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EPILOGUE

*In the past historians could be accused of wanting to know only about “the great deeds of kings,” but today this is certainly no longer true. More and more they are turning toward what their predecessors passed over in silence, discarded, or simply ignored. “Who built Thebes of the seven gates?” Bertolt Brecht’s “literate worker” was already asking. The sources tell us nothing about these anonymous masons, but the question retains all its significance.*⁶¹⁶

Many Voices of a Turkish State Factory looks at the shop floor dynamics of a state-owned textile factory in Istanbul in order to understand the connections between the living and working conditions of its workers, their consciousness and their political language between 1932 and 1950. It conceptualises this national factory, where the institutional relationship between the apparatuses of factory and state tended towards fusion, and where labour and state came into direct contact with each other, as a microcosm of state-labour relations in the early Republican period. The study investigated the relations between the politics of production and the larger framework of state politics, especially from the perspective of discursive structuring of class consciousness. Covering such a dynamic period of social change from the perspective of social history, it dealt with multiple levels of working-class formation, including its social and cultural dimensions. But, above everything else, this has been a study on crossing pathways of individual workers and the systematic pathways of the Turkish state’s nation-building project. And it has explored both the possibilities and the constraints that rose at these crossing points.

At the heart of this study is a critical engagement with Turkish labour historiography, particularly pertaining to two of its assumptions on the workers of the early Republican period. The first assumption suggested that state workers had better working and living condition than private sector workers, which resulted in their political compromise towards the state. It has been argued that they had the position of a labour aristocracy compared to the much more precarious and difficult conditions of employment of private sector workers. Through a detailed study of the living and working conditions of Bakırköy workers, I have documented ample evidence to question the validity of this assumption. The second assumption included the supposition that working-class consciousness did not develop during

⁶¹⁶ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. xiii.

this period and the labour movement of the late 1940s remained mostly ineffective in furthering workers' rights. The protectionist labour policies and improvements in conditions of employment were endowed on the working-classes who were nothing but passive victims of state actions. The reasons for this passivity are explained through a combination of repressive and co-optative strategies of the single-party regime. Characterized by an implicit teleological belief in the transition from a state of unconsciousness to a state of consciousness, these conclusions are based on an elitist historiography in which the political elites are given the central role. But, more importantly, the cultural and discursive developments in the worlds of labour that do not immediately concern (narrowly defined) political activity are overlooked. The over-emphasis on state actions combines with a narrow definition of resistance and struggle, giving rise to conclusions over which the working classes did not have any organizational and structural power to affect the labour policies. Political action is reduced to exceptional moments of popular explosion, while class consciousness is only recognized in its most direct and radical expressions.

This study then pushes the boundaries of Turkish labour history in three ways. The first line of distinction concerns the unit of analysis. Different from studies on state enterprises or the industrial working class, I reconstructed the experiences of a workforce at the site of production: the factory. This allowed me to see the details of the process of working-class formation that had previously been overlooked in the sweeping overgeneralizations. When factors such as the labour process, social relations at the level of the shop floor and their interactions with social relations outside the factory site are included in the analysis, a more nuanced understanding of working-class behaviour and politics becomes possible. The second difference concerns the centrality of the experiences of rank-and-file workers in the narrative. By building upon the accounts of actual people in real social formations, I documented their crude and concrete experiences of the process of proletarianisation.

The reading of multiple aspects of workers' shop floor experiences gave rise to alternative questions and conclusions. Among them are issues such as the development of a working-class mentality, ways of living, the trajectory of workers' political ideas and actions, and their ways of presenting them. This approach also characterizes the study of the trade union activity. Instead of studying trade unions as institutions representing a working-class collectivity that is independent of a working-class subjectivity, I opted for following the individual workers in the trade unions. This enabled me to approach the formation of class

identity, not from the perspective of teleology but of genealogy, since I did not start from an evaluation of working-class collective organizations according to a pre-determined schema; instead, I followed workers' learning processes in its non-linear as well as linear aspects. The last line of distinction is what made the first two lines possible to pursue. This study made use of a vast collection of archival material, some of which is being presented for the first time. By bringing together state-produced material with workers' own accounts, I questioned the former and contextualised the latter.

Overall, this study sought to connect a qualitative analysis of Bakırköy workers' objective living and working conditions to the subjective structuring of their perceptions and representations. In other words, both the discourses and experiences of work are analysed here. I have attended to the changes in meanings and structures as inter-constitutive factors by means of using textual as well as quantitative evidence. For this purpose, a solid historical materialist analysis is combined with a discursive analysis to understand the interrelations between the dynamics of the shop floor and the development of working-class consciousness amongst those workers. In what follows, I will first summarize the conclusions I arrived at and then present my ideas on the direction that future research on Turkish labour history should take.

Working at Bakırköy

Turkish labour historiography is characterized by two underlying contradictory assumptions regarding state workers in the early Republican period. Based on wage calculations and the social welfare provisions, it has been argued that state workers made up the better-off segment of the industrial working-class; indeed, the term labour aristocracy was used at times to describe their social position. At the same time, though, the context of labour at state factories was characterized by extremely high turn-over rates, which labour historians explained through the persistence of workers' rural ties. Labour stability and commitment are conceptualized as the result of the successful adaptation of rural migrants to an urban industrial environment.

What gave rise to this contradictory view of state workers is a combination of two factors. First is the dependence of labour historians on state-produced archival material. This leads not only to the reproduction of the state's point of view, which, in this case, is also the employer's, but also necessarily to the disregard of problems with data collection. I showed in this study that when the state-produced archival material ceases to be the only source of

information, this narrative of contradictions collapses. The second factor concerns a too simplistic equation between the class position of state workers, which is also too readily assumed, and their assumed political passivity. Cultural and political behaviour is regarded as a more or less passive reflection of the economic situation and its study is limited to instances of outbursts of collective action. In this equation, work ethics is perceived both as a condition and an epiphany of working-class consciousness. Absenteeism is seen as an indication of its absence. Behind all this reasoning lies a conception of early Republican workers occupying a transitional position in the peasant-to-worker transformation. How was it possible that a not fully proletarianised labour force had simultaneously better work conditions? A number of problematic conclusions derive from this contradictory picture. These conclusions were the starting point of this study.

I began my analysis of Bakırköy Factory with a detailed study of the work conditions at the shop floor level and their effects on the workers' career choices. This part of the study portrayed the ways in which men and women related to their work sphere and the meanings workers themselves ascribed to their labour. I have conceptualised the labour process as a site of struggle where workers' practices of accommodation and resistance to factory discipline, in the first place, and to the socio-political environment surrounding the labour question in general, take place.

When historians base their analysis solely on state-produced material, they inevitably reproduce the state's perspective. The study of labour formation processes is thus often limited to the study of the ways employers solved the problem of recruiting, organizing, and disciplining the labour force. The effects on workers' perceptions and the ways they internalized or resisted these actions are overlooked in these studies. Moreover, although in an implied manner, these studies suggest that working at state factories was a good opportunity that could only be rejected if workers had other means of subsistence. But what if the working conditions were not good at all? This dissertation examines the labour force not from the perspective of the state's measures to secure a stable labour force. Instead, I documented the shop floor dynamics from the point of view of the workers, especially with regard to their decisions to stay at or leave the factory.

The high labour turn-over rate at state factories has been much emphasized by labour historians studying the early Republican period. Behind this emphasis is the perception of state workers as pre-modern labourers whose ties to the land were not completely severed. The introduction of new archival material in this study seriously challenged this assumption.

Workers' petitions provide invaluable information on the reasons for and patterns of leaving the factory. Although they received much attention in factory inspection reports, these reasons and patterns were lost due to the nature of these documents, which approached the issue to solve the problem of labour stability. A study from the issue from below, however, reveals the mentalities and strategies of workers in dealing with the difficult working conditions they were facing. As such, it became possible to understand the high turnover rate as a workers' response to their working and living conditions.

To begin with, the workers' reasons for leaving were manifold and the reason given to the management was not always the only one, if not the most accurate one. The information in the factory inspection reports regarding these issues conceals this complexity. Analyses based on these data are not only bound to reproduce the employer's point of view. They also miss the strategies of workers in dealing with the factory management on matters such as absenteeism. The documentation of individual workers' employment stories enabled me to study the issue of career choices as a site of workers' struggle.

Another important contribution of this study has been the presentation of considerable discrepancies in working and living conditions among workers of the Bakırköy Factory. Between the unskilled workers in the preparatory departments and skilled workers such as the weavers, significant gaps existed concerning wage levels, employment conditions and bargaining position. This was also reflected in the statistics on the factors affecting workers' career choices. Contrary to the assumptions of female labour's higher instable character, male workers tended to leave the factory more often. In terms of the position within the labour process, weavers were the group that changed the most. Systems of pay also made a difference since workers who received hourly wages left more than those with accorded wages. The existence of these patterns further indicates the rational aspect of workers' career decisions.

The evaluation of the persistence of workers' rural ties fails to differentiate among workers in terms of their regional origin. I touched upon this issue by documenting the birth places of Bakırköy workers in my sample. Most of these workers were born in parts of the Ottoman Empire that were not part of the Republic. Speculatively, this would mean weaker rural ties compared to workers who were employed at factories and mines that were relatively close to their places of birth. Clearly, this argument needs further substantiation, but it is safe to assume that the proximity of the birthplace to the site of employment has significant implications concerning the availability of means of subsistence other than industrial work.

This is yet another point of difference concerning the conditions of reproduction of labour power that has not received enough attention from labour historians.

Another indication that Bakırköy workers acted as rational economic actors in making career choices is the contradiction of the information regarding the timing and duration of their leave. I provided examples of petitions asking for permission to harvest. Comparing the information in these petitions with the information provided by supervisors, however, reveals that workers used the harvest as an excuse to legitimise their periods of leave, knowing that it was recognised as such by the factory management. The two cases in which I could demonstrate that workers chose to work at other factories – one in another state textile factory and the other in a private glassware factory – most clearly illustrated the rational mechanisms behind workers' career choices. A careful reading and weaving of the information in the files together indicates rational actors who were able to calculate the risks and gains in making employment decisions. To reduce the multiple and complex stories of workers to a by-product of incomplete proletarianisation is to deny their agency. I have argued that the reasons for the high turnover rates should be sought in the low level of wages and difficult working conditions, which also changed from department to department. The designation of these workers as peasant-workers is based more on an assumption than carefully documented archival evidence. Absenteeism and high turn-over rates were workers' responses to the difficult conditions of work at Bakırköy Factory.

Overall, the conclusions arrived at in these analyses suggest that the perception of state workers as a transitional category, which is an intermediate stage between peasants and a classical proletariat, is misleading. Even in cases where workers combined wage work with subsistence agriculture, assuming the dominance of pre-capitalist social relations in workers' lives would simply be incorrect. The combination of waged and non-waged forms of labour could sometimes even benefit the employers by means of transferring – at least part of – the cost of reproduction of labour power onto the workers.

In studying the issue of managerial control and work discipline, I then documented the daily practices of supervision on the shop floor as much as possible. But since information on these practices concern instances when workers *made* trouble or *were in* trouble, the ordinary circumstances of daily supervision and discipline is left out. Still, I was able to show how and why fines were issued, how the foremen secured authority on the shop floor, and when workers protested against this authority. Although acquiring information about peaceful social relations among workers was highly difficult due to selective archive keeping as well, I gave a

glimpse of the co-operation among workers to resist managerial authority and even to benefit from the quota systems. At times, workers and the foremen solved problems amongst themselves, without notifying the management. By means of maintaining the order of the workplace, this cooperation secured the maintenance of production of surplus value.

Despite the high number of fines, however, the overall picture suggests serious limits to capitalist control at the factory. First and foremost, the ease of exiting and re-entering the factory hindered the imposition of tight managerial control over workers. On top of this, workers did not internalise the level of work-discipline demanded by the management, as we understand from the high number of fines given for absenteeism. Yet there was not a single case of objection to a fine by Bakırköy workers. Whether this was because objection was seen as futile, we do not know. Yet what we know for sure is that fining workers did not solve the problem of labour instability.

Moreover, my analyses of the wages at Bakırköy Factory illustrated, above everything else, the complexity of the systems of numeration and the differences among wage levels both within a single factory and between various factories. Inspection reports, as well as the expert reports, stressed the discrepancies and confusions regarding the pay systems and their effects on the high turn-over rates. In state textile factories, differences among preparatory and production departments appeared to be the dividing line. While weavers were on accord pay, spinners were paid on an hourly basis. This corresponded to gender differences as the spinners were predominantly female.

I am fully aware that a complete rethinking of wage levels in the state textile sector requires a thorough systematic analysis of a large number of workers in different localities at different points of production. But, the analysis of how workers reflected upon their wages brings the dimension of quality of life into the picture. Incorporating their views on the issue of wages portrays a highly different picture from that drawn by labour historians. Bakırköy workers, in general, were people who could hardly make ends meet. At times they worked for the same wage for years; annual increases were made on paper, not in reality. After having an accident, they returned to work before their health improved, for the wage loss was too much to sacrifice. Especially up until the second half of the 1940s, they laboured without basic employment security or any social insurance mechanism. Their housing conditions were far from adequate. In fact, they were among the first shantytown residents of the Republic. That they had to take care of their housing needs while some workers in newly founded state factories in Anatolia enjoyed housing provisions demonstrates the considerable differences

among state workers in terms of their access to social provisions. In this regard, I have argued against the grouping of state factories as a uniform body of state enterprises. The effects of factors such as location, differential labour recruitment and maintenance policies, various labour processes and the particularities of the industries on shop floor social relations and the development of working-class consciousness still await systematic critical analysis.

I argued against the dominant view that state workers of the early republican period occupied the position of a labour aristocracy because of the benefits they enjoyed being state employers. The evidence presented in this study portrays a radically different picture than the image of state factories as places offering secure employment conditions and impersonal rules. Low wage levels, difficult working conditions and harsh managerial discipline characterised work at Bakırköy Factory.

The Emergence of a Workers' Language

In documenting the labour-management relations on the shop floor, my motivation was to correct the confinement of the study of the ideologies and mentalities of ordinary people to the dramatic moments of collective action. The absence or limitedness of such moments gives way to the conclusion that workers were completely co-opted by the dominant classes. The emphasis here is on the development of the trade union movement. The assumption that this is the only realm where workers' politics could have developed often results in the overlooking of the workplace and the neighbourhood, where workers manifest instances of class consciousness. Through examining workers' petitions, I documented these instances.

My analysis is based on a chronological study of workers' petitions, which illustrated the self-definitions and perceptions of workers, both at moments of struggle and those of adaptation to the factory discipline. Though five aspects of these documents are analysed, namely timing, frequency, addressee, content and vocabulary, the analysis focused on the linguistic aspects of the workers' presentation of their demands and complaints. By means of a close reading of the historical social vocabulary that was available to the Bakırköy workers against the background of the changing socio-political dynamics, I documented their political perceptions and actions. On the whole, the analysis shows that workers' self-perceptions and the representations of that self-perception underwent a dramatic change in the early Republican period. In connection with the socio-political changes in the wider context, workers gradually developed a vocabulary that allowed them to formulate their demands more

effectively. This indicates the slow but steady development of a working-class consciousness among Bakırköy workers.

The main finding of this analysis could be summarized as follows: In a time span of less than ten years, petitions written by Bakırköy workers changed dramatically in terms of their linguistic characteristics. The road from a language of humility, characterised by such words as “destitute” or “servant,” to a language in which the petitioner recognises himself as a worker with rights and obligations, was rather short in the case of Bakırköy workers. The second half of the 1940s was characterized by increasing state intervention in labour relations and regulations due to the Turkish State’s will to integrate with the post-War international order on the one side, and the RPP’s efforts to secure its leadership in the face of increasing electoral competition from the DP, on the other. In the context of the political liberalisation subsequent to the war, workers – by building upon their short but intense experience of proletarianisation – seized the opportunity to assert themselves as the lawful citizens of the Republic. The change of image of the worker as a subject who asks for a favour, to a citizen who demands his rights was even recognized by the political authority. Thus, the post-War national politics had significant effects on both the perception of the Turkish worker by the ruling classes and on the Turkish workers’ self-perception.

The analysis helped to flesh out the shop floor dynamics of Bakırköy Factory by delving into the political practices and ideological assumptions embedded in the process of production. Petitions functioned as an entry point to an understanding of the struggles at the point of production. They illustrated the formation and reformation of identities, the perceptions and strategies of both workers and their supervisors. Increasing state regulations of the labour process and the labour-capital relations changed the modes of relations between workers and the factory management. The analysis of the petitions was also useful in terms of understanding these changes. It also detailed the practices of managerial discipline, worker-foremen relations and the mechanism of worker representation.

These findings further substantiate the arguments I made previously. In particular, the speed with which workers learned about and made use of the changes in labour legislation indicates their awareness of, first, their social identity as workers and, second, their ability to adapt to the changing conditions of employment. The workers’ complaints about their wages, the ways they formulate these complaints and their subsequent demands support my conclusions regarding the difficult working conditions at Bakırköy Factory. The discourse analysis of these formulations reveals the ways workers perceived their deprivation, made

sense of its reasons and their vision of a better life. In these petitions, we acquire a glimpse of the hard lives of those workers, their household problems, their sense of duty towards their families, and perhaps most importantly, we acquire a partial understanding of their sense of justice. The changes in the content of the petitions, from simple wage raise demands to demanding fair treatment, illustrate the increase in their self-confidence as workers who deserved to be treated with dignity.

Probably the most interesting archival material used in this dissertation is a text documenting a conversation between a worker who had repeatedly asked for a wage raise in the late 1940s and the chief of the personnel department. The uniqueness and the depth of this document deserve a few words on the contribution it made to this study. To begin with, the story of this worker presented an exceptional case in terms of the addressee of his last petition, right before what the factory management called “the investigation.” The worker wrote directly to the Prime Minister to complain about the factory management for refusing to give him a raise in 1951. Not unimportantly, this was after the 1950 general elections, which resulted in the victory of the DP. It was the increasing self-confidence of the workers due to the end of the authoritarian single party regime that made this act possible.

This has two very significant implications for labour history. The first one concerns the social class base of the DP victory. Though workers’ support for the opposition party is cited randomly, there is no systematic study of their electoral behaviour in this period. Second, this incident shows the rather immediate effects of the change in state politics on the strategies of state workers. That the opportunity created is seized by a worker who had consumed the possible ways of getting a wage increase suggests how closely changes at this level were followed and acted upon by workers. Thus, this case could be read as an indication of the effects of the political liberalisation process on workers’ self-perceptions. Obviously, the topic requires a much deeper analysis, but it suffices to note here the quick and significant effects that macro politics had on the daily struggles of workers. It should also be noted that these effects only become visible at this level of individual acts of resistance and struggle. In the larger frame, these effects seem to be imposed and directed by the ruling classes and the ways rank-and-file workers experience them fall through the cracks of analysis.

The transcript of the investigation brings us to the closest point of reconstructing the labour-management relations at Bakırköy Factory. The document creates an almost theatrical effect through the presentation of the interaction between a supervisor and his subordinate. For the first time in early Republican Turkish labour history, we hear the seemingly

unmediated words of a worker, we follow his line of reasoning, we feel his desperation and embarrassment before the supervisor and other workers and, finally, we observe the strategies he resorts to in order to defend his right to a wage increase. In a sense, the transcript exemplifies a worker's repertoire on matters such as self-image, his perception of authority and his ideas of a fair wage.

On a different note, this document is significant for it displays the discursive structuring of managerial authority on the shop floor. In fact, through a study of the short notes on workers' petitions, I illustrated the management's way of thinking on factory discipline. This instance of face-to-face interaction with a worker is a first-hand account of the language and the arguments a manager used in dealing with a 'troublesome' worker. Another similar example, namely the work stoppage at Bakırköy Factory, is also presented. But the difference here is the seemingly unmediated presentation of the complete conversation, which makes the analysis more dynamic in terms of seeing the two sides interacting.

I illustrated the development of a workers' language that was increasingly underlined by a working-class consciousness throughout the 1940s. While workers formulated their demands for a wage raise by appealing to the good will of their supervisors in the early 1940s, by the end of the decade they were referring to their skill levels, the discrepancy between wages amongst themselves and their co-workers, and the unfair, humiliating treatment they were subjected to as the basis of their right to a higher wage. I have argued that petitioning was used effectively as a means to struggle by Bakırköy workers. But these means could not evolve into a collective mode because of the repressive labour law that did not allow the newly emerged trade unions to handle labour disagreements. Though the mechanism of labour representatives was in use in one of the cases I analysed, the absence of trade unions on the shop floor explains the individualised and isolated character of these struggles.

The Labour Movement

This dissertation also presents a renewed understanding of the Turkish labour movement in the early Republican period. A quick glance at the archival material on trade unions in the early 1950s would already reveal its three main characteristics. First, we observed the strong and proud use of the word "worker" by workers themselves. The term is used to denote a separate yet complementary social group with clearly defined duties and rights. Second, the word "worker" was almost always qualified by the adjective "Turkish." It appears that the category *worker* could not exist on its own; it was just not enough, or perhaps safe. Though

the word does not necessarily refer to ethnic identity (after all, the population of Turkey has always been very diverse ethnically), but to a shared history and culture, biological references such as “noble blood” abounded. This could be understood as an indication that the industrial working-class had already signed into national identity; its members had been incorporated into the nation-state ideology.

The third characteristic concerns the strong anti-communist rhetoric of the labour movement. That in the context of the Cold War anti-communism became a national ideology is in no sense a particularly Turkish phenomenon. Neither is the use of communism as slander to keep the labour movement under control unique to Turkey. However, the character of workers’ reactions to these accusations is striking because of their very angry, at times offended tone. It seemed that to call Turkish workers communists was the worst possible insult to make. Instead of refuting these allegations calmly, organised Turkish workers were responding hysterically, expressing their disgust for the communists. What needed explanation, in my opinion, were the mechanisms through which anti-communism became so strong within the labour movement. The extent of anger and frustration workers showed when they were accused of communism, their invoking of the Turkish identity – again by using biological and historical metaphors – as evidence against these accusations necessitated the study of the psychology of the workers.

These observations led me to further investigate the ideological formation and the discursive characteristics of the trade union movement during the last four years of the 1940s. How was it possible that the politics of the labour movement reflected the politics of the Turkish state to such a great extent? What were the reasons behind the successful integration of the labour movement to the nationalist ideology? Why did the labour movement need to refer to national identity so often? Was it the condition of its existence or was there any kind of strategic thinking behind it? With these questions in mind, I designed my final analysis of the Bakırköy Factory trade union.

Bringing the Worker back in

My analysis of the labour movement has been different from the previous ones in two regards. The first distinguishing feature is the emphasis on the individual workers’ experiences. The literature on the early trade union movement is mainly an assessment of a workers’ organisation that developed under direct and close state control. The trade union movement has been studied as a uniform collectivity, about which many overgeneralisations have been

made. The voices of unionised workers, their decisions to join the movement and the internal struggles and criticisms within the movement are lost in this historiography. In this study, on the contrary, I question the monolithic view of the labour movement in terms of its docility towards the state, its nationalist rhetoric and the frivolous character of its demands and activities. It is not enough to conclude that the labour movement could not go beyond frivolous demands. Labour historians should also explain how workers made sense of these demands, and why these demands stayed frivolous. To do so requires documenting the alternative visions of labour politics within the trade union movement and the ways they were suppressed. Using biographical accounts and following individual workers' lives at the shop floor, I put these missing aspects of early trade unionism in Turkey at the centre of my analysis and thus fleshed out the abstract, sociological generalizations of the existing literature.

Though it brings together a wide range of archival material, both on the Bakırköy trade union and the trade union movement in general, the analysis focuses on the trade union career of individual workers to depict their learning processes concerning the labour question and politics. In documenting Bakırköy workers' trade union activity, I have been mostly interested in workers' decisions to join the union. Rather than evaluating the performance and politics of the trade union as an institution according to pre-determined conceptions of what a trade union movement should do, I opted to analyse the decision-making process to join the union and to take part in its administration. The personal stories I followed allowed me to trace the development of the mentality of a worker concerning the duties and rights of the trade unions.

The stories of two Bakırköy weavers who were quite active both in the Bakırköy Trade Union and in political parties were instrumental to answer such questions related to the worker's mentality: How does a worker decide to join a trade union? When and why does he begin criticising the union management? What are the channels of objection for those criticisms and how are they met? What are the possible connections between the labour process and labour relations on the shop floor, on the one hand, and trade union careers and political engagement, on the other? I tried to understand the mentality of individual workers within the trade union movement, how they made the decision to join the union, what formative experiences they had inside and outside the workplace before they made that decision, when they started complaining about the inefficiency of trade unions, how they made sense of the changes in the state-labour relations, and how they reacted when they came

to believe that their trade union engagement was not enough to solve their problems. With this analysis, my investigation came closer to studies in histories of mentalities. I attended to the conscious as well as unconscious elements of trade unionist workers in depicting the ways in which political positions were taken, articulated, circulated and contested.

By following two dissidents' political trajectories and career histories, their ways of dealing with not only their employer but also with their fellow workers at the workplace and in the trade union, I documented examples of insiders critique on the development of trade unions. My concern was not so much with these personalities as such but with the political alternatives they signified. Representing two very different politics, the stories of these workers challenge the monolithic view that the trade unions presented a homogeneous picture in which alternative discourses did not exist by means of revealing the multiple discursive positions within the trade union movement. As such, their stories disclose the contingent ties between class structure and political action. Although coming from similar experiences at the level of the shop floor, these two weavers had completely different political stances. The discrepancy in the career paths of these two workers delineated the accepted limits of dissidence.

The Worker Citizen in the Making

A second aspect that distinguishes my analysis of the labour movement of the late 1940s from other studies is the attention I paid to its discursive constructions. Different from other studies that attribute the process of national identification as a natural by-product of modernisation, I approached it as a process that requires explanation. In Turkish labour history, working-classes are assumed to be readily available for incorporation to nationalism; their subscription to the nationalist ideology appears to be an expected outcome. It could be said that description functions as the explanation in such studies: they did not resist because they were incorporated into the ruling ideology. The ways the nationalist discourse was internalised, modified and at times used to further workers' rights are understudied. In other words, besides studying the effects of the nationalist discourse on workers, we should also examine the ways in which workers contributed to the reproduction of the nationalist discourse. Only then can we recognise the agency of workers as political subjects and present an answer to the question of how the Kemalist modernisation project diffused into the political languages of the subaltern classes. The emphasis I put on these questions in my analysis of the trade union

movement brings the research closer to a cultural study of nationalism and nation-formation from a working-class perspective.

My aim has been to examine the discursive as well as the legislative interventions into the construction of working-class subjectivity. I have argued that the discursive fields are active sites of struggles that produce the hegemonic meanings of political categories and draw the limits of political legitimacy. These are not only the places where self-perceptions and representation are shaped in this field; it is also here that they exercise their constitutive power. Thus, I have explored the ideologies and politics of nationalism as components of the working-class formation process in the early Republican period, and focused on the interconnections between the processes of nationalism and the development of working-class consciousness. In doing so, I have not only illustrated the mediation or displacement of class struggle through nationalism, I have also documented how the nationalist discourse was used by workers to legitimise their demands. Moreover, I paid attention to the ways in which the labour movement resorted to this discourse in the context of internal struggles within the movement. I have argued that the discursive structuring of class-consciousness has critical implications for political action. Besides the state's direct control of the labour movement, it was this structuring that ensured that the demands of the movement limited themselves to practical economic issues and frivolous demands.

Since, as a state factory, Bakırköy Factory is a site where the Turkish state faces the Turkish citizen in an employer-employee relationship, the situation of Bakırköy workers perfectly exemplifies the fluid boundary between class and citizenship, and illustrates how permeable the two discourses are. Class politics were often conducted in a rhetoric of national identity and belonging. The story of the work stoppage in early 1940s, which presented a conversation between the factory manager and a worker who found himself as the natural leader of the protesting weavers, stands as an example of this fluidity. What we saw in this case was the transformation of a disagreement on production issues to a disagreement on the representation and serving of the national interest. Instead of arguing in the lines of workers' rights, the worker opted for connecting the interests of the weavers and the nation as a whole.

The nationalist discourse emphasises the shared interest between labour and capital mobilising both parties towards that shared interest: the rebuilding of the homeland. The optimistic rhetoric of nationalism, i.e. nationalism that concerns not the "other" as the enemy but the joint efforts of a people to reach a good future, shaped the discourse of a workers' politics and the labour movement. The workers were continuously reminded of the

importance of their duty and the bright future that awaited them. Their work-related problems were either ignored or considered necessary sacrifices for the welfare of the nation. Labour protectionist policies were often presented as the state's recognition of these sacrifices and the significance of workers' contributions to this rebuilding project. But at the same time, when the state asked the workers for this sacrifice, it also held the Turkish capitalist responsible for meeting the basic needs of the workers, the 'sons of the nation'.

The worker of this period is then subjected to a double discourse regarding her identity as a citizen of the young Republic. On the one hand, she is a free Turkish citizen: the salvation of the homeland saved her from the status of a slave. The immediate experience or the memory of the European supervisors and employers was carried to the level of the perception of foreign domination. It was the same salvation that put her eternally in debt to the nation. She also has a responsibility towards the nation for its rebuilding depends on her toil. On the other hand, there is an equalizing effect of the discourse of nationalism. If one has duties towards the homeland, then, she also has rights. Thus, the nationalist discourse was also enabling in the sense that it created a political space for labour politics through recognizing the workers as the sons of the nation. If the nation's well-being depended on their toil, the workers had the right to demand the betterment of their living conditions. When they presented themselves as Turkish workers, their demand for a better wage from their Turkish employers could well be located in the discourse of the nation as the family. In a context where industrial conflict was confined to the disinterested Turkish state's refereeing between labour and capital, the appeal to national identity aided the labour movement in claiming its legitimacy.

The analysis here also encompasses, albeit partially, the study of the constitution of citizenship from the perspective of working-class formation. There are two aspects of this constitution. First is the constitution of a working-class through citizenship rights while at the same time endowing it with obligations. Second is the study of the constitution of citizenship from the point of subjectivity formation, i.e., the discursive constitution of working-class citizenship through representation. By way of portraying the ways in which nationalist identities overlapped with those of class, I showed how the emphasis on national identity shaped workers' claims as citizens upon the state and their employers, and how the rhetoric of citizenship is used as a basis for claims-making.

The evidence presented indicates that the nationalist discourse had a double function for the labour movement. On the one hand, it was restraining because it obliged organised

labour to speak from within the nationalist discourse, both in order to secure its legal existence and to appeal to the working masses. This effect was best exemplified in the different endings of the career histories of the two workers I mentioned above. While one of them formulated his critique within the confines of this hegemonic discourse by arguing that the path of the Turkish worker was drawn by Kemalism and attributed the problems of the labour movement to bad governmental practices, the other gradually moved to a much more radical political position and formulated the problem in terms of capital-labour conflict. Consequently, the price they paid for their dissidence differed immensely: social exclusion and the hostility of fellow workers in the case of the former, life-long unemployment and police surveillance in the case of the latter.

In recent times, the most commonly asked question in Turkish labour history regarding the early Republican period has been whether the working-classes had been successful as political actors. It seems that the winning answer is on the negative side. I have no intention, and I am certainly not naive enough, to answer this overarching question through the study of a single factory. Rather, I would like to question the very question in terms of our ways of conceiving success and failure in a historical sense. To take an example, let us consider the failed attempt of a revolution. Looking retrospectively, how would we evaluate a past attempt that seemingly has not caused any social or political change in our present lives? Do we evaluate it in its close temporal proximity or, should we evaluate it in terms of its after effects in the sense that resistance moves like a mole burrows beneath the soil? Could we conclude that it was ineffective because it failed to overthrow certain aspects of a social order in an easily discernable manner? But what do we make of its effects on cultural memory, the ways it shaped the patina of the past, configured the limits of what is possible and impossible?

Similar to other social interpretations, interpretations of the political consciousness of the working-classes in the early Republican period are themselves a social force that shapes our political culture. I am of the belief that social historians have not been fair in evaluating the early trade union movement, which emerged under very difficult conditions. A fair evaluation would require taking these conditions into account. Our knowledge of the social and cultural aspects of working-class lives during the period is seriously limited. We, the young labour historians of Turkey, are far from being able to explain the transformation of a co-opted, state dominated labour movement to a highly militant organised labour force in the late 1960s and 1970s. This, in my opinion, is not a simple problem of the size of scholarship. The more immediate problem concerns our inability to engage with the recent methodological

and historiographical debates in the field. To begin with, we should problematise the narrative structures of labour history. More specifically, we should leave behind a narrative of progress through modernisation. The boundaries of the modernisation paradigm have limited the questions we asked of the archival material. The attempt to refute the defective historiographical representation of a “strong state” is a good starting point. But it is not enough. The study of working-class formation from below should also include the social construction of meaning.

I have examined several of these aspects of labour historiography in this study of a Turkish state factory that ceased to exist materially but continues its symbolic existence as one of the successes of the young Republic. I chose an alternative narrative structure by building upon what appear to be insignificant, minuscule and mundane instances of industrial work. This has allowed me to start from *what happened* instead of searching for *what should have happened*. An epistemology of absence gave way to a genuine curiosity for understanding human action and consciousness as socially shaped possibilities rather than pre-determined outcomes. The reward of that curiosity has been the reconstruction of a polyphonic segment of the worlds of labour, the *Many Voices of a Turkish State Factory*.