

THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP
IN ALEVI COMMUNITIES:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE *DEDE* NARRATIVES



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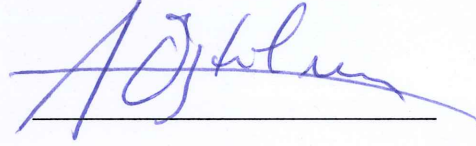
The Transformation of Religious Leadership in Alevi Communities:

A Critical Analysis of the *Dede* Narratives

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
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ABSTRACT

The Transformation of Religious Leadership in Alevi Communities:

A Critical Analysis of the *Dede* Narratives

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze the narratives of Alevi *dedes*, religious leaders of the Alevi communities, who migrated from different parts of Anatolia to Istanbul. Through narratives of *dedes* on memory and identity of Alevi communities, this study aims to examine the transformation of religious leadership in the urban context.

Mainly because of economic reasons, many people from Anatolia have migrated from their villages to urban areas since the 1950s. Alevis, who had mostly settled in rural areas, were also affected from this migration wave. As religious leaders of Alevism, *dedes* have had a central role in the religious structure of the Alevi society. However, migration and modernization initiated some changes on the position of the *dede* institution and the urban practices of Alevism starting with the 1950s. Accordingly, this study also tries to scrutinize the effects of the migration on Alevi communities and religious leadership, within the critical and complex political environment of Turkey during these years. The collected narratives from *dedes* who experienced this process, were used to reveal these effects from their own subjectivity, identity and memory.

ÖZET

Alevi Topluluklarında Dini Liderliğin Dönüşümü: Dede Anlatılarının Eleştirel Bir Analizi

Bu tezdeki temel hedef, Anadolu'nun çeşitli bölgelerinden İstanbul'a göç etmiş Alevi topluluklarının dini liderleri olan dedelerin anlatılarını analiz etmektir. Bu çalışmada, Alevi topluluklarının hafıza ve kimliklerine dair dedelerin anlatılarından yola çıkarak dini liderliğin kent ortamındaki dönüşümünün incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

1950'lerden itibaren birçok kişi ağırlıklı olarak ekonomik sebeplerle köylerinden kentlere göç ettiler. Daha çok kırsal alanda yerleşik olan Aleviler de bu göç dalgasından etkilendiler. Aleviliğin dini liderleri olan dedeler, Alevi toplumunun dinsel yapısında çok merkezi bir yere sahiptirler. Bununla birlikte, 1950'lerde başlayan göç dalgası ve modernleşme dede kurumunun konumunda ve Aleviliğin kentsel pratikleri üzerinde birtakım değişimleri başlattı. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmada kırdan kente göçün Alevi toplulukları ve dini liderlik üzerindeki etkilerinin o dönemin karmaşık siyasi bağlamı içinde incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Bu süreci deneyimlemiş olan dedelerden toplanan anlatılar, bu etkileri onların öznellikleri, kimlikleri ve hafızaları üzerinden ortaya koymaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My interest in history of Alevism¹ emerged during my undergraduate education at Boğaziçi University. Especially, after the conference “Alevi-Bektashi Communities in the Ottoman Realm (13-15 December 2011)” which was organized by the collaboration of Boğaziçi University and Harvard University, my interest in Alevism-Bektashism historiography and its culture grew. Moreover, I have always been interested in oral history which was introduced to me by Arzu Öztürkmen during her undergraduate oral history classes. Therefore, I decided to write my thesis about Alevism by using oral history methodology which is a great research tool for my interests.

As a history student, I wanted to examine Alevi communities through oral history methodology because I was curious about their own experiences of Alevism and perspectives about the history of Alevis. Since most of the academic works about Alevism in the history field are about emergence and origins of Alevism, I wanted to bring a different perspective with this thesis by using oral history approach. I am interested in the transformation of Alevism from rural to urban context and its survival in a cosmopolitan city like Istanbul. Therefore, I examined Alevism through

¹ In this thesis, I will only examine Alevism which shares the same belief system with Bektashism but has a different historical background than Bektashism.

the narratives of Alevi religious leaders in Istanbul who are the pioneers for the survival of the practices of Alevism in the urban context. The questions which inspired to conduct this research are about how religious leadership was transformed to the urban context within the re-formulation of Alevism after migration wave in the second half of the twentieth century, how religious leaders perceive this transformation and history of Alevism in their own perspectives. My questions about the elements in construction of Alevi identities and cultural memory were also essential for writing this thesis.

It is important to note that a part of my curiosity about the history of Alevism derives from my own family's Alevi background. Because I have not been raised within the religious practices of Alevism, I am partly part of this process of change through rural to urban migration. My research has been therefore an important encounter with Alevi religious practices. I must admit that my lack of knowledge with Alevism put me in a different situation in which I both felt as an insider and an outsider while conducting the field research. Furthermore, because of my unfamiliarity with Alevi terminology and its various religious traditions, I spent extra time and effort to comprehend complex terminology of religious practices and traditions.

In addition, choosing words in Alevi terminology for using in this thesis was a bit difficult during the writing process. This difficulty is caused by the fact that most of the Turkish words in Alevi belief and traditions are not commonly used in academic research. Therefore, I sometimes hesitated about using the proper words in English and translating Alevi terminology to English without losing their exact

meanings. At that point, I generally benefited from some anthropological and ethnographic works which used similar terminology for Alevism.

During the field research, I visited *cemevis* and talked to some *dedes* and Alevi there as a preparation for research before conducting the interviews. Considering the fact that I hadn't visited any *cemevis* before, this preliminary field research was quite helpful for getting familiar with Alevi, their religious culture and traditions. In the beginning, I got in touch with my informants with the help of my personal connections. Later, I contacted with next informants with the help of previous people who I interviewed before. The guidance of my informants for finding new informants was very important in terms of easing and accelerating my field research. For this thesis, I interviewed twenty informants and conducted all of the interviews between June 2015 and May 2016 at different *cemevis* in Istanbul. (See Appendix A for the dates of the interviews and the list of informants)

In the second chapter of this thesis, I examined terminology of Alevism and initial research about Alevi in the Ottoman Empire. I elaborated on the development of history writing of Alevism in the early Republican era and examined pioneering academic works about Alevism in the field of history. I also elaborated on the political context during the Republican era, which is very important in terms of understanding Alevi identity and memory as the main themes of this thesis.

In the third chapter, I introduced the methodology I used and also elaborated on the field research process of this thesis. In terms of oral history methodology, I explained why I chose oral history for examining Alevism and what kind of contributions oral history can make in studies on Alevism. Moreover, I explained

oral history concepts which I focused on in this thesis. In the process of research part, I elaborated on the progress of my research and my experiences in the field.

In the fourth chapter, I examined the *ocak* and *dede* institutions in traditional Alevism which are very essential for understanding Alevism before delving into the main focus of this work. In addition, I analyzed transformation of traditional Alevism in the urban context to give a clear understanding of what is meant by transformation in Alevi society.

In the fifth and the sixth chapters, I analyzed the narratives of *dedes* in different contexts. In the fifth chapter, firstly I examined journeys of *dedes* towards becoming religious leaders through their life stories. I also examined how the authority of *dedes* and requirements for becoming *dede* transformed in the urban context. In the sixth chapter, I examined representation of memory and identity in the *dede* narratives. Furthermore, I analyzed the construction of Alevi identity and memory in connection with the major historical events that took a significant place in the narratives.

CHAPTER 2

A SEARCH FOR MEANING:

UNDERSTANDING THE TERMINOLOGY SURROUNDING ALEVISM

Alevis are socio-religious communities in Turkey who are descendants of Kizilbash communities in the Ottoman Empire. Today, Alevis and Bektashis² constitute the largest sectarian minority of Turkey. Kizilbashes were mostly Turkic tribesmen³ and loyal soldiers of Shah İsmail, founder of the Safavid dynasty in 1501. They followed the Safavid Sufi order and Shah Ismail as their political leader and Sufi guide (murshid).⁴ The name Kizilbash (lit. Redhead) was given to them because militants wore twelve-gored red headwear which represented the Twelve Imams in Islam, and was designed by Shaykh Haydar, father of Safavid leader Shah Ismail and the head of the Safavid order.⁵

² Alevism and Bektashism are closely associated with each other, and they have similar rituals and belief system but the foundation of Bektashi order is historically different than Alevism. Therefore, I will use “Alevi-Bektashi” and “Alevi” terms according to different contexts. For a comprehensive historical review of the Bektashi and the connection see Karakaya Stump, “Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kizilbash /Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia,” chap. 2. and also Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsaneden Gerçeğe*.

³ Approximately two-thirds of Kizilbash-Alevis in Turkey Turkish and the rest are Kurds (Kurmanci and Zaza speakers). See Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*, 6.

⁴ Bashir, “Shah Isma‘il and the Qizilbash: Cannibalism in the Religious History of Early Safavid Iran,” 235.

⁵ For the Kizilbash-Safavi connection see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*. Also see Karakaya-Stump, “Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kizilbash /Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia,” chap. 4.

The association of Kizilbashes with the Safavid ruler led their rebellion against the Ottoman State since the rivalry between two states rose in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The mistrust towards Kizilbashes increased as the Ottoman State started Sunnitization policies against the rising power of the Shi'a Islam oriented Safavids.⁶ The Kizilbash movement is closely related to the centralization policy of the Ottoman State in the fifteenth century. The rural and mostly nomadic Kizilbashes were uneasy about taxations and being forced to settle by the Ottoman State.⁷ They were supported by Shah Ismail and this association between Kizilbashes and the Safavid Shah was the main reason for persecution of Kizilbashes by the Ottoman State. The famous Kizilbash poet Pir Sultan Abdal was also persecuted because of his poems dignifying Shah Ismail. Kizilbashes were routinized in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as reported in the official sources.⁸

In Islamic literature the term Alevi has several meanings. Firstly, it has been used for descendants of Imam Ali bin Taleeb and his wife Fatima; secondly, it means politically followers of Ali who were on the side of Ali during the conflicts in the Islamic history.⁹ Thirdly, theologically it refers to several different branches of Shia Islam such as *Imamiyye*, *İsna Aşeriyye*, *Caferiyye*, *Ismailiyye* or *Zeydiyye*.¹⁰ In the

⁶ For more information about Ottoman Sunnitization and religious change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire see Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*; Terzioğlu, “Where ‘İlm-i Hâl Meets Catechism: Islamic Manuals of Religious Instruction in the Ottoman Empire in the Age of Confessionalization,” 79-114.

⁷ Ocak, “Tarihsel Terminoloji (Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık, Alevilik),” 14-24.

⁸ For detailed research about Kizilbash persecution, see Imber, “The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi'ites According to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565—1585,” 245–273.

⁹ Gölpınarlı, *Manakıb-ı Hacı Bektâş-ı Velî: “Vilâyet-nâme”*, 144.

¹⁰ Ocak, “Tarihsel Terminoloji (Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık, Alevilik),” 22.

Ottoman Empire, the term *Aleviyye* was generally referred to the people from Ali's lineage. Also, in some Ottoman documents the term Alevi was used in the sense of Shiite *qulat* (exaggerators).¹¹ Starting from the sixteenth century Kizilbash people were being mentioned in the Ottoman documents. Exclusionist words meaning heretic or unbeliever such as *zındık* and *mulhid* were used for defining Kizilbash communities since they were not Sunni Muslims. They were punished by the state for being heretic followers of Shah Ismail.¹² Moreover, Alevi were frequently mentioned in the state reports as simple minded heretics who has no connection with Islam.¹³

Until the late nineteenth century, the term Alevi was not used in the sense of Kizilbash communities. However, in the nineteenth century Ottoman documents, we can observe that Alevi and Kizilbash words were sometimes used interchangeably.¹⁴ Frequently, Alevi and Kizilbash names were used concomitant with derogatory adjectives such as mischievous, heretic, superstitious in the late nineteenth century documents. However, only in the 1920s the word Alevi was prominently started to be used by Turkish nationalist writers for previously called Kizilbash communities in order to eliminate derogatory connotations of the word Kizilbash in Ottoman times.¹⁵

¹¹ Fleischer, "Muşafâ 'Âli's 'Curious Bits of Wisdom," 104.

¹² See Imber, "The Persecution of the Ottoman Shi'ites According to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565-1585," 245-273, and Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler, 15.-17. Yüzyıllar*.

¹³ For an examination of some of these reports see Akpınar, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Devlet Zihniyetinin Alevi Algısı," 215–226.

¹⁴ Akpınar, "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Devlet Zihniyetinin Alevi Algısı," 219.

¹⁵ Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 4.

2.1 Initial narratives on Ottoman Alevi communities

The first missionary accounts about Alevism are important in order to evaluate the place of Alevism in the context of national history writing. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump's significant work analyzing the first missionary accounts about Alevis in the Ottoman Empire, inspired me to elaborate on this issue in this chapter. As she argues in her work, detailed missionary reports about the origins of Kizilbashs needs to be examined critically for understanding their impact on the Kizilbash-Alevi history writing in the national and transnational academia.¹⁶ Starting from the early twentieth century, Turkish scholars and amateur researchers discussed some issues about Kizilbashs in parallel with missionary accounts. Subjects about the religious and ethnic origins of Kizilbashs were discussed in works of Turkish researchers and missionaries. Some of the Turkish writers who did the primary research about Alevism criticize missionary accounts about Alevis many times in their works, and attempt to refute claims of Christian missionaries by emphasizing Turkish-Shamanistic origins of Alevis.

The first Westerner accounts of Alevis belong to Protestant missionaries in the early nineteenth century. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) started its missionary activities in Anatolia in 1830s. These missionaries also had a periodical named American Missionary Herald (MH) in which they held account of their works. The main objective of missionaries was

¹⁶ Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık - Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarihyazımını Yeniden Düşünmek*, 233.

conversion of Christian groups such as; Gregorian Armenians or Syriac Christians to Protestantism.

The Ottoman State couldn't prevent missionary activities because it could damage political relations with the USA or England. According to Selim Deringil although missionary activities were not really successful, the Ottoman Government was worried about increasing missionary activities in Anatolia.¹⁷ Therefore, the government took some precautions by increasing the domination of Islamic elements in Anatolia such as building mosques in villages where there were none or sending Hanefi missionaries to some places. The aim of the state was taking religious communities such as Yezidis, Nusayris, Kizilbash under control because they were considered to be more vulnerable to missionary activities.¹⁸

As seen in the reports of MH, it is obvious that the Kizilbash communities were scrutinized closely by Protestant missionaries. Some of the writings illustrate how missionaries narrate their primary observations about Kizilbash to their readers. Mr. Dunmore, a missionary of ABCFM in Malatya, claims that Kizilbash are only nominal Muslims since they are originally Christians who were forced to become Muslims.¹⁹ Moreover, Mr. Dunmore states that Kizilbash are not followers of the Prophet Muhammad even though they are considered Muslims. He describes them as people deserving missionaries' attention who are open to the message of

¹⁷ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire*, 77.

¹⁸ Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 211.

¹⁹ Dunmore, "Kharpoot: Letter from Mr. Dunmore, March 4, 1857," 220. Also quoted in Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 215.

Bible and believe in Christ.²⁰ In another letter, he explains his ideas about the ethnic roots of Kizilbash he encountered by claiming that they are originally Kurds who settled near Turkish people and eventually learned Turkish but forgot their native language Kurdish.²¹ On the other hand, another missionary Mr. Richardson suggests that Kizilbash are absolutely not Kurdish since they can't speak Kurdish and Kurds hate them.²²

Mr. Ball, who was stationed in ABCFM's Yozgat branch, explains that the Kizilbash religion can't be considered purely Muslim because it is more likely a mixture of paganism, Islam and Christianity.²³ Another missionary George E. White, explains in his article that *cem* ritual resembles the Lord's Supper which may indicate this ritual is a heritage of Christian origins.²⁴ As it is seen the question about the origins of the Kizilbash religion was usually on the agenda of missionary reports.²⁵ Their evaluations mostly suggest that Kizilbash religion has a Christian origin which syncretized with Islam over the time but it is still possible to trace the Christian elements in the religion.

²⁰ Dunmore, "Arabkir: Letter from Mr. Dunmore, October 24, 1854," 55-56. Also quoted in Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 213.

²¹ Dunmore, "Kharpoot: Letter from Mr. Dunmore, January 22, 1857," 220.

²² Richardson, "Arabkir: Letter from Mr. Richardson, July 14, 1856," 298. Also quoted in Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 214.

²³ Ball, "Letter from Mr. Ball, August 8, 1857," 395. Also quoted in Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 216.

²⁴ White, "Some Non-Conforming Turks," 246. Also quoted in Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 48.

²⁵ For further reading on missionary reports see Kieser, "Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia. The Interactions between Alevis and Missionaries in Ottoman Anatolia," 89-111.

2.2 Situating Alevi in Turkish national historiography

Renaming of the communities as Alevi by intellectuals of the Young Turks era was a part of the Turkish nationalism ideal that also continued in the Republican period.

Young Turks were Ottoman men mostly educated in military and medical schools of the Hamidian era. These reform oriented men supported parliamentary system and criticized the Sultan Abdülhamid II's authoritarian regime in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Organized in the CUP (Community of Union and Progress 1908-18), during the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 they pushed the Sultan to reinstitute the constitution of 1876 which was suspended in 1878. The CUP was pushed out of power at the beginning of the Balkan War in 1912. Shortly after an unsuccessful war, the CUP sponsored government came back to power, and they carried out the Bab-i Ali Coup that established the absolute rule of the CUP.²⁶

After the end of censorship and intolerance of Sultan Abdülhamid's reign, there was a tremendous rise in publications and dispersion of different ideological debates. The political and social atmosphere of the Young Turk era accompanied competing ideologies mainly; Ottomanism, aiming the union of the different communities in the Ottoman Empire; Pan Islamism, the ideal of solidarity within the Islamic community; and Pan Turkism which sought the union of Turks under the Ottoman flag. Westernism, the ideal of adopting European techniques and ideas, was another debate that was brought forward by some intellectuals.²⁷

²⁶ For more competent research about Young Turk Revolution see Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*; Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey*.

²⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 127–28.

After the unsuccessful result of the Balkan War in 1913 and with the loss of a big part of European territories the Ottomanism ideal lost its influence. On the other hand, Pan-Turkism gained support of Young Turk intellectuals after the Balkan War. The cultural organization *Türk Ocağı* (The Turkish Hearth) that founded in 1911 and its journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Land) was very active in propagating Turkish nationalism.²⁸ As Zürcher states ideologies of the Young Turk period with common emphasis on nationalism, positivism and progressivism were not completely inseparable but overlapping with each other since Young Turks supported Ottomanism, Turkish nationalism and they were Muslims.²⁹

Turkish sociologist Ziya Gökalp's nationalist ideology synthesizing Turkish ethnicity, Islam and European modernization had a considerable influence in the CUP and in the Turkish Hearth movement. In fact, Gökalp was the primary ideologue and also a member of the CUP for a time. According to him Turkish nation and its own culture should be synthesized with European modernization.³⁰ His emphasis on the importance of pre-Islamic Turkish culture and historical consciousness for formation of a national identity influenced other intellectuals. According to Gökalp, Turkish nationalism representing a cultural ideal and Sufi brand of Islam reinforced solidarity.³¹ Gökalp elaborates on the role of religion in society by emphasizing on ethics rather than politics. He states:

²⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 130.

²⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 128.

³⁰ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 131–132.

³¹ Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp: 1876-1924*, 26.

One of the great tasks of religion in organic society is to leave other institutions free within their own spheres. As religion consists of a body of beliefs and rituals, it is necessary to seek social functions of religion (in terms of their worldly functions) with respect to these two groups of phenomena.³²

According to Gökalp, Sufi Islam was compatible with the Westernization ideal with its idealist tradition.³³ His secular approach to religion combined with Turkish nationalism and modernization ideal also formed the ideology of the Kemalist state. As the father of Turkish nationalism, Gökalp's ideology gained a considerable recognition in the Young Turk period and shaped the theoretical framework of many primary researches about Kizilbash-Alevi.

Baha Said (1882-1939) was among the researchers who were highly influenced by Gökalp's Turkish nationalism ideology. He was a member of the CUP's Central Committee and also worked for the secret service called the "Special Organization" (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) that was established by the CUP in 1913. Said was assigned to do research about heterodox religious communities; Kizilbash-Alevi, Bektashis, Nusayris, Ahis in Anatolia by the CUP upon Gökalp's advice.³⁴

Said began to write about Kizilbash-Alevi in nationalist publications in the late Young Turk period and continued in the early Republican period. He rejects the claims that Kizilbash-Alevi were originally Christians, and suggests they are purely Oghuz Turks.³⁵ In his essays, Said suggests a connection between Alevi and the national Turkish culture. In one of his essays on Alevism, Baha Said insistently

³² Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays*, 186.

³³ Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*, 35.

³⁴ Tevetoğlu, "Milli Mücadele Kahramanlarından: Baha Said Bey (Biga 1882-İstanbul 16 Ekim 1939)," 209.

³⁵ Baha Said, "Türkiye'de Alevi Zümreleri: Tekke Aleviliği-İçtimai Alevilik," 112.

emphasizes Alevi as preservers and carriers of Turkish culture. Said praises Alevi many times as protectors of Turkish nation and language.³⁶ Furthermore, he asserts:

The Turks that are devoted to their customs and their nation could not get used to a language that was complicated by mixed origins. The transnational ideals of the Arabs did not match with the national ideals of the Turks. Those ideals will never come together. For this reason, the purest of Turks, the Turcomans, Nomads and the most intelligent and the brightest Turks, while looking for a place where they would feel freedom, decided to get into Alevi *tekkes*. They knew that there was national freedom in those places.³⁷

While he accepts Alevi as pure Turks, he makes a connection between their religion and Shamanism. He contends that it would not be exactly accurate to relate Alevism to Ali and Imamate since Alevi rituals and religious order are same as Oghuz Turk's Shaman belief.³⁸ He maintains syncretism claims of missionaries about Alevism by accepting that Alevism was influenced by other religions such as Shamanism, Manichaeism, Islam and Christianity and these influences are supposed to be examined.³⁹

Baha Said's effort for integrating Kizilbash-Alevi to the traditional Turkish culture and representing their belief mainly as a synthesis of Islamic and pre-Islamic Turkish religion was very suitable for the CUP's nationalist agenda. Especially toward the end of the First World War because of the pressure from the Allied forces, the Turkish nationalists' interest in gaining the support of Alevi as religious

³⁶ Baha Said, "Türkiye'de Alevi Zümreleri: Tekke Aleviliği-İçtimai Alevilik," 120.

³⁷ Baha Said, "Türkiye'de Alevi Zümreleri: Tekke Aleviliği-İçtimai Alevilik," 118. Translation was taken from Köse, "Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism: The Ambivalent Place of Alevi Identities," 590–607.

³⁸ Baha Said, "Türkiye'de Alevi Zümreleri: Tekke Aleviliği-İçtimai Alevilik," 121.

³⁹ Baha Said, "Sufiyan Süreği: Kızılbaş Meydanında Düşkünlük", 161.

communities at the margins of Islam increased.⁴⁰ By integrating these “unorthodox”⁴¹ Muslim communities who were denounced previously, they aimed to provide a national unity based on Turkishness and Islam which was the last hope for them. This Turkish nationalism building project continued in the early Republican era which I will touch upon in the next sections.

2.3 Rethinking Köprülü paradigm

Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1890-1966), the father of the modern history writing in Turkey, was the first Turkish historian who gained recognition in the international academia. Köprülü was highly impressed by Ziya Gökalp and became pioneer of the history of the Turkish folk literature. With the influence of nationalist ideology, he did research about origins of Turkish literature. Köprülü’s paradigm about the connection between religious history of Anatolia and the mainland of Turks Middle Asia is widely recognized since the early twentieth century. His works contributed to the nationalist project of the state in the early years of the republic. Köprülü’s views gained international recognition and affected many national and international scholars’ research who followed his footsteps in their works such as his student Irène Mélikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak.

According to Köprülü Alevism and Bektashism are the main carriers of Turkish folk Islam that is associated with Central Asian shamanism which was

⁴⁰ Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 133.

⁴¹ In the historiography of Alevism, Kizilbash-Alevism has been defined with the terms unorthodox or heterodox by some early pioneering scholars in the field. However, recently these terms has been criticized for creating a normative framework. Since I agree these critics, I will use these terms in quotation mark.

preserved and transmitted under popular Sufism, especially the Central Asian Yeseviyye order. He asserts that Turkish folk Islam was formed when nomadic Oghuz Turkmens who gradually adopted Islam kept their shamanistic religion and traditions. *Babas* or *Dedes*, heterodox religious leaders of Turkmens, were Islamized versions of the old *kam/ozan* leaders in the old shamanistic religion of Turks.⁴² In the thirteenth century, with the Babai Revolt these Turkmen *babas* spread their heterodox beliefs in Anatolia, especially Hacı Bektaş Veli, whose legacy was taken by Bektashis later.⁴³

In his writings about Alevi and Bektashis, Köprülü evaluates both in the Turkish centric and Islamic context by reacting claims about the existence of Christian elements in Kizilbash-Alevi and Bektashi cultures:

As wrong as the judgments of some anthropologists and ethnographers are, who claim that there would exist among the Bektashi and Kizilbash a number of old local cults, that is, beliefs that stem from the pre-Christian area of Anatolia, in the same way err those who claim seeing the existence of some Christian Bektashis and of some rituals and beliefs that resemble similar ones found in Christianity—that this order [the Bektashiye] would have been under strong Christian influence. The continuity of a number of local beliefs and practices among the local people, who lived there for many centuries, although they have entered different religions and thus changed their outer forms, the existence of similar dogmas and ceremonies among people with a similar degree of religious evolution, and the commonality of some religious places and the customs associated with them among people of different religion living in their vicinity is a commonplace knowledge within the anthropology as well as the history of religion. It is for that reason necessary not to draw wrong and general conclusions by falling for some external similarities and proclaiming the sameness of things that have totally different origins and are often also of totally different character. The real identity of Bektashism manifests itself when these general principles from the sociology of religion are borne in mind, and when it [*Bektashism*] is investigated within

⁴² Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia After the Turkish Invasion*, 5.

⁴³ Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia After the Turkish Invasion*, 15.

the general history of the religious-Sufi currents of the Islamic and Turkish world.⁴⁴

As it is clear in his statement, Köprülü completely rejects the claim that Alevi-Bektashis have Christian origins as his work promotes a counter argument for these claims. Köprülü, also conceives Alevism as “rural Bektashis” without elaborating on association between the Safavids and Alevi which is important in terms of comprehending historical development of Kizilbash-Alevism. Therefore, his hierarchical approach is inadequate for explaining history of Alevism. Furthermore, Köprülü’s viewpoint directly excludes Kurdish-Zaza Alevi by tracing origins of Alevism and Bektashism in the Central Asian *Yeseviyye* order.

One of the most prominent scholars who followed Köprülü’s footsteps is Irene Mélikoff. She is known for her major work on Alevism and Bektashism which are recognized internationally. Mélikoff contextualizes Alevism-Bektashism as heterodox and syncretic folk Islam having Central Asian Turkish origins. She agrees Köprülü’s argument that Alevi are “rural Bektashis” who are less educated than Bektashis.⁴⁵ In her later work, she re-evaluates this generalisation and states that although Bektashis were more educated and urbanized, there were also rural Bektashis, and both Alevism and Bektashism originated from Turkish folk Islam.⁴⁶

Mélikoff highly emphasizes traces of Islamized shamanism on Alevism and claims that despite syncretism of Alevism with other religious elements such as

⁴⁴ Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia After the Turkish Invasion*. Quoted in Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 166-167.

⁴⁵ Mélikoff, *Uyur Idik Uyardılar: Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, 33.

⁴⁶ Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, 19.

Buddhism, Manichaeism or Christianity, it is clearly dominated by pre-Islamic Shamanism. Therefore, she also accepts Alevis as mainly carriers of old Turkish religions and traditions. In terms of ethnicity, Mélikoff doesn't deny the existence of Kurdish Alevis but according to her Alevi and Kurdish elements were mixed by the interaction between Alevis and Kurds which is very natural since they lived in the same geography throughout centuries.⁴⁷ Although Mélikoff highly focuses on Turkish elements in Alevism, she accepts that she questioned her ideas after confronting surprising oppositions of Kurdish nationalists who criticized her harshly for explaining Turkmen origins of Alevis-Bektashis.⁴⁸

Mélikoff's student historian Ahmet Yaşar Ocak confirms Köprülü's argument in terms of accepting Alevism-Bektashism as a syncretic and heterodox Turkish folk Islam. However, it is significant that he also emphasizes the traces of other non-Islamic religions such as Buddhism, Manicheism, and Christianity which Turks in the Middle Asia confronted before they converted to Islam.⁴⁹ He states that Alevism-Bektashism doesn't originate from only a certain ethnicity or religion but instead it's a product of syncretization of different religious elements in a vast geographical area from the Central Asia to the Balkans.⁵⁰ He accepts and examines influences of different religious elements on Alevism and criticizes claims that Alevism derives solely from Turkish Shamanism. In his works, he mainly focuses on Turkishness as

⁴⁷ Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, 21.

⁴⁸ Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, 245.

⁴⁹ Ocak, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, 55.

⁵⁰ Ocak, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, 16.

he emphasizes, besides Shamanism, traces of pre- Islamic and pre-Shamanist religions adopted by Turks.⁵¹

Similar to Köprülü and Mélikoff, he asserts that Alevism-Bektashism has pre-Islamic religious elements which was continued by nomadic Turkmens who kept these pre-Islamic features after they came to Anatolia from the Central Asia. Since these Turkmens had rural characteristics and were uneducated they couldn't adopt the Quran and Islam completely and kept their Shamanistic traditions.⁵² At this point, he again maintains Köprülü's distinction between sophisticated "high Islam" representing Sunni Islam and "popular Islam" that is associated with heterodox and rural Turkish folk Islam. In his latest works Ocak has a revisionist attitude as he examines the role of the Iraqi born the *Wafā'īyya* order in the development of Alevism and Bektashism which was not mentioned by Köprülü.⁵³ Despite the fact that Ocak repeats Köprülü paradigm in the normative framework of his studies, it is remarkable that he provides a new perspective by scrutinizing the *Wafā'īyya* order in his late works. He also delves into the historical distinction in the development of the Bektashi order and Alevism instead of rendering them to "rural Bektashis" which is not an explanatory definition for Alevis.

Although Köprülü paradigm has been followed by many scholars from different fields, there are also some recent scholarship which criticize Köprülü's

⁵¹ Ocak, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, 55.

⁵² Ocak, *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*, 55.

⁵³ See Ocak, "Babailer İsyanından Kızılbaşlığa: Anadolu'da İslam Heterodoksisinin Doğuşuna Kısa Bir Bakış," 49–50 ; Ocak, "The *Wafā'ī* Tārīqa (*Wafā'īyya*) during and after the Period of the Seljuks of Turkey," 209–48.

approach. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump has brought a comprehensive and critical approach to the history writing of Alevism. She revealed the connection between the Wafā'iyya order and the Kizilbash by examining documents from family archives of lineage holders. According to her research, many of the Kizilbash *ocaks* (lineage holders) in certain parts of Anatolia received *icazetnames* (formal religious authorization letters) from the eleventh century Iraq based Wafa'iyya order which spread to Anatolia and blended with the Kizilbash in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁵⁴

Moreover, she rejects the common assumption that Alevism as a form of popular Islam doesn't have written sources which serves to the Köprülü's argument by emphasizing the hierarchy between high Islam and popular Islam. She states that documents like *icazetnames*, *seceres* (pedigrees) and diaries in family archives of Alevi have not been paid enough attention by scholars. In addition to lack of interest, many of Alevi families have kept their archival documents secretly since they are nervous that people can to misuse or destroy them if they reveal these valuable sources.

Furthermore, she criticizes the normative contextualization employed in the history writing of marginalized forms of Islam. She asserts that using these binary terms like heterodoxy/orthodoxy, high Islam/popular Islam creates oppositions that make certain religions more original and pure compare to others.⁵⁵ She states that using "orthodoxy-heterodoxy" terms which were defined according to Sunnism-

⁵⁴ Karakaya-Stump, "Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah," 37.

⁵⁵ Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 3.

Shi'ism are problematic. Because using these terms overlooks that Shi'ism developed a Sharia based “orthodoxy” in itself over time and also it is difficult to define a certain group in Sunni Islam which represented “orthodoxy” persistently throughout the history. Hence, instead of “orthodoxy-heterodoxy”, she suggests examining Alevism-Bektashism based on distinctions between sharia based Islam versus mystic Islam.⁵⁶ According to her, using “syncretism” for Alevism is also problematic because it can't be considered as a definitive feature of Alevism since all religions have intermingled elements with previously existing religions.⁵⁷

There are a few other prominent contemporary scholars who criticized using binary concepts in the study of religious discourses. For instance, Ahmet Karamustafa suggests terms such as “deviance”, “new renunciation” and “dervish piety” instead of using problematic binaries such as orthodoxy/heterodoxy or popular Islam/high Islam.⁵⁸ He also argues that in the early Sufi movements in Anatolia there was not clear boundaries yet that could be defined with strict dichotomies such as orthodoxy/heterodoxy.⁵⁹ In contrast with Köprülü's claim, Karamustafa also argues there is no evidence showing that the Yeseviyye order played a crucial role in the formation of Turkish folk Islam which later transmitted to Anatolia through the former's connection with Bektashism.⁶⁰ He maintains that there is unlikely a connection between both since these orders were founded after death of their patron

⁵⁶ Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 8.

⁵⁷ Karakaya-Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık*, 3.

⁵⁸ Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period*, 4–11.

⁵⁹ Karamustafa, “Origins of Anatolian Sufism,” 94–95.

⁶⁰ Karamustafa, “Origins of Anatolian Sufism,” 93.

saints Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1270/71) and Hacı Bektaş Veli (d.early-thirteenth c.) whose lives might overlapped minimally.⁶¹ Another historian Cemal Kafadar suggest to conceptualize the religious history of Anatolia and Balkans during the eleventh and fifteenth centuries in terms of “metadoxy” that is a state of being beyond doxies defined by absence of an interest in enforcing orthodoxy.⁶² Markus Dressler also presents a comprehensive criticism of conceptualization binaries in Köprülü’s writings. He suggests some criteria for description of inner-Islamic difference to prevent theoretical pitfalls.⁶³

Köprülü’s arguments has been quite influential in academia and his paradigm was followed by Mélikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak who were the most prominent scholars studying Alevism during the late 1980s. Recent criticisms about perspectives of these scholars are quite remarkable in terms of challenging and encouraging to question widely accepted arguments about history of Alevism. This kind of debates can contribute to the history writing of Alevism by igniting discussions about new aspects of this subject.

2.4 A brief literary review about *dedes*

As mentioned earlier *dedes* are described as Islamized versions of the religious leaders of Shamanism called *kam/ozan* by Köprülü and scholars who follow his contextualization of Alevism as a part of old Turkish religion Shamanism. However,

⁶¹ Karamustafa, “Origins of Anatolian Sufism,” 83–84.

⁶² Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, 76.

⁶³ Dressler, “How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference: ‘Heterodoxy’ and ‘Syncretism’ in the Writings of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890–1966),” 241–60.

there is not detailed historical research about Alevi *dedes* because of lack of written sources about them except the documents in family archives of some *ocakzade* families. Much of the detailed works about Alevi *dedes* are ethnographic research conducted by anthropologists or sociologist.

As an early example of ethnographic research about Alevis Baha Said's works are very significant. In his articles, he conveys his observations about Alevis, their *ocaks* in different parts of Anatolia, and also elaborates on the role and function of *dedes* in Alevi rituals. His research is remarkable in terms of giving detailed account of religious traditions and rituals of Alevis and prayers of *dedes* during these rituals.

Yusuf Ziya Yörükân's works about Alevism are highly distinguished in terms of being the early examples of field research giving information about religious customs and practices of Alevis. His articles, mostly written between the late 1920s and early 1930s and published in different journals, are collected in the book *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar* which is an important ethnographic source about Alevis.⁶⁴ In his works about Alevism, Yörükân narrates his conversations with *dedes* in the villages where he spoke with them and collected information about Alevism. Like his contemporary Baha Said, he also emphasizes on Alevism as the carrier of Shamanism and Turkish culture and the *dede* as the Islamized version of shaman religious leaders.⁶⁵ It's interesting that although he was not an Alevi, Yörükân

⁶⁴ Yörükân, *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar*.

⁶⁵ Yörükân, *Müslümanlıktan Evvel Türk Dinleri: Şamanizm; Şamanizm'in Diğer Dinler ve Alevîlik Üzerindeki Etkileri*.

introduces himself as Alevi and sometimes notes that Alevi at the places he visits respect him for being a *dede*. According to him, even some *dedes* think that he is also a *dede* and they start to talk to him more openly about their religion and customs.⁶⁶ Yörükan also gives detailed account about the role and authority of *dedes* in Alevi communities. In one of his works, he highlights that there was decrease in the influence of the *dede* in some aspects among *Tahtacı*s.⁶⁷ For instance, he states that *Tahtacı*s consulted *dedes* and asked their permissions for every kind of occasions in the past. However, he adds that they don't depend on the *dede* that much in recent years except taking approval of the *dede* for marriages.⁶⁸ This statement is significant in terms of reflecting one of the earliest observations about the decrease of the authority the *dede*.

Another significant work that specifically examines *dedes* is Nüket Esen's M.A. thesis on Alevi Society in South-Western Anatolia which was written in 1983.⁶⁹ Her work focuses *the dede* institution and loss of its power in relation with the larger Turkish society, power relations as well as economic and symbolic factors which affected these relations in Alevi communities. She examines all of these factors in a sociological perspective by analyzing their effects on the changing power of the *dede* institution. She collected information for his research by interviewing *dedes* and the common people in the villages of South-Western cities such as Aydın, Manisa and İzmir. This research is highly important since it examines the

⁶⁶ Yörükan, *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar*, pp. 48, 98,102.

⁶⁷ *Tahtacı*s (Turkoman Alevi)s are a subgroup of Alevi)s who live in southern Turkey.

⁶⁸ Yörükan, *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar*, 257.

⁶⁹ Esen, "The Power of the *Dedes* in Alevi Society in South-Western Anatolia."

transformation of the social institutions and power relations in Alevi communities through their own accounts and perspectives.

Sociologist Markus Dressler specifically focuses on Alevism in his works. He examines contextualization of Alevism in Turkish historiography in his major work *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*.⁷⁰ Moreover, Dressler specifically focuses on the *dede* institution in his article “The Modern *Dede*: Changing Parameters for Religious Authority in Contemporary Turkish Alevism”.⁷¹ He scrutinizes how social changes such as secularization and urbanization caused transformation of traditional religious leadership in Alevism through the twentieth century. Dressler mainly argues that the *dede* institution is being reformulated with limitation of the *dede*'s authority with the effect of changes in the traditional social structure of Alevism.

Martin Sökefeld focuses on the *dede* institution and its transformation in Germany from the perspective of anthropology of religion in his article “Alevi *Dedes* in the German Diaspora: The Transformation of a Religious Institution”. His work is important in terms of specifically analyzing the *dede* institution in diaspora which is a topic that has not been much examined before. He examines how migration and politics of identity shaped the religious leadership in Alevism in relation with the history and practice of Alevism in Turkey. He argues that reformulation of Alevism as a public culture and activities of Alevi associations in this process created a

⁷⁰ Dressler, *Writing Religion*.

⁷¹ Dressler, “The Modern *Dede*: Changing Parameters For Religious Authority In Contemporary Turkish Alevism,” 269–94.

conflict between the genealogically legitimated authority of the *dedes* and the democratic structure of associations.

Another specific work examining the role and transformation of the religious leadership in Alevism is Ali Yaman's book *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları* in which he focuses on the structure and function of the *ocaks* as well as the *dede* institution.⁷² Yaman, who is also an *ocakzade* scholar, elaborates on the history and locations of different *ocaks* in Anatolia, and also scrutinizes the transformation of the *dede* institution throughout the social change in Alevi society. He examines how socio-political and historical context in Turkey shaped the contemporary Alevism and its transformation based on his field research and interviews.

All of these works are important in terms of scrutinizing the *dede* institution from different scholarly perspectives and bringing forward new debates for this subject which is not much studied so far. Especially, it is very essential to analyze the *dede* institution in relation with various socio-economic and political factors as well as the history of Alevism. Because, only by this multilateral perspective comprehensive research about such a complex subject can be achieved. Therefore, especially recent works in academia are impressive and promising for further research about Alevi *dedes*.

⁷² Ali Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*.

2.5 On political context related to Alevism during the republican era

Historical evolution of Alevism and construction of Alevi identity is closely related with the politics in the Ottoman State and in the Republican Turkey. Therefore, when we try to understand the Alevism and its historical transformation, we need to examine carefully the political history since the tension between the state authority and Alevis who were seen as heterodox by the state culminated throughout the history. This tension produced social change and mobilization among Alevis.

Especially, the Alevi revival in the late-1980s brought important developments in the Alevi society in social, political and cultural terms. The Alevi revival became a cornerstone which brought attention to debates about Alevism in different perspectives with increasing Alevi associations, conferences and publications by pushing Alevi issue in the public sphere again after the 1980 coup. I suggest that firstly, it is essential to look at the relationship between the state and Alevis, and also political atmosphere of Turkey since the early republican era in order to understand the formation of the Alevi revival and its consequences which has important effects for Alevi society.

The previous nation building project of the CUP continued in the *Kemalist* state period. A homogenized nation and laicism were the main objectives of the Kemalist state project. In 1925, dervish lodges, including Bektashi lodges were closed and prohibited. Moreover, as a part of laicization reforms of the state, the Directorate of the Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) was founded in 1925. This state sponsored institution represents Sunni Hanafi sect of Islam since its foundation. In fact, the Kemalist state's laicism didn't mean a complete separation between religious affairs and the state in the Turkish Republic. Instead, the state

defined and manipulated the ideal Islam that would be represented as Sunni Hanefi Islam.⁷³ The Republican notion of an “ideal citizen” was described as Turkish, Muslim from Hanefi sect of Sunni Islam with a secular and westernized worldview.⁷⁴

During the Sivas Congress in 1919, the leaders of the Alevi Kurdish tribe Koçgiri demanded self-government under the Ottoman Federation and rejected the leadership of Atatürk.⁷⁵ The Koçgiri tribe revolted in 1921 in the Dersim region and soon after it was suppressed. The revolt was an Alevi Kurdish revolt since it didn't gain support from Sunni Kurds or Alevi Turks. Kieser argues that “The Koçgiri movement displayed anything but cohesive Alevi support for the national war of independence”.⁷⁶

Another Kurdish-Alevi revolt happened in 1938 again in Dersim. The leader of the Dersim revolt, Seyit Rıza, was also a religious leader and the chief of the *Abbasuşağı* tribe.⁷⁷ The Dersim revolt was suppressed and Seyit Rıza was executed. Many other tribes who joined the revolt were exiled to other parts of Turkey. According to the official reports, 10% of the population of Dersim died.⁷⁸

With Kemalist secularization reforms Sunni Islam was sponsored by the state and became visible in the public sphere. On the other hand, Alevism was kept in the private sphere since its religious practices are not held in mosques as officially

⁷³ Parla and Davison, “Secularism and Laicism in Turkey,” 9.

⁷⁴ Köse, “Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism,” 591.

⁷⁵ Köse, “Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism,” 594.

⁷⁶ Kieser, “Alevi, Armenians and Kurds in Unionist-Kemalist Turkey (1908–1938),” 187.

⁷⁷ Kalman, *Belge ve tanıklarıyla Dersim direnişleri*, 164–68.

⁷⁸ Köse, “Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism,” 595.

recognized and state sponsored houses of worship. Until migration to cities in the 1950s and afterwards, Alevi were mostly settled in mountainous or rural areas, and did their rituals in houses. In the 1950s most of Alevi in villages of Anatolia started to migrate to big cities for economic reasons. Migration attracted them because of rural overpopulation, better job and educational opportunities in cities or towns. The migration wave affected Alevi like the rest of the population not only in the national but also in the transnational context. Many Alevi migrated to European countries especially Germany. As a result, interaction with the rest of society, access to education and public services increased for Alevi compare to their life conditions in villages. On the other hand, urban Alevi population experienced a disconnection from their religion since they practiced traditional Alevism in the village houses where most of their neighbors were Alevi like them. In the big cities like Istanbul or Ankara they gathered in houses for doing their ritual *cem*. However, because of the prejudices most of the time they had to hold this rituals secretly.

The 1961 coup which overthrew authoritarian Democrat Party regime was considered as a liberal attempt to protect secularism and Kemalism. The liberal constitution following the coup supported pluralism, freedom of thought, expression and existence of different social groups. This liberal atmosphere also encouraged emergence of new social movements, associations and parties.⁷⁹ The first association that was founded by Bektashis was called The Hacı Bektaş Tourism and Information Association. It created annual Hacıbektaş Festival and organized a public *cem* for the first time in 1963 which are important attempts for Alevi-Bektashi communities.

⁷⁹ Massicard, "Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation," 9.

Newspapers and periodicals such as *Cem* and *Ehlibeyt Yolu* (The way of the Ehlibeyt), *Ehlibeyt Yönü* (The Side of Ehlibeyt) were published in 1960s.⁸⁰ The Alevi issue appeared in the public sphere prominently through debates over Aleviness. In 1966, the Unity Party (BP/TBP), the first political party representing Alevis was founded but it didn't become successful and was closed down in 1971.⁸¹

The political polarization in the 1970s increased the sectarian tension. During this period conflict between Sunni and nationalist extreme right conflicted with leftists. In 1978, after a bombing attack to a cinema which screened a nationalist movie in Maraş, conflict increased between leftists and rightists. A group of rightists attacked houses and workplace of Alevis which resulted by massacre of many people who were mostly Alevis. After this incident many Alevis left the city and migrated abroad or different cities. A similar attack happened in Çorum in 1980 after spreading of rumors that Alevis had bombed a mosque. Anti- Alevi pogroms in Malatya, Çorum and Maraş deepened the Sunni-Alevi conflict and resulted by death of many people who were mostly Alevis.

In 1980, the military took over claiming to stop divisive conflicts in society. The 1980 military coup encouraged the development of Turkish-Islam synthesis as the new official ideology against socialism.⁸² Religious education that was optional before became obligatory with the constitution of 1982. In 1993, extreme rightest Sunnis targeted the festival organized by the Pir Sultan Abdal association in Sivas.

⁸⁰ Massicard, "Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation," 15.

⁸¹ Massicard, "Alevism in the 1960s: Social Change and Mobilisation," 16.

⁸² Van Bruinessen, "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey," 8.

Many artists and authors attended to the festival, including the author Aziz Nesin who was reacted by many Sunni Muslims because of his Turkish translation of Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses. This festival was protested by rightist who aimed to attack Aziz Nesin. The aggressive protestors set fire to the hotel where guests of the festival stayed and 37 people died in the fire.⁸³

All of these violent attacks and traumatic events which still remain as bitter memories for Alevi in Turkey are important to understand the Alevi identity and collective memory. These negative experiences played important role in the formation of collective Alevi identity since shared emotions and the past created a sense of belonging to the same group among Alevi. By the late 1980s these bloody events and invisibility of Alevism by in the public space created a revival among Alevi. As a sociological factor migration had a big impact on the revival since educated and urbanized Alevi intellectuals in Turkey and diaspora became the pioneers in Alevi organizations. In the late 1980s, after the repressive period of the military coup, many Alevi associations and *cemevis* (house of worship) were opened collectively by urbanized Alevi elites. Publications about Alevism increasingly spread in which topics such as history, belief and definition of Alevism were debated.⁸⁴ Not only in Turkey but also Alevi activists especially in German diaspora strived for the rights of Alevi and reacted against injustices in Turkey and in the transnational space. Different Alevi associations organized demonstrations and

⁸³Van Bruinessen, "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey," 9.

⁸⁴ For an overview of these publications see Ocak, "Alevilik ve Bektaşilik Hakkındaki Son Yayınlar Üzerinde (1990), Genel Bir Bakış ve Bazı Gerçekler," 115–120; Vorhoff, "Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey," 28–58.

published declarations claiming their religious rights such as official recognition of *cemevis* as house of worship and the Alevi struggle in Turkey and abroad.⁸⁵

According to Reha Çamuroğlu there are some political factors which prepared the Alevi revival. The first one is the collapse of the socialist block in Eastern Europe in the 1980s which caused weakening of socialist ideology among Alevi youth and middle generation. As a result, some of them began to engage in some left-wing parties and started to discover Alevism which they formerly neglected and perceived as exploitative in favor of socialism. The second factor is fundamentalism of political Islam which gained power especially after the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Consequently, Alevis developed a counter action by establishing organizations to create a political representation for their community. The last factor for the Alevi revival is the rise of the Kurdish issue which affected Kurdish Alevis and increased debates about ethnicity of Alevis. Therefore, against political Islamism, Alevis support secularism as the political choice and express their identity in that way. On the other hand, on the issue of Kurdish nationalism they adopt principle of unity and emphasize their religious identity as Alevi.⁸⁶

Çamuroğlu's explanation seems grounded considering political history of Turkey and the general tendency in representation of Alevi identity by Alevi organizations. In the personal level, ideas of Alevis about their identity and politics also confirm this kind of assertion as it will be analyzed in the next chapters.

⁸⁵ For comprehensive research about the Alevi movement abroad you can see Sökefeld, *Struggling for Recognition: The Alevi Movement in Germany and in Transnational Space*; Massicard, "Alevist Movements at Home and Abroad: Mobilization Spaces and Disjunction," 163-187.

⁸⁶ Çamuroğlu, "Alevi Revivalism in Turkey," 94-95.

On the other hand, organizations that emerged with the Alevi revival which have active role in the Alevi movement are different in terms of their definitions of Alevism and political inclinations. For instance, as one of the biggest Alevi associations the CEM Foundation (*Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi*: “Center for Republican Education and Culture) which was founded in 1993 represents Kemalist and state loyal tendency. It supports representation of Alevism in the Directorate for Religious Affairs. On the other hand, Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (*Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği*) is state critical and doesn't want representation of Alevism in the Directorate for Religious Affairs. Moreover, it doesn't approve Alevism as a religion in Islam and criticizes the CEM Foundation's attitude about the definition of Alevism and the Directorate for Religious Affairs. Similar fragmented arguments also exist in the Alevi organizations in diaspora.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ For detailed overviews about Alevi organizations see Dressler, “Religio-Secular Metamorphoses: The Re-Making of Turkish Alevism,” 280-311.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Oral history for the study of Alevism

Oral tradition of Alevism is a very fertile resource that is waiting to be discovered with its stories, poems and legends about the saints of Alevism that have been conveyed to next generations throughout the centuries. Oral narratives of individual life stories are invaluable sources which can enable us to see beyond the boundaries of the national history writing. Thompson states “Oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgement inherent in its tradition. It provides a means for a radical transformation of the social meaning of history.”⁸⁸ By challenging this authoritarian judgement, oral history gives us an opportunity to see the subjectivity of actors who stayed silent in the official history writing.

Alevi *dedes*, as religious leaders, have been pioneers in the protection and continuation of Alevism throughout the centuries. Actually, they are not only religious leaders who direct religious rituals and provide guidance to people but also they have social authority in the Alevi society for protecting the social order and Alevi traditions. However, these functions of the *dede* institution had changing parameters with the effect of migration and modernization. *Dedes* have rich memories about the past of Alevism and its oral traditions that transmitted throughout generations. Therefore, *dedes* are very important sources of oral history

⁸⁸ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 24.

for revealing and examining unwritten records and memories of the Alevi communities.

While there are not much research focusing on oral history of Alevis, there are few prominent ethnographic research focusing directly on *dedes* in the fields of sociology and anthropology. There is also a recent and remarkable oral history work *Alevi Hafızasını Tanımlamak* written by researcher Erdal Gezik. It examines narratives and traditional stories of Alevis for exploring symbols and meanings embedded in Alevi belief as well as the past and the memory of Alevism.⁸⁹ I think that more oral history research should be conducted about Alevism by discovering rich sources in this field.

In this thesis, I will examine narratives of Alevi *dedes* who live in Istanbul. Most of the *dedes* whom I interviewed migrated to Istanbul either during their childhood or youth. Through analyzing *dede* narratives, I will try to explore their self-reflections and subjectivities on various debates about Alevism. Firstly, I will examine how the traditional role of the *dede* transformed and modernized after migration from Anatolia to Istanbul, how the authority and the position of the *dede* changed and how it affected the Alevi society in the informants' perspectives.

Why subjectivity is important? Why should we analyze individual narratives which depend on unreliable and fallible memories instead of archival documents? These questions about objectivity and reliability of oral narratives should remind us that all written sources were once written by individuals. Therefore, they also include

⁸⁹ Gezik, *Geçmiş ve Tarih Arasında Alevi Hafızasını Tanımlamak*.

subjectivity which should be taken into consideration with a critical approach while evaluating them. As Portello discusses the main objective of oral history is not finding the fact in narratives but understanding why narrators tell certain things in their own way even if their narrative conflicts with historical facts.

The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required by all types of sources anyway, the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that 'wrong' statements are still psychologically 'true' and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.⁹⁰

It is essential to question why narrators forget, skip or change historical facts in their statements. Questioning inconsistencies or subjectivities in narratives, allows us to fill gaps in the official history writing by enabling us to understand subjectivities of individuals and making those people visible whose voices were once unheard. After the Alevi revival, not only Alevi researchers but also Alevi *dedes* have started to write books reflecting their own thoughts about Alevism and criticisms that have been directed to them. Through these books written by *dedes* and also interviews conducted with them by some researchers, we have a chance to understand position and self-reflection of *dedes* on certain issues. I think through oral history methodology, we can deepen our understanding and observe the internal gaze of *dedes* and hear their own words for themselves.

Secondly, I will examine how Alevi past is reflected upon memories of *dedes*.

Pierre Nora puts the difference between history and memory as he states:

⁹⁰ Hugo Slim et al., "Ways of Listening," 68.

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. The stark contrast of memory with history permits to see beyond the official, fixed accounts of history. Memory with its fluid, evolutionary, plural and individual nature reveals complexity of traces of the past on human mind. Through oral history narratives we can examine contrasts or similarities between history and memory, and understand the relationship between the past and the present.⁹¹

I will use the concept of cultural memory while analyzing narratives of *dedes*. According to Jan Assman, through cultural identity is formed by memory of events of the past which is embodied in cultural formation such as; texts, rites, monuments, and institutional communication such as recitation, practice and observance. He argues that a group attains awareness of its unity and peculiarity through knowledge that is preserved in cultural memory.⁹² Moreover, cultural memory reconstructs by relating its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.⁹³ In the narratives of *dedes*, I will examine how cultural memory is represented and how it creates identity and belonging through reconstructions of the past.

Furthermore, I will also scrutinize how Alevi identity is represented in the narratives of *dedes* through analyzing how identities like race, class, and ethnicity are

⁹¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," 8.

⁹² Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

⁹³ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 130.

constructed and intersected under the rubric of Alevi identity. As Sökefeld puts forward there is not a single Alevi identity, instead Alevis carry multiple identities. Turkish Alevis differ from Kurdish Alevis with their ethnicity. Turkish Alevis are also citizens of Turkey but they are different from Sunni Turks of Turkey. Furthermore, Alevism creates a difference between Kurdish Sunnis and Kurdish Alevis of Turkey.⁹⁴ Therefore, I will examine reflection and interpretation of these multiplicity of identities in the narratives by analyzing effects in the formation of different interpretations. I think it is necessary to examine some key elements such as politics and ethnic issues in the construction of Alevi identity which is a major subject in narratives. The Alevi identity has been subject of various research but I will try to reflect it from the oral history perspective.

I believe that this thesis with its focus on subjectivity, memory and identity will contribute to the gap in oral history studies about Alevis and bring forward new questions in this field. Studying Alevism in oral history field is a quite innovative approach since works in historical literature focus too much on origins of Alevism in the perspective of official sources. However, oral history can enable us to go beyond these official sources and discover experiences and subjectivities of Alevis which let us re-evaluate history of Alevism in different ways that were silenced by formal history writing. There are prominent ethnographic works about Alevis in academia, especially in the fields of anthropology and sociology. In general, ethnographic works in academia primarily deal with ethnic, cultural and political debates of Alevism. However, I think there are still not enough studies about subjectivities and

⁹⁴ Sökefeld, *Struggling for Recognition*, 21.

experiences of Alevis raising their voices in Turkey. At this point, oral history is a very necessary research tool that can let people speak for themselves.

3.2 The process of the research

The first time I decided to do oral history research about Alevis, I wasn't sure about with whom I could conduct in-depth interviews among the Alevi communities in Istanbul. My main intention was to learn about transformation of Alevism and experiences of Alevis who mostly migrated to Istanbul from other parts of Turkey.

Firstly, I needed to conduct preliminary research in the field and also prepare myself through readings in order to concretize the framework of my research. Therefore, I visited some *cemevis*, associations and informants' workplaces for collecting information and conducting exploratory interviews. The preliminary research is essential as Thompson emphasizes the importance of preparation before starting the interview process of an oral history research:

The first point is the preparation, through reading and in other ways, of background information. The importance of this varies a good deal. The best way of starting off some pieces of work may be through exploratory interviews, mapping out a field and picking up ideas and information. With the help of these a problem may be defined, and some of the resource for solving it located. The "general gathering interview" at the beginning of a local project, like the "pilot interview" of a big survey, can be a very useful stage.⁹⁵

The preparation phase was very important and influential for shaping the plan of my research, finding new contacts and also collecting ideas and information as Thompson states. After doing preliminary research and exploratory interviews about

⁹⁵ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 222.

Alevism and Alevi in the field, I decided to conduct interviews with *dedes* in order to understand changes in the Alevi religious leadership within the transformation of Alevism and experiences of *dedes* through their narratives.

I found interviewees through my personal connections and with a snowball effect it wasn't difficult to find interviewees for my research. Actually, all informants, including the ones I got in touch directly without using personal connections were very welcoming and unhesitant about accepting my interview offer. After talking about my research with Professor Rıza Yıldırım, he introduced me to Nebi Düzgün who is the president of an Alevi association. With his help, I talked to a few *dedes* about my research subject and they accepted my requests for interview. After I visited some *cemevis*, and did interviews with *dedes* there, I reached new connections with their references.

I conducted all interviews at different *cemevis* in Istanbul, except the ones with three interviewees who were not affiliated with any *cemevis*. I did one of these interviews at an informant's house, the other one at a cafe and the third one at the office of an Alevi association. I conducted all interviews in neighborhoods of Istanbul such as Ümraniye, Kartal, Esenyurt, Gazi and Avcılar where *cemevis* and most of Alevi are located. In total, I interviewed with twenty informants between June 2015 and May 2016. The ages of my informants varied between thirty-three and eighty-nine. While the thirty-three years old *dede* was my youngest interviewee, I generally interviewed with *dedes* who were aged between 60s and 70s. Having informants at different ages provided me to observe generational differences between them. All of them were born in different cities of Anatolia such as Tokat, Sivas,

Tunceli and Erzincan. Some of them migrated to Istanbul during their childhood or youth, and some at their middle ages or later.

I conducted only one interview at a cafe which was not really an appropriate place to conduct the interview considering noise and crowd at those kind of places. However, I had a very concentrated and helpful informant who made me finish the interview without any problem. *Cemevis* were the most suitable places for conducting interviews because I generally interviewed *dedes* who worked at *cemevis*, and had offices there. I also had a chance to observe rituals and Alevi at *cemevis*. I attended *cem* for the first time when I started this research. I also attended a funeral ceremony at one *cemevi*. Actually, it is not only a place of worship but also a place of gathering for social activities. At some *cemevis*, if they have enough space, there are book stores, dining halls and gardens where people get together. There are classes where children are taught *semah*, playing *saz* or other instruments. Children are also supported in other areas in their curriculum at schools. There are also some panels or classes at some *cemevis* for adults who are interested in history or religiology of Alevism. I attended one of these classes at Şahkulu Cemevi when an academician was giving a speech on the history of Alevism.

Dedes usually have visitors, mostly their *talips* (followers, disciples), who come to see them. During the interviews at *cemevis*, most of the time there were about 3-5 people in the room who came to visit *dedes* while I was conducting the interview. Despite the fact that this situation sometimes made the interview process difficult, in general these people didn't interrupt my interviews with *dedes* and mostly they listened *dede* with curiosity and carefulness as a sign of respect.

Sometimes, they joined the conversation, and told their ideas about certain issues, and at these points, I tried to observe the conversations without interrupting.

Groups can bring out the best and the worst in people. Sometimes, by taking the focus off individuals, they make them less inhibited, but the opposite can occur just as easily. A group may subtly pressurize people towards a socially acceptable testimony or a mythical representation of the past or of a current issue which everyone feels is 'safe' to share and which may be in some sense idealized. Communal histories gathered in this way can involve a powerful process of myth construction or fabrication which misrepresents the real complexity of the community...But groups can also be especially productive, as members 'spark' off one another. Memories are triggered, facts can be verified or checked, views can be challenged and the burning issues of the past can be discussed and argued about again in the light of the present. Group work can also increase rapport between project workers/interviewers and the community, encouraging people to come forward for one-to-one sessions if appropriate.⁹⁶

I think these kind of conversations made the interview environment more natural, and also enabled me to hear about more spontaneous and interesting subjects. When I went to *cemevis* to see a certain *dede*, I met other *dedes* there and also conducted interviews with them which helped me finish my field research in a short time. According to Beatrice Webb, her 'wholesale interview' technique in casual and informal social atmospheres give the interviewer many information. She states that in these kind of atmospheres 'you can sometimes start several experts arguing among themselves; and in this way you will pick up more information in one hour than you will acquire during a whole day in a series of interviews'.⁹⁷

Sometimes, while I was conducting interviews, other *dedes* in the interview room joined conversations and shared their ideas shortly on certain subjects by agreeing or

⁹⁶ Slim et al., "Ways of Listening," 118.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 215.

disagreeing the informants. These, conversations triggered different ideas and questions which provided saturating interviews.

In some interview situations, I was invited to lunch and mostly offered tea. At one of my informants' house, I was invited to the dinner after the interview. These kind of offers were a part of hospitality tradition and therefore, I didn't reject these offers. Beatrice Webb, also emphasizes importance of accepting such offers:

Accept what is offered...Indeed, the less formal the conditions of the interview the better. The atmosphere of the dinner-table or the smoking room is a 'better conductor' than of the office during business hours... A personally conducted visit to this or that works or institution may be a dismal prospect; it may even seem a waste of effort to inspect machinery or plant which cannot be understood, or which had been seen *ad nauseam* before... But it is a mistake to decline. In the course of these tiring walks and weary waitings, experiences may be recalled or elicited which would not have cropped up in the formal interview in the office.⁹⁸

During some interviews at *cemevis*, we had lunch breaks and ate in the dining hall together with workers, guests and *dedes* of the *cemevis*. These breaks and casual gatherings allowed me to observe Alevi in their natural social environment and introduce myself closely for gaining trust of my informants and building intimacy with them. Collecting interesting information in these social atmospheres was also helpful for my research.

While conducting interviews, I had a notebook for writing some special names that were hard to pronounce and understand while listening. Usually, I didn't write many things, and tried to listen to my informants for making them sure that I was focused on their speech. While I let my interviewees speak without interrupting

⁹⁸ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 241.

them, took notes of some questions popped up in my mind during their speech. After, they finished their talk on certain subjects, I asked those questions which I noted. Sometimes, I asked more detailed questions about specific subjects that my informants mentioned before. After the interviews, I wrote my observations on interview processes and informants and by this way, I kept details about each informant in my mind. Otherwise, it would be difficult to remember important background information and details about the informants.

All of the informants accepted my interview request immediately after I explained my research. I also explained that if they don't want me to use their names, I wouldn't use names. However, they all allowed me to use their names, and some of them even initially refused to sign the interview consent paper because they said that they trusted me, so there was no need for such a paper. The informants were very open to giving interviews. Their openness about speaking was due to their need to explain themselves because they think Alevism is misunderstood in the society.

Most of the *dedes* were used to giving interviews since previously some researchers conducted interviews with them. Interviews also opened a performance stage for the interviewees. For instance, Ali Düzgün Dede, who was interviewed and filmed by a researcher before, was willing to be filmed by me too. Although I tried to explain him that I wanted to record the interview by only a voice recorder, he kept asking where the video camera was. Then, I turned on my video camera to film him and suddenly he started to chant an Alevi *deyiş* (mystical singing). According to him, the interview was a performance ground for which he was ready to perform with his repertoire and formal clothing style with his suit and hat.

The *dedes* I interviewed with were not hesitant to talk about politics. They talked about the injustices Alevis faced during the history of the Ottoman State and the Turkish Republic. They also criticized contemporary politics in Turkey which is not enough to address problems of Alevis. Only two of them were reluctant to talk about some political issues and traumatic events in the past. One of them was a *dede* who was born in Dersim (Tunceli) and witnessed Dersim Uprising of 1937-38 and was exiled to the Western part of Turkey with his family when he was eleven years old. Another *dede* who was from Sivas didn't want to talk about the Koçgiri rebellion in detail on the ground that it wouldn't be good for me since relatives of the leaders in the rebellion wouldn't want a negative interpretation of their family member in my thesis. I tried to convince my informants that I wouldn't use any undesirable information in my thesis if they don't want me to do. I explained that I wanted to learn their ideas and experiences as a person from the young generation of Turkey. Most of the informants didn't mention details about their family life. Their narratives mostly revolved around Alevism, history of Alevis and politics.

My informants were comfortable about voice recording in general. However, at certain points, I could feel that they tried to control themselves about what they told or stayed silent. Silence of the informants also has some meanings in oral history perspective. Informants may find some subjects dangerous or uncomfortable to talk about. As Portelli asserts "Some actions considered legitimate and even normal or necessary in the past are today viewed as unacceptable and are literally cast out of the tradition. In these cases, the most precious information may lie in what the

informants hide (and in the fact that they hide it), rather than in what they tell.”⁹⁹

Therefore, I tried to understand reasons behind silences and hesitations of the informants. When they didn’t want to talk explicitly, they usually indicated the voice recorder, and said it wouldn’t be appropriate to talk further about certain issues when the recorder is turned on. When I encountered such hesitations about recording, I tried to build trust between me and my informants by saying that I can turn off the recorder, if they don’t want me to record.

Most people, however, will accept a tape recorder with very little anxiety, and quickly lose any immediate awareness of it. The recorder can even help the interview. While it is on, people may be a little more likely to keep to the point, and other members of the family to stay out of the way. And quite frequently, when it is switched off, some highly significant additional facts may be given, which could have been held back if there had been no recorder at all; information which is meant to be known to the researcher as background, but in confidence (and must of course be treated in this spirit).¹⁰⁰

As Thompson contends, tape recorder also brought some advantages to interview such as providing a quiet interview environment and making informants more focused on the interview. Informants tried to prevent or keep short external interruptions and noises such as when someone called on the phone or knocked the door for asking something to them. This provided me to have clear and less interrupted voice records. Moreover, when they didn’t wanted to talk about certain subjects while the recorder was on, I turned off the recorder and they spoke about things that they were hesitant to tell before. Usually, at the beginning of interviews,

⁹⁹ Portelli, “The Peculiarities of Oral History,” 102.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 232.

informants were talking to the recorder but after the interviews progressed, they were less concerned about the recorder and focused on our conversations.

During interviews, some informants became emotional and started to cry when they were talking about traumatic events in the past. In these kinds of situations, I didn't insist on asking questions on those emotional subjects, and gave time to the informants to calm down. Eventually, they calmed down without giving breaks and continued speaking. Many of the interviewees were experienced about giving interviews and talks to researchers and students. Some of them told me that some national or international students and academics came to them to learn about Alevism. Therefore, for some of them I was not the first researcher who wanted to interview them." Actually, one of the important and necessary characteristic of becoming *dede* is being a good and knowledgeable speaker who can effectively communicate with their communities. In *cem* rituals *dedes* address people and give speeches about Alevism, so they are quite used to talk to audiences.

After finishing conducting and transcribing interviews, I started to analyze the interviews. After reading each text, I examined the contents of the interviews and picked up many common points between them. I built the thematic perspective of my analysis according to these commonalities which I believe emphasize important subjects in the history of Alevis. I elaborated on subjectivities of my informants about each topic and cross checked the information given in the interviews. There were differences, similarities, and inconsistencies in the sources. However, as Portelli states oral sources are not objective and their non-objectivity lies in the

intrinsic characteristics such as artificiality, variability and partiality of them.¹⁰¹

While analyzing narratives, I kept these characteristics in my mind as well as unfinishedness of oral sources.¹⁰² Therefore, the aim of my analysis is not drawing a general and objective conclusion but elaborating on interpretations and reflections of my informants as Alevi religious leaders on their past.

As Michael Frisch states; “Oral history is a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory—how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.”¹⁰³ In this perspective, I believe that this thesis will use oral history as an efficient tool to discover experiences of *dedes*.

¹⁰¹ Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 70.

¹⁰² Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 72.

¹⁰³ Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, 188.

CHAPTER 4

THE SYSTEM OF *OCAKS* and THE *DEDE* INSTITUTION

Alevi religion has its own particular system and practices which are highly influential in the maintenance of the Alevi belief and traditions. Therefore, without understanding components of this belief system, it is not possible to fully comprehend the transformation of the Alevi institutions and the society. Before analyzing *dede* narratives, in this chapter I will explain the basic religious structure of traditional Alevism and briefly how it was transformed and re-formulated throughout time.

While examining the *dede* institution and the religious system of Alevism, I will use the terms “Traditional Alevism” and “Modern Alevism” to prevent historical ambiguity and emphasize changed parameters between different periods of Alevism. After 1950s-60s with the effects of urbanization and migration traditional Alevism, which had a system compatible with rural life, had difficulty to adapt itself to cities. In the late 1980s, traditional Alevism was started to transform within modernized institutions. The *dede* institution which is at the core of the traditional Alevism has also been influenced by this transformation. Therefore, I will elaborate on the transformation of the *dede* institution and Alevism through making a distinction between these periods.¹⁰⁴ However, it is important to note that all these changes don't

¹⁰⁴ For the use of modernity and traditionality concepts in Alevi historiography see Yıldırım, “Geleneksel Alevilikten Modern Aleviliğe: Tarihsel Bir Dönüşümün Ana Eksenleri,” 135-162; Erdemir, “Tradition and Modernity: Alevis’ Ambiguous Terms and Turkey’s Ambivalent Subjects,” 937-51.

mean that traditional Alevism was erased by Modern Alevism. I suggest that traditional and modern Alevism are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary they are intertwined. As Karin Vorhoff puts it “One may conclude that the present Alevi movement is of quite a modern nature while at the same time it celebrates tradition... Modernity is welcomed while at the same time traditional community and values are cherished.”¹⁰⁵ The degree of traditional and modern values may change according to regions and institutions but there are still urbanized people practicing their traditional and local Alevism. In addition to this, it’s not possible to say that transformation of Alevism is completed because it is still being re-formulated today.

4.1 On the system of *ocaks* in their traditional context

Ocak means literally hearth and distinguishes a holy lineage traced back to the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and his cousin and also son in law Ali.¹⁰⁶ The system of *Ocaks* is an organized structure controlling proper functioning and maintenance of Alevi religion. Many of the Alevi *ocaks* were named after colonizing and half warrior dervishes in Anatolia which shows that elements of the *dede* institution and *ocak* system may be related to these dervishes who were pioneers of the gradual Islamization of Anatolia from the twelfth century onwards.¹⁰⁷ We can see that many Alevi *ocaks* carry names of powerful dervishes

¹⁰⁵ Vorhoff, “‘Let’s Reclaim Our History and Culture!’: Imagining Alevi Community in Contemporary Turkey,” 251.

¹⁰⁶ Korkmaz, *Ansiklopedik Alevilik-Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 523.

¹⁰⁷ Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 57.

who were active in Anatolia during the thirteenth century such as Sarı Saltuk, Dede Garkın, and Hıdır Abdal.

There are pre-requisites for being recognized as a *dede* in the traditional Alevism. First of all, in order to become *dede* a person has to be sayyid, *evlad-ı resul* or *Ahl-al bayt (Ehl-i beyt)* all the terms indicate descent of the Prophet Muhammad his daughter Fatima and Ali.¹⁰⁸ *Ocakzades* (*ocak* members) had *seceres* (pedigrees) which proved their lineage and were approved by some convents or *Naqib al-ashraf* (chief of the descendants of the Prophet).¹⁰⁹ According to Alevi traditions, all Alevi communities must be affiliated with an *ocak*. Only people from *ocakzade* families can become *dede*. Non-*ocak* Alevis are called *talips* (disciples), and they are connected to different *ocaks* as followers. Particular, *dedes* from these *ocaks* control their *talips* at certain regions they are responsible of. For instance, the *ocak of Baba Mansur* which is based in the city Tunceli has *talips* from different regions. Such as some villages of Sivas that are affiliated to this *ocak*. Some *dedes* from this *ocak* are responsible of their *talips* in these villages, and they can't conduct their services in villages where their *talips* are not settled.

Historically, *ocaks* in Anatolia received their *icazetnames* (letters of authorization) from the Wafa'iyya order, the Safavids and the Çelebi branch of Bektashis.¹¹⁰ The lineage in *ocak* families continues through male members, and intermarriage between *ocakzades* and their *talips* were strictly forbidden according to

¹⁰⁸ Korkmaz, *Ansiklopedik Alevilik-Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 598.

¹⁰⁹ Korkmaz, *Ansiklopedik Alevilik-Bektaşilik Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 163.

¹¹⁰ For Alevi documents including *icazetnames* see Karakaya-Stump, "Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah," 137-142.

the Alevi tradition in the past. Marriage between Alevi and non-Alevi was also a taboo, and those who broke this rule were described as *düşkün* (ostracized). Today, there may be *ocak* families who still obey this rule, however mostly people don't pay attention to this rule as much as they did in the past.

It is important to understand the system of *ocaks* in order to comprehend the functioning of the *dede* institution in Alevism. *Ocaks* are connected with each other in a hierarchical way that certain *ocaks* are recognized as superiors, and they issue *icazetnames* to other *ocaks* subordinate to them. According to their functions there are four different *ocak* classifications. The most superior one is called *ocak* of the *murshid*, and the second that is subordinate to the former is called the *ocak* of the *pir*, the third is *ocak* of the *rehber*, and the *ocak* of *düşkün* are at the bottom of this hierarchy. The *ocaks* of *düşkün* are responsible of Alevi who were ostracized since they broke rules of Alevism. Functioning like a higher court, the *ocak* of *düşkün* gives decisions about punishment of excommunicated Alevi.

The reason of this hierarchy between *ocaks* isn't exactly known. According to Ali Yaman, there are three possible explanations for the hierarchy between *ocaks*: Firstly, it might result from the fact that some *ocaks* predates others; secondly, some *ocaks* might be superior to others since they had greater influence and larger numbers of *talips*. Lastly, it might be a result of displacement or forced migration of some Alevi who conflicted with the central state. As a result some *ocak* families moved to new places and associated with new *ocaks*, and their former *ocak* considered them as their *talip ocak* that is subordinate to them. As an outcome, hierarchy between *ocaks*

as *pir*, *murşid* and *rehber* emerged.¹¹¹ The same hierarchy is also seen in the *dede* institution since each *dede* from an *ocak* is the *talip* of another *dede* from another *ocak*.¹¹² Not all *ocaks* are included in this hierarchy since some of them are independent, and some other *ocaks* follow the Çelebi branch of Bektashis.

Independent *ocaks* which later followed the Çelebi *ocaks* that are called *dönük* (converted) *ocaks*, and other independent *ocaks* which didn't follow the Çelebi *ocaks* were called *purut ocaks*.¹¹³ According to Karakaya-Stump, some *ocaks*, might emerged independently because of moving of one *dede* family to another far place and establishing as an independent *ocak* with a new name. Thus, this mobility may be the partial explanation for multiplication of Alevi *ocaks*.¹¹⁴

4.2 Characteristics and functions of the *dede* institution in traditional Alevism

Dede, (Turkish for “elder” or “grandfather”), is a respectful and an honorary title used in Kizilbash-Alevism for religious leaders who are from the sayyid lineage. The title *dede* was started to be used very commonly in Sufi circles since the thirteenth century. According to Barkan, in Balkans and Anatolia titles such as “*ahi*, *baba abdal*, *pir*, *gazi*, *şeyh*, *hoca* and *dede* were attributed to dervishes to a great extent based on the evidence from registry books (*defter-i hakani*).¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 170.

¹¹² Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 169-70.

¹¹³ Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 169-70.

¹¹⁴ Karakaya-Stump, “Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah,” 25.

¹¹⁵ Barkan, “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri,” 279-365.

In traditional Alevism the *dede* is pioneer of religious life in Alevi society as religious leaders and spiritual guide who conducts rituals and transmit religious knowledge to his *talips*. *Dedes* provided guidance for their *talips* in the mystical path of Alevism called *Dört Kapı Kırk Makam* (four gates, forty levels) which consists of four gradual gateways (*kapı*) called *şeriat* (*sharia*), *tarikât* (mysticism), *marifet* (knowledge), *hakikat* (truth) and each of them has ten *makams* (levels). Each gateway represents a level of Alevi teachings and in order to become *İnsan-ı Kamil* (perfect humanbeing), one has to pass all these levels.

According to religious rules of Alevism, *cem* ritual can only be conducted with presence of a *dede*. Other social and religious rituals such as marriage, funeral and circumcision ceremonies are also led by the *dede*. During these ceremonies the *dede* gives advisory speech to his *talips* and prays. If *talips* have any problems, they consult the *dede* to solve their problems. *Talips* also visit their *dede*, if they had health problems because it was believed that *dedes'* praying and spiritual powers were good for healing. Besides religious life, the authority of the *dede* is dominant in judicial and social life of Alevi communities. It is important to note that while using his authority in different spheres, the *dede* acts like a mediator and pays attention to his *talips* opinions while discussing issues among them or making decisions. Moreover, sometimes he may consult other *dedes* about certain issues in his community.

As it was mentioned previously, the primary condition of becoming *dede* is being sayyid. In general, all male members of *ocak* families are called *dede* and respected by Alevis but it doesn't necessarily mean that all of them perform religious leadership. In a general meaning, it only indicates a person's lineage, if he doesn't

fulfill other requirements for becoming a *dede* in the traditional Alevism. The *dede*'s authority derives from his spiritual power, and this spiritual power primarily depends on his lineage. According to *Buyruks*, the written sources of Alevism, there are certain traits that an *ocakzade* must have in order to serve as *dede*. In addition to being an *ocakzade*, the *dede* must be qualified to provide moral and educational guidance to his *talips*. He must be a model to the society with his behaviors, knowledgeable and fair characteristic. He must have knowledge of the principles of Alevism written in *Buyruks* and follow them as well as Alevi traditions. These qualifications give *dedes* charisma and influence to be recognized and respected as religious leaders.

In traditional Alevism, a *dede* candidate was used to learn religious knowledge from elder *dedes*. Starting from childhood, boys from *ocakzade* families were trained by their family members such as father, grandfather or uncle who practiced *dedelik* (the office of the *dede*). Knowledge about religious teachings of Alevism and how a *dede* must be was acquired through participant observation by sons of *ocakzade* families. However, not all sons in a family have to become *dede* since practicing *dedelik* depended on one's free will and dedication. Usually, *dedes* might observe and pick a member of *ocak* who was willing to learn and practice *dedelik* in the future. Approvals of other *dedes* especially *pirs* were also necessary for a person to serve as *dede*. Moreover, it depended on a person's religious knowledge, leadership qualities and example behaviors to be accepted as a *dede* in their community.

Dedes travelled to different places where their *talips* lived in certain times of the year, during the period from winter to spring because in some regions *dedes* had

to work on their fields during summertime for earning a livelihood. *Dedes* were given some amount of money or some goods by their *talips* as gifts for their services when they visited them. These payments or gifts were generally called *hakkullah* or *çıralık*. *Dedes* were not paid by the government and they mostly earned their living through agriculture when they didn't visit *talips*. Thus, *hakkullah* was seen as a gift or help to show gratitude to *dedes* for coming all the way and providing service to *talips*.

During his yearly visits to his *talips*, the *dede* conducted *görgü cem* at one of the *talips* house. Usually, this would be a house that the *dede* chose to stay during his visit. The *dede* chose the house of one of his *talips* to stay according to some criteria. The owner of the house was supposed to be someone who got on well with everyone, was respected and wasn't in the position of *düşkün*. Besides *görgü cems* (ritual of good manners), there were also *müsahip cems* (companion *cems*), fasting *cems* and sacrifice *cems* which were conducted by *dedes*, and organized on special days in Alevism.

Since it was not possible for *dedes* to be present during whole year in different places where *talips* lived, sometimes *dikme dedes* or *mürebbis* (lit. educators) were assigned to represent *ocakzade dedes* in some regions. Difficult conditions and distance between *dedes* and *talips* made the communication weaker between them, therefore, appointing *dikme dedes* was seen as a solution for this problem. These *dikme dedes* were responsible of *talips* during the absence of their *ocakzade dedes*. It was a common issue during the interviews that some of the informants stated today most of *dedes* who claim to be *ocakzade* are in fact *dikme*

dedes who gained influence among their communities by time and declared themselves as *ocakzade dedes*.

Another important tradition of Alevism led by the *dede* is the concept of *müsahtlik* which is one of the first conditions of being an Alevi. Every person should have a *müsaht* which means brotherhood or religious partnership according to Alevi traditions. Sometimes, people choose a *müsaht* at a young age before or after getting married with consent of their wives. As *müsahts*, two couples become life companions in other words like siblings they should always help and take care of each other. For becoming *müsahts*, those who chose each other as *müsahts* consulted their *pir* and *murshid* via their *rehber*. Then, *dedes* conducted *cem* and approved them as *müsahts*. If there was any unsolved problem between *müsahts*, they used to consult their *dede* and he would conduct *müsaht cems*. During this *cems* if there was any disagreement, the *dede* would listen them and solve their disagreements. Therefore, *müsaht cems* strengthened bonds between *müsahts*.

Judicial role of the *dede* was very important for the social order of an Alevi community. When there were conflicts in Alevi communities, the *dedes* served as intermediators, and solved conflicts or decided necessary punishments for those who were found guilty. The main principle according to the Alevi traditions was that a problem in an Alevi community must be solved in the community by the *dede*. This was a practical method for securing the justice since Alevis mostly lived in isolated areas far from city centers and it was not easy for them to apply to the court since the Ottoman times. If there was someone committed a crime or a disagreement between people, it was conveyed to the *dede* during or before *cem*. Then he would listen to both sides and witnesses, and give a decision about the crime or conflict between his

talips. *Dedes* could also be tried if they were accused or there were complaints about them. If the accused person was a *dede* or there were disputes between *dedes*, they would be tried by their *pirs*. This proves that *dedes* were also justiciable by other *dedes* which means that they didn't have absolute authority that could make them unquestionable in their society.

If people who had conflicts with each other didn't want to solve their problems out of the *cem* ritual, they would ask the *dede*'s involvement during *cem*. Even if *talips* didn't bring forward problems, the *dede* always would ask if *talips* had any complaints about each other. When people didn't talk about their complaints or disputes, if the *dede* had heard about the issue before, he would bring forward the issue and question *talips*. The process of trial was called "*düşkün meydanı*" which was a kind of people's court. In "*düşkün meydanı*" process, both sides who were in conflict with each other, used to tell their complaints. He would also consult his *talips* as people's court and learn their opinions about the issue. Then, the *dede* was supposed to make a final decision about the conflict, or in some rare cases he would consult his *pir*. The final decision of *dede* was inviolable and those who broke this law was considered as *düşkün*.

A person was declared as *düşkün* by the *dede*, if s/he committed major crimes such as; killing a person, committing adultery, divorcing one's wife, marrying a divorced woman, and stealing.¹¹⁶ *Düşkün* people were punished by exclusion from the community until they made up for their mistakes. The punishment of *düşkün* was called *sitem* (lit. reproach), and this either material or spiritual punishment depended

¹¹⁶ Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 182–83.

on the decision of *dedes*. If the punished person didn't meet requirements of the punishment his/ her situation would be considered again by the *dede*. In some cases, a person can be totally excluded by the community including his/her family until s/he was forgiven by the *dede*.¹¹⁷

As seen, since all these rituals were organized by the *dede* and in every phase *talips* were inspected by him his presence and authority was the basis for maintaining religious and social system in traditional Alevism. Alevis were seen as marginal for centuries, and mostly lived in isolated rural villages in Anatolia, the traditional system of Alevism and the *dede* authority was the basic power keeping justice and order in the isolated Alevi communities. However, the traditional system of Alevism was suitable and functional for villages and small towns where Alevis were living together, and knew each other. After the transformation of Alevism in big cities, the religious system and traditions were tried to be adapted and modernized according to the contemporary Alevi society's conditions and needs. These traditions and practices are still maintained by some Alevis but their prevalence and level of transformation in these practices change in different Alevi communities.

4.3 Transformation of the traditional Alevism in the urban context: 1950s and beyond

The traditional system had started to change in the 1950s because of migration of Alevi population to big cities and abroad for job opportunities. Since Alevis moved

¹¹⁷ Yaman, *Kızılbaş Alevi Ocakları*, 184.

to different cities, the traditional *ocak* system and the *dede* institution started to become less functional because of several reasons. In rural settlements, the *dede*'s authority was absolute because he could have control over his *talips* since everybody knew each other and lived in villages. However, when most of the Alevi population moved to cities, contact between the *dede* and *talips* weakened since it was not possible for the *dede* to visit *talips* who scattered in different places. This situation caused a disconnection between *talips* and *dedes*. It was very difficult to maintain practices of Alevism in the cities therefore, Alevis mostly had to stay away from their traditional religious practices for a while. Main concern of them became earning a living and educating their children in big cities.

Their children were generally raised away from traditions and rituals of Alevism that were practiced in their hometowns. Actually, starting from the 1960s with the effect of Marxist ideology, Alevi youth reacted against the *dede* institution claiming that *dedes* were exploiting people through religion and collecting money as *hakkullah* from their *talips*. This was a prevalent conception among Marxist youth. Only after the bloody events and injustices that Alevis were subjected, Alevi youth started to raise interest in Alevism in the late 1980s and perceived it as a revolutionary religion because of its contradiction with the state ideology throughout centuries. Furthermore, there weren't any *cemevis* until the late 1980s, and this was a big problem which prevented Alevis to practice their religion in the public sphere. Because of sectarian conflicts and politics, Alevis felt trapped in big cities. Before the late 1980s, some of them secretly practiced their rituals in houses with presence of their *dedes*. However, most of Alevis in big cities had weaker contact with their *ocaks* and religious traditions compare to their village life.

Another factor in the transformation is that when Alevi were living in isolated villages where they were close and knew each other. Therefore, that environment enabled them to maintain traditions of Alevism and provided functioning of some kind of control mechanism in the Alevi society. Since everybody knew each other, the judicial function of *dede* was effective because a person's mistake couldn't stay unrevealed. Furthermore, if *talips* had problems between each other since they went to the same *cem* and the *dede*, they could open up about it or the *dede* could understand that there was an issue since he knew his *talips* closely. When people migrated to big cities, they settled in different districts where they barely knew each other. Until the Alevi revival there were not any *cemevis* and people organized *cems* in their houses secretly because they didn't want to attract attention of extreme rightist. After *cemevis* were founded people has started to go to *cemevis* and attend *cems*. However, there are still not *cemevis* in every neighborhood where Alevi live. Alevi have built *cemevis* and associations by donations among themselves. Therefore, all financial source comes from donations which are not enough to build *cemevis* in many places.

Moreover, these conditions caused dissolution of ties between *dedes* and *talips* which is an important factor in terms of weakening of the authority of *the dede* institution. After *cemevis* and associations were opened Alevi leaving in certain neighborhoods went to these places to practice their rituals. However, *dedes* in these *cemevis* are not from *ocaks* of all Alevi who go there. For instance, a *dede* at Ümraniye *Cemevi* is from a certain *ocak* but not all of Alevi attending rituals there are *talips* of that *dede*'s *ocak*. Therefore, the *dede* of the *cemevi* can't have the control mechanism like in traditional Alevism of villages because he doesn't know

all people from different *ocaks* who attend *cems* regularly or irregularly. When the *dede* doesn't know *talips* very well, he can't have any control on *talips* without knowing if his *talips* obey the rules and traditions of Alevism or if there is a problem between his *talips*.

The biggest outcome of these changes in the traditional Alevism was taking of authority by Alevi associations. Dressler argues that *dedes* play only a marginal role in the leadership of Alevi organizations while these organizations are mostly managed by *talips* who are mostly Alevi elites such as intellectuals, business men or other middle class elites who have different occupations.¹¹⁸ It is obvious that with the increase of associations and *cemevis* authority of *dede* was partly replaced by directors of these institution. Since directors are responsible of giving decisions about administration and finding financial resources, *cemevi dedes* have to abide by the common decisions made by administrators. In the past, *dedes* didn't have regular jobs which let them travel certain times of a year to visit their *talips*. However, in modern Alevism *dedes* can only serve at *cemevis* after they retire from a regular job since it is not possible to make a living and retire by working at *cemevis*.

In addition to the financial aspect, most of the cultural and religious activities are organized by *cemevis*. Therefore, who should serve as *dede*, depends on the decisions of directors of Alevi institutions such as associations or *cemevis*. However, it is important to note that there are still some small amount of *ocak dedes* who are not associated with any *cemevis* or other Alevi institutions. This shift of authority from *ocaks* to institutions brought forward many other complex results and changes

¹¹⁸ Dressler, "The Modern Dede," 277.

in the traditional Alevism such as practices and requirements of being *dede* as well as dynamics of power in and between Alevi institutions. I think it is essential to examine what *dedes* think about the past and the present of Alevism, how they perceive the transformation of the *dede* institution and themselves as religious leaders through their experiences. Therefore, I will analyze further outcomes of the transformation in Alevi religious system and institutions from perspective of *dede* narratives in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5

A JOURNEY TOWARDS LEADERSHIP:

NARRATIVES ON BECOMING A *DEDE*

In this chapter, I will scrutinize subjectivities of *dedes* about their roles as religious leaders. By subjectivity, I mean their vantage points and thoughts about different aspects of being *dede*, their experiences as religious leaders throughout years and transformation of the *dede* institution. Through narratives, I aim to unfold their reflections on being *dede*, its transformation, requirements and struggles at the present time. I believe that the most efficient way to learn about the *dede* institution and its transformation is possible through listening life stories of *dedes*. The *dede* institution is quite interesting because throughout centuries it has been maintained voluntarily without any help or protection from the state. Since it has been the main mechanism for the survival of Alevi tradition and religious practices, I think it is important to understand this core institution from perspectives of its maintainers. *Dedelik* as a spiritual symbol in the Alevi society represents a holy meaning as well as the past and traditional values of Alevism. This holy meaning attributed to this title is derived from *dedes'* lineages. Thus, it has a symbolic power and meaning in Alevism which must be protected in the future as it has been up to the date. Some Alevis and organizations question the values and spiritual meanings attributed to *dedelik*, however, in a wide extent *dedes* are still respected among Alevis as spiritual leaders.

5.1 On education and becoming *Dede*

While conducting interviews, I usually asked similar questions to my interviewees about *dedelik* in order to make a comparison or generalisation about their reflections on being *dede*. I focused on their definitions of *dedelik*, views on the transformation of *dede* institution and changing parameters of it. Mostly questions about *dedelik* began by focusing on their training to become *dede*. Most of the *dedes* I interviewed with acquired their knowledge about *dedelik* from elders in their families such as fathers or grandfathers who served as Alevi religious leaders in villages. Therefore, they observed and experienced traditional Alevism in Anatolia before migrating to cities as we can see in the narratives. Mahmut Koç Dede, tells about his journey towards becoming a *dede* starting from his childhood until today:

We are six siblings. I'm the youngest one, unfortunately. My mother encouraged me to learn *dedelik* since we didn't have a father and my brothers were busy with working to take care of us. Where ever there was the community and *cem* we were there. I couldn't play with my peers much. Only when I had free time, I helped my family, if they needed. With support of my murshid and mother, I attended to a *cem* in 1973. So, I attended *cem* when I was about thirteen-fourteen years old. I was assisted for ten years. So, I had a master. I had a murshid who trained me. For ten years, with his support, I was trained by him. My training included both reading and practicing. Of course, when the time came, I joined the army for my military service. After I came from the military service, we sat down with that murshid and he gave me the permission to serve as a *dede* in front of the community. Besides, I love reading a lot and whenever I have time, I feel free while reading books. I love reading the Quran. The Quran is my most favorite book among all. I love history. Then, I also love the community and people. Being with the community and supporting each other, sharing and producing are nice things for me. This is how my childhood was. When I was young, like everybody, I got married with the God's commandment and we had children. Since 1973, I serve as a *dede* without giving a break. The primary reason for not giving a break is the service that our *talips* expect from us which has encouraged me to continue. (Mahmut Koç, Appendix B, 1)

Mahmut Koç is sixty-five years old and he currently works at Keçeci Baba Cemevi in Istanbul. He was born in Tokat and lived there until he permanently moved to Istanbul with his family in 2006. As Mahmut Koç Dede narrates, practice of *dedelik* was instilled to him by his *dede* during his childhood. Becoming *dede* requires conscientious responsibility and maintenance of this service is encouraged by expectations and approvals of *talips*. Mutual bond between *talips* and *dedes* is the key incentive for *dedes* to do their service despite hardships they experience. These hardships varied from living conditions and other obligations of the *dede* such as earning a living for his family or reaching out his *talips* in distant places under harsh conditions.

Erzade Yıldız Dede, who is thirty-five years old and quite young compared to other interviewees, explains difficulties he encountered while visiting his *talips* in some villages.

In 2006, it snowed so much in Yozgat and its around that we had to go to the village, where we normally go in half an hour, in four hours by walking because the height of the snow was about two and half meters. There were six people accompanying me since they didn't want me to go alone. In case, there could be wolves on my way, they were my *talips* who accompanied me. We don't have any problems with people because people in other villages around respect my grandfather and family. They have never argued with us or said bad words about us. On the contrary, they respect and love us. When we went to that village after four hours, we had risk of freezing. Think that our feet turned to purple. After having rest for one hour, we started *cem*, and conducted our *cem*. Think that it is very difficult to prepare a *cemhane* (place for *cem*) in winter conditions. We performed *cem* in the village's school building. It is an old building but people cleaned there and prepared as a *cemhane*. Even if our place was small, our hearts are big so we performed our *cem* there. It was one or two o'clock. The reason why it took so long is that the chat was nice during the *cem*. During these local *cem*s, unlike *cem*s in cities today which take one and half or two hours, we conduct *cem* sometimes until morning. In the morning, when the sun rose, people used to go to their houses because *cem* wouldn't end. We walked on the snow and went to another city and had a rest for a few hours there. Then we started another *cem* there. Maybe it was the farthest distance, I have ever walked in my life. We walked for four hours to one village and three hours to another one. It was not

possible to go by the car and it was difficult to go by walking. Think that my six *talips* went ahead of me to clear the way from the snow with their hands. They opened the way by stepping on the snow so that the *dede* wouldn't get cold or become sick because if he becomes sick, people would not be able to perform their *cem* without a *dede*. (Erzade Yıldız, Appendix B, 2)

Erzade Yıldız Dede is from Tokat and lives in Istanbul currently. He is employed as a full time *dede* by a municipality in Istanbul which is rare since it depends on the decision of municipalities to employ *dedes*. However, he doesn't only serve in Istanbul but also fulfills his responsibilities towards his *talips*. Before working as a full time *dede* at the municipality, he had switched between jobs and gave breaks to visit his *talips* to conduct their yearly *görgü cems*. It is obvious in Erzade Yıldız's statement that it is his conscientious responsibility and respect to efforts of his ancestors which urges him to make sacrifices and maintain his service for protecting the traditional belief system.

I came back to home from my military service and kissed my parents' hands. I worked for one month but after that my *talips* from the villages put pressure on me to go back to the village. Especially, after *talips* from villages around Yozgat put pressure on me, I left the job and went back to villages. I came back to Istanbul after six months. Why? Because *talips* didn't perform *cem* for two years. If I hadn't gone to *talips* for about five years, they could have been assimilated and followed other religious paths. Even if they wouldn't do so, their religious ties could weaken. As I told before, our previous generation were loyal to each other and their religion although, they were horrified and under pressure. However, we are not close to each other despite our conditions are better. Think that the future generation may not come together ever. We as *dedes* pray God every morning and evening: "God, please don't let our path to disappear!" If it disappears, our loyalty to Imam Hüseyin will end. May Allah not show those days to us. I came back to Istanbul after six months. You get a job and work but after three months they call you back. You go back and start again. (Erzade Yıldız, Appendix B, 3)

As seen from Erzade Dede's statement there is also a mutual bond between him and his *talips* which encourages him more to continue to serve as a *dede*. His *talips* are mostly Alevis who live in villages of Yozgat and Tokat. Therefore, they still keep commitment to traditional Alevism. In *dedes'* narratives responsibility

towards elder *dedes* who instructed and passed *dedelik* to them as well as religious traditions and *talips* were prominent factors which has kept them to start and continue to serve as religious leaders. In parallel with Erzade Dede's narrative, Binali Doğan Dede explains how he was trained to become a *dede* and started to serve after seeing his *talips* expectations from him:

At the time of my grandfather Seyid Haydar, in 1970s, when I was at secondary school, I attended *cems* with my grandfather. I had a small *bağlama*. Together with my grandfather, I was practicing *zakirlik* at that time. So, I came from those days to the present time by training I took from my grandfather. Especially, I learned all teachings of Alevism, *erkan* of Alevism (rules or fundamentals of Alevism), *görgü cems*, and *semah* from my grandfather. So, my grandfather trained me himself in that period. Of course, I couldn't comprehend it at that time. I was going to secondary school and at the same time my grandfather was teaching me constantly. Of course I used to get bored, when he was making continuous effort to teach me these. My grandfather used to tell me "Son, they will ask these from you one day." I couldn't understand it because who would ask these things from me? I was going to secondary school. Teachers sometimes used to ask written or oral things. Who will ask these to me but the day came and my grandfather passed away. After my grandfather, my father didn't enter into *erkan*. So, he was aware of everything but he directly (laid) the burden on me, (said) your grandfather educated you. Of course, there was a gap after my grandfather. *Talips* come for *görgü*. Coming of *talips* and asking for *görgü cem*, asking for *cem*. At that time it reminded me of my grandfather's words, at the time of secondary school, reminded me of his words "Son, they will ask this from you some day." In addition to that, there was a duty that was given to me by my grandfather, a moral duty. So, as of that day, I started to (conducting) *cems*. (Binali Doğan, Appendix B, 4)

Binali Doğan is sixty years old and after serving in his hometown Erzincan, he moved to Istanbul in 2006 and started to serve at Erikli Baba Dergahı. His narrative shows that he was instructed by his grandfather since his childhood starting from an age when even he was not capable of understanding why he is trained in that way. These narratives illustrate the way traditional education was given to *dedes* from their elders. However, this tradition started to change after migration of Alevi from their hometowns to urban cities and *dedes* started to get their religious

leadership education at Alevi institutions or *cemevis* from institution *dedes* instead of *dedes* from their *ocaks* and families.

5.2 Mediating between the traditional and the modern

As seen from the narratives, there is not a complete dissolution in the traditional Alevism because there are still few Alevi who maintain their traditional *görgü cems* which are special to their *ocaks* and regions. In general there are routinized *cem* rituals every Thursday at *cemevis* which are called *ibadet cemi* (worship *cems*) by the *dedes* I interviewed. The latter addresses not only to a specific Alevi community but all Alevi from different *ocaks* who wish to attend. However, there are also regional differences in *cems* such as performing *semah* (whirl). There are different forms of *semah*, which is one of the twelve main services of *cem ritual* in different *ocaks* or regions. For protecting these regional differences, some *dedes* conduct *yöresel cems* (regional *cems*) in other words *görgü cems* which are practiced yearly and specific to their *ocaks' talips* in Istanbul or in specific regions where they live. Hasan Kaya Dede's statement shows how some Alevi still maintain their religious practices with regional differences such as *görgü cems* which are supposed to be performed in their local communities:

All *dedes* should see their *talips* but today in metropol, we scattered around. Now, we do this service in *cemevis*. For instance, in metropol there are less people coming to those *cemevis* but we still do our service. Because we have regional differences in terms of religious practices. Every Thursday we perform *cems* at *cemevis*. For instance, if you have free time and you are bored, you can at least go to a *cemevi* and attend *cems*. In the Muharram month, we fast three days for *masum-u paklar*¹¹⁹, one day for Fatma Ana and

¹¹⁹ Masum-u Paklar refers to the Fourteen Innocents of the *Ahl-al bayt* family who were martyred when they were little.

twelve more days for the Muharram¹²⁰ month, in total sixteen days. On the twelfth day we cook *aşure* and sacrifice animal. After the Muharram month, regional *görgü cems* start. Every region has their own *dedes* and they come to *cemevis* to conduct *görgü cems* of their *talips* at *cemevis* or houses. (Hasan Kaya, Appendix B, 5)

By conducting their local *cems* these Alevi communities still maintain their traditional Alevism. At this point the *dede*'s role is at the core of this effort for protecting traditional values and transmitting them to the young generations. Veli Gülsoy, is one of the informants who emphasized the importance of maintaining traditional and cultural diversities in Alevism. Veli Gülsoy Dede was born in Sivas in 1947, and served as a state official there. He moved to Istanbul with his family after retiring from his job in 1996. He has been working at Gazi Cemevi since then and has *talips* from different regions at the *cemevi*. Veli Gülsoy explains how as a *dede*, he tries to preserve diversity in rituals:

I have been to many *cemevis*. They all have their own way of performing *cems*. If they have *kıyam*, *rüku*, *secde* and prays and if they say Haqq (Allah), Muhammad, Ali, they are all the same at the core despite minor differences. I don't find odd any of them. These are all our richness. Since we became distanced from each other because of the oppressions of the state, we have regional differences. For instance, at the *cemevi* if there are people from Tokat, Ardağan or Sivas, I let them perform *semah* during *cems*. Normally, I have trained youth to perform *semah* but if there are people coming from different regions and wanting to perform their regional *semahs*, I don't deprive them from performing. Everybody should see their regional *semahs*, so I don't restrict them. (Veli Gülsoy, Appendix B, 6)

¹²⁰ Muharram Fast which takes place in Muharram month of the Islamic calendar is a ritual to commemorate the Karbala Event, in which a group of Ali supporters, including his son Hüseyin, were killed by the forces of the second Umayyad caliph Yazid I at Karbala. Muharram Fast lasts twelve days and during this period Alevis don't drink water and mourn. At the end of the fast, Alevis prepare a meal called *aşure* that is made of various nuts.

Another remarkable aspect in the life stories of informants was their involvement in different jobs for providing income and dividing their time between work and *dedelik* duty as Veli Gülsoy's narrative shows:

I was retired from the Directorate of Highways in Sivas in 1996. Before retirement, I served as a *dede* during my all annual leaves. So, if my *talips* had any difficulties or problems, I definitely went to their villages to help them. I strove to keep peace among them so that they wouldn't waste any time in courts and hurt each other. In 1976 my father passed away and then I started to serve as a *dede*. As I said, I always had my annual leaves in winter so that I could visit my *talips*. I always commiserated with them and helped them about their problems by solving conflicts between them. I always reminded that they are neighbors, they are *cans* (souls) who need each other. Hurting each other, hurting a humanbeing means hurting *Ahl-al bayt* and the God. I did services like these because I already learned these basic things from my father. (Veli Gülsoy, Appendix B, 7)

In general, most of the informants worked at different jobs for making a living until retirement, and at the same time they served for *talips* of their *ocaks*. Usually, they had started completely concentrating on their services as religious leaders after retiring from their works. Moreover, in most cases, there was a break in *dedelik* duties after moving to Istanbul or other metropols because of the conflictual political atmosphere and invisibility of Alevism in public space until the Alevi revival. Zeynel Tan who is from Sivas and works at a *cemevi* in Istanbul explains how he started to serve as a *dede* and why his father didn't serve in Istanbul:

When I was ten, we moved to Bahçelievler district of Istanbul. We insisted our father on coming to Istanbul for working and making money because we had to do so. During those times, people used to say 'dedes exploit people and take their money.' Therefore, we said that we should go to Istanbul and make our own money. When we came to Istanbul, my father didn't serve as a *dede* anymore. My father died when I was in high school. I worked at constructions for taking care of my family, and studied at the same time. I studied management at Anadolu University. Then worked at an insurance agent until I opened a shop. We became distant from Alevism for a while until a *cemevi* was opened in the 1990s in Yenibosna (district of Istanbul). Then, I turned back to Alevism again. I remember we had *cem* in a basement once. You couldn't conduct *cem* in every place you wanted because people could attack. (Zeynel Tan, Appendix B, 8)

Severe criticisms about *dedes* claiming that they were exploiting people highly affected *dedes* for giving break to their duties. Most of the informants mentioned that *dedes* were criticized and blamed for exploiting people. Ali Ekber Aydoğan Dede's statement also shows how he was subjected to criticisms by Alevi youth and began to serve as *dede* after long years of break from his duty:

Our youth also opposed us. They said "Father there is no need for *dedelik*." They gossiped about it and called *dedes* exploiters. When they say exploiter, I have never seen a *dede* asking something from his *talips*. So, they brought the end of *dedes*. Children of *dedes* opposed to their fathers and said "Don't go to *talips*." The gossip spread from our youth... Serving as a *dede* was not my own decision because the society wants you (to do it). You can't say no, when they call you. They say "You're my *pir*, my child will go to the military service and I will sacrifice an animal. I'm waiting for my *pir* to come." My *talips* call me. (Ali Ekber Aydoğan, Appendix B, 9)

Disconnection from religious practices was usual after migration to metropol. Up until the opening of *cemevis* following the Alevi revival, Alevis mostly were estranged from their religious tradition or they practiced their rituals by gathering at houses within their community. Narratives illuminate even many *dede* families distanced themselves from their religious life for a while compared to their previous religious life in their hometowns as Mustafa Düzgün Dede states:

Since our village was a sayyid village, every year *dedes* come to there. Our own *talips* also visit us. We learned religion, *cem* and became close with the community there. Of course, after coming to the city in 1974, things were not the same and there were not people or *cems* in the villages anymore until 1993 or 1997. In the city, the *dede* used to visit us but we didn't perform *cem*. He used to sit and talk, then eat his dinner. In the morning, he used to pray for us and then leave. May God bless them for teaching us. At least, they could maintain our religious path until today. If they haven't visited us, we wouldn't have known that we were Alevis or what *pir* and *rehber* means. From 1993 to 1997 *cemevis* were founded and in big cities people have started to go to *cemevis*. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 10)

Mustafa Düzgün was born in Tunceli in 1951 and is one of eight siblings in his family. He came to Istanbul in 1969 for working and in 2003 he retired from his job at a factory. Since 2008, Mustafa Dede works at Kartal Cemevi. As Mustafa Dede asserts, migration to big cities caused some changes in religious life of Alevis. Even Alevis from sayyid families, like Mustafa Dede who is affiliated to the Ocak of Baba Mansur, had significant changes in their religious life. In cities, mostly Alevis had to give a break to their religious practices mainly *cems* and as it is emphasized previously, the ones who continued conducting *cems*, performed it in private places such as houses with small number of people. In Mustafa Dede's statement we can see that the role of the *dede* was essential for them to maintain their religious path despite the fact that they didn't perform *cem* after migrating to Istanbul. It also shows that some Alevi communities didn't suddenly lose their connection with their *dedes* after migrating from their hometowns.

5.3 Changing authority of *dedes* and institutionalization

Another prominent subject of the narratives is the changes that Alevism and the *dede* institution have been through under the effect of transformation from rural to urban and the Alevi revival. Change in the authority of *dedes* were often mentioned by the informants. According to them, authority of *dedes* which was stronger in the past is restricted by the directors of Alevi institutions today. Hüseyin Özgöz Dede, who serves at Karacaahmet Sultan Cemevi, explains his thoughts and experiences about change of the *dede*'s authority:

Dedes were freer and had more authority in the society. Maybe they were not sufficient in terms of knowledge and language because their Turkish was not that good. However, they used to do their best to improve themselves by exchanging of information with other *dedes* but still they could bring our path

to these days. Today institutions have control over *dedes* which is wrong. You should let the *dede* to have the authority because he is the judge, the father, the role model and also the guide. You should leave him free so that he live Alevism and teach it. On the other hand, when institutions have control over *dedes*, a new degenerated Alevism emerges. Now they say (institution directors) for instance; “If we do something that way, our institution will have difficulties.” However, they put the *dede* in a difficult situation. Then, the *dede* says “Let’s sacrifice from ourselves so that the institution can be maintained.” In this case, the *dede* can’t be comfortable. He can’t even live Alevism. How can he keep it alive? This situation is same in all institutions. We don’t have a single institutional structure like the Directorate of Religious Affairs. In order to institutionalize, we should do it without damaging the *dede* institution and the core of Alevism. (Hüseyin Özgöz, Appendix B, 11)

Similarly, Zeynel Tan Dede talks about his conflictual relationship with administrators of the *cemevis* where he had worked before. His narrative shows how conflict of authority between administrators and the *dede* affects autonomy and service of the *dede* at institutions as he states: “I worked at different *cemevis* before but my ideas and directors’ ideas conflicted. They wanted me to have the same opinions with them and asked me to do what they wanted. One of the directors from the former *cemevi* where I worked was from Tokat. He said that he didn’t want a Zaza Dede, then I left there after this.” (Zeynel Tan, Appendix B, 12)

Dominant power of institution directors over decision mechanisms by pushing the *dede* authority aside seems to disturb *dedes*. Some *dedes* assert that these directors at the institutions cause assimilation and disruption of Alevism by using their position as a tool to thrust themselves to the forefront instead of focusing on Alevism as a belief. Süleyman Metin Dede, who is from a village of Sivas, states his concerns about this issue:

In 1960s our villages started to be left. Everybody went to other cities because they didn’t have good economic conditions in villages. When they came (to Istanbul), their village lifestyle conflicted with the lifestyle in Istanbul. For instance, I came to Istanbul in 1964 but there were no *cemevis* or associations. There was no place that I could go. You either go to mosque

or stay away. People have assimilated quite much since 1960. People couldn't live their religion and its practices such as *cem* and *müsahtiplik*. In 1992, after Maraş and Sivas massacres, people were in search to do something. Associations were opened slowly. These associations were founded for representing religion but their founders don't know about religion because there was a huge break and *dedes* stayed in the background. Then, there was a need for reorganization and *cemevis* were founded. Now *cemevis* are under directorship of associations. Directors of associations don't have much knowledge about religious path or tradition but they use their position for political or economic interests. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 13)

Süleyman Metin Dede is not affiliated to any *cemevis* since he criticizes

cemevis and doesn't approve their practices as he explains:

I don't go. I haven't gone (to *cemevis*) after I left the CEM Foundation. I don't find appropriate things that are done at *cemevis*. I don't want to damage anyone's religion. For example, *semah* means being close with God. Well, we just bring a group of people for performing *semah*. For instance, *kapıcı* (doorman) is one of the twelve services in *cem* ritual but doesn't mean someone for closing or opening doors. You will open the doors for conversation during the *cem*. You will open such a conversation door, so that problems can be solved. So, what appears is different from the real meaning therefore I don't like it. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 14)

He thinks that Alevi practices were routinized without understanding inner meanings and religious philosophy behind symbols in Alevism. Twelve services in *cem* symbolize different meanings in Alevism as Süleyman Dede explained one of them. According to him rituals at *cemevis* are insufficient about conveying such real meanings embedded in Alevi rituals. Thus, preventing the main aim of grasping inner meanings which is the main aim in Alevi belief.

Another *dede* Mustafa Düzgün, who works at Kartal Cemevi, criticizes prominence of institution directors which he thinks damages the *dede's* authority and charisma as a spiritual leader:

Alevi don't practice their religion anymore in *cemevis*. Why? Because someone who doesn't know himself can't know God. In order to know God you should control yourself. People say I believe in God so I don't have to go to *cemevis* but the purpose of *cemevis* is bringing people together. If we don't

come together, it means we don't have a common ground. *Dedes* had a mission to bring people together. Now, we don't respect *dedes*. For instance, directors of institutions have higher positions than *dedes*. Only if directors want the *dede* can stay here (*at cemevi*). If they don't want it, the *dede* can't stay. However, when you look at Alevism, the *dede* has the highest position. Now, people will think if the *dede* takes order from institution directors why they should respect him. However, when you look at Sunnis, muftis have the highest authority. Even the governor of Istanbul has a lower position compare to the mufti of Istanbul. In fact, in also Alevism *dede* should be at the highest level. Therefore, we can't maintain unity in Alevism. *Dedes* and *ocaks* should be respected so that when they command, everybody can obey. The biggest mistake is that institution administrations perceive *dedes* as staff but *dedes* are spiritual leaders. There are Pir Sultan Abdal associations organizing visits to Pir Sultan Abdal's village in Sivas every year. However, the house where Pir Sultan was born is about to collapse. First of all, the associations should restore Pir Sultan Abdal's house. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 15)

As previously explained, becoming *dede* depends on one's lineage that is proven by *icazetnames*. Possession of other necessary qualifications such as charisma and knowledge in order to serve as *dede* depends on the approval of one's *pirs*, *murshids* and recognition of *talips* in traditional Alevism. However, there is a significant development that was brought by a branch of the CEM Foundation called Alevi Islam Religion Services (*Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri*) which organizes some seminars and meetings for Alevi religious leaders. Alevi Islam Religion Services has a certificate program for *dedes* which is designed to train them with courses about Alevism and religious leadership. At the end of this program successful candidates who passed written and oral exams are given certificates as proof of their qualification for serving as *dede*.

Significant amount of *dedes* among my informants attended to this certificate program of Alevi Islam Religion Services which I was informed about during the interviews. There is also another Alevi institution *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* (AABF, Germany Alevi Communities Federation) which has similar

kind of courses for *dedes* in Germany.¹²¹ Hasan Kaya Dede is one of the Alevi religious leaders who attended trainings of Alevi Islam Religion Services and got certificate as a proof of his qualification to serve as a *dede*. He talks about what kind of a training one should have to serve a *dede* as he states:

One can't become a *dede*, only can live it. One can't be solely trained for being *dede*. If someone is from sayyid lineage, it means that person is already *dede*. If he wants to learn and train himself, he should come to *dede* and learn from him. For serving as a *dede*, I always say that one should be very conscious. You should guide in the religious path. If you don't do it, you can't serve as a *dede*. Imam Cafer Sadik says: "If a *pir* doesn't show the right path, then *dedelik* is not permissible for him." Now, you come here and ask *dede* something, if he doesn't answer and guide you, his *dedelik* is deficient. He should equip himself with wisdom both in terms of *zahiri* and *batini* (ostensive and inner) meanings in Alevism. I used to work at Tekel. During that time, I went to trainings of Alevi Islam Religion Services for *dedes* at Yenibosna Cemevi for four years. There, *dedes* teach you and you can learn the things you don't know from them. At the end of the training, they give you a certificate. We take our certificates and then do what? We show it to strangers when they come and question our *dedelik* and lineage. If they don't believe that we are *dedes* and *sayyids*, then we don't have to explain anything and just show our certificate. If you have your certificate, they have no rights to criticize you. (Hasan Kaya, Appendix B, 16)

The *dedelik* certificate program is perceived both as an extra approval from an official Alevi institution and also as a chance to improve their knowledge of Alevism and *dedelik* by instructor *dedes* at these programs. This situation reinforces authority of Alevi institutions by giving them the power over approval of *dedelik* qualities of an *ocakzade*. Religious knowledge of Alevism and practice of *dedelik* that is learned from *dedes* and transferred throughout generations may have differences among *ocaks*. In other words, we can't talk about a systematized and uniform written source of traditional Alevism. Therefore, this kind of programs by

¹²¹ Dressler, "The Modern Dede," 283–84.

Alevi institutions may be considered as attempts for creating a systematized and uniform Alevism by training *dedes* and creating written materials for their use. Through these courses and published materials given to *dedes*, it is aimed to teach them how to conduct *cems*, funeral ceremonies and celebrate sacred days in a standardized order. Mustafa Düzgün Dede emphasizes how *cems* were standardized by attempts of the CEM Foundation as he states:

We had a big cem ritual in 2003 at Abdi İpekçi and all Alevi associations attended. We were about fifteen-sixteen thousand people. Then, *cemevis* were founded in different places like Okmeydanı, Bağcılar, and Bahçelievler where people slowly has started to come for worshipping. Since there were differences between religious practices of *dedes*, in 2002 a meeting was organized by the CEM Foundation's Alevi Islam Religious Services branch. There were about 1200-1300 *dedes* who were trained about how to conduct a uniform cem instead of performing different regional *cems*. A book was published giving information about conducting *cem* and twelve services in *cems*. After then, all *dedes* have started to conduct *cems* according to that book. It was good and they were successful. At that time, there weren't other associations but now they have increased. Organizations like Pir Sultan Abdal and Hacı Bektaş associations or others increased. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 17)

Despite the fact that some *dedes* have positive thoughts about such attempts to standardize Alevi rituals, some other *dedes* don't approve of these attempts. Therefore, there are different thoughts among the informants about standardization of Alevi rituals. Murat Kantekin is one of the *dedes* who criticizes such standardization efforts and states that these attempts are taken to reformulate an Alevism with its rituals similar to standardized Sunni Islam. He explains his ideas about re-formulation of Alevi rituals:

With urbanization you are not in an isolated environment but in an environment where people from different cultures and regions live together. In addition, you have concerns about making a living. Especially in the 1970s-1980s because of political conditions and migration to cities, some problems appeared in Alevism. In other words, there were problems in terms of transmitting and maintaining religion. With the assimilation and oppression of Alevis by the state, Alevism had to go through a re-formulation

which excluded traditional *dedelik* a bit. They tried to re-formulate Alevism by representing Alevism with ostensive meanings so that Sunnis could understand. For instance, *cem* rituals were standardized. However, every *ocak* have differences in the way they perform *cems*. Actually, these differences are our richness. We have a saying, “The path is one, and rites are one thousand and one.” Therefore, there may be different practices but the religious path is the same in Alevism. Standardizing *cems* caused losing our richness and stepping out of traditional Alevism. A new belief with standardized practices like in Sunni Islam was created. Through urbanization Alevism and the *dede* institution had to stay in the background in order to survive. In the 1970s and 1980s, traditional *dedelik* couldn’t be transferred to cities and this caused a gap. A kind of formalism has started to fill this gap when we couldn’t transmit traditional *dedelik* and its oral tradition which existed in villages. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 18)

Murat Kantekin is a thirty-three years old *dede* who graduated from university and now studies sociology as his second degree and works at the same time at a company. Although he was the youngest *dede* among my informants, he is quite aware of the traditional Alevism which he became familiar with in his village and was introduced by his own grandfather who trained him since his childhood as he states:

Since I was born in a village which is an *ocak* center, growing up I was always in *cem* rituals. Almost all families in our village are *dede* families. Most of them serve as traditional *dedes*. Besides my deceased grandfather was a very qualified *dede*... Since I grew up very close to him, I was always at *cems*. I didn’t learn *dedelik* from somewhere else. However, knowing traditional *dedelik* is not enough because in our era there are more expectations in terms of knowledge. In this regard, as far as I remember, I guess in 2005 for the first time in Turkey a training course was started in Karacaahmet. There were courses about both *dedelik* and history of Alevism. I went to that course which was under the coordination of our deceased teacher Cemal Şener. There we gained some academic knowledge. After that I have started to serve as a *dede*. Actually, I was already serving as *dede* before. A few times I had to serve because of conditions. Once I was thirteen, I served as a *dede*....During the time of bairam *cem*, my grandfather was called from Kocaeli suddenly and he had to go there. Therefore, I served as *dede* for the bairam *cem* when I was thirteen with the request of our *talips*. They wanted me to serve at that time so that I could also practice *dedelik*. Then, there is a very common tradition as performing *cem* for the ones who go to military service. We perform *cems* and sacrifice animal for people who go to the military service or come from it after completing their service. Once, there was a friend who was going to the military and I conducted *cem*

that time. Since then, now I'm thirty-two years old, I have been serving as *dede*. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 19)

With the advantage of his academic education in Istanbul and knowledge of Alevism instilled in him during his childhood, he has a very different profile from other informant. He is an example of young and modern *dede* with his knowledge of traditional Alevism that he was taught by his grandfather as well as his employment of sociological perspective as an analytical tool while discussing Alevism. His opinions and criticisms about Alevi institutions are in parallel with some other *dedes'* statements in terms of criticizing *cemevis* and Alevi institutions for conveying only *zahiri* meanings instead of *batini* meanings and values in Alevi rituals. Another point he emphasizes is standardization of Alevi practices by institutions through implementation of certificate programs and courses. In the trainings of institutions such as ADIH, a standard curriculum is presented to participants. These kind of standardization efforts derive from the need to represent Alevism like a uniform belief system with standardized rituals and traditions like Sunni Islam against criticisms. However, these attempts conflict with diverse nature of traditional values in *ocak* system.

According to the informants, some Alevi institutions try to adopt Sunni elements in Alevi prayers and rituals for not bothering Sunnis and making Alevism milder in order to get recognition by Sunnis. This perception is confirmed in some narratives of *dedes* as they put emphasis on some efforts to include Sunni elements in Alevism for getting accepted in the society. Murat Dede is one of the informants who underlines his perception on implementation of Sunni elements in Alevi rituals as he states:

Since Alevi were otherized especially after urbanization and also because of the Sunni minded government, Alevi had to adapt Alevism to the Sunni perspective. Therefore, they try to define the belief and religious practices in Alevism through Sunni motives. They try to show like we Alevi and Sunnis are very similar. Okay but in fact, Sunnism actually has rituals which don't look for inner meanings much. If you want to explain the Sufi belief, practices and traditions which are basis of Alevism in a Sunni perspective, you can only do it in a shallow way without giving deep meanings. Unfortunately, we see this shallowness about many subjects related to Alevism. Sometimes, I criticize some of my friends for reducing Alevism to a Sunni perspective. If you just perform *cem* as a plain ritual with its orders like praying, performing *semah* and finishing it, it's not just that. Actually, *cem* also includes social dynamics of Alevism. As I said previously, if you can't transmit the Sufi elements, deep meanings and the core belief in Alevism, there will be something missing. So, if you can't explain the connection between Imam Ali and God to people who attend *cem*, there will be something missing. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 20)

Since the institutions has become more effective in education of *dedes*, some informants who were educated according to the traditional Alevism don't approve of the way Alevi institutions train *dedes* today. Eighty-nine years old Kasım Yılmaz Dede who worked at Şahkulu Cemevi previously, criticizes especially unqualified younger *dedes* who were trained at Alevi institutions instead of being trained through a master-apprentice relationship in traditional Alevism.

Of course, I am better than the new generation of *dedes*. They learned from old *dedes* like me who stay in the background now, not from new *dedes*. I am old now. I am ninety years old. I learned in the past. New generation *dedes* didn't see *cem*s for forty-fifty years. They learned something from the CEM Foundation but I was trained in my childhood. Training at the CEM Foundation is different from the training in the past. In the past, someone who was not aware of himself and not forty-fifty years old, couldn't serve as a *dede*. Now, people who are twenty becomes *dede* and sits on the *post* (the place where *dedes* sit during *cem* rituals). (Kasım Yılmaz, Appendix B, 21)

While I was doing the interview in the *cemevi* director's room, the deputy director Hüseyin Taştekin who is also an *ocakzade* joined the conversation by approving of Kasım Yılmaz Dede's statement. Furthermore, he explained his opinion on the subject which Kasım Dede also agreed:

Kasım Dede is right. Anatolian Alevism passes to son from sayyid father but now people who are not sayyid are in the position of *dedelik*. Associations like the CEM Foundation stereotyped Alevism like Sunni branch of Islam. For instance, there is no opening of hands or giving reference to the Quran all the time. In Alevi terminology, we say Allah Allah instead of *amin* or *tığlama* instead of sacrificing. There is no death in Alevi terminology but we say *sırlama* instead. Therefore, Kasım Dede is right. Now, the new generation try to put Alevism in a different context to seem more acceptable to others. In the past *dedes* would learn from their fathers or grandfathers by observing during *cems*, visiting *talips* a few times in a year. *Dedes* in the past both learned from *talips* and taught them. Being *dede* is something like that because a *dede* has so many thing to teach his *talips* and learn from them. In the past, Alevism was under control in the path of real *erens* (*Alevi saints*). Today Alevism is not in the path of *erens*. Now, people who don't have *müşahip* becomes *dede*, whereas in the past they couldn't. Someone who didn't enter the *tarikât* (*tariqa*) level of Alevism, couldn't become a *dede* in the past. Now, everybody becomes *dede*. (Hüseyin Taştekin, Appendix B, 22)

Kasım Yılmaz: Absolutely, I put my sign under it.

As the conversation continued, another *dede* in the room joined and asked

Nuri Kaya: Didn't Alevis open their hands during praying to God?

Hüseyin Taştekin: We Alevis don't look for God in the sky. You don't oppose to me about these issues with the Sunni perspective of Islam. We see Ali in the sun and the Prophet Muhammad in the moon. There is no such thing in Sunni interpretation of Islam. We think of a tree on the top of a mountain as sacred and conduct *niyaz* (supplication) to it. We pray for the sun and its warmth. We don't look for God in the sky but in human. We see God in human. Dede you can't argue with me about these subjects. Mansur al-Hallaj was killed because he said "ana'l-haqq" (I am the Truth). Now we look for these values. Our Anatolian Alevism is different my dear Dede (Nuri Dede). Therefore, I one hundred percent agree with Kasım Dede. It is formalized. (Hüseyin Taştekin, Appendix B, 23)

Hüseyin Taştekin is from Tunceli, and he has been living in Istanbul since 1970s. He is called *dede* among the Alevi communities since he is sayyid from the *Ocak* of Kureyşan. He has been working at the administrative board of the *cemevi* since 1995. Hüseyin Taştekin's and Kasım Dede's narratives show that they are both critical of some new Sunni like practices in Alevism. On the other hand, Nuri Kaya emphasizes similarities between Sunni Islam and Alevism today as he states:

There are *dedes* in every *cemevis*. Everybody serves according to themselves. Day by day, *dedes* improve themselves. Now, at our *cemevis* the *Quran*, *Yasin*, *Fatiha* (suras of the Quran) are read. We have *sajdah* (prostrating), *tawhid* and *ihlas*. For instance, in the past when a Sunni came to *cem* and asked an Arabic verse from the Quran, the *dedes* used to hesitate since they didn't know Arabic but it's not like that anymore. Now, *dedes* are knowledgeable about the deep wisdom of the Quran. Recently, they said at mosques that "Alevi bring their corpses here but they don't perform *salaat* here." It is true that we use to take the corpse to mosques but nobody performed funeral prayers. However, there is no better deed than performing funeral *salaat*. Now, we conduct funeral *salaats* at *cemevis* and even Sunni clergymen say "The way you perform funeral *salaats* are more accurate than how we do." Because Alevism is the path of Haqq, Muhammad, Ali and it is *tarik-i mustakkim* (the true path). If we can maintain that path, the best path is Alevi's. For instance, they fast for thirty days and we respect. We fast for twelve days in month and three days for Hızır fast. We have *sajdah*, *tevhid*¹²², *ihlas*, and *yasin* in our *cems*. So, we have the same. They say Allahu Akbar and place their hands on their chests. On the other hand, we also say Allahu Akbar and put hands on our chests and pray. Then we prostrate on the ground. We maintain the order what Imam Ali set. Alevi are the ones who walk in the path of *Ahl al-bayt*, Haqq, Muhammad and Ali. (Nuri Kaya, Appendix B, 24)

Nuri Dede introduces himself as the assistant *dede* of the *cemevi* since he serves at funeral and sacrifice rites, and conducts cem rituals when the main *dede* of the *cemevi* is absent. Previously, he was trained and worked at the CEM Foundation before his service at Şahkulu Cemevi. He is a supporter of the CEM Foundation as he praises it for its contributions to the Alevi Society. On the other hand, Hüseyin Taştekin criticizes the CEM Foundation and similar associations for stereotyping Alevism and bringing some Sunni practices into Alevism. As it is seen, Hüseyin Taştekin criticizes Nuri Dede for his interpretation of Alevism from a Sunni perspective. Nuri Dede's emphasis on commonalities between Sunnism and Alevism can be interpreted as a kind of reaction to criticisms against unorthodox practices of Alevism and seeking for approval in the society which consists of mostly Sunni

¹²² *Tevhid* refers to Arabic sentence *Lâ ilâhe illallah* meaning the God is one and single.

Muslims. This kind of reactions seeking for approval were common in *dede* narratives as they tried to emphasize similarities between Sunni Islam and Alevism.

As narratives illustrate, there are different viewpoints among *dedes* about the interpretation of Alevism and adaption of Sunni practices. *Dedes* who are closer to the CEM Foundation, like Nuri Kaya, more likely to appreciate similarities between Sunni Islam and Alevism or standardization of Alevi rituals in contrast to traditional *dedes* like Kasım Dede who only has traditional education of Alevism. Moreover, there are also *dedes* who criticize Alevis seeking for approval of Sunnis such as Celal Çelik Dede. When I asked Celal Dede his thoughts about *dedes* in the present time, he explained some behaviors of Alevis he doesn't approve. His narrative unfolds pressures sometimes he experiences while he does his duty:

If you ask me, today we all practice *takiye* (dissimulation) when we face a difficult situation because we want to show ourselves to them (Sunnis) nice. For instance when *talips* invite to somewhere, we go to that place. The place, I went today was also very important. When I go, they say “*Dede* our neighbors are Sunni act and talk accordingly.” Then, why do you invite me! It means they still refrain from their neighbors. Then, I say don't refrain or be afraid of their neighbors, your path is the truth. Before I go, I tell my conditions and say “Look if you will prevent me to speak and say they are Sunnis, then don't invite me. Everybody knows my characteristic as outspoken and sharp-tongued. Therefore, I sometimes send Hüseyin (Özgöz) Dede instead of me. (Celal Çelik, Appendix B, 25)

Celal Dede's statement shows the difficult situation when his *talips* are not comfortable about openly practicing rituals or traditions of their religion. This kind of refrainment derives from the fact that Alevis had to disguise themselves, when they were outside of their communities in order to protect themselves. Celal Dede's experience illustrates how some Alevis are still not comfortable about openly practicing their religion and tradition or expressing their religious identity outside of their communities.

5.4 The end of the keramet era and the beginning of the marifet era

Another important topic in the narratives was *keramets* (miraculous deeds) of *dedes*. *Keramet* is seen as a favor from God to some *ocakzades* who are the fourth level of Alevi path *hakikat* where one has freedom to control the material world and was in contact with God. Not everyone can be given *keramets* by God but the ones who can be an *insan-ı kamil* (a perfect humanbeing in Sufism) can perform *keramets*. Stories about *keramets* are common themes of the narratives, when the informants talk about *dedes* in the past. Hüseyin Özgöz Dede's narrative reveals how stories of *keramets* are conveyed throughout generations:

We saw that many things our *dedes* told happened. Old women and men in the village say, "Dear, you were kids. You don't remember we lived these things." Some of them say "If we live and breathe today, it is because of your fathers and grandfathers." A man divorces his wife and he wants to bring a woman from another village. His wife goes to the tomb of my grandfather and begs "Oh saints, I take refuge in you. Please show your favor and don't let my husband to marry someone else." she says. Suddenly a hand approaches and gives her an apple and says "Daughter take daughter this is *lokma*¹²³ from my father. I give you a son. May God bless him." In a few days, they will go and bring the new bride from a far place so they make preparations. The woman gets sick suddenly and they took her to a doctor. Doctor says that the woman is pregnant. It is impossible that a woman over fifty can give birth. How can it be possible? That woman gives birth and her husband gives up his decision to marry someone else. He takes the other woman back to her home. Now, they have one children. The mother of the child always come here. They are *ocakzades* from their mother's side. (Hüseyin Özgöz, Appendix B, 26)

As *ocaks* has started to lose their previous power in today's Alevism, Alevi institutions try to replace this gap by producing new solutions for adapting Alevism to urbanization. However, weakening impact of *ocaks* and Alevi practices such as *müşahiplik* in cities are main concerns in *dede* narratives. With the increasing

¹²³ *Lokma* (literally bite) is food that is shared by participants during *cem* ritual.

urbanization and Alevi revivalism, *dedes* who wanted to serve as religious leaders in cities have to revise their concept of religious leadership. Because of the improved education facilities and easy access to information, general profile of Alevi society is different than Alevis in villages in the past. Therefore, today *dedes* need to adjust themselves to the qualifications and requirements for addressing educated and more critical Alevis today. Zeynel Tan Dede is one of the informants who highlights importance of knowledge as he emphasizes the end of the *keramet* era:

It was the time of *keramet* (miraculous deed) in the past but now it is the time of *marifet* (ability) in other words knowledge. In the past *dedes* had *keramets* such as lifting a heating stove. Now they should show the right path to *talips* with their wisdom. My brother, who died later, was asked to prove his *dedelik* by showing a *keramet*. Then, he lifted a heating stove. (Zeynel Tan, Appendix B, 27)

During the interviews, I usually heard the same statements from *dedes* emphasizing the end of the *keramet* era and the beginning of the wisdom era at the present time. Kasım Dede makes a similar statement about *keramets* as he says: “It was the period of *keramet* in the past but now it’s time of knowledge and science. For instance when a *dede* emotionalized, he would put his hand in boiling water and take out the meat in it for giving to people. They tell this but I didn’t see it.” (Kasım Yılmaz, Appendix B, 28) With this emphasis the informants underline the necessity of improving themselves intellectually in order to provide adequate guidance to their *talips*.

In traditional Alevism, since *talips* were rural people who barely finished primary school, the *dede*’s knowledge was enough to enlighten them about Alevism. However, in the contemporary world a religious leader must be aware of new sources and debates on Alevism, its history and religions in general to give adequate information to people as Murat Kantekin Dede clearly explains the reasons:

Dedes have maintained our path until this day. I don't have a chance to criticize them. However, in traditional *dedelik* there were some people who served as *dede* with conventional knowledge without improving themselves. They are exceptions. Our *dedes* paid too much price for serving as *dedes* by sparing their time between *dedelik* and their works such as farming and they went to villages for serving. They gave their time and effort. Today, you are in city and especially youth who come to *cemevis* are bombarded with questions by people following different faiths everywhere at school or on streets. Having academic education, youth expect answers for questions in their minds. As a *dede*, if you can't answer at least eight questions out of ten, that young person doesn't come to *cem* again. For keeping youth at *cems* so to speak, you should catch the era. So, we should prepare ourselves knowing that what kind of difficult situations youth are being through and what kind of questions they face. We should know these and position ourselves accordingly. By saying academic *dedelik*, I don't mention a *dede* with PhD but in today's conditions a perspective of *dedelik* should be adapted by foreseeing youth's problems and questions. Except that our traditional *dedes* maintained this faith despite oppressions. In fact, in the 1980s many politically activist youth entered *cems* and harangued *dedes* by claiming that they were exploiters. There were *dedes* who experienced these situations. They, old *dedes*, told about it. Once, I listened this story from a person who criticized *dedes*. As far as I remember, in a village of Amasya or Çorum he attended a *cem* and criticized the *dede*, harangued him about exploiting and deceiving people. Now, that person says if he finds that *dede* today he will kiss his hands and apologize to him. Actually, what the *dede* did was very difficult in the political atmosphere of the 1980s. Some brothers behaved *dedes* unfair partly because of the conditions leaving religion in the background at that time. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 29)

Today, *dedes* try to improve themselves through reading and attending seminars or conferences about Alevism. Most of my informants talked about how they improved their knowledge about Alevism by doing research and reading books besides what they had learned from their *dedes*. In other words, in contemporary Alevism *dedes* are able to use many facilities to improve and update their knowledge. The way they talk about history of Alevism illustrates that they read different historical or religious books about Alevism. Actually, some of *dedes* such as Binali Doğan and Süleyman Metin whom I interviewed with wrote their own books in which they give information about history, traditions and practices of Alevism.

Moreover, many of *dedes* interact with national and international researchers and students. For instance, during the interview Hüseyin Özgöz Dede talked about his connections with foreign researches from different countries such as Denmark. He showed his researcher friends on his social media account and stated; “There are many of them. Ida is from Denmark and others are American or English. Seven of them became Alevi. There is Alex who plays *bağlama* during *cems*. He studies at a university and comes here for his PhD research.” (Hüseyin Özgöz, Appendix B 30) Hüseyin Özgöz Dede who is fifty-three years old studies law and has a long history of studying and contributing in different fields;

From our fathers and grandfathers we’re all from the lineage of *evlad-ı resul*. We are from the *ocak* of Sultan Sinemilli on my father’s side and from the *ocak* of Ağuiçen on my mother’s side. I worked as an educator, translator and consultant for many years. I had academic experiences and education in different fields at universities. I studied at over five universities. In addition, since my childhood as a part of our tradition I have been interested in playing *bağlama*. I improved my *bağlama* skill in professional level. Then, I was trained by Arif Sağ at a professional level. After that, I studied at Istanbul Technical University and also had one year work at Boğaziçi University. There, I instructed students about *bağlama* and Alevi poems. There was also a professor from Mimar Sinan University and he gave Turkish music lessons in the next room. I had a student called İsmail and there was also Arzu (Öztürkmen). It has been years since I have heard from them. I mean, I don’t know how much they improved studies. I had at least 1600 students at the Resital Art Center and it is not possible to remember names of all students. I worked as a music instructor at seven schools in Tuzla. In addition, I am interested in literature and working on four book now. I am preparing a visual book about *bağlama* and *semah*. I’m also trying to write an informative book about *düşkünlük* in Alevism. I have a research about *erkan* (the rules or fundamentals) of Alevism. I prepare books about funeral services. I have been serving at Karacaahmet Sultan Cemevi for sixteen years. As a *dede* I train *semah* and *bağlama* instructors and also *zakirs* (person who plays saz in cem). Before, I had some works at the CEM Foundation. I worked as *dede* and instructor at Maltepe Kırklar Cemevi for two years. We have five branches of Karacaahmet Sultan Cemevi and I worked as instructor at these branches. I gave instructions on various subjects from funeral services to playing *bağlama*. Still, I continue here. (Hüseyin Özgöz, Appendix B, 31)

Some *dedes* are actively involved with Alevi organizations and also take role in foundation of these organizations in order to contribute to Alevism. They are aware of the fact that there is a different society that they have to address in today's culturally and scientifically developed environment that is quite different from the past. Despite the fact that Süleyman Metin Dede doesn't work at a *cemevi*, he trains young generations about Alevism and conducts cem rituals at different *cemevis* in Turkey or in abroad. When he talks about his engagements in Alevism, he doesn't want to define himself as *dede*:

It changed a little over time. For instance, in the past *dedes* used to travel by horse, then car and plane. I went to Europe and stayed there for a long time. Belgium, Switzerland, Netherland... I went to over 50-60 *cemevis* there. Here, at the CEM Foundation I worked as the general secretary of Alevi Islam and Religious Services. Now, I am the vice president at the Baba Mansur Association which we founded between 2004 and 2005. Since that day I work actively. Ever since I could remember, I have always worked seriously for Alevism. *Dedelik* is a different subject. My father has *talips*. I should prove myself and have *talips*. I mean I should do it like teaching at school. It is a serious subject. Everybody can be *dede* but being *pir* or *murshid* are different issues. When you decide to become *dede*, you should have talents. You should serve as a *dede* with those talents. I am a *dede* but I don't serve as a *dede*. I have to lead *müsahip cems* and look after *müsahips*. I should track them. I should be aware of four doors and forty stages of Alevism. Time has changed. It changes quickly. People look for more knowledge. Nobody cares much about honesty, Alevi path or *erkan*. I looked for these, asked and learned them. However, you only learn from your perspective. You can't learn something at the level of a *murshid*. Therefore, it is very difficult to control people here. At that time, it was better because people at least believed their *dedes*. They didn't go against the wishes of *dedes*. Now, even if you show verses of the Quran, they approach with suspicion. A *dede* can't serve for all Alevi. He should have his own *talips*. I said that I don't serve as *dede* but actually, we have a group of over twenty-thirty people. We have been providing training for three-four years. So, we live Alevism. We work hard for training youth according to *şeriat*, *tarikât*, *marifet* and *hakikat* and teaching them their meanings and also prayers. I can't call myself *dede* because somebody else should call me *dede*. Having no titles is important because everybody is equal. If you deserve that title, *talips* will give it to you as they call you *murshid*, *rehber*. If you don't deserve it, you get nowhere by calling yourself as so. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 32)

As he states, Süleyman Metin Dede worked for Alevi Islam Religion Services but he became uncomfortable about the institution and its activities after a while. Then, he founded Baba Mansur Association which belongs to Baba Mansur *Ocak*. Despite, his various activities and his religious guidance he doesn't want to call himself as *dede* since he perceives it as a highest position which requires lots of effort. The weakening of core elements of traditional Alevism such as *müsahtiplik* or control mechanism of *dedes* seems to affect his understanding about serving as *dede* today. He believes that without its traditional values it is not proper to call one as *dede*. He also adds that he attended some Alevism workshops which have been organized by the AKP government since 2008 as a response to Alevis' demands and a part of Turkey's EU accession process:¹²⁴

I attended the seventh workshop. The government organizes it. Minister Faruk Çelik was in charge. He invited *dedes*, writers and experts about this subject to this panel. It was about the issues such as Alevi rights, what can be done for Alevi rights, what is Alevism and what is *dede* but they used this for pulling votes. They didn't give any rights. There has been no progress. For instance, all *cemevis* are illegal. None of them are legal. So, they have no formality. Culture is a different thing, it is temporary. For instance, in the past in villages the land was cultivated with plough right? Then, they had horses and then tractor. That culture is temporary and it can change by time but the belief is fixed and it can't change. Therefore, it is not right to call it culture. We have a belief and a culture in our belief. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 33)

We can say that *dedes* are also active in the political workshops about Alevism but they consider it as an insignificant effort since results of these workshops were disappointing for Alevis. Celal Çelik Dede, who attended these

¹²⁴ For more information about Alevi Openings see Özkul, "Alevi 'Openings' and Politicization of the 'Alevi Issue' During the AKP Rule," 80–96; Soner and Toktaş, "Alevis and Alevism in the Changing Context of Turkish Politics: The Justice and Development Party's Alevi Opening," 419–34.

workshops, is disappointed about results as he says; “There are many books (about Alevi workshops). I checked one of them and then threw over there. I think they are meaningless. I only attended a meeting once and didn’t go again because I think it is useless. They don’t care about your ideas.”(Celal Çelik, Appendix B, 34)

Like Süleyman Dede, many other Alevi *dedes* are still quite mobile since they go abroad or different cities of Turkey with invitation of their *talips* for conducting *cem*. This proves that despite the fact that the authority of *dedes* weakened and *talips* migrated to different cities or countries, still the traditional bond between *talips* and *dedes* are protected partially. For instance, some narratives show that the role of the *dede* as a mediator in solving conflicts still continues in a few rural Alevi communities as Murat Kantekin Dede narrates:

It is shaken (authority of *dedes*). During the period of traditional *dedelik*, in the past, the *dede* used to visit villages maybe for 15-20 days or one month. He conducted *cems*, solved problems, if there were any and then he used to leave. For the next eleven months, even if there were problems among villagers, they waited for the *dede*’s visit. For example, if there was a problem about land between people, they used to say “Wait, the *dede* will come in three or four months. Then we can talk about this during *cem* and solve it. The *dede* had an authority there. Today, people try to solve their problems among themselves or if they don’t like the *dede*’s verdict, they go to the court. In the past, it was not like this. The *dede*’s word had an influence. Today’s conditions has pushed people into individualism. In the past, there was a communal lifestyle and people used to act according to common motives. They had authority which belonged to for instance the *dede* or the village headman. Now, people may not listen to *dedes* in some cases when they don’t even listen to their fathers. Since current conditions has made the society, not only Alevis, individualist and ended the communal life style, there is not much of that authority but still there is some. I mean we live it. A few years ago, one of our *talips* in Tokat had a problem about land border. They called my father and he went to Tokat from Istanbul. There he talked with the villagers and they found a solution. So, if they call me, I go too. If a family has some heritage issues, the *dede* institution functions in such cases even if it is tried to be damaged. Maybe not like one hundred years ago but the *dede* still has an authority in community. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 35)

Although some *dedes* try to maintain traditions of their *ocaks* by serving to their *talips* and conducting *görgü cems*, migration highly affected connection between *dedes* and *talips*. Süleyman Metin Dede explains how *dede* and *talip* relationship is affected from migration and transformation:

The control has gradually increased. For example, in the village everybody knows each other. Therefore, in *cems* it is asked that “If you spilled something, fill it and if you broke something fix it.” You are in the *dar* position (the position of being judged). You come in the presence of the *dede*. You put together your feet and hands are on your chest. It means that you are not doing wrong. Then, the *dede* says “If you spilled something, fill it or if you broke something, fix it.” What does it mean? If you were unfair to someone, recompense and if you broke someone’s heart, fix it. For attending *cem*, everybody should have each other’s blessings. If one person doesn’t approve someone, there won’t be *cem*. If people say *Allah eyvallah*, it means, they give their blessing to each other. If some says s/he is willing, that means that person has a problem with someone else. Then, both sides are invited to arena. They explain their complaints honestly. After that, *dede* gives a verdict and reconciles them. Then, *cem* is performed. Here, that is not possible. For example, my father could come to an agreement with his *talips* but he wouldn’t do it with everyone. Because, he didn’t know if some of them broke somebody’s heart or deceived people. That time, he could only conduct sharia *cem* with the people he doesn’t know. However, if there were people whom he knew, he would conduct further level *cems* with them. There wasn’t any *cemevis* here. You can have at most twenty people at a house. However, you need to bring together one hundred- two hundred people. There is no such place and facility. The government doesn’t let it. For example, until the recent years it was a blame to use the word Alevi. I mean, you couldn’t found an Alevi association. For example, the CEM Foundation was found as Republican Education Foundation (*Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim Vakfı*). The word *cem* was banned at that time. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 36)

Difficulty of controlling *talips* was one result of this transformation as it is often mentioned in narratives. Additionally, foundation of *cemevis* brought another result as prominence of *cemevi* names instead of *ocaks*’ names when referring to a specific *dede*. In other words, since the authority was taken by Alevi institutions, *dedes* are mostly referred with the name of the *cemevi* where they serve instead of

the name of their *ocaks*.¹²⁵ Since population is quite mixed in metropol, *dedes* don't only serve to their own *talips* but also all Alevi who comes to *cemevis*. We can see this transformation from *ocak dedes* to *cemevi dedes* in the narratives. Zeynel Tan Dede's statement reveals how he interprets this transformation:

I don't visit my *talips* for conducting *görgü cems*. Well, mainly people at this *cemevi* are our *talips*. Actually, let's say that we are the *pir* of the whole Umraniye now. Well, we are accepted so but we also respect the *ocak dedes*. Everybody has an *ocak* which they are affiliated to but in general since we see *talips* at *cemevi* now, we are their *pirs*. (Zeynel Tan, Appendix B, 37)

Another significant subject in the interviews is perception of the informants about *dedes* they observed in their childhood and today. When they talk about *dedes* in the past with praise and respect as spiritual leaders of traditional Alevism, on the other hand, they are mostly critical of people who serve as *dedes* but are not *sayyid*. According to them being *sayyid* is the first but not the only condition of becoming *dede* since a *dede* should pay attention to his spiritual and intellectual growth at the same time. Veysel Kara Dede explains his concerns about *dedes* at the present time as he states:

I want to think good things but there are many issues that I am sad about. They don't dedicate themselves to the path. There are some people who serves as *dede* for their own interests. Therefore, there are fake *dedes* and *sayyids*. Some people for whom *dedelik* is illicit has started to sit in the position of *dedes* and most of *sayyids* agreed with them. Why? Because those fake *dedes* promoted themselves very well. In Germany or Turkey, people said they should serve as *dede* because they are knowledgeable. However, the Quran gives as the message about this subject but we don't see messages which doesn't serve to our interests. In the Quran it says, "I will create human in the world a caliph for the world among them." The caliphs for the world are prophets and saints. It says, "Obey them and grovel to them. The Satan was very smart but he didn't obey God's rule. Therefore, God cursed them. Now this message should be conveyed like this, "Curse people who doesn't show you the right path or promote themselves without deserving *dedelik*,

¹²⁵ Yaman, "Alevilerde Dedelik ve Dede Ocakları," 193.

don't go to their gatherings. Imam Cafer-i Sadık says in his *buyruk*, "If you grovel in front of someone who you know that are not sayyid, your worship includes polytheism. Don't ever believe them, even if you see them flying. (Veysel Kara, Appendix B, 38)

The education of future *dedes* is also a problematic issue today since there is not any formal institution funded by the government. Financial obstacles push some Alevi associations or *cemevis* to prepare programs for *dede* candidates. However, according to the informants, it is not only the training but also employment of *dedes* afterwards is also problematic without financial sources. Mustafa Düzgün Dede thinks that there are many obstacles for training people to become equipped *dedes*:

The *dede*'s work is not like in the village. In the village, the *dede* works on his land and makes a living but here you don't have a land to cultivate. Here you look to *talips* and if *talips* don't have anything to give, what will *dede* do here? Firstly, associations should have conditions to support *dedes*, *zakirs*, and *hocas* there. Now, people say, "Dede, take a university graduate and train him." I say, "Okay but then you give him salary." A university graduate won't work for a salary below three or five thousand liras. You give the salary and I train a university graduate young person. He should know about technology, computer and addressing to the public and serving to them. Pay his insurance and salary, then he will work. Why not? He graduated from university. I come here because I'm retired. Why would I come here, if I wasn't retired? I would go to work to make a living. Then, some group of people comes up, and says "Our *dede* doesn't take money. The *dede* used to cultivate land in the village. Why I didn't come here before? Because I had to work. I have four children. I need to educate them. They have needs, clothes. That was village, here is city. You can't consider village and city as equal. It is necessary for someone to be *sayyid* in order to work at *cemevis* as a *dede*. Secondly, it is necessary to improve yourself. A *dede* is supposed to be someone who is accepted by society, maintains traditions and serves to people with his knowledge as an honest person. So, in this way he can guide society. They (Sunni religious officers) graduate from the faculty of theology. Is there any faculty that you can study? Is there an institution of Alevism? There isn't. How will you train *dedes*? First, this issue should be dealt with. Then, there should be an education institution. *Dedes*' children and *zakirs* will be educated there. We need money to do that. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 39)

As it is seen, financial aspect is highly influential in terms of serving as *dede*.

As previously elaborated in the narratives, most of *dedes* wait for their retirement in

order to fully devote themselves to religious leadership. Mostly, children of *dedes* are not interested in becoming *dede* since they have to work on their career to make their living. In narratives, *dedes* put emphasis on how this situation makes them more vulnerable and they ask for a solution such as an institution funded by government to educate *dede* candidates.

This chapter shows *dedes'* subjectivities on various debates about the *dede* institution. There are major concerns of *dedes* about the effects of transformation such as weakening of the *dede's* authority, meaning of being *dede* today and changed parameters of becoming *dede* in contemporary Turkey. In general, they feel anxious about the future of the *dede* institution because of the lack of strong and adequate attempts to protect it by providing education and financial sources for training qualified *ocakzades* as religious leaders. Their major complaints are about unqualified and non-*ocakzade* people who serve as *dede*. Additionally, they are aware of the fact that with the transformation of Alevism *dedes* need to adjust themselves to developments and update themselves intellectually by using various facilities which were not available in the past. Moreover, they believe that traditional Alevism should be protected while adapting it to the present conditions in cities. Another issue they are concerned about is inefficiency of Alevi workshops that were organized by the government. They feel that their ideas and suggestions were not paid attention by the government as it is seen from the results of these workshops. Moreover, they think some directors of institutions try to promote themselves which they believe harms Alevi belief. It is important to note that despite the weakened authority of *dedes* and practice of traditional Alevism, *dedes* are still respected in the Alevi society. They also try to contribute for maintenance of traditional values in the

re-formulation of Alevism by communicating with Alevis and involving in activities such as meetings, writing books or training youth at *cemevis* or Alevi associations. There are many other subjects such as their perspectives and observations about the past and identity in Alevi society which are significant points that should be examined further in the narrative.



CHAPTER 6

REPRESENTATION OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY

IN THE *DEDE* NARRATIVES

According to Jan Assmann cultural memory preserves the knowledge which creates a sense of belonging to a particular group. It has its fixed points as fateful events of the past, who memory is preserved through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).¹²⁶ In the narratives, there are certain fixed points that are repeated and related to the contemporary situation of Alevis. These fixed points or events also shape Alevi identity by giving a shared past and meaning constituting identity.

In this chapter I will argue how Alevi identity and memory is represented in *dede* narratives. By doing this, firstly I would like to emphasize the multiplicity and fluidity of identities. As mentioned previously, Alevis have multiple of identities depending on the context in which identity is represented. The representation of Alevi identity in the narratives is only restricted by the present context of my informants. In other words, they don't represent merely the perception of a single fixed Alevi identity. As Assmann states "Memory is knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a

¹²⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 129.

cultural and religious tradition.”¹²⁷ Therefore, I will examine how Alevi identity is reconstructed within cultural memory of Alevis.

6.1 Sites of memory

In the narratives, some of the informants talked about objects or places as “*lieux de memoire*”, sites of memory, that embody memory and the past of Alevi communities.

Pierre Nora emphasizes significance of *lieux de memoire* as he states:

These *lieux de memoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world-producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past. Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders—these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity. It is the nostalgic dimension of these devotional institutions that makes them seem beleaguered and cold—they mark the rituals of a society without ritual; integral particularities in a society that levels particularity; signs of distinction and of group membership in a society that tends to recognize individuals only as identical and equal.¹²⁸

These *lieux de memoire* in the narratives were objects and places which have spiritual values and different stories belonging to Alevi *ocaks*. They transmit and preserve cultural memory of Alevis by reminding their past and binding them together. In general, these sites of memory were objects such as swords, scepter or places such as *ocaks*. This sites of memory are very important in traditional Alevism, there are still some traditional Alevis going to visit these places or see these objects

¹²⁷ Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 115.

¹²⁸ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 12.

for their respect to these sites of memories. Besides, they believe in spiritual power of these sites of memories which are not only reminder of the past but also holy legacies left by Alevi *dedes*. Veysel Kara Dede talked about the *Ocak* of Baba Mansur which was named after *pir* of the *ocak* Sayyid Baba Mansur. According to the narratives, Baba Mansur lifted and moved a wall from its place as a sign of his *keramet*. Veysel Kara states that there are still some remnants of that wall around the *ocak* of Baba Mansur which the community wants to restore today:

In Mazgirt's Muhundu district, its new name is Darikent, there we have the *ocak* of Sayyid Baba Mansur. There is a wall which is said to be moved by Baba Mansur and damaged both during Ottoman times and Turkish Republic period in 1938. Even, people who tried to destroy that wall are said to be turned to black color and died. At that time nobody could destroy that wall but it exists partially now. Hopefully, we will restore it. Some parts of it was covered by concrete. They say it is that wall but there are old wooden masts which are ornamented and carved. Most of the stone epigraphs were taken from there during Ottoman times. I feel very lucky since both my mother's and father's sides are from the *Ocak* of Baba Mansur. My uncle Mehmet during his service as the headman of village (*muhtar*), found some of the stones which belong to the wall in Diyarbakır and Van. He is not alive anymore, He brought those stones but according to him, there are seventy-two or eighty-two stones are missing. When military raided the village, they destroyed our stone epigraphs which were almost erased. There are still some of those stones in front of the *ocak* of Baba Mansur in Muhundu. (Veysel Kara Appendix B, 40)

Like Veysel Kara Dede, Hüseyin Özgöz Dede also mentioned a sword and a scepter which are important objects that have been protected as legacies of their ancestors. He states:

For instance at our house there was a snake. It was also called *ziyaret*. It wasn't killed. At home we have a scepter which was one of those given during the time of the prophet. We have kept it. There is also a sword we have kept. My father put it in mud brick walls. Every Thursday, he used to light a candle, pray and put some milk and *lokma* there saying that the snake would come and eat that *lokma*. It is said that the snake used to come and drink milk and then go. In the night, my mom told me to go and check the milk if it was spilled around. I told mom that the wall turned to a color like fluorescence green. If there was a *ziyaret* the wall turned to green. In the

morning it was chalky white but in the evening it was very green. There was a scepter which was given to the *ocak* of Sinemilli from the time of the prophet Muhammad. There is also one that was given to the *ocak* of Ađuiçen. We have the one that belongs to Sinemilli... There was another sword that belonged to our relatives. My aunt's husband is from the *ocak* of Cemal Abdal. They have a house close to my grandfather's tomb. At the time of military raid everything was collected such as guns or knives from houses. At those times, soldiers went to their house asked what they have at the house. Their daughter in law was scared and said that they had a sword as a family heirloom. The lieutenant heard her and told her to bring that sword. When soldiers saw the sword and writing on it as "*La fata illa Ali la saif illa zulfikar.*"¹²⁹ They saw a piece of precious emerald on it which survived through centuries. Then the soldier cried and castigated the woman for not preserving it and said "God damn you, why you didn't hide it!" Then, lieutenant took it and put in the archives of the General Staff. (Hüseyin Özgöz, Appendix B, 41)

Ziyaret means sacred places that can be a tomb, mountain, river or a sword that are hidden in a wall as Hüseyin Özgöz Dede explains. In his narrative, he also explains that they believed a snake in their house came to the wall and ate the *lokma* they left there. According to him, this interesting belief that the snake visited the wall was also a *ziyaret*. In Alevism, when people go to *ziyarets* they light candles, pray, perform *cem* ritual and offer sacrifices. These *ziyarets* are related to mythical stories related to Alevi saints. For instance, in Tunceli as *ziyaret* Alevis go to a mountain which was named after an Alevi sayyid Düzgün Baba. As Ali Dede mentions, Alevis go to Düzgün Baba Mountain perform *cems* and offer sacrifices. The story of Düzgün Baba has been conveyed throughout generations by Alevis orally. Ali Düzgün Dede, who obviously took his name after Düzgün Baba tells the story of him and his *keramet* as he states:

We used went up Düzgün Baba (Mountain) on foot. Düzgün Baba is son of Hacı Kureyş. His real name is Şeyh Haydar. In the coldest month of winter he

¹²⁹ "*La fata illa Ali la saif illa Zulfikar*" means, "There is no hero except Ali and no sword greater than *Zulfikar*." in Arabic. *Zulfikar* is the legendary sword of İmam Ali.

brings animals to the mountain to graze. When he hits branches of trees, they turn to green and animals eat them. His father comes to see what animals eat. He follows them and sees that Şeyh Haydar hits the trees with the stick in his hand and trees turn to green. There, one of the goats sneezes and then Şeyh Haydar says; “Did you see Hacı Kureyş?” When he turns back, he sees his father. Then, he rises to the air from there. After a few days, his father tells a few people to go and find his son. A few people goes to the mountain and see that he is in the Forties’ *Cem (Kırklar cemi)*. They come back and say that his place is *düzgün* (smooth or correct). Then his name becomes Düzgün. (Ali Düzgün, Appendix B, 42)

In this story about Düzgün Baba, which is narrated especially among Alevi communities from Dersim, Düzgün Baba rises into the sky because he feels ashamed of calling his father with his name. Then, he is seen in the Forties’ *Cem (Kırklar Cemi)* which is an Alevi religious myth related to the narrative about the prophet Muhammad’s visit to the congregation of Ali and the Forty Holy People (*Kırklar*) consisting of *Ahl al-bayt* and other people close to them. Actually, cem ritual as a worship (lit. congregation or gathering) symbolizes this mythical event.

According to Assmann, cultural memory is preserved and transmitted by specialized carriers of memory in both literate and oral societies and mediated in texts, icons, dances, rituals and variety of performances.¹³⁰ Since there are not enough written sources about stories of Alevi saints and *ocaks*, *dedes* are the main carriers in transmission of these stories to the next generations. In the narratives most of them gave information about history of their *ocaks* and saints which were conveyed orally through generations. Some *dedes* also wrote books which comprehend various topics about Alevism. Two of my informants, Süleyman Metin Dede and Binali Doğan Dede gave me their books as a gift, and Binali Doğan told

¹³⁰ Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory,” 114-117.

me that I can find the answers of all the questions I asked him in his book. Dressler argues that the *dede*'s role as the main source of Alevism was taken by non-*dede* Alevi and organizations which provide social and cultural services.¹³¹ This is true to a large extent but still some *dedes* try to share their knowledge with public through their personal efforts. Today, stories about lives of saints and many other information about Alevi traditions are also transmitted by institutions such as; *cemevis* and associations. These institutions organize visits to important places as sites of memories such as tombs of Alevi saints, *ocak* or places where stories narrated about Alevi saints believed to take place in the past.

Keeping up with the times, many Alevi institutions use online technology such as their own websites or social media as tools for transmitting information to people. In this sense, it is evident that internet has become a mediator for cultural memory of Alevi. In these websites or social media accounts of institutions, *dedes*, academicians or amateur researchers publish texts giving information about different kind of topics such as religious tradition, history of Alevi *ocaks* and Alevi saints. For example some of my informants like Süleyman Dede and Veysel Dede published some of their essays on the website of their *ocak*.

6. 2 Major historical events in memory of Alevi

Alevi identity is represented as a form of resistance in the narratives. It exists through its opposition to oppressions throughout centuries. The common point in the narratives was that existence of Alevi identity derives from the struggles and strong

¹³¹ Dressler, "The Modern Dede," 276.

resistance of Alevi throughout the centuries. Memory of suppressive and bloody events were often referred to as common markers of cultural memory which created sense of belonging to Alevi identity among sharers of these memories. The cultural values that were shared in Alevi identity revolve around a common past of resistance, Turkish nationality and Alevism that is perceived as the core of Islam.

It is evident that we can't separate construction of Alevi identity from history and politics of Islam and the Ottoman State. The conflict between the state and Alevi which was caused by their closeness to Shah Ismail and the nature of non-Sunni and esoteric religion shaped the historical consciousness and identity of Alevi. Narratives reveal the perspectives of *dedes* about Alevi as the victims of the state during the Ottoman Empire. There are two historical figures dominant in the cultural memory of Alevi one is Yavuz Sultan Selim who suppressed Kizilbash-Alevi and the other one is Sultan Mahmud II who closed down the Bektashi lodges in 1826. Erzade Yıldız Dede's statement shows a common conception about Yavuz Sultan Selim in the narratives:

Our history (the *Ocak* of Hubyar Sultan) and lineage goes back to 1500s but after that there is no record. Why? Because Yağız, not Yavuz, means savage... Yağız (Yavuz) Sultan Selim destroys Alevi's written sources not only in Anatolia but even in Egypt. He goes to Egypt and deports Alevi-Bektashi saints from there. He brings over two thousand *ulemas* (Muslim theologians) to here and creates a new religion with their fatwas (Islamic religious law). He brings caliphate. Today, in the Republic of Turkey there is caliphate. In the period of Atatürk, caliphate was put aside but in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey there is a place for caliphate. Today, they try to bring caliphate but I hope enlightened people won't let it. (Erzade Yıldız, Appendix B, 43)

In the narratives, when informants talk about oppression of Alevi, they usually start from the struggles of Alevi in the Ottoman Empire. When Süleyman Metin Dede explains the reason behind his family's migration from Tunceli to Sivas,

he explains it as a result of oppressions Alevis were exposed to during the reign of Mahmud II:

In 1800s, during the events at the time of Mahmud II, huge persecutions to assimilate Alevism were experienced in Tunceli. Mahmud II abolished guild of janissaries. He closed all Alevi-Bektashi lodges and gave them to Naqshbandis. Since they killed or did every kind of cruelty to remaining sensible *dedes*, they left that region. They came to Kangal (district of Sivas) settled in mountainous areas where it was difficult for the government to reach them. They came to those areas because of oppressions of Mahmud II. Still our village is in that region. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 44)

As it is seen tension between the Ottoman State and Alevis is a common topic in the narratives. Moreover, there is a continuation of the struggle of Alevis since the Karbala incident is often emphasized in the narratives. When it comes to the history of Alevis during the Ottoman Empire, Alevi *dedes* are very critical of the policies of the state against Alevis. However, when it comes to the Koçgiri (1921) and the Dersim rebellions (1937-38) they are not as critical of the state as in the previous events. Like Mehmet Divaneoğlu, they are more likely blame Kurdish-Alevi rebels who revolted against the state for gaining autonomy or some people from military who misused their service:

If we go into the Koçgiri rebellion neither you nor I can handle that issue. The Koçgiri rebellion is persecution of Alevis. I tell it frankly, they persecuted us. Excuse me but they tarnished our honor. Let's don't go into that subject. Never mind. If we talk about it, we get in trouble. There is no need to talk about it. Do you know who the main actors of the Koçgiri tribe are? Baytar Nuri, Alişer Bey and I won't tell the name of the other one. If I tell they will beat us here. I'm not going to talk about it. They are British spies and enemies of Alevis. At the time of Topal Osman, they all collaborated and brought the end of Alevis. At those times, leaders of that region exploited poor people. They persecuted people. My deceased father used to narrate that when he was twelve years old, they took people and executed them by shooting. It was such a rebellion. Their aim was eradicating *Ahl-al bayt*. They are Yazid. They didn't kill Sunnis but Alevis. There are ten Sunni villages in İmranlı (District of Sivas) but they didn't touch any of them. They revolted in Alevi villages. (Mehmet Divaneoğlu, Appendix B, 45)

Furthermore, Mehmet Divaneoğlu Dede explains his thoughts about another traumatic event the Dersim rebellion in the memory of Alevi that took place in 1937-38. He states:

Who is Seyid Rıza? I didn't want to go into that subject. There was Seyid Rıza. I respect him. The person that we talk about (the leader of the Dersim rebellion), you made me talk about it and now I'm telling. Seyid Rıza, the spy we are talking about now, who was from Nazmiye village of Tunceli was not a sayyid or Alevi. He was named after a sayyid. In fact, he was an Armenian. At that time, Armenian children were not living long after birth. Therefore, they call Seyid Rıza to pray for the new born child since he is a sacred person. Seyid Rıza goes and prays for the child and then tells his parents to give his name Rıza, not Seyid, to the baby. Therefore, his name comes from there. (Mehmet Divaneoğlu, Appendix B, 46)

As seen, Mehmet Dede blames actors of the Koçgiri and Dersim rebellions for being British spies. On the other hand, according to him Seyid Rıza in the Dersim rebellion was originally an Armenian. By attributing otherized identities to the main actors in these rebellions, Mehmet Dede tries to prove that Alevi have no connection with those rebellions against the unity of Turkish nation and the authority of the government. Mehmet Dede was quite hesitant when he was talking about his real thoughts and details about the Koçgiri and Dersim rebellions because he was nervous that relatives of these leaders who took role in these events would react to his interpretation. He also thought that I could get in trouble, if I mention these rebellions and their leaders in my thesis. His unwillingness to talk about this issue illustrates how deep these memories and fears of unfortunate events at the time of previous generations ingrained in his mind.

Ali Düzgün Dede who was born in 1930 in Tunceli and witnessed the 1938 Dersim rebellion was unwilling to talk about bitter experiences he lived in the past. Despite my persistence on learning his experiences, he didn't want to talk much about the traumatic event. He doesn't go into details of the traumatic event he and his

family experienced in his narrative, perhaps he doesn't want to revive bitter memories by talking about them:

Those issues are very bitter and can't be expressed. I had six brothers and two sisters. We came to the west, Tekirdağ Malkara. My sister died there (Tekirdağ). My other siblings also died. We are now three siblings. Therefore, that event is very bitter. I can't talk about it. I am a *dede* and a sayyid. So, someone else can tell it. We had been through so many things like starvation and fatigue in nine years. My father was old, and couldn't work. My siblings were little. The government helped for one year by giving land and food. Between 1947 and 1948, an amnesty was granted and we turned back to Tunceli with my six siblings and parents. When we came, I was seventeen. I got married. We cultivated lands and visited *talips*. After my father, *dedelik* passed on to me. (Ali Düzgün, Appendix B, 47)

Veysel Kara Dede's explanation on the incidents of Koçgiri and Dersim are in parallel with Mehmet Divaneoğlu's interpretation as seen in the following statement:

The Koçgiri rebellion is actually a destruction plan. You know Koçgiri was called Koçuşağı in Tunceli. There was an effort to eliminate the Kocuşağı tribe. You know who oppressed the Koçgiri right? Topal Osman. Who is Topal Osman? He is from a Sunni family from Giresun. I said before, there was even a spy with Seyid Battal Gazi¹³² who served to Umayyad dynasty. They transferred this mission throughout generations. It was a plan for destroying Koçuşağı. It didn't happen at the time of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It was before the Republican era. As far as I know, he was in Trablusgarb. Topal Osman was supposed to oppress gangs. Despite the fact that there is not exact documents about Koçgiri now... Do you know Zazas? Zazas had a pasha whose village is close to ours. His name was Murat. He says to the Koçgiri tribe, "You start the rebellion against the Ottoman State, I will back you up." He brings Topal Osman to the region and then he retreats. The Koçgiri tribe stands alone. At that time, there was Alişer who supported Seyid Rıza later. There are even songs written for Alişer. He had hostility towards Atatürk. In fact, Atatürk was Alevi and sayyid. Even Şah İsmail saw in his dream and foretold Mustafa Kemal's coming to Anatolia. Hopefully, someday I can show you that book which mentions this. (Veysel Kara, Appendix B, 48)

¹³² A mythical Muslim saint and warrior who lived in Anatolia in the eight century and he is said to be Alevi.

According to his statement Veysel Kara Dede interprets the Koçgiri rebellion as a plan to destroy Alevis. He thinks Koçgiri rebellion is planned by the commander Topal Osman who was indeed sent to the Koçgiri region by Atatürk to stop conflicts there. However Topal Osman who was a Sunni spy went further by collaborating with local Kurdish leaders who were also enemies of Atatürk and destroyed Alevis. Here, Atatürk who was the head of armies and the government at that time is not seen responsible for these events. He is also glorified as sayyid in the narrative. There is not enough historical evidence to support Veysel Dede's claims neither on the misuse of service by Topal Osman or any collaboration between him and Kurdish leaders. Additionally, there is no accurate evidence indicating Atatürk's sayyid lineage. However, besides this information's reliability and validity, this narrative tells us how Alevi identity is constructed in mind of the informant. Topal Osman who destroyed Alevis is represented as a Sunni spy like the ones serving in the Umayyad dynasty, on the other hand, his collaborators are represented as Zaza-Kurdish leader who is the enemy of Atatürk. This picture gives us the construction of Alevi identity as Turkish, politically secular and Kemalist versus Sunni and Kurdish spies betraying Atatürk and killing Alevis. He further mentions the dream of Shah Ismail about Atatürk which he read from a book. It is evident that his sources of knowledge are written from an extreme perspective that is mostly groundless in terms of evidence and exaggerated with the effect of the nationalist interpretation of Alevi history.

The glorification of Atatürk is very prominent in the narratives of *dedes*. Moreover, whenever I visited *cemevis*, I always encountered a portray of Atatürk sometimes situated next to portrays of important figures in Alevism such as Imam

Ali or Hacı Bektaş Veli in the room of *cemevi* directors or *dedes*. I often asked, directly or indirectly, the meaning and the place of Atatürk in Alevi society. The answers of my informants were similar as they all respected and glorified Atatürk in their narratives as it can be seen in Murat Kantekin Dede's statement:

In the Ottoman Empire after Yavuz Selim, Kanuni Sultan is the leader who mostly slaughtered. During the times of Yavuz Selim and Kanuni, Alevi were increasingly killed. Actually, Mahmud II ordered a more serious slaughter. He burnt all written documents. Destroyed libraries and hanged *dedes*. So, he destroyed Alevism in terms of its institutions. For me the real slaughterer was Mahmud II. Yavuz and Kanuni killed but Mahmud II killed more Alevi than they did. Therefore, Alevi were lying on the ground with a knife that was put on their throats. With the Republic, Atatürk removed the knife from their throats and then eliminated those who got Alevi on the ground. However, Alevi were still lying on the ground. They couldn't stand up. When they wanted to stand up for a few times, they got in trouble and couldn't get up. Now, they don't have a knife on their throats and there is nobody getting them on the ground but they are still on the ground. This is the reason why Alevi love Atatürk. He saved Alevi from massacres of the Ottoman Empire. Weren't Alevi massacred after that? Yes but Alevi don't consider Atatürk individually as responsible for those massacres. The Dersim process was very harsh. The real massacre happens after the second Dersim operation. None of the states would tolerate movements against their authorities and slaughter their own citizens. This happened in Dersim. The government preferred to kill instead of stopping the rebellions who rejected its authority. However, that wasn't Atatürk's mistake. Therefore, today everybody in Dersim region people over at the age of sixty, including people who witnessed those events, respect Atatürk. Although the new generation may have huge reactions against Atatürk because of some political reasons, people over sixty or seventy in Dersim have a deep love for Atatürk even some of them experienced the 1938 massacre. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 49)

As it is seen from the narratives, Atatürk as the founder of Turkish secularism is described as the savior of Alevi from the oppression they encountered during the Ottoman times. Hasan Kaya Dede's explanation on the importance of Atatürk for Alevi confirms Murat Dede's assertion in terms of emphasizing the meaning of Atatürk for Alevi who love and respect him:

Firstly, not only we but also the world love democrat, modern and enlightened Atatürk's principles. Now, is there any Alevi who became the

president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs? No. Why? If only Atatürk could live 10 years more, Turkey would have a strong structure. However, his life didn't last long enough and he got sick. Dersim events happened at the time when Atatürk was sick. Who brought the right to elect and be elected? Who did the clothing reform? Atatürk. Who did the public reform? Atatürk. So, Atatürk, raised Turkey to the level of modern civilized country. He said that "Science is the most reliable guide in life." He marked an era in this country. For instance, we love Atatürk because of the value he gave to our children and women. Religion is between God and humans. Atatürk brought laicism and separated religion and political institutions. He knew that the state can't be governed with *mullahs*.¹³³ He is one of the most important leaders in the world. Therefore, we love our Atatürk. Every state has a savior. Mustafa Kemal is the leader of Turkey. Politically, I love Atatürk very much. There is a picture of him in my room, isn't there? However, if we go to the *cemevi*, you will see that there is no picture of him there because Atatürk is the person who separated religion and politics like black and white. Religion and state governance are different like white and black. We go to our *cemevis*, there are pictures of Twelve Imams and there are prayers. If he wasn't there, today there wouldn't be *cemevis* and you couldn't walk around without covering your head. This are all by courtesy of Atatürk. (Hasan Kaya, Appendix B, 50)

Atatürk's laicism principle has an important place for Alevi since they think it saved them from oppression of a Sunni minded state. Despite the fact that Alevism was not supported in public space as Sunnism after the foundation of Directorate of Religious Affairs, Alevi seem to be thankful to Atatürk for ending oppression of Alevi during the Ottoman times.

Another significant point of the narratives were about the perspectives of ethnicity. Most of my informants' native languages are *Kırmanc* or *Zaza*, especially who were from Tunceli and Sivas. These *dedes* learned Turkish for the first time when they were in primary school. However, they claim that their original language is Turkish since they are originally Turkmens who were affected by Kurdish language after settling down in regions where Kurdish people live. Mehmet Dede

¹³³ Mullah is used in the Islamic world as an honorific title for a scholar or religious leader.

asserts that although his native language is Kurdish, he and other Kurdish speaking Alevis are originally Turkmens: “We speak Kurdish. It’s our native language. Excuse me but I’m not Kurdish. I’m Alevi. We are Turkmens, real Turkmens. We have no association with Kurds. Since we were nomads, we learned it when we were among Kurds. We are real Turkmens.” (Mehmet Divaneoğlu, Appendix B, 51)

Similarly, Veli Gülsoy Dede argues that people in his village learned Kurdish after escaping from the Ottoman State’s oppressions and settling in areas where Kurds live: “I’m not Kurdish. I learned Kurdish but I’m not related to Kurds. Everybody talked Kurdish in our village but we learned Kurdish when we ran away from the Ottoman State’s oppression and lived among Kurds. We have no association with *Shafi’i* Kurds.” (Veli Gülsoy, Appendix B, 52) As it is seen, nationality and sectarian difference are put forward as the main distinctions between Kurds and Alevis.

Mustafa Düzgün, who is from Tunceli (Dersim), states the native language in his hometown is Kurdish and he makes a distinction by emphasizing he is not Kurdish but sayyid. According to Mustafa Dede’s statement, it is obvious that he perceives Alevism as incompatible with Kurdish identity:

Our native language is Kurdish. We are not Kurdish. We are sayyids. We are from the lineage of the prophet but have Kurdish *talips*. For instance, we have *talips* from the Hizol tribe and they speak Kurdish. Many tribes are followers of the *ocak* of Baba Mansur. Some of them speak Kurdish, while some speak Dersince (a language spoken in Dersim). Whichever language a person accepts since s/he was born, if s/he wants, s/he speaks it. So, there is nothing like forcing anybody. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 53)

When we talked about ethnic origins of my informants they tended to describe themselves as Turkish even though their native language was Kurdish. However, above all they described themselves as Alevis which was their main

identity according to them and Alevis were originally Turkmen according to them. Most of the informants who were from Kurdish speaking regions such as Tunceli and some parts of Sivas immediately they became defensive and denied that they were Kurdish. It shows that they were highly affected from the interpretation of Alevism from the perspective of national history writing. Most of my informants have gained their knowledge through history books that were written in a nationalistic way emphasizing Turkmen origins of Alevism. They don't even discuss the possibility of Kurdish originated Alevis. They think that Alevis were influenced by Kurdish language since they had to settle among Kurdish people because of oppressions they faced during the Ottoman times.

Moreover, having Turkmen origins was a source of pride for them. As it is evident from the narratives some of them state that even Imam Ali who has a holy place in Alevi religion had Turkish origins which is in fact a baseless claim. However, this discourse of *dedes*, which puts Alevism in a Turkish nationalist context, reflects how their construction of identity is affected by the nationalist history writing. Another reason behind their definitions of ethnic identity is that they want to define themselves as pure Turkish because they face enough oppression and exclusion for being non-Sunnis. Defining themselves as Kurdish would only double their struggle since the Kurdish movement, which is seen as separatist, would only increase their exclusion from the society and distance them from the ideal citizen definition of the Turkish Republic.

According to Assmann cultural memory belongs to the mythical primordial time, on the other hand communicative memory includes events that happened in the

time frame of 80-100 years.¹³⁴ Despite the fact that some events in the narratives happened in the last 100 years, they are being supported and transmitted by institutions, celebrated on special occasions like in cultural memory. For instance, the attacks and massacres against Alevis in the last 100 years are commemorated by Alevi associations every year. As Hasan Kaya Dede states their organization for the commemoration of Maraş:

We have a protest march for the Maraş massacre on Sunday. We, eleven *cemevis* in total, got permission from the district governor. Yesterday, a meeting was held at Sarıgazi Cemevi. We will march as *cemevi* without any political factions. We won't let any political party use us. God bless those people. What happened, happened to innocent people. (Hasan Kaya, Appendix B, 54)

For these traumatic events that Alevis has been through in the near past such the ones in Çorum, Maraş and Sivas the informants were tend to blame politicians and the governments at those times for not taking control and ending attacks. The attack on the Alevi cultural festival in July 1993 in Sivas was a turning point for Alevis. Killing of thirty-seven people by extreme rightists was a culmination point of all violence Alevi faced previously. It is still a bitter memory which is commemorated every year. Actually, one of the main demands of Alevis was turning the Madımak Hotel where the attack happened in a shame museum. However, their wish was never realized by the government. The Madımak Hotel a monument embodying the bitter memory of the traumatic event even if their demand from the state to turn Madımak Hotel into a museum was not accepted.

¹³⁴ Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 117.

For Alevis the fixed points as the fateful events of past starts from the event of Karbala during which Hüseyin, grandson of the prophet Muhammad, was killed by the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I. The stories about Karbala are transmitted through generations via *dedes* during *cem* rituals. These stories about bloody massacre of Ali's son has been carried throughout the centuries in Alevi traditions. During the interviews, most of the informants talked about oppressions Alevis were subjected to throughout the history as it is seen in Veysel Dede's statement:

From Karbala until today, there are oppressions like Imam Ali, his sons and the Prophet Muhammad had been through. Since those days, there are threats and oppressions. Firstly, three caliphs opposed the will of Muhammad and then Imam Ali was oppressed. Then, rejection of *Ahl-al bayt* and the Karbala massacre and martyrization of Hüseyin... Migration of Imam Hasan's children to Transoxiana where Turks live. You know five of imams were martyred by Umayyads.... Therefore, since that time we have been subjected to so many massacres. So, since the times of Abbasids, Seljuks, Ottomans and the Turkish Republic, Alevis have experienced massacres until today. (Veysel Kara, Appendix B, 55)

When the narrators talked about suppression they faced in the near past they made an analogy between Karbala and those suppressive events during which Alevis were victimized. One of the interviewees Veli Gülsoy Dede describes the Sivas Massacre in 1993 in his hometown as an experience similar to Karbala as he mentions the event:

Well, I was working at that time and turned back from the worksite. My children were also hit by stones at the cultural center. At that time, he was going to high school or he had a break from university. My children's whole bodies were black. In the night, nobody could guess that the hotel would be burnt. It happened suddenly. Polices surrounded the hotel. We couldn't get out of our houses. We were not close but could see the flame on television and also from our balcony. They raided the cultural center where activities took place. Writers and artists were staying at the Madımak Hotel as guests of the festival. If only they knew, they wouldn't stay there and go. They had to go. Well, because of this event all roads were blocked. Nobody could go out and do something. The center of Sivas is full of bigots. The mayor of Sivas was also a bigot like them. For instance, if he was really a democratic mayor, he would at least extinguish the fire and move people away from there,

wouldn't he? So, even the governor couldn't do anything about it. We lived Karbala there. (Veli Gülsoy, Appendix B, 56)

Some of the *dedes* who are from Sivas don't want to assert it as their hometowns since they feel ashamed and resentful because of the saddening attack that affected Alevis deeply. This pain is shared by all Alevis not only the ones who witnessed the massacre. It is instilled in their memory through which they feel connected as members of the same society. When Mustafa Kendigelen Dede explains his feelings about the attack, he describes Sivas as the city of people having the mentality of Hınzır Pasha who ordered death of the famous Alevi poet from Sivas in the sixteenth century because of his rebellious poems against the authority:

All people who died there are our relatives and *cans* (souls). They don't necessarily have to be from my family. We condemn those who caused that incident. As a person from Divriği (a district of Sivas) I don't accept Sivas as my hometown. Sivas is already a bloody city. They hanged our *pir*. Didn't Hınzır Pasha hang Pir Sultan? What would you expect from people with that mentality? We don't say that we are from Sivas, we say we're from Divriği. We have nothing to do with Sivas. (Mustafa Kendigelen, Appendix B, 57)

When I asked Celal Çelik Dede about his hometown, he talked about how he changed his place of registry from his hometown Sivas to Istanbul as a reaction to the Sivas massacre and also some other personal issues:

I was born in Sivas 1953 in Sivas. In 1968, I came to Istanbul. Recently, took my state register from Sivas to Istanbul. My all children were born here. In 1996, I went bankrupt while I was serving to this path. Until that day, you know there is a saying "Coffin for the dead and cradle for the born (*ölene tabut doğana beşik*). Unfortunately, I saw that people did bad things. I experienced negative things with people from my village and felt empty. So, I thought that means everything is wealth. Both this experience and the Sivas incident caused me to take my state register from Sivas as a reaction. (Celal Çelik, Appendix B, 58)

As the narratives show some informants think the major responsible of the violent attacks are the government and state officials who didn't interfere these

events and prevent attacks. Another *dede* Mahmut Koç emphasizes ignorance of the state officials about the attack as he states:

In the 1990s, something which was never seen in the Islamic history happened with wrong propaganda targeting specific people and burning people in a hotel. They oppressed thirty-seven people there and burnt people by carrying gasoline with help of polices, state officers and municipal employees. They didn't even mourn over them for one day. The government means father and citizens are offsprings. The leaders of that government and people of the government... I don't know. This state showed its improvidence by not catching one of the offenders who burnt thirty-seven people at that hotel. (Mahmut Koç, Appendix B, 59)

Another traumatic incident was shooting of some coffee houses in Gazi neighborhood by unknown attackers in 1995. After this attack one person died and several people got injured. Following the incident protestors in the neighborhood clashed with the police forces and many people died. Mustafa Kendigelen Dede is one of the witnesses of this incident as a resident of Gazi neighborhood. According to him the government of that time was responsible for this unfortunate event which caused death of many people. He also emphasized that perpetrators of these incidents were not put on a fair trial which is a common conception among Alevis:

I experienced the incidents in 1995. I lost my job and also was about to lose my life. Is it enough? At that time, I guess the Turkish Republic was disturbed by the neighborhood. A few people came and still it is unknown why they did it. There was Doğu Kıraathanesi (coffee house) here where our people used to go and drink tea. Dehumanized persons with guns who thought they were heroes... No matter who did, it is not possible to accept this violence. Later, I joined the protests. An Alevi *dede* who was a good person in need of care. He was the symbol of here. He died. At that time, this building was started to be constructed. Here, our neighbor Müslüm Gündüz died. On the second day, there were increasing conflicts, our *cans* died. Violence triggered violence. Seven people died here at that time. Twenty two people died in total. This is a significant number and not less. This incident was a primarily a plan of people in the government and fascists against Alevis but they couldn't succeed. Yes, we lost twenty-two people but they saw unity and solidarity here. In the conditions of that time, even our Sunni neighbors set up barricades here. There were Sunni people who died. Engin Sezgin was shot beside me. Seventeen year old child. He was three meters away from me. Nobody can make me forget it. While I'm telling about it, I'm also living it

again now. I could have carried and taken him away but he was dead and I left him on the ground. I had to leave him because I could get shot and die. I was already injured on my back and had. I was beaten. My brother was taken by police during the clash. When I came home, my brother wasn't there. While I'm telling, I'm still living it. Those who caused this violence in Gazi didn't give enough account for it in the court. If a case wasn't solved, it is not closed. Whenever, they are called to account for their crime and we see the person who shot Engin Sezgin in the court, maybe we can relieve. Otherwise it is not possible to relieve. It is my opinion that since people in Gazi neighborhood are revolutionist and foresighted, they organized such an incident. (Mustafa Kendigelen, Appendix, 60)

Effects of these violent attacks on Alevi's culturally identity and memory are tremendous. These events also played role in the emergence of the Alevi revival and movement in the late 1980s. Since that time Alevis' counter reaction culminated and with the rise of identity politics they organized to stand against these attacks and injustices. Murat Kantekin Dede summarizes his perception about the struggles of Alevis he witnessed as he states:

It was the summer in the year when I finished the fourth grade. From the beginning of June we used go to the tableland of our village and come back at the end of August. We were playing with friends there. Old people from the village were listening to news from the radio. I never forget that I heard the news about the hotel fire as people were trying to take out bodies of death people. After some time passed, I noticed that the hotel fire that I heard while I was playing games at the age of 10 was the Madımak Massacre. As a child, I learned about the tragedy of the Madımak massacre on the radio. I finished the fifth grade and came to Istanbul that year. One morning when I woke up early for going to school, the television was on and there were news about shooting of people in a coffeehouse and killing of people including an Alevi *dede*. So, that was the Gazi massacre. As child, I observed the Sivas, the Gazi massacres and then the massacre in Mustafa Kemal neighborhood of Ümraniye. I always say that painful events Alevis experienced, actually kept Alevism alive despite difficult conditions of the city, systematized assimilation by the state and the social oppression. The bitter events that were caused by the system to assimilate Alevis have kept Alevis alive. That action and reaction brought Alevis to this point. Today, everybody knows that I'm Alevi. People in the political and social environments know that I'm Alevi. I don't need to hide it. I'm a person whose all works are about Alevism as I do research and write articles about it. However, still my mother cautions me not to tell people that I'm Alevi. Still, there is oppression and fear in her mind yet pains we have experienced keeps us alive. We are indebted to those people who were killed and paid the price. If those people paid the price with their

lives for their religion, we are supposed to transmit this religion to future generations in memory of them. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 61)

Murat Kantekin Dede's emphasis on the importance of attacks in terms of making Alevis more resistant and stronger was another common point in the narratives while we talked about how oppressions made the informants feel. Most of them encountered discrimination in the society for being Alevi. However, there were also *dedes* who told that they never faced such discriminations despite commonality of such discriminations experienced by most Alevis. Hüseyin Doğan, who serves at Garip Dede Cemevi, is one of *dedes* who was subjected to oppressions. He mentions discriminations he experienced especially at his workplace in the past:

We didn't experience any discrimination in our village. We were living together with our Sunni neighbors. When we came here and moved to this apartment, rumors quickly spread and people talked about if we were Alevi or Sunni. There was that kind of separation. Well, we couldn't fast during Muharram or did it secretly. In the month of Ramadan, my deceased mother used to fast and turned on the lights during *sahur* (meal before dawn). I experienced such difficulties. In my work life, I also experienced such things. I worked with a master. The master, since he was from Kayseri put pressure on me to go to mosque. I told him that I wouldn't go to mosque and he fire me. He said, "You either obey or leave." I said that it was an oppression. At that time, I couldn't give satisfying responses since I didn't have much knowledge but I preferred to leave. We said that we go to *cemevis* to worship. There were times people criticized our religion by saying that there can't be such a worshipping with musical instruments and ballads. (Hüseyin Doğan, Appendix B, 62)

Mostly *dedes* experienced discrimination for their religion at their workplaces. They either had difficulties about finding jobs or were pressured by colleagues or bosses. Nuri Dede's experience in his workplaces in the past is an example:

Once, I was working at a place. My boss told me, "Boy, you are young. Every Friday I close the shop and take all workers to the mosque to perform Friday prayer. I don't employ a man who doesn't perform Friday prayer." I said that I am Alevi and I didn't know how to perform prayer. He said that I was young and could learn it, and also he could hire a prayer instructor for me.

Anyway, he brought a prayer instructor for me. I was obliged to either accept or quit the job. We went to a big mosque in Eminönü. I stood up next to the instructor. He bent and I bent, he prostrated and I did too. I did whatever he did. I did it in a formalist way. Why? Because it was not my genuine will but was forced. I did it for not losing my job. After we finished prayer, I said to my boss, “I made a mistake today.” He said, “What is that son?” I replied, “Maybe I can deceive you but can’t deceive God. He said, “Why?” and I said “You bent, I bent; you stood up, I stood up.” He said, “Son, you’re right. You do whatever you know.” He was a good person. After that he never took me to Friday prayer. (Nuri Kaya, Appendix B, 63)

Veli Gülsoy Dede has a similar story about being discriminated at his workplace because of his religious identity as he narrates his struggles in the past:

I experienced so much discrimination. I struggled. When I passed an exam and became chief at the workplace, other workers collected signatures on the grounds that they didn’t want an Alevi *dede* to administer them. After I retired, those people who collected signatures withdrew my resignation secretly. There were Sunnis who said “We don’t want our *dede* to retire.” However, in the beginning they opposed to me. Then, they saw our understanding, good will and fairness and felt embarrassed because of what they did. They also confessed it. (Veli Gülsoy, Appendix B, 64)

Some *dedes* were exposed to discriminations during their education life and had to leave school because of these difficult experiences. Süleyman Metin is one of those *dedes* who couldn’t finish his high school education. Although he was granted a success scholarship, since he was discriminated by his teachers it became impossible to finish high school as he states:

I was exposed to a serious discrimination starting from primary school times. Since I studied at the primary school in our village, I didn’t experience discrimination. However, when we moved to the district, there we experienced serious discriminations. Alevi children were discriminated by everybody. They were seen as potential criminals by teachers or people around. For instance, I was expelled from the school because of my religion. There was a chemistry teacher named Zihni Tanrikulu from the Black sea region. There were twenty-five students in the class. A few students made a bet on disrupting the lesson. Some of the students suggested that they can disrupt the class, others claimed they wouldn’t achieve it. The losing party would buy movie tickets for others. I didn’t join any of the sides because I had no money to buy a movie ticket. I didn’t say that I didn’t have money, just said I wouldn’t join them. When the teacher entered class, the student who claimed he could disrupt the lesson asked the teacher what he thinks

about Sivas as a person from the Black sea region. The teacher said, “There are historical structures in Sivas from the time of Seljuks and Sivas is an important city but Alevis came and corrupted Sivas. After he said this, all of thirty-five people looked at me. There were five or six Alevis in the class but they were hiding it. When they looked at me, I asked permission of the teacher to talk and then said “I usually hear these things about Alevism on streets but I don’t care. As a teacher, why do you think like that about Alevis? What they did to corrupt Sivas? Did they steal or do immoral things or what?” When I said these, the teacher sat down on his chair and didn’t talk for two hours. Therefore, the lesson was disrupted. The next week, he came and asked me questions about subject which he didn’t teach in the class before. I said to him that we didn’t learned those subjects yet. However, he told me that we were responsible from the whole book anyway. I gave answer of the questions partially because I only knew the topics. He gave me zero. In the second class, he asked me another question and gave me zero on the oral exam again. During the break time, I wanted to talk to him and asked him why he behaved like that. He started to shout and said to people around, “Help me, he is attacking me.” A friend said to him, “Why are you so cruel, I was here and he didn’t attack you.” After that, physics teacher tried to humiliate me in the class by criticizing my clothes or appearance in front of my friends. Then, Zihni Tanrikulu, chemistry teacher, said, “I wouldn’t make you stay here even if you were the son of God. Because you are Alevi and we don’t like Alevis, they’re our enemies.” I entered that school with a success scholarship in 1964 but I took my diploma and left the school because of him. Then, I joined the military. There, I was subjected to more oppressions. Well, it was not the general attitude of the military but Sunni youth were taught about Alevis as enemies while growing up. Therefore, they always tried to oppress. Since I did so much research and read books about Alevism, I was never embarrassed. I have never hidden my religion. I’ve always told people that I’m an Alevi. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 65)

Celal Çelik Dede states that he was an atheist until 1986 because of the pressures he experienced since his childhood. These traumatic experiences in the past caused him to reject Alevism until he had a dream that reminded him to turn back to his religion. His statement clearly describes what he had been through as a child:

In 1968, I came to Istanbul and finished primary school here. I didn’t learn about Alevism from my mother or father. Since that day, I haven’t learned anything about Alevism from anyone in the family. This is a gift of God to me. Until 1986, I was an atheist because of some experiences in my life. However, after 1986 I returned to Alevism. Those incidents went through, made me indifferent to religion before. I was called Kizilbash, heretic and was beaten in Istanbul. I was almost dying once. What would you become? What would you do in that case? You would reject everything right? I was a child. There was nobody to guide me and show me the right path. I was

almost dying since I was Alevi. If my boss didn't stop them, they would kill me. Until 1986, I estranged from Alevism. After 1986, in my dream my ancestors explicitly told me to turn back to my roots. Then, I turned back. Since that they I have never left this path. (Celal Çelik, Appendix B, 66)

On the other hand thirty-one years old Murat Kantekin Dede emphasizes the indirect discrimination Alevi's experience. In other words, he claims that he was not directly discriminated but there is always pressure or discrimination he feels because of being Alevi. He points out collective struggle of Alevi's from discriminations even if someone doesn't experience these pressures personally:

We experienced discrimination indirectly. I always say that oppressions Alevi's experience are like indirect taxes collected by the state. Apparently, you don't notice it but in practice you pay it anyway. We experience this in all areas of life. Maybe, I haven't experienced discrimination in a very obvious way because I'm a resistant person and can raise my voice against injustices. If you're such person, then they may not put much pressure on you. However, whenever they get a change, they make you pay the price of it anyway. Therefore, I haven't had much difficulty since nobody criticized or judged me explicitly because of my religion. However, there are many friends who were judged for being Alevi. Today, there are no Alevi's among the eighty-one governors in Turkey. It's not because Alevi's are not capable of doing this job but because the state marginalizes Alevi's. I studied public administration but I don't have a direct purpose to become a governor. If you are an Alevi, the highest positions you can have may be deputy district governor or a manager of an office at one of the state institutions. However, there is no way that this government lets you become governor. Before the present government, there were a few Alevi governors. However, since the government aims to assimilate and kill Alevi's, there are no Alevi's as high ranking government officers anymore. (Murat Kantekin, Appendix B, 67)

Hüseyin Taştekin, an *ocakzade* and the deputy director at Şahkulu Cemevi, states that Alevi youth are not interested much in Alevism and this is a result of pressures that are put on Alevi's in the society. According to him since Alevi's have been feeling discriminated over centuries, they had to abstain from practicing their religion openly, and today the young generation became estranged from their religion. He puts emphasis that despite the fact that he is a religious person who tries

to contribute Alevism and maintain traditional practices of it, his children are not interested in Alevism:

I have three children. They have no interests in Alevism. Although I'm always here at the *cemevi*, I have never seen those attending *cems*. Despite my insistence they are not interested in *cem* or *semah*. For example my *dede* comes to my house every year from Erzincan. We host him at our house. We prostrate on the ground in front of him and he prays for us. Once, he even questioned me about an issue between me and my brother. So, I live traditions of Alevism but I admit that my children don't know about Alevism. It's a pity and I'm sad about it. I haven't seen Kasım Dede's children attending *cems* either. His sisters come but none of his children come to *cems*. This lack of interest is caused by oppressions of the state and neighbors. Today, Alevism is still oppressed. There are many incidents which none of us approve in Turkey. Dilek Doğan who was killed by police in her house at night was an Alevi. She wasn't armed or related to any illegal organizations. There are many similar incidents like that. (Hüseyin Taştekin, Appendix B, 68)

In general, all of the informants are disappointed about lack of interest in Alevism among Alevi youth. Although there are young people who attend *cems*, *semah* and saz courses or visit *dedes* at *cemevis*, the number of youth at *cemevis* are not enough to meet expectations of the *dedes*. According to *dedes* lack of interest in Alevism is partly because of long years of oppressions Alevism faced which also prevented them to practice their religion and transfer it to younger generations.

As previously explained, marriage between an Alevi and a non-Alevi isn't considered acceptable according to traditional Alevism. In fact, the main logic behind this restriction was protecting their religion from assimilation and external threats by preventing marriages with people out of Alevi society. By this way, they could maintain and transmit their religion to their children. However, since Alevism doesn't live in isolated villages and traditional rules are not being maintained as much as in the past, it is not very possible to obey this rule today. *Dedes* still officiate weddings when people request. However, some informants are not very strict about

this restriction considering the conditions of modern Alevi society and also impossibility of interfering in personal choices of people today. Mustafa Düzgün Dede thinks the time has changed and states that marriages are not arranged like in the past, therefore couples should marry if they want so:

Until our time, it was like that. Alevi used to marry with Alevi. After urbanization, there has been some changes. In cities, people are more socialized. They study at universities and become friends with people from different backgrounds. Mine was an arranged marriage. My wife is from a neighboring village. My father and mother saw my wife before we got married. We went to their house to see her and then we decided to get married and did it. Now, it is not like that. If you tell your son to marry someone who you think is proper for him, he may not listen to you. He may want to marry someone whom he know from university. In general people oppose this but I don't interfere, if they understand each other. If people accept each other and want to get married, why not? If parents don't want their child to marry an Alevi, then there may be serious problems. In that case, married couples can't be happy. (Mustafa Düzgün, Appendix B, 69)

In contrast to Mustafa Düzgün's opinion, some other *dedes* think this is still a major rule which must be obeyed in order to prevent annihilation of Alevism. It is required both for protecting religion and preventing discriminations or pressures Alevi may experience if they marry Sunnis. Mahmut Koç Dede underlines the importance of endogamy among Alevi in his following statement:

Our master, Imam Cafer-i Sadık has a buyruk and it's a kind of law of Alevi. He forbids marriage between a person with *ikrar* (initiation) and another person without *ikrar*.¹³⁵ Alevi have *ikrar*. In that book it is written that if three generations of Alevi marry non-Alevi, with the third generation Alevism ends. The Prophet Muhammad was married to many women but his lineage continued from his daughter Fatima, wife of Ali. Alevi are afraid about losing their religion and degenerating it, so, we prefer marriage in our community to protect our religion. I have three daughter in laws and they are all daughters of *dedes* from my village. (Mahmut Koç, Appendix B, 70)

¹³⁵ To follow the path of Alevism, all Alevi should have an initiation ceremony that is called *ikrar* which a promise to follow the Alevi path.

Besides rules of Alevism, some Alevis doesn't approve marrying Sunnis because they think the pressures from the Sunni family will cause problems in the marriages. As Süleyman Metin Dede asserts, most of Alevis think that if their daughters get married with Sunnis, they will be pressured by their husbands or their parents to practice Sunnism eventually. Therefore, in order to prevent such conflicts and pressures, it is unfavorable to marry a Sunni as Süleyman Metin Dede explains:

Marriage between Alevis and Sunnis hasn't been approved either in the past or now. Now, youth get married because they don't mind. There are conflicts in such marriages because of traditions and religion. For instance, if you're an Alevi and marry a Sunni, in the beginning parents of your husband will accept you and say that they're democrats. However, after marriage they put pressure on you and ask you to cover your head and perform salaah. Otherwise everyone is equal but as I witnessed, these things lead big conflicts. Therefore, they didn't approve in the past. (Süleyman Metin, Appendix B, 71)

The narratives of the *dedes* show that there are major historical events either belonging to the mythical history or the recent past. It is evident that, these events are embedded in the memory of Alevi society binding them together through sharing the same cultural traditions and the past. Therefore, their collective memory also constructs their identity. There are multiple and intersecting identities in Alevi society. My informants were religious leaders who represented themselves Turkish ethnically and Kemalist ideologically but above all as Alevi. Their religion is the most prominent identity in their self-representations. Their identity representations illustrate that *dedes'* historical consciousness is mostly affected by the national history writing which emphasizes Turkish origins of Alevism. The Karbala event is very significant in their cultural memory which is defined as a starting point of Alevi struggle that has been continuing throughout the centuries. The events in the recent past are often related to struggles of Alevis in previous centuries and intersect with

their cultural memory. Finally, Alevi identity is characterized in the narratives with resistance against oppressions which means although Alevis has been feeling discriminated and oppressed throughout the centuries, this has encouraged them to resist and strive for recognition until they gain their rights.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study tries to call attention to a different perspective about the transformation of the *dede* institution and the representation of memory and identity of Alevi with its focus on the narratives of *dedes*. Since *dede* narratives are not much visible in academic research, this thesis aims to contribute to this multilayered field by introducing new narratives on Alevi identity and *dede* practices. However, more narratives can be expanded and deepened by further research. The identity and memory of Alevi society are very broad topics which may be elaborated on various perspectives of individuals from different Alevi communities. However, this research only focuses on the narratives of the *dedes* in Istanbul. Some of the informants are related to *cemevis* or the CEM Foundation and some are independent *dedes* who don't work at any *cemevis* or associations. There are many Alevi institutions and religious leaders and they have different stand points in terms of definition of Alevism as well as their religious and political identities. Thus, different viewpoints can be explored through further research on *dede* narratives.

It has been the major aim of this thesis to show subjectivities of Alevi *dedes* about the transformation of religious leadership and Alevism as well as their representations of identity and memory. Through the life stories of the *dedes* I encountered, it was possible to hear genuine expressivity regarding Alevism and *dedelik*, issues debated for a long time in different platforms.

The research showed that the historical consciousness of informants has a big impact in the construction of their identities and memories. Their knowledge about the origins of Alevism was mostly influenced by the national history writing. On the other hand, their identities were highly impacted by their struggle for recognition against the state oppressions and ignorance. Narratives showed once more how the genealogy issue will always remain an important component of Alevism. Ottoman perception of the Kizilbash-Alevis and the effect of missionary reports about Alevism will continue to be important pillars of Alevism in the Turkish national history writing. In fact, there is still more need for further research on situating Alevi experiences in national history writing.

Perhaps the new direction of research also requires more focus on the functions of the institution of *ocak* and the role of the *dede* in traditional Alevi society. After the migration from villages and towns, Alevism and its institutions experienced a transformation which caused significant changes in the *dedes'* authority and in the functioning of the *ocak* system. With this transformation Alevism has been re-formulated in cities with Alevi institutions taking over the authority from *dedes*. But historical ethnography of particular localities are still scarce and they are most necessary to examine this process of change.

The narratives of the *dedes* also revealed how they think about the changing parameters in the traditional *ocak* system. Narratives illustrated that despite the fact that the authority of *dedes* was weakened institutionally, they were still respected and acknowledged within their community. Narratives also show how they try to adapt themselves to the transformation of Alevism, although they criticize the weakening authority of *dedes*. It is obvious that *dedes* who migrated Istanbul from their

hometowns carry both traditional values and teachings they learned from their own senior *dedes*. However, at the same time their conditions were different than the previous generation's conditions. Therefore, today we see a different *dede* profile combining modernism and traditional values. Today, *dedes* feel that their *talips* question religion and *dedelik* more than in the past. Thus, they feel the need to improve themselves beyond the traditional education they were given by *dedes* in the previous generations. They are also more active today in terms of taking part in organizations and initiatives as founders or members. Their biggest concern is the lack of support from the government to Alevis and the denial of *cemevis* as official religious centers. They also emphasize the need of proper and systematized educational institution for training new generation of *dedes*. The official denial of *cemevis* brings also the issue of a formal salary for the *dedes* from the state. Contemporary *dedes* carry the responsibility of maintaining the *dede* institution, preserve the traditional values of Alevism with their own efforts and also keep the Alevis as new local communities.

The representation of cultural memory and identity in the life stories of the *dedes* brings forward major historical events in the collective memory of Alevi communities. In general, *dedes* emphasize the struggles of Alevis since the Karbala event until the present time. The narratives collected in this research showed that the past of Alevis and their struggle for recognition constructs their identity and makes them define themselves as Alevi beyond all other ethnic and religious definitions attributed to them by others. Although other research may prove differently, in our case, the *dedes'* perspectives about the religious and the national origins of Alevis revealed that by emphasizing the Turkishness and defining Alevis as carriers of

Islam they accepted assertions of the nationalist history writing of Alevism. Despite the fact that most of them know Kurdish as their native language, they strictly reject defining themselves as Kurdish but Turkish and Alevi. Moreover, they emphasize cultural differences between Alevis and Kurds as a proof their distinctiveness. This shows that the informants of our research wanted to separate themselves from Kurdish nationalists who conflict with the Turkish state's authority. Although Alevis has struggled for their belief's official recognition by the state, this situation explains that some Kurdish speaking Alevis among the informants did not want to foreground their Kurdish origins, which would mark them even more in the Turkish national identity defined by the state.

Last but not least, I should also underline that this study only focused on the male perspective about Alevism which makes narratives constructed from a gendered perspective. However, there are *dedes'* wives who are called *ana* and highly respected in traditional Alevism. Alevi women also have been highly active in their communities for the maintenance of traditional Alevism and its practices. They take active roles in Alevi institutions and organizations. Therefore, there should be further oral history research focusing on women's perspectives about being Alevi and transformation of the place of women in Alevism.

In addition, further research is required about Alevi youth or new generation of *ocakzades* specifically. Their subjectivities about the Alevi past and being *ocakzade* may bring new perspectives on these subjects. Although oral history methodology is much preferred with old people, I think it can also be an efficient tool for discovering post memory and identity representations of Alevi youth. Lastly, oral history interviews with the directors of Alevi institutions can also be conducted

for exploring another authority mechanism in Alevism. I hope that my research will be a modest step towards more historical and ethnographic research in these domains.



APPENDIX A

INFORMANTS AND DATES OF INTERVIEWS

Ali Düzgün	20.08.2015, Esenyurt/Istanbul
Ali Ekber Aydoğan	12.08.2015, Bağcılar Cemevi
Binali Doğan	12.09.2015, Erikli Baba Kültür Derneği Cemevi
Celal Çelik	15.01.2016, Karacaahmet Cemevi
Hasan Kaya	24.12.2015, Sancaktepe Yunus Emre Cemevi
Hüseyin Özgöz	15.01.2016, Karacaahmet Cemevi
Hüseyin Taştekin	23.02.2016, Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı
Hüseyin Doğan	02.03.2016, Garip Dede Cemevi
Erzade Yıldız	10.09.2015 Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi
Süleyman Metin	02.08. 2015, Baba Mansur Ocağı Eğitim Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği
Kasım Yılmaz	23.02.2016 Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı
Mahmut Koç	23.12.2015 Keçeci Baba Cemevi
Mehmet Divaneoğlu	02.10.2015, Pir Sultan Abdal Cemevi
Murat Kantekin	01.02.2016, Sancaktepe/Istanbul
Mustafa Düzgün	01.10.2016, Kartal Cemevi, Istanbul

Mustafa Kendigelen	02.10.2015, Gazi Cemevi, Istanbul
Nuri Kaya	23.02.2016, Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı
Veli Gülsoy	03.08.2015, Gazi Cemevi, Istanbul
Veysel Kara	16.07.2015, Gazi Cemevi, Istanbul
Zeynel Tan	18.12.2015, Ümraniye İhlamurkuyu Cemevi



APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL TURKISH QUOTATIONS

1. Biz altı kardeşiz. En küçükleri benim ne yazık ki. Abilerim babam olmadığı için geçim gayretlerinde dolaşırken annem beni hep Alevi inancında dedelik hizmetine yönlendirdi. Nerde toplum var biz orda, nerde cem var biz orda. Ben emsallerimlen pek oyun oynamadım. Sadece boş kaldığım anlarımda gerekiyorsa aileme yardım ettim ama boş kalan zamanlarımı bir mürşidin desteğiyle annemin de gayretleriyle 73 yılında ceme girdim. Yani on üç-on dört yaşlarında ceme girdim. On yıl bifiil destek aldım. Yani bir üstad tutundum. Yetişmiş bir mürşidden el tuttum. Onun desteğiyle on yıl ondan ders aldım. Hem okuma şekliyle hem de pratiğiyle ders aldım. Tabi ki zamanı geldi askerliğe gittik. Askerden döndükten sonra o mürşidle bir an oturduk ve bir toplulukta bana açık beyan olarak el verdi. Ondan sonra da yalnız kendi halime kitap okumayı çok severim. Boş kaldığım zaman hiç kitabımı elimden bırakmasam o kadar özgürüm. Kuran okumayı çok severim. Kitaplar içinde en çok sevdiğim Kuran'dır. Tarihi severim. Sonra toplumu, insanları çok severim. Toplumun içinde yaşamak, birlik beraberlik olmak, paylaşımcı, üretici olmak bana daha hoş geliyor. Bu vesileyle çocukluğum bu şekilde devam etti. Gençliğimizde de her insana olduğu gibi Allah'ın emriyle evlendik. Çocuğumuz oldu. Ben 73 yılından bugüne kadar hiç dedeliğimi bırakmadım. Bırakmamamdaki birinci unsur bizim talip topluluklarımızın bizden beklemiş oldukları hizmetin bize verdiği gayret üzerine bırakmadım.

(Mahmut Koç)

2. 2006 yılında öyle bir kar yağmış ki Yozgat çevresine normal hava şartlarında yarım saatte gittiğimiz bir köye yarım saatte yürüyerek gittik çünkü karın boyu iki metreye yakındı. Altı kişi benimle beraber arkadaşlık yaptı. Dedemizi yalnız göndermeyelim. Yanımda gelenler benim talibimdi. Benimle gelme nedeni karda kışta dedenin yoluna kurt çıkar. İnsanlarla ilgili bir sıkıntımız yok çünkü çevre köylerimiz ehl-i sünnet olan kişilerle dedemi ve bizim ailemizi sever, sayarlar. Yani o çevre köylerde bizim hakkımızda kimse bu güne kadar ufacık bir kötü söz söylemediği gibi bizimle herhangi bir en ufak tartışması bile olmamıştır. Tam tersine çok da sever sayarlar. Biz o köye gittiğimiz zaman dört saat sonra donma tehlikesi geçirdik. Düşün ki ayaklarımız artık mosmor olmuştu. Tabi bir iki saat dinlendikten sonra ceme başladık cemimizi yaptık. Düşünün ki o karda kışta bir cemhane hazırlamak zor. Cemimizi köyün okulunun içinde yapıyoruz. Esk bir okul ama ordaki insanlar okulu temizlemiş en güzel şekliyle bir cemhaneye çevirmiş. Ne kadar yerimiz dar olursa olsun gönlümüz geniş ilkesiyle beraber o köy okulunda cemi yaptık. Cem bittiği zaman saat bir ve ya ikiydi. Uzun sürmesinin nedeni dedelerin yoğun olması, sohbetin güzel olması ve bu yöresel cemlerde bugün şehir yerindeki gibi bir buçuk iki saatlik değil de bazen sabahlara kadar uzanan cemler yaparız. Sabah gün ışırdı insanlar evine dağılırdı çünkü sohbet bitmezdi. Karın üstünde yürüye yürüye başka bir köye gittik, o köyde bir kaç saat dinlenip tekrar bir ceme başladık. Belki hayatım boyunca yürüdüğüm en fazla yol oydu. Dört saat bu tarafa, buz olduğu için de yürümekte zorluk çektik, üç saat de bu tarafa. Araba gitmediği gibi insanın gitme şartı da çok zor. Düşünün önünüzde giden altı kişi o kar tanelerini elleriyle açıyorlar. Ayaklarıyla eze eze gidiyorlar ki işte dede üşümesin, dede hasta olmasın çünkü dede hasta olduğu zaman o insanlar cemini yapamayacak. (Erzade Yıldız)

3. Askerliğim bitti eve geldim. Annemin babamın elini öptüm. Bir ay çalışma sürecim oldu. Bir ay sonra talipler dede geleceksin diye köylerden baskı yaptılar. Özellikle Yozgat çevresindeki köylerimiz baskı yapınca işi bırakıp gittim. Altı ay sonra geri geldim. Altı ay sonra geldim neden? Çünkü iki yıl boyunca talipler cem yapmamış. Yapmayınca biraz önce örnek vermiştik düşünün ki asimilasyona uğrayanlar bir beş sene daha gitmeseydiniz inanç boyutunda bir yere kendini bağlayacaklar. Belki dönmeyecekler ama o inanç azalacak çünkü bizden önceki kuşak inanç boyutuna baktığımız zaman demiştik ya karanlıkta, korkuda, baskıda birbirine kenetli bağlıyken şu an rahatız birbirimizin yanına bile yaklaşmıyoruz. Düşünün ki bizden sonraki kuşak belki de hiç bir araya gelmeyecek. Biz dedeler sabah akşam Allah'a yalvarıyoruz ki yarabim bu yol incelsin, incelsin ama kopmasın. Koparsa herhalde Hz. İmam Hüseyin'e bağlılığımızın sonu gelecektir. Allah o günleri bize göstermesin diyorum. Altı ay sonra döndüm. Bir işe giriyorsunuz çalışıyorsunuz üç ay sonra yine çağırıyorlar. Geliyorsunuz yine başlıyorsunuz. (Erzade Yıldız)

4. Dedem Seyid Haydar döneminde yani 1970'lerde işte ortaokul sıralarındayken dedemin yanında cemlere katılırdım. Küçük bir bağlamam vardı. Dedemle beraber zakirlik yani daha o günde... Yani dedemin ben o günlerden adeta bugünlere yetiştirilerek yani ben geldim. Bugün de özellikle Alevi erkanını, görgü cemini, semahını, bütün Alevi öğretilerini ben dedemden aldım. Yani birebir dedem beni kendi elinin altında o dönemde yetiştirdi. Tabi o zaman ben bunu pek algılayamıyordum yani bir yandan ortaokula gidiyordum bir yandan dedem bana sürekli telkinde bulunuyordu. Sürekli bunları bana öğretme çabasındayken tabi ki sıkılırdım. Dedem bana oğlum bunları birgün senden isterler derdi. Ben bunu da pek

algılayamazdım çünkü kim benden bunu isteyecek. Ben ortaokula gidiyordum. Öğretmenler benden yazılı, sözlü şey istiyor. Bana bunları kim soracak ama gün geldi dedem hakka yürüdü. Dedemden sonra babam erkana girmedi. Yani bilinciydeydi herşeyin ama doğrudan yükü bana deden seni yetiştirdi. Dedemden sonra tabii bir boşluk oluştu. Talipler görgü için geliyor. Taliplerin gelip görgü cemi talep etmeleri, cem talep etmeleri. Benim o zaman dedemin bana ortaokul döneminde oğlum bunları birgün senden isterler sözünü hatırlattı. Onun üzerine dedemin bana yüklemiş olduğu bir görev vardı yani manevi bir görev. İşte o gün itibarıyla ben cemlere başladım. (Binali Doğan)

5. Her dede talibi görmek zorunda ama günümüzde metropolde hep dağıldık. Şimdi mesela bu görevi cemevlerinde yapıyoruz. Mesela diyelim metropollerde o kurumda çok az kişi var ama yine de yapmaya çalışıyoruz. Çünkü yöresel farklılıklarımız var. Ondan sonra her Perşembe günü cemlerimiz var. Mesela diyelim boşsun canın sıkıldı, bugün en azından gidiyim bir cem görüyüm dersin. Muharrem ayında üç gün Masum-u Pak orucu tutuyoruz. Oniki gün muharrem orucunu tutuyoruz on beş gün. Bir de ana Fatma orucu olur sana onaltı gün. Muharrem ayında on ikinci gün aşure pişiriyoruz, kurban kesiyoruz. Bu sefer de görgüler başlıyor mesela yöre yöre. Muharrem ayından sonra. Her yörenin kendi ocak edeleri var gelip kendi taliplerini görüyor evde ya da cemevlerinde. (Hasan Kaya)

6. Birçok cemevinde bulundum. Hepsinin kendilerine göre cem yapma şekli var. Eğer bir yerde kıyam varsa, rüku varsa, secde varsa, dua varsa, Hakk, Muhammed, Ali diyorlarsa belki bir nüans fark olabilir ama özünde hepsi aynıdır. Hepsi Hakk Muhammed Ali diyor. Ben hiçbirini yadırgamıyorum. Onlar hepsi bizim zenginliklerimiz. Çünkü bu devletin zulmünden biz birbirimizden uzak kalmışız. Bu

yüzden herkesin kendine göre yöresel farklılıkları vardır. Ben mesela cemevinde Tokatlılar varsa onları semaya kalkıyorum. Ardağanlılar varsa kaldırıyorum, Sivashlılar varsa kaldırıyorum. Normal kendi yetiştirdiğim çocukların yaptığı semah hizmeti dışında o yörelerden de eğer halktan gelen olursa istekleri de varsa onları da mağrum etmiyorum çünkü herkesin kendi cemini görmesi lazım. Yani böyle onları kısıtlamıyorum. (Veli Gülsoy)

7. Sivas Karayolları'nda ve orda 1996'da emekli oldum. Emekli olmadan önce de ben bütün senelik izinlerimi bu topluma hizmet etmek için kullandım. Yani izinliği olduğumda mutlaka taliplerin herhangi bir müşkülâtı varsa, bir problem varsa herhangi bir köyde mutlaka oraya yetiştirdim. Onların herhangi bir kapıda, mahkemelerde sürünmemeleri için mutlaka aralarında bir barış için uğraşı verirdim ki bir daha birbirlerine zarar vermesinler. 1976'da babamı kaybettim ondan sonra başladım. Söylediğim gibi hep genelde izinlerimi kışın kullandım ve kışın talipe gittim. Onların dertlerine ortak oldum. Dertlerine tercüman oldum. Onların arasındaki fikir ayrılıklarını gidermeye çalıştım. Sürekli onların komşu olduklarını, can olduklarını, birbirlerine ihtiyaçları olduklarını ve birbirine zarar vermeye, insanın insana zarar vermesi, komşunun komşuya zarar vermesi, Ehl-i beyt'e, Hakk'a zarar vermesi demektir. Bu tür hizmetler yaptım. Çünkü zaten bunun temelini benim babamdan almıştım, biliyordum. (Veli Gülsoy)

8. On yaşındayken İstanbul'un Bahçelievler semtine taşındık. Biz İstanbul'a gelip çalışmak ve para kazanmak için babamıza ısrar ettik çünkü öyle yapmak zorundaydık. O zamanlar, insanlar dedelerin insanları sömürdüğünü ve paralarını aldığını söylerdi. Bu nedenle, biz de İstanbul'a gidip para kazanmalıyız dedik. İstanbul'a geldiğimizde, babam dedelik görevini sürdürmedi. Ben lisedeyken babam

öldü. Aileme bakmak için inşaatlarda çalıştım ve aynı zamanda okudum. Anadolu Üniversitesi'nde işletme okudum. Daha sonra bir dükkan açana kadar bir sigorta acentesinde çalıştım. 1990'larda Yenibosna'da bir cemevi açılana kadar Alevilikten bir süre uzak kaldık. Sonra, Aleviliğe geri döndüm. Bir keresinde bodrum katında cem yaptığımızı hatırlıyorum. İstediyin her yerde cem yapamazdın çünkü saldırabilirdi. (Zeynel Tan)

9. Bizim gençlerimiz de bize karşı çıktı. Dediler ki baba, dedeliğe gerek yok. Dedikodu yaptılar ve dedelere sömürücü dediler. Sömürücü dediklerinde yani ben hiç bir dedenin taliplerinden bir şey istediğini görmedim. Yani, dedelerin sonunu onlar getirdi. Dedelerin çocukları babalarına karşı çıktılar. Dediler ki taliplere gitme. Dedikodu bizim gençlerimizden yayıldı. Dedelik yapmak benim seçimim değildi çünkü toplum seni istiyor. Seni çağırdıklarında hayır diyemezsin. Sen benim pirimsin, çocuğum askere gidecek. Kurban keseceğim. Pirimin gelmesini bekliyorum derler. Taliplerim beni çağırırlar. (Ali Ekber Aydoğan)

10. Bizim köy seyid köyü olduğu için her sene bizim oraya dedeler gelir. Kendi içimizde de taliplerimiz gelir. Dini eğitimi, cemi, cemaati orda gördük. Tabi şehire geldikten sonra bu 74'ten sonra cem, cemaat de kalmadı köylerde yani. O zaman ta ki 93 ya da 97'ye kadar. Şehirlerde dede bize gelirdi cem falan olmazdı işte. Otururdu sohbet ederdi. Akşam yemeğini yerdi. Sabahleyin duamızı alırdık. Çıkar giderdi. Dede birşeyler biliyorsa, anlatıyorsa tabii Allah razı olsun en azından onlar o yolu buraya kadar getirebildiler yani. İster bilsek, ister bilmesek dede evimize gelmezse ziyaret etmezse biz Alevi olduğumuzu bilmezdik. Biz pir nedir bilmezdik rehber nedir bilmezdik. O dede buraya kadar gelmeseydi. 93'ten sonra 97'ye kadar

cemevlerinin temelleri atıldı. Büyük şehirlerde insanlar artık ceme gitmeye başladı.

(Mustafa Düzgün)

11. Dedeler daha özgürdü ve toplumla daha sözü geçen istikrarlı bir yapısı vardı.

Bilgi noksandı belki iletişim bilgileri, Türkçe noksandı ama bilgilerini olduğu kadar tazeliyordu, başka dedelerden bilgi alışverişi yapıyordu ama yine de bu yolu buralara getirdiler. Kurumlar artık dedeleri kendileri yönetiyorlar. Bu yanlış. Dedeyi kendi iradesine bırakacaksın. Dededir o hakimdir. O savcıdır, annedir, babadır, örnek insandır, irşad edicidir. Onu rahat bırakıcan ki o Aleviliği yaşasın, göstere sin ama kurumlar yönettiği zaman asimilasyona uğramış gibi dejenere bir Alevilik yapısı oluşuyor. Şimdi soruyorlar dedem böyle böyle yapsak daha iyi olur, bizim kurum böyle sıkıntı çeker. Böyle deyince dedeyi de zorda bırakıyor. Dede diyor ki bari kurum ayakta kalsın da bazı şeylerden kendimizi feragat edelim diyor. O zaman dede rahat edemiyor ki Aleviliği kendi yaşayamıyor nasıl yaşatacak? Bütün kurumların yapısında budur. Bizim diyanet gibi bir yapımız yok, ortak bir kurumsal yapımız yok. Kurumsallaşmak için de dedeliğin de yapısı Aleviliğin özünü zedelemeden dokunmadan yapmak gerekiyor. (Hüseyin Özgöz)

12. Daha önce birçok cemevinde çalıştım ama yöneticilerle fikirlerimiz çatıştı.

Benim fikirlerimin onlarınkiyle aynı olmasını, onların istediklerini yapmamı istediler. Daha önce çalıştığım cemevindeki yöneticilerden biri Tokatlıydı. Dedi ben Zaza dede istemem. Ondan sonra ben orayı bıraktım. (Zeynel Tan)

13. 1960'larda köylerimiz yavaş yavaş boşaldı. Herkes gurbete geldi yani köyü geçindiremedi insanlar ekonomik bakımdan herkes gurbete geldi. Gelince köylerdeki yaşantı burdaki yaşantıyla ters düştü. Nasıl ters düştü. Mesela İstanbul'a geldi.

1964'te ben İstanbul'a geldim. İstanbul'da bir cemevi yok, bir dernek yok.

Gidebileceğin hiçbir yer yok. Ya camiye gideceksin ya da uzak duracaksın. Mesela 1960'dan beri baya asimileler oldu. Halk inancını, cemini, müsaipliğini yaşayamadı. Ondan sonra 1992'de bu Maraş, Sivas katliamlarından sonra insanlar arayış içine girdiler. Yavaş yavaş dernekler açıldı. Dernek inancı temsil etsin diye açıldı ama derneği açan inancı bilmiyor. Çünkü uzun bir ara verilmişti. Dedeler arka planda kaldı. Ondan sonra yeniden bir yapılanma gerekiyordu. Cemevleri açıldı. Şimdi cemevleri derneklerin elinde. Dernek başkanının yol erkan konusunda pek bilgisi yok ama kendi siyasi ve ticari şeyine alet ediyor. (Süleyman Metin)

14. Gitmiyorum. Cem Vakfı'ndan ayrıldıktan sonra gitmedim. Cemevlerinde yapılanlar bana doğru gelmiyor. Kimsenin inancını bozmak istemiyorum. Mesela semah vecd halinde insanın tanrıyla buluşması. E biz ekip halinde çıkarıp semah dönderiyoruz. Mesela, kapıcı on iki hizmetten birisi kapıyı açıp kapayan adam demek halbuki değil. Kapı muhabbet kapısı açacaksın cemde. Öyle bir muhabbet açacaksın ki sorunlar çözülecek. Yani görünenlerle esas birbirine farklı onun için pek hoşuma gitmiyor. (Süleyman Metin)

15. Aleviler artık inancını yaşamıyor cemevlerinde. Niye yaşamıyor? Kendisini bilmeyen demiş ki kendisini bilemeyen hakkı bilemez diyor. Bunu söylerken adam hakkı bilebilmen için kendine sahip olman gerekiyor. Biz diyoruz ki ben Allahu biliyorum kendimi biliyorum cemevine gitmeme gerek yok ama cemevinin amacı Alevi toplumunu bir araya getirmektir. Biz biraraya gelemiyorsak demek ki birleşeceğimiz nokta yok. Dedelerin görevi buydu toplumu birleştirmektir. Şimdi dedelere saygı duymuyoruz bakma. Mesela kurum yöneticileri dedelerin üstündedir. Kurum yöneticisi isterse dede burda durur. İstemezse durmaz. Aleviliğe baktığınız zaman dede herşeyin üstündedir. Şimdi insanlar da bakar. Ya bu dede bir yöneticinin

emrindeyse ben ne saygı duyayım ama ilahiyat öyle değil dimi Sunnilerde. Mesela İstanbul müftüsü vali bile onun emrindedir. Halbuki Alevi geleneğinde dede en üstte olması lazım. Biz bu geleneği yaşatamıyoruz. Bu yüzden Aleviliğin birliği sağlanamıyor. Dede ocaklarının dedelerin saygın bir yerde bulunması lazım ki emrettiği zaman herkes ona uyabilsin. En büyük eksiklik idari kadroların dedeyi personel gibi görmeleridir ama dede ilahi bir kadrodur. Sivas'ta Pir Sultan köyü var. Pir Sultan dernekleri var. Her sene Sivas'a gidip gelirler. Gittik Pir Sultan dernekleri var. Pir Sultan'ın doğduğu ev yıkılmak üzere. İlk önce senin kurduğun derneğin pir sultana hizmet etmesi ve Pir Sultan'a bakım yapması lazım. (Mustafa Düzgün)

16. Şimdi dede olunmaz sadece yaşanılır. Yetiştirilmez mesela bir kişi dede seyid çocuğuyorsa eğer seceresi biliyorsanız ki bir sürü ocak var. Seyid soyundan geliyorsa zaten dededir. Donanım olarak kendini yetiştiriyorsa gelecek dedenin yanında bizim yanımızda posta oturuyor, kendisini yatıştırəcək. Dede olabilmesi için de ben şunu diyorum çok bilinçli olacaksınız. Yani irşad edeceksin. İrşad etmedin mi dedelik görevini yapamazsın. İmam Cafer Sadık hazretleri diyor ki bir pir talibini irşad etmezse dedelik caiz değildir. Şimdi sen geldin burda dedene bir şey sordun eğer o dede sen irşad etmezse dedeliği eksiktir. Kendisini ilimle hem zahiri hem batini yetiştirmek zorunda. Tekel'de çalışıyordum. Yani naptım üç sene dört sene dedelik eğitime gittim Alevi Din Hizmetleri'nde dedelik kursu var. Alevi din hizmetleri Yenibosna Cemevi'nde Alevi Din Hizmetleri var. Orda dedeler var dedelere eğitim veriyor. Sen de gidiyorsun orda eğitime katılıyorsun, sen de soru sorabiliyorsun ama bilmediklerini. Orda noluyor birbirimizi yetiştiriyoruz. Orda dede eğitim veriyor bilmediklerini öğreniyorsun. Bu sefer işin sonunda sana sertifika veriyorlar. Biz de sertifikamızı alıyoruz yapıyoruz. İşte dosyamıza koyuyoruz. Bir yabancı şer güç

geldiği zaman sen kimsin adam ne anlar dedelikten seyidlikten seni kabul
etmeyebilir. Sen de napıyorsun sertifikanı gösterirsin buyrun dersin hiç konuşmazsın.
Sen sertifikanı almışsın onun seni eleştirme hakkı yok. (Hasan Kaya)

17. Biz 2003 yılında Abdi İpekçi'de büyük bir cem yapmıştık o zaman bütün
Aleviler, Alevi kurumları katılmışı 15-17 bin kişiydik. Abdi İpekçi stadı var işte
karşıda. Ondan sonra İzmir'de cemler yapıldı. Derken bölgesel cemler işte her
bölgede cem evi açıldı işte diyelim ki Okmeydanı'nda , Bağcılar da, Bahçelievler'de
cemevi açıldı derken insanlar yavaş yavaş buralarda ibadet görüyor. O zaman da işte
her dedenin yaptığı uygulamalar biraz farklı olduğu için 2002'de Cem Vakfı'nın
Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri bünyesi altında bir toplantı yapıldı. 1200-1300 dede
topladılar. O dedelerin toplanmasıyla birlikte ortak bir cem nasıl yapılır, ayrı ayrı her
bölge, dede kendisine göre değil de. Ortak cem nasıl yapılır diye bir cem kitapçığı
basıldı oniki hizmetin içinde olduğu. Bütün dedeler artık o kitapçıktan cem yapmaya
çalıştılar. İyi de oldu, başarılı da oldular yani. Başka kurumlar yoktu. Şimdi çoğaldı.
Pir Sultan Dernekleri, Hacı Bektaş dernekleri çeşitli, kurumlar, vakıflar çoğaldı.
(Mustafa Düzgün)

18. Kentleşmeyle birlikte artık sadece sizden oluşan bir ortamda değilsiniz yani
birçok inancın birçok kültürün birçok farklı yöreden insanların birarada bulunduğu
ortamdasınız. Bununla birlikte bir hayat kaygınız, ekmek kaygınız var. İşin içine
biraz da siyaset girince Alevilik özellikle 70lerde 80lerde kente göçle birlikte bazı
sorunlar yaşamaya başladı. Yani inancın aktarımı, inancın yaşatılması gibi bir takım
sorunlar yaşamaya başladı. Hal böyle olunca bu sorunlar yeni şeyler doğurdu.
Sonrasında devletin de asimilasyon baskısı da beraberinde gelince Aleviler yeni bir
yapılanmaya gitmek zorunda kaldılar. Bu yeni yapılanmada geleneksel dedeliğin

biraz dışına çıkıldı. Biraz Sunni algının da zahiri anlamda kafasında şekillendirebileceği yeni bir motif oluşturulmaya çalışıldı. Yani mesela cemler tek tipleştirildi. Oysa her ocağın cemi farklıdır. Bu farklılıklar aslında bizim zenginliğimizdir. Bizde bir söz vardır yol bir sürekin binbir diye. Cemlerin tek tipleştirilmesi zenginliğimizi kaybetmemize ve geleneksel Aleviliğin dışına çıkmamıza sebep oldu. Sunni algının tek tipleştirilmiş şekilleştirilmesi gibi şekilci bir inanış ortaya çıkarıldı. Kentleşmeyle beraber Alevilik ve dedelik kurumu kentte kendini var edebilmek adına biraz arka planda durmak zorunda kaldı. 70'lerde 80'lerde geleneksel dedelik günümüz dedeliğine kentlerde yeterince aktarılamadı. Arada bir boşluk oldu. O aradaki bağ zedelendi, o boşluğu da o şekilcilik doldurmaya başladı. (Murat Kantekin)

19. Ocak merkezi bir köyde büyümüş olmaktan ötürü cemlerde büyüdüm. Hem bizim köyümüzdeki ailelerin neredeyse tamamına yakını dededir. Birçoğu aktif dedelik yapar. Geleneksel dedelik yapıyor tabi bu arkadaşlarımız. Bunun dışında benim rahmetli dedem de çok yetkin bir dedeydi... Deyim yerindeyse cemde onun dizinde büyüdüğüm için biraz cemlerin içinde büyümüş biriyim. Dışardan daha sonra dedelik eğitimi alarak öğrenmedim. Bu yeterli değildi nihayetinde geleneksel bir dedelik öğreniyorsunuz ama çağımızın beklentisi olarak bilgi açısından beklenti fazla. Bu bağlamda sanırım 2005 yılıydı tarihi çok hatırlamıyorum, Karaca Ahmet'te Türkiye'de ilk defa dedelik kursu açılmıştı. Orda hem dedelik hem Alevilik tarihi eğitimleri oluyordu. Rahmetli Cemal Şener hocamızın koordinatörlüğünde o kursa gittim. Ordan da biraz akademik anlamda dedelik eğitimi almış olduk. Sonrasında dedelik yapmaya başladım. Aslında daha öncesinde de yapıyordum. Birkaç defa zaruri koşullardan ötürü bir keresinde on üç yaşındayken dedelik yaptım ben.

Bayram ceminin olduđu gün talipler çağırıldı. Ben de orda talipler de dedemiz hem yapsın hem öğrensin diyerek onların da oluruyla henüz on üç yaşındayken bayram ceminde dedelik yapmıştım. Ardından bizim orada çok aktif olarak kullanılan bir şey vardır asker kurbanı, asker cemi. Askere gidenler ya da askerden gelenler kurban kesilir ve cem yaparlar. Orda askere giden bir arkadaşımız için cem yapılmıştı. Onun dedeliğini yapmış olduk. On üç yaşındaydım ben. Ardından işte şu an otuz iki yaşındayım şimdiye dek öğrenim hayatım boyunca da şu anda da aktif olarak dedelik yapıyorum. (Murat Kantekin)

20. Kentleşmeyle birlikte Aleviler ötekileştirildiği için Sunni bir devlet organizasyonu olduđu için Aleviler kendilerini var edebilmek ya da ayakta tutabilmek adına kendilerine Sünni pencerenin Aleviliğe uyarlanmış şekli gibi yansıtmaya çalışıyorlar. Şöyle ki yani inancın konumunu, durumunu ibadetin uygulanış şeklini falan Sunni motfiler üzerinden tanımlamaya çalışıyorlar. Efendim Sunniler bakın şöyle yapıyor bakın biz Aleviler de şöyle yapıyoruz, biz birbirimize çok benziyoruz falan birbirimizden çok farkımız yok. Eyvallah ama Sunnilik aslında zahiri yani Sunni ibadet biçimleri zahiri bir durum oluşturuyor ama Aleviliğin içerisinde çok derin bir batını, içsel bir olgu var. Siz eğer bu batınılığı içselliği Aleviliğin temel dayanağı olan o tasavvufi inancı, ibadeti, erkanı sadece Sunni pencerenin algılayacağı şekilde anlatmak isterseniz görsel bir şekilciliğin ötesine geçemezsiniz. Maalesef bugün birçok yerde Alevilikle ilgili birçok olguda bunu görüyoruz yani sadece şekilciliğin ön plana çıktığı bir şey oluyor. Hatta bazen bu anlamda eleştirdiğim oluyor benim bazı arkadaşlarımızı cemler sadece Sunnilerin algıladığı bir şekilcilik boyutuna indirgeniyor. Şöyle sadece bir ibadet silsilesi var sıralaması o yapıyor, olay bitiyor. Yani geliyorsunuz duaya duruyorsunuz, duaz-1

imam söyleniyor, semah ediyorsunuz tekrar dua oluyor, cem bitiyor ama aslında cem bununla birlikte biraz da Aleviliğin kendi sosyal dinamiklerini barındıran bir şey.

Yani kendi içerisinde bu az önce söylediğim tasavvufi durumu barındıran, ceme gelen insanlara bu tasavvufi algıları, batiniliği, inancın kendi özünü aktarmazsanız birşeyler eksik kalır. Yani siz eğer ceme gelen insanlara Hz. Ali ve Allah arasındaki bağlantıyı anlatmazsanız birçok şeyi eksik bırakmış olursunuz. (Murat Kantekin)

21. Ben tabii ki yeni dedelerden evvel Allah iyiyim. Onlar eski dedelerden öğrenmişler. Yeni dedelerden öğrenmemişler ki. Benim gibi köşede kalan dededen öğrenmişler. Yaşlandı kızım, paslandı. Ben doksan yaşında adamım eskiden beri görmüş gelmişim. Yeni dedeler otuz-kırk-elli seneden beri cem görmemişler. Cem Vakfı'nda birşeyler öğrenmişler dedelik yapıyorlar ama biz küçük yaşta yetişmişiz. Cem Vakfı başka eski başka. Eskiden kendini tanımayan, özünü bilmeyen kırk-kırk beş yaşına girmeyen dedelik yapamazdı. Şimdi yirmi yaşında gitmiş posta oturuyor dede olmuş. (Kasım Yılmaz)

22. Kasım dedenin söylediği doğru. Anadolu Aleviliği babadan oğula gelir, seyid silsilesidir ama şu anda seyid olmayanlar dedelik makamında oturuyor. Cem Vakfı'nın veya buna benzer kurumların yaptığı inancı şekle soktu. Aynı Sunni İslam inancı gibi. İşte Alevi ritüellerinde terimlerinde el açma yok, Kuran'ı öyle her yerde referans vermek yok. Alevi terimlerinde amin yerine Allah Allah'tır, kurban kesme yerine tıglama demektir, Alevi törelerinde ölüm yoktur sırlama vardır. Şimdi yeni nesil birilerine yaranmak için bu şekillere bürünür. Kasım Dede'nin dediği doğrudur. Eskiden babadan, dededen cem, cemaat içerisinde kendi ocaklarında yetişip taliplerini senede birkaç kere ziyaret eden orda irşad olan, orayı irşad eden yani her iki taraf hem feyz alıyor hem feyz veriyor. Dede böyledir hem talipten öğreneceği

çok şey var hem de talipe vereceği çok şey var. Onun için dede doğru söylüyor. Eskiden denetim altında olan Alevilik gerçek anlamda erenlerin izindeydi. Şimdiki Alevilik erenlerin izinde değil. Şu andaki Alevilik müsaiyet olmadan dede oluyor, eskiden olmazdı. Tarikata girmeyen, yemin etmeyen dede değildi ama şimdi her önüne gelen dededir. (Hüseyin Taştekin)

23. Biz Aleviler Allah'ı gökte aramıyoruz. Sen şimdi Sunni İslam anlayışıyla dede bana hiç bu konularda itiraz etme. Sen güneşi Ali'ye, ayı Muhammed'e benzetiyorsun. Sunni İslam anlayışında bu yoktur. Sen gidip dağın tepesindeki en güzel ağacı kutsal sayıp ona niyaz oluyorsun. Sunilikte bu yoktur. Biz o güneşin bize verdiği ısı, aydınlanma için el açıyoruz. Tanrıyı biz gökte aramıyoruz. İnsanın zerresinde arıyoruz. Dede bak bu konularda siz benimle tartışamazsınız. Biz ene-l hakk demiş bir toplumuz. İnsana Allah demişiz, hakk demişiz. Biz kalkıp da başka yerde bir şey aramıyoruz. Mansur ene-l hakk dediği için asıldı. Şimdi biz bunları arıyoruz. Bizim Anadolu Aleviliği farklı dedeciğim. Kasım dedeye yüzde yüz katılıyorum. Şekilciliğe girdi. (Hüseyin Taştekin)

24. Her cemevinde dede vardır. Herkes kendine göre hizmet ediyordur. Her gün gittikçe dedeler kendilerini geliştiriyor. Şimdi cemevlerimizde güzel yasin, Kur'an okunuyor, Fatiha okunuyor, secdelerimiz var, Tevhidimiz var, İhlasımız var. Mesela eskiden cemde Sunni bir vatandaş geldiği zaman Arapça bir ayet soruyordu Kur'an'dan dede Arapçayı bilmediği için bocalanıp kalıyordu ama şimdi öyle değil. Diyor ki bana fıkıhlarla, hadislerle gelme bana Kur'an'ın derinlikleriyle, ilmiyle gel diyor. Bizde cenaze namazı eskiden camiye giderdik. Camide son dönemde başladılar Aleviler leşlerini getirip burda namaz kılmıyorlar. Doğrudur. Cenazenin götürüp camiye bırakıyordun namaza girmiyordu kimse halbuki cenaze namazına

girmek kadar sevap bir şey yoktur ama şimdi bizim kendi cemevlerimizde cenaze namazını en güzel şekilde, gerçekten Sunni hocalarımız da geliyor diyor bizim yaptığımızla sizin yaptığınız arasında en doğrusu sizindir. Çünkü Alevi yolu Ehl-i beyt yolu hakk Muhammed, Ali yoludur, tarik-i mustakkim dosdoğru bir yoldur. O yolu sürdürebilirsek... En güzel yol Alevilerin gittiği yoldur. Mesela onlar otuz gün oruç tutar biz saygı duyarız. Biz de on iki gün Muharrem de tutarız. Üç gün Hızır orucunu tutarız, cemlerimizde bizim de secdemiz var, Tevhidimiz var, İhlasımız var, Yasinimiz var yani bizde de aynı. Ha Allahu ekber der kement bağlar biz cemde elimizi yüreğimize koyarız, dar duasına dururuz. Ondan sonra secde ederiz. Hz. Ali'nin kurduğu aynı nizamı biz devam ettiriyoruz. Ehl-i beyt yolundan Hakk, Muhammed, Ali yolundan yürüyenler Alevilerdir. (Nuri Kaya)

25. Vallahi şu ortamda bana sorarsanız hepimiz takiye yapıyoruz. Sıkıştığımız zaman hemen. Onlara şirin gözükmek için. Diyelim bir yere çağırıyorlar gidiyoruz. Bugün gittiğim yer çok önemli bir yerdi. Giderken ya dede komşularımız Sunnidir ona göre hareket et, ona göre konuş. E beni niye götürüyorsunuz kardeşim o zaman? Yani demek ki orda halen insanlar kendi komşusundan çekiniyor. Ben de diyorum ki ya komşunuzdan korkmayın, çekinmeyin, sizin yolunuz hakikattir, gerçektir. Onlar sizden korksun siz korkmayın. Onun için ben fazla evlere gitmek istemiyorum. Giderken de şartlarımı koşuyorum bakın eğer benim önümü kesicekseniz, beni orda konuşturmayacaksınız veya söylediklerimde Sunnidir budur şudur dersiniz o zaman beni götürmeyin. Benim tabiatımı herkes biliyor, huyumu da biliyor açıksözlü, sivri dilli olduğumu da onun için bazen Hüseyin Dede'yi gönderiyorum. (Celal Çelik)

26. Dedelerimizin söyledikleri birçok şeyi yani gördük yaşadık. Köy halkı yaşayan yaşlı kadın erkek anlatıyor. Diyor ki yavrum siz çocuktunuz hatırlamazsınız biz

bunları bunları bizatihi yaşadık. Bazıları diyor biz şu an nefes alıyorsak, yaşıyorsak dedenizin babanızın sayesinde. Hatta bir bey çocuğu olmuyor diye eşini boşuyor. Tam başka köyden kadın getirip evlenecekmiş. Kadın dedemin türbesine gitmiş yalvarmış demiş ki “ey erenler sana sığındım, bana bir himmet ver de beyim üstüme kuma getirmesin” demiş. Birden orda bir el uzanıyor. Elma uzatmış al kızım bu babamın lokması demiş. Al sana bir çocuk uşak verdim demiş. Cenab-ı Allah sana hayırlı uğurlu etsin diye. Bir iki gün içerisinde gelini alıp uzak yerden getirecekler. Hazırlık yapıyorlar. Kadın aniden rahatsızlanıyor. Hekime götürüyorlar. Kadın gebeymiş diyorlar. Yani mümkün değil kadın gelmiş elli yaşın üzerinde nasıl olur. O kadın doğum yapıyor. Beyi vazgeçiyor düğünden. Gelini götürüp geri bırakıyor. Onun bir tek çocuğu var. O çocuğu olan kadın da buradan hiç çıkmaz buralara gelir. Şu anda Hacı Bektaş’ta evi vardır. Onlar da anne tarafından dede soylular. (Hüseyin Özgöz)

27. Eskiden keramet devriydi ama şimdi marifet devri yani bilgi. Eskiden dedelerin ısınmış sobayı kaldırma gibi kerametleri vardı. Şimdi taliplerine doğru yolu bilgiyle göstermeliler. Benim sonra ölen kardeşimden dedeliğini kerametle ispat etmesini istemişlerdi. Sonra, o yanan bir sobayı kaldırdı. (Zeynel Tan)

28. Eskiden keramet devriydi ama şimdi bilgi, bilim devri. Mesela bir dede duygusallaştı mı elini kaynar suya sokardı içindeki eti çıkarıp insanlara vermek için. Böyle söylüyorlar ama ben görmedim. (Kasım Yılmaz)

29. Şimdi dedeler bir yığın baskıya dayanarak bu süreci bu güne kadar getirdiler. Benim o dedeleri eleştirme şansım olmaz ama şu var; geleneksel dedelik içerisinde sadece basma kalıp bir durumla çok fazla üzerine koymadan dedelik yapan insanlar oldu. Onlar bir iki istisnadır. Onun için bizim dedelerimizin tümü çok fazla bedel

ödeyerek işlerinden, tarlasından zaman ayırıp köylere gidip dedelik yapmaya çalıştılar yani bir zaman bir emek harcadılar. Bugün şöyle bir durum var; siz kenttesiniz, ceme gelen özellikle gençler okulda, sokakta her nerede olursa olsun öteki inanç mensupları tarafından soru bombardımanına tutuluyor. Akademik bir eğitim alan gençler kafalarında bir takım şeyler şekillendiriyor. Bunların tümünü ceme geldiğinde sizden almak istiyor. Siz dede olarak özellikle gençlerin sorduğu on sorunun en az sekizine yanıt veremiyorsanız o genç bir daha ceme gelmiyor. O genci de cemde tutabilmek adına deyim yerindeyse çağı okumak lazım. Yani bu gençler bugünün koşullarında ne tür zorluklar yaşıyor ne türden sorularla karşılaşılıyor. Onları bilmek ona göre kendimizi konumlandırmak lazım. Bu da akademik anlamda dedelik dediğim şey doktora yapmış bir dededen bahsetmiyorum ama günümüz koşullarında gençliğin yaşadığı soruları ve sorunları öngörerek ona göre bir dedelik anlatısı sağlamış olmakla ilgilidir. Yoksa bizim geleneksel dedelerimiz bu inancı baskılara karşı yaşattılar. Hatta 80 döneminde siyasal genç şimdilerde amcamız, abimiz olan birçok insan cemlere girip dedelere siz sömürücüsünüz diye nutuk atıyorlardı. Etrafımızda bunu yaşayan insanlar oldu. Onlar kendileri de söylüyorlar yani bazı yaşlı dedeler....Hatta ben bir keresinde bunu bizzat yapan insandan dinlemiştim. Kendisi yanılmıyorsa Çorum'un ya da Amasya'nın bir köyünde ceme girip dedeyi eleştirdiğini sen insanları sömürüyorsun, kandırıyorsun diyerek dedeye nutuk attığını. Sonra çıktığını söylemişti. Şimdi şunu söylüyor o dedeyi bugün bulsam gidip ellerini öper özür dilerim. Çünkü aslında çok zor bir şey yapıyormuş ama o 80 öncesi süreçte bu ateşli siyasal bir durumdan ötürü de.... Biraz da inancı öteleyen bir süreç olmasından ötürü bizim özellikle sol yapılardaki bazı abilerimiz dedelere bir takım haksızlıklar yapmış. (Murat Kantekin)

30. Çok var. İda var Danirmarkalı, Amerikalı, İngiliz. Yedi kişi de Alevi oldular. Alex var cemlerde bağlama çalıyor. Alex üniversiteli doktora için geliyor buraya. (Hüseyin Özgöz)

31. Atadan, babadan, dededen hepimiz evlad-ı resul soyundanız. Sultan Sinemilli Ocağı ve amcalarımız var Ağuıçien Ocağı dediğimiz anne tarafından da baba tarafından da ocakzade. Eğitimcilik yaptım yıllarca, danışmanlık, tercümanlık yaptım. Farklı branşlarda üniversitelerde bilgiler edindim, tecrübelerim vardır. Beş taneye yakın üniversite okudum yani. Onun dışında çocukluğumdan beri atamızdan geleneğimizi de bildiğimiz için bağlama ön planda olmak üzere saz ilgisi ön plandaydı. Küçüklüğümde beri saz çalarım ben. Bağlama eğitimini ilerlettim profesyonel çalma seviyesine. Ondan sonra gidip Arif Sağ'a bağlama eğitimini yine uzman olarak öğrenmeye başladım. Ordan İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi'nin eğitim birimlerinde eğitim de aldım. Daha sonra Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'nde bir yıllık bir çalışmam oldu. Orda da bağlama eğitimi daha çok deyişler üzerine öğrencilere ders verdim. Hatta Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi'nden öğretim üyesi gelmişti. Yan sınıfta onlar da Türk müziği dersi veriyordu. Biz de halk müziği dersi veriyorduk. Böyle bir İsmail öğrencim vardı Arzu'yla beraber bölüm başkanı vardı. Yıllar oldu irtibat sağlayamadım. Yani durum netice nereye vardı bilemiyorum. Bütün öğrencilerim ismini de hatırlamam mümkün değil en az 1600 öğrencim vardı Resital Sanat Merkezi'nde. Okullarda da görev yaptım yedi tane okulda Tuzla'da müzik öğretmeni olarak. Onun dışında edebiyatla uğraşıyorum. Kitap çalışmalarım var şu anda dört tane. Animasyonlu bir kitap çalışmam, bağlama, sanat dalıyla semahlarla ilgili animasyon görsel bir kitap hazırlıyorum. Alevilikte düşkünlükle ilgili bir bilgilendirme kitabı yazmaya çalışıyorum. Alevi erkanıyla ilgili yine bir araştırmam

var. Cenaze hizmetleri, yıkama, defnetme konusunda araştırma kitapları hazırlıyorum. On altı senedir de Karaca Ahmet Sultan dergahında hizmet yapmaktayım. Dede olarak da eğitimci, bağlama, semah hocası, zakir yetiştiriyorum. Ondan önce Cem Vakfı'yla da çalışmalarım oldu. Maltepe'de Kırklar Cemevi'nde iki yıl hocalık yaptım, dedelik yaptım. Bizim 5 tane şubemiz var. Yaklaşık dört şubede belirli bir süreç içerisinde eğitimcilik yaptım. Cenaze hizmetlerinden, bağlamaya kadar eğitimlik yaptım. Halen burda devam ediyorum. (Hüseyin Özgöz)

32. Zamana göre değişti biraz. Diyelim ki eskiden atla gidiliyordu. Sonra araba, uçak...Avrupa'ya gittim ben mesela çok kaldım. Belçika, Hollanda, İsviçre...Orda aşağı yukarı elli-altmış tane cemevi dolaşım. Burda Cem Vakfı'nda 4 sene Alevi İnanç Din Hizmetleri genel sekreterliği yaptım. Şimdi Baba Mansur Derneği'nin ikinci başkanıyım. 2004-2005'te kurduk. O günden beri faal olarak çalışıyorum. Her konuda kendimi bildim bileli her zaman Alevi konularında ciddi olarak çalışıyordum. Dedelik ayrı bir şey. Benim babamın talipleri var. Benim de kendimi ispat edip taliplerimin olması lazım. Yani bir okul gibi kurup onu yapmam lazım. Ciddi bir konu. Herkes dede olabilir ama pir, mürşid ayrı bir konu. Ona soyunduğunuz zaman yetenekleriniz olucak. O yeteneklerle onu sürdürmeniz gerekiyor. Dedeyim ama dedelik yapmıyorum. Müsayip bağlamam lazım, onlara sahip olmam lazım. Onları takip etmem lazım. Dört kapı kırk makamdan haberdar olmam lazım. Zaman değişti. Çark hızlı dönüyor. İnsanlar daha çok bilgiye yöneliyorlar. Dürüstlüğe, yol erkan nedir ona kimse çok bakmıyor. Ben baktım, sordum, öğrendim. Halbuki senin bakıp öğrendiğin ancak kendi bakış açına göre. Sen bir mürşid seviyesinde bunu öğrenip yapamazsın yani onu bilmediği için insanları burda idare etmek çok zor. O dönemde daha iyiydi çünkü inanıyordu en azından dedesine. Onun dediğinden çıkmıyordu.

Şimdi Kuran'da ayet de göstersen bir sürü şüpheyile karşılaşıyorsun. Bir de her dede bütün Alevilere dedelik yapamaz. Kendi özel taliplerinin olması lazım. Yapmıyorum dedim aslında burda her cumartesi toplanıyoruz. Yirmi-otuz kişilik bir grubumuz var. üç-dört senedir biz bu eğitimi veriyoruz. Yani Alevilik şeyini yaşıyoruz. Gençleri yetiştirmek. Şeriata, tarikata, marifete, sırr-ı hakikate göre onları yetiştirmek bilgilendirmek, anlamları nedir öğretmek, duaları öğretmek, ciddi olarak çalışıyoruz. Benim kendime dede demem doğru değil. Birisinin demesi lazım. (Süleyman Metin)

33. Bu yedinci çalışmaya katıldım. Hükümet düzenliyor. Bakan Faruk Çelik var ya yetkili oydu. İşte o dedeleri, yazarları, çizerleri bu konuda uzmanları çağırıyordu, panel şeklinde. İşte Alevi hakları verilecek sözde ne yapabiliriz, nasıl olur, Alevilik nedir, dede nedir böyle bir taktikle kendine oy toplamak için kullandılar. Hiçbir hak vermediler. Hiçbir ilerleme olmadı. Mesela cemevlerinin hepsi kaçak. Hiçbiri yasal değil. Hiçbir resmiyeti yok yani..... Kültür ayrı bir şey kültür geçicidir. Mesela sizin köyde eskiden kara sabanla çift sürülüyordu değil mi? Sonra atlar koşuldu. Sonra traktör çıktı. O kültür geçicidir, zamanla değişebilir ama inanç sabittir, değişmez. Onun için kültür demek yanlış yani. Kültür değiliz inancımız var ama inancımızın içinde kültürümüz de var. (Süleyman Metin)

34. Burda var bir sürü kitap tak bir tanesine baktım. Hepsini attım oraya geri. Bana göre boş yani. Bir sefer toplantıya katıldım. Bir daha da katılmadım boş gördüğüm için. Yani senin fikrini hiç oraya koymaz. (Celal Çelik)

35. Sarsıldı. Eskiden geleneksel dedelik dediğim süreçte dedenin bulunmadığı bir köye dede kışın belki on beş yirmi gün belki bir ay giderdi. Hem cem yapar hem de varsa oradaki sorunları çözerdi, görgü görürdü ve giderdi. Geri kalan on bir ay boyunca o köylü bir sorun yaşasa bile dedenin gelmesini beklerdi. Örneğin bir tarla

sorunu yaşasalar bile bekle dede üç dört ay sonra gelecek cemde biz onu konuşuruz, çözeriz derlerdi. Dedenin orda bir otoritesi vardı. Günümüzde bunu insanlar kendi aralarında çözmeye çalışıyorlar ya dede bir şey söyler bu taraflardan birinin hoşuna gitmezse bu mahkemeye taşınabiliyor. Eskiden böyle olmazdı. Dedenin sözü geçerli olurdu. Günümüzün koşulları insanları biraz bireyselliğe itti. Komünal bir toplumsal yaşam vardı ve siz onun içerisinde ortak dürtülerle hareket eder, bir otoriteniz olur, bu otorite dede olur, köy muhtarı olurdu. Şimdi insanlar ailede babalarının sözünü dinlemedikleri durumlarda bir dedenin sözünü çok fazla dinlemeyebiliyorlar. Bu günümüzdeki koşullardan toplum hayatının sadece Alevileri değil diğer kesimler için bireyselleşmeye ittiği için toplumsal bir arada yaşama kültürü ortadan kalktığı için o otorite yine pek fazla yok ama yine var. Yani yaşıyoruz. Birkaç yıl önce bir Tokat'ta bir talibimizin köyde tarlayla ilgili bir sınır sorunu olmuştu. Babamı aradılar babam İstanbul'dan kalkıp Tokat'a gitti. Orda köylüyle konuştu ve çözüm buldular. Yani ben çağırırsam ben de gidiyorum. Bir ailenin mirasla ilgili bir sorunu varsa yani ne kadar yıpratılmaya çalışılırsa çalışılsın dedelik kurumu hala toplumsal işlev görüyor. Belki bundan yüz yıl önceki ağırlığında değil ama yine de toplumsal anlamda bir ağırlığı ve otoritesi var. (Murat Kantekin)

36. Kontrol gittikçe genişledi. Mesela köyde herkes birbirini tanıyor. Tanıdığı için ceme alındığı zaman şey sorulur döktüğünüz varsa doldurun, kırdığınız varsa yapın siz dara kalkıyorsunuz. Dedenin huzuruna geldiniz görüşüyorsunuz. Ayaklarınızı birleştiriyorsunuz, eliniz göğsünüzde. Konuya tam bağlıyım yanlış yapmıyorum anlamında. O zaman dede soruyor döktüğünüz varsa doldurun. Kırdığınız varsa yapın. Ne demek? Kimsenin hakkını yediyseniz söyleyin verin. Kimsenin gönlünü kırdıysanız. Onu yap diyor. Ceme girmek için herkesin birbirinden razı olması lazım.

Birisi birisinden razı değilse cem yapılmaz. Allah eyvallah diyorsa razıyım demektir. İstekliyim diyorsa anlaşılır ki bir başkasıyla sorunları var. O zaman buyrun çık meydana diyorlar. Sen çıkıyorsun. Öbür arkadaş da çıkıyor. Hiç hile katmadan anlatıyorsun. Ondan sonra dede ona göre karar veriyor. Sizi barıştırıyor. Ondan sonra cem yapılıyor. Burda mümkün değil. Babam mesela kendi adamlarıyla tanıdığı için onlarla uzlaşıyordu ama dışarda her adamla bunu yapmıyordu. Çünkü onun hile yapıp yapmadığını başkasının gönlünü kırıp kırmadığını bilmiyordu. O zaman bilmediği adamla ancak şeriat cemi yapıyordu ama bilen adam olursa onlarla daha ilerisini yapıyordu. Burda bir cemevi yoktu. Bir evde kaç kişi olur. En çok yirmi kişi. Halbuki yüz iki yüz kişiyi bir araya getireceksin ki. E öyle bir yer yok, imkan yok, devlet müsaade etmiyor. Mesela son senelere kadar Alevilik kelimesini kullanmak bile suçtu. Yani Alevi derneği diye açamıyorsun. Mesela Cem Vakfı Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim Vakfı olarak açtı. Direkt cem kelimesi yasaktı o zaman. (Süleyman Metin)

37. Şu anda talip görgüsüne gitmiyorum ne yazık ki. Yani daha çok cemevinde burdaki insanlar hep bizim talibimiz. Biz aslında şu an bütün Ümraniye'nin piriyiz öyle diyelim. Yani kabul görürüz ama bağlı oldukları ocak dedelerine saygı duyarız. Herkesin bağlı olduğu bir ocağı var ama genelinde biz şu an talibi gördüğümüz için taliple olduğumuz için biz onların piriyiz. (Zeynel Tan)

38. İyi şeyler düşünmek isterim ama üzüldüğüm taraflar çok. Kendini yola adanmışlıkları yok. Yola adanmışlık olmayınca dedeliği sadece menfaat için kendi çıkarı için yapmış olanlar vardır. O yüzden de sahte dedeler vardır, sahte seyidler vardır. Dedelik yapmasını boş ver oraya oturması caiz olmayan kişiler oraya oturmaya başladı ve gerçek seyid olanların çoğu da onlara uydu. Niye? Çünkü o sahte olanlar kendi reklamlarını bir cazgır gibi çok iyi yaptılar ve Almanya'da

Türkiye’de onlar da dedelik yapmalı dediler çünkü bilgililer. Oysa Kuran yine bize bir ayet veriyor bu konuda Kuran’da ne yazılıysa aslında bize bir mesajdır ama alabildiklerimizi alıyoruz işimize yaramayanları kaldırıp atıyoruz ya da okumuyoruz. Bakın diyor ki ben yeryüzüne bir insan yaratıcam ve o insanın içinde yeryüzü halifesi yaratıcam. Yeryüzü halifeleri peygamberlerdir, velilerdir, veliyullahlardır. Onlara biat edip secde edin diyor. Şeytan çok da akıllıydı ama Allahu tealanın emrine karşı geldi. Secde olmadı. Allah da onu lanetledi. Şimdi bize bu mesaj şöyle aktarılmalı size doğru yolu göstermeyen ya da kendini ön plana çıkaran oraya oturmayı hak etmeyen kişileri lanetleyin. Onun meclisine gitmeyin. İmam Cafer-i Sadık buyruğu diyor ki seyid evladı olmadığını bildiğiniz kişilerin karşısında secde olduğunuz zaman sizin ibadetinizde şirk vardır. Onların uçtuğunu da görseniz inanmayın diyor. (Veysel Kara)

39. Dedelerin ilk işi köydeki gibi olmaz. Köyde dede tarlasını eker, biçer rızkını kazanır ama sen burda tarlan yok bir şey ekip biçmiyorsun. Talibin eline bakıyorsun talip de sana bir şey yoksa daha ne yapacak burda. Önce kurumların dedesini, hocasını, zakirini besleyecek duruma gelmesi lazım. Şimdi bize diyorlar ki ya dede bir üniversite mezunu al da yetiştir. Tamam diyorum yetiştiriyim ama siz maaş verin diyorum. Bir üniversite mezunu üç-üç buçuk liradan aşağı çalışmaz. Siz maaşı verin üniversite mezunu bir genci alayım yanımda yetiştireyim. Hem bilgisayar, teknolojiyi bilsin hem de konuşmasını hitabetini geliştirsin topluma hizmet etsin. Sigortasını yatırım, maaşını verin çocuk gelsin gitsin. E olur mu? Peki niye olmuyor. Şimdi adam üniversiteyi bitirmiş. Ben emekliyim diye buraya geliyorum. Emekli olmasam niye geleyim ki? Ekmek kazanmaya gideceğim. Ondan sonra bir grup çıkıyor bizim dedemiz para almaz. Ya köydeki dede ekip biçiyordu. Niye emekli

olmadan önce gelmiyordum çünkü çalışmam lazımdı. Dört tane çocuğum var. Okutmam lazım. Onlara üst lazım, baş lazım... Orası köydü burası şehir. Köyle şehir bir arada tutamazsın ki sen. Cemevlerinde dede olabilmesi için seyid evladı olması lazım. İkincisi kendini geliştirmeli. Toplumun kabul görebildiği, gelenek göreneklerin yaşadığı, bilgisiyle insanlara hizmet verebileceği dürüst temiz bir insan olması lazım ki topluma yön verebileceksin. Adam ilahiyat fakültesi bitirmiş. Sen dedenin mezun olduğu bir fakülte var mı? Aleviliğin bir enstitüsü var mı? Yok. Nasıl yetiştiriceksin bu dedeleri. Önce buna el atmak lazım. O halde eğitim kurumu olacak. Dede çocukları eğitim görecekler. Zakirler eğitim görecekler. Para lazım bunu yapabilmek için. (Mustafa Düzgün)

40. Mazgirt'in Mohundu ilçesinde Darıkent şu anki adı Mohundu nahiyesinde orda Darıkent'te bizim bir ocağımız vardır. Seyid Baba Mansur Ocağı. Seyid Baba Mansur'un orda yürüttüğü söylenen bir duvar vardır ki Osmanlı döneminde tahrip edilmiş, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti döneminde 38'lerde tahrip edilmiş katliamlarda tahribata uğramış vesaire vesaire vesaire. Hatta onlara kazmayı vurmuş kişiler anında simsiyah kesilerek cehennemi boylamışlardır diyelim. O duvarı yıkmak kimseye nasip olmamıştır ama zamanla korku cumhuriyeti de korku devleti de hakim olduğu için o duvarın üzerine bazen bazı yerde kapalı üzerine duvar koyarak daha yeni yeni yapmaya çalışıcaz bakalım inşallah iyi olur. Kısmi duruyor bazen betonla kapatmışlar burası diyorlar ama diğer sancakları o eski büyük ağaç direkleri var çoğu yazılı, süslü, oymalı ve sancak çoğu zamanda Osmanlı döneminde ordaki taş kitabeler alınmış götürülmüş. Bizim Mehmet Dayı dediğimiz ben hem anne tarafı hem Baba tarafı Baba Mansurlu olduğum için çok şanslı hissediyorum kendimi. Mehmet Dayı muhtarlık yaptığı zaman Diyarbakır'da Van'da o taşlardan bazılarını

buluyor, getiriyor ama hala onun söylemiyle o ş uanda hayatta değil yetmiş iki tane seksen iki tane mi taş eksik. Askeriye yıkmak istediği askeriye baskın yaptığı zaman önce taş kitabelerimizi yazılı taşları yıkmış ve çoğu da silinmek üzere denilen taşlar vardı. Mohundu'da Baba Mansur dergahı önünde o taşlardan birkaç tanesi duruyor. (Veysel Kara)

41. Mesela bizim evimizde yılan vardı. İşte o da ziyaret denirdi. Öldürülmezdi. Evde asamız vardı. O peygamber zamanında verilen asalardan biri onu saklardık. Kılıç vardı saklardık. Onu sakladığımız yerde babam duvarı kerpiç duvarlar vardır.

Onların içini oymuştu, oraya koyardı sıvardı kapatırdık. Mum yakardı her Perşembe günü orda dua eder, lokma yapar, mum yakardı, süt koyardı. Derdi ki yılan gelip yiyecek lokmayı. Orda yılan gelip sütünü içer gider derler. Gece annem derdi git bak mumlar devrilmiş mi dökülmüş mü anne diyorum duvar yemyeşil olmuş. O duvar sanki floresan yeşil rengi gibi. Ziyaret olan yer her zaman yemyeşil olur. Gündüz bakıyorsun kireç bembeyaz. Akşam mum yakıp koyuyorsun oraya yemyeşil.

Peygamberimiz zamanından kalma. Sultan Sinemilli'ye ayrı verilmiş, Ağuichen'e ayrı verilmiş. Sinemilli'ninki bizde. Hatta ona benzetilerek yapılan bir kılıç akrabamızda vardır. Teyzemin beyi onlar da dedeler Cemal Abdal Hoca onlarınki de dedemin türbesine yakın evleri var. Onların da bir zamanlar evlerine baskın döneminde herkes silah bıçak ne varsa toplamışlar. Sormuşlar evinde ne var ne yok diye. Korkudan o gelinleri varmış. Demiş ki filanca yerde bir kılıç var demiş dedemizden kalma.

Yüzbaşı duymuş onu. Getir bakalım o kılıcı. Askerler kılıcı görünce bakmışlar ki üzerinde La feta illa billah..... Zülfikar yazıyor ve üzerinde bir zümrüt parçası olduğunu çok değerli eski yüzyıllara dayanan bir kılıç olduğunu görmüş ve ağlamış. Kadını azarlamış, Allah cezanı versin bunu bari saklasaydın söylemeseydin. Şimdi

askerler gördü arşive koydu. Yüzbaşı almış, tutanak tutulmuş, onu götürmüşler.

Genelkurmayda özel arşivde saklanmış. (Hüseyin Özgöz)

42. Düzgün Baba'ya çıktığımız zaman yaya çıkardık. Düzgün Baba Hacı Kureş'in oğludur. Asıl ismi Şeyh Haydar'dır. Kışın zemheri ayında davarları getiriyor otlatıyor. Ağaçın dallarına vurduğu zaman yeşilleniyor davarlar yiyor. Babası geliyor ya ne yiyor bu davarlar diyor. Takip ediyor bakıyor ki elindeki şeyi ağaca vuruyor, ağaçlar yeşilleniyor. Orda keçinin biri aksırıyor. Aksırdığı zaman Şeyh Haydar diyor ki Hacı Kureş'i mi gördün? Bir arkasını dönüyor babası orda. Ordan havalanıyor. Ardan birkaç gün geçiyor babası diyor gidin bakalım bu nerde. Orda birkaç kişi gidiyor. Görüyorlar ki Kırklar Cemi'nde duruyor. Geliyorlar yeri düzgün diyorlar. İsmi Düzgün oluyor. (Ali Düzgün)

43. Tarihimiz 1500'lü yıllara kadar gider soy kütüğümüz ama ondan sonrası yoktur. Çünkü niye yoktur Yağız, Yavuz değildir, Yağız azılı demek, Yağız Sultan Selim'in Alevi tarihini ortadan kaldırmasıyla beraber, nedir bu Alevi kaynakları, yazılı kaynakları, yazılı kültürümüzü ortadan kaldırmasıyla beraber Anadolu'yu geçtim, Mısır'a kadar gider. Mısır'ı da fetheder. Ordaki külliyelerimizi de yakar, yıkar. Alevi-Bektaşî erenlerini, seyidlerini orda sürdürür. Gider Mısır'a iki bine yakın ulemayı alır getirir burda onların fetvasıyla yeni bir din çıkarır. Halifeliği de alır getirir. Bakın halifeliği de alır getirir. Bugün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde halifelik vardır ama Atatürk döneminde bu halifelik rafa kaldırılmıştır ama Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nde o halifeliğin yeri vardır. Bugün birileri de halifeliği almaya çalışıyor da umarım aydın düşünenler buna izin vermeyecektir. (Erzade Yıldız)

44. 1800'lerde bu İkinci Mahmud dönemindeki olaylarda Aleviliği asimile etmek için Tunceli bölgesinde büyük zulümler yaşanıyor. Bu İkinci Mahmud yeniçeri

ocağını kaldırıyor ya bütün Alevi dergah ve tekkelerini kapatıyor, Nakşibendilere devrediyor. Yani kalan akli başında dedeleri de öldürtmek, mahkemelerde süründürmek için her türlü şeyi yaptıkları için onlar o bölgeden ayrılıyorlar. Geliyorlar Kangal bölgesine, yerlerimiz genellikle dağlık yol, iz yok hükümetin de çok zor ulaştığı yerler haline geliyor. Bu İkinci Mahmud'un zulmünden dolayı gelmişler o bölgelere yerleşmişler. O bölgede de hala kendi köyümüz devam ediyor. (Süleyman Metin)

45. Koçgiri isyanına girersek ne sen altından çıkarsın ne de ben. Koçgiri isyanı ordaki Alevilere zulm etmektir. Ben bunu açıkça söyleyeyim. Bize zulm ettiler. Çok afadersin bizde namus kalmadı. Biz oraya girmeyelim boşver. O geçti. Onu anlatırsam başımız belaya girer. Bahsetmeye gerek yok. Koçgiri Aşireti'nin baş aktörleri kimlerdir biliyor musun? Baytar Nuri, Alişer Bey diğerini söylemeyeyim söylersem bizi burda döverler. Onlara girmeyeceğim. Bunlar Alevi düşmanı. Bunlar ajan İngiliz ajanı. Topal Osman zamanında bunlar hep birleştiler. Alevilerin sonunu getirdiler. O zamanki oranın liderleri fakir halkı sömürdüler. Milleti vurdu kırdılar. Benim rahmetli babam anlatıyordu. Diyor ki ben on iki yaşındaydım bizi götürdüler kurşuna dizdiler. Öyle bir isyan yaptılar. Bunların gayesi Ehl-i beyt'i yok etmek. Bunlar yezid. Sunniyi değil Aleviyi götürüyor. Yani İmranlı'da on tane Sunni köyü var bir tanesine dokunmadılar. Bu isyanı Alevi köylerine yaptılar. (Mehmet Divaneoğlu)

46. Seyid Rıza kimdir. Ben o konuya girmek istemedim. Seyid Rıza var. Ben saygı duyuyorum. Bu dediğiniz zat ille ben söylettiniz söylüyorum. Tunceli Nazmiye'nin köyünde şu anda bahsettiğimiz Seyid Rıza dediğimiz ajan Alevi değil, Seyid değil. O seyidin ismi ona verilmiştir. O bir Ermeni. Ermeni çocuklar doğmuyor. Doğmadığı

gibi ne yapıyor gel diyor sen iyi bir zatsın dedesin gel oku şu çocuğum düzelsin. O Seyid Rıza mübarek de geliyor okuyor. Seyid diyor ki benim ismimi verin, Seyid değil Rıza. Seyid Rıza ordan kalma. (Mehmet Divaneoğlu)

47. O olaylar söylenmez çok acı. Biz altı tane erkek kardeşтик. İki tane kız kardeşimiz vardı. Garbe geldik. Garbde bacım vefat etti. Kardeşlerim de vefat etti. Şimdi biz üç kardeş kaldık. Onun için çok acıdır yani ben o olayı anlatamam. Ben bir dedeyim, seyidim onun için başkası anlatabilir. Açlık da yorgunluk da herşeyi çektik o dokuz sene içerisinde. Babam yaşlı çalışmıyordu. Kardeşler küçüktü. Dokuz sene sonra döndük. Hükümet yardım etti bir sene yiyecek verdi, arazi verdi. 1947-48 sıralarında af çıktı. Sonra altı kardeş anne baba Tunceli'ye döndük. Geldiğim zaman on yedi yaşındaydım. Düğünümü yaptılar. Tarla ekip biçiyorduk, taliplere gidiyorduk. Babamdan sonra dedelik bana geçti. (Ali Düzgün)

48. Koçgiri isyanı tamamen bir yok etme planıdır aslında. Biliyorsun Koçgiri'yi taa Tunceli'den Koçuşığı denirdi. Koçuşığı'nı yok etmek için belli bir çaba sarf edilirdi. Koçgiri'yi bastıran kim biliyorsun dimi Topal Osman. Topal Osman kim? Giresunlu Sunni bir, hani ben baştan söyledim ya Seyid Battal Gazi'nin bile yanında muhakkak Emevi hanedanına hizmet eden bir uşak vardı, casus olarak takip ettiği. Bunlar sürekli birbirlerine bu görevi aktardılar. Topal Osman Koçgiri, Koçuşığı'nı yok etmek için kurulmuş olan bir plandır. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk döneminde değil aslında cumhuriyetten önce yapılmıştır. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk orda değil. O dönem Trablusgarb'da olması gerekiyor tarih olarak zannedersem. Daha sonra Çanakkale'ye gelmiştir vesaire ama Topal Osman o zaman iç ayaklanmaları bastırması gereken bir konumda yani çete savaşını yok etmek isteyen çeteleri yok etmek isteyen konumda ama Koçgiri'yle şu anda elimizde net belge olmamasına rağmen... Bakın Osmanlı

döneminde bizim Zazaları bilirsin dimi? Zazaların paşası var. Köyü bize yakın paşanın köyü. Asıl adı Murat bir paye veriyor paşalık görevi veriyor. Paşa Koçgiri aşiretine diyor ki siz ayaklanmayı başlatın, savaşı çıkartın, ben sizin arkanızdayım. Osmanlı'ya karşı. Topal Osman'ı oraya getiriyor ve kendisi geri çekiliyor. Koçgiri yalnız kalıyor. Alişer vardır o dönem daha sonra Seyid Rıza'nın yanına yanaşiyor. Alişer'in şu anda bile ha besteleri vardır ama M. Kemal Atatürk'e belli bir düşmalığı var bakın. Oysa Atatürk köken olarak Alevidir ve seyid evladıdır. Şah İsmail bile Mustafa Kemal'den rüya gördüğünü böyle böyle Anadolu'ya böyle birinin geleceğini, ben birgün kısmet olur bundan bahseden kitabı sana okuturum. (Veysel Kara)

49. Osmanlı özellikle Yavuz Selim'den sonra asıl daha çok katleden Kanuni Süleyman'dır. Yavuz Selim ve Kanuni ile birlikte Aleviler iyice katledilmeye başlandı. İkinci Mahmud çok da ağır bir katliam yaptı aslında. Yazılı bütün belgeleri yaktı yıktı. Kütüphaneleri tarumar etti. Dedeleri astı. Yani Aleviliği kurumsal anlamda katletti. Bana göre asıl katliamcı İkinci Mahmud'dur. Yavuz, Kanuni bunlar Alevileri katletmiştir ama İkinci Mahmud çok daha fazla Alevi katletmiştir. Böyle olunca Aleviler yere yatırılmış gırtlığına bıçak dayamış halde yaşıyorlardı Osmanlı zamanında. Cumhuriyetle birlikte önce Atatürk bu boğaza dayanan bıçağı ortadan kaldırdı. Sonra tepelerinde bunları yere yatıran olguyu ortadan kaldırdı ama şu oldu; Aleviler hala yerde yatıyordu. Ayağa kalkamadılar. Ayağa kalkmak istedikleri bir iki sefer başlarına çok kötü şeyler gelince ayağa kalkamadılar. Artık boğazlarında bir bıçak yok ve onların tepesinde onları yere yatırmış biri yok fakat hala yerdeler. Alevilerin Atatürk'ü sevmesindeki temel mesele budur. Atatürk Alevileri Osmanlı'nın kıyımından ve toplumsal katliamından kurtardı. Ha sonrasında Aleviler

katledilmedi mi evet katledildi ama bunu Aleviler Atatürk'ün bireysel kimliğine mal etmiyorlar. O Dersim süreci çok ağır. Asıl katliam orda ikinci Dersim hareketinden sonra oluyor. Şöyle bir durum var hiçbir devlet kendi sınırları içerisinde kendi otoritesine karşı olan bir olguya müsama göstermez ama hiçbir devlet de tutup halkını katletmez fakat Dersim'de bu oldu. Devlet Dersim'de kendi otoritesine karşı çıkan deyim yerindeyse tanımayacağını ifade eden bir yapıyı sindirmek ya da durdurmak yerine katletmeyi tercih etti. Fakat o Atatürk'ten kaynaklı bir hata değildir. Onun için bugün dersim coğrafyasında yaşı altmışın üzerinde hatta o günü de yaşamış insanlar dahil olmak üzere herkes Atatürk'e saygı duyarlar. Yani yeni kuşak gençler belki bir takım siyasal nedenlerle Atatürk'e bu konuda çok büyük tepki duysalar da benim Dersim coğrafyasında tanıdığım yaşı altmış-yetmiş'in üzerinde hatta 38 katliamının o süreci yaşamış olanların çok derin bir Atatürk sevgisi vardır. (Murat Kantekin)

50. Atatürk'ün yapmış olduğu ilkeleri sadece biz sevmiyoruz dünya seviyor yani. Şimdi şu anda hiç Alevilerden diyanet işleri başkanı oldu mu birisi? Olmadı niye? Atatürk keşke bir on sene daha yaşasaydı şu anda Türkiye temeli sağlam atılsaydı. Çünkü Atatürk'ün ömrü yetmedi, hastalandı. O dersim olayları da Atatürk'ün hastalığı zamanında oldu. Şimdi Atatürk seçme seçilme hakkını kim getirdi? Atatürk. Kılık kıyafeti kim getirdi? Atatürk. Halk devrimini yapan kim? Atatürk. Yani Atatürk çağdaş medeniyetler seviyesine çıkarandır. İlim en hakiki mürşit diyen Atatürk tür. Atatürk bu ülkede bir çığır açtı. Mesela diyelim ki kadınlarımıza verilen değer çocuklarımıza verilen değer biz Atatürk'ü onun için seviyoruz. Din kul ile Allah arasındadır laikliği getirdi. Din ile devlet işlerini birbirinden ayırdı. Mollalarla şunlarla bunlarla devlet yönetilmeyeceğini biliyordu. Dünya sayılı liderleri arasında

Atatürk var. Biz onun için Atatürkümüzü severiz. Her devletin bir kurtarıcısı vardır. Türkiye Devleti'nin önderi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'tür. Siyasi yönden Atatürk'ü çok seviyorum bak benim odamda resmi var değil mi? Ama şimdi gider cemevinde gezeriz Atatürk'ün resmini bulamazsın çünkü dinle devleti ayıran kim Atatürk. İnanç başka siyaset başka devlet yönetimini başka hak yolunda hizmet etmek başka yani siyahla beyazı ayırmak gibi Atatürk din ve devlet işlerini birbirinden ayırdı. Cemevlerimize gideriz oniki imamların isimleri var ibadet var kardeşim. O olmasaydı bugün cemevleri olmazdı, o olmasaydı siz bugün başı açık gezemezsiniz. Atatürk'ün sayesinde. (Hasan Kaya)

51. Kürtçe konuşuyoruz. Bizim anadilimiz. Afedersin ama ben Kürt değilim. Ben Aleviyim. Biz Türkmeniz, gerçek. Bizim Kürtlerle hiçbir alakamız yok. Göçebe yaşadığımız için, Kürtlerin arasında kalınca Kürtçe öğrenmişiz. Biz gerçek Türkmeniz. (Mehmet Divaneoğlu)

52. Ben kürt değilim. Ben kürtçe dilini öğrenmişimdir. Kürtlerle bir ilgim yok kızım. Kürtçe konuşuyordu bizim köyümüzde herkes ama bu Osmanlı zulmünden kaçarak onlarla içiçe yaşadığımız zaman kürt dilini öğrenmişiz. Şafi Kürtlerle ilgimiz yoktur. (Veli Gülsoy)

53. Anadilimiz Kürtçe bizim...Biz kürtlük değil biz seyidiz. Peygamber soyundan gelmişiz ama bizim Kürt taliplerimiz var mesela Hizol aşretinden bizim taliplerimiz var kürtçe konuşurlar..... Birçok aşiret Baba Mansur'a bağlı. Bunların bir kısmı Dersimce konuşurken bir kısmı kürtçe konuşurlar. İnsan doğuştan hangi dili kabullenmişse, isterse onu konuşur. Kimseyi zorlamak diye bir şey yoktur yani (Mustafa Düzgün)

54. Pazar günü yürüyüşümüz var Maraş katliamıyla ilgili. Biz kaymakamımızdan izin aldık 11 tane cemevi. Dün Sarıgazi Cemevi başkanı toplantı yapıldı. Biz hiçbir fraksiyonu içimize almamak kaydıyla, öyle vurma kırma bizde yok. Biz cemevi olarak yürüyeceğiz. Hiçkimsenin ortak malı değiliz. Bizi kullanmalarına izin vermeyeceğiz. Hiçbir parti, siyasi düşüncenin. O insanların ruhu şad olsun. Ne olmuşsa masum insanlara olmuş. (Hasan Kaya)

55. Evvela 3 halifenin Hz. Muhammed'in vasiyetine karşı gelerek başlattıkları baskı daha sonra Hz. Muhammed'in hakka yürüyüşünden sonra Hz. Ali'nin gördüğü baskı ve haklarının yenmesi ehlibeyt'in inkar edilmesi ve evlerinin baskına uğraması, ondan sonra Kerbela katliamı ve Hz. Hüseyin'in Şehadet'i ve Hz. Hasan müşteba'nın evlatlarının sürekli Maveraünnehir'e yani Türklerin içersine göç edişleri bugüne kadar yani Emevi'den sonra, biliyorsun Emeviler'in şehid ettiği imamların sayısı bizim ceddlerimizin imamlarımızın sayısı 5'tir. O yüzden o günden bugüne biz katliamlar görmüşüz. Yani Emevi, sırasıyla Abbasi, Selçuklu, Osmanlı ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti olmak kaydıyla bugüne kadar Aleviler katliamlar yaşamışlardır. (Veysel Kara)

56. Şimdi ben o zaman çalışıyordum şantiyede dim geldim. Kültür merkezinde benim çocuklarım da taşlanmıştı. Kızım, oğlum. Mühendis oğlum var. O zaman liseye gidiyordu veya işte üniversite izinine gelmişti o çocuğumu da taşlamışlardı. Her tarafları simsiyahtı çocuklarımın. Akşam da otelin de yakılacağını falan kimse akıl edemiyordu tabi yani. Birden bire gafil avlandı oralara yürüyünce bu sefer polisler etrafı çevirdi. Biz evimizden çıkamadık. Sadece balkonlarda ağladılar o ateşleri görüp. Yakın değildik biz ama alevleri görüyorduk televizyonda görüyorduk, balkonumuzda görüyorduk. O kültür merkezinde yapılan etkinlikleri bastılar o zaman

taşladılar çocuklarımı ama Madımak Oteli'nde o sanatçılar, yazarlar orda misafir kaldılar. Keşke o gün bilselerdi onlar o gün orda misafir olmaz giderlerdi. Gitmeleri gerekiyordu. İşte ondan dolayı bütün yollar kesildi. Kimse çıkıp birşey yapamadı...Sivas'ın merkezi yobaz dolu. Ondan sonra Sivas'ın merkezindeki belediye başkanı onların içinde yetişen bir yobazdı. Mesela eğer gerçekten demokrat bir belediye başkanı olsaydı en azından tazyikli suyla hem o ateşi söndürür hem halkı ordan uzaklaştırmaz mıydı? Yani veliyi bile etkisiz hale getirdiler. Sivas'ta o zaman biz bir Kerbela yaşadık. (Veli Gülsoy)

57. Ordaki ölen insanlar da bizim yakınlarımız, hepsi bizim canlarımız. İlla benim annemden babamdan doğması geremiyor. Bir kere orda onu yapanalrı lanetliyoruz. Ben bir Divriğili olarak Sivaslı olmayı kabul etmiyorum zaten. Sivas zaten kanlı bir şehir. Bizim pirimizi astılar Pir Sultan'ı asan Hınzır Paşa değil mi. O zihniyetten ne beklersin. Biz Divriğililer Sivaslıyız demeyiz Divriği olarak söyleriz zaten kenarındayız Sivasla işimiz olmaz. (Mustafa Kendigelen)

58. 53'te Sivas'ta doğdum. 68'de İstanbul'a geldim. Şimdi Sivas'tan da kimliğimi aldım. Kütüğümü aldım. Nüfusumu İstanbul'a aldım. Çocuklarımın hepsi burda doğdu. 1996'da iflas ettim ben bu yolla uğraşırken. O güne kadar ölene tabut doğana beşik diye bir söz var bizde ama ne yazık ki ondan sonra baktım insanlar farklı şey yapıyor. Kendi köylülerimle farklı şeyler yaşadım onun üzerine birden bire kendimi bir boşlukta hissettim. Demek ki her şey variyetmiş dedim. Hem Sivas olayları hem o olaylar hepsi birleşerek birden bire tepki olarak. (Celal Çelik)

59. 90lı yıllara geldiğimizde insanlar endi gayret ve çabalarıyla geçimini sağlamak gayretindeyken hiç olmadık yerde bir yanlış propaganda hazırlayarak, bazı insanları sembolik göstererek gidip insanları bir otelin içerisinde cayır cayır yakmak demek

islami tarihte öyle bir şey olmadıydı o güne kadar. Orda otuz yedi tane insanı hükmettiler bidonlarla benzin taşıyarak polisleri, devlet adamları, belediyecileri onlara yardım ederek orada insanları yaktılar. Onlar için de bir gün yas tutmadılar. Hatta onlara gülünç olarak şunu yaptılar. Devlet demek baba demektir, vatandaş bir evlattır. O devletin büyüğüne, o devletin yöneticisine, o devleti işleten insanlara bilmiyorum. O otelde 37 insanı yakanlardan birini onlarca sene saklayıp kendisi ölünceye kadar yakalayamadığının bir basiretsizliğini gösterdi bu devlet. (Mahmut Koç)

60. 95 yılındaki olayları birebir yaşayan bir insanım. Hem işimi kaybettim hem nerdeyse başımı kaybediyordum yani açıkçası. Yeterli mi? O günün koşullarında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin bu mahalle için rahatsızlığı varmış demek ki öyle diyeyim. Geliyor üç kişi yukarıdan, düşüncesi ne, neden yapıyor o da hala piyasaya çıkmış değil. Burda bir Doğu Kırcaathanesi vardı bizim insnalarımızın gelip oturduğu, çay içtiği. İnsanlığını yitirmiş eline aldığı silahla cesaretlenen, kendisini kahraman görenler.. Bu kimin eliyle yapılıyorsa yapılınsın kabul görmesi mümkün değil şiddetin. Sonradan eyleme karıştım. Bizim ihtiyar dedemizin vurulması ve halkın buraya toplanması. Bakıma muhtaç temiz bir insandı. Buranın simgesi o. O öldü. Burası o zaman daha yeni yapılıyordu. Kum yığınları vardı. Burda Müslüm Gündüz komşumuz hakka yürüdü. İkinci gün baya çatışmalar oldu, canlarımız haka yürüdü. Şiddet şiddeti getirdi. Yedi kişi öldü o zaman burda. Yirmi iki kişi toplamda hayatlarını kaybetti. Ok önemli bir sayı bu az değil. O da ekseriyet bizi yöneten devlet egemen güçlerin, faşistlerin Aleviler üzerinde oynanan büyük bir oyundu ama tutmadı. Evet biz 22 kişi kaybettik ama burda birliği beraberliği gördüler. O günün koşullarında Sunni komşularımız bile burada barikat kurdular. Biz bunları biliyoruz.

Ölenlerin içinde Sünnilerimiz de vardı. Engin Sezgin benim yanımda vuruldu. On yedi yaşındaki çocuk. Üç metre yanımda vardı. Hiç kimse bana onu unutturamaz. Ben anlattığım zaman şu anda onu yaşıyorum. Onu kucağıma aldım götürecektim. Canını vermişti yine aynı yere bıraktım. Bırakmak mecburiyetinde kaldım çünkü kurşun geliyordu ben de ölebilirdim. Zaten yara almışım başımdan, sırtımdan. Coplanmışım. O çatışmada kardeşim polislerin eline düşmüş. Eve gelmişim kardeşim yok. Anlattıkça yine ben sanki yaşıyorum. Gazi'ye bu vahşeti yaşatanlar, Gazi'yi yok etmek isteyenler hukuk önünde yeterince hesap sorulmuş değil. Bir davanın hesabı sorulmamışsa o dava devam ediyordur. Ne zaman ki onlar sorgulanırsa biz bu mahkemelere gidip Engin Sezgin'i vuramı görürsek belki içimiz rahatlayabilir. Yoksa mümkünatı yok. Hukuk adalet yerini bulmamıştır. Gazi mahallesindeki insanların devrimci, Alevi, ileri görüşlü olması bu konular üzerinden böyle bir eylemde bulundular. Benim görüşüm bu. (Mustafa Kendigelen)

61. Dördüncü sınıfı bitirmiştik köyde beşinci sınıfa geçtiğimiz yaz tatiliydi. Köyün yaylasında Haziran başı gibi yaylaya göçer köylü ağustosun sonu gibi yayladan dönerdik. Köyün yaylasında arkadaşlarla oynuyorduk. Pili radyodan haberleri dinlerdi köyün yaşlıları da. Orada hiç unutmuyorum biz oynarken bir haber duymuştum otel yangınında ölenlerin cenazeleri çıkarılmaya çalışılıyor diye. Aradan bir süre geçtikten sonra farkettim ki benim o on yaşında yaylada oynarken duyduğum otel yangını Madımak katliamıymış. Ben o çocuk halimle Madımak katliamının acısına bir radyoda şahit olmuşum. O yıl beşinci sınıfı okudu ve İstanbul'a geldim. Bir sabah okula gitmek için erken uyandıgımda evde televizyon açtı ve tvde bir kahvehane tarandığını ve içindeki insanların bir Alevi dedesinin de bu insanların katledildiğinden bahsediliyordu. O da Gazi katliamıydı. O çocuk halimle Sivas

katliamını, Gazi katliamını sonrasında Ümraniye'deki Mustafa Kemal Mahallesi'ndeki katliamın süreçlerini çocuk halimizle gözlemlemiştik. Hep şunu söylüyorum Aleviliğin bugün kentte bu kadar zorlu koşullara, devletin sistemli asimilasyonuna, toplumsal baskılara karşı ayakta diri tutan aslında bu yaşadığı acılar sanırım. Sistemin aslında Alevileri sindirmek katletmek ve içine kapanık hale getirmek için var ettiği o acılar Alevileri aslında diri tuttular. O etki-tepki bu noktaya getirdi. Bugün beni tanıyan herkes Alevi olduğumu bilir. Siyasetin içerisinde, sosyal yaşamın içerisinde herkes Alevi olduğumu bilir. Saklama ihtiyacı hissetmem. Bütün işi gücü Alevilik olan, Alevilik üzerine kafa yoran, araştırma yapan, makale yazan bir insanım ama benim annem hala bir yere gideceğim zaman aman oğlum Alevi olduğunu kimseye söyleme der. O korku, baskı hala insanların belleğinde yaşıyor fakat buna rağmen yine de o yaşadığımız acılar bizi diri tutuyor. O bedel ödemiş katledilmiş insanlara minnet borcumuz var. Eğer insanlar bu inanç için canlarıyla bedel ödediyse bizim de hatıraları adına bu inancı daha diri bir şekilde gelecek kuşaklara aktarmamız gerekiyor. (Murat Kantekin)

62. Köyümüzde bir ayrımcılık yaşamadık. Sunni komşularımızla bir arada yaşıyorduk. Buraya gelip bir apartmana taşındığımızda apartmanda hemen şöyle söylemler başladı acaba nunlar Alevi mi Sunni mi diye. Böyle bir ayrılığa düştük. İşte kendi muharrem orucumuzu tutamıyorduk gizli biçimde yapıyorduk. Ramazan aylarında aman biz bilinmesin diye rahmetlik annem tutardı sahurda ışığı yakardı. Bu gibi zorluklar çok yaşadım. Bu iş hayatımızda yaşadık. Bir ustanın yanında çalışıyordum. Usta Kayserili olduğu için beni zorla camiye götürmeye çalışırdı. Ben gitmem dedim ve beni işten çıkarttı. Ya bize uyacaksın ya da çıkıp gideceksin dedi. Biz de dedik bu bir baskıdır. O zaman da tam bilgi sahibi olmadığımız için cevap da

veremiyorduk ama biz çıkmayı tercih ettik. Dedik ki hayır efendim bizim ibdetimiz cemevlerimizde biz oraya gidiyoruz. İbadetimizi yapıyoruz derken hayır böyle bir ibadet olmaz siz çalgıyla, türküyle ibadet yapmaya çalışıyorsunuz diyerek bizim inancımıza bile dil uzattıkları oldu. (Hüseyin Doğan)

63. Bir gün bir yerde çalışıyordum. Bana patron dedi ki delikanlı sen gençsin ben her Cuma bütün çalışanları dükkanı kapatıp cumaya götürüyorum, Cuma namazı kılmayan adamı ben çalıştırmam. Ben de dedim ki abi ben Aleviyim, ben namaz kılmayı bilmiyorum. Dedi ki ben sana bir namaz hocası tutarım gençsin öğrenirsin ne var. Dedi. Neyse aldı bana bir namaz hocasını getirdi. Mecbur ya işten çıkacağım ya da onu kabulleneceğim. Ondan sonra bana namaz hocasını getirdi. Eminönü'nde büyük camiye gittik. Şimdi ben adamın yanında dikildim. O eğildi, ben eğildim, o yattı, ben yattım o ne yaptıysa ben şekilcilik yaptım çünkü niye? İçimden gelerek değil zorakidir. Ekmeğimin hatırı için. Ondan sonra biz namazdan çıktıktan sonra dedim ki patrona abi dedim ben bugün bir hata işledim. Dedi nedir oğlum? Dedim belki seni kandırabilirim ama yukardakini kandıramadım. Dedi niye dedim ki sen eğildin, ben eğildim, sen kalktın, ben kalktım dedim. Dedi oğlum sen de soğru döylüyorsun. İyi bir insandı. Ondan sonra bana dedi ki tamam sen nasıl biliyorsan öyle. Beni daha ne cumaya götürdü, ne de namaza götürdü. (Nuri Kaya)

64. Çok hissettim. Mücadele ettim. Hatta ben sınavı kazanıp bir işyerine amir olarak gittiğim zaman hakkımda imzalar da toplandı. Bir Alevi dedesi bizi yönetemez diye. Sonra emekli olduğum zamanda o imza verenler de defalarca gittiler benden gizli dilekçemi geri aldılar. Biz dedemizin emekli olmasını istemiyordu diyen Sünniler oldu ama önce çok karşı çıktılar. Sonra bizlerin tarafsız, iyimser, herkese, insan haklarına

sahip çıkacak şekildeki anlayışımızı görünce bu sefer de yaptıklarından utanç duydular, itiraf da ettiler. (Veli Gülsoy)

65. Ciddi bir dışlanmayla karşılaştık yani. Taaa ilkokulda, ortaokulda başlamak şartıyla. İlkokulda kendi köyümüzde olduğumuz için bu konularda fazla şey olmadık ama kazaya geldiğimiz zaman bir baktık ki çok ciddi bir dışlanma var. Herkes Alevi çocukları diye ayırıyordu. Alevi çocukları sanki potansiyel suçlu muamelesi görüyordu hocalar tarafından, çevre tarafından. Mesela ben liseden inanç yüzünden atıldım. Bir tane Zihni Tanrıkulu diye Karadenizli bir öğretmen vardı Kimya dersine gelen. 35 kişilik sınıf. İki tane talebe birbiriyle iddaya girdi. Ben bu dersti kaynatırım dedi birisi. Öbürü de yok kaynatamaz. Kaynatırsa bir kesim öbür kesimi sinemaya götürecektir. İkiye ayrıldı sınıf. Şimdi ben katılmıyorum dedim çünkü benim sinemaya gidecek param yok. Param yok demedim ben katılmıyorum dedim. Öğretmen girdi içeriye o ben kaynatırım diyen çocuk kalktı dedi ki hocam Sivas hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz. Öğretmen de uyanık tabi dedi i dersti kaynatmak için soruyorsanız otur derse başlayın. Yok dedi hocam ne demek biz siz Karadenizlisiniz sizin gözünüzden Sivas'ı bir tanımak isteriz dedi. Öğretmen de dedi ya Sivas Selçuklulardan kalma eserler var, önemli bir konumda ancak son zamanlarda Aleviler gelmiş girmiş Sivas'ı batırmış dedi. Öyle deyince otuz beş kişi döndü bana baktı. Yok beş-altı kişi vardı ama onlar kendini inkar ediyordu. Bana dönüp bakınca ben el kaldırdım. Dedim ki ya hocam ben bu sözü sokakta çok duyuyorum ama önemsemiyorum. Siz bir öğretmen olarak Alevilerin neyini gördünüz Sivas'ı batıracak mesela hırsızlıkları mı var, edepsizlikleri mi var, çok kirli insanlar mı nedir dedim. Öyle deyince adam oturdu yerine iki saat üst üste hiç birşey konuşmadı. İki saat kaynadı. Hiç birşey söylemedi. Dolayısıyla o arkadaş kazandı değil mi.

Kazanınca haftaya geldi. Süleyman Metin kalk tahtaya dedi. Kalktım ben. Daha işlemediğimiz konuda bana soru soruyor. Dedim ki hocam biz daha bu konuya gelmedik. Olsun dedi bütün kitaptan sorumlusunuz. Kısmen anlattım ama başlık olarak biliyorum sadece yani. Otur sıfır. İkinci ders geldi yine kaldırdı başka konuda sordu. Yine sıfır. Haftaya geldi yine öyle. Bir tane çocuk vardı. Dedi ki ya söyle ona sen kötü bir şey demedin hakaret etmedin. Ben teneffüste çıktım dedim ki hocam böyle böyle koşun imdat bana saldırıyor dedi. Talebeler başımıza toplandı aman o Çerkez çocuk dedi ki ben yanındayım böyle dedi sana niye bu kadar acımasızsınız diye. Talebeler geri durdu. Bu sefer kendisi devreden çıktı. Fizik dersine gelen bir bayanı devreye soktu. Süleyman Metin kalk tahtaya, şunun tipine bakın, şunun şekline bakın Ben bakıyorum bir noksanlık mı var. Sonra dedim ki niye bu kadar düşmanlık. Dedi ki sen Hz. Allah'ın oğlu olsan ben seni burda yaşatmam. O Zihni Tanrıkulu çünkü sen benim sevmediğim bir grubun insanısın. Biz Alevileri sevmeyiz. Bize düşman. Ben onun yüzünden tastiknamemi aldım, oradan ayrıldım ki liseye de imtihanla on üçüncü olarak kazanmıştım yatılı 64'te. Ondan sonra askerlik. Orda daha çok baskılar. Yani ordunun genel şeyi değil ama çocuklar yetişmiş. Sunni çocukları Alevi çocuklarını düşman biliyorlar. Dolayısıyla her harekette seni ezmeye çalışıyorlar ama ben bu konuda çok araştırdığım, okuduğum için hiçbir yerde de mahcup olmadım. Hiç saklamadım. İlk önce gittiğim her yerde ben Aleviyim, ona göre konuşun. (Süleyman Metin)

66. Ben 68'de İstanbul'a geldim ilkokulu bitirdim. Ne anadan ne babadan kimseden almadım. O gündür bu gündür ne büyüğümden aldım ne bir şey. Bu yaradanın bir lütfudur bize. 86'ya kadar ateisttim bazı nedenlerden dolayı ama 86'dan sonra özüne dön dedi ceddime bana sen ne yapıyorsun. O yaşadığım olaylar seni o duruma

sürüklüyor. İstanbul'da Kızılbaş oldum, kafir oldum, dayak yedim, ölümden kurtuldum. Sen olsan ne olursun? Sen olsan ne yaparsın? Hepsini reddedersin değil mi? Çocuksun çocuk yaştasın. Başında büyük yok, öğretene yok. Yol gösteren yok, kalmışsın arada. Ölümden kurtuldum diyorum Aleviyim diye. Dayak yedim. Kuyruklu kızılbaşım diye. Eğer benim patronum, ustam bana sahip çıkmasaydı beni öldürürlerdi. 86'ya kadar bazı şeylerden çok uzak kaldım. 86'dan sonra açık ve net ceddime tebliğ etti bana. (Celal Çelik)

67. Dolaylı yoldan ayrımcılık yaşadık. Ben hep şeyi söylerim Alevilerin yaşadığı ötekileştirmeler devletin aldığı dolaylı vergiler gibidir. Görüntüde farkında olmazsınız ama uygulamada aslında bu sizden bir şekilde çıkar. Bunu hayatın her alanında yaşıyorsunuz. Belki ben bunu çok bariz bir şekilde yaşamadım. Bu da şundan kaynaklanmış olabilir sesi biraz fazla çıkan bir insansanız ve pek boyun eğmeye niyetiniz yoksa çok fazla üzerinize gelemeyebiliyorlar ama tabii ama fırsatını yakaladıklarında bunun için size bir bedel ödettiriyorlar. O açıdan dolaylı anlamda çok fazla sorun yaşadım ama kimse karşıma geçip de benim inancından ötürü böyle yapıyoruz demedi ama etrafımızda buna benzer çok şeyler yaşamış arkadaşlarımız oldu. Bugün bu ülkede 81 vali arasında bir tane Alevi yoksa bu Alevilerin valiliği beceremediğinden değil devletin Alevileri ötekileştirmiş olduğundandır. (Murat Kantekin)

68. Üç tane çocuğum var. Çocuklarım Alevilikten bihaber. Burda olmama rağmen hiçbirinin doğru dürüst ceme girdiğini, hiçbirinin semaha ya da şuna buna meraklı olduğunu görmedim o kadar ısrarcı olmama rağmen. Mesela benim dedem Erzincan'dan her sene gelir. Son 3 senedir rahatsız. Her sene gelir. Otururuz karşısına çocuklarla birlikte secde oluruz, duamızı alırsınız, misafir ederiz. Hatta bir kere beni de

sorguya çekti. Kardeşimle ufak bir sıkıntı yaşamıştık. Yani bunların hepsine vakıfım içinde yaşadığım şeyler ama çocuklarım bilmiyor. İtiraf ediyorum. Yazık, üzülüyorum yani. Kasım dedenin çocukları da öyle birinin gelip de ceme katıldığını görmedim. Kız kardeşleri geliyor ama çocuklarının hiçbiri yok. Bu devletin, mahalleden olan baskılardan kaynaklanıyor. Bugün hala baskı görüyorlar. Şimdi Türkiye’de hiçbirimizin tasvip etmediği bir takım olaylar oluyor. İşte Dilek Doğan bir Alevi kızı Sarıyer’de evine bir gece giren polisler orda yargısız infaz ettiler. Ya bu kızın elinde silah yok bir şey yok bugüne kadar hiçbir örgüte bağlılığı yok. Buna benzer olaylar. (Hüseyin Taştekin)

69. Bizim dönemimize kadar öyleydi. Herkes Alevilerin çoğu Alevi olanla evlenirdi. Sonradan şehirlileşmenin getirdiği farklılıklar var. Üniversitelerde okumak beraber arkadaş olmak. Komşu köydeki bir kızla görücü usulü gibi bir şey oldu yani biz öyle birşeyimiz yok. Annem babam beğenmiş biz de gittik gördük tamam dedik. Oldubitti. Şimdi bakıyorsun öyle olamıyor. Kendi çocuğuna oğlum be şunu beğendim bunla evlen desen de senin çocuğun seni dinlemeyebilir. Bir bakıyorsun üniversitede okumuş. Alevi olmayan bir arkadaşla arkadaşlık kuruyor. Onla evlenmek isteyebilir. Genelde insanlar karşı çıkar ama ben anlayış farklılığı yoksa karşı çıkmam. İnsanların o seni kabul ediyorsa sen de onu kabul ediyorsan niye evlilik olmasın. Kabul etmiyorsa ailesinin bir Aleviyle evlenemezsin diye bir düşüncesi varsa o zaman çok sakıncalar doğar o işin içinde. Evlenen gençler mutlu da olmazlar. (Mustafa Düzgün)

70. İmam Cafer-i Sadık efendimizin buyruğu vardır. O bir nevi Aleviliğin yasasıdır. Orda yasak buyurur. Bir ikrarlının bir ikrarsıza düşmediğini yani doğru olmadığını söyler. Aleviler ikrarlıdır. O kitap da şöyle yazar özellikle bir dede bir Türk kızı alsa

yani seyid olmayan Alevi kızı olsa dahi bir dede dede olmayan bir kişinin kızıyla evlense ondan bir zürriyet gelse o da erkek olsa. O erkek çocuk da yine dede olmayan bir kişinin ızıyla evlense ondan dahi bir zürriyet gelse onda dedelik kalmaz. Üçüncü de bitiriyor çünkü birincide bozuluyor. İkincide gen değişiyor. Üçünde kabul olmuyor. Hani peygamberimiz birden çok onlarca evlendi ya niye Hz. Fatma'dan başka evladının nesli güzel bir nesil olarak yürümedi. Sadece Hatice Hanım'ın son küçük evladı Fatma'dan devam etti.... Alevilerin korkusu da budur ki biz de kendi inancımızı bozmayalım, kendi genlerimizle kendi inancımızla yürüelim diye. Üç tane gelinim var. Üçü de kendi köyümden dede kızları. Eşim de dede kızı, annem de dede kızı, babaannem de. (Mahmut Koç)

71. Alevilerin Sunnilerle evlenmesine yani kız verip almasına o zaman da karşılardı, şimdi de karşılar. Şimdi laf anlatamadıkları için evlenebiliyorlar. Niye karşılar? Gelenekleri, görenekleri, inançlarından dolayı çatışma çıkıyor. Mesela sen bu ailede doğmuşsun başın açık ama Sunni bir aileye gittiğin zaman başta biz demokratız falan diyorlar sonra türbana gir benim artık çevrem kabul etmiyor. Türbana sokuyor veya namaz kıl diyor. Karmaşa çıkıyor yoksa yaradılıştta herkes eşittir. Gelenek ve göreneklerinden dolayı şiddetli geçimsizlik çıkıyor. Ben kendi yaşantımdan gördüm. Mutlaka büyük çatışmalar çıkıyor. O yüzden evlenmeyin demişler. (Süleyman Metin)

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