

ALEVI REVIVALISM IN TURKEY: PROCESSES OF DISENCHANTMENT SINCE 1990s

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Dedicated to my family

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AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

This thesis was written to comply with the rules of scientific ethics; in the case benefits from the other studies have been referred in accordance with scientific norms. The data are not made any alteration and any part of this thesis is not used in another study in Fatih or another university

Nurullah Gündüz July, 2009

ABSTRACT

ALEVI REVIVALISM IN TURKEY: PROCESSES OF DISENCHANTMENT SINCE 1990s

This thesis explores Alevism which gained more importance in certain time periods, Alevis, the changes that they have been exposed to and the disenchantment process of Alevism. Especially since the 1990s, Alevis and Alevism of which leftist ideology hopefully embraced became important than ever and added a different dimension to Alevism. Also it was emphasized that Alevism was superior Sunnis as Sunnis was seen as a violent, bigot, a radical sect while Alevism was seen as a humanist, equitable, modern belief. It is clear that Alevis have been influenced negatively by this situation. Although they were taken into much consideration in certain time periods by their public visibility, these periods lasted in a short time and they are left all alone as they became politicized. We will explore how Alevism was illustrated as an enchantment. The ideological, political and social aspects of this enchantment will be analyzed. Different hypothesis will be used to determine whether this enchantment is valid or not. Hypotheses will be proved via the interviews with intellectuals and Alevi writers.

Key words: Alevi community, heterodox belief, public visibility, enchantment, disenchantment

TÜRKİYE’DE ALEVİLİĞİN YÜKSELİŞİ: 1990’LARDAN İTİBAREN BÜYÜNÜN BOZULMASI SÜREÇLERİ

KISA ÖZET

Bu tezde Türkiye’de bazı dönemlerde önem kazanan Alevilik, Aleviler ve Aleviliğin büyüü gösterilmesiyle yaşadığı deęişimler ve bu büyüün bozulması süreçleri incelenecektir. Özellikle 1990lerden itibaren sol ideolojinin umutla sarıldığı Alevilik ve Aleviler hiç olmadığı kadar önem kazanmış, bu deęişim aslında sadece folklorik özellikleriyle dikkat çekici olan Aleviliğe deęişik bir boyut kazandırmıştır.Hatta Aleviliğin Sünnilikten daha üstün olduğu Sünniliğin saldırgan, dinci, radikal bir mezhep olduğu, Aleviliğin ise hümanist, eşitlikçi, çağdaş bir inanç olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Aleviler ise bu durumdan olumsuz biçimde etkilendikleri görülmüştür. Her ne kadar bazı dönemlerde kamusal görünürlükleriyle göz önünde bulunsalar da bu dönemlerde politize olmuş, bu dönemlerin de hep kısa sürmesiyle yalnız kalmışlardır. Burada Aleviliğin nasıl büyüü gösterildiğini, bu büyüün ideolojik, siyasi, toplumsal yönleri irdelenecektir. Daha sonra bu büyüün bozulup bozulmadığı deęişik hipotezlerle kanıtlanmaya çalışılacaktır. Hipotezler entelektüel yazarlarla ve bilim adamlarıyla yapılacak olan röportajlarla da desteklenmeye çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Alevi topluluğu, heterodox inanç, kamusal görünürlük, büyüleme, büyüün bozulması

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADD	Kemalist Thought Association
AKP	Justice and Development Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
TUP	Turkish Union Party
KONDA	Research and Consultancy Company
DIYANET	The Presidency of Religious Affairs
TBMM	Turkish National Grand Assembly
F. U.	Fatih University
M. A.	Master of Arts

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Disenchantment and Alevi

Disenchantment is a special term of Max Weber related to the reducing power of religion on society. According to Weber, in human beginning, the world was surrounded by holy things (Weber, 1985). Weber describes the "disenchantment of the world" as it results from the intersection of the Protestant Reformation and the scientific revolution in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Shull, 2005:1). This is the process of changing from a theological based understanding of the world to a secular and positivist understanding of the world. According to Weber, God, magic, and myth are now replaced with logic and knowledge (Shull, 2005:2). The concept of disenchantment has a detailed and wide meaning about religious effects in society being replaced by a positivist perception of the world life. There are a lot of deep meanings related to disenchantment but we are only using its conceptual meaning. It provides us with an easily understandable meaning and is the best word which helps us to figure out Alevi and Alevism in Turkey. Our disenchantment framework does not reflect a critique and judgment of Alevi and Alevism and we are not comparing them with other groups and religions; actually, we are trying to examine the Alevi community by viewing their position in the social political

frame from the 1990s up to now in Turkey. We use disenchantment as the name of the process in order to illustrate Alevi problems in the context of a broad picture in Turkey. Also we think that Alevi problems are discussing with a repetitive discourse which shows us Alevis' problems are continuing in Turkey.

In this thesis we will research/examine the transformation of Alevis in Turkey, from people who belong to an ethnic community based on heterodox beliefs and practices in Turkey to other countries. Alevism is generally used as an umbrella term to define a large number of different heterodox communities, whose actual beliefs and ritual practices differ greatly, and whose members can be found mostly in Turkey with smaller numbers in Iraq, Iran, Syria and the Balkans (Van Bruinnessen, 2001).

Alevis and Alevism represent approximately 15-20% of the total population of Turkey. Alevis represent the largest religious community after Sunnis in Turkey but Alevis claim it to be 25 million¹.

The last survey of the about whole population of Turkey was held by KONDA (Research and Consultancy Company) in 2007. Judging from people's responses in the survey to the questions about which religion and sect they affiliated with, one can see that 99% of the population is Muslim and by sect, 82% are Sunnite Hanafi and 5,73% are Alevi-Shiite (Konda, 2007 :28).Accordingly, the commonly guessed Alevi population equals 2 million 895 thousand people among adults. If the population below the age of 18 is added to the adults, one reaches the conclusion that the total Alevi

¹ <http://www.nethaber.com/Politika/23446/Cem-Vakfi-baskani-Izzettin-Dogan-25-milyon>

population in Turkey nears 5 million (4,587.000). Another remarkable finding is that 9.06% of the population is Sunnite Shafii (Konda, 2007:28).

Alevi is the name of a community generally in conflict with Sunnis and which is both socially and politically opposed to the Sunni based social system.

Their historical background is not the same as that at the Sunni, in spite of their having interacted for many centuries with in Muslim, Seljuk, and Ottoman states.

We are going to study the transformation of Alevism by means of an enchanting and disenchanting process. Enchanting started after Alevi revivalism from the 1970s until in the 1990s. Following the 1990s enchanting process, we are trying to analyze Alevis' existence from a secret undiscovered group to a publicly visible and intriguing group related to political dimensions of Turkey. Moreover, Alevism was useful as presenting a good, modern alternative to Sunni Islam, a major part of secular state. In a secular state we could underline secularism in society's views as soft (flexible) or embracing. First, one can be characterized by passive secularism, which allows public visibility of religion, but it is not the case of Turkey; the dominant ideology in Turkey is assertive secularism, which aims to establish a secular worldview in the public sphere and to confine religion to the private domain (Kuru, 2006).

After the harsh oppression of the Alevis during the Ottoman period, the new Republican regime seemed to provide Alevis with a sense of

emancipation from the orthodox Sunni establishment with its secularization project (Şahin, 2001:122).

The secular Kemalist state offered a chance for Alevis to be independent with their unique religious and traditional life which differs from Sunni or other traditional Islamic sects. Not only are Alevis different, but they are also oppressed because they do not fit into the Sunni system. Traumatically, Alevis thought they would live the same scenario of self perception. The main result of Alevi revivalism has been the discovery of Alevis and Alevism by secular groups and socialist people. The main purpose of Kemalists was to place Alevis against the Sunni majority system by showing them enchanted by secularists. The arguments of Kemalists were to show Alevis a modern, secular, the guardian of secular regime also not *gerici* (over conservative) for political Islam.

Concerning disenchantment we want to mention that we think Alevis are a large community, approximately 10-15% of the 70 million total populations in Turkey, but does their population reflect their power? Why the enchanting process became short and after then they became alone and their problems have not been solved. Do they have power and sphere of as great as their population and being (existence). One of our aims in this thesis is to find out what kind of disenchantment is related to Alevism and Alevis. Simply, we can say that while Alevis are a major community and part of Turkish society, they could not achieve to play a part in society with the support of the secular state and thought. Why could they not do so?

What are the reasons, they are still troubled and do not believe themselves to be powerful. Alevism and Alevism are often discussed topics related to the agenda in Turkey by the Kemalists and conservatives. The main reason of this discussion is the size of the Alevi population and ethnicity. Alevism represents 15-20% of the total population of Turkey. It means there are too many to ignore; and something that Alevism has considerable power. Practically, Alevism has a lot of social, political and religious problems and their power is not seen clearly. Alevism always expresses their problems and their claim of being oppressed by the Sunni community in all platforms.

The disenchantment of Alevism among Alevism starts with the appearance of Alevi ideology and uprisings in the 1970s. We will present the meanings and values of. Alevism is a heterodox religious sect in contrast to Sunni, Shafii sects throughout the history the Alevism religious subjects and values have been influenced by the other beliefs and religions due to the fact that Alevism is of a syncretic character in this context. According to my literature review of Alevism and Alevism from books, articles, M.A and Ph.D theses, as well as journals, most studies are based on two areas spaces. In the first, they focus on definitions of Alevism and Alevism; most of the sources are repetitive on Alevism and Alevism. But there are some outstanding points that these studies do not address: what are Alevism expecting for the future and what are the missing things that Alevism do or do not do?

In this study, I will be addressing the following questions: Is Alevism losing its magical world and sources, and is Alevism disenchanted or being disenchanting?

1.2. Methodology

In Turkey, one the most difficult research subjects is studying Alevis and Alevism, because there are limited sources about what Alevism is, who Alevis are, and what kinds of Alevism exist in Turkey. Moreover, there are no clear common explanations about Alevism. Many kinds of definitions are expressed by different Alevi groups and researchers. Being Alevi is an abstract identity because of the syncretic belief system of Alevism for Alevis, which as a matter of fact includes a wealth of cultures, religions and traditions. Alevi identity is an argument which is appropriate for developing a definition of Alevism. There is no legitimate accepted Alevism in Turkey. The case of Alevi identity is both problematic and prosperous. The discussions between Alevis are centered on who is real an Alevi and what Alevism is.

In order to understand and analyze ethnic and religious communities, it is necessary to observe them in their fields. Our field work was located in *cemevis* (Alevi gathering places for praying *cem*), and their associations which represent the spread of Alevis in urban public sphere. In our field study, firstly, we observed the behaviors of Alevis in their places. We can analyze what they are thinking about Alevis, Alevism and other non-Alevi groups. Sunni people do not have detailed knowledge about Alevism; most of the non-Alevi people with whom I have talked wanted to simplify

Alevi and Alevism. There are some stinging concepts and calumnies such as "the candle went out" (*mum söndü*) this is meant to affirm that Alevi practice incest with their mothers and sisters.

To know how the Alevi ideology was shaped we investigated the real cause of Alevi and Alevism. From another side, we focused on the facts of Alevi related to the Turkish political and social context. Social and political developments and crises played an important role in the transformation and shaping of Alevism. The third method is the use of interviews with some Alevi writers, *dedes*, and academicians. In these interviews we investigated whether our observations and reasons are true or wrong, what can be thought related our topic. Actually Alevi do not seem to be closed people if you present your self as a researcher and student. In my thesis I have taken into consideration the existence of Alevi, that which they have achieved and that which they have not achieved.

1.3. Collecting data

In my thesis I have used different types of materials to learn and gain knowledge: MA and PHD theses from YÖK (Higher Education Board) and Proquest Dissertations. These are helpful sources which provide me with the framework and methodology and content of my thesis. Also, I have evaluated them for what might be useful in my thesis. The books about Alevism and Alevi gave me the chance to see different perspectives in detail. Articles which have been written by Alevi and academicians reminded me of the actual and hot new developments of Alevi and Alevism

in Turkey. However it was hard to analyze new articles and sources and whether to use them or not. The other sources are study in cemevis.

The last sources are interviews with an expert dede, the religious and traditional leader of Alevi. Academicians such as my instructor shared their opinions and thoughts which helped me when I was in trouble about what to do. Alevi writers presented me with a framework and a general framework for understanding Alevi and Alevism easily. Also they looked at my thesis and added somethings. Dede also explained their positions and the transformation of the dede institution by the transformation and transition of Alevism despite the decreasing power of their authority. At the same time they confessed their faults and responsibilities and plans for what they should do.

1.4. The Problematic Issues

One of the dilemmas in studying Alevism is how to be accepted by the related community; if you cannot communicate with each other it is very hard to focus on your study to prove your arguments. The behaviors and actions of Alevi gain entry to a new concept and meaning of Alevism by the same point of divergences and similarities. Despite the different thoughts and structures built on Alevism, a contested picture was put forward.

Moreover in studying Alevi and Alevism one of the contradictory problems is judging Alevi and Alevism. According to some Alevi, a person who is a Sunni conservative evaluates Alevism in the Sunni context and

wants to prove Alevism as something produced as a disordered belief system.

In our thesis, we have not judged Alevis and Alevism, besides we have try to figure out Alevis' visibility in the public sphere. Moreover, we do not compare Alevism with other religions and cultures.

1.5. Survey study in Cemevis

One of the major requirements for analyzing the structure of a religious community is the study of their own places through participant observation. Our guiding question is how Alevis gather and the broad picture of their behaviors. The cemevi the religious place of Alevis is a premier place in our issue. The cemevi is a new concept and type of Alevi religious places in cities, hence it is not found in rural areas. We will introduce the cemevi briefly, on the physical aspects and construction structure.

The main institutions of Alevis as well as the visibility of Alevism in the public sphere; we have visited 4 associations. These associations' physical features help us figure out the relations between the cemevi and the associations. Cemevis provided us with an understanding of the religious behaviors of Alevis. We investigated the context of the emergence of cemevis which have been located in the urban sphere since the 1990s. Cemevis are the places which provide evidences to prove that Alevis belong to a religious group. We have observed cemevis in Istanbul and Nevşehir/Hacıbektaş, the Garip Dede Shrine, Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine and Cemevis and the Şahkulu Sultan Shrine. These places provided us with

the chance to observe Alevis in cem ceremonies, while they were eating *lokma*², their conservation, behaviors, their understanding of and their reactions to me as well the chance to talk with them organically in their own sphere.

1.6. Participant Study in the Alevi Sphere

The 16-18 August Hacibektaş Cultural Art Festival is organized by Alevis. It is the biggest and most effective Alevi organization and the most comprehensive civil organization of Alevis. It is organized over two days. Hacibektaş is buried in the town of Nevşehir, located in the middle of central Anatolia. Each year Thousands of Alevis come to this place as a pilgrim. Alevi people do not go to Mecca for pilgrimage as Sunnis do.

Hacibektaş reflects the religiosity of Alevism. We have to realize that the religious sources of Alevism in our participant study are located in Nevşehir Hacibektaş. Concerning the religiosity of Alevism, we could decide that Hacibektaş is a pilgrimage center of Alevis. Actually it is presented as a visiting place but this is not enough to define Hacibektaş. In my observations, Hacibektaş was not only a place in which people go for visiting but also a holy place where Alevis visit their religious place and their former religious leaders' and scholars' tombs. Otherwise Alevis have no other specific places like Hacibektaş. As the matter of fact, this monopoly has transformed it into a pilgrimage center.

² Sharing eatable foods

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY

2.1. A Brief History of Alevis and Alevism

Alevism is a blanket term for a large number of different heterodox communities in Turkey, who call themselves Alevi and whose actual beliefs and ritual practices differ much from each other as like Sunnis, Shiites and Shāfiīs (Erol, 2008:1). It is a syncretistic religion, with very recognizable elements of other religions (Peuch, 2002). We may consider Alevism as a heterodox religion, and a melting pot of different religions, such as, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, as well as Shamanism and parallel inherited groups. Alevis interacted with many states and traditions. Thus "Alevi" is not the name of a pure community due to its wide historical experiences and roots. Rather than Sunnis, Shiites and Shāfiīs, Alevi possessed different cultural and religious wealth, Alevis have already reconciled with their heterodox reputation.

Alevis were not originally known as Alevis, but rather as Kizilbash (Turkish: Kızılbaş) and Bektashis. These two distinct groups represent Alevis

from a historical perspective. Bektashis and Kizilbash are two communities similar in terms of religious and cultural sources. Kizilbash is the historical name of Alevis (Melikoff, 1999). So, in the Ottoman period, Alevis were known as Kizilbash. The Bektashis led a sedentary life in organized *tekkes* lodges, small buildings common in Islamic countries used by dervishes, and the Kizilbash, who were living in different parts of Ottoman territories, the Kizilbash were nomads or semi-nomads in the Ottoman Empire (Melikoff, 1999:7). They were the followers of Hacı Bektaş Veli (1209-1271) who lived in the Seljuk period³. In the Ottoman and Seljuk archives there is no knowledge and documents about Alevis.

The classification, definition and assimilation of Alevis was very hard for the Ottomans and actually this is the reason why the Kizilbash were problematic for the Ottomans.

For a long time, the Kizilbash had no definite name. In Ottoman documents, they are called *zındıks* (heretics), *râfızis* (schismatics) as well as Shiites and *mülhids* (atheists) (Melikoff, 1999:7). These names are non-communal concepts showing that the Kizilbashes were not seen as internal and organic parts of Ottoman *tebba*⁴(society). After the foundation of the Turkish Republic under the leadership of Atatürk, they became known as *Alevi* (Melikoff, 1975).

The first religious roots of Alevism were actually with Shamanism. Shamanism makes up the major elements and source of Alevism is a

³ He was an Anatolian saint who lived in Nevşehir. Many Muslims came to him and took advice. He was a pure person whose advice and thoughts are still acceptable for people.

⁴ (Ottoman society Arabic linguistic)

system of traditional beliefs and practices concerned with communication with the spirit world. Shamanism is most common among central Asian primitive societies; Shamanism was a primitive belief system that also lacked any interactions with the religions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Alevism includes different non perceptions-traditional worships and self perceptions of understanding and feelings of the world which are different for ordinary Sunnism, Shiism and Shāfi'ism.

The central rituals of Alevi religious life are the ayn-i cem (cem for short) celebration which is a replay of Muhammad's legendary heavenly journey (mirac) and, with the assembly of forty (kirkklar meclisi), combined with a memorial to the suffering of the Twelve Imams (Zeidan, 1995:9). These ceremonies take place in a big hall and unlike Sunni practice, both men and women worship together. Cem ceremonies take place solely in a worship place which is called a "Cemevi". (Cem house: a building constructed specifically to hold *cem* ceremonies. These ceremonies do not reflect only religious, but also cultural and traditional values. In cem ceremonies *nefes*, *mersiyes*, and elegiacs are sung by the dede with a saz. The saz is the traditional musical tool with which Alevis express Alevism as a commentary on the Koran. Their religious leaders are called *dedes* (Literally grandfather in Turkish). Dedes have to be connected to a descendent of the Prophet Mohammed. This tradition is patrilineal and a dede's son is destined to be a dede. Not just anybody can be a dede, even

if he is an expert in Alevism or being an Alevi. A woman cannot be dede; only a man can be a dede.

2.2. Taking the name of Alevi: From Kizilbash to the name of Alevi

The name of Kizilbash was transformed to Alevi with the foundation of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s; this period actually included the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and, at the same time, the emergence of the Turkish Kemalist Republic. Due to the fact that Kizilbash identity is excluded from the society, it turns into Alevi identity with a sharp transition that Alevis are subjugated. Alevis expected to gain new rights in the development of Alevi identity and consciousness. However these conditions were not appropriate for Alevis due to destructive effects of War of Independence.

Moreover, the conditions of Alevis continued in the foundation period, Kemalist regime aimed to establish one sided viewpoint which was based on secularism. Indeed this case was the reason that Alevis did not played active role in the establishment of modern Turkey. In the foundation process, all ethnic and religious groups were excluded at both the level of opinions and practices. Actually only Kemalist ideology was put on the center of the foundation process. Alevis were located like Kurds, Sunnis, or any other different groups located as excluded in back. The resurgence of Alevism had to wait more than half a century.

CHAPTER III

ALEVI REVIVALISM IN TURKEY

Alevi revivalism started in the 1970s. Major indicators which caused Alevi revivalism are three major political factors.

3.1. Socialism: The beginning of the revivalism

The first factor is socialism. In the 1970s the majority of Alevis turned to socialism (Çamuroğlu, 1998). In these years the most popular ideology was socialism which was supported by the USSR. As a result of this development, socialism was a disputable authority as an ideological alternative for the young and middle generations of Alevis (Çamuroğlu, 1998:94). The Socialist block in Eastern Europe collapsed at the end of the 1980s, while the major and monopole socialist state was replaced with Russia. Politically frustrated and isolated, a large part of the Alevi youth began to seek other paths. Moreover the other indicator of influence on the new generation, related to socialist thought which rejected any religious existence in society, was the decreasing religious authority of dedes. The socialist movements and ideologies tied with the immigration from rural to urban areas caused dede's religious authority to decrease. Alevi religiosity also became less connected to political ideologies and lost its religious former importance. Among them there were a great number of individuals who, in the course of their activities in left-wing parties and groupings

throughout the 1970s, gained political experience and extensive social networks (Çamuroğlu, 1998:94). Many of Alevis began to redefine themselves as Alevi which, as an ascribed identity, accelerated the Alevi collectivity and organizing.

3.2. Political Islam: Becoming Alone, Monophobia and Seeking Protective Shelter

The other reason which accelerated the revival of Alevis is the rise of political Islam founded by Necmettin Erbakan. He is the first Islamist politician active in Turkey and the founder of political Islamic parties. His parties were the MSP (National Salvation Party), MNP (National Order Party), RP (Welfare Party), and FP (Virtue Party).⁵ These parties except for the MSP⁶, were all closed down by the Constitutional Court because of their anti-secular and radical Islamist issues and actions. In contrast, Alevis always defend the secularist regime; they declared their dependence and loyalty for Kemalist regime. They are against political Islam because Alevis evaluate the rising of political Islam and *sharia* as being similar. Moreover, the actions and discourses of Erbakan were harsh, and perceived as a threat by the secularist state. He opened the Turkish secularism argument and redefined what secularism is; 'we demand secularism to be written in Turkish, or what does it mean, what means does it include?'⁷

⁵ MNP(26 January 1970-20 May 1971), MSP(11 October 1972-12 September 1980), RP(19 July 1983-16 January 1998), FP(17 December 1997-22 June 2001)

⁶ The MSP was closed down by the military administration like other political parties in 1980 with the coup d'état of 12 September 1980

⁷ <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/1997/03/12/f05.html>

The main response to Erbakan's political and radical Islam was the foundation of the TUP (Turkish Union Party) which was based on Alevi secular ideology and identity. The TUP was founded on 17 October 1966 by Alevis. This was the first attempt of politicization of Alevis. The founding fathers of the party were leftist and socialist. This party was an oppositional party against Sunni- political Islam. This party was the ideological Alevi party; its symbol was twelve stars and a gazelle. The twelve stars represented the twelve imams who were accepted by the Alevis as the religious leaders after the Prophet Mohammed, starting with his paternal cousin Ali bin Abu Talib. Ali was also the fourth caliph of the Islamic state, after the passing away of the Prophet Mohammed. The lion represented Hacıbektaşlı Veli who was a dervish and the religious leader in Nevşehir a central Anatolian city in the 13th century. He holds the lion and gazelle in current pictures. The lion represents his power and the deer represents his tolerance and love. Moreover, it shows that opposition and enmity can be met in peace. The Turkish Union Party was not able to represent all Alevis in Turkey. There were a lot of discussions about the party program and ideological spectrum. Hasan Tahsin Berkman was the first leader of the Turkish Union Party. He retired from the Turkish Armed Forces as an investigator brigadier general. The TUP first participated in the 1969 elections and took 2.8% of the votes and won 8 seats in the national assembly. Some of the MPs resigned from the Union Party and left it. In the 1973, elections the Union Party won one MP in the National Assembly. The vote percentage of the party decreased regularly and after 1977 the

political efficiency of the party finished.⁸ This party was closed down in 1980 with the coup d'état. At that time, all political parties were closed down by the military administration.

The role of CHP (Republican People's Party) became an obstacle against Alevis, which was a case of failure and dissatisfaction for the TUP. Alevis, like other Turkish citizens, voted for CHP in elections because it was the first political party in Turkey. 1923-1950 was the governing term of CHP as a single party regime without opposition. After the end of the CHP government it was replaced by the Democrat Party which came into power. According to Alevis, Ataturk saved them from Ottoman oppression and founded the secular state, just as the Alevis wanted.

Alevis can be defined through their traditional and values based on community. Their ancestors' directions are very important in all spheres. Most of the Alevis with whom I have talked, expressed that they and their families have been Republican for a long time.⁹ The hegemony of CHP over the Alevis has continued after the multi party regime. This tendency has made Alevis scared of political Islamist movements and discourses which have, as CHP mentioned, become a threat to secularism, possibly attempting to replace it with *shariah*.¹⁰

⁸ <http://www.alevileriz.biz/archive/index.php/t-3793.html>

⁹ Research trip in Hacibektaş/Neveşehir 16-18 August 2008 Cultural Art Festival

¹⁰ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun in Taksim

3.3. Kurdish Reflexive Active Position: Common Destiny but Different Responses

The last reason is the Kurdish movement. Kurds have long lived in the Middle East and their historical background is clearly known; there is no doubt about their past. Mesopotamia, Persian territories, Iraq, and Syria are some of the regions where Kurds have settled. They have been living for centuries in Anatolia. The cohesion of the Kurdish tribes, in turn, is based on a mixture of blood ties and territorial allegiances associated with strong religious loyalties (Meho & Maglaughlin, 2001:5). They have interacted with most states and nations under whom they have lived.

The Kurdish community has never established their own governing state. Mostly, they have lived under alien states. The history of the Kurdish community shares a destiny with the Alevis due to the oppression under which they lived from the Turkish state. Besides, the majority of the population of the Kurdish community is located in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia which has squeezed them and limited them in Turkey.

The last development in the existence of the Kurdish community is the foundation of the Turkish Republic which provides centralization and is basically a Kemalist umbrella. Moreover Kurds have their own language but they have lost their connecting tools with the abolition of the Arabic alphabet and the acceptance of the Latin alphabet by the Kemalist regime on 1 November 1928. Besides this, Kurdish society is agricultural; and thus the Kurdish community has played little role in the making of modern Turkey.

The socio-economic and political changes that most Kurds have witnessed since the 1960s include the mechanization of agriculture, industrialization, subsequent revolts, rural-urban migration, emigration, and political mobilization in party politics (Meho & Maglaughlin, 2001:5). Like Alevis, young Kurdish generations have been effected by socialism since the agricultural Kurdish society and community has always been under oppression throughout history. Ağa¹¹ is the most popular social and political figure among Kurds,

In order to understand the Kurdist separatist movements in Turkey and the rise of terrorism associated with the *Partia Karkare Kurdistan* (PKK)¹², one needs an appreciation of the historical development of the Kurdish people, their experiences, ideas, grievances and demands (Laçiner & Bal, 2007:474)

Kurdish movements are not the same as nonviolent Alevi movements,. PKK gained thousands of Kurdish and Alevi teenagers in their to struggle with the Turkish Republic in order to found a new Kurdish state, Kurdistan. The wind of socialism accelerated the process as well. The same period also witnessed a sudden resurgence of Alevi identity (Van Bruinessen, 2001).

The attempts at redefining Alevism are ambiguous, the main reason of Alevi marginalization, which has brought the political monopolizing side

¹¹ Ağa means common boss, owner of the property and territories in Southeastern Anatolia, they have workers called *maraba* that work in the ağa's territory. The properties of the ağa's is inherited so a class member can not change his/her class.

¹² Kurdistan Worker's Party is a terrorist organization that was established in 1978. More than 30,000 soldiers, police, and civilians have died because of their actions.

of the CHP among Alevis. This ambiguity consists of heterodox definitions and explanations and homogenous political choices such as for the CHP among Alevis. Different definitions such as "Alevism as a path of life", "Alevism is materialistic ideology, different from Islam, a different religion, leftist ideology" and the self perception of Alevism among Alevis are due to the fact that the TUP did not play an important role in the political arena.

3.4. Reencounter: From Erbakan's Political Islam to Erdoğan's AKP

The tensions between Alevis and Sunnis were shaped by the radical Islamist Erbakan in the political arena. The Virtue Party was Erbakan's last political party, but it was closed down in 2001 and Erbakan was removed from politics. In 2002, the old members of the Virtue Party founded the AKP (Justice and Development Party). Foundation of the AKP created a new type of tension between Alevis and the AKP. The AKP is also a liberal Islamist party, not as radical as Erbakan's party. The main founding members Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (current Prime Minister) Abdullah Gül (current President), also were the executive members in the Welfare and Virtue party. But they were not as extremist as than their *hoca*(professor and teacher), Necmettin Erbakan. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was an extremist Islamist in the years 1995-2002; his practices raised tensions with Alevis when he, as a metropolitan mayor, cancelled the building permits handed out by the previous municipal council, and sent bulldozers at 03:00am on September 1, 1994 to demolish a newly-built congregation hall (*cemevi*) and the additional buildings of a shrine complex. (Erdemir, 2004:177). But

when the AKP was founded in 2002, they collected some liberal moderate social democrats, Ertuğrul Günay (leftist republican and old secretary of the CHP) the current minister of Culture and Tourism) and Reha Çamuroğlu, (an Alevi writer and intellectual)., The AKP's opening project was to not follow Erbakan's thought and discourse, but to appear liberal by rejecting the "Islamist" label common in the Western media, and to claim to be a mainstream, pro-Western party with a "conservative" social agenda, but also a firm commitment to the liberal market economy and European Union.¹³. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan invited Çamuroğlu to be a candidate in the election. This was the first organic relation between Alevis and political Islam.

Most of the Alevi organization and associations do not see this invitation as a way to reduce the tension; in fact, they have declared that this is an assimilation plan by the AKP. Alevis and Alevism are located as an ongoing social problem, not only with their religious and traditional thoughts and structures but also with their social reactions and the political gaps included their in differentiation in Turkey. Overall, we have given a brief history of Alevis and Alevism, from its emergence up to now including with its revivalism process and position in the social and political arena. In order to understand Alevi revivalism in Turkey we have to consider what way Alevism is to be taken over in political developments. Alevis are still in a contradictory position and their political behaviors and relations between Sunnis will be an important issue to occupy the agenda in the future.

¹³ <http://arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=-610584>

3.5. Transformations of Alevism

As we explained before, Alevism is a heterodox synthetic melting of beliefs which include Asian immigrant Turks' culture, Islam, Shamanism, and Christian, Mesopotamian, Arabic and Persian cultures and traditions. The flexibility in Alevism includes an unbounded capacity and capability to absorb different cultures and religions as well to sustain this prosperity harmonically. Even today Alevism is a discussion topic with the context of Alevis in Turkey, as well as other countries where Alevis are still living. As a matter of fact, Alevism includes uncountable and impalpable transformations in its history. The historical transformation of Alevism is concerning the Kızılbaş who are the ancestors of Alevis. Actually the case of Alevis sharply changed in the Republican Period due to the changing name of Alevi. This was the opening of a new page for Alevis to create a new past and a new destiny. Moreover they do not accept any relations with Syrian, Lebanese and Persian Alevis; they always define themselves as Anatolian Alevis or Turkish Alevis.

The current Alevi case is related to Turkish Alevis which emerged with the foundation of the Turkish Republic. In order to analyze Alevism and its indicators, we have to present a broad picture from the foundation of Turkish Republic to now.

The last step in the transformation of Alevism is the revivalism of the 1990s which increased the visibility of Alevis. In order to understand Alevi revivalism; we need to focus attention major developments and paradoxes of Turkey. Until 1989, there was only the TRT state television channel which

was a monopoly in Turkey. In 1989 the first private TV channel, Star TV, was founded by Ahmet Özal and Cem Uzan. This development is an important corner stone in the growth of private TV stations. Alevism came to the scene in the public sphere as one of the fronts of civil society. It is evident that the revival of Alevi identity is indebted to the attention of the printed media on the Alevi groups and their values in the 1980s, which has a special meaning for the history of media (Çaha, 2000:272).

As we explained, the major element which accelerated Alevi revivalism and the Islamic movement was the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the Kurdish movement. These fast developments pressed Alevis from three sides. As a result, Alevis have been discovered by leftist ideology. Alevis were a new community in the development of a New Leftist path in protecting the secular state from any religious effects. In addition, Alevis always have been an object of secularists and conservatives, because they always played the loser role in this game.

In 1993 the Sivas massacre happened where 37 people were killed in the Madımak Hotel. This massacre is not only killing people but also the main argument to create obstacles against the normalizing process of Turkey. The normalizing period started with Turgut Özal when he came into power after the coup d'état in 1983. In this period alongside the foundation of private TV channels, the abolition of some laws which limited rights and freedoms, and economical acceptance of the global economy, Turgut Özal

relaxed importation limits and this was a start for entering the world free market.

A short time later, after the Sivas incident, the Gaziosmanpaşa incident occurred. An Alevi cafe was raked by unknown people and Alevis thought that their existence might be threatened; they thought that their future would be in trouble. The Alevi community totally complied with and adopted the Kemalist regime and its institutions, which were based on secular, westernized, antitraditional, and centralized institutions.

The Turkish state and its agents also interacted the Alevis them at different levels and in varying degrees (Şahin, 2001). Alevis expressed the idea that Alevism in reality means a "democratic, progressive and secular systems of thought." They defend that Alevism is a humanist perspective of Islam, while Sunni Islam is a violent and radical face of Islam (Çakır, 1999). This idea has received much support from secularists in Turkey, especially from the state and the army, which have tried to slow the rise of Islamism and its manifestations in politics. Overall, Alevis are always located between secularists and Islamists in the development of social and political mobility in Turkey. Nowadays, Islamist communities and the Islamist ruling party, the AKP, hold the power. On the other side, secular institutions such as the Judiciary and the TSK (Turkish Armed Forces) have a power. This is a dual contradiction that squeezes the Alevi sphere. Alevis are not as different from others as much as they are an organic part of Turkey. Mostly the discussions based on the

differences of Alevi and Alevism are that even if they are different, these differences can be melted in wealth culture and aspects of Alevi.¹⁴

3.6. Resources of Alevism;

From Secretive, Internalized to Explicit Written Culture

Resources of societies such as language, religion, marriages, art, music, special days, and celebrations have important roles over culture and traditions. These sources provide connections between old and contemporary times. Alevi culture has been made secret, by which we mean, norms and social rules have been continued orally and internalized out of fear of assimilation by Sunni groups. Secret and oral tools of culture and traditions of Alevism major aspects of Alevism that account for its survival. For many centuries, songs, tongue twisters, apothegms, and poems have been transferred from old to new generations.

This syncretic culture of Alevi has been protected until today by its followers. Until the 1970s, we had no clear and systematic written and visual sources about Alevi and Alevism. However, famous Alevi sources such as magazines, newspapers, and books started to be written in 1990s. The main reason for this lateness is the avoidance of written sources among Alevi. For a long time, no Alevi leader supported the importance of written

¹⁴ Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." (Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

sources As Bloch writes, "You can not argue with a song" (Bloch, 1974). It means any Alevi can criticize poems, rules, or the authority of dedes or great people in the family. This Alevi language is a propulsive power among them for resistance to the Sunni sect of Islam and traditions. The worries which Alevis have with respect to the dominant classes, being assimilated, are one of intermarriages among Alevis. In rural areas Alevis were living together but urbanization differentiated the Alevi life style. Still they have intermarriages, but as well as they prefer to possess Alevi grooms and brides. I have encountered with these social rules in Hacibektaş. When I was in Hacibektaş, I asked Alevi women whether I could marry an Alevi girl, they said, "No, we do not want a Sunni groom." The other issue which surprised me, is the secret stereotype in Alevi discourse which is "can". I was surprised because they always use it in their conversations.

Still Alevis resist global hegemonic culture which gives importance to their behaviors and take position against to Sunni hegemony in Turkey. Besides, they always attempt to have Sunni people accept Alevi existence and identity. In all public spheres, they declare their resistance and struggle against Sunni religious hegemony. Ali Balkız, Kazım Genç İzzettin Doğan, Cemal Şener¹⁵ are the most popular Alevis to sustain their ideologies on behalf of all Alevis.

¹⁵ Ali Balkız(The president of Alevi-Bektashi Federation) Kazım Genç(The President of Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association). İzzettin Doğan(The President of Cem), Cemal Şener(an Alevi writer and the vice president of Karacaahmet Sultan Association.)

CHAPTER III

ENCHANTING TOOLS OF ALEVISM

4.1. Cemevis: Gathering places of Alevis, Modern architecture of Alevist Power

The emergence of the Cemevi: Establishing control mechanism over Alevis

The Cemevi is a new concept of Alevi collective gathering places which emerged in the 1990s with the immigration from the rural to the urban public sphere. Cemevis bear the official titles of *cem ve kültür evi* (cem and culture house), *cem kültür evi* (cem culture house), or *Alevi kültür merkezi* (Alevi culture center) (Es, 2006).

The names of some of the associations are Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine, Garip Dede Shrine, Şahkulu Sultan, Erikli Baba Shrine, and Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations¹⁶. Cemevis are not under the category of religious places as mosques. These associations are under the control of the Associations Law. During the period after the coup detat in 1980s, Association Laws were enacted which included more limitations and obstacles added in 1983. Laws were changed in 1989 when limitations and

¹⁶ When I was visiting these associations that they are far away to my residence, I had asked people "do you know the association" Most of them answer "do you mean cemevi?", Cemevis is the single word of Alevi worship place in Turkish society's linguistics.

obstacles were abolished and replaced and easy and liberal laws were enacted. This improvement accelerated the process of the founding and spread of cemevis (Erdemir& Erman, 2008).The official title always gives reference to culture, because cemevis can be established only as culture centers under the associations legally (Es, 2006).

Before the emergence of Cemevis, cem ceremonies were held in the biggest houses in villages. These houses were allocated for cem ceremonies because cem ceremonies were a group prayer, not an individual prayer¹⁷. Cem ceremonies were held on winter evenings when there was no cultivation (Şener, 2004:153). Rural life had no need for special buildings; hence cem ceremonies were usually held on nights. This case has changed with immigration from rural areas to cities; urban life included more hard work and a nonstop working life, besides the lack of silence and the fluency of fast life dizzily effected Alevis concerning the necessity of praying cem. In cities it was hard to gather in flats and apartments, as it is a collective and interactive ceremony (Participants go along with dede's *nefes*, *mersiyes*).

A dualism of problematic points among Alevis occurred; firstly the lack of a distinctive model for a place of worship. The second problematic issue was that Alevis always kept secret and lived in their own habitat in Alevi villages, Alevi neighborhoods, and Alevi daily life. Life in rural areas provided mechanical solidarity; their social cohesion was based upon the likeness and similarities among individuals in their lives, and largely

¹⁷ Recorded conversation with Cemal Şener, May 2008, Cağaloğlu

dependent on common rituals and routines. (Durkheim, 1968:20).We can argue that what holds Alevis together is shared traditions based on the cultural values of Alevism¹⁸.

The division of labor among Alevis gradually replaced religious and traditional features as the basis of social cohesion in urban areas. In their division of labor Alevis needed as to be gathering in cities. This is the first reason why cemevi and associations are constructed in cities. The period of the widespread use of cemevis takes place after the 1990s.The foundation of associations provided a wide viewpoint for Alevi leaders; the legal status of associations accelerated the revelation of Alevi identity and the realization of what they are able to do. Written cultural aspects of Alevism started to appear. Alevi books, magazines, radio stations, night celebrations, special days and trips are some of these examples. Moreover the visibility of Alevi identity has gained more encouragement for self confidence and counter culture to Sunnis. Alevis have been identified by secularists in their religious and social life by the lack of headscarf, Islamic veiling (*tesettür*), and their political gap is mostly leftist. At the same time, they have a distance with MHP and the Welfare Party. These possessions of Alevis have been perceived as guardians of the secular state. The role of guardianship has been attributed to the Alevis by secularists.¹⁹

¹⁸ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun ,26 March 2009, in Taksim

¹⁹ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun, 26 March 2009, in Taksim.

4.2. What is a cemevi: Physical construction and architecture

The problem of the cemevi for architects

In order to understand the role of cemevis we need to focus on the construction of cemevis. As we explained before, cemevi is an urban building. There is no specific cemevi building in rural areas, as it is understood that the cemevi is a new building of Alevis to be used for gathering in the city. Besides the lack of distinctive cemevi architecture inside associations has not developed. (Şener, 2004:153) Actually the cemevi is a main part of association' building, just there is no specific cemevi buildings.

There are some common, such as wide hall, pictures of Atatürk, a picture of Karacaahmet, Hacı Bektası Veli, Şahkulu Sultan, and carpets on the ground. The dede's place is a slightly higher pulpit approximately one meter above the ground for governing the cem ceremony, as well as for controlling and seeing all of the participants. Most of the people who migrated from rural areas to urban areas are farmers and peasants who lived in villages, then later constructed Cemevis as well as libraries, big halls for eating, and kitchens inside associations.

The Karacaahmet Association was founded in 1969 with the name of the Karacaahmet Sultan Association. It is in Üsküdar Bağlarbaşı, the Anatolian part of Istanbul. The association is located in a three-story building. On the first floor there is a kitchen, and library on the second floor. There is a secretary on the third floor and a lunch hall where visitors

and members have lunch. There are 6,000 registered members throughout Istanbul. It is the biggest association in Turkey in terms of its number of members.²⁰

The Garip Dede Association was founded on 10 May 1998 with the name of Garip Dede Tomb Cemevi. It is in Küçükçekmece, the European part of Istanbul. The association is located in two buildings. The big building consists of two floors. On the first floor there is a kitchen and a lunch hall where visitors and members have a lunch; on the second floor, there is a dede room and cemevi which is a wide hall. In the small building there is a library and tomb; they are divided with a wall. They have 900 registered members.²¹

4.3. The Role of Cemevi and Associations:

Double Monopoly places

Cemevi became not only religious but also political and social because of this situation. Associations are the place of talking and chatting, an advice and information centre as well as a place for the planning of political choices and decision making about Alevi problems in cities. Alevis determine their actions and opinions or relations between other religious groups. Especially the dede influences the members with his opinions and comments. The *dede* or spiritual chief of the community must belong to an *ocak* (hearth), a genealogy which goes back to Ali²² (Melikoff, 1998:8). This privilege makes the dede a monopoly leader. According to Alevi beliefs, the

²⁰ Observation study in Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine (25 march 2008)

²¹ Observation study in Garip Dede Shrine and Cemevi (10 March 2008)

²² Fourth caliph, was the cousin and son-in-law of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.

dede is a holy man who is gifted by God. He is believed to be evaluated as innocent; indeed this authority is applicable for the members of followers and the rest of the Alevi who have organic relations²³ to their community.

In Alevi belief, the dede is holy and criticizing the dede is not good. It is even prohibited. The *dede* is rightly regarded as one of the keys to Alevi society: dedes are at once its focus, its teachers, its temporal judges and the links to their religious heritage (Shankland, 1998:24). Traditionally, for the dede, the relationship between norms and authority is reversed. The dede is a person who sustains the traditional domination of Alevism. He depends on the existence of traditional entitlement to position and to compliance; he could not change the norms and rules. (Cuff& Sharrock& Francis, 2005).

In traditional authority, the norms generate the leader (Spencer, 1970:125). Alevi norms have been created over many centuries from different monotheist religions, polytheist religions, tribal customs and values; this is why we define Alevism as a heterodox belief. Customs and values are important sources for Alevi that is why they sustained their culture and traditions over centuries. In addition, dedes have traditional authority starting at their adolescence and ending with death. Followers are easily influenced because they are less educated and they do not have permission to criticize the dede²⁴. This is a process in which less educated Alevi learn their roles from dedes. As we explained before, Alevi are a

²³ Go to cemevi, participate in cem ceremony, special days and trip, hacibektaş, Abdal Musa, Erikli Baba, Yunus Emre.

²⁴ In my survey studies in Karacaahmet and Garip Dede Shrines I had interviewed only 4 people who were university graduates out of 30 participants.

tradition based community. The oppression of Sunni based life creates an indisputable authority and legitimacy for cemevis; it is a power tool, and an established control mechanism over Alevis. Moreover most of the Alevis with whom I have talked in cemevis were leftist and harshly criticise the ruling party, the AKP. They mentioned mosques, the political agenda and the Islamist movement as threats for them. Registered members of cemevis are mostly leftist and more political persons; I suppose they were influenced by dedes and some leftist politicians who have powerful relations with cemevis.

4.4. Multivariable Religious Place

Turkish society is a traditional society which has to establish citizen²⁵ associations after the migration to cities. Conceptualizing the cemevi as a religious place or a social gathering place is contradictory in the Alevi context. The first contradictory issue is that cemevis are built inside of the associations. They are part of the associations. These associations are founded by some groups of Alevis who are in same area²⁶. It is proper to argue that these associations cause localization for groups of people who come from the same areas. Moreover, some cemevis were built near cemeteries in which their religious leaders, pirs (friends of God) were buried. This situation causes a new emergence of the cemevi as a shrine. Shrines are the second accepted and unquestionable buildings after

²⁵ (hemsehri), such as ;Kastamonulular Derneği, Sivashılar derneği,

²⁶ In Turkish "memleket"

mosques among Muslims, but temples are more important for Alevis than for Sunnis.²⁷.

These issues are constrictive in that they hinder the institutionalizing and empowerment of cemevis in social life. This means that it includes more than one place and concept; therefore there is no clear agreement on what a cemevi is; what the criteria are for a cemevi. Moreover a place which includes a religious and a social gathering place like the cemevi brings the problematic issue that some Alevis come to associations but do not participate in cem ceremonies. That is to say, the cemevi is not a unique construction; the importance of cemevi is influenced by the whole associations buildings. People who come to the associations sometimes visit the shrine, pray, make a vow, or talk with their friends. Not all of them participate in the cem ceremony.²⁸

4.5. The Inflexibility of the Diyanet

Diyanet (The Presidency of Religious Affairs) relations between Alevis always deal with mutual tension. We introduce the Alevi-Diyanet conflict here from the perspective of Alevis. In this part we will discuss demands of Alevis from the Diyanet, especially as related to the institutions and operations of the Diyanet. The Turkish state is secular but there is a Diyanet founded by law when the caliphate from Ottoman times was abolished in 1923, to control prayer areas. The Diyanet organizes activities

²⁷ Observation study in Hacibektaş 16-18 August 2008

²⁸ Observation study in Hacibektaş 16-18 August 2008, Garip dede Shrine, Karacaahmet Shrine March 2008

based on Sunni perspectives of religion duties. Diyanet appoints Imams (Religious Officers in mosque), *vaizes* (chaplains), and muftis, pays their salaries, arranges pilgrimage issues, provides money for mosques needs, broadcasts kandil programs (special days in Islam, for the anniversary of Prophet Mohammed birth, the anniversary of the God-Prophet Mohammed meeting), these are elements of traditional Sunni Islam.

Alevis get no support from the Diyanet because, the Diyanet does not accept Alevi rituals and norms. According to the Diyanet, Alevism is cultural and mystical interpretation of Islam, not a religion. According to Ali Bardakoğlu²⁹ “

“ The cemevi is not an alternate place of worship to the mosque, it is wrong to present cemevis as an alternative to mosques, as this will turn Alevism into an independent religion and will lead to the alienation of Alevis, a majority of whom see mosques as their places of worship, from Islam”³⁰

According to Diyanet Alevism is not out of Islam; Alevism is a part of Islam, inside Islamic cultural tendencies, and a sect/religious order (*tarikât*). Alevism is not the opposite of Sunni Islam.³¹ Since Alevis receive no financial support from the state, Alevis arrange their weddings, funerals and circumcision ceremonies in the cemevi and pay their own expenses. The expenses of cemevis and associations are defrayed with the willingness of members.

²⁹ President of Diyanet

³⁰ <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=138706>

³¹ <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=666298>

4.6. Their Demands Concerning the Diyanet

Alevis had not struggled with the Diyanet until the 1980's. Until then, only some low level complaints and worries before elections were shown by Alevis. Because there were no private TV channels, and it was difficult to criticize the state because in 1980 the Turkish military captured the administration of the state. This coup d'état made society passive and frightened. Alevis became self-confident and they gave voice to their critics and complained sharply and regularly to the Diyanet.

There are different groups of Alevis. They are not a single group; because of this, there are different ideologies and opinions in Alevi communities. However they come together concerning the institution and operations of the Diyanet. The general idea about the Diyanet is the same concerning Alevi associations. We can classify the critiques and opinions about the Diyanet with two titles.

4.6.1. The Approach with a Structure of Diyanet

There are two varieties of opinions concerning the structure of the Diyanet and Alevi groups.

4.6.1.1. Abolishing of the Diyanet

Most Alevi groups and associations agree on this issue; they are definitely against the Diyanet. According to them, the existence of the Diyanet contradicts secularism. The main criticism according to the Alevi

viewpoint concerning the Diyanet is that the Turkish Republic is secular, and a secular state cannot control religion and cannot enforce any religious thought its citizens. All citizens can believe anything and the Turkish state must not put any obstacles before citizens in their religious beliefs. They may not impose any religious pressure and must keep the same and equal distance for all religious beliefs.

Religious beliefs have to be felt by the individual spirit and also held in our conscience. This is the reason why these members have an alternative solution the needs of religious people and imams can be provided by the Ministry of National Education (Demir, 1995).

According to one member of the Pir Sultan Abdal association, the Diyanet serves religious duties only to Sunni communities, it is a big discrimination for Alevis. (Pehlivan, 1993:43)

Another famous and strong Alevi union is Hacı Bektası Veli Association. According to the leader of this association, Mustafa Selmanpakoğlu, "Diyanet cannot do its duty and lost its aim in time; it only imposes Sunni Islam to everyone. Since 1950 the Diyanet has become an enemy of the secular state. The main solution is the Diyanet has to be abolished part by part and after this a new central control organization has to be established and represented by religious sects" (Selmanpakoğlu, 1995). "Alevism requires secularism. Alevism does not include any Sunni Islam perspectives. Alevism is rooted in the culture and traditions of Turkey. The Diyanet is a Sunni perspective. Alevis can not accept the religious state because Diyanet is against the secular state. Alevi people pay their taxes

like Sunni people but Alevi people do not receive religious duties from the state. It is a very big injustice application. All of the workers and officers are Sunni. There are no Alevi officers in the Diyanet'' (Çamur, 2003:45).

4.6.1.2. The Restructuring of the Diyanet

As we explained, a large number of Alevi associations and unions defend the abolishment of Diyanet, while other Alevi associations defend the reconstruction of the Diyanet organization and structure (Üzüm: 2000). The famous Alevi association, Cem Foundation, defends the opinion that the Diyanet does not represent the Alevi tradition and secular state thought, and it is difficult to say the Diyanet is impartial. In the last paragraph it is declared that Alevis demand a reconstruction of the Diyanet which includes the entire group of religious beliefs, impartial, on principle, independent from the state, and not under the control of any dominant religious groups. The magazine *Cem* declares that they are always tolerant to improvements and arrangements (Doğan, 1992:10).

Prof. Izzettin Doğan, the leader of the Cem foundation, who is also a dede, explains in an interview that he also agrees with Cem magazine; " the Diyanet has to reconstruct totally. All religious groups have to be represented equally inside the Diyanet. The Diyanet has to have autonomy from the state or other dominant religious groups' pressure" (Doğan, 1992:8).

Overall, the opinion collects in a common point, we can summarize that the Diyanet is under control of Sunni sects, and always responsible for Sunni community.

As we see, these groups demand a new Diyanet which is tolerant of all religious beliefs, Islamic and also other religions with no discrimination and injustice. Their demand was declared in a Religion- State Relations” symposium which was arranged in 26-27 march 1996.³²

4.6.2. The Critique to the Diyanet

We can handle these critics in two points: critics on Diyanet personnel and cadres and critics on activities of the Diyanet.

4.6.2.1. Critiques on Personnel and Cadres

According to some Alevi citizens, the Turkish state does not have more money for the poor, the retired, workers, and civil servants because it uses money to support mosques, and the water, electricity, natural gas gas expences to provide housing for imams (Demir, 1995:22). It is a big contradiction of the state. It is not a hard decision to provide religious duties for Alevis.

The other claim of Alevis is that the Alevi personnel in the Diyanet was contradicted by the President of Religious Affairs, Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz in the “ Religion- State relations” symposium. He said that there are different groups of personnel in Diyanet cadres; there is no discrimination for any ethnic, religious, or regional differences. According to him, any person who graduated from imam-hatip high schools (schools which give intensive religion lectures) and Faculty of Theology can be a clergy in the Diyanet cadres.

³²

http://www.sonmezkutlu.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=55&Itemid=37

4.6.2.2. Critique on Diyanet operations

The central organization of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, established in 1924, consists of the Committee of Consultation (Hay'ati Mushawara) and central officers³³. The Presidency of Religious Affairs, which was created in the Republican period, continued the Ottoman experience to a certain extent. The Diyanet is one of the major institutions in Turkish bureaucracy. State religion relations are held in the powerful position of the Diyanet. The secular state does not care about any religious community or person. The Diyanet is always under the control of the Turkish state, hence religious revivalism or entering them into the public sphere has been prevented by the acceptance of one voice of Islam with Diyanet hegemony in Turkey.

Still, Alevis -Diyanet relations take place in tension besides Alevis' demand is missing by the obstacle of the Diyanet.

The demands of Alevis from the Diyanet should be stated as follows:

1. It has to be accepted by the state that there is pressure over Alevis, and the social religious pressures have to be broken down. Their first aim is to be officially recognized by the state. The Alevi identity should be accepted by everyone and Alevis should be able to say easily "I am Alevi".

In conclusion, we have explained the Diyanet-Alevi conflict. However, the perspective of Sunnis is in opposition to Alevi perspectives. Sunni people

³³ <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/English/tanitim.asp?id=4>

do not accept Alevism as a sect of Islam; they think that Alevi are not Muslim because they do not go to mosques, pray, or fast in Ramadan, and they have little Islamic background and daily life (Üzüm, 2000). Alevi abstract themselves from Turkish society; the Sunnis and Alevi always blame each other. They do not want to come together; they cannot tolerate themselves, and because of this, the Sunni-Alevi conflict continues.

4.7. Enchanting tool of Alevi

One of our thesis arguments is that an enchanting tool of Alevism is the cemevi, as we could explain the emergence of cemevi and the meaning of cemevi in the public domain. In this part, we will analyze whether cemevi provide a wanted role among Alevi, or are cemevi an unbearable influence among Alevi?

The cemevi is a new concept in the Alevi context; it is the enchanting tool in the public sphere. What was the dream of Alevi who built cemevi? Which roles were considered and which roles were targeted? How were they used to enchant Alevi? In order to clarify as a whole picture of emergence of cemevi concept we need to look at the collecting members. The process of enchanting based on the idea of effecting Alevi in cities. The most important process is registration; as we explained before cemevi are built inside of associations, and they had to gain members to the associations with registering members. It is an unofficial issue, therefore registered members contributed power and legitimacy for associations and registered members also worked to find new Alevi members. Moreover, this function provides legitimacy and confidence for the founders of

associations. The emergence of the cemevi value was empowered by traditional based Alevism; mostly, there are no written rules in associations. Cemevi values related its meaning among members. *Saz, Bağlama,* and *semah* courses were offered to influence teenagers and introduce them to Alevi culture. Also this advancement provides interest to parents about their children care. At the same time, there are ÖSS (Student Selection Examination) for entering universities, held every year. Teachers and advisors volunteered among educated Alevis and they do not demand money. This examination is very important for both teenagers and their parents. Besides, it is a problematic issue among Alevis to reach teenagers. As we explained before, urbanization and immigrations transformed Alevis, hence a lot of teenagers are in a paradox. The decreasing religious authority of dedes became insufficient to give satisfactory answers to the questions and religious beliefs of teenagers.³⁴

Overall, we explained the frame of cemevis and their functions, however there are some outstanding points concerning whether cemevi has played the wanted roles or not. One of the reasons that hinder the development of cemevis is are not caused by the same process. They were founded by a different "ocak"; it means a sect among Alevis which is based on the heritage of the twelve imams. This categorizing among founders and ocaks, is a hindrance for the development and increases in number of cemevis. The lack of unification and varieties of groups cemevis are evaluated as a wealth of Alevism.

³⁴ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun, 26 march 2009 in Taksim

Another side of the meaning of cemevis among Sunnis is also problematic, unfortunately cemevis have not been accepted by Sunnis, as we may say they neither go to the cemevi nor accept cemevis as religious places.

CHAPTER V

DISENCHANTMENT

THE CONDITION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT

5.1. Definition of Social Movement/Collective Action

A social movement is an action against the main structure of the establishment and practices of the state and government. It is organized and attempts targets social goals which are beneficial for society by means of resisting practices of the state and government or providing the opportunity to bring freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and harmony of laws and regulations. Social movements are neither randomly organized nor opportunist for financial advantages and privileges. The process of social movements starts with the philosophy of doing or changing something in society even if there is a wall and obstacles.

As such, social movements can loosely be defined as interactive networks of people who have shared beliefs and a sense of solidarity, and who come together to take part in collective action to challenge the status quo (Porta & M Diani, 1999). It is a diagnosis and remedy for existing forms of suffering, a diagnosis and remedy by which this suffering stands morally condemned (Moore, 1978). Moore refers to the process of interpretation and reflection that takes places in all forms of protest and social mobilization.

'Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective, that is, to say they result from the more or less spontaneous coming

together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures, but who merely share a common outlook on society³⁵

It is easily confused with collective action as done by people as a reason of unexpected and undesired events and structure. The main differentiation between social movement and collective action is a social goal; in social movement there is a distinctive social goal which is based on the idea of resistance and action in society by likeminded and targeted people.

Social movements include civil rights, gay's rights, transparency in state, judiciary, military affairs, unionism, environmentalism, feminism, workers rights, and diseases (AIDS, Hepatitis, and Cancers), Counter discrimination, racism and terrorism. When short-lived impulses give way to long-term aims, and when sustained association takes the place of situational groupings of people, the result is a social movement. (Marshall, 1999).

Collective actions include uprisings, temporary fashions, craziness, crowds, group shouting, panics, grapevines and mass hallucinations (Marshall, 1999). In Turkey the response to traffic accidents are a perfect example of collective action; when a traffic accident happens, a lot of people passing by come and occupy the area out of pure curiosity. They usually obstruct official works. In collective actions there is no distinctive idea and methodology; it is unplanned action that consists of spontaneous

³⁵ <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/551335/social-movement>>.

situations, which cause a popular tumult. They often end with police or civilians' intervention.

Social movements can have a restricted frame, such as legalization of euthanasia, as well as a wide frame, such as the break down of the capitalist world system hegemony. They can be revolutionist or reformist; indeed either has a common side which means the breakdown of the status quo (Marshall, 1999:747).

Social movement is a cornerstone concept which we need to draw a picture of the Alevi movement in Turkey. We will discuss whether Alevis create a social movement or collective action. Alevi collective action repertory and discourses represent diversity; mass Alevi collective demonstrations, protests, boycotts, anniversary and celebrations, visual and written press releases, petitions, signature campaigns, lawsuits in national and international courts, are examples of such collective actions (Erdemir& Erman 2004).

5.2. The Lack and Problems of Persuasive Discourse

One of the requirements of creating and sustaining a social movement is the creation of a distinctive persuasive discourse. The mode of styles determines the perception of social subject among state officers and people; Alevis express their problems and demands harshly and with resentment because of feeling hurt by the state and some non-Alevi groups. İzzettin Doğan (The President of CEM foundation, Republican Education and Culture Foundation) says, "Either the President of the Republic and the

Prime Minister are resisting the idea of an Alevi President of Republic and Prime Minister, or the Diyanet has been a 'state inside a state'.³⁶ As we said before, AKP is now a ruling party and there is a long distance between them and Alevis; most of Alevis do not like or vote for the AKP. They systematically criticize the AKP since the AKP wanted to tie up their relation with Alevis, and as a first step invited Reha Çamuroğlu, an Alevi intellectual and writer, and nominated him as a MP candidate in the Istanbul 2007 election. The first organic confrontation between the AKP and Alevis was an invitation by the Abdal Musa foundation Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to an *iftar* in the month of Muharrem³⁷.

Reha Çamuroğlu played an active role in this *iftar* program at the Bilkent Hotel in Ankara. But many Alevis had harsh reactions. The other Alevi associations and foundations were also invited but most major Alevi organizations announced that they would not participate in the dinner because they did not believe the government was sincere. Fermani Altun, the president of the World Ehl-i Beyt Foundation based in Istanbul, has expressed dislike about the way the rapprochement has been presented even though he is a pro-AKP Alevi leader³⁸. He noted that when Çamuroğlu was a parliamentary candidate from Istanbul, he never consulted with Alevis. "We don't accept Çamuroğlu's invitation," said Altun, adding, "This is

³⁶

<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetay&ArticleID=908084&CategoryID=104>

³⁷ This is the Arabic name of a month which is holy for all Muslims, but more important for Alevis. They do not fast in Ramadan like Sunnis. They fast 10-12 days in Muharrem.

³⁸ <http://www.hri.org/news/cyprus/tcpr/2008/08-01-11.tcpr.html>

a month of mourning and not suitable for a large iftar".³⁹ Professor İzzettin Doğan, president of the İstanbul-based Cem Foundation, says the government has "refused" to work with Alevi organizations for a long time. "We did not refuse to attend the dinner right away. We first wanted the prime minister to make a public statement embracing the Alevis. But he did not make it." Doğan asked, "Why does the prime minister of Turkey remain so distant to such a large community? Is this understandable?"⁴⁰ He also said that no Alevi organizations of long standing would attend that iftar. The iftar program is over but the discussion has not finished; the result was that the iftar program was boycotted, and 12 Alevi dedes declared the Alevi participants as *düşkün*. (excommunicated). The following are major crimes that cause an Alevi to be declared *düşkün*⁴¹. Some *ocaks*, on the other hand, had a function similar to that of a higher court. Called the *ocak of düşkün*, they had the authority to reconsider the punishments given to the disciples, and even to cancel them⁴²

The boycott and declaration of the participants as excommunicated was an expected response that agreement between Alevis has not occurred. Moreover, it made Alevis disappointed.

³⁹ <http://www.hri.org/news/cyprus/tcpr/2008/08-01-11.tcpr.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=131396&bolum=101>

⁴¹ In this, the rules and regulations of rural society are totally incompatible with urban life. Anyone who has committed an offence will, in any case, be punished by the judge. The dede may judge concerning killing a person, adultery, divorcing one's wife, marrying a divorced woman, stealing

⁴² <http://www.alevibektasi.org/dedes.htm>

5.3. "Alevi movement: to be or not to be"

Alevi have different power sources, as explained before. They consider the TSK and Judiciary as the main elements and guardians of the secular state. However, some of the massacres made Alevi timorous and distrustful. There have been four different harsh assaults against Alevi: Maraş, (1978), Çorum (1980), Sivas (1993), and Gazi(1995). The Maraş and Çorum massacres, occur before the coup d'état in 1980, were harsh and long ongoing tensions between leftists and rightists. Alevi were sacrificed in provocations which were based on Alevi anti- Islamist and nonconformist values. These events are largely forgotten because of the 1980s disorder in Turkey. The Sunnis and Alevi were constrained to forget these events. But it cut off in 1993. Two violent and sudden attacks against the Alevi people occurred in Sivas and Istanbul in 1993 and 1995, respectively (Şahin, 2001).

On July 2 1993, in Sivas, people who came to Sivas hosting attendees of Pir Sultan Abdal, an Alevi cultural festival after the Friday *namaz*, some of the prayers were provoked by unknown groups and individuals and the pre-massacre period experienced tension. Gossip and whispers suggested that Alevi were enemies of Islam. The *post-namaz* period was an optimum time, since the worshippers left the mosque together, for provoking them against Alevi. They set fire to the Madimak hotel when there were people inside the hotel. The police and gendarme did not interfere with the massacre. People were provoked by assailants who were shouting "*Allahuekber*" (God is the greatest).

Alevis were perceived by conservative people as enemies of Islam in Sivas. The Alevi participants in the festival, most of them in the hotel, were squeezed in, unable to escape because of the crowd surrounding the Madimak hotel. Consequently, 37 people died and 60 were injured. "Critical events can set the stage of mobilization not because they create collective identities that were none existed before, but because they rearrange the priority ranking of social identifications that already matter to people in varying degrees" (Gould; 1995: 19). This massacre brought a new scenario for Alevis; they were scared to continue with the tension against them as well as the painful lament of the Sivas sacrifices.

Two years later, on March 12 1995, in the predominantly poor neighborhood of Gazi in Istanbul, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a coffeehouse and two people were killed. A total of 17 people died in the ensuing incidents when residents accused the police of being part of the attack⁴³. The police and gendarme came to Gazi but they confronted an Alevi crowd, which was provoked and tried to protest this incident in front of the local police station. The police employed violence to disperse the Alevis participating in protest marches in connection with the events in Gazi, Umraniye, and other Alevi neighborhoods in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir throughout March 13-15 (Şahin: 2001).

The other problem is the nonconformist Alevi approach. Alevis always lived under oppression in their history; their leaders, cultures, traditions were in front of state eyes and after the foundation of the Turkish republic

⁴³ <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=171136>

they accepted all of the reforms. Republican protests were the last organized secular protest of the Presidential election in Turkey in 2007, after the term of President Sezer. This is a common path to persuade Alevis in the secularist perspective. The AKP had a qualified majority in the TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly); they were able to select their candidate which secularist and did not want a President who was selected because of a religious president possibility.⁴⁴ Alevis were used as a supporters and participants in these protests actively (Solgun: 2008).

Alevis showed their presence in the Turkish political context; unfortunately they did not conform with other groups of Turkish people, meaning they did not compromise with each other. A frequent aspect of social movements is their respect other minded people and the defence of the rights of others, but Alevis did not defend the rights of other religious people such as Sunnis, Kurds, girls with headscarves or members of Imam Hatip and other vocational technical schools.⁴⁵ Alevis have a large population in Turkey; therefore it is obvious that they can be a force which can change certain things.

Overall, the discussion on the position of Alevis in social movements is an opportunity for Alevis to continue on their paths, understanding self, defining them, and gaining their rights. But Alevis has not found an opportunity to see, define and express themselves to themselves and to other citizens.

⁴⁴ AKP did not select Abdullah Gül, by the put obstacle of Constitutional Court with the qualified majority 550/367 in parliament.

⁴⁵ (Their points cut down in ÖSS (Student Placement Examination) and it is miracle for them to place in 4 years faculties).

CHAPTER VI

INSTITUTIONALIZING ALEVI LIFE

An institution is a structural union and foundation which includes social togetherness and aspiration of being in society. It is connected with the state and actually is a path to create relations with the state. In Turkey there are many groups which are divided ethnically, religiously or by other factors of differentiation. They have educational, commercial, and social institutions that are collectively recognized. We will examine the Alevi existence in the institutionalizing process with encountering problems. Our aim in this part is basically to show if there are any institutions related to the Alevi context. We will concentrate on the Alevis' institutionalizing facts in Turkey. In society, founding an educational institution is the best way of being independent and pressuring the state or any groups. Examples of such groups are schools, kindergartens, colleges (primary, secondary, and high schools), universities, research centres, and dormitories for divorced or poor women, care centers, media tool; newspapers and TV channels, and commercial unions such as TUSIAD, MUSIAD⁴⁶.

6.1. Organization of Alevis

The first step in institutionalization is the organization in social spaces. Alevis encountered more alienated and differentiated in coming together. As we mentioned before, Alevis encounter problems primarily

⁴⁶ TUSIAD(Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen Associations, MUSIAD(the Independent Industrialists & Businessmen's Association)

while they attempt to talk about their issues and in the decision making process; aspects of their movement are divided and multivariable. In order to understand the background of Alevi organizations we have to look at the viewpoint of state. we have to look at the foundation process and expanding authority among Turkish citizens(Kuru:2006) Alevis have always felt the pressure under the scare of Sunni hegemony and been given the role of guardians of the secular state by secularists.

They have been squeezed and cannot reconcile their aspirations and capabilities in the social commercial arena. Indeed systematic discrimination decelerated them by means of attempts followed by continuous postpones. There are some attempts to establish commercial unions and associations but achievement is not satisfactory for Alevis. Their Republican Industrialist and Businessman Association is closer to the CEM Foundation and the Democrat Industrialist and Businessmen Association is closer to the Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, but they are not active⁴⁷.

6.2. Deficiency in creating Organizations

In order to emphasize the lack of organization activation among Alevis the primary problems may be shown can be show that the primary problems. This primary problem is based on the suppression of the Alevi heritage throughout their history. Solgun said "Alevis always have been under oppression; they were beaten by the Ottoman they have been unrecognized in the Republican age. The Kemalist regime has not given

⁴⁷ <http://www.alevibektasi.org/taktor.htm>

them a normal life; although, it abolished the threat of death to Alevi.⁴⁸ The regime and power elites have not given Alevi few chances to exist in society; but they are always used as a figure against the official threat of the secular state, especially the Islamist movement, to guarantee the regime and, the essentiality of secularism.

At the same time Alevi were seen as an internal threat. "Alevi who are a closed society and as easy to provoke into causing uprisings by external powers, collaborating with Kurdish nationalist movement representatives"(Pehlivan, 1993:188). As we mentioned, the TSK supports Alevi, even if Cafer Solgun says, "The power elites seem to be friends of Alevi but the other side our state is secular. Alevism is also *gerici* (unprogressive) so, the secular state did not show any tolerance to Alevi.⁴⁹ These indicators are major problems also there are some remaining sub problems.

6.3. Leadership

One of the major elements in creating social movements and organizations is powerful and equipped leaders. A leader has to have charisma and capability to change something in society and affect his followers. Charisma is a certain quantity of an individual personality by virtue of which he were considered extraordinary and treated as if he is endowed with super national, superhuman , or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities (Weber, 1946:47).In the Alevi community,

⁴⁸ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun in Taksim on 26 march 2009

⁴⁹ Recorded conversation with Cafer Solgun in Taksim on 26 march 2009

dedes are the outstanding leader candidates who are accepted as holy religious men. They stand in a master-disciple relationship to each other in their hierarchy, and each has specific duties towards the lay community (Zeidan, 1999:9). Dedes have a knowledge by means of traditional and cultural knowledge; at the same time their authority has been disputed in Alevi history. However, by the negative effects of urbanization, position and location of dedes have transformed of which they became uneducated and inefficiency in educated Alevi people in cities. Also, it was easy to influence *talips* (followers of dedes) in secret oral concepts of Alevism but migration from rural areas to cities has brought differentiation and opposition among Alevis. Controlling of followers became harder in cities.

Dedes do not play any role in organization, but still they are symbolic figures in association as heads of associations or foundations. They make *dua* (pray) for their followers, chat with visitors, and supervise the cem ceremonies. Also they give advice to *talips*, if followers need and demand it from them

6.4. Collective memory of systematic oppression as two dimensions

In the Republican period, both Sunni and Alevi, religious leaders lived the same process. This process consists of the same oppression of religion by the secular state. Dedes, imams, and sheikhs (leaders of cemaats) have different religious ideas and comments on Islam. However, they have been evaluated by the same opinions. Dedes were the leaders of Alevis who lived

under the most painful pressure of the secular state and the behaviors of provoked peoples' attacks which were fed from internal and external powers. Collective structure is a process of Alevis who always prefer to be secret and identify themselves as Turks, secular, Kurdish or Kemalist. The institution of the dede became that of a symbolic and honorable leader who had no more power than suggesting advice for his followers.⁵⁰

6.5. The Types of Associations, Foundations: NGO or Political Unions

As a Way of Urban Alevism

Establishing Alevi associations and foundations is a new trend in the perception and transformation of Alevism. As we explained before, Alevis and Alevism are based on secret oral culture and traditions. The rural exodus to cities as a corner stone of the transformation of Alevism actually exposed Alevism with urbanization. Even if there were millions of Alevi in rural areas, they were not known as a community, but also perceived as a group of people. Moreover, Turkey was a closed country both externally and internally in the 1960s and 1970s. An external factor in this term is the cold with counterattacks and policies which polarized the countries of the United States and the Soviet Union. Turkey was a middle player with strategic cooperation with the US. The other reason is preserving of self from the communist threat from the Soviet Union. Non- global international situation also made Turkey an internally closed society. Democracy had not

⁵⁰ Recorded conversation with Elisa Massicard in Taksim French Consulate on May 2009

yet been developed in Turkey. The coup d'état shows us. As the military intervention in Turkey during 1960s and 1970s resulted in bad and painful events.

At the same time urbanization brought development and organic solidarity inside the cities. In organic solidarity, society needs a functional interdependence among its various organs in order to continue or survive (Durkheim: 1968). For example, doctors need farmers for their food, firefighters and police for safety and security, teachers for their children's education, and garbage collectors to dispose of their waste; farmers need teachers, police, firefighters, doctors, garbage collectors, and so on. Thus, the various parts of society need one another in order to prosper. By the late 1980s, the politicization and mobilization of Alevism began to be expressed in the publication of Alevi books and journals, and the foundation of Alevi associations. These are the organic solidarity among Alevis in cities. When we mention Alevi organizations, the first type is the traditional organization; it is essentially a religious organization (Şener, 1998:35). Associations are founded on the basis of the Islamic movements as a response from the religious side of Alevism. Founding an association was the easiest path to provide Alevi solidarity and union and supply the necessity of a social place for Alevis. Founding an association requires criteria for inclusion and exclusion. It is also a collective representation providing a common ground for an identity of a group or a community (Tilly, 1998)

The increase in the publication and associational activities of Alevi was a manifestation of a new expression and organizational model among Alevi. (Şahin, 2001).

Prominent foundations are classified into five Types. These foundations are basically representative of Alevi and Alevism. Their leaders conceptualize Alevism from their viewpoints.

1. Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations (PSAKD): Pir Sultan was a person who was a poet and dervish in the Ottoman period. This association was founded in 1989 in reference to his personality. Their leaders define their Alevism as a way of life and philosophy peculiar to Anatolian people, and the external side of Islam (Erdemir & Erman 2004). Kazım Genç, the leader of Pir Sultan, usually harshly criticizes conservative people and the government in his press releases. He argues with some Alevi groups against accepting an Islamic based notion of Alevism:

“All Alevi are Kemalist; even the most rightist one is a Kemalist.”⁵¹ This association plays a role arguing for socialist policy and opposing perspectives against conservative parties.

2. Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Cultural Foundation (HBVAKV): As we explained before, Hacı Bektaş Veli was a virtuous person who lived in the 1290s in the Seljuk period. “According to this foundation, Alevism is different from Islam, as Alevism has emerged before

⁵¹ <http://www.taraf.com.tr/makale/1758.htm>

Islam's coming "(Erdemir & Erman 2004). They coordinate their research and studies with the Germany Alevi Unions Federation (AABF) and the European Alevi Unions Confederation.

3. Cem Vakfı(Republican Education and Cultural Foundation)

Cem Vakfı was founded by İzzettin Doğan⁵² in 1993. He is an outstanding famous Alevi who has drawn attention in Turkish society and Europe. His perception of Alevism is pretty different from the other foundations and associations. He emphasizes the good relations between Alevis and state. He seeks the path of solution in state affairs by means of melting the ice between Alevis and the state.

İzzettin Doğan is a political figure that due to his communications with all parties should not be understood as only leftist because he has good relations with Islamist parties.

4. **Ehli-i Beyt Vakfı** (1994) According to them, Alevism is the essence of Islam; on the contrary, this foundation is closer to Sunni Islam as they accept *namaz* and fasting. The leader, Fermani Altun, defends the acceptance of all requirements of Islam, mostly the same features with Shiites. They are found in the conservative media and environment. This foundation is not accredited by the other foundations and associations.

5. Single Independent Associations: Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine, Eriklibaba Shrine, Garipdede Shrine, and regional cemevis Esenyurt, Sultanbeyli, Gazi mahallesi cemevi, are local to Istanbul. These are mostly

⁵² International Law professor in Law faculty at Galatasaray University

single independent organizations that represent the localization of Alevi associations.

They have their own members who live close to cemevis. These associations are working essentially mechanically, meaning they are limited and small size sphere. Three cem ceremonies are held weekly, sheep are sacrificed, and gift shops sell books, pictures of Hacı Bektasi Veli, Pir Sultan Abdal, Yunus Emre, and key rings. Mostly, they have an important position among Alevis as the first step of their socialization where they may rest and chat with their neighbours.

Overall, the outstanding point between associations and foundations is differentiation. The main perspectives of Alevi movements are divided and multivariable (Massicard: 2007). The harmony between these groups is considerable in Alevis demands from the state; the statue of cemevis, religious lessons and systematic segregation against Alevis. Alevis have public visibility of their existence with these associations, but these institutions are no more than associations; they do not have power over Alevis in the social political sphere.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will analyze the whole argument which I tried to explain in various ways. Studying any ethnic community is an ongoing problem and the social political context can be changed easily and rapidly. Alevis I have focused on are an outstanding and effective dynamic community. Alevis are an issue in Turkey by both their own structure and the Turkish political social structure.

When I started studying Alevis in September 2007 I realized and saw a lot of developments about Alevis and Alevism. As I have studied the revivalism of Alevism by the Islamic movements, the collapse of Soviet Union and Kurdish movements. Following this progress Alevis were discovered by secular people and actors in the political sphere. Alevis had the perfect opportunity to express their opinions, freedom, and problems and gossip about them, but the processes of Alevism in Turkish life followed the disenchantment which included the failure in the political organization and socialization as being a main part of pressure groups and powerful on their problems .

Another development is, they had an opportunity to institutionalize as mostly educational institutions, founding schools, research centers, universities, dormitories, and providing scholarship for high school and university students as an investment for education. The other side of the

socialization processes of Alevi could be evaluated as a missing subject by means of the part of social movements and the creating of their own social movements.

I have focused on Alevi inside from their perspectives. I definitely express and emphasize that I am not judging Alevi. I am not evaluating Alevi and Alevism as an unimportant or invaluable community. I am a Sunni person who has heard a lot of bad gossip about Alevi and Alevism in the past when I was a child but I always defend them. I cannot avoid confessing to some events that I have lived through; I have not seen and lived with love and tolerance and interest for Alevi.

My desires and demands have not been provided by Alevi. Self existence and perception of Alevi demands that they evaluate themselves as subjects without any intervention. The AKP, the current ruling party, is still a threat against Alevi but be an opportunity for Alevi. Not only the rising of the AKP but also the rising of conservative people in the social and commercial area constrict Alevi. Besides some Alevi feel themselves all right going to mosques for cuma prayer, fasting in Ramadan, and wearing headscarves (Toprak, 2008).

The AKP did not behave to Alevi like other parties; the AKP is a center right party which is a mass party, and targeted to be a single party. The AKP's interests in Alevi and Alevism stem from their strategies to make all different groups and community vote support in elections. AKP is not an ethnic or religious party. Moreover, they have no distinctive related community or group to focus on. Alevi are a big community which is a

source of many votes in elections. Not only the AKP, but also other parties always attempt to prepare projects and plans to persuade Alevis. The Alevi Workshop has been arranged by the AKP government in 3-4 June 2009 in Ankara, state minister Faruk Çelik and Supervisor of the Prime Minister, Necdet Subaşı, listened to Alevi leaders. It was the first meeting between the AKP and Alevis. The Second Alevi workshop (June 8) was arranged in Istanbul with the attendance of academicians. It can be seen as evidence of normalization.

7.1. Opportunity

The second case is the AKP can offer an opportunity for Alevis to find out their problems. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, no government or political parties presented any solution for Alevis. Because of this, Alevis do not evaluate the openings up of the ruling party. The AKP is the essential problem can be understood in this case; the case of no confidence among Alevis is not a simple issue. Besides, incidents and politics of governments caused Alevis to have an existential struggle. Alevis have been exhausted by false and artificial politics and thoughts.

However, Alevis have a chance to pressure the AKP to gain their rights. Even some of the projects fall down, and Reha Çamuroğlu lost his disputed authority with Mp power; he has not played an expected role in Alevi government relations.

7.2. What could Alevi do

In my thesis I have tried to explain the Alevi paradox. Now have to say, what Alevi can do? My first aim before starting my thesis was to find or suggest any solution for Alevi and see what I could do for Alevi. I want to emphasize that this thesis is presented to Alevi to help them confront themselves, and increase their self understanding during their ongoing sphere and statue in Turkish society. Despite the dilemmas of Turkey's political and social context, it is not suitable for Alevi and Sunnis to deeply believe that nobody is happy in Turkey now. I think Alevi do not believe the AKP will do something for them. However the AKP is still trying to solve its internal problems. The failure of local elections has accelerated this process. Besides, the non -Alevi people get bored. Alevi people also want Alevi problems to be solved.

There are some demands of Alevi from the state, political parties and Sunnis. The most important of their main demands is cemevis to be recognized by state as prayer places. In addition, Alevi would like support from the Diyanet for their Cemevis, the social security and salary of Dedes, and the abolition of religious lessons in the middle school years.

The main idea of this complaint is Alevi's demand of money for their expenses from the Diyanet. They attempt to mention their demands officially, and sometimes the leaders of Alevi associations meet with MPs, politicians and statesman. Alevi are the only groups which demand money support for religious duties. For instance Turkish Jews and Christians have their own churches and synagogues and they get no support from the

Diyanet. Also, they do not demand that they always pay their own expenses. They are not against the Diyanet according to them.

Alevis' demands from Sunnis are the disappearance of gossip and calumnies in the social sphere.

7.3. A Chance for Alevi Confrontation

In my research, I have developed some solution for Alevis. As I explained before, any political party, or state government can solve the Alevis' problems. The Alevi-Sunni relations have to normalize by themselves. But, unfortunately firstly Alevis have to take action in the social political sphere by expressing themselves as one of the substantive elements of Turkey. Conservative people are more powerful than they were in the past and they do not need to solve the Alevis' problems, even if there are a lot of borders and walls seem hard to pass beyond. Their psychology was shaped by massacres and the lack of attempts to accept Alevi existence from the past to now.

The last conclusion is about the actual hot topics which are related to Alevis. Alevi social movements can be created by Alevis which are pure, clear, and sustainable. They always shout secularist and socialist slogans, carrying ADD (Kemalist Thought Association) banners to figure out someone's ideologies.

Overall we tried to draw a broad picture of Alevis and Alevism since the 1990s with their historical and political development up to now as an ongoing process. In order to summarize, I have used a different frame work

to study Alevi. I think the enchantment process proves the Alevi position and presentation of self in the public sphere and adds new meanings to Alevi. It is easy to understand Alevi ideology which is adapted leftist ideology. In the disenchantment processes it shows us why Alevi's problems are still continual and their problems have not been solved.

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