The Turkish Olympics: Festival into the Gulen movement

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Part One

Laying the Framework
Chapter One

Introduction to the Turkish Olympics

The Turkish Olympics Final is an annual two-week long cultural festival bringing together non-Turkish international students from Gulenist schools in other nations to compete in a variety of performances throughout Turkey. The performances tend to have international school children singing in Turkish, dancing villager dances from Anatolia, reciting Turkish poetry and acting in Turkish plays. International school children can also perform in English or their own native languages but much of the Turkish media attention is given to the school children/performers that learn Turkish.1 Also important at the Turkish Olympics – while the majority of performers are international non-Turkish children – there is a space given for Turkish children who go to Gulenist schools outside of Turkey.

The Turkish Islamist “Gulen Movement” sponsors and organizes the Turkish Olympics Final and also organizes smaller semi-final contests in which students from their international school network compete in home countries to represent each nation at the final. In Egypt, Gulenists have organized a semi-final Turkish Olympics festival at the largest Gulenist school in the country, Salahaldin International School in Cairo.

The focus of my thesis is on the Gulenist educational/dormitory/business network in Egypt. The Egyptian Gulenist network is the focus of this study for two reasons. The first reason is utilitarian in nature. As a master’s student at the American University in Cairo, I spent several years in Egypt after I lived and worked with Gulenists in Istanbul. The second reason is geopolitical. Turkey and Egypt are seminal nations in the Middle East. The only other country with a similar population size as well as cultural and economic import would be Iran. As such
research on the Gulenists’ actions and business/education network in Egypt – especially after the ouster of President Morsi and the rise of President El Sisi – is an important study which touches on issues of politics, economics, Islamism and education between Turkey and Egypt.

**Naming the Gulenists an Islamist Weberian Status Group**

Imam Muhammed Fethullah Gulen began his Sunni Islamist organization in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the city of Izmir, Turkey. Over forty years later the Gulen Islamist group has schools and members in nearly 200 nations across the globe. Gulen himself lives as an exile from Turkey in an Appalachian Mountain mansion in the United States. He is certainly the most famous Turk living abroad, if not the most famous Turk living.

Students of Imam Fethullah Gulen say they are part of a movement of “likeminded thinkers” who are loosely organized around the creation of schools, businesses, hospitals and media corporations. True believers of Fethullah Gulen explain that Gulen’s teachings call on them to do “service to humanity.” Gulenists believe they are a part of something bigger than an Islamist sect. They state that Gulen’s teachings will mediate conflict and give peace to the world. Many Gulenists feel they are part of an international protective and mediating process. In the English speaking world, Gulenists call themselves “The Gulen Movement.” In the Turkish speaking world, Gulenists say they are a part of *Hizmet Hareketi* or “Service Movement.”

Gulenists make a point to never call themselves a *cemaat* or Islamist congregation/society. Yet, in the formation of a worldwide educational, medical, business and media network Gulenists in Turkey and abroad worship together, work together, go to their own schools and universities, and attend the same hospitals and the same mosques. They vacation together. They marry one another. They bear Gulenist babies together. As such, for the purposes
of academic study and in accordance with the ethnographic work, I will refer to the Gulenists as a Weberian status group/congregation/society. More of this will be explained below.

In Turkey detractors of the Gulenists call Gulenists a *cemaat*. Non-Gulenist Turks use the word *cemaat* to stress that the Gulenist organizational structure is purposefully opaque and convert. Turkish critics of the Gulenists describe Gulenists as striving to create a parallel state in Turkey by controlling the Turkish police, judges and national public prosecutor’s ministry as well as a host of other government bureaucracies.\(^8\) Disparagers in Turkey state that the Gulenists exist only for money and the growth of Gulenist private Islamist corporations and schools in Turkey and around the world. These attackers say the actions of the Gulen congregation ultimately serve only to enrich the leaders of the congregation. Doubters say the Gulenists are secretive. Detractors say the Gulenists are surreptitious. Detractors fling a lot of mud.

Yet some of the mud sticks. In the four years working for and studying the Gulenists and Gulenism, I have seen that – while not all of the mud detractors fling is true – much of what detractors in Turkey say about the Gulenists has merit. The “Gulen Movement” is not a fluid poetic “happenstance” that naturally floated out of the collective brain sphere of Anatolian Turks intent on “world peace.” Gulenism is a planned, organized, controlled and disciplined Islamist network that is spreading all over the world. As such I will sometimes use the word “Islamist”, “congregation” or “society” to describe the Gulenists. However, in naming and understanding what Gulenism is, it is necessary to find an academic framework that will advance conceptual understanding of this group that goes beyond the binary clouded hatred Turkish (and foreign) detractors feel toward Gulenism and the “movement for world service” idealism Gulenists believe about themselves.
Sociologist Karl Emil Maximillian “Max” Weber’s (1864 – 1920) ideas on modernity and capitalism are useful in understanding and naming Gulenism. In this study on Gulenism, I will use Weber’s critique of Marxist notions of class as well as Weber’s concept of status group as part of the larger social structure. Later in the thesis I will also discuss Gulenism through Weber’s ideas on politics and bureaucracy.

Regarding Weber’s (and Marx’s) critique of class in capitalism, Gulenism functions along classist and capitalist lines. Within the Gulenist media organization where I worked for nearly two years I saw the division between management and lower level workers. The notion of villager Anatolian classism as expressed in Gulenist Islamist Turkish corporations certainly has a place in the critique of Gulenism. In some ways scholars cannot help but understand Gulenism through the prism of “class.” And yet, while class exists in Gulenism, something else is at play in the organization of the Islamist congregation/society.

Weber’s ideas on status groups, based around the concepts of honor and prestige, provides insight into Gulenism. The Gulen congregation/society is formulated around being a status group both in Turkey and abroad. As per Weber, the Gulen status group is, at times, segregated and at other times active and connected with the greater world. Gulenists believe that honor and status is gained in the spreading of Fethullah Gulen’s vision via Gulenist schools, businesses, hospitals and media institutions. Also, Weberian status groups justify their group’s actions. The Gulenists I interviewed in my fieldwork were convinced that they were “serving humanity.” As such I argue that Gulenists’ belief in this “service to humanity” is an important component of their honor/prestige system. The Gulen society while at times being divided by class can transcend classism. The role of Sohbet groups (religious discussion groups) supersedes the class dynamic in Gulenism. Gulen congregational leaders – some of whom are not wealthy –
have a voice within the Gulen congregation/society especially when discussing how the business institutions and bureaucracies of Gulenism connect to the ultimate “world service” altruism of Gulenism. In terms of social organization, Weber rightly saw that the need for self-preservation creates “protective” and/or “covert” behaviors in honor based status groups separate from class.

I will use the term *Islamist status group* interchangeably with the terms “Islamist congregation/society” in discussing and naming the Gulenists. Yet, I will give more weight in this thesis to the term “status group” as it better reflects the Gulenist organization and network. By including the term “Islamist” I do not seek to replicate Weber’s antiquated notions around religion and capitalism. I use the term Islamist because Gulenists have a Sunni Imam as a spiritual leader – Fethullah Gulen – who is an entrenched Sunni Islamist and influenced by the political and religious discourses of earlier Anatolian Sunni Islamist leaders such as Mevlana Rumi and Said Nursi.*

**The Turkish Olympics**

For nearly two years (2011 – 2013), I worked as a part-time TV reporter and Istanbul correspondent for a Gulenist TV channel named Ebru TV, which was owned by the largest Gulenist TV channel, Samanyolu. I went to Gulenist meetings, conferences and covered the news. Of all that I saw in my two years with the TV channel, by far the most compelling was the production of a two-week long event in early June called “The Turkish Olympics.”

Gulenist educators began the first Turkish Olympic gatherings in 2001. From 2005

*It is important to note that Gulenism is not a Sufi movement as is mistakenly thought by many academics in Islamic studies. Though influenced by leading Sufi, Jalal ad-Din “Mevlana” Rumi (1207 – 1273) Fethullah Gulen’s ideas come more from his mentor Said Nursi (1872? – 1960). Nursi and Nursi’s Nur status group/congregation were concerned with an Islamist/deist re-imagining of modernity in which spiritualism (as opposed to materialism) would be the featured epistemology. Nurism and later Gulenism are fundamentally practical political expressions of Sunni Islam. In terms of of worldview and general perspective I have observed that Nurists and Gulenists have more in common with Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood than they do with Sufi orders in Turkey or in Egypt.
onward, with support from then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s government, the Gulenists began to expand the event until it became the largest festival in Turkey. Up until 2014 the Turkish Olympics as a cultural event was popular in Turkey. The closing ceremony at the end of the two weeks was broadcast live on multiple Turkish channels and attended by hundreds of thousands. Leading up to the closing ceremony touring Turkish Olympics international student participants performed in cities across the Anatolian hinterland. The audience of the Turkish Olympics was Turkish speaking and, as such, the spectacle of international school children learning Turkish and then traveling to Turkey became a focal point of national pride and played on Anatolian traditions of hospitality. At the same time, the Turkish Olympics became a space for each child to represent his or her own nationalism; embodying multiple nationalisms in the global south. Also at play at the Turkish Olympics in Turkey was the concept of internationalism and its transformative power in recreating Turkish national identity.

Indoctrination of Performing Children into the Islamist/Capitalist Gulen Congregation and Deployment of “Turkish” Audience Members at the Turkish Olympics

The Fethullah Gulen status group’s use of Islamism, Turkish nationalism and internationalism at the Turkish Olympics is meant to indoctrinate performing children into the groups’ Islamist congregational structure. Also the spectacle of international school children performing in Turkish works to excite and eventually recruit Turkish Olympics “Turkish” audience members into the multinational Gulenist educational, business, health care and media network.

As such the primary focus of this research will be on international non-Turkish
performing school children and Turkish audience members at the Turkish Olympics.

However, a secondary focus of study emerged from the field work and needs to be included in this thesis as it informs the creation of the Turkish Olympics. The secondary focus of this study is the Turkish school children who participated in the Turkish Olympics as performers and the Egyptian audience members (many are family members of performing Egyptian children) who attended the finals of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt in 2014.

Argument 1: Child Indoctrination

Use of School/Dormitory Networks to Further the Gulen Congregation and Create the Turkish Olympics: Albania, Bosnia, Northern Iraq, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Egypt

Gulenists respondents stated that the largest numbers of the Gulen status group educational school/dormitory networks are in Albania, Bosnia, northern Iraq, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. These dormitories are important points of child indoctrination into Gulenism and as such are spaces where reportedly many dormitory residents are active as performers at the Turkish Olympics.

When discussing the role of Albanians (and Bosnians) in Gulenist society, it is important to see the special relationship eastern European Muslim majority regions had with Turkish nationalism and Turkish Islamism going back to the Ottoman Empire, which is significant in understanding how the Gulen congregation made membership and institutional inroads into eastern European Muslim majority milieus (especially the elites within those milieus). When discussing the Gulenist influence in northern Iraq it is fundamental to examine Erdogan’s foreign policy and desire for good relations with northern Kurdish Iraqi leaders. The Gulen status group
was a power broker within Erdogan’s AK Party from 2001 until falling out with Erdogan in late 2013. The details of the Gulenist/AKP fallout will be covered in later chapters.

From 2001 to 2013 Gulenists supported Erdogan in many initiatives. Gulen congregational leaders state that much of the diplomatic success Erdogan experienced in northern Iraq had to do with the Gulen congregation’s building of an extensive educational network there. Erdogan was then able to parley Gulenist built educational capital into good will for Turkey and Turkish business.

When discussing the role of Turkic speaking central Asians in the Gulen society, it is important to note that after the fall of the Soviet Union, Gulenists built their first international schools in central Asian Turkic republics. However, the idea of Turkish political, economic and cultural expansion into central Asia did not start with the Gulen congregation.

The Gulen status group’s expansion into Central Asia was facilitated by an earlier discourse in Turkish nationalism. Turkish cultural (and if possible political) expansion into central Asia had been a goal of rightest nationalists in Turkey and the Ottoman State since the nineteenth century.

Turanist Thought in Gulenism and Nationalism(s)

According to nationalist discourse in Turkey, “Turks” in Anatolia lost direct land contact with their supposed central Asian brethren in 1501 with the rise of modern Safavid Iran. However, proto-nationalist Turks in the late Ottoman Empire looking for a primordial creation story linked modern day Turkish nationalism to central Asian Turkic folktale/folk art study and etymology. This form of far-right wing Turkish nationalism is called in Turkey “Turancilik” or Turanism. “Turan” is an old Persian term referenced in the Persian Shahnameh or “Book of the Kings” and means the lands north of Iran; i.e. the Turkic lands of central Asia. That the Gulen
congregation built its first international schools in Turkic nations precisely as the Soviet Union pulled out of oil rich central Asia was not an accident. In the early 1990s, Gulenists built their first international schools in a region most palatable to Turkish nationalists. As such the Gulenists’ act of building schools across central Asian nations was an employment of rightest Turkish nationalism and a way to galvanize private Turkish capital for new private educational opportunities in central Asia.

Certainly, not all Gulenists are Turanists. There are fundamental differences between Gulenism and Turanism. Gulenism is more open-minded to other cultures and belief systems than Turanism. For example, Gulenists discuss the importance of what I have posited as “comradery internationalism” (that is the concept at the Turkish Olympics where participants have mutual respect for each other’s nationalisms). “Comradery internationalism” at the Turkish Olympics is a concept purist Turanists do not hold in high regard because Turanists are Turkic internationalists intent on creating a new Turkic nation from western China to Istanbul.27

However, the Gulen congregation’s use of Turanist ideology to further its educational/Islamist mission in central Asia and the appropriation of Turanist greeting norms to curry male sentiment shows that the Gulenists employ right wing nationalist discourse in Turkey and abroad.

**Argument 2: “Turkish” Audience Excitement and Deployment**

**Turkish Civilization and Turkish Culture in the Gulenist Appropriation of Turkishness**

The Turkish Olympics is a space where audience members are able to position themselves as Turkish citizen/hosts and parley this host status into employment opportunities in Turkey and possible deployment to work at Gulenist institutions abroad. In order to attract Turks
in Turkey to work abroad, the Turkish Olympics in Turkey reinvents traditional Kemalist understandings of Turkish national identity (Turkishness). As such the Turkish Olympics in Turkey provides a venue for citizens of Turkey to reimagine their place in the state sanctioned assimilation process known as Turkishness.

The Turkish Olympics attracted an audience in Turkey which initially came to the Turkish Olympics out of curiosity at the existence of Turkish and non-Turkish children involved in an international festival which featured Turkishness (being Turkish) as a unifying component. Famed historian of Turkey, Eric Zucker, explains that Turkish national identity production starting in the Kemalist era was tied to an inclusive/exclusive discourse around the concepts of “Turkish civilization” (inclusive in that all citizens of Turkey are part of “Turkish Civilization”) and “Turkish culture” (exclusive in that only members of the citizenry who follow certain social norms of “ethnic Turkishness” can possess Turkish culture). As readers will see in chapter three, the role of civilization and culture’s reimagining at the Turkish Olympics is tied to Islamist and multiethnic (non-Turkish) audience members’ national identity reinvention.

The Turkish Olympics then is a space where audience members are able to position themselves as “civilized” Turkish citizen/hosts and parley this host status into employment opportunities in Turkey and possible deployment for work at Gulen status group institutions abroad.

**Said Nursi’s Influence on Gulenist Islamism**

The spread of Said Nursi’s Islamist movement in the 1930s and 1940s presents scholars with the development of a new Islamist discourse running counter to the Kemalist state. Nurism was both anti-nationalistic and anti-materialistic but it was far from being reactionary against the project of modernity. Nurism discussed how Muslims could connect with the modern world in
spite of Kemalist laicism. Gulenism, as an offshoot of the Nursi Islamist status group/congregation, accepted Turkishness and Turkish nationalism but Gulenism’s acceptance of Turkishness comes with multiple caveats. Gulenists loathe materialism and Kemalists’ use of statism and modernism. Yet it is Gulenism’s critique of statist and modernist projects in Turkey that gives the most insight into Gulenists’ appropriation of Turkishness. The Gulen status group’s international education and health care networks and the congregation’s belief in its “service to humanity” show that Gulenism does not oppose “civilizing” modernist projects. On the contrary, Gulenism embraces such projects. Also, Gulenism is not opposed to the Turkish state as many members of the Gulen status group are police officers, state prosecutors and judges in Turkey. The fact that many of these same police officers, state prosecutors and judges (and members of the Turkish military) are arrested and/or out of work following the failed July 15, 2016 coup against Erdogan and the AKP led state show how connected Gulenists are with power politics in Turkey.

Gulenists support Turkish nationalism and a reinvented spiritualist modernity. This reinvented modernity comes from Said Nursi’s belief in an internationalized modernity in which all deists – regardless of being Islamic, Jewish or Christian – battle against materialism. Following the example of Fethullah Gulen’s 1998 visit to Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, international Gulenist schools often organize “dialogue centers” in new cities and countries. The purpose of these centers is to reach out to locals regardless of their faith. In the US, Gulenist dialogue centers tend to reach out to Christians, Jews and other Sunni Islamic groups.

In Egypt, the overall anti-Islamist and anti-Turkish rhetoric in the country since the fall of President Morsi in July 2013 has created an environment where Gulenists must be careful how Egyptian authorities perceive Gulenist educational and/or dialogue activities. Before July 2013
the Gulen congregation had a relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In fact a week before President Morsi was ousted, leading Gulenist Mustafa Ozcan planned to go to Egypt to meet with Muslim Brotherhood leadership and counsel a more moderate approach to relations with the Egyptian military and left-wing Egyptian politicians. Following the July 3, 2013 ouster of President Morsi, the Gulen status group in Egypt have allied themselves with the administration of President El Sisi and stressed their anti-Erdogan credentials.

Islamism and Performance at the Turkish Olympics in Turkey

The Turkish Olympics is a performance where Turkish Islamism lies bare and naked. To understand how a cultural festival can hold political meaning for Islamists in Turkey, scholars need only view how organizers of the Turkish Olympics portray Imam Fethullah Gulen to the Turkish audience.

The beginnings of Turkish Olympics performances in Turkey present audiences with a twenty-year old video of Imam Fethullah Gulen giving a “divinely inspired” sermon in which Gulen predicts that Turkey will one day have “an Olympics.” Turkish audience members watching the Turkish Olympics on TV or seeing the Olympics live next see Gulen’s digitalized image discussing dialogue centers, schools, progress in Turkey and “Olympic ceremonies” which display the activities of “Hizmet friends” (code words Gulenists use to describe themselves). While Gulenist Islamism is not overt at the Turkish Olympics in Turkey, it is certainly not covert either. The digital presence of Imam Fethullah Gulen (the leader of the Islamist Gulenist congregation) at the Turkish Olympics in itself infuses the discourse of the Turkish Olympics with an Islamist undertone.
Thesis Argument 3: Economic Growth of the Gulen Status Group

Much of the rational for continued growth of the Gulen status group comes from a fusion of Islamism and capitalism. As such the Turkish Olympics as a festival spurs economic growth and wealth production conducted within the rules of an Islamist congregational structure.45

In interviews, Gulen status group leaders stated that the Gulenist business organization TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists) has generated nearly 400 billion new dollars for the Turkish economy in new international trade since 2004/2005.46 Turkish corporations have spread across the globe, so too has Gulen status group’s schools.47 In fact, this spread of economic and educational capital is linked as the international Gulen congregation schools become meeting points where local elites meet visiting Turkish business leaders.48

As stated before many Gulenists believe they are a part of something bigger than an Islamist and capitalist sect.49 Interviewees generally believed they were part of a worldwide “service to humanity movement” which somehow dwarfed the importance of the status group’s separate business/private educational enterprises.50 Gulenists, regardless of being wealthy or poor, tended to deny that the Gulen congregation is a hierarchical international educational network connected to private, for-profit elite status production. In interviews, Gulenists believed that the Gulen status group as an institution would protect51 them from the dangers of the non-congregational world.52

While the Gulen status group is profit based and capitalistic in nature53, Gulenists use the Islamist congregation as a protective barrier from the uncertainties of unfettered neo-liberalism (called vahsi kapitalizm or “wild capitalism” in Turkish).54 Poor Gulenist interviewees seem to accept class disparity within the status group because at least poor and wealthy Gulenist children
alike can go to schools and get health care at little or no expense. The popular Turkish adage
*Suruden ayrılan koyunu kurt kapar* is apropos for understanding the protection the Gulen status
group provides for members. The translation of the adage is: “The sheep which strays from the
herd is snatched by the wolf.”

I have seen while working for a Gulenist media organizations (Samanyolu and Cihan
News Agency) that Gulenists do not fire under-performing employees as long the employees in
question work hard and are believers. While salaries at congregational institutions are below
industry standards, there always appeared to be a position somewhere in the organization’s
business enterprises, educational and health services for believers of Fethullah Gulen and
Gulen’s vision of *Hizmet* or worldwide “service to humanity.” As such firing or the termination
of employment was unheard of within the status group. As long as members were believers in
Fethullah Gulen’s spiritual (and economic and political) message, then there was always a place
of employment for believers. And again, even if salaries are low in Gulen status group
institutions, the congregation has extensive business, education, media, and health care services
that members use at little or no cost.

*This protective-ness inherent in the Gulen status group should not surprise academics. In
a laissez-faire world where the state is in retreat it is rational that people would unify in religious
status groups. In fact, given the intense privatization in Turkey since 1980 it is quite logical that
a status group like the Gulenists would be appealing to Islamist-leaning Turks.*
METHODOLOGY:

My research primarily followed Egyptian and Turkish students and teachers who attended or worked at Salahaldin International School in Cairo, Egypt. Salahaldin is the leading Gulenist school in Egypt and one of the more expensive international schools in Cairo.

The research for my thesis consisted of ethnography, visual analysis, and observational studies. I questioned how the Turkish Olympics deals with nationalism, Islamism, capitalism and congregationalism. I conducted interviews with students, parents, Turkish faculty, sponsors, judges and audience members of the Turkish Olympics.

My fluency in Turkish allowed me great access into the Gulen status group and my history as a TV reporter/journalist working with an American/Turkish Gulenist TV channel added to the openness of Gulenists to express themselves and their worldview to me. With my contacts in the Gulen congregation, I interviewed over seventy active Gulenists in Cairo, Egypt, Istanbul, Turkey and in Germany. Besides low-level Gulenists, I was able to interview leading heads of the congregation and the President of the Turkish Olympics.

I was never beholden to the Gulenists during the production of this thesis. From October 2011 until August 2013, I worked as a part-time TV correspondent/reporter and assistant news editor at Ebru TV the American/Turkish branch of the largest Gulen TV channel in Turkey, Samanyolu. I began my formal research into the Turkish Olympics and the Gulen status group in January 2014. Consequently, I was not connected to the Gulen congregation in any capacity while producing this thesis.

Gathering general background information on the Gulen congregation occurred in informal conversations between myself and my TV producer, “Abdullah Erdogan”, from October 2011 until August 2013. As a leading Gulenist media producer, Erdogan was an
individual who provided invaluable information on the scope, size and functioning of the Gulen status group.

I began initial investigations for this thesis on the Turkish Olympics in the summer of 2013 and completed the final interviews on the Turkish Olympics in September 2015. However, the vast bulk of the interviews and ethnographic work took place from January 2014 until June 2014, or a 5-month time period. In this time, I interviewed performing school children (twenty respondents), Turkish teachers (thirty respondents) and Egyptian parents (fifteen respondents) of the students to learn why they encourage students to perform at the Turkish Olympics. Besides the performers and those around them, I interviewed judges (twenty respondents) and sponsors (three respondents) of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt, Turkey and Germany. Finally, I conducted extensive interviews with “Turkish” audience members (twenty respondents) who attended the Turkish Olympics Final both in Turkey (from 2005 – 2013) and in Germany (in 2014) in order to understand the excitement/incitement and then later deployment process that audience members at the Turkish Olympics experienced.

While some of the categories of respondents I interviewed were separate, oftentimes the categories of respondents meshed. For example, a Gulenist Turkish judge of the Turkish Olympics who worked as a teacher at Salahaldin International School in Egypt might have been an audience member of the Turkish Olympics in Turkey seven years earlier. This interviewee could possess multiple roles in the ethnography in that he could speak to being a Gulenist judge at the Turkish Olympics, a Gulen status group educator at a Gulenist international school and a Turkish audience member at the Turkish Olympics.

The Gulen congregation has discouraged would be Turkish scholars from studying this important event for fear of an academic or journalistic attack on their congregation. Ironically, as
a foreigner, it was in many ways easier for me to do this academic study than a Turkish scholar. As stated before my knowledge of Turkish was a great asset to this work both in Egypt and, especially, in Turkey. I intend for this study to inform a deeper understanding of the Gülen society in the academy and multimedia journalism.

My field work is fundamental to this study. I was able to chart the Gulenist international network based on direct interviews with Gulenists themselves. In many ways having direct interviews and contacts with the subject of study had many advantageous. However, there was one disadvantage to this kind of research. Readers need to be aware of this short coming in order to read the thesis properly.

Gulenists were telling me about themselves and their congregation. As such there is a component of subjectivity inherent in the research. Were respondents always telling me the truth or were they lying sometimes? Or were there some lies mixed in with the truths? Did the truths that respondents held dear always correlate with reality or were their “truths” a fiction sold to them by leaders of the Gulen status group? As the researcher I have tried in the text to highlight many of these inconsistences. Yet the fact remains that readers of this thesis need to realize respondents’ statements have a degree of bias due to their positions in the movement.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

The Turkish Olympics affords a view of multiple nationalisms. It is within this framework that Islamist Turkey reproduces itself nationally and internationally. The Turkish Olympics is a showcase for what Gulenists have done globally; a way to excite their base and a means to produce cultural capital and public consent. As such, I conducted a series of
investigations around the following questions:

1. How much can the Turkish Olympics inform studies on the newly developing “Black” Turk hegemon vis-à-vis Prime Minister Erdogan’s and the AKP’s decade long dominance of politics and the economy in Turkey?

2. How do “Turkish” audience members view performing international students (“the other”/symbols of internationalism displaying Turkish nationalism)?

3. What is the depth of involvement in the Gulen society that performing children experience? Are there different levels of involvement these children experience and if so what are these levels and how does involvement work at each separate level?

4. How does this show of multi-cultural exchange under the banner of a seemingly inclusive internationalism help scholars better understand Islamist congregations such as the Gulenists’ version of Islamist capitalism?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis has three parts and seven total chapters. They are as follows:

Part I: Laying the Framework

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review

Part II: Child Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics

3. Theoretical and Historical Background and Literature Review of Child Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics
4. Ethnography of Child Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics
Part III: Audience Production and Turkish National Identity Reinvention at the Turkish Olympics

5. Theoretical and Historical Background and Literature Review of Audience Production and Turkish National Identity Reinvention at the Turkish Olympics

6. Ethnography of Audience Production and Turkish National Identity Reinvention at the Turkish Olympics

Part IV: Summary

7. Conclusion to the Study of the Gulen Congregation’s Turkish Olympics in Egypt
A study on a cultural festival funded and articulated by an Islamist status group’s international educational network has never been done before. Research on the Turkish Olympics must discuss Turkish nationalism as the superior (or at least dominant) nationalism on display at a festival of multiple global southern nationalisms. As such this research will add to academic understanding of global south on global south cultural imperialism. Readers will recognize Edward Said’s and Timothy Mitchell’s influence in this study. However, unlike Said and Mitchell, I do not focus my study on eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century academic and artistic justifications for European imperialism and the resulting cultural festivals (i.e. World’s Fairs). My research instead interrogates how a hereto subjugated “oriental” other (“Turks”) reinvent themselves at the Turkish Olympics by mapping the world according to their own nationalism. I also study how the “other” of the festival – that is performing school children – are indoctrinated into the Gulen status group via the Turkish Olympics.

A collection then of thinkers – many of whom are connected to post-colonial critical theory – is necessary to unpack the phenomena of the Turkish Olympics within the Gulen congregation/status group. I will utilize studies on spectacle/festivals, cosmopolitanism, ethnicism and nationalism in this review of literature.

I begin with Timothy Mitchell’s work on world fairs in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mitchell’s critique will inform this thesis’ discussion of the Turkish Olympics as a traveling “fair” for nationalist reinvention of the “international Turk” in Turkey. Also this thesis will interrogate how the Turkish Olympics works as a Turkish neo-imperialist mapping festival
in which Turks objectify children and nations of the global south.

Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas around cultural and educational capital will be used in critiquing the Gulenist schools and dormitories as spaces for the development of Gulenist educational capital. By using Bourdieu’s concepts of educational capital production, scholars can understand the Turkish Olympics as an event, which reifies and displays the Gulen status group’s educational capital product. The Turkish Olympics then is involved in the selling and consumption of Gulenist education to the wider world.

The literature review discusses the theory of cosmopolitanism as outlined in the seminal book *Cairo Cosmopolitan*. I will use ideas in *Cairo Cosmopolitan* to critique how Gulenists employ the notions of internationalism/multiethnicism/cosmopolitanism in the formation of their status group, the group’s international education network and the Turkish Olympics.

Ethnicism will be featured in this study on Turkishness, Egyptianness and multiple nationalisms under the umbrella of Turkish nationalism. I will compare Max Weber’s ideas on the presumptive nature of ethnicities with Anthony D. Smith’s cultural approach or ethnosymbolism to the study of ethnicism.

Any study on nationalism would not be complete without Benedict Anderson. Anderson’s ideas on print capital utilizing dialects and creating “national languages” will be fundamental for this thesis’ study on Turkish nationalism. Also I will discuss Anderson’s more esoteric studies such as his critique of death, timelessness and how these two existentialisms connect with modern nationalism.

Ernest Gellner states that nationalism in the industrial age is tied to state-sponsored education, which in turn codifies and imposes on the populace of the state a nationalized communication/language. Gellner’s ideas will helpful in the unpacking of the Gulen status
group’s employment of multiple nationalisms in their worldwide school and dormitory network. Gellner’s work connects with Anderson’s interrogation of nationalism and Bourdieu’s studies on educational capital production. Using these connections, I will highlight nationalism, education and performance at the Turkish Olympics.

Mapping the Spectacle

Timothy Mitchell’s groundbreaking work *Colonising Egypt* positions his study of the colonial object in international “orientalist” spectacles (world fairs and conferences) of nineteenth century Europe. Mitchell is writing as part of a larger group of intellectuals influenced by Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*. In *Orientalism* Said critiques what he sees as western artistic and academic justification for eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century European imperialism in the creation of dehumanized eastern “Orientals.”

Mitchell furthers Said’s work by critiquing the process by which non-Europeans became objectified spectacles/performers for European audiences. Scholars have justified European spectacles as “Western curiosity” from which European intellectual growth bloomed in the early modern age. Yet, in *Colonising Egypt* Mitchell critiques “the festival/spectacle.” Using a series of examples from the nineteenth century, Mitchell shows European spectacles as spaces where Europeans could reveal and objectify the “exotic” other. This objectification of “orientals” had an ancillary influence on imperialism and global capitalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mitchell discusses how western Europeans – having made “easterners” exotic objects at world fairs and other cultural festivals – could then justify brutal economic domination of and direct imperial rule over them.

My study will engage the performers and the audience of the Turkish Olympics. As such
my research will be informative into how Kemalist state oppressed Islamist Turks empowered by
global capital, map and plan their power over Turkish citizens and foreigners. Also I will
interrogate how the international students view their roles in the production of the Turkish
Olympics and their relationships with Turkey, the Gulenists and Turkish nationalism.

This study will use frameworks developed by Mitchell and Said with a twist in that I will
focus my research on a global southern milieu’s (Turs’’) employment of cultural imperialism on
other global south nations (in this study’s case Egypt). Turkish nationalism is the moving force
behind the production of the Turkish Olympics. As such this study will contribute to research on
post-colonial power structures and economic relations between formally oppressed global
southerners.

**Pierre Bourdieu, Capital Production and the Gulen Congregation**

Going to an unknown nation, learning that country’s languages and building schools far
from Turkey is all part of how Gulenists believe they serve humanity. Pierre Bourdieu’s studies
on the production of different forms of capital help us understand the process in which the
Gulenists build their worldwide network and then return home for the Turkish Olympics.

Bourdieu views society as one field of metaphoric “play.” For Bourdieu capital
production is, “the experience of being passionately involved… engaged in a struggle with others
and with our own limits, over stakes to which we are (at least for the moment) deeply
committed.” When accomplishment of any sort occurs, social actors seek to develop their own
personal capital for the increase in their standards of living and that of their children.
According to Bourdieu, actors can reproduce capital in two general ways. One way of capital
reproduction is through inter-generational support of educational institutions. In this version of
capital production, wealthy people work to ensure that their children succeed in elite universities. The progeny then has access to high levels of cultural capital (such as educational credentials). From the collegial contacts made within educational institutions students can then develop ties, which might result in future economic capital production.63 A tangible example of this would be elite educational institutions in the United States such as Harvard University. Attending students at Ivy League schools irrespective of their family’s backgrounds gain access to elite capital production and networks simply from the four years students attend the university.

The second version of capital production according to Bourdieu occurs when an athlete or a famous person converts his or her name or appearance into endorsements. These endorsements increase the popularity and name recognition of the product and enrich the spokesperson both in terms of economic and prestige capital.64

The Gulenist school of my case study, Salahaldin International School in Cairo, is connected to the type of cultural capital production Bourdieu envisions. Salahaldin International School is not just a site for elite cultural capital production but also is a school for the advancement of talented students from poor families and a site for the maintenance of educational and ideological standards for students from Gulenist families. This ternary nature of Salahaldin is by no means simply an anomaly; it represents three wide-spread sociological constructs of the Gulen status group. Those constructs are neo-liberalism, reproduction, indoctrination.

Gulenists build schools in Turkey and in Egypt that intentionally seek children from wealthy parents by promising top-notch private/neoliberal education. Meanwhile the congregation presents students from families that are a part of the Gulen status group free education as a way to strengthen and continue the status group. And finally Gulenist leaders give
scholarships and free room and board to students from non-Gulenist families as a meritocracy-based way to indoctrinate talented students into the Gulen status group. In Turkey, these scholarship children from poor families can and often do become the new generation of teachers, businessmen, media experts and bankers in the Gulen status group/congregation. In Salahaldin’s case, the Egyptian children on scholarship come from the poor city of Beni Sweif outside of Cairo and from middle class families in Alexandria.

The Turkish children at Salahaldin (twenty-five percent of the school populace at Salahaldin International school in Cairo as of 2014 were from Turkey) tended to come from Gulenist families with parents either working in Turkey or Egypt for Gulenist institutions. That some Gulenist parents would send their children to far away Egypt for high quality English language based education speaks to Bourdieu’s ideas on education capital reproduction. First and foremost, the Gulen status group reproduces high levels of education capital for children of Gulenist families. Also it is easier for Gulenist authorities and parents to indoctrinate their children by sending their children abroad to a Gulenist school and Gulenist dormitory where their children adopt many of the Gulen status group’s ideas on internationalism, nationalism and Islamism.

The Turkish Olympics in Egypt were tied to scholarship students in that many Egyptian and Turkish students on scholarship participated in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt 2014. Incidentally 2014 was the first year when children from Beni Sweif performed, trying to go to the Turkish Olympics Final in June of 2014.

**Cosmopolitanism in Cairo at the Turkish Olympics and in the Global South**

_Cairo Cosmopolitan_ is a collection of writings by a group of thinkers called the Cairo
School of Urban Studies. In developing their theory of cosmopolitanism, thinkers connected with the Cairo School of Urban Studies work to go beyond two ideologies. The first ideology to which contributors of *Cairo Cosmopolitan* were opposed was the neo-liberal belief that modern societies naturally divide between dictatorial regimes and middle class “western” states. The Cairo School of Urban Studies was also against the neo-imperialism inherent in the “Clash of Civilizations” theory. Recently some scholars of the MENA region have revised Huntington’s theory and stated that within “Islamic Civilization” the same conflicts Huntington outlines in terms of geo-political divides were replicated in MENA societies themselves. These scholars of the MENA region who supported this revised version of Clash of Civilization theory organized groups within MENA societies into “western” modernizers and “backward” Islamists. The Cairo School of Urban Studies, on the other hand, oppose such normative dualities, instead embracing the idea that theory must be linked to direct experience of the world and concrete relations of power within society.

Contributors to *Cairo Cosmopolitan* accept that some scholars have appropriated the word “cosmopolitan” to idealize certain metropolises (i.e. Alexandria, Istanbul, Izmir/Smyrna, Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Cairo) in the nineteenth century where multiethnicism/internationalism was thought to be of central import in social change. The writers of *Cairo Cosmopolitan* dismiss this understanding of cosmopolitanism as a nostalgia project of scholars in the twenty-first century. In the nineteenth century western European imperialism and capitalist emulation by non-European elites in so-called “cosmopolitan” cities like Istanbul and Cairo was the norm. That these nineteenth century cities/examples of “cosmopolitanism” may appear to some historians in the twenty-first century to be “internationalist” in flavor, misses the oftentimes contentious relationship between newly arrived peasant labor and elite owners of capital in the
nineteenth century. Also historians who look with a loving eye to nineteenth century cosmopolitanism oftentimes fail to discuss the developing discourse around nationalist mono-ethnic identity politics that sprung from these “multiethnic” cities. For example, a multiethnic/international Istanbul in the nineteenth century was the birthplace of Pan-Turkic Turanism, a far-right version of Turkish nationalism/Turkish mono-ethnicism. Certainly there were ethnicities living side by side in some MENA urban centers in the nineteenth century. Yet the political discourse and direction of the world in the nineteenth century was toward nationalism and mono-ethnicism. The question can be posed and is posed in Cairo Cosmopolitan: how much was nineteenth century “cosmopolitanism” anything but an urban concentration of a new capitalist elite in the MENA region with ties to foreign imperial states, corporations and homogenizing nationalism?

The term “cosmopolitanism” has also been used by some academics to describe a new “Petroleum Cosmopolitanism” originating from the Persian Gulf, which seeks in the twenty-first century to employ Islamist symbols in the production of architecture and consumerism. Superficially “Islamist,” petroleum cosmopolitanism works “…with the US to ruthlessly repress Islamist radicalism.”69 Academics connected with the Cairo School of Urban Studies state that petroleum financed “cosmopolitanism” is international only if there is an acceptance from local actors regarding the pre-eminence of a neo-liberal globalized world. As such while global capital production may change aspects of its surface appearance (blue cheese Le Big Macs at McDonalds in Paris or Islamist architecture at hyper malls in Dubai), ultimately the exploitive and unequal aspects of neo-liberalism remain the same.70

The academics writing in Cairo Cosmopolitan see cosmopolitanism as a concept, which can be re-branded in the twenty-first century. This rebranding becomes part of an emancipatory
counter-mono-ethnic theory, which gives local actors a space to define themselves outside of state sponsored nationalist projects. The term cosmopolitan in *Cairo Cosmopolitan* is connected to a process by which the marginalized bring their ideas back to the public sphere, “in the shape of subversive, grounded, fierce, world-weary articulations.” As such the writers of *Cairo Cosmopolitan* agree with critical theorists like Bent Flyvberg who view social science as being dependent on interpretation and the interrogation of power relations in social change and transformation. For these writers Cairo offers them a laboratory to explore citizenship in the global south.

This thesis is aided by the work done in *Cairo Cosmopolitan* in that the Turkish Olympics, like Cairo itself, is a laboratory or mirror of how Gulenists employ cosmopolitanism/internationalism/multi-ethnicism in their worldwide congregational schools and business network. *Cairo Cosmopolitan* includes writings on gated communities in Cairo and how connected these communities are part of the neo-liberal urban planning process. The Gulen status group in Cairo organizes their schools on a nearly identical business model that is a model of neo-liberal “gated education” or education for the elite of Cairo. However, the Gulen status group at times undermines what is called in Turkish “Vahsi Kapitalizm” or “Wild Capitalism”/neo-liberalism. In terms of inter-congregational support services, the Gulen status group gives many members education, health care and other services for little or no money. This process of gathering around an Islamist status group is not undermining the neo-liberal privatized paradigm but instead an understandable response by locals who seek protection where there is no protective state or provision of public services.

Scholars writing in *Cairo Cosmopolitan* discuss the Muslim Brotherhood as possessing a space in cosmopolitanism. Sections of *Cairo Cosmopolitan* show that members of the Muslim
Brotherhood believe in political pluralism, anti-police brutality efforts, secular parties and full rights for Coptic Christians and women. Following the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to political power in 2012 many students of Egypt would now question how much members of the Brotherhood really believed in political pluralism at the time *Cairo Cosmopolitan* was written in 2006. Nonetheless that the Muslim Brotherhood was included as a possible partner in cosmopolitanism will be helpful when looking at Gulenists.

It seems apparent from the ethnographic work that some of the time Gulenists are marginalized, especially following their clash with Turkish President Erdogan in late 2013 and early 2014 and presently following the unsuccessful July 15 coup attempt. Since their clash with Erdogan, Gulenists have allied themselves with other minority voices in Turkey and support political pluralism and campaigns for press freedom and human rights in Turkey. However, like the Muslim Brotherhood, when the Gulenists were allied with Erdogan and were a part of Erdogan’s ruling elite, Gulen status group members were active in the Turkish police force, public prosecutor’s office and other state bureaucracies. Up until the unsuccessful July 15, 2016 coup attempt, Gulenists held some sway in the Turkish state (though they had been under attack by the AKP leadership since 2013). After the July 15 coup, massive arrests and firings have been reported in public and private sectors of Turkey. President Erdogan and Turkish authorities have taken aim against the Gulen status group focusing the arrests on Gulenists. Leadership within the AKP has accused the Gulen congregation of being accomplices with the CIA in the planning of the July 15 coup.

Investigating how much the Gulenists accept neo-liberal “petroleum cosmopolitanism” and how much Gulenists connect with a subaltern cosmopolitanism as outlined will be useful in studying the Turkish Olympics, the ethnicities/nationalities of participating school children and
the ethnicities of the “Turkish” audience.

As a final note, I will use the term “petroleum cosmopolitanism” in this study as an analogy of the neo-liberalized version of cosmopolitanism as outlined by the Cairo School of Urban Studies. Readers ought to see my use of this term as reference to the entire global process by which hyper-capitalism/neo-liberalism applies itself in multiple societies and works to make itself felt superficially and aesthetically relevant to people’s lives all the while being the same process of elitism from China to Brazil; from the Middle East to the Midwest of the United States.

Ethnicity as the Origin of Nations

Max Weber’s and Anthony D. Smith’s (1939 - ) ideas are useful comparisons in understanding the concept of ethnicity and its importance in studies on the Gulen status group and the Turkish Olympics. Both thinkers position the role of ethnic identity as the genesis of nationalism and nations. For Weber, ethnicity is subjective and “presumed,” far from being certain or normative. Weber states that any “irrational” political community – regardless of how objectively artificial or real that community is – ultimately relies on an acceptance of a shared ethnic brotherhood. While Smith accepts the subjectivity inherent in ethnic formation, he stresses cultural differences between ethnicities as the focus of his study. Smith contends that, “the role of myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols … (are) reminders of the unique culture and fate of the ethnic community.”

Smith’s acceptance of some normative elements of ethnicity and Weber’s contention that ethnicity is presumed and subjective will be useful in studying fieldwork connected to student performers’ Egyptian-ness and Turkish-ness at the Turkish Olympics. It may appear from first
glance that Weber’s critique of ethnicity as an illogical happenstance and Smith’s study of the variants and truths that go into ethnic production may be opposed theories. However, I prefer to use both Weber and Smith’s ideas inter-changeably as two sides of the same ethnic studies coin. I see no conflict between Weber and Smith but instead useful theories which support each other. The ethno-symbolism of ethnicity a la Smith is – some of the time – helpful in academic production linked to history, myth and tradition. Yet it is also fascinating (and helpful) to the see the assumed/inventive nature of ethnic production a la Weber. In some ways then ethnicity exists as both invented and unreal and at the same moment one of the driving forces a person has in her identity production.

**Benedict Anderson’s Roots of Nationalism**

A leading scholar in studies of nationalism, Benedict Anderson contends that nationalism is more akin to kinship or religion in that these concepts create immediate associations with communities as opposed to ideologies such as liberalism or Marxism. Anderson stresses that while nationalism has different forms it nonetheless is the primary unifier around the world, surpassing even Marxism and/or neo-liberalism in its importance. According to Anderson, nationalism arose two centuries ago in a “spontaneous distillation” of “differing historical forces.” Nationalism then became a “modular” force of modernity, planting itself across cultures and venues.

Anderson states that nationalism is based on how a community imagines itself. Anderson gives the example of an aristocrat in France during the *Ancien Régime* explaining that the said aristocrat would likely not think of herself as being a part of a “class of aristocrats.” Anderson here is not stating that class or proto-nationalism only existed after July 14, 1789.
Certainly when pressed the aristocrat would have known that she was a part of a community which was above and apart from the rest of the King’s subjects in the Kingdom of France. However, Anderson explains that an aristocrat of the Ancien Régime would likely first imagine herself to be part of a familial/honor/service community in which her father the Comte of X would be sworn in service to the Duc of Y and so on.89

Yet in modern nationalism, Anderson explains, mobilization of the populace is based around the nation being an imagined horizontal community.90 The social system in the nation itself may be (and often is) unequal. As per Anderson it is important to recognize that the idea of a “nation,” industrialism and modern military mobilization all coalesced onward from the late 1700s. Given nationalism’s overt success – and murderous war brutality – over the past two hundred years, Anderson seeks to understand the cultural roots of nationalism.91

He finds these roots in the rise of print capitalism in the fifteenth and especially sixteenth centuries, starting in Europe and then spreading across the world.92 According to Anderson the rise of print capital empowered the merchant class in Europe to begin reading in vernacular dialects.93 Initially print capital’s spread was a Protestant movement against the use of Latin by the “universal” Catholic Church.94 However publication quickly became associated with one particular dialect as the new “national language” of a political area.95 Castilian became codified as Spanish. Modern English came from the dialects of English around London. The French of northern France around Paris became the new national language; so too with the northern German dialect in the Holy Roman Empire.96 Between roughly 1450 and 1900, nationalism became the result of print capitalism and the existent linguistic differences (ethnic or otherwise) first in western Europe and then across the planet.97

This development of national languages had two discernable results according to
Anderson. On the one hand national languages created a disparity of power within nations in that those who spoke the national language as native speakers gained easier access to capital production and political power. Second, print production gave new national languages a feeling of antique authenticity. This faux antique-ness would be used by nationalists to justify “objective” primordial origin myths of their separate nations and nationalisms.

Understanding the roots of nationalism will be fundamental in this thesis’ theoretical framework around the rise of Turkish nationalism in the nineteenth century and Turkish nationalism’s subsequent transformations in the twenty-first century. Famed Turkish historian Kemal Karpat uses many of Anderson’s ideas (or perhaps Anderson uses many of Karpat’s ideas) in developing theories as to why Turkish language becomes the moving force behind twentieth century Turkish nationalism in the republican period of Turkish history.

Importantly Ataturk’s belief in the rightness of pan-nationalism; that is an internationalization of nationalisms for all peoples is oftentimes used by Gulenists to justify the Turkish Olympics to Turkish and foreign audiences. Anderson dismisses such claims as being nearly impossible. It certainly was impossible in Ataturk’s case. Just as Ataturk was holding up his hallowed “Turks” as examples to the world of how anti-imperialism and nationalism mixed could result in a “free” Turkish state, he was in 1925 and again from 1937 to 1938 brutalizing different Kurdish groups. These were the same Kurds who were at least twenty-five if not thirty-five percent of the population of Ataturk’s free “Turkish” state.

From roughly from 1923 until Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s electoral victory in 2002 the Kemalist dominated Turkish state actively supported a one state nationalism. Kemalist nationalism followed modernist structures of nationalism in that it was nominally “secular” and materialist in outlook. Actually the Kemalist state was far from secular, but instead Kemalism
was laicist; the distinction between secularism and laicism will be made later on in this thesis when discussing the Kemalist state’s actions against religion starting in the 1920s. Kemalist Turkish nationalism could be maintained only by a self-imposed (or Kemalist junta imposed) cultural isolation from the MENA region and Eastern Europe, the two areas of the former Ottoman state. In some ways this self-imposed/military imposed isolationism from neighbors made Turkey the ideal NATO member and ally of far-away America.

Erdogan’s rise to power in 2002 and 2003, coupled with Gulenist growth both in Turkey and outside of Turkey and the production of a show/festival like the Turkish Olympics presents a challenge to isolationist Kemalism as the ruling ideology of Turkey. Since 2002 a new spirit of neo-liberal Islamism (a.k.a. “Petroleum Cosmopolitanism”) has become the norm in Turkey. This internationalist neo-liberal Islamism seeks to claim and rebrand Turkish nationalism (called in this thesis “Black” Turkish nationalism). The Turkish Olympics becomes a mirror then by which scholars can view how neo-liberal Turkish Islamist leaders are seeking to reinvent and re-employ Turkish nationalism.

**Death, Timelessness, Religion and Nationalism**

Anderson posits that the nation came into being at a time when religion was ebbing as a unifying factor across the globe. Modern nationalism thus grew from the lacuna left by religion. Understanding death and timelessness – two concepts explained by orthodox and heterodox sects within each religion – became a space nationalism needed to fill. In the nineteenth century, the nation became worthy of the ultimate sacrifice. The nation at the same time became timeless, stretching back to antiquity and forward to a future utopia.

National sacrifice became a justification and explanation for mass death in nineteenth,
twentieth and twenty-first century wars. Nationalized death monuments, museums to war and mass gravesites in Cairo, Paris, northern Virginia, Canakkale and countless others are places where nationalized populations can feel as if they knew/know/will know and had/have/will have a connection with everyone else in their nation state’s past, present and future. According to Anderson, the appeal then of nationalism was/is/will be fundamentally connected with the communal need to process death and timelessness.

Anderson’s ideas on death and timelessness will be useful in this thesis interrogation of Turkish nationalized media performed at the Turkish Olympics.

Ernest Gellner: Nationalism and Education

While Anderson sees imagination and creativity in a society developing its nationalism, Ernest Gellner (1925 – 1995) sees fabrication and falsification in a people’s production of their collective national narrative. According to Gellner the way in which nationalism is reified in any nation is through state-sponsored education.

Gellner focuses much of his study on nationalism around the artificiality of life in the industrial age. According to Gellner, the process of modernity is the process of state-sponsored homogenization of national populaces. In the modern age an artificialized humanity can “no longer breathe” without the homogenizing panacea of state sponsored national education and nationalized communication. Gellner writes that modern day people need to be mobile and able to communicate immediately with the same shared and standardized linguistic medium. As such one’s educational background becomes paramount to the modern man/woman, “The employability, dignity, security and self-respect of individuals, typically, and for the majority of people now hinges on their education.” Humanuty, in Gellner’s eyes, has
become separated from everything (monarchy, land, faith) and gelded only to nationalized education systems.109

The Gulen status group employs nationalism as a part of their educational network in Turkey, Egypt and many other countries. As such the Gulenist educational system must adhere to certain nationalized rules and laws in every state they build their schools and/or dormitories. For example, starting in 2014 the Gulenist educational curriculum at Salahaldin International School in Cairo came under scrutiny by the Egyptian state.110 The Egyptian Ministry of Education imposed a nationalized education system at Salahaldin International School following the rise of President El Sisi’s government in 2014.111 In 2015 and 2016 (the years after this thesis’ 2014 field work on the Turkish Olympics) the Turkish Olympics in Egypt was cancelled or “limited.” Instead Gulenist leaders at or connected to Salahaldin International School began to push for a new “Arabic Olympics.”112 Performed for the first time in 2015, the Arabic Olympics was a cultural festival akin to the Turkish Olympics. It featured Pan-Arabism and sought to bring students together from Gulenist schools across the Arab world.113

Scholars see that Gulenists are able to maintain their educational system in Egypt and morph their most important cultural festival to adhere to new political realities and an upsurge in Egyptian nationalism following June 30, 2013. I will use both Gellner’s and Bourdieu’s ideas on education, capital production and nationalism in the study on the Turkish Olympics and the Gulen status group.

Conclusions

The upcoming thesis will discuss the ways in which the Gulenists are and are not a part of neo-liberal worldview. Also this thesis will interrogate how much a festival like the Turkish
Olympics reproduces nationalism, ethnicism, and cosmopolitanism/internationalism and in what ways the festival/spectacle undermines those same concepts.
Part Two

Study of Child/Performer Indoctrination into the Gulen Status Group at the Turkish Olympics
Chapter Three

History and Theory of the Process of Child Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics

The Gulen Status Group owns and operates an extensive school network throughout Egypt and as a result holds sway over children and parents in their schools. The Turkish Olympics performance festival in Egypt is a space for shaping and subjugating performing children. Child performers of the Turkish Olympics are inculcated into the Gulen status group/congregation using two seemingly opposed ideologies: internationalism and Turkish nationalism.

In the ethnography I was able to discern three categories of international child indoctrination into the Gulen status group via the Turkish Olympics. I stress that these categories came from my fieldwork and are not based on previous literature on the Gulen status group nor are they from another established theoretical framework. The three categories of international child indoctrination into the Gulen congregation via the Turkish Olympics that I was able to observe were international comradery, outsider internationalism and Gulenist internationalism. I will explain these three variants of international child indoctrination in further detail later in the thesis.

While the focus of this research is on international children and their process of indoctrination via the Turkish Olympics into the Gulen congregation, a secondary focus of this study is the indoctrination process for Turkish children into the Gulen status group. Turkish children at Salahaldin international school had an intimate relationship with Turkish national identity and many of the Turkish children interviewed came from Gulenist families. As such,
indoctrination of Turkish students into Gulenism at the Turkish Olympics was more about strengthening and reinforcing existent national and familial beliefs.

Twenty-five percent of the student population at Salahaldin International School were from Turkey. Turkish students then may have been examples of Turkishness (and Gulenism) for Egyptian and other international students at Salahaldin.

**Use of Turkish Nationalism at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt**

Turkish nationalism was the featured narrative at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt in 2014. Performers reciting Turkish poetry, music, plays and folk dances constituted the majority of performances. However, the Gulenists were careful to temper the Turkish Olympics in Egypt’s use of Turkish nationalism. The Turkish Olympics in Egypt also employed Egyptian national symbols such as an occasional Egyptian folk song. The ideology of internationalism was fundamental to balance for the Egyptian audience the Turkish nationalism espoused by Turkish Gulenists with Egyptian national songs and performances. The concept that the Turkish Olympics is a festival that “connects all peoples of the world” helped the Gulen status group legitimize itself as an impartial and inclusive organization to Egyptian parents and audience members.

**Nationalism and the Sun-Language Theory**

Simply being able to sing in Turkish does not guarantee that a non-Turkish child performer will have success at the Turkish Olympics. Whether competing in Egypt on the national level or at the international final in Turkey, medal winning non-Turkish students are the ones who learn Turkish. Organizers of the Turkish Olympics highlight the learning of Turkish
as one of the de jure requirements of success at the Turkish Olympics. Certain talented Egyptian performers in training before the Turkish Olympics performance in Egypt attended after school Turkish Language sessions to get their Turkish level to a place where they could compete. The Turkish Olympics has a requirement which states that non-Turkish participants must be proficient in speaking Turkish when participants compete for singing or poetry recitation competitions. Turkish language learning at the Gulen’s Turkish Olympics has a pronounced connection to the nationalist project in Turkey. In order to understand why Gulenist Turks have such an identity investment in the language of Turkish, one must understand the history of Turkish nationalism and the development of the Sun-Language Theory in the 1930s.

From the Izmir Economic Conference in 1923 onward, Ataturk and other Kemalist leaders of Turkey tied the development of the modern Turkish language to the Turkish nationalist project. Ataturk and his contemporaries were the successors of Turkish proto-nationalists such as Munif Pasha, a leading Ottoman statesman in the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1862 Munif Pasha discussed the need to transform written Ottoman Turkish to correspond with the widely spoken vernacular Turkish. In 1928 nationalists in Turkey accomplished Munif Pasha’s goal of aligning written and spoken Turkish with the adoption of the Latinized Turkish alphabet. The next step was to “clean” Turkish and make it “pure.” In 1934, Ataturk created the Turk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti, The Society for the Study of the Turkish Language (later called the Turk Dil Kurumu or Turkish Language Association). Republican leaders in The Society for the Study of the Turkish Language used The Society as a national platform to “cleanse” Turkish of its sizable Arabic and Persian vocabulary. By 1936, Ataturk and Turkish academics hatched the Gunes-Dil Teorisi, “Sun-Language Theory.” The Sun-Language Theory posited that all languages originated from one primordial language in Central
Asia and that Turkish was the closest language to the original “Sun-Language.” After developing the Sun-Language Theory, Ataturk’s administration hoped to give a western veneer of authenticity to their “theory.” Consequently, the Turkish State hired Viennese academic hack Hermann Feodor Kvergić to push the Sun-Language Theory in academic circles and claim the ideology as Kvergić’s own. In the mid-1930s – with help of Turkish government largess to pay hospital bills and travel expenses – Kvergić wrote in support of the Sun-Language Theory.

Ataturk’s primordial Sun-Language Theory legitimizes the Turkish language as the scalpel of modernity in Turkey. Turkish is the one language, not just of the nation, but of a primordial Turkish nationalist world-view. As Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Laz, Greeks, Dönme and Ladino Jews living in the Republic of Turkey can attest, nationalism and the consciousness of “being Turkish” are fundamentally tied to the language of Turkish. As such, the Turkish Olympics’ prioritization on Turkish language learning is a part of this larger historical picture. The emphasis given to Turkish language acquisition at the Turkish Olympics exemplifies one of the ways in which the Gulen status group employs Turkish nationalism in the subjugation of non-Turkish student performers. That the Gulen congregation’s Turkish Olympics festival would recreate the same sort of nationalist discourse prioritizing Turkish language acquisition is not surprising. Many members of the Gulen status group and their families have been indoctrinated into Turkish nationalist rhetoric and the Sun-Language Theory.
Use of Internationalism at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt

If a non-Turkish child participant were to question the importance of Turkish nationalism, Gulenist organizers explained that in fact the Turkish Olympics in Egypt is not a vehicle for the expression of Turkish nationalism. Instead, it is a venue that supports all the world’s nationalisms. This Gulenist version of internationalism accepts the idea that nationalism is a norm in the modern world; akin to the air humans breathe, the water humans drink and the food humans eat. The Turkish Olympics’ display of linguistic, sartorial and dance based Turkish nationalism first awes subject children. Gulenists organizers then employ an internationalism supportive of Egyptian, Turkish or other nationalisms to convince subject children of the importance and auspiciousness of the Turkish Olympics. Consequently, the Turkish Olympics in Egypt presents two ideologies (nationalism and internationalism) but ultimately uses Turkish nationalism as the persuasive ideology to socialize student participants into the Gulen status group.

Comradery Internationalism, Outsider Internationalism and Gulenist Internationalism

By using Turkish language, Turkish media production, myths of Turkish good governance and hygienic standards and national pride movements for expatriate Turks, the Turkish Olympics in Egypt employ nationalism to indoctrinate and subjugate Egyptian and Turkish school children into the Gulen status group. However, Turkish nationalism cannot be overt in Egypt, lest it would create an equally powerful Egyptian nationalistic backlash. As such the Turkish Olympics in Egypt also stresses internationalism in the subject formation of performing school children.
The degree to which the Gulen congregation can subjugate a child often depends on a variety of familial, monetary and belief factors in each child’s life. Since the Gulen status group links its many educational activities and institutions, Egypt based Gulenist schools and dormitories are spaces of student/participant subject development at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Gulenist organizers of the Turkish Olympics employ Turkish nationalism at the Turkish Olympics by prioritizing Turkish language, “civilized” Turkish artistic performance and Turkishness for expatriate Turkish children. I have observed and posit that internationalism at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt is a three-step process: comradery internationalism, outsider internationalism and Gulenist internationalism.

The Three Steps of Indoctrination of non-Turkish Students

Comradery internationalism is the version of internationalism that most of the Egyptian and other international student participants experience at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Since the participants of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt are almost always from Gulenist schools and/or Gulenist Turkish language courses in Egypt, participants and participant families are often paying clients of the Gulen status group schools. Given the fact that many Egyptian participants of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt come from families who are paying for them to attend Gulenist schools, Egyptian students experience internationalism based on equality and comradery between Turkish and Egyptian nationalism. In comradery internationalism an Egyptian/international student experiences the Turkish Olympics (and the Gulenist educational system) as a festival that recognizes and appreciates the international student’s national identity. The international student experiences equality with Gulenist Turks at the Turkish Olympics
because he or she is equal based on the fact that the student’s parents pay full tuition for their child to be in the Gulenist educational network.

When payment to the Gulen status group school stops, so too does the equality an international student experiences at the Turkish Olympics. When a non-Turkish participant/student is taken by scholarship into the Gulen congregation, the international student becomes an “outsider international.” In outsider internationalism a non-Turkish student is expected to acquiesce to Gulen status group standards based on the fact that he or she is receiving free or subsidized education at a Gulenist school. This will likely include performance at the Turkish Olympics, learning Turkish at Gulenist summer camps in Turkey and perhaps living in Cairo at Gulenist dormitories. In these Gulenist dormitories Gulen congregation leaders reportedly create an environment of strict Sunni Islamism.

From the ethnographic evidence I have qualified a third step of indoctrination non-Turkish students experience into the Gulen status group as displayed at the Turkish Olympics. This final step of full indoctrination is called Gulenist internationalism. A Gulenist international is a non-Turkish student who has accepted the role of membership in the Gulen status group. The Gulenist internationalist is fluent in Turkish and a staunch Islamist in support of Fethullah Gulen, the Gulen status group and Turkish nationalism. Yet, the Gulenist internationalist speaks other native languages besides Turkish and is an example at the Turkish Olympics of how an international participant can possess multiple nationalisms.

**International Comradery: The Friendly Face of the Turkish Olympics**

Comradery in the expression of multiple nationalisms is the pretty face of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Comradery internationalism is one way that Gulenist staff members
inculcate student participants into participation in the Turkish Olympics. Comradery internationalism also is an effective tool to sell Gulen Congregation schools to Egyptian families (and non-Gulenist Turkish families living in Egypt). At the Turkish Olympics in Egypt, many children explained that they were active in the Turkish Olympics because they wanted to see a comradery of nationalisms in union together. As one student explained, “I wanted to see that atmosphere because from what people explained we would feel our culture by seeing the international students’ performances.”

Winners at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt move on to the Turkish Finals in Turkey. Participants at the finals experience a wider world where they meet and befriend other people possessing other nationalisms. Yet, the Turkish Olympics prioritizes Turkish nationalism; as such, Turkish nationalism overrides all other versions of nationalism. Gulenists further their status group’s use and support of Turkish nationalism at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt by giving scholarships to certain Egyptian performers and inviting the selected performers into the Gulen congregation as “outsider internationals.”

**Outsider Internationalism**

The Gulen status group influences the version of Turkish nationalism expressed at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. When Gulenists open educational institutions free of charge to Egyptian performers/students, Gulenists expect the Egyptian youngsters to acquiesce to Turkishness and Islamism. As such, the performers brought into the Gulen status group possess a middle space called outsider internationalism in the Gulen congregation and the Turkish Olympics. These performers are still the “other”, the outsider, the Egyptian. While some of their performances are rooted in Egyptian sartorial or musical traditions, these
students/performers are expected to learn Turkish, accept Turkishness and Turkish nationalism, live as Gulenists live at a Gulen status group dormitory in Cairo and attend Salahaldin International School on scholarship. It is possible then that the Egyptian performers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt who are on scholarship are active as comradery based internationalists and outsider internationalists depending on the situation.

**The Black Sheep in the Herd of Turks: Gulenist Internationalism**

In Gulenist internationalism, a non-Turkish child subject has fully embraced the Gulen status group or the so-called “Hizmet (Service) Movement.” As such the child subject has become a member of the Gulen congregation and has accepted the teachings of Imam Fethullah Gulen as the true Islamic path. A Gulenist internationalist child believes that the Gulen status group is not an Islamist congregation but is instead a “movement to serve humanity.” The child also accepts the primacy of Turkish nationalism yet has a space in the Gulen congregation and the Turkish Olympics as a non-Turk. Though most non-Turkish performers are active in only comradery internationalism or outsider internationalism, a Gulenist internationalist is active in all three forms of internationalism. In this a Gulenist international student can experience the excitement and comradery of sharing their multiple nationalisms with other Turkish and non-Turkish students. Also the Gulenist international student adheres to Gulenist morality codes and finally positions him or herself as an international among the Turkish Gulenists.

**Turanism and Turkish Rightist “Head Clunking” in the Gulen Congregation at the Turkish Olympics**

Gulenists’ use of nationalism is connected to a long tradition among rightist nationalists
in Turkey. One of founding intellectuals of the Turkish Republic and a leading Turanist, Ziya Gokalp (1876 – 1924) believed that if Turks looked to their central Asian roots they would find a “true” form of the modern that was not polluted by the West.137 According to Gokalp the original Turks of central Asia were both feminists and democrats. The first Turks had a society which was a meritocracy and sexually equal. It was only with an importation of “degenerated Islam” that Turks lost their modernity.138 In Gokalp’s thinking, modern Islam was not the culprit so much as a misinterpretation of an older, truer Islam. As such, according to Gokalp, Islam needed to be re-imagined and, “purged of the cultural pollutants it had acquired as it spread across the globe.”139 This purging process then was directly connected to introducing Islam to a “re-invigorated” Turkishness. When purified Islam and Turkish nationalism appeared, a Turk could be modern and democratic all at once.140

That a political movement such as Turanism with its connections to right wing, authoritarian, patriarchal xenophobia could call itself “feminist” or “democratic” is a massive contraction. Yet, right-wing politicians and thinkers around the world have oftentimes claimed to be “democrats and feminists” all the while curtailing the rights of women and limiting the freedom for minorities. Perhaps given the inherent popularity of feminism and democracy rightists like the Turanists feel the need to “steal thunder.”

A component of Gulenist appropriation of masculine Turanist behavioral norms is the kafa tokuşturmak greeting. The kafa tokuşturmak (literally “head clunking”) is a sign of rightist masculinity in Turkey; women and leftist males in Turkey would never do the kafa tokuşturmak greeting.141 “It is our thing,” explained Turanist Professor “Murat,” “We believe from out studies that the ‘true’ Turks (Turks of central Asia) greet and greeted each other in this manner.”142
I studied at the Turanist Turkic World Studies Institute in Izmir from 1997 – 1998 and worked as a translator there in 2005 directly with Professor “Murat.” While at the Turkic World Studies Institute I learned how to do the kafa tokuşturmak. In order to do the kafa tokuşturmak two male friends shake hands and at the same moment touch the sides of their foreheads together, once on the right side of the forehead, once on the left side of the forehead (akin to kissing on the cheek but no cheek kisses are exchanged). During the greeting males do not strike each other’s foreheads in an aggressive manner yet there is an implied “manliness” to the process of soft head-butting. Because Gulenists also greet each other in the same manner as Turanists, this displays a cross pollination of rightest nationalist behavioral norms among likeminded groups in Turkey. This sharing of behavioral norms indicates that the Gulen status group, while an Islamist organization, is also connected to and holds within its congregation Turkish nationalist/Turanist fascist believing members.

Certainly there appears to be much intellectual sharing between the most formulaic version of fascism, Nazism, and Turanism. Both Nazism and Turanism take their ethnic origin myths from an idealized central Asia milieu. Both are highly militaristic and anti-democratic. Domestically both Nazis and Turanists employ street thugs and intimidation tactics to exclude and destroy any group not adhering to national ethnicity myths. Yet Nazism was born from a modernity invented by German scholars who gave social priority to whiteness and Caucasian Aryans. Meanwhile, Turanism/Turkish nationalism and modern Turkish Islamism were at times responses to imposed modernity as well as local movements which at times was processing events and occurrences separate within the Ottoman state of the 19th and early 20th century.

Gulen and Said Nursi’s Joint Islamist Critique of Modernity in Turkey
The imposition of modernity over a populace has often times been a brutal and violent process. The ruling Muslim elite of the Ottoman State (i.e. the proto-Turks) began to respond to the ideas of democracy, human rights and the place of religion in a secular world with the Tanzimat in 1839 and Abdul Hamid II’s later reforms.

Famed Turkish sociologist Serif Mardin and other Turkish sociologists have discussed Gulen and his status group as offshoots of the older “Nur Islamist congregation” of the mid twentieth century. Gulen stated that he learned much from Kurdish Islamist leader Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1872? – 1960).145 As a young man Nursi began his education at the palace of Abdul Hamid II in Istanbul and later members of Nursi’s own Islamist congregation worked to reinterpret Islam and Muslim identity in the light of science and modernity.146 As a young man Gulen was a member of the Nur status group and seems to have taken Nursi’s approach a step further incorporating Turkish nationalism and neo-liberalism into his Islamist critique of modernity.147

The following chapter will feature the ethnography of child indoctrination into the Gulen status group. The theoretical concepts discussed above – Islamism, Turanism, internationalism – connect with Turkish language use and the three processes of indoctrination students experience into the Gulen congregation at the Turkish Olympics.
Chapter Four

Ethnography of Student/Performer Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt

The first part of the research focused on the indoctrination of children into the worldwide Gulen status group vis-à-vis the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. As such this chapter is based on interviews with Turkish Olympics performing students in the Cairo based Salahaldin International School (SIS) network, Gulenist teachers at SIS and parents of the performing students.

Fundamental to this ethnography will be to examine the depth of involvement in the Gulen congregation that performing international non-Turkish children experience. I posit that there are three levels of indoctrination which performing international children experience. The first level is called “international comradery” in which children from non-Turkish backgrounds are accepted in an embrace of all internationalisms at the Turkish Olympics. The second tier is called “outsider internationalism” because non-Turkish students – usually through living in Gulenist dormitories and getting scholarships to attend Gulenist schools – are compelled to acquiesce to some aspects of Turkish nationalism and Gulenist Islamism. The last and deepest layer of non-Turkish child indoctrination into the Gulen status group is called Gulenist internationalism. At this stage the non-Turkish child (usually with the support of their parents who have also accepted the teachings of Fethullah Gulen) embraces Gulenism. Yet the divisiveness of nationalism within the Gulen movement becomes apparent in that, though a spiritual brother or sister of Turkish Gulenists, the non-Turkish performer/student at the Turkish
Olympics is still separate and possesses a space of internationalism within the Gulen status group.

The three categories of indoctrination listed in the above paragraph are not fixed divisions. It is possible (and oftentimes occurred in the fieldwork) that a student/performer at the Turkish Olympics was active in at least two categories. And, as in the case of “Sema,” some students were active in all three categories of child indoctrination into the Gulen status group via the Turkish Olympics. Perhaps, it is better to call the three categories “stage sets” in that just as in any theatre production, the three “stage sets” of child indoctrination (international comradery, outsider internationalism, and Gulenist internationalism) shifted based on the needs of the performance.

Also at play in the field work was a final “related aspect” to the overall indoctrination process. Scholars need to consider the “related aspect” of privatized verses subsidized education in how non-Turkish children are indoctrinated. If a student came into the Gulenist educational structure as a full tuition paying student, she was less likely to be deeply indoctrinated and in her performance at the Turkish Olympics she was usually a part of international comradery. This would be the case for the three Egyptian girl dancers whose case study will be seen later on in this chapter. However, if a student came into the Gulen congregational school via a scholarship then Gulenist leaders expected her to adhere to Gulenist dormitory standards and become indoctrinated into the Gulen status group and participate at the Turkish Olympics as at least an outsider internationalist or even a Gulenist international.

Of secondary import to this ethnography is the indoctrination process experienced by Turkish students at the Turkish Olympics. The field work points to the Turkish Olympics being a space where Turkish children reinforce their Turkishness. Performance then for these Turkish
students becomes a process by which the Turkish child pledges him or herself to being both Turkish and a Gulenist. Yet, Turkish students are involved with the process of indoctrination as experienced by non-Turkish students at the Turkish Olympics. Turkish students may only be onlookers to this process of non-Turkish student indoctrination. Yet, nonetheless Turkish students inform this study since by their very presence, Turkish students become examples of “Turkishness” for non-Turkish students.

“Sevinc”, Teacher of Egyptian and Turkish Girls at the Turkish Olympics

“Sevinc” was a twenty-six-year-old member of the Gulen congregation from Kirsehir province in Turkey. In early 2014 she was working as a teacher’s aide at the largest Gulen school in Egypt, SIS in Cairo. After classes on weekday evenings, Sevinc coached a dancing troupe of Egyptian and Turkish girls in Salahaldin’s school auditorium. The girls in Sevinc’s charge were bolts of energy, running and playing in the aisles of the auditorium or whirling to Turkish folk dances on the stage. Many of the dancing Turkish and Egyptian girls said they dreamed of going to Turkey for the finals of the Turkish Olympics that upcoming summer.

Privately Sevinc confided that given the girls’ youth and inexperience it was unlikely the judges of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt would select their dance group to represent Egypt at the final Turkish Olympics celebration in June 2014. However, Sevinc explained, it was not important that her girls advance to the finals of the Turkish Olympics. Gulenists active in the creation of the Turkish Olympics think five or six years in advance as they decide on which children they will spend resources on developing. Many Gulenist staff members like Sevinc encourage and coach young students from SIS to participate in the Turkish Olympics. The fact that these coaches/teachers in 2014 viewed future participants’/students’ development in not just
one year increments but instead in five to six year increments (2019 or 2020) speaks to the Gulen congregation’s investment in and development of youth capital.

Bourdieu’s idea of education as capitalized production is useful when scholars interrogate how Gulenist leaders view students/performers in the long-term. A talented student like “Salma” (who will be discussed later in this chapter) was a full paying student but she received extra free education in Turkish language and was thus incentivized with free education at SIS and at the Gulenist women’s dormitory to participate in the Turkish Olympics. However, decisions as to who would win at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and move on to Turkey for the finals appeared to be at times connected to a child’s tuition status and the importance of the child’s parents in supporting the Gulen congregational education network.

In Salma’s case she was considerably better at singing than her leading competition, “Nabila”, a girl from a wealthy family in Alexandria whose father “Wael” held a position of importance in the Egyptian government. When it came time for Gulenist judges to choose a winner between Salma and Nabila to go from the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and perform at the Turkish Olympics final in Turkey, judges picked Nabila even though she was a substandard singer at best.

That an inferior singer like Nabila, would beat out a natural talent like Salma appears unfair. Yet this example follows Bourdieu’s theories in that the reproduction of wealth is always part and parcel to educational capital production. Nabila’s father as a leading bureaucrat in the Egyptian government was worth more to the Gulen status group than the talent of Salma. Clearly the Gulenists have made inroads in becoming part of the educational elite in Egypt and Cairo.

Friendly government and business leaders like Nabila’s father would likely be useful to Gulenists in continued elite status production for their school network in Egypt. Therefore, as per
Bourdieu, it was more important to give Nabila high status and an aspect of educational capital (i.e. winning the female singing competition at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt) than it was to give Salma’s more successful performance at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt top prize.

However, besides the Turkish Olympics, Salma was scheduled to perform in Turkey at other Gulenist conferences in 2014. As such the Turkish Olympics – while the main cultural festival of the congregation – is by no means the only venue where talent like Salma can shine. As such a meritocracy within the Gulen status group appears to exist alongside Bourdieu’s theory of elite educational capital production. In this meritocracy of educational capital production, talented children can go far in the Gulen status group but they are more financially dependent upon the congregation itself since they are poorer and receive less from their families.

“Ibrahim”, Gulenist Activist and Leader in Cairo

Leading member of the Gulen status group, “Ibrahim Gokhan”, thirty-eight, ran Gulenist businesses and dormitories in Cairo, Egypt. He was watchful of any outsider/“guest” interested in the Gulen status group and the congregation’s main event, the Turkish Olympics. During my interview at SIS with performers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt, Ibrahim attended the interview, observing my questions and the performers’ answers. Ibrahim said nothing during the interview. He sat in a chair in a corner of the room, his legs crossed and his brow furrowed, listening intently.

I asked two Turkish boys (both aged sixteen named “Yunis” and “Cengis”) about participating in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt, living in Egypt in the Gulenist Dormitory and the Turkish Olympics Final in Turkey. The boys’ answers reflect that the Turkish Olympics was for them a space where they could be proud of their Turkishness, be good Muslims (Gulenists) and
appreciate other peoples’ nationalisms. Yunis and Cengis’ answers fall into an oft-seen pattern among Turkish student participants at the Turkish Olympics. The Turkish Olympics was a national proclamation space for Turkish children.

After the interview was over Ibrahim – sufficiently pleased with the boy’s answers – shook the boys’ hands, gave them a soft nationalist head butt (*kafa tokusturmak*) and put his arms around the boys’ shoulders proudly announcing: “These are our boys! We love them very much! And they are important to us today and they will of course be *quite* important to us tomorrow. You know these boys… these boys are the boys of the future!”

Coming from Gulenist parents Yunis and Cengis reflect Bourdieu’s ideas of individuals and groups working to capitalize on their wealth and confer upon their progeny academic credentials. Gokhan becomes, in this example, a kind of surrogate Islamist status group stand-in-father; proud of his successful boys. Yunis and Cengis are to Ibrahim “the future” of Gulenism.

As per Bourdieu, education capital is used by the Gulen status group institutions in three ways. One way is that the Gulen congregational network convers academic success to students from wealthy non-Gulenist families. The second way is students from Gulenist families reportedly paying little or no tuition for schooling. In the first example education capital is a neo-liberal product that Gulenist institutions are selling to wealthy non-Gulenist families. In the second example Gulenist schools give education capital to Gulen status group members and their children based on a reproduction and continuation of the Gulen status group itself.

Yet in the third production of educational capital scholars can discern a kind of meritocracy which conveys a higher economic status to successful graduates from Gulenist institutions. In this third production of educational capital, Gulenists give poor (or middle class)
children from non-Gulenist families free education as a way to tie the children to the status group and indoctrinate the children to be a new generation of Gulenists.

An Egyptian Diva, the Story of “Salma”

In the afternoon on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, Salahaldin International School held a practice in the school auditorium for all children interested in competing at the Turkish Olympics. “Salma,” an Egyptian girl aged eleven, was called to the stage.

Alone on stage Salma appeared nervous and shaken. The opening notes of Sezen Aksu’s Masum Degiliz began to play out of the auditorium speakers. This was the song Salma would sing in Turkish.

Masum Degiliz (None of Us Are Innocent, 1993) is a Turkish pop rock song written and performed by Sezan Aksu. Sezen Aksu is a prolific performer in the world of Turkish pop music. Some in the west have even called Aksu “The Queen of Turkish Pop.” Born in 1954, Sezen Aksu is an environmentalist and Turkish nationalist. Aksu sung in support of “martyred” Turkish soldiers in the thirty year-long Kurdish PKK guerrilla insurrection against the Turkish state. Aksu is also culturally progressive. She supports women’s rights, the campaign for universal literacy and the LGBT movement in Turkey. Masum Degiliz is an apolitical ballad about human guilt and sin which declares, “Hands are sinful, Words are sinful, This is the fire of (our) time, The whole world is sinfull”

The Gulenists employment of a Turkish star whose songs are remembered by the Turkish nation speaks to Anderson’s ideas around nationalism, death and timelessness. Anderson posits that nationalism fills a social need in modernity in that it justifies death by fellow countrymen in service to the nation. Death and sacrifice make the nation itself immortal.
How then does a religious organization like the Gulenists who are employing nationalism validate its celebration of Turkishness to a Turkish audience? Gulenists employ non-Islamists yet nationalist artists at the Turkish Olympics as a way to tie music and performance to time and national memory of the Turkish audience. From Aksu’s music and public views, it seems nearly impossible that Aksu is a Gulenist. However, Aksu’s lack of membership in the Gulen congregation or in any other Turkish Islamist movement in no way prohibits the Gulen status group’s use of Aksu’s music at the Turkish Olympics. Sezen Aksu’s music at the Turkish Olympics appropriates transformative artists whose expression reminds the nation of times past, present and future.

Salma began to sing *Masum Degiliz*. She struggled. For the first minute Salma’s voice cracked and was off-key. She forced her Turkish vowels. It was obvious Salma could not speak Turkish. And then she came to the chorus. This was a part of the song Salma knew well. Her voice sunk down for a moment, gathering strength and then sprung out, singing, “Hands are sinful, Words are sinful, This is the fire of (our) time, The whole world is sinful!”

Salma hit the notes and then went through them, creating new sounds in the wake of her voice’s echo. She was a natural: perfect and untrained.

The audience sat awed for moments. Time paused… then… the audience roared approval. Salma fed off their applause; her voice on target now for the rest of the song. The crowd swooned, an enchanted mob, wanting more, cheering her every word. As Salma finished *Masum Degiliz* girls and boys in the auditorium crowded the stage, chanting her name and clapping.

Salma ignored her new fans. She watched the judges. The judges sat at a long table in the middle of the auditorium, a line of Gulenist Turkish men in their thirties and forties, appearing
impartial behind their dress suits and almond moustaches. A badem biyik or “almond moustache” is a popular symbol of Islamist masculinity in Turkey. Called an almond moustache because it is light and just fits over the lip, the almond moustache is representative of how the Prophet Mohammed reportedly wore his moustache. Turkish Islamist leaders such as Necmettin Erbakan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Fetullah Gulen all wore or wear the almond moustache.

The Gulenist judges quietly wrote their marks and feedback for Salma. Since the judges did not express happiness at the end of the show, Salma was sure they did not like her performance. She began to cry and ran from the stage, down into her fans. She ran through the group of children and toward the back of the auditorium, still weeping, shaking with tears. Her friends chased after her. Salma’s Turkish teacher, “Meltem Hanimeli” (aged twenty-five from Izmir, Turkey) came to Salma and took her aside. Hanimeli told Salma that she had done a wonderful job.

The purpose of this first practice was to gauge how much effort and resources the Gulen status group would spend on each student. The judges decided to fast track Salma into the Turkish Olympics. Salma would take private music lessons after school and Meltem Hanimeli would give Salma extra Turkish classes. Hanimeli would even bring Salma to stay a few nights a week at Hanimeli’s apartment so that Salma could learn Turkish faster. Hanimeli shared a flat with other Gulenist women in a Gulenist Women’s Dormitory near Salahaldin International School. The judges hoped that Salma would learn Turkish faster with the exposure to both Hanimeli and the other Turkish women with whom Hanimeli lived. All of this extra coaching and teaching would be free of charge to Salma’s family. Some judges felt that even if Salma did not win the singing competition at this year’s Turkish Olympics in Egypt, she needed to attend the Turkish Olympics Final that summer as a non-placed Turkish Olympics “touring
The Gulenist judges knew they had a star on their hands and now it was time to help their star shine.

In terms of Salma’s indoctrination into the Gulen status group, Salma started as a paying student but given her talents the Gulenists incentivized her to develop her skills. Part of the indoctrination process then for Salma was a deeper involvement within the Gulen status group via her Turkish Olympics performance and her actively participating in what amounted to a mini-performance scholarship. Gulenist leaders asked Salma to take extra Turkish lessons with her Turkish teacher Meltem Hanimeli in an environment (the Gulenist women’s dormitory) where Salma would be exposed to Turkishness, Turkish language and Turkish music. It is plausible then to state that in the field work the privatized and/or scholarship status of all students at Salahaldin was fundamental to how deep a student could go in the indoctrination processes. If Gulenists gave a student/performer a scholarship it was expected that she became indoctrinated deeper into the Gulen status group.

Salma came from a self-described conservative Muslim family who liked that SIS gives Qur’anic morality courses as part of its regular curriculum. Because Salahaldin positioned itself as a Turkish Islamist school, Salma’s Egyptian Islamist family felt comfortable placing Salma in Salahaldin and having Salma participate in the Turkish Olympics. Salma explained:

They (My parents) say that at the beginning Turkey wasn’t a civilized country at all… And then when the new people came it became a good country. So they told me it was a pleasure for them to make me learn at a Turkish school, because they left me in safe hands.

In referencing “new people” it seems likely that Salma’s parents meant the rise of an Islamist political majority in Turkey following the AK Party’s electoral success in 2002 yet
Salma, at eleven years old, did not know who the “new, civilized” people were that were running Turkey.

Salma did not seem to grasp or care about the differences between secular Kemalists such as Ataturk and Islamist Turks like Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Salma explained that she wanted to sing the song *Masum Degiliz* because she liked the way the song sounded and because her “Turkish teachers” had thought Salma’s voice was good for *Masum Degiliz*. On why the Turkish Olympics occur in Egypt and in other nations Salma stated that Turkish people “wanted to spread their culture more” and “discover hidden talents” of people around the world.

Salma’s ideas on why the Gulenists hold the Turkish Olympics, has some validity. Gulenists are involved in a version of imperial mapping as described by Mitchell. The goal of such mapping is a utilization of colonial economic production by the “mother” country. The Gulenists use the Turkish Olympics as a space to highlight and map the hidden and no-so-hidden talents of Turkish and non-Turkish students for the eventual utilization in their international network.

**“Civilized” Turkish Performance**

“Mariam,” “Nada” and “Laila” were members of the girls dance troupe coached by Sevinc. Mariam, Nada and Laila were also eleven years old and classmates of Salma. During a joint interview Mariam, Nada and Laila explained that each of their families had visited Turkey and approved of the girls’ participation in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. The girls stated that they saw their participation in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt as the first step to seeing the wider world outside of Egypt. Mariam, Nada and Laila discussed how the Turkish national project could “civilize” Egypt saying, “We are representing Turkey in Egypt… the audience will see that
Turkey is such a nice country and that Egypt too can be a nice country.” As an example of how Turkey can be a civilizing example for Egypt, Mariam, Nada and Laila pointed to higher hygienic standards in Turkey stating, “Turks don’t enter the house with shoes so they are cleaner than we are.”

Gulenists socialize Egyptian children like Salma by using Turkish media figures coupled with the idea that Turkish society is more “civilized” than Egyptian society. In Salma’s case Turkey is more civilized because “good people” govern Turkey. In Mariam’s, Nada’s and Laila’s example Turkey is more civilized because it has better hygienic standards. It was not important to Salma that by reproducing Sezen Aksu’s song at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt she was, in fact, a part of the Turkish nationalist project.

Mariam, Nada and Laila’s statement that they represent Turkey in Egypt speaks to a version of cosmopolitanism that sounds akin to south-on-south neo-imperialism. The Turkish Olympics can create among some non-Turkish students a new cultural imperialism in which participant children can idealize Turkishness to the detriment of their own ethnicity/nationalism.

Though Mariam, Nada and Laila expressed pride in connecting with Turkishness they were full tuition paying students. Also, Mariam, Nada and Laila could not speak Turkish and they did not have their lives overtly controlled by Gulenists as some other non-Turkish children living in the Gulenist dormitories did. As such, Mariam, Nada and Laila were ultimately only a part of comradery internationalism at the Turkish Olympics. Yet their case study is important in that scholars see by their participation in the Turkish Olympics and as students at SIS the extent of their acceptance of Turkishness over being Arab or Egyptian.

That Gulenist Turks would teach to young students like Mariam, Nada and Laila a version of cultural/soft neo-imperialism should not surprise academics. Turkey grew from the
Ottoman state which itself was imperial in conquest and design from at least the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 onward. It is possible then to call the “neo-imperialism” in the ethnography nothing “neo” or new. Instead Turks belief in their cultural supremacy and imperial dominance over Middle eastern “others” could be called “Ottomanism.” We must careful however in using the term Ottomanism because Ottomanism was also used in the 19th century by Ottomans to describe the multi-ethnicism of the Ottoman state. I employ both terminologies (one imperial, the other multi-ethnic) in this thesis.

Turkish Nationalism for Expatriate Turkish Children

The extensive Turkish corporate sponsorship of the Turkish Olympics exemplifies how Turkishness, capital and education are interconnected in the Gulen status group. The best symbol of this interconnection is the existence of a “native Turkish speakers” competitive branch in the Turkish Olympics. This branch of the Turkish Olympics gives a space of nationalist expression for expatriate Turkish children in the Gülenist school network.

Poetry Reciter “Su”

As stated before, SIS’ student population is twenty-five percent Turkish. Su Buyukgoz,” fifteen, is a Turkish girl attending Salahaldin and a reciter of Turkish poetry at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Su’s family hails from the Turkish province of Bolu and her father, “Emre Buyukgoz” thirty-nine, is a Gulenist and SIS’ head-chef. A talented chef Emre follows the tradition of the best chefs in Turkey coming from Bolu province.

Su explained that many of the Turkish kids in Salahaldin came from Turkish families who either work in Cairo or are in Turkey but want their children to study in a Gulen status group school abroad. Su did not want to say why the Gulenist parents living in Turkey would
send their children to Salahaldin. It became apparent to me that learning the deeper reasons why parents in Turkey would send their children to Salahaldin or other Gulenist schools around the world is a difficult topic to undertake and would need to be its own separate project.

Regarding the Turkish Olympics, Su said, “There is an advantage for the (Egyptian) students at Salahaldin to learn Turkish because then they can understand us.” Su stressed that she was proud of her Turkishness and her native Turkish language when she participated at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt.

**Turkish Dancer “Hakan”**

Sixteen-year-old “Hakan” was in the boys dance troupe at Salahaldin International School. Hakan’s father worked in a Turkish corporation in Cairo. Hakan revealed, “The goal of the Turkish Olympics is to spread the Turkish Language and to show the world how Turkish can be a unifying language.” Hakan felt that by spreading the language of Turkish he was involved in a movement of “national pride.”

**Turkish Singers “Yunis” and “Cengis”**

Sixteen years old “Yunis” and “Cengis” were singers who had performed in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and as students of SIS had represented Egypt in the Turkish native speaker competitions of the 2012 and 2013 Turkish Olympics finals in Turkey. Yunis and Cengis were the same boys who Gulenist leader Ibrahim Gokhan embraced as the “boys of the future” after sitting in on their interview. Yunis family lived and worked in Cairo. Cengis’s family lived in Istanbul. Cengis’s father was a writer for the leading Gulenist newspaper Zaman. The Gulen status group gave Cengis a scholarship to attend Salahaldin International School and Cengis lived in a male Gulenist dormitory near to Salahaldin. Both Yunis and Cengis had heard of the Turkish Olympics from when they were young. Visitors from other countries would come to
their communities in Turkey and they would welcome “these new friends.”182 Yunis discussed the media spectacle around the Turkish Olympics in Turkey:

> All Turkey – before it wasn’t like this – but now all Turkey when it comes time of the Turkish Olympics, I saw the Olympics on all Turkish channels. Children come. Poets and artists come and meet the children. So there is real popular support for the Turkish Olympics.183

There may have been more to learn from Cengis about the experience of living in the Gulenist men’s dormitory but the presence of Gokhan dissuaded further inquiry into the inner workings of the Gulenist dormitory system or questions as to why Cengis’s parents would send him to a Gulenist school in Egypt.

More questions remain as to why Turkish children are at SIS and why they participate in the Turkish Olympics. However, thinking on Weber’s and Smith’s ideas around an ethno-symbolic/presumed ethnicity scholars can see the Turkish Olympics as a space for Gulenist Turkish children to affirm their ethnicity and accept a Gulenist version of Turkish nationalism.

Turkish and non-Turkish performers formed bonds which lasted years after their performance at the Turkish Olympics finals in Egypt and in Turkey.184 Certainly Turkish performers did not experience the indoctrination process into the Gulen Movement via the Turkish Olympics the same way non-Turkish students did. Likewise, non-Turkish students did not experience the reification process of Turkishness and Gulenism that Turkish students experienced at the Turkish Olympics. Yet because of the interconnectedness of the performer community at the Turkish Olympics, Turkish performers knew and spoke about the indoctrination processes non-Turkish performers experienced. As such, Turkish performers’ responses need to be included in the below sections on the three steps of indoctrination for non-Turkish performers at the Turkish Olympics.
International Comradery: The Friendly Face of the Turkish Olympics

In their interview, eleven year old girl dancers Mariam, Nada and Laila described participation in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt as their first step to see the wider world. Similarly, Yunis and Cengis – though Turks and more connected with the process of reification – described the comradery, which developed at the Turkish Olympics. Yunis and Cengis expressed their nationalism as mono-nationals that is nationals of only one political nation-state. Like Yunis and Cengis, the Turkish Olympics in Egypt (or the finals in Turkey) was a space where Abdelrahman, aged seventeen, could also express his Egyptian nationalism at the Turkish Olympics. Abdelrahman stated that the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and the finals in Turkey opened for him a new door to the world. Abdelrahman and one of his parents gave an interview to me. Abdelrahman joined Facebook groups for the years he participated in the final of the Turkish Olympics in Turkey. The Facebook groups Abdelrahman joined had membership in the thousands, mostly of Abdelrahman’s fellow Turkish Olympics participants from Turkey and around the world.

Abdelrahman performed at a section of the Turkish Olympics called “Native Singing” and his rendition of the Egyptian nationalist song Beledee, Beledee (My Nation, My Nation) was a hit at the 2012 Turkish Olympics Finals in Turkey. Abdelrahman won bronze at the final competing in a field of talented performers from around the world. While Mariam, Nada and Laila were dancing Turkish folk dances, organizers of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt only called upon the dancing girls to be Egyptian and proud of the comradery existing between Egypt and Turkey at the Turkish Olympics. Yet Gulen Congregationalists called on Abdelrahman to be
something much more. As such Abdelrahman would come to be a part of comradery internationalism and outsider internationalism.

The Story of Abdelrahman and Sartorial Mapping

Abdelrahman hailed from Alexandria, Egypt. In being able to sing an Egyptian song “Beladee, Beladee,” Abdelrahman was successful in comradery internationalism. However, despite speaking fluent Turkish, Abdelrahman found the Gulen status group stifling and was not successful as an outsider internationalist.

Abdelrahman’s first connection with the Gulen Congregation and the Turkish Olympics in Egypt was when “Omer Yildirim” (talent scout for the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and principal at SIS) visited the Bibliotheca Alexandrina boys’ choir. Abdelrahman sung in the same choir as his friend “Ahmed.” In 2010 Yildirim, a Gulenist Turk/Arab from the southeast of Turkey, attended a performance of the boys’ choir and then offered both Abdelrahman and Ahmed full scholarships to SIS and a place in the Gulenist dormitory in Cairo.

According to Abdelrahman, he and Ahmed were the only Egyptian boys in the dormitory. The majority of the young men living in the dormitory with Ahmed and Abdelrahman were Turkish, Albanian and Kazakhi. Abdelrahman explained, “They told us that if we stay in the dorms then khalas (everything has been decided), you are part of Hizmet (the Gulen status group).”

Abdelrahman took intensive Turkish lessons at a Turkey based Gulenist summer camp language program. All of this work in Turkish in addition to living in the Gulenist Dormitory in Cairo resulted in Abdelrahman learning fluent Turkish. While Abdelrahman was successful in
learning Turkish, he faced problems accepting Turkish nationalism and Gulenist Islamism at the Turkish Olympics.

When Abdelrahman was about to perform a Turkish song at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt or the finals in Turkey – Gulenist organizers urged Abdelrahman to wear the outfit of a Turkish villager. Turkish Olympics organizers told Abdelrahman that if he wore a Turkish villager costume while singing a Turkish song it would be easier for him to win metals at the Olympics in Egypt and Turkey.

Abdelrahman wore the Turkish costume but wondered, “What it would matter if I wore a Turkish costume or not? The costume was not singing the song.” Organizers compelling Abdelrahman to wear a Turkish villager costume to score higher at the Turkish Olympics is a sign of Turkish nationalism in costume and stage presentation. More than this, non-Turkish children wearing traditional Turkish outfits is a symbol of the Turkish audience’s need for sartorial mapping. Yet unlike what Mitchell observed in nineteenth century world fairs, the sartorial mapping at the Turkish Olympics is a post-colonial south-on-south version of neo-imperialism (or inversely a throwback of old style Ottoman imperialism). In this mapping process the southern audience of Turks – while curious of the outside world – can only begin the process of mapping “the other” by first coming to terms with their own history of self-imposed national modernization. As such first the Turkish audience must view “the other” as they have viewed the marginalization of their own villagers/“Black” Turks in republican Turkey.

The Story of Abdelrahman and Problems at the Gulenist Dormitory

Abdelrahman went on to explain that the behavioral standards for those living at the dormitory and attending Salahaldin were harsher than for the paying students at Salahaldin. As
a high end International School in Cairo, Salahaldin was unlikely to be overly strict with students from tuition paying families. The dormitory behavior standards Abdelrahman experienced include limited or no communication with co-eds at Salahaldin and little or no internet connection while at the dormitory. Smart phones, for example were forbidden for dormitory residents. Abdelrahman explained that it was difficult for him to adjust to the behavioral codes of the Gulen Dormitory in Cairo:

All of the strict rules against talking to girls and no internet based cell phones are only for the people staying in the Salahaldin Dormitory. Otherwise the other students who live in Cairo and go to the school never experience the same sort of rules and discipline as the dormitory member experiences.

According to Abdelrahman most of the young men at the dormitory – Turkish, Egyptian or other nationalities – wanted out of the Gulen status group. Turkish boys at the dormitory said that, “Fethullah Gulen did not teach what the dormitory was practicing.” The fact that the majority of the residents at Abdelrahman’s dormitory were reportedly from Turkey, Albania and Kazakhstan helps researchers see where the Gulen Congregation has had the most success in Gulenist subject formation. Ultimately the field-work showed that the Gulenist dormitory system was the fundamental point of indoctrination into the Gulen status group.

Abdelrahman related a story where he said hello to a Turkish girl at Salahaldin during school hours. Abdelrahman also asked the Turkish girl to borrow a pencil. Later on the Gulenist “big-brothers” of the dormitory investigated Abdelrahman’s actions, “They asked me, ‘Why didn’t you ask for a pencil from a boy?’ They were always watching me, especially around the Turkish girls of our school.” Abdelrahman reported that if he spoke to Egyptian girls at Salahaldin International School he would not have a problem from the elders of the Gulen
congregation. However, the Gulenist “big brothers” of the dormitory would question him if he spoke to a Turkish girl at Salahaldin.204

When Abdelrahman asked why it was forbidden to speak to girls at the school, Gulenist leaders reportedly would not give him a reason besides to say that in Islam, “it was harem (forbidden) to speak to women in public.”205 In 2013 Abdelrahman relates that he left Salahaldin and the dormitory. The reason for his leaving was – according to Abdelrahman – thirty percent because he wanted to leave the school and seventy percent because he was kicked out of the Salahaldin International school and the Gulenist dormitory.206

Gulenist Principal Omer Yildirim’s Response to Abdelrahman’s Story

In the 2013 – 2014 school year Yildirim became the Salahaldin high school principal yet he was still connected to the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. While Yildirim no longer was a talent scout, he advised the organizers of the 2014 Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Yildirim discussed Abdelrahman’s removal from Salahaldin and the Gulenist dormitory in 2013 of the 2012 – 2013 school year.

As related earlier, before becoming the high school principal of Salahaldin, Yildirim was one of the main chaperones and organizers of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. As such he brought the qualifying Egyptian students to the Turkish Finals in Turkey. In 2012 and 2013 when Abdelrahman went to Turkey, Yildirim reports that Abdelrahman – a handsome and charming boy – often got numbers and emails of female participants.207 Regarding Abdelrahman’s abilities with girls, Yildirim rolled his eyes and called teenage Abdelrahman a “suave hornball.”208 Yildirim tried acting as a mentor and role model for Abdelrahman so that Abdelrahman could learn to be patient and choose wisely which girl he wanted to date.209 However, Yildirim’s duties
as organizer and talent scout of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt meant that he could not always be with Abdelrahman. Because of Yildirim’s limited time, other Gulenist “big brothers” watched over Abdelrahman and – according to Yildirim – these other Gulenists did a poor job mentoring young Abdelrahman. Said Yildirim, “The quality of some members of hizmet (the Gulen status group) can be lacking.” Yildirim related that he wished he had more time for Abdelrahman because Abdelrahman was a good boy and needed a good mentor.

Abdelrahman for his part said that he, Abdelrahman, loved Yildirim calling Yildirim, “My big brother… (Yildirim) isn’t like the rest of Hizmet (the Gulen status group).”

According to Yildirim, the reason Abdelrahman was kicked out of Salahaldin and the dormitory had to do with a Gulenist Turkish girl Abdelrahman began to date secretly from Salahaldin. At night (according to Yildirim) Abdelrahman began slipping out of the dormitory and visiting the girl who lived nearby. Doormen in the area saw Abdelrahman and his girlfriend together on the streets late at night. One night, kidnappers abducted Abdelrahman and Abdelrahman’s Turkish girlfriend and held them for ransom. Gulenist administration at Salahaldin responded to the ransom threats by calling on their contacts within the Egyptian Mafia and paying to get Abdelrahman released.

After Abdelrahman’s release, leaders of the Gulen status group at SIS and the Gulenist dormitory cut all ties with Abdelrahman. Yildirim disliked his fellow Gulenists decision to end the congregation’s relationship with Abdelrahman. Yildirim argued with other Gulenists on behalf of Abdelrahman to no avail. Yildirim told his fellow Gulenists that the Gulen status group should give Abdelrahman another chance to continue with his scholarship and work directly with Yildirim. Yildirim told his brother Gulenists that he, Yildirim, would be responsible for
Abdelrahman’s future behavior. Despite these pleas the heads of the Gulenist administration at Salahaldin and the dormitory stood firm and ended Abdelrahman’s scholarship.\textsuperscript{214}

Ultimately, the exact reason why Gulenist leadership removed Abdelrahman from the Turkish Olympics, SIS and the Gulenist dormitory is not as important as what researchers can learn from Abdelrahman’s case study in outsider internationalism and child indoctrination into the Gulen Congregation.

Abdelrahman’s claim that the “big brother” Gulenists did not like Abdelrahman speaking with Turkish girls gives a glimpse into gender relations and nationalism in the Gulen congregation. Equally important was Yildirim’s story about Abdelrahman’s post-date abduction, the Gulen congregation’s payment of ransom for Abdelrahman and the Turkish girl at the school. In Abdelrahman’s statement and Yildirim’s story, the role of youth flirtation, nationalized sexuality and status group discipline underpin Gulenist understandings of femininity, masculinity and Turkishness.

From the Library of Alexandria to the Dormitory of Gulen: Outsider Internationalism – “Ahmed” Case Study

Ahmed, Abdelrahman’s friend, also aged seventeen was originally from Alexandria. As a young teen he performed in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina choir. It was at a Bibliotheca Alexandrina choir performance that principal Yildirim and the Gulenist administration at Salahaldin offered Ahmed a scholarship to attend Salahaldin and stay in the Gulenist dormitory in Cairo.\textsuperscript{215}

Ahmed lived up to Yildirim’s expectations and in 2012 and 2013 Ahmed won one gold, one silver and four bronze medals at the Turkish Olympics finals in Turkey.\textsuperscript{216} While Ahmed
was not completely fluent in Turkish (he was not nearly as good at Turkish as Abdelrahman) he had learned Turkish well enough to participate in the finals of the Turkish Olympics and be active in the Gulen status group’s dormitory system. Like Abdelrahman, Ahmed and many of the people Ahmed met at the Turkish Olympics kept in touch and planned to go to university together. As an outsider, Ahmed’s use of internationalism served him well. He reportedly accepted the rules of the Gulen status group dormitory system so that he could parley “pseudo membership” in the Gulen congregation into subsidized university education in Turkey.

Ahmed’s experience at the Turkish Olympics and in the Gulen status group mirrors some aspects of how Salma was treated. However, the difference between Ahmed and Salma is age and level of indoctrination. While Gulenist administrators wanted Salma to learn Turkish, she did not live in the women’s Gulenist dormitory (though during the production of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt in early 2014 she did stay some nights per week at the Gulenist woman’s dormitory to improve her Turkish). Ahmed however while at SIS lived all of the time in the men’s dormitory and as such had learned passable Turkish and becoming more indoctrinated into the Gulenist system than Salma.

In Ahmed’s case study, we see that the cosmopolitan nature of Gulenist dormitories is linked with the Gulenist project of educational capital production. As non-Turkish internationals, Ahmed and Salma represent a version of outsider internationalism. Both Ahmed and Salma received free education and both might – in the future – continue to gain more educational capital at subsidized Gulenist universities in Turkey or in Africa.

Outsider internationalism is part of a greater indoctrination-based meritocracy system of educational capital production existent within the Gulen status group. It appears from the ethnography that Gulenism needs to bring in talent from poor families (or middle class families).
which makes the talent loyal to the Gulen status group. In fact, the meritocracy of education capital production within the Gulen congregation may be one of the biggest strengths of a group like the Gulenists.

Both Ahmed and Abdelrahman are important case studies at the Turkish Olympics and in the greater Gulen status group because both boys were a part of comradery internationalism and outsider internationalism. Both Ahmed and Abdelrahman received full scholarships to SIS based on their performance abilities. And yet in performance they were able to embrace their Egyptian-ness at the Turkish Olympics; for example when Abdelrahman performed the Egyptian nationalist song Beladee, Beladee. Ahmed was also able to perform some songs which were “Arabic” or “Egyptian.”

Both boys were examples that students being indoctrinated have their own agency into how deeply they become part of the Gulen congregation and accept Turkishness. In Abdelrahman’s case he rebelled and was removed. In Ahmed’s case he accepted Turkishness and Gulenism and hoped to get free (or partially subsidized) education from a Gulen status group university. While Gulenists in the field work clearly tried to bring non-Turkish students into their status group, the process of indoctrination of non-Turkish students was complex indeed. While the carrot of free education as opposed to expensive private education might have been appealing to students like Ahmed and Abdelrahman (and their parents), the indoctrination process is far from certain and linked to personal agency of the students as well.

Gulenist Internationalism: Kazakh, Turkish and Egyptian

Of all the performers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt “Sema”, a girl whose family was from Kazakhstan, was the best example of Gulenist internationalism.
Seventeen year old Sema was one of the three masters of ceremonies at the 2014 Turkish Olympics in Egypt final ceremony. Sema’s history with the Gulen status group dates back to before she was born. In the early 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union, Sema’s mother met the first Turkish Gulenists in Kazakhstan. In fact Sema’s mother was one of the first of seven Islamic Kazakh women who decided to cover themselves after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was partially with connections to the Gulen status group that Sema’s mother and father were able to come to Turkey in 2000 when Sema was 3 years old. After a year in Turkey, her family moved to Cairo to study at Al-Azhar University. Sema’s family has been in Egypt at Al-Azhar since 2001. As of March 2014, her father was doing his master’s degree at Al-Azhar and working in the Kazakh Embassy in Cairo. Sema’s mother was still studying at Al-Azhar’s undergraduate program. Sema had an older sister who was also studying in Al-Azhur.

Sema said that her mother and father and whole family were members of the Gulen status group (which she called Hizmet). Like many in the Gulen congregation in Cairo, Sema and her family lived near other Gulenists. The entire Gulenist community, stated Sema, lived close to SIS in Cairo’s Fifth Settlement District.

That Gulenists live close to one another follows typical Weberian status group behavior. Sema attended Salahaldin and said, “At school here I feel half Egyptian and half Kazakh.” She spoke in Turkish to Turks, in Arabic to Egyptians and at home in Kazakh to her family. In her years at Salahaldin International School, Sema had specialized in learning new languages. Her work in language acquisition at Salahaldin facilitated her MC work with the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Sema reported that she and her family spoke fluent Turkish, Arabic and Kazakh. Besides speaking Turkish, Arabic and Kazakh, Sema spoke near native speaker level English from her time at SIS (as stated earlier, at Salahaldin the language of instruction is
Reportedly, she could also communicate in French and Russian. During the Turkish Olympics in Egypt final performance, Sema translated Turkish into fluent colloquial Egyptian Arabic for the majority Egyptian audience. While on stage, Sema wore a traditional Kazakhi woman’s dress. To the audience Sema was Egyptian and Kazakhi while translating and speaking Turkish. Her sartorial appearance, fluency in Arabic, Turkish and Kazakhi presented a newly mapped third milieu at the Turkish Olympics, which exemplified the existence in the Gulen congregation of a “Gulenist internationalist.”

Sema was covered and said she was a believer in Islam and the teachings of Fethullah Gulen. Sema said the ideal behind the Turkish Olympics is to:

Introduce Islam to the world… Like, when the Christian people who attend the Turkish Olympics see the people praying they become introduced to the Turkish Olympics… And I know of people who became Muslim by meeting (Gulenists). So the Turkish Olympics is a way to introduce Islam behind the show of speaking Turkish.

From watching satellite TV, Gulenist channels such as Samanyolu Sema heard about Americans and Russians who, after attending the Turkish Olympics Finals in Turkey, had become Muslim. Sema stated:

When we look at the generation of Fethullah Gulen and the other big brothers of Hizmet, they have always worked for one goal, the Turkish language and Islam together… God be praised let them continue to do their work…In future generations this will continue… Gulen and the other Gulenist big brothers have had the biggest influence on the development of the Turkish Olympics.

According to Gulenist Turanists, as a Kazakhi girl Sema is a pure Turk, purer than Turks themselves. And yet Sema too must acquiesce to the Turkey-based nationalism of the Turkish Olympics and the Gulen congregation. Gulenists seem to believe that it is only with Turkish nationalism and a re-imagined Islam moderated by the teachings of Fethullah Gulen that Sema
can regain the modernity that is her birth right as a Turk from the Turkic homeland of central Asia.

Besides Salahaldin, the Gulenist community in Egypt had connections and schools in the city of Beni Sweif south of Cairo, in Alexandria and in Port Said. Gulenists in Egypt are primarily Turkish but there are a sizable number of non-Turkish Egyptian and central Asian Gulenists in Egypt. Though organized around a neo-liberal economic paradigm which champions the “gating” of education to elite students and families, Gulenist internationalists like Sema represent a new version of cosmopolitanism within the Gulen status group. Gulenists are inclusive of non-Turkish Anatolian elements (Kurds, Laz, etc) within their status group. This openness to Anatolian “others” indicates an openness to foreign internationals within the status group in so far as Gulenist internationalists accept the teachings of Fethullah Gulen and the primacy of Gulenist Turkishness in congregational identity production.

Gulenist internationals are inside the congregation and as such are separate and protected from the external neo-liberal policies of the Gulen congregation. The employment of Islamist capitalism within the Gulen congregation appears to be different and community based but is also a neoliberal response to unfettered capitalism. Certainly wages are low in the Gulen status group but the walls of protection (free or semi-free education, health care, vacation sites, food provisions, etc.) are high. Meanwhile Gulenists actions outside of the status group in Egypt and other nations appear to be neo-liberal in design and implementation. The ethnography shows that Gulenists push a version of rugged individualism/neo-liberal capitalism on the elite class its educational network primarily services but act in quite an opposite manner to members within their community—providing subsidized private services in response to the withdrawal of state social service provisions.
Gulenist Structure in The Child Indoctrination Ethnography

One Turkish Islamist described the role of the Islamism in Turkey akin to being in a factory. Gulenists work together in their part of the Turkish Islamist factory. Are Gulenists actions any different than the anti-reformation Jesuit schools across Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Yes, in that Gulenists are connected with 21st century fiscal austerity/privatization and exist in a status group says it supports concepts such as democracy and religious tolerance. Is the Gulen congregation any different than Jerry Jones’ People’s Temple? Yes. The Gulen status group/Gulen Congregation/Hizmet is not a cult limited to a small group but instead a global network possessing internationalism and inclusivity.

Some have likened the Gulen status group to being an “Islamist Mafia.” Yet the mafia trope does not fit the Gulen congregation because the mafia (at least the version of the mafia active in the United States, Cosa Nostra) focuses most of its resources on protecting and controlling illegal and semi-legal activities. While some in the Gulen congregation may have Turkish or Egyptian mafia connections, Gulenists as a whole seek power and influence in many different fields in many different countries by using a combination of religiosity, education and financial wealth.

It seems likely that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s damnation of the Gulen status group as a parallel group within the nation, seeking to subvert and control the government has a great deal of validity within the Turkish context. Yet, the Gulen congregation in Egypt is quite different than the Gulen congregation in Turkey. Also, non-Turkish Gulenists of Egyptian, Kazakh or Albanian decent have different goals in mind for the Gulen status group in Turkey, Egypt, Kazakhstan or Albania than their fellow Turkish Gulenists.
Ultimately, the Gulen Congregation is a complex and large organization with a ruling cadre of “big brothers” headed by Fethullah Gulen the *hoca efendi* (“auspicious teacher”). And yet, given its size, the Gulen status group possesses a diversity of voices and perspectives.

**Conclusions of Child Indoctrination Ethnography**

The Turkish Olympics is an effective magnifying glass with which scholars can study the greater Gulen status group. As such, the best way to understand the wealth production machine that is the Gulen Congregation is to think of the congregation as a multinational caramel apple. The caramel on the outside is the institutionalized public relations part of the status group. “Sweet Caramel” is how non-congregationalists first encounter the Gulenists, usually through a Gulenist school or an activity such as the Turkish Olympics. In this first layer Gulenists practice a form of international acceptance of all people, i.e. comradery internationalism.

The second layer, the apple itself, is how the Gulen congregation organizes through networks of dormitories, schools, universities, hospitals, businesses and media organizations. It is possible for Turks and foreigners to work and/or attend these institutions and still not be a member of the Gulen status group. Ahmed and Abdelrahman are examples of non-Turkish outsiders who were not a part of the Gulen congregation but were deeply connected to the status group and undergoing proselytism and inculcation into the Gulen status group vis-à-vis their Gulenist dormitory in Cairo as outsider internationalists. An important “stage set” here to remember is that entrance into this layer of the Gulen status group for non-Turkish students is connected to subsidized/incentivized education.

Finally, to go to the seeds of the apple, the center third layer, is to cut into actual Gulenist Islamism. It is from this center point that Gulenist true-believer proselytism emanates. It is
possible for non-Gulenist student/performers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt to feel nothing of their indoctrination and subjugation into the Gulen status group. However, as the same performers get deeper into the congregation, Gulenist proselytism increases and the process of child subjugation and indoctrination intensifies. Also a feeling of communal connectivity in which the status group “takes care of its own” increases. It becomes a forgone conclusion that upon being a member of the Gulen congregation one has help or full support for one’s health care, education and employment.

While the Gulen status group is usually Turkish in ethnicity, the congregation has developed a space for non-Turks. These non-Turks like Sema and her family must wholeheartedly accept Imam Fethullah Gulen as their mentor and spiritual guide. They must also accept the preeminence of Turkish nationalism and Turkishness. And yet, fully indoctrinated non-Turkish Congregationalists like Sema and her family possess a third Gulenist internationalism which incorporates the notions of international comradery and outsiderness/“being the other” into the Islamist/Turkish status group.
Part Three

Study of Audience Production and Nationalist Reinvention at the Turkish Olympics
Chapter Five

The History and Theory of the Development and Transformation of “Turkishness” among Audience Members at the Turkish Olympics

For much of Turkey’s republican history Kemalism – or the ideas associated with Mustafa Kemal Ataturk – has been the ruling ideology. In Kemalism, Turkishness is the fundamental part of national identity most dominant in the fields of education, family, business, militarized duty, masculinity and femininity.244 As such, the ideal of being Turkish was the unifying glue of the Republican Turkish state.245 Any study then of present day Turkish audience production and reinvention at the Turkish Olympics must first discuss and define the earlier notion of Turkishness as conceived by republican Turks and pre-republican Ottomans. Leading historians of Turkey, Kemal Karpat and Erik Jan Zurcher, will inform much of this theoretical study into the ideology of Turkishness and the feelings of inferiority Turkishness creates among many citizens in Turkey.

Primordialism and the Language of the United Ottoman State

Kemal Karpat differentiates the terms “Turkishness” and “Turkism,” stating that Turkishness was a nationalist project of unification based on a “synthesis of new socio-cultural forces”246 growing out of the Ottoman crises years in the middle nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.247 Karpat explains that “Turkishness” became the leading political discourse in the late Ottoman State and early Republican period with the rise of the Young Turks’ Committee of Union and Progress in 1908/1909.248 However, Karpat explains that by the late 1920s and early 1930s, populist “Turkishness” gave way to the state sponsored “Turkism” of the Kemalist
Republican state. Karpat’s critique of the term *Turkculuk* is important in that it divides the nascent nationalist/populist project of 1856 – 1923 (Turkishness) with the modern Kemalist nationalist project (Turkism). However, the fact remains that political discourse in Turkey today uses the term Turkishness – not Turkism – to describe nationalist identity politics around “being Turkish.” Perhaps the use of *Turkculuk* in modern day Turkey shows the popularity of pre-Kemalist (or Turanist) versions of Turkish nationalism as opposed to the state sponsored and imposed Kemalist Turkishness.

From 1856 (the end of the Crimean War) to 1914 seven million Muslim refugees relocated in Anatolia from the Caucuses, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Bosnia/Yugoslavia, Romania, Crete, Cyprus and Albania. By 1882 forty-two percent of the Anatolian populations of the Ottoman Empire were from refugee Muslim families or decedents of Muslim refugees, turning Anatolia, “into a de facto United Ottoman state.” Commonalities in religion (Sunni Islam) created links between the newly arrived refugees and the villager Muslims of Anatolia. While Tanzimat leaders such as Ahmet Cevdet Pasa (1822 – 1895) were not ready to Turkify the Ottoman Muslim milieu in Anatolia, he accepted that the Ottoman state “stood on four foundations” that is the Caliphate, the family of Osman, the capital being in Istanbul and that the sultan was always Turkish. In Ahmet Cevdet Pasa’s writings, scholars see that the concept of “primordial Turkishness” was an active discourse among Ottoman elite in the mid-nineteenth century. Clearly the Ottomans discussed and thought on their own “primordialism” in response to the cultural nationalism of French Revolution and the racialized history of the Brothers Grimm and the “Aryans.”

† Tanzimat = reorganization of the Ottoman State based on western European examples. This process began in 1839 and ended in the First Constitutional Era in 1876.
Ottoman elites would eventually come to employ both a racial (German) and a cultural (French) approach to national identity production in the early twentieth century. Initially, Turkishness would be Turanist and connected to ideas of a racial “Turkic blood” and epic myths of Central Asia. Then Turkishness would morph under the Kemalist regime and the national identity of Turkey would be constructed more along cultural/civilizational lines. As such, in modern day Turkey both cultural (French in origin) and racial (German in origin) Turkishness exist as active discourses. These discourses at times compliment and reinforce each other and at other times conflict.

Karpat explains that though the Ottoman state from 1839 to 1908 did not officially support the Turkish ethnicization of Sunni Muslims in Anatolia, a natural populist process of language reinvention took place among the “Turkish milieu” and the greater Ottoman community of Anatolia and the Middle East. A new populist language – the precursor to modern Turkish – grew out of late nineteenth century newspapers and reviews in Anatolia. This new language blended the classical Ottoman Turkish (heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian languages) with the villager Turkish of Anatolia. This “new Turkish” gained widespread use in Ottoman elementary schools, middle schools and professional schools as well as many government offices. The creation of a “people’s Anatolian language” happened in the polyglotism of the Ottoman state and, as such, Arabs, Circassians, Greeks, Kurds, Laz and Armenians all used the new Turkish language. Karpat states that Turkish language use was a tool to unify different Muslim ethnicities in Anatolia. Clearly Karpat’s analysis closely follows Anderson’s theory of print capital being the main root of modern nationalism.

However, Karpat argues this was not a nationalist project in so much as it was a “natural evolution” among “Turks” and “non-Turks spreading unopposed … as a means of
communication, rather than a mark of the dominant ethnic group.”

Karpat states that the new Turkish identity in Anatolia played off of earlier, rustic villager Turks who, while regionalized, could trace their lineage in Anatolia back to the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries A.D. Given the need to create a nationalist Turkish identity in the nineteenth century, Turkishness “…coalesced around the existing ancient Turkish ethno-tribal identity to which it grafted the Ottoman and Islamic political ingredients.”

Did the modern day Turkish language develop in a “natural” manner among the “Muslim milieu” of late nineteenth/early twentieth century Anatolia? Or did forces within the Ottoman state actively conceive of modern Turkish for the masses of newly arrived Muslim refugees in late nineteenth/early twentieth century Anatolia so as to instill a new nationalist identity, thus effectively nationalizing a sectarian refugee milieu? The answers to these questions are not clear and outside the scope of this study. Yet if scholars of Turkey wish to understand the development of modern day Turkish and how language production is associated with Turkishness, these questions need more investigation. A deeper reading of Anderson will be necessary in this process. One can suppose (as Karpat does) that the rise of modern Turkish in the late nineteenth century occurred devoid of nationalist machination and was a “natural process.” However, given the import Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic gave to Turkish language production and reform, it is possible that elements within the Ottoman State before 1908, covertly (if not overtly) supported the development of a new language to further the nascent Turkish Nationalist project.
Turkishness of the Young Turks: First Turanist and then Kemalist

The Young Turks were a group of elite Ottomans active in the state’s military and political power structures. First the Young Turks worked as agitators against Sultan Abdul-Hamid II’s government (1880s – 1908) and then they became the rulers of the late Ottoman and early Republican state (1909 – 1950). Erik Jan Zurcher’s work on Turkishness gives academics one of the best accounts of the ideological development of the Young Turks.

Initially the Young Turks wanted to oust autocratic Sultan Abdul-Hamid II (r. 1876 – 1909) and to create a constitutional, parliamentary state. By enacting democratic reforms in the Ottoman Empire, the Young Turks hoped to remove the external threat of European imperialists dominating the internal workings of the Ottomans. However, the Young Turks had a fundamental clash of ideals. While they gave lip service to democracy and popular representation, they were also elitists who adhered to the anti-democratic concepts of technocracy. As such their political discourse was at loggerheads with their elitist foundations. Whenever given the choice between real democracy or technocratic modernization, the Young Turks always choose the latter.

Zurcher explains that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his supporters belonged to a radical wing of the Young Turks. As time went on the Young Turk movement as a whole and the radicals in particular moved closer toward an employment of Turkishness/Turkish nationalism as the guiding ideology of their political enterprise. By the time Young Turks were running the Ottoman State in 1909 they embraced a version of populist Turkishness theorized by Ziya Gokalp and other Turanists. This version of Turkishness (Turanist in approach) persisted as the main national identity through the 1920s.
From the mid to late 1920s onward, the ideology of “being Turkish” became more tied to the Kemalist state and as such focused on one state Turkish nationalism within the Republic of Turkey. Fearing that the rise of Pan-Turkic nationalism in Turkey might upset delicate relations with Stalin’s USSR, Ataturk closed all Turanist institutions in 1931.\textsuperscript{268} After closing Turanist institutions, the Kemalist state embraced a new Turkishness. Kemalists actively supported the Sun Language Theory in the 1930s and revisionist histories of ancient Anatolia featured early Anatolian civilizations (such as the Hittites and Sumerians) as proto-Turks.\textsuperscript{269} Ataturk himself opened Sümerbank (Sumer Bank) with backing from the Soviet Union in 1933 and Etibank (Hittite Bank) in 1935. Borrowing from communist central planning policies, these financial institutions were part of the Kemalists’ statist plan to transform Turkey’s industrial output.\textsuperscript{270} By naming these new institutions after ancient Anatolian civilizations, scholars can see the Kemalist state’s “repackaging” of Turkishness rhetoric in 1930s Turkey.\textsuperscript{271} While Ataturk and other Kemalist leaders continued to recognize Turkic roots from central Asia, being Turkish in 1930s Turkey became tied to the land and ancient history of Anatolia. As such the Kemalist state checked and rebranded the earlier Turanist version of a Turkic nationalism stretching from western China to Istanbul.\textsuperscript{272} It is important to note the synthesis which has occurred among the Islamist Gulen status group in that the Gulenists have adopted some Turanists behavioral norms and beliefs. Since both Turanists and Turkish Islamists were for much of the history of the republic not a part of the ruling elite, it is understandable that these two rightist marginalized groups would find ways to mutually support and work together. This closeness between Islamism and Turanism has resulted in Gulenists being able to move seamlessly between both Islamism and Turkic Turanism.
Zurcher explains that the Kemalist employment of Turkishness was tied to the idea of “Turkish civilization” and “Turkish culture.” The dichotomy within Kemalist Turkishness between the concept of “Turkish civilization” and “Turkish culture” would become the leading inclusive/exclusive process by which the new Turkish national identity would emerge in 1930s Turkey. 273

However before discussing the concepts of “Turkish culture” and “Turkish civilization”, it is necessary to discuss earlier discourses around “Ottomanism” and “Islamism” in the late Ottoman state and how Ottomanism and Islamism relate to Turkishness. Besides identification with Turkishness, Ottomanism (the multiethnic character of the Ottoman State) and Islamism were important rallying points for the Muslim milieu of Anatolia during the War of Turkish Independence (1919 – 1923). 274 Ataturk’s capture and entry into Izmir on September 9th, 1922 ended the existential threat to the Muslim/Ottoman “nation” and signaled the complete victory over the Christian “Greeks” and Armenians in Anatolia. Much of the Kemalist victory over native Anatolian Christians, the country of Greece and Greece’s western allies (Italy, France and Britain) grew from a decade of anti-Christian rhetoric which relied on Islamism and multiethnic Ottomanism as unifying tools for the Anatolian Muslims. 275 For example, during the Turkish War of Independence, Ataturk’s National Assembly worked to position the nationalist resistance as a rightly guided Islamic movement 276 and Ataturk allied with Muslim Kurdish and Muslim Circassian guerrilla leaders. 277

Sectarianism then appears to be a unifying and founding component of Turkish and Greek national identities in Anatolia and the southern Balkans. Opposed to the national narratives of modern day Greece and Turkey, it seems difficult to say with any kind of certainty that the early communities of “Hellenic” or “Turkic” villagers existed opposed to one another in
the Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Seljukid/Beylik periods of Anatolian/Balkan history. What seems more plausible is that starting in 1071 until the eighteenth century life in Anatolia and the southern Balkans was a polyglot blend of Muslim, Jewish and Christian families living next to one another, marrying one another, and speaking a mix of languages. As such Armenian converts to Islam called Hemshin worshiped in Armenian while Orthodox Christians in western Anatolia would speak in villager Turkish. However, nationalism in the modern period resulted in the formation of new states. The death knell of Ottomanism then was the forced population exchanges between Turkey and Greece (1923/1924) in which the Christians left Anatolia and most Muslims left Greece.

After the Christian “ethnicities” left Turkey, the Kemalist state embraced the monoculturalism of Turkishness to the detriment of Kurds, Laz, Circassians and other Muslim non-Turkish ethnicities in Turkey. As early as 1923 the nationalists’ party Halk Partisi or People’s Party had as one of its statues, “Every Turk and every outsider who accepts Turkish nationality and culture can join the People’s Party.” By 1925 the Turkish Ministry of Education stated that political ideologies opposed to “Turkish unity” had resulted in the ministry banning the use of the terms Kurd, Laz, Circassian, Kurdistan and Lazistan. In 1927 the People’s Party’s platform declared the spread of Turkish language and culture to be a guiding principle of the party.

After declaring the Republic of Turkey, the new Kemalist leadership also moved against Islamism in the state’s drive toward modernization. Atatürk’s government worked to control all religious activity in Turkey in a militarized version of laicism reminiscent of Jacobin aggressions during the French Revolution. Kemalist laicism was repressive toward Sunni Muslims who – while being the vast majority of the Republican population – had views, which
were opposed to the Kemalist state. It is important to note that the Kemalists adopted a laicism, which means state control of the religious structures and religious leaders. Secularism is different in that the state does not try to control the form which religious structures organize or religious authorities preach.

As a means to enforce laicist/statist control of Islam over the populace, Kemalist leaders created *Istiklal Mahkemeleri* (Independence Tribunals) throughout the 1920s. Initially these tribunals prosecuted and executed Independence War deserting soldiers, bandits and members of the former ruling party, the Committee for Union and Progress. However by the mid-1920s the Tribunals began arresting and executing Islamist reactionaries and anyone who did not go along with the “westernized” dress code and hat law (1925). The actions of the Independence Tribunals paved the way for a national discourse amendable to Kemalist legal transformations such as the Latin Alphabet (1928), women’s suffrage (1930 partial, 1934 full), the spread of communal education centers *Halkevleri* or People’s Homes (1931), Turkish last name adoption (1934) and the “purification” of Turkish (mid-1930s). As such the laicism of the Kemalist state was reminiscent of Jacobin conflicts with Catholicism during the French Revolution. Like the Jacobins, Kemalists recreated a nationalist narrative, which removed the authority of religious leaders in politics. Atatürk’s use of religious leaders as enemies of the state – such as the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925 – legitimized the state’s use of secularism in the modernization of Turkey.

**The Excluded and Included: Minority Communities and “White/Black” Turk Divide**

Turkish scholar Seda Demiralp and other Turkish scholars such as Serif Mardin and Mucahit Bilici have written about Islamism and modernity in modern Turkey. For these thinkers
and like-minded Turkish journalists, the concept of a “white” Turkey and a “black” Turkey are powerful sociological concepts relating to real divisions across Anatolia. My use of such words such as “white” Turkey and “black” Turkey are not meant to reify such divisions. To the contrary a binary which divides into literal black and white camps is a flawed concept. Yet because many Turks see a “black”/“white” division in their society (however fictitious that division may be) means that we must discuss how this division is employed in the social construction of Turkish nationalism at “black” Turkish events like the Gulen status group’s Turkish Olympics. If there is a new “black” Islamist Turkish hegemon ruling Turkey, then we scholars are compelled to use the language of Turks themselves in studying and understanding this new hegemonic transformation. Yet we must be careful least we academics ourselves become complacent and use divisive words like “white” Turkey and “black” Turkey in a way which accepts naturalness to such divisive concepts.

Throughout the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, Muslim refugees from Bosnia, the Caucasus, Bulgaria, Crimea, Romania, Crete, Thessaloniki and other regions of Eastern Europe came to Turkey in different waves. Many of these “white Turks” – urbanized denizens of western Turkish cities with Eastern European heritage adopted Turkishness as their new national identity. One of the fundamental components then of a Kemalist employment of Turkishness was a nationalist embrace of all new comer Muslims who (1) were open to modernist ideology around “progressive” nation building and (2) embraced Turkishness. While the use of Turkish identity was an effective tool for national inclusivity and loyalty among newly arrived eastern European Muslims, Turkishness was exclusive and far harder for Muslims and non-Muslim inhabitants of Anatolia to adopt. Newly arrived eastern European Muslims tended to be better educated, wealthier and more used to European modernity from their home countries.
Meanwhile Anatolians had less education, were more rural and oftentimes had less experience with materialism and secular/statist ideologies. As such Anatolian villager Turks, Kermanji speaking Kurds, Zazaji speaking Kurds, Arabs living in Turkey, Trabzon-based Laz, Circassians, Georgians, Arameans, Hemsin and Armenians were excluded from the national Turkish identity to varying degrees. All of these communities left over from the Ottoman state found “being Turkish” in Republican Turkey to be an identity imposed by the state. Even ethnic Anatolian Turks unfamiliar with statist modernity underwent a forced assimilation into the Kemalist Turkish national identity. As such the struggle of Ottomanism or multi-ethnicism in creating a mono-ethnic Turkey has been the existential crises point for the peoples of Turkey in their relationship with the national state. Certainly this struggle of the marginalized cosmopolitan gaining voice and power is not unique to Turkey. Anderson stated as much when he discussed exclusion and inclusion to the power structure in the new nation state based on national language production.

As per Anderson, groups in nation states close to state-sponsored print capital production inherently have easier access to nationalized power structures. This was the case with “white” Turks who at the start of the Turkish Republic were denizens of western Anatolian cities and decedents of Eastern European Ottoman Muslims. As the Kemalist state pushed its own modernized version of Turkishness, “white” Turks were the quickest to learn the official nationalized language and fill new positions in the Kemalist government and state controlled economy.

Meanwhile “black” Turks lived in villages across Anatolia and in the early republican period of Turkish history had less access to the new nationalized language and the resulting national power structure. Scholars can see then that the Erdogan prime ministry/presidency and
long leadership of Turkey is a “black” Turkish correction in the power divide between urbanized and rural Turks coming from the inception of the Turkish Republic and Ataturk’s presidency. With the arrival of “black” Turks into major Turkish cities after 1950 the pendulum of power began to shift from an urban elite to a rural-turned-urban majority.

However, scholars’ understanding of national identity production cannot rest alone on a study of Ottomanism/multi-ethnicism in modern day Turkey. A deeper critique of how Turkishness, modernity and Islamism interact is fundamental in understanding the state’s and the citizenry’s production of national identity and how that identity is transformed by audience participation at the Turkish Olympics.

Following the oppressive laicism of the Kemalist state, the idea of two Turkeys has developed. One Turkey – that of the “white Turk” – is western in outlook, urban, supportive of the Kemalist military and religious in so far as being religious means being culturally Turkish and being religious in private life but supportive of secularism publically. The other Turkey – that of the “black Turk” – is politically Islamist, rural/“villager”, anti-military and pro-capitalist in so far as the “civilizing” influence of capitalism in Turkey represents a wealth and power accumulating structure separate from that of Kemalism. While “white” Turks generally accept a one-state Kemalist version of Turkishness and “black” Turks tend to adhere to an international Turanist version of Turkishness, both groups are vocally nationalistic.

Some in Turkey feel there is an actual racial divide between both groups with Anatolian “black” Turks looking “darker skinned” and eastern Europe immigrant “white” Turks looking “whiter.” While there may be some racial differences between ethnicities in Turkey, the divide between “white” and “black” Turks appears to be based more on ideological differences in relation to religiosity, state power and capital production. Generally speaking, Islamist “black”
Turks often use spiritualism to express their existential intent while laicist “white” Turks organize their political and social lives around the tenants of materialism. As such belief in either materialism or spiritualism is the starting point of conflict between these groups.

Given the economic, infrastructural and educational advances of modern Turkey both groups adhere to a version of political modernity based on earlier Kemalist state structures. However both groups employ modernity differently. As the successors of Ataturk, the “white” Turk employs a nineteenth century materialist modernity while the “black” Turk, through the teachings of Said Nursi, has transformed modernity into a new hybrid: spiritualist modernity.

Elite “white” Turks in the Kemalist political party the People’s Republican Party (or CHP) exclude and segregate “black” Turks saying Anatolian villagers living in Turkey’s large cities are ignorant, unwashed and uneducated. Meanwhile “black” Turk leaders such as Necmettin Erbakan, Fethullah Gulen and Recep Tayyip Erdogan embrace their roles as voices of the oppressed majority and feature their employment of Islamism and capitalism as victories of democracy in modern Turkey. It is fundamental then for scholars to conceptualize how discourses around multi-ethnicism/mono-ethnicism and the “black”/“white” Turk divide inform the Kemalist creation of a Turkishness which is culturally exclusive and yet inclusive in its approach to civilization and civilized behavior.

Clearly Weber’s ideas on ethnicism being a presumed irrational community give insight into the “black”/“white” Turkish divide. “Black” and “white” Turks are both an imagined community as per Weber. Yet, these “ethnicities” (or divisions within the Turkish ethnicity based on economic inequalities) did in fact emerge from shared and at times separate historical experiences. Smith’s study then of memories, traditions and symbols allows scholars to look at the “black”/“white” Turkish divide less connected with skin color and much more connected to
the varied histories, traditions and memories of different Anatolian groups/ethnicities. These histories, traditions and memories created a “white” Turkish community in Anatolia starting in the 1850s and a marginalized “black” Turkish one from 1923 onward.

**Turkish Culture and the Turkish Civilization Umbrella**

Jewish Kemalist thinker Munis Tekinalp (also known as Moiz Kohen, 1883 - 1961) wrote on the assimilation concepts of “Turkish civilization” and “Turkish culture” in Republican Turkey. Tekinalp explains that culture consists of: “the sentiments and attitudes adopted from earliest childhood onwards, from one's parents and immediate surroundings.” However civilization is, “the high culture consciously learned at a later age, which is international and possibly changed at will.” In this Tekinalp appears as an archetypical Kemalist. While a shared Islamism and Ottomanism unified the Muslim communities of Anatolia during the Turkish War of Independence, modernist Kemalists decided that neither multi-ethnicism nor religious Islamism would be the bond to create a new Turkey. Leaders of the Turkish Republic supported a mono-cultural and mono-civilizing Turkish nationalism for identity production. Turkishness would both inclusively civilize all different cultures in Anatolia and be the exclusive culture of Turkey.

Consequently, a resident of Diyarbakir – a leading Kurdish city – who can accept her Turkishness to the detriment of her Kurdishness may be able to become “culturally Turkish.” Her children have an even a better chance to be culturally Turkish. Meanwhile, another Diyarbakir woman who holds onto her Kurdishness is compelled at the very least to accept the “civilizing hand” of Turkishness in her life. This imposition of Turkish civilization is reflected in the primacy of Turkish language, Turkish business, Turkish state controlled education systems,
the Turkish military and the Turkish state legitimizing marriage. Even if she does not accept her
Turkishness in terms of culture, a Kurdish woman in Turkey accepts Turkish civilization as the
umbrella under which she understands her Kurdishness. Turkish civilization becomes equivalent
to Turkish nationalism meanwhile Turkish culture is connected with Turkish ethnicity.

Perhaps the best example of the Turkish umbrella civilization among Kurds would be the
Kurdish nationalist leader Abdullah Öcalan. Öcalan reportedly only speaks and thinks in
Turkish. As a product of the Turkish education system Öcalan likely found his Kurdish
nationalism and communism from a Turkish educational system and state structure. Here
scholars can see Gellner’s ideas on nationalized education systems writ large.

In this Öcalan appears to be the norm, not the exception. The Kurdish language in Turkey
is taught with a Turkified Latin Alphabet (while Kurdish in Syria, Iraq and Iran is taught with an
Arabic alphabet). As Kurds move to western Turkey and settle in large Turkish cities their
children often speak little Kurdish. Kurds call this new generation who has grown up in the west
of Turkey and speak little Kurdish, “white” Kurds. While more research needs to be done on
this topic, it seems likely that this “black”/“white” divide among Kurds plays off of the civilizing
“black”/“white” divide among Turks. The fact that a civilizing rhetoric of exclusivity and
inclusivity in Turkishness can come to define exclusivity and inclusivity in Kurdishness is an
example of the overarching civilizing/nationalizing power of Turkishness on all other ethnic
groups in Turkey.

In the production of a nationalized language and education system and the inclusive and
exclusive nature inherent in such a system, many of Anderson’s and Gellner’s theoretical ideas
apply. For example, the national Turkish Language Association (Turk Dil Kurumu) was the state
apparatus by which the new Turkish language of the Turkish republic was invented in the 1930s.
New language rules were then given to the Ministry of Education and spread through the entire Kemalist state. Interestingly, many non-Turkish respondents in the ethnography stated that their fathers’ and grandfathers’ first contact with state sponsored Turkish was in the Turkish military during forced tours of duty. As such nationalism, state sponsored education, the new Turkish language and military mobilization became the tools by which “black” Turks and non-Turkish minorities became “Turkified” in Turkey.

Response to Kemalist Turkishness Example A: Multi-ethnicism

The Zazaji Kurdish Dersim Uprisings of 1937 – 1938 show that Kurds and other ethnicities in Turkey contested state sponsored Turkishness as a unifying ideal even during the period of high Kemalism (1930 – 1950). While Turkishness transformed within the Kemalist discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century, Kemalists continued to exercise influence on the national discourse and development of the Turkish state. From Adnan Menderes’ election in 1950 until Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s victory in 2002, Kemalist ideology was the primary narrative of the ruling elite in Turkey even if – from time to time – a Kemalist leader was not the Prime Minister or President of the Republic.

The rise of the Abdullah Öcalan’s Communist/Nationalist Kurdish Worker’s Party or PKK in 1978 marked a turning point in ethnic relations in Turkey and how citizens of Turkey would conceive of Turkishness. In 1984 Öcalan and the PKK began a thirty-year insurrection against the Turkish state. As of 2013, forty-five thousand deaths have resulted from the PKK/Turkish state conflict. While a Turkish nationalist backlash against the PKK was the response of many Turks, the on-again off-again PKK insurrection has had inevitable realpolitik results across Turkey. The “Kurdish question” is now openly discussed in the Turkish media,
Kurdish speaking radio and television channels broadcast in Turkey and the leftist PKK affiliated, People’s Democratic Party or HDP regularly wins the majority Kurdish vote in the east of Turkey. HDP also polls well in western Turkish cities showing an ethnic transformation in how Turkish citizens view the ideal of Turkishness and Turkish nationalism. While some of the HDP support in Turkish cities comes from the migrant Kurdish community living in western Turkey, many Turkish leftists, feminists and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered groups also support the HDP.\(^308\) As a result, a citizen of Turkey can now openly pronounce her Kurdishness, Lazishness, Circassian-ness, Jewishness, Armenian-ness and so on. HDP acts as a unifying political party where the same citizen can discuss her feminism and embrace whatever sexual orientation she desires. Certainly Turkey continues to be a conservative country and HDP’s embrace of the “other” should not be misunderstood as a general openness of Turkey’s citizenry or perhaps as anything but an alliance of othered groups intent on political power. Nonetheless, HDP’s victory in the June 7, 2015 parliamentary election shows a continued transformation in Turkey’s ethnic awareness and awareness of the “other.”

In the PKK and HDP’s marginalization and active political involvement, scholars detect similarities with the marginalized actors highlighted in *Cairo Cosmopolitan* who work to reclaim power in Cairo from statist institutions and neo-liberal wealth. Incidentally after the June 7, 2015 successful HDP electoral victory, President Erdogan led a state sponsored attack of the HDP across Turkish media. The result of Erdogan’s and AKP’s media blitz (all made possible from Turkish corporate support of Erdogan) was a massive AKP/Erdogan electoral victory in the fall of 2016. As such, when allowed, Kurdish and other marginalized cosmopolitan voices of Turkey possess a meaningful space in the political opposition. When outlawed – as is more or less HDP’s condition in 2016 – marginalized cosmopolitan groups have the choice of silence and
observance of the law or outright revolt as has been the practice of the PKK since 1984.

Responses to Kemalist Turkishness Example B: Spiritualism and Deism

While Kemalism has no place for what some in Turkey have termed “domestic foreigners” – indigenous Jewish and Christian groups in Turkey after 1924 – Gulenism seeks to reach out to potential political and business allies among Turkey’s Jews and Christians. In Turkey Jewish and Christian numbers are small yet Gulenist connections with indigenous Christians and Jews are informative in the transformational politics around spiritualism and multi-ethnicism in Turkey. Similar to controls on Islam, the eighty-year laicism of the Kemalist state resulted in Turkish state control of indigenous Christian and Jewish religious activities.

As Islamism gains more visibility and political power in Turkey, these non-Islamic and yet deist groups may also benefit and gain increased political recognition by the Turkish state through connections to “black” Turkish political and religious organizations such as the Gulen status group. The process by which all religions’ boats rise together in modern Turkey is outside the scope of this study on Islamists and audience production at the Turkish Olympics. However, scholars’ work on the role of Christian and Jewish groups in Turkey will likely inform studies on the way in which materialism and spiritualism can support openness and democracy and at other times morph into oppressive forms of laicism and/or religiosity. Also a study on inter-sectarian dialogue and support will be informative on ethnic/religious relations in Turkey.

There is one exception to Gulenist interfaith dialogue. This exception comes from the historic divide between Shia and Sunni Islam. While Gulenists reach out to deist religious groups, and even Buddhists and Hindus at Gulenist interfaith dialogue centers and schools in India and Southeast Asia, Sunni Muslim Gulenists consider Shia Muslims to be a heretical
sect and a perversion of the truth faith.\textsuperscript{314} As such Gulenists tend to vilify Alevi Shia in Turkey and other Shia groups abroad making alliances between the Gulen status group and Shia groups in Turkey and outside of Turkey reportedly non-existent.\textsuperscript{315} This topic of Sunni/Shia relations in Turkey is a point of conflict and transformation in today’s Turkey and any study of Sunni/Shia relations would likely start in the contested alleyways and backstreets of Alevi neighborhoods in Istanbul and Ankara. In these neighborhoods running street battles between leftist Alevis and state security forces is the norm. To their credit Turkish scholars have done work in Alevi communities in Turkey, discussing the role of an excluded Weberian ethnicity which has been historically oppressed by both the Kemalist and Erdogan-led state.

In conversations some leading Gulenists have privately expressed the practical need to reach a settlement between the two main Alevi Shia sects (ten to fifteen percent of the Turkish population is Shia Alevi) and Sunni Islamists in Turkey. If the next generation of Gulenists can find a way to reconcile their religiosity with political needs in Turkey and the rest of the Middle East, there may be a chance for the forging of relations between Shiaism and the Gulen status group.

**The Islamist Dance Partners: Gulenists and the AKP at the Turkish Olympics**

The Turkish Olympics in Turkey – though initially conceptualized by the Gulen congregation – is not a wholly Gulenist affair. In the midst of the 2012 Turkish Olympics Closing Ceremonies at Turk Telekom Arena in Istanbul, then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave the keynote address to the audience and called on Imam Fethullah Gulen to come back to Turkey from Gulen’s self-imposed exile in the US.\textsuperscript{316} The crowd roared at Erdogan’s call for Gulen’s return.
Erdogan’s speech and presence at the Closing Ceremonies of the 2012 (and later 2013) Turkish Olympics in Turkey, exemplified the complexity of the Gulen status group and AKP relationship in Turkey from 2002 to 2013. In this eleven-year period Gulenists and the AKP appeared to be the closest of friends. Events in late 2013 and in early 2014 would end the Gulen congregation/AKP political alliance and the failed coup attempt in 2016 was the final nail in the coffin of the former alliance. Yet, the fact that a mere four years before the July 15 coup, Erdogan in 2012 would publically – at the Turkish Olympics – call for Gulen’s return to Turkey shows that the Turkish Olympics in Turkey was not just a Gulenist enterprise but an amalgamation of different groups within “black” Turkish Islamism. These groups at times conflict and at other times are in harmony with each other.

From 2003 onward, the Uluslararasi Turkce Dernegi (TURKCEDER) or the International Turkish Association – a Gulenist organization – worked closely with Erdogan’s government to produce the annual two-week long Turkish Olympics tour of Turkey. As a joint venture between the Erdogan state and the Gulen status group, the Turkish Olympics in Turkey supported an appropriated “black” Turk version of Turkishness that reached out to citizens in most parts of the country. This new version of Turkishness removed laicist Kemalists as the ruling elite and changed Turkishness from being laicist, modernist and statist into being Islamist, modernist and statist. Both Fethullah Gulen’s status group and Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s AKP political party donated large sums of money and backed the Turkish Olympics in government owned public media and Gulenist owned private media.
Multiethnic *Turkiyeli* as Hosts and Audience Members of the Touring Turkish Olympics

Besides being a featured media event, the Turkish Olympics was also a two-week long nationwide touring festival. As such the Turkish Olympics Tour brought “the world” to the doorstep of small town and villager Anatolians. In 2012 the Turkish Olympics toured forty-one of the total eighty-one Turkish provinces. Also, every major metropolitan city in Turkey hosted the Turkish Olympics tour in 2012. Most Turkish respondents in the fieldwork stated that they saw their first Turkish Olympics performance during a Turkish Olympics tour of their home province in Turkey between 2005 and 2009. Many of these same respondents cited the Turkish Olympics in Turkey as being an important influence in getting them active in the Gulen status group and bringing them over to teach in Egypt from Turkey.

Here Gellner’s and Michell’s ideas around a spectacle/festival reinforced by state-sponsorship and a friendly nationalized media apply. For the Turkish Olympics festival to be a success it was necessary for “black” Turks and the multiple ethnicities of Turkey to view and experience a reinvented national identity. While television and radio use is widespread in Turkey, nothing beats seeing a show live. The point then of the touring Turkish Olympics in Turkey was to connect with the masses. As shown in the ethnography, for the Gulen status group the tour of the Turkish Olympics was a great recruiting tool. The festival allowed “Turks” in the audience to map a familiar world dressed and appearing to them in traditional Turkish outfits: singing Turkish songs, dancing Turkish dances and role playing Turkish nationalism on an “international” stage.

Until 2014 the Turkish state under Erdogan’s leadership was the main sponsor of the Turkish Olympics. Erdogan and his AK Party benefited from the reinvented Turkish national identity at the Turkish Olympics which leaned more on Islamism than Kemalist laicism. As such
all of the state’s affiliated media groups were in attendance at the Turkish Olympics festival and the Turkish Olympics opening and closing ceremonies in Istanbul were broadcast live on all major private and public Turkish radio and television channels.

The Turkish Olympics’ use of Turkishness rebrands earlier Kemalist understandings of national identity production in Turkey. In Kemalism Turkishness is both exclusively cultural and inclusively civilizational. Identity production at the Turkish Olympics however embraces formally excluded non-Turks of Anatolia (primarily Sunni Laz, Sunni Kurds, Sunni Circassians, Sunni Arabs and Sunni Hemshin). As long as these marginalized groups accept “being Turkish,” they can host and be cultural emissaries to international school children.323

The Turkish Olympics admission of host status to the audience creates a space of national empowerment for non-ethnic Turks of Anatolia. This empowerment of formally marginalized Sunni non-Turks of Anatolia comes at a cost in that Gulenism compels multi-ethnic audience members to feature their “Turkishness” and adhere to Islamic modernity when acting as hosts, teachers and emissaries at the Turkish Olympics. Yet, if non-Turkish Anatolians can embrace the ideal of a recreated Turkish national identity at the Turkish Olympics they can become the teachers and emissaries of a new Turkishness to the world. As such these marginalized groups gain more power than in the earlier Kemalist paradigm in which they are recognized as both Turkish and multiethnic Türkiye (citizens of Turkey).324

The difference then between Kemalism and Gulenism is that the former oftentimes denies the existence of or oppresses non-Turkish ethnicities in Turkey. Meanwhile, Gulenism accepts the cosmopolitan existence of different ethnicities insofar as Sunni ethnicities of Anatolia embrace a Gulen status group approved version of Turkishness.325
The Turkish and Egyptian Audience Community

On March 15, 2014 at Salahaldin International School’s Turkish Olympics Final in Egypt, Salma sang. While she sang both Egyptian and Turkish audience members gasped at the young girl’s talent. Later, during a play both Egyptians and Turks laughed. And still later during a poetry recitation on lost love both Egyptians and Turks in the audience got distant, tears in eyes, some in the audience reliving lost loves from five, ten or even fifty years earlier. As such audience members experience the Turkish Olympics performance communally, even if Turks and Egyptians have different national understandings of the Turkish Olympics.
Chapter Six

Ethnography of The Creation of an Audience’s Turkishness

Many Turkish Gulenist respondents at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt stated that had it not been for the their attending the Turkish Olympics performed in Turkey, they would have never come abroad to work at Gulenist institutions in Egypt or any other country. A study then of Turkish audience members – many of whom came to Egypt, produced the Turkish Olympics in Egypt and sometimes returned to Turkey for the Turkish Olympics finals – is a story of Turkish national identity reinvention. Once an audience member in Turkey has accepted a new Gulenist/black Turkish national identity, then Gulen institutions can employ and possibly deploy the new Congregationalist abroad.

There are three discourses Gulenist organizers use in the transformation of Turkishness among Turkish audience members at the Turkish Olympics. Gulenists show the audience members a new internationalism in which Turkey is the center of the world. This discourse is connected with Mitchell’s ideas of mapping the world through a festival/spectacle. The Turkish Olympics also employs subtle and – at times – overt political Islamism. This brand of Islamism connects to both Fethullah Gulen (as the leader of the Gulen status group) and the Erdogan state and Erdogan’s voter base. Third, the political and religious oppression black Turks experienced during the period of Kemalist state dominance (1923 – 2002) resulted in the Erdogan state and the Gulen status group’s openness to a multi-ethnic Turkey or a concept known as Turkiyeli (one who is a member/citizen of Turkey but not necessary “Turkish”). This openness to multi-ethnicism/cosmopolitanism, while being prefaced as Turkish multi-ethnicism (and thus still tied
to the notion of mono-ethnic Turkishness), extends citizenship status and is reflected in the Turkish Olympic’s call for audience members to become “Turkish hosts.”

Hosts at the Turkish Olympics spread a newly internationalized version of Turkishness first as active Gulenists in Turkey and then in eventual employment and deployment to the Gulenist educational system across the world.

This ethnography on audience production at the Turkish Olympics takes as its primary focus the Turkish audience at the Turkish Olympics. Yet this ethnography will also have as its secondary study the Egyptian audience at the Turkish Olympics. Egyptian audience members experience the Turkish Olympics in Egypt differently than the Turkish audience members. The inclusion of Egyptian audience members is pertinent to this study in that the views of Egyptian audience members speak to how Gulenists build consent among a VIP non-Turkish milieu. Egyptian audience members tended to be parents of performing students. Oftentimes the Egyptian parents/audience members were from wealthy segments of Egyptian society. Turkish Gulenist leaders based in Egypt courted these same VIP Egyptians at the Turkish Olympics. As such Gulenists used the Turkish Olympics and the Turkishness on display to build bonds with VIP Egyptian parents.

**Politics of the Fervent, Principal “Omer Yildirim”**

“Omer Yildirim” separated a half open pistachio nut with his teeth and tongue. He was sitting in the plush chairs of his principal’s office in SIS, remembering his first appointment to Africa, to Tanzania specifically. “Africa is a hard geography,” recalled Yildirim. He first went to a poor school, much poorer than SIS in Cairo. Yildirim’s Tanzanian students could not speak Turkish and at the time he could not speak English or Swahili. The only help Yildirim had was
that he was from a Hejazi Arab family who had fled Saudi Arabia to Turkey, “a few generations ago.” Thus Yıldırım could recognize some Arabic words in Swahili.

From 2004 until 2009 Yıldırım worked as a Turkish teacher and lead promotor of the Turkish Olympics in Tanzania. It was a time when new Gülenist schools were increasing in Africa and across the world. Yıldırım explained that being assigned in Africa was the hardest place to teach in the Gülenist educational network. And yet the Gülenists at Yıldırım’s first school in Tanzania had a fervent belief in their mission.

Yıldırım related a story about an elderly Turkish man who was part of the teaching staff at Yıldırım’ first school. The elderly man became ill while in Tanzania and the man’s condition quickly deteriorated. From his deathbed, the old man made fellow Gülenists promise to bury him in the garden of the school. The old man told those who sat with him in his last hours that he had come abroad to “spread love in the world” and did not expect to see Turkey again. The old man said that after he died he had one wish: in death he wanted to hear the voices of children – children from the school he had helped found – playing near his grave. When the old man died, Yıldırım and other Gülenists dutifully buried him in the school courtyard.

**Politics of the Fervent, Director “Nuri Kuloglu”**

From his office in Cairo’s Zamalek district, “Nuri Kuloglu,” thirty-eight, director of the Nile Center discussed the Turkish Olympics’ role in the political discourse of Turkey. Nile Center is a Gülenist language center catering to young adult Egyptians who want to learn Turkish.

It was May 2014 when I interviewed Kuloglu. Two months earlier in March 2014 some of Kuloglu’s Egyptian students had participated in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt at SIS. Now
all winners at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt were waiting to learn if Gulenist organizers would hold the Turkish Olympics finals in Turkey the next month (June).

Kuloglu discussed Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan’s declaration of war on the Gulen status group. In recent months Erdogan had called Gulenists a secretive “parallel” society seeking to take over the Turkish state. As such Erdogan’s government had cancelled all Turkish Olympics venue/stadium contracts with the Gulen congregation. If there were no stadiums then the Turkish state was effectively boycotting the production of the Turkish Olympics in Turkey in 2014.333

Kuloglu felt that the production of the Turkish Olympics was connected to a deeper, “Anatolian” popular sentiment displayed by audience members at the Turkish Olympics.334 Kuloglu, an ethnic Kurd, complained about Erdogan and Erdogan’s actions against the Turkish Olympics saying the Turkish Olympics is the:

Property of the people of Anatolia… The sponsors and the people are the real owners of the Turkish Olympics. Even if the (Turkish) state helped the formation of the Turkish Olympics before – the real owner and the creator of the Turkish Olympics are the people of Anatolia.335

As a protest against Erdogan’s decision to cancel the Turkish Olympics in Turkey in 2014 one of the leading hash tags in Turkish on Twitter was “#TurkceOlimpiyatlarimilletinEseri” or “The_Turkish_Olympics_is_a_Treasure_of_the_Nation.”336 This hash tag oftentimes appeared alongside Gulenist projects on Twitter.

Scholars can see that when the Gulenists lost their political war with Erdogan in early 2014 their position within the Turkish state’s bureaucratic system was weakened. This weakening has reportedly only continued since 2014. Before July 15, 2016 while Gulenists in some state bureaucracies continued to work, the Gulen status group’s power vis-à-vis the Turkish
state had been greatly diminished through arrests, purges and demotions within the Turkish government directed by Erdogan and other AK Party leaders. Following the failed July 15 coup, Erdogan’s blaming of the coup on Gulenists has increased the power of the Erdogan-led government to arrest and blacklist Gulenists in public and private institutions across Turkey.337

As such Gulenists within Turkey (and in some cases abroad338) have moved into a “marginalized cosmopolitan status” as envisioned by the Cairo School of Urban Studies’ work with the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, the respective roles of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Gulen status group are more similar in 2016 than when Cairo Cosmopolitan was written in 2006. In 2016 the Muslim Brotherhood and the Gulen status group are considered by their respective political elite to be pariahs and fifth columns active within domestic politics. What is interesting is how a marginalized Islamist organization from Egypt (the Muslim Brotherhood) is championed in Erdogan’s Turkey and another marginalized Islamist group from Turkey (the Gulen congregation) is supported and allied with El Sisi government in Egypt. These regional alliances seem to support the adage, “He who is the enemy of my enemy is my friend” following the Rabaa clashes in the summer of 2013. Since that time the Gulen status group in Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey have become valuable weapons President El Sisi and President Erdogan wield in their ongoing war of words.

Meanwhile, in Turkey the Gulen status group has ceased to hold political power and as such Gulenists look for alliances among other marginalized groups. In 2014 respondents in the ethnography told me that Gulenists and Kemalists (one time enemies) had begun a series of “talks” intent on healing wounds and finding common ground in their opposition to the Erdogan state.
Did these “talks” result in alliances that led to the July 15, 2016 coup against Erdogan and the AKP? Erdogan and his supporters have only blamed the Gulenists. For example, AKP Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has accused the Gulenist elements in the Turkish Military for the coup attempt and not included Kemalists in subsequent accusations and arrests following the coup.339

**Turkish Internationalism at the Turkish Olympics**

Gulenist respondents associated with the audience and the teachers of the Turkish Olympics of Egypt felt that Turkey had turned a corner in the use of internationalism at the Turkish Olympics. First Gulenists stated that the Turkish Olympics is an international competition in which the international world comes to Turkey. At the Turkish Olympics, the Turkish audience saw a familiar Turkishness (song, poetry, dance all done in Turkish or from a village/rustic region of Turkey) blended with an internationalism where foreign children (i.e. the future of humanity) embrace being Turkish. The Turkish Olympics presented Turkish audience members with a connected, creative and passionate internationalism. This Turkish Olympics sponsored internationalism was opposed to the staid self-justifying Kemalist internationalism of the past in which international activity was only supported by the normally isolationist state if (as in the case of Turkey’s joining NATO) the Kemalist-led government could point to its own success in “westernizing” Turkey. As such, the Turkish Olympics as a festival/spectacle at least weakened (or at most destroyed) Kemalist isolationism as a valid component of national identity in modern Turkey. The Turkish Olympics as per Mitchell allowed Gulenists to map the world for Turkey, fusing neo-liberalism and Islamism.
Principal Yildirim explains in his interviews that since foreigners were not Turkish and could not understand “Turkishness,” Turkish nationalism in Kemalism called on Turks to exercise an “othering”/isolating process against anything “foreign.” Many citizens of Turkey wanted to connect with the outside world and were annoyed by what they perceived as the outside world’s relegation of Turkey to a “lesser state” status in the pantheon of nations. Respondents linked Kemalism to isolationist pragmatism which counseled a “peace at home, peace abroad” mentality where Turks strove to take care of business in Turkey and counseled other nationalities to do the same in their own countries. As such the isolationist binary of the “other” and the “Turk” was a featured component of Kemalist national identity production. According to respondents, this isolationist mentality resulted in a self-imposed cultural remoteness in which even second language English learning was a rarity among Turkish citizens. As Yildirim states:

For 60 or 70 years before Hizmet (the Gulen status group) Turks were closed to the world. We only were happy if we participated in an international sporting event or conference; fooling ourselves into believing that we were a great people and important on the world scene.

Kemalist leaders only employed internationalism when internationalism worked to reinforce the ideology of the Turkish state and when internationalism helped lessen a threat to the Turkish state. To this end Turkey sent twenty-five thousand Turkish troops to fight in the Korean War, joined NATO and became a staunch American ally throughout the Cold War. Given the growing power of the Soviet Union in the middle of the twentieth century and Turkey’s shared eastern border with the Soviet Union, there was a practical reason for Turkey’s alliance with the US and other NATO nations. Kemalists proclaimed Turkey’s acceptance into NATO as a western acceptance of Kemalist Turkey and thus the successful result of the secular
Kemalist project to “revolutionize and modernize” the country. This version then of internationalism in the Kemalist state worked only to remove an existential threat to the state (the USSR) and to justify the state sponsored rhetoric that Kemalism had been successful in bringing modernity to Turkey.

The development of Kemalist isolationism or Gulenist/Erdoganist internationalism certainly does not happen in a vacuum. From 1923 until Turkey joined NATO in 1952 Ataturk and his successors (primarily Ismet Inonu) put Turkey in a neutral position at a time of war and imperialism. During the Cold War, leaders in Turkey opted to be American allies.

However, upon seeing Turkishness and internationalism so intertwined at the Turkish Olympics, some Turkish audience members state they dream of the wider world in which Turkishness and Turkey is of central importance. Says Meltem Hanimeli:

Maybe I will be a bit of a racist but to see a (foreign) student performing or singing a Turkish song, it is a thing, which fills one with pride. For this to happen in English is not important. English has become very widespread. But Turkey is a small country and so this is an amazing thing… God-willing we will open lives… and make Turkey a more popular nation. And this doesn’t mean that we will go out and conquer the world. Instead by using tolerance and reflecting goodness we will create a peaceful country.

It is informative to think on Hanimeli’s last words that the intent of the Gulen status group is to “create a peaceful country.” Hanimeli was saying an oft-repeated Gulenist ideal common among many at the Turkish Olympics. The ideal is that the efforts of the Gulen congregation will serve humanity wherever the status group has schools and that each nation’s dialogue with Fethullah Gulen’s teachings will ultimately create “peace” in every country on Earth. Yet, it seems just as plausible that Hanimeli’s words (or subconscious slip of the tongue) hint at a tendency within Gulenism which desires to impose “peace” on Turkey itself.
It would be quite natural according to Weber that a status group like the Gulenists would strive to dominate politics in Turkey. Weber states that all status groups – upon attaining enough power – naturally seek to transform the state itself through control of the political and bureaucratic system within the nation. That the Gulen status group would be working to impose a “peace” on Turkey is not surprising, nor is it surprising that official spokespeople for the Gulen status group state that Gulenists have no political aspirations and are only an “innocent” part of “civil society in Turkey and around the world.” If the Gulenists were only active in education, then these specious statements of supposed Gulenist “innocence” and “civility” might be plausible. However, given the congregation’s movement since 2003 into the Turkish police, national public prosecutor’s ministry and the national judiciary, it is impossible to say that Gulenism is anything but a highly politicized ideology intent on control of the Turkish state.

Scholars and apologists for the Gulen status group will likely exonerate the Gulen congregation’s effort to increase its power in the Turkish state, stating the Gulenists only wanted to take part in the inner workings of the Turkish state and not take over the state. If this were the case however Gulenists again could be active in many other departments of state besides the powerful Turkish police force and the Turkish judiciary. That the Gulenists concentrated themselves in the power-brokering police and judiciary up until 2013 gives credence to Erdogan’s claim that Gulenists were seeking to create a parrell state within the state.

In August 2016, at the time of the defense of this thesis, many Gulenists in Turkey have been arrested and await trial in prison cells. These Gulenists have been removed from their positions in the police, military, state bureaucracy and private sector on the suspicion that they were directly involved in the failed July 15, 2016 coup against the Erdogan-led government. Following the July 15 coup attempt, Erdogan and fellow AKP leaders in Turkey have begun
what some observers call a “witch-hunt” against the Gulenists.\textsuperscript{349} It appears at the time of this thesis’ defense that the failed coup was one example of some elements within Gulenism seeking to dominate and assert political control over Turkey.

In the future what further actions will Gulenists take against the Erdogan and AKP-led government? Time as ever, will tell.
Political Islamism at the Turkish Olympics: Erdogan’s or Gulen’s Olympics?

The Turkish Olympics represents to many Turkish Gulenist respondents the “democratic will” of Anatolians. Principal Yildirim states that the Turkish Olympics is a moment for the “beautiful Anatolian people” to shine along with the Gulen status group.350 In this Yildirim agrees with Nuri Kuloglu that the Turkish Olympics (and the Gulen congregation) is synonymous with the democratic will of the “Anatolian people.”351

In order to understand connections between politics and Islamism at the Turkish Olympics in Turkey, this study features multiple interviews I conducted with Mustafa Ozcan and Ozcan’s assistant “Sadik” from 2013 to 2015. Mustafa Ozcan as the reported head of the Gulen community in Turkey is a public figure so this ethnography will use Ozcan’s real name.

Journalist and Gulenist, Cumali Onal of the Gulenist Zaman Newspaper said that, “all the work of Hizmet (the Gulen status group) is connected to and has Mustafa Ozcan’s hand in it.”352 Ozcan traveled around the world attending conferences and speaking on behalf of the Gulen status group. Following the 2013 divorce of the Gulen congregation from Turkish Prime Minister/President Erdogan, AKP allied media outlets published alarmist news articles which featured Mustafa Ozcan (a man in his late 60s) as the nefarious head of the Gulenists in Turkey.

In interviews Ozcan stated that the alliance between Erdogan’s political machine and the Gulen status group had been less of a marriage and more of a partnership.353 According to Ozcan, Gulenists never trusted Erdogan or the AK Party leadership.354 From the beginning of the Gulenist/AK Party relationship both sides were angling for power over the other and yet both the Gulen congregational leadership and the leadership of the AK Party kept up the partnership from a mutual fear of a Kemalist military coup d’état.355
As an example of how Erdogan’s AKP lead government did not fully trust the Gulen status group, Ozcan pointed to the Erdogan government putting a special request to the US Secretary of State in 2004 to restrict the amount of time Ozcan could stay in the USA. This “US visa hold” effectively kept Ozcan from relocating to the US to be close to Ozcan’s mentor Fethullah Gulen. It also kept Ozcan, as the leading Gulenist in Turkey, in a position with close ties to the Erdogan government and the economic, media and educational apparatuses of the Gulen status group.

According to Ozcan, the Erdogan state’s careful restriction, manipulation and control of Ozcan’s life and visa travel options made Ozcan’s situation precarious following Erdogan’s and the AKP’s electoral victory in March of 2014. In a May 2014 interview Ozcan explained that he wanted to relocate to the US and conduct his leadership of congregational activities from American soil yet, given his visa restriction, he was effectively trapped in Turkey.

Ozcan’s assistant Sadik said that Turkish state security forces watched and recorded Ozcan’s every step and every meeting. During the May 2014 interview at Ozcan’s hill mosque/business complex in Istanbul’s Camlica district, Ozcan asked me for help to get out of Turkey and go to the US. Ozcan asked if I had pull within the US State Department or the Federal Bureau of Investigation or “any other American agency active outside of the USA” so as to help Ozcan go the United States with a visa or green card. Though Ozcan did not come out directly and say it, I had the distinct impression that Ozcan thought that I was a member of the US Central Intelligence Agency. I said to Ozcan that I have no such connections.

Changes in the production of the Turkish Olympics reflect Ozcan’s narrative of political and economic machinations between the Gulen status group and the Erdogan state leading up to the seminal year 2013 and the Gezi Park Protest. During the Gezi Protest in June 2013 Fethullah
Gulen and his leading lieutenants like Ozcan openly denounced Gezi protestors, saying the protestors were “looters.” The congregation’s media outlets backed Erdogan’s narrative of the Gezi protestors being thugs, fifth columnists and radicals. The Gulen status group members in the Turkish national police force, the national public prosecutors ministry and the many judges with ties to the Gulen Congregation were on the front lines, propping up the Erdogan state and crushing Gezi Park inspired dissent across Turkey during the 2013 summer of protest.

On June 14, 2013, the day before Erdogan gave the order for the final crack down on Gezi Protestors (on June 15, 2013), Erdogan attended the Closing Ceremony of the Turkish Olympics in Istanbul and gave the keynote address. In the keynote speech Erdogan stated that Turkey was divided into the “good Turkey” and the “bad Turkey.” Erdogan’s speech to the Turkish Olympics faithful roused his political base and left no doubt that they – the audience – were among the “good” and the others (Gezi Park Protestors across town) were the “bad.”

In interviews in 2014 and 2015 many Gulenist respondents accepted that their status group’s support of the Erdogan state during the summer of 2013 had been mistaken. Gulenist respondents accepted that had the Gulen status group supported the Gezi Park Protestors (or the least remained neutral) the Erdogan led state would have collapsed. Yet at the time Gulenists were valued members of Erdogan’s government bureaucracy. Weber’s ideas on status groups and their drive to dominate politics and the state apparatus are informative when looking at the Gulenists. From the status group’s inception in the 1970s Gulenists have driven to carve a space of political power for themselves in Turkey. It was normal then, upon achieving this state based power that Gulenists remained loyal to Erdogan in the summer of 2013.

In 2014 and 2015 the Gulen status group was unable to hold the Turkish Olympics Final in Turkey. As discussed earlier in 2014 (and in 2015), the Erdogan led state refused to give
Gulenists licenses to operate in performance halls and stadiums in Turkey. Germany instead of Turkey became the new home of the Turkish Olympics Finals in 2014 and 2015. While the production of the Turkish Olympics Final in Germany was impressive, the Turkish Olympics was much smaller (in terms of numbers of student performers) than in preceding years.

In times of good relations between the Erdogan government and the Gulen status group, millions of Turkish citizens saw the Turkish Olympics live in Turkey or on the televisions in their homes as the Olympics was covered by all Turkish media groups. In 2014 and 2015 only Gulenist private media showed the Turkish Olympics in Turkey. Due to Erdogan’s personal opposition, the Turkish Olympics effectively went from being the biggest show in Turkey to being erased from national consciousness.

This process of erasing follows Gellner’s ideas of state sponsored media acceptance of a nationalist ideology. When the state no longer supports the ideology through its control and ties to the media, the ideology (in this case Gulenism) ceases to hold sway over the national populace because of opposition from the state and state sponsored and allied media groups. Gellner explained that if a widely-held ideology within the country is at loggerheads with the state, the government will use its influence in the media to destroy and/or weaken the control the ideology has over the nation’s populace.

By 2015 Ozcan himself was erased from the national discourse in Turkey. Via a phone interview in September 2015 Ozcan’s assistant Sadik reported that Ozcan had managed to leave Turkey and was now residing “somewhere safe” outside of Turkey.

While the Gulen status group is the moving force behind the Turkish Olympics, it is important to note that *when and which year* the Turkish Olympics occurs often determines how much the Turkish Olympics has been purely a Gulenist affair or a joint Gulenist/Erdoganist
project. Clearly, when the Turkish Olympics was a joint Gulenist/Erdogan event it was more successful nationally. However, as a solely Gulenist festival in 2014 and 2015 the Turkish Olympics gives scholars insights into the ways in which the Gulen status group is growing outside of Turkey.

Whether held in Turkey or outside of Turkey, the Turkish Olympics Final is a window for scholars to see how Anatolian Islamists galvanize, politicize and combat one another for power and influence in a transforming Turkey. The micro-history of the Turkish Olympics Final in Turkey and (as of 2014 and 2015) in Germany, exemplify and reflect the macro-contested politics within Turkish Islamism from 2002 onward. Multiethnicism, “black” Turk nationalism and the production of education-based capital are all part of this contested political story. That some marginalized Gulenist elements in Turkey would reportedly support a coup against the Erdogan state is one more example of Islamist contestation in modern-day Turkey.

**Multiethnic Sunni Anatolian Audience Members at the Turkish Olympics**

The Turkish Olympics is one example of how the Gulen status group navigated the discourse between Kemalist/statist Turkishness and a Turkey of multiple ethnicities.

*Nuri Kuloglu, Multiethnic Turkiyeli Administrator and Organizer*

Nuri Kuloglu head of the Nil Cultural Center in Cairo, Egypt stated during his May 2014 interview that he was a Kurd from Van province in eastern Turkey along the Iranian border. Kuloglu explained that he was active in the Gulen status group at university and upon graduating in the mid-1990s worked in a series of congregational schools in Central Asia and in Russia. Kuloglu reports that as early as the 1990s, Gulenist schools in Central Asia were holding Turkish language competitions. Consequently, from the 1990s onward Turkish language competitions
were part and parcel to the project of international Gulenist school production and growth.\textsuperscript{372} Again the link between language and nationalism à la Gellner shows that Gulenist schools like SIS are oftentimes locations of Turkish nationalist deployment in an international context.

While Kuloglu said that his native language was Kurdish and that he was Kurdish\textsuperscript{373}, he used Turkish as a second native language to create a successful pedagogic career. A legend in the Gulen status group, Kuloglu was one of the Gulenist educators who pioneered new Turkish teaching techniques in Central Asian schools.\textsuperscript{374} In 2000 Kuloglu and a team of Gulenist educators published the Turkish language teaching textbook used years later by Gulenist schools (and non-Gulenist schools) across the world.\textsuperscript{375}

Weber’s ideas on presumed ethnicity, is helpful in understanding how Kuloglu possesses multi-ethnic identities. Weber stated that status group members create ethnicities from the subjective belief status group members have about their status group. Important to Kuloglu and the Gulen status group then is the Weberian idea that ethnic formation is the result of a status group’s effort to monopolize and grow their power. As a status group grows so too does its assumed and created myth of ethnicity. While the Gulen status group is far from considering itself a separate ethnicity in Turkey, Gulenism gathers members from multiple ethnic backgrounds and provides a space for social achievement so far as members accept the primacy of being Turkish. In the case with Kuloglu, using a status group orientated Gulenist Turkish ethnicity was key to his professional advancement and growth within the Gulen congregation. And yet, Kuloglu was able to openly discuss his Kurdishness during the ethnography.

Kuloglu was also one of the founding teachers of the Turkish Olympics.\textsuperscript{376} Starting in 2001, Turkish language competition groups from Central Asia – some of whom Kuloglu taught and led – were among the first international students to come to Turkey for Turkish language
competitions. From 2001 to 2003 Kuloglu and other Gulenist educators held “proto-Turkish Olympics” language competitions in Turkey. In 2003 Gulen congregationalists working with the Erdogan state inaugurated the first official Turkish Olympics Final in Turkey, which brought international students from around the world to compete together. In 2005 organizers added opening and closing ceremonies rich with singing in Turkish and dancing traditional Turkish dances to the Turkish Olympics as a way to increase popularity of the Turkish Olympics with the Turks. Also organizers of the 2005 Turkish Olympics opened the Turkish Olympics to Turkish corporate sponsorship. As such, the 2005 Turkish Olympics was the first celebration where the general population of Turkey began to be aware of the Turkish Olympics.

Though Kuloglu did not discuss this matter, it seems likely that as a Kurdish man and one of the lead organizers of the Turkish Olympics, Kuloglu knew how to connect with the Kurdish community in Turkey. Kuloglu’s story shows that the success of the Turkish Olympics in non-Turkish areas of Turkey has to be attributed – at least somewhat – to the fact that there were a number of leading organizers of the Turkish Olympics who happened to be multiethnic Turkiyeliler, that is non-Turkish Anatolians. An openness to multiple Anatolian ethnicities or cosmopolitanisms within the Anatolian context seems to have been necessary among the organizers of the Turkish Olympics.

Ali Gunes, Multiethnic Turkiyeli Teacher and Audience Host

“Ali Gunes,” twenty-seven, a Syrian Arab from Turkey’s Syrian border province of Sanliurfa encountered his first Turkish Olympics touring group in Antalya in 2009. At the time Gunes was in his second year of university, was far from home and was not a Gulen status group member. Gunes explains that he went to the touring Turkish Olympics out of curiosity. The performance occurred in the ancient Roman Amphitheatre of Aspendos. Says Gunes, “The show
was, well… You know how they say that the first time you tasted a great dish it always stays on your palate? (My) first year as an audience member at the Amphitheatre in Aspendos was like that.”

Awestruck by the show and the Gulen status group’s work around the world, Gunes and his friends volunteered to work as security at the Olympics, keeping the audience and students away from dangerous parts of the Amphitheatre that had fallen into disuse. His work as a volunteer at the Turkish Olympics Tour in Anatolia was the impetus for Gunes volunteering for continued work with the Gulen congregation over the next year (2009 – 2010). When he graduated from university with a teaching degree in Physical Education, Gunes worked for one year as a Gulenist dormitory supervisor in Antalya. Then in 2011 Salahaldin International School in Cairo offered to employ Gunes as the school physical education teacher. Gunes accepted the offer and went to Egypt.

The fact that Gunes spoke Turkish and Arabic natively made Gunes valuable both to Salahaldin and the Gulen status group. Besides his work as a teacher, Gunes was active as a translator and coordinator at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt.

That the Gulen Congregation has developed an environment, which is friendly to both Turks and the Sunni non-Turks of Anatolia shows a mastery of manpower organization and indoctrination. It is plausible to posit that were it not for Kuloglu’s founding work and Gunes’s acceptance of Gulenist Turkishness, the Turkish Olympics in Egypt would have never occurred in the version seen in 2014.

It is important to note that openly speaking about the role of multi-ethnicism/cosmopolitanism seemed to be somewhat taboo among Gulenists during fieldwork. This is unsurprising given that the Gulen status group is a Turkish nationalist organization with
fundamental ties to the mono-ethnicism of Turanist and Kemalist Turkishness. While Kuloglu, Gunes and other non-Turkish Anatolian respondents discussed their Arabness/Lazness/Kurdishness etc., this research was only able to touch the surface of non-Turkish Anatolian audience/organizer multi-ethnicism at the Turkish Olympics in both Turkey and Egypt. As such multi-ethnicism in the Gulen status group and at the Turkish Olympics needs further investigation.

**Egyptian Audience View of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt**

This section discusses how bonds of consent are created between Turkish Gulenists and the Egyptian audience vis-à-vis the Turkishness on display at the Turkish Olympics. In response to the Turkish nationalism and Turkishness at the Turkish Olympics and SIS, Egyptian parents and teachers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt felt a closeness with Gulenist Turks around three concepts: Islamism, Occidentalism and Ottomanism. Each of these concepts have historic antecedents in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are linked to national identity production in Egypt and Turkey.

*Islamism and “Clean” Turks: Egyptian Audience Production at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt*

“Khayal,” forty-three, was the vice principal at the Beni Sweif’s Salalahdin branch school. Khayal called himself a committed Gulenist who came into the Gulen status group via the teachings of Fethullah Gulen. For Khayal, Gulenism had enlightened his own Islamism. Said Khayal, “I think the Turkish people are the best example of modern Muslims. I want all of our Muslims (Egyptian Muslims) to be like Turkish people. Turks are very hard working. They are nice, organized and clean.”387
Khayal’s daughter ten-year-old “Mirna” won her competition and was slated to perform at the 2014 Turkish Olympics Finals but when the Finals were held in Germany, Salahaldin Gulenist educators cancelled the team trip of Egyptian finalists. Still, Khayal was proud of his daughter’s work and he supported her education within Gulenist schools, hoping eventually that she will go to Turkey to pursue higher education.388

Khayal’s adoration of everything Turkish (“they are hardworking” etc.) embodies petroleum cosmopolitanism. Khayal sees the material wealth of Turkey and the Gulensits and wanted to be a part of this wealth production. In our interview Khayal was focused more on the wealth to be generated from connections with the Gulenists.

*Occidentalism and “Our Kids”: Egyptian Audience Production at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt*

A self-described “liberal Egyptian woman” and fluent in French and English, Hedayet, thirty-nine, was not a likely person to harbor feelings of anti-westernism and Occidentalism. Hedayet worked at a French radio channel in Cairo and prided herself on her open-mindedness and progressive worldviews.389

Like many wealthy Egyptians, Hedayet wanted her eleven-year-old son Bahaaeldien to be educated in the “western style.”390 So she sent him to the best British and American private schools in Cairo. However, in these private schools his classmates picked on Bahaaeldien. Explained Hedayet, “The kids at the British and American international schools treated him terribly, kicking him on the bus… the administration in the foreign schools didn’t know how to deal with ‘our kids.’”391

By “our kids” Hedayet said she was referring to “Middle Eastern” kids.392 Hedayet stressed that she did not want to appear prejudiced but believed that children in the Middle East, especially boys, “need to have a hard hand.”393 Stated Hedayet, “If the boys do not respect
authority in the school they will treat overweight and creative kids like Bahaaeldien badly, like a mascot.”

When Hedayet sent Bahaaeldien to Salahaldin her biggest concern was that Salahaldin would provide discipline at the school and that Bahaaeldien – once in a safe environment – would be able to display his own creative skills. Hedayet and Bahaaeldien both attested to the high level of education and safe environment Bahaaeldien was a part of at Salahaldin International School. Hedayet concluded, “Turks understand us… So they understand our children and how to raise our children… Perhaps the Turks can even teach our Egyptian children better than our Egyptian schools can.”

Bahaaeldien was one of the most active performing students at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. In the fieldwork Turkish Gulenist instructors like Principal Yildirim pointed to Bahaaeldien’s artistic and scholarly success at Salahaldin and the Turkish Olympics as signs of the good work the Gulenists do in Egypt.

It is commendable that Hedayet wanted her son treated with respect at his school. Having been failed by Egyptians at the best international schools, Hedayet looked for a new kind of international elite school for Bahaaeldien.

This example follows Bourdieu’s theory that the wealthy search for elite schools as a way to provide their children with educational capital. In this scholars see that education reproduces inequality and classism, not widespread growth and social mobility.

Ottomanism: Egyptian Audience Production at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt

Wael, fifty-five, member of the Egyptian government in Alexandria and father of Nabila, eleven, stated that Egypt and Turkey are “one heart” and that both countries came from the same Ottoman cradle. As such Wael believed that Egyptians and Turks should have a natural
alliance in the world and that the Turkish nationalism displayed at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt was not offensive.\textsuperscript{397} Wael believed that displays of Turkish nationalism were tied to the greatness of Egypt itself.\textsuperscript{398} Weber’s presumed ethnicity and Smith’s cultural critique of ethnicity are on display in Wael’s words. Wael presumes the ethnic Egyptian is the same as the ethnic Turk and attaches a shared historical understanding of being Turkish and of being Egyptian. In understanding ethnicity scholars see the ethno-symbolic approach of Smith and the supposed approach of Weber are linked. Ethnicity is both presumed illogically (as per Weber) and connected to shared histories, myths and religions (as per Smith). In both thinkers, pre-modern ethnicity is transformed in modernity to being a national identity.

To begin to interrogate Khayal’s Islamism, Hedayet’s Occidentalism and Wael’s Ottomanism further, more research needs to be done on Egyptian national identity production and how that production connects, accepts and rejects aspects of Turkishness. This research would likely focus on Egyptian national identity production in relation to Egyptians understandings of Ottomanism, Mamlukid/Turkish white slavery and white master relations, Islamism and Turkish nationalism. The bedrock of this research would seek to investigate questions such as; how does a rebranded “black”/Gulenist Turkishness influenced by Islamism, multiculturalism and modernity affect the Egyptian audience at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt? How much can Egyptians accept a national ideal from Turkey and how do Egyptians understand “being Turkish”?

\textbf{Conclusion to the Ethnography of Audience Production at the Turkish Olympics}\\

In this ethnography we have seen that Gulenism is a political movement as much as it is an altruistic effort to “serve” humanity. This fact is not surprising. Gulenists are a status group
with interests in many fields in Turkey. As per Weber, status groups are compelled into politics. If the Gulen congregation continues for many more years, it is possible a la Weber that Gulenists may even begin to develop their own presumed ethnicity. As such it appears quite natural that the Gulen status group would strive to apply their own version of “peace” on the Turkish nation and that in his process Gulenists would seek position and power in the private and public spheres of Turkey. Perhaps scholars can view the actions of some Gulenists during the July 15, 2016 coup as an example of Gulenists developing their own presumed ethnicity.

Academics of Turkey and the Gulen congregation can view the Turkish Olympics as a space to further Gulenism and Gulenist understandings of Turkishness to a Turkified audience. That the Erdogan state would ally with the Gulenists in the production of the Turkish Olympics (primarily from 2005 until 2013) can be understood as an alliance of Islamist “black” Turks and a resulting reinvention of Turkishness for Turks and multiethnic Turkiyeli.

Reinvented Turkishness at the Turkish Olympics strives to answer the fundamental questions and conflicts of Turkey. In convincing audience members to accept a new version of Turkishness, Gulenist thinkers and organizers of the Turkish Olympics present an internationalized Turkishness which responds to the Kurdish/multiethnic/Turkiyeli question, the question of modernity and the role of political Islamism in Turkey.
Part IV

Conclusions
Cihan Korkmaz, age twenty-five, was a Gulenist dance instructor sent from Turkey to educate performing students at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt. Korkmaz taught two teams from Salahaldin High School (SIS), the boy’s and the girl’s dance teams. Korkmaz could not speak Arabic (or any other language besides Turkish) and could only communicate with his Egyptian dance team members via SIS physical education teacher and Syrian/Turkish Arab, Ali Gunes. During practices Korkmaz – a lithe authoritarian instructor – would often shout at Egyptian and Turkish dance team members. The Egyptians did not understand Korkmaz’s berating, looking helplessly at fellow Turkish dance team members or Gunes for translations of what Korkmaz was yelling.

During one break between dance practices I witnessed Korkmaz, Sevinc and Meltem Hanimeli – all Gulenists and in their mid-twenties – discussing the role of the Gulen status group’s educational network and the Turkish Olympics in the Arab world. Since 2013, besides coming to Egypt once a year to train the dancers for the Turkish Olympics at SIS, Korkmaz had also gone to Yemen to teach Turkish Olympics dance teams there.399

In the break Korkmaz said to Sevinc, Meltem Hanimeli and myself that the Arabs and their mosques were, “filthy” and need, “us (Turks) to progress… they are trapped in ignorance.”400 Korkmaz went on to state that Fethullah Gulen had told his congregation that the Arabs – because of their hard-headedness and ignorance – would be the last to comprehend and accept what the Gulen status group were doing in the world.401 Korkmaz went on to say that Allah had revealed Islam to Arabs first because the Arabs were the race most in need of
enlightenment and that this state of affairs (the ignorance of Arabs) was the same today as it had been in the times of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{402}

During this conversation with Korkmaz, Sevinc and Meltem Hanimeli approved of and supported Korkmaz’s opinions. Meltem Hanimeli even gave examples of the backwardness of Yemenis as she had been stationed in Yemen before she got the assignment to come to Cairo. Hanimeli described gunfire in the city she had been stationed in Yemen but “\textit{Hamd olsun} (God be praised) we were kept safe, doing the good work for the ‘service movement’ (Gulen status group).”\textsuperscript{403}

That Gulenist Turks would view themselves in their employment of Gulenist Islamism and Turkish nationalism as culturally superior to Arabs is in no way surprising. Precedents for Anatolian Turkish belief in their own cultural superiority over Arabs likely date back to Sultan Selim I’s invasion and conquest of much of the Arab world in 1517. This Anatolian Turkish feeling of superiority over Arabs likely intensified into hatred during TE Lawrence’s and Arab leaders’ insurrection against the Ottoman State four hundred years later.

Yet, the fact that cultural imperialism as expressed by Korkmaz and seconded by Hanimeli would continue to inform how Gulen status group members in their twenties view the Arab (Egyptian and Yemeni) school children with whom they worked, is emblematic of a unique cultural imperialism existent within the Turkish Olympics and the Gulen congregation. This Gulenist imperialism cloaks itself in the guise of \textit{iyi niyetler} that is the “good intentions” of an Islamist group’s “service to humanity” all the while applying an Islamist and Turkish nationalist ideology based externally on neo-liberalism.

This study has employed frameworks developed by Timothy Mitchell and Edward Said and focused on a global southern audience who have processed modernity and are now applying
their brand of modernity to the greater world. As Turkey was one of the few nations outside of Europe which successfully resisted European colonial domination, Turks possess the credentials in the global south of being fellow “inferiors”/“easterners”/others but without the colonial historical “baggage” which goes along with such “credentials.” Initially as Ottomans and then as Turks, Anatolians instead have a history of forced modernization from the Kemalist Republican Turkish state. In a way, Turks colonized themselves from within via the actions of the isolationist Kemalist state.

Gulenist Turks position themselves then as both outside and inside the colonial process. Organizations like the Gulen status group and events like the Turkish Olympics work to reinforce Turkishness and a Turkish approach to modernity both within Turkey and outside of Turkey. Outside of Turkey, Gulenist institutions and the Turkish Olympics can be understood as a version of neo-colonial south-on-south cultural imperialism. Meanwhile, Gulenists themselves discuss how they work to “moderate” the rest of the “poor world” into a new age of “peace among all humanity.”

Perhaps the most important aspect of this thesis work has been to begin a discourse in which this study of neo-imperialism/Ottomanism can deepen the academy’s understanding of twenty-first century power structures and economic relations between formally oppressed global southerners.

**Traveling Turkish Gulenist Children in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt**

For an imperialist/nationalist project to succeed, imperialists feel a need to create spaces where their children can proclaim nationalism for “the home country” and not “go native.” National spectacles such as the Turkish Olympics in Egypt provide self-proclamation and
national proclamation spaces in which imperial milieus seek to reproduce nationalist sentiment in faraway lands. In the ethnography, many Turkish parents – some of whom were Gulenists and some of whom were not Gulenists – saw the Gulenist school network and the Turkish Olympics as an arena to inculcate their children in Turkishness.

Similar to how international branches of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America inculcate expatriate American children in being American, the Turkish Olympics provide a way to socialize expatriate Turkish children in Turkish nationalism. Yet a primary question remains: why would Gulenist parents who live in Turkey ship their children to a Gulenist school abroad? One reason is practical; the schooling for a child from a family part of the Gulen status group is free or highly subsidized by the congregation. Yet there are many Gulenist schools that Turkish Gulenist children can attend in Turkey.

In Turkey, as abroad in Egypt, the Gulenist schools are for-profit institutions open to wealthy children irrespective of membership in the Gulen status group. Yet, Gulenist parents in Turkey may be incentivized to send their children to far away Gulenist schools in order to reproduce and strengthen the Gulen congregation abroad and to indoctrinate their children in Gulenism. Much like the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church) requiring its young members to go on a mission away from the United States, the sending of young people transfers the energy of youthful rebellion into the energy of the Gulenist “service community” and indoctrinates young Gulenists into the religiosity of the Gulen status group.

Further research would seek to answer how children from Gulenist families are selected to go to which country. Is the selection process akin to a religious lottery in which Fethullah Gulen or one of the leading “big brothers” of the Gulen congregation prays and then selects a slip of paper with a child’s name and another slip of paper with a country? Or do Gulenist
parents have more control over where they send their children? Obviously these questions are mostly conjecture at this point and need more research. However, the issue of how Turkish children from Gulenist families come alone from their homes in Turkey to a distant land like Egypt and then participate in a nationalist/internationalist festival like the Turkish Olympics is fundamental to understanding the Gulen status group as a whole.

Another question that needs further research is to what extent the now anti-Gulenist Erdogan led Turkish state has clamped down on Gulenist (and other dissenters’) schools and universities in Turkey especially following the failed July 15, 2016 coup. Since late 2013 Erdogan and his allies have attacked a number of Gulenist institutions and even managed to close the largest Gulenist newspaper, Zaman. Further research into this topic would study how much the Gulen status group has been able to maintain its extensive educational, economic and media network in Turkey. Along with this study of private Gulenist institutions would also be research into Gulen congregationalists and their maintaining government positions within the public sphere in Turkey such as in the Turkish police, Turkish public prosecutor’s office and Turkish judicial networks. Following the mass arrests of supposed coup planners and sympathizers this study would ask how successful the Erdogan-led state has been in ending Gulenist influence in this many sectors in Turkey.

Gulenism and Neo-Liberalism; An Islamist Status Group Twist

The ethnography on child performers at the Turkish Olympics in Egypt showed that the Gulen status group is involved in the privatization of education in Egypt at their elite school Salahaldin International School (SIS). The majority of students at SIS came from Egyptian families of means and pay tuition. However, the existence of subsidized education and room and
board for students from Gulenist families and some Egyptian students from poor or middle class backgrounds shows how the Gulenist educational system is not purely neo-liberal in its interior functioning. Instead, we see a second and third aspect of the Gulenist educational network. The Turkish Olympics and the Gulen educational system at SIS worked to reinforce congregational belief among students/performers from Gulenist families and worked to indoctrinate into Gulenism students/performers from poor or middle class Egyptian families.

A private elitist educational model while applied to one group of wealthy student/performers at SIS and the Turkish Olympics, did not apply to the other two groups of student/performers. The second group – children from Gulenist parents – was expected to take part in the Turkish Olympics as a way to reinforce their belief in Islamism and Turkish nationalism as understood by the Gulen status group. The third group – talented children from non-Gulenist families – was part of a meritocracy of indoctrination. If the third group accepted Gulenism and Gulenist understandings of Turkish nationalism displayed at the Turkish Olympics then they became part of the Gulen congregation and as such will presumably have many of the benefits provided to other co-congregationalists, regardless if they are native “Turks” or not.

While the Gulenists adhere to a laissez-faire business model in the organization of SIS and their greater congregational network, the existence of a meritocracy (i.e. free education for students from non-Gulenist parents) within this neo-liberalizing Islamist status group presents scholars with new fields of research. Beyond the meritocracy of the Gulenist status group, once new members of the group join the group, how does the congregation protect employment opportunities for all members?

In my work at the Gulenist TV channel, I have personally seen that Gulenists do not fire each other. If a person does not do well at his or her job; a new job is created or an easier job is
given to the unsuccessful worker. One tradeoff I observed of full employment within the status group is that wages at status group controlled organizations are significantly lower than industry standards. However, with lower wages came the protection that the congregation provides. Free or subsidized education, full employment, health care and other benefits all belong to Gulen status group members.

At this point the issue of class must be analyzed in any further investigation into the Gulen status group. While all members have access to education, health care and other benefits, do wealthy Gulenists have more access than rank and file Gulenists? Are non-Turkish Gulenists receive the same level of education, health care and other benefits that “Turkish” members of the status group receive? Also, how much does Fethullah Gulen’s interpretation of Islamism influence the economic production of the Gulen status group and in what ways is economic production influenced by ideological beliefs of the Gulen status group? These questions and others like them would likely inform scholars’ further work on the Gulen congregation and the Turkish Olympics.

**Gulenism and Gulen**

Abdelrahman reported that the other boys in the dormitory (boys of Turkish, Kazakh and Azerbaijani origin) hated the Gulen status group leaders in Egypt because the boys believed that the discipline standards for them at SIS and in the dormitory were harsh and not in line with what Imam Fethullah Gulen preached. Clearly Abdelrahman did not like aspects of the Gulen status group. His views, while important, must be interpreted remembering that he was kicked out of SIS and the affiliated Gulenist dormitory. Yet Abdelrahman’s statements on how other boys in the dormitory felt about the Gulen Congregation deserve investigation by scholars.
In studying this example, scholars must be careful in delineating the difference between the man, Gulen and the ideology Gulenism which informs the sociological functioning of the Gulen status group.

Given the power Gulen himself exerts over the Gulenist status group, Gulen the man and Gulenism the ideology appear to be more or less linked. As such, it seems likely that the boys at the Gulenist dormitory in Cairo were wrong in thinking that Fethullah Gulen did not give his underlings direct instruction about how they should run Gulenist dormitories around the world. However, Gulenism and Gulen at times may be different (akin to Fordism and Ford, Leninism and Lenin, etc.). That the thinker’s intended meaning and the sociological power of the thinker’s writing when implemented would be different than what she had intended is not surprising. One need only look at Nietzsche and Nazism’s appropriation of Nietzschian thought to see a transformational knowledge producer’s ideas writ low into the filth of rightest fascism.

While it is unlikely that the Nietzsche/Nazism example is apropos to this study, there is still a need for scholars to temper their critique of Gulen and the Gulenist status group especially when that critique is based wholly on direct quotes from Gulen’s writing. Scholarship based on quotes from Gulen that are not married to anthropological evidence in how the ideology is practiced on the ground is shallow scholarship indeed.

**Gulenist “Service to Humanity” and Islamist Capitalism**

Sema’s attendance at SIS and in the Turkish Olympics in Egypt is similar to the case of Yunis and Cengis (the two “boys of the future”) in that it shows how the Gulen status group proselytizes children into believing their status group works to serve humanity. Regardless of being Turkish or non-Turkish, once inside (or semi-inside) the Gulen congregation, members or
potential members are indoctrinated through status group activities and attendance at Gulenist educational institutions. While the ethnographic evidence shows that the goal to proselytize is not overt, once inside the Gulen status group the inner layer proselytism begins to pull, like gravity, at a student/performer.

Non-Turkish student performers at the Turkish Olympics (i.e. Ahmed and Abdelrahman) experienced this proselytizing pull upon becoming outsider internationalists. Even Turks who are not a part of the status group but are associated with the Gulen congregation feel a pull toward becoming a full member.\(^{406}\) Gulenists do not force potential members to join but there is a consistent process of “entreatment” on the potential member. Oftentimes potential members know what the Gulen status group wants of them.\(^{407}\)

Gulenist internationals are within the congregation and as such are separate and protected from the neo-liberalism the Gulen status group displays externally. Perhaps this deployment of internal protective-ism and external neo-liberalism could be called in modern parlance “Islamist capitalism.” The employment then of Islamist capitalism inside the Gulen congregation appears to reproduce community-friendly internal politics and oppose overt individualism. While wages are low, the ethnography shows that the Gulen status group provides social assistance to group members.

One final note is that it is important to stress Gulenism is not at odds with the neo-liberal education/business model. I feel it necessary to state again that it is logical, and perhaps even necessary that without a protective state apparatus to defend them, people will naturally join status groups. Status groups like the Gulenists provide protection in the face of a retreating state from the effects of hyper-capitalism.
Gender, the Nationalized “Turkish Woman” and Family in the Gulen Status Group

In the ethnography, the “ideal” Gulenist woman appeared to be both a believer in the Gulenist version of Sunni Islam and the mother of the Turkish nation. Even women who were not technically “Turkish” such as Sema said she possessed Turkishness as an extension of being part of the Gulen status group.

Further research into the issues of femininity and nationalism needs to be done which feature Gulenist women’s perspectives on these issues. Researchers also have yet to study in depth how Gulenists marry and produce notions of masculinity and femininity within their status group and within their separate family units.

A greater study then on families in the Gulen congregation would likely start by seeking to learn how Gulenists send their children to Gulenist schools around the world. A second study on gender and family in the Gulen status group would focus on the phenomenon of Gulenists inviting groups of non-Turkish parents and other congregational friends from various nations to Turkey for Gulen status group organized trips. Both of these studies (Gulenists families sending their children abroad and Gulenist families hosting traveling non-Turkish families and guests into Turkey) would likely discuss how Gulenists market themselves to parents as dependable educators of children. These studies would also give insights into Gulenist familial practices in the production of gender and family norms within a Turkish nationalized milieu. A third study which features non-Turkish Gulenists’ marriage practices would likely be the place to complete the unpacking the issues of family norms and gender production in Gulenism.
Private Business Married to Privatized Education: The Gulen Status Group Model

What is clear from this research of the Turkish Olympics in Egypt is that the spread of Turkish business in Egypt is linked to the Gulen status group school network.\(^{408}\) Salahaldin International School in Cairo (and other Gulenist language schools and high schools in Egypt) act as loci where Turkish business groups such as the Gulenist Business organization TUSKON (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists) can network and do business with Egyptians.\(^{409}\) Given Salahaldin’s status as the leading Gulenist institution in the largest Arab nation, the school has regular visits from affiliated Gulenist media and business groups as well as Gulenist politicians from Turkey.\(^{410}\) Access to foreign and local investment as well as direct connections between first the Morsi and then the El Sisi governments means that the Gulenist enterprise in Egypt (though limited by the El Sisi led state) continues to flourish in a time of political turmoil between Egypt and Turkey.\(^{411}\)

Importantly, the Gulen status group education/economic network is not relegated only to Egypt. Respondents report that the Gulen status group seeks to replicate its economic/educational network throughout its worldwide system of schools. This means that the Gulenist education/economic loci system in Salahaldin and Egypt is the norm across the international Gulen network, not the exception.\(^{412}\)

Turkey’s foreign economic and political growth since the end of the Cold War may be the reasons for the growth of the Gulen status group. This Turkish economic growth might ultimately be the driving force behind the spread of Turkey-based economic and political power in the Muslim majority world. During the recent years of unilateral American dominance, Turkey has successfully carved for itself more military and economic regional autonomy.\(^{413}\)
Internally Erdogan’s capitalist Islamist “black” Turk roots made him both a populist politician and a transformative leader with access to foreign investment.

Though no solid evidence has come to light as of yet, it appears plausible that the Gulen status group procured for Erdogan’s domestic allies some of the foreign investment that came into Turkey from 2002 until the 2013 break between the Gulenists and Erdogan’s AK Party. How and from which source this supposed foreign investment came into Turkey over Erdogan’s political career needs more research by scholars and investigative journalists.

Financial Transparency in the Gulen Status Group

Gulenists in the ethnography were quite open about sharing with me many aspects of their educational network and the production of the Turkish Olympics. However, even after my multiple requests for direct financial records and interviews with donors of the Turkish Olympics, Gulenist administrators such as Ozcan, Yildirim and Gokhan refused to give me access to accounting numbers and donors. Leading Gulenists would only say when questioned that Turkish donors and local Egyptian leaders who believed in the vision of Fethullah Gulen funded Salahaldin International School and the Turkish Olympics in Egypt.

This lack of transparency as to how the Turkish Olympics or the Gulen status group are funded gives plausibility to a theory posited by some Turkish and foreign observers of the Gulen status group/congregation. Given Fethullah Gulen’s own exile in the US and the subsequent Gulenist connections to powerful Americans from Gulenist dialogue centers across the US and the Gulen status group’s championing of privatization and anti-regulation, this theory posits that the United States government seeks to support the growth of the worldwide Gulen status group.
Critics of the Gulen status group in Turkey such as media and political allies of the AKP and President Erdogan, purport that this US government support is given secretly to the Gulenists by the CIA and other covert American organizations. Adherants to this theory state that the reason for this supposed American support of the Gulenist congregation is that the Gulenist educational network – wherever it goes and whatever it does – oftentimes furthers a version of moderated Islam amendable to neo-liberalism in Muslim majority nations.

Any further study then on the Gulen status group and/or the Turkish Olympics will need to discuss this theory and investigate further the finances which make the Gulen status group/congregation’s educational network and the Turkish Olympics possible. Gulenists should look at further investigations into their finances not as dangerous or threatening invasions, but instead as a chance to verify once and for all to the world that the funding of their international network is transparent and connected with their altruistic goal of “serving humanity.”

Final Conclusions on Child Indoctrination at the Turkish Olympics

From the fieldwork I have personally developed three indoctrination steps which non-Turkish children undergo into the Gulen status group via the Turkish Olympics. The first I have called “comradery internationalism.” The second is “outsider internationalism” and the third stage and full acceptance into the Gulen congregation is called “international Gulenism.” Certainly Turkish or non-Turkish Anatolian students are a part of these indoctrination steps but their direct access into the Gulen status group is made easier than international non-Turkish students. Turkish students gain easier direct access into Gulenism because they and their families are inherently a part of Turkish nationalism which is the preeminent nationalism active in the Gulen congregation.
Gulenist leaders in Egypt chose which Egyptian children to support with scholarships and dormitory residency. Occasionally Gulenist leaders placed student subjects into the dual roles of outsider internationalist and comradery internationalist. This was the case with Ahmed and Abdelrahman. However, usually Egyptian student performers only stayed at the level of comradery internationalist and did not become outsider internationalists. This likely happened because the Gulenists build their schools, dormitories, hospitals and universities to make money. As such, indoctrinating all Egyptian performing students at the Turkish Olympics into Gulenism is possible in a superficial manner as expressed in comradery internationalism.

However, for the Gulen status group to go deeper and subjugate hearts and minds of performing students using the carrots of fully or partially subsidized scholarships and free living space would have been financially detrimental to the Gulenist for-profit business model. As such opening student access to the second stage of indoctrination had to be limited to children of talent that the Gulen status group could tie to its congregation vis-à-vis scholarships and the carrot of free educational capital. Once Egyptian students became members in the Gulenist meritocracy of indoctrination they became outsider internationalists and eventually Gulenist internationalists.

The ethnography shows that the meritocracy of indoctrination that is connected to outsider internationalism is part of a larger existential component in Gulenist status group organization. Many of the officials of the Gulen status group in Egypt and in Turkey state that they themselves came from poor families and were only able to reach a higher economic and educational level by membership in the Gulen congregation. That these same individuals would organize a meritocracy of indoctrination in Egypt connected to SIS and the Turkish Olympics is not surprising. Also given the international standardization across the Gulen status group, the
field work shows that in every nation Gulenism is active, a version of outsider internationalism connected with a meritocracy of indoctrination exists. Scholars can see from this research that new generations of Turkish and non-Turkish international students enter into the Gulen status group as outsider internationalists connected to the Gulenist meritocracy of indoctrination. One country of possible research on this topic would be the United States where as of 2010 Gulenists ran the second largest affiliated Charter School network in the country. Given the illegality of mixing religion and education with public Charter School funds how do Gulenist dormitories and the meritocracy of indoctrination function in Gulenism in the US?

The ethnographic evidence shows that deep indoctrination into the status group begins with the Gulen congregation’s dormitory system. The removal of Abdelrahman was an important example. Once in the dormitory system Abdelrahman could either accept the Gulen status group or not. In Abdelrahman’s case the heaviness of Gulenist Islamism became intolerable for him and he reacted with forbidden love and dangerous late night romantic meetings. The fact that Abdelrahman could not function in the dormitory system was a test. Upon failing the test, Gulenist leadership removed Abdelrahman from the status group. In the Gulenist system the dormitory then is the threshold of full indoctrination into the congregation.

Further research into the internal politics of the male and female Gulenist Dormitory system in Egypt is fundamental to understanding how the Gulen status group creates indoctrination among children. During this research process the role of the Gulenist “big brother” agabey (one agabey runs each male dormitory) or “big sister” abla (one abla runs each female dormitory) will be important in understanding how students and performers structure their lives and learn about the world. Scholars will need to study performance in the Turkish Olympics as a
component of the students’/dormitory residents’ structuring and learning processes. Researchers ought to study how Gulenist “big brothers” and “big sisters” become coaches, teachers, administrators and dormitory leaders in the Gulen educational network and at the Turkish Olympics.

Despite the Erdogan government’s arrests and closures of status group organizations, Turkey continues to be the center and home of the Gulen status group. However, as the status group spreads internationally, denizens from countries with extensive Gulenist educational institutions are important in understanding how the Gulen congregation employs its third version of internationalism. Gulenist internationalism and it is the final step in the three step process of non-Turkish child subjugation into the Gulen status group vis-à-vis the Turkish Olympics.

It is important to note the role of the family over a student’s indoctrination into the Gulen congregation. Were Salma’s or Mariam’s or Nada’s or Laila’s families not acquiescent and supportive of Turkey and their children’s Turkish School in Cairo, it is unlikely these four Egyptian girls would be dancing Turkish dances or singing Turkish songs at the Turkish Olympics. For this reason, Gulenist schools are supportive of parents visiting Turkey on trips organized by the Gulen status group.

Final Conclusions on Audience Production at the Turkish Olympics

From 2003 to 2013, the Turkish Olympics called on Turkish citizens to host thousands of visiting international school children traveling across Turkey. Consequently, during the Turkish Olympics in Turkey an Amedi Kurd, a Sanliurfan Arab or a Trabzonian Laz became normalized as “Turkish hosts” by the presence of touring international child performers in their provinces. This acceptance of an internationalized “Turkish host” by audience members was
based on a new national Turkish identity. The Turkish Olympics then is a space/festival where “black” Turks and non-Turkish Sunni Anatolians appropriate the Kemalist exclusive claims on Turkishness and spread a new inclusive Turkish identity. As such some audience members from Turkey believe they become empowered citizens by watching the Turkish Olympics. And perhaps in some ways audience members do in fact become more empowered.

In the fieldwork many Gulenist respondents believed that the Turkish Olympics in both Egypt and Turkey was a natural social osmosis; a project of enlightenment created from the collective subconscious of the Turkish people and then given to the world as a gift. “Black” Turks that is indigenous Anatolian Turks and non-Turks of Anatolian origin (Laz, Circassian, Arab, Hemsirin and Kurds) were marginalized groups in Kemalist Turkey. The growing power of the Erdogan state and the Gulen status group gave these multi-ethnicities and “black” Turks more political and economic power in Turkey. This new Turkey – that is the Turkey of the Turkish Olympics – is linked to the successes of the Erdogan state and the Gulen status group. At different times both the Gulen congregation and the Erdogan state used the Turkish Olympics as a place of national reinvention and indoctrination into “black” Turkishness.

Islamism and multi-ethnicism both have a place in this new Turkishness of the Turkish Olympics. Sunni Islamist “hosts” accept the new Turkishness identity as a precursor to active work within the Gulen status group and the Turkish Olympics. The Turkish Olympics then becomes an engine to introduce employment and deployment into the international Gulen congregational network.

It is at this point that more research needs to be done on the exact status group structures by which an educator or other worker within the status group (such as Emre Buyukgoz, the chef of SIS and father of Su Buyukgoz) gains employment to work in the vast Gulenist network.
Possibly there is a computer database of names and abilities or some other way of organizing the resources of the Gulen status group to help congregational leaders select work applicants to fill job positions.

Leading Gulenist representative in Egypt, Ibrahim Gokhan (Gokhan was a Laz from Trabzon) explained that the Turkish Olympics was a way for the world to understand “who the Turks are today.”

Said Gokhan: “From the past there was an image of the Turk. It was connected to the Ottoman Empire first and then as the (Republican) ‘Turk’ afterward. Now there is a different image because of the Turkish Olympics.” Gokhan’s words reflect the “black” Turks’ and non-Turkish Sunni Anatolians’ changing views of being “Turkish” at the Turkish Olympics.

The concepts of a multiethnic Turkiyeli (a citizen of Turkey) and Sunni Islamism exemplify historical continuity with earlier Republican and Ottoman understandings of self. Gokhan’s mentioning of an Ottoman heritage connected to the Turkish Olympics harkens back to the Tanzimat and the Ottoman state’s drive for a multi-ethnicism called “Ottomanism” within the Ottoman State. As such Ottomanism of the past connects with Turkiyelilik (multi-ethnicism) of the present among the Turkish audience at the Turkish Olympics. Sunni Islamism was an ideology of social change and unity in the late Ottoman State. Similarly, Islamism continues to transform and influence identity production in Turkey today in that it presents audiences with an ideology of social unity opposed to the laicism of Kemalism.

This research has shown how a reinvented Turkishness animates “Turkish” audiences at the Turkish Olympics. Besides more studies into the Egyptian audience at the Turkish Olympics, studies into “black” Turkish multiculturalism would help scholars better understand a
transforming Turkey. Overall, this research has called into question the naturalness of Turkishness, the Turkish Olympics and the “enlightened” modernity of Kemalism and Gulenism.

**Gulenist Belief and Meaning: the Raison D'Etre of the Turkish Olympics**

Gulenists believe they are a part of a worldwide service-to-humanity movement. To this end, Gulenists have built schools, universities, hospitals and dormitories across the globe. They have done this work in the span of twenty-five years. Rank and file Gulenists in the fieldwork made little money and many of them withstood challenging living conditions in order to raise their families in lands far from home.

Gulenists have belief. And their congregational leaders have an ability to hold and wield educational and economic capital. Presently the Gulen status group is hurting in Turkey. The most recent reports I have received from Gulenists are that Gulenist activities in Turkey have gone underground. Yet my contacts are adamant that Gulenism is not finished in Turkey. They state that theirs is an international “service movement” built to last.

The Turkish Olympics is the driving engine of indoctrination for audience members and performing children into this congregation. As long as there is a Gulen status group, the festival known as the Turkish Olympics will continue. This is because the production of the Turkish Olympics is the raison d'etre of the Gulen congregation; one cannot exist without the other.
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5 Önal, journalist and correspondent for Gulenist Zaman Newspaper in Cairo, Egypt, interview.
6 "Interview with Yücel Durak, Assistant to Mustafa Özcan." Interview by author. May 10, 2014.
7 Durak, Assistant to Mustafa Özcan, interview.
12 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
13 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
15 "Interview with 'Nuri Küloğlu', director of the Nile Center," Interview by author. May 3, 2014.
18 "Interviews with Mustafa Özcan, the Reported Head of Gulenist Activities in Turkey up until 2015, and Özcan's Assistant Yücel Durak." Interview by author. May 9, 2014 and July 27, June 25, 2013.
19 Gökhan, Gülenist Organizer in Cairo, interviews.
20 Gökhan, Gülenist Organizer in Cairo, interviews.
21 Gökhan, Gülenist Organizer in Cairo, interviews.
22 Özcan and Durak, Leading Gulenist in Turkey until 2015 and Assistant, interviews.
24 Oğuz, *Türkiye'de*, 38.
26 "Interviews with Professor ‘Murat’" Personal interview. Sept. 1997 - Sept. 2005. “Professor Murat” is a professor of Turkish Studies at a major Turkish University. He spoke to me candidly but requested that his name be changed given the present climate of political restrictiveness in Turkey.
27 Professor “Murat”, interviews.
32 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
33 Özcan and Durak, Leading Gulenist in Turkey until 2015 and Assistant, interviews.
34 Durak, Assistant to Mustafa Özcan, interview.
35 Özcan and Durak, Leading Gulenist in Turkey until 2015 and Assistant, interviews.
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87 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 57.
88 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 57.
89 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 57.
90 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 58.
91 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 58.
95 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 61.
102 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 57.
104 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 54.
105 Montserrat, *Ethnicity*, 55.
109 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
110 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
111 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
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113 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
114 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
117 Final Performance *Turkish Olympics*, March 15, 2014.
118 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
119 Gökhan, Gülenist Organizer in Cairo, interviews.
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123 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
133 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
134 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.

Abdelrahman and parent, interviews.


Professor “Murat”, interviews.

Professor “Murat”, interviews.

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Seviç, Girl's Dance Instructor Salahaldin School, Interview.


"Sezen Aksu - 'Dansoz Dunya'"


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Hanimeli, Salma’s Turkish Teacher, interview.

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Interview with Fatima, Salma's Mother." Interview by author. February 10, 2014.

Fatima, interview.

Salma, interview.

Salma, interview.

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Mariam, Nada and Laila, interview.
186 Yunis and Cengis, interview.
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191 Mariam, Nada and Laila, interview.
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193 Abdelrahman and parent, interviews.
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195 Abdelrahman and parent, interviews.
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211 Abdelrahman and parent, interviews.
212 Yıldırım, principal at Salahaldin High School, interviews.
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216 Ahmed and Mother, interview.
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218 Abdelrahman and parent, interviews.
220 Sema, interview.
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227 Sema, interview.
228 Sema, interview.
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239 "Interviews with Hikmet Yaşar." Interview by author. May 2013.
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383 Güneş, Physical Education Instructor at Salahaldin International School & Assistant Dance Instructor and Translator, interview.

384 Güneş, Physical Education Instructor at Salahaldin International School & Assistant Dance Instructor and Translator, interview.

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