

**THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN SHAPING SOCIAL RELATIONS:
A CASE STUDY ABOUT THE REMEMBRANCE OF ÇORUM
MASSACRE IN 1980**

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'L' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN SHAPING SOCIAL RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY ABOUT THE REMEMBRANCE OF ÇORUM MASSACRE IN 1980

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This thesis examines memory narratives of witnesses of the Çorum events that happened in 1980. I conducted an ethnographic study to examine how Alevi and Sunni citizens differ in constructing a collective memory based on shared past and the role of identity positions in the recollection of past images. To this end, first, I investigated the narratives and organization of commemorations that memorialize the events as a struggle against forgetting and form a master narrative. Second, I analyze individual memory narratives about the events, which involves subjectivity and collectivity concurrently. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with thirty people who witnessed the events. The research reveals that although images of the events are similar, the present conditions, and religious and political belongings lead Alevi and Sunni citizens to differ in making sense of the past. While for most Alevis I interviewed, remembering of the Çorum events represents a struggle for keeping awareness of state repression and historical victimization, for conservative and nationalist Sunni people, facing and making people remember the events is considered problematic. This thesis provides insight into the relation between memory and social identities as well as an understanding of the Alevi issue through the examination of a local case.

Keywords: collective memory, narrative analysis, the Çorum events, identity, forgetting.

ÖZ

TOPLUMSAL İLİŞKİLERİN ŞEKİLLENMESİNDE HAFIZANIN ROLÜ: 1980 ÇORUM KATLİAMININ HATIRLANMASI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Bu tez, 1980 yılında meydana gelen Çorum olaylarına tanık olmuş kişilerin hafıza anlatılarını incelemektedir. Alevi ve Sünni vatandaşların ortak geçmişleri üzerine nasıl bir kolektif hafıza kurduklarını ve geçmiş imgelerin anımsanmasında kimliklerin rolünü inceleyen etnografik bir çalışma ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu amaçla, unutuşa karşı bir mücadele olarak Çorum olaylarını anma törenleri ve anmalar üzerine kurulan anlatılar bir ana anlatı biçimi olarak incelenmiştir. Diğer taraftan, olaylar üzerine kurulan, hem öznellik hem de kolektivite içeren bireysel hafıza anlatıları incelenmiştir. Veriler derinlemesine mülakat yöntemiyle olaylara tanık olmuş otuz kişi ile yapılan görüşmeler sonucu elde edilmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda olaylara dair imgelerin benzer olmasına rağmen, şimdinin koşullarıyla birlikte dini ve siyasi aidiyetlerin geçmişi anlamlandırmada Alevi ve Sünni vatandaşlar arasında farklar oluşturduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Çorum olaylarının hatırlanması, görüşme yaptığım Aleviler için devlet baskısına ve tarihsel mağduriyete olan farkındalığı korumayı sağlarken, muhafazakar ve milliyetçi Sünniler açısından olayları hatırlatmak/hatırlamak ve yüzleşmek sorun teşkil etmiştir. Bu çalışma, bir yandan hafıza ve toplumsal kimlikler arasındaki ilişkinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunurken yerel bir örnek üzerinden Alevi meselesine bir bakış sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kolektif hafıza, anlatı analizi, Çorum olayları, kimlik, unutuş.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AABK: *Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu* (Confederation of Alevi Unions of Europe)
- AAGB: *Avrupa Alevi Gençler Birliđi* (Union of Alevi Youth in Europe)
- AAKB: *Almanya Alevi Kadınlar Derneđi* (Union of Alevi Women in Germany)
- AAKM: *Anadolu Alevileri Kültür Merkezi* (Culture Centre of Anatolian Alevi)
- ABF: *Alevi-Bektaşlı Federasyonu* (Alevi-Bektashi Federation)
- AKP: *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party)
- AP: *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party)
- CEM Foundation: *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi Vakfı* (Republican Education and Culture Center Foundation)
- CHP: *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party)
- EMEP: *Emek Partisi* (Labor Party)
- HBVAKV: *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı* (Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation)
- HBVKD: *Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür Derneđi* (Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultural Association)
- HDP: *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (People's Democratic Party)
- HK: *Halkın Kurtuluşu*
- İGD: *İlerici Gençler Derneđi*
- KESK: *Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu* (Confederation of Public Laborer's Union)
- MHP: *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Movement Party)
- MSP: *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party)
- POL-BİR: *Polis Birliđi Derneđi* (Police Union Association)
- POL-DER: *Polis Derneđi* (Police Association)
- PSAKD: *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneđi* (Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations)
- SGB: *Sosyalist Gençlik Birliđi*
- TÖB-DER: *Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneđi* (Union and Association of All Teachers)
- TRT: *Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu* (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)
- ÜGD: *Ülkücü Gençlik Derneđi* (Idealist Young Association)
- ÜLKÜ-BİR: *Ülkücü Muallimler Birliđi* (Union of Idealist Teachers)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Setting the Problem

This research examines the relation between construction of memory narratives and social relations between Alevi and Sunni communities in the Turkish city of Çorum. In 1980, a conflict that came to be known as the Çorum massacre erupted between the city's Alevi and Sunni citizens. The conflict reached its peak on 4 July of that year, and resulted in 57 deaths, lots of injuries, and many migrations within and outside the city. In the political atmosphere of the time, these conflicts started as a political tension between rightist and leftist groups, but over the course of the events turned into a sectarian conflict. This study will show how memories about the massacre that happened thirty-four years ago are evoked and what kind of a role they have in shaping identity positions in Çorum today.

Thus, the study follows two paths: one will seek to search for the manner in which witnesses and inhabitants from both sides construct a collective memory today. In this context, commemorations of the events are analyzed as a significant "realm of memory" representing an aspect of collective memory and narration, which both yields remembrance of the events, and evokes conflict at a discursive level between Alevi and Sunni communities. The narratives produced through commemorations and against them are framed as master narratives.

Secondly, I investigate individual narratives of the past event to determine the extent to which subjects recall the images of the past under the influence of master narratives. I will show that subjects attribute meanings to the past in multiple ways, and that they can differ from and are shaped by the collective narrations. In this study, data was primarily collected by in-depth interviews with the witnesses of the events living in the city center. Based on this, I conclude that the social memory of the Çorum events is revived under the influence of other Alevi massacres for the Alevi

community, and the issue is still a matter of conflict simmering in the background between Alevi and Sunni inhabitants in Çorum.

While investigating the social memory of the city about the past events, I began with the question of the extent to which the case still occupies a place in the minds of the inhabitants and shapes the social relations between sectarian communities. Whenever the matter of Alevi victimization and its relation with the state is raised, as the Çorum events are counted along with the other previous massacres of Maraş (1978), Sivas (1978), and Madımak (1993), I questioned how the city dwellers attribute meaning to their historical past, and how they place Çorum among other Alevi massacres. Regarding the population of the Alevi community in the city, there is a considerable number of Alevi residents, but it is not possible to figure out the exact number. This problem exists in Turkey because there is lack of official census data regarding ethnic and sectarian factors. There are different percentages calculating the population. One of the estimated number of the community, which most Alevis agree, is at between 10 and 15 percent of the total population (Açikel & Ateş, 2011, p.714).

The search for the existence of collective memory was the first step of the study. Thus, while investigating the particular place of the Çorum events for its witnesses, I also informally observe the perception of the new generation about the events. I realized that the memory of the events was more vivid for the witnesses than for their children. The long silence and fear of the reoccurrence similar incidents has resulted in an absence of the image in history among young people. Yet the Madımak Massacre still seems to influence the memory of the Alevi community at large, and encourages mobilization among Alevi groups in order to protect their history, rights, and group identity. Hence, within the framework of my main research question, I search for the answer of the questions how Alevi and Sunni people maintain and construct their identities together with the previous traumatic events. To what extent does the memory works of such events effect or determine in their daily relations and narratives about the past? What are the variations in the narrations they

construct about the events? What are the references, symbols, or indications of the events for the witnesses?

1.2. Literature Review

This thesis is primarily located at the intersection of two bodies of literature: collective memory and narrative analysis. Collective memory literature draws the framework for the thesis, and helps to understand social frameworks of memory, its embodiment in social life, and its role in shaping social relations. The extent to and manner in which individuals construct their memories in coherence with social memory is one of the central discussion in this thesis. Collective and individual memories are analyzed through the narrative construction, which shows the ways collective memory is developed and transferred, and the extent to which referents change according to different social groups.

Memory studies in general analyze the process of remembrance in both its individual and social aspects. Although remembrance is a process that takes place in individual minds, it has been argued by many scholars with various interpretations that this process has a social side and that individual memory is constructed by the social environment an individual belongs to (Assmann, 2015; Bartlett, 1995; Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs & Coser, 1992; Nora, 1996; Portelli, 1991; Wertsch, 2002). The term “collective memory” was first used by Maurice Halbwachs to underline how one’s social framework determines individual memory. The importance of Halbwachs lies in his attempts to explain the social side of remembrance, which “continued the legacy of Durkheim’s belief that every society displays and requires a sense of continuity with the past” (Mistral, 2003, p.50). Halbwachs argues that there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society. Therefore, for him, social classes, families, associations, and corporations have distinctive memories constructed by their members (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992, p. 22). He claims that memory can exist only in case of group belonging. So, the concept of “social framework” has a central place in Halbwachs’ theory (1992, p. 40). Memory depends on social conditions and develops in the process of socialization. It belongs to individuals, but is determined by society (Sancar, 2014, p. 41).

As memories depend on the existence of groups and institutions, by definition collective memory is multiple in Halbwachs' conceptualization. Thus, there are as many memories or memory narratives as there is "a plurality of social frameworks or a multiplicity of membership" (Miztal, 2003, p.52). This idea supports the existence of contested and negotiated memories about the same event and the relation between social identity and memory (Bodnar, 1992; Confino, 1997; Schwartz, 1990). Contestation of memory shows itself against the disciplinary power of nationalist historiography that intends to control the mind of society about historical knowledge and form a united way of remembrance (Olick & Robbins, 1998b). "Counter memory" is a way of challenging the hegemony of national or dominated memory, which provides an alternative viewpoint from below, as in the case of feminist and oral historians (Foucault, 1977; Kleinberg, 1992; Leydesdorff, Passerini, & Thompson, 2005; Olick & Robbins, 1998a; Thompson, 2000).

The relation between present circumstances and remembrance of the past events is one of the important characteristic of memories. Memories are not seen as an absolute preservation of the past, but a continual reproduction and reconstruction under the influence of today's needs and conditions. Halbwachs points at the fact that they have lost the form and the appearance they once had (1992, p. 47), so memories are constructed according to the needs and conditions of the present. He develops the presentist approach by asserting that "the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch" (1992, p. 25). This view is expanded by asserting the coexistence of continuity and transformation, and thus a the dynamic relation between history and memory (Schudson, 1997; Schwartz, 1982). These studies illustrate that individuals recollect the memories of the past within a cultural and political repertoire "which provides us with cognitive categories for remembering and elaborate on the issue of the temporality and context of remembering" (Miztal, 2003, p.71). As Barry Schwartz argues, "the past is always a compounded of persistence and change of continuity and newness" and "collective memory has both cumulative and presentist aspects" (1982).

Commemorations are one of the tools that preserve social memory by representing past images based on the characteristic of group identity. Halbwachs makes a distinction between historical and autobiographical memory that the first reaches social actor through written records or commemorations, festive enactments, and the like (1992, p. 23). Historical memory is stimulated in indirect ways by storing and interpreting the past through institutions for the people who did not experience the past directly (1992, p. 24). At the same time, commemorations can be tools for manipulating society and constructing a united national identity, as Hobsbawm and Ranger argue in the *Invention of Tradition* (2010). According to this argument, new nation states in 19th century used invented traditions as a means of exercising power in the process of establishing or legitimizing institutions and socializing people to the newly established order (1983). Michael Schudson describes this “instrumentalization of memory” as one of the processes of distortion in collective memory, exemplified in the cases of Watergate and Vietnam, where the administrations drew attention away from their own failures of intelligence and strategy (1997, p. 351). In contrast, in the late 20th century, there emerged a democratic act against the hegemony of nation-state historiography that revealed on the plurality of memories suppressed or hidden by dominant powers (Confino, 1997; Olick, 1999a; Schwartz, 1982).

Commemorative organizations are considered as a realm of memory (*lieux de mémoire*), which emerge out of a fear that “everything is on the verge of disappearing, coupled with anxiety about the precise significance of the present and uncertainty about the future, invests even the humblest testimony, the most modest vestige, with the dignity of being potentially memorable” (Nora, 1996, p. 8). In his comparison between memory and history, Pierre Nora asserts that spontaneous memory is destroyed by history, which creates a society bound up in archival memory (1996). Modern society needs “external props and tangible reminders” of memory (such as museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, monuments, etc.) because it is no longer experienced from within (Nora, 1996, p. 8; Ross, 2007, p. 65). His fundamental argument is that true memory as “a real part of everyday experience” does not exist anymore because there is “no longer any *milieu de*

mémoire” (Nora, 1996, p. 1). “Lieux de mémoire are fundamentally vestiges, the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it” (Nora, 1996, p. 6).

Especially, for the societies, which experienced violence and destruction in 20th century, the fear of forgetting mobilizes people to create social memory about the past. As the older generation witnessing those times starts to pass away, living memory faces disappearance (Assmann, 2015, p. 18). For this reason, people go after their testimonies and vestiges. These vestiges, however, are not stable and frozen. The *lieux* Nora emphasizes are “hybrid places, mutants in a sense, compounded of life and death, of the temporal and the eternal” (Nora, 1996, p. 15). While these sites create a framework that is materializing and fixing things being preserved, they include diversity in representation and are open to different interpretations, and so carry different meanings. *Lieux de mémoire* create a space and time having their own reality distinct from official history or national memory. The language and objects used in these sites are intrinsic to that space and time, and create their own meaning (Nora, 1996, p. 20). As the memory transfers from national to social, it comprises multiple interpretations about the past with respect to present conditions and needs.

In addition to the investigation of collective memory and narrative construction through commemorative activities, by focusing on individual narrations, I will analyze the intersubjective side of memory recollections in the sense that the meaning subjects is formed “through its relation with the other” (Passerini, 2007, p.8). As Mikhail M. Bakhtin stress that “‘contraposition’ of self and other” formulate our “incarnated participant in the world” and “creating existential meaning” (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p.52-53). Gardiner conveyed the importance Bakhtin attribute to the relation between I and other that confine our perception of ourselves and outside world. “When engaging with the world as embodied beings, our ability to attribute meaning and significance solely through our own thoughts, deeds, and perceptions is subject to certain limitations, particularly with respect to the ‘authoring’ of our own selfhood” (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p.53). Based on Bakhtin’s conceptualization of the relation between self and other, I argue that remembrance and narrative

construction of subjects are shaped by their relation with others and collectivity. Borrowing from Jeffrey Prager's study, "the intersubjectivity of memory" shows "how the larger interpersonal and cultural worlds in which individuals live constitute their memories" (1998, p. 70).

Though remembered events are experienced by members of a group, "they typically do not interpret or remember these events in the same way" (Wertsch, 2002). I benefited from Jeffrey Prager's conceptualization of memory as embedded and embodied while analyzing the divergences and convergences of individual memories with collectively constructed memory (Prager, 1998). Similar to Halbwachs' formulation, Prager argues that memory is embedded in the "contemporary world, peopled by others who collectively contribute to the construction of memory and help determine the importance that the past holds for an individual in the present" (Prager, 1998, p. 70). At the same time, it is "embodied in a particular person, a person actively engaged in forging selfhood" (Prager, 1998, p. 81). Thus, on one hand, building a narrative of a past event results in a performing self, which is constrained by social structure and social organization relative to the framing of experience (Goffman, 1974, p. 13). On the other hand, within this social framework, individuals produce subjective positions as they as performers are thinking, feeling, desiring, and dreaming human beings (Goffman, 1990).

Gender differences in memory narratives and silences about events are analyzed as a form of producing subjectivities. Women and men perform their subjectivities through their way of remembrances and storytelling as subjectivity refers to "the capacity to imagine, think and decide one's life" (Passerini, 2007, p.35). Studies on gender and memory show that social roles are reproduced and reconstructed through the narratives of past events (Campt, 2009; Jelin, 2003; Leydesdorff et al., 2005; Minchin, 2007). It is going to be seen that images of the past are recalled differently by women and men. While women embody the personalized symbols of pain, fear and suffering in their narratives, "institutional repressive mechanisms appear to 'belong' to men"(Jelin, 2003). Besides, since memory maintains its existence alive within the borders of communication (Assmann, 2015), when this

interaction is lacking, remembering is replaced by forgetting. Halbwachs explains forgetting as the disappearance of frameworks of collective memory and alternatively calls it “deformation of certain recollection” (1992, p. 172). Luisa Passerini asserts that memory is fragile and that there is a dynamic relation between memory, silences, and oblivion based on one’s conditions. Silences can take various forms, which are long-term, repression of memory and imposed “amnesia” or full memory (Passerini, 2007). While silences and forgetting can exist as a result of power authorities, they can be “evasive”, that is, a preferred silence, by the sufferers or survivors of a catastrophic event to avoid upsetting remembrances (Ricoeur, 2004). Thus, erasing the “heavy baggage of history” makes it possible to focus on the future life of a group (Nietzsche, 2007b; Renan, 2003).

Lastly, the second part of the literature focuses on narrative analysis. Narratives are taken as the fundamental source for representing the past and constructing collective memory. According to Wertsch, one of the cultural tools used in remembering the past and preserving it is explicit linguistic forms, especially narratives, that represent the past and forms of mediation that rely more on embodied practices (2009, p. 120). Borrowing from Bakhtin’s view of “text (written and oral) was the primary given” of linguistics (2002, p. 103), Wertsch approaches text “as a basic organization unit that structures meaning, communication, and thought” (2002, p. 14). Philip L. Hammack and Andrew Pilecki investigate narratives as an “analytic solution to the problem of mind and society by positing that individuals are embedded within a social context saturated by stories” (2012). In this sense, they argue that individuals “think, feel, and act in ways that are positioned in relation to these stories—accounts of collective memory and social representations of history” (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012, p. 65). Jerome Bruner contends that “we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on” (1991, p. 4). Narratives are considered as a version of reality “whose acceptability is governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness” (Bruner, 1991).

The relation between narrative and identity construction is another point of interest in this study. In their works on the social psychological dynamics behind the intractable conflict between Palestine and Israel, Philip L. Hammack and Daniel Bar-Tal show how individual and collective master narratives about past events and beliefs serve to establish collective identity through the transmission of collective memory and the creation of myths supporting that memory (D. Bar-Tal, 2007; Hammack, 2008, 2010). As Bruner asserts, story-telling is needed when it comes to matters of identity and autobiographical memory since the stories we tell organize our senses of who we are, who others are, and how we are to be related (1990). In the case of Alevi identity, personal and collective narratives on humiliating experiences, massacres, and massive scale violence preserve social memory, resulting in the formation and maintenance of large group identities (Köse, 2011; Yıldız & Verkuyten, 2011; Vorkoff, 2003; Neyzi, 2003). The identity perspective this thesis follows is compatible with Stuart Hall's and Stephen Reicher's approaches (Hall, 1992, 1996; Reicher, 2004). Modern identities are being de-centered; that is dislocated or "fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities" (Hall, 1992). The categorization of self and group belonging can be various; as Stephen Reicher suggests, there are choices of categories through which we divide the social context as self and other (2004). People belong to many categories and groups rather than living as unique individuals (Verkuyten, 2014).

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Research Strategy

In order to analyze the memories of people about the Çorum event, I conducted an ethnographic research by holding semi-structured interviews with Alevi and Sunni people who experienced and witnessed the events in 1980. My primary aim was to investigate what they told about the painful past, how they narrated the story, and whether the events had an influence in their present relations and lives. Under this aim, I searched for whether a collective memory had been constructed about the events, and whether the inhabitants had established their lives on a faced past or whether there still existed a potential conflict between Alevi and Sunni residents in

Çorum at the backstage. The narratives of witnesses are the main source for this thesis together with observations from the field study. The narratives were obtained by semi-structured in-depth interviews, and from books and documentaries about the Çorum massacre.

Focusing specifically on what happened in Çorum in 1980 and how it influenced the relations between two communities, I stayed in the city and held interviews there between February and March 2015, I also returned for a one-day visit when the commemorations of the massacre were held on 2 July 2015. While in Çorum, I participated in the natural settings of its citizens. My task was to investigate a particular aspect of the lives of the people about the event they had witnessed and had been influenced by, and “this includes finding out how these people view the situations they face, how they regard one another, and also how they see themselves” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3). Hence, sharing the same atmosphere with the people helped me in understanding their interpretations of the events and the way they viewed the relations between two sectarian communities in their natural lives. I was able to observe the extent of spatial separation in the city, see the places the events took place, and have informal and unstructured conversations with a wide range of people. Talking with people in their own setting and context also made them feel more comfortable and confident in talking to me.

I collected my data from individual life stories and public narratives representing the events and relations between inhabitants today. “The central idea of narrative analysis is that the stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 116). The life stories of individuals concerning their sect, critical moments of their identity formations, and testimonies about the massacre served as significant sources. Narratives can reveal deep fears, perceived threats, and past grievances that drive a conflict in addition to privileging certain actions over others (Ross, 2007, p. 31). What is more, metaphors and images used in narratives can tell us a great deal about how individuals and groups understand the social and political worlds in which they live and explain the conflicts in which they are involved (Ross, 2007). Following this approach, through in-depth

interviews, I investigate narratives about the massacre and perceptions about relationships, which stood to reveal whether there was a working memory about the past event or not.

1.3.2. Data Collection

I interviewed 30 people in total from both the Alevi and Sunni sect. Among them, 17 interviewees belonged to the Alevi community, though showing a varied degree of commitment to their religious identity. They included the heads of two different *cemevis* (the places where Alevi religious ceremony take place) in the city, two lawyers defining themselves as Alevi, two *dedes* (Alevi's religious leaders), and ordinary people. It is difficult to make a categorization among these interviewees based on the degree of their religious commitment because interpretations of the belief differ and vary practices accordingly. Still, I gather all of them under the name of Alevi community as they define themselves as such, so their personal description is determinative for the identification. Similarly, there were 13 people belonging to the Sunni sect, who also had various degrees of religious commitment. The main concern for selecting these interviewees in general was their having witnessed the events in 1980 somehow. Related with this, among the Sunni community, I spoke mostly with rightist or old-rightist and *ülkücü* (idealist) people who presently define themselves mostly as democrats or no longer having the rightist dispositions they had in the past. Likewise, most of the male Alevi interviewees stood close to leftist ideology or participated in radical leftist movements in the past. Political standing was highly apparent in men's narration compared to women interviewees from each sect. There were 10 women and 20 men among the respondents. The ages of these respondents is changing around between 35 and 55.

I talked with people from various social statuses. My respondents included people seen as opinion leaders or having institutional identities, such as the head of Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation [HBVAKV]), Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi (Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Center), a member of the staff of the local municipality, and an old provincial head of the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party

[MHP]). Moreover, I talked with variety of ordinary people like tradespeople, housewives, or teachers. I sought to analyze to what extent the remembering of the past, expression of feelings, and discourse of conflict display coherence and divergence between these groups of people. The first group have an influence of constructing collective narratives and memory. They have the power of managing group dynamics by either establishing commemorative organizations that raise the question of past events or by leading people not to talk about the events and producing a narration against the other. On the other hand, while the latter group build narratives, the framework of the master narrative influences them based on their group identity. At the same time, each of them have their own way of expressing ideas, feelings, and beliefs, which reveals a subjective side to remembering and narrative construction.

The sample selection of the 30 interviewees was purposive in the sense that interviewees should have witnessed the events or had parents, relatives, neighbors, or associates who had been involved in them, and reside in Çorum. I reached these people through my personal network, which helped me in being accepted by them and in increasing their willingness to talk about the issue. One of my primary networks was Sadık Eral, who is also one of the sufferers of the violence in the 1980s, and someone who advocated for people judged as injured parties and published a book *Çaldıran'dan Çorum'a Anadolu'da Alevi Katliamları* about the Alevi massacres from Çaldıran to Çorum (Eral, 1995). He is one of the prominent addresses that most people pointed me toward when I asked to talk about the issue. In addition, Metin Uçar, who is an associate professor at Hitit University and has a study about the informal solidarity network in Çorum (Uçar, 2009), directed me to related addresses. Other than these, I used my own personal network through the help of my relatives and acquaintance living in Çorum, to reach people to talk to and listen their stories.

All interviews could not be held in the same structured manner, as some of them had to be conducted in limited time and conditions. Approximately, an interview took one hour. Some interviews were conducted in a conversational environment where I was not alone with the interviewee. I visited a women's group (most of them were Alevi)

in their practice of reading Hacı Bektaş Veli texts, i.e. “reading group” (*okuma grubu*), meeting at the Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Center where ten women on average joined the conversation. However, only one of them was willing to narrate her experience publicly because some of them did not directly witness the events and some of them abstained from talking about the tense events. These Alevi women were not religious Alevis, who could follow Sunni practices or stay in-between. The other women contributed with their comments and small anecdotes to the conversation. Sultan Ana is another similar example. She welcomed me in a room where there were other guests and members of my network. It was an indicator for me whether people were restrained in talking about the issue or not. Indeed, after the first meeting in the Center, when I visited the group a second time, the woman preferred to talk in a separate room because others found talking about the events obtrusive. Most people welcomed me in their workplaces, such as in their shops or offices.

There were list of questions I determined before the meetings. The questions I directed to almost all interviewees related to what they experienced in the course of the events, how relations were between Alevis and Sunnis before and after the events, how they reestablished or maintained their relations, whether they encountered any changes in their business, neighborhood, or schools, and whether they participated in the commemorations, had heard about them, and how they approached them. Moreover, I also asked about their ideas about the government’s Alevi “opening”, Alevis’ relation with cemevi, interpretation of their beliefs, and the current situation in the city. Apart from these, the questions I addressed to the interviewees could differ according to the flow of conversation. I did take audio recording when interviewees allowed me to do so; otherwise, I took notes during the interview. The names of the interviewees are not given, unless they have an institutional identity such as being head of an association or center, or a prominent actor, and they permitted me to use them.

1.3.3. Data Analysis

Narratives are analyzed here in two ways: On one hand, I look at the engagement of individual narratives to the collectively constructed story telling about the emergence of the events. In this sense, the way people from different sects and political positions interpret the commemorative activities, whether they agree with the idea and message of the gatherings or stand against them are analyzed in the second chapter. On the other hand, I analyze the subjective side of narrative construction in the manner of how people place sequential events into a meaningful context, and in the expression of feelings and positioning of the other. While individuals engage with collective stories of what it means to inhabit a particular political and cultural entity, a resistance movement, or an ideology (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012, p. 3) by unifying around political and cultural-religious identity in the public square with a protesting discourse, they can take more moderate positions in the interviews. They can express their feelings of sorrow, fears, hopes and gratefulness at the same time in addition to anger and hatred against opposing ideas and positions that do not find a place in public narratives. It is going to be seen that the memory narratives are constructed inter-subjectively and have a malleable character depending on the political, religious, and cultural commitments of the individuals.

1.3.4. Limitations

First, establishing a trust relationship is important for making people feel comfortable in talking about an unpleasant matter. Thirty-five years had passed since the Çorum events took place when I went for the research, but since the issue has not been elucidated, it remains a distressing and suspicious matter for people. That is why, discussions of the events and intentions behind such discussions viewed with suspicion by people living there.

One of the limitations in establishing a trust relationship while talking with Alevi interviewees was my belonging to the Sunni sect and being young. Indeed, many people did not question my sectarian identity before the interviews. If they trusted or had a close relation with the gatekeeper who directed me to the interviewees, they welcomed me to meet with them and talk. In general, since they express their

victimization and want it to be recognized by others, most of them started conversation by saying, “We don’t have anything to hide”. They sometimes asked my sect during the conversation when the subject came up. However, as I recognized for some interviewees, they believe that it is not possible to understand Alevi without getting involved in their ceremonies and practices. Also, many of them made an effort to explain the favorable characteristics of Alevi belief in human relations, and sometimes explain the differences between each sect, for they probably thought that I was an outsider to the group and young enough not to know the details. They sometimes showed suspicion about my knowledge or my possible oppositional standing about an issue. I tried to manage these by visiting the cemevi and sharing my knowledge about the activities holding, about which many Alevi do not have information because they do not attend. In addition, I tried to give the message that I was not totally a foreigner to the city and its people because my parents were also from one of the districts of Çorum and I had relatives still living there. I also tried to avoid entering into a discussion about religious differences, since it could have provoked people and led them to take position against me.

I came across more questioning and critical attitudes on the side of Sunni groups. I reached people who had witnessed the events mostly via my relatives and acquaintances, which caused them to take kindly to meeting with me. On the other hand, because I came from outside and was trying to get information about an unpleasant political-sectarian issue, they always asked why I chose such a complicated issue and why scholars are getting interested in this. One of the columnist writing for a local newspaper I called was at first reluctant to meet, saying, “I am sure you can gather enough information about the issue, you won’t need my words”. I told him the name of the gatekeeper, and on the same day, he called me back and told me he would help me. One of my relatives always expressed her astonishment and asked what kind of business I could have with Alevi, and actually, only half in jest, she stated her antipathy towards them. One man who runs a coffeehouse seemed very reluctant to talk. Even though I called three times, he did not let me visit his place. I tried to overcome this suspicion and reluctance by being open and explaining the aim of the study.

1.4. The Organization of the Thesis

Here, I would like to briefly present an outline of the thesis. In the second chapter, I will trace the historical background of Alevi politicization in the Republican Period, which led to emergence of the Çorum events in 1980 together with other relevant massacres before and after that. The close relation between leftist groups and Alevis since the 1960s and the changing position of the radical right towards Alevis are investigated in order to explicate the ideological positioning behind the sectarian conflict. In addition, I address key events in Alevi collective memory that are part of the Alevi identity formation. Kerbela Massacre (680 AD) and Çaldıran War (1512) are the two historical events that ensure the continuity of victimization discourse historically. The Maraş (1978), Sivas (1978), and Çorum (1980) massacres before the September 12 coup d'état, the Madımak Hotel burning (1993) and Gazi riots in the 1990s, and lastly the Gezi Park event (2013) are significant referents for Alevi community for state repression and discrimination against them, as all of them took place in recent history.

In the third chapter, I analyze the organization of commemorations that started in 2009 with the pioneering of some prominent Alevis in the city. In this part, I show that the commemoration of the Çorum events constructs a collective narration for the victimized parties and forms a means of representation through marches, speeches, and slogans after twenty-nine years of silence. The primary motivation for initiating commemorations for Alevis in Çorum was to voice their discomfort due to the lasting silence and to increase awareness for the young generation about an event whose causes and perpetrators had still not been revealed after many years. On the other hand, the organizations reveal the contested side of social memory whose emergence creates a discomfort for conservative Sunni groups. Many interpret their gathering in the square and reminding people about the events as threatening and provocative by defining the groups as minority and marginalized. For Alevis, commemorations have the role of strengthening group identity constructed with references to a shared past and developing group consciousness by reminding about all other massacres and victimizations before and after the Çorum events, in the place that conflicts took place.

In the fourth chapter, I will investigate individual memories and their convergences and divergences with the collectively produced narrations in the commemorations and institutional discourse. It is going to be discussed that the individual remembering and storytelling process does not occur in the same motivation and way of expression as the memory actors perform in the commemorations. By analyzing gender differences in recalling the images of past together with silences, I will show that despite the fact that victimized groups have the desire to face the past and voice their demands and rights under the master narration, at the individual level, talking about the painful past is more difficult and worrying. The expression of feelings, beliefs, and political-historical analysis exhibit variations between male and female narrations. In this sense, the engagement of political, religious or cultural identities have a significant impact on the way of speaking and silencing about the past. Mostly Alevi people, who have been subjected to social repression and victimization, have a tendency to voice their suffering when compared to Sunni people, who stay distant and act with deliberation on what and how to speak about the massacre.

1.5. What Happened in Çorum in 1980?

Here I will briefly describe the phases of the Çorum events. The sources I benefited from are local (*Çorum Gazetesi*, *Koparan Gazetesi*, and *Vahdet Gazetesi*) and national newspapers (*Milliyet* and *Tercüman Gazetesi*) and the books *Çaldıran'dan Çorum'a Alevi Katliamları* (Eral, 1995); *Yakın Tarihimizde Kitleli Katliamlar: Malatya, K.Maraş, Çorum, Sivas* (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012); and *Yaz Mevsiminde Katliam ve Direniş 1980 Çorum* (Eke, 2012). It should be noted that each source has an ideological position, and I tried to summarize the occurrence of the events that are conveyed in each source regardless of its position on them.

1.5.1. High political tension before the first confrontation

Before the conflict began on 29 May, Çorum was under the influence of the political polarization prevailing throughout the country at that time. There were murder and injury cases in the city center and some counties of the city, most of them aimed at

teachers who were one of the most politicized groups around TÖB-DER¹ and ÜLKÜ-BİR² (Eral, 1995, p. 77). One of the frequently mentioned causes of the conflict was attacks of rightist groups on 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day and a notice published by the group of Islamist Youth on 19 May Commemoration of Atatürk Youth and Sport Day.³ In the celebrations of April 23, a group of people attacked people at a feast with sticks and chains. Because of that, a planned parade was canceled and twenty people were taken into custody.⁴ Under the influence of this incident, the notice with the title of "Muslim, save your honor!" written by Islamist Youth before the celebrations of 19 May increased concerns about possible attacks. The notice had Islamic and moral emphases against the way demonstrations had been held and called for jihad:

Under the name of May 19 demonstrations, the day is coming that will attack our innocent sisters' chastity and modesty. It shatters our soul; blood is shed inside of us. Again, the son of Muslim will be displayed salaciously and disgracefully through peeled off by infidel order... The one who becomes silent against injustice is speechless evil. How happy is he who goes after jihad with his life and blood.⁵

What is more, changes in the appointment of the mayor and police chief in Çorum were shown as evidence of the intentions of the government to stir up trouble in the city. Rafet Üçelli, who was known with his closeness to the Adalet Partisi (Justice Party [AP]) government, was appointed as the mayor and Nail Bozkurt, who was known as having nationalist tendencies, was appointed as police chief (Eral, 1995, p.78; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012, p.162)⁶. Another strong claim narrated by many interviewees is that the confrontation took place due to interference of outside sources. Alexander Peck who was an officer working in the Turkish Embassy of the USA, is alleged to have made preliminary preparations for the rise of the sectarian conflict during his visit of

¹ Tüm Öğretmenler Birleşme ve Dayanışma Derneği (Union and Association of All Teachers) was an association established after 1971 military intervention with gathering of leftist and revolutionist teachers around the country.

² Ülkücü Muallimler Birliği (Union of Idealist Teachers) has been a mobilization of idealist teachers since the 1970s positioned against TÖB-Der.

³ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 17.05.1980

⁴ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 24.04.1980

⁵ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 24.04.1980

⁶ *Çorum Gazetesi* 18.07.1980

the city. (Eral, 1995, p.74; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012, p.162).⁷ *Vahdet Gazetesi* also implies the roles and plans of outside powers, but does not address an evident point.⁸

1.5.2. First (street) confrontation: start with the murder of Gün Sazak

The violent Çorum massacre started after the 27 May murder of Gün Sazak, who was the vice president of the MHP and old Minister of Customs and Monopolies in the government of the Second Nationalist Front (coalition composed by AP, Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party [MSP] and MHP). In response to his murder, some groups related with the MHP and Ülkücü Gençlik Derneği (Idealist Young Association [ÜGD]) staged a demonstration in the city center on 28 May. As the witnesses convey, the currently existing tension at that date between rightist and leftist groups heightened during the protests. Protesters destroyed the shops of leftist people by breaking glasses and assaulting shop owners.⁹ In the same news, it is conveyed that some quarrels in schools, the Vocational High School (Endüstri Meslek Lisesi) and Gazi Paşa Primary School (Gazi Paşa İlkokulu), continued at that date between rightists and leftist groups and street confrontation increasingly arose in the following days.

On 29 May, attacks took place in Bahar Bookstore and the office of *Çorum Gazetesi* (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012, p.166).¹⁰ According to the sources from both sides, the most concerning thing in these events was the non-intervention of police officers and their keeping in the background in that violent atmosphere. It is narrated that attackers scattered around the regions where Alevi and leftist people were settled for the most part, and had very offensive behaviors. People tried to take precautions on their own (Eke, 2012; Eral, 1995; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012). Milönü neighborhood is a well-known region with a mostly Alevi and leftist population. In many sources, concerns about the repetition of a massacre similar to Maraş were strong, and among leftist groups, there was widespread suspicion about whether the police supported rightist groups because of their reluctance to interfere and some cases where they intervened

⁷ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 17.07.1980

⁸ *Vahdet Gazetesi*, 15.06.1980

⁹ *Vahdet Gazetesi*, 15.06.1980

¹⁰ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 20.07.1980

against people defending themselves in the barricades or even joined assailant acts (Eral, 1995, p.86-89).¹¹

At this point, the regions that were divided depending on political and sectarian divisions were as follows: Kuruköprü, Üçevler, Sigorta, Mutluevler, Terlemezevler, and Yazıçarşı were districts mostly controlled by rightist groups. Milönü, Kale Mahallesi, Esnafevleri, Şenyurt, Bahçelievler, Karşiyaka, and Nadık Mahallesi were known as Alevi settlements and secured with barricades against armed attacks in the incidents of the 1980s. The leftist organizations that participated in conflicts were named as Halkın Kurtuluşu (HK), Devrimci Yol (Dev-Yol), Kurtuluş, İlerici Gençler Derneği İGD, Sosyalist Gençlik Birliği (SGB). The murder of two police officers (Abdurrahman Koçak and Muzaffer Yeşilyurt) after military operations on 30 May in the Milönü neighborhood increased tension between groups and produce strong public reactions against the mayor and police chief (Eral, 94-95).¹² During these events, six people died and tens were injured, together with hundreds of destroyed and plundered businesses.¹³

1.5.3. June & Second confrontation between 1 and 4 July

Curfew period lasted between 30 May and 13 June.¹⁴ In the month of June, confrontations largely stopped, but some isolated events took place in the city center and villages according to the news. Ovasaray village, on the Çorum-Ortaköy road, was one of the eventful places known for its Sunni-conservative population. There, two dead bodies, belong to Yahya Baran and Osman Aksu, were found in a building under construction killed by leftist militants.¹⁵ Through the end of the month, a number of other events allegedly followed. There were injuries,¹⁶ explosions in some workplaces in the city center,¹⁷ death bodies found in farms,¹⁸ people arrested with weapons,¹⁹

¹¹ *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 05.07.1980; *Çorum Gazetesi*, 30.06.1980

¹² *Vahdet Gazetesi*, 15.06.1980

¹³ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 21.07.1980

¹⁴ *Koparan Gazetesi*, 17.06.1980

¹⁵ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 22.07.1980

¹⁶ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 21.06.1980

¹⁷ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 23.06.1980

¹⁸ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 24.06.1980, 26.06.1980

¹⁹ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 25.06.1980, 26.06.1980

forcible money collection incidents.²⁰ Together with increasing threats and attacks to houses and work places, all these events prompted citizens' considerable worries about their security, and forced many people to domestic migration in this period.²¹ Especially, denominationally mixed neighborhoods began to be homogenized by changing or moving houses mutually between Alevi and Sunni citizens (Eral, 1995, p.114).

The second events that emerged on 1 July and reached their peak on 4 July were more violent and resulted in many deaths. SSK Hospital and its environment were a central point where attackers took up positions and carried out their attacks.²² SSK Hospital, the Terlemezevler neighborhood, Üçevler and Eti Evler districts, Ulukavak, Çatalhavuz, and Yazımahalle are places where shootings and burnings of houses took place.²³ The mayor declared a curfew on 2 July once again, but robberies, extortions, attacks, and tortures proceeded in this period on the way to villages and in street alleys in the city (Eral, 1995, p.123; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012, p.194). There were four deaths and fourteen injuries after these events.²⁴ The testimony of one of the sufferers displays the gravity of these attacks:

A crowded group came to in front of my house. They took off my husband and got first into a grocery store and then into a coffeehouse. They bagged his head and took him out. They took him in front of them and he fell into place as they hit with a stick. I was scared and fainted. They continued and went out the city in that way. He died when they went behind hospital and they threw him on the grass. I looked for him for five days. He was brought into morgue of the hospital, I could not recognize him. I know the murderers very well.²⁵

Under this tense atmosphere, the curfew was lifted on Friday morning, 4 July. Before Friday prayer, some rumors about the bombing of Alaaddin Mosque by communists and Alevis started to circulate. Based on the witnesses' narrations, a frequently repeated slogan used in this provocation was: "What are you waiting for? Communists, Alevis bombed Alaaddin Cami. People are burning inside of it!" It was

²⁰ *Koparan Gazetesi*, 25.06.1980

²¹ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 1.07.1980

²² *Saygı Öztürk, Hürriyet*, 07.07.1980

²³ *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 03.07.1980

²⁴ *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 03.07.1980

²⁵ *Çorum Gazetesi*, 26.07.1980

also asserted by many witnesses that at the same time in many mosques in the city, the same alert was called and many people responded to provocation against Alevi citizens. The position of Alaaddin Mosque is in between the two districts of Gülabibey neighborhood (Sunni inhabitants) and Eti Street (Alevi inhabitants) close to Milönü neighborhood; that is why it has been called as a “green line” (Eral, 1995, p.127). In reality, according to quotes by brigadier general Şahabettin Esengül in Çorum and many testifiers, safety measures were imposed in that area and a small fire was set from the barricades, but there was not a big mosque fire. People assumed that the fires were set to project the image of a mosque fire (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012, p. 198).

Violent events continued throughout the month and some isolated cases took place in August.²⁶ The violence came to an end with imposition of martial law and military intervention in September. Statements of politicians from the government and opposition parties show that there was gross security negligence. The Minister of Internal Affairs in 1980, Mehmet Gülcügül, certified this fact by asserting that if the problems in Çorum had been addressed resolutely from the very beginning, the events would not have reached this level and there would not have been so many deaths: “There are 46 thousand police officials in Turkey. Security forces were highly politicized as POL-BİR²⁷ (2 thousand) and POL-DER²⁸ (17 thousand). We are in a situation that duty of 26 thousand security force is to run after politicized 20 thousand police.”²⁹ In addition, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and the chairman of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party [CHP]), Bülent Ecevit were releasing accusing statements against each other’s party. “It is quite clear who stands where. The CHP is behind all of these events and there is the government against them. The way of the AP and its government passes through peace, rest, brotherhood, humanity, wealth, faith, and development.”³⁰ On the other side, the CHP gave wide coverage to the Çorum issue in its group meeting on 6 July and Ecevit

²⁶ *Koparan Gazetesi*, 16.08.1980

²⁷ *Polis Birliği Derneği* (Association of the Police Union). It was known as “state’s police”, which established in 1978 against Pol-Der.

²⁸ *Polis Derneği* (Association of the Police). It was known as “public’s police”, which was established to work for protecting personal rights of the police.

²⁹ *Tercüman Gazetesi*, 14.07.1980

³⁰ *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 11.07.1980

listened to the impression of the party's committee about the events. "By making connection between the Çorum and Sivas events, and our interpellation, the Prime Minister made the biggest provocation. By doing that, the Prime Minister very clearly implied that in case of overthrowing the government, it is impossible to prevent militants supporting the government, and legitimized their actions."³¹

Lastly, the judicial process during and after the events has not satisfied those who suffered from then and Çorum citizen. Court cases started on 1 July and continued after the September 12 military intervention. On the date of August 20, there were 213 remands, 2-arrest warrant in default and 252 trials without arrest, 467 in total.³² After the coup d'état, police officers Kemal Maraşlı, Ekrem Begane, and Yalçın Malkoç were first condemned to death and then their penalty was turned into life imprisonment (Eral, 1995, p.216). However, as expressed by interviewees, this punishment has been considered as a way of covering the events in particular on the part of victims, so many of them demand reopening of the cases and judicial process.

³¹ *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 06.07.1980

³² *Koparan Gazetesi*, 20.08.1980

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I am going to trace the history of the Alevi issue within the bounds of this thesis. The social and political conditions leading to the emergence of the Çorum events and preceding the violent events in Sivas (1978), Malatya (1978), and Maraş (1978) occurred in relation with the ideologically politicized Alevi identity and the reaction of radical rightist groups in response to both the anti-communist movement and the related political-religious positioning of Alevis. Comparing to the high affiliation of the Alevi identity with ideological positions before the 1980s, the community started to discuss religious and cultural grounds of the identity, and gave prominence to it in the 1980s. With the movements of Alevi revival since the 1990s, the religious and cultural roots of the identity started to be rapidly resurrected and reinterpreted under the influence of the Sivas Madımak Massacre (1993) and Gazi Riots (1995) (Çakır, 1995a; Çamuroğlu, 2008). In this revival process, complicated aspects of Alevi identity came to light based on the identity transformation marked by modernization and the urbanization process. The Alevi community channeled its efforts to reconstitute its identity and institutions in an urban context, which gave rise to controversies within the community over the nature and characteristics of Alevism.

Debates in the process of the revival revolved around determining the religious, sectarian, and ethnic origins of Alevi identity, together with its position vis-à-vis political ideologies. There are different group of Alevis, and they define themselves using various terms such as “sect,” “ethnic group,” “true humanists,” “enlightened Muslims,” and “true Muslims” (Köse, 2012, p. 578). The most agreed description for Alevism is its being a heterodox and syncretic belief system belonging to different ethnicities (Çamuroğlu, 2008; Kehl-Bodrogi, 2012; Massicard, 2013; Mélikoff, 2012; Ocak, 2013). Three or four different ethno-linguistic Alevi groups can be counted in Turkey. These are the Turkish, the Kirmanchi (Kurdish/Zaza Alevis), the Zaza, and the

Arabic-speaking (Nusayrian) communities (Açikel & Ateş, 2011, p. 718; Van Bruinessen, 2004). On the other side, similarly complex and heated debates have arisen among non-Alevi due to the social, political, and religious concerns of these groups. The boundaries of Alevi identity have been affected by the religious and ideological positioning of non-Alevi in the same process. Roughly, while there are integrative endeavors that highlight the common ground between Alevi and the Sunni Muslim community or that stress the Turkish and Islamic roots of the Alevi, there are also politically motivated reactions to multiple religious interpretation and life of Alevi population that, exaggerate the differences between diverse Alevi understandings in order to refuse Alevi demands for group rights.

In this chapter, I pursue the main contours of the history of the Alevi issue in response to the need for understanding how Alevi citizens construct and maintain their social memory. Regarding this, I also briefly discuss the relation of Alevi citizens with leftist and rightist groups and the changing dynamics before and after the 1980 military intervention. My aim here is to explicate the roots of the socio-political elements of the Alevi identity and reveal the backgrounds of the changing dynamics in religious and political positioning within the community amid the escalating civil violence at the end of the 1970s. As is going to be seen in the following chapters, Alevi narratives about the Çorum events differ from those of other communities not only concerning the particular case of the massacre in Çorum, but also in that they are constructed on the basis of a wider memory of other historical experiences of victimization and marginalization. Moreover, the institutionalization process of the Alevi community through associations in Turkey and Europe after the 1990s has had a central place in attempts to foster solidarity through reviving collective memory about the events in Çorum.

2.2. Traces of the Social Memory of Alevi Before the Republican Period

The historical references of Alevi identity reveal a continuous focus on the victimization of the community by the state and Islamist ideology. The collective memory of the community is shaped around the persistent potential of conflict and the threat of state oppression, as well as an awareness of the persistence of biases

and stereotypes against Alevis in society. Alevis have historically struggled for recognition, and viewed themselves as pitted in a continual struggle against historical villains (such as Yazid, Ebusuud and Yavuz Sultan Selim) that reemerge in different forms with similar hostility. Similarly, there are many historical heroes such as Ali, the twelve Imams, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Shah Ismail, Pir Sultan Abdal and Atatürk, who play significant role in the formation of Alevi identity and Alevi moral and belief system (Köse, 2011).

The Karbala Massacre of 680 AD is the archetypical event for the formation of identity and grounding the master narrative of victimization for every Alevi person. Yazid, the son of Muawiya and murderer of Hussein, is considered to be the primary culprit of the Karbala disaster and the enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt³³. He was the Umayyad Caliph and sent his forces against Hussein and his followers in Karbala, Iraq. “He is associated with pure destruction, killing and attempts to annihilate ancestors of “Alevis” by violence” (Köse, 2011, p.20). “Yazid” has been used against Sunni rivals or enemies as an insult by Alevis. Muawiya is also one of the villains who is considered to be the arch-enemy of Ali. “Political conspiracies, coalition formation, and dirty political and religious tricks to promote self interest are associated with Muaviye” (Köse, 2011, p.21). The Karbala disaster and the figures related with it become historical symbolic reference for Alevi belief and identity. Hussein’s martyrdom symbolizes the pain and martyrdom of Alevis, continuing and renewed today. Thus, Alevis consider and interpret all massacres that occurred in the Ottoman and republican regime as a reappearance of the Karbala Massacre. As Alevis trace their descent from the Ahl al-Bayt, their commitment to the Karbala mourning is a significant symbolic representation of continuous victimization.

Shah İsmail, Seyit Rıza, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan, and the losses in Madımak Massacre are examples of this continuation. Seyit Rıza’s words before his execution illustrate the historical symbolic continuation: “We are descendant of Karbala. We have nothing to be ashamed of. This is shameful. This is cruelty. This is murder” (Köse,

³³ The term refers to the family of the Prophet Muhammed (*Ehl-i Beyt* in Turkish).

2013, p. 595). The scholar Ayhan Yalçınkaya asserts that Karbala never ended, that Alevis face threats from cruel oppressors every day is:

Struggle must be continued against present time... If we don't struggle and submit ourselves to history, the historical form of the present time will reproduce itself perpetually, because it wants to be lasting. When it is the case, we confront Karbala every day. Karbala is not an event that happened in a particular period of history; it is at an end and out of our intervention. After a thousand years, we experienced Karbala in Sivas (Yalçınkaya, 2005, p. 54).

Yavuz Sultan Selim (Selim I) is another figure in the collective memory of Alevis. He is remembered for his defeat of Shah Ismail in Çaldıran, and challenge of Kızılbaş ideals in 1512 (Massicard, 2013, p. 33). Ismail, who became the Iranian shah in 1501, is seen as an Alevi hero and as the leader of the Kızılbaş community.³⁴ Because the Safavid dynasty presented a serious threat by attracting rebellious Anatolian Turkmens to their side at the beginning of the 16th century, the expression "Kızılbaş" was used to describe all heretic groups holding Shia indications and to characterize Iranian and Shia Islam in general during the Ottoman period (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2012; Subaşı, 2010).³⁵ The fundamental reasons why Yavuz Sultan Selim is considered as a historical villain by the Alevi community is that he began the oppressive rule against Kızılbaş, established the sharia order and distorted the tolerant ethos of Anatolia (Köse, 2011). In addition, it was under him that defamations against Kızılbaş started. Today, despite not being so widespread, the term continues to have a humiliating connotation and to be used, especially in the region of Anatolia. That is why, most members of the community prefer to use "Alevi" in defining themselves to avoid negative implications of "Kızılbaş."

2.3. Politicization of Alevis and Alevi Massacres Before 1980

Alevis' collective memory of the victimization of the community in the republican period largely rests on the massacres that took place before the 1980 coup d'état.

³⁴ The term "Kızılbaş" emerged at the beginning of the 16th century. It commonly refers to followers of the leaders of an Iranian Safavid religious sect between the 14th and the 15th century (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2012).

³⁵ As Ottoman rule became centralized and chose its formal religion as Sunni Islam, Alevis, who were called Kızılbaş were also named as *zındık*, *Rafizi*, and *mülhit* (profane, non-believer) (Subaşı Alevi Modernleşmesi, 85, Bodrogi, 33).

Malatya (1978), Sivas (1978), Maraş (1978) and Çorum (1980) are the cities where violent sectarian conflicts occurred in a highly politicized atmosphere before the military intervention in 1980. The Dersim rebellion (1938) also took place in the republican period as an Alevi Kurdish rebellion against the new regime which was brutally suppressed; however, it is mostly appropriated by Kurdish/Zaza Alevi because of ethno-sectarian concerns (Açikel & Ateş, 2011; Köse, 2013). The 1970s massacres arose in a period when the politicization between the Left and Right was highly polarized. Moreover, it was a time when the affiliation between the Alevi and leftist ideology increased while the radical Right pursued an anticommunist politics by appropriating Islamic language.

2.3.1. Relation between Alevi, the Left and the Right

The association between leftist ideology and Alevi dates back to the end of the 1960s and the move of the young generation toward anti-imperialist, socialist, and Marxist movements. The leftist position of the Alevi population can be classified around socialist parties and organizations and the CHP, which defined itself as a social democrat party. This led to a generational divide: while most of the older religious generation grew up in rural regions and supported the CHP, the generation of young Alevi from urban areas was largely responsive to socialist ideas (Massicard, 2013, p. 61). Social and political transformations started in the 1950s and came into effect in the mid-1960s and 1970s. At this point, history of Alevism started to be reread by young Alevi with the ideas of the Left. “Young Alevi tended to re-interpret their religious heritage and cultural identity in terms of historical materialism. They thus began to view Alevism as both a revolutionary ideology and as a practiced communism” (Vorhoff, 2003, p. 95).

Members of the young Alevi generation, who had grown up in cities and received a university education, became involved in student movements from then on. They were influenced by revolutionary movements and gained perspectives about Alevi belief that were different from those of the old generations. “Young Alevi, who reinterpreted their heritage based on historical materialism, started to see Alevism as a revolutionist doctrine and a kind of collectivism showed up before its time”

(Massicard, 2013, p. 60). Symbolic names and events such as Ali, Hussein, Shah İsmail, Pir Sultan Abdal, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Karbala, and the Çaldıran War were mentioned together with contemporary revolutionary leaders (mostly young revolutionaries such as İbrahim Kaypakkaya, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin Cevahir, Mahir Çayan, etc.) and their struggle, death, and execution. Zülfü Livaneli's first album³⁶ is one of the best illustrations of the connection between mourning for killed revolutionaries and Alevi mysticism (Küçük, 2008, p. 910). Secular and revolutionary discourse replaced religious practice among young Alevis and transformed the use of the religious oral tradition. Symbols of belief were preserved, but the meaning behind them was altered. The search for God gave way to the search for right. Red, the symbolic color of Kızılbaş community, represented the color of revolution; and Alevi revolts in the Ottoman Rule in the 16th century were re-read as socialist movements (Küçük, 2008; Massicard, 2013).

The relation between the radical Left and Alevis occupies an important place in understanding the reasons for the massacres that took place between 1978 and 1980, the emergence of Alevist movement after the 1980s, and the position of today's Alevi organizations. The most necessary commonality, which is shaped on discourse, between the Left and Alevi young supplied reciprocally. As socialist ideology expanded among Alevis in Turkey, the Alevi community provided a social and cultural basis through which its revolutionary ideals reached people living in rural areas. Alevi music – *deyiş*, *semah*, and *nefes* – was the strongest cultural instrument establishing an emotional tie between revolutionary leaders and the Alevi community. The existing oppositional expressions in Alevi *nefes* were easily adapted to socialist ideology and had met with a warm response from Alevi youth. Embracing the Alevi musical tradition but obscuring its religious motifs, the revolutionary movement looked like an Alevi movement.

³⁶ His first album, *Chants Révolutionnaires Turcs*, was released in 1973 in Belgium. The music album is composed of twelve folk songs treating resistance stories of Anatolian people and expressing its solidarity with the brave revolutionaries during the "oppressive period of the 1970s." The names of the songs (Dede Sultan, Ulaş, Alay Alay gelen, Unutma Bizi, Bize de Banaz'da, etc) illustrate the identification between the revolutionary youth and traditional Alevi mysticism. *Ulaş* was written as a lament after the young revolutionary Ulaş Bardakçı was killed by security forces, and *Bize de Banaz'da* is a storied traditional song that Pir Sultan Abdal sang before he was killed ("Livaneli," n.d.).

For the rightists, the 1960s were the years when the ultra-nationalist movement became politically organized and united under the MHP towards the end of the decade. These were also the years when MHP representatives started to use Islamic discourse to appeal to electors. Instrumental use of Islamic discourse led to a separation of lineage-Turkist supporters of the nationalist wing until the mid-1970s (Bora & Can, 2009, p. 55). The party was trying to hold predominantly anti-communist discourse together with an anti-capitalist and Islamist-nationalist emphasis. However, its popularity would not increase until the rise of national chauvinism after the 1974 Cyprus operation and US embargo. Moreover, it was a time of rapid economic changes that plunged the middle class into crisis (Bora & Can, 2009, p. 61).

All these conditions opened MHP the door of Nationalist Front government and broadened support from Middle-East Anatolia. Especially in the 1977 elections, the MHP's efforts to stress its Islamic credentials helped it gain the votes of a great part of the Sunni population in central and eastern Anatolia, a region that Ömer Laçiner defines as the Çorum, Erzurum, and Antep triangle (1978a, 1978b). One of the decisive factors for this regional ethno-religious support was changing economic conditions of the middle class. Indeed, this change favored minorities in financial difficulties in the region. Though the improvement of capitalism did not enhance the living conditions of the middle class in central Anatolia, Alevis did start to benefit from new job opportunities. The rise establishment of new communication networks, compulsory primary education, industrialization, and rural-urban migration ended the with social marginalization of the Alevi population and enabled them to find place in public sector and bureaucracy (Massicard, 2013). On the other hand, as the Sunni population in the region could not adapt to the new conditions at the same rate, they grew uneasy due to the changing social and economic balance and desired to regain their old positions (Laçiner, 1978b, p. 40).

These transformations overlapped with the MHP's search for power. Between 1977 and 1980, the MHP focused on securing the votes of the population in central Anatolia and pursued an exclusive policy against Alevi, Kurdish and Communist

groups.³⁷ “In this period, Alevi were seen as the carriers of leftist ideology and atheism as well as the remnants of the heretic fifth column by MHP” (Açikel & Ateş, 2011, p. 725). This association between Alevi and the Communists became unifying factor for all right wing parties (MHP, AP, and MSP) in the 1970s. Leftist opposition was considered an attack on the national and religious identity of Turkish society. It was such a critical situation that the MHP had to postpone its struggle with the rightist parties (Ertan, 2012, pp. 211–213).³⁸ Protecting the cultural and religious values of Turkish society was an important tool to mobilize the support of the nationalist and conservative Sunni population of central Anatolia. Common stereotypes about Alevi belief were released into circulation and the Sunni population was convinced that Alevi were fighting against Sunni Muslims in collaboration with leftist groups. Consequently, the Alevi population was made into an object of hatred in the cities of Malatya, Sivas, Maraş, and Çorum, where Alevi and Sunni populations lived together. This led initially to small conflicts between rightist and leftist youth groups, and ultimately to Alevi massacres.

2.4. The Violent Events in the 1970s

Similar stories circulated about the escalation these events. The violent conflicts first started in the cities of Malatya and Sivas in 1978. In Malatya, the mayor Hamit Fendoğlu, who won the election with the support of rightist parties, and his daughter - in - law and grandchild were killed by a bomb on April 17 (Ertan, 2012; Massicard, 2013). People who participated in the funeral attacked the branch offices of CHP and TÖB-DER, and later local Alevi. These attacks resulted in eight deaths and many injuries (Ertan, 2012; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012). In Sivas, a conflict arose for an unknown reason on September 3 and ended in the death of nine people and the injury of more than a hundred (Massicard, 2013, p. 62). Notices published before the escalation of these events indicate the influence of the anti-Communist movement in the attacks. The one published in Sivas (1978) with the signature of Müslüman Gençlik (Muslim

³⁷ It is called *three Ks* in Turkish: *Komünist, Kürt, Kızılbaş* (the Communists, the Kurds, the Kızılbaş/Alevi).

³⁸ It is cited that Alparslan Türkeş stated in 70s: “As a result of betrayal behaviours of the Left, we have to postpone our struggle with the right.” Radical right has been against Arabic influence in Turkish Islam because it encourages Arabic nationalism based on Turkish antagonism (Can, 2003, p. 682).

Youth) warns Alevis: “Alevis watch out! Do not be an instrument. Consider the history; at one time, you were saying, ‘Shah Shah’. Now, you are not going to Shah, but to communism. We will prevent this movement” (Küçük, 2008, p. 915).

The most devastating conflict occurred in Kahramanmaraş from 22 to 25 December and resulted in 111 deaths (Sinclair-Webb, 2003). One of the triggering events was a low-impact bomb explosion during a screening of the film *Güneş ne Zaman Doğacak* (“When will the Sun Rise?”), causing panic and injuring several people (Sinclair-Webb, 2003, p. 223). The topic of the film was the “enslaved Turks” who had taken shelter from the USSR in Turkey and then were returned by Turkey, which attracted the interest of many right-wing citizens in the city (Gürel, 2004, p. 106). The bomb explosion was assumed by ülkücü groups to have been carried out by leftists, though later the reverse was proved in the trial (Sinclair-Webb, 2003, p. 223). After this event, the killing of two leftist teacher on December 21 started the conflict. At their funerals on Friday 22 December, three people died due to the eruption of armed clashes outside the mosque (Sinclair-Webb, 2003, p. 222). In following days, the violence by radical rightist groups escalated against local Alevis, leftist organizations, and some halls (Massicard, 2013, p. 63).

The last case of conflict case at the end of the 1970s occurred in the city of Çorum (1980). It was not as devastating as Maraş; however, it had significant consequences for the citizens of the city and later came to occupy a central place in the collective memory of the Alevi community. These four events had the importance of being the first civil conflict during the republican period (Massicard, 2013, p. 63). In all the attacks, it was ordinary people who were involved in the conflicts, and who were killed and injured in the events. Unlike Maraş, people mobilized in the streets and showed resistance to the attacks in Çorum, which has been interpreted as indicating that the violence in the city was not actually a sectarian conflict (Küçük, 2008, p. 915). Moreover, when compared with the Sivas Madımak (1993) event, the Maraş and Çorum incidents did not create strong collective reaction by Alevis, who did not put forward demands for creating a martyrs memorial or museum (Yaçınkaya, 2005, p. 360). Yaçınkaya argues that since massacres before 1980 remained in the shadow of

the military intervention that year and were viewed as a conflict between anti-Communists and socialists, the issue was not treated directly as an Alevi-Sunni problem (2005, p. 360).

The narrative of interviewees in my fieldwork confirms that political separation and the military intervention that occurred just after these events were influential in the emergence of the events. One result of this reading is that the massacres did not take place directly against Alevis, but because their identities were highly affiliated with the Left, the conflict ultimately unfolded along sectarian lines (Yalçinkaya, 2005, p. 360). Though this argument points at the reality of the political identification of Alevis and its role in the rightist and leftist polarization, it does not explain why it so easily turned into a sectarian separation and victimized Alevi citizens in these cities (Küçük, 2008, p. 915). It could be argued that the Alevi revival in the 1990s together with the Madimak Massacre and Gazi Riots opened the way for seeing the importance of the sectarian dimension behind these events at the end of the 1970s. That is why the remembrance and interpretation of the Çorum events, in particular, was reshaped under the influence of this movement.

2.5. Alevi Mobilization after 12 September Coup D'état

After the Left was dealt a major blow due to the 1980 coup d'état, discussions about the Alevi issue changed direction. More precisely, the dynamics of Alevi politicization transformed into identity politics to a large extent. Between the 1960s and 1980s, Alevis were engaged in leftist politics and supported revolutionary movements. It was a kind of "implicit politicization" that did not fight particularly for Alevi identity, but that included individual Alevis struggling for socialism.³⁹ While being an Alevi facilitated getting involved in leftist movements, after the bond between Alevism and the Left was established, Alevi identity was subsumed in socialist activism (Ertan, 2015, p. 49).

³⁹ The expression "implicit politicization" (*örtük politikleşme*) belongs to Mehmet Ertan (Ertan, 2015).

The emergence of the “Alevi revival” or “Alevist movement” did not have its source merely in one particular event such as the military intervention or collapse of leftist movements, but sprang from various interrelated global and country base cases at that time. Political transformations in the 1980s within the local and global context had considerable impacts on the mobilization of the Alevi community. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, changes in the general trends of leftist movements, the Kurdish issue reaching new dimensions in Turkey, and the expected burst of Islamism gave rise to a revival in Alevi identity, which turned into a rediscovery of the identity (Çamuroğlu, 2008). Under these conditions, until the 1990s, the Alevi community passed through a depression period in which Alevi organizations were dispersed, the Hacibektaş Turizm Derneği (Hacibektaş Tourism Association) was closed (“HBVKD Tarihçe”, n.d.) and the junta executed staff accused of communism and separatism (Massicard, 2013, p. 70). In addition, it was a period in which Alevis were marginalized in several areas, and the potential extinction of Alevism was in question due to the rising politics of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis (Massicard, 2013, p. 70).

The 1990s was also a time when social movements rapidly changed the direction toward civil society from states to transform civil relations as started from the 1960s and 1970s, and took the name of new social movement in the literature (Cohen, 1985; Habermas, 1981; Melucci, 1985; Tilly, 2008; Touraine, 1985). Different from the classical understanding, new peace movements, ecologist movements, anti-nuclear movements, and women, lesbian and gay (gender and LGBT) movements arose in the context of new social movements in America and Europe in these years. These movements centered predominantly on the cultural and social arena, and their main motivation lay in expressing identities freely, involvement and gaining civil rights. These relatively new movements and their changing demands shaped the political structure of their societies and blurred the line between the “political” and the “private,” as citizens tried to wrest control from the political elite (Offe, 1999, p. 53). As the wall between “private” and “public” space started to be demolished, new types of conflict emerged around lifestyles and identities (Touraine, 1985, p. 779). For Melucci, new movements “influence institutions, governments, policies; there are pushes toward the renewal of cultures, languages, habits” (1985, p. 810) by

challenging “the dominant logic on symbolic ground” and questioning “definition of codes, *nomination* of reality” (1985, p. 812). “They don’t ask,” but offer “by their own existence other ways of defining the meaning of individual and collective action” (Melucci, 1985, p. 812).

Hence, defining identities and being recognized by others were at the top of the agenda of Alevi in this process. The Alevi revival was driven by the fear of losing the essence of Alevi belief and the desire for recognition and civil rights. After the bloody massacres in the 1990s, changing political dynamics and the loss of traditional bonds in the urban context forced the Alevi community to reconsider the meaning and implications of their identity. Within the new social and political landscape, the gap between generations widened, as did the essential need to define and teach the doctrines of Alevi belief to new generations and to foster communal solidarity based on the memory of common grievances. Added to this was the dominance of a Sunni-Muslim understanding that interpreted Alevism as a sect under Islam and excluded any other alternative approach. For that reason, the Alevi issue started to be discussed within a new framework in the post-1980 period, which manifested itself “in the form of heightened group consciousness, greater ease in expressing identity in the public sphere, increased public visibility and the making of political and legal claims based on social and political arenas” (Köse, 2012, p. 579). Alevi mobilized around different associations with various religious and ideological positions, published journals and books debating the nature, fundamental features and rituals of Alevi identity, and entered the spheres of television and radio broadcasting.

One of the triggering factor in the increase of mobilization around different association and of the number of existing association in Turkey and Europe was the Sivas Madımak Massacre (1993) and Gazi Riots (1995). The Madımak incident, especially, served as a political source for mobilizing and organizing Alevi identity, and after the massacre Alevi organized large demonstrations in Turkey and in major European cities (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011). The incident became the basis for the argument of the historical continuity of Alevi victimization, which supports that the Madımak and other Alevi massacres were not a coincidence, and that the very

identity of Alevis was marked by oppression and Alevi resistance to psychological and physical violence (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011). As will be detailed below, Madımak also influenced the construction of collective memory in Çorum. Most especially, for the young generation the memory of the Madımak Massacre overshadows the previous and subsequent incidents, which shows the success of the mobilization after the massacre.

2.6. The Sivas Madımak Massacre and Gazi Riots

Apart from the rise in discourse about the reformulation of identity, the violent events that occurred in the 1990s, the Madımak Massacre and Gazi Riots, prompted discourse about moral values and innocent victimhood, and functioned as a catalyst of mass organization (Massicard, 2013; Yıldiz & Verkuyten, 2011). The Madımak Massacre in particular played a significant role in the reconstruction of Alevi collective memory, and served to unify group identity through narratives of collective trauma and shared victimization, including previous violent attacks against Alevis.

The attack on the Madımak Hotel in the city of Sivas on 2 July 1993 by nationalist-Islamist groups resulted in the burning of the hotel and the loss of thirty-seven participants in the Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği (Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations [PSAKD], 1988), which had gathered many intellectuals and artists on that day to commemorate Pir Sultan Abdal. The goal of the group that gathered around the hotel was to protest Aziz Nesin, who was translating Salman Rushdi's *The Satanic Verses* and who had openly spoken about his atheistic beliefs (Massicard, 2013, p. 85). Negligence and uncontrolled management of the cruel attack brought about serious discussions and different interpretations about the causes and results of the event.

For Alevis, the massacre was carried out due to existing hatred toward and ignorance about Alevis. Leftist and Kemalists also accused the Islamist "*gerici* and *yobaz*" (retrogrades and bigots) who supported sharia and led the protest and attacks (Massicard, 2013, p. 85). For the socialists, it was not an attack against Alevis, but a fascist attack on against revolutionaries and democrats (Küçük, 2008). On the other

side, rightist and Islamist politicians and others interpreted the event as having been provoked by Aziz Nesin's participation and speeches that were offensive to religious values and feelings (Ertan, 2012). The event had considerable repercussions in Turkey and Europe, with thousands of people protesting and commemorating the massacre and starting to mobilize around new associations and foundations (Çakır, 1995a; Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011). Madımak became an important justification for the Alevi narrative of historical victimization starting from the Ottoman rule to the republic, and for the need to organize a unified group identity as a precaution against new attacks.

The Gazi riots in Istanbul in 1995 strengthened these approaches. The armed attack by a taxi on four coffeehouses and one pastry shop took place in the Gazi neighborhood, known for its Alevi and leftist population. Afterwards, many people gathered in the street and damaged local shops. The police intervened, as a result of which twenty-two people died, and many were injured and arrested. The protests organized by Alevi associations and unions spread over other neighbors in Istanbul and Ankara that were suppressed by the police forces (Massicard, 2013, pp. 86–87). Similarly, the attacks were approached differently by the radical Left and the Alevi associations. While the first viewed the attacks against the working class rather than Alevis, the latter evaluated it as an attempt to massacre Alevis, but this time deliberately abstained from having a position next to the leftist groups (Çakır, 1995b; Küçük, 2008).

2.7. Alevi Associations and Foundations in and after the 1990s

At the end of the 1980s, Alevi mobilization started to be organized primarily around associations as opposed to leftist political parties and organizations. These different Alevi associations presented Alevism and Alevi identity in various different ways. As distinct from the pre-1980 period, historical and cultural references replaced the Left as the primary factor in defining the Alevi identity. Even though political concerns were still central, they came to be announced by organizations carrying the names of historical Alevi opinion leaders, and thus a new orientation took shape on the basis of religious and cultural symbols. Political concerns and demands have been

imbedded into main religious or cultural identifications with varying interpretations since that date. Because urban life has been experienced concurrently with modern life, survival in urban living conditions pushed Alevis into new and changing interpretations of Alevism. Different religious and political positions led Alevis to mobilize under different associations with all varying interpretations. Together with their small branches spread throughout Turkey and Europe, HBVAKV (1994), PSAKD, Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi Vakfı (Republican Education and Culture Center Foundation [CEM Foundation], 1995), The World Ehl-i Beyt Foundation (1999), and Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu (Confederation of European Alevi Union [AABK]) are central organizations representing mainstream interpretations of Alevism.

HBVAKV and PSAKD were the first two poles of this diversity. While HBVAKV associations worked for an Alevi cultural awakening, PSAKD continued to carry socialist ideals rather than a religious emphasis. In the mid-1990s, the number of associations started to increase and the movement polarized based on the position associations took on definition and borders of Alevism. In 1994, the World Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, which has an Islamic interpretation of Alevi belief, was established. This foundation defended an Alevism close to Turkish Shiism and the belief that Alevi and Bektashi beliefs were the essence of Islam and the unity of the Quran (“Vakıf Hakkında”, n.d.). Although the foundation has only marginal support among the majority of Alevis in Turkey, it, together with the CEM Foundation, was one of the parties of the polarized Alevi movement that focused more on the religious dimension of Alevi identity, and stood on the side of rightist parties in the 1990s. In this respect, the CEM Foundation is more decisive in determining ideological and religious attitudes of other Alevi associations and lodges comparing to the World Ehl-i Beyt Foundation. The CEM foundation is known for its closeness to the state and for having high-level Alevi notables among its founders (Massicard, 2013, p. 92). According to the foundation, Alevism is a sect of Islam with a Turkish interpretation free from Arab influences (Ertan, 2015). Correspondingly, demands have centered on the identification of Alevism as a sect by the state. Participants of the foundation have

demanded representation under the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Directorate of Religious Affairs) and the allocation of state funds for Alevi religious services.

As mentioned above, the Left was no longer the only associational bond of the Alevis, but cooperation between them has continued in different ways. By raising concerns about religious status of Alevism, founding president of the CEM Foundation, İzzettin Doğan, advocated that the Alevis should break their bonds with leftist politics and leave its discourse. For him, atheist Marxist young groups attracted Alevi youths and convinced them that being a Communist was part of being an Alevi. “Instead of learning Alevism and offering its values, however they interpret Marxist system in their head, they could say Alevism is this; they attempted to get their approach (that is irrelevant with Alevism) through to the Alevis” (Doğan, 1998). He has been rejected opponent position Alevis have been degraded. Rather, in his interviews, Doğan often puts emphasis on the leading role of the Alevi community during the foundation of both the Ottoman state and the republic. Furthermore, he blames the state for being careless and ignorant about the Alevi community, and for the problems the Alevi community has had to deal with for decades. That is why he offers the solution that the state has to abandon its dismissive attitude towards Alevi citizens and build inclusive and compatible policies about the issue. Therefore, as a foundation, they aimed at establishing a coordinated relationship with state institutions in order to benefit from all of state resources in the same way as Sunni citizens (Doğan, 1998).

Contrary to the religious concerns of the CEM Foundation, PSAKD has an independent cultural, philosophic, and more secular understanding of Alevism. The association does not locate Alevism as entirely part of Islam or a sect in Islam, but defines it as a syncretic union of various beliefs, such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, Sufism, etc., prior to and outside of Islam (Ertan, 2015). According to them, Alevism is a human-centered life style concerned with freedom of belief and expression, scientific and rationalist approaches, and equality and collectivism. PSAKD claims to save rebellious and oppositional heritage of Alevi culture against the oppressive and assimilating system of the state. Furthermore, its discourse contains highly internalized leftist notions that mean that the association, with its several

branch offices⁴⁰, functions as a bridge between leftist politics and Alevi issues. Identity politics and new Alevist movement has been accused of being a state bluff that after the coup d'état, Alevi citizens were led to reflect over their beliefs and evoke their religious identities in order to prevent socialist struggle. Especially at the beginning of the 1990s, participants of the association tried to prioritize democratization, laicization and human-rights problems by rejecting the existence of an urgent and major Alevism issue since they were afraid of weakening power of the Left (Küçük, 2008, p. 918).

Based on political developments in Turkey after the 1980 military intervention, a form of Alevi revival took place in Europe, too, particularly in Germany (Rigoni, 2003). In fact, Kurdish and Turkish Alevi immigrant population entered Europe in the 1960s; however, the visibility of Alevi identity and its political and cultural mobilization did not arise until the 1980s (Massicard, 2013; Rigoni, 2003; Sökefeld, 2008; Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011). There were several triggering factors operating in this increasing Alevi mobilization in Europe, including the fall of the Soviet Union, the Islamization of state and society in Turkey, and the Kurdish struggle for cultural and political recognition. In addition to these, the military intervention caused many intellectuals, union directors, militants and university students to be exiled, Alevi militants among them. For them, Turkey became a “lost homeland,” and their exodus to Europe contributed to the evolution of both political and cultural Alevi organizations there (Massicard, 2013, p. 315; Sökefeld, 2008).

The biggest European Alevi organization is the AABK, which was established in 1993 in Cologne as an umbrella organization of 140 Alevi associations and 30,000 members from Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and the United-Kingdom (Sökefeld, 2008, pp. 82–83). Before gathering under the roof of the AABK, there were various associations established with different emphasis on the religious, cultural, social, and political aspects of Alevi identity. The Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür Derneği (Hacı Bektaş Veli Cultural Association [HBVKD]), Hamburg Alevi Cultural

⁴⁰ After Sivas massacre, association made an effort to unite other Alevi associations and foundations and pulling Hacı Bektaş Veli associations towards the Left. (Massicard, 2013, p. 91)

Group, Anadolu Alevileri Kültür Merkezi (Anatolian Alevi's Cultural Centre [AAKM]), and Yurtseverler Birliği (Federation of Patriotic Unions [YSB]) are some examples for these associations. Where the first two aimed to preserve and transfer cultural and religious rituals by protecting Alevism from political influences, the AAKM and YSB (and later its small derivatives) were more prone to underline the social and political discrimination Alevis experienced and supported religious reform Massicard, 2013; Rigoni, 2003, p. 163).

Although the unification of many groups under the AABK did not extinguish the differences between the religious interpretations and representational choices of those groups, the AABK largely set aside these differences and put forward a new focus after the Madımak Massacre, and the Gazi Riots. The 1993 massacre marks a turning point for the Alevi diaspora by symbolizing lasting danger the community can face at any time. It was urgent for them to ensure self-organization in order to prevent the Alevi identity from disappearing and to increase awareness of any possible threats (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011). "For the first time, Alevi migrants entered public scene: a week after the hotel fire in Turkey, they organized the Sivas Katliamını Protesto Yürüyüşü (Protest March against Sivas Slaughter) in Köln, bringing together 60,000 people" (Rigoni, 2003, p. 163). This political organization did not remain limited to protests and meetings; most of the associations began printing their own publications and established their own media organs. The AABK alone has a monthly magazine called *Alevilerin Sesi* (Voice of Alevis), a TV station (*YOL TV*), an Alevi Business Network, a Council of Faith Affairs, a youth and a female division, and a European Alevi Academy (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011, p. 248).

One of the primary motivations for the federation is keeping the collective memory of Alevis alive in the face of the exclusionist treatment of the Turkish state, and does so based on the Alevi massacres before and after 1980. As the determinant event of this mobilization, the Madımak Massacre increased commemorative organizations in Europe and Turkey. The AABK and its youth organization are leading participants of commemorations in Dersim, Maraş, Sivas and Çorum. The Avrupa Alevi Gençler Birliği (Union of Alevi Youth in Europe [AAGB]) is foremost inheritor of the community's

memory and the cause of protecting Alevi identity. In a board meeting in 2014, Ruhi Altun, the head of Britain Alevi Youth, underlined this:

Our families had to migrate from their own land in order to escape from oppression and massacres, but we, as the young ones, protect our action, our path, our belief thousands of kilometers away from our country. Today, our youth who did not see Dersim, Maraş, Çorum and Sivas massacres ever go and participate in commemorations every year to memorialize our beloveds in Turkey despite all oppressions, and teach Alevism courses in school curriculum in the countries they live (Metem, 2014).

The success of Alevi mobilization in Europe transferred political and cultural memory new generations and helped maintain an active sense of Alevi identity among the diaspora community. The federation wants to intensify its efforts to situate similar sensitivity and solidarity among the Alevi community and youths in Turkey; however, because local variations among communities are wide and bonds are not so strong as in the Alevi diaspora, the result of its mobilization efforts have been mixed. In the case of Çorum Alevis and commemorative organizations, the AABK and AAGB have a considerable population and penetrate into the atmosphere of marches and speeches. Since the anniversary dates are close, many young members of the AAGB and high-level officers of the federation and other Alevi associations are invited and attended Sivas Madımak and Çorum commemorations together. As will be discussed in the next chapter, they establish dominance over the narrative constructed in commemoration of the Çorum events and help settle conflicting positions among the local Alevi community and deal with past grievance.

2.8. The Government's Alevi "Openings" after 2007

Despite Alevi mobilization in associations and foundations, no government in the history of Turkey was receptive to their demands until the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party [AKP]) came to the power (2002) and undertook an initiative to deal with the problems of various groups such as Kurds, Alevis and the Roma people under the policy of "democratic opening" (Köse, 2010a). The first initiative for Alevis, called the "Alevi Opening," was undertaken in 2008 as a response to Alevis' demands and Turkey's EU accession process (Özkul, 2015). The opening was organized around Alevi workshops and Alevi *iftars*, in which the changing status of cemevis, restructuring of the Diyanet, the content of compulsory religious courses

and the textbooks used in them, and the investigation of sectarian violence of the 1970s and 1990s voiced and discussed (Köse, 2010a; Özkul, 2015, p. 84). Necdet Subaşı coordinated and moderated the workshops while Reha Çamuroğlu organized the first Alevi *iftar* as advisor to then-prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. While some Alevi leaders participated in the workshops and responded positively to the initiative, the majority of Alevi citizens approached the opening with skepticism “mainly because the policy was initiated by the ‘other,’” whom they believed was carrying out the opening as part of a Sunnification project (Köse, 2010a, p. 148). The World Ehli-Beyt and CEM Foundation were the two Alevi organizations that participated in the workshops.

In spite of the initiative, the government did not take any concrete steps to address the issues and demands discussed in the workshops, but the process itself was a symbolic step showing that the government did attach importance to the Alevi issue (Genç, 2016). While there was already a great deal of skepticism about the opening, its failure to achieve concrete results increased discontent and led many people, including Alevis and Sunnis, to lose hope in the government’s Alevi “opening.” Still, the gain of this initiative was that for the first time, the state recognized the Alevi issue and tried to negotiate with Alevis about their demands. After five years, the government did put the opening on the agenda for a second time in 2015 and promising policies regarding Alevi demands. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who was the prime minister at that time, visited Hacı Bektaş, commemorated the Karbala martyrs, greeted Alevi representatives, organized visit to cemevis in Erzincan, and formed a commission working on the status cemevis and dedes. Yet the government did not show any progress in the implementation of these efforts, in particular to define the legal status for cemevis and *geleneksel irfan merkezleri* (traditional wisdom centers) as promised.

In the second initiative, the political atmosphere in 2015 was more challenging for the AKP to deal with the Alevi issue due to the dissatisfaction after the government’s first Alevi “opening” and increased tension between the state and Alevis after the Gezi Park protest (2013). Those who had supported the first initiative expressed their

mistrust of the government in its sincerity toward the openings (Balkız, 2014). The Gezi Park incident was one of the major causes of this mistrust. İzzettin Doğan, the founder of the CEM Foundation and an active participant in the “opening” meetings and the *Akil Adamlar Komisyonu* (the Committee of Wise Men), claimed that there was an atmosphere of conflict between Alevis and the state, and that this could lead to bigger problems (2014). Especially Erdoğan’s statements about the Gezi Protest and the fact that the protests are mentioned by a large number of Alevi participation form a basis for this conflicting positions. Characterizations of Berkin Elvan⁴¹ and other losses of Gezi, almost all of whom were Alevis, as terrorists increased the anger and feeling of victimization in the Alevi community (Birgün, 2015). Moreover, after his Cologne visit, Erdoğan’s statements and discomfort about the formation “Ali’siz Alevilik” (Alevism without Ali) in Germany led to discussions of state intervention in the definition of Alevism (Çakır, 2014a, 2014b). Hence, while the government opened a realm for the negotiation and discussion of the Alevi issue with the initiatives of the opening, it also ended this opportunity by using polarizing and discriminative discourse after the Gezi Protest.

2.9. The Gezi Park Protest

The Gezi Park protest a recent event that holds an important place in Alevi social memory, since many Alevis actively supported the protests and many of those who lost their lives were of Alevi origin. The protest began on 28 May 2013 as a result of protests against a project to reconstruction the old Topçu Kışlası (Artillery Barracks) as a shopping mall in Taksim Square, in Istanbul. Following the demolition of a wall and the uprooting of a tree, protests started and escalated after the police intervened with tear gas and force. While the protest started as a reaction against urban-management projects, including the construction of new bridge and mosque in Çamlıca, there were several reasons behind the momentum the movement gained, the massive support it received from the middle class, and the expansion of the protest from Istanbul to other cities (Göle, 2013). Apart from concerns about urban-management projects, protestors criticized the conservative politics of the AKP

⁴¹ He died from a tear capsul hitting on his head as a result of the police attack in Okmeydanı when he was 14.

government, mostly focusing on identity and lifestyle issues such as abortion rights, women rights, and restrictions on the sale of alcohol (Yörük & Yüksel, 2015).

One of the essential aspects of the Gezi Park protest was its power to gather a variety of people from various political and cultural backgrounds, including environmentalists, feminists, LGBT rights advocates, Kemalists, Kurds, Alevis, anti-capitalist Muslims, leftist groups, artists. The Alevi presence in the protests was mostly grounded on the discussion of naming new bridge over the Bosphorus after Yavuz Sultan Selim, which evokes political atrocities for Alevis (Göle, 2013). The fact that seven of the people who died in the protests were of Alevi origin opened a discussion on why Alevis were on front line. For some Alevi youths, since their participation was so high, the result was not a coincidence (Dağlıoğlu, 2014). They explained the large Alevi participation based on an accumulated anger towards the violence of the authorities by referring to previous massacres (Dağlıoğlu, 2014). They viewed the protest as a way of showing resistance against a government whose policies were becoming increasingly intolerant and strengthening Sunnification (Yörük & Yüksel, 2015, p. 144).

Together with Erdoğan's characterization of the protestors as terrorists and encouragement of the use of force by the police, the Gezi Park events reawakened Alevi feelings of insecurity and fear of state power. Though the uprising and the conflict did not arise out of a sectarian problem, the presence and losses of Alevi people in the protests led to a sense of inclusive victimhood. The events become a symbol of the continuous historical victimization of the Alevi community, the ongoing threat to Alevi identity, and the return of Alevis to the status as the "other" within society (Özkul, 2015, p. 91). Thus, the Gezi Park events found an important place in the collective memory of the Alevi community. Alevis memorialize the names of their losses during the commemoration of Alevi massacres, including the Çorum events, to raise awareness about the ongoing nature of this threat. Though the interpretation of consequences of the protests for Alevi community differs in individual narrations and memories, the master narrative of Alevi victimization includes the Gezi Park events.

All the events covered in this chapter shape the social memory of the Alevi community and form a basis for its victimization narratives. The Çorum event is an episode of this, and is always counted among the atrocities of the 1970 in discussion of the politicization and socialization of the Alevi community. Though the conditions and causes of all these events lie in the context of the social and political relations in their times, for members of the Alevi community, the end result is their victimization and the problem of identity recognition. Therefore, remembrance of these events and passing the memory of the Alevi past to younger generations are viewed as crucial to the maintenance of Alevi identity.

In the following chapter, I will analyze the construction of the memory of the Çorum events as part of the continuing fragile relationship between Alevis and the state and the concerns of memory actors in Çorum that younger generation will forget of Alevi victimization. Memory actors refers to Karbala, Çaldıran, Maraş, Sivas, and Gezi to increase awareness of the similarity behind the massacres, and remind Alevis that they are always viewed as the “other” by state powers. Based on this history and every incident that took place after the Çorum massacre, memory is rewritten and events are reinterpreted in the present. It should be noted that the start of the commemorations of the Çorum massacre coincided with the time when the Alevi opening was taking place and the Alevi issue was highly discussed publicly, which shows a relief in voicing past grievance in public and a search for an opportunity to get involved in the process of demanding rights. In the next chapter, I will investigate the process of the construction of a collective memory of the Çorum events through commemorative activities and their role in opening doors for the remembrance of the past and the emergence of conflicting arguments.

CHAPTER 3
A FORM OF BUILDING COLLECTIVE MEMORY: COMMEMORATIONS OF THE
ÇORUM EVENTS

3.1. Introduction

Commemorations of the Çorum events form a “realm of memory” by building and rebuilding a collective narrative and collective memory based on this narrative about the past tragic event. For the Alevis living in Çorum, who experienced tragic side of the past more painfully than Sunni citizens, commemorations have the role of strengthening group identity constructed with references to shared past and develop group consciousness by reminding all other massacres and victimizations before and after the Çorum events, in the place that conflicts took place. Primary motivation for initiating commemorations for Alevis in Çorum is to voice their discomfort due to lasting silence in addition to increasing awareness for the young generation about an event whose causes and perpetrators have not revealed after so many years. Besides, it is an opportunity to emphasize that it was not a singular or exceptional case in Alevi history in Turkey also by remembering Maraş (1978), Madımak (1993), Gazi Riots (1995) together with mourning for the losses of the Gezi events (2013), all of which demonstrates the continuation of Alevi victimization. On the contrary, this attempt, starting with the demand of facing with the past, has made the commemorations a space building conflicting narratives on the events at the same time. Thus, while the organizations provide a field for remembering by forming a unity with a common ground, they provoke counter memory and conflicting standings of Sunni groups about the same past.

As it will be seen from the data collected in the fieldwork, the language used in marches and speeches, and the narrative constructed on massacre narration were exposed to the reactions of Sunni citizens opponent to these activities. For conservative, nationalist Sunni people, it is taken as exclusivist that the participants are composed of a homogenous community and begin to accuse ordinary people. What is more, the contesting discourse built on the public square implicitly hinders

ordinary Alevi people to attend in the marches. In this chapter, based on my observations in July 2015 commemorative organizations and interviews done during the investigation, I will show two things about these organizations: on the one hand, commemorations become the distinct concrete activity with the assertion to build collective memory and ensure its transmission to new generation as an act of reproducing identities. On the other hand, it reveals that there are divergences on how narration should be built about the shared past and there are conflicting positions on this way of narration. The participation of non-local associations around Turkey and from abroad creates an open context for the commemoration, which does not rely only on what was happened in Çorum, but also on the multiplicity of local identities and on the way local subjects' effort to build collective memory. The context transforms through the contribution of different associations for years and gains new meanings depending upon the political context of the time.

In this regard, first I investigate into the literature on commemorative activities and their relation with the formation of social memory and collective identity. In addition, its role of posing contested memories and narratives, which can be both an opportunity and obstacle for the struggle for justice and unity in the case of Çorum, will be discussed. Then, I analyze the commemoration organizations of the Çorum events; the phases it has gone through, the role of memory entrepreneurs in emergence and continuity of the activities, and the emergence of alternative memories along with conflicting side of them. Lastly, I discuss the influence of diaspora Alevis as translocal associations in the commemorations that significantly influence the transformation of the commemorations by dominating in the narrative construction.

3.2. Literature about Commemorations and Building Memory

Commemorative ceremonies are ritual acts evoking collective memory by establishing collective narratives about the events having passed. Together with the escalation of memory studies, there has been an increase in the investigations of commemorative activities as they are the embodiment of collective memory and carry its dynamics and dimensions. It is in a sense “a register of sacred history”

(Schwartz, 1982), which “moralizes the past, creates out of a chronicle tradition” (Schudson, 1997, p. 359). Paul Connerton assign great importance to commemorations as ritual performances since “the images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained” by them in the present (1989, p. 38). For him, commemorative ceremonies are performative, and participation builds commitment to the group and to its core narrative (Connerton, 1989). Besides, it has been highly in relation with the political upheavals from its rising manipulative usage since the late eighteenth century by nation-states (Gillis, 1994; E. J. Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2010; Nora, 1996; Olick & Robbins, 1998b) to turning into a more democratized act in the late twentieth century with asserting plurality of memories and various agencies in constructing memories of the past (Confino, 1997; Misztal, 2003; Olick & Robbins, 1998b). On the one hand commemorations play an instrumental role of constructing and maintaining social identities in a unitary sense that establish the relation of communities with their past based on symbolic events, practices, mnemonic sites and heroism. On the other hand, they reveal malleable side of the past images by waging a struggle between contested memories as alternative narratives against dominant ones claiming multiplicity of identities, experiences and meanings of the past (Olick, 1999a). As a result, commemorations carry intertwined meanings under a singular and united image.

3.2.1. National Identity and Commemoration

The idea that the role of commemorative activities as establishing and maintaining collective identities on historical continuity of the society is attributed to Durkheim (Allen, Pickering, & Watts Miller, 1998; Misztal, 2003). In his study of “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life”, Durkheim places importance on rites and ceremonies as natural needs of society, which uphold and reaffirm “at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality” (Durkheim, 2004, p. 121). Although he does not directly refer to social remembering of the past, the way people “constitute the notion or category of time” by creating calendars shows the collective understanding of past and the need for locating events “in relation to fixed and determined guide lines” (Durkheim, 2004, pp. 108–109). On the same base, modern nation-states have been built on the idea

of preserving the meaning of shared past, collective sentiment and solidarity through mnemonic sites, heroic stories, and commemorative activities. The construction and continuity of national identity hold unity and solidarity resting on a vision of an honorable and glorified past and of a reachable future. To achieve this target, nations need to establish a representation of the past by selective remembering and forgetting. Ernest Renan observes this aspect of nation-state formation in the way that “forgetting... is an essential factor in the creation of a nation” (Renan, 2003, p. 11). The past and the present become the two significant constitutive elements of the soul of nations. “One (past) is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present consent, the desire to live together, the desire to continue to invest in the heritage that we have jointly received” (Renan, 2003, p. 19). Hence, social remembering of an affirmative side of the past has been a necessary condition for national unity which is to a great extent enabled by commemorating heroic events and great men sacrificed and devoted their lives to their nation.

The way nation states construct collective memory by selective remembering and forgetting is an intentional act that leaders or memory entrepreneurs form a selected past images in order to hold unity and serve for their political aims. As presentist approach argues that the past is manipulated or reappropriated for the current political and social needs by using public commemorations, media, and education system (Misztal, 2003, p. 55). In a way, it means to institutionalize national memory and dominate popular memory. By doing that, states have joined its society to the ideology of the state and to its idea. In *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm and Ranger investigates into how the late nineteenth century European states have invented traditions appealing to zeitgeist in order to increase social unity and solidarity, to justify institutions or authority relations, to transfer and indoctrinate socialization and value judgements (E. J. Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2010). The emphasis put on “invention of tradition” addresses to the fact that written history is not the production of spontaneous memory that belongs to local community, rather it expresses appropriated common history which is formed via institutionalizing and popularizing by carriers of establishment ideology. The Third Republic’s public ceremonies of Bastille Day is one of the examples of this invention of new traditions

in France. It was done with the intention that transform the heritage of the French Revolution into a consolidative expression of state power and the citizen's pleasure (E. J. Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2010, p. 271). Nora and Connerton also analyze commemorations as the instrumental mechanism of promoting solidarity and political power. Commemoration calendar of National Socialist Party (Hitler's handling of political power, and ceremonies conducted for the Old Guard) and May 1968 anniversaries are some examples for the ways of forming social memory through commemorative practices (Connerton, 1989; Nora, 1996).

The image of the Battle of Gallipoli in commemorative narratives, history books and official narrative is another example of how national identity is established and maintained by dominating and manipulating commemorative narrative, and national historiography by political power. Since 1916 the discourse used in commemorations of Gallipoli and the way ceremonies organized has been displaying multiple images accommodated in narratives related to the interests of authorities and their ideologies (Arzik Erzurumlu, 2012; Demirci, 2013). It became an instrumentalized "realm of memory" that contains multiplicity of identities from ultra-nationalist to Islamists and create an "imagined community" with a common narrative accordingly. After starting with a moderate commemoration in 1916, in every change of government, the use of the commemoration has also changed. While the general pattern of the victory of Turks has been preserved, the dynamics of glorifying the role of armed forces or Mustafa Kemal, highlighting Turkish identity, expansion of local status to national and international one, and holding official monopoly has altered with respect to contemporary context of politics (Arzik Erzurumlu, 2012). Today, after AKP came into power, the way of commemoration has monopolized with the regulation of 18 March Veterans Day, which sets the rules of commemorations locally and nationally (Demirci, 2013, p. 25).

As meanings of the past is malleable, the present circumstances can exploit the potential of ceremonies; therefore, commemorations become a process involving social and political context and genre memories (Olick, 1999a). Hence, the decisive

role of “memory entrepreneurs” (Jelin, 2003)⁴² who are the decision-makers, here the top is the state officials and then local authorities and non-governmental organizations, on the issue of what, who and how to remember becomes illustrative in case of commemorations. The “duty to remember” (Nora, 1996) of national victory and its manner is taken on by the government and assigned to the shoulders of local communities and small non-official institutions by showing willingness to be the part of official commemorative narrative.

3.2.2. Multiplicity of Commemorations: Alternative or Contested Memories

On the other side, despite the fact that state powers try to hegemonize collective memory by making use of commemorative narratives and symbolic practices in ceremonies with unitary and solidarity concerns and political interests, commemorative activities have not only taken the role of legitimate institutions, but also contained contested memories within itself, challenged to dominant narrative and produced multiple meanings under the same past event. In this sense, the popular memory theory and dynamics of memory perspective criticize presentist approach that there is the possibility of building collective memory from bottom to above contesting the dominated one and it is not restrained to political reductionism and functionalism (Misztal, 2003, pp. 62–74). As democracy settles down in societies, it becomes difficult to manipulate or unify public memories by monopolizing commemorations with political interests. Groups can challenge indoctrinated commemorative narratives, which are contradicting with their own experiences or which intentionally (maybe unintentionally) suppress and silence alternative stories or invisible side of them. Especially after the World War II, commemorations transformed into a democratized and localized nature in tandem with proliferating studies paying attention to personal stories (Gillis, 1994; Mosse, 1991; Young, 1993).

Classification of popular memory that highlights localization of remembering is called “oppositional memory”, “counter-memory”, “public memory” or “unofficial

⁴² Elizabeth Jelin borrows this concept from Howard Becker’s Notion of “moral entrepreneur”, “to use it in the field of struggles over memories. ”They are seeking “social recognition and political legitimacy of one (their own) interpretation or narrative of the past” (Jelin, 2003, p. 54).

memory” by the scholars (Misztal, 2003, p. 62). Counter-memory, as Foucault articulates, arguing the differentiation and challenges to the dominant memory desacralizes tradition and shows the tendency of decentralization of collective memory (Foucault, 1977). In his view, popular memory is a factor that enables people to control their dynamics (Olick & Robbins, 1998b, p. 23). In this regard, the impersonal and imposed manner of commemorations leaves its place to fragmented incentives. Social communities have discovered an authentic narration of the history and a new form of perception concerning past (Nora & Özcan, 2006, p. 233).

An illustrative example to conflicting side of collective memory and emergence of alternative narratives can be the change of the date of the commemoration of the Battle of Gallipoli in its 100th anniversary from the 18 March to 24 April by intending to dominate commemorations of Armenian genocide on the same day. 24 April 1915 is the date when a large number of Armenian intellectuals were arrested and collective violence and deportation was triggered. Although there is no direct evidence about the relation between deportation decision and Gallipoli (Demirci, 2013), by organizing commemorations on the same day, the state tried to minimize the influence of the discussions of the genocide and to draw attention of the country into the national commemoration. Nevertheless, still not dominating, Armenian commemorations were also done and mourned the traumatic past by standing against suppression attempts to their form of past representation. Moreover, they brought into question Armenian martyrs in Battle of Çanakkale that is ignored and has never mentioned in the commemorative narrations that reveal multiplicity of collective memory, which is composed of differently regarding to group dynamics (Ertani, 2014).

Within this direction, this section of the thesis is focusing on democratized culture of commemoration that gives the rise to local memory movements separated from unifying concerns of national power, but bringing to light the unspoken and undebated tragedies of Alevi community in Çorum, whose losses have not been the main topic of conversation for the governments for a long time similar to other Alevi massacres. As memory of such traumatic events can no longer be taken for granted,

there emerges a powerful reason to commemorate, “to save both individual and collective recollections from oblivion” (Gillis, 1994, p. 12). By initiating commemorations of the Çorum events, the initiators give people the opportunity to have a voice in building up history in their own words rather than complying with long-term omission and silence or with the narrative impeaching ambiguous actors. This initiative to trigger popular memory for the local shared historical event displays some similarities with national commemorations in terms of manner and target of organizations. The commemoration has been represented with a dominated master narrative to unify community’s identity which constructed around the victimization of Alevi both particularly in the Çorum events and in general from Karbala to the Gezi Park events; fascism, its proponents –at the top the state is placed – and Sunni community (directly accused in the 2015 commemoration) as the villains of the story, and call for protecting rights and history of Alevi community (so protecting Alevi identity). In addition, the memory entrepreneurs are leading figures of the local community as decision makers of what, who and how to commemorate.

On the other hand, the commemorations form a realm of memory that brings into the open different kinds of reception of the past tragedy. The transmission and diffusion of the past images have diversified among Alevi and Sunni communities. As a visible side of collective memory, commemorations depict a unitary picture with its narrative. However, it also produces contested memories on the side of Sunni, conservative communities who oppose to the way commemorations are organized and the discourse presented with them. Thus, the commemorative activity is not the only and appropriated indicator of collective remembering for the whole city (Confino, 1997). In this sense, the commemoration of the Çorum events harbor multiple narratives under its imagery and triggers alternative contested narratives preferring oblivion or other means of commemorations comprising all citizens by nonpolitical representations.

3.3. Emergence of the Commemorations of the Çorum Events

The public commemorations of the Çorum events started on 4 July 2009, twenty-nine years later after the events with participation of 100 people (Cumhuriyet, 2009). It

was initiated by Sadık Eral who was one of the sufferers and worked as the lawyer of people judged as injured party due to the events. It was the year when for the first time the violent past was uttered publicly in the city square. Among participants, there were Turgut Öker, who was the head of the AABK at that time, representatives of some of the political parties and civil society organizations from Çorum. In the commemorations, people held posters expressing that they did not forget their loss and they supported the brotherhood of Alevis and Sunnis in the city. At the end of the first march and speeches, organizers let a white pigeon fly to symbolize peace and brotherhood, and left 57 cloves on behalf of the losses in the city square. After the commemoration, a panel was set up to explain and discuss the events with the talks held by Sadık Eral, Turgut Öker, Feramuz Acar (the Head of Denmark Foundation of Alevi Communities), and Haydar Gören, from Yol TV. In the end, the organization finished with a dinner, called “*Canlar Yemeği*”, given on behalf of the dead (Ntv, 2009). Since 2009, commemorations have continued with an increasing participant population from and outside of the city, organized by the Çorum branch of HBVAKV. After the first organization, Alevi Associations in Europe have given more attention and increased attending of young groups to the commemorations of the Çorum events along with Sivas Madımak. Since the date is close to the Madımak Massacre commemorations (2 July), the organization has been extended by carrying a group of people from Sivas to Çorum.

Commemorative activities started with the call for remembering and appropriating the past tragedy all together by leaving sectarian differences and contestations aside. Initial narrative constructed on the demand of coherent reception of the past. In his speech of the first commemoration, Eral describes the Çorum events as “provocations to prevent the development of democracy in Turkey, the growth of Turkey, and to lead up to September 12 coup d’état.” He emphasizes the essential need for reading military intervention and the events together. Also, he does not prioritize the victimization of Alevis, but addresses the whole Çorum citizens either

Alevi or Sunni as victims of the events not as perpetrators (Cumhuriyet, 2009).⁴³ The 57 cloves and letting a pigeon fly show that initial narrative was constructed on shared victimization without making any distinctions. Rather than laying stress on historical continuation of Alevi massacres and accusing Çorum citizens as perpetrators, by pointing to the relationship with the 1980 military intervention, the initiators aimed at decreasing intensity of a possible reaction and at encouraging a broader participation by people from different opinions politically and religiously. It seems like an invitation not only to Alevis, but all citizens in a square open to public in order to embrace the commonly experienced painful past and to face with it although participating representatives and organizers are mostly Alevis.

However, the issue was not only to draw the attention of non-Alevi citizens, persuade them the need for facing with the past and take a collective action, but also it was to evoke the memories of Alevi community, put an end to silence and fear by mobilizing them around commemorative activities. I did not have the chance to directly observe commemorative activities until 2015, so I do not have the first-hand information for what kind of an atmosphere marches and speeches created, and what it meant for audiences in the square and participants of commemoration at the very beginning and throughout the years. Yet, by analyzing the interviews I did in this process and the point it comes to in the last year, I ascertain that the initial invitation has not reciprocated by majority of the citizens. Throughout seven years, the participants have composed of a homogenous group that any non-Alevi, nationalist or Islamist representatives or organizations have not responded to the call as it was hoped.

The organizations that have been regularly attending with representatives to the commemorations are AABK, the Head Office of HBVAKV, Associations of Alevi Cultural Center, Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu (Alevi-Bektaşî Federation [ABF]), PSAKD, KESK (Confederation of Public Laborer's Union), CHP, Halkların Demokratik Partisi (People's Democratic Party [HDP]), Emek Partisi (Labor Party [EMEP]), Halkevleri

⁴³ "Türkiye'de 12 Eylül ile yüzleşmeden Çorum olayları ele alınamaz. Biz bu cesareti gösteriyoruz. Çünkü Çorum'da yaşanan olaylar Türkiye'yi 12 Eylül'e sürüklemiştir. Çorum olaylarını değerlendirirken 12 Eylül'ü es geçemezsiniz. Alevisiyle, Sünnisiyle Çorum halkı bu olayların faili değil mağdurdur."

(People's House), and village societies. Therefore, far from the initial claims and requests, leftist and Alevi organizations have been the only possessors of the commemorations. In relation to this, commemorative narration has turned to the absolute victimization of Alevi population by even addressing Sunni citizens in Çorum as perpetrators of the events. Hence, the commemorations have been representing a common identity and building various narratives about the common past shaping predominantly around two notable ones: one is highlighting tragedy of local Alevi community suffered from and broadens inclusively involving other Alevi massacres and victimizations. The other one is refusing to bring up this issue publicly in the way that current groups actualize by asserting concerns about repolarization and inviting new confrontations. In both cases, the meaning of commemoration holds a significant place that search for the answer of what the commemorations represent and serve for. At this point, I consider the role and intentions of memory entrepreneurs important, which characterizes the aim and language of commemorations and gives a form to the organization by making decisions on how to construct narrative, whom to address and invite to them.

3.4. The Role and Intention of Memory Entrepreneurs in the Commemorations

One of the leading group promoting public attention for the remembrance of the past events and their recognition is victims, survivors or relatives of the survivors. For the cases the memory of the past is not alive in minds of people as a matter of course, it becomes a requirement to revive it via external factors such as creating archives, marking anniversaries, celebrations and authenticating documents (Nora, 1996). The role of memory entrepreneurs can be interpreted between an absolutist instrumental and relativistic approaches of memory, where the first argues that "our conception of past is entirely at the mercy of current conditions", the latter "locates the significance of events in the standpoint of the observer" (Schwartz, 1982, p. 376). In this case, it is the combination of these two approaches that the past is reconstructed in the present with deliberate intentions of creating awareness and consciousness, but on the basis of painful experiences of witnesses true to life, which has particularities for every person. For the people experiencing a tragic devastation, "commemorative vigilance" (Nora, 1989) becomes important in order to express

their grievances, demands and struggle against the power causing people to forget. Sadık Eral and Nurettin Aksoy, the head of the HBVAKV in Çorum, are the two initiators of the commemorations. They were both exposed to the violent conflict and can be taken as notables among the local Alevi community. In the interviews, while Eral mostly underlines the intention of mediating contesting past images of Alevi and Sunni community, Aksoy puts emphasis on the danger of forgetting their own shared grievances among the Alevi young and community in general, and the intention of developing awareness against possible reoccurrence of massacres.

Sadık Eral stated that their aim was to express the pain of Alevi people and all aggrieved people experienced the events at that time. For him, it was a rebellion against the forces who want to disintegrate Çorum citizens. He initiated it to commemorate the Çorum events as a year of peace and brotherhood:

We went out by bearing the pain. Yes, I went out and said that there is no one tortured more brutally than me and kept alive. As deaths cannot talk, I have the right to talk...And we got on the Çorum square and said: Come all friends, let's do this hand in hand, but no Sunni came. No Sunni democrat sounded. No Muslim people sounded (Eral, February 2015).⁴⁴

It was a declaration of invitation that embracing the painful past together and demanding to reveal real perpetrators by state forces are possible. However, as his words of disappointment display that the issue does not make a convincing public impression and is not acknowledged in the same way as the common past and value by whole townspeople. Many Sunni citizens, even the ones not standing much distant from Alevi community, do not share master narrative representing under the collectivity of commemorations.

Another triggering factor for starting commemoration is to raise consciousness in new generation. Nurettin Aksoy explained the emergence of this process due to the ignorance of their children and the young in the city about the past. He realized this

⁴⁴ "Dedik ki bu bizi bölmek isteyenlere inat, Çorum'da Çorum olaylarını barış ve kardeşlik yılı olarak anmak istiyoruz. Tabi acıyı bal eyledik diye çıktık sokağa. Evet, çıktım dedim ki benden daha ağır işkence görüp de hayatta kalan kimse yok. Ölümler konuşamayacağına göre benim konuşma hakkım var dedim. Ve Çorum meydanına çıktık dedik ki: "Gelin arkadaşlar, bunu el ele tutalım" ama hiçbir Sünni gelmedi. Hiçbir Sünni demokrat ses vermedi. Hiçbir Müslüman diyen insan ses vermedi » (Eral, February 2015).

fact in a conversation with his children and *semahçılar*⁴⁵: “We talked about Çorum events. And our children asked: ‘Really? How did it happen? Does not this country have a state, soldier, police? What happened and did our neighbor kill us? Will they do it again?’” He stated the difficulty of explaining reality of happenings, as he conveyed that the young could not perceive those experiences just by telling the story. After this realization, as one of the promoters, he participated in organization of commemoration and helped shooting a documentary film *Ekinler Kanlar İçindeydi* (2010). He says: “After this, our children who did not take us seriously and regard it possible started to be shocked.”⁴⁶

Informing and conceiving the young become a compulsive component of the commemoration organizations. Personal transmission of the story is not seen enough to raise awareness among new generation. Therefore, Aksoy and Eral undertook the role of memory entrepreneurs to ensure memory transmission. Here, the past is taken as a notion that can be learned from and rebuilt in the present as a result of current needs and conditions (Jelin, 2003, p. 92). The link between past experience and future expectation is built through memory construction. Gathering many people on the square every year together with organizing a panel and shooting a documentary film develop a narrative about the events, which touches the tragedy Alevi people suffered.

In this context, I am using the concept of *generation* as Mannheim defines it. He emphasizes shared life experience referring to “shared destiny”. “People sharing particular time and space tend to a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience and a characteristic type of historically relevant action” (Mannheim, 1952, p. 291). Instead of temporality, he prioritizes living in a particular time and space which leads to have similar cast of time. The reason why young people cannot grasp

⁴⁵ They are *semah* dancers performing religious ritual in *cem* ceremonies.

⁴⁶ “Çorum olaylarından bahsettik. Çocuklarımız: ‘Gerçekten mi? Yani gerçekten mi, nasıl olur? Yani bu ülkenin devleti mi yok, askeri mi yok, polisi mi yok? Ne oldu da komşumuz hemen bizi kestiler? Yani yine mi kesecekler?’ Biz de dedik ki bu olmuyor, yani anlatamıyorsun, anlatmak zor. Benim çocuğum algılayamıyor... Ondan sonra belgesel çekimi başladı. Ondan sonra bizimle, yani ciddiye almayan çocuklarımız böyle bir olayın neden yaşandığını ihtimal vermeyen çocuklarımız, bu sefer kendileri şaşırma başladı” (Nurettin Aksoy, February 2015).

the stories of their parents is that they did not experience similar events in a similar way. Mode of thinking, social and political atmosphere, approaches, etc. all has changed. Hence, the meaning generations attribute to the same event also changes. To fill this gap, memory entrepreneurs produce a narrative that is bound to the master narrative, and also has a subjective side. On one side, they remind the old tragedies in Karbala, Çaldıran, Dersim, Maraş and Sivas Madımak. On the other side, they stress the brotherhood and peace that existed in the same past they are referring in Çorum.

The need for creating sources to store information also paves the way for commemorative organizations. For the actors of social memory, as long as Alevi people do not have the means of source of information about their past experiences, it is very likely to be defeated again. Because separation and fears after the events drove many families to silence, the need for collective movements increases in order to create resistance against oppressed feelings and memory. Enabling Sunni people to recognize and acknowledge the past in the same way in addition to demanding appropriation of Alevi victimization are secondary issue in this respect. For Nurettin Aksoy, it is of top priority to make claims, take steps when it is needed, and to make Alevi's consciousness about their history, who even abstain from talking about the recent history:

Alevi do not have memory. Alevi do not have studies. Alevi do not have records. Because, when you turn your face, they do not have any archives/records that will convert their memory to consciousness, the same events and the same system since 1400 years from Karbala. The same massacre, the same discourse... Is not there anything changed? Think that a society, for thousands years, has been subjected to the same events and has no precaution. It goes round in vicious circle, but there is no action. We, as to keep it in memory, to explain to young generations what happened thirty, thirty five years before, started such an incident (Nurettin Aksoy, February 2015).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ "Alevilerin bellekleri yok. Alevilerin çalışmaları yok. Alevilerin kayıtları yok. Ya da işte şöyle bir yönünü döndüğün zaman belleklerine tekrar hafızayı akla, bilince dönüştürecek hiçbir kayıt olmadığı için, 1400 yıldır Kербela'dan beri aynı olaylar aynı sistem. Aynı katliam, aynı söylem... Yani hiç mi değişen bir şey yok? Yani bir toplum düşünün ki binlerce yıl aynı şeyler başına geliyor ve bunun için hiçbir tedbir yok. Yani aynı şeye kısır döngü gibi devir daim gibi onları yaşıyor, ama bunun için hiçbir tedbir yok. Biz de bunu olayları hafızada tutmak, bellekte tutmak, yani bundan 30 yıl önce ya da 35 yıl

There is an explicit need for creating archives preserving bitter experiences to guard for today and shape future. It is an effort to open up the realm of memory (*lieux de memoire*) in which the memory can not be a part of everyday life (Nora, 1996). “Lieux de memoire arise out of a sense that there is no such thing as spontaneous memory” (Nora, 1996, p. 7). It is a matter of turning to social awareness, appropriating your own history and so developing an active understanding of history. Aksoy builds a narrative placing historical continuity, from Karbala to the Gezi Park events, of victimization for the Alevi community in the center and underlining the existence of potential danger today. He expresses a deep concern for the case that knowledge about the past victimization will fade into oblivion without such efforts of commemorative vigilance. Eral also shares this concern and suggests to turn this memory into “brotherhood consciousness” that embraces the past as a shared tragedy and will prevent reoccurrence of the same event rather than having a desire and passion of revenge.⁴⁸ Otherwise, for the entrepreneurs, oblivion will not raise consciousness for the young or new generations to know their roots, realize their identity and political accounts on them.

Hence, in essence, the initiators meet on a common ground of the requirement for transforming historical consciousness to collective memory. Memory is taken as a guard against new victimizations, discriminations and separations for Alevi community in Çorum. Besides this common ground, there are differences in expectations and demands of the two leading memory entrepreneurs, which shows diversity in interests on commemorations. This differentiation creates an impact on personal narratives about the construction of past images either on separation or appropriation of memories while shared intentions are preserving master narrative and create collectivity under commemorative activities.

önce ne olduğunu gelecek nesillere anlatmak için böyle bir olaya başladık” (Nurettin Aksoy, February 2015).

⁴⁸ “Bunu biz intikam meselesi, hırsıyla değil, bunu bir bilince dönüştürelim. Burdan bir kardeşlik bilincine dönüştürelim. Diyelim ki bu tür, geçmişte bu acılar yaşandı bunları biz eğer anmazsak acılar daha yaşanır”(Sadık Eral, February 2015).

3.5. Contesting Side of Memory Construction

Even though memory entrepreneurs aim to unify the images of the past and develop awareness about the victimization of Alevi community, commemorations and efforts of building the collective memory create a site where people struggle for the presence and “true” representation of their identities and past stories, which introduces contested memories. Since memory is such a field that is unstable, fluid, and open; representation and interpretation of the images lead to take contesting positions. There emerge controversies over the actors taking possession of power of representation and discourse about the shared past: “The struggle plays out between a variety of actors who claim recognition and legitimacy of their voices and demands” (Jelin, 2003, p. 50). It is important to understand cultural expressions and performances by considering “how in-group and out-group audiences respond to them” because “divergent group psychocultural narratives interpret same expressions or actions so differently” (Ross, 2007, p. 63).

Memories of the oppressed and marginalized groups usually shape around claiming the “true” version of history and demand of justice to reveal the perpetrators and make their victimization recognized. In this case, the Alevi community who were subjected to severe assault in the Çorum events are positioning themselves on the side of victimized and marginalized. Against them, there are accused people, who can be categorized as non-Alevi conservatives and also ask for a fair remembering of the past, but claim the need for a purification of positions from politics and ideologies, which they assert the leading actors in commemorations actualize. For this reason, for many of them this comes to the meaning not to remember because many prefer to keep silence about the past tragedy rather than raise the potential of new conflicts by strongly voicing the demands and accusation in public places.

Today, the commemoration of the Çorum events starting with one hundred people has reached two thousand people with the participation of some representatives of CHP, some members of HDP from Çorum branch, Alevi associations and members of small leftist parties and organizations (Cnn Türk, 2014). The number of participants changes according to the interviewers, some of which gives exaggerated numbers in

order to display a favorable response received. Aksoy speaks of eight thousand people, two thousand of them from outside, which he does not find enough. Hüseyin Solmaz, one of the Alevi dedes who lost his father in the events, says five thousand people participate from Europe and Turkey. For them, every year the number increases and people show deep interest in organizations. Yet, despite this collaborative effort and positive image of commemorations, there are considerable amount of Alevi people as outsider to the foundation, association and political party environments, who do not participate in the commemorations. Many of them are the ones abstaining from or afraid of being appeared there, or the ones not aware of the organizations.

On the part of Sunni community, aside from the ones politically positioned around leftist groups and organizations, they hardly ever attend the commemorations. The ones participate in the marches bring forward with their leftist political identity rather than their sects. It reaches such a pitch that in the eighth year of marches, it is easy to meet people who witness the commemorative organizations for the first time and who do not hear about it in the city center, except the ones deliberately against this kind of organizations. There are several reasons behind this indifference and oblivion. Some of the shopkeepers I had conversation in haste during the march, there were young people who had no idea about the Çorum events since they had no relatives directly experienced that time or since their parents had not talked about it before. Some of them guessed the commemoration organized for the Madımak Massacre, for possibly it happened more recently, it became a current issue and the bus leading the marches in Çorum had pictures of losses in the fire of the Madımak Hotel. Besides that, there were people living relatively outside the city center and in Alevi neighborhood, so they did not hear about the commemorations and marches, and did not know exactly for what purpose they were done.

On the other hand, these numbers and organizations about the past tragedies do not have a meaning for Sunni community who are aware of the commemorations and composed of people defining themselves as nationalist, old idealist, religious, conservative or as not belonging to any group. Their reaction to the commemorations

has a significant place in constructing an alternative memory narration and building contestation as the ones who also witnessed the events. When I ask them about the commemorations, most of them address a small number of people gathering every year and label the commemorations as protest demonstrations organized by marginal groups. According to the Sunni people I interviewed, Çorum residents do not accredit these demonstrations. The harshest objection belonged to a craftsman Metin, who was a nationalist at that time in his words. He interprets the commemorations as: “It is meaningless to spill water on dry dirt.”⁴⁹ For him, it is meaningless to organize and participate such demonstrations because underlying reason for these organizations is to scratch it. What is more, commemorations are represented by only a certain group of people. Many Sunni interviewers voiced this idea. After indicating the intention of aggravating, Ümit, who served in *Ülkü Ocakları* and was on trial after the coup d'état characterizes demonstrations as “militantly done”. Turgut who also worked in *Ülkü Ocakları* at that time says:

Alevis are doing it. There is no such a thing for Sunnis. When it comes to death, there are at least 10-15 dead people from Sunni community. However, if you pay attention, always the dead are launched as Alevi. A narrow community does that. Indeed, it is something radical groups bring forward again now... There are not many people demanding commemorations. For, it is a case ultimately leading to separation.⁵⁰

Serkan, a craftsman running their family shop since 1944 in the city center and defines himself as a religious Muslim, does not credit the commemorations: “It is not right to aggravate. If they want to commemorate, they can do it once a year. Nevertheless, I don't approve of it.”⁵¹ People who see the commemorations as protest demonstration supporting a more heterogeneous local organizations that satisfy future expectations. “Commemoration should be in this way: certain civil society communities come together, explain, and we draw a lesson. There are outside

⁴⁹ Kurumuş pisliğe su dökülmez (Metin, February 2015).

⁵⁰ “Aleviler yapıyor. Sünnilerin pek ilgisi yok. Ölüme gelince en az 10-15 tane Sünni kesimden ölen vardır. Ama hep dikkat ederseniz ölenler Alevi kesimden diye lanse edilir. Dar bir çevre onu yapıyor. Daha doğrusu radikal grupların şu anda yeniden gündeme getirdiği bir şey. Yok (Yapılmasını isteyen çok kişi yok). Yani ayırmaya neden olacak bir durum sonuçta” (Turgut, February 2015).

⁵¹ “Kaşınması doğru değil. Anmak istiyorlarsa senede bir gün ansınlar. Ama yine de doğru bulmuyorum” (Serkan, February 2015).

participants. What kind of fault do ordinary people have?”⁵² (Metin, February 2015). “It is a protest demonstration; we cannot say that is a commemoration. Nongovernmental organizations should organize together. Some suggestions should be put forward” (Osman Eğri, March 2015).⁵³ Furthermore, there is a strong belief that commemorations were started and have been organized by German Intelligence Service. Fahri Azkur, who was the provincial head of MHP just before the events occurred, and Teoman Şahin, who was the founder of Ehl-i Beyt Foundation in Çorum and defined himself as Shia Alevi, supported this view. Şahin states that it is a religious duty to draw a lesson from history; but “is it done for this reason? They want to separate again” (March 2015).⁵⁴

Another example of the objection against the commemorations belongs to one of the young women I dropped by her shop during the commemoration march in 2015 summer. She was surprised and disappointed since it was the first time she witnessed the march in the city. She was angry with the organization and closed the door of her shop due to any possible disturbance. She said that she was very sad about that picture and preferred not to remember bad times. Similar to other reactions, she did not find the intention of the organization in good purpose. It was useless and dangerous to make people recollect confrontations with those slogans used in the squares. Rather, it was better for her to build nice memories and fix grievances.

This approach of Sunni people reveals a conflicting side of the recollection of the Çorum events. The main reason why these people avoid participating in and approving commemorations is that the manner of organization does not represent them. Although they express bitterness of the events, they are disturbed because victimization is presented one sided for them. The narrative specifically building on victimization and marginalization of the Alevis, not all Çorum citizens encompassing

⁵² “Anma şöyle olur: belirli sivil halk toplulukları bir araya gelir, anlatır, ders çıkarır. Belli bir kesimin yapmasıyla olmaz. Dışarıdan gelenler oluyor. Halkın ne suçu var” (Metin, February 2015).

⁵³ “Protesto mitingi o, anma denemez. Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları birlikte yapmalılar. Öneriler geliştirilebilir”(Osman Eğri, March 2015).

⁵⁴ “Tarihten ibret almak farzdır, doğru. Ama, fakat, lakin bu amaçla mı yapılıyor? Tekrar ayrışmasını istiyorlar” (Teoman Şahin, March 2015).

Sunni groups, is not shared by these people. Some of them accept the violent acts and murders Alevi people were subjected to, but often they abstain from prioritizing it. Accepting it by using the same language will mean accepting their guilt as an accused group, for the language Alevi people uses in commemorations includes “murderer”, “account for the massacres”, “fascists” and also refers to previous and subsequent massacres “Maraş, Sivas, Gazi”. Thus, because by implication they address to nationalists, rightists and Islamist groups, many of them consider the organizations provocative and that they do not serve for their citizens.

As for the entrepreneurs, the fundamental aim of commemorations is to embrace the tragedy that Alevis were subjected to against the state forces at that time and its living ideology today, the stance of Sunni people (including conservatives, rightists, Islamists) does not meet with that aim. On one side, it resulted from political disparity between the two communities. It seems as a protest demonstration to these Sunni groups since there are lots of leftist groups and their flags in the square, so it becomes a political and cultural reenactment of Alevi identity with the Left. Politically contested symbols “provoke intense in-group feeling” (Ross, 2007, p. 63) of fear and anger, for it reminds responsibility of leftist groups in the events to the rightist people. On the other side, there are many Alevi groups coming outside the city and country for the commemoration marches. This effort to gather a crowded group, instead of making this with native inhabitants, is another reason for Sunni people’s unfavorable reactions toward organizations. When reception of the shared past is met by the “outsiders” at first sight, act of remembering and demanding rights amounts to separation of two communities on interpretation and representation of the shared past.

At first, the majority of the group protesting there consists of only Alevis. For ordinary people, there are no representative Sunni entrepreneurs and communities standing there. Even if there are, they are represented with a leftist party or organization. Although in speeches, speakers can address to the issue as belonging to all Çorum citizens, symbolically it is taken as an Alevi organization. Obviously, this is a matter of identity and belonging for both sides. Commemorations form a realm for groups to

construct and maintain their collective identity. By gathering there as Alevi organizations and voicing “state terrorism against Alevis”, they rebuild the narrative based on continuing victimization and marginalization of the Alevis, which also establishes their collective identity historically. On the contrary, Sunni people do not find the same realm preserving their identity under the same issue. Even if they accept the state had primary responsibility for the emergence and exacerbation of the events, especially nationalist side takes the marches and commemorations as offensive against them. As they were known with their *ülküçü* position at that time, they are seen as one of the actors in the events.

Therefore, their narrative construction includes either denying their active role in the process, as the events occurred successively with the 1980 military intervention and most of the trials were combined with September 12th, or accepting their role only by highlighting being deluded with anticommunist struggle and patriotic senses. In both cases, they do not accept being addressed as perpetrators of the events. That is why, standing in the commemorations requires for them to overcome and face with their identities. Approaches toward commemorative organizations involve conflicts of memory and identity. “Identities and memories are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*. As such, they have no existence beyond our politics, our social relations, and our histories” (Gillis, 1994, p. 5). Recollections do not bring back without political and social reality of Alevis and Sunnis in this case. Though sectarian identities are transitive within itself, each identity has political, cultural and religious borders. Remembrance and preferences of each side are determined within these borders.

This apathy toward commemorations brings about loss of faith in building up trust between Sunni and Alevi people. As one of the organizers of them, Eral stresses their expectation of expressing a sorrow about the events by Sunni community. He addresses to political and religious representatives of the Islamists, conservatives and nationalists. “Still, intervening, after that, we are commemorating with four-five thousand people. And still, neither on behalf of Muslims, nor on behalf of AKP, nor on behalf of MHP, no one comes out and utters any word showing their regret if these

events had not happened.”⁵⁵ As being special to Çorum, he and other organizers anticipate prominent party representatives, journalists or intellectuals to make public statements. For them, it is required to show that all people are sensitive and embrace the past grievances, irrespective of their political or religious stance. As long as they see the ignorance and apathy toward commemorations instead of getting desired reactions, their belief on sincerity of the brotherhood discourse is weakening:

...They only say this, if we hold a march in commemoration, ‘do not reopen old wounds’ they say. This means, he says in a way, ‘are you asking for a new trouble?’... Today, the president came to Çorum, Tayyip Erdoğan, and he said ‘Pride on Ebu Suud Efendi’ to Çorum. It was a serious trauma for Çorum because Ebu Suud Efendi was a man who gave *fetwas* that it is necessary to assassinate Alevis...But, there is a mass convenient that is ready to be abused. Today, I know there are lots of people in Çorum approving Isis movement in their minds. If they have a chance, tomorrow there will emerge three Isis from Çorum. It is clear who will be the victim of it. That is why we say that we must not forget Çorum events and we must commemorate it.⁵⁶

From Daniel Bar-Tal’s perspective, this conflicting case brings into the open societal beliefs which are the basic components of collective memory and ethos of conflict (Daniel Bar-Tal, 2007, pp. 1435–1437). He defines the societal beliefs as cognitions shared by society members “on topics and issues that are of special concern for their society and contribute to their sense of uniqueness” (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 353). Clearly, not all society members in conflict hold consensual beliefs about the conflicting case. People develop selective narratives about the past. “They do not intend to provide an objective history of the past, but tell about the past as it is functional to the society’s present existence, especially given its confrontation with the rival society” (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1436). Hence, the knowledge about the past determines the interpretation of present circumstances about the commemorations for both Alevi

⁵⁵ “Hala onun arkasından biz dört-beş bin kişi ile anıyoruz. Ve hala birileri çıkıp da ne Müslümanlık adına ne AKP adına ne MHP adına bu olaylar olmasaydı diye üzüntü belirten bir sözcük dahi söylemiyorlar” (Sadık Eral, February 2015).

⁵⁶ “Ancak şunu söylüyorlar, olayları anmada bir yürüyüş yaparsak “yav şu yararları kaşımayın” diyorlar. Bunun anlamı şu, öyle söyler ki: “bir daha mı kaşınıyorsunuz” havasında söylüyorlar. Bugün başbakan Çorum’a geldi, Tayyip Erdoğan, kalktı dedi ki: “Ebu Suud Efendi ile gurur duyun” dedi Çorum’a. Bu Çorum için çok ciddi bir travmaydı. Çünkü, Ebu Suud Efendi Alevilerin katli vaciptir diye fetva veren bir adam... Ama kullanılan, kullanılmaya müsait bir kitle var. Bugün ben içinden İşid’in hareketlerini tasvip eden bir sürü insan olduğunu Çorum’da biliyorum. Fırsat bulsunlar yarın Çorum’da üç tane İşid çıkar. Bunun mağdurunun da kim olacağı belli. Bunun için diyoruz ki biz, Çorum olaylarını unutmayalım analım” (Sadık Eral, February 2015).

and Sunni community. Relatedly, it influences future expectations and fears as it reflects on Eral's words.

One of the themes on which societal beliefs of collective memory touch is that it "presents one's own society as the victim of the opponent" (Bar-Tal, 2003). Utterance of a symbolic name in a public speech by an Islamic party leader revives traumatic memory that also leads Eral to voice concern about strong likelihood of future victimizations. In addition to the narrative of collective memory, the interviewees evolve narrative about the present and future which Bar-Tal calls it as *ethos* (Bar-Tal, 2000). In their narratives, it is possible to see some of eight themes of ethos of conflict. Societal beliefs about security, of one's own victimization, of unity and of peace are four predominant themes emerging from Alevi interviewees. Fear of reoccurrence past violence brings about the societal beliefs about security and victimization. The efforts to guard the young against possible threat promote beliefs about the unity of Alevi citizens supported by the beliefs of victimization. The overall aim of commemorative organizations and the evolving narratives of collective memory serves for the societal beliefs of peace.

3.6. Moderate Approaches and Refrain

Apart from these interpretations of commemorations, there are some moderate approaches toward commemorative organizations. Muharrem is one of them who is the head of EMEP and runs a pesticides shop. He is Alevi, and does not define himself religious. Muharrem was one of the managers of TÖB-DER in 1980 and was on trial after the September 12 coup d'état. After he points out the limited participation in commemorations, he analyzes what others think and explains why he finds organizations important.

There are people who think, as you said, that these events ended already, it is closed, and why are you reopening it? I am sorry for them because it is not reopening. For me, going there means asking why the real perpetrators have not been revealed and this event happened. Someone has to inform us. Now

from here, unless they inform, that Alevi continues to blame his Sunni neighbor (Muharrem, March 2015).⁵⁷

He believes that for democratization it is a requirement and meaningful to participate this organization. However, very few people perceive it in this way. “Some goes there to spill out hatred against Sunni community; some, from Alevi, goes to say that I couldn’t have come here so far; look, I come!”⁵⁸ He was also angry at those who accused of and addressed to ordinary people living there:

We also criticize from time to time; for example, the Alevi unities came here. We said that what a nonsense it is. Well, now you are coming here and shouting loudly. At whom are you shouting? Are you shouting at the man sitting in front of you in the park? Your address is the government, the state, but both you are coming to Sunni region and also as if you are showing Sunnis off, as if you are doing something... We said that this is not nice at all.⁵⁹

Obviously, the demand for a local commemoration to ask for justice trials and find out the truths made not only by Sunni, conservative or nationalist people, but also by Alevi, leftist people. The language used in the marches has an important role for the audience. Many people argue that accusing slogans can draw reactions of ordinary people in the city. In this regard, representation of the demands differentiates people and marginalizes the groups on the side of addressed audiences. Even though the speeches comprise peaceful demands and embracing language, some slogans prevent reaching the message to the ordinary citizens. Muharrem voices his discomfort with this act and calls for a more inclusive language.

Lastly, there are some Alevi people who consider the commemorations as necessary, but are afraid of participating in them. They are afraid of being visible and subjected to be blacklisted mostly by the state forces. They protect not only themselves, but

⁵⁷ “Dediğiniz gibi şöyle düşünen insanlar var: “ya bu olaylar zaten bitti kapandı, ne diye kaşıyorsunuz”. Şimdi bunun kaşındığını düşünenler var. Ben ona üzülüyorum; çünkü oraya gitmek onu kaşımak değil aslında. Bence oraya gitmek “gerçek failleri hala ortaya çıkarılmadı, neden bu olay gerçekleşti” demek. Bize birilerinin bilgi vermesi lazım. Şimdi burdan, aksi halde bu verilmediği sürece şurdaki Alevi ordaki Sünni komşusunu suçlayacak hala” (Muharrem, March 2015).

⁵⁸ “Kimisi Sünni kesime olan nefretini kusmak için gidiyordur. Kimisi işte buraya çoktandır gelemiyorum bak geldim demek için gelenler var Alevilerden” (Muharrem, March 2015).

⁵⁹ “Biz de eleştiriyoruz dönem dönem. Mesela buraya gelip Alevi birimlerini biz de eleştirdik. Dedik ki “böyle saçmalık olur mu ya”. Yani şimdi siz şimdi buraya gelip bangır bangır bağıriyorsunuz. Kime bağıriyorsunuz sen? Karşında parkta oturan adama mı bağıriyorsunuz? Senin muhatabın hükümet devlet ama sen gelmişsin hem Sünnilerin bölgesinde Sünnilere bir şey yapar gibi, caka satar gibi... Biz dedik bunlar hiç hoş değil yani” (Muharrem, March 2015).

also names of their children. Although they desire to voice their pain and future expectations, they do not want to encounter police forces and reactivate bitter side of the past. Ahmet who was fifteen years old in 1980 and lost his father in the events says:

Of course, the police are taping there, I don't know for what reason they are taping. How can I send my children? My children, mine, have a future...Now, I swear, people have the fear, we saw those days, we got a beating, our brothers were tortured, people were killed in jail (March 2015).⁶⁰

Ahmet is not the only man carrying this fear to be visible in a public demonstration. Many Alevi people, especially witnessed the past violence, abstain from participating crowded organizations having some political demands in the city. Worries about the repetition of violent conflicts is one of the determinative factor for both motivating to organize the commemorations and avoiding attending there. Nurettin Aksoy is aware of this fact and indicated their effort to overcome this pressure based on the fear:

In all marches we organize, while in such a system that when we go to Sivas there are eight, then, five thousand police coming and working. Here there are three traffic police; one or two civil servant from police station, chief. We walked with them. There was not any intemperance (February 2015).⁶¹

For all these precautions, it is not easy to overcome people's anxieties due to other external factors such as protecting their children's future. Most of the reactions to conceal their names I encountered in the interviews were given not to endanger their children's job or job opportunities. This worry over being blacklisted by the state is so alive on Alevis' side. Still, they support to preserve social memory about the events. However, instead of organizing marches and speeches in open public spaces, some of them propose other safe ways to inform the young. Ahmet underlines the importance of memory transmission to next generation in order to raise awareness and save their future:

⁶⁰ "Tabii, polis ordaki kameraya çekiyor. Ne için kameraya çektiğini bilmiyorum ben. Çocuğumu nasıl göndereyim, benim çocuğumun bir geleceği var, istikbali var... Şu an milletin yemin ediyorum yani korku var. O günleri de gördük, sopa yedik abilerimiz işkence gördü, insanlar öldürüldü ceza evlerinde"(Ahmet, March 2015).

⁶¹ "Yaptığımız bütün yürüyüşleri Sivas'ta gittiğimiz zaman sekiz, on bin, beş bin polisin gelip görev yaptığı bir sistemde biz üç tane trafik polisi; bir iki tane de Emniyet'ten sivil memur, müdürle yürüdük. En ufak bir taşkınlık olmadı" (Nurettin Aksoy, February 2015).

When humankind forget, new generation will also forget. I think, year by year, in its anniversary, legally, it should be talked and a lecture should be organized. And subsequent generation should know why it is done, what happened in the past. I think. Because unless they know, they will be deceived, too.⁶²

Hence, though there is still fear and a sense of threat on Alevi side, witnesses of the events desire the shared past be available to be remembered and commemorated (Schudson, 1997, p. 359). Next, I will discuss how non-local organizations dominate the commemorations and transform the discourse aimed to be built at the beginning upon 'peace' and 'brotherhood'. Speeches of Alevi associations' representatives will show that the context of the event can change based on the present circumstances, and on the concerns of victimized groups. As Jeffrey K. Olick argues that past meanings are malleable to varying degrees, and present circumstances exploit these potentials (1999a, p. 381).

3.7. Local and Non-local Encounters in the Commemorations

The issue of representation is central in the discussion of disappointments of the entrepreneurs considering the reactions of Sunni community and limited commitment of local Alevi population in the commemorations. Participation of European and German Alevi associations and other Turkish Alevi associations outside from Çorum produces a symbolic representation for the citizens. Speeches of their representatives and their dominance on the narrative of the commemoration in general have a great impact on the audience. The favorable side of this representation is supplying considerable number of participants to the organization (crowds encourage ordinary people to attend the march) and helping the management of the activities, speeches, slogans, providing buses, etc. Yet, the contribution of European Alevi organizations discourages and causes reactions of many Sunni people, and implicitly causes many Alevi citizens not to attend the organizations. For the non-Alevi people, these associations and their representatives are the "outsiders" and their dominance in the squares means that the matter is not

⁶²" İnsanoğlu unuttuğu zaman yeni nesil bunu unuttur. Bence yıldan yıla bunun yıldönümünde yasalara uygun bir şekilde konuşulup konferansı verilmeli. Ve alttaki nesil bunun ne için yapıldığını, geçmişte ne yaşadığını bilmesi lazım bence. Çünkü bilmezse bu tezgâha, oyuna o da gelir" (Ahmet, March 2015).

about Çorum or Çorum's people, but about their political aims on Alevi issue and Turkey. For a group of Alevi people, who do not prefer to participate, it can be offensive for their Sunni neighbors in case of the accusatory statements. Also, many of them beware of attending because of their fear about being blacklisted or about getting involved in a new conflict. Based on my observations from the 2015 commemorations, the claim of Alevi identity and the need for struggle expressed more firmly by "outsiders" not only based on the Çorum massacre, but on the general victimization of the Alevi community in Turkey. Besides, the address form of the guest speakers heavily illustrated their diasporic and outsider position that was openly accusatory against local Sunni people.

The organizations and representatives undertaking commemorative activities in Çorum are AAGB, AABK (represented by Hüseyin Mat as the chairman), Almanya Alevi Kadınlar Birliği (Union of Alevi Women in Germany, AAKB), HBVAKV (represented by Ercan Geçmez as the chairman), Turgut Öker (HDP representative and the old chairman of AABF), Ali Kenanoğlu (the 25th term HDP representative, the founder of Hubyar Sultan Alevi Kültür Derneği [Hubyar Sultan Alevi Culture Association]), and ABF. The organizer association, the Çorum branch of the HBVAKV, engages with these associations for the management of the commemorations. Their interpretation of Alevism and political positions meet on a common ground. Yet, the speeches of representations of these associations show that the form of addressing, identification of "us" and "them" dichotomy, and actors of victimization and perpetrators are more direct and specifically defined while the local representatives try to emphasize more of multicultural aspect of the city and the need for unification. In this sense, in order to illustrate this difference of identity positions, I will give examples of the speeches made by Hüseyin Mat, Turgut Öker and Ercan Geçmez in comparison with the one by Sadık Eral. It is significant to point out that Eral is not a member of management group in any of these associations, but has close relations with the HBVAKV in Çorum and helps mobilization of Alevis in the city as defining himself among the victims of the massacre.

In the first place, the speeches of Hüseyin Mat and Turgut Öker represent an interpretation of Alevi identity, which is combined with a variety of identities Kurds, Turks, leftists, revolutionists, and socialists. In the speeches, the lines were drawn mostly based on political positions. Diversity of the identity only includes revolutionists and socialists in the political sense along with Kurds and Turks. In relation to this, the “other” is defined in terms of their being fascist, Islamist, racist, and rightist. The two representatives abstain from directly opposing Sunni people, but obliquely connote that they favor the ones close to their political orientations while stating their desire for whom to rule the country. It should be noted at this point that these speeches were made after the election of June 2015 when HDP exceeded the election threshold by gaining %13.1 of the votes and taking eighty seats in the parliament. That is why, the sense of victory and hopes for ruling the country by the mentioned groups were loudly expressed by the two speakers:

We sent Kenan Evren who made the massacre, the chief murderer, the chief dictator, to his dump. But, we all together did not stop with it, and stroke great blow to fascist election threshold that was created from stone and concrete after the 1980 fascist junta. Today, we buried AKP, the power of AKP, and its junta, which is the child of 80’s coup d’état... For ninety years, the rightists whose heart is worthless have ruled the country. We do not deserve this. This country should be ruled by Alevis, Kurds, leftist youth, and revolutionists. We are fighting for this. Alevis are fellows of the ones whoever deal with sharia and fascism in any place around the world (Mat, July 2015).

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Before thirty five years the mentality ensanguining this land has not removed. Today you see, when their profits come into question, political Islamist and their racist police can express that they are coming from the same lineage, same stone, and take joint action. And we, despite all of our differences among us, revolutionists, socialists, Alevis, Sunnis, Kurds, the enlightened faces of this country have to stand together in all circumstances. We have to do it so that people descended from racist Yazid and Muaviye will not rule this country. As our dear head (Mat) just said: “let revolutionists, democrats,

⁶³ “Bu katliamı yapan, baş katil Kenan Evren’i baş diktatör olarak çöplüğüne uğurladık. Ama bununla da kalmadık onun 1980 faşist cuntasıyla birlikte yaratmış olduğu taştan, betondan yaratmış olduğu o faşist barajı da 7 Haziran’da hep birlikte indirdik. Bugün 80 darbesinin yavruları olan, yaratmış olduğu AKP’yi de AKP iktidarını da, onun cuntasını da 7 Haziran’da gömdük arkadaşlar... Doksan yıldır bu ülkeyi yüreği beş para etmeyen sağcılar yönetti. Biz bunu hak etmiyoruz. Bu ülkeyi Aleviler, Kürtler, sol gençler, devrimciler yönetmeli arkadaşlar. Onun için mücadele veriyoruz. Şeriata, faşizme karşı kim dünyanın neresinde mücadele veriyorsa Aleviler onların yoldaşı olur” (Hüseyin Mat, July 2015).

Alevis, Kurds and Turks rule the country”, dear *canlar* (fellows) (Öker, July 2015).⁶⁴

The narratives of the representatives are constructed on a strong sense of group belonging and self-categorization embracing culturally Alevis and Kurds, politically socialist and revolutionist. Having a sense of “we” ensures collective mobilization in case of conflicting situations, unite and shape actions of group members and is an important base of social power (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011, p. 249). The social identification of “we” and “them” is, in this sense, formulated around politically common denominator that is shared by as many Alevis as possible (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011, p. 249). Both representative sees the state powers together with its ideological components as the perpetrator of the Alevi massacres in the Republican period. Threat and oppression preserve group boundaries by positioning Alevis, and other minorities as innocent victims while the state actors are the perpetrators. For them, the threat has not been reduced because existing government has been carrying the same approach and political strategies since then. Thus, the social identity of Alevis “depend on the kind of functional interdependence between in-group and specific out-groups” (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011).

It is also strongly emphasized not to forget how the Alevi community together with other minorities have victimized historically and continuously. Collective victimhood is underlined in the narratives, which sustains and fuels conflict between groups (Daniel Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori, & Gundar, 2009). “A sense of being victim reminds group members of past violent acts by the rival and indicates that they could recur” (Daniel Bar-Tal et al., 2009, p. 245). In order to mobilize members of the group, it is considered important to keep the crowds’ past memories alive and reconstitute it with present danger. As being the leaders of associations, the representatives “invoke a self-image of being ‘true Alevis’” and create a sense of “inclusive

⁶⁴ “35 yıl önce bu toprakları kana bulayan zihniyet ortadan kalkmış değil. Bugün görüyorsunuz, kendi aralarında siyasal İslamcısı da kafatasçı polisleri de kendi çıkarları söz konusu olduğunda aynı soydan, aynı kayadan geldiklerini ifade edebiliyorlar, birlikte davranabiliyorlar. Ve bizler de kendi içimizdeki bütün farklılıklara rağmen devrimciler, sosyalistler, aleviler, sünniler, kürtler bu ülkenin aydınlık yüzleri her koşulda bir arada olmak zorundayız. Bir arada olmak zorundayız ki bu ülkeyi ırkçı kafatasçı Yezid ve Muaviye soyundan gelenler yönetmesinler. Değerli başkanımızın (H.Mat) da dediği gibi devrimciler, demokratlar, kızılbaşlar, kürtler, türkler yönetsin sevgili canlar” (Turgut Öker, July 2015).

victimhood” that broadens “the group of people that can be mobilized and thereby enlarges the potential political power”(Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011, p. 250).

At this point, it is possible to see the differences and commonalities between local and diasporic Alevis. As briefly explained in Chapter 1, the political organization of the Alevi identity rapidly increased in Germany and Europe especially after the Sivas Massacre in 1993, and eventually reached its aim to a great extent in comparison with the efforts in Turkey (Sökefeld, 2008). Alongside of similarities with local identity with regard to difficulties of expressing the identity, recognition, and dealing with past tragedies, the struggle on abroad passed into different phases, and had its own characteristic. The issue of multiculturalism and cultural identity changed the path of Alevi movement in Germany. Indeed, it opened the way for the movement after some racist violence cases occurred and the objection against migrant workers raised in Germany (Sökefeld, 2008, pp. 53–55). Antiracist and multicultural discourse provided the basis for a cultural Alevi movement, reconstitution of the identity and struggle for their rights for the migrant Alevis, which leads to succeed in gaining the profit more quickly.

Activities and conflicts of the AABK as an umbrella organization have focused on both opposing the discriminating policy of the Turkish state towards Alevis and ensuring the commitment Alevi community in Europe with changing dimensions. The most substantial gain this struggle brings to Turkish Alevis is the provision of sources, for the movement has become successful. The practices of diaspora Alevis in the commemoration of Çorum events can be taken as “strategic” in De Certeau’s sense in comparison to the positions and reactions of local Alevi population. Migrant Alevi mobilization provides “proper” which “allows one to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expectations, and thus to give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances”. Also, it legitimates to define the power of knowledge by the ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces (De Certeau, 1984, p. 36).

The European associations provides, in the first place, human source that the members of youth and women associations send a group of people for the commemoration because it was not easy to mobilize and convince Çorum Alevi in the first attempt to gather in the public square under an agreed narrative. They have a highly dominant role on the discourse of the commemoration that the method of organization -the march, slogans, speeches, panels, *semah* demonstration and *nefes* singings in the graveyard of the association- is followed similar to the ones organized in Hamburg and Sivas which are also run by the support of the same associations (Sökefeld, 2008). In a way, these associations hold the power on the area of commemoration and control the way of organizations by manipulating the language and settling borders of in-group and out-group. While this strategy strengthens the unity of the Alevi and leftist groups and encourages them further to participate in the commemorations, it causes drawback and silence for the ones who have to live together with the marginalized Sunni groups and have daily interactions with them to build a segregated discourse.

The Alevi identity, in this case, is constructed and represented with more acute lines, assertive, courageous and conflicting way as a result of the struggle to survive in another country as ostracized and migrant groups. The only tie connecting guest speakers to the city of Çorum is their shared Alevi identity and tragic past images, their memory. Under this commonality, the cultural identity they represent has critical points of deep and significant *difference*, which is grounded on the continuous play of history, culture and power. The way of Alevism represented by these groups and narrative of the Çorum massacre is one of the different positions, as by following Stuart Hall's perspective, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Cultural identity has its histories- and histories have their real, material and symbolic effects. The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual "past", since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already "after the break". It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a

positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental “law of origin” (Hall, 1990, p. 226)

The relation established with the Çorum event changes according to the positions of identities, to the images of similar other cases and political identifications of representatives or memory entrepreneurs. Hence, it is not only about the direct past experience, but about its interpretation, selected recollection and its relation with the present cultural and political needs and opportunities. As the conditions of Alevi community have developed and suitable atmosphere improves in order to voice their needs and demands, the discourse has sharpened or been assertive accordingly. Moreover, it is continuously rebuilt concomitantly with Gezi and Kobane events, which refresh the memories of the previous massacres, proves the justness of victimization narrative and support the inclusive victimhood against state power (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011).

Another non-local example of speeches belongs to Ercan Geçmez. His words were the most accusing ones uttered in the public square, which address directly towards Çorum Sunnis. Unlike other speakers, he regards Sunni people as responsible for the massacre by identifying their acts with the crimes of terrorist organization, Isis. I find it the sharpest public expression of this idea that is received a lot in personal interviews showing itself as fear and anxiety by the Alevis:

The problem in Turkey is not to face with the state. Turkish societies should face with themselves. Today, unless Sunnis in Çorum face with the state due to this massacre, they must know that they won't and can't be friend of Alevis and the others... Sunnis of Çorum, put your hand on your heart... The ones alleging Isis, what is the difference between Maraş's perpetrators and Isis? Isis is a Sunni organization, the ones who carried out Maraş was also Sunni. Turkish Sunnis, I do not want to blame you. If you say that we are not responsible for this, we do not involve in this, come and face with it... But you don't do that because you are benefiting from it politically. You are denier, impostor, and liar (people applauding). I am saying these to your face in case that brotherhood happens, it will be honest... No one can be brother in this land; on one hand by saying everyday Alevis and Sunnis are brothers, on the other hand burning Alevis in ovens alive and applauding behind. Turkish Alevi associations won't leave the squares anyone (Ercan Geçmez, 2015).⁶⁵

⁶⁵ “Türkiye’de sorun devletle yüzleşme meselesi değil. Türkiye toplumları kendileriyle yüzleşmek zorundalar. Bugün Türkiye’de Çorum’u oluşturan Sünniler kendilerine bu katliamdan ötürü devletle

Geçmez articulates insincerity of Sunni people (prefer to refer a sectarian identity rather than a political connotation) by contradicting the very common discourse of brotherhood and innocence used by majority of Sunni groups, based on their reluctance of facing with the Çorum and Maraş Massacre in this case. As the meaning of the past is dynamic and is conveyed by social agents (Jelin, 2003, p. 48), here, the meaning of the past is engaged in confrontation with opposite interpretations between general Alevi and Sunni discourse. Although many Alevi people also put the blame on the state powers as the top responsible agent, sometimes directly sometimes implicitly they accuse ordinary Sunni people attacking themselves and supporting the cruel treatments in my personal interviews. However, accusing their neighbors and friends for this massacre is a fragile issue since they still live together, and have every day relations that undergo transition every passing year even that some people do not participate in funeral ceremonies conducted separately in cemevi in order not to offend Sunnis. Hence, public accusation of Sunnis in the speech of Geçmez can certify arguments of opposed non-Alevi groups for the commemorations, some of which interprets their attitudes as an attack to the relation of Alevis and Sunnis in Çorum.

On the other hand, the emphasis Sadık Eral put in his speech is more on the richness of identities and cultures in these lands, the need for unification, and for the efforts to keep peace and democracy. He did not utter the words Alevi and Sunni in his speech, and addressed “dirty hands”, “imperialist powers”, “cruels”, and “enemies of religion” as the perpetrators of the Çorum and other massacres (He included Sivas, Maraş, Karbala, Gezi by memorializing the names of Ethem Sarısülük and Berkin Elvan. Also, he noted Turkmens, Yazidis, Arabs, Palestinian people as victims of oppression). Isis is also uttered as one of the serious present threat as being successor

yüzleşmezlerse bilsinler ki Alevilerin ve diğerlerinin dostu olmayacaklar, olamayacaklardır... Ey Çorum'un Sünnileri, elinizi vicdanınıza koyun... Bugün İşid'i bahane ettiklerini söyleyenler Maraş'la İşid'in ne farkı var? İşte İşid Sünni bir örgüt, Maraş'ı yapanlar da çoğunlukla Sünni idi. Ey Türkiye'nin Sünnileri sizi suçlamak istemiyorum, biz yapmadık diyorsanız, biz bu işlerde yokuz diyorsanız gelin bunlarla hesaplaşın... Ama bunu yapmıyorsunuz. Çünkü siyaseten bundan nemalanıyorsunuz, inkârcısınız, sahtekârsınız, yalancısınız. Bunları yüzünüze karşı söylüyorum ki, kardeşlik olur ki dosdoğru olsun... Her gün gidip Aleviler ve Sünniler kardeşdir deyip de arkasından Alevileri diri diri fırına atıp alkışlayanlarla kimse bu topraklarda kardeş olamaz. Türkiye Alevi dernekleri kimseye bu meydanları bırakmayacaktır” (Ercan Geçmez, July 2015).

of Yezid's cruelty. The important thing in his speech is that the perpetrator of the Çorum events was anonymous, so he did not accuse anyone directly, and there was no clear attempt to draw group boundaries as differentiating identities as Alevis and Sunnis. The only place he mentioned this difference aloud is to express his discomfort with this separation:

We as the democracy powers demand to reinvestigate of the Çorum events and bring the facts to light. We want that the ones who disseminate animosity by separating this people as Alevi and Sunni are put on trial. We want this to make an example of it. We want criminals not to go unpunished. We want it in order not to see massacres and slaughters again. (Eral, July 2015).⁶⁶

Here the "mode of representation" of the victims and perpetrators of the Çorum events and other massacres change based on the use of words and images in order to construct a narrative of the past and state the expectations for the future. The dependence on usage of words and images can result in contrasting cultural values and also in contesting roles of memory (Misztal, 2003b, p. 23). Thus, by opting for this language, I think that Eral tries to stand apart from this contradiction and contestation of sectarian identities, their values and differentiated memories. When the initial target of this commemorative activity is taken into account, while these words and images are still serving for this aim, the non-local speakers' effort contradicts with it. Still, even if he prefers to use a different imagination of the past and future in his neighborhood, he addresses people in the same place of other representation that builds one image.

This confrontation between local and translocal actors in the same area and context illustrates the challenges for the production of locality in this globalized and diasporic world (Appadurai, 1995). Following from the Arjun Appadurai's approach, locality is relational and contextual, which is constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts (1995, p. 178). Its production is based on the production of local subjects and

⁶⁶ " Biz demokrasi güçleri olarak Çorum olaylarının yeniden araştırılmasını, tüm gerçeklerin gün ışığına çıkarılmasını istiyoruz. Bu halkı alevi sünni diye bölerek kin tohumu ekenlerin ortaya çıkartılmasını yargılanmasını istiyoruz. Bunu ibreti alem için istiyoruz. Suçlular cezasız kalmasın diye istiyoruz. Bu topraklarda bir daha kıyımlar katliamlar olmasın diye istiyoruz"(Sadık Eral, 03.07.2015, from the speech of commemoration).

neighborhoods, which is both context-driven and context-generative, by providing and composing the setting within which the various kind of human action can be initiated and conducted meaningfully (Appadurai, 1995, p. 184).

In the context of the commemoration activities and speeches, the initiation of local subjects creates a neighborhood in the city of Çorum with the activities of social memory production, reproduction and representation of the past tragedy. Their contribution to the creation of a commemorative context exceeds the conceptual boundaries of the territory, and together with the participation and even the control of translocal actors produce new meanings and context.

As local subjects carry on the continuing task of reproducing their neighborhood, the contingencies of history, environment, and imagination contain the potential for new contexts to be produced. In this way, through the vagaries of social action by local subjects, neighborhood as context produces the context of neighborhoods” (Appadurai, 1995, p. 185).

The production of context and local subjects have been influenced by large-scale social formations, movements and transformations such as formations and transformations of nation-states, migration flows and global political and cultural movements.

The Alevi issue and identity has crossed the boundaries of Turkey, but kept its relation as a cultural and political movement with the local associations. What I contend within the scope of this section is that the translocality of Alevi issue and identity, with its close interrelation and exchanges with local subjects, creates new meanings by transforming and reproducing existing meanings, can interfere in the course of organizations, and so create new contexts and contestations in local neighborhood. They offer a limitation of Alevi identity, reconstruct the memory combining Alevi victimization with the Kurds’ and present a future imagination by setting targets to go for rights, assigning duties to remember, face with the past and demand rights. Hence, it becomes difficult to discuss the Alevi issue as a local case belonging to Çorum, which is not a spatially restricted and isolated territory and carries idiosyncratic meaning.

On the other side, despite under the formation of a master narrative with a unitary representation of past images and collective memory by the representative organizers and speakers, there are latent or silent attitudes and reactions against this initiative of commemoration on the side of Alevi population in Çorum. The positions that are not detected at the first glance show up in personal interviews, secondary narratives and with the observations throughout the commemoration. I can describe these attitudes as not attending the commemorations, but supporting them; expressing discomfort and fear in face to face contact, watching behind the windows, show enthusiastic endorsement by standing, applauding and greeting the actual participants outside the street, and being principally against these public organizations. Here, I would like to convey my observations during the march I participated in summer 2015. In general, positions of non-participant Alevis to the commemorations are tactical in the sense that they follow different unplanned and nonstrategic roads to adapt newly created environment as the non-powerful actors.

One of the slogans highly used in the march was “Do not look out of the window, protect your honor!” and a commonly used expression “Not stay silent, the next will be you!”⁶⁷ In addition, one of the women, seeming like among the organizers of the commemoration, called to a group of women looking out of their balcony that “Ladies, come to downward. It can’t be by staying there”.⁶⁸ Participants loudly voice their disturbance from outsider watchers and supporters that they leave them alone in the streets although the crowd struggle for their rights, too. There were some women who responded the invitation of the crowd, and joined to the march in order to memorialize the losses of Sivas and Çorum massacres. Since the march started in front of HBVAKV, which is located in Alevi neighborhood, it is for sure that the watchers to whom the crowd reacted are Alevis to a great extent.

Most of these people are ordinary citizens who are not members of any associations or formations. Therefore, the watchers do not own a place, but have tactics “depend on time- it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’”

⁶⁷ “Pencereden bakma, onuruna sahip çık!”, “Susma sustukça sıra sana gelecek!”.

⁶⁸ “Hanımefendi aşağı gelin aşağı. Oradan olmaz”.

(De Certeau, 1984, p. xix). The place always belongs to the other, the powerful one (in this case it can be taken as the other of Alevi identity, which is defined mostly as Sunnis or rightist, Islamist, conservative groups; or as the local and translocal organizers of the commemoration holding the power of space for a day). The weak pursue the propitious moments and act “when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements; the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is ‘seized’” (De Certeau, 1984, p. xix). The decisions of ordinary Alevis are not explicitly presented in the squares, but supporting from outside or expressing their hesitation at any opportunity is one of the tactics they use for surviving under the area of “strong”. They live in the place of their “other”, so they make their decisions and organize every day practices accordingly.

As a last point, I would like to emphasize the memorialization of the events continuing after the marches and speeches in the backyard of HBVAKV. The one organized as a march from the HBVAKV to the clock tower firstly aims at addressing “others” who are considered to be in a deep silence about Alevis’ tragedy. In addition to this, memory actors intend to attract attention of the Alevis lapsing into silence and being afraid of presenting in a protest because “memorials – whether in monuments, holidays, or commemorative programs- tend to be audience-centered, and their creators worry about their rhetorical effect” (Schudson, 1997, p. 359). The second part of this commemoration is composed of only Alevi participants and actually aspires to gather Alevis under a cultural type of commemoration. In this one, singers played *deyiş* and *nefes* memorializing historically known massacres, some poems were read, and young *Semah* group displayed a small demonstration. The expression of pain was more explicit and had symbolic references to traditional Alevi history in the second part of the commemoration. They are present there not only with their political or ideological standing, but also with cultural language embodied in songs and *semah* demonstration.

In this way, Alevi community, even it was a small group of people, actualizes cultural way of expression and memorialization of tragedy. “Cultural performances are

expressions that communicate core parts of a group's self-understood identity and history" (Ross, 2007, p. 67). Alevi people memorialize the events with a cultural performance producing a way of representation in memory construction, which based its narrative on the continuing victimization of Alevis from Karbala to Gezi, by regarding the state, fascism, and hegemonic Sunni approach as responsible for it. "Rituals commemorate continuity and in so doing shape communal memory" (Connerton, 1989, p. 48). With performative demonstrations expressing the pain of Alevis through singing *nefes* and *deyiş*, the group embodies the social memory in the commemoration and preserves the core features of identity. "... a community is reminded of its identity as represented by and told in a master narrative... Its master narrative is more than a story told and reflected on; it is a cult enacted. An image of the past, even in the form of a master narrative, is conveyed and sustained by ritual performances" (Connerton, 1989, p. 71).

As discussed so far, there are multiple ways of remembering and narrative construction based on the shared past. The representation of the memory in commemorations varies regarding group identity, commitment to it, and audience intended to address. Besides, the commemorations produce a collective narration referring to group history, values, and symbols, which compose a part of master narrative making local and trans local actors meet in the same square. However, under this master narrative, emphasizing the continuing victimization of Alevis and oppression of Sunni Islam's state ideology, there emerge contesting voices and standings of Sunni people together with Alevis keeping in the background or silencing. There are individual ways of recollecting and expressing the past, which has divergence and convergence with the collectivity. While memorialization instrumentalizes the past according to the present needs by creating a space to voice the demands and expectations in the collective sense, individual rememberings can reveal subjective manner of sense making and interpretation of the history, which is both fed by collective narratives and also produces its own expression of feelings and narrative. In the next chapter, I will analyze the extent individual narratives have relation with the collectivity.

CHAPTER 4
INTERSUBJECTIVITY OF MEMORY: INTERTWINED RELATION BETWEEN
INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE NARRATION

4.1. Introduction

In the third Chapter, I showed the way of collective narrative construction embodied through the commemoration of Çorum events, and means of representation commemorations ensured through marches, speeches, and slogans. Under the “contested memories” topic, two faces of collective narratives whose construction has incoherence and ruptures depending on the social and religious background of individuals have been demonstrated. The manner of storytelling about the historical past has a fragile place of appropriation and repudiation as in the example of contested arguments about the commemorative organizations (Cole, 2003). Remembering and storytelling of the same past event do not take place in the same manner for Alevi and Sunni groups. While one group of Alevi memory entrepreneurs support the idea that “we should remember so as not to repeat” and sees memory spaces as an arena for political struggle, objected Sunni side assert that remembering bad memories does not heal the existing wounds. Moreover, we could hear voices of Alevi people who experienced the events and do not join the commemorations due to fear and concern for their families, or who criticize the content of speeches. At the same time, many Sunni people expressed their objection to the commemorative activities by asserting that they do not represent ideas of Çorum’s residents, and Alevi people are considered as a minority group with marginal leftist political engagements in the city.

Hence, the study on commemoration displays that the struggle against oblivion conceals an opposition between appropriation and repudiation of the past, between distinct and rival memories. Slogans and public speeches produce a representative master narration of the past events against imposed forgetting and silences, for the aim of producing collective remembering is “common underlying appropriation of a master narrative” (Wertsch, 2002) of the past, and maintenance of a sense of

woundedness and injustice through generations” (Daniel Bar-Tal & Staub, 2003). At the same time, the collectively represented memory contains different means of remembering, and forgetting. There are different interpretations and meanings of the past and relatedly present relations that are not uttered the same way as in the slogans and speeches. “There will be other stories, other memories, and alternative interpretations. These endure in spaces of resistance, in the private sphere, and in the “catacombs” of history” (Jelin, 2003, p. viii).

In this chapter, I investigate the individual memories, which have both convergences with and divergences from the collectively produced narrations. The individual remembering and storytelling process may not occur in the same motivation and way of expression as the memory actors perform in the commemorations. As the memories intended to be brought to the surface are painful and wounding, it can be difficult for people to recall their experiences, from which they have grown distant for years and do not have a driving force to speak about them to a listener. When they put into words what happened and what they experienced, the share of feelings, beliefs and ideas change based on interviewees’ political and social engagement with the issue. This difference in recalling images of the past displays gender contrast in individual narrations. Female interviewees express pain and suffering due to the attacks and threats in 1980 by using more personalized symbols while male interviewees depict a chronological picture by making political, social and religious interpretations. Men build institutionalized and journalistic narrations including historical and political background of the events, institutional repression, and explanations. In contrast, women stress largely the influence of the events in their everyday life and family relations decontextualized from the political arena.

In addition, forgetting and silences show themselves as part of remembering action in various forms in narratives. For Alevi people, speaking about a such as traumatic event publicly required staying distant from this for some time to recover. The course of making sense of the events and getting a more eased atmosphere in the city has resulted in a course of silence and faded images of the past. What is more, though the issue started to be voiced publicly, there are still people preferring to keep silent

either due to their irresolvable pain or regarding the case as a threat for the people's relation. Again, the engagement with political, religious or cultural identities have a significant impact on supporting to keep silent or speak about the past. Most Alevi people who have been subjected to social repression and victimization tend to voice their suffering compared to Sunni people, who stay distant and act with deliberation on what and how to speak about the massacre.

Before I delve into the gender memory and silences, I will briefly discuss intersubjective aspect of memory construction. Here as indicated in the literature review part, in very broad terms, intersubjectivity refers to the relation between and encounters with self and other as Bakhtin articulates. Bakhtin's central argument is that "just as we are impelled to attribute meaning to the object-world around us, we need to envisage *ourselves* as coherent and meaningful entities" (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p.53). While we constitute "our singular life narrative", we need an additional, external perspective to our own. Hence, as Bakhtin contends that "we can only exist through the 'borrowed axiological light of *otherness*" (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p.54). "Participative thinking and acting requires an engaged and embodied relation to the other, and to the world at large", which refers to a dialogical relation "with the word of another" (as cited in Gardiner, 2000, p.54 & 58). In this sense, people's ways of making sense of the past images and their remembering practices are in relation to each other. Individual way of interpretation of the past and present is considered in relation to other subjects. "Memory is conceived of as a relationship between present and past, silence and speech, the individual and the collective, and thus a narrative made up of individual and collective forms of forgetting" (Passerini, 2007, p.8).

In this part, with reference to Jeffrey Prager's conceptualization of *embedded and embodied memory*, I will argue that the social world within which individual minds are embedded presents the categories and narratives of experiences while, at the same time, individuals exercise their subjectivities through their own way of narration (Prager, 1998). "The embedded mind remembers in culturally particular and meaningful ways, reflecting not only its relation to the past but its involvement

in the social world that provides specific access to the past” (Prager, 1998, p.194). On the one hand, the produced master narratives under collectivity form a framework for the individual remembering depending on the identity positions, which harbor power relations maintaining resistance and domination. On the other hand, subjective form of narrations reveal disguised aspects of the recollection and interpretation of the past events. “Memory is embodied in a particular person, a person actively engaged in forging selfhood” (Prager, 1998, p.81), which means that “memory is also motivated by the individual’s relation to his or her own feeling states” and it is considered as an “effort to reconcile self-understanding or self-consciousness with one’s inner world of feeling” (Prager, 1998, p.90). Hence, in the rest of this section, I will analyze how individual memory narrations are formed in convergence with and divergence from the master narratives and collectivity. It will be seen that subjective ways of remembering are fed from collective narration and social frames whilst they preserve individuality in it.

4.2. Insurrection of Collective and Individual Memory

The contested memory narratives of Alevi and Sunni groups in Çorum display a power struggle against the privileges of historical knowledge, borrowed from Foucault’s conceptualization of *power, knowledge* and *subject relation*. In the first place, the emergence of commemorative organizations against the long term silence can be seen an *insurrection of subjugated knowledge* “referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization” (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). The Alevi memory entrepreneurs initiated “an opposition against secrecy, deformation and mystifying representations imposed on people” (Foucault, 2002, p. 330) about the past events and tried to create a collectivity based on victimization of Alevis in the 1980 events by suggesting to gather around the peace and forgiveness, and to fight to bring those responsible to justice. As opposed to this struggle, Sunni groups mostly prefer to ignore the manner Alevi memory actors produce a narrative, something they largely consider politicized and discriminative. Thus, parties perpetuate a discursive conflict through the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of which the relations of power established and consolidates (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Producing of a discourse of truth about the

historical content, particularly by the victimized groups, is taken on as a duty while it demands that the duty should be taken on by everyone. The initiative of making people remember the buried past exposes others to participate in this act, both in affirmative and dissenting manners. While one type of representation of the past is offered to the public through commemoration, speeches, documentaries, and books by the victimized identities, the counter narrations of the past show up in a documentary, or narrations by individuals, who mostly prefer to keep silent publicly in case there is no institutionalized way of representing.

We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth... If I were to characterize, not its mechanism itself, but its intensity and constancy, I would say that we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function: we *must* speak the truth; we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth. Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalizes, professionalises and rewards its pursuit (Foucault, 1980, p. 93).

The best representation of institutional narrative and memory about the Çorum event standing against victimization discourse of Alevis is the documentary made by TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) (Ağırbaş, n.d.). The documentary is shot as part of the “*Faili ‘Meçhul’*” series, which narrates the events that took place before and after the 12 September 1980 coup d'état as well as remaining unsolved murders. The documentary's manner of story construction about the Çorum massacre has a common path with individual narrations, and written books by Alevis (Eke, 2012; Eral, 1995; Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2012). It takes Gün Sazak's murder as the triggering factor for the emergence of conflict in addition to some political murders and the notice having religious connotations delivered before 19 May. The main message conveyed in this documentary is that a group of “unknown people” and “secret hands” provoked both Alevi and Sunni people in the city and deceived them. Speakers underline the relation between the Sivas (1978), Maraş (1978) and Çorum (1980) events in the sense that they were planned and deliberately organized with similar tactics. Speakers talk about the cruelty of the attacks largely directed towards Alevis, but they present all Çorum citizens as victims of the event rather than highlighting an Alevi victimization on the front. There are six speakers in the

documentary; one of them is the mayor of the city, others are the head of ÜGD, a neighborhood representative, a laborer, and two journalists. The voices of the witnesses do not show variety and the voice of women or Alevi people is non-existent. It reflects the idea that the Çorum events as an “unsolved event” is recognized by institutional actors and the identities being accused of as traumatic and suffering as Alevi people recognize. Thus, while it produces an institutional context of narration, the documentary turns a blind eye to one of the central actors of the events, whose narration and how they make sense of the events do not appear in the documentary.

When I compare this documentary with *Ekinler Kan İçindeydi* shot by İlhan Cem Erseven (2010), this one has a larger range of speakers including the former CHP Çorum representatives, the former public prosecutor, an old idealist movement member, women and Alevi people. Stages of the story is the same, but have different nuances such as strong indication to the role of rightist movement in leading the events together with weak governmental management, influence of outside forces, and unknown actors in the city. The narration constructed in the documentary is similar to prevailing collective victimization discourse of Alevi people. It is more often to hear how Alevi people encountered the violence and they were victimized in the narratives compared to the one shot by TRT. What the narration of this documentary represents is similar to the one constructed in the commemorations aiming to voice suffering and traumatic experiences of Alevi people, who are considered to be silenced intentionally by institutional actors.

Besides this, one of the common themes in these documentaries is the vagueness in addressing a perpetrator about the events. For the Alevis, “the state” is regarded as the primary culprit responsible for the Çorum events together with “fascist groups” and “fascist ideology” represented by idealist movement. “Shoulder to shoulder against fascism” and “killer state will account for” were the two popular slogans chanted in the square during the commemorations. However, though trials proceeded for the murders after the coup d’état, complainants could not obtain any result in which official authorities accused a particular group or persons for the

evoking of the events. For Sunni people, “unknown people” and “secret hands” provoking both Alevi and Sunni people in addition to the state actors at that time were responsible for the occurrence of the conflicts and deaths. Namely, the commonly accepted convict is the state without a specifically addressed actor. All the narratives by Alevi and Sunnis, related the events with the state in that period, and accepted that Alevi people were subjected to an unfair attack in Çorum. Still, mobilization of Alevi under the massacre discourse is interpreted as a provocative instrument by Sunni groups since the position of subject, who will remember what plays an important role and how. Conflict, in this sense, persists in the discursive level where the parties accuse each other of carrying antagonistic beliefs and feelings and of posing a challenge to the creation of a peaceful atmosphere.

In addition to the vague perpetrator, one of the commonality in the individual narratives is the highly positive image of the relations between Alevi and Sunni people in the city. Almost all the interviewees expressed the presence of peaceful life before “secret hands” provoked conflicting relations between the two communities. All the negative images about the time before the sectarian conflict arose are ideological disagreements depending on the polarized political atmosphere at that time.

Çorum was like a heart. Everyone loves, respects each other. If the food was cooked today, they would eat tomorrow; if it was cooked tomorrow, they would eat it the other day. They were that much intimate. Only the ones coming from outside prided, the others were doing assistantship to them. Labor work used to the share of local people while trade was done by outsiders” (Durmuş Aslan, February 2015).⁶⁹

“These events are so complicated. It is not one sided. Moreover, citizens here were not complainant of neither his/her Alevi neighbor nor Sunni neighbor. Everyone knew each other... No one blamed the other for being infidel” (Ethem Erkoç, February 2015)⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ “Çorum bir kalp gibiydi. Herkes birbirini sever, sayar. Bugün pişerse yarın yerler, yarın pişerse bir gün yerler. Birbirlerine bu kadar samimilerdir ki. Yalnız, dışardan gelenler ağalık yapar içerdekiler de onlara yamaklık yapardı. İşçilik yerliye, tüccarlık dışardan gelenlere kalıyordu” (Durmuş Aslan, February 2015, an old Alevi dede).

⁷⁰ “Onun için yani bu olaylar çok karmaşık. Tek yönlü değil. Ve vatandaş burda Alevi komşusundan, Alevisi de Sünni komşusundan şikayetçi değildi. Herkes birbirini biliyordu... Asla bir diğerini kafirlikle

Until these events emerged, there was no separation of Alevi-Sunni in this district inside Çorum. Always the same foods were eaten in houses, we drank tea, we visited each other. There was respect, love, compassion to each other, our dialogs were the same. It was as if your property was ours, your life was ours... they were to us, we were to us (Sultan Ana, February 2015).⁷¹

These are the sample statements proving the peaceful and friendly relations before the separation took place in Çorum, which were uttered by most of the people I interviewed regardless of their sect. These points were referred when the obscurity of the emergence of sectarian conflict was addressed. In addition, people refer to the unproblematic times and express optimism for the future when they talk about the present trouble-free relations.

When the representative master narratives are compared with the individual narratives, it seems that “individuals engage with these collectively constructed stories through their own cultural participation” (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012, p. 78). As Prager argues, memory is embedded to the social and cultural world in which memorial productions are inseparable from the socially and culturally located individual. “The rememberer remembers in a contemporary world, peopled by others who collectively contribute to the construction of memory and help determine the importance that the past holds for an individual in the present” (Prager, 1998, p. 70). Relation between the constructed collective narratives of commemoration, documentaries, and speeches, and individual narrations shows that individual mind is “embedded within a social ecology of discourse, and the coherence provided through narrative is one of social coherence” (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012, p. 84) Out of discursive complexity, individuals make effort to achieve coherence and collective solidarity gained through shared narratives. With collective narratives, Alevi and Sunni people provide a sense of group meaning by both referring to in-group values, feelings, and beliefs, and more generally shared values as a citizen of Çorum that they have friendly family and neighborhood ties with Sunni people. Stories serve to

falan suçlamıyordu” (Ethem Erkoç, February 2015, a retired teacher and a column writer in Hakimiyet Newspaper in Çorum).

⁷¹ “Hiç Alevi-Sünni gibi bir ayrım, olaylar çıkana kadar, bu bölgede Çorum’un içinde Alevi-Sunni ayrımcılığı yoktu. Hep evlerde aynı yemekleri yedik, çaylar içerdik, birbirimize misafir oluyorduk. Birbirimize sevgi, saygı, şefkat vardı; diyaloglarımız aynıydı. Malını malımız gibi, canını canımız gibi... Onlar bizlere biz onlara” (Sultan Ana, February 2015).

construct collective identity through the transmission of collective memory and the creation of myths that support that memory (D. Bar-Tal, 2007; Hammack, 2008), which is consulted depending on the present conditions and needs. In one sense, the discourses serve to sustain power relations, which either maintains the political status quo or provides legitimacy for resistance (Fivush, 2010). On the other hand, they represent a coherence within and between group relations.

As it will be seen in the gender differentiation of memory construction, memory is both embedded in the socially constructed narrations and “embodied in a particular person, a person actively engaged in forging selfhood.” (Prager, 1998, p. 81) Remembering and memory narratives lead to self-constitution process through which the individuals make sense of their past experiences, feelings and relations in the present conditions, so they exercise subjectivities through the storytelling about the images of the past. Memory becomes “a vehicle by which the embodied self situates itself in the present by reference to its unique past” (Prager, 1998, p. 81-82). Women’s narratives will demonstrate how the most silenced and the affected group of people express their feelings and bodily sensations – sadness, feeling of emptiness, and hopes – in individual narratives with different nuances from the institutional and collective narration in commemorations, but also feeding from them. Individual memories of women narrations, largely Alevi women, subjected to suffering, social exclusion, and repression directly or through their family relations, in this case, illustrate their invisible existence during the events,. In particular, women memories and narratives make visible of the invisible and suppressed voices under highly politicized and institutionalized memories and narrations, which are constructed by male dominated memory actors.

4.3. Gender Differences in Narrating the Past

Although I did not center the study upon gender differences in memory recollection while structuring narrative investigation, the narratives of women and men reveal an explicit distinction based on their social roles. After I realized that there is a men-domination in direction of reliable addressees while searching for people that witnessed the events and can talk about it, I intentionally took the action of looking

for female witnesses whose names were not mentioned much as an addressee. Thus, I listened to the experiences of women as an actor of the events by considering their way of interpretation of the events and the roles they took on in the process of the conflict in 1980.

As a result of the struggle of feminist movement against the influence of power relations in excluding women from knowledge generation processes since the 1970s, feminist historiography has undertaken studies aiming at “making women ‘visible’ and giving them their own past back to themselves” (Berkday, 2012; Bridenthal & Koonz, 1977; Carroll, 1976; Scott, 1999; Thompson, 2000). It is a common base with oral history and feminism which are both interested in the diversity of possible subject groups and both challenge the traditional “objectivity” of social science (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 5). Feminist historians asserted the importance of subjective, personal and “ordinary” experiences of men and women, which supports the fact that lives of women associate with family issues –emotional support and personal relations, and this is as historically important as wage labor and politics. In this way, feminist historiography questions the traditional separation between public and private space by arguing that inequalities in private life structure the inequalities in public space (Berkday, 2012, pp. 28–29).

The gender analysis of narratives shows that the social roles women and men take are reproduced in memory narratives. The roles attributed to men and women, first is adopted in public space and the latter is in private, are performed discursively while parties talk about their experiences, the meaning they attribute to the events and feelings. “Just as the femininity and masculinity have been redefined, so have the domains of private and public experience...not only the boundaries between public and private spheres change over time and between places, but so do the ways in which men and women position themselves in relation to each sphere” (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 8). Male and female interviewees revealed the internalization of their cultural roles in distinctive ways while they recalled their pasts. “It is not only that their memories tend to focus differently, men more readily talking about work, women about family life, and also that women are likely to find it easier to talk about

remembered feelings than men” (Thompson, 2000, p. 120). By involving gender analysis in this section, I will show how men and women experience and narrate the same events differently, which “gives an opportunity to analyze both the manner women and men make sense of their situation and at reciprocal relation between the two” (Berktaş, 2012, p. 30).

4.3.1. Female Narratives

When I tried to find people to talk about the events and its consequences for the city, first addressees were men who are known with the studies about the Çorum events, known with their political standing, and can be called opinion or religious leaders for Alevi and Sunni communities. It was a common tendency among each group to refer me to these people whose word is taken more reliable and who can give firsthand information. The only exception was Sultan Ana. She is not a literate person, but grew up in the oral tradition of Alevi community in Çorum. Her father, and father-in-law were dede and she was married to her uncle’s son so that “no Sunni blood would be mixed within the family.”⁷² Sultan Ana owns an association with her name, which works as a cemevi (Nadik Cemevi) and aid association. With a mini service bus, the association carries people to the cemevi, offers food for the poor and entertain guests. She is treated differently from heads of other cemevis. Most people, including scholars, governor and the representatives of the city, know her and invite her to their places. Because she tries to remain distant to politics, Sultan Ana is embraced and appreciated as a cultural figure by people having various political and cultural backgrounds. That is why, her name was given to me both from Alevi and Sunni circles.

Other than her, there was no particular female addressee seen as a reliable source regarding both the events and Alevi culture. One of the plausible reasons is to do with the the case which has political connotations. Central actors of the events were part of a political separation who were members of a party or an ideological formation,

⁷² She said this by apologizing to me: “I ask for forgiveness. You are an educated women, you are self-aware. You understand what I say very well. (Affına sığındım. Okumuş insansın, kendini bilen bir insansın benim dediklerimi de iyice anlıyorsun)”. (February, 2015)

which is predominated by men. Besides, both Alevi and Sunni communities as religious groups are male-dominated. Prominent religious leaders of communities are men in each sect. In particular, leadership of Alevism is transferred next generation through father to son or by giving hand to a man who is educated by the previous dede. However, it is for sure that women were also significant part of the story in the events. Most of them might not have struggled at the front on the street, but they either gave support for the barricades or struggled to protect their family members and neighbors in their houses. They worried about the security of their families and houses, tried to create a secure environment for their neighbor and children. In addition, women have experienced the impact of the separation in everyday relations with relatives or neighbors, which is more distant from political discourse. Therefore, their images about the events are informative of influences of the painful events on family members, everyday relations and feelings of people.

As most women to whom I talked were housewives, not a member of a political party or an association, the way they tell the story is shaped around their houses, children, relatives and neighbors in contrast to men. The most characteristic element in their narratives is expression of emotions. The effort to tell painful side of the events and impacts on their family, for the most part by trying not to blame particularly one side, is strongly apparent. There is a gender contrast in formation of narrative about the Çorum events in the sense that personalized symbols of pain and suffering tend to become embodied in women, while institutional repressive mechanisms appear to “belong” to men” (Jelin, 2003, p. 76). What is more, women give details of the stories like depicting a scene and use little political connotations or institutional language. It is quite rare that they try to explicate political intentions and complicated relations between military and politicians. Many women assume Alevism as a cultural or religious identity without ascribing political meaning to it. In contrast, institutional side of the events is substantially verbalized by men. They are more prone to depicting big complicated relations including militaristic, political and outside influences, historical side of Alevi issue and religion-politics relationship.

I interviewed a group of women in the Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Center.⁷³ The Center mainly works on academic investigations and publications about Alevism and Bektashism. The mission and vision of the center is indicated as conducting academic investigation about the role of Hacı Bektaş Veli in the history of Turkish thought and culture. Hacı Bektaş Veli is considered to be one of the important figures in Sufism thought. Together with investigating to reveal his and his students' manuscripts, the center aims to be an institution conducting important studies about Alevism and Bektashism. With these concerns, the center organizes panels and conferences, and publishes a journal named "Hünkar". In addition, the center attempts to introduce Alevi culture to Sunni people and make each community familiarize and socialize with the other by organizing visits to cemevis in some villages, and some gatherings for women in the Center. This standing is criticized by other Alevi communities with the concerns that the center and its head, Osman Eğri, misinterpret Alevism by representing it in a cultural continuity under Islam, i Sunni Islam per se. The Alevi groups gathering around cemevis see the center and people ruled. People attending there are regarded as "assimilated Alevis". While the center organizes some trainings and studies aiming to enable Alevis to learn and transmit their cultural symbols to the society, they adopt a position interpreting Alevism as an arm of Islam and showing the commonalities under its roof, which is the fundamental disagreement between other Alevi groups and the state's.

When I visited the Center, women were coming together once in a week and read passages from the books of Hacı Bektaş Veli. On another day, they were gathering to learn how to play *saz*, sing *nefes* and *deyiş*. The reading group was led by a young woman with headscarf who was raised in a mixed family, but trained stick by the Sunni doctrines. To a large extent, participants of the group define themselves as Alevi while their religious practices are closer to Sunni sect. There were two women trying to learn the Quran, some indicating that they fast in Ramadan and there was one woman reading the Quran in women meetings. Most of them did not visit cemevi

⁷³ The Center first opened in 2003 as a branch office of Gazi University Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş Veli Research Center in Çorum. After the establishment of Hitit University, the center first closed in 2006 and then reopened in 2008. (Information is retrieved from the center's website: <http://www.hbektas.hitit.edu.tr/index.php/hbektas/tarihce>)

and participate in ceremonies (some of them visited them through the Center's organization). The center creates a space for these women standing in-between to know each other, to learn Alevi culture for both and socialize in this way. At that time, they were reading and talking about *Makalat* from Alevi-Bektaşî calcic series published by Directorate of Religious Affairs (Yılmaz, Öztürk, & Akkuş, 2009), The book has lots of connotations to verses of the Quran and to hadiths as opposed to many Alevi writings.

In addition to the group in the Center, I tried to reach some other female interviewees through my personal network in order to learn more about how women remember the events, how they are affected by it and what kind of narratives they construct in telling the story. The most distinctive feature of women narratives is their frequent reference to life around household, their intimate sphere and interpersonal relations in detail (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 1). There is some qualitative evidence that suggests difference in the accuracy and vividness of memories between men and women, which assert that women can recall their memories more fully and vividly than men (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 3). Moreover, compared to men, they show strong tendency to express feelings about the impacts of the events.

Women tend to remember everyday life, the economic situation of their families, what they were supposed to be doing at every minute of the day, what was happening in their neighborhoods and communities, their fears and feelings of insecurity. They remember within the framework of family relationships, because women's subjective experience of time is organized by and linked to reproductive events and affective ties (Jelin, 2003, p. 82).

Emel⁷⁴ is among the injured party. As she has an Alevi family, her family was subjected to some attacks by their surroundings. When I asked what they lived in that process, she gives details about the day her neighbors took shelter in her house and how they protected people escaping from violence. Indeed, she verbalized what happened to their family and house. Desperateness and fostering solidarity in close neighborhood against violent attacks are underlined. Also, she expresses her disappointment and sadness at attacks and offensive attitude of their acquaintances.

⁷⁴ I interviewed her in the reading group. In the group, women did not want to talk one by one. It was such a conversational interview. Emel was one of the willing speaker in the conversation comparing to others.

Now, I was sitting at Terlemez⁷⁵ during the 80s events. I had two children, one of them was two years old, the other was three. It was such a terrible event that it started as right-left case. No one reacted when it started as right-left case. I mean, some few were clamoring and leaving, but then it came to the separation of Alevi-Sunni. When it became Alevi-Sunni division, our streets escaped. The most bitter side is that there was a woman whose house was demolished and who was escaping with her two children in front of our house. My husband saw them and asked where they were going. She said: “we are in trouble, my brother, we have no place to stay and do not have a man with us. We don’t know what to do”. My house was on the third floor; the highest building was mine. All Alevis in the neighborhood were in my house. Three days, five days, maybe more than that. We consumed everything we had together because we did not have a chance to buy something from outside. Some neighbors were sleeping under spring mattress at that time. They were extremely scared... There were some Sunni families there. Since we were there, they did not come close to us, they escaped from us (Emel, February, 2015).⁷⁶

They did not want to be involved in it. They withdrew... My husband is a tradesman. He electrified the door. He said that if you invaded my house and killed five people, then at least ten people will die from yours. We resisted in this way. The events calmed down a little, did not get better completely. My father-in-law was sitting ... street. He sent a message that my son (I did not understand name) came and removed his belongings. People pressured him. They are old people, husband and wife. My husband and I would go. We took our kids, got on motorbike and went to the house, to ... street (the one his father in law was sitting). Our own neighbors surrounded us. The people we ate and drank together said to my father-in-law that you would give your son and daughter in law to us. They took a gun and said this. My father-in-law told that ‘before you killed me I wouldn’t give my son and daughter in law to you’. I would already leave here in the morning. We found a house behind Eti Secondary School, which would be exchange (Emel, February, 2015).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ One of the neighborhood in the center of Çorum.

⁷⁶ “Şimdi 80 olaylarında ben Terlemez’de oturuyordum. Benim iki tane çocuğum vardı. Birisi iki yaşında birisi üç yaşındaydı. O kadar kötüydü ki ilk başta bu sağ sol olayları olarak başladı. Sağ sol olarak başladığı zamanlarda hiç kimse tepki vermedi. Yani bir kaç kişi bağıyor çağırıyor gidiyorlardı. Ama ondan sonra Alevi-Sünni ayrımına gelindi. Alevi Sünni olduğu zaman bizim sokaklar kaçtı. En acı tarafı da iki tane çocuğuyla bir tane kadın evleri yıkılmış kaçarak gidiyorlardı bizim evin önünden. Benim eşim görmüş “nereye gidiyorsun” demiş. Kadın demiş: “Çok zordayız kardeşim kalacak yerimiz yok. Başımızda erkeğimiz yok. Ne yapacağız bilmiyoruz”. Benim evim üçüncü katta. Orada en yüksek ev benim evim. Bütün mahalledeki Aleviler benim evimdeydi. Üç gün, beş gün belki daha fazla. Evimizde ne varsa hepsini tükettik biz. Çünkü dışarı çıkıp bir şey alma olasılığı yoktu. Bazı komşular- somyeler vardı o zaman - somyelerin altına girip yatıyorlardı. O kadar korkuyorlardı ki... Biz oradayız diye -bizi tanıyan aileler vardı orda bir kaç tane Sünni - onlar pek bize yaklaşmazlardı. Yani bizden çekildiler.” (Emel, February, 2015)

⁷⁷ Bulaşmak istemediler. Çekildiler... Eşim esnaf benim. Kapıya falan hep elektrik verdiler. Dedi hani “bizim evimizi bastığınız zaman, benden beş kişi ölecekse sizde en az 10 kişi ölecek” dedi. O şekilde biz direndik. Olaylar sakinleşti birazcık, daha tam da düzelmedi. Kayınpederim oturuyor benim... Mahallesinde. Bu haber göndermiş ki “... gelsin benim eşyama götürsün”. Adamı (kayınpederini)

Continuing from these words, she explained how their furniture was moved to a new house and how they had hard times without food in that chaotic atmosphere. The narrative of her memory is actually shaped around her living environment. Her testimonies and expression of victimization are constructed based on deprivation of survival necessities before all political conflicts and interpretations. Her roles, as a mother, wife, and daughter, are determinative in this narrative construction. Similar to Emel, Meral recollects the events with its bitter effects on her close family at first step:

See, I know that we were hungry for one week. I remember that we cried. Bullets passed over my late father's shoulder, they drilled sponges. Well, there were shoulder paddings before. I have a brother, sixteen years old at that time, got Alzheimer later. Ten years ago, doctor said that it was because of horror inside of him. He could not get rid of his fear. Doctor said that he had been withdrawn, and because of that, he did not talk to anyone (Meral, March 2015).⁷⁸

There were people we knew. There were many Sunni people burning and destroying. Among them, there were many good people with whom we had been living in the same neighborhood. We were hungry and crying, mum and dad were at loss. There was an old woman, we called her *nine* (nana)... she was very old. Under that hail of bullets and fire, she went to the bakery and brought a sack of bread. She fed us and by saying that they had been my relatives, she rescued us from there (Meral, March 2015).⁷⁹

On the one hand, offenders of the trouble for these women are faithless Sunnis who were their neighbors, people they know, and people they "eat and drink together". Since they attacked their private place where they construct their lives, and their

sıkıştırmışlar; karı koca yaşlı insanlar. Eşim gidecek ben de geleceğim çocuklar da aldık motorunuza bindik eve gittik ... Mahallesi. Kendi komşularımız etrafımızı sardılar bizim. Beraber yiyip içtiğimiz insanlar, ne diyorlar kayınpederime "oğlunla gelinin bize vereceksin. Silah getirdi oğlunla gelinin, elimize vereceksin". Kayınpederim de dedi ki "ya oğlum ben oğlumla gelinimi size vermem beni öldürmeden önce". "Ben zaten sabah gideceğim burdan" dedi. Bir ev bulduk, Eti orta okulunun arkasından da değiş tokuş oldu. (Emel, February, 2015)

⁷⁸ "İşte bir hafta aç kaldığımızı biliyorum. Ağladığımızı, babamın, rahmetlinin ceketinin omuzlarından geçmiş kurşunlar süngerleri delmiş. Hani vatkalar vardı eskiden. O zaman 16 yaşında bir ağabeyim vardı alzheimer hastalığına yakalandı sonradan... 10 sene evvel, içindeki korkuları nedeniyle demiş doktor. İçindeki korkuları yenemedi. İçine kapanmış dedi o yüzden kimseyle konuşmamış dedi." (Meral, March 2015. She works in a gas station as a cleaner.)

⁷⁹ "Tanıdığımız da vardı. Sünnilerden yakanlar yıkanlar öldürenler çoktu. İçinde o kadar iyi insanlar vardı ki aynı mahallede oturuyorduk. Aç kaldık ağlıyoruz annem babam ne yapacağını şaşırıldı. Bir yaşlı nine derdik teyze, çok yaşlı bir kadın. O ateşin, kurşun yağmurunun içinde gitti fırından bir çuval ekmek getirdi, bizi doyurdu ve bunlar benim akrabalarım diye peşine aldı oradan kurtardı bizi." (Meral, March 2015)

identities, before the state and outside powers, they regrettably utter very close surroundings. On the other hand, one of the conspicuous things in these narratives is the complexity of avoiding unjust accusation against one side. I realize that in each party, people walk in eggshell while generalizing sectarian blaming. On that case, I cannot make a sharp classification between Alevis and Sunnis or genders; however, almost all women avoid big blaming sectarian generalizations. They accept that the events exploded together with Alevi-Sunni separation and many Sunni people they trusted turned their back or even attacked. At the same time, there are many helpful, well-intentioned Sunni people they certainly drew attention to, by whom they could protect their families.

“Allah bir daha yaşatmasın” (“I wish God won’t give us this again”)

Many women uttered these words after narrating bitter stories they lived. The events are assumed to result in “sharp stabbing disconnection” between two communities which had no serious overt conflict in the city before that. The chance of “living together” is still there for these women and they place precious meaning on this chance that started to be gained again after many years:

I wish there would be no Alevi-Sunni difference, no discrimination case. Those events would not come back. By sweeping children, no one will make enemies of children. How many years does it take to raise a child? I am totally against this kind of events (Sultan Ana, February, 2015).⁸⁰

We, their kids suffer the same as they did. We do not want the next generation to suffer. You should see people as human. You also have arms, eyes, foot. God created you and him. There should be love because of God. You are brothers because God created you. I said that you are brothers either on the way or by blood, we are brothers. We said you and I, what happened? What happened? All filled in their baskets (Hülya, February, 2015).⁸¹

It is very bad, God forbid, I wish no one would undergo the same... Look, I came here to work with Edip brother... Our people have lots of companies,

⁸⁰ “Alevi-Sünni davası olmasın. Ayrım tekim davası olmasın. Geri bu olaylar gelmesin. Çoluğu çocuğu önlere katıp, birbirlerine iki çocukları düşman etmesinler. Bir evlat kaç senede meydana geliyor? Ben bu tür olaylara çok karşıyım” (Sultan Ana, February 2015).

⁸¹ “Onların çektiği çilelerini, çocukları bizler de çektik. Bizden sonrakiler çekmesin. İnsanı insan gibi görmeye çalışacaksın. Senin de kolun gözün ayağın var, Allah seni de yarattı onu da yarattı. Yaradan’dan ötürü seviş olması lazım. Allah’ın yarattığı, Yaradan’dan dolayı kardeşsin ya da yolda kardeşsin. Ya da kanda kardeşsin. Kardeşiz biz dedim. Sen ben dedik de n’oldu? Ne oldu. Herkes sepetine doldurdu” (Hülya, February 2015). (She teaches Kur’an, participated in religious talks).

factories. Sunnis are working; Alevi also work in Sunni people's work place. Look, it is very nice. Rather than living brotherly, people massacred (Meral, March 2015).⁸²

"I wish God wouldn't make people undergo those events again. God will give goodness" (Emel, February, 2015).⁸³

Nevertheless, in memories of these Alevi women, social exclusion based on sectarian difference is still alive. The fear of re-experiencing the same pain exists behind every good wishes about Alevi-Sunni difference. Speaking about the Çorum events and its reflection on people still create uncomfortable feelings among them. I saw this discomfort among the women in reading group at the Research Center. Except for Emel and Hülya, others were reluctant to share their story in public. They participated in chatting only with some small comments or wishes. After the conversation, the head of reading group stated disturbance of the subject and depressing atmosphere it created there. Next time, she wanted me to interview with women willing to speak alone in next room. On that day, only one woman accepted talking to me by expressing her great hesitation. She was worried about her children, so she absolutely rejected to be audio taped and wanted to talk anonymously. By talking about this dangerous topic, she did not want to endanger her son's job. Therefore, without entering into details, she briefly talked about what she had in mind about that time. The message she gave is that although they had very hard time, were subjected to discrimination and violent attacks, today they overcome the separation in their relations. She does not forget cruel side of the events: "One of dedes from Gökçepınar was burnt in the oven", "one man was killed on the way of his village", "people threw a teacher to stream", and "people put sign on houses". At the same time, she wants to reflect positive side of the case today: They could construct favorable relations over the cruel past. She started her speech by saying "we do not discriminate on the grounds of language, religion and race". "Shops were set apart from each other. People did not do shopping from each other. However, we got over

⁸² "Çok kötü bir şey; Allah bir daha hiç kimsenin başına getirmesin. ... Bak geldim burda Edip abinin yanında... Bizim milletin de bir sürü firmaları fabrikaları var, Sünniler çalışıyor, Sünnilerinde Aleviler. Bak ne kadar güzel. Kardeşçe yaşamak varken millet birbirini kırdı geçirdi" (Meral, March 2015).

⁸³ "O olayları Allah bir daha kimseye yaşatmasın. İyilik versin"(Emel, February, 2015).

it. There are no such things today. There is not any problem in marriages. We have brides. We don't harbor resentment, we love"⁸⁴ (Zehra, February 2015).

The fear of these women interviewees and their practices in the Research Center can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, they are performing a self as an Alevi woman who also shares and believes Islamic interpretation and practices, which is favored and socially supported. Borrowing from Goffman's conceptualization of self, they put on a performance of a self, which is "a social product in the sense that it depends upon validation awarded and withheld in accordance with the norms of a stratified society" (As cited in Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xlvi). The Alevism supported and approved in the Center is the one accepted and believed in the Quran, placing itself under Islamic understanding and tradition by believing and at least agreeing on fundamental principles, which contradicts, to a great extent, the Alevi community gathered around *cemevis*. By participating in the activities of the Center, these women standing in-between, could "sustain a respectable self-image in the eyes of others depends on access to structural resources and possession of traits and attributes deemed desirable by the dominant culture" (As cited in Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xlvi). The way they construct an image of Alevi self by showing the compatibility with dominated culture and way of believing. Most of them do not attend *cemevi* ceremonies performed in *cemevis*, some of them only watched by joining the visit to a village organized by the Center, some of them were learning how to read the Quran, and they presented there by accepting and confirming the precepts read from *Makalat*. Thus, they are producing a "socialized self" that is a social product and constrained to define themselves in congruence with the statuses, roles, and relationships they are accorded by the social order" (As cited in Lemert & Branaman, 1997, p. xlvii).

On the other hand, these practices and self-production can be taken as a natural consequence of their everyday practices and social roles. In religious sense, as they mean, they have not followed a traditional Alevism, but a way of living interwoven

⁸⁴ "Dükkanlar ayrıldı. Birbiriyle alış veriş yapmıyordu insanlar. Ama aştık. Şimdi böyle bir şey yok. Evliliklerde de öyle bir sıkıntı yok. Gelinlerimiz var. Kin taşımıyoruz, seviyoruz." (Zehra, February 2015).

with Sunni Islam; therefore, they have been influenced by its principles and practices. Since all women I interviewed were housewives, their daily routines are shaped around their houses, families, neighbor, and related environments. As a common way of socialization, women establish neighbor relations through home visits, sometimes organized around praying or religious talks. Therefore, such everyday social relations can shape in-betweenness of these Alevi women who both define themselves as Alevi and share the practices of dominated religious understanding. As they engage in daily routines and issues more than men, and as their minds and discourse are less affected by hegemonic political and ideological terms, they can more easily adapt to the social order and establish a self sharing the characteristic of each community.

To sum up, women narrative, among my interviewees, about the Çorum events is placed around their houses, family and neighbor relations. Their roles shape the manner they tell their stories. Most of them constructed a narration far from official discourse. As quoted passages from interviews demonstrate, their subject matter “is the ordinary and the everyday” (Minchin, 2007). They mostly depict how the violent attacks and sectarian distinction penetrated into their routines and rhythm of everyday lives. Interference with their vital everyday needs is a devastating part of the events: they had to move from their houses, needed to find food and protect the lives of their children or neighbors. While doing this, expression of sorrow, reproach, fear, and hope dominate their narration in which they have in mind the trouble side of the past together with the desire of and belief in getting over hard times.

4.3.2. Male Narratives

Compared to female narratives, mode of memory construction in men’s narrative has a political direction. It is quite often that they place narrations outside of their houses, and their ideological position prevails other social positions and roles. In relation to this, they narrate their memories within logical and rational frameworks rather than highlighting their feelings (Leydesdorff et al., 2005). Many give reasons lying behind the events in harmony with journalistic reports and formal narration based on their standing. They depict the story with its phases from the beginning to the end with its relation to military intervention, political separations and actors in power.

Their testimonies are often found in public documents, judicial testimonies, and journalistic reports... While these testimonies may undoubtedly empower and legitimize the voice of the victim in these contexts, their “testimonial” function is centered in the factual description, narrated as precisely as possible, about the materiality of torture and political violence (Jelin, 2003, p. 83).

Actors playing role in these recollections are soldiers, the police, intelligence service, left and right-oriented people together with their sect, and American secret agent. Different from women’s narratives, men make many references to high state officials. Without exception, they establish a relation between the military intervention and the Çorum events in their analysis.

Military regimes resulted in significant transformations in the daily activities of both men and women. Fear and uncertainty permeated social spaces and practices, particularly in public spaces outside family relations. Since men tend to be more active within such spaces, perhaps they felt a greater impact (Jelin, 2003, p. 81).

Because there exists continuing uncertainty over the perpetrator of the events, and the 1980 military intervention took place just after it, most people refer to state powers as the offender of the conflicts:

Nothing showed up until the coup d’état. The police and military were in charge around the clock tower. The answer from the police was: Leave the region you located... Milönü center (the place where Alevi friends are located. I abstained from using this expression because it points out a discrimination, not because I am afraid) and Yazıçarşı center are two points. The Same people exploded in two sides. I am sure they were members of MIT⁸⁵. There were domiciliary visits by soldiers. Both soldiers and the police protected their own sides. They told that if you had guns, hide them. The Alevi police mediated Alevis, and the Sunni police mediated Sunnis (Metin, February 2015).⁸⁶

Now, look my daughter, the Çorum events started with Gün Sazak’s murder. Alright. This matter was started by a group of MHP sympathizers who broke windows, windows of workplace belonging to Alevi and left-oriented people, in between Zafer Market, the place we called downward market in between Sancaklar Mosque. There were lots of American secret agents. We saw them personally. You talked to Sadık brother (Sadık Eral). He saw lots of things, too.

⁸⁵ MIT is the Turkish abbreviation of National Intelligence Service.

⁸⁶ “İhtilale kadar bir şey çıkmadı. Ordu ile polis görevli, saat kulesinin orda. Polisten gelen cevap: Bulduğunuz bölgeyi terk edin... Milönü merkez (Alevi arkadaşların bulunduğu yer, bu ifadeyi de kullanmaktan çekinirim. Ayrım ifade ettiği için. Yoksa ürküttüğü için değil) ve Yazıçarşı merkez iki ana noktalar. Aynı kişiler iki tarafta da patlattılar, Mit mensubuydular eminim... Askerler tarafından ev aramaları oldu. Asker de polis de kendi kesimini korudu. Silahın varsa sakla dendi. Alevi polise Alevi, Sünni polise Sünni aracı oldu”(Metin, February 2015).

Now they could not play off people against each other because the Right and Left was something the young got interested... Middle-aged people didn't intervene. They realized that Çorum wasn't fighting tooth and nail, they made it Alevi-Sunni. And then of course, they attacked the coffeehouse in Milönü with the same guns, attacked the coffeehouse in Yazıçarşı with the same guns (Ahmet, March, 2015).⁸⁷

As the quoted examples illustrate, just like among women interviewees, there is a common belief that the sectarian separation did not result from an existing conflict between ordinary people. The agreed point voiced by men on this issue is that without the interference of state powers, it was not possible to lead to that much chaos in the city. On the other hand, male narrators also have the confusion about naming the role ordinary people played in the increase in violence. Most of them avoid attributing an offensive meaning to whether people participated in the attacks voluntarily and deliberately. Regardless of sects and ideological position, they prefer to put ordinary people in a position that they were obliged to or deceived into this separation. Agency of these people is quite subtle in these narratives. It was such an event that is "planned" and "systematically" staged by state forces, which is still an unknown agent for some interviewees. "They" made ordinary people an instrument to reach their political intentions:

Now, let me tell you this: The Çorum events are not a simple, classic matter that some people became furious and did this. The Çorum case is an event done systematically, planned. Our intelligence service on that day did this systematically and planned. And, let me put the end of the event not the beginning: the chief of Çorum criminal court, of that date, said exactly this: "Cemal Bey, do not make any effort" (Cemal is, our deceased, Dinçer Solmaz's (now he is lawyer, candidate of CHP) father. He was the provincial head at that time, when the coup d'état took place, when the events took place). Our court was in Erzincan. We were going and coming back to Erzincan, twenty-two, twenty-three times, but nothing. Then, he said that the state did this and state protects its suspect, needless to struggle. He was right. Our suspects got death penalty. Özal came in 1984, introduced a law. Suspects with capital offense would be free after ten years; suspects with life sentence would be

⁸⁷ "Şimdi bak kızım Çorum olayları bir defa Gün Sazak'ın ölümüyle başladı. Tamam mı. MHP'li bir grup bizim aşağı çarşı dediğimiz Zafer çarşısının arası, Sancaklar camisinin ara var ya, bu arada Alevi ve sol görüşlü insanların camlarını, işyerlerinin camlarını kırarak başladı bu iş. Burda çok Amerikalı ajan vardı. Biz bunları birebir de gördük. Sadık abimle de görüşmüştün zaten. Yani, birebir, o da çok yaşadı bazı şeyleri. Şimdi bunları bu sefer sağ ve soldan halkı birbirine sokamadılar. Çünkü niye, sağcılık ve solculuk gençleri ilgilendiren bir şeydi... Orta yaşlı insanlar karışmadı. Bu sefer baktılar ki tam Çorum birbirine girmede, Alevi-Sünni yaptılar. Ve orada da tabii ki işte Milönünde aynı silahla kahve tarandı, Yazıçarşı'da aynı silahla kahve tarandı" (Ahmet, March 2015).

free after eight years' of imprisonment. It ended up in this way. I mean, this is the case with guilty and innocent (Hüseyin Solmaz, February 2015).⁸⁸

Now look, when you search in the internet, people say that the rightists, idealists, more precisely fascists started it. However, no one had a thing at the beginning of the events, got involved in. You know Why?: we understood it after 12 September. When I was jailed after 12 September, we saw today that any state official, neither gendarme commander nor governor at that time, nor the chief of police, did not have any intervention. I mean, because the state was a mere spectator for a couple days and after that, military came and intervened. Besides, think about it, there is this thing, people were unconscious. For example, there were two-three people injured, villagers moved according to that. Or on the other side, people say that, for instance from that side, their side, their village people died. Alevi side said that our people died, this time they moved from there... What I want to say is that basically this event appeared under the Right and Left, but intensified on Alevi and Sunni case. And on this, the greatest responsibility belongs to neither people nor this nor that. It belongs purely and simply to politicians, to people governed this state at that time. I know it well. We realized this later. Still, 12 September has been judged, but the governors are not judged. There is nothing related to them (Turgut, March 2015).⁸⁹

⁸⁸ "Ben şimdi size şunu söyleyeyim yani, Çorum olayları öyle basit, klasik, birileri hırsla geldi ben bunu yaptım olayı değil ki. Çorum olayları planlı programlı yapılmış bir olay. O günkü bizim istihbarat teşkilatının, planlı programlı yaptığı bir olay. Ve olayın ben size şöyle, başını değil de sonunu anlatayım. Çorum ağır ceza reisi -o günkü ağır ceza reisi- aynen şöyle diyor: (bizim rahmetli bu Dinçer Solmaz'ın (şimdi avukat, Chp aday adayı) babası (Cemal) da avukattı, Chp'nin il başkanıydı o zaman, ihtilalin olduğunda, olayların olduğunda da il başkanıydı) "Cemal bey hiç uğraşma" dedi. Bizim mahkeme Erzincandaydı. Erzincan'a gidiyoruz geliyoruz, 22-23 defa gittik geldik, boş. Ondan sonra, "bunu devlet yaptı, devlet yaptığı sanığını da korur, boşa uğraşmayın" dedi. Adamın dediği çıktı, bizim sanıklara idam verdiler. Özal geldi 84'te bir kanun çıkardı. İdamlıklar 10 yıl yattı mı çıkacak, müebbetler de 8 yıl yattı. Öyle bitti. Yani, suçlu suçsuz olay bu" (Hüseyin, February 2015. He lost his father, Veli Solmaz, in the events. Veli Dede was an Alevi dede, burnt in the oven. Hüseyin did not witness the events directly. He came back to Çorum afterwards).

⁸⁹ "Şimdi bak, bütün internete falan baktığın zaman, başlangıç hep şeydir: sağcılar ve ülkücüler daha doğrusu faşistler başlattı falan derler. Oysa olayların başlangıcında hiç kimsenin şeyi yoktur, dahli yoktur. Niye biliyor musun; bunu daha sonra biz 12 Eylül'den sonra anladık. Ben 12 Eylül'den sonra içeriye alındığımda devletin hiçbir yetkilisinin, bugün ne jandarma komutanının ne o günkü Valinin ne emniyet müdürünün hiçbir müdahalesinin olmadığını gördük. Yani devletin seyirci kaldığı bir kaç günün arkasından ancak asker gelip müdahale etti. Zaten şimdi düşünsene, şöyle bir şey var, halkın hiçbir bilinci yok. Adam sadece diyelim ki işte bu olmadan 2-3 kişi yaralanmış ona göre köylüler hareket ediyor. Veya öbür taraftan deniyor ki adamlar kendilerinin, mesela şu taraflardan, köyden insanlar öldü. Alevi kesim diyor ki bizim insanlarımız öldü; onlar da oradan hareket ediyor... Yani diyeceğim şu, işin esası sağ ve sol adı altında göründü ama Alevi ve Sünni sorunu üzerinde yoğunlaştı. Ve bunda da en büyük pay ne halkın ne şunun ne bunun. Siyasilerin, sadece ve sadece o günkü devleti yöneten kişilerin, bunu iyi biliyorum. Yıllar sonra da biz zaten onu fark ettik. Hala daha 12 Eylül yargılandı mesela şeyler, hiç yöneticiler yargılanmadılar, onlarla ilgili hiçbir şey olmadı" (Turgut, March 2015. He was director of Idealist Association and a teacher. During the events he was a teacher in Samsun.).

The manner men and women interviewees construct narratives about the occurrence of the Çorum events tells us the relation between form of recollection and gender roles. The subject matters women and men highlight differ from each other depending on the way they consume space and time. Men's narrations are very close to official transmission of the past events in both statist and opposing manner, which dominates transference of knowledge about the events. "Memories supportive of the maintenance of existing power structures are usually assured wider social space and easier transmission. But memories of subordinate groups can also show striking resilience, and they can be transmitted, as women's memories often must be, from the interstices of society, from the boundaries between the public and the private" (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 8). Having a look at women's testimonies reveals the "invisible" and unvoiced aspect of remaining after the violent past. In this case, it shows the area where women's life is affected and the meaning they attribute to identities, and sectarian separation. Memories on Alevi-Sunni distinction and the accompanying social exclusion evoke concern about the possibility of re-experiencing it. Ideological positions do not become the focus of women's remembrance as well as men. Rather, they point at how intimate family and neighbor relations were affected, and their living conditions changed based on sectarian conflict.

Focusing on women's voices brings out "plurality of viewpoints and worldviews" into the public space different from men's voices. "This perspective also implies the recognition and legitimization of experiences other than those considered dominant or hegemonic (mostly those of men and those enunciated from positions of power)" (Jelin, 2003, p. 85). It gives the chance to see various types of narratives under the same issue which ascertain subjective side of memory construction. Looking at different images of men and women lets us see first how historical past is recaptured. Besides, it shows the manner how they deal with the past "as well as the meanings assigned to masculinity and femininity" (Leydesdorff et al., 2005, p. 8). Reluctance to talk about Çorum events and displaying a sense of insecurity were higher in women than men. More likely, the speech act on this issue seems to be left to men largely. As mentioned at the beginning, first addressees were always men when I searched for someone to talk about the events. It shows that men dominated the public sphere

and they are seen as the source of reliable information. For the most part, the discourse they reproduce is also compatible with typical hegemonic language in Alevi and Sunni political surroundings.

Nevertheless, these distinctions are characteristic points of diverse narration types by men and women. It should be noted that each has also common concerns and references about sectarian positions, separations, and confusions on the agency. They have fears and silences up to the degree they were involved in conflicts. Their wounds become determinative in their speech that they may show aggression, may prefer not to talk, may be more accusatory or have a moderate position. These acts are still unstable.

4.4. Silences: Insecurity in Talking About the Past

“Thus: it is possible to live almost without memory, and to live happily moreover, as the animal demonstrates; but it is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting.”

(Nietzsche, 2007b, p. 62)

4.4.1. Types of Silences

Memory and forgetting have an interpenetrating and complex relation that the existence of the one depends on the absence of the other, which means that they simultaneously work in human mind. Talking about remembering of an event or an image implies forgetting of other images related or unrelated with the recalled object. Forgetting restricts and shapes the act of remembering in the way that selecting an image can be possible by eliminating other images. “Memory is distortion since memory is invariably and inevitably selective. A way of seeing is a way of not seeing; a way of remembering is a way of forgetting, too” (Schudson, 1997, p. 348). Therefore, all narrative memory about the past include silences and forgetting. It is not possible to have full memory for individual subjects (Jelin, 2003, p. 17). Subjects construct narration of the past in present condition that is influenced by their emotions, beliefs, knowledge, social interactions, future expectations, and macrosocial processes. Remembering process results from one or more than one of

these conditions, which becomes selective in recollecting images of the past depending on them.

Goffman's conceptualization of frame analysis supports the idea that forgetting occurs by virtue of "the disappearance or change of frameworks due to shifts in social conventions. The fact that there can be many frames and that they are constructed upon each other", there are multiple nature of realities, so multiple meanings attributed to forgetting (as cited by Misztal, 2003, p. 83). Similarly, Halbwachs identifies collective memory with its association to social frames, which determines what and how to remember. As individual remembering depends on the frameworks of social memory, for Halbwachs, forgetting also relies on the disappearance of frameworks of collective memory and he alternatively calls it "deformation of certain recollection" (Halbwachs & Coser, 1992, p. 172).

Thus, the way people recollect the images of the past and construct narrative displays similar characteristics that include elimination or dissembling of some facts, silences and voids in the narrations based on the shared social framework. The way people select moments of the past and construct frame of narration are in relation to group belonging, dynamics, and identity. Yet, belonging to a group identity is not the mere determinant in the manner of remembering and forgetting. Individual differences in narrative memory can appear in relation to the multiplicity of situations and identities (Hall, 1996), which result in different forms of expression of forgetting and silences with different purposes.

Many of the silences we observe are relative and we must understand them as such: for instance, there may be silence of existing historiography confronted with worker's culture, or a silence of women's studies in comparison to a women's oral tradition, or a silence of the mass media in comparison with poetry. It is constitutive of the definition of a silence to find out its limits, its context, and its reference: in respect to whom and to what is it a silence. (Passerini, 2007, p. 29).

When traumatic memories are considered, forgetting and silences occupy an important position in the narrations. Subject of forgetting has a significant role in memory narratives since the past experiences of subjects differ and shape the manner they give the meaning of the event. Carrying similar political and social

identities with the perpetrators of the events causes a silence aiming to make people forget the conflicts due to fear of re-experiencing the same social dissociations and of being subjected to the same accusations. Moreover, a deep mistrust towards the memory entrepreneurs of the events prevents these people from believing in striking a balance between the two poles. Hence, parties who are close to nationalist-conservative line show a tendency not to talk in detail about the Çorum events and show uneasiness on bringing up the issue.

Any operation aiming to cancel memory cannot help but produce set of memories with the intention of violently replacing the previous one. The field memory is a battlefield in many ways. Indeed, one could argue that we speak from a century, which has given rise to a contradictory mixture of memory and oblivion (Passerini, 2007, p. 18).

On the other hand, as being the carrier of victimized identity, actors of memory who initiated the commemorations and most Alevis I interviewed manifest willingness to talk about their continuing victimization and make people notice their losses. Their silences have different backgrounds where the longest period has passed before the initiation of the commemorations. Except for the book written by Sadık Eral (1995), no attempt has been made to memorialize the losses and construct a memory narrative upon the past victimization. Interviews and observations in the commemoration point out that ordinary people who stayed in the city fell into oblivion for twenty-nine years as making sense of the events, recovering the social and psychological repression based on Alevi identity, and cleavages between Sunni and Alevi community seemingly have made voicing the victimization harder. For many Alevis, even naming the religious identity was a serious obstacle in everyday relations, and there have been circulating stereotypes surrounding them. Besides, Sivas massacre had an impact on the memory of the Çorum events in two ways. On the one hand, it came to the front as a uniting victimization that revived mobilization around Alevi identity and led to protect and claim their rights. Clearly, this prominence has prevailed in transformation of the narrations of happenings in Çorum. During the commemoration, I realized that the new generation heard Sivas massacre more than Çorum itself. On the other hand, it opened a space to speak about the past and gave the courage to bring up the issue to the agenda.

4.4.2. Disassembling the Facts

In this section, I will spare some space to the types of silences persisting among non-Alevi groups of people who show discomfort in talking and reminding the Çorum events. Largely, this attitude of silence appears on people who carry the label of being perpetrators of the events by its victims, actually carry the identity of perpetrator who is defined conservative, Sunni and with changing degree nationalist. The attitude of silence harbors a kind of contention that questions who will control what and how will be remembered and represented to the people. The motive behind this behavior is similar to Renan's interpretation of collective memory in which forgetting of the events posing threat to unity is necessary for ensuring national cohesion (Renan, 2003, p. 11). In this case, since there is not any actor officially introduced as offender of the event, and actually the unnamed state forces in the 1980s are accused of having carried out the conflicts, state actors and conservative-nationalist wing prefer to stay silent about the past. "The official management of collective memory, while always designed to legitimize power, is seen as revolving essentially around two poles of censorship and celebration, or socially organized forgetting and socially organized remembering" (Misztal, 2003, p. 56). As for the Çorum case, socially organized forgetting is used as a way of legitimizing power in which there is no effort to memorialize the losses or support the initiatives of commemorations. Indeed, an evasive forgetting (Jelin, 2003, p. 18) or overt silence (Vinitzky-Seroussi & Teeger, 2010) has been observed, which advocate that reminding people the negative side of the past, pain and conflicts will trigger the potential of reviving them. Furthermore, the actors who manage this memory acts are seen dangerous in the sense that their intention are not considered as peaceful, but exacerbating the hostility.

The first reaction when I opened the matter to some non-Alevi conservative-nationalist people was to ask questions like "why do you study this case", "why did your instructors give this topic to you" or to directly reject talking about it. Many consider this case as dark and dangerous to reflect ideas on it. It results in separation and conflicts between two communities, and it is still alive for these people. While they say that the relation between Alevis and Sunnis is not in tension as it was in the past, they do not show the comfort in talking as if all things fall behind. It makes me

feel that traumatic side of the event influenced Sunni people more than Alevis. Being accused of the violent act causes them to avoid speaking about it. What is more, based on this accusation, it hosts an underlying feeling of anger. Many pointed out insistently that ordinary people did not take part in attacks. Commonly used argument was that there were outside forces and they played a game on Çorum. They once experienced this separation and do not want to see the same tension once again. Thus, speaking about the dark side of the past reminds unfavorable feelings and ideas about each other. It does not serve to heal the wounds. Instead, it reopens them and will escalate hidden conflicts. That is why, many strongly suspect that there is a bad intention under investigations about the past tragedies. People have a great distrust towards people trying to bring the matter into question.

Erasures and voids can also be the results of explicit policies furthering and silence, promoted by actors who seek to hide and destroy evidence and traces of the past in order to impede their retrieval in the future. Recall Heinrich Himmler's famous statement at Nuremberg, declaring that the "final solution" was a glorious page in our history that has never been written and that never will be." In these cases, there is a willful political act of destruction of evidence and traces, with the goal of promoting selective memory loss through the elimination of documentary evidence. In a broader sense, all policies for conservation and memory, by selecting which artifacts and traces to preserve, conserve, or commemorate, have an implicit will to forget (Jelin, 2003, p. 18).

At this point, the effort made by one of the municipal officials in the department of archive should be stressed. When I introduced myself and explained the topic I would study, he told me "you chose a difficult topic to study. You will hardly find people willing to talk to you... We are trying to make people forget the events, you are making remember"⁹⁰ (İbrahim, February 2015). He did not want to be recorded in the meeting, and gave the first strong reaction against talking and investigating the events. His position and place of work has a decisive role in this reaction. By "we", he meant the municipality workers or the ones working for the city, who have the power of controlling citizens' living and even perceptions. He depicted a dark picture that the relations between two communities are still tense and the atmosphere is conducive to awaking a conflict. He does not believe that the brotherhood discourse

⁹⁰ "Çalışmak için biraz zor bir mesele seçmişsiniz. Görüşeceğimiz kimseler bulmak zor olacak... Biz unutturmaya çalışıyoruz siz hatırlatmaya çalışıyorsunuz." (İbrahim, February 2015)

is true. “This case in Çorum is on a knife edge” and he believes that 95 percent, the old animosity goes on.

Separation between neighborhoods are sharp as it was in the past. It is difficult for Sunni Muslims to live in an Alevi district if they do not drink and are pious. It is already known here. That is why people do not settle in each other’s street. People will not want to speak for interview (still, he gave some names) (İbrahim, February 2015).⁹¹

It is so worrying for him that the matter triggers in shadow of a discussion. His narration reflects a kind of institutionalized memory as an official worker. It shows the authorized power actors’ discomfort on the issue that the intention behind the silence is making people forget the tragic past. Although he shared his personal ideas about the current situation of the city, his position represents a sample of how authorized actors adopt a position on the remembrance of the events. Recollection of conflicting cases is still considered as dangerous because while it creates a discourse victimizing one group, Alevis, it condemns Sunni, Islamist, conservative-nationalist group against them. The current AKP Municipal Council is actually one of the addressees representing the identity of offenders for that victim group. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the actors of memory expected some representatives to join the commemorations and share the feelings of victims. However, the representation and identity conflict stand at the very center of the issue. The way to overcome past grievances that actors of memory offer come across the effort of silence about the past. The disagreement over the manner of recollection becomes sharper as the power of control on perceptions increases.

The municipal official’s pessimist remarks came after the narration of his memories about existing conflict and tension. He narrated some of his personal moments when he had chance to get contact with Alevi citizens. He told that he did not have biases towards Alevis, had a responsibility to compose people and believed that it is possible to live together. However, the moments he narrated were encountering an

⁹¹ “Bu mesele pamuk ipliğine bağlı. Kardeşlik söylemi var ama ben gerçek olduğuna inanmıyorum. Yüzde doksan beş eski husumetler devam ediyor. Mahalleler arası ayrışmalar olaylardan sonraki hal gibi keskin. İçki tüketmeyen, mütedeyyin bir hayat sürüyorsanız Alevi mahallesinde oturamazsınız. Burada genelde bilinir zaten. Kimse kimsenin sokağında oturmaz. Görüşme için insanlar konuşmak istemez” (İbrahim, February 2015).

unexpected reaction. As municipality, they were organizing a concert playing Turkish Folk Music. The players were composed of Alevi people. He also participated in the concert as a *ney* player. The first reaction he got was “why is he here, and playing ney?” It was a shocking encounter for him because he did not have discriminatory ideas and feelings as he conveyed. Another case that he encountered represents the existing political tension for him. February 2015 was the date Firat Çakiroğlu, who was an idealist university student from Ege University, was murdered with a knife attack out of a quarrel that arose among students. People performed a funeral prayer in absentia for him in Çorum Ulu Cami, and had a quarrel. He said that in the community a nationalist group showed up by asserting that leftist militant killed him, and a discussion took place about it. Though it was not a big quarrel, these cases cause him to convince about existing high tension after many years. He believes that there is a repressed situation, which revives in such encounters.

I faced another silencing struggle of the memory in the Women Culture and Art Center opened by municipality, located in the Milönü district. The Center offers service to women in improving their artistic skills with painting studio, and classes of the violin, computer, the Quran, and different handcrafts. I got in the center to talk with women about the events and their experiences. However, when I explained my study field to the receptionist woman, and asked for permission to interview with women, she directed me to the municipality official by indicating that they did not want to discuss such issues in the center. Her excuse was that the place is a government agency and it is not appropriate to speak such matters there. Talking about the sects would be disruptive in that atmosphere, so I should have gotten information from a trustworthy and authoritative person, which was a commissioned officer in municipality.

These examples display that speaking about the Çorum events has some limitation depending on the place and identities. Maintaining the silence over the insecure past is a common attitude among formal institutions and the ones linked to that. “Narration of certain memories and the silencing of others can oftentimes be conceptualized as the attempts of those with power to set the limits on what is

speakable or unspeakable about the past.” (Vinitzky-Seroussi & Teeger, 2010, p. 1107) Such a polarized and politic issue cannot find a public place to be able to speak without hurting anyone. It is difficult to form a moderate voice. Thus, any attempt to reveal this separation is trying to be suppressed or silenced by power actors. Forgetting and making people forget painful side of the conflict between two groups is considered as a solution to overcome past grievances. In this way, they believe that no one will accuse and show personal and ideological antagonism towards each other.

“the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”

Milan Kundera

Silences in Alevi community does not appear in the same manner and intention as in the examples of Sunni people do. Rather than the attempt to gloss over the remnants of the past, most of the Alevi people I interviewed in Çorum were open to talk about the events and their experiences. Similar to the words by one of the personnel in the Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Center, “people from Alevi community told their stories by saying that an ember burns where it falls” (February 2015). Some people did not want to be audio taped or give their names, but many of them accepted to speak with me. Largely, they seem to let people know their victimization, and help me in such a study relating with them. On the other hand, not all responses were so much welcoming. One of the women I tried to reach via my personal network rejected talking with me. She lost her son in the events and showed anger against my intermediary network. The intermediary contact was from Ovasaray village while she is from Ortaköy (an Alevi village subjected to attacks from Ovasaray village in 1980 based on sayings of interviewers), which also led her to reject speaking. It was the only time I was rejected by an Alevi person. This case was also one of the most traumatic examples except Hüseyin Solmaz’s case (he lost his father named Veli Dede in the events. At that time, he was in Germany, so he learnt the details about what happened after he came. Veli Dede’s murder in the oven has been imprinted on the memories of Alevi community, which is uttered by many interviewers). It is very likely that as people get involved in deeper frustrations about the past, they become closer

to keep their silence. However, it does not mean that images about the past of every person living in silence fade into a deep oblivion. Not speaking to another person, who carries the identity of “the other”, about the traumatic past shows the existence of pain and anger: “A thing must be burnt in so that it stays in the memory: only something that continues *to hurt* stays in the memory” (Nietzsche, 2007a, p. 37).

On the other side, in such traumatic cases, victimized party breaks the long-term silence. For the Çorum case, the only initiation to evoke public memory was the book written by Sadık Eral after the events took place. Actors of memory waited for thirty-four years to remind their past publicly with an intention to create a peaceful environment by making each side meet in the same place. This attempt and the results are discussed in chapter two. Here, I would like to stress the possible reasons of this long-term silence and covert silences behind victimization discourse built in collective narration after that. When the emergence of commemorations are taken into account, without the attempts of aforementioned memory entrepreneurs, it would be difficult to start collective commemoration with the participation of Çorum citizens. The number of participation to the first organization from the city, the number of outside attendants to following commemorations, and the statements of many interviewers about their fear on participation show that many local ordinary people mostly prefer to stand aside. It has been possible to learn the manner they reform their memories and reasons why they prefer standing aside through individual interviews.

There are several reasons that can be counted for the long-term silence after such a traumatic event. In the first place, it should be noted that the Çorum events were followed by 12 September military intervention which brought with an authoritative governance that redesign political and social life in the country. The coup d'état brought about trials, surveillance, death sentences, tortures, blacklisting, political bans, and dismissals afterwards. In 1983, the first elections after the intervention were held, but repressive authority prevailed with its constitution and censorship which was imposed not only by the law preventing judgement of actors, but also as self-censorship that led many people not to talk about the things done in the

intervention. Repressive silence imposed after the coup d'état showed its effect in Çorum, too. As a traumatic event having both political and religious connotations, it was difficult to voice what happened in the city by addressing a certain offender.

Traumatic events involve breaks in the ability to narrate and memory voids and gaps... the presence of trauma is indicated by the coexistence of an impossibility of assigning meaning to past occurrences, by the inability to incorporate it in a narrative, by its recurrent and persistent presence and manifestation in symptoms (Jelin, 2003, p. 17).

Related with this, the atmosphere in the city and overall the country were not suitable for carrying the issue to public sphere for discussion. "Silences kept during Franco's Spain, the Stalinist Soviet Union, and the Latin American dictatorships burst open with the change of regime. During these repressive periods, painful memories survive that 'await the propitious moment to be expressed'" (Jelin, 2003, p. 19). Thus, on the one hand the period of silence might have valuable contribution in the sense that the matter could find an addressee that would not even listen in a repression process. That is to say, a charged silence raises a possibility of having a positive meaning, which makes possible to distance oneself from the past by not necessarily forgetting it, but to recall and make others remember to relieve its pain (Passerini, 2007, p. 26).

The time of initiation for constructing a public memory points out the necessity of proper political and social atmosphere to voice the victimization publicly. Most of the interviewees speak out the sharp separation of districts based on sects and considerable number of migration to other cities just after the events. This case tells us that the events result in homogenization of neighbors depending on sectarian identities, and this transformation settled in the memories of people. People tried to secure their living space by escaping from the "other" and creating a neighbor where they are not seen as a threat. Though there are transitive and mixed places, this situation of creating secured places stands for both Sunni and Alevi communities for years. It appears that it has taken time to overcome these boundaries mentally and physically for these people. Many Alevi interviewees voiced the fact that more recently identification of districts started to dissolve, but is not totally overcome. This separation of living space means the separation of schools and working places

(mostly markets and shops) in addition to houses. Thus, dissociation of neighbors put borders in everyday communication between each community, which has made difficult getting in touch with each other and understanding their pain. Limitation of communication results in long period of speechlessness in which finding an addressee to talk and voice victimization seemed impossible.

In that process, the Madımak Hotel fire and Gazi riots awoke feelings of fear and threat. Many people in the commemoration and interviews uttered the Madımak Massacre, which is at the back of every Alevi person's memory more than any other tragedy. Indeed, the Madımak Massacre was the event that triggered Alevis to be mobilized and keep the collective memory alive. Victimization narratives were raised a lot after that, and Alevi community in Turkey and diaspora started to use the collective trauma in "creating a coherent and unifying group identity and a sense of inclusive victimhood" (Yildiz & Verkuyten, 2011, p. 243). Besides that, 2009, when commemorations started, is the year when the government's Alevi "opening" was still a current issue after the first initiative in 2007 (Köse, 2010a). Reviving social memory about the Çorum events coincided with the government's Alevi "opening" process, which means that people had the feeling to be listened by authorized power. The initiative bringing forward Alevi issue to the agenda by the government known by its Islamic and conservative political stand contributed to speak Alevi issue freely in public area. Even if almost all Alevi people despair over the possible favorable outcomes of these attempts, they attach importance to be recognized by the prime minister for the first time as Alevis, and to be listened with their religious identity. The initiation was part of democratization process and gave Alevis the opportunity to voice their demands not only to governmental entity, but also to public. Therefore, it opened channels to talk the Alevi issue loudly all over the country, which also influences the actors of memory in Çorum. When all these components joined, the atmosphere encouraged to partially break the silence about the Çorum events actualized in the process of increased democratization movements.

I called it a partial break of silence and forgetting because after this long speechless period, transformation of the memory on the events has been interrupted. The

images of the Madımak massacre and the discourse built on that apparently surpass a possible distinctive collective narration upon the Çorum case. During the commemoration in 2015, I dropped by some shops and tried to get whether the audiences and observers were aware what was happening on the street. In Alevi district, I could have a small conversation with a young girl who was working in a phone line store, and seemed excited about the march and slogans chanted in the street. When I asked why these people were walking, she firstly uttered the Madımak Hotel fire. After I asked the relation with Çorum, she confirmed by saying “yes, there also happened some events before that”, but she indicated that she did not know the case very well.

There was also a woman participating in the march for the first time after she was moved to tears by seeing out of the window and did not want to regret. I first asked if she joined the commemoration before, she said: “No, I was not here in summer for years. I am joining this Sivas thing for the first time”. Then, in the course of the conversation she told what she remembered about the Çorum events, how they escaped from the bullets and protected their children. However, the driving force for her to go to the street was decedents of the Madımak Hotel fire; she stated her sorrow at the beginning and the end of the conversation:

I feel so sad for those people burned (their pictures were on the bus that led the crowd). They burned them alive. I went to Sivas and saw, maybe you went there. Here is the street, street. It was fired there and no one helped. Is there a kind of humanity? Those people were all praying, fasting, making pilgrimage. Most people are religious there... But there were both Alevis and Sunnis among them. They burnt them because they were intellectuals... Goddam those people. We never forgive them (July, 2015).⁹²

Between the expressions of sadness about the Madımak Massacre, she talked about the difficulties they faced after the events that they had to move their house and how they disengaged from old neighbors. The images of the Madımak Massacre and her experiences in the Çorum events intertwined in her narration.

⁹² İşte şu yananlara çok üzüldüm ama ben. Diri diri yaktılar. Gittim gördüm Sivas’a, gitmişsindir belki. Cadde burası cadde, şurda yanıyo ve şurdan yardım yapamıyolar. Böyle insanlık olur mu; hepsi de namaz kılan oruç tutan hacca giden insanlar. Oranın çoğu dindar... Ama Alevi de vardı Sünni de vardı onların içinde, yananların içinde. Aydın kesim diye yaktılar... Allah kahretsin yakanları. Hiç affetmiyoruz onları. (July, 2015)

This case shows two things. First, due to repression or not overcoming the trauma, removing the signs and images of the event prevents building and maintaining of collective memory. Unless people are subjected to narration of the past through oral tradition or institutional memory tools such as schools, curriculum, museums or media, transmission of the experience and knowledge about the past weaken, and forgetting and apathy can settle in. Second, it supports that individual memory is constructed through supra-individual relations “dependent on frames of meaning and contexts of significance” (Prager, 1998, p. 70). As the role of the Madımak Hotel fire has a significance in creating a space that made Alevi people united under the victimization discourse after the 1990s, it creates a shared frame of understanding on other victimizations of Alevi community; people remember and think about the past with the help of this frame. They express the feeling of pain, sorrow and anger with the elements used in circulating memory narratives about the Alevis’ victimization, which highly increased after the Madımak Hotel fire.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have investigated the narratives of witnesses of the Çorum events to ascertain how Alevi and Sunni citizens differ in remembering their shared past, and to what extent the confrontation between the two communities continues. As part of the Alevi issue, in the collective memory of the community, past grievances always become the topic of discussion. In recent history, the Maraş, Sivas, and Çorum events in addition to the Madımak Massacre and Gazi Riots, have been events in which Alevis were subjected to violent attacks. These form a basis for the community to trace their victimization historically all the way back to Karbala. Regarding this victimization discourse and its influence in constructing the identity of Alevis, I researched the case of the city of Çorum, where there are still a considerable number of Alevi citizens, though many people emigrated from there after the conflicts in 1980. My main motivation in this investigation was to discover people's images of the past, and the situation of current relations between the two sects living in this city whose violent past has not been voiced or recognized as much as Maraş and Sivas. I aimed to discover whether witnesses or their children had constructed a collective memory as in the case of the Madımak incident, and whether social relations had been reestablished based on the images of the past.

Within this frame, I conclude that the memory of the Çorum events is alive for its witnesses as a matter of sectarian conflict, but has not been transferred to the younger generations similarly due to the long-term silence and feelings of threat and fear by the communities. My investigation on the commemorations organized since 2009 shows that for the young people of Çorum, the images of the Madımak Massacre are more alive than those of the city's past. Nevertheless, there is some awareness among the new generation, the witnesses, and their neighbors who have been in silence for years and are about to forget the events. Moreover, I conclude that the conflict between Sunni and Alevi people continues at the discursive level, based on my investigation into the ideas about the commemorations. Citizens'

political concerns influence their perceptions of religious affairs and how they make sense of the past. Conservative nationalist people have reacted against Alevi people who show affiliation with leftist ideology. Similarly, Alevis see the position of these conservative Sunni people as insincere and not courageous enough to face the past and their faults. Though still there are certain places who are known with their dominant Alevi and Sunni population, the connections have been increased in recent years comparing to the time just after the events took place.

What is more, one of the important conclusions of this study is that the Alevi and Sunni issue in Çorum related with the past conflict is stuck between the discourse of brotherhood and hostility. As long as the lives of people intersect through the living environment and family or friend relations, it is easy to find people indicating the close relations between Sunnis and Alevis and the insignificance of the divide between them. “There are lots of good people among them” or “I know some people better than our people” are the way they express their intimacy towards “the other”. When it comes to the matter of the violent past, the two parties always point out the very close relations before the events when they want to underline that the sectarian hostility did not emerge due to a conflict between local people. “We did not have any problem before this event” or “we did not know the difference between Alevis and Sunnis this much before that” are usually voiced in the interviews. Particularly, women interviewees talk about the destructive influence of the violence in their personal everyday relations and uncomfortable feelings together with their strong wish not to experience the same events again.

On the other hand, the issue is still viewed as a dangerous subject to talk about by most Sunni conservative people, while Alevis show more eagerness to voice their victimization and testimony. The silence and reluctance to talk increase by Alevis depending on the atrocity they witnessed personally and around immediate environment. It becomes difficult to show forgiveness toward the other for both parties if they were subjected to a direct attack or lost their relatives. Also, for the old radical rightists, the trial process after the 1980 coup d'état and the public generalizations about the role of *ülkücü* people in the Alevi massacres seem to

increase the sense of threat and danger in reviving these “problematic” past issues. Many of them find it wrong to revive the bad memories of the past and increase the tension. Since the political connotations of the issue and positioning of the parties have a significant place in the narration of men, it was quite often for them to question the aim of the study in their interviews. Hence, the need for constructing and maintaining the collective memory has a basis in the purpose of the remembrance and needs of the present. Contrary to Sunni people, for Alevis, remembrance serves to create an awareness among new generation about the past conflicts to prevent the reoccurrence of the same events by emphasizing the continuing victimization of Alevis today in addition to creating an opportunity for actualizing peace and brotherhood with a faced past.

Before starting my fieldwork, I was aware that there are various interpretation of Alevi identity and that the intention of defining the identity creates a disturbance for the community. However, it was not something I observed directly until I got involved the field. In Çorum, it is possible to meet Alevi people who have adopted different interpretation of the belief. There were people close to Shia Alevism, people who are closer to a Sunni interpretation, those who adopt a more syncretic understanding, and those who do not believe in any of them. Although this multiplicity comes together on the ground in making sense of the violent past in a similar way, they differ in their political and religious standing, so it is difficult to find a united voice about the shared past and Alevi identity. One of the hypotheses I had before the fieldwork study was that Alevis would agree on the fact that the events emerged out of the existing biases and stereotypes about them. Yet, all of them indicated that there were friendly relations between the two communities and that their different lifestyles had not been a problem before the conflict arose. Lastly, in the fieldwork, I encountered hopeless reactions toward the government’s Alevi “opening”, which was still a current issue at that time. I expected that at least people who supported the government would express favorable opinions about the opening; however, all people stated their despair due to the tense relation between the government and Alevi community.

This thesis has certain limitations. In addition to the ones I mentioned in the methodology part, first, I had time and place limitation in conducting the study. I stayed there one-and-a-half months, and went again on the day of commemoration to observe it. In that process, I tried to keep intimate relation with the people I interviewed and to establish a trust relationship; however, if I had stayed longer and gotten more involved in the everyday life of these people, I believe that it would have been easier to determine the role of sect in daily relations between communities. Still, my visit there within a limited time interval as a university student and my conscious refusal to make religious comments helped me build a sense of objectivity and trustworthiness in their eyes.

Second, I focused on the witnesses who live in the city center and could not visit the villages of the city. Though most of the conflicts took place in the city center, and many people migrated from the villages to the center after the events, data from the witnesses of villages would have given a more comprehensive result about the memory construction and maintenance of Alevi and Sunni people.

Third, I mainly interviewed witnesses of the events and focused their narrations in this thesis although I did have some informal conversations with young people and included it in my analysis. Indeed, I largely confine my thesis to the narrations of the witnesses of the events due to this lack in the field and time limitations. Nevertheless, the perceptions of young people are important in the sense that they are the carriers of the memory. Therefore, further studies can particularly focus on the issue in terms of the new generation because, as I observe, hostile feelings have been disentangled because of the friendships established among them. They helped to reduce biases though groups that are more conservative religiously continue to live at a distance from others.

In this study, because I primarily take into consideration the memory of the Çorum residents, I did not involve those who migrated to the city after the events. Further research may also look at the narratives of these people and investigate the way they make sense of the past by comparing to the results of this study. Together with this,

economic relations and distribution of sources in the city are one of the points this thesis was not able to cover, for it do so would require a formulation of the relation between identity and the distribution of cultural and economic capital. One of the damaging results of the events was the loss of investors and migration of wealthy people, according to the interviewees' narratives. A study looking at how the economy revived after the events and the role of sect in the distribution of economic sources would reveal to what extent the sectarian differences are apparent in this area compared to social and cultural relations.

To sum up, this study contributes to the field by presenting new data about the images of witnesses of the Çorum events that have never been investigated before. The Alevi issue has been one of the challenging and complicated issues for the government for years due to the fragile relation between the community and the state. The violent events of the 1970s are an important part of the collective memory of Alevis, and they argue that these justify existing biases and the discrimination experienced in the society in the Republican period. The city of Çorum contains significant number of Alevis who survived these events and have maintained daily relations with their Sunni neighbors. The complexity of the relations between the Alevi and Sunni community manifests itself in different ways for each community. For Alevis, while there is an attempt to revive the memory of the painful past and keep the awareness of threat alive for young generations, at the same time they carry the feeling of brotherhood and intimate personal relations with the other. In the Sunni community, particularly for the nationalist and conservative people, while the discourse of brotherhood has a strong emphasis, maintaining the memory of the painful past is not taken as helpful or constructive. Hence, through the lens of the violent past, this study illustrates a local example of the identity perception of Alevi and Sunni people about each other and their shared history.

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