right at the forefront of this endeavor – to finally draw the curtain on the “the self-transparent thinking subject”<sup>27</sup> as it has been conceptualized in the tradition of Descartes – stands a group of thinkers who usually get subsumed under the (admittedly rather hazy) term ‘post-structuralism’.<sup>28</sup> This, by implication, is to say that although we are dealing here with a quite heterogeneous range of approaches, what still can be defined as the common denominator unifying all those thinkers labeled as ‘post-structuralist’ is their radical rejection of the Cartesian *cogito*. Accordingly it should be regarded as one of the major successes of scholars like Michel Foucault or Judith Butler that Descartes’ classical role model of subjectivity has been seriously called into question.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Žižek, Slavoj (1999), “The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology”, London: Verso, p. xxiii.

<sup>26</sup> [“une substance dont tout l’essence ou la nature n’est de que de penser, et qui, pour être, n’a besoin d’aucun lieu, ni ne dépend d’aucune chose matérielle”] Descartes, René (2011), “Discours de la Méthode”, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Žižek (1999), p. xxiv.

<sup>28</sup> See Reckwitz (2008), p. 11; for a comprehensive overview of the history of the philosophy of the subject see Reckwitz, Andreas (2010), “Das hybride Subjekt. Eine Theorie der Subjektkulturen von der bürgerlichen Moderne zur Postmoderne”, Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft.

<sup>29</sup> Obviously enough, the questioning of Cartesian subjectivity was not exclusively driven by only these few authors although their work was without doubt central to foster it. For an overview of further approaches that have rejected Descartes’ concept see Žižek (1999), p. xxiii.



‘No agent without structure’ can be summarized the central proposition of those theorists who, in more or less close discipleship of Saussure’s structural linguistic, have been referred to as post-structuralist.<sup>30</sup> A postulate that already seems to be implicitly included in the ambiguous meaning of the term ‘subject’ itself, i.e. the possibility of ‘being the *subject of* something’ (a sentence, an act etc.) or ‘being *subjected to* something’ (a law, a punishment etc.).<sup>31</sup> An ambiguity that is most prominently reflected in the following questions posed by Foucault in critical reference to Descartes:

*How can man be that life whose web, pulsations, and buried energy constantly exceed the experience that he is immediately given of them? How can he be that labour whose laws and demands are imposed upon him like some alien system? How can he be the subject of a language that for thousands of years has been formed without him, a language whose organization escapes him, whose meaning sleeps an almost invincible sleep in the words he momentarily activates by means of discourse, and within which he is obliged, from the very outset, to lodge his speech and thought, as though they were doing no more than animate, for a brief period, of that web of innumerable possibilities?*<sup>32</sup>

What Foucault expresses is nothing less than the subject’s all encompassing interdependency with discursive regimes and the according mechanisms of power. In a range of critical historical studies dealing with modern disciplinary institutions (the psychiatry, the hospital, the prison, the military etc.) he shows how the subject is not an independent entity, but becomes formed via its categorization by and incorporation into various systems of knowledge and power, disciplining the human body (and mind). Most elaborately in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault, drawing on Nietzsche’s ‘genealogy of morality’, develops a “genealogy of the modern ‘soul’”<sup>33</sup> while he follows the evolution and development of the prison as a prime exemplifier for modern disciplinary institutions. His major argument, in clear dissociation from Descartes, is that the subject “is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Reckwitz (2008), p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> See Reckwitz (2010), pp. 9 - 10.

<sup>32</sup> Foucault, Michel (1989 [1966]), “The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences”, New York: Routledge, p. 352.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, Michel (1977), “Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison”, London: Penguin, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Quite apparently, Foucault's approach towards subjectivity has some immediate implications for the cultural analysis of the subject and, as we will see very soon, the question of how (gender) identity is formed and reproduced. While he denies the idea of the "self-transparent thinking subject", he switches the focus on the question of cultural mechanisms of power and discourse as determinants for the (re)construction of identity. In his treatise on post-structuralist theories of subjectivity Reckwitz summarizes this shift of attention the following way:

*Instead of presupposing the reflexive subject it then becomes visible as the product of highly specific cultural forms of subjectivization. [...] The question constantly is: Which cultural patterns of generation are the precondition for the social production of a, seemingly unquestionably, given individual-entity? How does the cultural logic of a distinct subjectivization 'work'? Which hardly conscious or transparent cultural processes of stabilization and destabilization are included in a particular social subject-order to which the individual more or less unproblematically adjusts?*<sup>35</sup>

At this point I would like to draw as a first conclusion the following: What is most important here is the fact that the project of 'decentralizing the subject' which Foucault, together with further thinkers in context of post-structuralist theory, embarked on has acted as a major point of departure for successive attempts to question the existence of any naturally given identity and, at the same time, for the development of new concepts theorizing how identity is (re)constructed. In particular, as Connell explains, Foucault's post-structuralist approach "appealed to many feminist as well gay theorists, who saw here a way of understanding the fine texture, as well as the strength, of gendered power".<sup>36</sup>

Yet, before I move on the term 'power' deserves some further attention here as its meaning is crucial, but rather ambiguous: On the one hand power, most commonly, is to be understood as a repressive force. Subjects of power are perceived of as 'powerful' as they can manipulate those who are subjected to it, for whom power accordingly constitutes mainly a mechanism of constraint. In this sense of the term power – exercised by institutions over individuals or by one group/individual over another – was applied by, of course among many

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<sup>35</sup> ["Statt das reflexive Subjekt vorauszusetzen, wird es dann als Produkt hochspezifischer Subjektivierungsweisen sichtbar. [...] Die Frage lautet durchgängig: Welche kulturellen Generierungsmuster sind die Voraussetzung für die soziale Produktion einer scheinbar fraglos gegebenen Individuen-Entität? Wie 'funktioniert' die kulturelle Logik einer bestimmten Subjektivierung? Welche kaum bewussten oder transparenten kulturellen Prozesse der Stabilisierung und Destabilisierung enthält eine bestimmte gesellschaftliche Subjektordnung, in die der Einzelne mehr oder minder unproblematisch einrückt?"] Reckwitz (2008), pp. 16 - 17.

<sup>36</sup> Connell, R.W. (2002), "Gender", Cambridge: Polity, p. 59.

others, both the women's liberation and gay liberation movements in order to define their relationship towards (heterosexual) men within a patriarchal system.<sup>37</sup> While this idea of power is, doubtlessly, a central aspect of our gender regime there is a further concept of power that will be even more crucial for my analysis (both concepts, however, should not to be treated as exclusive, but rather as complementary): Foucault's notion of power as a productive force. As he puts it: "In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production."<sup>38</sup>

This understanding of power – a force that is able to shape individual's identities via discursive regimes – will act as a constant point of reference for my analysis of the gendering aspects of the Turkish military respectively military service. In particular, Foucault's theorizing of bodies as "docile" helps us to understand how military service as an institution disciplining male bodies impacts the (re)construction of masculinity as it teaches men how to be 'real men'. Besides, Foucault's writings on the modern clinical system and his analysis of the productive power doctors exercise on their patients' bodies, what Foucault has named as the "medical gaze",<sup>39</sup> have in the context of this study shown to be useful to theorize the exemption process of the 'unfit' from military service. Within this theoretical framework the authority of the military doctors to produce 'rotten bodies' during the examination procedures are to be regarded as the outcome of a distinct *militarized medical discourse*,<sup>40</sup> a power-knowledge relation, that sorts the conscripts according to a range of 'scientific', in this case medical categories.

However, while Foucault's 'decentralization of the subject' acts as a stable point of reference to challenge the idea of a naturally given identity the fact that Foucault "notoriously failed to theorize gender",<sup>41</sup> a circumstance that is even more distressing as "most of his stuff is actually about men and masculinized institutions",<sup>42</sup> leads to the conclusion that his arguments need some extension. In line with this criticism Bröckling for example, in his in-depth analysis of military discipline, argues that any approach towards military discipline cannot be restricted to the production of docile bodies, but needs to take into account as well

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<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>38</sup> Foucault (1977), p. 194.

<sup>39</sup> See Foucault, Michel (1991), "The Birth of Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception", Bristol: Routledge.

<sup>40</sup> See Biricik (2006).

<sup>41</sup> Connell (2002), p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

the fact that militaries, as homoerotic male societies, are places in which the participating men are shaped through mechanisms of homosocial control and affective binding.<sup>43</sup>

Within the broader context of post-structuralist feminist theories that draw upon or refer to Foucault but extend his argument towards a theory of gender identity, Judith Butler undoubtedly brings into play one of the most useful and, at the same time, radical approaches. In contrast to other feminist writers who are predominantly, or even exclusively, concerned with the question of the suppression of women by men Butler has a specific interest in the more general question of the constitution of identities and subjects in the sense of “mechanisms of gendering”.<sup>44</sup> Based on her rejection of what we have labeled as classical theory of the subject which, according to Butler, centers the constitution of identity “almost always [...] on the question of what internal feature of the person establishes the continuity or self-identity of the person through time”<sup>45</sup> Butler argues for a reformulation of this very question in the following way:

*To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is “identity” a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity?*<sup>46</sup>

Hence, what is broadly regarded not only as the basis of gender per se but, on top of that, as biologically defined, naturally given entities, namely the binary categories man/woman, are reformulated by Butler as the outcome of social practice and discourse. To phrase it in Butler’s own words, she looks to demonstrate that “what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality”,<sup>47</sup> meaning gender is to be seen as “a shifting and contextual phenomenon [...] among culturally and historically specific sets of relations”.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bröckling, Ulrich (1997), “Disziplin. Soziologie und Geschichte militärischer Gehorsamsproduktion”, München: Fink, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> [“Mechanismen der Vergeschlechtlichung”] Straube, Gregor (2004), “Handlungsfähigkeit, Materialität und Politik: Die politischen Theorien von Judith Butler und Donna Haraway”, in: Rosenthal, Caroline / Steffen, Therese F. / Väh, Anke, *Gender Studies. Wissenschaftstheorien und Gesellschaftskritik*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, p. 123.

<sup>45</sup> Butler (1990), p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. [original emphasis].

<sup>47</sup> Butler (1990), p. xxiv.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

In the context of my study this means that we will have to turn our attention to those regulatory discursive practices that, in the context of the Turkish military, foster a distinct way of how gender identity, particularly in this case of how masculine identity, is defined. One of my major arguments within the analytical part of this study is that mandatory military service, as an *erkeklik laboratuvarı* (laboratory of masculinity; Pınar Selek), is to be regarded as crucial for the discursive (re)construction of what in the next subsection will be introduced as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. The process of producing a particular image of idealized/normative masculinity works in strict mutual interdependence with the discursive construction of and simultaneous distinction from an array of ‘unmanly’ counterparts – meaning in our case those who are exempted from performing military service, i.e. women and the ‘rotten’ men. A relationship that Butler summarizes as the “radical dependency of the masculine subject from the female ‘Other’”.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the construction of the ‘male’ is always embedded in tales about the ‘female/unmanly’ – a binary opposition depicting one of “these troubling dualisms”, as Donna Haraway calls them, as there are (among many others): male/female, civilized/primitive, rational/irrational, active/passive etc.<sup>50</sup>

At this point it is important to highlight the fact that the female ‘Other’ must not be reduced solely to women. As the analysis of the ‘rotten report’ issue enables us to demonstrate, it encompasses both women as well as a range of subordinated masculinities. Since this is a crucial point, in the following subsection I will broaden the discussion by introducing the theoretical concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. A concept that helps us to understand how the construction of normative/idealized masculinity is not reducible to a simple male/female opposition, but its ‘Constitutive Other’ comprises both the female as well as the ‘unmanly’ male.

### **1.1.2 Hegemonic Masculinity and its Institutional Reconstruction**

Within the broader context of gender studies and research on gender identity the last decades – mainly since the late 1980s – have seen the emergence of studies on men and masculinities as an increasingly prominent sociological undertaking.<sup>51</sup> This newly established research field was notably shaped by the theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity that has served

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. xxx.

<sup>50</sup> Haraway, Donna (2004), “A Manifesto for Cyborgs. Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s”, in: id., *The Haraway Reader*, New York: Routledge, p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> See Barret, Frank J. / Whitehead, Stephen M. (2001), “The Sociology of Masculinity”, in: id. (eds.): *The Masculinities Reader*, Cambridge: Polity, pp. 1-26.

as a continuous source of inspiration for most research on men and masculinities.<sup>52</sup> The concept originates in a field study on social inequality in Australian high schools<sup>53</sup> from where it was picked up and elaborated into a sophisticated theoretical framework in 1985 by Carrigan et al.'s "Toward a new sociology of masculinity"<sup>54</sup> a highly influential paper "heralding a new era in studying men".<sup>55</sup> From this point on it experienced a steady and rapid increase in popularity mainly thanks to its further development by Raewyn Connell, the most popular name in the field of men's studies, whose two volumes *Gender and Power* and, above all, *Masculinities* are nowadays inextricably linked to the notion of hegemonic/normative masculinity.

The concept primarily provides us with a theoretical tool for the gender analysis that allows a nuanced look at hierarchically structured gender identities which is more differentiated than the rather simple treatment of gender as the binary opposition of a male oppressor and a female oppressed. The major impetus to overcome the short-sighted idea that men as oppressors cannot, by definition, simultaneously be the target of this very oppression themselves arose during the gay liberation movement of the early 1970s. In the words of Connell, this is to say that "the idea of a hierarchy of masculinity grew directly out of homosexual men's experience with violence and prejudice from straight men".<sup>56</sup> Thus, the concept of hegemonic masculinity reflected in the first place the demand to bring the question of the *oppression of men by other men* systematically on the scientific agenda via its inclusion into the broader context of the general conjunctions between gender and power.

To clarify, this assessment should not be confused with a rejection of the fact that, of course, the subordination of women has to be regarded as the most crucial benchmark for the hierarchy of our asymmetrically structured gender order. Also Connell notes that the "interrelation [of forms of masculinity and femininity] is centered on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women."<sup>57</sup> Still what distinguishes her concept from many

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<sup>52</sup> See Connell, R. W. / Messerschmidt, James (2005), "Hegemonic Masculinity. Rethinking the Concept", *Gender & Society* 19(6), p. 834.

<sup>53</sup> Kessler, S. J. et. al (1982), "Ockers and Disco-Maniacs", Sydney: Inner City Education Center; see Connell / Messerschmidt (2005), p. 830.

<sup>54</sup> Carrigan, Tim / Connel, Bob / Lee, John (1985), "Toward a new sociology of masculinity", *Society and Theory*, Vol. 14(5).

<sup>55</sup> Wedgewood, Nikki (2009), "Connell's theory of masculinity - its origins and influences on the study of gender", *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 18(4), p. 332.

<sup>56</sup> Connell / Messerschmidt (2005), p. 831.

<sup>57</sup> Connell, R. W. (1987), "Gender and Power. Society, the Person and Sexual Politics", Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 183.

claims of “classical” feminist theory is the idea that “[h]egemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities *as well as* in relation to women”.<sup>58</sup> In other words, the concept of hegemonic masculinity emphasizes the fact that the ‘Constitutive Other’ for the construction of an idealized type of masculine identity is not only the subordinated feminine, but also various forms of subordinated masculinity. A theoretical postulate that advocates for “the study of historically specific masculinities rather than studying men as a homogenous group”.<sup>59</sup>

Since its early days, Connell’s concept has proven to be a powerful analytical tool to theorize the (re)construction of both normative as well as subordinated masculinities within various institutional settings, favoring, among others, the media,<sup>60</sup> educational institutions,<sup>61</sup> sporting milieus,<sup>62</sup> workplaces<sup>63</sup> as well as the military.<sup>64</sup> While the understandings of the term ‘masculinity’ might differ between various scholars in the field (of critical studies on men and masculinities) there is one crucial point that unites probably all of them, namely the “reject[ion of] the idea that men and masculinities are either locked in a genetic combination, or determined by a fixed, unchangeable, biological set of conditions or factors”.<sup>65</sup> Take for example the well pointed definition by Messerschmidt and Connell, who approach masculinities as “configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting”.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand the notion of hegemonic, deriving from Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony which he developed as part of his analysis of class relations in Italy, can be summarized as “a

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. [emphasis added].

<sup>59</sup> Wedgwood (2009), p. 332.

<sup>60</sup> See for example Donald, Ralph R. (2001), “Masculinity and Machismo in Hollywood’s War Films”, in: Barret, Frank J. / Whitehead, Stephen M. (eds.): *The Masculinities Reader*, Cambridge: Polity, pp. 170-183.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Segal, Alan (2001), “Masculinity, School, and Self in Sweden”, in: Barret, Frank J. / Whitehead, Stephen M. (eds.): *The Masculinities Reader*, Cambridge: Polity, pp. 184-208.

<sup>62</sup> See for example Messner, Michael A. (2005), “Still a Man’s World? Studying Masculinities and Sport”, in: Connell, R.W. / Hearn, Jeff / Kimmel, Michael S., *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 313-325.

<sup>63</sup> See for example Collison, David L. / Hearn, Jeff (2005), “Men and Masculinities in Work, Organizations, and Management”, in: Connell, R.W. / Hearn, Jeff / Kimmel, Michael S., *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 289-310.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Barrett, Frank J. (1996), “The Organizational Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity: The Case of the US Navy”, *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 3(3), p. 129.

<sup>65</sup> Barret / Whitehead (2001), p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> Connell / Messerschmidt (2005), p. 836.

social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces”.<sup>67</sup> It refers to the “cultural dynamics by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life”.<sup>68</sup>

Following these assumptions it will be the task of this study to apply a, in the broadest sense, post-structuralist theoretical framework as it was introduced above with a special focus on the institutional reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity for the analysis of the Turkish military in the form of a case study. Thus, I will set the focus of interest on a particularly ‘powerful’ institution, powerful both in the sense of its ability to exercise power on the human (in this case: male) body and in the sense that it is central for the reproduction of distinct discourses channeling these very mechanisms of power. But before going into the analytical part there are some further questions that arise within this context and that deserve our attention. Quite apparently, the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity in the context of the Turkish military does not happen in an empty space, but within an institution that is tightly linked to both the militarist discourse in Turkey as well as to the according concept of national identity. In line with this assessment, the following subsection sets the theoretical focus on the intersectionality between militarism and nationalism from a gender perspective. The aim is to show how both nationalism and militarism are ideological constructions that have an impact on the way gender roles are defined in relation to the nation-state and the military as a primary institution of state administered power.

### **I.1.3 Theorizing Militarism and Nationalism from a Gender Perspective**

In her evocative volume “Gender & Nation” that, doubtlessly, depicts one of the most central works on the linkages between gender relations and nationalism, Nira Yuval-Davis faults the almost complete absence of gender aspects within popular theories of nationalism: “Most of the hegemonic theorizations about nations and nationalism, even including, sometimes, those written by women, have ignored gender relations as irrelevant.”<sup>69</sup> This assessment is as true as it is distressing – distressing primarily because, to say it with Nagel, “nations and states are indeed gendered institutions”.<sup>70</sup> Gendered first of all in the sense that already the various concepts of national identity, as the ideological basis of the nation-state, are inextricably

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<sup>67</sup> Connell (1987), p. 184.

<sup>68</sup> Connell, R.W. (1995), “Masculinities”, Cambridge: Polity, p. 77.

<sup>69</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira (1997), “Gender & Nation“, London: Sage, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Nagel, Joanne (1998), “Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations“, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 21(2), p. 243.



linked to specific concepts of gender identity. Yuval-Davis: “Constructions of nationhood usually involve specific notions of both ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’”.<sup>71</sup>

As this study focuses on the gendering aspects of the military and, in particular, military service, it is inevitable to take into account that the military in its contemporary form is an institution located at the very core of the nation and, therefore, nationhood. The evolution of the modern nation-state cannot be thought of separately from the evolution of both the ‘army of the masses’ and modern citizenship. Aydın: “[T]he creation of nation states, the recognition of the citizen as the legitimator of sovereignty and the conscription-based army of the masses that makes soldiers out of all are different facets of the same reality.”<sup>72</sup>

Although in general terms this assessment contains much truth, Aydın still misses a crucial point here: The strong bond between the nation, the army and the citizen as it was established in the age of nationalism *inter alia* via the institution of mandatory conscription is an *exclusively masculine* one. While the ‘army of the masses’ might go hand in hand with the militarization of societies in general it does not make soldiers out of all of all. It makes soldiers out of all men. In consequence, mandatory conscription inextricably links the concept of the soldier as the defender of the nation with being a citizen of male sex, thereby implementing a strongly diverging relationship of the male and the female citizen with the state: “As sacrificing one’s life for one’s country is the ultimate citizenship duty, citizenship rights are conditional on being prepared to fulfill this duty.”<sup>73</sup> While the idealized role of the male citizen is found in being both the defender and the leader of the ‘national family’ (including his own family and, in general, all ‘womenandchildren’<sup>74</sup>) women, the defended ones, frequently get reduced in nationalist discourses to the mainly passive and submissive role of the “reproducers of the nation”.<sup>75</sup> Hence, the institution of mandatory conscription is to be regarded as one of the core variables which define men’s and women’s roles within modern nation-states. Altınay:

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<sup>71</sup> Yuval-Davis (1997), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Aydın, Suavi (2009), “The militarization of society: conscription and national armies in the process of citizen creation”, in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun, *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 17; see also Bröckling (1997), p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Yuval-Davis (1997), p. 93.

<sup>74</sup> This spelling of “women and children” is used by feminist scholars to both underline and criticize “the old paternalist position that *equates* women and children – to the extent of running them together or combining them [...] predicted on an assumed victim position”; Baumann, Erica (2008), “Beyond ‘Women vs. Children’ or ‘WomenandChildren’: Engendering Childhood and Reformulating Motherhood”, *International Journal of Children’s Rights*, Vol. 16, p. 180 [original emphasis].

<sup>75</sup> See Yuval-Davis, pp. 26-38.

*Compulsory military service is simultaneously a practice geared towards the 'defense of the country' and a practice that differentiates the relationship between male and female citizens and the state. A conscription system that requires only men to serve as soldiers establishes a strong connection between masculinity, the state and military service. Through conscription, which is formulated as the most sacred of duties, men are granted first-class citizenship. Compulsory military service not only masculinizes firstclass citizenship, it also defines masculinity itself. Military conscription is a first step on the path to manhood; indeed, it is the sine qua non condition of manliness.*<sup>76</sup>

Taking into account that a) the institution of mandatory military service roots within the evolution of the modern nation-state,<sup>77</sup> b) military duty as a disciplining practice exclusively targeting males simultaneously “socializ[es] boys to men”,<sup>78</sup> and c) military service thereby fosters and solidifies quite different concepts of the male and the female citizen one comes to understand the deeply gendered aspects of the connection between the nation-state and the military or, more broadly phrased, the “extensive nature of the links between nationalism, patriotism, militarism, imperialism, and masculinity”.<sup>79</sup>

What results from this is that nationalism is not only, as Ernest Gellner most famously suggests, a “political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”.<sup>80</sup> Rather it invents the fiction of a homogenous nation with the effect “to naturalize the hegemony of one collectivity and its access to the ideological apparatus of both state and civil society”.<sup>81</sup> Nationalism and cultural hegemony are two sides of the same coin. Nationalist ideologies legitimize the subordination of groups viewed as inferior by the establishment of a close linkage between the state and the invention of an idealized national collective - Benedict Anderson’s infamous “imagined communities”.<sup>82</sup> At the same time the image of the bearer of national identity – the citizen – of whom this community as it is constructed in the tales of nationalism comprises must not be regarded as a genderless

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<sup>76</sup> Altınay, Ayşe Gül (2009), “Refusing to identify as obedient wives, sacrificing mothers, proud warriors”, in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun, *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> See Göregenli, Melek (2009), “Patriotism and the justification of inequality in the construction of militarism”, in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun, *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> Barrett (1996), p. 132.

<sup>79</sup> Nagel, Joane (2005), “Nation”, in: Connell, R.W. / Hearn, Jeff / Kimmel, Michael S., *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, p. 407.

<sup>80</sup> Gellner, Ernest (1983), “Nations and Nationalism”, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Yuval-Davis (1997), p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, Benedict (1991), “Imagined Communities”, London: Verso.

construction. Rather, the idealized image of the citizen is to be regarded as a prototype for the idealized image of masculinity. As Nagel argues: “[T]he culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism.”<sup>83</sup>

Hence, any analysis of the reconstruction of normative/hegemonic masculinity as (re)constructed and transmitted by the institution of the military and military service should consider that this image gets conceptualized right at the intersection between nationalism and militarism and, therefore, must not ignore the according concept of national identity with regards to its implied conceptualizations of the male and the female citizen.

To clarify, this is not to be misunderstood as a claim that the military or military service is to be regarded as the primary source of gender inequality per se. Still, as an exclusively male dominated institution *administered by the state* it plays a central role in the establishment and maintenance of distinct discourses that outline men’s and women’s relationship to the state.<sup>84</sup> In line with this, militaries have repeatedly been the focus of studies on the (re)construction of gender relations and roles. As Barret argues:

*The military is a primary candidate for the study of masculinity, not only because it is an institution populated with men, but also because it plays a primary role in shaping images of masculinity in the larger society. [...] Militaries around the world have defined the soldier as an embodiment of male sex role behaviors.*<sup>85</sup>

Morgan comes to a similar conclusion: “Of all sites where masculinities are constructed, reproduced, and deployed, those associated with war and the military are some of the most direct.”<sup>86</sup> However, while the image of the soldier as a major prototype of hegemonic masculinity can be considered universal, the roles that militaries play within the shaping of hegemonic discourses still strongly differ from country to country. Not everywhere is the omnipresence and impact of militarist discourses of such a prime quality as is the case in Turkey – in where military service is not only compulsory for every male citizen (without any alternative), but militarist discourses are so closely interwoven with nationalist discourses that every citizen is presumed to be ‘born as a soldier’, meaning as well that military institutions are located right in the center of power. The military thus quite apparently serves

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<sup>83</sup> Nagel (1998), p. 249.

<sup>84</sup> Altınay, (2004), p. 79.

<sup>85</sup> Barrett (1996), p. 129.

<sup>86</sup> Morgan, David H. J. (1994), “Theater of War. Combat, the Military, and Masculinities”, in: Brod, Harry / Kaufmann, Michael, *Theorizing Masculinities*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, p. 165.

as a primary object of analysis for the (re)construction of idealized citizenship and the gender roles incorporated to it. In line with this assessment, the following section will trace the origin and the major places of reproduction of this close linkage between the Turkish military and Turkish nationalism and its impact on idealized citizenship/masculinity – a linkage that can be summarized best as the ‘legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus*’.

## I.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: TRACING THE ‘REAL TURK’

*Nationalist projects are simultaneously gender projects.*

- Sylvia Walby

### I.2.1 From Muslim *Millet* to Turkish Nation

The Turkish Republic was quite a latecomer in the history of European nation-building projects, and Turkish nationalism was “among the last to rise in the declining Ottoman Empire”.<sup>87</sup> Thus, it was not before the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the first signs of a distinct Turkish nationalism started to emerge as a reaction to the different European nationalist movements. In that time the romantic ideal of a united Turkish *Volk* – in contrast to the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural realities of the Ottoman Empire – developed within the intellectual elites of the Empire.<sup>88</sup> The Ottoman ‘intelligentsia’ started to concentrate their energies on the project of ‘national awakening’ meaning intellectuals began to imagine a distinct Turkish nation-state as a response to the broader rise of nationalism.<sup>89</sup> However, it was not until the years of the Balkan Wars, after the 1908 Young Turk revolution, that Turkish nationalism was first “formulated and codified as a clear cut world view”.<sup>90</sup>

As is well known, the Ottoman Empire was “socially and politically organized around semi-independent confessional units called millets”.<sup>91</sup> On these millets a specific socio-political structure was based, the so called ‘Millet System’, most commonly defined in literature on the Ottoman Empire as “the framework within which the Ottoman state ruled its non-Muslim subjects”.<sup>92</sup> The ‘Millet System’ divided the Ottoman society into two main

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<sup>87</sup> Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. / Ansari, Ali M. (2005), “Turkish and Iranian Nationalisms”, in: Choueiri, Youssef M. (Ed.), *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 313.

<sup>88</sup> Adanır, Fikret / Kaiser, Hilmar (2000), “Migration, Deportation, and Nation-Building: The Case of the Ottoman Empire”, in: Leboutte, René (Ed.), *Migrations et Migrants dans une Perspective Historique. Permanences et Innovations / Migration and Migrants in Historical Perspective. Permanencies and Innovations*, Brussels: Peter Lang, p. 276.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Kuyucu, Ali Tuna (2005), “Ethno-religious ‘unmixing’ of Turkey: 6-7 September Riots as a case of Turkish Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 11( 3), pp. 368.

<sup>92</sup> Braude, Benjamin (1982), “Foundation Myths of the Millet System”, in: Braude, Benjamin / Lewis Bernard (Eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Holmes and Meier, p. 68; although the original meaning of the term has been subject to discussion (compare *ibid.*) I will refer to the above mentioned definition when using the term “Millet System”.

groups: the Millet-I Hakime (dominant Millet) referring to the Muslim majority and the Millet-I Mahkume (dominated Millet) referring to the non-Muslim population. The non-Muslims lived under Ottoman rule as ‘dhimmis’: “tolerated protected subjects in an inferior position”.<sup>93</sup> The ‘Millet System’ recognized the heterogeneous character of the Empire’s population by granting those who did not belong to the dominant religion of Islam certain privileges like the right to administer their communal affairs under the authority of their religious head. While they were exposed to a number of official discriminatory measures, they enjoyed at the same time “security of their lives and property”<sup>94</sup> and were able to keep their religious and ethnic identities intact under the “protective umbrella of the Ottoman regime”.<sup>95</sup>

The millets did not have any ethnic, national or linguistic connotation but were only based on their religious affiliation<sup>96</sup> and the existence of non-Muslim minorities on Ottoman territory was widely accepted among the Muslim millet. It was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a reaction to the rise of nationalist movements throughout Europe, when the Ottoman Empire’s traditional hierarchical system started to crumble and the term ‘millet’ experienced a terminological shift in the sense that it acquired an ethno-nationalist connotation.<sup>97</sup> The “seeds of nationalism” which spread from Western Europe towards all directions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century “found fertile soil in the Ottoman Empire”.<sup>98</sup> And along with the idea of a distinct national identity further political concepts sloped over from the West, most importantly the concept of ‘popular sovereignty’ as well as the notion of ‘minority’ and its counterpart ‘majority’ – the basis for the later ideological distinction between Turks and non-Turks.<sup>99</sup>

As mentioned above, it was during the years of the Balkan Wars that Turkish nationalism in the sense of a clear cut political ideology first started to emerge.<sup>100</sup> The following *İttihat ve*

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<sup>93</sup> Tsimhoni, Daphne (1996), “Jewish-Muslim Relations in Modern Iraq”, in: Schukze, Kirsten E. (Ed.), *Nationalism, Minorities and Diasporas: Identities and Rights in the Middle East*, London: I B Tauris & Co., p. 95.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.; see also Kedourie, Elie (1988), “Ethnicity, Majority, and Minority in the Middle East”, in: Esman, Milton J. / Rbinovich, Itamar (Eds.), *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 27.

<sup>95</sup> Aktar, Ayhan (2009), “Turkification Policies in the Early Republican Era”, in: Duft, Catharina (Ed.), *Turkish Literature and Cultural Memory*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> Kuyucu (2005), p. 368.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Grigoriadis / Ansari (2005), p. 313.

<sup>99</sup> Kedourie (1988), p. 27.

<sup>100</sup> Aktar (1996), p. 270.

*Terakki Cemiyeti* (CUP) period saw the “gradual formation of the idea of a distinct Turkish national identity that was separate from the more inclusive Ottoman national idea”.<sup>101</sup> The newly developing ideal of a ‘Turk’ was basically defined at that time through being of Muslim faith, meaning that several different ethnic groups like the Kurds were theoretically included in that category – in contrast to the non-Muslims communities<sup>102</sup> who were increasingly viewed as a hostile ‘internal other’.

The consequence of this undertaking, namely the ideological construction of the Turkish nation, was a “transition from prejudice to racist nationalist theories” in the Ottoman Empire, resulting in the “exclusion of non-Muslims from the nation, by various degrees of violence combined with both legal and informal discrimination”.<sup>103</sup> Hence, the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were shaped by the nationalist project to ‘homogenize’ the Turkish nation, leading to a radical demographic transformation.<sup>104</sup> Already in the first half of 1914 the forced transfer of the Greek population started when about 100.000 Greeks were forced to leave Western Anatolia – a process which continued during World War I and the Greco-Turkish War and found its climax after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne. Altogether well over one million Greeks were forced out of Turkey between 1914 and 1924.<sup>105</sup> In 1915 during the infamous Armenian Genocide about one million Armenians were massacred<sup>106</sup> marking the “ejection of the Armenians from the empire”.<sup>107</sup>

When the Turkish Republic was founded on October 29, 1923, the large-scale population exchanges, deportations and massacres of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century had already led to a significant ‘homogenizing’ or ‘nationalizing’ of Turkey’s population. With the adoption of the new constitution in 1924 all people residing within the territory of the newly formed nation-state were converted into Turkish citizens, including the remaining minorities. But even after this first major phase of ethnic and religious ‘un-mixing’ there remained a tension between the material reality of Turkey’s vast territories and the nationalist vision of a

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<sup>101</sup> Kuyucu (2005), p. 369.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Astourian, Stefan (1999), “Modern Turkish Identity and the Armenian Genocide: From Prejudice to Racist Nationalism”, in: Hovannisian, Richard G. (Ed.), *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, p. 23.

<sup>104</sup> Kuyucu (2005), p. 369.

<sup>105</sup> Adanır / Kaiser (2000), p. 280; see also Kuyucu (2005), p. 369 and Aktar, Ayhan (2003), “Homogenizing the Nation, Turkifying the Economy: The Turkish Case of Population Exchange Reconsidered”, in: Hirschon, Renee (Ed.), *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn.

<sup>106</sup> Kuyucu (2005), p. 369.

<sup>107</sup> Astourian (1999), p. 40.

completely ‘turkified’ nation-state.<sup>108</sup> The answer to this problem was found in a wide range of different administrative measures which can be summarized as ‘turkification’ policies. Aktar defines the term ‘turkification’ as:

*The way in which Turkish ethnic identity has been strictly imposed as a hegemonic identity in every sphere of social life, from the language spoken in public to the teaching of history in public schools; from education to industry; from commercial practices to public employment policies; from the civil-code to the re-settlement of certain citizens in particular areas.*<sup>109</sup>

These set of policy measures did not only officially legitimize the social exclusion of every non-Turk. Moreover, they aimed at the transformation of the newly founded Republic from a multi-ethnic territory into a mono-ethnic homeland by denying the existence of any other cultural heritage than what had been defined as Turkish identity.

Although the turkification policies were supposed to be all-encompassing in the sense that all inhabitants of the Turkish territory had been converted into Turkish citizens by the newly adapted constitution, there remained certain ethno-religious limits of Turkishness, giving these policies a definite discriminatory/anti-minority character.<sup>110</sup> These limits to Turkishness experienced a major shift during the time of the One-Party Era, excluding more and more people from being considered a ‘Turk’. While still during the 1920s “Islam was the subtle but definite marker of Turkishness”,<sup>111</sup> meaning that the category ‘Turk’ was open to anybody being of Muslim faith, this changed towards a much more exclusive ideal of Turkishness during the 1930s, mainly as a consequence of the implementation of the aforementioned turkification policies. With the “Speak Turkish” campaign “language increasingly became a component of nationality too” and was finally joined in the 1930s by the criteria of ethnicity and race.<sup>112</sup> According to Çağaptay the policies implemented by Atatürk’s CHP during the formative years of the Turkish Republic finally produced three different zones of Turkishness that limited the access to being regarded as a Turk accordingly:

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<sup>108</sup> Öktem, Kerem (2004), “Incorporating the Time and Space of the Ethnic ‘Other’: Nationalism and Space in the Southeast Turkey in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries”, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 10(4), p. 564.

<sup>109</sup> Aktar (2009), p. 29.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.; see also Çağaptay, Soner (2006), “Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is Turk?”, New York: Routledge, p. 142.

<sup>111</sup> Çağaptay (2006), p. 156.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



*In its interaction with the country's ethnic and religious minorities, High Kemalism produced three zones of Turkishness: an outer territorial one, reserved for the non-Muslims [...] a middle religious one, reserved for the non-Turkish Muslims; and an ethnic one, reserved for the Turks.*<sup>113</sup>

Now, after having roughly introduced the concept of Turkish national identity as it finally resulted from Kemalist nationalist discourse it will be the task of the upcoming subsection to follow the ideological redefinition of the military's position within this context. The main argument will be that during the early Republican era the military experienced a significant shift in meaning as it was inextricably linked to Turkish national identity – a process that went hand in hand with the 'sanctification' of the newly established institution of mandatory conscription, merging the concept of the 'real Turk' with being a citizen of male sex.

### **I.2.2 Turkish Nationalism and the 'Legitimizing Myth' of the *Asker Ulus***

On its website the Turkish army finds self-confident words to describe its exclusive place within both Turkish history and Turkish national identity:

*As people who devote themselves to the military the Turks proved the whole world to be a military nation. Beginning with the Turkish nations in Middle Asia every Turk was considered a warrior and the military was never considered a special profession.*<sup>114</sup>

Although this statement might strike some as a bit odd at first it stands rather exemplary for a widely spread and often repeated perception of the Turkish nation as a 'military nation' (*ordu-millet / asker-ulus*) – a perception that gets reflected most symbolically in popular sayings like "every Turk is born as a soldier" (*her Türk asker doğar*) or "Turkish Armed Forces are emerging out of the nation's bosom" (*milletin bağrından çıkan Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*).

What these sayings suggest is nothing less than the existence of a natural bond between the Turkish military and Turkish national identity, defining the military as the father of all Turks and militarism as their primary ideology. A position that is repeated constantly on the broadest variety of occasions, ranging from educational books to state museums (e.g. the *Anatkabır* in Ankara or the *Askeri Müzesi* in Istanbul), political speeches to academic

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> ["Kişi olarak askerliğe gönül veren Türkler tüm dünyaya ordu-millet olduklarını kanıtlamışlardır. Orta Asya'daki Türk uluslarından başlayarak, her Türk savaşçı durumunda olduğundan askerliğe özel meslek gözü ile bakılmamıştır."] TSK, "Tahriçe", [http://www.tsk.tr/1\\_tsk\\_hakkinda/1\\_1\\_tarihce/tarihce.htm](http://www.tsk.tr/1_tsk_hakkinda/1_1_tarihce/tarihce.htm) [28.05.2012].

volumes. And as well a position that has managed to make its way into the Turkish Penal Code where it harshly punishes “discouraging people from military service”.<sup>115</sup> This provision forcefully expresses the crucial status attributed to the institution of compulsory military service within Turkish ‘national identity’ (as it was constructed by Kemalist ideologists during the age of nationalism). The following words of popular historian Hilal İnalcaık speak for themselves:

*The Turkish Nation has preserved its military-nation character from beginnings of history till today. If the Turk is [...] marching on the forefronts of world history, that is because of his unshakable national characteristics, military character, his grand military virtues, his ability to engage in total war for his rights and freedom. [...] The Turk has inherited this character from his history that goes back thousands of years.*<sup>116</sup>

It is important to stress the fact that these lines do not constitute one approach among others. Rather they most prominently represent a hegemonic discourse, serving at the same time the function of a *legitimizing myth*, constantly reproduced by an omnipresent and powerful ideological apparatus that has been properly nursed and pampered since the evolution of Turkish nationalism. It is a hegemonic discourse in the sense that for many people it seems to be the only possible way to approach, to talk and even to think about the connection between Turkish national identity and the Turkish military. One approach seemingly without alternative, expressed most pointedly in the omnipresent and unquestionable figure of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as the symbolic incarnation of an inextricable linkage between Turkish national identity and the Turkish military. It is a legitimizing myth in the sense that it serves the primary function of keeping a distinct social order in place, i.e. that it is linked to “practices that keep social hierarchy intact”.<sup>117</sup> By situating militarism in the character of the ‘Turk’ him-/herself, the myth naturalizes the militarization of everyday life in Turkey ranging from the omnipresence of militaristic symbols in public places to militarist indoctrination

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<sup>115</sup> According to Article 318(1) TCK (Law No. 5237, 26.9.2004), “Halkı Askerlikten Soğutma” (alienating the public from military service), “persons who give incentives or make suggestions or spread propaganda which will have the effect of discouraging people from performing military service shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of six months to two years” - a penalty which can be increased by half “if the act is committed through the medium of the press and media” (Article 318(2) TCK). Famous instances of imprisonment include, among others, the conscientious objectors Halil Savda and Osman Murat Ülke; see WRI (2007), “Article 318: Silencing dissent. The Turkish military’s not so secret weapon against antimilitarist”, *The Broken Rifle*, No 76/2007, [http://wri-irg.org/system/files/public\\_files/br76-en.pdf](http://wri-irg.org/system/files/public_files/br76-en.pdf) [24.02.2012].

<sup>116</sup> İnalcaık, Halil (1964), “Osmanlı Devrinde Türk Ordusu”, quoted in Altınay (2009), p. 88.

<sup>117</sup> Göregenli (2009), p. 39; see also Sidanius, Jim / Pratto, Felicia (2001), “Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

during the infamous national security classes (*Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi*). It is legitimizing also in its function as an ideological framework that authorizes the stigmatization and marginalization of those who reject its indefinite validity or, more generally, do not fit its categories.<sup>118</sup> And, it is most effectively held in place and reproduced by, among others, the authoritative practice of military service.

Clearly, tracing the exclusive position of the Turkish military within Turkish national identity requires more complex explanations than an “emergence out of the bosom of the nation”. I argue that if we are to follow the historical evolution of the myth, a genealogy of militarism in Turkey, we do not have to go back hundreds of years. On the contrary, the ‘myth of the *asker ulus*’ is a rather young ideological undertaking and its origin is to be found in the times of the evolution of Turkish nationalism. In other words, the ideological construction of the ‘Turks’ as having been an *asker ulus* for hundreds (or even thousands) of years can be traced back to the establishment of the Turkish nation-state when, as already summarized above, Turkish identity was strictly imposed as a hegemonic identity in every sphere of social life.

It is always a central concern of every nationalist project to construct and control the past of its imagined community<sup>119</sup> – a past that is colorfully embroidered with a broad range of “invented traditions”,<sup>120</sup> many of which serve the primary function of filling with life what was just named ‘legitimizing myths’. Thus, nationalism, invented traditions and legitimizing myths stand in a relationship of mutual interdependence. As Michael argues:

*The relationship of a myth-constructed past and nationalism is characterized by interdependence: since myth survives thanks to the spreading of national identity, while, simultaneously, nationalism partly survives thanks to the spreading of the myth. In the framework of this interdependence therefore nationalism turns past which it constructs – partly or even entirely – while, at the same time, the constructed past strengthens and renders for the public at large the indisputable ‘truths’ of nationalism.*<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Most notably represented in the ‘social death’ that follows a refusal to perform ones ‘national duty’ as it is told in the stories of Turkey’s conscientious objectors.

<sup>119</sup> See Breully, John (2010), “Bringing History Back into Nationalism?”, in: Aktar, Ayhan / Kızılyürek, Niyazi / Özkırıklı, Umut (eds.), *Nationalism in the Troubled Triangle. Cyprus, Greece and Turkey*, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> Hobsbawm, Eric / Ranger, Terence (1983), “The Invention of Tradition”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>121</sup> Michael, Michalis N. (2010), “History, Myth and Nationalism: The Retrospective Force of National Roles within a Myth-Constructed Past”, in: Aktar, Ayhan / Kızılyürek, Niyazi / Özkırıklı, Umut (eds.), *Nationalism in the Troubled Triangle. Cyprus, Greece and Turkey*. p. 149.

In the case of Turkey, the rise of Turkish nationalism, and the corresponding construction of the nation's founding myths went hand in hand with a discursive strategy redefining the military's position within Ottoman and Turkish society. This, to clarify, is not to say that the military had not played a central role in the earlier Ottoman times as well. On the contrary, the military was one of the empire's most central institutions and a primary bearer of power. However, incorporated in the slowly changing discourse on Turkish national identity during the age of Turkish nationalism one can find a historically new ideological construction of the military as a "proudly carried attribute of Turkish culture" with the effect that, together with the gradual development of a highly racist nationalism, "militarism becomes a matter of biology and a 'racial' characteristic".<sup>122</sup> A shift in meaning that Altınay summarizes with the expression: "From a 'necessity of times' to (invented) 'tradition'."<sup>123</sup>

This process was preceded by the introduction of a system of mandatory conscription during the late years of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Empire had already known a conscription system for centuries compared to contemporary European states or its successor as it was established during the founding years of the Republic the Ottoman Empire's conscription system which differed in that "an unusually large proportion of the population was exempted from conscription".<sup>124</sup> Most importantly, it was not until 1909 that by law "all Ottoman male subjects, except the family of the Sultan, were made eligible for military service".<sup>125</sup> Before that still certain parts of the Muslim population were exempted while, until 1870, the entire non-Muslim population was expected to pay an 'exemption tax' (*bedel*) instead of serving in the Ottoman military.<sup>126</sup> This legal provision, introducing military service as mandatory for all males, came along with an ideological reformulation of the institution of military service. In the words of Bröckling: "The institution of generalized mandatory conscription [...] occurred concomitantly with the ideological sanctification of military service."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun (2009), "Introduction", in: id. (Eds.), *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 27.

<sup>124</sup> Züricher, Erik-Jan (2009), "Refusing to serve by other means: desertion in the late Ottoman Empire", in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun. (Eds.), *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 46.

<sup>125</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 26.

<sup>126</sup> Züricher (2009), p. 46; see also Züricher, Erik-Jan (1998), "The Ottoman Conscription System – 1844-1914", *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 43(3).

<sup>127</sup> Bröckling, Ulrich (2009), "Sand in the wheels? Conscientious objection at the turn of the twenty-first century", in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun, *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 53.

Beginning with the introduction of mandatory conscription during the early Republican era, the institution of ‘national service’ became inextricably linked to the newly established concept of the ‘real Turk’. In line with this, the (imagined) connection between the idealized citizen and the Turkish military became both discursively naturalized, as it is most explicitly expressed in the term *asker ulus*, and access to it became limited exclusively to male citizen: the ‘real Turk’, “born as a soldier”, became at the same time the ‘real man’. This “sanctification process” of military service found its legal finalization in the first military service law of the Republic in 1927 that still remains in force until now.<sup>128</sup> While Article 72 of the 1982 constitution defines “national service [as] the right and duty of every Turk” Article 1 of the *Askerlik Kanunu* (Law on Military Service) explains what is actually meant by the term ‘Turk’: “Every male citizen of the Turkish Republic is obliged to perform military service in compliance with this law.”<sup>129</sup> Thus, women do not only get per se legally exempted from performing their ‘national duty’, they get, thereby, at the same time exempted from the concept of being a Turkish citizen. If military service is the *right* (!) of every ‘Turk’, women do obviously seem to miss a central ‘right’ going hand in hand with being of Turkish nationality and get, by definition, excluded from that same category, and get downgraded to second-class citizenship.

Both the construction of the ‘legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus*’ as well as its implementation as a hegemonic discourse, i.e. the sanctification of the Turkish military in general and military service in particular within a myth-constructed past of the ‘Turks’ – as it is exemplified in the above quoted statements – was one of the central concerns of Kemalist leaders during the early Republican era. It was implemented as part of a “general rewriting of Turkish and Ottoman history in the 1930s”<sup>130</sup> – the production of the so called “Turkish History Thesis” (*Türk Tarih Tezi*) – by Kemalist leaders and affiliated historians with the aim to provide “Atatürk’s vision of a new secular and rational Turkish collective identity”<sup>131</sup> with a common history. In 1931 the *Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Turkish Historical Society; originally *Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti* / The Society for the Study of Turkish History) was founded with the commission to conduct research and provide academic writing on the history of the Turkish nation. Together with the *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Linguistic Society) it “has been

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<sup>128</sup> See Züricher (1998).

<sup>129</sup> [“Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tebaası olan her erkek, işbu kanun mucibince askerlik yapmağa mecburdur”] *Askerlik Kanunu* (Law No. 1111, 21.06.1927).

<sup>130</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 20.

<sup>131</sup> Alaranta, Toni (2011), “The Enlightenment Idea of History as a Legitimation Tool of Kemalism in Turkey”, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, p. 19.

the principal institution in canonising the official historical discourse, which has been reproduced by many scholars of contemporary Turkey”.<sup>132</sup>

Already few months after its establishment, the *Türk Tarih Kurumu* came up with a four-volume history textbook, the *Tarih* (history). In the last of these volumes the connection between the Turkish nation and its “military character” is made the following way:

*A nation with high military spirit is a nation with a history of civilization; one that embodies deep and far-reaching knowledge. It is natural that the Turkish race, which has been the ancestor of all major civilizations since the first days of humanity, perfected this spirit.*<sup>133</sup>

This way of telling Turkish history, discursively constructing a seemingly natural bond between ‘the Turks’ and militarism, has forcefully been imposed as a hegemonic discourse since its elaboration during the early Republican era. As mentioned above, its rigorous preservation is secured by an ideological apparatus that reaches into all parts of the public as well as many parts of the private sphere. It is based on a mythological construction of the past of the Turkish nation which places the ‘military spirit’, most directly expressed in the “right and duty” to fulfill ones *vatan borcu* (debt to the nation), right in the center of national identity. Thereby, the hegemonic discourse we have named as ‘the legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus*’ keeps both distinct social and gender orders in place as it naturalizes the subordination of those who get either get expelled from the ‘right’ or themselves refuse to perform their ‘national duty’. In the words of Altınay:

*It [the myth of the military nation] is a highly gendered discourse that has important implications for gendered citizenship and gendered self-identification. Just as “Turkish culture” is defined through the military, Turkish masculinity is defined through military service.*<sup>134</sup>

Accordingly, after having traced the discursively constructed linkage between the concept of ‘the Turk’ and the Turkish military, as it was established during the age of Turkish nationalism, the next step should be to turn the attention in detail towards the institution of compulsory military service as the centerpiece of that linkage.

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<sup>132</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

## CHAPTER II

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After having developed both a theoretical and a historical background for my analysis, this chapter will now focus on my empirical data. The first section presents an empirically based in-depth analysis of military service in Turkey by taking a close look at the implicit “mechanisms of gendering”, as theoretically introduced above, that are at work in the context of military service as a ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood. My leading research question can be phrased as: What “regulatory practices” that teach/force a recruit to act like a ‘real man’ need to be taken into account when analyzing a conscript’s path from the conscription process until the end of his service period? Accordingly, after an introductory description of the conscription process in the first subsection, I will then move on to the mechanisms of discipline that are exercised on (and between) the privates during their service period. The focus of interest will thereby not be reduced to discipline as a mechanism of power that produces “docile bodies”, but will be extended by regarding *military discipline as masculine discipline*, i.e. as a discipline that also works through mechanisms of “homosocial control and affective binding” as it typically appears within artificial homosocial (male) societies such as the military. A mechanism that in the case of military service is most emphatically expressed in the system of *devrecilik*, a system of mutual punishment that is structured among the different *devreler* (terms) of soldiers as they get inducted. The section will then be concluded by an analysis of the attribution of military service as a ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood. What was already introduced above on a theoretical level as a mechanism of gender division, strongly distinguishing between the male and the female citizen as the men becomes trained to be a defender of his ‘national family’, will in this section get illustrated and interpreted more in detail with the help of my empirical data.

In the second section I will then draw the attention to what I intend as the actual core part of this study, namely the question “who is in and who is out?” and the according distinction between the ‘fit’ and the ‘rotten body’. Hence, within the framework of the above introduced definition of military service as a set of regulatory practices that (re)construct masculinity – as an *erkeklik laboratuvarı* – I will come in this section to the crucial question of who is allowed to enter the laboratory and who, and for what reason, is denied access. The section will be introduced by a detailed description of the exemption procedures with a particular focus on the exemption process of gay men. As in contrast to the above described conscription process only very few resources on this process exist, the vast majority of the

information presented is based on the evaluation of my interviews. The second subsection then sets the focus on the power of the military doctors' "medical gaze" to discursively construct 'homosexual bodies' during the examination procedures within the framework of a militarized medical discourse on homosexuality. Drawing on inter alia Judith Butler's concept of the discursively sexed body we will see how the performance those conscripts who wish to get exempted on the basis of a 'psychosexual disorder' enact during the examination procedures reproduces and enforces this same discourse. The final subsection brings together and summarizes my before pointed out arguments and gained findings with regards to their relevance for the (re)construction of hegemonic masculinity and the concomitant maintenance of a distinct patriarchal gender order. The major argument will be that within a given matrix of "compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality [that] requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term"<sup>135</sup> the discursive production of the homosexual body serves the function of a projection surface, a "repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity".<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Butler (1990), p. 31.

<sup>136</sup> Connell (1995), p. 78.



## II.1 GETTING CONSCRIPTED, OR: HOW TO BECOME A ‘REAL MAN’

*Just as “Turkish culture” is defined through the military, Turkish masculinity is defined through military service.*

*- Ayşe Gül Altınay*

### II.1.1 The Conscription Process

As already mentioned above, Turkish law states that “national service is the right and duty of every Turk”, whereby ‘Turk’ is being defined as “every male national of the Turkish Republic”. In detail this means that every ‘healthy’ male of Turkish nationality is considered eligible for military service between the first of January of the year he turns 19 and the first of January of the year he turns 40.<sup>137</sup> However, the possibility exists to defer the conscription twice for one year, a “request [that] must be backed up by documents from, for example, the employer or the university”.<sup>138</sup> Besides, all draftees who, at the time of their drafting, are engaged in a higher education program are allowed to delay their induction until graduation (certain age limits exist: 29 for university education, 36 for post-doctoral education).<sup>139</sup> Turkish nationals permanently (legally) residing and working abroad can apply every second year for deferment until the age of 38.<sup>140</sup>

For all those who neither hold a university degree nor have worked abroad for at least three years, their *vatan borcu* wants to be paid back by serving in the military for, currently, fifteen months – of which the basic training comprises three and the so called *üstad* (master) period comprises twelve months – as ‘long term privates’. While this is the standard case, three further options to fulfill ones military duty exist:

Those who have worked abroad for at least three years (1095 days) and hold a valid work and residence permit have the opportunity to shorten their service by paying an amount of currently €10000, the so called (and much disputed) *bedelli askerlik*. Everybody who chooses

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<sup>137</sup> Article 2, Law on Military Service (No 1111).

<sup>138</sup> UNHCR (2001), “Turkey/military service”, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Directorate for Movements of Persons, Migration and Consular Affairs, Asylum and Migration Division, No 11534/01, July 2001, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/467010bd2.pdf> [28.05.2012], p. 26.

<sup>139</sup> Article 35, Law on Military Service (No 1111).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.; UNHCR (2001), p. 26.

this option is required to complete a basic training for one month in Buldur in southern Turkey and then gets exempted from further posting.<sup>141</sup>

The case of those who hold a university degree is separately regulated by the “Law on Reserve Officers and Reservists”.<sup>142</sup> They can either perform their service as a short term private – the only difference to the long term being that the service is shortened from fifteen to around six months (*kısa hizmet*) – or for a twelve months period as a *yedek subay* (reserve officer). In the second case, the conscript, after having completed the training period, benefits from the same conditions as any other *subay* (officer): fixed working hours (usually from 9am to 5pm), weekends off, and a monthly salary.<sup>143</sup> However, the final decision between these two options – short term private or *yedek subay* – is not up to the conscript himself, but lies in the hands of the military authorities, though he is asked for his personal preference.

As in every other country, conscription in Turkey goes hand in hand with some standardized medical inspections that examine the conscript’s mental and physical eligibility to perform his service. This military medical check-up has two primary aims: Firstly, it shall ensure that no conscript suffers from any sickness that, in a closed surrounding like a military unit, has the potential to grow into a proper epidemic. The second aim is to check whether the recruits are ‘healthy and normal’, i.e. eligible to deal with the ‘mental and physical hardships’ they will have to face during their service period.<sup>144</sup>

According to the information gathered from my research, the conscription process altogether comprises only a few rather simple steps: After having received the conscription documents, every draftee has to see his according *askerlik şubesi* (draft office) to register for conscription. A process which previously needed to be done in the ‘hometown’ (meaning the father’s place of birth), but nowadays can also be completed in the actual place of residence. Then, as a second step, he is given an appointment for the medical examination. If in the eyes of the military doctors the conscript does not suffer from any grave mental or physical problems, he is then declared ‘fit’ to perform his service.

For those who hold a university degree, besides, the additional decision needs to be made whether they will perform their service as a short term private or as a *yedek subay*: At the day of their examination the respective candidates are asked to state their personal preference. However, all of my interviewees agreed that their preference did not have much effect on the

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<sup>141</sup> UNHCR (2001), p. 27.

<sup>142</sup> Yedek Subaylar ve Yedek Askeri Mermular Kanunu (Law No 1076).

<sup>143</sup> The privates on the other hand only receive a symbolic payment of a few Liras per month.

<sup>144</sup> See Selek (2010), p. 42.

final decision. Then, before their actual service period starts, the university graduates are required to take a short exam that is at least assumed to have impact on the final decision. Accordingly, those who reject the idea of serving as a *yedek subay*, in most cases because they prefer to serve a period of time as short as possible, aim at a rather poor performance in the exam in order not to be considered eligible to serve as an officer. As my interviewee Emir said:

*Then, before we went to the army, one week before, we had to do an exam. It is really bullshit, it is really bullshit! They are asking twenty-five Turkish and twenty-five mathematic questions to decide if you're gonna do the short term or the long term [yedek subay]. So, when I was talking with my friends they were saying like: "Don't do the exam totally!" Because it's very basic, it's very easy. If you want to do fifty questions out of fifty, yeah, you can do that. At least forty-eight, forty-seven. It's just very easy. After that I just did like twenty questions right. Twenty right and thirty wrong.*<sup>145</sup>

Shortly after the examination the draftee gets asked to pick up his induction papers from the draft office within a given deadline.<sup>146</sup> The papers indicate both to which unit he will be sent to for the basic training and, in the case of the university graduates, if he will serve as a private or *subay*. In intervals of three months the recruits are then sent to their training units where they are given a basic military training that includes physical and weapon training as well as educational programs (also comprising language and literacy courses for illiterates). Around one week before the end of the training period, the draftees get informed about the unit where they will perform their *üstad*, usually being a different unit than that of the basic training.<sup>147</sup>

### **II.1.2 Military Discipline as Masculine Discipline and the System of *Devrecilik***

During my stay in Istanbul, I once had a conversation about the Turkish military with a man who had done his military service back in the 1970s. He told me the following story from his service period: One day the commander of his unit called all recruits to gather in the unit's courtyard. As everybody had arrived, they were informed that this day the commander had a 'special task' to offer and that he was in search of the most qualified candidate to execute it. In order to find that person all soldiers had to line up next to each other. Then the

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<sup>145</sup> From my interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

<sup>146</sup> UNHCR (2001), p. 17.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 19.

commander, step by step, started to sort them out according to their level of education: First, everybody who had completed a higher school education, i.e. had visited a *lise* (high school) had to take one step forward. Then, everybody who held a Bachelor degree had to take a further step. Everybody who held a Master degree one more step, and so on. At the end of this selection process the person who was standing ahead of everybody else was a university professor who was at the same time the dean of his university's technical department. He got told his 'special task': In many of the *koğuşlar* (dormitories) the light bulbs were broken and it would be his assignment for the day to change them all.

As, quite apparently, the according commander did not really believe that a university dean would do a better job in changing all the broken light bulbs than anybody else, the question arises about the reason behind this seemingly irrational decision not to save time by just ordering a random private to take care of the job. Obviously, he wanted to demonstrate something. Namely that neither the man's personal nor his educational background would have any effect on the way he was going to get treated during his service period. In other words, the performance the commander enacted through this elaborate selection process aimed to show that, within the borders of the military barracks, all recruits were 'the same' to him – the same in the sense that they had to obey his commands without any exception and boundaries, and that their outside civilian lives were of no worth inside the military unit. The whole process was nothing else than a clear demonstration of the higher ranked commander's power over the lower ranked privates – a power, according to Foucault, "that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise".<sup>148</sup>

Another story I was told during my field research: Within their training period all privates of a military unit were standing outside in formation and had to practice the *hazırol* (*hazır ol* literally means 'be ready' and is the command for the military salute) in front of their commander. After a while the commander put a long wooden stick in the ground and placed his uniform cap on top of it. He ordered the privates to continue practicing for another hour, thereby imagining the stick with the cap to be their commander. Then he walked off and left the privates alone, saluting the wooden stick.<sup>149</sup> I remember very well how the person who told me the story strongly underlined the feeling of complete senselessness he experienced

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<sup>148</sup> Foucault (1977), p. 170.

<sup>149</sup> Quite similarly, forcing a recruit to practice the *hazırol* in front of a tree is a popular punishment given by commanders for a soldier's misbehavior. As my interviewee Nurettin explains: "If someone has done something bad they would send him to the tree and say: 'Think him as your officer and stand in front of him to show to him your respect and greet him.'" (From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011).

when he was forced to salute a stick with a hat on it. Still he knew that there was no way around it. Disobeying his commander's orders would immediately lead to harsh punishment.

Both stories, although depicting two rather different situations, are exemplary of what Altınay calls the "irrational character of the military rationale",<sup>150</sup> a common feeling everybody I talked to expressed when recalling his service period. A feeling that gets reflected most symbolically in the popular saying *askerlikte mantık yoktur* (there is no logic in military service) – as it is often repeated when men talk about their experiences from their service period. My interviewee Emir summarizes the impressions he and many of his fellow conscripts were left with after having performed their service the following way:

*You cannot understand the logic behind it. But there is a famous saying that, maybe you heard it, but in the army there isn't any logic. You can hear that, you can hear it anywhere in Turkey. This is very hard to understand, because... So if there isn't any logic, why are you celebrating you sons, your brothers when they're going to the army?*<sup>151</sup>

During their service period, the privates have to deal with both seemingly irrational commands and a feeling of impotence when confronted with the unquestionable authority of their officers ordering them.<sup>152</sup> As the above quoted saying most clearly suggests, in the eyes of the individual candidate, the military does not present itself much of a rational place. However, it is not to be regarded as irrational at all. Rather it is an institution that follows its very own rationality: the rationality of *military discipline*; a discipline in which, even more as it is the case within other disciplinary institutions, the subject becomes 'objected', i.e. the individual dissolves completely in the military's disciplinary regime as it is most apparently represented in the officers' indefinite authority over their lower ranked personal. Within the hierarchically structured military's chain of command the subject ceases to exist as it becomes 'homogenized', i.e. gets incorporated into the bigger unit of a group of comrades. This process of homogenization begins right at the moment when the actual service period starts, with a series of rituals that are performed on the recruits' bodies with the aim to standardize and norm them: the hair gets cut short, beards are to be cut off, and everybody gets put into the same clothing.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 63.

<sup>151</sup> From my interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

<sup>152</sup> As my interviewee Nurettin puts it: "The guy who is at the top of your unit he's the god. You do whatever he says." (From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011).

<sup>153</sup> See Selek (2010), p. 67.

Following Foucault's discussion in "Discipline and Punish" on the linkage between power and modern disciplinary institutions, military discipline – as it is executed by the 'army of the masses' – stands exemplary for a new "microphysics of power". A power that is geared towards the production of "docile bodies" and that finds its most direct application in the institution of the military and, accordingly, in the body of the soldier: "By the late eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed."<sup>154</sup> And in the same chapter he continues:

*The classical age saw the birth of the great political and military strategy by which nations confronted each other's economic and demographic forces; but it also saw the birth of meticulous military and political tactics by which the control of bodies and individual forces was exercised by the state. [...] While jurists or philosophers were seeking in the past a primal model for the construction or reconstruction of the social body, the soldiers and with them the technicians of discipline were elaborating procedures for the individual and collective coercion of bodies.*<sup>155</sup>

Although in general terms this statement has much truth to it, there is something that needs to be added here – namely the fact that the disciplinary regime, as it is in place within military institutions, does not target the body in general; it exclusively targets the *male body*.<sup>156</sup> In other words, if one talks about military discipline, one at the same time talks about distinct mechanisms of *masculine discipline* – a discipline that is carried out by men over men within an exclusively male dominated institution: a temporary, obscure male society the recruits are forced into. Military service is not only disciplining those who perform it – in the sense that it 'homogenizes' them and, thereby, strips them off their individuality as it incorporates their bodies into a strictly hierarchical mechanism of order and obedience. Rather, as the discipline it enacts over the individual is a purely masculine discipline, it at the same time 'masculinizes' them. Hence, the disciplinary regime that is at work in the institution of military service cannot be reduced to a simple utility-docility relation that "increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)".<sup>157</sup> As it "aims to 'make' productive, yet docile, bodies out of

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<sup>154</sup> Foucault (1977), p. 135.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-169.

<sup>156</sup> Of course, this fact has been subject to change and groups formerly excluded from military institutions have successfully fought to get access to them. Hence, as Nagel points out correctly, in this context the question arises whether as a consequence the military will 'demasculinize' or 'feminize' (see Nagel (2005), p. 260). But as this is not the case in the Turkish military I decided not to follow that discussion here.

<sup>157</sup> Foucault (1977), p. 138.

*male citizens*”<sup>158</sup> all the attributes that are associated with the soldier as the primary object of military discipline are regarded as typical masculine attributes. Hence, military discipline combines the inscription of utility-docility into the soldier’s body with a further, often neglected, disciplinary mechanism – a mechanism of gendering. In line with this Bröckling argues:

*Military discipline is twofoldly coded: Soldiers do not only obey their officers’ rules and commands. Central for the troop’s coherence and its propensity towards violence are as well the social control and the affective bindings within the group of comrades. The military is a strictly hierarchically structured, rationalized organization. But it is also an egalitarian male society, that constitutes itself through the exemption of women and that transforms homoerotic libido into outwardly orientated aggression.*<sup>159</sup>

Thus, while the first aspect of military discipline, the production of “docile bodies”, is symbolically expressed in the process of physically homogenizing the soldiers’ bodies, the second aspect of military discipline Bröckling notes here, the aspect of “social control and affective binding”, correlates with a further process of *gender homogenization*: an emphatic and elaborated exclusion of everything considered ‘unmanly’ from the institution of military service. This aspect, going hand in hand with the artificial production of a ‘purely male society’, is in the case of military service in Turkey most pointedly expressed in the system of *devrecilik* – a quasi-institutionalized mechanism at work between the privates that serves on the one hand as a strongly hierarchical system of mutually disciplining and punishing each other (homosocial control), and on the other hand strengthens the ‘homosocial bond’ (affective binding) between one *devre* (term) of soldiers.

*Çayda dem askerde kıdem* (the tea’s color is the soldier’s rank), a commonly heard saying in the Turkish military probably summarizes best the disciplining aspects of *devrecilik*. It expresses one simple, but essential fact: the longer a private has served in the military the higher he gets ranked within the (unofficial) hierarchy that is in place between them. A hierarchical system that is structured among *devreler* (terms), referring to terms of soldiers

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<sup>158</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 66 [emphasis added].

<sup>159</sup> [“Militärische Disziplin ist zweifach codiert: Soldaten gehorchen nicht nur dem Reglement und den Befehlen ihrer Offiziere, entscheidend für den Zusammenhalt der Truppe und ihre Gewaltbereitschaft sind ebenso die soziale Kontrolle und die affektiven Bindungen in der Kameradengruppe. Das Militär ist eine strikt hierarchisch gegliederte, rationalisierte Organisation, es ist aber auch ein egalitärer Männerbund, der sich über den Ausschluß von Frauen konstituiert und homoerotische Libido in Aggressivität nach außen transformiert.”] Bröckling (1997), p. 10.

who were inducted into military service at the same time. As my interviewee Nurettin explains:

*People go to do their service in February, in May, in August, and in November. Every three months one group goes. And people who started at the same time as you, they are called your devre. And they, most of the time, they unite, they get together and they struggle against the higher ones or the older soldiers. There is like a hierarchy, a cruel hierarchy.*<sup>160</sup>

In detail: Out of each term's perspective, those who have started their service three, six, nine, or twelve months earlier are to be considered as *üst devre* (high term) while those whose service began later are the *alt devre* (low term). The 'highest term', the ones who are about to finish their service and, therefore, do not have any other term above them, are called the *en üst devre* (highest term). Accordingly, the newcomers who have just started their service are regarded as the *en alt devre* (lowest term). Everybody I talked to about *devricilik* agreed that the system works about the same in every military unit (although perhaps with various degrees of intensity): the *üst devreler* are in charge of controlling, disciplining and punishing the *alt devreler*. In the words of my interviewees:

**Uğur:** *Before you go to military there is this mind like "alt devre - üst devre". Because of all the people who already went to the military, they're telling you "alt devre - üst devre". You're getting this mind before you go there. [...] And, in the koğuş, when you move there first, if you're a newcomer, the others, üst devreler, they're talking to each other and you're a stranger. You're like a stranger, you're a beginner, and you're the worst.*<sup>161</sup>

**Nurettin:** *They treat them bad. And they make the newcomers clean everywhere and get up earlier. Most of the time cleaning is the problem. They make you clean all the places and sometimes they even make you do their own duties. I remember the guys who came three months earlier than I did, they made me, one of them made me wait for his turn, wait outside to protect the building for his turn.*<sup>162</sup>

**Emir:** *The en alt devre, the lowest term that spent least time in the military, does everything. [...] So, [if] you're the upper ones [...] you've your free time, you watch TV, you listen to the radio. In the cafeteria you are the first in the line, whenever you come. Even when the en alt devre come first, it's not important. The cafeteria guy who is the responsible one for selling poğaç, açma, simit, juices, cola, whatever, he wouldn't sell it*

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<sup>160</sup> From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011.

<sup>161</sup> From my interview with Uğur, 29.09.2011.

<sup>162</sup> From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011.



*to the alt devre. He would wait for you. [...] That's the rule, you know. That's the unwritten rule of the Turkish army, you know. And the commanders always say: "Yeah, this is the rule."*<sup>163</sup>

A disciplinary system that, of course, has much more interesting aspects to it than, recalling the above quoted saying, the fact that those who are the last to be served in the canteen will get the tea that has infused the longest. As previously mentioned, the entry into military (as well as other disciplinary) institution goes hand in hand with the abandoning of one's individuality; the conscript becomes homogenized and standardized right at the moment when he sets foot into the military barracks: everybody becomes, as Pınar Selek's interviewee Aydın quite pointedly remarks, "brewed in the same pot".<sup>164</sup>

Being a soldier among others, the individual person all of a sudden "sinks and becomes untraceable".<sup>165</sup> This process of 'de-individualizing' is accompanied by the almost complete decomposition of any social hierarchy and its replacement by a, unknown in this form to the candidates, new hierarchy: the hierarchy of the military unit. While also within other disciplinary institutions social hierarchies might blur, for example in educational institutions in which the school children's outer appearance as well becomes, at least partly, homogenized through the wearing of a school uniform or in sport clubs where hierarchies are partly (re)defined by the athletes' performance, the redefinition of one's own position within a social group is never as all encompassing as it is the case during military service. An *alt devre* who, due to his level of education or his family background, has a self-perception as being of a higher social status than a less-educated *üst devre*, will most probably see himself confronted with situations where he has to obey orders of that person. A situation that is reflected in the following story Emir told me:

*For example there was one guy. When we came there first [to the military unit] he was the en üst devre and he took us and talked with us. He and two of his friends. Three, like a gang. They told us: "There are rules here and you have to go with the rules." [...] And he was saying: "Here your education is not important. We are all equal right now. And even though we are equal, we came here first. [...] We are gonna decide if you wash dishes or not. We are gonna decide if you clean the floor or not. We are the ones who decide everything." [...] He is a driver of minibüs! He is still driving, I saw him. He is driving from Beşiktaş to Maslak, he is a driver of minibüs! In civil life, he knows that he cannot...*

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<sup>163</sup> From my interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

<sup>164</sup> ["im selben Topf gebrüht"] Selek (2010), p. 67.

<sup>165</sup> ["versinkt und unauffindbar wird"] Theleweit, Klaus (1986), "Männerphantasien. Band II: Männerkörper – Zur Psychologie des weißen Terrors", Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, p. 9.

*He's not in the same level with an educated man. [...] But he was like that, you know. You cannot even talk to him for like 15 minutes. But you have to learn to live with them. You have to learn to live with them because if you don't, these 140 days are not gonna pass.*<sup>166</sup>

While on the one hand the military is a place that targets the male physique, that works on its outer appearance by first de-individualizing/homogenizing and then ‘masculinizing’ it in the form of an endless repetition of exercises that look to reshape the recruits’ bodies, it at the same time targets the male psyche. As expressed in the system of *devrecilik* as a primary example for a mechanism of masculine discipline, the military teaches the recruits how to commonly enact power over those who are – within a given hierarchical framework – situated below them, and at the same time to cope with the mental and physical hardships that go along with themselves being subjected to orders coming from above them. The “rationality of the military irrational” as it is expressed within the powerful disciplinary mechanism of *devrecilik*, as humiliating it is from an object’s perspective as tempting it is from the subject’s one, results in a “reorganization of the person”.<sup>167</sup> As it annihilates the individual, it creates a *tabula rasa*, out of which the newly formed ‘man’ rises like a ‘phoenix out of the ashes’.<sup>168</sup>

The inevitable personality shift that goes along with the gradual rise from *alt devre* to *üst devre* is expressed in the following statement by Emir:

*And when they are pissed off, the alt devre, they put water to the ground, like this. And they make you clean it. For nothing! For nothing! They're just pissed off for one little reason, like that they called your name and you didn't look at them. Just for this reason they're pissed off and they fuck you! [...] They make you clean for 3 hours! But with your whole devre, with your same term. One did the wrong, but you have to do the cleaning all together. [...] And after a while, like 2 months, we were the üst devre. So we got used to it. You know, that's very weird. And after I went back to civil life, after May 2011, I was also thinking like: "What kind of people we were in army?" That we were like torturing each other, you know. [...] "You do this, and I will sit, and I will watch you. I'm not gonna help you. You will do this, because I did this." What kind of a human psychology is that?*<sup>169</sup>

In summary this system of masculine discipline as it is experienced by the majority of Turkish men as part of their (mandatory) military service can be summarized as a regulatory practice that (re)constructs masculine identity on primary three levels:

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<sup>166</sup> From my interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

<sup>167</sup> [“Reorganisation der Person”] Bröckling (1997), p. 24.

<sup>168</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> From my interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

- 1.) On the physical level of disciplining, of homogenizing and physically training the recruits' bodies towards productive and docile male bodies.
- 2.) On the mental level of order and obedience, i.e. of learning how to act under discipline and how to enact discipline themselves within a given institutional setting and an according hierarchical regime.
- 3.) On the psychological level of (homosocial) affective binding: the experience of being part of an exclusively 'masculine' institution – an institution to which access is denied for anything considered as 'effeminate'.

As mentioned before, through the militarist discourse on the 'real Turk', that has linked the institution of military service to a distinct notion of idealized citizenship making it a moral obligation towards the 'Turkish nation' for a man to perform his 'national duty', military service has achieved the unquestionable status of being a "rite of passage into adult (heterosexual) masculinity".<sup>170</sup> In other words, as a consequence of the above analyzed hegemonic discourse on militarized citizenship (i.e. the legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus*) and the according (self-)perception of men resulting from this discourse boys are not to be regarded as 'real men/Turks' before having gone through the 'mental and physical hardships' of military service.

However, as we have just seen, the fact that military service serves the function as a 'rite of passage' towards manhood cannot be reduced to a question of social attribution. While the above historically traced legitimizing myth on the *asker ulus* discursively establishes and naturalizes distinct diverging roles of the male and the female citizen, inextricably linking the 'real Turk' with the *asker* (soldier) and, hence, being a citizen of male sex, it is as much military service *itself* as a regulatory practice that (re)constructs the gender regime as it defines and forms masculinity. Thus, the in this subsection described disciplinary techniques are as closely linked to the 'growing-up' process from childhood to manhood as it is the 'myth of the military nation'; the second one being always present in the background, legitimating those regulatory practices military service comprises of and the social order they hold in place. Hence, while this subsection has focused on the various aspects of military discipline (as masculine discipline) it will be the aim of the following subsection to put emphasis on how these various disciplining practices, in collaboration with a hegemonic discourse that defines every Turk/man to be born as a soldier, in detail function to "socialize boys to men", i.e. to transform the *Mehmetçik* ("Little Mehmet", the Turkish

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<sup>170</sup> Altınay (2004), p. 77.

equivalent for the American “G.I. Joe” or the British “Tommy Atkins”) into a grown-up Mehmet.<sup>171</sup>

### II.1.3 From *Mehmetçik* to *Mehmet*

My interviewee Nurettin, quite similar to many people I talked to, did not want to join the army – mainly because he considered military service a waste of his lifetime and was at the same time quite afraid of what to expect. Still, he decided to perform his service as early as possible. When asked for the reason he said:

*I could have postponed it for a while, but at that time I was interested in a girl who was going to finish her school in about one and a half years. I didn't want to go. I just made a plan that I would go to do my military service and complete it in about one and a half years, almost. Then she would finish her school, come to Istanbul, we would start a family, be happy. [...] I applied for the military service because of her. [...] If you go to a girl's family and tell that you want to marry her they will expect you to have performed your military service.*<sup>172</sup>

Although this is gradually changing, or has changed quite significantly already especially in the modern urban parts of Turkey, it seems to be still a common practice within traditional families to expect their daughter's future groom to have performed his military service before they would agree to a marriage. There are various reasons for this: the first one is the rather pragmatic reason that the family does not want their daughter to marry someone who will then soon be away from his future family for fifteen months. Moreover, as it is almost impossible to find a job for anybody who has not performed his military service he will, until he has performed his military service, most probably not be able to take care of his family's financial security.<sup>173</sup> And as this is regarded as one of the central duties of fatherhood – to be able to secure the family's survival, i.e. to provide the weak and vulnerable ‘womenandchildren’ with food, shelter and, in general, security of their lives – it is considered inevitable for every man to first fulfill his ‘national duty’ before being able to get married and to start a family. But the fact that military service is to precede *evlilik* (marriage) cannot be reduced to these simple pragmatic reasons. As abovementioned, it is part of a

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<sup>171</sup> See Selek (2010), p. 193.

<sup>172</sup> From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011.

<sup>173</sup> All my interviewees agreed on this fact. As for example Emir explains: “When you start to search for a job they are looking at it: ‘Did he complete his military service? Or did he delay it?’ [...] If you don't do your military service in Turkey this question is always going to come into your face.”

whole hegemonic discourse on normative masculinity that men are not to be considered eligible for fatherhood, as the final accomplishing of manhood, before having completed their military service. In line with this, almost everybody I spoke to agreed, or was at least aware of the fact that military service is considered a central stage in becoming a ‘real man’. As my interviewees Nurettin and Faruk said:

***Nurettin:** Manhood is considered to consist of 3 things: You have to perform your military service, you have to be circumcised [...] and you have to get married to be a real man. I think in Turkish society this is what it takes to be a man.*<sup>174</sup>

***Faruk:** People in my hometown, like my family, they all would say: "Army teaches you more than any school can. Army teaches men how to be a man." [...] Like a man who takes care of his life and the responsibilities, which may be a father soon or, I don't know, a brother or a husband. These you get to learn in the army. Taking the basic and the crucial responsibilities that adds up to your manhood.*<sup>175</sup>

Thus, military service depicts one of the major obstacles for every ‘childish boy’ to reach the end of the road towards becoming a ‘real man/Turk’, a road that begins with the circumcision and finds its end in marriage and starting a family, i.e. in becoming a father. The circumcision as the first ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood is embedded into a ceremony that Hannah Rachel Bell describes as the “symbolic severance from the world of mothers [which] prepare[s] [the boy] for the start of his manhood journey”.<sup>176</sup> In line with this Selek explains:

*In the times of going to the Hamam together for example, boys were first allowed to bath with their mothers until, all of a sudden, their access to women-Hamams was denied. During this period, usually at the same time with the circumcision of the man, whose difference to the woman thus becomes ‘official’, he passes to the other side of the border and, from now on, constructs his gender identity among other men, with or against them.*<sup>177</sup>

After this symbolic cut-off from the “world of the mother” military service is the next central

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<sup>174</sup> From my interview with Nurettin, 25.09.2011.

<sup>175</sup> From my interview with Faruk, 27.09.2011.

<sup>176</sup> Bell, Hannah Rachel (1998), “Men’s Business, Women’s Business. The Spiritual Role of Gender in the World’s Oldest Culture”, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, p. 29; see also Selek (2010), p. 25.

<sup>177</sup> [“In Zeiten gemeinsamer Hamam-Besuche etwa durften Knaben vorerst zusammen mit ihren Müttern baden, bis ihnen plötzlich der Zutritt ins Frauen-Hamam verwehrt wurde. In dieser Phase, meist zeitgleich mit der Beschneidung des Mannes, dessen Unterschied zur Frau damit ‚offiziell‘ wird, wechselt er auf die andere Seite der Grenze und konstruiert nunmehr seine Geschlechteridentität unter seinesgleichen, mit oder gegen Geschlechtsgenossen.”] Selek (2010), p. 26.

step to become a part of the ‘national (patriarchal) family’. In order to accomplish this step the boy, who at that time has already grown into a *delikanlı* (youngster; literally “crazy-blooded”), gets for a while separated from his familiar surroundings and thrown into the unknown and strange place of the military barracks. Through this process of separating young men from their civil lives the military imposes its very own hierarchies, norms and disciplinary practices, as they were described and analyzed in detail above, on the male subject. At the same time it replaces the *Mehmetçik*’s ‘natural’ family by a new artificial family, a male society comprising exclusively of military personal, where the officers take over the role of the fathers and the other privates substitute the older and younger brothers, according to the system of *devrecilik*. As Özgür told me: “And for the last three months [of military service] you’re the strongest ones within the community. And then you can be the big brother for them.”<sup>178</sup> In line with this, in my interview with the retired *Albay* (Colonel) Tahsin Meriç he repeatedly stressed the function of the army to replace the soldiers’ familiar social surrounding by the homosocial group of comrades: “In the army we are mothers as well as fathers, brothers, and friends.”<sup>179</sup>

While the army positions itself as the *Mehmetçik*’s surrogate family it lets its military ‘educational program’ comprising of the abovementioned range of disciplinary techniques work on the still childish and, hence, formable little Mehmet with the aim to complement the (perceived as) only partial education he received before from his family and the school. Furthermore, the military as well looks to complete those parts of school and family education the *Mehmetçik* missed to receive. A fact that adds up to the widely spread perception of the military as a primary education tool for young uneducated men. As Colonel Meriç explained to me:

*During my Lieutenancy and First Lieutenancy there were a lot of people who did not know how to read and write Turkish, how to eat and even how to use a toilet. We provided essential education for these people. We taught many people how to read and to write. We taught how to plant a tree. We taught tailoring. We taught various professions. In the old times there existed what we call “Ali schools” [schools for illiterate people] in the military. In these schools all the illiterate soldiers learned how to read and write. Now there are night schools where education by teacher servants and officials from the Ministry of Education is given. Furthermore, we even circumcise the soldiers there.*<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> From my interview with Özgür, 29.09.2011.

<sup>179</sup> From my interview with Colonel Tarshin Meriç, 11.01.2012.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

This (in this case self-)perception of the military is as well reflected in the following answers my interviewee Ekmel and Özgür gave me when asked about the function of compulsory military service:

***Ekmel:** I mean you don't become a professional soldier. [...] It doesn't make so much sense. [...] The only thing that I can see as a benefit is that they teach you a bit the culture and the discipline. [...] And they were telling us stories that they had people, for example, who came to the military who didn't know how to use a toilet. Usually from the South-East. And... So it's a bit of a... I mean they also use the military a bit in a way of a, sort of an education tool in that they put people from wherever they come. I mean, ok, most of the time it's from the eastern regions. But a bit, you know, to learn at least the basics. How to get yourself cleaned, how to do this and that. So I think that is interesting probably.<sup>181</sup>*

***Özgür:** I understood actually, when I was in army, that we have so many bad educated people. And you can understand that the army is a little bit like an educational place for them as well. [...] They can learn about life, training, army, cleaning, eating. I can tell you. They can... Because some of them live in a very small village. They don't know anything! They don't know how to shave, they don't know how to clean! And army is kind of a school in Turkey. They can teach them how they arrange their stuff. [...] How they can be the moderators of their own life.<sup>182</sup>*

By the time the *Mehmetçik* leaves the army he shall be well equipped with the basic knowledge and with all the major characteristics that constitute the 'real man/Turk' and future father: a strong 'masculine' body that is able to protect both his own and his 'national family', discipline in the sense of the ability to obey and carry out orders without questioning them (from the ones above him), the skill to enact authority himself (over the ones below him), love for the (patriarchal) 'national family' and its values, and, accordingly, a strong feeling of "homosocial desire"<sup>183</sup> adding up to this love.

I think that the last mentioned point, what I introduced above as the disciplinary mechanism of homosocial control and affective binding, deserves some further attention here as it is particularly crucial with regards to the (re)construction of masculinity in the context of military service. Flood for example argues, similar to many other scholars in the field of

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<sup>181</sup> From my interview with Ekmel, 27.10.2011.

<sup>182</sup> From my interview with Özgür, 29.09.2011.

<sup>183</sup> The term "homosocial desire" derives from Eve Sedgwick's groundbreaking analysis of (male) homosocialities; see Sedgwick, Eve (1985), "Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire", New York: Columbia University Press.

studies on men and masculinities, that homosociality – as it is imposed inter alia by the military – is quite closely linked to masculinity:

*“Men’s lives are said to be highly organized by relations between men. Men’s practice of gender has been theorized as a homosocial enactment, in which the performance of manhood is in front of, and granted by, other men.”*<sup>184</sup>

Hence, the military teaches men how to be a man as it exposes them, within a geographically very limited space, to both attachment as well as continuous concurrence and comparison with other men. Within the boundaries of the military unit these men have the possibility/are forced to mutually show each other how to act like a ‘real man’ while they evaluate the others’ performances and try themselves to prove their own masculinity under the critical gaze of their fellow comrades. While everybody is trying to perform the perfect man/soldier as it is defined and reproduced in the hegemonic militarist discourse on the ‘real Turk’ the *Mehmetçikler* themselves (re)produce this very discourse and thereby constantly (re)define normative masculinity within a common performative act. To put it in the words of Butler, the disciplinary practices military service comprises can be summarized as being part of a “repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being”.<sup>185</sup>

But this constant reproduction of masculinity through a set of regulatory (disciplinary) practices does not take place as an independent mechanism. Rather it works in mutual interdependence with the distinction from the ‘unmanly’, the effeminate, which it creates and (re)produces simultaneously. As Kimmel argues: “Historically and developmentally, masculinity has been defined as the [...] repudiation of femininity.”<sup>186</sup>

Any thinkable identity is always in the need of difference it can be defined in contrast to. To phrase this statement in a rhetoric question: How could a man ever act like a man without having an idea about what it means not to act like a man? Laclau phrases this (general) interdependence of categories of a constitutive outside the following way: “[E]ach element of the system has an identity only so far as it is different from the others: difference = identity.

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<sup>184</sup> Flood, Michael (2008), “Men, Sex, and Homosociality. How Bonds between Men Shape Their Sexual Relations with Women”, *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 10(3), p. 341.

<sup>185</sup> Butler (1990), p. 45.

<sup>186</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. (1994), “Masculinity as Homophobia. Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity”, in: Barret, Frank J. / Whitehead, Stephen M. (eds.): *The Masculinities Reader*, Cambridge: Polity, p. 273.



[...] Given that there is only system as there is radical exclusion, this split or ambivalence is constitutive to all systemic identity.”<sup>187</sup>

In other words, the reconstruction of masculinity is always in need of a ‘Constitutive Other’ that serves as an antithetic reference marker channeling it. This ‘Other’ for many feminist scholars is to be found in the ‘woman’ serving as “the reflector and guarantor of an apparent masculine subject position”.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, “women must become, must ‘be’ [...] precisely what men are not and, in their very lack, establish the essential function of men”.<sup>189</sup> Recalling what was said above in the theoretical part of this study, it was primary Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity that intervened here with the aim to broaden this idea of a ‘Constitutive Other’ by incorporating as well various subordinated types of masculinity into it. In her book *Masculinities* Connell distinguishes four different categories of masculinity: Hegemonic as the idealized form of masculinity; affirmative masculinity as it is enacted by the majority of men while they try to achieve hegemonic masculinity, following and thereby reproducing its normative power; marginalized masculinity, for example in the form of ethnic or religious minorities as well as people with certain disabilities who can by definition not enact hegemonic masculinity; and lastly subordinated masculinities – men that are perceived as unmanly, as effeminate, as quasi-female, constituting together with women the primary ‘Other’ for the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity: “Women and gay men become the ‘other’ against which heterosexual men project their identities.”<sup>190</sup>

I argue that in the context of military service in Turkey the exemption process of gay men from military service plays a crucial role for the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity. If military service is a ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood it essentially depends on the distinction of the ‘unmanly’. Within this given framework, it is the authority of the military doctors to undertake the essential distinction between those who are ‘fit’ to embark on their journey towards manhood and those who are ‘rotten’, i.e. useless as potential protectors of their ‘national family’. This exemption process comprises again a range of interesting regulatory practices discursively shaping masculine identity. Most importantly, it is the

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<sup>187</sup> Laclau, Ernesto (1996), “Emancipations”, London: Verso, p. 38.

<sup>188</sup> Butler (1990), p. 61.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Kimmel (1994), p. 280.

military doctors' "medical gaze" during the examination procedures that, in close interdependence with the performative acts enacted by the according conscripts themselves, expresses and reproduces a distinct *militarized medical discourse* on the 'real homosexual/rotten man'.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> See Biricik (2006).

## II.2 GETTING EXEMPTED, OR: HOW TO BECOME A ‘ROTTEN PERSON’

*Anyone who fails to perform his military service is of no use to himself, his family or his country.*

- Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi<sup>192</sup>

### II.2.1 The Exemption Process

As Turkey still does not acknowledge conscientious objection by any means, the only possible way to get exempted from mandatory conscription without having to fear any kind of legal persecution is to have one's mental or physical unfitness attested to during the military medical check-up. If, after having undergone the according health examinations, the military doctors come to the conclusion that a candidate is mentally or physically ineligible to perform military service, the person is then issued the infamous *Çürük Raporu* stating (and at the same time serving as a proof for) his unfitness to perform military service. In order to receive this 'ineligibility certificate' the according conscript first has to go through the same major steps as any other recruit. If during the medical check-up either the person himself declares or the doctor recognizes any grave physical or mental problems which question his eligibility to perform military service he is then usually sent to the according military hospital department for further medical examinations. My interviewee Onur, who aimed to avoid military service by any means and finally managed to get exempted because of a spine problem, describes his exemption process the following way (he at this point actually just went to the military department as he wanted to defer his service for another two years after having finished his undergraduate):

*When I went to local military office in Beykoz, which was a town, a district, I used to live in Istanbul, they said: "Well, you want to postpone it, but we have to take you to the military health check. So, if you have any health problems, you have to tell them." And I have a lot of problems. I mean, not serious ones, but small ones. So I made a list. I brought it to the paper just telling everything, you know, so maybe they'll give me the *Çürük Raporu*, the Rotten Report. I would like to be a rotten person. [...] I wrote everything and then, when I went to the military health check, they said: "Well you're writing this, but we have to send you to the military hospital for the check." [...] And when I went there I had to spend one month! I had to take holiday from my work because I had*

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<sup>192</sup> Quoted in Altınay (2004).

*to be there every day! They had so much bureaucracy over there! They asked to take a paper from there and then take it back to some other office and it always took like one day just because of the cue. [...] So... I managed to get my health report from there because I have a problem in my spine.*<sup>193</sup>

Quite similar works the exemption procedure for those who ‘suffer’ from a so called ‘psychosexual disorder’. However, some rather unusual methods are applied here in order to prove and at the same time measure the extent of the ‘sickness’: In case the doctor at the medical check-up suspects the recruit to suffer from a psychosexual disorder or the recruit declares himself that he does not want or does not feel eligible to perform military service due to his sexual or gender orientation he is as a first step sent to the military psychiatry department to consult one of the psychologically or psychiatrically trained military doctors. The further procedure then depends on three main factors:

- 1.) The person’s performance, i.e. how well the applicant manages to convince the military doctors of the extent of the ‘disorder’.
- 2.) The actual state of the military health regulation.<sup>194</sup>
- 3.) The according military hospital the private visits as the usual procedures seem to differ strongly between various military hospitals.<sup>195</sup>

Quite apparently, the option to get exempted because of a ‘psychosexual disorder’ goes along with some difficulties from the military’s point of view. The first question that immediately arises in this context is: How can someone prove his homosexuality? This question at the same time hints at a risk the military is very likely to face, namely that people just claim they are homosexual in order to avoid to get inducted. Correspondingly, military authorities have shown quite an impressive creativity when it comes to the question of how to be sure that someone is not only a bit (or even not at all), but actually ‘diseased’, i.e. ‘extremely

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<sup>193</sup> From my interview with Onur, 26.09.2011.

<sup>194</sup> Which, according to Bricik (2006, p. 46), is subject to regular changes.

<sup>195</sup> Many people I talked to about the issue agreed on that fact. It seems like especially in the urban centers of Turkey, i.e. in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara the examination procedure comprises (at least nowadays) less harassment than it is the case in the more rural areas. But as there do not exist any publicly accessible statistics on the issue, it is by now impossible to make any statement about this based on empirical evidence.

homosexual'.<sup>196</sup> The according further examination methods military doctors have come up with so far to diagnose and measure someone's homosexuality include<sup>197</sup>:

a) *Personality Tests*

The conscript may be asked to perform various personality tests, most commonly the MMPI, and the HTP-Test.<sup>198</sup>

b) *Photos or videos taken during sexual intercourse*

The practice that probably contributed more than anything else to the rise in popularity of the 'rotten report' issue: asking the conscripts to provide film footage or photographs taken during sexual intercourse. These have to display the conscript in the "passive/receiving" (anoreceptive) position during anal sexual intercourse with another man. Both the conscripts' face and anus must be clearly visible on the picture.

c) *Photos or videos taken while wearing women clothes in public places*

As the Turkish military has received increasingly bad press for the aforementioned practice to ask for pictures taken during sexual intercourse some conscripts get now asked instead to prove homosexuality by providing pictures displaying them in women dresses worn in public places.

d) *The 'relative/forced come-out proof'*

A further (rather new) practice that is used instead of b) is to ask the conscript to bring a close relative (father/mother, brother/sister) to the military hospital who then has to testify the conscript's homosexuality.

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<sup>196</sup> See Biricik (2006).

<sup>197</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 46-49; Başaran (2007); see also Biricik, Alp (2009), "Rotten report and reconstructing hegemonic masculinity in Turkey", in: Çınar, Özgür Heval / Üsterci, Coşkun, *Conscientious Objection. Resisting Militarized Society*, London/New York: Zed Books, p. 113; Zalewski, Piotr (2010), "Do Ask, Must Tell. Turkey's military doesn't just discriminate against gays, it humiliates them", *Foreign Policy*, 04.12.2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/03/do\\_ask\\_must\\_tell](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/03/do_ask_must_tell), [28.05.2012].

<sup>198</sup> The MMPI is a standardized psychological personality test comprising of a set of 566 questions; during the HTP-Test on the other hand the candidate is asked to draw a house, a tree and a person, and then to answer a set of questions concerning the picture.

e) *Rectal Examination*

This medical examination method is based on the belief that repeated anal intercourse would leave to a gradual deformation of the anus' muscles in the sense that the person loses the ability to contract them. Hence, in order to examine whether the applicant regularly practices anal intercourse (as the 'passive' part) a military doctor would insert his finger into the applicants anus and ask him to 'squeeze'.

f) *Hospital Stay*

The conscript may be asked to stay for a period of up to a few weeks in the military psychiatric department under close observation of the military doctors. This measure is usually imposed in those cases where a clear decision could not be reached, even after the application of various further examination procedures.

Yağmur, a transsexual who received her *Çürük Raporu* in Istanbul, describes her examination procedure the following way:

*When I went to GATA beneath the psychiatry building there were lots of people who were gays, who were transsexuals, or who had mental disorders, like murderers, or like... Any kind of people! Who cut themselves or who... Schizophrenia, suicides. We were just altogether in the same place. We were waiting for the doctor there. Then, one by one, you see the doctor. Then they give you an appointment for the next week. In that appointment they make a test with you, the Minnesota Personality Test [MMPI]. 560 questions. The answers are only 'yes' or 'no' questions. Questions are just always the same rephrased. [...] For example: Do you like men? Do you believe in god?<sup>199</sup>*

In addition to the MMPI Yağmur was as well asked to do the HPT-Test. After having completed both tests she got an appointment for a further interview in which she had to go through a further round of questions posed to her by a group of military doctors. In a last step she had to come back for a final rendezvous with a committee of high ranked military doctors who then announced the outcome of the whole process. Yağmur:

*I went back there [to GATA], all the doctors were sitting in front of me and I came inside. The doctors started to ask me questions: "Do you dress always like this?" "Sometimes a bit more décolleté", I said. "What is your job?", they said. "I make tattoos", I said. Then:*

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<sup>199</sup> From my Interview with Yağmur, 23.09.2011.

*"What do you think about the military?" I said: "Nothing." The Doctor said: "There must be something." I said: "A place full of men." He said: "Do you see your parents?" I said: "No." Normally I see them, but when I say: "Yes I do, I see them", then they want me to bring one of them [the 'relative/forced come-out proof'] and the process gets longer and longer. I said: "No". After that it was over and I got another appointment. [...] There are now fifteen or more doctors with a higher status in the military hierarchy. So they said to me: "You are sick so you won't make your military service." Then they gave me a document confirming this. Then you have to take that document to the Golden Horn place [Yağmur's draft office], today I did that. I brought the document there, there were many other documents they had. They signed it and wrote that they don't reject the final diagnosis as a psychosexual disorder: "In the times of war and peace, you cannot do military service." And I agreed as well and it was over, finished.<sup>200</sup>*

Yağmur was lucky enough that her exemption process was rather short and she got through it without much hassle although, of course, also she perceived the whole procedure as "humiliating".<sup>201</sup>

Gürkan on the other hand, who received his Çürük Raporu in 1999 in Izmir, had to go through an even more humiliating process. After having completed both the MMPI and the HPT-Test he was asked by the doctor to provide pictorial material within one week proving his homosexuality. Gürkan said:

*With the picture it was a bit difficult. The face had to be recognizable as well as the penis and the ass. To put all this into a square was a bit complicated. Twice I got cramps because of the position. [...] I also got humiliated at the selection, before they announce it [the final diagnosis]. There are about 12 military people, big ones, with uniforms and everything. [...] They all looked one by one at the pictures and I had to bring ten pictures, ten different positions there. This is the difficulty of course, but I managed to do it. And at every single picture they looked and compared it with me. I was standing in the middle. And then they asked me questions. For example which positions I like and if I use this position they see regularly. Questions like that.<sup>202</sup>*

In those cases where the military doctors cannot reach a decision, i.e. where the extent of the applicant's 'disorder' is not as all encompassing as to make him apparently ineligible for military service the final diagnosis can be postponed for a year. This means that the conscript gets temporarily exempted for a year after which he has to come back to the military hospital

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> From my Interview with Gürkan, 13.06.2011.

to undergo the same procedure again. In an article on the issue that appeared in 2010 in the US magazine *Foreign Policy* it says:

*But even if authorities don't demand photographs, the process can be harrowing. V., in his early 30s, had to spend weeks at four military psychiatric hospitals before he could gain an exemption - this, over the space of three years. "At the first hospital, despite the fact I told them I was gay, I was declared eligible for service," he told me at an Istanbul bar. "At the second, I was declared ineligible. At the third, the psychiatrist in charge acknowledged I was gay, but 'not effeminate enough' to receive an ineligibility report. Still, to help me out, he gave me a report that said I was neurotic." The fourth hospital was the worst. "I stayed there for almost two weeks straight, without any possibility of leaving," says V. One of the doctors, a surgeon, decided to subject V. to a rectal examination. "The guy put his finger in my ass to check for any deformations," says V. "'Ooh, it's very tight,' he joked. 'You'll be a very good soldier.' His finger was still inside." It was only after the military doctors requested testimony from a family member - V.'s sister confirmed that he had been a homosexual as long as she could remember - that V. was released and declared unfit for service.<sup>203</sup>*

According to the information gathered during my field research the practices to ask the conscript to prove for pictures taken during anoreceptive intercourse as well as the practice to conduct a rectal examination have become much less common during recent years, so that by now they gradually seem to get replaced by what I named above the ‘relative/ forced come-out proof’ and, secondly, by asking for pictures depicting the person wearing women clothes in public spaces.<sup>204</sup> The major reason for this change is, most probably, to be found in the immense rise in media (and slowly also academic) attention the whole issue has experienced during the last approximately ten years. After the issue got picked up by various media outlets from Turkey as well as from abroad, inter alia by the popular German magazine *Der Spiegel* in its article “Pornos für den General”<sup>205</sup> (Porn for the General), the topic finally even made its way on the agenda of Turkey’s association process with the EU. As the European Commission “Progress Report” from 2011 critically states:

*The Turkish armed forces have still a health regulation which defines homosexuality as a ‘psychosexual’ illness and declares homosexuals unfit for military service. Conscripts who*

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<sup>203</sup> Zalewski (2010).

<sup>204</sup> See my Interview with Özgür, 29.09.2011, and my interview with Professor Kürşad Kahramanoğlu, 28.09.2011.

<sup>205</sup> Popp, Maximilian (2010), “Pornos für den General”, *DER SPIEGEL*, 44/2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,726903,00.html> [28.05.2012].



*declare their homosexuality have to provide photographic proof. Some have had to undergo humiliating medical examinations.*<sup>206</sup>

However, I argue that this change in practice so far has not had any major impact on the general discourse it expresses (although, of course, it makes quite a difference for the applicants themselves what kind of humiliating procedures they have to go through). What for our undertaking seems to be most crucial here, a point to which I will now turn the attention to in the following subsection, is the unchanged authority – on the basis of the abovementioned health regulation which defines homosexuality as a ‘psychosexual disorder’ – of the military doctors to draw the line between the ‘fit’ and the ‘rotten’ and thereby, to bring my central hypothesis back into play, to (re)produce a distinct militarized medical discourse on the ‘homosexual body’ – a concept that finds its primary function as a ‘Constitutive Other’ for the construction of hegemonic masculinity. The following subsection will now set the focus on this authority of the military doctors and their “medical gaze”.

## **II.2.2 The Authority of the Military Doctors**

The unholy authority to draw the demarcation line between the ‘fit’ and the ‘rotten’, to define who is to be considered as a ‘rotten person’ and, accordingly, ineligible to perform military service, lies exclusively in the hands of those responsible for the medical examinations of the conscripts’ ‘fitness’: the military doctors. It is up to their decision to, within a given legal and ‘scientific’ framework, distinguish between the one who is to be seen as ‘healthy’ enough to become a defender of the ‘national family’ and its ‘womenandchildren’ and the one who is to be expelled as an inferior second-class citizen, a ‘rotten’ man.<sup>207</sup> I argue that the exemption process, thus, can be described as a distinct power-knowledge relation as it applies the ‘scientific knowledge’ that is incorporated within the medical doctors’ “medical gaze” on the conscripts’ bodies and attributes them to a range of medical categories. In other words, the discursive production of the ‘homosexual body’ is inextricably linked to this institutionalized

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<sup>206</sup> COM (2011), “Turkey 2011 Progress Report”, Brussels 12.10.2011, SEC(2011) 12101 final, p. 36.

<sup>207</sup> Or, as Gürkan in Ulrike Böhnisch’s documentary “Çürük Raporu – The Pink Report“ states, in the case of being a homosexual one even gets downgraded to a “third class man”: “It is also not so easy to say: ‘I’m not going to the military because I’m gay.’ Then you are not first class, but second class man – or even third class man. Because when you’re gay, you are second class anyways, and when you then also can’t go to the military... It can be that, perhaps there even exists a third class man” [“Es ist auch nicht so einfach zu sagen: “Weil ich schwul bin, gehe ich nicht ins Militär.” Dann ist man nicht erste Klasse, sondern zweite Klasse Mann - oder dritte Klasse Mann. Weil man schwul ist, dann ist sowieso zweite Klasse und wenn man auch nicht ins Militär war, kann ja sein, dass ne dritte Klasse Mann gilt.”].

“gaze” of the military doctors. And it begins right in the moment when the conscripts show up at the first medical examination. A procedure Emir describes as follows:

*We came into a room, like 50 people. We're getting naked. But, we had our boxers, you know. Just our boxers. They look at us, they look at our tattoos. If we had tattoos they wrote it on a paper. I had one, so they wrote it. They look at our heartbeat, eye, ear. [...] So, I passed this exam. There isn't any problem with me.*<sup>208</sup>

What Emir pointedly terms as an “exam” here, the medical examination procedures that the conscription process comprises of, is in the eyes of the individual conscript a consecutive series of tests of the proper functioning of his (male) body. In this situation the conscripts are not only exposed to the doctors’ “medical gaze” but at the same time to the critical views of their fellow conscripts. Thus, the medical examination is a moment where the conscripts get forced into a mechanism of masculine concurrence while their bodies get compared to each other by both the doctors as well as themselves. As Ahlbäck argues:

*Yet hardly anywhere else [is] such a systematic examination and corporeal comparison of young men's bodies made, accompanied by a categorical sorting strongly associated with masculine pride or shame over one's own body. The physical examination at the call-up often stands out in the memories of military service as a kind of test of manhood and appears to have left behind strong images in memory.*<sup>209</sup>

Since it depends on the conscripts’ performance during the “exam” if he will be allowed to enter the ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood the military medical check-up at the same time has to be viewed upon as an “examination of one’s masculinity”,<sup>210</sup> as a first obstacle a man has to take on the way of becoming a ‘real man’.<sup>211</sup> Accordingly, many draftees fear to fail the “exam” as this statement given by one of Pinar Selek’s interviewees shows:

*When I went to the medical examinations I had problems with my weight. With my weight! At that time I just weighed around 49 kilograms. Although apart from that I was perfectly healthy they did not let me join the army. [...] “But I want to go to the army”, I said. They sent me to a hospital. After I got examined there, they came to the conclusion: “Is*

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<sup>208</sup> From my Interview with Emir, 26.09.2011.

<sup>209</sup> Ahlbäck, Anders (2010), “Soldiering and the Making of Finnish Manhood. Conscription and Masculinity in Interwar Finland, 1918–1939”, Doctoral Thesis submitted to Åbo Akademi University, Åbo, p. 235.

<sup>210</sup> [“Untersuchung der eigenen Männlichkeit”] Selek (2010), p. 42.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

*eligible”. You should have seen me, how happy I was! [...] All of my friends went to the army and I should not be allowed to do so...*<sup>212</sup>

Within the medical examination the conscripts are exposed to the situation that the military doctors – as they apply their ‘medical’ knowledge on the candidates’ bodies – evaluate their fitness to perform military service, constituting at the same time an evaluation of their fitness to be/become a man. Within this examination procedure the military doctors’ authority is expressed in their power to assign the conscripts to a range of ‘scientific’ categories based on their knowledge. Thus, the examination is to be regarded as, to say it with Foucault, “a whole mechanism that link[s] to a certain type of the formation of knowledge a certain form of the exercise of power”.<sup>213</sup> Recalling the above introduced definition of power as a productive force the examination procedures are to be viewed upon as a primary source for the production of varying types of male bodies. During the medical examination the ‘scientific’ knowledge of the military doctors enters into a dialogue with the conscripts’ bodies, reproducing both knowledge and, thereby, ‘truth’ about these various types of ‘rotten’ or ‘fit’ bodies. Following Foucault a bit further this means that the primary importance of the military medical examination is its function to transform the person into an individual “case”. A case whose features and (dis)abilities become measured and valued and, according to a distinct “comparative system”, the case then becomes allocated to a diachronically fixed, but historically changeable set of categories of the human body (and mind). Foucault:

*The case [...] is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc.*<sup>214</sup>

It is the military doctors’ mission/authority as the ‘examiner’ at this point that, during the whole process from the first standardized medical check-up over the psychological tests until the final questioning round in front of the military doctor’s committee, to measure the level of (masculine) ‘fitness’ of the candidates, i.e. to decide who is to be categorized how. In other words, while every individual is transformed into a case in the moment of the entry to the

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<sup>212</sup> [“Als ich zur Musterung ging, hatte ich Probleme mit meinem Gewicht. Mit meinem Gewicht! Ich habe damals so um die 49 Kilo gewogen. Obwohl ich ansonsten Kerngesund war, haben sie mich nicht zur Armee gelassen. [...] ‘Ich will aber zur Arme gehen’, habe ich gesagt. Sie haben mich in ein Krankenhaus geschickt. Nachdem man mich dort untersucht hatte, befand man: ‘Ist tauglich’. Du hättest sehen sollen, wie ich mich da gefreut habe! [...] Alle meine Freunde gingen ja zur Arme und ich sollte das nicht dürfen...”] Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Foucault (1977), p. 187.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

examination procedure the authority of the military doctors is to produce the ‘truth’ about them.

However, there is a difference between the production of medical and psychiatric ‘truth’ as “medicine certainly has a much more solid scientific armature than psychiatry”.<sup>215</sup> While the fact that someone is declared ineligible as he exceeds (or deceeds) the upper (or lower) body-mass-index limitations, as they are laid down in the military’s health regulation, is not up to interpretation in any way. While this, of course, does not change the fact that someone gets assigned to the category ‘unfit’, i.e. becomes discursively categorized as a ‘rotten body’, it still expresses a very different power-knowledge relation as it is the case for the more tricky mental ‘diseases’. Still, to deal just a bit longer with the question of ‘physical disorders’, also these seemingly fixed categories are not to be viewed upon as unchangeable or impossible to manipulate. For example, the Turkish military’s medical experts just recently decided to change the health regulation in order to deal with the problem of people cutting their forefinger in order to avoid induction – a problem that occurred mainly in the eastern regions of Turkey where the number of Kurdish people, who more often seem to reject the idea of serving in the Turkish military, is particularly high. As Colonel Meriç explains:

*The health directive is prepared by the experts in the military hospitals. Let’s say I have a crippled arm. Then the Internal Medicine Department has the right to issue the Çürük Raporu with the approval of the whole [military doctors] committee. In the past, in the eastern parts of Turkey, some people were cutting off their forefinger, the trigger finger, in order to receive the Çürük Raporu. Lately, this has been regulated by a new law. People who don’t have a forefinger are not accepted as being disabled. So these people are then performing their military service at the office.*<sup>216</sup>

A further way for people who reject the idea of becoming forcefully incorporated into the *erkeklik laboratuvarı* is to get exempted from military service by exceeding the abovementioned body-mass-index limitations. In her interview-based book *Mehmet’s Buch. Türkische Soldaten berichten über ihren Kampf gegen kurdische Guerillas* (Mehmet’s Book. Turkish Soldiers tell about their Fight against Kurdish Guerilla) journalist Nadire Mater presents one of these cases:

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<sup>215</sup> Foucault, Michel (1980), “Truth and Power”, in: id., *Power/Knowledge*, Essex: Harvester, p. 109.

<sup>216</sup> From my interview with Colonel Tahsin Meriç, 11.01.2012; the problem of people cutting their forefinger is also addressed in a campaigning video produced by, among others, the Turkey-based human rights organization İHD (*İnsan Hakları Derneği* / Human Rights Association), see İHD et al. (2011), “Vicdani Ret – Kendine Bozma, Sistemi Boz!” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7PDVp4R7DM> [28.05.2012].

*'I get a certificate that I'm not eligible and then I don't have to go to the military', I told myself. [...] But how could I manage it? I found all those laws and regulation that are connected to military service and started to read them line per line. According to the law I needed to have some kind of flaw in order not to go. [...] At a height of 1,72m and a weight of 45kg you could get a certificate that you are ineligible. [...] This, of course, was not easy. I didn't touch any bread, rice, pasta, pastry, just nothing. I only ate fruits and the broth of the food I was given. Without bread and rice I lost weight until 46kg. After I had talked openly to the doctor [he] finally [...] wrote '45' although it was 46kg. In Gülhane they gave me a certificate that I'm not eligible.<sup>217</sup>*

While these extreme cases of self-mutilation forcefully express the power of “body politics” the military is able to exercise over the human body (while at the same time standing exemplary for the willpower of people who reject and, hence, try to resist the hegemonic militarist discourse on masculinity) they constitute rather rare exceptions. On the other hand it is problem that is both more common and more difficult to handle for the military doctors to find out the ‘truth’ about those who claim to suffer from a ‘psychosexual disorder’. Quite apparently, the possibility exists that even after a serious of examinations some doubts remain whether the candidate is really ‘extremely’ homosexual or perhaps just ‘on the edge’ – so that he could still perform his service as long as he hides his ‘sickness’ – or even a ‘normal’ guy who is just pretending. Obviously a well-founded fear as the following considerations by my interviewee Onur indicate:

*When I was there [in the military hospital], when I first went there, I thought of acting a bisexual. At first I thought of acting a gay, but then I found acting bisexual is closer to me, you know. I'm not a gay, but I'm a heterosexual and bisexual is something in the middle so maybe I can act like that.<sup>218</sup>*

The aim to expel ‘disordered’ masculinity from the *erkeklik laboratuari* in order to secure the proper growing of the *Mehmetçikler* into ‘real men/soldiers/Turks’ causes a dilemma – namely the inevitable necessity to ensure whether someone is ‘really’ disorderedly gay. So in

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<sup>217</sup> [“Ich kriege ein Attest, dass ich nicht tauglich bin, und dann muss ich nicht zum Militär’, setzte ich mir in den Kopf. [...] Wie konnte ich das nur anstellen? Ich fand die ganzen gesetzte und Regelungen, die mit dem Militärdienst zusammenhängen, und fing an, sie Zeile für Zeile durchzugehen. Vor dem Gesetz musste ich irgendeinen Makel haben, damit ich nicht hin musste. [...] Bei einer Größe von 1,72m und einem Gewicht von 45kg konnte man ja ein Attest kriegen, dass man untauglich sei. [...] Das war natürlich nicht leicht. Ich rührte kein Brot an, kein *Pilav*, keine Nudeln, kein Gebäck, einfach nichts. Ich aß nur Obst und löffelt die Brühe des Essens, das man mir gab. Ohne Brot und *Pilav* sank mein Gewicht auf 46kg. Nachdem ich offen mit dem Arzt geredet hatte schrieb [...] ‘45’, obwohl es 46kg waren. In Gülhane gab man mir ein Attest, dass ich nicht tauglich sei”] Mater (2001), pp. 49-51.

<sup>218</sup> From my interview with Onur, 26.09.2011.

order to remove any doubts the military doctors have, as mentioned before, the authority to force the conscript to spend up to a few weeks in the military psychiatry for intense psychiatric observation. Together with the 'knowledge' about homosexuals that is gathered during the further examination procedures (the first consultation with the psychiatrist, the various psychological tests, the pictures and 'medical' examinations on the candidate's body) this process of confining the conscripts into the "Panopticum" of the military medical psychiatry is a final crucial step within the process of the military's "body politics". Under the military doctors' "authoritative gaze" the conscripts, knowing the "rules of the game", i.e. being equipped with the knowledge about the military doctors' 'scientific' categories, are expected to act the 'real homosexual'. Hence, the according candidates look to "regulate [their] bodies in the knowledge and presence of the authoritative gaze".<sup>219</sup> In other words, the knowledge/truth about the 'fit' (male) and, in particular, about the 'rotten' (unmanly) body that is (re)produced within the whole examination procedures under the "medical gaze" of the military doctors is part of a communication process between the gazed at candidate and the gazing doctors. The following (final) subsection will now set the focus on this process of "patriarchal bargaining" and its consequences for the discursive construction of hegemonic masculinity and, in mutual interdependence, the effeminate/homosexual 'rotten body'.

### **II.2.3 Hegemonic Masculinity, Effeminacy, and the 'Rotten Body'**

The question whether a candidate is ineligible for military service due to a 'psychosexual disorder' is not a question of the person's sexual orientation. Rather the diagnosis depends on the capability of the conscript to perform the 'extreme', i.e. the 'diseased' homosexual.<sup>220</sup> As Bricik argues: "A patriarchal bargain is taking place at the military hospitals and individuals have devised certain strategies in order to obtain a report and deal with these 'medical' methods reminiscent of the early nineteenth century."<sup>221</sup> What Bricik calls a "patriarchal bargain", drawing on a theoretical concept from feminist scholar Deniz Kandiyoti, refers to a range of strategies women (read also: subordinated men) have developed in order to "maximize security and optimize life options [...] in the face of oppression".<sup>222</sup> In our case this means that the applicants, in order not to get inducted into the *erkeklik laboratuvarı* where

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<sup>219</sup> Whitehead, Stephen M. (2002), "Men and Masculinities", Cambridge: Polity, p. 195.

<sup>220</sup> See Bricik (2006).

<sup>221</sup> Bricik (2009), p. 112.

<sup>222</sup> Kandiyoti, Deniz (1988), "Bargaining with Patriarchy", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 2(3), p. 274.

they either have to hide their gender identity/sexual orientation or are very likely to be exposed to discrimination, homophobia, and in some cases also physical violence, try to adjust to the scurrile image of the ‘extreme homosexual’ as it is reflected in the militarist discourse on the ‘homosexual body’. The according conscripts bargain with patriarchy in the sense that they, while performing ‘the homosexual’, agree to a humiliating procedure within which they get socially stigmatized as ‘rotten’ – as suffering from a ‘psychosexual disease’ that is “apparent in their whole life” – in order to avoid to be exposed to the military’s concentrated and, for them, discriminatory mechanism of masculine discipline. The perception of homosexuality that is discursively (re)constructed within the doctors’ “straight mind[s]”<sup>223</sup> during this bargaining process is reflected in the following answer Yağmur gave me, when asked why she managed to get exempted without much hassle:

*Because I was there physically like a woman. They saw me and they said immediately: "Yes, you can't do the military service." But I know some other friends, they are more masculine than me, and they wanted from them cross-dressed photos taken in public places. And even if they brought those pictures, they postponed their process for one year and then they had to go again. If you are that kind of feminine like me, even if I begged them "take me to the military!" they won't let me in because of my physical appearance.*<sup>224</sup>

In my interview with university professor and human rights activist Kürşad Kahramanoğlu (who also used to be the general director of ILGA between 1999 and 2006 and is one of the leading experts on LGBT related questions in Turkey) he explained the underlying concept of gayness the following way:

*Because, you see, the Turkish mentality you have to be "bottom" to actually be considered homosexual. If you're the "top" that doesn't make you gay. [...] The gay in the mentality of these people doesn't mean a person who prefers to have sex with his own sex, but it means that the person who is actually effeminate.*<sup>225</sup>

Hence, within the framework of this hegemonic discourse on homosexuality gayness is not to be seen as having anything to do with a sexual attraction of men towards men, but is a projection surface for everything expelled from the normative concept of hegemonic masculinity. As much as the ‘real man’ shall be equipped with all characteristics of

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<sup>223</sup> Wittig, Monique (1992), “The Straight Mind”, in: id., “The Straight Mind and Other Essays”, Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

<sup>224</sup> From my Interview with Yağmur, 23.09.2011.

<sup>225</sup> From my interview with Professor Kürşad Kahramanoğlu, 28.09.2011.

masculinity, the caricatural concept of the ‘real gay’, the ‘disordered’ gay, comprises all the features that are associated with femininity: passivity, emotionality, both physical and mental weakness (read also: irrationality) etc. Under the military doctors’ “medical gaze” even their outer appearance needs to resemble ‘female features’. Özgür:

*Now my friend, I'm telling you his story: He was living with his partner for almost seven or eight years. And when he was like thirty he wanted to take this report [Çürük Raporu]. [...] And his sister went to the army hospital with him. And she approved the situation [the ‘relative/forced come-out proof’]. But after that they were asking questions like: "Why you don't shave your legs, why you don't shave your body?"<sup>226</sup>*

As it is expressed very obviously in the fact that in order to get exempted the according candidates get asked for pictures showing them wearing women clothes in public or during anoreceptive anal intercourse, the image of the ‘real gay’ as it is discursively reproduced during the military medical examination is in reality an image of the ‘disorderly effeminate’ man. As most of the candidates are very aware of the “rules of the game”, they try their best to perform accordingly. Beginning with the psychological test they adopt to the scurrile image of the ‘real gay’. Gürkan:

*I had to draw a picture, a house. I had forty-five minutes, so I used all the colors I had. It was a colorful picture. A shame that I didn't get it. I had put it on my wall. A gay picture. I also had to answer 300 questions. A test. And of course it included some very irritating and strange questions. But I also had a lot of fun during that time. I should for example mark with a cross which singer, female singer, I could imagine to be my idol. There were also some names mentioned: Ajda Pekkan, Sezen Aksu, Emel Sayın. I had to choose one and I had to think: "If I was a woman then I would choose exactly this one."<sup>227</sup>*

This process of performing the ‘real gay’ is not reduced to the attempt to adapt to/fit into the military medical discourse through an according performance during the psychological tests, but extends to a remodeling of the conscripts’ bodies with the aim to ‘feminize’ them. Gürkan: “I had earrings in both ears. At that time I was wearing extra big earrings because I thought the picture has to fit.”<sup>228</sup> In line with Butler’s arguments on gender as a repetition of performative acts, one can argue here that the examination procedures constitute a regulatory

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<sup>226</sup> From my interview with Özgür, 29.09.2011 (his friend finally did not manage to receive the *Çürük Raporu* and had to go to the military).

<sup>227</sup> From my interview with Gürkan, 13.06.2011.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.



practice that discursively/performatively constructs the ‘fit’ and, as a ‘Constitutive Other’, the ‘rotten’ within the framework of the “heterosexual matrix”. Beginning with the statement “I am gay” at the first standardized military medical check-up over the repeated consultation with military psychiatrists to the final diagnosis “you have a psychosexual disorder” the whole examination/exemption procedure consists of speech acts inscribing a distinct identity into the “cased” conscripts. During this process it seems like even the candidates themselves can feel the power of the hegemonic discourse that inscribes the stigma ‘rotten’ onto their body. Yağmur: “In this process I felt that they made me feel like a sick person. Like psychologically they made me feel sick! They made me feel like that!”<sup>229</sup>

Before attending the military medical examination those conscripts who consider getting the *Çürük Raporu* evaluate their chances to perform the effeminate ‘real gay’. Accordingly, those men I talked to who did not chose to go for this option, although they described themselves as ‘gay’, did so inter alia because they did not feel be able to enact a convincing performance and, therefore, decided to hide their sexual orientation. As Faruk said:

*As far as I know the process is like they have to believe that you're that way. And I could do nothing to make them believe. I couldn't wear like flamboyantly dress. Or the videos, pictures, this stuff they are allegedly asking, I don't know.*<sup>230</sup>

Hence, within the matrix of the hegemonic militarist discourse on homosexuality the question who is homosexual or not is not be answered by the conscripts themselves, but it is within the hands of the military doctors to categorize who is (and what is) homosexuality and thereby produce the ‘real homosexuals’. As Butler argues in her analysis of the US military’s approach vis-à-vis homosexuality: “A homosexual is one whose definition is to be left to others, one who is denied the act of self-definition with respect to his or her sexuality, one whose self-denial is a prerequisite for military service.”<sup>231</sup>

Similar to most state institutions the military is a place that has been and remains dominated by men and, at the same time, constitutes a primary organization in which

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<sup>229</sup> From my interview with Yağmur, 23.09.2011.

<sup>230</sup> From my interview with Faruk, 27.09.2011; there are, of course, further reasons not to try to get exempted on the basis of a ‘psychosexual disorder’: Fear of social exclusion, including the impossibility to find a job, fear of violence from their surroundings (family, neighbors etc.), or the rejection to get stigmatized as being ‘sick’ because of their sexual orientation. For example, as Ekmel explained: “If they will ask me to sign something stating that I’m ill because I’m gay and that’s the reason why I would like to be exempted from the military service, I will not sign that document because I don’t believe in that.” (From my interview with Ekmel, 27.10.2011).

<sup>231</sup> Butler, Judith (1997), “Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative”, New York: Routledge, p. 105.

hegemonic masculinity is (re)constructed. Hence, it can look back on a long tradition of vigorously rejecting the idea of the entry of anything suspected to be ‘unmanly’.<sup>232</sup> In line with this assessment Butler argues that excluding gay men from military service is in the first place “symptomatic of a paranoia that forms the possibility of military citizenship”.<sup>233</sup> Hence, the vigorous demarcation from the ‘homosexual’, as it is most symbolically expressed with the stigmatization of gays as ‘rotten’, serves the primary function to keep a distinct both social and gender order in place. An order that is linked to a militarist discourse on the ‘real Turk/man’ as much as it is, in mutual interdependence to each other, linked to a militarist discourse on ‘the homosexual/rotten/unmanly’. Within this framework the question, to phrase it with Nagel, “why the men in military and paramilitary institutions – men concerned with manly demeanour and strength of character – [seem] so agitated and afraid of the entry [...] of homosexuals into military institutions and organizations?”,<sup>234</sup> finds its most simple answer:

*This unseemly, sometimes hysterical resistance to a diversity that clearly exists outside military boundaries makes more sense when it is understood that these men are not only defining tradition but are defending a particular racial, gendered and sexual conception of self: a white, male, heterosexual notion of masculine identity loaded with all the burdens and privileges that go along with hegemonic masculinity.*<sup>235</sup>

Similarly, Kimmel – in his enlightening analysis of the interdependence of masculinity and homophobia – comes to the conclusion that the exclusion and defamation of gay men is in the first place to be regarded as an expression of men’s fear to be considered unmanly and, thus, at the same time an attempt to defend their masculinity. From this point of view homophobia does not express any ‘actual’ resentment against homosexuals, but rather serves as a “central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood”.<sup>236</sup> Homophobia as well as the exclusion of homosexuals from the military is a repetition of performative acts that aim at

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<sup>232</sup> A circumstance which gets reflected in the fact that the demand for a heterogeneity of both military and state institutions has to be regarded as one of the leitmotifs of suppressed groups’ fight against patriarchy and inequality.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p 108.

<sup>234</sup> Nagel (1998), 258.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.; obviously enough, Nagel refers here to the situation in the United States. However, the statement is correct for most armies throughout the world.

<sup>236</sup> Kimmel (1994), p. 277.

affirming men's manhood. The collective forceful and repeated demarcation from the mere imagination to be somehow linked to the 'effeminate man' is "a way of proving the unprovable – that one is fully manly".<sup>237</sup> No doubts must arise that we are dealing here with 'real men'.

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

## CONCLUSION

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It was the primary aim of this thesis to contribute to research on the interplay between modern disciplinary institutions and the constitution of gender identity, using the (re)construction of both hegemonic and subordinated masculinity in the context of compulsory military service in Turkey as an exemplifier. I analyzed how the militarist discourse on the ideal citizen (read: real Turk) evolved during the age of Turkish nationalism, a concept inextricably linking the terms soldier/man/Turk. Furthermore, it was shown how this hegemonic discourse is reproduced both within the institution of military service itself – through the disciplining/shaping of ‘boys’ to ‘real men/soldiers/Turks’ – as well as within the exemption procedures from military service – through the discursive construction of the ‘real homosexual/effeminate/rotten’ during the military medical examinations. In the framework of this discourse compulsory military service is perceived of as an inevitable ‘rite of passage’ towards manhood and, therefore, full citizenship – automatically reducing those who are exempted from it to second-class citizens.

During the first chapter it was my aim to initially conceptualize gender identity as not to be regarded a somehow naturally given individual-identity, but rather that identity gets assigned to subjects as the outcome of social practice and discourse. I introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity to show how our gender regime is ordered by a set of hierarchically structured gender identities, the hierarchy between them getting, among others, defined at the conjunctions between patriarchal hegemonic militarist and nationalist discourses. As a next step I traced how within the narrations of Turkish nationalism a distinct notion of idealized citizenship, closely connected to the notion of hegemonic masculinity, evolved: as showed in the second section of chapter I, a ‘good Turk’ is to be of Muslim faith and ‘Turkish ethnicity’, the configuration baseline for being considered as a native/friend, as ‘us’. Everybody else is assigned to the opposite side, the ‘they’, as the most basic categories of every nationalist ideology. Within the framework of this opposition both the ‘woman’ and the ‘man’ become categorized, get assigned to distinct roles: while women find their fixed place within patriarchal nationalist discourses as the reproducers of the nation, men are defined as its defender. A process that in the case of Turkey was closely linked to a discursive redefinition of the position of the military within society, resulting in what I have termed the “legitimizing myth of the *asker ulus*”.

In the second chapter I first analyzed how, within the given framework of this hegemonic discourse on citizenship, military service comprises a set of regulatory practices disciplining boys to men. But while military service is defined as an inevitable ‘rite of passage’ for any man in order to become a ‘real man’ and, thus, a defender of the ‘national family’, the ‘effeminate man’ does not fit into the categories of this discourse. Although he might fit into the category of the ‘Turk’ at first sight (being of Muslim faith/Turkish ethnicity), he at same time undermines it as he breaks through the binary system of “compulsory heterosexuality”. He becomes the stranger. In an attempt to determine the stranger’s “undetermination”<sup>238</sup> the hegemonic militarist discourse categorizes him as ‘disordered’, as ‘rotten’, thereby discursively producing a ‘Constitutive Other’, against which hegemonic masculinity is defined.

However, while this was the basic argument of this thesis, of course a variety of further possible ways to approach the issue exist, that were not touched on due to the limited frame of this work. While it is in the first place the distinction between the ‘fit’ and the ‘rotten’, the ‘normal and the ‘abnormal’, that outlines the two main categories of a system of difference which is hold in place by this very relation of mutual constitution and, correspondingly, interdependence, both primary categories inhabit a number of subcategories, comprise a set of further elements. Once we step over the demarcation line between the ‘fit’ and the ‘rotten’ we can see that both categories are again subdivided into groups of hierarchically structured subcategories of the more and the less ‘rotten’ and the more or less ‘fit’. Hence, it could be a focus of future studies to take a more detailed look at the various nuances of masculinity as they get defined in the context of military service. An example could be a detailed analysis of the diverging ways how those who get exempted on the basis of a ‘psychosexual disorder’ and those who get exempted due to further psychological or physical disorders (e.g. the ‘fat’, the ‘skinny’) are approached.

A further question that was not touched upon is the question of how the practice of the medical examinations preceding the issuance of the *Çürük Raporu* has changed over the years. I think that a historical study on the change of practice in relationship to the slowly changing intensity and direction of militarist discourses might as well enhance the discussion significantly.

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<sup>238</sup> Baumann, Zygmunt (1991), “Modernity and Ambivalence”, Cambridge: Polity, p. 56.

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## APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

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Ekmel, 30, performed the basic training (4 weeks, *bedelli askerlik*), pp. vii-xxi.

Emir, 27, performed military service as a short-term private (5 months), pp. xxi-xl.

Faruk, 28, performed military service as a reserve officer (12 months), pp. xl-li.

Gürkan, 42, exempted on the basis of a ‘psychosexual disorder’ (*Çürük Raporu*), pp. li-liv.

Ibrahim, unknown age (approximately around 40), conscientious objector, pp. liv-lv.

Kürşad Kahramanoğlu, 61, university professor and LGBT rights activists, pp. lv-lxxii.

Merve, 28, woman conscientious objector, pp. lxxiii-lxxvi.

Nurettin, 30, performed military service as a long-term private (15 months), pp. lxxvi-xc.

Onur, 26, exempted on the basis of a physical disorder (*Çürük Raporu*), pp. xci-xcvii.

Özgür, 33, performed military service as a long-term private (15 months), pp. xcvii-cxiv.

Tahsin Meriç, 67, retired *Albay* (Colonel), pp. cxiv-cxviii.

Uğur, 32, performed military service as a long-term private (18 months), pp. cxviii-cxxxiv.

Yağmur, 31, exempted on the basis of a ‘psychosexual disorder’ (*Çürük Raporu*), pp. cxxxiv-cxxxviii.