

the *hajj*: sacred and secular

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The goal of this article is to arrive at some understanding of why, against any rational calculus, thousands of Turks living in Europe undertake the arduous journey back to Turkey year after year, at vast expense, in physical discomfort, and at risk of life. Immigrants have been the subject of anthropological interest for some time; generally, they have been studied either in the host countries, where issues of alienation and assimilation predominate, or back home, where studies focus on factors leading up to immigration or on what happens to them when they return. For Turks the annual journey home is itself an integral part of their experience as immigrants, perhaps *the* integrating factor in their lives, yet it has been conceptually invisible.¹

In order to highlight it I ask what we might learn if it were considered as a kind of pilgrimage or *hajj* (Turkish *hac*); indeed, the ritualistic and obligatory character of this journey is what alerted me to the possibility of its more than instrumental significance. Based on material I gathered in two Turkish communities, I compare the annual journey back to their natal villages made by Turkish migrants in Belgium with the *hajj* to Mecca made by Turkish villagers who live in Anatolia. Although I suggest that the former is a symbolic transformation and in some sense an inversion of the latter—a metaphor made more in action than in words (Comaroff 1987)—this study is not intended as a tight structural analysis of the two journeys but as an exploration that probes some of the rich meaning of *hajj* in order to open up new ways of thinking and indicate new paths for further research about Turkish migrants, pilgrimage, Islam, and the orienting power of symbols. I am aware that such a comparison may be controversial, not only because some feel that *hajj* can only refer to the journey to Mecca, but also because the comparison transgresses traditional academic boundaries.² It is hoped that the shock of projecting what scholars generally consider to be merely secular, instrumental behavior in light of traditional religious practice may bring a flash of illumination that enhances our appreciation and understanding of both migrants and pilgrims.

Migration and pilgrimage are not usually brought into semantic conjunction. Although both have to do with the patterned movement of people, they are thought to refer to different areas of human experience and have been allocated to different, mutually exclusive fields of study. Migration is felt to be motivated by practical considerations relating to the secular realm and is therefore studied in terms of economics, politics, and demography.³ In contrast, pilgrimage, as a departure from ordinary life, is often assumed to be undertaken in relation to spiritual matters and thus is perceived as part of the domain of religion. But perhaps this division of experience

A comparison of the pilgrimage to Mecca made by Turkish villagers with that made to their natal villages by Turkish immigrants in Europe argues for blurring the boundaries between the categories "sacred" and "secular" as well as those between pilgrim and migrant. It suggests that the hijra (emigration of Muhammed) and the hajj (his pilgrimage home) provide a symbolic model, unavailable for non-Muslims, that implicitly structures and makes comprehensible the ritualistic and obligatory character of the immigrants' journey home. [Islam, symbolism, pilgrimage, Turkish peasants and immigrants]

has more to do with Western categories than with Muslim ones, for in Islam the distinction between “sacred” and “secular” is not a viable one (Lewis 1988:3; Nasr 1985:30; Toprak 1987:219). Thus, the title of this article should not be understood as a reinforcement of these categories but as an ironic play on them. What needs to be asked is, do the academic divisions really reflect the lived experience of either migrants or pilgrims? Or do we need to move across disciplinary boundaries as migrants and pilgrims move across territorial ones?

This article embarks on such a project by suggesting that instead of separate domains such as migration and pilgrimage, each with its own rhetoric and symbols, there may be certain powerful key symbols (Ortner 1973) that, with varying degrees of explicitness, shape the imagination and motivate the behavior of Muslims. The *hajj*, I claim, is a particularly vivid symbol, capturing the imagination of millions of Muslims regardless of whether they have had firsthand experience of it or even of whether they are devout Muslims. In Turkish village life it looms large—as the quintessential journey and one that is recognized and legitimate. Villagers who have gone on the *hajj* bring back stories of their travels, and such exotic tales stand out in an environment where many have rarely even been to Ankara, the capital city, or the Mediterranean coast, let alone outside of Turkey. It occupies village activity and conversation for at least three months out of every year—the time before the pilgrims depart, the time while they are away, and the time when they return. As we shall see, there are many activities related to the *hajj* that involve the entire village. It would be naive to think that a powerful symbol like the *hajj* is contained within the limits defined by religion (or by scholars of religion); such symbols overflow their boundaries and enter into the cultural mainstream. Because it is a powerful and pervasive image in village life, the *hajj*, I believe, functions as a model in terms of which certain other journeys are implicitly shaped and from which they acquire additional dimensions of meaning.

Turkish workers in Belgium, and in other European countries, have been drawn predominantly from villages, and I suggest, therefore, that images of the *hajj* form part of their mental topology. While it is true that other migrant groups make similar journeys, I am not convinced that this fact is the only, or the best, basis for comparison. We must not assume that superficial resemblance indicates the presence of similar meaning.⁴ The journey of Turkish immigrants needs to be understood not only in relation to the journeys of Greek and Italian immigrants, for example, but also in the context of the Turks’ own cultural world, which includes their present situation as well as the values, orientations, and symbols that have shaped their motivations and expectations. It is therefore important to understand something about the context of village life.

For villagers of my acquaintance, Islam is the taken-for-granted context in which life is lived. This does not mean that all villagers are necessarily devout in their religious practices; rather, Islam sets the widest stage for their action by specifying the kind of world they live in and the kinds of action appropriate in that world. I am not arguing about a special kind of spirituality or a separate domain of religion, in fact just the reverse. I am trying to indicate that for villagers without much formal schooling, the world is built upon a foundation of Muslim cosmology. That cosmology provides answers to the ultimate questions—“where have you come from?” “where are you going?”—questions that were and are repeated so often that they form a kind of refrain underscoring the wider context of everyday journeys.

Turks in Belgium do not refer to their trip back home as a *hajj*, except in an offhand or joking manner, for they are aware that canonically it refers only to the pilgrimage to Mecca. Yet surely Freud has made us aware that the joke or oblique remark may point directly to an area of concern, often a socially taboo one. Furthermore, the Turks whom I know are not unaware of the word’s extracanonical uses—for example, in mystic, poetic descriptions of the soul’s journey to God. They also used it in two different places and times to refer to two journeys I made, even though I am not Muslim.⁵

My metaphorical use of *hajj* is clearly an interpretation put upon a pattern of action; but it is an interpretation that takes its cue from the participants even if they do not articulate it fully. Moreover, it performs a valuable heuristic function, for it "takes us into the heart of that of which it is an interpretation" (Geertz 1973:18). It brings about conceptual movement as it helps us to focus attention on the journey itself.

contexts of study

This article draws upon my work with Turks in two locales. Between August 1980 and July 1982 I lived and worked in a village on the central Anatolian plateau, and I returned for a visit in the summer of 1986. That village is composed of an interrelated and integrated group of Sunni Muslims. When I speak of "villagers," I am referring to that group of people. The Turks among whom I worked in Belgium from September 1984 to August 1985⁶ were also mostly Sunni Muslims from villages in central Anatolia, although not from the particular village in which I had previously worked. The views expressed in this article are the result of work with Sunni Turks; the meaning of Turkey, of migration, and of Muslim ritual and symbol may be different for Alevi Kurds, a minority group of Turkish citizens, some of whom are promoting their separate ethnic identity and even a separatist nationalism. Although my perspective⁷ has been informed by my work with Sunni Turks, it has also been shaped by its spatiotemporal parallels with the lives of most Turkish migrants. That is, it follows chronologically the route taken by Turkish migrants, most of whom have come from villages even though some may have lived and worked for a spell in a Turkish city prior to migration. Similarly, my initial work was in a village; I came to understand Turks' identification with and strong attachment to the villages of their birth. Scholarly analyses of migration are rarely informed by such experience; instead, they rely on theories of "the working class," a class to which these immigrants may be ascribed in Europe, but one with which they rarely identify themselves. These analyses may miss the cultural baggage these "urban villagers" carry with them from the village to the city, whether that be in Turkey or in Europe.

For many villagers, as for many Muslims, to make the *hajj* is to touch the foundation of faith and to drink of the wellspring that sustains and gives it meaning. The spiritual meaning is symbolized concretely: pilgrims touch or kiss the Black Stone nestled in the Ka'ba and drink from the well of Zemzem that sustained Hagar and Ismail in the desert. People from our village who went on the *hajj* brought back containers of this water to share with fellow villagers.

The *hajj* to Mecca, whatever else it may be or do, is expected to be a unifying experience, one that integrates the pilgrim's present life with both the past and the future. Pilgrims on the *hajj* are also thought to be vouchsafed a glimpse of the other world (Turkish *öbür dünya*), which they imagine to be their original, true, and final home. In short, it is precisely because the *hajj* seems to be a journey home that the journey home of immigrants can be interpreted as a pilgrimage.

Unlike notions of pilgrimage that have influenced the Christian West, notions in which the movement is perceived primarily as a "going forth," so that even life itself can be construed as a pilgrimage, the Muslim notion embodies an image of return, a return to place of origin. It is not enough, therefore, to compare and contrast the forms of movement; we must also attend to that which stays put, to the "place" of place. The rest of this article is divided into two parts: the first describes the *hajj* to Mecca made by villagers, and the second is devoted to the migrants' pilgrimage back to Turkey. Because the analogy of the journeys entails an analogy of place, it is first necessary to show that Mecca is not only a religious center but also an image of home.

facing Mecca

Since the *hajj* to Mecca precedes both temporally and logically its secular form, we shall turn to it first. In order to understand the significance of the *hajj*, however, we need first to gain some sense of the meaning of Mecca and the place it has in the lives of these Muslims. Mecca is *kutsal*—sacred and holy. It is hallowed ground and *kapalı*—closed to those who do not belong, off limits to those who do not accept and submit to the word of God as conveyed by Muhammed, his messenger. Mecca is the birthplace of Muhammed and the place where he lived a great part of his life. It was in Mecca that he first heard God's call and proclaimed his message, a message Muhammed believed was not a new revelation but a return to the one true faith given in the beginning to Abraham (Turkish Ibrahim). There is thus a recursiveness built into Islam, a desire to return, restore, recall, and rebuild—a desire to return to the original message and to wash away the layers of pollution built up over time in order to reveal God's pristine design. As we shall see, this recursiveness has implications beyond the religious sphere, for it gives a bias or style to social life, particularly in the family.

The people of Mecca rejected Muhammed's message and he was forced to leave. His migration to Medina, known as *hijra* (Turkish *hicret*), marked the separation of the community of believers from nonbelievers. The believers became a community in exile from its home. Later Muhammed returned to Mecca, and some traditions relate that he rebuilt the temple (Ka'ba) first made by Abraham and put back the Black Stone, the only relic believed to have come down from the time of Adam, as cornerstone.⁸ He commemorated the deeds of Abraham in ritual form and made and proclaimed the *hajj* following Abraham's example.

For Muhammed, therefore, the *hajj* was a journey home both literally and symbolically. It was a journey to his own place of origin, but also to what some consider to be the home of Abraham, and even of Adam and therefore of all humankind. Mecca is known as the mother of towns, the first dry land floating on the waters from which the rest of the earth spread out.⁹ It is also the earthly home of God, the Ka'ba being his dwelling place. Finally, Mecca is the reflection of the "other world" (*öbür dünya*). The "other world" is imagined, at least by villagers, as the original home to which one returns at death, and Mecca is the closest one can get to it in "this world" (Turkish *bu dünya*).

To make the *hajj* to Mecca is to retrace the steps of Muhammed and Abraham and to reenact the major events in the life of faith. But Mecca is a lodestone exerting a strong attraction not just because of the historical events that took place there, but also because of its active place in the lives of villagers. It is a place displaced beyond the horizon, creating a desire to bridge the distance; it is also a presence that is absent, engendering a pervasive mood of longing.

gurbet In order to gain a deeper sense of the meaning of Mecca for villagers, one must also become aware bodily—not just intellectually and emotionally—of the place of Mecca in their lives. One can know, for example, that Muslims pray in the direction of Mecca and thus that the *ezan* (the call to prayer) beckons them not only to pray, but to Mecca. What is more difficult to know, and what one learns only by experience, is the way the amplified sound of the call punctuates daily rhythms and permeates the consciousness of believer and nonbeliever alike. The call is inescapable. That sound, repeated five times a day every day, every year, all of one's life, makes inroads on the brain. One begins to adjust one's own rhythms to the call and not the clock, adjusting also to the intervals between calls, which differ widely from summer to winter. One begins to anticipate the call just at the crack of dawn, so that its absence is not only noted but keenly felt.¹⁰ This is bodily knowledge. Similarly, one can know that Muslims pray toward Mecca—that point on the horizon that speaks so eloquently of things unseen and organizes orientation in space as well as time. In accordance with the *ezan*, villagers bow and pray toward Mecca five times a day, and those who do not do so are no less affected by the sound. Indeed, even non-Muslims cannot escape the sound or ignore its implications.

Mecca, "the center out there," as Victor Turner aptly puts it, simultaneously creates distance and gives expression to the feeling known as *gurbet*, a term that means exile from home, a feeling that calls forth a desire to collapse that distance. By means of the sensory signals provided by ritual, spiritual meanings are fused with kinesthetic responses in the body, creating a kind of bodily tropism.¹¹ In other words, from childhood on villagers are oriented toward Mecca; it is the focal point that provides orientation in a world that is simultaneously physical and spiritual. Rather than mutually exclusive domains of life, these seem to be more like different layers. The secularist, nationalizing program initiated by Atatürk promotes the pulling of these layers into separate and distinct domains, as they are felt to exist in the West. According to Toprak, a major triumph of Atatürk's reforms consists in relegating a social and political religion like Islam "to the position of a purely individualistic faith" (1987:221). A large proportion of villagers (and others) resist this tendency.

In our village, Mecca was to the right and southeast while Ankara was to the left and northwest. These physical orientations took on symbolic and political significance. The lights of Ankara, the capital of the secular republic, could be seen at night and beckoned to a westernized, secular, and national world. Indeed, Atatürk's mausoleum, a huge square structure dominating Ankara, is referred to half jokingly as "our Ka'ba" even by taxi drivers. It is a place of pilgrimage and for children it is also the capstone to an elementary education. Children from all over Turkey, if their parents or villages have the means to send them, travel to this memorial of the founder of their country—usually at the end of elementary school. It is also the first place that I, as a Fulbright grantee, was taken. Although Atatürk intended to create a secular republic, there were and are contradictory impulses in the society that tend in the direction of the sacralization of the state.¹² Atatürk is as much a presence in death as in life. According to a haunting song all schoolchildren must learn, "Atatürk is not dead, he still lives."¹³ He also watches over his people from omnipresent statues and pictures of him, in a reversal that seems, ironically, to emphasize the aniconic character of Islam.

The secular world consciously advocated by Atatürk is (according to villagers and many other Turks) now coded as "leftist,"¹⁴ in contrast to the "rightist" world under the authority of religion and thus oriented toward Mecca. That is, the primary distinctions are not between communism and capitalism (as we in the West assume), for the religious consider both of these political programs to be secular and materialist in comparison with one based on Islamic values. In short, while the same codification cannot be objectified in the landscape in quite the same way in all villages, there is an intimate relationship between psychological and physical topography: geography is invested with meaning.

What I am trying to point to are the kinds of generative schemes and themes that orient and naturalize behavior. They are what distinguish a Turkish village from an Italian or Greek one and a Turkish migrant from an Italian or Greek one. Such schemes are reproduced as well as modified in each generation and are implicitly engaged in efforts at reorientation. These ways of being in the world are ingrained as children are taught, by their movements and displacements in space and time, the limits and meanings of their lived-in world (cf. Bourdieu 1977:90). In this way Mecca, the unseen point on the horizon, comes to exist as a presence in their midst, etching invisible pathways on the "geography of the soul" (Niebuhr 1984:10) and predisposing their footsteps in its direction.

"sacred" hajj Although the *hajj* is one of the five conditions (Turkish *şart*) of Islam and is obligatory for all those physically and financially able to go, few actually make it. Since a person cannot go into debt to finance the trip, the *hajj* is usually made by older people who have accumulated the necessary means or when, with some equanimity and a grand gesture, one can sell off all of one's possessions to finance the trip—as did one childless couple in the village. Although the *hajj* is usually undertaken only once, I knew a few villagers who had been twice.

Regardless of the personal motivations that finally propel individual villagers to make the *hajj*, the journey to Mecca is not undertaken lightly; before they set out, certain specific preparations must be made. In this section I would like to describe some of the preparations I saw villagers make before leaving on the *hajj* in September 1981 and again in July 1986.

departing Several weeks before leaving on the *hajj*, the villagers who plan to go must give a feast for the entire community, not only to pay off social debts but also to earn *sevap*, the blessing that brings its own reward. Although this is meant to be a communal meal, men and women eat sequentially. In 1981, eight villagers (five men and three women) went on the *hajj*. They provided eight sheep, 100 kilos of rice cooked in huge copper cauldrons presided over by the men, and 25 kilos of *hoşaf*, a watery compote made from apricots and pears. They also served soup and bread. In the summer of 1986 six villagers (three men and three women) went. In each case the feast was held out of doors in the *harman* (threshing space), where canvas sheets had been spread. Metal or wooden trays, around which eight people could eat at a time, were placed on top of the canvas.

On the morning of departure, the entire village gathered in the main square for the blessing and to say goodbye. The pilgrims were distinctive in their pale blue traveling clothes with the Turkish flag embroidered on the breast pocket (Figure 1). All of the men formed a huge circle while the *imam*, who was part of it, said prayers and wished them well. This circle of men, with their backs to the women, not only excluded the women, even those going on the *hajj*, from the communal ritual but essentially rendered them invisible (Figure 2). There is no “special circumstance of womanhood,” as some have claimed,¹⁵ that can serve as a rationale for excluding women from the ritual. This physical and symbolic exclusion was, to me, the most powerful illustration of the essential bonding between men and the peripheral nature of women in the brotherhood of Islam. Only after the circle was broken and the prayer, blessings, and impassioned embraces were concluded did the *imam* walk over to the female pilgrims to say goodbye.



Figure 1. Special clothes for the *hajj*; women wear a long dress of the same cloth and color (pale blue).



Figure 2. Farewell to those leaving on the *hajj* (the last five men to the right of the van); women are excluded.

The journey to Mecca is not undertaken alone. These trips are organized by local travel agents but coordinated at the national level. Passports are of course controlled by the government, and travel outside of Turkey has been restricted; people going on the *hajj* must get *izin* (leave or permission) from the government.¹⁶ Villagers went overland by bus and bought their tickets from an agent in the nearest town so that they might travel with friends from their own and nearby villages and so that, in any case, their group would all be from the same small area in Turkey. They traveled directly to Mecca without diversion. They brought most of their own provisions with them: meat, cheese, yogurt, bread, dried vegetables, butter, and even their own water. They also bore prayers and petitions of other villagers. Once in Mecca they were accommodated in a pension-type lodging—one room for the men and another for the women, but still the same local group all together. This same group of fellow villagers was also guided around together to perform the prescribed rituals at the appropriate places.

For villagers, one of the most important events of the *hajj* is the *kurban* (sacrifice), which commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son if so required by God, as well as the son's willingness to obey his father. This rite dramatizes God's power as well as humanity's obligation both to recognize and to submit to it. On the day of the *kurban* Muslims everywhere, and Mecca is no exception, sacrifice a sheep or sometimes a cow or camel.

Performing the *kurban* in the village at the same time and in the same way as in Mecca, our thoughts and prayers automatically traveled to the absent villagers. We would soon learn what it had been like in Mecca, for after the *kurban* and a brief visit to Medina they would start for home. In the village, *Kurban Bayramı* is a solemn day of celebration. It is a time when ceremonial visits are paid to one's elders, relatives, and friends. The meat of the sacrificed animal is generously shared with the poor. At this and other *bayrams* (holidays), gypsies often camp outside the village in order to partake of the gift of meat.

In Mecca, by contrast, hundreds of thousands of animals are slaughtered at once and what cannot be consumed immediately must be discarded. This poses an enormous health as well

as logistical problem for the Saudi government since improperly disposed of meat creates a stench and a breeding ground for disease.¹⁷ A number of Turks described a feeling of revulsion and horror at the carnage and waste. Nothing in their experience approached it or prepared them for it. Although all eight of our villagers who went on the *hajj* in 1981 lived to tell about it, one man returned very ill and died shortly thereafter.

back home Upon their return, these villagers, at least the men, have changed in status. Forever after they will be known as *hajji* (Turkish *hacı*) and treated with deference and respect. Even those who think the trip to Mecca is a waste of money that could be put to better use show public respect to the *hajjis*. For a man, being a *hajji* represents a new stage in life, and his changed status is evinced by a number of outward signs. He can now legitimately let his beard grow, as he was required to do as he entered the sacred precinct of Mecca. A beard signifies a kind of sanctified status conferred by age and wisdom, which is why the elders are irritated and confused when they see youths with beards. (No youth in our village had a beard). Male *hajjis*, having been elevated to a more spiritual status, no longer permit women to shake or even kiss their hands, as is customary. This symbolically emphasizes their belief that women are more immersed in the material, perishable aspects of existence than men are (Delaney 1988). Their life's journey accomplished, these men can now sit out their days with their friends, usually within the precincts of the village mosque, where women do not go. At home they can expect to be waited on, as they expect to be waited on by houris in Paradise. They seem to desire to transform their own space back home into an image of Mecca or the "other world." But it is an image that is, once again, more enacted than expressed, whether verbally or visually. Although some people displayed photographs or wall hangings of the Ka'ba in their homes, the houses themselves were not painted with images of Mecca or Paradise, as is the case in some areas of Turkey, especially the southeast, and in Egypt, as described by Campo (1987).

For a woman *hajji* there are no outward signs of changed status; whatever the rewards, they are invisible and internal. A woman who has made the *hajj* may be an object of curiosity, envy, and admiration to her friends, but her journey does not confer any new privileges. It does not indicate arrival at a new stage of life, since stages in women's lives are defined rather by bio-sexual events of the female body: menstruation, defloration, childbirth, and menopause. After her journey she returns to the same life and resumes all her domestic tasks.

Upon their return, the *hajjis* repair directly to their houses to await visitors and to distribute the myrrh, frankincense, dates, baubles, bangles, and beads they have brought back with them. These gifts are of little monetary worth but carry more than their weight in symbolic value, letting some of the luster of Mecca rub off on the entire community.¹⁸ Almost all of us received a cheap metal ring (I wear mine when traveling) and I, the *gavur* (infidel, non-Muslim), received a special present of a silk scarf for reasons that will become clear in a moment. They also brought back stories, which is of course how I learned of their experiences. These accounts, candidly shared in the immediacy of return and in the intimacy of relatives and neighbors, were impressionistic fragments. In time, the bits and pieces would be put together to form a coherent whole that conformed more closely to stereotypical expectations.

In the first few hours and days after their return, they commented primarily on the differences from those expectations. In addition to the extraordinary heat, the cheap cost of gasoline, and the absence of any trees except for date palms, which they had never seen before, two aspects struck them most vividly. Because the *hajj* is supposed to be an expression and experience of unity and community, villagers had gone with the expectation that all Muslims would be able to understand each other—that they would have similar customs and certainly dietary and culinary similarities. Instead they found themselves confronted by many different kinds of people speaking languages they couldn't understand and eating different kinds of foods. They were shocked to discover that they could not understand fellow Muslims, not even Turks from other

countries. And those villagers who knew the prayers in Arabic or could recite the Koran in Arabic did not know or understand Arabic as a living vernacular language.

Unlike the black American Muslim Malcolm X, who gloried in the mixture of races and ethnic groups, villagers were frightened and made uneasy by it. Released from the bonds of racism, Malcolm X did not, however, notice those of sexism, which segregate the sexes and relegate women to the periphery, excluding them from certain areas and rituals.¹⁹ Significantly, women are “exempted” from wearing the *ihram*, the garment symbolizing the brotherhood of Islam. This garment, which is simply two lengths of white cloth, is put on in place of ordinary clothes at the entrance to the sacred precinct. Women, by retaining their daily dress, continue to display the distinctive attributes of nationality, as well as the rank and status of their husbands or male relatives, just as they would anywhere else. Some rationalize this difference by explaining that men symbolize the unity of Islam, women its diversity. Yet the diversity is also displayed by special men. The king, other officials of the Saudi government, and invited dignitaries wear their own special clothes and insignias of rank as they open the Ka’ba and inaugurate the ceremonies of the *hajj*.

The *hajj* is supposed to generate feelings of belonging and brotherhood, what Victor Turner has called “*communitas*,” or a “spontaneously generated relationship . . . between human beings stripped of their structural attributes”—stripped, in other words, of gender, rank, caste, wealth, position, kin, and local affiliation (Turner 1972–73:216). And yet these practices—the retention of secular but high-status clothing for certain people and the exemption of women from the symbolic garment—ensure that the hierarchies of the secular world continue to be recognized even in Mecca, thus undermining the ideology of equality and brotherhood.

Although the experiences villagers commented upon most vividly were those reflecting diversity, this does not deny that the pilgrims also experienced a sense of unity, especially in the performance of ritual and prayer. At the same time, one must keep in mind that these rituals are familiar, and for the brief time that villagers unroll their prayer rugs and perform their *namaz*, they may feel themselves transported back to the security of the village. Still, a village *hajji* learns that “he belongs both to this larger community and to his own national and local . . . one, and by virtue of having reenacted the origins of faith at its font, he is uniquely capable of linking the two and revitalizing in his person that to which he returns” (Roff 1985:85). But this dual identity does not refer only to two localities, one Mecca and the other home; the duality exists in the heart of Mecca. As noted above, the various national contingents and their local constituents are housed and guided through the rituals and sacred territory separately. Such segregation erodes the theme of unity and brotherhood as it heightens national differences, differences that exploded in Mecca in July 1987 when a group of Iranians (who are Shi’a) began making inflammatory remarks and allegedly attacked Sunni Muslims. The resulting riot left more than 400 people dead. In the case of the villagers, these distinctions served to increase rather than diminish the tension felt between identity as Muslim and identity as Turk, identities that they cannot easily compartmentalize.

fruits of the journey Ironically, the “sacred” *hajj* bore secular fruit. Their experiences made the villagers much more appreciative of my situation in their village. They were able to see the analogy between their own experience and mine, realize what I had done, and identify with it. “You came here and didn’t know the language, didn’t have the same customs or eat the same foods,” they said to me. “You have respected our customs and tried all our foods. We went to Mecca and didn’t try anything. And you are not afraid.” Instead of being treated as an amusing oddity in the village, I began to be treated with a certain awe and respect, as befits a *hajji*.

But the most puzzling and significant experience of the village *hajjis* was the revelation that when one is at the center, one is disoriented. All their lives they had prayed in one and the same direction, toward Mecca. It was a kind of direct line to the sacred, and this directionality oriented their lives in time and space. In Mecca, one could pray to the Ka’ba from any direction,

a fact symbolically implying that there are many roads to God, which is the opposite of what they had been taught, and for which they were totally unprepared. Expecting to become more oriented, they found instead that they were profoundly disoriented. When the everyday orientations of this world (*bu dünya*) are erased or confused, one is forced back upon oneself and forced to think about the purpose for which one is there. Commenting on this disorientation much later, a couple of villagers suggested that its effect was to channel their thoughts to the "other world" (*öbür dünya*). But in the experiencing of it, what was supposed to be the centering, integrating, unifying event of their lives was something quite different.

-facing Turkey

In contrast, the "secular" *hajj* seems to fulfill for the immigrants what the "sacred" *hajj* failed to fulfill for the villagers. In order to understand why that is so, we need to get some idea of the meaning of Turkey, and especially the home village, for immigrants. The significance of the journey, like that of the *hajj* to Mecca, becomes apparent in relation to the goal. For Turkish immigrants in Europe, the journey's goal is Turkey and, beyond that, the home village, the place where they are *yerli*. *Yerli*, composed of *yer*, meaning "ground" or "place," and the suffix *li*, which indicates "with" or "belonging to," is the Turkish word meaning native or indigenous. Despite the fact that Turks consider themselves paradigmatic migrants originally from Central Asia, they also identify themselves as *yerli*, natives of the specific ground or place on earth where they are born. Identity with place of birth, autochthony, is not something that can be discarded as one moves but is an indelible part of who one is. Turks do not see themselves merely as Turks but as particular kinds of Turks, and the kind is tied to a particular territory.

A very similar ideology of identity exists in Belgium. To speak of "the Belgians" is to employ a relatively recent fiction predicated on the establishment of the state of Belgium in 1830, and the "Flemings, Walloons, and Brusselers consider themselves to be firmly rooted autochthones" (Roosens 1981:87). Roosens goes on to say that in Belgium, "autochthony is a strong ethnic symbol that one needs if one wants to belong" and "whoever cannot demonstrate that he has deep roots in some part of Belgian territory . . . is and remains a 'foreigner'" (Roosens 1981:87). Such an attitude clearly exacerbates problems of assimilation but, just as clearly, it cannot be considered the only cause of such problems, since it mirrors the Turks' own ideology. No doubt there will be some accommodation and change as these groups continue to rub against each other. If this friction does not reach the point at which it ignites ethnic warfare, then the exchange of ideas and values will begin to accompany the exchange of money and services. But for the moment, the Turks cannot expect from the Belgians what they would not grant among themselves. For both groups the small bit of land from which they come is still one of the most salient items in the construction of identity.²⁰ The homeland, which in Turkish is the motherland (*anavatan, anayurt*), and especially the home village, is almost *kutsal*—sacred or holy. This hallowed ground is also, according to my informants, *kapalı*, as are women: it is off bounds or closed to those who do not belong; it is protected from constant traffic and trafficking; it is a sanctuary, a refuge.

gurbet For villagers of my acquaintance, any displacement from the natal home was felt as *gurbet*. A deeply felt emotion, *gurbet* has been an integral part of Turkish life and character since long before the migration to Europe. It is inscribed in love songs and is an indelible part of brides' laments as they are taken from their natal homes to those of their husbands, even when the new home is only a few lanes away in the same village. For men it is part of the experience of military service. Among the religious it is an integral and inescapable part of life on earth. Life in this world (*bu dünya*) is imagined as *gurbet* because the original, true, and final home is in the other world (*öbür dünya*), in Paradise—an intimation of which is supposedly glimpsed on the *hajj* to Mecca.

Turks in Europe, the majority of whom are of rural origins, are in an acute state of *gurbet*. This is an extremely important point and helps to illuminate some of the psychological problems of Turkish immigrants. They are strangers in a strange land, exiled not only among strangers but among people who do not share their language, religion, values, or customs. If home is where the heart is, then the village is the home for which they pine, a vital “center out there” pulling them in its direction and orienting their lives in space and time. Its location in space is known, and some immigrants boast that they know the way there by heart. It also organizes the temporal order, for the village exists as a frame of reference both “before” and “after” the sojourn in an alien land.

Most Turks at the beginning of migration assume that they will stay only a short time. Their journey away from home appears to be thoroughly secular in nature, undertaken for financial rewards rather than spiritual enrichment. It is a kind of secular *hijra*. The term *hijra* originally referred to the emigration of Muhammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina, but it has been used to refer to other migrations, economic as well as political. It means not an abandonment of home but a temporary withdrawal until conditions change and it is possible to return. In a sense, the *hajj* or return home is predicated on the prior movement away from home; that is, the concept and traditions of *hijra* not only invoke ideas of *hajj*, they provide a dimension of meaning and a psychological orientation to migration and the journey home that are unavailable to non-Muslims. Muslims, therefore, have at their disposal a wide symbolic framework within which their own migration may be modeled, justified, and interpreted. If the “going forth” is imagined as *hijra*, then by implication the journey home, like its historical precedent, is a pilgrimage, *hajj*—one evokes the other. This is a very different image of pilgrimage from that portrayed in, for example, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, an image that has profoundly influenced the English-speaking world and is also familiar to non-English-speaking Christians. Although these Turks often go forth empty-handed and with barely the clothes on their backs, they do not go as pilgrims to a new land, as did the Puritan pilgrims to America in the 17th century. They venture into the unknown, but their venture is not an adventure. It is not the journey or being “on the road” that is valorized by Turkish immigrants, but the goal. And the goal is the return.

These Turks do not intend to find a new life in Europe, to make it their home, to assimilate. They intend to stay only until they make enough money to buy land, build a house, or start a business back in Turkey. They direct their efforts and income to that goal. Because of this they make little financial or emotional investment in the host country. Their sojourn there is merely instrumental, a means to an end. They feel little need to learn the customs and language of the host country, for their primary conversation is with each other and with those in Turkey.

The isolation or “ghettoization” of Turks in Europe cannot, therefore, be attributed solely to the response of the host countries. This is not to say that the response of each to the other does not intensify the boundaries between them, but it is to say that the situation of Turkish immigrants in Europe cannot be explained by any simple cause and effect relation. Turks cannot be viewed as merely reacting to the host environment, for their ways of perceiving it and ways of acting in it have been shaped by cultural patterns and beliefs brought with them. Their situation is mutually constituted.

One cannot deny that Turks are generally looked down upon and perform the most menial and manual of work in Europe, where without doubt they form a “caste-like minority” (Ogbu 1980:36). I do not mean to deny or belittle this fact, but I do believe it is only one side of the picture. The notion of *gurbet*, with its feeling of displacement from home—a feeling that is amplified by the several referents of “home” (Mecca, the other world, Turkey, one’s village, one’s parental house)—is the other side and has consequences that must be taken into account for a fully nuanced picture.

Researchers who stress the alienating and degrading conditions in which the Turkish peasant immigrant lives and works may in fact incorporate biases of their own. Commenting on the

literature about the Turkish peasant immigrant, Halman notes that he or she is “defined in terms of material deprivation . . . is shown less as a human being with an organic personality than as a simple fictional device, a symbol of socioeconomic problems and ultimately as an eidolon for ideology” (1985:84). Although Halman is referring to fictional literature, the same can be said of much social science literature about Turkish peasant immigrants. He believes that the portrayal of these people as passive victims and the “exposé of the subhuman conditions under which Turkish peasants are shown to be living in their own country or in Western Europe” (Halman 1985:89) have their roots in entrenched anti-peasant biases of urban educated classes, whether these be Turkish or European. An account written with such biases will portray Turks primarily as victims and usually result either in blaming the victims for their passivity, stupidity, or stubbornness, or in turning on the perpetrators of the victimization. In neither case are peasant immigrants portrayed as actively engaged with the world, which they try to shape according to their own values and their own design.

Such a bias may be an explicit prejudice but more often, I suspect, it is due to a lack of familiarity with peasants and village life. In lieu of firsthand acquaintance and, more important, appreciation of the values and ways of village life, scholars project their own ideological assumptions. Since most researchers have not lived in rural village communities, they find it difficult to understand the meaning of the home village and the strength of the attachment binding its natives to it.

“secular” hajj From the meccas of industrial Europe—Paris, Berlin, Munich, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Stuttgart—thousands of Turks return each year to Turkey, for a visit. Some travel by a car they have bought in Europe and may sell upon return; many go by bus. In Brussels and, I suspect, in other cities as well, agencies organize these trips and draw on specific groups. These groups are composed of people originally from the same area in Turkey, often from the same village or cluster of villages, for migrant groups seem to have been formed from cohort groups.

Before setting out on the journey home, immigrants make ceremonial visits to relatives and friends not accompanying them in order to collect news, gifts, and blessings. Then together they travel back to their own home area in Turkey as villagers from the same area travel together on the *hajj* to Mecca. Also like the “sacred” *hajj*, this trip is done all at one stroke. These travelers are not tourists, and the only, and exceptional, side excursions are made to pick up cohorts dispersed to other Western European cities. The group is consolidated at the borders of the Communist bloc countries, for in some of these countries they are not permitted to deviate from the road, which may be narrow but is anything but straight—a veritable pilgrims’ highway. Although this territory may seem familiar, it may also seem inhospitable, if not downright hostile. Reports of repressive actions by the Bulgarian government against the Turks living there have exacerbated this feeling. Since Communists are presumed to be atheists, this territory is sometimes referred to as *Dar el Harb*—lands of the nonbelievers. Once again geography is suffused with meaning, simultaneously religious and political.

It is while traversing this territory that, I suspect, a camaraderie of the road develops and a spirit of *communitas* is most in evidence.²¹ For all travelers talk of the arduousness of the journey in terms reminiscent of pilgrims’ accounts, both ancient and modern, of the *hajj*. They discuss the obstacles that await the traveler, which roads are better, which borders are harder to cross, where there are bound to be long queues, which customs officials turn a blind eye and which confiscate what they can. They also talk of the spots where fellow travelers have died—a kind of shrine erected in the heart, toward which those following their path pray for a safer passage.

arriving They return to Turkey bearing gifts, not just trinkets as from sacred Mecca but substantial secular gifts signifying success in terms of the Protestant ethic.²² These conspicuous gifts

are usually examples of the technological miracles that index the material superiority of Europe—machinery, electronic equipment, household appliances. Rather than sharing the fruits of their labor with the entire community, however, the travelers bestow these luxuries on individuals or specific families. Such action testifies to the transformation of values from a more collectively oriented ethic to an individually oriented one, a process that is associated with the “West,” with industrial capitalism, and with Protestantism. While such objects bestow on their possessors a certain glamour in the eyes of their fellows—a glamour that reflects back on the givers—the objects also cast a shadow. They create envy and enmity in the group; they are an affront to village custom, which demands that beautiful or precious objects not be flaunted but be “covered” as protection against the evil eye.

Nevertheless, these gifts are expected by those back home and they are obligatory. They represent, I believe, a kind of repayment on a debt—a debt that can never really be repaid in full. Since it is the parents (normatively the father) who first give *izin*, permission to leave, it is to the parents that one’s obligation returns. While *izin* means “leave,” it is also deeply embedded in social relations: the word implies that one is under the authority of another—it implies authority and obligation.²³ To translate it simply as “on leave” or “on vacation” seriously distorts its meaning, for the notion of “vacation” in its Euro-American sense of extended holiday is lacking among migrant-peasant Turks. Such an interpretation also underestimates the word’s psychological ramifications.

For it is here that recursiveness is displayed at the interpersonal level; the emphasis in the parent-child relationship is not so much on parents supporting children and sending them forth to supersede them as it is on children supporting parents (see also Kağıtçıbaşı 1977). By going forth to Europe, even out of financial necessity, the migrant has deprived the parents of his or her help and companionship. This shames the parents in the eyes of their fellow villagers, and the gifts serve to “cover” or compensate for this shame. Unfortunately, those back home have little idea of the cost of these gifts, for they have little idea of what European salaries really mean. Translated into Turkish *lira*, the foreign amounts seem otherworldly. They are certainly out of the villagers’ world of experience. These sums substantiate their idea that Turks in Europe live in a kind of earthly paradise. The immigrant Turks cannot describe the sweat and toil that goes into their gifts without losing esteem. They are expected to be magnanimous. Although the gifts come at great cost both financially and spiritually, consuming a large portion of immigrants’ income, they are the price of maintaining self-esteem and gaining respect, the very esteem and respect so lacking in Europe.

The journey home enables the immigrants to touch the foundation of their being and to drink of the wellspring that gives it meaning. Not only can they touch the native soil of their village, which is almost sacred, and drink from the village fountain, which they have idealized in their imagination, but they are also put in touch with the sources of identity such as family, friends, and fellow villagers. They remember and learn of the deeds of significant others, which provides them with a sense of historical continuity. This pilgrimage renews their identity as Turks and gives them dignity.

To say that migrants hope for renewal and confirmation of identity does not preclude the possibility that their hope may be frustrated or deny that it may be transitory. Unlike those who go to Mecca and fulfill an obligation of a lifetime, the migrants who journey home become more deeply enmeshed in a lifetime of obligation. In a reversal of the *hajj*, this journey home does not help to release them from the cares of the world, but, by the various exchanges that occur there (of people, goods, money, status), serves instead to attach them more firmly to that world. Regardless of some feelings of ambivalence on the part of those back home, for the brief period of the visit these “tourists” are treated almost as *hajjis*. In any case, the memory of being treated in this way remains after the reality of the visit fades, and it recreates, in absence, the desire to return.

As the *hajj* to Mecca takes place at a specific time in the Muslim year (although that time moves through the seasons because the Muslim calendar is based on the lunar year), so too do Turks feel there is an appropriate time to make the journey home, namely, during the sacred month of Ramazan. That is when many Turks try to take their *izin* (leave) from work.²⁴ During the past several years Ramazan has occurred at a time of good weather, moving backward from fall through summer to late spring, and it will continue to occur in spring for a few more years. Whether they will still wish or be able to take leave when Ramazan occurs in the winter, I do not know, but for the present and in the recent past they have been able to realize the congruence they feel between the symbolic time and the actual time. They plan to be home for Şeker Bayramı, the candy or sugar holiday, which ends the month of fasting with all kinds of Turkish delights. It is the other major religious holiday but, unlike Kurban Bayramı, it is more festive than solemn. On this occasion, as at Kurban, sheep are sacrificed, only this time they are sacrificed in honor of the special guests.

For guests they are. Although most immigrants believe that they will eventually return to Turkey, most do not. This does not seem to diminish the power of belief, but serves instead to increase the feeling of *gurbet* and the consequent desire to make the pilgrimage home. Like Muhammed, who never returned to Mecca to live but remained in Medina and only made the *hajj* back to the sacred home, these Turks make the *hajj* home but continue to live outside the “sacred” homeland. Indeed, they may be aware that to return for good would vitiate the image and render it secular. It is the image, I believe, that legitimizes their sojourn and keeps them going. But in the psychological state of *gurbet*, Turkey rather than Mecca functions as orientation in time and space. They have come from Turkey and it is to Turkey they will return. When they pray in the direction of Mecca, Turkey is on the way. In a way that Atatürk could not have foreseen but as he might have wished, the concept of Turkey has come, at least for some, to incorporate the symbols and meanings of Islam. This mixture, however, is an unstable solution that continually threatens to precipitate the separate and competing elements of nationalism and Islam.²⁵

Turkey, like Mecca, also functions as an intimation of life in the other world. In our village there were wall hangings inscribed with a well-known saying attributed to al-Ghazali to the effect that the earth is but a guest house, that one should not put too much store in this life and this world, but earnestly make provision for the next. Immigrants treat their European host countries as guest houses—and only partially, I think, because they are called guest workers.

fruits of the journey Ironically, the secular journey bears spiritual fruit but of a kind perilously close to that of the Protestant devout of another time. The immigrants neither store up goods in this world nor enjoy them. Instead, they religiously make provision for life in the next world. They buy carpets, appliances, and furniture, which they never use in Europe, in order to provision their future homes in Turkey.

In their talk, Turkey begins to take on the characteristics of the other world and, at least among immigrants in Brussels, is described as being *Cennet gibi*, like Paradise. They idealize the warmth, the sun, the clean air, the clear water, the vegetables that ripen naturally, and the luscious fruit that drops into their laps. And they fantasize a life of ease in which they are waited on hand and foot by adoring relatives, in contrast to what they see as a life of hard labor in an inhospitable environment. Turkey, and specifically their own natal village, is their original, true, and final home, as all of them are well aware. Bodies of Turks who die in Europe are sent home to their natal villages to be interred in native soil.

If Turkey has become image and symbol of the other world, it becomes more understandable that the actualization of taking up residence there is put off indefinitely. At the same time, I believe, the “secular” *hajj* keeps alive the image and gives meaning and orientation to these immigrants’ lives in this world.

notes

Acknowledgments. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) meeting in Boston in November 1986 and discussed at a Social Science Research Council workshop on "Movement and Exchange in Muslim Societies" in September 1987. Since then it has expanded and benefited from the thoughtful reading and suggestions of Eugene Roosens, Dale Eickelman, Andrea Klimt, Yasemin and Levent Soysal, and my daughter, Elizabeth Bangs. What still remains rough, unclear, and undone is due to the author alone.

¹So much so that whenever I spoke of my project, people automatically assumed I meant "return migration," a term referring to the study of migrants who have already returned. Others wish to see the annual journey only as a means to the final return. I believe it has a degree of autonomy that warrants further research.

²Mary Douglas (1978[1966]:53) notes that holiness or the sacred depends on keeping categories of creation separate and distinct. Although her analysis focuses on religious beliefs, I believe her observation applies as well to the "sacredness" of the boundaries of traditional academic domains. Is it not precisely the transgression and blurring of boundaries between disciplines and genres that is being so hotly debated in contemporary academia?

³The effects of migration are studied by specialists in the disciplines of psychology, sociology, health, and education, all considered secular disciplines focused on the secular concerns of daily life.

⁴For example, the term *marriage* is used to describe something arranged by the parents for a young woman and young man who have never spoken to each other prior to it, something in which emotional and sexual compatibility are neither a prerequisite nor a goal; the same term is used to refer to something in which the individuals choose each other on precisely those grounds. While both arrangements are forms of legitimate cohabitation, can we say that their meaning is the same? If not, why do we use the same word to cover both?

⁵In 1975, in the course of my work on the story of Abraham, I made a journey to Harran, a village in eastern Turkey that was allegedly Abraham's home between his migration from Ur and his migration to Palestine. Villagers there gathered around me and declared, much to my consternation, that I was on a *hajj*. In 1981, when I was conducting anthropological fieldwork in a central Anatolian village, I left with my daughter for a brief vacation to historical sites on the Aegean coast. Unknown to us, but known to the villagers, Ephesus is the focus of an annual pilgrimage of certain groups of Christians, for it is believed to have been the last home of the Virgin Mary. We arrived just as thousands of others were converging on this place and thus unwittingly became part of that pilgrimage. When I returned to the village I was asked about my *hajj*.

⁶As an associate at the Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven, I worked with medical anthropologists, doctors, and psychologists who were studying the "psychosomatic" complaints of various migrant groups. I worked among Turkish migrants in Brussels who were suffering from depression. My belief that their depression was related to nostalgia and *gurbet*, an indigenous concept to be more fully discussed later, led to the thoughts expressed in this article.

⁷It is not only where one stands, but also who one is that determines, to a large extent, the interpretation one gives. In other words, one's gender, age, ethnicity, class, aesthetic preferences, political persuasions, and academic training all affect the perceptions and interpretations of events. I presented some of these ideas at the 1987 American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in Chicago (see Delaney 1989). See also R. Rosaldo's notion of "the positioned subject" (1988 [1984]) and Haraway's related discussion of "situated knowledge" (1988).

⁸The Black Stone embedded in a corner of the Ka'ba is the focal point of the pilgrimage. It is this stone people desire to touch or kiss. Furthermore, some traditions maintain that it contains the voices of all the living. It was white when it was given to Adam but, because of humanity's sins, it has since turned black.

⁹The gendered aspects of religious symbolism are a subject that has barely begun to be addressed. By this I do not mean what Islam says about women and men, but rather how the symbols and meanings of gender figure in wider cosmological constructions. My research in Turkey (Delaney 1984) suggests that women as mothers, and also the womb, are associated with the soil, earth, or ground, and that these symbolize the physical origins of persons. In contrast, the eternal and spiritual aspects of personhood are associated with men and symbolized by "seed." The house and the village, the physical places where people dwell, are also symbolically female. These places are considered sanctuaries; access is limited and they are *kapalı* (covered or closed), as are women. Women are veiled, as is the Ka'ba. The female symbolism of the Ka'ba has also been noted by Lazarus-Yafeh (1981:30), who cites several texts in which the Ka'ba is imaged as a bride who, on Judgment Day, will be led to her wedding, and those who are able to catch hold of her covers will enter Paradise with her. While Saudi Arabia differs from Turkey, I believe that these associations transcend national boundaries and are, at the very least, worthy of investigation.

¹⁰If my own experience is any indication, I suggest it is felt as a kind of ache. Even several years after returning to the United States I am aware, especially at dawn, that something is lacking, and I long to hear it. On the other hand, when an *ezan* is heard outside its normal schedule, one is immediately alerted that something is wrong. In Turkey, it means that some member of the community has died. All work immediately stops and the community gathers to pay its respects.

¹¹See especially Marcel Mauss (1973 [1934]) for initiating discussion of the way culture is inscribed in the body, in its learned techniques of posture and movement. The notion of bodily tropism is especially appropriate with regard to Islam, for the idea of “turning” to God is given physical expression in the rituals of the Turkish Mevlevi, or Whirling Dervishes.

¹²Clearly, this is a controversial subject that could easily deflect us from our path. But I believe it may partly explain some of the resistance of the more religiously inclined to various secular political platforms. A number of Turks expressed the view that the cult and veneration of Atatürk after his death give the impression more of a sacred state than of a secular religion. Several called my attention to the fact that personal pronouns referring to him are capitalized. The title of a book about him, *Tek Adam* (A Singular Man [Aydemir 1969]), uses connotations that are widely known: the attributes of singularity and uniqueness are held to belong primarily to God.

Atatürk seems to have been imbued with notions of his own importance and to have believed that he had a mission to accomplish, namely, to save the nation from demise (cf. Kinross 1965; Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984). He preferred the title of *Chazi*, which means “a fighter in the path of Islam,” but he infused it with nationalist meaning. He promulgated the view that the original homeland of the Turks (Central Asia) was the original Eden, that Turks were the first people, and that Turkish was the ur-language. These views were institutionalized when he founded the Türk Dili Kurumu (Turkish Language Society) and Türk Tarihi Kurumu (Turkish History Society). We have already noted that his mausoleum not only resembles the Ka’ba but is referred to as such, albeit ironically. In addition, people whose loyalties fall more to one side or the other of the religious or secular-nationalist divide occasionally note how the two major national holidays mirror the two major religious holidays. Like Muhammed, Atatürk had no sons, and the disputes over succession can be likened to those in Islam. “Atatürk is like a prophet whose mystical image exists as a powerful unifier forever and ever. No other modern leader has achieved the degree of immortality Atatürk enjoys among the Turks” (Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984:358).

¹³After completing a successful military takeover in September 1980, General Kenan Evren, who would later become president of Turkey, made a visit to Atatürk’s mausoleum to pay his respects and to tell him what he had done. In other words, Evren greeted Atatürk as if he were still alive or as if he were a god (cf. Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984:354).

¹⁴This is confirmed by Toprak (1987), who claims that the secularists in Turkey might be called a “surrogate left,” which places them in opposition to both groups on the right—the “ultranationalists” (Ağaoğulları 1987) and the “fundamentalists.”

¹⁵The Ferneas (1972), among others, have claimed that women are an equal but different half of Islam and that only the special circumstances of womanhood keep them from participation in certain religious rituals. I argue that their exclusion has more to do with the *meanings* of womanhood and female bodily functions than with physical limitations. Nor do I single out Islam for special opprobrium, for Christianity and Judaism make similar symbolic associations of women with the earthly, material, profane aspects of existence. While it is also true that there are special religious activities organized by and for women (see Tapper and Tapper 1987), the status of those activities is decidedly secondary.

¹⁶In 1980, when the *hajj* coincided with Evren’s military coup, all permits were revoked. Several years later, President Evren became the first Turkish head of state to make the *hajj*. Prime Minister Özal followed suit in 1989.

¹⁷The Saudis now have a scheme of “sacrifice by proxy” in which the excess meat is frozen and shipped to needy Muslim countries.

¹⁸I was struck by the similarity of these gifts to those carried by the three wise men to the “center,” the birthplace of Jesus. In the Turkish example, the gifts come back *from* the “center” to be dispersed among ordinary folk, an inversion that warrants some attention.

¹⁹Women are not permitted inside the mosques during prayer time but perform their prayers outside, around the periphery; nor are they permitted to visit the cemetery of the prophets in Medina. An excellent film, *Mecca: The Forbidden City* (produced and directed by Abolghasem Rezaei), visually conveys the impact of their exclusion and distinctiveness, while its commentary supplies the rhetoric of unity and brotherhood.

²⁰One might have expected Islam to become a unifying force among the immigrant Muslim groups in Belgium, yet ironically, those groups have imitated the duality in Belgian society. The distinctions emphasized are not those between Alevi and Sunni Muslims but those between Moroccans and Turks. Each group seeks to establish its own separate Muslim institutions.

²¹In the only novel I know of that focuses on a Turkish migrant’s journey home, *Fikrimin İnce Gülü* (*The Slender Rose of My Thought*), Ağaoğlu (1984) stresses just the opposite tendencies. Rather than undermining my point, I think she confirms it. For her novel is not so much a commentary on the journey as a study of a “fatal flaw” in the main character’s personality. She gives her protagonist the name of Bayram, which means holiday or festivity, yet his character is just the reverse. The willful pride that isolates him from his fellow travelers and thus causes him to reject *communitas* forms the drama and the substance of the tragedy. He has fallen from grace and this, I would claim, is what makes his journey a completely secular one.

²²Material prosperity is surely a sign of success in the Protestant ethic, an ethic promoting the notion that hard work brings its rewards. The immigrants are internalizing what Weber called “this worldly asceticism” and by their sacrifices expect to earn their just rewards. No wonder villagers think the migrants in Europe are being converted to Christianity.

²³*Izin* was a topic of much interest in the village. Villagers wanted to know whether my father had given me *izin* to come to Turkey, to their village. When I said that that had not been necessary, they wondered whether my university or my government had given me *izin*. The fact that my decisions were fairly autonomous (and that it was from their country that I had needed permission) was difficult for them to understand. Whenever I left the village I made sure to get *izin* from the *muhtar*, and when I returned I made sure to let him know, so that his honor would not be compromised. Had I not done so my work in the village might have been jeopardized, since I was there by the grace of his *izin*.

²⁴Some take a more jaundiced view. Berger and Mohr (1982[1975]:208), for example, suggest that “the timing of release depends on the conveniences of production when the work is slow” or that, as in France, the migrants are forced to take leave in August when the factories close. Turks in Belgium, as well as professionals who have been working with them for some time, told me that most try to have their “leaves” coincide with Ramazan, with Şeker Bayramı or possibly Kurban Bayramı. If the latter, it truly would coincide with the *haji*. Clearly, this is a place where more research needs to be done.

²⁵It must quickly be stated that Atatürk’s nationalism was of a type different from that promoted by pan-Turkists, Turanists, or the more recent Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi. His was territorially based—that is, based on the notion of the nation-state of Turkey. By placing Islam under state control, he attempted to incorporate and render it powerless. Both the “ultranationalist” and the religious movement hinder the secular, westernizing, and democratizing tendencies that Atatürk tried to foster. It must also be noted that while there has been a fusion of nationalism and religion among certain Alevi Kurds, the particular nation (Kurdistan instead of Turkey) and religion (Alevi instead of Sunni Islam) in question contrast and conflict with those of Sunni Turks. In Belgium, however, the major contrast in Muslim identity (see note 20) is between Moroccan and Turk, regardless of sectarian affiliation. One factor influencing the resurgence of Muslim identity in Belgium is that it restores to men some of the self-esteem and support that have been undermined by widespread unemployment. One of the consequences appears to fall literally on the heads of women. Girls, like their mothers, are being “covered” and kept at home.

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