Alevist Politics of Place and the Construction of *Cemevi*s in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis investigates some aspects of the reinstitutionalization process that the Alevi identity has gone through in the post-1980 period by focusing on the emergence of *cemevi*s (houses of gathering) in urban public space. I look at various processes such as the displacement of Alevi communities to urban centers, the advent of a unitary signifier of Alevism, and the development of a new governmentality targeting the Alevi population by the Turkish state, through which cemevis have become institutional sites that signify Alevism and serve as focus for Alevist mobilization. I gathered my data by combining fieldwork that involved participant observation, in-depth and semi structured interviews with the analysis of the published material on Alevism, Alevis and cemevis. The fieldwork mostly concentrated on the Alibeyköy and Okmeydanı Cemevis. In this thesis, I suggest that cemevis do not simply provide space for the realization of communal services, but also play an important role in the public representation of Alevism(s) as they serve the reification of certain practices as "proper" manifestations of Aleviness. In cemevis new institutional positions are becoming apparent and various Alevi beliefs and practices have been subject to restructuration in accordance with the novel institutional frameworks Alevi groups have encountered as a result of increasing interaction with various state agencies and the Sunni majority. My findings demonstrate that cemevis have been conducive to the organization of a secularized way of life for Alevis in combination with the development of a new Alevi religiosity practiced at the individual level.

KISA ÖZET

Alevici Mekan Siyaseti ve Türkiye'de Cemevlerinin Kurulması

Murat Es

Bu tez Alevi kimliğinin 1980 sonrası dönemde geçirdiği yeniden kurumsallaşma sürecinin bazı yönlerini cemevlerinin (toplanma evi) kentsel kamusal mekanda ortaya çıkışına odaklanarak incelemektedir. Alevi cemaatlerinin şehir merkezlerine doğru yer değiştirmeleri, birleştirici bir Alevilik göstereninin meydana çıkışı ve Türk devletince Alevi nüfusu hedef alan bir yönetme sanatının geliştirilmesi gibi çeşitli süreçler üzerinden cemevlerinin Aleviliği ifade eden ve Alevi mobilizasyonunun merkezine oturan kurumsal alanlar haline gelmesi üzerinde durulmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın verileri, katılımcı gözlem ile derinlemesine ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlara dayanan bir saha çalışmasının yazılı belgelerin analizi ile birleştirilmesi sonucu toplanmıştır. Saha çalışması özellikle Okmeydanı ve Alibeyköy Cemevleri üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. Bu tezde cemevlerinin sadece cemaatle ilgili hizmetlerin yerine getirildiği mekanlar olmakla kalmayıp belli pratiklerin Aleviliğin "gerçek" tezahürleri olarak pekiştirilmesine hizmet etmek suretiyle, Alevilik(ler)in kamusal temsilinde önemli bir rol oynadıklarını öne sürülmektedir. Cemevlerinde yeni kurumsal konumlar gelişmekte ve farklı Alevi inanç ve pratikleri, Alevi grupların çeşitli devlet birimleri ve Sünni çoğunlukla artan etkileşimi sonucu karşılaştıkları yeni kurumsal çerçeveler içerisinde yeniden yapılandırılmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bulguları cemevlerinin Aleviler için sekülerleşmiş bir yaşam biçiminin organizasyonuna ve bireysel düzeyde yaşanan bir Alevi dindarlığının gelişmesine katkıda bulunduğunu göstermektedir.

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Babama…

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PROLOGUE

I left my hometown on my own for the first time in 1993 in order to receive education at a boarding high school in Ankara. Since I came from the only part of Turkey with a predominantly Alevi population, I had no "chance" of concealing the fact that I was Alevi. I was questioned on my very first day at the school by two senior students: "Is it true that in Tunceli the mosques are used as barns?" This was just the beginning of a long list of questions. I was automatically given a position of representation with regard to my difference, of which I was becoming more and more aware through encounters with my conservative Sunni friends.

I remember seeking and buying books in order to establish some authority over the elusive issue of Alevism. Nevertheless, thirteen years later, after writing a Master's thesis on a related subject, my mind is even less clear than before. But something is different now. I now am able to question the very requirement of reaching some form of closure on one's identity through a critique of the power relations implicated in such a demand. It took me a long time to realize the dynamics behind the urge to stabilize, fix the meaning of Alevism and the Alevi identity.

Then, there are personal concerns involved with the selection of my research topic. Yet, I had never been to a cemevi in Istanbul before I started my fieldwork, although I have been living there for six years. Despite the fact that a "feeling" of familiarity was established very quickly once I started to visit cemevis, I came to realize how diverse the Alevi communities actually are throughout the later stages of my fieldwork. Cemevis are the nodal points around which all these different groups

circulate and come together, rendering the similarities together with the differences between numerous Alevi communities explicit.

Cemevis… they themselves vary to the outmost degree, not only in terms of the architectural styles deployed in their construction, but also with regard to the strategies through which they are built and paths their founders follow to have them recognized. They share a common trait though: cemevis are never complete, both physically and symbolically. The tips of the iron bars on their terrace await a time when enough funds can be found to build another floor, while the various groups debate whether they should be culture centers and/or places of worship.

At the beginning I thought behind the will to construct cemevis was the need for places to organize cem ceremonies. My research proved this assumption to be wrong. It was always the morgues and the cafeterias that were finished first. Cemevis are used mostly for the organization of funerals and the meals after the funerals in tandem with a plethora of other activities. Alevis and sometimes non-Alevis from diverse regional, ethnic and class backgrounds visit cemevis to attend cems; make friends and socialize with them; observe Alevi ceremonies and gain knowledge about Alevism; find dedes and ask them questions; to attend the courses offered on *semah*, *bağlama*, computers, foreign languages, and so on.

There were also researchers, journalists, politicians visiting cemevis. This thesis is the work of one of those visitors, who perhaps is a bit more confused than the rest…

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Signature Campaign for *Cemevi*s[1]

The European Commission's "Regular Report on Turkey's Progress towards Accession" was released on October 6, 2004. The report referred to the situation of Alevis in Turkey as follows:

> Alevis are not officially recognized as a religious community, they often experience difficulties in opening places of worship and compulsory religious instruction in schools fails to acknowledge non-Sunni identities. The parents of an Alevi child have a case regarding compulsory religious education pending before the ECtHR [European Court of Human Rights]. Most Alevis claim that as a secular state Turkey should treat all religions equally and should not directly support one particular religion (the Sunnis) as it currently does through the *Diyanet*[2] (2004: pp. 44-45).

"The issue of Alevism" (*Alevilik meselesi*) came to the forefront of European Union (EU) accession debates immediately after the report was released. The Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was interviewed about the developments with regard to EU accession prospects on the same day by CNN Turk TV Channel. When questioned about the position of Alevis and cemevis, Erdoğan stated that:

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[1] *Cemevi* literally means "house of gathering."

[2] Diyanet is an acronym for the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

> Alevis are not a minority. Minorities are only non-Muslims as it is set in Lausanne [Treaty]. Since Alevism is not a separate religion, they [Alevis] can not be classified as a minority. Alevi means "those who belong to Ali" and I myself try to live same as *Hz*. Ali. Then I am more Alevi than they are…Cemevis easily can be established as culture centers but not as places of worship."[3]

The following day there were protests from the representatives of Alevi organizations on the press. Erdoğan drew the anger of the Alevi organizations by reiterating the classic motto of some religious Sunnis and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) against the Alevis: rather than recognizing the differences stemming from different communal beliefs and practices, he reduced Alevism to the love of Ali. Erdoğan had taken part in the demolition of the construction site of the Karacaahmet Cemevi, when he was the mayor of Istanbul in 1994. This issue, too, was raised in the program, and the representatives of the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation (ABF) criticized Erdoğan, saying that "somebody who destroys cemevis can not approach Alevis with tolerance."[4]

ABF and European Alevi Bektashi Unions Confederation (EABC) organized a joint meeting in Ankara on October 9 and 10 in order to assess the implications of the report for Alevis in Turkey. During the meeting it was pointed out that the importance of the report lay in the fact that "it did not leave any trace of doubt about the recognition of Alevism." There was a general agreement among the representatives of both organizations to use this opportunity to mobilize support for

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[3] "*Aleviler azınlık değildir, azınlıklar zaten Lozan'da belirtildiği şekliyle sadece gayrimüslimlerdir. Alevilik ayrı bir din olmadığı için de azınlık olamazlar. Alevi 'Hz. Ali'ye tabi olanlar' demek ve ben kendim Hz. Ali R.A. gibi yaşamaya gayret ediyorum. O zaman ben onlardan daha Aleviyim. …Cemevleri ibadethane olarak değil ama kültür merkezi olarak rahatlıkla kurulabilir." CNN Turk*, October 6, 2004.

[4] *Birgün*, October 9, 2004.

pursuing the demands of Alevi organizations on a larger scale. One of the main objectives was crystallized as the "recognition of Alevism as a faith."[5]

On November 13, the EABC and ABF organized a press meeting where it was announced that they "decided to embark on a series of activities in order to attain legal assurance for the Alevi identity and faith." The representatives of the organizations stated that it had been decided to start a "judicial battle" with a signature campaign for the recognition of cemevis as legitimate places of worship by the state.[6] The target was to gather one million signatures before December 10, 2004. 100,000 of the signatures were planned to come from Europe and the rest were to be gathered from Turkey. Afterwards, these signatures were to be presented to the offices of prime minister and the president of Turkey as well as to the EU commission before the European Parliament (EP) would make its decision on the beginning of the EU accession negotiations with Turkey. The text of the signature campaign was designed as below:

> To the Offices of Prime Minister and President of the Republic of Turkey
> ALEVIS' CENTERS OF FAITH ARE CEMEVİS.
> Alevism is a specific faith of its own and the Alevis' centers of faith are cemevis. We demand the legal recognition of "Cemevis" with the same status as the centers of worship for other faiths – mosques, *mescit*s,[7] churches, and synagogues- by the Republic of Turkey.[8]

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[5] Aleviler Çözüm İstiyor. (2004). *Alevilerin Sesi*, 79, pp. 11-12.

[6] Alevilerden Hükümete Çağrı. (2004). *Sürek*, 13, pp. 1-3.

[7] '*Mescit*' means small prayer room. In mescits one can perform namaz (Sunni canonical prayers), but there is no imam or Friday prayers.

[8] "*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı'na ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlığı'na, Ankara*
ALEVİLERİN İNANÇ MERKEZLERİ CEMEVLERİDİR.
Alevilik kendine özgü bir inançtır ve Alevilerin inanç merkezleri cemevleridir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti yasalarında diğer inançların ibadet merkezleri olan Cami, Mescit, Kilise, Havra ve Sinagog gibi "Cemevleri"nin de yasal statüye kavuşturulmasını talep ediyoruz."

The petition text did not refer to Alevism as a "sect" (*mezhep*), and there was no mention of Islam. Alevism was instead defined as a "faith" (*inanç*), a term immune from the connotations of codified religion. Disagreements over the organization of the petition text had to do with the debate on whether Alevism was within or outside the confines of Islam. The ensuing struggles over the content of the petition text revealed the tensions and oppositions between various Alevi organizations and resulted in the withdrawal of some of them from the campaign. For instance, the Alevi intellectual İsmail Kaygusuz declined from supporting the campaign on the grounds that calling Alevism "a specific faith of its own" would offend Alevis who saw themselves as nothing but "heterodox Muslims." He suggested changing the text along the lines of emphasizing Alevism as "heterodox Islam" (Kaygusuz, 2004).

Another group of Alevi intellectuals who were sympathetic to the notion of "Alevi Islam" first attacked the text on the grounds that it invoked the minority status for Alevis by putting the name "cemevi" next to "church" and "synagogue," the places of worship for 'minorities' and then criticized the presentation of Alevism "outside the Islam." In their website, they urged their readers to support the campaign, yet proposed to change it as below:

> CEMEVİS ARE PLACES FOR THE PRACTICE OF FAITH FOR ALEVIS
>
> Alevism is an Islamic interpretation and practices of faith for Alevis are carried out in cemevis. We demand that the legal status of "Cemevis" [as places of worship] be the same for Alevis as the Sunnis' places of worship: mosques and mescits.[9]

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[9] "*CEMEVLERİ ALEVİLERİN İNANÇ UYGULAMALARININ YERİDİR*
Alevilik İslami bir yorumdur ve Alevilerin inançla ilgili uygulamaları cemevlerinde yürütülür. Sünnilerin ibadet yerleri olan: Cami, Mescit gibi, Aleviler için 'Cemevi'nin de Türkiye Cumhuriyeti yasalarıyla, yasal statüye kavuşturulmasını talep ediyoruz." Retrieved November 10, 2004 from http://www.aleviyol.com/cemevleriimzakampanyasinadestek.htm.

Both groups defined cemevis as "centers/places of worship," but differed in terms of defining Alevism as an independent faith or within the confines of Islam. The first group advocated an approach that conceptualized Alevism as an independent faith next to Sunni Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The second group, on the other hand, strictly repudiated the juxtaposition of Alevis next to official minority groups while calling for the negotiation of the issue between Alevis and Sunnis only.

When the campaign ended, 600,000 signatures had been gathered and the folders containing the signatures were presented to the offices of the Prime Minister and the President as well as the European Parliament. The ABF and EABC were not able to mobilize stronger support and collect more signatures because the *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim Vakfı* (CEM Foundation) and the two biggest centers of attraction for the Istanbulite Alevis, Şahkulu and Karacaahmet Shrines, did not support the campaign. Administrations of CEM Foundation and Karacaahmet Shrine were against the campaign because of the exclusion of Islam from the petition text and the administrators of the Şahkulu Shrine Complex were annoyed by the involvement of and the claim to leadership by the EABC from abroad. Achieving a consensus on the content of the petition text was not possible in the face of the conflicting perceptions and projections of Alevism by different Alevi organizations with competing agendas.

This incident reveals the multiple lines of positioning within the Alevist[10] movement in Turkey. It points to a debate between differently situated institutionalized Alevi actors as how to define and control cemevis in tandem with the contestation of diverse meanings attributed to these places.

[10] I am using the term "Alevist" in order to emphasize the fact that Alevism has attained the qualities of a social movement with an agenda of its own, independent from leftist politics after the 1980s. See Massicard, 2003a.

What is a Cemevi Anyway?

In this thesis I envision examining the construction of cemevis in Turkey. Cemevis are officially bear the titles of *cem ve kültür evi* (cem and culture house), *cem kültür evi* (cem culture house), or *Alevi kültür merkezi* (Alevi culture center). The official title always gives reference to culture, because cemevis can be established only as culture centers legally. The use of the official title varies, but "cemevi" is the most commonly used term to refer to these institutions; that is why I am going to use this term throughout the thesis as well.[11]

An examination of the literature and debates over cemevis reveals a variety of uses and meanings attached to the category of "cemevi." Alevi communities have called different things as "cemevis" compared to the conceptualizations currently in use. Different communities have called the places where they hold cem ceremonies with different names. Places where *cem*[12] ceremonies are organized and other communal practices take place have variably been called "*cemevi, meydan evi, cem damı, dede evi, baba evi, tarikat evi, dergah, tekke, derme evi, gülhane*" (Korkmaz, 2002; Bozkurt, 1993; Aydın, 2001; Birdoğan, 2003; Arslanoğlu, 2000). Often there has not been any specific categorization at all. In its simplest sense, a cemevi has been any location where a cem ceremony is organized. The houses of community members have often been used interchangeably to house the ceremonies. Accordingly,

[11] Relevant to this was what I experienced in the first days of my fieldwork. In my first visit to Şahkulu Shrine, (*Şahkulu* D*ergahı*) I was lost in Üsküdar and when I asked the shops owners and real estate agents about its location, the answer I received all the time was "Are you asking about the cemevi? This way."

[12] The Arabic root of the term "cem" means "gathering, accumulation, community and crowd." Community members come together in these communal meetings that are presided over by dedes (Korkmaz, 2003, p. 91).

the meaning of cemevi is mobile, in flux just like the location of cems and the *dede*s[13] who preside over these gatherings. In this sense, the status of cemevi has been 'nomadic' since cem ceremonies prevailingly were not anchored in a specific location until the cemevis emerged.

The ambiguous and shifting location of cems points to the ambivalent and flexible position of cemevis in the lives of Alevi communities. The same flexibility is maintained in the 'modern' cemevis: "cemevi" often refers simply to the room or congregational hall where a cem is held. At other times it denotes a whole site where the social, religious and cultural activities take place. Cemevis are called places of worship or culture centers, or both: "cem houses," "cem culture houses," or "cem and culture houses." These two meanings are deployed interchangeably by different Alevi and non-Alevi actors in different contexts to diverse ends.

There is no thorough survey of cemevis in Turkey. The oldest record I found for a cemevi construction in Istanbul dates back to 1991, Bağcılar Cemevi (Cem Vakfı, 2000). Seufert (1997) notes that there were only three cemevis in Istanbul before 1993 and by March 1994 the number had increased to around twenty. In 1998, Journalists Aydın and Dalgakıran (1998) estimated the number of cemevis to be forty seven in Turkey, those under construction included.[14] The chairperson of the CEM Foundation, İzzettin Doğan argues that there were around two hundred cemevis in Turkey in 1997 (Cem Vakfı, 1998). According to Şahin (2001) there were 550 cemevis throughout the country in 2000. In a recent interview, Kazım Genç, the director of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association (PSACA) estimated the number

[13] "*Dede*" literally means "grandfather." Dedes are a caste of spiritual guides who are believed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammed. Their presence is essential to the realization of communal services. Clarke (1999) remarks that the position of dede involves "inherited spiritual leadership, involving intimacy with God, arbitration among people, and musical skills with accompanying special duties and privileges" (p. 100).

[14] Cemevleri sayısında patlama. *Hürriyet*, April 9, 1998.

of cemevis in Turkey to be one hundred.[15] He himself told me that of the thirty seven branches of PSACA, twenty had cemevis.[16] Turgut Öker, the head of the *Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu* (European Alevi Bektashi Confederation) indicated the number of cemevis in Europe to be around fifty.[17] The conflicting numbers indicate the ambiguity surrounding the definition of cemevi. For instance, can we take reappropriated and restored shrines as cemevis? Or should we rather accept the recently constructed ones? Answers to these questions continue to be debated.

Alevi researcher and the manager of the unit of cultural affairs at the CEM Foundation, Ayhan Aydın (2003), notes that in 2002 there were cemevis in Istanbul on the Anatolian side in Kartal, Maltepe, Tuzla Aydınlı köyü, Sarıgazi, Ümraniye, Adalar, Seyid Seyfi (Maltepe) and on the European side there were cemevis in Gazi Mahallesi, Yenibosna, İkitelli, Alibeyköy, Gazi Osman Paşa, Bakırköy, Haramidere, Büyükçekmece, Kağıthane, Şahintepesi, Okmeydanı, Garip Dede Türbesi, Erikli Baba Türbesi in 2002. Twenty two cemevis and "four Alevi shrines" (Karaca Ahmet Sultan, Şahkulu Sultan, Eryek Baba and Garip Dede) attended the *Barışa Semah Dönenler* (Turning *Semah*[18] for Peace) Organization in 2004.[19] Alevi dede and researcher Ali Yaman (2005) adds Bağcılar Cemevi, Yenidoğan Cemevi, and Gürpınar Cemevi to the list of "cem culture centers" in Istanbul for 2005.

There are relatively few studies on the 'history' of cemevis. Coşkun (2002) claims that the conditions of surveillance and suppression Alevis have experienced in Anatolia have discouraged them from expressing their religious identity and their

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[15] *Radikal*, October 10, 2005.

[16] Interviewed by the author, on July 1, 2004.

[17] On his speech in Gazi Cemevi on October 28, 2004.

[18] *Semah*s are ritual dances that constitute an important part of the cem ceremony.

[19] *Vatan*, September 29, 2004.

practices openly. Since the communal practices have always been performed in secrecy, places of communal gatherings and practices are not marked architecturally. Akcan and Erkılıç (2004) have similarly argued that due to the necessity of performing their rituals secretly, Alevis "were never able to build an institutional symbolic expression. The Cem Culture House …has no precedent." Nonetheless, this line of argument does not –and should not- necessarily lead to postulating that there has not been any architectural expression of places that are designed for practicing Alevi ceremonies and communal services, and hence a "cemevi" typology in Anatolia. It is also problematic to conclude that there were not any cemevis in Anatolia, relying on a common assumption that Alevis were always and totally suppressed in Anatolia (for a criticism of this line of history writing, see Bozarslan, 2003).

There already have been several studies revealing the first sketches of the historical existence of "cemevis" in Anatolia. I was informed about a "700 year old underground cemevi" in a village located in the Arapkir district of Malatya during my fieldwork. Kenanoğlu and Onarlı's study (2003) together with Onarlı's articles published in Cem Magazine (1998a; 1998b; 1998c) are but a few examples of new history writing on cemevis. Aydın (2003) mentions his visit to a centuries old cemevi in Tunceli-Pülümür. There is also Akın's study on the architecture of cemevis as "heterodox sacred space[s] in rural Anatolia" (1995, p. 73).

Yet, I will not attempt to examine the historical validity of the existence of cemevis here. Regarding the question of historical origins, suffice it here to say that there already has been a spatial organization for the performance of cem ceremonies and other communal practices preceding the emergence of cemevis. Although lodges and shrines were used in some cases for the performance of cem ceremonies, it was more often the case that the community would gather in the houses of dedes or one of

the community members, both of which were distinguished from the other dwellings in the village by and large by having a large room to accommodate the whole village population (Şanlı, 2004; Birdoğan, 2003). Open air areas such as village squares were sometimes used for organizing cem ceremonies (Bozkurt, 1993). However, since constructing histories for places is an important part of the place making process in terms of legitimacy claims, I will focus on the uses of history in the making of cemevis rather than attempting to undertake the task of historical research on cemevis myself. I will look at the interpretations of 'historical roots' especially in the discourses of the state produced by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) on the one hand, and Alevi intellectuals and representatives of Alevi organizations, on the other. In so doing I will attempt to demonstrate the ways in which the past is appropriated and interpreted in the name of legitimizing or negating the viability of cemevis.

In this thesis I will focus on the newly established cemevis by migrant Alevi communities in the urban centers rather than undertaking a historical investigation of the 'cemevis' in Anatolia. The cemevis that constitute the subject of my research specifically have been designed as culture and religious centers for and by Alevis. They emerged in the urban space from the early 1990s on. The importance of these 'new' cemevis lies in the fact that they are located at the locus of innovative ways of communal organization, the reconfiguration of religious and social practices of Alevi communities as well as the representation of Aleviness in the public sphere.

I use the term "institutional site" in order to express and untangle the difference between cemevis as the locus of historically and discursively constructed claims to ownership, and the spatial location where certain representations of 'proper Aleviness' are performed. Institutional sites such as schools, universities, and the

bureaucracy are spaces where one can observe the implementation of disciplinary norms through institutional practices and contestations over them by differently situated actors. The outcome is a "lived space, occupied and contested differently by differently positioned subjects" (Fortier, 2000, p. 118). Cemevis are institutional sites of Alevi groups where certain practices are reified as 'proper' manifestations of Aleviness and certain others are excluded as effects of 'degeneration' or 'assimilation.' In cemevis, Alevi practices are exhibited to the "strangers" such as Sunnis, journalists, academics, politicians, and Alevi youth who do not attend the cems as members of the congregation.

Production of physical place is always simultaneous with the construction of a symbolic meaning. Cemevi*s* are thought/designed/planned/desired to embody the cultural and religious presentation of Alevism to the outer world; hence the struggles over the form, function and architecture of cemevis are subject to intense debates as actors with vested interests at cemevis project their vision of Alevism as the only 'true, original' representation of it. For this reason it is essential to look at the formalization of Alevism in cemevis in accordance with the meanings attached to them.

Space, Place and Power

Öncü and Weyland (1997) draw our attention to the recent "place based struggles" where "borders have become the locus of struggles among a variety of social actors, mobilized to reassert or redefine their boundaries vis-à-vis other relevant actors, and translate them on to the space of metropolis" (p. 4). I do not approach cemevis only as locations where one can find Alevis and observe their

practices, assuming a naturalized and fixed image of the place. I rather envision looking at the historically specific processes through which cemevis themselves are symbolically and physically constructed. I do not take cemevis merely as effects of the transformation of Alevi communities, but instead conceptualize them within a dialectical framework in which cemevis re*construct* Alevi communities while they are being *constructed* by them.

In order to be able to grasp the relationship between the emergence of cemevis and the transformation of Alevi beliefs and practices, I will turn to the theory of space and place. What can be called the 'spatialization' of social sciences has taken place during the last decades. A renewed interest in geography and the deployment of spatial metaphors to investigate social processes have become salient in social inquiry. Terms such as "space, place, positioning, public and private sphere, local, global, situated knowledge, field, center, periphery" have moved to the forefront of academic studies and debates (Massey, 1994; Duncan, 1996; Agnew, 1993; Pred, 2000). Moreover, the interest in space has not been limited to academia. The very struggles revolving around defining, claiming and contesting spaces and places have become pivotal in the social, political and economic struggles throughout the contemporary world (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003; Keith and Pile, 1996).

The novel approaches to space problematized conceptualizing space as the simple context, or backdrop of social relations but suggested rethinking it as a "structure created *by* society" and in terms of relationships, which are "inter-active, interdependent" with reference to social relationships (Soja, 1980, pp. 210-211). The dialectical relationship between "the social" and "the spatial" can be formulated as follows:

> to the aphorism of the 1970s –that space is socially constructed — was added in the 1980s the other side of the coin: that social is

> spatially constructed too, and that makes a difference. In other words, in its broadest formulation, society is necessarily constructed spatially, and that fact –the spatial organization of society— makes a difference to how it works (Massey, 1994, p. 254).

A new awareness on the constructed nature of space entailed construing space not as *being* but as constant *becoming*. The spaces are produced and reproduced ceaselessly; they are defined, appropriated and contested in diverse ways by differently situated actors. In return the spaces command bodies, influence the organization of social practices and provide real and imaginary anchors for belonging. As Lefebvre (1991) remarks: "Space is at once the result and cause, product and producer; it is also at *stake*, the locus of projects and actions deployed as part of specific strategies, and hence also the object of *wagers* on the future –wagers which are articulated, if never completely" (pp. 142-3).

"Space" and "place" are terms that are often used interchangeably, but they are actually different. First, space is more abstract, while place is more concrete. Spaces are experienced as places (Gieryn, 2000), or when processed with meaning making, the spaces attain distinct identities as places (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). Pearson and Richards (1999) argue that "through the cultural artifact of a name, undifferentiated space is transformed into marked and delimited place. Stories and tales might be attached to such places, making them resonate with history and experience" (p. 4). Second, "place is not just a setting, backdrop, stage or context of something else that becomes focus of sociological attention…Everything that we study is emplaced" (Gieryn, 2000, p. 466). "Historically contingent becoming of any place" (Pred, 1985, p. 339) is "shaped by conflict, difference, and social negotiation among differently situated, and at times antagonistically related, social actors, some of whose networks

are locally bound, others whose social relations and understandings span entire regions and transcend national boundaries" (Smith, 2002, p. 123).

Discussing the implications of problematizing the concepts of space and place in anthropology, Gupta and Ferguson remind us that "all associations of place, people, and culture are social and historical creations to be explained, not given natural facts" (1997a, p. 5). They go on to suggest that we should focus on "how perceptions of locality and community are discursively and historically constructed" (ibid., p. 7). Approaching space as construction introduces the questions of agency and power: "with meaning making understood as practice, how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b, p. 40).

Drawing on the insights of the anthropology of space and place, in this thesis I envision exploring the process of "place making" or "becoming of a place" with regard to the emergence of cemevis in the post-1980 period in Turkey. I will attempt to look at historical and discursive construction of cemevis on symbolic, imaginary and the practical levels. The emphasis I put on the becoming rather than being is based on construing cemevis as 'projects' to be realized. The project of producing and reproducing cemevis is hence open to challenges, contestation and influences by competing social actors to numerous ends.

Cemevis are contested sites of Alevi public visibility in Turkey. Their emergence and spread is an important step towards the institutionalization of Alevi beliefs and practices. My contention is that the tendency towards unity and standardization in tandem with the rationalization and secularization of diverse Alevi beliefs and practices can be best understood by investigating the construction of cemevis. Cemevis provide ample opportunities to observe the recent restructuration

of Alevi beliefs and practices, together with strategies of empowerment and disempowerment between several social actors that have vested interests in their construction.

Cemevis appear, then, at the center of the tension and interaction between the institutionalization of Alevism and its contestation by several social actors. For this reason the included and excluded discourses, narratives, memories, practices and histories in the construction and reproduction of cemevis attain significance. I envision seeking answers to questions such as: what discourses are deployed in the creation of cemevis? Who is authorized to speak, from which institutional subject position in order to legitimate, contest or negate the emergence of cemevis? What is at stake in the struggles revolving around cemevis?

State, Modernization and Religion in Turkey

The relationship between the state and religion has been a widely discussed topic in academic studies on Turkey (Tapper, 1991; Atay, 1998; Mardin 1989, 2003; Aktay, 1999). The secularizing policies of the Turkish Republic have been accompanied by keeping a latently official version of Islam promoted by the state itself. To this end, a Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924 in order to promote a rationalized version of Islam that was compatible with the republican ideals (Kara, 2004). The result was the development of an official state Islam whose influence was envisioned to be determined by the individual devotion and practicing. However, Islam continued to provide "the vernacular" for large segments of society that were marginalized during the Kemalist modernization (Yavuz, 2002). It also remained an important source of meaning and ethical guidance in the everyday lives

of many citizens of the Republic (Mardin, 1989). The Kemalist regime never did away with Islam completely, but kept it under state control and patronage (Aktay, 1999). I am not going to go into the details of the contextually changing relations between the state and religion throughout the republican history, but suffice it to say that Islam was subsumed in the statist and nationalist discourses and it has increasingly been conflated with the Turkish national identity to date (Akgün and Çalış, 2002).

What is the place of Alevis in this picture? It is possible to outline two general strands of approach in the debates pertaining to Alevis and Alevism in Turkey: The first is represented by and large by conservative Sunni intellectuals, theologians and social scientists. Here, there is a great anxiety to stress that Alevism is part of Islam. This is followed by the arguments that insist on the fact that Alevis are Muslims, albeit they are not situated at the right position vis-à-vis the "true sources" of Islam: Koran and *sünnet*[20] (Kırkıncı, 1990; Sarıkaya, 2001; Sofuoğlu and İlhan, 1997; Aktay 1999; Sarıkaya, 2001). By defining Alevism within Islam and defining Islam on the basis of the Koran and sünnet, the Sunni authors already situate themselves in a superior position. Accordingly, their notion of Alevism is defined in accordance with what it lacks compared to "proper (Sunni)" Islam, which they distinguish from Alevism by its "codified and standardized rules of conduct, *fıkıh*[21] written resources, complexity, sophistication, coherency" and so on. In the eyes of this group, Alevis are no more than 'ignorant peasants' who did not have the "chance" to benefit from the "Islam of the book." For example, Sunni theologian Kırkıncı (1990) argues that

[20] The word "*Sünni*" derives from word "*sünnet.*" Sünni means "those who follow the sayings and the deeds (*sünnet*) of the prophet."

[21] Islamic law.

"Anatolian Turks were not able to reach the *medrese*, they could not learn many dictums (*hüküm*) related to the faith and worshipping…properly" (p. 53).

Accordingly, since Alevism is not "complex and sophisticated enough," it is presented as too weak be able to resist to the "dismantling effects" of modernity. What is more, Alevis become the scapegoats of the modernization by being postulated to be the voluntary collaborators of the "suppressive" modernizers of the country (Subaşı, 2001, 2002; Aktay, 1999). Subaşı takes this line of argument and goes as far as claming that "Alevism is melting" (*Aleviliğin erimesi*) in the face of the modernity (2002, p. 115). It is not only problematic here to see a conceptualization of modernization as something totally alien, threatening and imposed from outside, distorting the "harmonious" and unproblematized order of a nostalgic past, but these authors imply that Sunnis are more immune to the influences of the modernity, which is far from being true (see Roy, 2004; Aslan, 2000). Moreover, Alevis are too easily assumed to support all the modernization efforts, anachronistically.[22] Another significant problem is the absence of a discussion of the uneven power relations between Alevi and Sunni groups. The state's active support and dissemination of (even if it is an official) Sunni Islam is never mentioned and the comparisons between Alevism and Sunnism are done without acknowledging this significant factor (Şen and Arslan, 2005).

On the other end of the spectrum, Alevism is represented as by definition compatible with modernity, progress, democracy, and human rights. Represented by especially some secularist authors and authors of Alevi descent, here, modernism and secularism are represented to be intrinsic to Alevism (Geaves, 2003, Zelyut, 1992; Korkmaz, 2002; Kaleli, 2004; Aydın, 1999). This stance is also problematic in that it

[22] Even remembering Dersim and Koçgiri uprisings, closure of shrines and prohibition of cem ceremonies could give us an idea about this issue (See Bahadır 2002, Bozarslan 2003).

ignores the historical and mutually contingent relations that determined the relations of Alevi communities to such signifiers. Another kind of anachronism prevails here through an alliance that is imagined and expanded from present towards the myriad Alevi pasts, proclaiming Alevis as the 'natural' defenders of "humanism, equality and progress."

It is not surprising, then, that one of the main themes that has dominated the recent academic debates on Aleviness and Alevi communities has been the deinstitutionalization experienced in the face of displacement to urban space and/or under the sway of modernization (Shankland, 2003; Yaman, 2004; Yalçınkaya, 1996; Subaşı, 2002; Üzüm, 1999). Such literature is imbued with references to the loss of authority on the side of dedes, the diminishing number of cems and cem attendance, and the fractured structure of the multiple-centered mobilization and so on. Although they have different emphases, these works have one thing in common: they assume an essential Alevi identity anchored in a rural past and evaluate the contemporary restructuring of Alevi beliefs and practices with reference to whatever is their vision regarding such fixed notion of a traditional Alevi identity. There is a sense of tragic loss surrounding all the debates.

However, in this thesis, I envision putting more emphasis on the reinstitutionalization process by looking at the construction of cemevis. Alevi identities are reconstructed through new networks as well as novel institutional practices in the contemporary setting rather than being dismantled by modernization and getting distanced from the "traditional values." My stance in this thesis is informed by a constructivist outlook that emphasizes the historically contingent processes that underlie the production of the Alevi communities' beliefs, practices, and the signifier of Alevism itself. I do not take the multiplicities that surround

Alevism and Alevi communities as a problem, a weakness to be eliminated. I suggest to take the fractured structure of the Alevist movement and the myriad understandings of Alevism, the diversity of Alevi practices as well as the current positioning of Alevis in the political arena as related to the institutionalization patterns, material limits and unequal power relations; rather than seeing them stemming from the strengths or weaknesses essentialized Alevism(s).[23] Similarly, since I do not believe in the existence of a pure and essentialized Alevism located in a static "tradition," located in the rural past, I do not approach the recent restructuration process as a deviation from the "traditional values." My objective is to historicize and contextualize the conditions within which different formulations of Alevism are created and what kind of novel political, social and economic relations these reformulations enable when they are put into articulation.

Methodological Issues and the Scope of the Thesis

Studying your 'own' people blurs the assumed distance between the subject and the object of the study. Native ethnographers problematize the binary of sterile ethnographer versus informants of the study at hand. Weston (1997) has argued that this in-between position of native ethnographers makes them "hybrids" and "they become at once hypervisible and invisible, painfully obtrusive and just as readily overlooked" (p. 170). She goes on to suggest that the subject position the native ethnographer occupies is a "compound" one, whose hybridity "collapses subject/object distinctions" by not belonging to either of the categories but including elements from the both (ibid., p. 176).

[23] In this sense, I propose to "democratize" our conceptualization of Alevis/m by rendering plurality of communities, beliefs and practices normalized in our approach to Alevis/m(s).

Doing research on cemevis has been a challenging task from the outset, due to the fact that I am of Alevi descent. Being a native ethnographer posed difficulties together with rendering certain parts of my research easier. On the one hand, experiencing similar problems stemming from being an Alevi increased my understanding of a number of issues discussed in Alevi circles. Following the typical questions of "Where are you from? Are you Alevi, too?" I had access to the ideas and feelings of people as an "insider." On the other hand, my informants assumed too quickly that I would already know many things that were essential for my research, and for this reason I was not given much of the "introductory" information a non-Alevi researcher would gather during fieldwork.

Attributing a fixed and essentialized identity to the native ethnographer undermines the fractured identity of the researcher. Such an attitude denies the multiple and fractured subject positions that are attributed to the subjects of social research in the case of the ethnographer. The researcher's own ability to critically reflect on the multiple subject position s/he occupies is underestimated. Furthermore, the creative tension between what one is "born" and endlessly "becomes" is undermined in such approaches. I had to come to terms with my own biases and assumptions regarding Alevi communities throughout my fieldwork. It has been difficult, at times, to balance my sympathies with the critical tools of analysis I have acquired through my training. Sometimes it was hard to discern the lines between "me" (hence "us") and "them." Moreover, the fieldwork of my research was actually not "out there," located at a particular time-space dimension but was consisted of my life experiences. The daily conversations with family members, friends and relatives often revolved around Alevism and cemevis. This was because I was considered to be becoming an authority on the subject. To put shortly, the field was my life.

Given how complex my relations with my informants were, I find Scheper-Hughes' (1992) approach to the relationship between the anthropologist and informants very helpful. Dissatisfied with the distance between the lives and concerns of the two parties, she enters in a more direct and "engaged" relationship with her informants:

> My particular sympathies are transparent; I do not try to disguise them behind the role of an invisible and omniscient third-person narrator. Rather, I enter freely into dialogues and sometimes into conflicts and disagreements with the people of Alto, challenging them just as they challenge me on my definitions of the reality within which I live. (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, p. 25)

In this "active and committed" anthropology, the discipline becomes a "field of action" in which anthropologist operates and tries to make a difference in the lives of the informants (ibid., pp. 24-25). The fieldwork I conducted was interactive in the sense that I challenged and was challenged by the Alevist activists with whom I established ties.

I do not claim to reach conclusions that concern Alevism in general or all Alevis in Turkey in this thesis. The scope of my research is limited to cemevis in Istanbul mostly and the Alevi communities that founded them together with the Alevi organizations that are operating them. This study was particularly difficult basically because there is no such corpus of work to which I could refer to while writing this thesis. I had to construct the history and development of cemevis from scratch, on the basis of whatever I could gather from the memories of my informants, newspaper reports and the references of Alevi non-profit organizations. Also the problem of the multiplicity of the actors and the complexity of the process made it difficult for me to do justice to the all dimensions of the cemevi construction in Turkey. For this reason I had to put more emphasis on the certain aspects of the process than others. For

instance, I will not make a detailed discussion of the architecture of cemevis and the debates in the national assembly revolving around the status of cemevis.

The fieldwork upon which this thesis is based on was carried out mostly in two cemevis: Okmeydanı Cemevi and Alibeyköy Cemevi. My reason for choosing these two cemevis had to do first with their proximity to where I reside. Second, both cemevis were established from scratch, that is, they were recently constructed. Their administrators were eager to offer their help for my research, especially in the case of the Alibeyköy cemevi. Apart from these two, I visited and attended cems and was present at funerals as well as panel debates in CEM Foundation's center in Yenibosna, Nurtepe, Kartal, Ihlamurkuyu, Bağcılar and Sultanbeyli Cemevis as well as Şahkulu and Karacaahmet Shrines. I also visited Hacıbektaş town in the summer of 2005.

The fieldwork consisted of participant observation, in-depth and semi structured interviews and the analysis of written documents. I introduced myself before starting the interviews and briefly explained the topic of my thesis. I generally used the real names of the administrators of the Alevi organizations I interviewed, not only because their opinions were in circulation in the public debate, but also because they represent certain institutional positioning pertaining to Alevism and cemevis. I used pseudonyms for those informants who gave me information during private conversations and for those who hinted that they would not be comfortable with their names appearing in the thesis.

I conducted around thirty five in-depth interviews with dedes, *hocas*[24] and cemevi administrators. I also completed two hundred semi structured interviews in Alibeyköy, the residents of which were comprised of Alevis from Erzurum, Sivas, Tunceli and Amasya in the summer of 2004. I collaborated with the cemevi

[24] Alevi hocas attend the funeral services, recite the Koran, and sometimes solemnize marriages.

administration for the preparation of the questionnaire and prepared a report for them regarding the perceptions and expectations of their "target population" in the area. I also benefited from the books, booklets and brochures I collected from cemevis. I attended mass organizations such as *Binyılın Türküsü* (Saga of the Millennium), *Gelin Canlar Cem Olalım* (Let us Organize a Cem) and *Barışa Semah Dönenler* (Turning Semah for Peace). I followed Internet forum groups and newspapers and TV programs for news on cemevis and Alevis.

Organization of the Thesis

I organized this thesis in three chapters. Chapter One deals with the emergence of a unitary signifier of "Alevism" and a homogenizing category of "Alevi" in an attempt to unify the different manifestations of Aleviness and non-Sunni communities for the purposes of governmentality and Alevist mobilization in Turkey. I take the subjection of the different beliefs and practices of Alevi communities to systematic inquiry and increasing production of knowledge on Alevism as signs of a quest for order that targeted rendering the elusive and multiple manifestations of Aleviness administrable. This process is implicated in the emergence of institutionalized centers that contest one another in the production of knowledge on Alevism and Alevis.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the displacement of Alevi communities to urban areas as a result of the waves of mass migration during the post 1950 period. As a result interaction between Alevi and Sunni communities has increased and the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion between the two have to be renegotiated. The new living conditions in the cities served rendering Alevi groups

conscious of their Aleviness and sharpened their sense of belonging to a distinct identity. On the other hand, living under the gaze of Sunnis, the significant other for Alevis, and the mutual influences between Alevi and Sunni communities has entailed a reconfiguration of Alevi practices in cities. The cemevis have emerged in this context as important sites of representation where 'proper Alevisms' are presented to a number of "strangers." The category has come to include those who are of Alevi descent as well. This development pointed to the displacement of Alevi practices from their association with home to the space of public and media representations.

Chapter Two looks at the politics of place revolving around the construction of cemevis in Turkey. Nagar and Lietner (1998) note that "Place-based struggles are simultaneously struggles for and negotiations over identity, social boundaries, and material reproduction and the appropriation and control of space is central in this process" (p. 230). The struggles for making cemevis recognized as places of worship constitute the locus of my discussion here. I will discuss the implications of attributing cemevis status of "place of worship" and/or "culture center" by different actors.

In order to explicate the contestation of the category of "place of worship" (*ibadethane*) I will examine the role of religion in nationalist politics and the binaries constructed between mosques and cemevis on the one hand, cems and *namaz* (Sunni canonical prayers) on the other. I will subsequently attempt to shed light on the ways in which Alevism is culturalized in the official state discourses in tandem with what Alevi groups and individuals understand from culture and cemevis as culture centers. At the end of second chapter, attempts to construct a cemevi in Sultanbeyli by the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association and strategies deployed by the administrators of the association to achieve their goals will be examined as a case study.

Chapter Three is about the internal organization of cemevis. In this chapter I will look at the emergence of novel institutional positions within Alevi communities and fragmentation of authority with regard to the production of knowledge and decision making processes. The wide array of specialized tasks within cemevis has resulted in a separation of administrative and "faith-related" tasks. The former is given to the directors and board members of Alevi non-profit organizations and the latter is given to the dedes. There is also a third category of hocas whose position is important for the realization of Koran related tasks.

CHAPTER 2

NAMING ALEVISM, TAMING ALEVIS

Quest for Order

It would not be proper to call it a philosophy, neither is it a culture. It is not a religion either.[25]

Ali, Alevi shop owner from Erzurum, his answer to "What do you think Alevism is?"

Since the end of the 1980s "the question of Alevism" (*Alevilik Sorunu*) has become a widely debated issue in the public sphere. A number of transformations Alevi communities have gone through during this period are generally labeled "Alevi resurgence/revivalism" (Çamuroğlu, 1998). It was in this period that an Alevist movement has emerged and problematized the secular model of Turkey by questioning the very viability of the existence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) and the compulsory religion classes in the primary and secondary schools. Alevi organizations have begun lobbying for the recognition of cemevis as places of worship. The boom in the publication of books, magazines in tandem with first radio, and subsequently TV broadcasting by Alevi groups have moved Alevis into the public sphere (Vorhoff, 1998). In various parts of Anatolia, the shrines of Alevi saints

[25] "*Felsefe desem olmaz, kültür desem olmaz. Din de değil*." Interviewed by the author, on June 23, 2004.

have been restored and new ones have been constructed. Accompanying the restoration of shrines have been festivals that have quickly become "traditional" (*geleneksel*) and attracted large numbers of participants from various regions of Turkey. The most important of these festivals has been organized in Hacı Bektaş Town, which has gradually become a pilgrimage center for all Alevi and Bektashi communities in Turkey. Lastly, Bektashi shrines have been reclaimed and restored by Alevi organizations to become cemevis together with the newly established cemevis in urban centers and Alevi villages (Ellington, 2004; Erdemir, 2004).

The importance of this period for my research lies in the fact that post-1980 period has reified a unitary category of "Alevi" and a homogenizing signifier of "Alevism" in Turkey. I do not envision in this thesis formulating yet another definition for Alevism, a highly contested and politically charged signifier. What I will attempt to do is rather to problematize the very viability of "Alevism." Alevism is not a given, static term, but it is historically and discursively constructed. Like any other signifier, its meaning has been subject to changes as a result of contingently shifting circumstances and contestations implicated in asymmetrical power relations. Neither will I busy myself discussing "what Alevism has done" as an agent of social and political processes. It is Alevi subjects making the 'Alevi histories' when they act as historically and materially situated actors operating within multiple fields of action, rather than an anthropomorphically defined agent of Alevism.[26] Throughout this thesis, I will attempt to focus on the ways in which Alevi communities in their ethnically, regionally and historically diverse settings have responded to and

[26] When one looks at the literature on Alevism, it is disproportionately larger than that of Alevis indeed. There are book titles such as "*Aleviliğin Günümüzdeki Sorunları* (Problems of Alevism Today)" or read sentences such as "it is also true that Alevism is the most fervent defender of the laicism" (Yalçınkaya, 1996, p. 189) or "*Alevilik* [Alevism]…wants to build schools instead of mosques in the village. It is laicist, it respects human rights" (in Kosnick, 2004, p. 985).

participated in historical, social, cultural, and economic developments, how they have produced and reproduced their beliefs, identities and practices under shifting structural circumstances. I advocate an approach that acknowledges the structural conditions that limit and determine the lives of Alevi subjects discursively and materially, but at the same time opens up space for making strategic moves to negotiate their difference under changing circumstances. I agree with Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) on the point that, "what is necessary to produce the structure is still a historical action, accomplished by true agents…. these agents are product of this structure and make and remake structure, which they may even radically transform under definite conditions" (p. 140).

In this thesis, I will use the category of "Alevi" to define a number of non-Sunni communities, since it has achieved a hegemonic position and is currently used both by Sunnis and non-Sunnis to define certain communities. It is rather a blanket term (Erdemir, 2004) that is used to refer to a number of non-Sunni communities whose beliefs and practices differ along ethnic, regional and linguistic lines. However, I will distinguish my stance by opposing the notion of a single, unified "Alevi community." I will rather stress the existence of a multiplicity of "Alevi communities."

Categories we use to make sense of the world do not exist outside history. Their content is always unstable, in flux. What "Alevi" means, how and by whom it is deployed, the ways in which it is articulated as a social/political marker of difference are all contingently and historically determined. "Alevi" in its most general sense means "those who belong to Ali, the followers of Ali." Used in this fashion, the term refers to a wide range of groups in the Middle East and Asia. In the case of Turkey, Melikoff argues that the term "Alevi" with its contemporary meaning does not have a

history stretching back before the nineteenth century (Melikoff in Yaman, 2000). Previously, non-Sunni communities were known for their local names such as *Tahtacı, Yörük, Çepni, Kızılbaş,*[27] *Türkmen, Abdal, Işıkçı, Sıraç, Amuca* and so on. However, a unitary and singular concept of "Alevi" has gradually replaced or begun to coexist with all previous categorizations and aforementioned communities have come to be primarily referred to as "Alevi." By the 1980s the term had already begun to be taken for granted, and was in widespread circulation (Andrews in Yaman, 2000). The hegemonic use of the term entailed undermining the linguistic, ethnic, and regional differences between diverse groups.

Categorization is an inherent part of "ordering, hierarchy, and -under the aegis of instrumental reason- tools for social domination" (Foucault in Natter and Jones III, 1997, p. 143). Defining a number of different communities as "Alevis" points to a project that aims to overcome the differences stemming from the diverse historical experiences of various communities in an attempt to create a homogenous Alevi community. What is at stake here is the construction of an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1995) of Alevis. Attempts to create this larger community are accompanied by a quest for order that involves the elimination of differences between myriad non-Sunni communities in order to achieve an internal unity and coherence within the larger Alevi community, which is increasingly conceptualized as "Alevi society" (*Alevi toplumu*) rather than "Alevi groups/communities" (*topluluk, cemaat*). This was the case in the everyday conversations I witnessed during my fieldwork, and there indeed was an attempt to conceptualize Alevis as a nation in the late 1980s (Engin, 2004).

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[27] *Kızılbaş* is one of the most common terms used to refer to Alevi communities, especially those in the Eastern Anatolia.

What complements the homogenizing tendency manifest in the emergence of "Alevi" as a hegemonic category is the conflation of "Alevi" with "Bektashi."[28] The differences between Alevi and Bektashi communities are reduced to "city Alevis" versus "village Alevis" (Şapolyo, 2004 [1964]). Yet, different loyalties prevail in different parts of Anatolia.[29] Bozkurt notes that "Bektashis are not favored by Alevis in Anatolia. They are called *dönük* (inconstant). Until very recently [Alevis and Bektashis] did not intermarry. In response to this, Bektashis also reject Kızılbaşs" (1993, p. 51). The rise of Hacıbektaş town as a modern center of pilgrimage and accession of the patron saint of the Bektashi Order, Hacı Bektaş, to an unprecedented popularity among all Alevi groups is a novel development. Although the festival organized in Nevşehir in the name of Hacı Bektaş has a history dating back to 1964, the participation of hundreds of thousands of Alevis only began in the 1990s (Massicard, 2003b). Despite the efforts of some Alevi organizations (namely the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation and the Şahkulu Shrine Complex) and claimed descendents of Hacı Bektaş (UIusoy family) to unite Alevi and Bektashi communities around the –spiritual- center of Hacı Bektaş Lodge, this has not been a viable project due to the prevalence of local loyalties and competing projects for unification by other Alevist actors.

Despite the fact that Alevism has "gone public" and "gained publicity" by the end of the 1980s (Şahin, 2002, p. 123), documentation of the beliefs and practices of various Alevi communities was not specific to the last two decades. The first attempts

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[28] Bektashism has evolved as a spiritual brotherhood, and was recognized by the Ottoman state. The Bektashi order was organized centrally and urban based. Contrary to the exclusivity of membership in contemporary Alevi communities. E: Bektashism is open to everyone who wishes to be initiated to the brotherhood (Korkmaz, 2000; Ulusoy, 1986).

[29] Historically, groups like Tahtacı*s* or Alevi Kurds of Dersim region have been loyal to their own saints. Hardly any Alevi community refrains from revering Hacı Bektaş, but this all remains at the rhetorical level. The saints of some groups were claimed to have come to Anatolia before Hacı Bektaş (Gezik, 2004). Also see Bahadır, 2002.

at systematically defining Alevism resulted from the struggles between the Ottoman state and Christian missionaries to convert the Kızılbaş communities of the empire. The former defined *Kızılbaşlık* as the "pre-Islamic Turkish religion" while the latter formulated it as a "syncretic, pre-Islamic" belief system (Karakaya Strump 2004, p. 331). Alevi communities attracted the 'scientific interest' of nationalist Turkish intellectuals starting from the early twentieth century as exemplified in Baha Said's writings (1917). Yörükan made extensive research on *Tahtacı*s[30] in the 1920s and 1930s (Yörükan, 2003). Şapolyo (1964) studied the beliefs and rituals of several Alevi groups in detail. There were also popular journalistic works as early as the 1960s (see Benekay, 1967).

Then, what is so special about the last two decades? The distinguishing feature of the post-1980 period has been the 'discursive explosion' pertaining to Alevism. During the last two decades, there has occurred an immense increase in the production of knowledge on Alevism and Alevi communities. As a result of the rise of the "question of Alevism" and its articulation in the public sphere, all aspects of the lives of Alevi communities and their beliefs and practices have come under scrutiny and become subject to systematic inquiry. Traditions, histories and more importantly, the experiences of Alevi individuals have been put into record, conspicuously observed, and "scientifically" studied. It has become a favorable topic in academic circles to "study Alevis." For instance Alevi researcher Ayhan Aydın's anxiety to pin down a fleeting tradition is emblematic of this attitude. He writes about the participants of the Hamza Baba Festival: "Tens of thousands of people coming here from different provinces, regions and villages constitute a natural laboratory.

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[30] *Tahtacı* means "timber cutter." These communities lived in the Aegean cost and the Toros Mountains and earned their lives by cutting trees. Tahtacıs are closer to an ethnic community.

These [people] should be studied, their knowledge should be collected, they should be interviewed, fast disappearing local elements should be diagnosed, photographs should be taken, and the problems of the people should be listened to" (Aydın, 2001 pp. 142-143). [31]

The discursive shift on Alevism has helped transform various manifestations of Aleviness into issues that are widely talked about, explored, problematized, and accordingly normalized. A reified signifier of Alevism, this way, has been subjected to the discursive regulations of institutional social and political actors. The discourses on Alevism do not merely describe or explain "what is out there," but construct the very object of their analysis. The discourse, here, stands for the regulative system that controls and manipulates the process of the production of truth concerning Alevism, as well as demarcating the borders of what can be said and has to be censored, silenced about it.

It is important not to confuse the secrecy once surrounded public manifestations of Aleviness with the "secret" of Alevism, though. Ironically, even though Alevism is defined as a secret to be unraveled, this "mysterious" thing called Alevism has been an enigma for Alevis more than anyone else; since what was defined as a secret was yet to be developed and put into circulation. Tens of definitions formulated by numerous actors with different agendas point to first, the absence of a strong center with the means to dominate the discursive field, and second, to the dynamism of a recent process of discursive battle that is still very much in its initial phase.

The fear of disapproval, possible subjection to –especially symbolic- violence and the will to maintain intimacy were not the only reasons for the silence

[31] Turkish translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

surrounding issues related to Aleviness. Up until very recently, Alevis would avoid openly expressing their identity in public, because revealing their identity could bring about symbolic and at times physical harassment as well as cause problems with doing business and dealing with the state bureaucracy. Moreover, the rules of "the path" (*yol*) ordered the members of community to be reticent about revealing the secrets of their faith to strangers. This reticence stemmed from the practice of dissimulation[32] *(takiyye)* that is also typical of many Sufi-based movements. Since many Alevi practices were construed as heresy by the central state and the Sunni majority, the secrecy was necessary for protection.

However, I contend that even if there did not exist such a ban on revealing one's beliefs to "strangers" (*yabancı*), it would still be difficult to find the 'material' to talk about, 'preach' on Alevi beliefs, the meaning of religious practices, or engage in theological discussions. The reason partly has to do with the traditional role of dedes. Guardians of the secrets and the holders of the truth pertaining to Alevi ethos used to be dedes, who maintained a monopoly over the matters related to the realm of the sacred. Dede*s* were the only ones in Alevi communities who were endowed with the right, ability and the responsibility to talk about Alevi beliefs and practices to strangers, and this was already something that rarely happened. Second, the most important source of mystery, the exclusive structure of cem ceremonies was a precondition of maintaining the privacy of cems, which were organized as meetings exclusive among community members. During these gatherings private matters and

[32] *Takiyye* means concealment of real belief and intentions. According to the principle of takiyye, the true practices of Aleviness would be revealed to outsiders in accordance with their "capacity to absorb it." Therefore those 'who did not reach the maturity to understand the truth' were given a false impression to satisfy their suspicion. This practice enabled nonconforming groups to escape surveillance and persecution by the established groups.

problems were discussed and personal problems between the members of the congregation were resolved, often in the very home-space of community members.

Accordingly, it becomes sensible that attempts to extract the "true" definition of Alevism out of the elders, the habitants of a "pure," idealized past are destined to fail. Perceiving the "lack" of *words* regarding one's Aleviness as "confusion" or "ignorance" is misleading, because Aleviness was embedded in the everyday in the case of elder Alevis, and their Aleviness was not problematized through a politics of recognition in need of legal status and a modern notion of identity that is based on a will to knowledge. In this regard, there was a shift from how one lives (a moral) life to what one should believe. Individuals with Alevi background have begun to *feel* the need to "*know* about one's beliefs culture, faith." This need not only stems from defending themselves in their encounters with Sunnis, but also from a modern approach to identity. As Asad (1993) aptly observes, "Discourse involved in practice is not the same as that involved in speaking about practice. It is a modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate that knowledge" (p. 36). Today, what we observe is that discursive articulation is increasingly taking precedence over the habitual practicing. Ironically, the devoted Alevis who did not question much but believed and followed the rules of "the path" have been replaced by a new generation that know much more about the theological or symbolic aspects of what their parents practiced, but do not take part in the communal services as much.

Scripturalization has been of great significance in the process through which myriad Alevi pasts, liturgies, cosmologies, hymns, and traditions have been put into a unitary discourse. Alevi beliefs and practices have undergone a process of codification through scripturalization. A great amount of data on diverse Alevi

traditions have been collected and recorded. The books and writings in the hands of dedes were gathered and printed in Latin letters (Şahin, 2002). Orally transmitted traditions have been fixed on paper and this has served to standardize and homogenize diverse Alevi practices. On the other hand, scripturalization has weakened the dedes' monopoly over the production and control of the knowledge regarding Alevi beliefs and practices. In this sense new media in the form of books and magazines increased the dissemination of knowledge and contributed to the fragmentation of authority by making it possible for larger segments of society to have access to knowledge on Aleviness (Vorhoff, 1998; Eickelman, 1999). Attempts to construct a canon of written works on the Alevi liturgy also have served the standardization and codification of Alevi rituals. Writing, thus stabilizing, fixing the traditions, has been conducive to the formalization and systematization of Alevi beliefs and practices (Gümüş, 2004).

Getting Recognized: Alevist Mobilization

Propensity towards the unification and homogenization of Alevi communities after the 1980s has not been a coincidence. Before the 1980s Alevism did not exist on its own as a resource for political mobilization. The post-1980 period has marked the Alevi communities breaking free from leftist politics. Before, matters related to Aleviness were articulated through leftist utopian discourses and the state was constructed discursively as external to Alevi communities, as a threatening force (Yalçınkaya, 1996; Tuğal, 2004). Alevi communities were considered unreliable if not threatening to the republican elite throughout the history of the republic and were treated either with indifference or were tolerated as the carriers of old Turkish culture

from the Central Asia (Küçük, 2002; Dinçer, 2004). Today, the anxiety that is felt by all actors with projects on Alevis regarding the fractured character of Alevism and anxiety to stabilize what Alevism is and who Alevis are has to do with issues of representation and doing politics. This is a process of making diverse beliefs and communities politically *administrable;* transforming different histories and experiences of Alevi communities into a unified Alevism that can be deployed by the Alevist organizations and/or the state agencies for mobilizing Alevi communities regardless of the conflicting projections of those. Under these circumstances, the multiplicity of meanings Alevism carries and the myriad discourses about it have come to be seen as problems to be resolved and the search for order and normative measures have been set in motion in an attempt to counter them.

For instance, when the representatives of the CEM Foundation visited the leader of *Demokratik Sol Parti* (Democratic Left Party), Bülent Ecevit, for the allocation of funds to Alevi organizations from the state budget, Ecevit stated that, "It is first necessary for Alevi groups to reach a consensus regarding some issues related to the [Alevi] practice[s]. For instance, some of our citizens ask for the construction of mosques in their villages, some of them state that there is no need for such a thing. Some demand the [state] to take cem centers as religious centers, yet some others demand that they should be seen as cultural centers. This, I think, makes it difficult for the state to make the necessary contributions" (Cem Vakfı, 1998).

Navaro-Yaşın (1998) notes that the Turkish state turned from a "repressive" system of power towards a "productive" one during the last decades (p. 59). That is, it increasingly demonstrated not only the capacity to forbid, inhibit or restrict, but also to produce, define, and permit as a new strategy of governance. However, she adds that although it was possible to sketch the development of a productive power, it did

not replace the suppressive model, but rather the two co-existed as a synthesis (Yaşın, 1998). This approach enables us to explain why the state, on the one hand, started to take active part in the production of knowledge on Alevism in order to define and promote it within the official discourses, and, on the other hand, its suppressive stance was maintained as exemplified in the anti-Alevi pogroms of Sivas (1993) and Gazi (1995), the banning of Alevi organizations and cemevi constructions on several occasions.

The various organs of the Turkish state began to participate in the institutional production of knowledge on Alevi communities in order to promote an official version of Alevism. In 1989 the Research Institute for the Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş was established at Gazi University. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) embarked upon its activities to "embrace Alevis" in the early 1990s. DRA organized meetings with Alevi dedes and activists, and panels about Alevism. Researchers from theology faculties started to do fieldwork in Alevi villages and increasingly participate in the debates to define Alevism. Through theology faculties; the Ministry of Culture, which was especially influential in the etatization of the Hacı Bektaş Festival; its research institute and the DRA, the state actively participated in the production of knowledge on the Alevi communities and promoted its own version Alevism, conceived and promoted as "Turkish Islam." In the 1970s Alevis were perceived as one of the three "k"s that were defined as the main threats to the Turkish Republic: *Kürt, komünist, kızılbaş* (Kurds, communists, Kızılbaşs) (Sinclair-Webb, 2003). In the 1990s Alevism began to be promoted as part of "Turkish Islam," and Alevis as the bearers of Turkish cultural values.

In line with incorporating Alevis to the Kemalist regime and the state, Alevi pasts were reinterpreted in a booming historiography by authors of Alevi descent.

Looking at "how these multiple pasts are reworked in the politics of the present" (Bartu, 1999, p. 32) can be useful in understanding the current positioning of Alevism in the political agenda. This shift in the treatment of Alevis was reflected in the reinterpretation of the position of Alevis vis-à-vis the Kemalist state in the recent history writing on Alevism. During the 1990s, parallel to the attempt to integrate Alevism into the republican project, Alevis were postulated as an "original constituent" (*asli unsur*) or the "founding constituent" (*kurucu unsur*) of the republic. Books written by researchers of Alevi descent suggested complicity between Mustafa Kemal and Alevis for the cause of the secular republic. Mustafa Kemal's visit to the Hacı Bektaş Lodge during the War of Independence has become a myth and the arguments went as far as concluding that Mustafa Kemal himself was Bektashi.

In these histories, republican history is presented as a radical break with a suppressive Ottoman past, emancipating the Alevis and endowing them with rights equal to those of the Sunnis. It is also suggested that the single-party period was one of bliss for the Alevis, which is contrasted to the multi-party period starting with the *Demokrat Parti* (Democrat Party) era, when the secular republic 'strayed from its secular and democratic path' (see Şener, 1989; Öz, 1995; Zelyut, 1992).[33] Alevism was rendered valuable in the state discourses only when it was connected to the nationalist cause, serving the preservation of "the Turkish language and culture, protecting it from foreign elements" and Hacı Bektaş was lauded as the "Pir of Turkism" (Erdoğan, 1995, p. 35).[34]

[33] For a criticism of this line of history writing, see Kehl-Bodrogi, 2003; Aktay, 1999; Bahadır, 2002.

[34] Erdoğan, a high bureaucrat himself said in the same speech he made in a panel organized by the Diyanet: "We are going to pursue the scientific presentation of Hacı Bektaş, with all dimensions of him. Because, no one should be afraid of the science. The state, above all, is afraid of nothing (hele devlet hiç bir şeyden korkmaz)."

During the early years of the Turkish Republic, the state accommodated the Alevis as the bearers of authentic Turkish folk culture, but this went hand in hand with interpolating them as "Turks," rather than "Alevis." It was necessary to give up upon their religious identity in order to become 'proper Turks' (Küçük, 2002, p. 903). While certain elements of the Alevi identity were appropriated –such as Alevi hymns as examples of pure Turkish language- on the basis of their compatibility with the nationalist ideals, much of the belief system was rejected on the grounds of being '*hurafe'* (superstition).

The increasing importance of Alevism as a resource for mobilization can be grasped best by looking at the political context of the 1990s. This period created opportunities and imposed a new framework for the formulations of Alevism and the place of Alevist mobilization in the political spectrum. Following the demise of utopian movements exemplified in the failure of reel socialism, the idiom of politics went through a radical change. In Turkey, as in the rest of the world, this period was characterized by the replacement of class politics with identity politics (Erdemir, 2004, p. 13) —used synonymously with the term "culture."[35] Cultural politics is directed at states for legal recognition and means to preserve and maintain cultures, despite the risk of essentializing cultures as fixed and observable entities with clear boundaries and homogenization within group boundaries in the name of codifying cultural "discrepancies" (Benhabib, 2002, pp. 1-6).

The feelings of insecurity in the face of an increasingly Sunnified state and the rising influence of the Sunni actors in the economy and in the state bureaucracy, and the advent of Kurdish identity politics were significant for the rise of the Alevist movement (Ayata, 2000, pp. 66-68). Perhaps the most important motivation behind

[35] As a result identity politics is also called "cultural politics."

the Alevist mobilization in Turkey was the rise of Islamist movement as an important social, economic and political actor. Lubeck and Britts remark that in the Middle East, the neoliberal structural adjustment programs played an important role in destroying "the social contract between state elites and urban dwellers" and this gap was filled by the Islamist organizations in the absence of leftist politics (2002, p. 310). Yavuz (2002) argues that Islam as an actor helped to bring the excluded segments, the periphery of Turkish society, to the center of political life. Following the "centralizing and homogenizing reform" period of the 1920s, "Islam has become the oppositional identity for the excluded sectors of Turkish society" (p. 22).

The growing power of the Islamists engendered feelings of antagonism and insecurity among the Kemalist elite and at this juncture the secularists "discovered" the Alevis as "a community, which could properly be defined as part of the people, who held a worldview and lifestyle that was radically in contrast to that of Islamists" (Navaro-Yashin, 2002, p. 145). As she succinctly puts it:

> A turning point in middle class secularist's activism was their discovery, in the mid 1990s, of the existence of Alevi community in Turkey. Here was a community, which could properly be defined as part of "the people," who held a world-view and lifestyle that was radically in contrast to that of Islamists, most of whom were Sunni. Middle class secularist activists bean to read and learn about Alevis, to visit cemevi*s* (Alevi houses of worship), to participate in Alevi *semah töreni*s (ritual ceremonies), and attend meetings in Alevi organizations (ibid:, pp. 16-7).

Accordingly, Aleviness has come signify devotion to the enlightenment foundations of the republic and to secularism in the secularist discourses of the 1990s. For example, columnist Mine G. Kırıkkanat (2001) argued that:

> Remembering the fact that this country with a 95% Muslim population does not only belong to Sunnis, but also to Alevis might give us relief…Maybe then you could understand why Turkey does not fall victim to reactionism (*irtica*) despite all the investments in sharia, the schools of bigotry and backwardness

> (*cahillik*), and the armies of the brainwashed in tariqa schools and the hypnosis séances of the Koran courses. Because, there is also a part of people (*halk tabanı*) that…does not bury their head in the sands of the desert and their women in bags [cover] (*torba*): the Alevis.[36]

The claims to represent the best interests of the Alevis as a society (as a whole) introduces the problem of "how these interests are to be defined and by whom. Advocates of such collective interests invariably claim the competence to define them. Such claims emanate from sites of authority, governments, political parties and religious authorities" (Zubaida, 1994, p. 5).

At this point, it is necessary to introduce some of the actors that made claims to the right to represent the best interest of the Alevis, playing a significant role in the Alevist movement and reinstitutionalization process. The first of these is the CEM Foundation. The establishment of the foundation in 1995 brought together some of the leading figures of Alevi mobilization from the 1960s such as Abidin Özgünay, and well known Alevi businessmen such as İbrahim Polat. From its inception the foundation made itself different from the other organizations by assuming the role of negotiating with the state in order to voice "the demands of Alevis."[37] The public image of the CEM foundation is conflated with İzzettin Doğan. An international law professor at a prestigious state university from a prestigious *ocak*,[38] Doğan skillfully uses the advantages stemming from both positions in his dealings with the state representatives and Alevi groups.

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[36] 'O da Beni Seviyor'... *Radikal*, October 28, 2001.

[37] The publications of the foundation are full of references to this. See Cem Vakfı, 1998.

[38] Each dede lineage is organized around what is called an "*ocak*," which literally means "hearth, household." Ocak represents the dede lineage that is established by a claimed descendant of the prophet.

Doğan does not defend the abolition of the DRA, because then "Sunni Islam would fall under the control of irresponsible institutions. Then they would be able to continue their activities in order to destroy the secular state without any intervention" (Cem Vakfı, 1998, p. 253). The foundation advocates the allocation of funds from the state budget for Alevis and their institutions. It has established good relations with the government, and especially with the True Path Party. The spokesman of the government, Yıldırım Aktuna, attended the opening ceremony of the Foundation's İkitelli Cemevi in 1997, and stated that "three trillion TL was going to be allocated to [Alevis] for the realization of Alevi beliefs" (ibid., 231).

The foundation was ambitious in its stance to establish transnational ties, not only with the Alevis in diaspora, but with the central Asian Turks and Mevlevis as well. The most important activities of the foundation were the organization of three meetings where the issues related to Alevi beliefs, practices, histories and institutionalization were debated. The first two meetings were later published as well. In these meetings that are called *Anadolu İnanç Önderleri Toplantıları* (Leaders of Faith in Anatolia Meetings), where a wide range of issues were discussed among dedes that had been invited from various parts of Turkey. The first meeting was held between October 16 and 19, 1998 and hosted a minister from the cabinet. The second meeting took place between May 12 and 14, 2000. It was supported by the Ministry of Culture and hosted the chief consultant of the Ministry of Culture, political party representatives, the metropolitan mayor of Istanbul and the former chair of the DRA. The third meeting took place on August 31, 2002. The establishment of the *Alevi-İslam Din Hizmetleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of the Alevi-Islamic Religious Services) in 2004 marks the final move of the foundation for gaining monopoly over the

representation of Alevis at state level and its attempts to implement their vision of Alevism.

The CEM foundation played a significant role with a position of leadership in the early years of Alevist mobilization in Turkey, including a position of leadership among cemevi. However, this has changed quickly. The contacts the foundation established with center right parties and its stance in relation to the DRA created tensions with other important organizations such as the Şahkulu Sultan Shrine Complex, the Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolia Culture Foundation, or the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association. There emerged a strong opposition after the establishment of the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation (ABF) in 2002.

The ABF currently has the largest base of membership but has faced problems because of defining Alevism outside Islam. The most important institutions in it are the Pir Sultan Culture Association and the Hacı Bektaş Culture Foundation. Closely associated with the ABF, another important actor was the European Alevi Bektashi Unions Confederation. The confederation was active in the Alevist mobilization in Turkey, and provides both intellectual and financial support for ABF.

Urbanization and the Transformation of Alevi Practices

Ergül Şanlı Dede, the Director of Taşdelen Cemevi describes the changing atmosphere of the city for Alevis through his own experiences as,

> In those days [1970s and 1980s] let alone being the director of an [Alevi] association, you were supposed to be ready to get into a fight when you said 'I am Alevi'. Because when you said that you were Alevi, what would follow was unethical accusations such as you indulged in incest relationships (*ana bacı tanımaz*). Under those circumstances, there were concealments (*gizlenme*) in many regions. I also concealed [my identity, because] you have to live, you have responsibilities, you have family and children. However,

> when there was some relaxation (*rahatlama*) in the last 12-13 years, we have become a bit more comfortable. [When we were] in the villages there was no such thing as concealment, because everybody was already Alevi, and the [neighboring] villages with different faith [Sunnis] knew that, too.[39]

Bammer argues that the displacement is "one of the most formative experiences of our century" (1994, p. xi). In Turkey, too, the processes of industrialization, population increase, and the mechanization of agriculture have resulted in large waves of migration to the urban centers (Karpat, 1976; Erder, 1999). Şahin has observed that "the cities where Alevis live have been quite above the national average in terms of giving migration" (2002, p. 130). Kieser (2002) furthers her argument by noting that Alevis also were over-represented in the migration to Germany after the 1960s.

Aksoy and Robins (1994) argue that the "newcomers to city choose to live in areas where their compatriots are already established in order to benefit from mutualistic networks of support" in the case of Istanbul (p. 69). This was also true for the Alevi communities. Bozkurt (1993) notes that the first "Alevi" neighborhoods"[40] started to emerge at the outskirts of big cities by the end of the 1950s. The greater migration wave of the 1960s resulted in increased contact with the Sunni population:

> The Alevis' gradual integration into the wider society — migration to the towns, education, careers in public service — brought them into closer contact, and sometimes in direct competition, with strict Sunnis, from whom they had remained socially separated for

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[39] "*O dönemde başkan olmayı bırak, 'Aleviyim' dediğim anda veya her an kavgaya hazır olman gerekir, çünkü Aleviliğini söylediğin anda adam sana 'Ana bacı tanımaz' gibi suçlamalar getiriliyordu, ahlak dışı suçlamalar getiriliyordu. Şimdi bu durumda çoğu yörelerde gizlenmeler oldu. Bende gizledim çoğu yörelerde, çünkü yaşamak zorundasın, sorumlulukların var; ailen var, çoluğun çocuğun var. Ama işte son 12-13 yıldır bir rahatlık gelince biraz daha rahatladık. Köylerde iken saklama gibi bir şey yoktu, çünkü herkes Alevi idi zaten. Diğer farklı inancın köyleri de biliyordu*." Interviewed by the author, on April 11, 2004

[40] However, the established neighborhoods were far from being ghettos. There is: first of all no neighborhood, at least in Istanbul, where Alevis comprise the totality of its population including infamous Gazi Neighborhood (Perouse, 2002).

> centuries. This caused growing tension, especially in the towns of the ethnically and religiously mixed zone mentioned above, but also in the large cities further west (Bruinessen, 2000, p. 120).

Yet continuous migration waves forced migrant groups with similar backgrounds to settle in different parts of the city. While the first comers were living in the semi-central parts of the city, the newcomers were settled at the peripheries of Istanbul, and this dispersal of the migrant communities in different parts of the city made the maintenance of rural networks in the cityscape problematic (Bayraktar, 2003).

Migration and urbanization are processes that bring about place-based struggles to find living place and defend the borders of the lifeworld for groups in a more and more fragmented, diverse, contested and dense setting. Immigration to urban centers has had serious implications on the lives of Alevi communities. Confined largely to the rural areas with scattered distribution throughout Turkey, Alevi communities lived not only relatively isolated from their Sunni neighbors but were also segregated from other "Alevi communities."

Tajbakhsh (2001) defines the urban as the locus of "the encounter with diversity, strangers, the overlapping worlds of multiple allegiances, networks and identities" (p. 7). Accordingly, city life involves "intensified exposure to other cultural identities, resulting in conflict, mutual influence and interpenetration, or forms of accommodation" (ibid., p. 163). Migrating to city centers entailed the redefinition of the communal boundaries between Alevi and Sunni communities. Maintaining the spatial separation/segregation between Alevis and Sunnis has become problematic in the cities. Sharing the same living and working space with Sunnis has made it difficult to maintain not only the physical but the mental distance. Increasing engagement with Sunnis –as neighbors, colleges, and classmates and so

on– has brought about significant changes for the reproduction of Alevi communities and restructuration of Alevi practices. In the urban space, Alevi communities came under the gaze of the Sunnis, their significant other. As a result of this, they have been forced to negotiate their difference, and draw new boundaries between themselves and Sunnis.

A salient outcome of sharing the city space with Sunnis and interacting with them has been the fact that Alevi beliefs, practices and institutions have been put into constant comparison with Sunnism –which itself is another unitary construction- and defined on the basis of what they lack in reference to Sunni Islam, Sunni communities and their practices. Since Sunni communities and their institutions were established prior to that of Alevi communities and were integrated to the secular model of Turkey in the form of "state Islam," the institutional framework through which these communities mobilized their members provided a model to be emulated by the Alevist movement.

Living in the cities was not only conducive to encounters with the Sunnis but also with other Alevi communities. This has made it possible to foster a new, larger sense of community, rendering the imaginations of "an Alevi society" possible. Interactions between different Alevi communities on the one hand created a larger sense of "us" on the basis of similarities between different communities. On the other hand, the differences between these communities have become obvious with the expansion of communal boundaries and this has lead to debates about who represents the "authentic" tradition, unspoiled by "degeneration" and/or "assimilation."

On the other hand, the life in the city not only has introduced Alevi communities to new forms of socialization through encounters with a number of "others," but also made it difficult to maintain peculiar performances of Alevi identity

like cem, because a "proper, village cem" is argued to the community members to share the same living space in order to maintain the mechanism of mutual checking for the *görgü cemis*.[41] It becomes difficult if not impossible to maintain community control over fellow villagers when they are scattered throughout the city and lose contact with one another, let alone being able to meet for regular cems. In this sense the expansion of imagined "Alevi society" has gone hand in hand with the fragmentation and dispersal of local communities in urban space.

Under these circumstances, there has emerged a feeling of loss pertaining to a tradition, which is thought to be fading away. This in turn has engendered nostalgia for the place of origin. The village life has come to be depicted as the locus of a 'pure' community and the "authentic" Alevism that will constitute the vantage point from which the contemporary restructurings can be instigated. Accordingly, village life has come to stand for "an imagined locus of purity, cooperation, sharing, and neighborliness" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997b, p. 15). Nazmiye is a fifty four year old Alevi woman from Şiran. She has been living in Istanbul, Rumelihisarüstü for the last thirty years. Nazmiye describes the years of her youth spent in the village with such a sense of nostalgia: "I can not tell you how much people were close to one another… There was respect for the elders, for the dedes. Is it the case now? The youth are disrespectful …the cems in the village were totally different. I do not find the cems held here [in Istanbul] intimate enough."[42]

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[41] *Görgü cemis* are conducted once a year generally and the communal problems are discussed in the presence of dede and conflicts are resolved. Although it might be acceptable (technically with the permission of the dede to whom one is attached) to attend normal cem ceremonies presided over by different dedes, one must see his or her own dede to be seen (*görülmek*).

[42] "*İnsanların birbirine nasıl tutkun olduğunu anlatamam… Yaşlılara ,dedeye saygı vardı. Şimdi öyle mi? Gençler saygısız…Köydeki cemler tamamen farklıydı. Şehirdeki cemler samimi değil*." Interviewed by the author, on May 23, 2003

Such approaches to the past lead to a romanticized vision that "posits an idyllic past of unified tradition, certainty, stasis, and a cognitive and behavioural commonality…an 'original lifeworld' of traditional absoluteness and fixity, where in individual is...first an 'truly' at home" (Rapport and Dawson in Morley, 2000, p. 246). In the life narratives of my many informants, village life appears as one of harmony, peace and perfect social relations unharmed by the "degenerating effects" of the city life. The life in the village is remembered as the locus of a "pure, authentic, original, real Alevism."

This way of remembrance of the past engenders an image of the rural life, which is fetishized and situated in an ever recurring, frozen past outside history. This results in the construction of a contrast between the urban and the rural, where the rural is differentiated from the urban not only spatially, but also temporally as it is ascribed the role of preserving the "essence" of visiting one's home town where Aleviness is preserved 'pure and authentic' was, in this sense, is not spatial, but temporal (Morley, 2000).

Urban Cems

The cem ceremony (*ayin-i cem*) is one of the central and distinguishing communal practices for Alevi communities. Cems are of great importance to the production and reproduction of Alevi communities (Yaman, 2004; Zelyut, 1992). Cem is also called *"Ayn-ül Cem, Ayin-i Cem, Cem Ayini, Abdal Musa Kurbanı, Birlik Cemi, Dardan İndirme Erkanı, Koldan Kopan Erkanı, Ali Cemi, Görgü Cemi, İçeri Kurbanı, İkrar Cemi"* (Yaman, 2004, p. 56). The cem ceremonies have served many purposes at the same time: A cem can be a means of socialization; the vehicle of

transmission of traditions; a way of passing time during long winter days when contact with the outer world was cut in the rural Anatolia; and last, a platform where the disputes between the community members would be settled by the dedes.

There are two kinds of cems: those held only on special occasions, and regular weekly cems. The liturgy of cem*s* and their scheduling varies from region to region. Apart from the cems held on special days, other cems would start with the end of the harvesting season in the villages (Clarke, 1999; Birdoğan, 2003). Bozkut (1993, p. 173) notes, "The religious ceremony generally takes place in the winter. The village starts the preparations with arrival of the dede. The *pervane* (messenger) goes to every house to summon them [to the ceremony]. The place to have the ceremony is decided [in the absence of a particular cemevi]. Those who will perform the service in the ceremony are decided."

Korkmaz (2003, pp. 96-98) lists the services held during cem ceremony as follows:

1. dede: presides over the ceremony.
2. *rehber* (guide): guides those who attend the ceremony.
3. *gözcü* (watchman): maintains order and quiet during the cem.
4. *çerağcı* (candle lighter): lights the place where cem is held
5. *zakir*: performs *deyiş-düvaz-miraçlama* (hymns).
6. *ferraş* (*süpürgeci-carcı*): sweeps the floor.
7. *sofracı (kurbancı*): deals with the sacrificial animal and serves the meal.
8. *semahçı (pervane*): performs *semah* (ritual dance).
9. *peyik* (messenger): informs the villagers about the place and timing of cem.
10. *iznikçi*: cleans up the cemevi.

11. *saka (saki, ibirikdar, ibrikçi*): brings in and distributes water

12. *bekçi*: provides the security of the cem and those who participate in cem.

Bozkurt (1993) also includes the service of the *kuyucu* (who buries the leftovers of sacrificed animal) and has a *kapıcı* (gatekeeper) rather a guard. However, there are regional differences in terms of the categorization and duties of the holders of these services. In some cases the category of *kapıcı* also includes the gözcü, performing both tasks at the same time. Although the symbolic number of twelve (with reference to the twelve imams) generally is considered the valid formulation, this is not necessarily the standard number of services everywhere. For instance, Şanlı notes that "three services are enough for the organization of cem*s* in the villages of Dersim [Tunceli]" (2004, p. 13).

When I refer to the differences between the current cems and the cems in the past, I am aware of the risks of romanticizing the rural cem ceremonies as part of a fixed and essentialized Aleviness situated in an ideal past. To avoid this, I will try to distinguish between reimagining the past in accord with the contemporary interests and struggles for redrawing communal boundaries by approaching the accounts of the dedes and first generation Alevis who attend cems in cities critically. Today some of the cem services, which once corresponded to a kind of organization relevant to small scale institutions of local communities, have attained different meanings. Developed within a specific context to answer particular concerns, these services either have lost their relevance to the objective conditions of living or have been diminished to the symbolic significance under the urban circumstances:

> Alevism, as it is embodied, performed, and practiced in Istanbul, often fails to adhere to the prescriptions and prohibitions of an Alevi ideal situated in a rural and somewhat mythical past. To

> portray the urban Alevism that emerges in the urban Alevis' interaction with the Sunni other in Istanbul (Erdemir, 2004, p. 33).

For instance, the designated service of bekçi has become totally unnecessary with the opening of cem ceremonies to strangers. In the villages the bekçis are described as being placed around and inside the village as a precaution. Since there is no longer any need for watching out for strangers, the guards in urban cemevis wait at the doors of the congregational halls where cem is held and are supposed to keep people from entering once the ceremony starts and leaving the cem before it ends.

However, even this regulation is difficult to implement since during my fieldwork I observed that people enter and leave ceremonies whenever they want. The dedes or the congregation can not exert authority over participants, to stop them from leaving. The reason for this is that the congregation in an urban cem is not formed out of community members who have known each other, and can impose discipline on each other. The dede and the congregation often see each other for the first time during the cem, hence participants are not the *talip*s[43] of the dede, and have no accountability to him. This is also because they are afraid of discouraging especially the youth from attending the ceremonies.

In some cemevis service of gözcü is abandoned completely. The service of peyik has also become irrelevant unless the villagers continue to hold ceremonies only with their own villagers and with their own dede, because there is always a dede ready at cemevis and many cemevis organize cem ceremonies every week at the same hour. İznikçi does not need to clean up the cemevi since there are full time employees to do the job, and the same is valid for the service of kurbancı, because cemevis have their own butchers and cooks for such tasks. During many cems the offering prayers

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[43] *Talip*s are the followers of dede ocaks. The relationship is traditionally hereditary between the families of the dede and the talips.

in the presence of dede when kurbancı brings the sacrificial animal inside congregational hall have been abandoned. The sacrificial animals are often slaughtered and cooked by the butchers and cooks of cemevis separately from the cem ceremony. Accordingly, the practical division of labor that existed among the community members has been taken over by professional employees at cemevis. This situation makes it difficult for participants to take active part in the cems and pushes them more and more into a passive stance in their relating to the ceremony, dede and the other participants.

There are further changes in the organization of cems. The scheduling, duration and proceeding of cems have been subject to changes. First, there have been shifts in the time of the ceremonies. It was generally accepted that there would be no cems in the agricultural season, because during the spring and the summer the villagers were busy with rising and harvesting their crops (Clarke, 1999; Birdoğan, 2003). The dede of Sarıgazi Cemevi explained to me the logic of this arrangement as "The flowers have bloomed, [hence] the *sofu*s[44] have left."[45] Special attention was paid to holding the ceremonies during Thursday or Friday nights. The ceremonies started in the evenings and sometimes lasted through the night until the morning.

In Istanbul, I observed that cems were organized regularly once a week at many cemevis, at a calendical level throughout the year. Some cemevis further initiated cem*s* in the day time during the weekends because those were the only available times for many participants working full time during the weekdays. The Şahkulu and Karacaahmet Shrines organize cems on the weekends. Cemevis such as

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[44] 'Sofu' means crudely religious person, but the intention is rather to say "*sofi*," which means "sufi" and stands for "*dede*" here.

[45] "*Çiçekler bitti, sofular gitti*." Another expression close to this is "*Çiğdemler bitti, sofiler gitti*" (Birdoğan, 2003, p. 343).

Bağcılar, Kartal, Nurtepe and Yenibosna Cemevi organize cems every week on Thursday nights regardless of the season.

Mehmet, a board member of the Bağcılar Cemevi explained the reason for having cems every week throughout a year in the following manner: "It is difficult to find dedes in villages, but this is Istanbul. Cems are held every week because we can find dedes here permanently."[46] The presence of a number of dedes settled and constantly living in Istanbul make it possible to have dedes in cemevis always available. Some of these dedes, such as the Hüseyin Dede of the Sarıgazi Cemevi, were brought from other cities:

> In 1993, this cemevi was built. The people who live here and know me, found it proper that I should be the dede. They were phoning me and saying 'Hüseyin dede [you] should come and be our dede.' I was not sure about what to do. The administration came to my house [in Eskişehir] from here. They told me "Dede, we used to say, God [help us so that] we can build a cemevi, then God would have granted us our wish. [Now] we have built the cemevi and are looking for a dede, but we can not find one. Second, we have found you [to be] proper [dede for our cemevi]…I said 'How could this work out, give me some time to think about it.' Around one month has passed, may God be pleased with them, they constantly stayed in touch because they found me worth [the service]."[47]

However there are differences related to this issue, cemevis such as Okmeydanı, Ihlamurkuyu and Sarıgazi organize cems only during the fall and winter. Hüseyin dede from Sarıgazi Cemevi told me that the reason they stopped cems in

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[46] "*Köyde dede bulmak zor, ama burası İstanbul. Burada dede sürekli bulunduğu için her hafta cem yapılıyor*." Interviewed by the author, on June 11, 2004.

[47] "*1993'de buranın cemevi yapılmış. Burada bizi tanıyan insanlar uygun bizi bulmuşlar, bizi görmüşler. Hüseyin Dede gelsin, işimizi bu yapar, bu yapsın gibisine bize telefonlar geldi 1993'te. Biz de olur mu, olmaz mı diye kararımızı veremedik. Buradan yönetim Eskişehir'e geldi, benim evime. Bana dediler ki, 'dede biz bir zaman dedik 'Ya rabbim, bir cemevi yapalım, Allah bizim muradımızı vermiş olur.' Cemevi yaptık, şimdi dede arıyoruz, bulamıyoruz bir. İkincisi biz seni uygun bulduk' … Bu nasıl olur bana bir müsaade edin dedim, aradan bir ay kadar geçti Allah razı olsun bizi layık gördükleri için devamlı irtibat kurdular.*" Interviewed by the author, on May 30, 2004.

spring and summer was that "people take leave from their jobs, they work, or they go on to vacation. Nobody comes [to attend cems]."[48]

Since numerous dedes have migrated to the cities, many villages have been left without dedes and this in return has influenced the timing of cems in the villages as well. The dedes who live in the big cities go to their villages in summer, and the cems no longer are organized in the winter, but during the summers. For example, Veli dede of the Şahkulu Shrine Complex told me that in his village his talips waited for his return to the village in the summer in order to start the cem ceremonies.

Another change took place with regard to the duration of cems. Participants demand that the cems be shorter. Busy working schedule and often the simple fact that "people get bored" necessitates the cem*s* to be shorter. The longest cem ceremony I attended throughout my fieldwork lasted three hours. An administrator from Ihlamurkuyu Cemevi complained about the length of cems: "the dede keeps the cems [lasting] too long. God should be able to understand the prayers quickly, right? Cems continue for two to three hours. I want to [be able to] finish my worshipping in five minutes and leave."[49] The demand he voiced for shorter cems points to a shift in the meaning of cems. Defining the cem exclusively as "worship" stems from a conceiving of the ceremonies differently, where chatting, eating, telling stories and settling disputes during cems are excluded from the meetings. Accordingly, the ceremonies begin to attain an air of a strict prayer form, which involves expectations of a shorter time limit.

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[48] "*İnsanlar izine gidiyor, iş gayesi, deniz sefası, kimse gelmiyor*."

[49] "*Dede cemleri çok uzun tutuyor. Allah herhalde çabuk anlamalı duaları değil mi, çabuk anlayan biridir değil mi? Cemler iki üç saat sürüyor, ben beş dakikada ibadetimi yapıp gitmek istiyorum*." Interviewed by the author, on March 24, 2005

Rationalization

Another observable manifestation of institutionalization on the Alevi communities has been the rationalization of beliefs and practices. Certain practices have been disowned as being superstition, such as some expressions of reverence to dedes and sacred relics, in an attempt to eliminate the mythical and mystical aspects of the cem liturgy. Different traditions stemming from diverse historical experiences and certain practices that are not "compatible with contemporary needs" deemed to be "irrational" or "degenerated."

Alevi journalist Musa Ağacık expressed the need for doing away with "superstitions" during a panel organized by Okmeydanı Cemevi: "Are we this hapless, this primitive? Is there really any difference between crashing into each other in order to pick mulberries from the mulberry tree in Hacıbektaş [Lodge], and tying pieces of cloth to the Eyüp Sultan [tomb]? Both of these acts are fanaticism (*yobazlık*)."[50] The mulberry tree Ağacık mentioned is located in the garden of Hacıbektaş Lodge in Hacıbektaş town. Alevis visiting the lodge pick the berries and sometimes the branches of the tree as sacred relics. It is common practice not only for Alevis, but also for Sunni communities, to collect sacred relics like sand from the tombs of saints, carry talismans prepared by sheiks or dedes, as well as burn candles at tombs or tie cloths to trees for the realization of wishes. When I visited Hacıbektaş town this summer I noticed warnings put up by the municipality against tying cloths on trees. This battle is ironically the same as the one waged by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) against such practices in the tombs and shrines visited by Sunnis.

[50] "*Bu kadar zavallı, bu kadar ilkel miyiz biz? Hacıbektaş'taki dut ağacından dut almak için birbirini ezmek, Eyüp Sultan'a çaput bağlamak arasında ne fark var? İkisi de yobazlık*."

Otherwise opposing each other, the DRA and Alevi intellectuals are allied in their attempts to rationalize the realm of the sacred.

The belief in dedes' *keramet* (miracles) has also diminished. Dedes' affiliation with the prophet is believed to endow them with supernatural powers. Dedes were not only responsible for attending cems, at times dealing with funerals and settling the disputes, but they often acted as healers and were believed to have magical powers. Some dede ocaks are believed to have certain powers. For instance, "some dedes from [the Kureşan] Ocak lick heated iron or burning stoves. Alevi dedes believe that this gift was given to the dedes of Kureşan Ocak by birth" (Bozkurt, 1993). It is no longer the practice to drink the water the dede uses to wash his hands during the cem ceremonies in order to be blessed. The sacred aura stemming from the very concrete person of the dede is no longer accepted, but the order and structure of the cem have gained significance over the persona of the dede.

Another mystical element that faces contestation today is the '*esrime*' (spirit possession). Bozkurt (1993) explains esrime as follows:

> In this mourning part [of the cem] someone from the society (*toplum*) or the dede gets possessed…loses his [consciousness] completely. Jumping on his knees, he beats his knees. Foam comes out of his mouth…in Alevi society possession is considered to be sacred. The person who is possessed is considered to have attracted the blessing of the holy ones on him (p. 95).

I myself witnessed an esrime during a cem ceremony I attended at the Yenibosna Cemevi. A young man, who later told me that he was in the semah group of Karacaahmet Cemevi, attended cems regularly at different cemevis, became possessed during the ceremony and started to scream loudly and hit his knees very hard. He was shouting uncontrollably and crying as well. What I noticed was the feeling of unease and disapproval all around me. The old men sitting next to me were

shaking their heads and the dede warned the young man "to stop acting excessively (*aşırı*)" several times.

Standardization

Related to the rationalization has been the standardization of Alevi beliefs and practices. The most important factor behind the standardization was the increasing importance of the "printed word," gaining prevalence over the "ritually transferred model," transforming it into a "standardized doctrine" (Olsson, 1998, p. 202). In line with the emergence of new institutional centers, there has been a propensity towards unifying different cem practices and in so doing creating standardized cem ceremonies that will be valid in all cemevis throughout Turkey. In the cemevis operating under the CEM Foundation there is already a standardized cem form in use. The dedes are given notes from which they read the prayers and the hymns. The organization of the service is the same at all of the cemevis that are attached to the foundation. In Germany the Commission of Dedes (*Dedeler Kurulu*)working under the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation of Germany targets the "bringing of order to the variability of the ordering of the twelve services for the first and the last time…[and] designating the days of the beginning and end of Alevi festival days" (Gümüş, 2004, p. 522).

This will to unification is another step towards making cems into standardized prayers. In an attempt to "save the cems from disappearing," regional liturgies that have developed through different historical processes and experiences are being eliminated. Curiously, Alevi traditions are abandoned in ad attempt to recover and protect Alevism(s). Yet not everyone is eager to have standardized cems. A

bağlama[51] teacher from the Bağcılar Cemevi complained about how cems were being turned into "merely prayers," referring to the cems he had attended in the CEM Foundation:

> A cem is a space where people are given knowledge about worshipping. If this turns into a Sunni mentality in the way that you will bend and rise, now you will sing a hymn, then you will bend, everything is going to be monotonous and formalist (*şekilci*). You will have done the same things for a limited time span. By singing the same hymn in every cem this [the cems] will become monotonous. When you enter places like that you can not have the feeling. It is more of talk about the *zahir* [the outside, the empty form] than *batın* [inside, secrets that are beyond the form].[52]

This bağlama teacher contrasted the codified, standardized Sunni prayer namaz to cem ceremonies, by invoking one of the most circulated criticisms directed at the practice of namaz in an attempt to defend the multiplicity of liturgies in cem practices. According to this point of view, what distinguishes cem from namaz is the difference between the two forms of prayer in terms of intentions and feelings. What matters during the cem is to have a clean heart, mind and soul rather than mere bodily cleanliness or the ever repeated 'monotony' of bodily movements.

Elimination and the Invention of "Traditions"

After the opening of cems to strangers, certain Alevi practices have been abandoned due to the risks caused by them in encounters with Sunnis. For instance, drinking alcohol in cems has been prevailingly excluded from cemevis, a very

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[51] *Bağlama* is a long necked lute that is specific to Anatolia. It is played in the cem ceremonies.

[52] "*Cem insanlara ibadet bazında çeşitli bilgilerin aktarıldığı yer. Bu sadece Sünni felsefesinin yaptığı gibi eğilip doğrulmak, ama şimdi şu değişi okuyacaksın, şurada eğileceksin olursa monoton ve her şey şekilci olacak. Belli bir süre sonra hep aynı şeyleri yapmış olacaksınız. her cemde aynı değiş okuna okuna bu monotonlaşacak. Öyle cemlere girince sıkılıyorsun, haz alamıyorsun, o duyguyu alamıyorsun. Batından çok zahir konuşuluyor*." Interviewed by the author, on June 11, 2004.

delicate issue that is often used to question the extent to which Alevis are "good Muslims." This practice was already not common to all Alevi communities (Şanlı, 2004), but many communities ceased performing it despite the fact that the tradition is still alive in some villages (Yıldız, 2004). In urban cemevis, even mentioning the possibility of use of alcohol during cems is out of question.

There is not only the elimination of certain practices but the invention of new ones. Some of the innovations in cem ceremonies involve the use of technology. At some cemevis, the candles that are burnt at the beginning of the cem and put out at the end of the ceremony have been replaced by electric lamps. Many cemevis are equipped with sound systems and the dedes and zakirs use microphone to be heard clearly by all of the participants. Another good and more substantial example to these novel practices is Ramadan Cems/Prayers (*Ramazan Cemi/Namazı*). The administrators of Alibeyköy Cemevi were forced to initiate *Ramazan Niyazı* (an alternative term to namaz) because of the demand for them from the Alevis living in the area: "We did not want to start it, but it is better than sending them to the mosque" the director of the cemevi told me. Then he concluded in a joking manner: "Soon we will start having namaz in the cemevi in order to prevent them from going to mosques."[53] A board member from Okmeydanı Cemevi complained about the demands of the congregation: "They are coming [here] and asking why there is no Ramadan namaz. Were there any Ramadan namaz in your village? Why are you inventing things in order to make advances to the Sunnis (*Sünnilere yaranmak için*)?"[54]

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[53] "*Neredeyse cemevinde namaz kıldıracağız camilere gitmesinler diye*!" Interviewed by the author, on April 14, 2004.

[54] "*Ramazan Bayramı'nda niye namaz kılınmıyor, diye geliyorlar. Senin köyünde Ramazan namazı kılınıyor muydu? Niye başkalarına yaranmak için böyle icatlar yapıyorsun*?" Interviewed by the author, on March 21 2004.

Both cemevis operate under the federation, and the administrators in both cemevis opposed the idea of having Ramadan cems on the grounds that it could lead to assimilation. However, this appeal towards having Ramadan Prayers comes from an urge to stress the similarities between Alevis and Sunnis. Despite the use of the term niyaz, many Alevis I interviewed used the term namaz, including the administrators.

The class differences are also reflected in the organization of space parallel to the emerging novel hierarchies in cemevis. Erdemir (2004) notes for the CEM Foundation center in Yenibosna that the distribution of congregation in the cemevi is different not only in terms of gender but also along class lines:

> Koca Ahmed Yesevi Cemevi had these two crescent shaped wings facing each other, separated by the stage on one tip, and by the protocol seating on the other. The architecture not only separates the men from the women, but also creates a designated protocol seating area where the Alevi male and female elite can sit on their own separated from others. So this building, which is often described as *çok modern* (very modern) by the patrons, not only imposes gender segregation, but also class and status differences on its patrons (pp. 138-9).

Decontextualization of Semahs and Gülbenks

While some practices have been abandoned and the new ones invented, some practices have gained a life outside the realm of cems. Semah has been distanced from cem and has become one of the most important signifiers of Aleviness in media representation. Before the emergence of cemevis one learnt the semah as part of one's socialization, upbringing, and personal history; by attending cem ceremonies starting from a young age.

However, in cemevis there are special courses and specialized experts, special places designated for the teaching of semah within cemevis. Semah is taught and performed independently from the context of cem ceremonies. One might be "dancing" semah while seldom if not never attending cem ceremonies. As young people perceive semah as more and more part of their "culture," and learn it in special courses, from teachers, without participating in cem ceremonies, and practicing it through the cem, the semah gets separated from cems and attains a life of its own.

I have met youth from the semah groups of cemevis who knew semahs not only from their own hometowns but many other regions, *perform* them on TV, but have attended cem ceremonies only a few times in their whole lives. They did not go on participating in cem*s* because they did not like to be there and found cem ceremony "boring, not nice" or simply, "unnecessary." Performing semah in this process rather has become a cultural expression of Aleviness, a way of manifesting Alevi identity. Dinçer argues that,

> in semahs there is tendency to uniformity, that certain characteristics of different semahs are preferred at the expense of some others. Those preferences reflect certain processes about the reconstruction of Alevi identity. The tendency to uniformity strengthens the understanding of the Alevis as a single group and denies the diversity within Alevi community at large. In this process, any self-identifications that can harm the positive image of Alevis in the eyes of Sunni population and the state are discarded (2004, p. 348).

The gülbenks, hymns, which are part of cem ceremonies, have also moved beyond the space of cem. They have been for long the subject of study in musical conservatories, performed by artists from different backgrounds and were presented

to large audiences including the Western ones. It has been a disputed topic whether gülbenks could be performed in *türkü bars*[55] or not.

Meeting the Other "Alevis": Encounters with Intimate Strangers

Ali Kenanoğlu, the representative of the ABF says with regard to the encounters of Alevis in cemevis:

> M. E: A cemevi is wherever the cem is held. What is the need for cemevis?
> .A: K: The need to have cemevis stems from this: There is an Alevi society that does not go to mosques, churches or synagogues, who does not feel belonging to those. These [cemevis] are going to stand as places these [Alevis] will go and find their identity. The cultural development of these…
> M. E: Where do they find their identity?
> A. K: [As a place] where they can express their identity and say "I belong here." It [cemevi] is going to maintain its existence in this manner. Let me put it like this: Now you are completing a Master's degree. You are studying the Alevi society. Where do you go? You go to cemevis and Alevi associations. That is, you know that you are going to find this society there."[56]

Apart from the cem ceremonies held in shrines and lodges, it was more common practice to hold cems in the houses of dedes –which would contain large rooms- or the house of a talip who had a large hall in his house would be used to have cem ceremonies. Accordingly, multipurpose living spaces also functioned as

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[55] These bars emerged in the mid 1990s in big cities. They are decorated like village houses inside and live folk music performances are available at any hour of the day.

[56] "*M.E: Cemevi cemin yapıldığı yerlerdir. Ne gerek var cemevlerine?*
A. K: Cemevlerine şunun için gerek var, camiye gitmeyen, kiliseye gitmeyen, havraya gitmeyen, kendisini buralara ait hissetmeyen bir Alevi toplumu var. Bunların gittiği ve kimliklerini bulduğu mekanlar olarak duracak bunlar. Bunların kültürel gelişimi…
M. E: Kimliğini bulduğu mu?
A. K: Kimliğini orada ifade edebildiği, ben buraya aitim diyebildiği. O anlamda varlığını sürdürecektir. Şimdi şöyle diyeyim, size şimdi siz bir mastır yapıyorsunuz. Alevi toplumunu inceliyorsunuz. Nereye gidiyorsunuz? Cemevlerine, Alevi derneklerine gidiyorsunuz. Yani sonuçta bu toplumu orada bulabileceğinizi biliyorsunuz." Interviewed by the author, on February 15, 2004.

congregational halls for the realization of cem ceremonies. Heller has noted that being home provides us with a "firm position which we know, to which we are accustomed, where we feel safe and our emotional relationships are the most intense" (quoted in Morley, 2000, p. 24). McDowell (1997) joins Heller in arguing that the term home "ideally is associated with safety, with familiar and protective boundaries, with the family, the exclusion of unwanted others, with privacy, a haven in a heartless world" (p. 6).

Organizing cem ceremonies in one's home within a more intimate and private atmosphere by bringing together the members of the family, relatives and neighbors can not be maintained in the institutional space of cemevis. Therefore, one of the most important problems cemevis have regarding cem ceremonies has to do with intimacy and homeliness. It is my contention that the diminishing number of attendance numbers at cems after the initial years of "thirst," has to do with the absence of this feeling of homeliness.

In the rural communities, every village used to be a cosmos in itself, closed to not only Sunnis, but to the other "Alevis" as well. Cems were open to only those who were the followers of a particular dede. There are communities maintaining this practice, at least for the görgü cemis (Aydın, 2003). Moreover, different regions have different traditions and cem liturgies differ not only on the basis of different regions, but on the basis of the traditions different dedes from different ocaks have carried on until the present. In urban cems, attended by Alevis who have different experiences of and hence expectations from cem ceremonies, there occur problems.

People who have attended to cem ceremonies in their villages and are used to a certain form of cem liturgy are often disturbed and sometimes alienated from cems totally due to the incompatibility between different cems they attend in cemevis. In

Alibeyköy, Hüseyin, a Turkish Alevi man from Tokat told me of his dislike of a Kurdish dede, "He was a Kurdish dede. The man talks, he says something, [but] you do not understand anything. A tall, dirty, thin man…he was from Erzurum."[57] It was striking to see this man, who presented himself as a very devoted Alevi who attended cems regularly, and contributed money to cemevi constructions, make such harsh remarks about a dede, whom I expected him to revere.

An old woman from Tokat, Fatma described, in a teasing manner, how strange she found the behavior of another Alevi woman during a cem they had attended together: "A woman from Erzurum beat me up. I was sitting [during the cem]. We do the *muhabbet* [cem] calmly. We don't cry 'Hü! Hü!' We do the muhabbet from inside [silently]. The woman told me, 'Why do not you say Hü? Say Hüseyin, why do not you cry?' She hit my back, and it hurt very much."[58]

Note that both the lady and man from Tokat called the dede and woman from Erzurum "man" (*adam*) and "woman" (*kadın*) rather than approaching them as "dede" and "*bacı*" (sister), not allowing these "Alevis" from different backgrounds into their imaginary of an Alevi community.

An even more serious problem in these urban cems, where anyone who wants to observe the ceremony is admitted, is that it is not possible to tell whether the other participants are Alevi or not at all. Under these circumstances, cem*s* turn into sites where encounters with other Alevis, whom I call *intimate strangers,* suspicious "brothers and sisters" occur. As Erdemir (2004) notes:

> In urban cemevis it was no longer possible to recreate the exclusivity of or the social intimacy one would find in village

[57] "Kürt dedesiymiş. Adam konuşuyor, bir şeyler diyor, anlamıyorsun. Uzun boylu, kirli zayıf bir adam…Erzurumluymuş." Interviewed by the author, on June 16, 2004.

[58] "*Erzurumlu bir kadın beni dövdü. Oturuyordum. Biz muhabbeti ağır ağır ederiz, öyle bağırmayız 'Hü! Hü!' diye. Biz muhabbeti içten ederiz. Kadın bana dedi ki 'Niye, Hü desene, ya Hüseyin desene, ağlasana!' Sırtıma vurdu, canım çok yandı.*" Interviewed by the author, on July 23, 2004.

> ceremonies. The anonymity of crowd in cities transformed Alevi worship from an intimate gathering with family, relatives and fellow villagers, into a crowded ceremony with suspicious strangers (p. 40).

For this reason there are Alevi villages that are still attached to their own dedes and exclude outsiders including *intimate* strangers from their cem ceremonies. There are families that prefer to have the cems in their houses with people they *know*, and there are many villages that either decline to use cemevis for their cems, preferring to hire salons or use their village association buildings for organizing cems. In some cases, villagers use the cemevis for their village cems and bring their own dede rather than attending cems under the dede of the cemevi.

Cem Ceremonies and Representing Aleviness

The cemevis have attained a significant role as schools where the proper representations of Alevism are to be produced and transmitted. Consequently, cem ceremonies have come to stand for performances where the "modern, humanist, peaceful" aspects of Aleviness are to be reiterated constantly in the presence of the "others," Sunnis (the significant others) and the Westerners (to demonstrate how modern Alevis are and Sunnis not). Allowing "strangers" in cems is seen as an opportunity to prove that prejudices about Alevi rituals are wrong and that Alevis are as moral as everyone else.

With the opening of Alevi communities to the outside world, cem ceremonies also have attained a new role in terms of representation of 'proper/true Alevism[s].' As Dertli Divani, a famous dede minstrel told to the crowd gathered in Şahkulu Lodge during a cem ceremony I attended, "These are not real but educational cems."

The metaphor of education is important here in demonstrating the fact that the intention not only is to reach the non-Alevis in order to fight the prejudices about Alevis -hence the transformation of the cems from the sphere of secret aura to public spectacle-, but also to educate "ignorant" Alevis about Alevism. The first targets of these cem ceremonies are those Alevis who are in "need of learn about *their own* belief, their culture," especially the youth. Second comes the Sunnis who are "full of prejudices against Alevis," and then the rest of the world "that can benefit from the humanist, tolerant, universal culture of Alevis." In this sense, cemevis function as what I call *spaces of daring* targeting Sunnis. An important motivation behind opening cemevis is to fix the wrong-representations of Alevis in the eyes of Sunnis. Sunnis are invited to come and see that Alevis are only "worshipping," that is, they are morally equal to Sunnis.

In this way, the cemevi becomes a platform upon which different ideals and projections of Alevism are performed. ABF Representative Ali Kenanoğlu told me what happened in a cem when Mustafa Sarıgül, the mayor of Şişli, who gave strong support to the Okmeydanı Cemevi, was attending the cem: "Our çerağcı read the *çerağ* (candle) prayer. Then he recited a prayer in Arabic so that Mustafa Sarıgül would not say, these [people] are not Muslim."

As Alevis have become more visible and attracted more and more attention from academic and political circles and tourists, cemevis have also recently started to be included in what can be called the cultural mapping of Istanbul. The cem ceremonies increasingly are being visited and recorded by international researchers, documentary makers and film producers. One such occasion was the cem ceremony I attended at Şahkulu Lodge on August 22, 2004. El-Cezire TV was present and they recorded the ceremony. When I inquired about their project, the TV crew told me

that they were making a documentary called "Istanbul, city of one thousand faces." This incident is significant in that that Alevis are counted among "one thousand faces" of Istanbul and cemevis are recognized as *the* location where Alevis can be found. Ten years ago, a documentary including Alevis as part of Istanbul's cultural landscape would not even have been conceivable.

Second, I would like to describe an interesting case that took place at the Okmeydanı Cemevi. When I was participating in a cem ceremony last summer, I found out that I was not the only one who was there to observe the cem. Ali, a young textile engineer and his friend Zeynep, a Sunni businesswoman, were there to "watch" the ceremony. Ali told me that he was an atheist, but since for Alevis being an atheist does not preclude the possibilities for appropriating their Aleviness (as culture or ethnic identity passing from parents) he had brought his friend to the cemevi. Zeynep, a secularist young lady with obvious sympathies for Alevis was very annoyed to see that the majority of the women in the cemevi had covered their heads. She turned to me and said, "Why are they wearing head covers (*baş örtüsü*)? They should come here as they are (*oldukları gibi*)."[59]

Zeynep was surprised due to her lack of unmediated contact with Alevi women. This prevented her from seeing that some –and especially middle aged and older– Alevi women cover their heads not only during cems but also in their everyday lives, even though not in the same way the Sunni women do. Reflecting her imaginary of secular modern female identity on Alevi women, she did not believe that these women in the cemevi were actually behaving as they would normally. The headcover was a sign of backwardness and since Alevis were "progressivists," Alevi women should not have worn headscarves.

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[59] "*Neden baş örtüsü takıyorlar? Oldukları gibi gelsinler*."

Funerals are of special significance in the representation of Alevism in cities for similar reasons. They are much more public than cems, since it does not require special effort to *see* the funeral services. The funerals are held outside, in the backyard, or the basement floor of cemevis. Anyone passing by can observe them. For this reason, funeral ceremonies put Alevis under the gaze of Sunnis more than cems do. Consequently, the language and the content of funeral prayers as well as the practices and costume of hocas have become a site of struggle for defining the difference between Alevi and Sunni communities.

Since funerals take place under the gaze of, and often with the participation of Sunnis, dedes and hocas are under a lot of pressure to be *competent* enough so that their *performance*s do not cause embarrassment. As Ali Rıza Uğurlu, the director of the Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services says:

> The real embarrassment (*mahcubiyet*) is the one that is in the eyes of my own society, it is the embarrassment I have in front of you. Now, you have the chance of comparison, you have gone to a mosque and seen the funeral prayer and then came here. You saw this [the funeral ceremony here], and said "Dede you have ruined me (*Dede beni mahvettin!*)." When you say this and when I get embarrassed, when you get embarrassed because of the level of [dede's] knowledge, even if you bring your funeral [to the cemevi] you will escape from there, or you do not bring it [your funeral to the cemevi anymore], or you do not bring people who believe in other faiths in order not to be embarrassed.[60]

Funerals and hocas are a salient boundary marker between Alevis and Sunnis. Consequently, hocas are under pressure from the congregation to not offend the Sunnis who attend funeral ceremonies. The hoca of Sarıgazi Cemevi told me, that "One day I was going to attend a funeral prayer. Someone from the family of the

[60] "*Kendi toplumuma, sana karşı mahcup oluyorsam bu mahcubiyettir. İşte yani senin kıyaslama özelliğin de var, camiye gittin, cenaze namazını gördün, buraya geldin. Bunu gördün, "Dede sen beni mahvettin" dediğin an, benim de utanır hale geldiğim, bilgi düzeyinden dolayı mahcubiyet haline girdiğin an, cenazeni getirsen de oradan kaçarsın; veya getirmezsin; veya başka toplumlardan başka inançlardan insanlar getirmezsin mahcup olmayasın diye*." Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

deceased came to me and said, 'Please Hoca, we have many of our Sunni neighbors with us.'"[61]

This example points to the negotiation of difference in city circumstances. There is a will to get recognition for difference, but it is accompanied by a great care to stress similarities as well. The man warned the hoca to watch what he was going to say because of an anxiety not to alienate his Sunni neighbors, at a juncture the relationship between Alevis and Islam was problematized and rejected by some Alevi organizations.

Towards an Alevi Religiosity?

Fenn offers to "think of religion as a way of tying together multiple experiences and memories of the sacred into a single system of belief and practices. (2003, p. 6). What we have seen so far in terms of the restructuring of Alevi beliefs and practices points to a process through which Alevism emerges as religion. Constructing Aleviness as religion serves to exclude it from the realm of the everyday and give it a designated place in the secularist dichotomy of the sacred vs. profane. In the process, cems become something external to everyday life with careful boundaries based on time and space limits. Accordingly, attending cems becomes an issue of personal choice and requires deliberate effort, creating what can be called an Alevi religiosity.

While the secularist Alevis tend to appropriate Alevism as a culture, the restructuring of Alevi practices points to a process that leads to the emergence of a "religion" of Alevism as diverse Alevi beliefs and practices that have been defined,

[61] "*Bir gün cenaze namazı kaldıracaktım. Cenaze sahibi gelip, 'Aman hocam, çok Sünni komşumuz var' dedi*." Interviewed by the author, on July 24, 2004.

codified, standardized, and fixed by institutionalized centers. First, whereas previously Aleviness was experienced through group practices, it has now become an individual matter. And individuals can shift their alliances and seek new belongingness through associating with groups other than those they inherited. In this regard cemevis, on the one hand, draw our attention to the concentration and territorialization of Alevism, and its dissemination, on the other.

Second, as practice and belief become separated, some Alevis opt for learning the "the philosophy" of Aleviness, and consequently there emerges a "belief without practice, religiosity without practicing," that is articulated by an absence of "the feeling" in the face of Alevi practices. Alevism is reformulated as religion [not as a religion] and was ascribed a place in the secular model, a marginal one.

CHAPTER 3

CEMEVİS VERSUS MOSQUES: ALEVIST POLITICS OF PLACE

Indeed if we had brought the poor children of our country together, at a place of worship, we would have seen that they do not have a common "altar and pulpit."

Baha Said Bey, *Memleket*, 1919

Keith and Pile (1993) argue that "space cannot be dealt with as if it were merely a passive arena on which things happen," but it is implicated in the production and the articulation of identities (p. 2). In this sense, there is a congruity between "identity politics of place" and the spatialized politics of identity" (ibid., p. 2). As a result, Nagar and Leitner (1998) conclude, "identity politics become identity politics of place" (p. 230). This chapter aims to bring the issues related to power, empowerment, relations of domination and subordination as well as struggles and contestations revolving around the discourses, strategies, actors and practices that take part in the construction and reproduction of cemevis afore.

There are several social and political actors contesting the ongoing process of the construction of cemevis in Turkey. The most significant of these can be summarized as follows: The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA), municipalities, political groups, Alevi intellectuals, media, and various Alevi organizations. Cemevis are constructed and shaped, negated and contested, negotiated and incorporated into

the public sphere/space through the interactions between these actors. The discursive and non-discursive practices of these actors, their strategies to define, contest and negate cemevis set the content of public debate and determine the limits of public imaginary on cemevis.

Massey (1994) argues that "multiplicity of place-identities, held by different groups, cannot always happily coexist…Which meaning of a place will be hegemonic is always being negotiated, and it is in that sense always subject of power and politics" (p. 119). The contested meaning of cemevis by and large revolves around defining them either as places of worship or culture centers. Therefore, in this chapter I look at the Alevist politics of place in Turkey for the recognition of cemevis as Alevi places of worship, with equal legal rights and privileges as mosques, mescits, synagogues and churches. To this end, I focus on the claims making processes with respect to cemevis by Alevi organizations by examining the numerous and diverse meanings attributed to cemevis either as "places of worship" or "culture centers" together with the discourses that underlie such claims. I first discuss the discursive strategies and practices of Alevi groups in order to construct and represent cemevis as legitimate places of worship, and then look at the reaction of the DRA that persistently defines cemevis as culture centers where a folkloric Alevi identity can be preserved.

However, a warning is in order first: there is no a clear cut distinction between the two positions. The categories of culture center and place of worship are used simultaneously by the same groups and individuals at different instances and in various contexts. The ambiguity of the status is fought vehemently on legal grounds, but this twofold definition concomitantly enables groups with different agendas and projections to appropriate cemevis simultaneously. The result is a plethora of

meanings and uses attributed to cemevis, enabling a number of strategies of legitimacy.

Defining Cemevis: Culture Centers or Places of Worship?

It is first necessary to look at the context within which the category of place of worship is defined. Doing so entails looking at the *place* of religion, its limits and designated role in Turkey. Contrary to the general idea, Islam was not excluded from all spheres of life during the single-party era. The founding fathers of the republic retained certain aspects of Islamic 'frames of reference' in order to reach the majority of the citizens. The attempt to replace the Islamic umma (*ümmet)* with a secular nationalist identity involved the maintenance of the control of the state over religion as religious life was envisioned to be transformed into the private, personal sphere. Hence the establishment of the DRA as soon as the caliphate was abolished:[62]

> Since the republican revolution of 1923, Islam in Turkey has been redefined…religious expression came under strict government supervision and control…Turkish Islam in effect became more standardized, circumscribed and compartmentalized, while republican ideology and associated institutions came to dominate much of everyday life. (Tapper, 1991, p. 2)

Yet Republican ideology drew certain symbols, themes and ethical principals from Islamic discourse so that "secular acts are identified as being religiously desirable and they gain an aura of religious legitimacy…Turkish state, while not viewing religion as giving direction to its politics and actions, continues to treat it as a resource which may be mobilized for 'purposes of state' whenever it is found useful

[62] However, compared to the prestige and influence of the institution of *şeyhülislamlık*, that followed the office of *sadrazam* (grand vizier) in rank in the Ottoman organization, the Directorate of Religious Affairs had much more of a limited influence as it operates as a sub-office of Prime Ministry and has no direct influence and authority in issues pertaining to education, pious foundation or religious education (Kara, 1998, 81-82)

or necessary" (Turan, 1991, p. 42). Aktay (1999) notes that the republican elite opted for the long institutionalized and well organized Hanefi branch of Sunni Islam that they had inherited from the Ottomans as the proper religion for Turkish citizens rather than approaching the Alevis. The "lack" of codified, centralized religion and religious organization disadvantaged the Alevi communities in the face of Sunni Islam with long established position within the state structure and already existing class of religious scholars. Accordingly, throughout republican history, mosques and mescits enjoyed state support, were provided with treasury land for construction, but in turn were kept under control by the state,. The state trained and provided imams for the mosques and allocated funds for the maintenance expenses. Until very recently the electricity and water used at places of worship were –hence at mosques and mescits- free.

The ongoing process of making cemevis possible has not been a smooth one. Especially during the first years of their emergence cemevis encountered bureaucratic and legal opposition from various state agencies such as the courts, police and municipalities due to the monolithic and unitary structure of secular nationalism in Turkey. In the early 1990s, cemevi constructions were often initiated illegally and they have gradually become established as "culture centers," the only viable legal status. Currently cemevis can acquire construction licenses and operate as only the locales, headquarters and culture centers belonging to non-profit Alevi organizations –associations and foundations.

The legal obstacles for establishing cemevis as places of worships are grounded in Law #677, with reference to which Sufi lodges, convents and shrines were closed down in 1925. The law rendered "mosque and mescits" as the only legitimate places of worship (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2001, p. 42). Village Law #442

defined the village as "formed by people in possession of common properties such as a mosque, school pasture, plain, [and] swamp" (ibid., p. 44). Law #6785, which was later to become Law #31949, also refers to mosque and mescits as the only places of worship that should be taken into consideration in urban restructuring plans.

This law was changed in accordance with the EU Integration process in 2002 and the statement "mosque" was replaced with "place of worship." Realizing the opportunities provided by the new law, Alevi organizations started to press for attaining the status of places of worship for cemevis. Since 2002, continuous applications have been made by Alevi associations and foundations for the allocation of treasury land and financial support for the construction of cemevis. Petitions were presented to either *kaymakamlık* (administraration of districts) or municipality of a district for the allocation of lands in several cases (in Kartal, Çankaya and Sultanbeyli). Each time the petitions were directed to the Directorate of Religious Affairs for defining the legal status of cemevis, and since the Directorate does not recognize any place of worship other than mosques for "all Muslims," the applications have been rejected (Yıldırım, 2005). Such attempts also have been thwarted by a "clarification the same year" made by the parliament, which set the content of the category "place of worship" as "mosque, mescit, church and synagogue," still excluding cemevis from legal recognition (Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı, 2004, 358).

Due to the reasons outlined above, cemevis legally can be established as "culture centers" and can not enjoy the same privileges as mosques, nor can they receive financial support from the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The limited financial support comes either in the form of selling/hiring of construction land by the municipalities at low prices or financial support via the Ministry of Culture. The last

four years have been a period in which the Alevi organizations have challenged this *status quo* and attempted to have cemevis accepted as legitimate places of worship.

Watson (2002) suggests conceptualizing the state "as a set of arenas" rather than a unified structure (p. 52). She maintains that "seeing interests as discursively constructed and constituted in interaction within and between the arenas of the state, rather than as fixed and defined in advance" enables us to avoid "the traps associated with seeing the state as a fixed entity" (ibid., p. 52). For this reason, although while the construction of some cemevis have witnessed police raids, there have been legal problems and clashes with the municipalities, some others received state support. CEM Foundation and Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolia Culture Foundation received money from the government in order to build their "foundation centers" (*vakıf merkezi*) which were commonly referred to as cemevis in the mid 1990s. The opening of the "culture palace" of the Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolia Culture Foundation was made by the president Süleyman Demirel. However, in both cases the financial support came from "ö*rtülü ödenek*,"[63] rather than the "legal" means of support. This, furthered to the ambivalent position of the state towards cemevis.

The financial aid Alevist organizations received from the state was construed by some the pro-Islamic groups as a threat to their existence, "so-called Alevi organizations become plump and healthy (*palazlanıyorlar*) with state support," wrote the pro-Islamic *Akit* Newspaper (*Akit*, May 19, 1998, cited in Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2001). This reaction had to do with the post-1998[64] rapprochement of the secularist wing of the state with some Alevi organizations. Generals who had forced the *Refah-Yol*

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[63] This is a state fund that was under the use of prime minister but is not part of the parliamentary budget.

[64] In 1998, the Islamist Welfare Party was forced to withdrawn from the coalition government by the military and was later shut down by the Constitutional Court.

(Welfare and True Path Parties) coalition to resign were called "Alevi generals." It was not the only Islamists who were having problems with the support given to some of the Alevist organizations. Receiving financial support from the government also created suspicion among Alevi circles. It was often argued that the state was trying to create 'its own Alevis' by means of privileging certain organizations, especially in the case of the CEM Foundation.[65]

Alevi non-profit organizations were started to be established after the ban on associations was lifted in 1989 (Subaşı, 2001). These organizations bore the name of Alevi saints as well as the names of villages and towns of origin. Cemevis were started to be established from the early 1990s on. During the first years of cemevi construction the priority was to make cemevis accepted as culture centers. Several associations were sued and were shut down because they included the names of "Alevi, cem" and "cemevi" in their statutes (*tüzük*) (Şahhüseyinoğlu, 2001). It was only after Supreme Court of Appeals lifted the ban on using such titles in 2000 the words "cem" and "cemevi" could be used in the names and statutes of Alevi association and foundations (Yıldırım, 2005).

In its initial phases Alevist mobilization leaned towards the establishment of associations, but there has been a trend towards associations. The vice-chair of the *Anadolu Bilim Kültür Vakfı* (Anatolia Science and Culture Foundation) that operated the Ihlamurkuyu Cemevi, Zeyşan Kiraz explained their motive to opt for establishing a foundation as:

> First there was an association. Then we established the foundation, because the associations were functioning under the police law. It was a bit difficult to work with the associations, but things were

[65] This has been often used against İzzettin Doğan's CEM Foundation for receiving money from Tansu Çiller, the rightist leader of *Doğruyol Partisi* (True Path Party). See Özcivan, 2004.

> getting easier when you established a foundation, [since] that was giving you the chance of organizing broader activities.[66]

In these first years, the difference between the various Alevi organizations with different political agendas and the cemevis were quite ambiguous. The fact that cemevis were also the locales of Alevi organizations posed problems, since some of the Alevi organizations were controlled by leftist groups in the early 1990s. These groups were there to channel the mass upheaval created by the Sivas Massacre (1993) into leftist mobilization. The director of the Adana branch of the Pir Sutan Abdal Culture Association (PSACA), Ali Rıza Aydın witnessed such attempts by a socialist party to take over the association, which ended up in failure:

> In Adana the branches of the PSACA were established in 1993. This happened partly due to the Sivas Massacre. Before, there were Hacı Bektaş Associations and so on in Anatolia. I was there from its [association's] inception in Adana. Some of our leftist friends established [the association] with the concern of "can we organize the people who would come here." People from the Labor Party (*İşçi Partisi*) established it. Later on, they realized that it was not working out as they expected and left the association.[67]

Due to the persisting ties between leftist organizations and many Alevi associations, the cemevis initially appeared in the public sphere due to their association with leftist groups. This image was compounded by the funerals of the members of legal and illegal Marxist organizations. Some of these funerals belonged to guerillas that were killed in armed conflicts with the state forces, but the majority of the funerals were organized for political prisoners and their supporters outside,

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[66] "*Dernek vardı önceden. Sonradan vakfi kurduk, çünkü dernekler o dönem polis yasasına falan tabiydi. Derneklerle çalışmak biraz zordu, ama vakıf olduğu zaman işimiz biraz daha kolay oluyordu, biraz daha geniş çaplı çalışmalar yapabiliyordunuz*." Interviewed by the author, on March 24, 2005.

[67] "*Adana da 1993'te kuruldu, Anadolu'da Pir Sultan Abdal Dernekleri'nin kuruluşu biraz da Sivas katliamından sonra oldu. Adana'da ondan sonra kuruldu, ondan önce Hacı Bektaş dernekleri falan vardı. Adana da kurulduğunda ben başından itibaren oldum. Biraz böyle sol eğilimli arkadaşlarımız 'oraya gelecek kitleyi örgütler miyiz' gibi bir kaygıyla kurmuşlardı, İşçi Partililer kurdular önceleri. Ondan sonra baktılar ki olmuyor, terk ettiler derneği*." Interviewed by the author, on July 1, 2004.

who died during the hunger strikes against the reorganization of the prison system. Some of the associations established by Alevis organizations gave their support and allowed their locales to be used for hunger strikes. Especially the Gazi and Küçük Armutlu Cemevis located in neighborhoods hosting strong Marxist groups were subject to such influence. The label "terrorist" was used conspicuously to refer to all the deceased or killed leftist activists, and their presence and funerals in cemevis were reflected in the cemevis: they were described as "nests of terror" (*terör yuvaları*) by the state representatives and conservatives, Sunnis and Alevis alike. Also at some Alevi organizations, such as the Alibeyköy branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association the police found weapons, and that also put the image of cemevis next to "terrorists" (Üzüm, 1999). The police raids were often also due to the clashes with the municipalities because of the "invasion" of treasury land.

In 1996, the Alibeyköy Cemevi was at the center of conflict for such reasons. Gazi Aslan, then a board member of the Alibeyköy Cemevi, remembered those days in the following manner:

> G. A: For instance, one of the contradictions we experienced back then was the organization of a funeral service for someone who had died during the hunger strikes. There was a feeling of unease with people living in the area. Of course [since then] this has also been experienced in many other cemevis, but we experienced these troubles for the first time, since we were the first cemevi [that had such troubles].
> M. E: But the funeral took place, right?
> G. A: Yes, it did. This was our duty, that is, we could not have anything [against] the providing of services to anybody who came there. However, there were [problems] due to the inability to accept on the side of the people living in the region, or as I said before, because of some amateurship…
> M. E: For instance, what was their [people's] objection about?
> G. A: Their objection, people living in the area were already put under a lot of pressure. That is, a lot of soldiers came as a result of the funeral, that day even we were not able to enter the association. I mean, you perhaps know that Metin Göktepe[68] incident is also

[68] Metin Göktepe was a reporter of pro-Left *Evrensel* Newspaper. He had come to Alibeyköy to observe the funeral. He was arrested by the police together with other several hundreds of people and

related to that. A friend who was arrested there, I mean, the area was under a great blockade, all the people…
M. E: Did the murder of Metin Göktepe take place around the Alibeyköy Cemevi?
G. A: Metin Göktepe was taken from there. The area was blocked because of the funeral, a lot of people were arrested and that day even we [administrators of the association] were not allowed to enter the association.
G. A: It was closed. Was the corpse already inside?
M. E: No, the funeral was going to come here [to the area].
G. A: The funeral was going to come, but the soldiers came and surrounded areas and did not let anyone in, right?
M. E: The soldier came. There was an immense mob of cops (*polis yığılması*). Meanwhile, everyone was naturally disturbed in this strained atmosphere. People living in the area were very disturbed. Some people used this in negative ways.
M. E: How?
G. A: They influenced the people (*yönlendirdiler*). There were those who made anti-propaganda such as "See, this is a place for terrorists (*burası teröristlerin yeri*), in cemevi there can only be worship, these [people in the association] are engaged in terrorist activities."[69]

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put into Eyüp Sports Salon. There he was beaten to death by police officer and this incident was later publicized and gained symbolic importance with regard to the freedom of press in Turkey. See, http//www.metingoktepe.net.

[69] "*G. A: Mesela o dönem yaşadığımız çelişkilerden biri, açlık grevlerinde ölenlerden bir cenazesinin oradan kalkması. Bölge insanlarında bir tedirginlik oldu. Tabii bu bizimle birlikte bir çok cemevinde yaşandı, ama Alibeyköy ilk olmasından biraz da bu sancıları ilk çeken yer oldu.*
M. E: Kalktı ama cenaze öyle mi?
Tabii, cenaze kalktı. Bu bizim görevimizdi, yani cemevine gelen herkese hizmet verme noktasında şeyimiz olamazdı. Ama bölge insanlarında işte kabullenememe ya da söylediğim gibi bir takım acemiliklerden kaynaklı…
M. E: Mesela onların itirazı neydi?
G. A: Onların itirazı, bölge halkı zaten büyük ölçüde baskı altına alındı. Şöyle ki, cenazeyle birlikte bir sürü asker geldi, biz dahi derneğe giremez olduk o gün. Yani ki artık Metin Göktepe şeyi de o olayla ilişkilidir, biliyorsunuz. Orda alınan bir gazeteci arkadaş, yani bölge müthiş bir şekilde ablukaya alındı, bütün insanlar…
M. E: Metin Göktepe cinayeti Alibeyköy Cemevi civarında mı oldu?
G. A: O olaydan alınarak götürüldü Metin Göktepe. Bölge abluka altına alındı cenazeden dolayı, o sırada pek çok insan gözaltına alındı ve bizler dernek yöneticisi olduğumuz halde derneğe giremedik.
M. E: Kapatıldı. Cenaze içeride miydi o sıra?
G. A: Yok, cenaze buraya gelecekti.
M. E: Cenaze gelecekti ve asker gelip etrafı çevirip kimseyi sokmadı cemevine, öyle mi?
G. A: Asker geldi. Yukarılardan itibaren müthiş polis yığılması yaşandı. O arada tabii insanlar gergin bir ortam içerisinde rahatsız oldular. Bölge halkı büyük ölçüde rahatsız oldu. Bir takım insanlar bunu olumsuz anlamıyla kullandılar.
M. E: Nasıl?
G. A: Yönlendirdiler ya, işte burada teröristlerin yeri, cemevi sadece ibadet olur, bunlar çeşitli terörist şeylerde bulunuyorlar, gibi anti propaganda yapanlar oldu." Interviewed by the author, on January 23, 2004.

On August 31, 1996 the representatives of fifteen cemevis[70] gathered at the headquarters of the CEM Foundation in Yenibosna and discussed the "attainment of legal status for the cemevis."[71] The main issues that were discussed were institutionalization, position of dedes, the unification of practices, and the administrative organization of cemevis. However the most important debates revolved around "the fallacious" (*yanlış*) image of cemevis. Some of the points reached by and signed by the representatives of eight of these cemevis[72] referred to the relationships with the state and how to fight the negative image of cemevis were:

> Officially recognized Alevism should be presented to be public opinion.[73]
>
> The fact that the state conceives of Alevis as potential criminals makes Alevis sad (*Alevileri üzmektedir*). Everyone should know that Alevis are not potential criminals.[74]
>
> The attainment of legal status for cemevis should be researched by jurists and [this] should be concluded as soon as possible.[75]
>
> Alevis should immediately unite in order to rid themselves of their dispersed image. It is our foremost task to undo the image [of Alevis] as people who oppose the state and the regime (*devlete ve düzene karşı gelen*) and who fight the police on the streets; to work

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[70] These were Anadolu Görgü ve Kültür Derneği Cemevi, Yagup Derviş Cemevi, Garip Dede Türbesi Yaşatma Ve Koruma Derneği Cemevi, Alibeyköy Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği Cemevi, Kağıthane Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür Derneği, Nurtepe Cemevi, Karacaahmet Sultan Dergahı Cemevi, Sarıgazi Cemevi, Firüzköy Görgü Ve Kültür Derneği, Cemevi, Okmeydanı Hacıbektaş Veli Cemevi, İkitelli Hacı Bektaş Veli Dergahı Cemevi, Tuzla Aydınlıkköy Cemevi, Pendik Esenyol Cemevi, Gazi Mahallesi Cemevi, Bağcılar Cemevi, and Kartal Cemevi.

[71] I attained a copy of the transcriptions of this meeting from the library of CEM Foundation. See the Appendix 1.

[72] The absent signatures on the document are indicative of the emerging fractions between different groups in the early phases of cemevi construction. Rival institutions to CEM foundation, Şahkulu Sultan Shrine and Alibeyköy Cemevi administrators did not sign the document.

[73] "*Yasal güvenceye kavuşturulmuş Aleviliğin kamuoyuna ilanı gerekmektedir*."

[74] "*Devletin Alevileri potansiyel suçlu olarak görmesi Alevileri üzmektedir. Alevilerin potansiyel suçlu olmadığı herkes tarafından bilinmelidir*."

[75] "*Cem evlerinin resmiyet kazanması, hukukçular tarafından inceletilmeli bir an önce sonuca varılmalıdır*."

> against the plot through which cemevis are postulated to be nests of terror (*terör yuvaları*); and to promote, explain and share our faith that is molded with love of humanity and based on tolerance.[76]
>
> It is our duty to act with the consciousness that 'our unity and togetherness that are necessary for attaining our deserved space in the state and to be represented is the source of our power' and to do the necessary things to have our faith put under legal protection."[77]

Due to the reasons mentioned above, some cemevis have developed complex methods of dealing with conflicting forces that claim the allegiance of cemevis for funerals as in the case of the Okmeydanı Cemevi. Ali Yıldırım, the director of Okmeydanı Cemevi explained how they negotiated with both leftist groups and the police officers the position and the boundaries of cemevis with regard to funerals:

> A. Y: Now, this is a very delicate topic. In such cases, the administrator should grasp the issue very well. I mean, [such] funerals were organized, there were two funerals organized here. The funeral has to be organized, I have nothing against that. However everything should be organized under the supervision (*idare*) of the cemevi administration. It should not be the case that everyone does whatever s/he wants to. The police of the state should not think, "I will definitely surround the cemevi, the funeral will proceed in the shadow of guns," they should not do that. Such a problematic (*sorunlu*) funeral came here. We can not say "We do not accept the funeral," then we would attract protests (*tepki*). The police also did that, "Do not take the funeral." There were demands via telephone asking "Why do you accept it?" The funeral [has to be] dealt with, I will receive the funeral, and take care of it in accordance with our ways and customs. Neither you would be disturbed, nor would I be. We indeed did that. I invited the family here, "Look we will organize the funeral in Alevi style, in the way we desire it. We understand the marginal groups, and friends who support them. We respect them. However you also have to respect us. We [cemevi administration] have issued a

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[76] "*Alevilerin darmadağın görüntülerinden kurtulması için hızla birleşmeleri, devlete düzene karşı gelen, sokaklarda polisle çatışan insanlar imajını silmek, Cem evlerinin sanki terör yuvalarıymış gibi gösterilmek istenilmesindeki oyunu bozarak, insan sevgisi ile yoğrulmuş, hoşgörüyü esas almış inancımızı tanıtmak, anlatmak ve paylaşmak esas görevimizdir*."

[77]"*Devlette hak ettiğimiz yerimiz almak ve temsil edilebilmek için gerekli olan birlik ve beraberliğimiz, gücümüzün kaynağıdır bilinci ile hareket edip inancımızın yasal güvenceler altına alınmasını sağlamak için gerekli çalışmaları yapmak görevimizdir*."

decision against wrapping [the coffin] with flags and slogans[78] we do not allow such things. You should also respect us." We convinced them as well, 'Now, you distance from here, around 500 meters. Then you can wrap the coffin in flag, you can fight the police, you can do whatever you want, but we do not want such things [to take place] within the cemevi'. Then we told the police chiefs –they also came-, "Keep the police as far away from cemevis as possible," and they did that. [The funeral] proceeded without any problems. The press did not give any [negative] news on it. The press only mentioned that the funeral took place. That is, there was not any incident and so on. That is, the administrator has an important function here. [He] should be principled (*tavırlı*). I mean, it would not work out if he plays a double game (*ikili oynamak*).

M. E: Could you please explain what lies behind this attitude?

A. Y: Now, from the outside cemevis are regarded as a nest for terrorists (*terörist yuvası*) in the eyes of some circles…This is a culture center, there are cultural activities taking place here as well. There is only the [terrorist] image. As you see, there is this point of view, as if there is [only] cems taking place and terrorists are being supported (*terörist beslemek*) [at cemevis]. The press also reflects it this way generally, and we have to prove it otherwise."[79]

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[78] In such funerals it is often the case that the coffin is wrapped in the flag of the leftist organization, and slogans accompany the deceased to the grave.

[79] "*M. E: Şimdi bu çok hassas konu. Orda yani yöneticinin konuyu iyi kavraması lazım. Yani cenaze kalktı, bizim buradan iki tane cenaze kalktı. Cenazenin kalkması lazım, cenazenin kalkmasına karşı çıkmıyorum. Ama cemevinin yönetiminde idaresinde kalkması lazım. Herkesin kendi kafasına göre hareket etmemesi lazım. Devletin memuru polis 'illa ki ben cemevini saracağım, silahların gölgesinde cenaze kalkacak' bunu da yapmaması lazım. Öyle sorunlu bir cenaze geldi buraya. Cenazeyi almayız diyemeyiz, bize tepki verirler mesela. Polisten de geldi, 'cenazeyi almayın kardeşim.' 'Niye alıyorsunuz' diye telefonla talepler geldi. Cenaze kalkacak, cenazeyi ben alırım, bizim usulümüze adetimize göre ben kaldırtırım. Sen de rahatsız olmazsın, ben de rahatsız olmam. Yaptık da. Aileyi çağırdım ben buraya, 'kardeşim biz cenazemizi Alevi usulüne göre istediğimiz şekilde kaldıracağız. Marjinal gruplar, destekçi arkadaşları anlıyoruz, saygı duyuyoruz. Ama siz de bize saygı duymak zorundasınız. Slogan atmak, bayrak sarmak, bunlar cemevinde biz yönetim olarak kararımız var, biz böyle bir şey yaptırmıyoruz. Siz de bize saygılı olunuz.' Onları da ikna ettik, 'Ha buradan 500 metre gidiyorsunuz. Bayrak mı sarıyorsunuz, polisle mi çatıyorsunuz, ne yaparsanız yapın, ama cemevinde böyle bir şey istemiyoruz'. Polise de dedik ki, polis müdürlerine -onlarda geldiler, oturduk- dedik ki, 'Cemevinden olduğu kadar polisi uzak tutunuz'. Onlar da onu yaptılar. Sorunsuz kalktı. Basın da vermedi. Basın sadece cenazenin kalktığını verdi. Yani öyle bir kargaşa olay molay olmadı. Yani burada yöneticinin, idarecinin çok fonksiyonu var. Tavırlı olması lazım. İkili oynarsa olmaz yani.*
A. Y: Bu tavrın altında yatan nedir? Bunu biraz açarsanız? Böyle davranmanızın
M. E: Şimdi cemevlerinde sade bir böyle dışarıdan bakıldığı zaman bazı kesimlerin gözünde bir terörist yuvasıymış gibi. Burası bir kültür merkezi, kültürel etkinlikler de yapılıyor. Sadece o gözle bakılıyor. İşte cem yapılıyor, terörist besleniyor gibi bir bakış açısı var. Basın da böyle yansıtıyor çoğu zaman. Bunun böyle olmadığını kanıtlamak zorundayız." Interviewed by the author, on March 14, 2004.

Situating the image of the cemevis next to "illegal/terrorist activities" has been a strategy used conspicuously by the DRA and the conservative circles to diminish the viability of cemevis as places of worship as well as to ensure their separation from leftist groups. For instance, Abdülkadir Sezgin (1996), who was a DRA inspector with close ties to the ultranationalist *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (National Action Party) argued against the construction of cemevis on the grounds that "the whole objective" for establishing cemevis was "increasing the number of problems regarding the Alevi-Sunni issue with the illusionary purpose of dividing us internally after the PKK business" (p. 209). Sunni theologians Sofuoğlu and İlhan (1996), associated cemevis with illegal leftist activities in their study (very likely ordered and) published by the DRA. In their opinion, mosques are the locus of "national unity integration," whereas the cemevis host "illegal" and "divisive" (*bölücü*) activities. According to Sofuoğlu and İlhan, the objective behind the construction of cemevis is: "by means of having cemevis recognized as places of worship, and [then] using this prestige [stemming from the status of] place of worship in the eyes of the society in order to recruit political supporters and create centers for illegal organizations" (p. 128).

Yet, this image of cemevis as places under the influence of politics and illegal activities are reflected back at the DRA by Ali Kenanoğlu, Istanbul representative of the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation in the following words:

> M. E: Dou you rather contact the Ministry of Culture? I am trying to understand this. I think there are no relations with the Diyanet?
> A. K: We surely have nothing to do with the Diyanet. We do not recognize the Diyanet. [Accordingly] we do not want to address an organization we do not recognize. We do not accept the existence of the Diyanet. It might just stay there and can have one quadrillion budget. We are against the existence of such an organization. We believe that it harms the Republic of Turkey, that it is putting dynamites to the foundations of the republic. In southeast Anatolia, the mosques that were attached to the Diyanet were used as the reservoirs by Hizbullah. It is not us who are

> saying this, it was on the press. Cemalettin Kaplan,[80] "the black voice" from Germany went there at the first place as an official of the Diyanet. The Diyanet trains these people. These kinds of people come from the ranks of the Diyanet."[81]

Alevi intellectual Rıza Zelyut (1993) similarly has argued that there are parallels between the Umayyads' (*Emeviler*) use of mosques for "political purposes" and the situation in contemporary Turkey:

> In mosques, there are generally talks about politics, or religious servants (*din görevlileri*) bring the politics-related topics to the agenda. Different political and religious beliefs are insulted. Imams work not like religious servants, but like party members…Today, the reason for the mushrooming of mosques has nothing to do with the scarcity of places of worship. The newly opened mosques are political units, where reactionary-divisionists (*gerici-bölücü*) political ideas are blended, organized and disseminated (p. 148).

This way Zelyut reflects the accusation of engaging in politics made by the DRA back at mosques. The only difference is that as cemevis are attacked on the grounds that they are affiliated with "illegal leftist groups," mosques are associated with Islamist "reactionaries and divisionists." In both cases, there is a clear inclination towards aligning these centers with the political center, albeit with different emphases. DRA officials put the (Sunni) religion at the center of national unity, while Kenanoğlu and Zelyut allude to the neutralization of the religious sphere by the exclusion of Islamists from the state structure.

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[80] *Kaplancı*s are located in Germany. The movement considers its leader as the new caliph of the entire Muslim world. (Roy, 2004)

[81] "*M. E: Kültür bakanlığı ile ilgili mi daha çok ilişkiler? Ben onu anlamaya çalışıyorum. Diyanetle ilişki yok sanırım.*
A. K: Diyanetle kesinlikle bir ilişkimiz yok. Biz diyaneti tanımıyoruz. Tanımadığımız bir kurumu da muhatap kabul etmek istemiyoruz. Biz Diyanet'in varlığını kabul etmiyoruz. Kendisi orda durabilir, bir katrilyon bütçesi de olabilir, ama bizi temsil etmiyor. Biz böyle bir kurumun olmamasından yanayız. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne zarar verdiğini, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin temellerine dinamit koyduğuna inanıyoruz. Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesinde Hizbullah'ın depoları olarak Diyanet'e bağlı camiler kullanıldı. Bu basına yansıdı, biz bunu söylemiyoruz. Cemalettin Kaplan, Almanya'nın 'kara ses'i diyanetin bir görevlisi olarak Almanya'ya gitti. Bunları Diyanet yetiştiriyor. Diyanetin içerisinde bu tip insanlar yetişiyor." Interviewed by the author, on February 15, 2004.

Directorate of Religious Affairs, Cemevis and Mosques

Cemevi: the place where Alevis gather; mosque for Alevis.[82]

Ekşi Sözlük (Sour Dictionary)[83]

DRA was established in the 1924. Law #633 states that "Attached to the office of Prime Minister, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) is established in order to carry out the tasks related to Islamic beliefs and the foundations of worshipping and ethics in Islam; to enlighten the society with regard to the religion; and to administer the places of worship" (Hacı Bektaş Anadolu Kültür Vakfı, 2004, p. 352). As mentioned before, the Law #677 had banned the religious brotherhoods and their lodges and shrines, rendering mosques and mescits the only legitimate places of worship in Turkey for the entire Muslim population.

Since the directorate was designated as a state agency that held the authority over the maintenance of "place of worship" and the control and production of religious knowledge in Turkey, the claims of the Alevi organizations for legal recognition of cemevis had to go through the review of the DRA. Because it is the "duty" of the DRA to "enlighten the public about the proper Islam" it is understandable that the DRA functionaries have been trying to teach Alevis how to be 'good Muslims' for a long time. The opening of cemevis has problematized the position of mosques as the only legitimate places of worship and the DRA as the only institution that has control over religious affairs through the control and

[82] "*Cemevi, Alevilerin toplandığı yer, Alevi camisi*."

[83] *Ekşi Sözlük* is an online dictionary, in which definitions and reflections for numerous topics are written by the members of a forum. Available online at http:// www.sourtimes.org

administrations of places of worship. For this reason I will first look at the representation of Alevism and cemevis in the discourse of DRA, and then analyze the ways in which Alevist actors contest such strategies.

Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı (the Religious Affairs Foundation of Turkey), an institution established by and affiliated with the DRA published a book titled "Alevism Bektashism Debates" (*Alevilik Bektaşilik Tartışmaları*) in 1997 in order to take part in the public debate and perform the duty of the DRA as expressed in its foundational law , "to enlighten the citizen on religious matters." Written by two professors from the theology faculty of the Marmara University the book has a section called "The Issue of Cemevi." This section is worth quoting at length, since it illustrates quite well the approach of the DRA to Alevism and cemevis. The authors define cemevi as a "house of gathering" (*toplantı evi*). They define Alevism as religious order (*tarikat*) and argue that cemevis has no historical precedence. They argue that cem ceremonies can not be equal to namaz.

> The cem ceremony is similar to the *zikr* [tariqa] meeting in other religious orders. Its special characteristic has to do with the fact that it is only held in Turkey and abroad where there are Alevi Bektashi lodges. Another characteristic of this ceremony is that it is carried out with the use of *saz* and *kopuz* (Sofuoğlu and İlhan, 1997, p. 125).

Careful to categorize cems as "meeting" (*toplantı*) rather than "prayer" (*ibadet*), they argue that there has existed no specialized place for the realization of cems:

> There has not been an institutionalized place for the realization of these meetings [cems]. There have not been buildings under the name of "Cem house" until recent years. In places with less population, the ceremonies are generally held in a big room in the villages. Interchangeably this ceremony is held in the houses of leaders called "Baba" or "Dede," at the house of person who is being initiated into the order, as often the case in "*Dardan İndirme*" liturgy, at the house of the deceased person and this house is called "cemevi." That is, [cemevi] is a place of gathering. Even the village square can be used for this task in summer time.

> On the other hand places where the ceremonies are held are lodges together with mosques, *aşevi* (cookhouse), and other social institutions." (ibid., pp.124-125)

The authors present Alevists' claim to have cemevis recognized as places of worship as a threat to the national unity in Turkey:

> It is possible to list the reasons for the *insistence* to propose cemevis for the agenda in the following manner:
>
> Creating skepticism regarding the notion of a single place of worship by means of weakening the gathering (*toplayıcı*) and unifying (*bütünleştirici*) role of the Mosque, the only place of worship for all Muslims regardless of religious sect (*mezhep*) or order (*tarikat*) differences; weakening the greatest element of national unity and integrity (*milli birlik ve bütünlük*), the unity of religion by proposing the thesis that "Alevis do not go to mosques…
>
> It is not possible to understand and attribute good intentions to both seeing Alevism within Islam, and at the same time defending the thesis of [suggesting] cemevis as an alternative to the churches of Christians, the synagogues of Jews and the mosques of Sunnis.
>
> It is not possible to agree with this idea from the perspective of Alevism and Bektashism at the first place, because such an understanding postulates as if all Alevis and Bektashis are against mosques. However, according to history, science and the contemporary examples we know that Cemevi is not an alternative to the mosque. Cemevis are places where Alevi and Bektashis' private ceremonies that are not performed at mosques are held." (ibid., pp.125-6)

The authors' stance reifies a notion of "national unity" that is predicated not on constitutionally defined bonds of citizenship, but unity of religion. In their account, the most important constituent of Turkish identity is religion rather than language or ethnicity. This approach reflects the post-1980 trend to define the national identity on the basis of ethnicity (Turk) and religion (Sunni Muslim). Since the authors designate a unitary religious sphere that is exclusively based on this understanding of Islam,

their imaginary on national boundaries exclude not only those Alevis who oppose the mosques, but all Jewish and Christian citizens of Turkey.

Sofuoğlu and İlhan construe Alevism as a religious order, and this strategy enables them to define cemevis as the equivalent of dervish lodges (*dergah ve tekke*), and from this point they conclude that cemevis can not hold the same status as mosques. Equating cemevis with dervish lodges is used conspicuously in DRA reports on the legal viability of cemevis, since they are the continuation of the lodges and shrines closed down by the "laws of [Turkish] Revolution" (*devrim yasaları*) and cemevis can not be opened according to Law # 677. References to the "Turkish Revolution" are conscious efforts to make a claim to the legacy of the Republic to oppose Alevist claims to legal rights in the first place.

Mosques and Alevis

Everybody should know their place.[84]

Zeynep, 66, housewife, from Çorum

Minarets are the bayonets
The domes [of the mosques] are the helmets
The mosques are our barracks
The believers are the soldiers [85]

From the poem of Ziya Gökalp, read by R. Tayyip Erdoğan and causing his imprisonment

It was not surprising that a poem by the "national poet" (*milli şair*) Ziya Gökalp gained such an air of threat when it was read by the Welfare Party (*Refah*

[84] "*Herkes yerini bilsin*." Interviewed by the author, on August 3, 2004.

[85] "Minareler süngü/ Kubbeler miğfer/ Camiler kışlamız/ Müminler asker"

Partisi) mayor of Istanbul, because the immense rise in the number of mosques all over Turkey has been central to the Islamic resurgence in Turkey. There were 42,744 mosques in Turkey in 1971 (Çakır and Bozan, 2005, p. 29). The greatest rise in the number of new mosque constructions took place between 1981 and 1992, when the number rose from 47,645 to 68 202 (ibid., p. 29). The total number of mosques in Turkey was estimated to be 76,445 on January 1, 2005, and 64,951 of them were controlled by the DRA (ibid., p. 70).

As the establishment of cemevis in Turkey can not be explained solely on the grounds that Alevis need places of worship but carries symbolic value, the same holds true for the construction of mosques. In the Istanbul of the 1960s, mosques were at the center of Sunni networks of solidarity and integration. Duben (2002) argues for Çağlayan, a *gecekondu* (shantytown) area, that the Sunnis living in the neighborhood established associations and built mosques and "by this way integrated themselves to the rest of the Sunni population, and as a result created a greater sense of solidarity against Alevis" (p. 34). In his analysis of the competition between two monuments, the Kocatepe Mosque and the Atatürk Memorial Tomb in Ankara, Meeker (1997) observed that these "shrines" of Islamism and Kemalism "appear to be in relationship and challenge and response" (p. 157). He argues for the Kocatepe Mosque," This great place of worship" (*ulu mabet*), newly completed in 1987, was designed and built during a period of Islamic resurgence and was intended to stand as a monument to the place of religion in Turkish society" (ibid., p. 176).

The competition between the Kemalists and Islamists over the urban space often surfaces through the attempts to build mosques in the 'secular' core of the cities. Baykal (2000) has observed that attempts to build a mosque in Taksim Square first began in 1954 and continued until the late 1990s. The project of building a

"monumental mosque" in Taksim Square, she notes, has to do with the contestation of the identity of the square where "hegemonic definition of the place by the early-Republican state elite is being challenged" (p. 65). When the Welfare Party won the municipal elections of 1993 in Istanbul they pursued the construction of a monumental mosque in the square complete with a cultural center that was designed to "challenge the project of modernity. In this cultural center, there would be no room for 'immoral,' 'false arts' performances such as opera or ballet" (74).

Massey argues that "in the historical and geographical construction of places, the "other" in general terms is already within" (1994, p. 119). Yuval-Davis notes that "the identities are constructed historically and discursively and always in relation to other categories which themselves are subject to change" (1997, p. 10). In the case of Alevism, the most important category to relate is the category of "Sunni." As Alevis constituted "the other" for Sunnis, for Alevis too, and even more than as it was for Sunnis, the category of 'Sunni' constitutes the major point of reference for the exclusion and construction of otherness. The construction of the image of "the Sunnis" would tell us what Alevis think themselves of "not-to-be." In the case of cemevis, the negation of mosques would reveal a lot about what they signify for Alevis.

Starting from the gecekondu areas, the expansion of mosque constructions engendered feelings of encroachment not only for the secularists but Alevis as well.[86] The mosques constructed by Sunni immigrants in the city space throughout the last twenty years have provided the reactionary motivation as well as a model to be

[86] During my fieldwork in Alibeyköy, I often encountered remarks about how scarce the number of cemevis was compared to that of mosques. A housewife from Sivas told me that "One mosque has invaded the whole earth, it is doing whatever it wants. We also pay taxes, [but] we took these places [the land on which the cemevi was being built] only by force" (*Bir cami dünya yerini zaptetmiş, her istediğini yapıyor. Bizim de vergilerimiz gidiyor. O yerleri biz hep kendi zorumuzla aldık*). Interviewed by the author, on August 12, 2004.

emulated for the construction of cemevis. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the establishment of *Ankara Cemevleri Yaptırma Derneği* (the Association for Building Cemevi*s* in Ankara) in 1992, just the same as various associations established for building cemevis. Alevi civil engineer Niyazi Parlar, who took an active part in the restoration of the Şahkulu Shrine Complex, told me that,

> The first cemevi that was opened after the 1980s was this restoration project for the Şahkulu Sultan Shrine Complex. When this project was being shaped some people naturally appropriated it with different intentions. There were some honest (*samimi*) Alevi people who wanted to resolve this issue, and some other people with different agendas. There indeed were such people, [since] these movements always already develop in this manner. The difference from a mosque construction association is minimal. There even was a man who had worked at a mosque construction association until he realized that he was [actually an] Alevi. Then he worked for the cemevi construction and so on.[87]

The construction of cemevis is always compared and contrasted to that of mosques. For instance, since there is less public and private support, it takes longer to complete a cemevi. This is often a source embarrassment for cemevi administrations. One of the board members of the Okmeydanı Cemevi contrasted their cemevi to mosques in terms of this material aspect:

> We are establishing [this cemevi] with donations. We do not have any income from anywhere. We organize funerals and there are meals distributed here with the help of donations…But [if you] go to a mosque today, it gleams (*pırıl pırıl*). But you see this place [despite] it being one of the best cemevis. All cemevis are like haven (*cennet gibi*) as they are decorated with marble outside and mosaics inside. This place is a second, third quality construction compared to those [mosques] because it was built by means of

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[87] "Bu işte 80'lerden sonra ilk açılan cemevi Şahkulu külliyesi restorasyon projesidir. Bu iş şekillendiği zaman orada ki bir kısım insanlar, değişik amaçlarla tabii bu işlere sahip çıktılar. Bir takım samimi Alevi insanlar da, bu meseleyi çözmek isteyen insanlar da vardı, başka hedefi olan insanlar da olabilirdi. Vardı zaten, bu hareketler öyle oldu. Cami yaptırma derneği ile pek bir farkı olmaz. Hatta bir vatandaş vardı, önce cami yaptırma derneğinde çalışmış, sonra da Alevi olduğunu anlayınca cemevi yaptırmaya çalışmış falan." Interviewed by the author, on April 1, 2005

> collecting donations. We also would like our people to come and stay at a nicer place, be peaceful, relax spiritually.[88]

The chair of the Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services argued that a cemevi was equal to and/but is always *more* than a mosque. He contrasted the first mescit from the time of the prophet to the mosque, and laid a claim to the legacy of the prophet, implicitly challenging the Sunnis with sünnet:

> M. E: Is the mescit in religion also a culture center?
> A. R. U: Look, the mescit can be defined as a place where sports activities, meetings and all sorts of [other] activities were held. The prophet says 'The earth is my temple (*mabet*)'. God does not need a temple. If He needs a temple, that is the *ocak* of human beings and if mescit is defined on basis of these criteria then cemevis are the places that fit the definition of mescits…What is sacred is not the masses of beton (*beton yığınları*), but what is done inside [the particular building], the worshipping. If everything is done in accordance with the purpose [of worshipping] they [all places] are all sacred.
> M. E: Why not simply cem house, but cem culture house? What do you understand from the 'culture' here?
> A. R. U: We are building the culture here. Cemevi is not used only for a single purpose, it is not merely used as a place of worship… [Cemevis] have been functioning as an assembly (*meclis*) where the social and individual problems of Alevi society are resolved. At times cemevis have been an ocak of *sohbet* (chatting) and muhabbet, other times an education center, sometimes a cafeteria for the poor and at other times a house of friendship, brotherhood, unity and welfare (*birlik ve dirlik*). And they will remain like that in the future.[89]

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[88] "*Biz bağışlarla kuruyoruz. Bizim bir yerden gelirimiz yok. Cenazeleri kaldırıyoruz, bağışlarla burada yemekler veriliyor… Ama bugün git bir camiye, pırıl pırıl. Ama burayı görüyorsun. Belki burası cemevlerinin en iyilerinden bir tanesi. Camilerin hepsi dışarıdan mermer, içeriden mozaik kurulu, cennet gibi. Burası bağışlarla yapıldığı için onlara göre ikinci, üçüncü sınıf bir inşaat. Biz de isteriz ki insanlarımız gelip daha güzel yerde otursun, huzurlu olsun, ruhani olarak rahatlasın.*" Interviewed by the author, on May 16, 2004.

[89] "*M. E: Dindeki mescit de mi aynı zamanda bir kültür merkezidir?*
A. R. U: Bakın, mescidin tarifi sportif faaliyetlerin yapıldığı ve toplantıların yapıldığı ve bütün etkinliklerin yapıldığı bir yerdi. Burası, ve peygamber ne diyor, 'Yeryüzü benim mabedimdir' diyor.Allah'ın mabede ihtiyacı yok, mabede ihtiyaç varsa o da insanın gönlüdür ve bugün bu değerlerle mescidin tarifi buysa mescidin tarifine uyan cemevleridir…Kutsal olan beton yığınları değil kutsal olan içinde yapılan eylemlerdir, ibadettir. Eğer o amaca uygun yapılıyorsa hepsi kutsaldır.
M. E: Neden cem değil de cem ve kültür evi? Oradaki kültürden ne anlıyorsunuz?
A. R. U: Kültürü burada inşa ediyoruz. Cemevi tek amaç için kullanılmıyor, sadece ibadethane olarak kullanılmıyor… Alevi toplumunun tapınma dışında, toplumsal, bireysel sorunların çözüme kavuşturulduğu bir meclis işlevi yeri görmüştür ve görmektedir. Cemevleri yeri gelmiş bir sohbet,

The difference between Alevi and Sunni religious practices together with cemevis and mosques also can be drawn on the basis of regulating the movement of women in these places. As exemplified in the remark of the director of the Adana Branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association,

> If we [are to] go to mosques we can not accept any [Sunni] norms on [the clothing of] our wives i.e., they do not cover their heads or should be careful with their skirts, because there are no such limitations (*sınırlama*) in Alevism. If my wife is wearing a mini skirt and I am fine with it, if she is not covering her head, she will of course go [to cemevi] in that manner. If we go [to mosque] with our *saz*, if we want to turn semah no matter what you do there will arise problems. Then you would not let us in the mosques [and] then we would not have a chance to do our worshipping.[90]

Another strategy to repudiate mosques is to claim that constructing mosques are against the 'humanist' and 'collective' nature of Alevism. An Alevi architect with dede lineage and leftist background, Hüseyin Kaya explained the necessity of differentiating cemevis from mosques in the following manner:

> H. K: Now, if you build a cemevi you will have built it with the same status as a mosque. Its opposite is the mosque, [same as] whatever the function a mosque performs.
> M. E: What do you think is the function of a mosque?
> H. K: I mean, in my opinion, mosque is totally a symbol of exploitation in the society. It is a very well organized system of exploitation complete with its associations, congregation, the relationships of the congregation and its numerous religious orders. There are three to four organizational groups that take part in the mosque construction organization, the system of exploitation, one of them is the mosque association. The other one is the imam and his followers (*tayfası*), and imam's relations with the congregation.

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muhabbet ocağı olmuş, yeri gelmiş eğitim öğretim yeri olmuş, yeri gelmiş yoksullara aşevi olmuş, yeri gelmiş dostluk, kardeşlik, birlik, dirlik yeri, evi olmuş ve olmaya da devam edecektir." Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

[90] "*Biz camiye eşimizle gelsek, eşimizin yok eteğiydi, yok saçı kapalı olacak diye bir kıstas kabul etmeyiz; çünkü Alevilikte kadına böyle bir sınırlama yok. Eğer benim eşim mini etekli ise, ben kabul etmişsem, saçı açık ise elbette açık olacaktır. Böyle bir kıstas olmaz, sazımızla gelmişsek, orada semah döneceksek siz ne yaparsınız orada olay çıkar. O zaman bizi camiye koymazsınız. O zaman bizim ibadetimizi yerine getirme şansımız yok*." Interviewed by the author, on July 1, 2004.

> Another one is the religious order. There is always the involvement of the religious order. Then, other things that we are not aware of might enter [the process of construction]. However, Alevi culture and tradition, according to the teachings of our elders, is an understanding, a life, or a faith, that is completely humanist, against personal interests, and at odds with personal interests. In this manner, if you go ahead and ask for a place of worship that is against the mosques, yet takes mosques as its model, then you would have taken a step contrary to the Alevi tradition, culture and philosophy of life."[91]

He also criticized the tendency to build multi-storey, huge cemevis by formulating Alevism as a Sufi movement, invoking the place of modesty in 'Alevi tradition':

> There should not be showing-off (*gösteriş*). Showing-off is first of all waste (*israf*), it is forbidden (*haram*). It is forbidden in Islam as well, but those people [Sunnis] are building mosques that look like skyscrapers. While there are so many hungry people in this country, while this is the priority if you think about the social structure of the community you belong to –because these [people] must maintain themselves [economically first]- could you earn the blessing of God (*sevap*) if you waste your money on such a thing? If what we will build is going to contribute to the social development…for instance, our greatest problem is unemployment today, and it is caused by illiteracy (*cehalet*), by the lack of educated people…We had a Russian head-engineer in –Seydişehir in 1978. He would say to us, "There are factory chimneys in Russia, [whereas] there are minarets in Turkey. I wonder if these [two] are identical." Here is our difference. Does this country need factory chimneys, or minarets? Does it need cemevis, or factory chimneys? One should think about this.[92]

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[91] "*H. K: Şimdi eğer cemevi yaparsanız bir cami statüsünde yapmış olacaksınız. Onun karşıtı camidir, cami nasıl bir işlevlik yapıyorsa.*
M. E: Caminin işlevi ne sizce ?
M. E: Yani bana göre cami toplumda tamamen sömürü simgesidir. Dernekleri, oradaki cemaati, cemaatin iş ilişkileri ile, bir çok tarikatları ile iyi organize edilmiş bir sömürü sistemidir. Cami yapma organizasyonunda, o sömürü düzeninde yer alan üç dört tane organizasyon grubu vardır, bir tanesi dernektir cami derneğidir, bir tanesi imam ve tayfasıdır, cemaatle olan ilişkileridir; bir tanesi tarikattır, mutlaka işin tarikat ayağı vardır; ondan sonra ve bunun dışında bilemediğimiz başka şeyler de girebilir. Ama Alevi kültürü ve geleneği, geçmişimizden günümüze kadar büyüklerimizin aldığımız öğretiye göre tamamen hümanist, insancıl, bireysel çıkar olmayan, olmaması gerektiğine inandığımız bir anlayış bir yaşamdır ve yahut bir inançtır. Bu anlamda, siz kalkıp da camiyi örnek alıp da cami karşıtı bir ibadethaneye sahip olmak isterseniz, o zaman Alevi geleneği, kültürü, yaşama felsefesine ters bir adım atmış olursunuz." Interviewed by the author, on March 10, 2005.

[92] "*Gösteriş olmamalı.Gösteriş bir kere israftır, haramdır. İslamiyet'te de haramdır, ama adamlar gökdelen gibi cami yapıyor. Ülkenin bu kadar aç insanı varken, bu kadar yoksul insanı varken bulunduğunuz cemaatin, toplumun sosyal yapısını düşünürseniz bunlar öncelikli iken, insan -çünkü bunlar ayakta kalmaları gerekiyor-böyle bir israfa para harcarsanız nasıl bir sevap kazanmış oluruz*

Just like the dialectical relationship between the mosque and the cemevi, cem as worshipping (*ibadet*) is contrasted to namaz. Popular Alevi intellectual and journalist Rıza Zelyut has argued that there are a number of reasons for Alevis' repudiation of attending mosques and the canonical Sunni prayer namaz. The "historical reason" is that Alevis "lost their enthusiasm for going to mosques because the Umayyad caliphs ordered blasphemy against Hz Ali and *ehlibeyt*[93] in the mosques. The social reason is "the attacks and insults Alevis faced in mosques" (1991, p. 148).

Zelyut opposes the namaz on practical grounds, as well. He argues that the namaz has no place in modern society with a thoroughly functionalist approach:

> Alevis are poor people from the poor segments [of the society]…interrupting their work for five times a day and performing namaz condemned them to inefficiency and hunger…the Alevi masses have quit and created new ways to replace the practicing of namaz five times a day, because it was not compatible with the way of life of working masses…the reality imposed itself, the life separated Sunnis from the mosque, as well…This tight (*sıkı*) form of prayer, namaz, turned into a prayer that is only abided by some elders because it is incompatible with the realities of social and economic life. The mosques are empty since the working masses do not have time or the means to perform namaz (1991, pp. 149-50).

The real reason for Alevis' not performing the namaz, according to Zelyut, has to do with the fact that Alevis have a higher ethical perspective and conscious effort in their approach to worshipping. The namaz is rejected on the basis of being mere

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ki? Yapacağımız şey toplumsal gelişime ışık tutacaksa, katkı koyacaksa insanlara… mesela en büyük sorunumuz ülke olarak işsizlik, ama işsizliğin de en büyük sorunu cehalet, eğitimli insanlar da yok bugün…1978 tarihinde bir Rus başmühendisimiz vardı Seydişehir'de. Şunu bize söylüyordu, 'Rusya da Fabrika bacaları var, Türkiye de minareler var. Acaba bunlar özdeş mi?' Farkımız bu. Bu ülkenin minareye mi ihtiyacı var, fabrika bacasına mı ihtiyacı var? Bu ülkenin cemevine mi ihtiyacı var, fabrika bacasına mı ihtiyacı var? Bunu düşünmek lazım."

[93] The descendents of the prophet, household of prophet. The term denotes the bloodline of the prophet.

formalism and Alevis are argued to worship with what comes from "inside," from one's heart:

> In the philosophy of Alevism, what matters in worshipping is sincerity (*içtenlik*), and the purpose of all worshipping is…human beings to become perfect…Alevis believe that worshipping on the basis of feelings of reward or punishment is not real subjection [to God]…In the worshipping, what matters is the essence, not the form (ibid., p. 150).

Next, he rests his argument on Koran by contrasting the form of worshipping to its content:

> Alevis do not believe that namaz is expressed in its current form in Koran. There is no such statement in the Koran 'Perform namaz!'. What is mentioned [in the Koran] is *salat*. *Salat* does not mean namaz, but remembering and greeting God sincerely.…However
> a) There is no form for namaz in the Koran…It is not described [in Koran] how to perform namaz.
> b) There is also no information regarding the necessity of performing namaz five times a day (ibid., p. 150).

The moral 'superiority' of Alevis is also invoked through the virtue of the participants to cems, grounded in an idealized vision of the past. The hoca of the Okmeydanı Cemevi says: "Criminals (*suçlu*) are not allowed in our cems. When you look at the other beliefs they are different. This [difference] is valid generally for the Sunni faith of course. You can worship together with the killers and thieves in the same place [at a mosque]."[94] The hoca maintained that this way cems become the proper worshipping:

> We would do [our worshipping] in the mosque if they [Sunnis] worshipped in the way we do. In our worshipping, which we call "circle prayer" (*halka namazı*), our dede asks, "Is there anybody who is resentful among us?" the hoca can not ask this to the congregation in mosques.…I mean, this is the difference between our brotherhood namaz (*tarikat namazı*) and praying five times a

[94] "Bizim cemimize suçlu olan giremez. Farklı inançlara baktığımızda, farklı dediğim genelde Sünni inancı tabii, katille de, hırsızla da aynı yerde ibadet edebilirsin." Interviewed by the author, on March 24, 2005

> day (*beş vakit namaz*), we do not do worshipping when we are not at peace with one another, but the man has killed someone and divorced his wife, yet he goes and prays at the mosque. This is the difference. I say the worship we do is the right one.[95]

This mythical and nostalgic representation of Alevism, which is grounded in an idealized conceptualization of the past, is deployed as a boundary marker between Alevis and Sunnis by differentiating cems front namaz and cemevis from mosques – on especially moral grounds. However, as shown in the first chapter, there actually is no such exclusionary atmosphere of worshipping in cemevis. Hence, the moral status of the participants to a cem can not be verified, because the social reality of the contemporary Alevi communities does not correspond to the model of an ideal-ized rural community sustained by harmony, peace, mutual bonds of support and moral regulation.

Culturalization of Alevism and Cemevis as Culture Centers

Everyone is into culture now. For anthropologists, culture was once a term of art. Now the natives talk culture back at them. "'Culture' the word itself, or some local equivalent, is on everyone's lips," Marshall Sahlins has observed. "Tibetans, and Hawaiians, Ojibwas, Kwakiutl, and Eskimo, Kazakhs, and Mongols, native Australians, Balinese, Kashmiris, and New Zealand Maori, all discover they have a "culture."

Alan Kuper, Culture: The Anthropologist's Account

Kuper's complain is indicative of the expansion of the influence of the term "culture." The term has long ceased to be the exclusive property of social scientists.

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[95] "*Zaten bizim yaptığımız ibadet gibi onlar da yapsınlar, tamam biz de camide yaparız. Bizim yaptığımız ibadette dedemiz soruyor, mesela biz 'halka namazı' diyoruz ibadet yaparken, içimizde küskün, dargın var mı diye. Ama bunu hoca camide cemaate soramaz… yani beş vakit namazla bizim kıldığımız tarikat namazının farkı bu, biz küsülü ibadet yapmıyoruz, ama adam adam öldürmüş, eşini boşamış gidip camide namazını kılıyor. Fark budur ve bizim yaptığımız ibadet doğrudur, diyorum.*" Interviewed by the author, on June 10, 2005.

It has achieved unprecedented popularity as a term in the everyday lives of people. Since cemevis only can be established as culture centers legally and also are recognized as such by the state, in this section I will examine the content of culture as it is deployed by different groups to differentiate Alevis from Sunnis and cemevis from mosques. The contestation over the meaning and functioning of cemevis is carried out through a binary of "culture center" (*kültür merkezi*) versus "place of worship" (*ibadethane*). For this reason, it is necessary to examine the ways in which different parties make use of the term 'culture' in the struggles revolving around the meaning and operations of a cemevi.

Raymonds (1976) delineates three broad categories related to the concept culture. The first pertains to "a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development"; the second means "a particular way of life;" and the third is used to describe "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (p. 80). Culture was used initially to describe agricultural activities but it attained new meanings with the advent of Western modernity (Benhabib, 2002). Eagleton (2000) argues that in the eighteenth century "culture" came to be used a synonym for "civilization," and it pointed to "the general spirit of Enlightenment, with its cult of secular, progressive self-development" (p. 9). Kendell and Wickham (2001) note that,

> By the time of the Enlightenment, "culture" was being used as a synonym for 'civilization'. Culture, then, came to represent a path of progress (progress leading to the European civilizations), and was typically used in the singular. In the nineteenth century…"culture" came to be associated with different and specific ways of life, particularly those that could be seen in the different nations of the world and in the different regions of those nations. Thus "cultures" could be comfortably used as plural… At the turn of the twentieth century, in tandem with the emergence of the human and social sciences (especially anthropology and sociology) culture became most closely associated with meaning (pp. 6-7).

The state representatives and Alevi organizations conceptualize "culture" differently. The Sunni theologians construct Alevism as a sub-culture of "Turkish Islamic culture" in the anthropological sense of the term. Ethem Ruhi Fığlalı (1995) who has studied Alevi communities extensively through an explicitly nationalist outlook conceptualizes Alevism as a residue of old Turkish culture:

> Even today, Alevi and Bektashi clans, no matter what is said, no matter what is put into motion to direct attention away from it, are clans that are within Islam one hundred percent and they are formed through the old traditions and customs of Turkish culture. As a theologian, I am grateful for the existence of this clan. Why? Because, this clan, is indeed a sweet (*sevimli*) clan that continuously makes me experience the voice, heart and souls of my ancestors from the Central Asia with their complete color and life. (pp. 15-16)

Conceptualizing Alevism as a culture also makes it possible to objectify it as a subject for anthropological inquiry. However, in this picture having a culture is a sign of dominating Alevism, because it is the case that those who 'research' Alevism have civilization, and Alevis who lack the civilization have culture. I have not encountered any conceptualization of Sunnism as culture. This situation stems from the fact Alevism is defined by giving reference to Sunnism and as a result gets relativized in the process.

Sofuoğlu and İlhan (1997) also support the cultural formulation of Alevism as a way of life:

> Contributing to the continuation of some values such as costumes, dances (*oyun*), folk songs and some folkloric [elements] that have started to disappear in cities, and most importantly, supporting the continuation of those aspects of Alevism and Bektashism that are different from other religious orders and sects.
>
> We are convinced that it is *acceptable* to open and operate cemevis *only* with regard to this last idea, and this kind of activities can be conducive to the development of *Turkish culture* with good organization and serious effort" (p. 128) (my emphases).

Here the state discourse defined Alevis as the bearers of "Turkish folk culture" and by this way it could "distract attention away from the central problem of structural inequalities in access to resources" (Bottomley in Kaya 1998, p. 33). Strikingly, Alevis insist on turning cemevis into places of worship and cems into prayer exclusively, while the DRA defines those as culture center and gatherings for religious order. The attitudes change between the two camps as they struggle to define the boundaries of "place of worship" in tandem with what religion is and what it is not.

However, when I looked at the accounts of my informants it was striking to see that they almost exclusively understood culture as being cultivated, enlightened. They were aspiring to be "enlightened, progressive, educated, knowledgeable, democratic" (*aydın, ilerici, eğitimli, bilgili, demokrat*) and believed that the culture they were to receive from cemevis would provide them with all that.

A male informant from Sivas drew the difference in terms of culture as being 'cultivated': "I sometimes go to mosque to attend funerals, but cemevis are more enlightened."[96] Ali, An eighteen year old Istanbulite male informant was also critical of approaching cemevis as places of worship in the following manner: "You can not get people anywhere with religious knowledge. It is necessary to have culture and knowledge in order to make progress. Cemevis can be cultural centers where people gather and discuss things. [In cemevis] they do not do anything else than come together and pray to God."[97] Haydar, a sixty year old informant from Erzurum told

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[96] "*Zaman zaman cenaze için camiye gidiyorum, ama cemevleri daha aydın*." Interviewed by the author, on July 19, 2004.

[97] "*İnsanları dini bilgilerle bir yere ulaştırmak olmaz. Kültür ve bilgi gerekir ilerlemek için. Cemevleri insanların bir araya gelip tartışacakları kültür evleri olabilir. Bir araya gelip Allah'a dua etmekten başka bir şey yapmıyorlar*." Interviewed by the author, on June 22, 2004.

me that "If there is no culture in the first place, nothing else can happen. Without culture, you would become an empty human being."[98]

Having culture, being cultivated means "to be blessed with refined feelings, well-tempered passions, agreeable manners and an open mind. It is to behave reasonably and moderately, with an innate sensitivity to others' interests, to exercise self discipline, and to be prepared to sacrifice one's own selfish interests to the good of the whole" (Eagleton, 2002, p. 18). Although Eagleton concludes that this "cultivated individual sounds suspiciously like mildly conservative individual," in the words of Haydar this person sounded more like the "perfect human being" (*insan-ı kamil*). Haydar was invoking the ideal of becoming a perfect human being through the reception of the culture one would find in cemevis.

Partly stemming from conceptualizing culture as enlightenment, opening cemevis as culture centers was simultaneously defended on the grounds that the culture the Alevi youth would receive at cemevis could make them better citizens. Alevi culture and the cultural activities in cemevis are offered as an antidote against the youth's existential problems and their affiliation with "dangerous movements," that is leftist politics. In the following account of an administrator from the Okmeydanı Cemevi, the "Alevi culture" is conflated with a patriotic secularist discourse that makes it possible to present cemevis as centers working in line with the interests of secular democracy:

> D. A: Our cemevis have their sections for worshipping as well as the section for culture. The worshipping section is the cemevi. We come and do our worshipping in the cemevi, and the worshipping ends there. However, we are not only worshipping in cemevis. As I just said before, we are doing semah courses, theatre course. We offer computer classes. We organize panels. This is both a necessity of Alevism and the circumstances of Turkey. Here, other than simply worshipping and experiencing Alevi beliefs there are

[98] "*Başta kültür olmayınca bir şey olmaz. Kültür olmayınca sen bomboş bir insan olursun*." Interviewed by the author, on July 21, 2004.

> other very important issues at sate, how should Alevi people be raised, how they should be democrats, how should they claim to be the owners of their country (*nasıl ülkesine sahip çıkmalı*) and the republic, how should they be secular. We find these [issues] to be very significant.
> M. E: All of these are being taught at cemevis, are not they?
> D. A: Of course, we are teaching them. You can not see any of these at mosques. People (*vatandaşlar*) at the mosques come, perform their namaz and leave. We say cem and culture house. We are both performing cem and developing the culture. We are teaching our culture.[99]

It is possible to see similar use of the "culture" for the rapprochement with the state in the case of the Gazi Cemevi. This cemevi gained some sort of legitimacy in the yes of the government after the Gazi incident. The Ministry of Culture sent books and money for the organization of the "cultural activities" so that the youth would not be 'deceived' by illegal leftist groups. Çakır and Yılmaz (2001) note that the director of cemevi seemed to understand this very well and since he described the cemevi as the meeting point of state-society relationships:

> The young people living in Gazi were not able to find jobs as if they had criminal records. This [neighborhood] was desired to be seen as if it belonged to another state. People of Gazi had been forced into a position of potential criminals. This [situation] has been slowly improving. Our infrastructure has begun to get better. We [as cemevi] serve as a bridge between the state and society [of Gazi].[100]

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[99] "*D. A: Bizim cemevlerinde ibadet kısmı da var, bunun dışında kültür kısmı da var. İbadet kısmı cemevidir. İbadeti gelir cemevinde yaparız, ibadetimiz orada biter. Ama biz bunun dışında cemevlerinde sadece ibadet yapmıyoruz. Demin de anlattığım gibi, semah kursu yapıyoruz, tiyatro kursu yapıyoruz. Bilgisayar kursu veriyoruz, paneller yapıyoruz. Bu hem Aleviliğin gereği hem, Türkiye'nin koşullarının gereğidir. Burada bizim olayımız, burası sadece cemevidir; sadece ibadet yaparız. Alevi inançlarını yaşarız, dışında bunlar da bizim için önemli, bir Alevi insanı nasıl yetişmeli, nasıl demokrat olmalı, nasıl ülkesine sahip çıkmalı, nasıl laik olmalı, nasıl cumhuriyete sahip çıkmalı, biz bunlara da çok önem veriyoruz.*
M. E: Bütün bunlar cemevinde öğretiliyor değil mi?
D.A: Tabii öğretiyoruz, bütün bunları camide göremezsiniz. Camideki vatandaş gelir, namazını kılar, gider. Biz cem ve kültür evi diyoruz. Cemi yapıyoruz, hem de kültürü geliştiriyoruz. Kültürümüzü öğretiyoruz." Interviewed by the author, on March 14, 2004.

[100] Yolunu arayan Alevilik. *Milliyet*, August 15, 2001

He articulated the mission of the cemevi in terms of a "clash" of cultures between the 'enlighten-ed/ing' (*aydın*) Alevi culture and the degenerating "coffee culture": "From the old ones to our youth we want to live, receive education, and become cultured. We want to destroy the coffeehouse culture (*kahve kültürü*). We want to turn Gazi into a nice neighborhood" (ibid.).

I argue that by supporting the Gazi Cemevi the government has attempted to prevent further the alienation of especially the Gazi youth from the state. The administrators of Gazi Cemevi were quick to realize this and they presented the 'culture' the residents of the neighborhood would receive in the cemevi against the recruitment of Gazi youth by the underground Marxist organizations.

The culture the Alevi youth will receive is not only understood as a protection against the 'danger' of influence by Marxist groups, but also as a precaution against the alienating effects of city life. A cemevi administrator received his motivation to work at the cemevi from such fears. Construing the urban environment as a space that contains many dangers for his children, he thought the best way to be protected from "degeneration" was for them to have a "*place* to go":

> No matter how busy I am, I always devote my time to it [cemevi]. I mean, I take this time from my own family, but I try to spend as much time as possible at the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association. The culture [that is] there is very important to me. I mean, we would like to have the same cem we used to have in the villages here, I mean our children- the real issue for me is this: Istanbul is a very big place, there should be a place our children can go. I- we really want some educational activities to be held at the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Associations, you say it, we want some cultural activities to be carried out there. Now there are some activities, even if there is not much. My goal is to bring my children to this culture and make them learn it. [My children] should not go out [to the streets] and become *tinerci* [street children], I do not know, s/he should not go out and seek different things there. This is all I want. Of course, our children, or let me put it this way, my children- because, there is tolerance in this culture there is love, peace, brotherhood, *müsahiplik* (brotherhood of the path). However, when I look at the other side [Sunnis], the children have

> no one to take care of them (*sahipsiz kalmış*), and they do not have anything related to culture. Some of them inhale bally,[101] some inhale paint thinner, some are involved with theft, they have criminal records. Now, what are these children going to do when they do not go to a designated place, they will look this way or that way. Yet my aim is to make it possible for them to experience this culture [Alevism] better. For this reason- I should not say 'reason', this is a culture. I am serving at Pir Sultan Abdal Culture association to keep this culture alive.[102]

The Case of the Sultanbeyli Cemevi

The DRA Reports on cemevis always end with latent threats directed at Alevi organizations by targeting attempts to establish cemevis as "divisive attempts" by deploying the unitary discourse of the state. In so doing, the Directorate reifies the dominant position of state controlled Sunni Islam by naturalizing its position as the single option available to all Muslim groups, and continues to impose Sunni beliefs and practices on Alevi communities. When Sadegül Çavuş, the director of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association in Sultanbeyli gave a petition to ask about the legal status of cemevis as places of worship, the answer the DRA gave reiterated the discourse of *culturalizing* Alevism and the explanation ended with this sentence:

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[101] Bally is a glue that has narcotic effects when inhaled.

[102] "*Her ne kadar işim yoğun olursa olsun mutlaka ben oraya zaman ayırıyorum. Yani bunu kendi evimden kısıyorum, ama Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği'ne ne kadar olursa zamanı daha fazla ayırmaya çalışıyorum. Oradaki kültür benim için çok önemli. Yani biz köylerde yapılan cemi burada aynısının yapılmasını istiyoruz, yani bizim çocuklarımız- benim esas meselem şu, İstanbul çok büyük bir yer, burada bizim çocuklarımızın gidebileceği bir yer olsun. Ben bunu Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Dernekleri'nde gerçekten eğitim çalışmalarının yapılması, ne bileyim bir takım kültür faaliyetlerinin yapılmasını istiyoruz. Şu anda da yapılıyor, bir nevi de olsa yapılıyor, biraz da olsa yapılıyor. Benim amacım kendi çocuklarımı bu kültüre getirip bu kültürü öğrensinler. Gidip dışarıda tinerci olmasın, ne bileyim gidip dışarıda farklı bir şeye gitmesin. Benim bütün amacım bu. Tabii benim amacım çocuklarım, çocuklarımız diyeyim daha doğrusu- çünkü bu kültürde hoşgörü var, sevgi var, barış var, kardeşlik var, musahiplik var. Ama şimdi öbür tarafa baktığımda, o bir kesime baktığımda çocuklar sahipsiz kalmış, herhangi bir kültürel bir şeyleri yok Kimileri bally çekiyor, kimileri tiner çekiyor, kimileri gasp yapıyor, suçları var. Şimdi çocuklar belirli bir yere gidemedikten sonra ne yapacak, ya bu tarafa bakacak, ya bu tarafa bakacak. Ama benim hedefim bu kültürü daha iyi yaşayabilmeleridir. Bu sebeplerden, sebep demeyeyim, bunlar bir kültür. Bu kültürü yaşamak için Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği'nde görev yapıyorum*." Interviewed by the author, on June 12, 2005.

> It is a *national obligation* to think about and make the necessary analyses on the attempts to create opposing camps between the members of this nation who lived together and *without any problems* with each other for thousands of years by means of *artificial* problems. [103] (emphases mine)

In their study on the Muslim communities living in Dar es Salaam, Nagar and Leitner (1998) have discussed the implications of enacting, contesting and imposing multiple and intersecting identities in communal places and neighborhoods. They argue that the appropriation of place and control over material space are in fact "central pivots in struggles for and negotiations over identities, social boundaries and material reproduction" (pp. 245-6). Cemevis are important for the reproduction of Alevi communities in cities and the restructuration of Alevi beliefs and practices. Accordingly, they are at the locus of conflicts and struggles for the appropriation and control of symbolic and material space.

Attempts to construct a cemevi in Sultanbeyli, and the subsequent struggles between the Sultanbeyli branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association and the municipality highlights the struggles revolving around gaining *ground* in city space. The director of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association, Sadegül Çavuş gave me the following information: The association was established in Sultanbeyli in 1995. It embarked on a project to build a cemevi in Sultanbeyli in 2003. After the Urban Restructuring Law #3194 was rearranged in accordance with the EU accession process the association collected 11,160 signatures and presented a petition to the municipality demanding the allocation of public land to construct a "place of worship" on July 23, 2003. The municipality declined to grant the land on the grounds that cemevis were not legally recognized as places of worship.

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[103] See the Appendix 2.

Unable to attain land through legal means, the association used the typical methods of land occupation that have been in use by squatter settlements for decades in Istanbul. The association searched for and found municipality/treasury land. After "invading" (*işgal*) the land for the construction of the cemevi, the association bought the land privately under the director's name (since associations are not allowed to own the land) and initiated the cemevi construction. A fifty meter-square large building was constructed within two days, gecekondu style, despite municipality officers' intervention to stop it. Then "people waited day and night on guard...there was the Karacaahmet example in front of us," the director went on. There already existed a school, a mosque and several houses on the land.

The municipality, on the other hand, allegedly sold the same land to some other people and these people sued the association for invading their land. The association claims that the municipality had actually forged the documents to expel them from the land and even paid the fees of the lawyer of their opponents. At this point, the directorate of national education of the district interfered and offered the cemevi administration to donate the land for building a school together with the mosque that is located at a distance of fifty meters from the cemevi. The administration refused this offer on the grounds that "there were 144 mosques in Sultanbeyli and not a single cemevi."

Meanwhile the mayor of *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party) was replaced by that of the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party). The new mayor also refused to grant permission to build a cemevi on the basis of city restructuring plan [the area is located at the ISKI water reservoir] offered to allocate another location to build the cemevi. But suspicious of his motivation, the administration declined the offer.

When they tried to obtain electricity for the building, the TEDAŞ (electricity company) directed the association to the office of mufti to receive an official document that show that the cemevi was a place of worship. The mufti of the district stated that his office could not issue such a document because in order for a place to attain the status of a place of worship for "Muslims" it had to have an imam. The association then asked TEDAŞ once more to provide electricity for the cemevi, but the firm rejected the demand on the grounds that it was an illegal building lacking a construction license. Therefore, the association made use of another squatter strategy: It established an illegal line for electricity without authorization from TEDAŞ and paid for the penalty fee in order the electricity line to be legalized.

After this the association made several other attempts to mobilize public support including the organization of a *Kardeşçe Birlikte Yaşama Şöleni* (the Festival for Leaving in Peace), where the Alevis living in Sultanbeyli gathered in large numbers and were informed about the process. The last strategy the association deployed was to apply to the metropolitan municipality, but to no avail. The mayor of the metropolitan city declined from meeting them and the manager of urban restructuring department made no promises.

Consequently, the judicial process was completed and the association proved in court that the land belonged to them. Yet there still was no license issued from the municipality. The administration of the cemevi decided to initiate the construction, nevertheless. As Ali from the administration told me: "If the laws do not recognize us, we do not recognize them either." The construction started on April 8, 2006 with the participation of thousands of Alevis with the support of the EABC and the ABF as well as several parliamentary deputies. Despite the warnings of the municipality and the office of the kaymakam for the "illegal activity" there were no police raids during

the first days. However, shortly after the construction started, the municipality interfered and stopped the construction machinery.

The association made use of legal means –court cases and the right to receive information law- and created national and transnational support from liberal circles. The struggle as a result gained a great symbolic significance. Alevi representatives asked not only for legal permit but also for undermining of the laws on their behalf, as was the case with Sunni mosques. Ali Rıza Gülçiçek carried the issue to the national assembly, the EABC rallied support in its journal and web site. The association made consistent use of the press to seek support (*Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Birgün, and Star*) in order to show the double standard –the Göztepe mosque project- attacking the AKP for its opposition to Alevis. The construction of further houses while the construction was going on was video recorded. When all these strategies did not work, they combined them with strategies used in the construction of gecekondus.

Finding Your Place: Where Does God Reside?

Yalçınkaya (1996) argues that the motivation behind opening cemevis is more than the need for organizing cems. He draws our attention to the institutionalization pattern of cemevis and its similarities to that of mosques:

> For instance, the demand for opening cemevis means discarding the belief structure of Alevism completely. Because, in Alevism there is no specialized place for worshipping such as mosques, there can not be. The visible erosion in the belief systems of Alevis does not stem from not being able to find places of worship. Cems can be organized perfectly at any place, but if they can not be [organized], the reason behind this is not the lack of space (*mekansızlık*). Accordingly the demand [of Alevis] should not be asking for cemevis in a way that resembles Orthodox Islam (p. 26).

In this chapter I attempted to look at the processes underlying the creative tension between defining cemevis either as places of worship or culture centers. The categories "place of worship" and "culture center" were appropriated differently and used strategically to legitimize or negate cemevis' status as places of worship. In these struggles the content of place of worship was put into debate, but it either expanded through the appropriation of the early Islamic mescit of the prophet, or the culture center was contrasted with the place of worship.

Practically and technically "culture" does not have any correlations with religion, a realm that is tightly controlled and policed by the state. For Alevi organizations with secularist orientations such as PSACA, Alevism is a culture and Alevi culture includes the faith. This way, culture transcends religion and makes cemevis 'safe' for these groups to appropriate. Culture also points to a secular realm and is used as a mark of distinction from the mosques. That is, cemevis are equal to cemevis as places of worship but they are more than mosques, because they also are culture centers. The DRA, on the other hand approaches cemevis as culture centers, but this culture is a folkloric one, or a sub-culture of the greater Turkish culture, firmly situated within the nationalist discourse.

Defining cemevis as places of worship, on the other hand, has been conducive to the secularization of Alevism. Putting cemevis under this category served the exclusion of politics that was conceived as a threat to the state by conservative Sunnis and the DRA, and to the image of cemevis by the Alevi organizations. Yet the content of "politics" has been used elastically, allowing the exclusion of leftist groups from cemevis. Moreover, the content of "culture" has expanded to include bağlama and semah courses, which used to be organic parts of cem, the "worship." They have

become independent and moved to the secular realm. This way culture has become a synonym for the everyday and the cemevi for religion.

CHAPTER 4

WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE? ADMINISTRATORS, DEDES AND HOCAS

The rules, the charter, the philosophy [the order] of the cemevi *are obvious. Everybody working here is abided by them, things proceed this way.* [104]

Mehmet Boy, the Chairperson of Kartal Cemevi Foundation

This chapter revolves around the struggles taking place within cemevis. Various actors counter one another in order to define the functions and internal organization of cemevis. Cemevis are established as the local headquarters of Alevi associations and organizations. They serve diverse needs such as the organization of funerals, the organization of funeral meals, and cems together with bağlama, semah, foreign language, computer and sometimes Koran courses. The diversity of tasks at urban cemevis has created new institutional positions and restructured some of the Alevi institutions. Cemevis I focus on are hierarchically organized institutions where certain groups specialize in designated positions. Accordingly, these cemevis, the institutionalized sites of Alevi beliefs and practices, engender new institutional positions that influence the current restructuration with regard to Alevi beliefs and practices.

[104] "*Cemevinin kuralları bellidir, cemevinin tüzüğü bellidir, felsefesi bellidir. Burada çalışan herkes ona uymak zorundadır, o şekilde devam eder.*" Interviewed by the author, on May 5, 2004.

The administrators of cemevis are the directors and board members of Alevi association and foundations. They are generally recruited among professional circles and tradesman. The emergence of these new elite has to do with the fact that Alevi communities have established themselves in metropolitan areas. The upward mobilization through education has resulted in the rise of a burgeoning class of professionals with Alevi backgrounds. An Alevi intelligentsia that actively participated in the debates revolving around "Turkey's Alevi problem" has come from the ranks of a generation that was trained in the universities. Moreover, Alevi entrepreneurs have seized business opportunities during the rapid processes of industrialization and integration into world economy, and an Alevi middle class has been born (Çamuroğlu, 1998; Erdemir, 2004). Administrators have challenged the authority of dedes and replaced them in terms of the leadership of communities and public representation of Alevis and Alevism, while Alevi intellectuals have challenged the position of dedes regarding the production of knowledge on Alevism.

Kaplan (2004) observes that the situation in Germany points to a shift from talip-dede relations to member [of Alevi organization]-dede relationship. It is possible to take this formulation one step further in the case of Turkey: one does not even have to be a member of the association that operates a cemevi, but any anonymous Alevi can come and demand services from dedes. In addition, non-Alevis also attend cems and funerals, and it is difficult to say who is Alevi who is not, since the congregation is not comprised of people who know each other, but often is a group of people who are seeing one another in the cemevi for the first time.

Dedes often admit their inability to deal with the administrative tasks that require specialized knowledge of bureaucratic processes and business transactions, and leave those tasks to administrators. Dedes and the administrators are by and large

supportive of separating dedes from the administrative duties for another reason as well: charges of fraud and incompetence directed at cemevi administrations. Keeping dede*s* away from the financial and administrative aspects of the functioning of a cemevi is proposed as a means of protecting the dedes' already severed prestige as (only religious) leaders of the community. Loss of prestige and influence on the side of dedes is to a large extent dependent on the differentiation of the knowledge in the modern urban societies. When Alevi cosmologies were situated in modern epistemologies, the truth generated by such cosmologies has become only one among many truth claims. The sacred truth of Aleviness was contrasted to scientific truth, everyday truths, experiential truths, all with their own spheres of authority.

However, the position of the dedes and administrations' influence on the determination of the religious practices and the functions of a cemevi often lead to expressed or latent clashes between the two groups. For one thing, administrators often try to interfere in the organization of cems. Dedes, on the other hand, often criticize the administrators for lacking "Alevi faith." They also sometimes establish relations with rival institutions in the factions between different organizations.

The hocas who attend the funeral services, recite the Koran, and sometimes solemnize marriages constitute a third group. In many cemevis, dedes do not attend funeral prayers and wedding ceremonies, but leave those tasks to hocas. Since the position Alevi hocas' corresponds to and competes with that of Sunni hocas/imams at mosques, the ambiguity surrounding the duties of Alevi hocas has been subject to intense debate. The practices and public visibility of hocas, especially during the funerals are significant in drawing boundaries between Alevi and Sunni communities. For this reason, the processions of burial services, the choice of the language in which

the Koran is recited and even the costume of hocas are issues generating conflict and debates.

Visiting "the Biggest Cemevi"

My visit to the Kartal Cemevi revealed how strikingly different opinions and stances with respect to Alevi beliefs and practices could coexist within the same institution, as they were articulated by administrators, dedes and hocas. In this cemevi the administrators, dedes and the hoca not only contested one another's ideas, but represented different positions among themselves regarding certain issues.

I visited the Kartal Cemevi, which was operated by *Kartal Cemevi Vakfi* [Cemevi Foundation of Kartal] in May 2004. Located in Kartal, this cemevi is reputed to be the biggest cemevi of Turkey. During my visit, I interviewed some of the administrators and *employees* of the cemevi. I was able to talk to the director, dede and hoca of cemevi and later attended the cem ceremony.

The chairperson of the Kartal Cemevi Foundation, Mehmet Boy had been holding this position for five years, since 1999. He was from Erzincan, had lived in Germany and held a university degree for teaching German. Boy was elected *muhtar* (headman) of the neighborhood where the cemevi was established between 1994 and 1999. He was working at the cemevi full time, not engaged in any other job and was receiving salary from the foundation. That is, it was his profession to *manage* the cemevi.

I asked Boy's opinion on the place of dedes in cemevis regarding administrative tasks. He thought that it was not desirable to have dedes as the directors of Alevi organizations: "Dedes should not involve with the administration.

If somebody comes to me and complains abut something, I can stand up to it (*göğüs gerebilirim*). However, it [the same incident] would damage the prestige of the dede."[105] When I inquired about the division of labor within the cemevi concerning dedes and hocas he replied:

> This of course is a separation, and it is at the same time a division of labor…Hocas, who deal with funeral prayers and the deceased should be competent in [reading] the Koran and in Arabic. We generally opt for such people, naturally. Our hoca too, was educated in an imam-hatip school, and has experience as an imam. Accordingly, his knowledge of Koran is very good, and we do not have any problems with regard to this issue.[106]

After my visit to the director, I interviewed two administrators of the foundation. Anxious to explain the extent of contemporariness (*çağdaşlık*) of Alevis, one of the administrators argues that, "Women attending cem ceremonies do not have to cover their hair. If you are [so much] interested in the appearance of the person next to you [during cem], then there must be a problem with you [and not with the woman who does not cover her hair]."[107] This administrator was also advocating the view that namaz prayers were anti-productive and unethical same as what we saw in the former chapter:

> In the Koran, it says "Do not worship when you are working," "Do not come to worshipping by violating the rights of other human beings." In a working day of eight hours, someone who performs namaz for two hours would be violating the rights of his/her

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[105] "*Dedeler yönetimde yer almamalı. Bir vatandaş gelip bana şikayette bulunursa ben göğüs gerebilirim, ama dedenin saygınlığına zarar verir*." Interviewed by the author, on May 5, 2004.

[106] "*Tabi bir bölünme bu, aynı zamanda bir iş bölümü…Cenaze namazlarını kıldıran, cenaze kaldıran hocaların da Kuran konusunda yetkin olması lazım, Arapça konusunda yetkin olması lazım. Genelde o tür insanları seçiyoruz tabii ki. Bizim hocamız da zamanında imam-hatip lisesinde okumuş, imamlık da yapmış. Dolayısıyla Kuran bilgisi çok iyi, güzel; orada bir sıkıntımız yok burada*."

[107] "*Cemlere saç açık gelinebilir. Yanındakinin görünüşüyle ilgileniyorsan sende bir sorun var demektir*." Interviewed by the author, on May 5, 2004.

> employer. [Whereas] when you look at the Alevis, you see that they do not pray during the summers because of their work.[108]

However, my encounters with the dede and hoca of the cemevi revealed the presence of conflicting stances concerning namaz and the dressing of women during cems. The hoca of the cemevi was an i*mam-hatpin* high school graduate. An Alevi by birth from Erzincan, he was recruited to school "without any pressure." He had been teaching Koran courses in the cemevi for the last three years and three of his female students were already working at the Kartal Cemevi as female hocas for the funeral services.[109] He argued that "sharia prayers" were incumbent on all Alevis and regularly performed the namaz. He preferred to define himself as *Camera* [Shiite] and argued that "Sunnism and Careerism are essentially the same. There are only formal differences. They [*Camera*s and Sunnis] both believe in Koran, namaz, and *seat.*"[110]

When I asked him whether he had experienced any problems with dedes because he performed namaz, he replied:

> Dedes who do not know anything about the Koran reject the namaz. Cave-in Sad[111] says that 'Those who do not know the fıkıh of the religion can not become dedes'. I do not take them [those dedes] seriously, because they do not rest [their arguments and practices] on the real source, the Koran and the sünnet … We debate with dede [of the cemevi], because he thinks differently. He reads Koran, but only for *melts*.[112]

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[108] "*Kuran'da ibadeti çalışırken yapmayın diyor. "ibadete kul hakkıyla gelmeyiniz" diyor. Sekiz saatlik bir iş gününde iki saat namaz kılan kişi işverenin hakkını yemiş olur. Alevilere baktığınızda yazları iş-güç nedeniyle ibadet etmezler*." Interviewed by the author, on May 5, 2004.

[109] Women are preferred to wash women for the funeral services.

[110] "*Sünnilik ve Caferilik özünde aynılar, ama görünümde değişiklikler var sadece. Özü aynı, hepsi Kuran'a, namaza, zekata inanmak zorunda*."

[111] Sixth imam for Shiites and Alevis.

[112] "*Kuran'dan haberi olmayan dedeler reddediyor namazı. Cafer-i Sadık diyor ki, dinin fıkhından haberi olmayan dede dedelik yapamaz. Ben de onları [o dedeleri] gerçek kaynağa, Kuran'a, sünnete dayanmadıkları için kale almıyorum... Dedeyle tartışıyoruz. Dede farklı düşünüyor, Kuran okuyor, ama sadece mevlit için*."

The hoca was not only critical of dedes but also other hocas who did not perform namaz: "The other hocas think differently. You will read Koran, yet say 'There is no namaz.'" I am not satisfied with this [answer]."[113] He was approaching dedes with suspicion, firmly believed in the need to perform namaz, *seat* and follow the sünnet of the prophet as one could expect to hear from a Sunni imam. Yet he was at the same time differentiating himself from Sunnis by defining himself as a *Camera* [Shiite], and by performing the namaz in the manner *Caferi*s do. Yet he still did not reject but appropriated cems as of Koranic origin. He argued that cems were initiated by the prophet: "The twelve services originate from the Koran. The prophet held it [cem] in Akabe with 12 people."[114]

I went to the separate cemevi building next to the "culture center" around seven o'clock in the evening. Because the cem was supposed to start around half past seven, I had a chance to talk to the dede of the cemevi and another dede, who was there to assist him during the cem.

The dede of the cemevi was an old dede from Sivas. After answering my questions briefly he let the younger dede to answer my questions. This younger, middle aged dede was from the Kartal branch of the CEM Foundation. The hoca was not present during the cem. When I asked the dede his opinion about the statements of hoca with regard to performing namaz, he answered: "You can not carry two faiths in the same *ocak*, both namaz and cem can not coexist [there]. This person [hoca] has embraced other things because he had become suspicious of his own faith."[115] There was no administrator present in the congregational hall, and the dede criticized them

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[113] "*Diğer hocalar farklı düşünüyor. Kuran okuyacaksınız ve sonra namaz yok diyeceksiniz, ben bundan tatmin olmuyorum*."

[114] "*12 hizmet Kuran'da var. Akabe'de peygamber 12 kişiyle yapıyor*."

[115] "*Aynı kalpte iki inanç taşıyamazsın, hem namaz, hem cem olamaz. Bu kişi kendi inancından şüpheye düştüğü için başka şeylere sarılıyor*." Interviewed by the author, on May 5, 2004.

for not paying enough attention to cems: "The administrators [here] do not have faith (*inançsızlar*). A leader should set a good example, should impress people [with the example he provides]. [The administrators] should be people of faith. The reason and the faith should come together."[116] Interestingly enough, in the eyes of this dede, the leadership of the "community" was already given to the administrators despite his contempt for the administrators of a particular cemevi. Yet, he was setting a neat distinction between the separate realms of influence pertaining to dedes and administrators. The former was given the authority and responsibility over faith related issues while the latter was assigned to the realm of reason, the 'secular rational mind' that was to *administer* the worldly, mundane affairs.

As people began to arrive, I observed another striking indicator of the extent to which dedes and administrators could have different ideas regarding the organization of cems. The dede of the cemevi warned a young woman entering the cem to pick a headcover from a box put at the entrance and cover her head. This attitude was just the reverse of what the administrator had just told me. When I inquired why it was necessary for women to cover their hair, the young dede explained this necessity through the notion of *edep-erkan*:[117]

> One has to follow the edep-erkan within the place of worship. One has to adjust to the *pir*.[118] We do not follow the rules of sharia, there is a lot of tolerance in us. [Yet] no one can expand his/her legs on the floor, people [should] sit in circle. You can not sit as if you are in a coffee house, except those who are sick or have had an operation. Those are allowed sit on a chair. One can not come to the worshipping (*ibadet*) with bare arms or bareheaded, but we are tolerating [such behaviors] since presently we are educating the people, so that we can raise, enlightened youth who can treat all

[116] "*Yöneticiler inançsızlar, cemlere gelmiyorlar. Önder dediğin örnek olmalı, insanları etkilemelidir. [Yöneticiler] inançlı insanlar olmalı, akıl ve inanç bir araya gelmeli*."

[117] *Edep* means "good manners, being ashamed of doing bad things" and *erkan* means "liturgy." Together they relate to the rules and order that should be followed during a cem.

[118] Spiritual leader

> seventy three people in the same manner and contribute to the well being of Turkey.[119]

What is rather striking here is that the dede was opposing the ideal of 'modern Alevis' articulated by the administrator for the sake of maintaining order and discipline in the cem. However, he was still making it clear that the situation was far from what he desired, and he was tolerating certain behaviors in order not to discourage Alevi youth from attending the ceremonies. His words are important in demonstrating the limits of dedes' authority over a novel and elusive congregation.

Shortly after the cem started, Mr. Boy entered the cemevi. Subsequent debate between the dede from the CEM Foundation and Boy illustrates how different claims by different actors with different agendas and loyalties can be articulated within the same cemevi. Examining this debate also provides opportunity to examine the strategies deployed by actors whose competing interests are at stake in the struggles to the control of cemevis.

After the cem started, the dede gave a short speech on the importance of *Hıdrellez,*[120] and then criticized the administration for not making an announcement about this. Then he asked whether anybody from the assembly had any questions. At this point, the young dede from the CEM Foundation made an announcement about the "Hz Fatma Panel"[121] organized by the CEM Foundation, with which the administration of the Kartal Cemevi Foundation was not on good terms. At this

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[119] "*Edep-erkana uymak lazım ibadet yerinde. Pire uyulur. Bizde şer'i, katı kurallar yok, çok hoşgörülü davranılır. Kimse ayak uzatamaz, halka halinde oturulur. halinde oturulur. Kahvede gibi oturulmaz ama rahatsız olanlar, ameliyatlı olanlar sandalyede oturabilir. Kolu açık, başı açık bu ibadete girilmez, ama şu ana eğitimci bir amaç güttüğümüz için hoş karşılıyoruz, [ki] aydın, Türkiye'ye faydalı, yetmiş üç millet bir nazarla bakan gençler yetişsin*."

[120] *Hıdrellez* is the beginning of the spring. It is believed to be the meeting day of the prophets Hıdır and İlyas and the day when the spring starts (Korkmaz, 2003).

[121] Daughter of the prophet and the wife of Imam Ali, Fatma is often called "Mother Fatma," and revered deeply among Alevi communities.

moment Mr. Boy entered the cemevi. First he apologized for not having been able to attend the cems during the last month, because he had been too busy with the activities to establish a federation of Alevi foundations. Then he said:

> This society (*toplum*) needs to be united and to stay together (*birlik ve beraberlik*). We take part in joint activities with other organizations, but our cemevi is an independent institution. Everything that is said here [in this cemevi] renders our administration responsible in front of the state and the laws. Last week the call for the legal process the CEM Foundation aims to initiate against the state[122] was read here and [those who were present] were invited to take side against the state in this lawsuit. However, they did this without consulting us, spoke here by abusing the good intentions of the dede.[123]

Boy was making it clear from the outset that the authority for any legal and political issue rested with the administration, because this was a legal case and it was his duty and right to deal with such issues. He was implying that the dede of the cemevi was not competent enough to deal with such 'complicated' issues of politics and could easily be abused due to his "good intentions." He went on by warning the congregation, speaking from an authoritative position of leadership: "I was very upset [to hear this]. Under the roof of an institution where *we* hold responsibilities, one of our friends should not have done this. Are you *aware* of the implications of this case?"[124] (my emphases)

Following this exclamation, one of the participants in the congregation protested and a hot debate ensued. Boy went on to say that:

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[122] The lawsuit was being prepared against the government for the demands of the CEM Foundation on behalf of Alevi citizens.

[123] "*Bu toplumun birliğe bütünlüğe ihtiyacı var. Diğer kuruluşlarla ortak çalışmalarımız var, ama Kartal Cemevi bağımsız bir kuruluştur. Burada konuşulan her şey cemevi yönetimini devlet, yasalar karşısında bağlar. Geçen hafta burada Cem Vakfının T.C. aleyhine açmayı düşündüğü yasal sürecin bildirisi burada okutulmuş ve devlet aleyhine davada taraf olunması istenmiş. Ama bu bizim görüşümüz alınmadan, dedenin iyi niyeti kullanılarak burada konuşmuşlar*."

[124] "*Çok üzüldüm. Sorumluluk taşıdığımız bir kurumun çatısı altında bir arkadaşımızın böyle bir şeyi yapmaması gerekiyordu. Açılan davanın ne olduğunun bilincinde misiniz*?"

> This call should not have been read here. I am announcing the standpoint of this institution. Do not protest, and listen. I am not here to speak ill of the CEM Foundation. We are indeed trying to establish a federation with them, but I have to point out the mistakes of İzzettin Hoca [hoca as "professor" here] as well.[125]

The implied addressee of all of the criticism, the dede from the CEM Foundation wanted to respond to the accusations of the director, but the director did not let him speak saying, "Please, dede, I do not want to do anything disrespectful."[126] He was careful not to confront the dede directly within the space of cem, the congregational hall, despite his visible dislike of the dede and the whole incident. However, the dede was not going to give up easy and accept the claim of authority by the director of the foundation in the "cemevi." He replied, "Do not disturb the peace of the society here. My pir gave this *post* [*sheepskin*] to me, not you. Do not mislead the society. You can not represent *Alevilik* [both Alevism and Aleviness]. Everyone who represents *Alevilik* speaks here."[127]

Hence, the dede too was making a claim to represent the best interests of "the Alevi society." Interestingly, both parties refrained from using the religiously connoted term *cemaat* (community), and opted for *toplum* (society) in its place, a more "secularist" and inclusive term to define the congregation. The two parties were struggling for the right to represent the will and rights of this larger, imagined Alevi society. This debate pointed to the fact that the space of the cemevi as congregational hall in the imaginary of the dede was challenging the boundaries of cemevi as an Alevi institution in the imaginary of the cemevi's director.

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[125] "*Bu bildiri burada okunmamalıydı. Bu kurumun görüşlerini açıklıyorum, itiraz etmeyin, dinleyin. Amacım Cem Vakfı'nı yermek değil, biz onlara federasyon kurma çalışmasındayız, ama İzzettin Hoca'nın yanlışlarını da söylemeliyim*."

[126] "*Lütfen dede, saygısızlık yapmak istemiyorum*."

[127] "*Toplumun huzurunu kaçırmayın. Bu postu bana pirim verdi, sen vermedin. Toplumun yanlış yönlendirmeyin. Siz Aleviliği temsil edemezsiniz, Aleviliği temsil eden herkes burada konuşur*."

In his argument the dede did three things at the same time: First, he posed the claim that the cemevi (as congregational hall) fell within the confines of the dedes' authority, and the director's authority was not valid there. Second, he invoked the leadership role of the dedes for not only religious but everyday matters by challenging the opinion of the director on a political issue. Third, by broadening the limits of the debate to everybody present, he evoked a public debate within the congregational hall where everyone's opinion counted. By means of this strategy he contested Boy's claim to represent the will of all Alevis present (or who were present at the time of the call for the lawsuit) first, and second, Alevis in Turkey in general. This strategy seemed to work, since a middle aged man from the congregation turned to Boy and said:

> Your ("*senin*," not "*sizin*," which is more formal) talk [only] count in the administration and not in cemevi.
> Boy: If you are going to give answers, come [and see me] after the cem and we will talk.
> Participant: You can not silence anybody here! My Aleviness is not dependent on you. This is a place of worship. The head of the institution is there [pointing to the outside of the congregational hall].[128]

Then the dede of the cemevi intervened and the parties calmed down. The cem continued. The parties came together after the cem and discussion continued. They were still debating, when I left.

[128] "*Senin konuşman yönetimde olur, cemevinde olmaz.*
Boy: Cevap verecekseniz, cemden sonra gelin, konuşalım.
Katılımcı: Burada kimseyi susturamazsın. Benim Aleviliğim sana bağlı değil. Burası ibadet yeridir. Kurumun başı orada [dışarıyı işaret ederek]."

Administrators

If dedes give up their duties regarding the matters of faith and get involved in the administrative tasks, and if administrators abandon their duties and interrupt dedes in matters of faith problems would occur. That is, everybody has their own domain of responsibility, limits of which have to be recognized.[129]

Kazım Genç, the Director of Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association

The authority and influence of administrators over cemevis cover a wide range of areas. To begin with, administrators are in charge of the construction process during the building of cemevis. They deal with the municipalities in order to obtain construction licenses, land deeds and municipal support for the construction of the buildings. They are responsible for legal problems,[130] and negotiate with numerous state agencies with respect to the bureaucratic procedures. They either use their own resources or mobilize regional or business networks to finance the construction expenses.

The administrators' know-how and the personal connections they have established with bureaucrats, municipalities and business circles are decisive in dealing with complex bureaucratic and financial processes involved in the establishment and the operation of cemevis. The administrators also establish relationships and negotiate with state agencies such as the police and the offices of the müfti and kaymakamlık in their struggle to legalize cemevis. It is again

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[129] "*Dede eğer inanç konusundaki görevlerini bırakır, gelir eğer yönetsel konularda ilgili sıkıntılara müdahale ederse; yöneticiler görevini bırakır, inanç konularla ilgili bölümlerde dedeye müdahale ederse bu sıkıntı yaratır. Yani herkesin bir görev alanı vardır ve bu görev alanının sınırlarına uymak zorundadır.*" Interviewed by the author, on July 1, 2004.

[130] "It is often the case that cemevis are built on treasury land, and especially in the early 1990s it was not uncommon to see clashes between the police forces and Alevi groups in the construction sites of cemevis because the municipalities ordered the demolition of the buildings."

administrators who deal with the academics, journalists, political party, NGO and EU representatives who frequent the cemevis.

The administrators I contacted and interviewed during my fieldwork had spent their childhood years outside Istanbul generally. They almost all were first generation immigrants to Istanbul, having left their hometowns and villages in their early childhoods. The reasons for doing so had often to do with their parents' seeking jobs in Istanbul due to economic hardships, or their families' desire to provide their children with better education possibilities. In some cases, they had come to Istanbul on their own in their youth in order to work or receive higher education.[131]

There were current or retired state servants, trade unionists, businessmen, professionals such as civil engineers and lawyers as well as "Alevi" intellectuals in the administrative boards of the cemevis I visited during my field work. The administrators of the cemevis were generally recruited among the professional circles and tradesman. Some of them had established their own businesses. When possible, it was arranged to have -at least- directors with university degrees. Many of them have had work experience in municipalities, trade unions or state agencies. During the formation of the list of candidates for the administrative boards it was important to prepare candidate lists representing the diversity of the population resident in the particular location in which the cemevi was being established. The vice chairperson of *Anadolu Bilim Kültür Cem Vakfı* (the Anatolia Science Culture Cem Foundation), which was building a cemevi in Ihlamurkuyu explained to me the recruitment process in the following terms:

> We say [to them], come and do it. There are nine people [in the administration]. They are from Sivas, Malatya and Tunceli. The chairperson owns a bakery, vice chairperson [himself] is a civil

[131] Education has been seen as a major means of upward mobilization among Alevis and is a significant source of prestige.

> engineer, two are retired, one owns a car gallery, one produces plastic windows, one is a doctor. These are the people who founded the foundation.[132]

He expressed his ideas regarding the ideal qualities of an administrator as,

> An administrator should be professional; [administrator cadres] should be formed out of educated, cultured, and learned (*bilgili*) people. There should be educators [teachers] within the administration, there should be people with technical skills such as architects and engineers in order to deal with construction-related problems. There should be doctors, psychologists, economists.[133]

However, the difficulty of allocating enough time to administrative tasks has diminished the number of young professionals in cemevi administrations. Although there were often complaints about the lack of young 'educated' professionals within the administrative circles, the administrators who worked at full time jobs experienced difficulty in finding sufficient time for administrative duties. Many administrators were either retired, or had their self established business. For example, one of the youngest Alevist activists I met during my fieldwork, Ali Kenanoğlu, the general secretary and Istanbul representative of the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation (ABF), told me that, "Within the organization of ABF, most of the other members are retired. They all have grown up children. The only young members are me and Muhterem [the director of the Alibeyköy Branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association]."[134]

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[132] "*Biz gelin, yapın diyoruz. Dokuz kişi var, Sivas, Malatya, Tunceli'den. Başkan fırıncı, başkan yardımcısı inşaat mühendisi, iki emekli, bir otomobilci, bir lastik pencereci, bir tıp doktoru var kurucuların içinde*." Interviewed by the author, on March 24, 2005.

[133] "*Yönetici profesyonel olmalı, eğitilmiş, kültürlü, bilgili insanlardan oluşmalı. Yönetimde eğitimci olmalı, inşatla ilgili sorunlarla ilgilemek için mimar-mühendis gibi teknik adam olmalı. Doktor, psikolog, iktisatçı olmalı*."

[134]"*ABF organizasyonunda ki diğer üyelerin çoğu emekli, çocuklarının büyütmüş. Genç olarak bir ben bir de Muhterem varız*."

Ali Kenanoğlu was able to find time for his multiple administrative tasks because he was working as a financial advisor on a freelance basis. He was simultaneously the director of *Hubyar Sultan Kültür Derneği* (the Hubyar Sultan Culture Association), the executive board member and Istanbul representative of Alevi Bektaşi Federation, and the director of the Okmeydanı Cemevi administrative discipline committee. Muhterem Aktaş, a lawyer, was the director of Alibeyköy branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association and an executive member of the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation. During his administrative term at the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association, he constantly received criticism from the members of his own administrative board as well as many members of the association for not devoting the necessary time to the administration of the Alibeyköy Cemevi. Largely due to this issue, he was not able to be elected for a second term.

As tasks related to "faith" are given to dedes and hocas, administrators seldom attend cems, because they have other "work to do."[135] However, even though they do not attend cems regularly, they are there to make sure everything is under control. As an administrator of the Okmeydanı Cemevi puts it:

> We do not know much about Alevism, we are [only] administrators here. We are not Alevi dedes, we have dedes here. We prepare [the necessary] environment. We do not deal with anything related to cems. Cem is the task of dede, *aşık* and other service holders. If there are negativities (*olumsuzluklar*) taking place [in cems] we warn them afterwards. Aleviness is the job of the dedes, we are [only] administrators here.[136]

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[135] In Nurtepe Cemevi only two administrators, one also being the hoca and the other the dede of the cemevi, regularly attended cems.

[136] "*Aleviliği pek bilmiyoruz, burada yöneticiyiz. Alevi dedesi değiliz, bizim dedelerimiz var. Biz ortam hazırlarız. Cemde bizim hiçbir şeyimiz olmaz. Cem, dede, aşık ve oradaki hizmetçilerin görevidir. Olumsuzluklar olduğu zaman sonradan ikaz ederiz. Alevilik dedelerin işi biz burada yöneticiyiz.*" Interviewed by the author, on March 14, 2004.

As it becomes obvious from the quote above, despite the ostensible agreement on the separation of the realms of dedes and administrators, the administrators of Alevi organizations often interfere with "faith related" issues in order to prevent "negativities." The desire to "modernize" Alevi institutions often come from administrators and meet resistance from dedes. The administrators' will to render the Alevi rituals as well as the belief system 'compatible with contemporary life' is a source of clash between dedes and the administrators.

One of the main avenues through which the conflicts between the administrators and the dedes surfaces has been defining Alevism as a "way of life" (*yaşam tarzı*) or as a "faith" (*inanç*). For instance, the European Alevi Academy, an institution, which was established in Europe by dedes, but later got into conflict with the Confederation of European Alevi Unions (CEAU), announced a public declaration protesting the representation of Alevism in strictly secular terms by both the DRA and the CEAU. Yet, the real target was the CEAU administration that insisted on its vision of the non-Islamic character and definition of Alevism:

> Alevism is not simply a "culture and a teaching" or exclusively "a way of life" as some –for whatever purpose- claim. Alevism is the name of a faith that finds its expression in the path of "God-Muhammed-Ali," which follows the traces of "Prophet's household and twelve imams," has been supported and developed by the wisdom and contributions of the Saints of Khorasan and Anatolia.[137]

[137] European Alevi Academy Press Release, February 16, 2002.

Dedes

> Leadership [of Alevi communities] has been taken away from the dedes, and [their leadership] has been turned into a symbolic one that starts and ends with the threshold of a Cem House (Vorhoff in Yaman, 2004, p. 187).

Dedes have for along time carried central importance for the maintenance of Alevi traditions and communal services (Yaman, 2004; Yalçınkaya, 1996). They have been the holders of the esoteric knowledge concerning Alevi beliefs and practices. Dedes' authority has applied not only to religious but influenced worldly affairs when they settled the disputes between their talips as judges. Dedes have not only presided over community matters, but also acted as healers, news carriers, story tellers and teachers. Their influence stems from their exclusive authority over not only Alevi liturgies, but from their ability to read and write while most of their talips could not. Moreover, since dedes traveled between the villages of their talips, they carried news, hence provided a significant source of contact with the outer world. Clarke remarks that "the republic of Turkey institutionalised many of the functions previously held by the dede and centralised power in the state, the dede's authority has been significantly curtailed" (1999, p. 108). The influence of dedes in areas such as teaching, healing, judging, and predicting the future has been taken over by "professionals" such as educators, doctors, state judiciary, and social scientists.

Dedes come from numerous *ocak*s that are scattered throughout Turkey. No cem ceremony is possible without the presence of a dede, and one can only become a dede by means of descending from a dede lineage. Dedes claim to descend from the twelve imams, and being a dede "is bestowed by God, it carries on through lineage, and can not be attained by education" (Bozkurt, 1993, p. 96). This sacred lineage endowed dedes with influence and the authority over Alevi communities. Rather than

their attained knowledge of Alevi beliefs and services, dedes are revered, to a large extent, because of incarnating the holy persona in their very material presence. Childhood memories of the dede of the Sultanbeyli Cemevi reveal the significance of this holy aura very well:

> Now, I have had talips. The man [his talip] knew so much that he had memorized the whole Koran, [yet] I remember that this 70-80 year old man would rise to his feet when I entered the room, a 10-12 year old [child]. Now, be careful, for what [trait] of mine did he rise to his feet? He made me sit somewhere higher than himself, despite the fact that I was a child. Then I was a child, I knew nothing. Moreover, my talip was my teacher. See, as a learnt man, as someone who had memorized Koran he was my teacher.[Yet] he was asking my permission even to teach me, despite the fact that he was the teacher.[138]

Because of their privileged proximity to the realm of the sacred, dedes are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers and ability to demonstrate *keramet*s.[139] Alaattin Alkılıç, the muhtar of Mahmut Şevket Paşa neighborhood told me about a dede from his childhood. His memories of this dede illustrate extent to which dedes could be a source of awe and respect among their talips:

> A. A: Our dede would live there; yes, in his own village. At a certain time, he would say "I am going to come and stay at your [house] for ten days," and they would come and stay. In our village they [the villagers] would take him to one or two houses [to stay]. I also remember this, When dede stayed at a house, they would put four or five *döşek*s (mattresses) –you know the mattresses, right?- where he sat. Dede would sit on them; he would sit on the mattresses and sink. It was already difficult to see the dede, but there was such an extraordinary discipline and respect. How should

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[138]"*Şimdi benim taliplerim vardı. Adam Kuran'ı ezbere okuyacak kadar bilgiliydi. ben on on iki yaşlarında kapıdan içeri girince o 70-80 yaşında adamın ayağa kalktığını biliyorum. Bak dikkat et benim neyime kalktı o ayağa? Beni çocuk halimde aldı üst tarafında oturttu. Ben o zaman çocuktum, bilgi yok. Hem benim talibim bana bilgi öğretiyor. Okumuş adam, Kuran'ı okumuş adam işte hocalık yaptı bana. Bana bilgi verirken bile benden destur istiyor, artı bana öğretmenlik yapıyor bana. Yani şimdi sen tutup da bilgi ile, sıradan bir Sünni vatandaş gibi, cami imamı gibi dede koyarsan olmaz.*" Interviewed by the author, on September 5, 2004.

[139] God given ability to create miracles.

I express it [the extent of the respect], no one could [dare to] talk. One fellow countryman (*vatandaş*) would find out those who made noise during cems and the dede would punish them.
M. E: What sorts of punishments?
A. A: He [dede] would say things such as "You will go, bring such and such thing from such and such place," while somebody else was supposed to bring it [do the job], or "You will carry water to your house today, you will do the all housework today.." There was punishments of this sort that dede applied, I remember.
M. E: And would everybody obey those [orders]?
A. A: They were obeying that [particular] dede. Other dedes would also come, but they were not treated with the same degree of love and respect, but that dede was a very what-do-you-call-it, dede. Let me put it like this, I should tell you something my father told me. There was a dede in our village, and he had some poplar trees. One day, there occurred theft regarding those trees. Two brothers were debating, so they [the villagers] called the dede. Dede told the fellow compatriots (*vatandaş*), "You are wrong, Ali Efendi." [The man] said, "No." [Dede] said, "May God will that rain and storms" –of course he said that in Kurdish- "May the hail etc. hit [your land]. You are wrong, [but] you do not accept it." He said, "May rains and *şivan*[140] hit these lands." He cursed them in this way. After two months, you are free to think whatever you want, the field the dede mentioned [cursed] was destroyed (*dümdüz olmuş*). Neither the field, nor the trees were spared. For this reason they are almost afraid of the dede, what he says. This is what I have heard. My father was warning me, "Watch out, my son" he was saying…They [the villagers] were afraid of all the dedes, but they were abnormally (*anormal derecede*) scared by this dede. [Seeing] the dede's entrance to that village, [seeing] people run away in various directions (*kaçışmak*) and the respect shown [to him] would impress us. I remember such things. My father used to tell me, and I myself experienced such things.[141]

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[140] Ş*ivan* means "lamentation" in Kurdish.

[141] "*A: A: Dedemiz orada yaşardı, evet kendi köyüydü. Belli bir dönem, on gün gelip sizde kalacağım, derdi; gelip kalırlardı. Bizim köyümüzde bir iki eve götürürlerdi. Bir de şunu hatırlıyorum, dede bir evde oturduğu zaman oturduğu yerde, döşekler, -döşekleri bilirsin- bizim köyde yatak dört beş tane döşek koyarlardı. Dede onun üzerine otururdu böyle,yatakların üzerine dede otururdu, gömülürdü. Dede zaten zor görünürdü, ama acayip bir disiplin vardı, bir saygı vardı. Nasıl söyleyeyim, kimse konuşamazdı. Cem yapılırken de bir vatandaş konuşanı hemen tespit ederdi, dede ona ceza uygulardı*
M. E:Ne tür cezalar ?
A. A: İşte derdi ki "Sen gideceksin, şuradan şunu getireceksin" bir başkasının getirmesi gerekirken, veya "Kova su getireceksin, bugün evin bütün işini sen yapacaksın." Dedenin böyle uyguladığı cezalar vardı, hatırlıyorum
M. E: Herkes de uyardı buna ?
A. A: O dedeye uyuyorlardı. Başka dedeler geliyordu, aynı sevgi aynı saygı gösterilmiyordu ama o dedemiz böyle çok şey bir insandı. Ben şöyle söyleyeyim, babamdan duyduğum bir olayı söyleyeyim. Bizim köyde bir dede varmış, dedenin kavakları falan varmış. O kavaklarda bir gün bir haksızlık olmuş. İki kardeş tartışıyorlarmış, köylüler dedeyi çağırmışlar. Dede 'Sen haksızsın Ali efendi' demiş vatandaşa, 'Yok' demiş. 'İnşallah yağmur fırtına' -tabii Kürtçe söylemiş- 'dolu bilmem ne vurur. Sen haksızsın, kabul etmiyorsun.' Demiş ki 'Buralar yağmur şivan yesin.' Böyle bir beddua etmiş. İki ay sonra, siz nasıl düşünüyorsanız düşünün, iki ay sonra o tarla, dedenin söylediği o yer dümdüz olmuş.

The importance of this account lies in the fact that this dede's influence on the community was not based on his knowledge regarding the Koran or the excellence of his cem service, but stemmed from his ability to create –real or imagined- material effect on the lives of his talips. Dede held such special place in their eyes that he did not even sit on the same level as them, but was offered to sit on top of several mattresses. As shown by this example, dedes' proximity to the realm of the metaphysical and their gift of demonstrating keramet (miracle) were significant sources of authority and influence.

Despite changing qualities and meaning of being a dede, some Alevis still insist on the demonstration of keramet by dedes. One of the most "popular" dedes, not only in Istanbul, but throughout Turkey and abroad, Dertli Divani told me an anecdote about a cem he presided over in Germany: "We were about to start the cem. Then one man from the congregation turned to me and said 'Dede, show us a keramet.' I told him I was not there to show keramet, but hold the cem. Then he said, 'What kind of a dede are you, you can not show keramet!' We had a big argument and he left the cem."[142]

The way in which dedes interact with Alevi communities has been subject to change as well. The visits of the dede to the houses of their talips provided an opportunity to establish personal ties with one's spiritual guide as the road to become

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Ne tarla kalmış, ne ağaçlar kalmış. O yüzden hep korkarlar dededen, dedenin konuşmalarından. Böyle duydum, babam da anlatıyordu, 'Aman oğlum' diyordu…Her dededen çekinirlerdi, ama bu dededen anormal derecede çekinirlerdi. Dedenin o köye girmesi, o insanların kaçışması, gösterilen saygı bizi de etkiliyordu. Böyle şeyler hatırlıyorum. Babam onlar anlatıyordu, kendim de yaşadım böyle şeyler." Interviewed by the author, on April 15, 2005.

[142] "*Ceme başlamak üzereydik. Oradakiler arasında bir adam bana dönüp 'Dede bize bir keramet göster' dedi. Ben de oraya keramet göstermeye değil, cem yapmaya gittiğimi söyledim. O zaman da 'Keramet gösteremiyorsan sen ne biçim dedesin!' diye konuştu. Sonra tartıştık ve adam cemi terk etti*."

a perfect human being (*insan-ı kamil*) was believed to be mediated by dedes. Listening to the anecdotes and stories narrated by dedes was deemed significant for personal growth. However, it was important to watch the example the dede set in flesh and blood, rather than simply listening to him. Dede enacted the example of a perfect human being in his habitual practices as a whole. However, as a result of the increasing importance of the new media Alevi individuals have gained "direct and complete, rather than progressive, access to knowledge, which is provided in a discursive form, not through spiritual exercises" (Roy, 2004, p. 222).

There are some Alevi families still maintaining ties with their own dedes, yet their numbers are dwindling. These Alevis continue to believe in the necessity of establishing intimate relationship with their dedes. An Alevi businessman from Tunceli, Hüseyin thought that this was most beneficial for his children:

> Surely he comes [and visit us] every year. I hope this can carry on. My children have seen, how to meet a dede, how he comes, why he comes, they know these all very well. That is, I am lucky about this matter. What I want most is that my children see their pir, that our tradition continues, that this path of Alevism continues. I believe that our path is right, that [my children] will follow it.[143]

Another important source of power for dedes has been their access to "knowledge" (*bilgi*). The content of this "knowledge" had both to do with metaphysical knowledge and knowledge about mundane, practical matters. Since the borders between the 'sacred' and 'profane' were not delineated and policed so carefully as at present, dedes *knew* a great deal about "worldly" topics as well, and this empowered them further in their relations with their talips. With the immigration

[143]"*Tabii her yıl geliyor bize. İnşallah devam eder. Bizim çocuklar gördü, dede nasıl karşılanır, nasıl geldiğini, niçin geldiğini çok iyi biliyor çocuklarımız. Yani ben bu konuda şanslıyım. En çok istediğim de benim çocuklarım pirini görmesi, geleneğimizin devam etmesi, işte bu Alevilik yolunun devam etmesi. Yolumuzun doğru olduğunu, bunu devam ettireceklerine inanıyorum ben*." Interviewed by the author, on June 12, 2005.

to cities and increased integration into specialized kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of daily life has expanded to include knowledge on areas such as law, bureaucracy, and "scientific" knowledge. Understood in these terms, it has become impossible for dedes to not to lag behind their talips in terms of knowledge. Accordingly, dedes have been compelled to retreat more and more into the realm of "religious" knowledge. Accompanying the confinement of dedes to congregational halls in cemevis has been the redefinition of the content of dedes' "knowledge" as explicitly and exclusively on "religious" grounds.

The director of Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services, Ali Rıza Uğurlu, acknowledges this new distinction between the "knowledge" of administering a cemevi and the "knowledge" of carrying out "religious services":

> M. E: It seems you do not approve dedes being directors in [Alevi] associations?
> A. R. U: No, I do not approve of it much, because it [administration] requires another [kind of] knowledge, another dimension. Relations with the state, public relations, and governance are one thing, administering services of faith is yet another.[144]

In this process, 'modern' ways of knowing have replaced the transmission via story telling, and the mythical past that is enacted by dedes has been by and large abandoned for the sake of rationalized accounts of "scientific analysis." Alevi histories and liturgy as narrated by dedes have become subjects of "scientific" inquiry and explicated in terms of scientific methodology. Educated within the positivistic tradition of state sponsored education, new Alevi subjects do not want to listen to "fairy tales," but demand "rational explanations." The result of these developments

[144] "*M. E: Dedelerin dernek başkanı olmasını da çok tasvip etmiyorsunuz galiba ?*
A. R. U: Yok, çok tasvip etmiyorum; çünkü o başka bir bilgi gerektiriyor, başka bir boyut gerektiriyor. devletle ilişkiler halkla ilişkiler yönetme başka bir şey,inançsal hizmetler yürütme başka bir şey." Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

was a widening gap of 'knowledge" between dedes and talips. Ergül Şanlı Dede from Ümraniye was convinced that,

> The cems can not be held by memorizing prayers only. Dedes are lagging behind society [talips], including me. When I was publishing this book [a play he published], somebody asked me "Are you a dede?" I am a *seyyit* (a descendant of the Prophet), and am from the ocak of Dede Garkın, but I have not become a dede [yet]. I say that in my understanding, being a dede is different. If you are lagging behind society in terms of knowledge and skills, if you are lacking the skills to lead the community, if society is ahead of you, even if you were Hacı Bektaş Veli himself, it would be the same. I mean the real superiority someone carries in terms of being a seyyit or dede is the superiority of knowledge.[145]

Accordingly, dedes have suffered a loss of self confidence. A young dede who preferred to work as an administrator at the Bağcılar Cemevi rather than act as a dede told me that, "I do not think of becoming a dede. Because, we desire someone who has a university degree… somebody who can talk should occupy the post. That is, if an airplane engineer comes to cem and asks questions, he [this knowledgeable dede] should be able to convince him [with his answers]."[146]

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[145] "*Sadece dua ezberlemekle cem olmaz. Dedeler şu anda, ben de dahil toplumun çok gerisindeyiz. Hatta bana birisi sormuştu bu kitap çıkarken, "Dede misin?" diye sordu. Soyda seyitlik, Dede Garkın ocağındanım ama dede olmadım. Benim anlayışımdaki dedelik diyorum, farklı. Bilgi beceride toplumun gerisinde kalmışsan, topluma öncülük edecek yetilerin yoksa, toplum senden ilerideyse istersen Hacı Bektaş Veli'nin kendisi ol, bir şey fark etmez. Yani burada seyitlikteki dedelikteki asıl amaç bilgi üstünlüğüdür.*" Interviewed by the author, on April 11, 2004.

[146] "*Dedelik yapmayı düşünmüyorum, çünkü biz istiyoruz ki üniversite bitirmiş… konuşmasına bilen insanlar bu işi yapsın. Yani bir uçak mühendisi ceme gelip bir soru sorduğu zaman dede onu ikna edebilsin*." Interviewed by the author, on October 19, 2004.

If the dede I call "hak" [righteous] goes to a mosque, I will follow him; if he goes to a church, I will be there. There is nothing special about wood or betony, but a building is [there] to protect you from the cold, right? Now, cemevi is not different from mosque or church. Worshipping can be done everywhere. For worshipping you need time and a place, any place with four walls [would do]. Once you have a mürşit[147]…worshipping can be done anywhere.[148]

İlyas dede, Okmeydanı Cemevi

What is expressed above, this dede's dedication to his mürşit has lost from its significance with the opening of cemevis. Cemevis make dedes *locatable*, they anchor them in space; moving the emphasis from the specific persona of the dede to the institutionalized position. The result is a shift from the personal traits of particular dede lineages and personas to the redefined position of dede as a professional cleric employed at cemevis. Alevis from different regions with former or current loyalties to different *ocak*s have started to frequent cemevis and demand service from dedes they have not formed commitments. Before the opening of cemevis and dedes' employment in these institutions, dedes were generally distinguished on the basis of the ocak from which they came. During my fieldwork, I observed that the *ocak* background continues to be important, but dedes are often recognized and referred to as "dede of such and such cemevi" rather than their personal reputation or ocak background.

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[147] *Mürşit* is one's spiritual leader. He is the dede for a talip and another dede for a dede.

[148] "*Benim hak dediğim dede camiye gitsin, camide peşindeyim ben. Kiliseye gitsin, oradayım. Ağaçtan, betondan bir şey yok, ama o nedir, insanı soğuktan muhafaza etmektir bir bina, değil mi? Şimdi cemeviyle caminin, kilisenin bir farkı yok. İbadet nerde olsa olur, bir zaman, ibadet için bir zaman lazım, bir de mekan. İşte dört duvar arası bir mekan, bir mürşit …olduğu zaman ibadet her yerde olur*." Interviewed by the author, on February 23, 2004.

Dedes' employment at cemevis marks a significant transformation with regard to talip-dede relations. Before cemevis, a defining characteristic of dedes was their mobility. The majority of dedes had their talips residing at other locations than where they lived. By the end of the harvest season, dedes would start visiting their talips in their villages. During the fall and winter they would be always on the move visiting villages, during which they would conduct cem ceremonies and settle disputes. Dedes generally would stay in the houses of their talips during their visits and then return to their own villages (Yıldız, 2004). This has also been the case when Alevi communities immigrated to other cities or countries, even though it has become more and more difficult to maintain the ties. However, as mentioned above, dedes have become anchored in space with the opening of the cemevis. One does not have to seek out and contact dedes exclusively during the winters for the procession of communal services any longer. A dede is always available at the cemevis. As dedes get accessible all the time, and bear responsibilities to every Alevi (and sometimes non Alevis) visiting cemevis, they cease to be exclusively responsible to their talips, but to everyone who demands to receive service from cemevis.

Before the cemevis, many dedes worked on their own land, or were craftsmen, sustaining themselves by other means than simply receiving money or goods (these payments were called *hakullah*[149]) from their talips in exchange of their services. In this way, the dependence of dedes on their talips was limited and their relationships with the talips were not formalized in an anonymous setting. In cemevis, however, dedes have turned into full or part-time working employees: "Dedes do not have a role beyond being paid employees who only carry out some religious services in cem culture centers and cemevis…Dedes are desired here [in cemevis] for services such as

[149] *Hakullah* literally means "the share of the God." It is the payment in cash or kind that *dede*s receive in return of their services.

presiding over cems, blessing *lokmas*[150] and sacrificial animals as well as attending funeral prayers" (Yaman, 2004, p. 180). Yaman (2004) observes that in urban cemevis dedes are generally excluded from the administrative processes:

> Very few directors and administrators come from dede families in well known Alevi associations. Those administrators who come from dede families do not have knowledge regarding traditional Alevism, nor deal with religious practices such as cems. Especially, it is observable that dedes are kept outside the decision making mechanism in these institutions that belong to Alevis (p. 179).

Despite dedes' having accepted their authority to be limited to the "religious services," problems still occur when the administrators challenge the position of dedes even in "faith related" issues. The director the Directorate of Alevi Islamic Religious Services, Ali Rıza Uğurlu expressed the much reiterated dede opinion regarding administrators. Despite their knowledge of know how regarding bureaucratic and administrative tasks, administrators were supposed to be devoted Alevis and were not to get involved with the matters of faith and leave those to dedes:

> The administrators are very important, because dede is not everything by himself. Also there is such a mentality that "the dede is," he [the administrator] says "Dede is my servant (*memur*), I can make him do this or that according to my will." If the person supervising [over a dede] does not have faith –and the person can easily say such things, that the dedes [can] have no influence. We see cemevis that function perfectly and are full of people when the person who administers it [cemevi] is endowed with faith and knows how to run an association, and he is one with his employees and his dede. But of course, the dedes do not have much influence at places where the dominant mentality is, "It does not make much difference whether there is or there is not cem, what is this cem anyway? Are you still crying after Hasan and Hüseyin?"[151]

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[150] Food that is distributed after cems and meals given after the deceased.

[151] "*Yönetenler çok önemli çünkü dede başlı başına bir şey değil. Bir de öyle bir zihniyet var ki, "dede benim," diyor "benim bir memurum. İstersem onu yaptırırım, istersem yaptırmam." Başındaki insan eğer inançlı olmazsa -ve başındaki insan bunu söyleyebiliyor rahatlıkla- dedelerin hiçbir etkinliği kalmıyor. Orayı yöneten insan inançla donanmış ve biraz dernekçiliği, işini bilen işinin ehli olan insan dedesiyle de bütünleşmişse, çalışanlarıyla bütünleşmişse halkın beklentilerini yerine getirebiliyorsa o cemevlerinin sağlıklı mükemmel yürüdüğünü halkla dolup taştığını görüyoruz. Ama bunlardan yoksun, işte "cem olsa da olur olmasa da olur, cem de neymiş? halen bin yıllık Hasan, Hüseyin'e mi ağlıyorsunuz" diyen bir zihniyetin egemen oluğu yerlerde dedenin de bir etkinliği olmuyor*." Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

Problems between dedes and administrators also occur, because dede networks extend beyond that of cemevi administrations. Dedes establish ties and sometimes collaborate with rival institutions. In some cases, dedes who have problems with the executive board of a cemevi might be replaced.[152] This creates feelings of unease and insecurity among dedes working at cemevis. As Ali Rıza Uğurlu puts it:

> Look, there are dedes who are fired because [that] dede worked and attended cems at another cemevi, with which the [the administration of the cemevi where dede worked] could not get along and experienced some problems at the administrative level. There are such cemevis, because he [the administrator] is the supervisor of the dede. In a way, dede is obliged to do whatever he says. What he [dede] comes [to the cemevi] for, because he needs to earn his bread.[153]

The number of dede children has arisen in accordance with the general population increase Turkey has experienced over the years, and they could provide the necessary resource to train dedes. However, despite the rising number of potential dedes, it remains a problem to find dedes to work in cemevis. The majority of dede children prefer not to inherit the family line. Important in this has been the transformation of the practice of being a dede from something periodical to a full time profession with scarce resources and not high career prospects at cemevis. Compounded with the diminished prestige of dedes in the eyes of Alevi communities, it has become quite a challenge to become a dede.

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[152] For instance the former dede of the Alibeyköy Cemevi was removed from his post because he gave an interview to the conservative newspaper *Zaman*.

[153] "*Bakın bir cemevinde dede onların iyi geçinemediği, yönetsel bazda problemli olan bir cemevinde dedelik yaptı diye, cem yaptı diye işine son verilen dedeler var. Cemevleri var, niye çünkü dedenin başında o bir amir. Dede onun dediğini yapmakta bir yerde yükümlü. Kendisini neye geliyor, çünkü ekmeği yok.*" Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

Lack of vigor and training on the side of dede children to fill in the dede positions in cemevis has brought the necessary condition of descending from holy lineage under criticism. Some institutions, such as the Şahkulu Shrine have inaugurated courses where anybody willing to become a dede can attend and earn a certificate to work as a dede. The CEM Foundation, too, has started to educate dede candidates. The director of the Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services, Ali Rıza Uğurlu, told me that although it was preferred to gather the cadres out of dede children, it was not an obligation due to the scarcity of overall availability of dede children.

The training of dede children by institutions other than dede ocaks has had two significant implications: First, the education of these young dedes is not entrusted to older, more experienced dedes as it was before. It is no longer the case that the gift of being a dede is transmitted through participation in communal practices, but it has become part of a formal training complete with instructors and certificates. Alevi intellectuals and researchers who have specialized on Alevism join experienced dedes to train young dedes, further unsettling the monopoly of dedes on such topics.

These attempts of some Institutions to train dedes without holy descent are not welcomed by everyone. Some severely criticize them for corrupting Alevism. For instance, Pir Ali Dede of the Sultanbeyli Cemevi used an analogy to illustrate his protest against the possibility of training dedes without dede lineage:

> Being dede is something that comes from your ancestors, meaning, humans' lineage looks like the lineage of a tree. You are what your father is, you can not turn a walnut into hazelnut, can you turn it into an apple? You are what your line is, you can not change that. I would give you education and a diploma [so that] you go and teach [how to be a dede], can you think of anything sillier? It is impossible. You are what your line is, everybody is from their own lineage. Every tree bears its own fruit on its branches.[154]

[154] "*Dedelik soydan gelen bir şeydir, yani her ağacın soyu nasılsa insanın soyu da öyledir senin baban ne ise sen de osun, sen cevizi fındık yapamazsın kardeşim yapabilir misin, elma yapabilir misin? Senin*

The dede went on to argue that rendering the status of dede attainable through education would erode the difference between Alevis and Sunnis: "I mean, now it would not work out if you try to put [here, to the cemevi] a dede [who had gained his position through his] knowledge, just like an ordinary Sunni, like an imam of a mosque. This can not happen in Alevism."[155]

Yet, in the face of eroding ties between talips and dedes and the establishment of new networks transposing the inherited forms of loyalty between the two groups, it becomes more and more difficult to verify one's claim to be a "real" dede. For instance, the zakir of the Sultanbeyli Cemevi was skeptical about the claims of some dedes to sacred lineage.

> Where are we going to find this tree [pedigree]? The man comes and says "I am a dede." I do not know his origins, I do not know where he is from. If someone comes here, says 'I am a dede," I just kiss his hands [as a sign of respect]. However he [should] prove it [by explaining his origins]: "We came from this and this place." You must make some research, and no one [dede] should be offended by that.[156]

As dedes are expected to become professional clerics, they are required to compete with their Sunni 'counterparts' in order to win the commitment of their no longer 'given' followers. In consequence, expectations from dedes have changed. In cemevis dedes are expected to have profound knowledge of theological debates and

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soyun ne ise sen de osun, bunu değiştiremezsin Ben de eğitim diploma vereyim sana git öğret, öyle saçma şey olur mu ya? Öyle şey olmaz. Senin soyun ne ise osun, herkes kendi soyundadır. Her ağacın dalında [kendi] meyvesi olur." Interviewed by the author, on April 16, 2005

[155] "*Yani şimdi sen tutup da bilgi ile, sıradan bir Sünni vatandaş gibi, cami imamı gibi dede koyarsan olmaz. Alevilikte bu olmaz*."

[156] "*Nereden bulacağız bu ağacı? Geliyor adam 'Dedeyim' diyor. Yerini bilmiyorum, yurdunu bilmiyorum. Şuradan biri gelse, "Ben dedeyim" dese hemen eline sarılıyorum. Ama bu kendini tasdik edecek, 'Şuradan geldik'. Araştıracaksın illa ki böyle kızma darılma yok*." Interviewed by the author, on April 16, 2005.

the Koran. Although it used to be mostly a job for hocas before, many dedes have learnt the funeral services.

When dedes offer the service of reciting Koran in Arabic, they enter into competition with hocas –both Alevi and Sunni- for performing the intonation of Koran in the most appealing way. In an environment, in which there are many opportunities to compare and contrast, a young businessman from Amasya complained about the performance of the dede he arranged from Alibeyköy Cemevi when he recited Koran for a *mevlit*:[157]

> Recently we brought a dede from the [Alibeyköy] cemevi for a mevlit. We should have rather invited a hoca, we all think so. I think dedes are insufficient. Dedes should be chosen among knowledgeable ones. Today, a [Sunni] hoca speaks for two and a half hours during a Friday prayer and everyone listens to him. A knowledgeable dede should come and tell me about what my essence is.[158]

Working full time at cemevis, and their position and designated duties within the cemevi hierarchy renders the status of dedes more and more comparable to that of the Sunni imams at mosques. This surely is related to the congregation that demands to see articulate 'men of religion' who could constitute a counterpart to Sunni clerics. For this reason, dedes are constantly compared and contrasted to Sunni clerics. The words of the director of Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services, Ali Rıza Uğurlu demonstrates the changing relationship between dedes and Alevis clearly:

> For one thing, [Alevis] want dedes who will not politicize their faith, who would not *embarrass* them in terms of the dimensions of maturity (*kemaliyet*), insightful knowledge (*irfaniyet*), and science –I do not know if science can express all of what there is, I do not

[157] *Mevlit* is a ceremony where the birth of the prophet is narrated with the recitation of Koran.

[158] "*Geçen mevlit için cemevinden bir dede getirdik, hoca olsa ondan iyiydi, hepimiz dedik. Dedeler bence yetersiz. Dedelerin bilgili olanlar arasından seçilmesi [lazım]. Bir hoca bugün Cuma namazında iki buçuk saat konuşuyor, herkes dinliyor. Bilgili dede gelecek, banim özüm neyse anlatacak*." Interviewed by the author, on July 6, 2004

> know if the dimension of faith also belongs to science-…I mean, you are a student who is about to finish a second university [degree] today. Would you listen to the *fairy tales* of "the sword of Ali was stretching one hundred meters," or even if you listen to it, how much appeal I can have for you? Or, during a funeral prayer, in your funeral, if I can not take the central position and satisfy you with my speeches, oratory (*hitabet*) and prayers of funeral for how much more would you follow me?[159] (emphases mine)

The unmentioned reason of this embarrassment is of course Sunnis here. There is also an implied danger of losing Alevi communities to Sunni imams. Uğurlu's concerns are point to a process through which rationalized Alevism finds its knowledgeable clerics.

Hocas

> This year we dealt with 850 funerals here. Only one of the [families] demanded the prayer to be in Turkish, the rest abided by what our hoca offered, he wore his robe and coif, chanted Koran [in Arabic].[160]
>
> Okmeydanı Cemevi, Administrator

Hoca means "learnt man, teacher." Hoca is a term that is used to define the religious scholars and imams working at mosques yet it is also used to refer to teachers in public schools. The ambiguous characteristic of the term matches well the

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[159] "*Bir kere inancını hiç siyasallaştırmadan, dedelerin hem kemaliyet boyutu, hem irfaniyet boyutu, hem bilim boyutu -bilim hepsini ifade ediyor mu bilmiyorum, inançsal boyutu da bilime giriyor mu bilmiyorum- o boyutuyla kendisini mahcup etmeyecek dedeler istiyorlar… Yani bugün siz ikinci Üniversiteyi bitirmek üzere olan bir öğrencisiniz, siz benden uçan kaçan Hz Ali'nin yüz metre uzuyordu masallarını ne kadar dinlersiniz, veya dinlerseniz size ne kadar hitap etmiş olurum? Veya bir cenaze namazında bir cenazenizde ön plana çıkıp konuşmalarından, hitabetinden, namazdaki dualarından eğer sizi doyuramıyorsam sizi mahcup ediyorsam, siz ne kadar benim peşimde olursunuz*?" Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004

[160] "Bu sene buradan 850 tane cenaze kalktı, sadece bir tanesi Türkçe dua istedi, ötekiler hocamızın istediği gibi kaldırdı, hoca cüppesini ve takkesini giydi, [Arapça] Kuran okudu." Interviewed by the author, on May 13, 2005

ambivalent position of hocas within Alevi communities. Hocas represent an in-between category as they specialize in reciting Koran and prayers (especially in Arabic), and often get educated in Sunni institutions of religious education.

The position of hoca has been born out of the need to have someone with the knowledge of Koran in Alevi villages especially, for funeral services. Such need stemmed from the fact that dedes generally do not reside in the villages of their talips, and visit the villages for short periods for the organization of cem ceremonies only. Under such circumstances, hocas attend the funeral services, recite mevlits and sometimes solemnize marriages.

In Alevi villages there often were hoca families who had performed this task for generations, passing on the knowledge of "old writing" (*eski yazı)* and dealing with funeral services. It was also the case that after the opening of imam-hatip schools, that some families sent their children to these schools, and then these children returned to their villages as official imams appointed by the state. In some Alevi villages Sunni imams attended these services and presided over the funerals. [161] Some Alevi children learnt how to read the Koran and conduct funeral services from these imams.

In his study on an Alevi village located in central Anatolia, Shankland (2003) argues that the villagers make a clear distinction between the roles of hocas and dedes:

> Only a person born a dede can become one and the prayers that they pronounce are nearly always in Turkish. Any man who wishes to may become a hoca and his prayers are nearly always in Arabic. Sometimes a hoca may be used as a substitute dede, for example to say grace at a meal after people have eaten. They have additional specialized functions, a hoca reads the *nikah* before the consummation of a marriage and it is a hoca who leads the burial service *cenaze* and recites hymns, *ilahi*, over the body as it is laid to earth (p. 44).

[161] This was the case, for instance, what I observed a few years ago in Şehitler village of İnegöl, Bursa. The imam dealt with all the tasks that required reading Koran, and the funerals.

Bozkurt (1993) relates the construction of mosques in Alevi villages to the need to have officials attending funeral services as well: "Likewise, the most important factor that necessitated the construction of mosques in Alevi villages has been this [issue of] the funeral ceremony. The Alevis were obliged to demand mosques and hocas from the state due to the death of the old (*eski*) dedes" (p. 220).

As mentioned before, the need for separate places for funerals has been one of the main motivating factors for the establishment of cemevis. Funerals had become a serious problem with the immigration to cities. The understanding between the imams of mosques that are located in Alevi villages or neighborhoods, or the possibility of dealing with funeral at one's house, or at the village cemevi has become problematic with migration to city centers. For this reason, the right to bury the dead in accordance with one's own traditions has been a central claim made by Alevi representatives in their quest to legitimize the construction and use of cemevis.

Whether the imam costume, the signifier of Sunni men of religion, should be worn by Alevi hocas is a point of debate. Some associate the costume with Sunni reactionism (*gericilik*), and as a sign of assimilation into sharia, while others appropriate it as a sign of Alevis' similarity to Sunnis. For instance, the hoca of the Sarıgazi Cemevi was compelled to buy a costume because the congregation demanded it:

> M. E: Then, what do you think about the issue of [wearing] turban and robe (*sarık ve cüppe*)?
> H: Coif (*takke*), beard and turban. *Hz.* Ali says "beard and turban are the *symbol*s of the Arab," but it is not mentioned whether or not there was beard and turban when our blessed prophet was presiding over funeral prayers. It is not mentioned in the historical resources, today it has become something *traditional*, hence we, too, wear turban and the robe.
> M. E: I mean, you know what they are saying, you are not a hoca in a mosque, why are you wearing [those]? I am asking for this reason.

> H: It brings *formality* within the society, just for that reason. I mean, that you are a hoca, that when you go *in front of the society*, the fact that you are hoca becomes *clear* due to the turban and robe you are wearing. [There is no need to] exaggerate this, or I do not have a notion of it would be meritorious [*sevap*] to attend the funeral with turban and robe and not if you do without"[162] (emphases mine).

This hoca was carefully leaving open space to argue against the necessity of wearing turban and robe during funeral prayers on the grounds that this practice was not historically based on the example the prophet provided. However, he still followed the practice because it has become part of a 'tradition' he felt himself belonging to, albeit it was quite ambiguous whose tradition this has been. The hoca was also careful not to provoke humiliation and perhaps hostility from Sunnis by invoking the notion of tradition. Simultaneously, the reference to formality, the desire to be recognized by the congregation as an institutional persona is explicitly articulated by the hoca himself.

In some cases, dedes too have been compelled to take over funeral services because the hocas have 'gone too far' in their training for funerals. What Düzgün Dede from Tunceli experienced is a good example of how the responsibilities of dedes have increased:

> The institution of dede should know all the religious prayers, religious knowledge –funeral prayers etc- related to Alevism. I embarked on learning funeral services after I turned forty. It has been six years since I learnt how to handle funerals. I put and end to the wrong practices. There were people who cheated [Alevis], they were holding the funeral prayers in such a way that they were

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[162] "*M. E:, Peki bu sarık, cüppe meselesine ne diyorsunuz ?*
H: Cüppe sakal ve sarık. Hz Ali "sakal ve sarık Arap'ın bir alameti" diyor, ama Peygamber efendimiz cenaze namazı kıldırırken sakal ile sarık var mıydı, ondan bahsedilmez. Tarihi kaynaklarda bahsedilmez, günümüzde geleneksel hale gelmiş, biz de sarık ve cüppe giyiyoruz
M. E:, Hani şey diyorlar ya cami hocası değilsin, niye giyiyorsun. Ondan soruyorum?
H: Toplumda bir resmiyet oluyor, sadece onun için. Yani hoca olduğunu, toplumun karşısına çıkınca hoca olduğun üzerindeki sarık ve cüppeden belli oluyor. Bir resmiyet oluyor. Bunu büyütmeye veya sarık ile cüppeyle kıldırırsan sevaptır, kıldırmazsan sevap değil düşüncesi bende yok." Interviewed by the author, on April 2, 2005

> buttering up Sunnism (*Sünniliğe yağ çekiyorlardı*) and they were performing funeral prayers in a way that is conducive to the cause of Sunnism (*Sünniliğe yarayan bir şekilde*)."[163]

The dede took the decision to attend the funerals, because he was not satisfied with the Alevi hoca who attended the funeral ceremonies: "The man who [used to] attend the funerals was trained in Erzurum.[164] I could not make him to change his coif and his dirty beard, so I sent him away. Hocas [Sunni] were saying, 'You dedes do not do your job, so we are doing it.' I wear my tie, I attend to both cems and funerals with it. There is no need for either [wearing] coif or robe."[165] The dirty beard and his coif were conceived by dede as the signs of hoca's opposition to the 'contemporary' values and were opposed by the signifier of ' the modern lifestyle,' the tie. The dede was differentiating himself from hocas by wearing the costume of modern lifestyle, the suit.

However, the will of the congregation and the dede can be at odds regarding the dress code for funerals. The hoca of the Ihlamurkuyu Cemevi started his words saying "It was easy to be a dede or hoca before, now everyone is enlightened."[166] He went, on explaining how he was compelled to wear special clothes during the funerals: "I was attending the funeral prayers with my normal clothing (jacket and trousers). One day somebody from our congregation said, 'Hoca, even a shepherd has his own

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[163] "*Dedelik kurumu Alevilik kavramı ile ilgili hangi dinsel dua, hangi dinsel bilgi –cenaze, dua vs-varsa bilmesi lazım. Ben 40 yaşından sonra cenaze hizmetleri öğrenmeye giriştim. Cenaze kaldırmayı öğreneli 6 sene oldu. Yapılan yanlışların üzerine bir çizgi çektim. Kandıranlar vardı, Sünniliğe yağ çeken, Sünniliğe yarayan bir şekilde kaldırıyorlardı*." Interviewed by the author, on April 22, 2004

[164] Erzurum is reputed to be one of the most conservative provinces of Turkey.

[165] "*Cenazeyi kaldıran adam Erzurum'da yetişmiş. Başındaki takkeyi, kirli sakalını değiştirtemedim, yolladım. Hocalar, diyorlardı k,i 'Siz dedeler kendi işinizi yapmıyorsunuz, biz yapıyoruz.' Takıyorum kravatımı, cemi de cenazeyi de öyle kaldırıyorum. Ne takkeye gerek var, ne cüppeye*." Interviewed by the author, on April 2, 2005.

[166] "*Eskiden dedelik hocalık kolaydı, şimdi herkes aydınlandı*." Interviewed by the author, on December 2, 2004.

costume, why do not you have a robe and turban?' I bought the robe and turban with my own money because the community demanded it"[167]

The ways in which hocas attain the ability to read Arabic and preside over the funeral services bring them closest to the Sunnis and adaptation of Sunni practices. As we have seen with the hoca of the Kartal Cemevi, hocas might change lines, and adapt the point of view of Shiites or Sunnis. For this, reason it is desired to have the hocas trained by dedes to prevent such incidents. This was the motivation behind the alternative courses offered by the Directorate of Alevi-Islamic Religious Services for Alevi Islam to train hocas. The director of the institution, Ali Rıza Uğurlu, thought that,

> A. R. U: If you do not train your own hocas equipped with your own faith, equipped with his own faith, equipped with the Alevi faith, you will receive nothing but the current clashes with the hoca you get from outside, from hocas who are trained in mosques. Today, I know such cemevis where the hoca and dede always quarrel. The hoca speaks about mosque, the dede speaks about cemevi. The hoca is raised through Sunnism, because he comes from there. The dede is raised with Sufism. And today the dede is attending bayram cem, [while] the hoca is presiding over bayram namaz downstairs.
> M. E: What do you suggest in order to resolve this "hoca problem"?
> A. R. U: Look, on Saturday, November 30 -the announcement is outside- I will have it started. Here, on Saturday, I am going to start a course addressing the children of the dede [lineage] with headlines such as dede, zakir, funeral services and twelve services that is the order and liturgy of cem. Now, could the hoca I train here have any problems with dede when he goes [works at] at a cemevi? He can not, because I trained him. That dede endows him with that knowledge.[168]

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[167] "*Normal elbisemle (ceket, pantolon) cenaze kaldırıyordum. Bir gün bizim cemaatten biri 'Hocam, bir çobanın bile kıyafeti var, senin niye cüppen, sarığın yok?' dedi. Cemaat istediği için cüppe ve sarığı kendi paramla aldı.*"

[168] "*A. R. U: Siz cemevinde kendi hocanızı yetiştirmezseniz, kendi inancıyla donanmış hocayı yetiştirmezseniz, Alevi inancına donanmış dedenizi oraya koymazsanız dışarıdan aldığınız camiden yetişmiş hocadan işte bugünkü sürtüşmeleri alırsınız; başka bir şey alamazsınız. Ben bugün öyle cemevleri biliyorum ki hoca ile dedesi birbirini yiyor, hocası camiden dem vuruyor, dede cemevinden dem vuruyor. Hoca Sünnilikle yetişmiş, çünkü oradan gelmiş. Dede tasavvufla yetişmiş. Ve bugün bayram ceminde dede cem yaptırıyor. Hoca altta namaz kıldırıyor.*
M. E: Ne öneriyorsunuz bu "hoca sorunu"nu çözmek için?

Professionalization and Secularization via Cemevis

Fenn (2003) defines the contemporary position of religion in the modern society as one in which "individuals and communities now claim direct access to the sacred without mediation by religious clerics and a clerical elite" (p. 3). As the dependence on dedes and their control over their followers diminish, individuals gain more independence in terms of the resources they turn to for their "quest for meaning." In the contemporary setting, privilege by birth is no longer sufficient to ensure the reverence of Alevis for dedes. Dedes are expected to become "men of religion" (*din adamı*), who are expected to become experts on theological matters and offer religious services including funerals. This way, they are increasingly forced to retreat to the realm of "religion" (*din işleri*).

Given "how marginal religion has become in modern industrial society as the site for producing disciple knowledge and personal discipline" (Asad, 1993, p. 46), the confinement of dedes to the religious space of cem has been complementing the secularization process that we discussed in the previous chapters regarding the redefinition of Alevism with reference to religion. This was accompanied by the definition of cem as worshipping and the cemevis as places of worship.

Professionalization of the administrations of cemevis and the emergence of a new position of administrator has been conducive to the secularization of this new version of Alevism where a division of labor and authority was established between the administrators/secular realm and the dedes/religious realm.

A. R. U: Bak şimdi ben 30 Kasım'da cumartesi buyurun gelin, reklam dışarıda,cumartesi günü başlatıyorum. Burada cumartesi günü dede çocuklarına dedelik, zakirlik, cenaze hizmetleri ve 12 hizmet yani cemin edep ve erkanı ile bu başlıklarda kurs başlatıyorum. Şimdi benim burada yetiştirdiğim bir hoca bir cemevine gittiği zaman o cemevindeki dede ile bir problemi olabilir mi? Olamaz çünkü niye o dede yetiştirdi onu. O dede onu o bilgi ile donatıyor." Interviewed by the author, on November 26, 2004.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I attempted to investigate the construction of cemevis as institutional sites of Alevism in the post-1980 period. To this end, I first looked at the recent propensity towards defining Alevism in an increasingly systematic and unitary fashion. This had to with the shifting location of Alevism from the semi-closed space of various Alevi communities to become part of the public sphere. Such transformation necessitated a redefinition of what it means to be an Alevi, because the ambiguous and multiple meanings of Alevism posed difficulties for the incorporation of Alevis into the state discourses and governance strategies. Categorizing a number of non-Sunni communities as "Alevis" and conceptualizing their diverse beliefs and practices under the unitary signifier of "Alevism" made it easier to deal with, operate on, handle, and administer Alevi communities by the state. The multiplicity of meanings surrounding Alevism also has posed problems for the claims making process on the side of Alevi organizations that attempted to represent the interests of the totality of Alevi communities, which they conceptualized as "Alevi society." The subsequent quest for fixing the meaning of the elusive signifier of Alevism has been accentuated with the conceptualization of Alevism with reference to Islam (conceived as Sunnism), leading to debates over whether it was within or outside the confines of Islam; and to the nationalist imaginary provided by the state discourses on Alevism.

In either case, Alevi beliefs and practices were not evaluated on the basis of their historically contingent paths of development, but always with reference to the contestations revolving around other signifiers, such as secularism, democracy, Islam and Kemalism.

Coupled with the state's shifting strategies from exclusively repressive techniques of power to more productive ones, the political atmosphere of the 1990s provided opportunities for political mobilization on the basis of Alevism. The increasing Sunnification of the state and society urged the secularist segments of the country to seek alliance with an emerging Alevist movement. Alevism was formulated either as the "humanist" face of Islam or the "Turkish Islam" in order to balance the increasing power of the groups that conceived (Sunni) Islam as a resource for political mobilization. The process of accession to the European Union was another important factor that introduced a new legal framework through which the demands of Alevi organization could be articulated against the unitary stance of the nationalist state through a multiculturalist discourse. There was a move towards the emergence of centers, and institutionalized Alevi groups contested each other to attain the monopoly over the right to represent the best interests of Alevis.

The same period witnessed the construction of cemevis in various regions of Turkey. The emergence and rising number of cemevis in public space point to an attempt on the side of Alevi communities to inscribe their identity in urban space. In this regard cemevis complement the visibility of Alevis/m in public sphere with Alevi visibility in public space. This situation serves rendering Alevi presence in urban public space recognized and normalized. The institutionalized presence of Alevi communities in the urban public space poses a claim of recognition directed at the Sunni majority and the state, hence a will to integrate into the larger society. Cemevis

in this process materialize as vantage points from which Alevi organizations launch their negotiations with the state for legal recognition necessary for attaining religious and cultural rights.

Alevi institutions and practices underwent a series of transformations during the post-1980 period. These have been imposed by the institutional and legal frameworks that Alevi groups encountered as a result of displacement to urban centers. For this reason, experience of Alevi communities in the urban space entails conceptualizing their gaining visibility in the public space beyond the paradigm of the 'flourishing' of a suppressed identity, since "not everyone can feel comfortable in the public sphere in a naturalised and secure way when they become visible as the other" (Morley, 2000, p. 119). Sharing the same urban space with Sunnis has made Alevis increasingly aware of their difference and has given impetus to struggles for maintaining communal boundaries in a novel and at times hostile environment. However, as Jacobs and Fincher (1998) observed, "registering difference has uneven outcomes: for some it marks a joyous inclusiveness; for some, a reminder of the unavoidable materiality of their marginalization" (p. 14). Alevist politics of difference went hand in hand with an anxiety to stress the similarities due to the asymmetrical power relations between Alevi and Sunni groups. Accordingly, *cemevis* today play a significant role in the Alevist politics of representation: the opening of cem ceremonies to the "strangers" serves to repudiate misrepresentations such as Sunni claims on the immorality of Alevis, in tandem with promoting the image of a modern secular community in the eyes of secularist groups and the Westerners. For this reason, the language used in cem ceremonies and funeral prayers, the regulation and distribution of female bodies in congregational halls as well as the costumes Alevi hocas wear during the funerals are all subject to fervent debates.

The complex relationships between numerous social actors have created different patterns of construction and recognition for cemevis, ranging from direct state support, as in the case of headquarters of the CEM Foundation and the Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolia Culture Foundation that were built with the money coming from the central government (despite in the form of "örtülü ödenek"); to municipal aid, such as given to the Okmeydanı Cemevi, which was provided with construction land and financial backing by the Municipality of Şişli; to eventual accommodation, as in the case of the Alibeyköy Cemevi, which was first opposed by the municipality and was raided by the police, but its position was gradually normalized and accepted by the municipality; and to persistent opposition as demonstrated through the struggles between the Municipality of Sultanbeyli and the Sultanbeyli branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association.

The significant other of Alevis, the Sunni have played an important role in the definition and the organization of Alevi beliefs and practices. Similarly, mosques are the "other" of the cemevis. Just like Alevism is defined on the basis of what it "lacks" in comparison to Sunnism, cemevis are defined according to what they "lack" compared to mosques. Cemevis are places that are defined on the basis of real or imagined *lack* (of legitimacy, history, legal status or financial means), of *absence* (of a unitary architecture, a community), of *incompleteness* (of symbolic and material construction) and of *danger* (of police raid, Islamist attack, and municipality threat). Although cemevis have been constructed discursively as what mosques are not, they are also defined with reference to mosques. Consequently, they have become increasingly similar to what mosques signify for Sunni communities: places of worship. Moreover, the process of constructing cemevis involved mosques as a successful project to be emulated. Accordingly, the construction of cemevis

demonstrates parallels to those mosques that were constructed by the migrant Sunni communities in the gecekondu areas. This is exemplified in the establishment of associations and subsequently foundations to build and operate cemevis.

Constructing cemevis that are modeled after mosques points to a process through which Alevis are being Alevized just like Sunnis were Sunnified under the monolithic and centralized control of state sponsored Islam. The definition of "place of worship" imposes restrictions on the organization of cemevis: the confinement of Alevi practices to the realm of secularized religion and exclusion of any other activities that have a claim on the everyday by labeling them "politics." This tendency to define cemevis as places of worship is also used strategically by rival Alevi organizations and groups within cemevis for the exclusion from the executive boards of administrations with leftist affiliations.

Yet a significant way of differentiating cemevis from mosques has been the "culture center" status of cemevis. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) uses the term "culture" in its folkloric and anthropological sense -Alevism as a subculture of greater Turkish Culture-, while Alevi organizations rather adhere to the aesthetic and educational connotations of the term. The DRA's insistence on appropriating cemevis as culture centers has to do with its designated role of controlling "the places of worship." The legal recognition of cemevis would involve the incorporation of cemevis to the DRA structure. Claims to legal status pertaining to cemevis on the side of Alevi organizations therefore rightly is diagnosed by the DRA as a challenge to its control and authority, and faces fierce resistance. For the same reason, any affiliation of cemevis with the DRA is vehemently rejected by the Alevi Bektashi Unions Federation (ABF), but there are other organizations such as the CEM Foundation defending a more pragmatic stance by calling for the representation of Alevis under

the DRA. In the case of some Alevi organizations such as Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association, the culture expands to include the "faith" and this way Alevism becomes immune to being defined on religious grounds only. The fractured structure of the Alevist movement and the ambiguity surrounding the status of cemevis, oscillating between being culture centers and place of worships, enables groups with different agendas to claim cemevis. This way, both Alevis who equate any reference to religion with a stigmatized Sunni Islam and Alevis who oppose activities of Alevi associations that operate cemevis as indulging in politics can claim these places simultaneously. However it should be kept in mind that the lines between the culture and religion are redrawn in each instant of strategic deployment and intersect one another.

The discursive battle revolving around the construction of cemevis operate through binaries such as culture versus religion, Alevism versus Sunnism, cemevi versus mosque, dedes versus imams, and namaz versus niyaz/cem. Nonetheless, the oppositional frameworks fall short of explicating the complexity of the process that is based on constantly shifting boundaries of difference: deprived of their charismatic aura dedes are compelled to become professional clerics like Sunni imams; cems are moved to the realm of religious practice while they are redefined as formalized prayers, far from assuming a role in the socialization process; cemevis –in the sense of congregational hall/the space of cem- are on the way of becoming locus of worshipping exclusively, distanced from the living spaces and family life; cemevis are constructed as temples (place of worship) and Alevism as religion in order to secularize Alevi beliefs and practices.

One of the main findings of this thesis is the fact that the way in which Alevism is reinstitutionalized through cemevis points to the organization of a secularized way of life for Alevi communities. That is, it is essential to define

Alevism on the religious grounds first, in order to secularize it subsequently. A binary is constructed between the religious and cultural spheres and they are situated and represented separately in cemevis. Related to this is the emergence of cemevis, which is part of a process through which Alevism as religion (not as *a* religion per se) is formulated. The differentiation between the role of dedes and the administrators is one of the most important manifestations of such restructuring. With the opening of cemevis dedes have lost their influence in, the "material world," and their influence is limited to exclusively the realm of religion, while the secular (worldly) tasks are taken over by the administrators. In this reformulation, the sacred becomes crystallized as religion through the systemizing and homogenizing affects of scripturalization, codification, doctrinization, and standardization of beliefs and practices. Following this, Alevism as religion finds *its place*, and it is positioned at its exclusive location: the cemevi.

Resulting from what is outlined above, cemevi as "place of worship" has become rather taken for granted, prevailing over other meanings and aspirations regarding these places. As experiencing one's Aleviness have ceased to be embedded in the realm of the everyday, Alevi practices have become more self conscious and following them has become a matter of personal conscience and deliberation. Since following communal services is no longer enforced by the community and has ceased to constitute a part of the everyday, it has become a matter of personal preference whether or not one "worships." In the urban cemevis I visited, participants in cem ceremonies were expected to perform "prayers" within clearly demarcated time limits within the confines of an increasingly unified cem liturgy. Accordingly, there have emerged an Alevi religiosity that is based on "the construction of religion as a new historical object: anchored in personal experience, expressible in belief-statements,

dependent on private institutions, and practiced in one's spare time" (Asad, 1993, p. 207).

Another manifestation of secularization is the increasing fragmentation of social space into neatly demarcated places for housing, recreation, entertainment, education, sports, religion and so on. The need to establish a separate place that is different than the place of living, one's home as the site for holding communal services, appears as an implication of modern urban circumstances where different practices take place in specified locations (Ellin, 1997). What is more, this situation is part and parcel of a reinstitutionalization process characterized by an increasing specialization and professionalization of communal services. Transformation of Aleviness from the realm of intimate habitual practicing into the anonymous setting of cemevis becomes possible with first defining Alevism as religion, and then separating it from the everyday life by secular divisions as it ceases to provide an exclusive cosmology for individualized Alevis.

Organizing cems in cemevis, away from the living spaces, at a specified location where there is a multitude of institutional actors and intimate strangers, indicates a new mode of experiencing Aleviness. Alevis from different backgrounds become aware of one another's existence in cemevis. Cemevis in this sense have been conducive to imagining an "Alevi society" by means of associating with these intimate strangers. In this regard, cemevis signify organized Alevi communities' breaking free from their inherited communal ties and their active quest for new commitments.

Alevi communities have lately been forced to reach a closure on their identity questions at an increasing pace in Turkey. However, "Problems are created by problem solving, new areas of chaos are generated by ordering activity. Progress

consists first and foremost in the obsolescence of yesterday's solutions" (Bauman, 1995, p. 14). The hegemonic meaning of cemevis will continue to be a problem.

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APPENDIX l

19 Ekim 1996 tarihinde saat 17.00'de Cem Vakfı Genel Merkezin'de toplanarak çalışmalarını sürdüren Cem Evi yöneticilerine üzerinde birleşerek ortak noktalar aşağıda çıkarılmıştır.

1- Anayasanın 24. maddesi, herkes inancında özgürdür, hiç kimse inancından dolayı kınanamaz ve baskı altında tutulamaz der.
Yasal güvenceye kavuşturulmuş Aleviliğin kamuoyuna ilanı gerekmektedir.
2- Devletin Alevilere potansiyel suçlu görmesi Alevileri üzmektedir.Alevilerin potansiyel suçlu olmadığı herkes tarafından bilinmelidir.
3- Alevilerin ibadet yeri ve kültürlerini işleyecekleri yerler Cem Evleridir. Cem Evleri insanlar arasındaki sevgi bağlarını güçlendiren, saz ve semah ile ibadetlerine icra ettikleri yerlerdir.
4- Cem Evleri, halkın gücüyle meydana gelmesi mümkün olmayan yapılardır. Cem evlerinin gerek yapılaşmasında, gerek işleyişinde devletin maddi katkısının olması zorunludur. Bu nedenle bize verilen sözlerin belli bir siyasi partinin genel başkanının sözleri olarak değil, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Hükümeti Başbakanının sözü olarak kabul ediyoruz. Verilen sözlerin yerine getirilmesini istiyoruz.
5- Cem Evlerinin resmiyet kazanması, hukukçular tarafından inceletilmeli bir an önce sonuca varılmalıdır.
6- Cem Evleri rasgele yapılar olarak değil, belli projelerin uygulanması ile yapılanmalıdır.
7- Cem Evleri işleyiş yönetmeliği hazırlanmalıdır.
8- Alevilerin darmadağın görüntülerinden kurtulması için hızla birleşmeleri, devletle düzene karşı gelen, sokaklarda polisle çatışan insanlar imajını silmek, Cem evlerinin sanki terör yuvalarını besleyen odaklar gibi gösterilmek istenilmesindeki oyunu bozarak, insan sevgisi ile yoğrulmuş, hoşgörüyü esas almış inancımızı tanıtmak, anlatmak ve paylaşmak esas hedefimizdir.
9- Cem Evlerinde inancı yaşatırken ibadetle birliği sağlamak için akademik çalışmalar yapılmalı, Alevi-İslam Enstitüsü kurulmalı, bu konuda çalışma yapan kurumlara destek verilmelidir.
10- Cem Evleri kanalı ile gençlere sahip çıkılmalı vasıflı ve inançlı birer insan olmaları için eğitim çalışmaları yapılmalıdır.
11- Cem Evleri yalnız inancın yerine getirildiği yerler olmamalı, sosyal ve kültürel etkinliklere yer verilmeli, Cem evlerinin adı da Cem Küftür Evi olmalı,
12- Çoru Evlerine profesyonel yöneticiler getirilmeli, dedeler yönelim dışında kalmalı, dedeler toplumdaki saygın yerini korumalı,
13- Dedeler elbetteki Ehlibeyt soyundan olmalıdır. Dedeler eğitimine önem verilmelidir, toplumu yönlendirme kapasitesinde dedeler yetiştirilmeli, ayrıca zakir ve diğer din görevlileri eğitimi hızlandırılmalıdır.
14- Her inançtan insanla beraber iyi yasamak istiyor isek, kendimizi her fırsatta iyi anlatmak yanlışların yerine doğruları söylemek ve sevgi ile yaklaşmak gerekmektedir. Bunun içinde önce kendimizi tanımamız gerekir, bu nedenlede elimizde saz ve gülümüzle, insanlık sevgisi ile önce kendimizi sonra da toplumu eğitmeliyiz.
15- Devlet'te hak ettiğimiz yerimizi almak ve temsil edilebilmek için gerekli olan birlik ve beraberliğimiz, gücümüzün kaynağıdır bilinci ile hareket edip inancımızın yasal güvenceler altına alınmasını sağlamak için gerekli çalışmaları yapmak görevimizdir.
16- Bu çalışmalar komisyon tarafından önce rapor halinde daha sonrada yönetmelik haline getirilerek kamuoyuna deklere edilmelidir.

CEM VAKFİ
/>

ŞAHKULU SUL.DRN.

ŞAHINTEPE CEM EVi
H.B.V ANADOLU KÜL.VAKFI
OKMEYDANI ŞUBESİ

GARİP DEDE TÜRBESİ

GAZİ MH.

ÜMRANiYE CEM. E.

SARIGAZİ

CEM EVİ

EYÜP ALIBEYKÖY PİR SULTAN

BAHÇEÜE

NURTEPE CEM EVİ

KARTAL CEM EVİ

DERNEĞİ

APPENDIX 2

T.C.
BAŞBAKANLIK
Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı

Sayı :B.12. i .DİB.0.12.00,01/015 - T Si

Konu :Cemevleri.

İSTANBUL VALİLİĞİNE
(Müftülük) ; . '

İlgi :29/12/2004 tarih ve B.02.I.DİB.4J4.00/24Û-10366 "sayılı yazı **eki,** Sadegül ÇAVUŞ'a ait 21 Aralık 2004 tarihli dilekçe.

633 sayılı Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kuruluş ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanunin 1. maddesinde Başkanlığının görevleri; "İslam Dininin inançları, ibadet ve ahlak esasları ile ilgili işler." yürütmek ve din konusunda insanları aydınlatmak ve ibadet yerlerini' yönetmek" şeklinde "belirlenmiştir.

Anayasanın "İnkılap Kanunlarının Korunması" başlıklı 174. maddesinin 3 numaralı zikredilen 67" bendinde sayılı "Tekke ve Zaviyelerle Türbelerin Seddine ve Türbedarlıklar ile Bir Takım Men ve İlgasına Unvanların Men ve ilgasına Dair Kanun" değiştirilmeksizin, kaldırılan tekke ve zaviyelerin İhyası anlamına gelebilecek, ayin-i cem icra etmek üzere Cemevi tesis edilmesi anılan kanuna uygun düşmemekt^n Nitekim anılan Kanunla dervişlik, dedelik, babalık, çelebilik ve halifelik gibi unvan ve sıfatlar da yasaklanmıştır.

Cumhuriyetin ilanından sonra 03 Mart 1924 tarihinde, Mustafa Kemaİ Atatürk ve arkadaşları tarafından 429 sayılı Kanunla, bir Cumhuriyet Kurumu olarak kurulan ve Anayasanın 136. maddesi gereği genel idare içerisinde yeri belirtilen Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, günümüze kadar kendisine Kanunla verilen görevini, mezhep, meşrep, tarikat, Alevi, Sünni vb, hiçbir ayrım yapmadan Müslümanlık üst kimliğinde herkesi içine olacak şekilde sürdürmüştür. Cumhuriyetimizin temel ilkelerinden olan laiklik de devletin ve bütün kamu kuruluşlarının eşit statüdeki vatandaşlık esasına göre hizmet sunmasını gerektirir. Kamu hizmeti sunumunda dini aît ayrılmalara ve ayrışmalara yol açması muhtemel yapılanma *vs* düzenlemeler sonuçta toplumsal birlik ve bütünlüğü tehdit edecektir. Cumhuriyetin kuruluşundan itibaren Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı bu çizgide bir kamu hizmeti anlayışını sürdürdüğü içindir ki, toplumumuz birlik ve bütünlük içinde, mezhep ve meşrep tartışmalarından uzak bir şekilde varlığını devam ettiregelmisîir

İslam tarihinde, Hanefi, Şafii, Caferi gibi mezheplere, Mevlevi, Kadiri, ve Be! 'asi gibi tarikatlara mahsus "Cami ve Mescit" dışında bir ibadethane mevcut değildir.

Dini, tarihi ve bilimsel kabule göre; İslam'dan ayrı bir Alevilîk-Bektasilik Dini; cami ve mescitten gayri "Cemevi" adında bir îslam mabedi de bulunmamaktadır. Ayrıca Müslüman olan Alevi-Bektaşi vatandaşlarımızın Kur'an'dan başka bir kutsal kitabı, Hz. Muhammed'den gayri bir peygamberi de yoktur. Bu tarihte de böyledir, günümüzde de böyledir. Bu durura Alevi-Bektaşi evliyasının, ulularının eserlerinde. nefeslerinde, şiirlerinde de hep böyle ifade edilegelmiştir.

Günümüzde bazı çevrelerin Aleviliği İslam dışı bir din, ayrı bir mezhep, ayrı bir kültür olarak gösterme çabalan, Aleviliğin aslına ters düşen bir takım değerlendirmelerdir. Alevi vatandaşlarımızın en önemli referansı olan Hacı Bekîaş-ı Veli'nin "Makalat" isimli eseri elimizde bulunmaktadır. "Makalat"ta anlatılanlar İslam'ın özüdür.

Alevi adı da Sünni adı da bize sonradan verilmiş isimlerdir. Halkımızın hemen hemen tamamı Kur'an-ı Kerim'in ilke ve prensiplerine bağlı kişilerdir. Binlerce' yıl bir arada ve hiçbir problemi olmadan yaşamış bu milletin fertlerinin, yapay soranlarla karşı karşıya getirilmek istenmesi ve aralarında tefrika tohumlarının yeşertilmeye çalışılması faaliyetleri, üzerinde uzun uzun düşünülmesi ve gerekli analizlerin yapılması milli bir zarurettir

Bilgilerinizi rica ederim.

Doç, Dr. Mehmet GÖRMEZ
Diyanet İşleri Başkanı V.