The Cultivation of Memory in the Gülen Community

by Marcia Hermansen

This paper explores the cultivation of ‘memory’ as reflected in the teachings of Fethullah Gülen and the practices of the community inspired by him. For example, it discusses how particular places, themes, and images are remembered within the movement, evoked and re-enacted so as to create community and inspire a sense of participation and allegiance.

Although the history of the Gülen movement is relatively brief—some forty years or less, practices of sharing memories inspires a collective sense of community and even sacrality.

In this paper memory within the Gülen movement will be presented in terms of its resonance with broader themes in Turkish collective memory such as Anatolian/Turkish Islam, the Ottoman cultural ideal, etc. In addition, the relationship of particular remembered symbols and experiences in the history of the Gülen movement to its current practices will be elaborated, for example ‘the Light Houses’ and ‘camps’.

All of this will be set against the background of the topography of a movement that has expanded its imagination and its practice from local to national and ultimately global contexts.

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