THE ALEVI COMMUNITY IN TURKEY AFTER 1980: AN EVALUATION OF POLITICAL GROUP BOUNDARIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ETHNICITY THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis intends to determine how the ethno-religious Alevi communities in Turkey survive and what are the main sources and factors helping them to sustain their group borders, especially as from the mid-1980s when these communities had started to reveal their identity clearly. It is important to state that the Kemalist regime was challenged by an obligatory change process on both economic and political grounds after the 1980 military coup in Turkey. Because of the rising of political Islam and the Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement, the modernist Kemalist regime and the Jacobin laicism have been subjected to criticism. In this tense period, one of the most important legitimation tools used by the state was the Alevi population, known by its dominant secular, modernist and Kemalist identity. For this reason, it can be proposed that in this era the occurrence of the Alevi identity's revelation might have been supported or guarded by the Kemalist regime or state institutions. But another claim for the Alevi awakening is that the Alevi population had tried to define their identity against and/or parallel to the rising of Kurdish nationalism and the political Islamic movement. In sum, in this thesis I intend to clarify how the Alevi community constructs and/or protects its ethno-religious borders in these circumstances according to ethnicity theories.

Keywords: Alevi, Ethnicity, Turkey, Heterodoxy.

ÖZ

1980 SONRASI DÖNEMDE TÜRKİYE'DE ALEVİLER: POLİTİK GRUP SINIRLARININ ETNİSİTE TEORİLERİ BAĞLAMINDA DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Bu tezde etno-dinsel bir topluluk olan Alevi cemaatinin kimliklerini açıkça ifade etmeye başladıkları 1980'lerden sonra kendilerini nasıl idame ettikleri ve grup sınırlarını korumalarına yardımcı olan faktörlerin neler olduğu saptanmaya çalışılacaktır. Belirtmek gerekir ki, Türkiye'de Kemalist rejim 1980 askeri darbesiyle birlikte hem ekonomik hem de politik alanda zorunlu bir değişim sürecine girmiştir. Politik İslami hareketlerin ve Kürt etno-milliyetçi hareketin yükselmesiyle birlikte, Kemalist rejim ve Jakoben laiklik anlayışı ciddi eleştirilere maruz kalmıştır. Bu gergin dönem içerisinde, devlet tarafından kullanılan meşruiyet araçlarının en önemlilerinden birisi de Kemalist, modernist ve seküler kimliklerinin baskın olduğu bilinen Alevi topluluğudur. Bu nedenle, Alevilerin kimliklerini rahatlıkla ortaya koymaya başlamalarının Kemalist rejim ve devlet birimleri tarafından desteklendiği ve korunduğu öne sürülebilir. Alevi uyanışı için öne sürülebilecek bir başka önerme de Kürt milliyetçiliği ve politik İslami hareketlerin yükselmesine parallel ve/veya karşıt olarak Alevi topluluğunun kendi kimliğini tanımlamaya çalışmasıdır. Özet olarak, bu tezde Alevi topluluğunun etno-dinsel sınırlarını sözü edilen durumlarda nasıl yapılandırdığı ve/veya koruduğu etnisite teorileri bağlamında açıklanmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevi, Etnisite, Türkiye, Heterodoksi.

To Tuğba and Asmin

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis intends to determine how the Alevi communities in Turkey survive and what are the main sources and factors helping them to sustain their group borders, especially since the mid-1980s, when the Alevi communities started to reveal their identity clearly. Turkish Alevi communities are often referred to by miscellaneous epithets such as *a sect of Islam* (Temel Britannica, 1992: 143), *a liberal Islamic faith* (Olsson et. al (ed.), 2003: preface), *heterodox Islam* (Melikoff, 1993: 101), *Turcoman Sunnism* (Özdağ, 2002: 88) or *a rebellion pertaining to a nation or class* (Ergin et. al., 1997: 95). Additionally, there are many prejudices *against* or *in favor of* the Alevi communities like *pervert* (Taraf, August 19-25, 1994: 6), *rebellious* (Melikoff, 1999: 14) and/or *hidden* (Uzunyaylalı, 1999: 13; Türkdoğan, 1995: 36; Clarke, 1999: 9). This work will undertake a close analysis of why state institutions condoned the Alevis and Alevi associations, which the state institutions had delineated with distinctive or altered definitions and elucidations or had not paid attention to until the mid-1980s. These years might be characterized not only by the Alevi identity's embarkation on a voyage to declare itself but also by its inception to affect some positions in power. Nevertheless, the thesis will seek a broader understanding of the reasons for the following two questions: 1. How were the Alevis and their identity affected by the contentions and skirmishes between the state/state institutions and some structures, at time when they were being evaluated as menaces by the state institutions? 2. How did the Alevi communities express themselves in the political arena against the dominant discourses in the country? In this work, ethnicity theories will be used to shed light on how the Alevis endeavor to maintain and perpetuate their identity borders and what the main patterns of their identity are. Ethnicity theories will be used in order to explain the logic of reciprocal influence among the Alevis and their surrounding fabrics.

It is important to state that the Kemalist regime was challenged by an obligatory change process on both economic and political grounds after the 1980 military *coup* in Turkey. Conservative trends, which had been one of the genuine challengers to the official state ideology since the early years of the new Turkish Republic, began to rise and consequently, official *Turkish History Thesis* (*Türk Tarih Tezi*) concomitantly shifted to a national (*milli*) culture which was a combination of Kemalism, racism and Islamism. This new trend, called Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (*Türk-İslam Sentezi*), triggered an awakening of certain congregations and sub-identities and paved the way for political Islam to become closer to the state ideology, although Islam had been considered a threat for several years. In this respect, henceforth, political Islam progressed and evolved alongside the state ideology after 1980.

Around the same time, another problem emerged in east and southeastern Anatolia where large segments of the population are Kurdish. In 1984, a war called the "*low intensity war*" (Cumhuriyet, September 20, 1998: 4) between the Kurdish separatist group Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan* in Kurdish, PKK hereafter) and security forces started. At the beginning, the PKK had aimed to set up an independent, united and socialist Kurdistan[1], but then, in its 4th congress in 1990, it debated the probability of a federal Kurdish state (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997: 155). On the one hand, the warfare between the PKK and the Turkish army contributed to the growth of Kurdish consciousness, but on the other it was also partly responsible for the arousing and maturing of ethnic diversities in Turkey. The warfare that would be equated with the Kurdish problem (Cumhuriyet, November 24, 1998: 5) went on in Turkey for many years.

Because of the rise of political Islam and the Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement, the modernist Kemalist regime and the "Jacobin laisism" (Metiner, 1995: 13) associated with the enlightenment philosophy were subjected to criticism after 1980. In this era, although the state institutions took preventive measures to secure

[1] In the first congress held on July 15-26, 1981, the PKK anounced that it was Marxist-Leninist and its aim was to materialize a National Democratic Revolution by the leadership of the proletariat in the area called Middle-North-West Kurdistan.

themselves, they also struggled mainly on discursive grounds. The state constituted counter-contentions on the discursive area against the arguments claimed by the rising movements mentioned above. This led to a legitimation conflict in both national and international areas. In this tense period, during the process of the re-producing, re-structuring and coding of the concepts, the Turkish state used any modern structure to strengthen the nation-state and provided cultural unity for a legitimate circumstation. One of the most important legitimation tools for the state was most probably the Alevi population, known as its dominant secular, modernist and Kemalist identity[2]. For this reason, it can be proposed that in this era the re-emergence of the Alevi identity was supported or guarded by the Kemalist regime or the state institutions. Another claim for the Alevi awakening in this era is that the Alevi population itself attempted to define their identity against and/or parallel to the rising Kurdish nationalism and political Islamic movement.

It is well known that since the borders of nation-states had been eroded during the 1980s throughout the world, the concept of national culture as one of the outcomes of modernism, and modernism itself became subjects of intensive critique. Nevertheless, the concept of nation-state has shifted from a state for citizens owning a shared culture and having legal individuality to a state for miscellaneous identities and congregations (Aydın, 1999: 10-11). This "post-modern" circumstance, during which identities and diversities gained more importance according to their authenticity, led to the production of the politics of these new dynamics as well. In this conjuncture, the disintegration of the socialist Soviet Union eradicated the obligation to choose one of the two alternative models -capitalism and socialism- and then the newest and more pliant discourses have attracted attention in political and philosophical fields. These discourses,

[2] Same scholars also suggest that Alevis' approaches towards secularism are stronger than their common religious-ethnic memories. According to this view, some myths and symbols constituting *Alevilik* are about to dissappear with the development of secular conception. An article of a troubadour Ruhi Su bears the most beautiful expression of this: "Since Turkish Society is a secular state, the word of 'Shah' has been erased from the language of Alevi People and Alevi Troubadours. That means their desire was not for the shah nor the sultan; it was for equality and for a secular state order in which they were to be free in their beliefs. Perhaps, our sociologists and politicians will later have chance to accentuate on this..." (Su, 1970: 14)

arguing that pursuing a political policy that originated from the concept of nation-state is a conservative thrift, accelerated throughout this era (Gülalp, 2003: 15). As the discourses on identities, congregations and especially ethnic groups were now considered as alternative approaches, the policies originating from these gained political potency. The ideological awakening of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey and the sub-identities' gaining of importance in world politics inevitably led to the triggering of the re-defining of Alevi identity. In addition to that certain social and political events that escalated in the mid-1990s in the context of the tension between so-called supporters of the shari'a and secular people might have caused the Alevi community to perceive themselves in an obligatory re-defining process. The re-defining process may be evaluated as a resistance to shari'a (Korkmaz, 1997: 7) and fascist groups (Korkmaz, 1997: 72), which have been perceived by the Alevi community as the instigators of the assaults they were subjected to in the past.

1.1. Methodology and Outline

In this thesis the reasons of the revival observed in the Alevi identity will be studied using various theories of ethnicity. In addition, how the political group boundaries of the Alevis were formed and preserved will be determined. To this end, the 1980 military coup, an important turning point in Turkey, has been chosen as the starting point. The rise observed in the Islamic and Kurdish ethno-nationalist movements after the 1980 coup had a significant impact on the Alevi community. As mentioned earlier, the Kurdish ethno-nationalist movement and the rise in political Islam caused the Kemalist regime to be gravely criticized after 1980. During this period, in order to preserve the nation-state structure and to reinforce cultural unity, there was an attempt to establish a legitimate foundation and to this end, the assistance of Alevis, whose secular, modernist and Kemalist identities were assumed to be strong, was in a way called for to be on the side of the state.

With an increase in ethnic and religious activities in the country, the community entered a phase of being defined and recognized both in and out of the group. In

order to set my assumptions regarding how the group boundaries of the Alevi community were attempted to be influenced and how these boundaries could be explained, I first of all defined some breaking points. Subsequently, I analyzed the discussions carried out on these breaking points. The breaking points I defined are as follows: 1. The momentum gained in the Kurdish discrimination movement after the 1980 military coup and the way this movement is expressed among Alevis; 2. The rise in the political Islamic movements and the state's secular reactions; 3. The Sivas massacre in 1993 and the Başbağlar massacre carried out subsequently; 4. The Gaziosmanpaşa incidents in 1995; 5. The discussions on perverseness during 1995 and 1997.

A careful analysis has been made of the Zülfikar and Semah magazines, published for the Alevis in Germany by the PKK, alleged PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's writings on religion and Alevism and the interviews carried out with him. During the period when the Alevis entered a grave phase of identity searching with the Sivas massacre, the reflections of the Başbağlar massacre -- carried out by the PKK -- upon the Alevis and conservative circles have been revealed in this thesis by thoroughly searching and analyzing various magazines and newspapers in which an implicit war of discourse is said to have generated within the scope of the Sivas-Başbağlar massacres.

To analyze all these above-mentioned breaking points, a thorough search was made of the news on Alevis in the publishing organs of related institutions. In order to be able to perform the analyses of the discourse that was attempted to be established after the mentioned breaking points, newspapers such as Beklenen Vakit, Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet, Milli Gazete, Tercüman, Özgür Gündem, and Ülkede Gündem, and periodicals such as Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, Aydınlık Dergisi, Cem Dergisi, Zülfikar, Semah, Nokta, Aksiyon, Özgür Halk, Hacıbektaş, and Diyanet Aylık Dergi, all of which either continuously or occasionally issued publications from 1990-2004, have been scrutinized. In addition to these, many books published on Alevis and Alevism both in and out of Turkey, together with articles published in international journals, have been

examined with great care. In this thesis, I have not dealt with the related decisions of the trials charged mostly on the grounds of insults against Alevis and Alevism.

I interviewed some Turkish-Alevi, Kurdish-Alevi and Turkish-Sunni figures as I wanted them to contribute to the scope of defining group boundaries in particular. I recorded all of these interviews. Even though these interviews do not provide satisfactory data on the group boundaries of Alevis and other identities, they provided me with some information on certain points, and I have expressed these as end notes in my thesis. Upon their own will, I had to keep the names of the interviewed individuals undisclosed.

This thesis is comprised of four chapters. In the first chapter, which is the introductory chapter, definitions related to Alevis and Alevism have been made. It will be stated in this chapter that in Turkey, Alevis are defined by different circles quite differently. In relation to what the origin of the term Alevi could be, it will be shown in this section that the concept in fact appeared towards the end of the 19th century. In this section, an attempt will be made to define the Alevi concept, which is used as a general name for many groups whose beliefs and rituals are in fact quite different from each other. There will be an emphasis in this chapter on the fact that the groups and individuals who try to define Alevism according to their own political structures and backgrounds come to the foreground too frequently.

After the definitions are made, I will try to explain that the concept of "Ali," which I see as the most important point of connection between the Alevis in Anatolia and the Islamic religion, is perceived differently by Alevis from the way it is perceived by the Islamic view. I will state that the Ali cult, which causes Alevism to be confused with Shiism in some circles in Turkey and abroad, is in fact a general cult belonging to the Middle East.

Since I believe that the most important problem of the studies conducted on the Alevis in Turkey is that they are not objective, I will try to make a brief analysis

of these studies and show the conscious and unconscious interventions that were attempted to be made in the issue of Alevi identity. In this chapter, analyses will be made while dealing with texts written by conservative researchers by occassionally forming connections between what reseachers and writers of Alevi origin have written.

At the end of the introductory chapter, there is a section where an explanation is made of the ethnicity theories that I will use while analyzing the Alevi identity and group boundaries. In this section, three main and current theories -- primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructionism -- will be introduced and a critique of these theories will be made. Symbolic ethnicity and transactionalist approaches, which are kept apart from these main theories, will also be dealt with and defined. The criticisms made by these three theories of each other, and the strengths and weaknesses of these theories are among the issues to be discussed.

The second chapter of the thesis includes incidents that are considered important regarding the history of Alevism. In this chapter, the structures that formed Alevism and the events influencing the formation of Alevism will be mentioned in a chronological order. An attempt will be made to emphasise from a historical perspective that today's Alevism is formed by different communities and groups differing significantly in their political views and beliefs. In this chapter, I will try to show that *Kızılbaşlık* and *Bektaşilik* are two different faces of Alevism, and I will explain that these two faces are gathered under one name with the onset of the modern Republic of Turkey. This chapter, in which history is explained, begins with a short analysis of Turks' relation to Islam and continues with the conflicts and development of a close relationship between the Bektaşi and Kızılbaş people and the Ottoman state during the era of the Ottoman Empire. It will then pass on to an analysis of the republican period. The fact that in the republican period the heterodox and heretic organizations, brought together under the general name Alevi, started to resemble each other with the modernization phase will be focused on in this chapter. An attempt will be made to show that with the onset of modern life, the references and codes used in the Alevi

community's perception of life have shifted from the religious sphere to the social sphere and, as a result, the group boundaries became more vulnerable to external influences. This shift in the reference points of the community also caused the community to be dragged into Marxist movements between the years 1960 and 1970. In the second chapter of the thesis, the chapter on history, these political structures and the interaction of Alevis will be thoroughly dealt with.

However, the most important chapter of the thesis is on the analysis of the breaking points determined after the 1980 period. In this chapter, detailed information will be presented concerning the events occuring at the aforementioned breaking points and the discourse carried out subsequent to these events. An attempt will be made to explain the impact of the Sivas massacre, the Başbağlar massacre and the Gazi events upon Alevis and the discourses of these structures mentioned in connection to these massacres and events upon Alevism will be analyzed. How these discourses, which are significant steps in the reformation of the political bounderies of the group, are evaluated by the Alevi people will be explained in this chapter. An attempt will be made to show that in the 1990s, when the Alevis started to express their identities more freely, there were double standards from time to time in the approach of the Islamic movements, the PKK and the state organizations towards the Alevis. It will be shown that while especially in the records of state organizations and official statements Alevis are regarded as a "religious sect," the same organizations and the people to whom these statements belong disregard Alevism in other areas.

In addition to these, during this period it is observed that the political conflicts experienced in "cem houses" (place of gathering) were actually important in restructuring group boundaries and in this context both Alevis and conservative powers experienced a short-lived conflict. It will be mentioned that the fact that Alevis want cem houses to be considered as prayerhouses is completely in correspondence with the modern understanding and that this demand is in fact within the boundaries defined by the system.

One of the most important events regarding Alevis and Alevism in the 1990s was undoubtedly the experience of forming parties, which needs to be considered as the Alevi elites exercising their power on the common people. While the Democratic Peace Movement is an Alevi party, it was unsuccessful in the elections, getting fewer votes than the total of its own members. It will be stated in this chapter that this Alevi party was not supported since Alevis believe that the boundaries of the community can be protected only within a secular and modern framework.

In the discussion chapter, which is the fourth and final chapter of the thesis, in light of all this data an examination of how the political group boundaries of Alevis changed, which symbols and myths formed these boundaries or how these boundaries were reformed will be made. When the theories of ethnicity mentioned in the first chapter are evaluated within a historical perspective, how revealing the Alevi community in understanding the political group boundaries will be analyzed. It will be shown that in shaping the group boundaries, the Alevi community generally uses historical myths and cults. Moreover, it will be stated that the group identity is reinforced with some primordial ties and that these ties are nurtured and reinforced owing to the continuous segragation mechanisms by the biggest "other" group, the Sunnis. That the name of the Alevi community appeared only towards the end of the 19th century will be taken up as the most important proof of its being a made-up name. In addition, because of this made-up term, there is a construction phase in the establishment of an Alevi identity, and it will be emphasized that this phase is shaped in accordance with the mentioned myths and primordial ties.

1.2. Etymology and Definitions

Etymologically, the expression of "Alevi" is generally known as "a man who is the supporter of Caliph Ali," "the followers of the caliph Ali" and/or a "group showing respect to Caliph Ali," and, in daily usage this expression is utilized exactly like this. Although these statements about the meaning of the term Alevi, which all refer to Ali bin Ebû Talib, the fourth caliph of the Sunni world, are

employed by certain sources in this way (Eyuboğlu, 1979: 19; Noyan, 1995: 17), there are other sources arguing that the word Alevi is composed of the word *Ali* and the suffix *vi*. As such, the word evidently means "belonging to Ali" (Büyük Lugat ve Ansiklopedi, 1969: 301; Fığlalı, Undated: 273; Ocak, 2002b: 216) or "people descended from the Ali's lineage" (Melikoff, 1999: 20)[3].

Although it is a well-known fact that the term Alevi refers to a religious context, it is not definite when the term Alevi started to be used. It is estimated that the term, which had not been conspicuous before, started to be used at around the time of the 19th century (Emiroğlu and Aydın, 2003: 28; Melikoff, 1993: 53). Although Gündüz (2002: 67) argues that in the Ottoman archives this term had almost not been used, for a long time before the founding of the Ottoman State the term had been used in Kutadgu Bilig (1069-1070), written by Yusuf Has Hacib (Yusuf Has Hacib, 1942). In the Vienna, Cairo and Fergana copies of Kutadgu Bilig, the *Alevi* expression appears[4]. In addition, it is quoted that the founder of the Erdebil lodge, Ebi'l-Feth Safiyüddin, had stated that "*Biz de Seyyidlik var, fakat Alevi, yahut Şerif olduğumuzu sormadım*" (We are all Sajids but I did not ask whether we are Alevi or Sherif) in a copy located in Ayasophia library under the number 2123 (Gölpınarlı, 1997: 172). Another definition of the Alevi term is seen in the *Siyasetname*, written by the renowned vizier of the Seljuks Empire, Nizamülmülk. The term can be seen in some of the pages of this source (Nizamülmülk, 2003). The term, in the reign of Abdulhamit II, was treated as "Alevi-Kızılbaş Muslims" (Çamuroğlu, 2004: 7). But we can fairly easily conclude that the widespread usage of the term started around the 19th century because the traditional term of *Nusayri* used in Syria had been replaced with the term Alavi (Alaouite) in general

[3] In addition to these definitions, similarly, although it is claimed by some groups that this word means "Ali-evi" ("Ali-house") and/or "Someone from the ménage of Ali" (http://www.cemvakfi.org), this usage is known to be wrong. In a discussion of a Flash TV program broadcasted on March 6, 2005, the Chairperson of Ehlibeyt Foundation Fermani Altun also made the same mistake.

[4] While the word of "Alevî" passes in the sentence of "*Alevîler bile katılmaknı avur*" in Vienna edition, in Fergana and Cairo editions it passes in the sentence of "*Alevîler bile katılmaknı öğretür*" (Yusuf Has Hacib, 1942)

(Melikoff, 1993: 26)[5]. But, Melikoff (1999: 318) argues that the term Alevi is an implement to assimilate the Alevis into Shi'ism. In sum, it can be assumed that the difficulty in defining or comprehending the term Alevi is due to the syncretic[6], gnostic[7], heterodox and oral traditional properties of the relevant groups.

In addition, since the term had not been practised before the 19th century, this contributed to an additional difficulty in outlining the group and the group borders. Here it should be argued that either various Alevi groups did not appear until the 19th century or these groups and religious communities had been known with different definitions. Evaluating the process of its historical perspective, it can be argued that the Alevi community did not suddenly appear in the 19th century and that there were historical predecessors that had dissimilar belief systems and religious dogmas. Generally these were labelled as Alevi only in name.

In the dictionaries of the Turkish Language Institution (Türkçe Sözlük, 1959; 1966; 1974), Aleviness (*Alevilik* in Turkish) is treated as "anyone belonging to the sect of Alevi." As for Eyuboğlu (1979: 19), Aleviness is a totality of rules for a way of life more than a religious dogma. While Noyan (1995: 19-20), an Alevi *dede-baba*[8],emphasizes that Aleviness is one of the four categories[9] in Muslim

[5] In this context it's worth to mention that Nusayrism, which means Arab *Alevilik*, is a religious fact that should be taken apart from Anatolian *Alevilik*. In the framework of this thesis, Arab *Alevilik* defining itself as the core of Islam will be left out and the concept of *Alevilik* existing in Anatolia, which is in general constituted by Turkish and Kurdish ethnic structures, will be analyzed.

[6] While syncretism, in religious terms, is defined as an expression depicting adoration to a god by using the shape or tradition of another god (Marshall, 1999: 650), in general it expresses the leaking of several symbols, narratives and expressions belonging to the other cultures or different traditions to the "pure culture or tradition" (Stewart and Shaw, 1994).

[7] Gnostism can be defined as "the totality of doctrines defending that a momentary 'enlightenment' can be reached through intuition by protecting mystical information and tenets transferred by various legends which are trying to divulge the root and destiny of the earth and human spirit". (Ulaş et.al., 2002: 238)

[8] In Bektaşism, Dedebaba, is a term and spiritual position religiously meaning the assignee of Hacı Bektaş Veli.

society and Turkishness, Bender (2000: 137-172) argues that *Alevilik* is a consequence of love for God, Prophet and Imam Ali and it should not be assumed to be a result of the Arabic culture. According to Bender (2000: 137-172) *Alevilik* originated from the Zoroastrianism and Yezidism, which are peculiar to Kurdishness.

McDowall (1996: 10) claims that *Alevilik* is a syncretic belief embracing pre-Islamic, Zoroastrian and Shi'a beliefs. The other sources handle *Alevilik* as "Islam unique to Turcoman" (Cinemre and Akşit, 1995: 5); "Shamanism which became Islamic" (Melikoff, 1999: 29); and "Islam peculiar to Anatolia" (Şener and İlknur, 1995: 19). It should be noticed that these sources highlight Turkish ethnicity with confidental accent. Exceptionally, as Bal (1997: 27) sets forth, Alevilik is a sub-culture and belief group. Bruinessen (2001: 117) treats Aleviness as an umbrella term and a name used to label different heterodox communities that have dissimilar beliefs and rituals. The definition given by Bruinessen (2001: 117) provides us a possibility of broad expression. Confusions observed in the definitions of the Alevis are not only seen among ordinary people and scholars, either non-Alevi or Alevi, but also amongst some organizations that argue they *represent* the Alevi society. For instance, The Cem Foundation (Foundation of Republican Education and Culture Center) is one of the most prominent organizations for Alevi society. The foundation was established in 1995, and along with the political developments, has been negatively criticized by many other organizations and structures. A *dede*[10] and the president of the Cem Foundation, Prof. İzzettin Doğan, emphasizes the Turkishness and Islamic characteristics and consequently defines Aleviness as "*liberal Islam belonging to Turks*" (Doğan, 1966) or "*a liberal religious approach of the Turks*" (Aydın, 2003).

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[9] Noyan (1995: 19-20) classifies Muslim under four titles: Experts of sufism, Sunnis, those turning sufism to an institution and Bektaşi-Alevis. Noyan's classification separating Alevi-Bektaşism from sufism merits attention.

[10] *Dede*ship instution is a *sine qua non* for Anatolian *Alevilik*. *Dede*s are the people acting both as leaders in solving problems of social life among Alevi society and also spiritual leaders in Alevi rites.

Nejat Birdoğan, a folklorist and a member of the executive committee of the Pir Sultan Abdal Association, another Alevi organization, in an interview (Aydın, 1997: 99) argues that *Alevilik* is an assortment composed of a combination of the ancient religions of Turks, Kurds, Zazas and the Arabs dwelling in Hatay. According to Birdoğan, *Alevilik* should be considered as a separate belief system from Islam. Lütfi Kaleli, president of the Semah Culture Foundation, another Alevi organization, claims that whether it is in Islam's circle or not *Alevilik* can be evaluated in regard to the five pillars of Islam (Üzüm, 1997: 170-171). According to Kaleli, the Alevis just fulfill the first pillar of "being Islamic," *Kelime-i Şehadet*. So, it should be claimed that *Alevilik* stays out of Islam considering the other four rules of "being Islamic" (Üzüm, 1997:171-172).

1.3. Invention of Ali and Evolution from Hz. Ali to Ali

Ali is the son-in-law and cousin of the prophet Muhammed. Moreover, he takes a more imperative place in Islamic mythology and history. It should be added that an "Ali myth" is apart from and beyond the historical Hz[11]. Ali teaching of the Sunni Islam could be seen in almost all beliefs from the Middle East. No doubt, historical Hz. Ali is different from the mythological Ali and this discrepancy is more profound than people imagine. Historical-arcaic Hz. Ali belongs to orthodox Islam, whereas the mythological one has been used by all oppressed communities as a legendary and a rebellious cult. According to this perspective Ali was a flag of the "subjugated" people in the Middle East.

Shi'i scholar Şeriati (2002: 68) explains the meaning of the mystification of Ali among communities spreading out in a wide geography as follows:

> As a concrete history, Ali feeds and meets the needs of the people which are urging them to create imaginary examples and gods throughout the history. Ali has collected Prometheus who was produced to meet the need of self-sacrifice in human soul, Demosthenes who was produced to meet the need of true, effective and powerful speech, spiritual beauties of

[11] It is observed that in writing the names of important figures in Islam, generally the Hz. Prefix is used with names in sources or the full name is used. The Hz prefix is Persian and is used only in Persian sources, not Arabic sources. Hz in the discourses in Turkey can be considered to be a sign of favouring a point of view. Here the full name or the Hz prefix is not used. The reason is that Ali is referred to with a meaning beyond his historical personality and that an emphasis is made in this way.

> "Nus" and "Futushi Shi" and various supremacies, invincibleness, cleanness, self-sacrifice, tenderness, spiritual fruitfulness briefly all beauties belonging to the other gods in a "god".
> ...
> Ali, in the real history, meets the needs of the people that are urging them to create imaginary examples, hypothetical gods and goddesses throughout the history.

The cult of Ali and his central role in Aleviness are key concepts because of their usage in current debates as methods of political manoeuvre. In discursive discussions concerning the meaning of Aleviness, the cult of Ali is used to create a hegemonic status. For example, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made the following statement in October 2004 as "*If being Alevi is to love Ali, I am more Alevi.*" This statement, to which several Alevi organizations reacted, has been used by numerous groups and people (Sezgin, 2004: 37; Türkdoğan, 1995: 57). This version of Aleviness is a "reduced" type of Aleviness and resulted from the inclination of including Aleviness in the Islamic circle. This has caused the development of an unhealthy relation between Islam and *Alevilik* and has "succeeded" in forcing the Alevis to choose between Sunnism and Shi'ism as a belief system integrating them into a safe life.

1.4. "Perversion" and the Alevis, an Expression

Accepting the Alevis and Aleviness as parts of a perverse belief system is an old mind-set. The Alevi quality of "being astray" goes back to Ottoman times and it is occasionally heard from the officials of Turkish Republic. Three critical events have negatively influenced the Alevis in recent years. The first event occurred in a TV program on January 9, 1995. The program's host "involuntarily" remarked upon a similarity between the terms of Kızılbaş and incest. After the blunder, the TV building was stoned and the emcee was compelled to apologize several times (Aksiyon, 1995b: 4). The other two events were more complex than an *ordinary* and *simple* blunder because in both of them Alevis and *Alevilik* were used as humiliation contrivances. The first of these emerged after the car accident in Susurluk in November 1997. The accident revealed many illegal links and processes within the state itself. Thus, the democratic institutions in the country reacted to this with a small but successful organized activity. People would switch their electricity off every night at 21.00 o'clock. This activity had been evaluated

and defined by then Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and the justice minister of the time, Şevket Kazan[12], as follows: "The people who switch their electiricity off are plotters. Opposition plays "*Mum Söndü*" [13,14]. These words have been reproached by miscellaneous democratic mass organizations.

Finally, during a time of crisis with Syria, Recai Kutan, the leader of the Virtue Party (VP) which was founded after the closing of the Welfare Party, stated, *"In Syria a heretic Alevi insight is in power."* This statement caused another crisis. Yasin Hatipoğlu, vice president of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, sent a warning message to Kutan about his statement. Afterwards, Kutan corrected his statement[15] and stated that this has nothing to do with the Alevis in Turkey. Nusayrism is a heretic Alevi insight[16]. The Alevis made some statements against Kutan[17].

In specific periods, "being perverse" or "being astray" are sometimes used as an expression of the subconscious in some cases it is used a specific target. However, clearer definitions on the Alevis are made in some places and form important examples in the sense of showing up the settled approach. On this subject, the best examples appear among the publications of Taraf Magazine:[18]

> Those using Ali for their loathsome mouths are perverted animals full of enmity against Islam...
> Alevis are resisting: 'You know Welfare Party and Tayyip Erdogan said that alevis [sic] were also our brothers. We either play *saz* or blow out the candle. We want freedom…
> I am against the separation of secular-muslim [sic], alevi-sunni [sic]… Something like namely I am against the separation of virtuous and bitch…. (Taraf, September 30 - October 6, 1994: 11)
> …to those perverts destroying the religion from inside… (Taraf, July 8-14, 1994: 6)

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[12] Sevket Kazan had attended to the the trials of Sivas massacre as an attorney for the accused.

[13] See footnote 123.

[14] http://www.milliyet.com/1997/02/12

[15] http://arsiv.hurriyetim.com.tr/hur/turk/98/10/07/gundem/09gun.htm

[16] http://www.radikal.com.tr/1998/10/08/politika/04kut.html

[17] http://www.alewiten.com/sapik.htm , http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1998/10/11/siyaset/siy02.html

[18] It's the publishing organ of illegal organization called Islamic Great East Raiders - Front (*İslami Büyük Doğu Akıncıları Cephesi* in Turkish, IBDA-C).

1.5. An Analysis on the Studies on Alevis

The most important problem seen in the studies on the Alevis and the Alevi culture is that they are not objective. While the texts written by the Alevis are generally closer to the state ideology, others try to interpret and define *Alevilik* as an internal part of Islam. Moreover in the daily discussions, *Alevilik* is being dealt with using orthodox Islamic references. For instance, one of the most prominent discourses regarding *Alevilik* is about the closeness of *Alevilik* to Islam and its "being the essence of Islam."

Xemgin (2000:101) argues that:

> …When the discussion focused on *Alevilik* to be a kind of Shi'ism in the Islamic religion, in order to explain its conflicts it is started to be claimed that *Alevilik* represents the happy period (devr-i saadet), namely it corresponds to the very essence of Islam and other Muslim people have perverted the real Islam… (Italic letters mine)

It can be clearly seen that these kinds of discussions create a matrix, which may be solved only though an agreement that one of them is the original and the other is a derivation. Furthermore, the belief that diversity is perverse emerges instead of giving diversity the right to exist.

Another problem faced during the sociological analysis of *Alevilik* is the method applied to expose the relation between Islam and *Alevilik*. There are two main views on *Alevilik* in this context. One of them belongs to the Alevi-originated writers. It is clearly seen that they deal with the Islam-based perspective of justice and unfairness and moreover they do not seem so at peace with orthodox Islam. Most of them use the arguments of Shi'ism and while trying to separate themselves from an orthodox belief in this geography, they get closer to another orthodox belief system in Iran.

The debates on the roots of *Alevilik* have revealed another problem for methodology. There are four main views on the roots of *Alevilik*. Three of these are Shi'ism, Shamanism and former Middle East and Anatolian religions (or cultures). The last one is the syncretism thesis. In discussions about the roots of

Alevilik, researchers choose one of the views mentioned above according to their cultural background and political attitude.

In addition to Alevi-originated scholars, most Sunni writers treat *Alevilik* as a sect of Islam. They have caused the formation of a new trend of arguments on whether *Alevilik* is in Islam or not. This kind of debate had been performed during the reign of the Jeune Turks (1913-1918) and later the conflicts between the PKK and the Turkish army in the Tunceli-Bingöl regions during the 1990s[19]. For the state, the Alevis were "*the real Turks*" during the conflicts with the PKK and additionally they were "*real Muslims*" against the threat of the shari'a. It can be argued that in a sense, the state, in one respect, has invited the Alevis to fight against the enemies of the regime.

The proposals of the scholars studying the Alevis and *Alevilik* in Turkey have certain limits. Especially, some prominent scholars (whose Sunni cultural characteristics are dominant) attempt to evaluate *Alevilik* in the "*Islamic circle*" in their works. It is seen that *Alevilik* is a segmentary model of Islam for these scholars. And in some cases it is suggested as a sect of Islam. These types of sources use certain kinds of terms during the evaluation of *Alevilik* and *Bektaşilik* that generally bear negative meanings. One such term is Kızılbaş and the use of the term is clearly avoided. For instance, in a book named "*Tarikatlar,*" delivered to its readers by the daily *Milliyet* (Güner, 1986: 71-80), in the chapter titled *Bektaşilik* the words Kızılbaş or Alevi are not used. Furthermore, it is stated that the word Bektaşi is being used in Turkey in a context of negative discourse (Güner, 1986: 74). According to the writer, although the sect founded by Hacı Bektaş Veli had been undeniably in the Sunni circle, after his death, some aspects against the Quran and Sunna were internalized by the faction (Güner, 1986: 71). Contemporary Aleviness is indicated as being against the Quran and the Sunna in these statements. It is also argued that "to be contrary" or "being outside the circle" is something that is disliked. In an interesting photograph in the book on

[19] In this period, the relation of *Alevilik* not only with Islam but also with Turkishness was debated.

page 74, the Mehteran Chorus is placed at a demonstration of the Memorial Ceremony of the Hacı Bektaş Veli.

The most prominent conservative and/or nationalist scholars studying Aleviness are Ethem Ruhi Fığlalı, Orhan Türkdoğan, İbrahim Canan, Zekeriya Beyaz, Saim Savaş, İlyas Üzüm, Yasin Aktay, Abdülkadir Sezgin, Mustafa Ekinci, Hüseyin Bal, and Muzaffer Özdağ. As mentioned earlier, they treat Aleviness as being in the Islamic circle.

Beyaz (2003: 218), in his work named *Alevi Dosyası (The Alevi File),* insists that Aleviness is an Islamic sect and furthermore it is a branch of the Shi'a belief belonging to Turks. Beyaz seeks to bring Aleviness closer to Shi'ism. He also defines the Alevis as not belonging to Turkish identity unlike the Bektaşi. Another scholar who points out that Aleviness should be treated in the Islamic circle is Fığlalı. As Fığlalı (1996: VIII) defines Aleviness as being representative of Turcoman Sunnism, Türkdoğan (1995: 42) states that his aim is to unite the Alevis and Sunnis in a shared Islamic culture.

Likewise, Üzüm (2002: 29) argues that the Alevis and Bektaşis are societies that could not find the opportunity to know the real/bookish Islam. Moreover, according to Üzüm, the Alevis-Bektaşis have not completed the "Islamization" process. Similar arguments made by Sezgin (2002: 168) are also interesting. According to him:

> …contrary to those asserting that the term *Alevilik* is a separate religion, a separate sect, even a mixture of Christianity, Shamanism, sun worshipping and Islam, though it is a life-style fully belonging to us, it is proved to be **inside Islam, a Hanefi Islam connected to Maturidi tenets;** in the continuous propaganda and created negative atmosphere this situation is not known among the public including the ecclesiastics (Italic and bold letters mine).

In addition to these studies, there are some theoretical approaches. By using certain historical terms, the "tradition" of *Alevilik* has been re-invented and re-created. For instance, Mustafa Ekinci (Ekinci, 2002) in his book *Anadolu Aleviliğinin Tarihsel Arka Planı (The Historical Background of the Anatolian Aleviness)* and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (Ocak, 1999b) in his book *Osmanlı*

İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler (XIV-XVII. Yüzyıllar) (Marginal Sufism in the Ottoman Empire: Kalenderis (XIV-XVII centuries)) use the *Şeytan Kulu* (Slave of the Devil) term that comes from Ottoman sources (Sümer, 1999: 12; Birge, 1965: 66). The Ottomans used the term "Şeytan Kulu" in place of the term "Şah Kulu" (Slave of Shah), which was a Kızılbaş rebellion against the state that broke out in 1512. Likewise, Ekinci (2002: 30) and Ocak (1999b: 128) also prefer to use the term "Şeytan Kulu" to proclaim the identity between the "Şah" (Shah) and "Şeytan" (Devil) to humiliate the "Şah." It is noteworthy to emphasize another reflection seen in Ekinci's book (Ekinci, 2002: 228). According to Ekinci, following the war between the Safevids and the Ottomans, the Ottoman Empire entered the unproductive period and thus, the Safevids became the "wreckers" of Europe. As discussed above, Ekinci tries to re-create a traditional dissatisfaction with the concepts concerning the Alevis.

According to Ekinci (2002: 228):

> …because of these clashes, the Ottoman State could not acquire what it wanted in Europe and it entered to the period of stagnation. Iranian Safavid State, with its position, preventing the development of the Great Islam Unity; on the other hand, maybe, it unconsciously became the saver of Europe.

Fığlalı (1996: 206) assumes a similar attitude and argues that the factious (*fesat* in Turkish) components of the Shi'i-Safavids and Hurufism muddied the faith of the innocent and sincere Turkish people as they covered themselves up as believers and *Sufis*. It can be construed from Fığlalı's words that the Sufism outside the Sunna tradition is not acceptable.

The crucial issue here is not whether the Alevis are Muslim or not. The main problem is that the Alevis are accepted as legitimate as long as they get closer to orthodox Islam in Turkey. The Alevis' getting closer to orthodox Islam has created another problematic inspiration, which is related to the correct method of worship for the Alevis. For instance, while Türkdoğan (1995: 58) suggests that "*Bismişah,*" used in some Alevi prayers, means God, he warns the Alevis not to enter into "a wrong belief system" like the Christian Liberation Theory. Furthermore, another discursive orientation made by Türkdoğan (1995: 59) is

seen between the following expressions: "*Approximately ten Alevi people have just converted to Sunni identity in Ortaca,*" and that the process of marriage of a Sunni girl with an Alevi person is a *"kind of Sunnism turning into Alevilik* or *assimilation.*"

The most prominent figure who wants to deepen the relation between *Alevilik* and Turkishness is Abdülkadir Sezgin. Acording to Sezgin, as the extreme and radical left is widespread among the Alevis, they became a large and potential threat. In this respect, he argues that the Alevis should rescue themselves from these "extreme" organizations whose borders are not also drawn clearly by Sezgin. However, Sezgin (2002: 172) argues that:

> …among the existence of groups such as **Nurists, Süleymanists** that are organized like orders although they are not so, the existence of newly build-up and developed order-like groups such as **Aczimendis** are known by anyone. Making these activities that were carried out illegally and turned into 'pressure groups of democracy', legitimate and legal institutions can be evaluated a kind of democratization (Bold letters mine).

Another scholar, İlyas Üzüm, has accentuated similar issues. Üzüm (1997: 40) points out that the funeral ceremonies of some illegal leftist militants are held at cem houses.

In short, by using the Islamic symbols of *Alevilik*, a holistic Islamic *Alevilik* is attempted to be created and then by getting it closer to Sunnism, an attempt is made to re-create this created *Alevilik*. In the comments of most of these academics and researchers, there is an attempt to establish connections between the elements of *Alevilik* which are closer to Islam. In such cases, while the Cem Foundation -- as being one of the Alevi organizations in which *Alevilik* has the highest connection with Islam -- is mentioned, the views of the Pir Sultan Abdal Association, which have a clear leftist identity, are not mentioned at all. For instance, Üzüm (1997: 43) asserts that there are all sorts of people in Pir Sultan Abdal Associations, ranging from atheists to Kurdish nationalists and from socialists to ultra leftist fractions. As such, these organizations have developed in a manner that is not in line with Anatolian Alevis' beliefs, opinions and insight. Üzüm (1997: 44) also states that these associations have a hostile attitude towards religion.

A similar attitude is also seen in İlyas Üzüm's serial articles titled *Tarihi ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Alevilik* (*Aleviness with its Historical and Cultural Dimensions*) prepared for the Tercüman Newspaper. Here, *Alevilik* is exhibited as a part of Islamic culture and its non-Islamic and leftist elements are not included. In his interviews held with Alevi representatives, Üzüm was careful not to pass the boundary of Islam. During the interviews, significant comments made by the Alevis, were emphasized.

> *Alevilik* is a part of the cultural history of Islam (Tercüman, July 23, 2004: 14)
> Sunni Islam insight is closer to us than the Shi'ite Islam (Tercüman, July 25, 2004: 14)
> *Alevilik* is a libertarian and liberal interpretation of Islam
> A **tendency** existing inside Islam religion (Tercüman, July 28, 2004: 14) (Italic and bold letters mine)

1.6. Theorotical Framework

In order to test the hypothesis of this thesis mentioned above, ethnicity theories will be used and assessments will be realized in this context. As is well known, both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars proposed that race and ethnicity were remnants of traditional societies and as modernism developed, they would vanish parallel to several modern improvements (Jalali and Lipset, 1992-93: 585). But, since the 1950s, ethnicity has become a source for political mobilization in world politics (Al-Haj, 2002: 238) and the number of studies on ethnic and cultural issues have increased in this era (Eriksen, 2002: 12). In the last 50 years, globalization has had a more powerful influence on world politics, leading to the maturing of certain ethnic separations and initiating the publication of articles and books on ethnicity and race by several scholars who are mostly historians (Banton, 2001: 173; Angstrom, 2001: 59). Gurr and Harff (1994: 7), as an indicator of ethnic discrepancy, argue that at the beginning of 1993 approximately 27 million refugees suffered and fled from ethnopolitical conflicts and repression. In addition, 9 million ethnic refugees had fled across international borders while another 17 million ethnic people had been displaced within their homelands[20].

[20] Gurr and Harff (1994: 15-26) define politically active ethnic groups observed in modern states in four different ways. These are ethno-nationalists, residents, community structures and ethno-class structures. While Anatolian Alevis should be placed among community structures, Kurdish

According to Isaacs (1989: 3), at the beginning of the Cold War, between 1945 and 1967, as an estimated value, 7,480,000 deaths occurred as a result of ethnic and cultural fatalities. Moreover, globalization (Banton, 2001: 173) and, as a result, the easing of the situation for minorities and the ethnic groups within the nation state[21], (Helsinki Yurttaşlar Derneği, 2001: 38) has paved the way for these groups to behave in controlled manners. The above-mentioned developments led to the emergence of some approaches on the formation of ethnic groups, their borders and interaction.

One of the most important approaches that needs to be mentioned is the orthodox Marxist approach which had not considered ethnicity important because of its primary interest in the relations of production and class-conflicts within its traditional dicourses. According to the Marxist tradition, ethnicity conceals and masks the class conflict from the actors. Then, ethnicity mediates the process of conceiling of the actors' class positions leading to the fetishization of the relations of production (McAll, 1992: 70) [22]. However despite the foresights of the traditional Marxist approach, especially those parallel to industrialization and modernization, ethnic groups and the problems peculiar to them have not decreased but increased to a significant extent. Despite the fact that the need to define ethnic groups has emerged in modern periods, it is still being debated as to whether ethnic organizations and ethnic identities constitute phenomena nurturing

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nationalist movement seems suitable to be defined under the ethnic-nationalist structures. According to Eriksen (2000) over 2000 ethnic structures exist in the world.

[21] Isajiw (1993) uses the terms of primary, secondary, folk-community, national community, dominant majority and subordinate minority in the typology of the ethnic groups and asserts that with modernism and particularly with the increase of migration phenomenon, secondary ethnic group identity started to find place in the political arena more than before.

[22] One example of this approach to ethnicity is Micheline Labelle's Ideologie de couleur et classes socials en Haiti (Les Presses de l'Universite de Montreal 1978). In the area of Port-au-Prince there is a bourgeoisie, a petty bourgeoisie, and an industrial proletariat, while in the country areas there are three main categories of peasantry that can be ranked in relation to each other on a scale running from moderate wealth at one end to poverty at the other. In general, these class distinctions coincide with differences of colour, with paler skin at the bourgeois and petty bourgeois end of the spectrum as a result of greater intermarriage with Europeans. It is thus a simple step to "explain" the differences between classes in terms of biological differences rather than relations of production and this is what Labelle describes as the "ideologie de colouer" or "ideologie de coloriste" (McAll, 1992: 71) .

on and produced by modernism or a natural reaction by the old/traditional against the destructive effect of modernism on the old or traditional. While Eriksen (2002: 22-23) claims that ethnic processes are modern in character, Smith (2002b: 40) emphasizes that ethnicity and religion stand as the two fields, which have resisted the dominant secular and universalistic attempts at assimilation by modernism, also providing various clues as regards the pre-modern roots of ethnic structures. Smith (2002b: 40), while claiming that ethnic bonds and feelings are pre-modern formations, emphasizes that these structures constitute the pre-modern nuclei of modern nations as well.

In the literature of anthropology, the term ethnicity is treated as "a social/cultural and sometimes political formation having its own culturazation process and a holistic identity, which both sees itself 'separate' from the others and which is seen as the 'other' by others in the sense of specific religious, linguistic, spatial and/or cultural features, by protecting this group identity and providing the group's continuity through inner-marriage." (Emiroğlu and Aydın, 2003: 276). This definition outlines a general perspective in distinguishing ethnic groups from the other groups. Furthermore, it presents some clues that can be employed to clarify and explain the formation of the ethnics, their continuity and the alterations observed. However, in the definition of the term ethnicity, certain elements like language, religion, race etc. can be adopted either as a whole or individually. For instance, as Hastings (1999: 3) labels ethnicity as "a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language," Smith (1999: 41) refers to it as "a cultural collective type emphasizing the role of the myths belonging to its lineage and historical memories." In contrast according to Eriksen (2000), although there are cultural differences in ethnic structures, ethnic groups use culture as a tool for political self-interest and owing to this, cultural dissimilarities cannot be separated categorically or definitely. As it is seen, there is confusion in the process of deciding what is or is not a desirable definition of ethnicity, and because of this, some indefiniteness and contradictions have appeared in the approaches to the formations, alterations and interactions of ethnic groups. According to Isaacs (1989: 1-25), this diversity is due to the instinctive behaviour of the people

bearing their own emotions, needs, contradictions and discipline, that is, their own "House of Muumbi"[23]. Stanfield (1993) strongly argues that on account of the dominant prejudices of both the society and the researcher, objectivity in studies of ethnicity cannot be realized.

In sum, it can be concluded that various signs can be used as features peculiar to an ethnic group. For instance, a collective name, a devotion to a common ancestor and unitary characteristics can be accepted as common elements constituting and forming the inner-dynamics of an ethnic group. Nevertheless, discussions on how ethnic groups survive and which factors help them to sustain their group borders, which are in fact a meaning of their existence, continue to exist. It should be stated at this point that how the values system and the cultural properties concerning these values used by ethnic groups connect to the group itself is an essential question that should be answered. Asking whether an ethnic structure in a *given* society exercise the culture or different factors like language, color, race etc. or whether an ethnic structure is isolated because of these factors are the key questions for which answers should be found. Thus, culture is also becoming an outstanding element in studies of ethnicity. Establishing a relation between ethnic groups and culture needs more attention. Culture once had such a central role in describing the ethnics that, from the 1920s to the 1960s, ethnicity was defined as a cultural phenomenon (Anderson, 2001: 209). Yet, since the 1960s, primordialists have argued that language and culture have indeed had a particularly central role in the way ethnics shape their behaviours (Eller and Coughlan, 1993: 187). Likewise, Cohen (1981) treats ethnic groups as cultural groups as well.

Particularly, the 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a sudden increase of interest in the studies of culture and if alienation, ideology and hegemony had been the key words of earlier periods, culture would now be the dominant concern for the social sciences (Swingewood, 1998: ix). This development was to broaden the

[23] Muumbi's House: Muumbi is the totem of Kikuyu tribe in Kenya and it is seen as the mother of the tribe by the tribe members. The land on which the tribe has resided is her own house and every Kikuyu is born in this house (See Isaacs, 1989: 1-25).

definition of culture (Swingewood, 1998: x). Additionally Roosens (1990) maintains that culture has too many definitions in social studies.

Thus, theories of ethnicity can be varied according to the impact of culture and primordial ties. Although theorising ethnicity and ethnics based on some minor and major approaches is an acceptable method, there are three major approaches which are generally focused on[24]. In the last few decades, even if some scholars theorised ethnicity in a more general context (Davis et. al., 2000: 526), according to major methodological approaches, primordialism, instrumentalism (situationalism) and constructionalism continue to have an enormous influence in the field of ethnicity studies.

Unlike the primordialists and constructionists who assert that cultural codes are more important sources to form an ethnic identity, primordialists treat culture as fixed, fundamental and a *given* fact formed by factors like blood ties, shared territory, religion and language. Constructionists suggest that culture, to a certain degree, is produced, formed and shaped by the existing structure in which the ethnic groups live.

Apart from these approaches, instrumentalists exhibit a more situationalist approach. According to instrumentalists, the identity of an ethnic group can be altered by the characteristics of the process that the ethnic group is subjected to. That is, an ethnic group's identity is varied according to the power and interest relations in a given society and, therefore, culture can also vary parallel to the changes seen in ethnic identity. Thus, it can be easily inferred that culture has a secondary place in the instrumentalist premise. The instrumentalist approach treats the ethnic groups in a context of social organizations that have borders which can vary according to different situations. In the primordialist approach ethnic groups are perceived as cultural groups that have decisive borders. However, instrumentalists have been critized by constructionists for emphasizing

[24] Denomination and classification of ethnicity theories is quite problematic. For instance, Isajiw (1993) states that apart from the general acceptance, there exist primordial, epiphenomenic, instrumentalist and subjective approaches.

the importance of culture and arguing that mass consciousness determines the features that form the ethnic structure.

The primordialist approach, accepted as a basic definition identifying ethnic groups, has gained more attention through the rising interest in multi-cultural studies observed in the post-war period and the politics of decolonization during the 1950s. In these years primordialist theses were becoming widespread and prevalent throughout the world[25].

The term "primordial" was used for the first time by an American Sociologist, Edward Shils, in 1957. Shils defines the important ties in social life as "primordial," "individual," "sacred" and "civic" (Geertz, 1993), maintaining that these primordial attachments and identifications have coercive powers and consist of assumed givens of social existence (Isaacs, 1989: 35).

Primordialists state that every individual possesses certain endowments and identifications, and these assumed peculiarities are rooted in the unchangeable circumstances of birth. The individual perceives the primordial sentiments as given, coercive and "*a priori"* prior to all experience and social interactions. Consequently, ethnic identity has an ascriptive property and so, ethnicity is an immutable and fundamental component of human societies.

According to primordialists, the primitive ties which can be distinguished from other kinds of bonds are language, religion, assumed blood ties, territory etc. It is contended that these attachments come from birth and they have intense emotional and non-rational peculiarities (Oberschall, 2000: 982). Moreover, these are existentially primary patterns of human relationship (Grosby, 1994).

[25] Windschuttle (http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/21/oct02/geertz.htm) draws attention that especially from this date on, the concept of universal western culture suggested by the European enlightenmentism has been started to be criticized and as a result of this, the importance of other cultural structures has gained importance.

Another claim contended by primordialists is that primordial sentiments are more important than other social relations and the status to determine the interactions of the ethnic group, with the other ethnic groups and society in which the ethnic group lives. Bacova (1998: 31) asserts that even though the importance of the primordial sentiments differ from person to person, from society to society and from time to time, the strength of such bonds and their types are claimed to be important.

Geertz (1963) emphasizes the importance of blood ties, religion, language and shared territory and claims that race should also be evaluated among primordial ties. However, he also draws attention to the ethnobiological approaches that can be a threat for these evaluations. According to Geertz (1973: 259), primordial attachments stem from the "givens" and these givens stem from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language and following particular social practices. Geertz (1963), additionally, supposes that primordial ties can be more dominant in semi-modern societies that are politically and/or technically less developed[26]. Geertz (1963), correspondingly, stresses that culture and primordial ties are the more important components in defining human behaviours and additionally advocates that these ties have a more significant impact on daily life than the other kinds of social bonds such as class, political party or occupation (Isaacs, 1989: 36). In sum, according to primordialists the social determination of an individual comes into being beyond the individual.

Another primordialist, Harold Isaacs, states that primordial ties become an individual nature in a definite time and historical moment of a given society (Isaacs, 1989: 38). Isaacs (1989: 36) defines the primordial attachments claimed by Geertz as "basic group identity" and insists that these are the innate parts of a personality.

The most important critique for the primordialists is that they have a deterministic view of ethnicity for the reason that they insist on primordial sentiments being

[26] At this point, Geertz, gets nearer to the modernist view asserting that ethnic identities will decrease or diminish in conjunction with modernism.

coercive, unquestionable and prior to all experiences or interactions. Primordialists fail to explain the formation of new ethnic groups and are unsuccessful in elucidating the disappearence of the existing ones. Eller and Coughlan (1993: 183) assert that the term primordial itself is an emotional, un-sociological and meaningless term and, thus a bankrupt concept for the analysis and decription of ethnicity in scientific studies. In addition, according to Eller and Coughlan (1993), ethnicity and nationalism are far from the three so-called important and basic features of primordialism, "given," "*a priori*" and "*ab origin,*" and they state that primordial attachments are ties that are "produced" but not "given" (Eller and Coughlan, 1993: 188). Furthermore, Hoben and Hefner (1990) argue that the term defined as primordial by Geertz has vital oversights and some imperfections in regarding socially re-organized groups as primordial groups.

Grosby (1994) responded to the critiques mentioned above. According to Grosby (1994), when Eller and Coughlan consider primordial attachments as irrational and emotional, they skip the reality that every emotion has a concrete source. Furthermore, Grosby (1994) notes that emotions are aroused by the cognition of an object. Consequently, the ineffable and coercive features of these emotional underpinnings are an account of natural, objective and unchangeable structures like the family and society one is born into and territory[27].

The critiques made of the primordial approach have been augmented by intrumentalism, which became popular in the beginning of the 1970s. According to instrumentalists, individuals, groups and elites use their identities to gain social and political advantages or privileges (Brass, 1985; Barany, 1998). Consequently, instrumentalists prefer to use the term ethnic identity, which is a more changeable term, instead of ethnic culture. According to the instrumentalist approach, an

[27] Another theory taking root in primordial approaches is ethnobiologism which can be characterized as a more radical approach. Ethnobiologists emphasize biological feature of ethnicity and regard ethnic structures as natural genetic reflections. Consequently, according to ethnobiologists, ethnicity is genetic originated and therefore it bears constant features. The most important figure of this approach is Van der Berghe. Berge defends that social structure and synergy of human being can be understood solely through the determinance of blood ties and genetic structure (See Berghe, 1995).

ethnic group can change its borders and distinguishing behaviours in order to get privileges out of a situation. Going beyond the bounds of what is considered acceptable, Oberschall (2000: 982) claims that any ethnic integrity does not come into being in normal conditions, but in situations for which individual and social benefit is available.

Mitchel (1956) claims that social identity becomes more important in case of threat. The instrumentalist approach supposes that ethnic identities are not either ascribed or achieved but consist of both. Therefore, according to the instrumentalist approach, ethnicity is a group of symbolic ties used by individuals and groups in the political agenda. One of the most prominent figures of the instrumentalist approach, Michael Banton (1997), asserts that ethnic groups evaluate even their names according to their social, economic and political benefits. Banton (1997: 15) maintains that people give a name for what they demand, not for what they actually are. According to the "Rational choice theory" of Michael Banton and Michael Hetcher, individuals' choices are becoming so important that members behave so as to maximize their economic advantages or security. Consequently, as ethnic identities become tools for social interaction to gain privileges, instrumentalists claim that ethnic groups are political and social interest groups.

Another instrumentalist, Barth, criticizes the traditional anthropological approaches (Barth, 2001: 11) and primordialism for treating the societies with different cultures as units separated from each other with well-fixed borders having no interaction and changeability. According to Barth, (2001: 14-16) cultural values do not give a descriptive meaning to an ethnic group. On the contrary, culture is generated and used by means of the interaction of the ethnic group with its surrounding society. Barth (2001: 16-18) defines the ethnic structures as organizational units interacting with other different groups but not as static cultural entities. Additionally, Barth notes that an ethnic group should be defined by its interrelations with others but not by shared values of group members.

The instrumentalist approach claimed by Barth is labelled as "transactionalism" (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 9). This was critized by Francis (1976), Wallman (1986) and Epstein (1978) because it fails to vary the *ethnic belongings*. In addition to this, the criticism of primordialism largely focuses on the failure of the strict interpretation of the continuity of ethnic groups. Roosens (1989), criticizing Barth, says that boundaries constitute an identity but the group having identity does not become an ethnic group without blood ties. In this way, Roosens (1989) puts forward instrumentalism's deficiency in explaining ethnicity. Instrumentalists are also criticized for defining interests largely in material terms, for failing to take the participants' senses seriously (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 9).

Beginning from the 1980s, the progress in social sciences and anthropology led to the appearance of some methodological critiques together with these developments. According to Cohen (1999: 41), comparative sociology led to the emergence of a philosophical problem and an open question against social anthropology. This issue was related to whether it was appropriate to use some terms of some parts of the society for the other parts. In other words, according to Cohen (1999: 41), the assumption of a *descriptive* and consequently *interpretive* expression of a culture could be reduced to the appropriate terms of another culture which is in essence a contradiction. Consequently, striving to understand an ethnic structure in terms of cultural, religious etc. characteristics entails this contradiction.

From this standpoint, to understand the formation and continuity of ethnic groups, both of these hypotheses, that is, ethnic groups are socially "imagined" structures and that these structures have dynamic inner mobility, have been argued for the last decades. In the beginning of the 1980s, "*The Invention of Tradition*" by Hobsbawn and Ranger and "*Imagined Communities*" by Benedict Anderson were signs of scholars' shifting to studies of ethnicity. These scholars took the ethnic consciousness into consideration but not the main dynamics which were to guide

the behavior of ethnic groups. This was a constructionist approach. The position of Cohen (1994) serves a wide field of meanings and formulations:

> The consequent change in the anthropology of the ethnicity had...to move from a position in which it took the consciousness for granted or neglected to the one in which it made the consciousness problematic. We devised systems for constructing other people's consciousness without inquiring too closely into their veracity. This is my point of departure from the Barth of 1969.

According to Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 72), the constructionist approach:

> …focuses on the ways of ethnic and racial identities are built, rebuilt, and sometimes dismantled over time. It places interactions between circumstances and groups at the heart of these processes. It accepts the fundamental validity of circumstantialism although attempting to retain the key insights of primordialism, but it adds them a large dose of activism: the contribution groups make to creating and shaping their own identities…

According to the constructionist approach, considering ethnic consciousness important, ethnic structures settle on their boundaries by the effective situation of misceallenous internal and external factors (Nagel, 1998).

The new focus on consciousness implies a shift of relative emphasis from ethnicity as an aspect of social organization to ethnicity as consciousness, ideology and imagination (Govers and Vermeulen, 1997: 5). Even though constructionists argue that ethnic structures are socially imaginative, they do not undervalue the historical basis of ethnic clashes and mobilizations (Nagel, 1998).

This perspective is based on the view that ethnicity is not only an individual fact but also a social phenomenon. However, the constructionist approach, contrary to the instrumentalist claims, argues that ethnics cannot be manipulated by political parties.

Nagel (1998) summarizes the ethnic identity according to the constructionist approach:

> Ethnic identity, then, is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual's self-identification and outsiders' ethnic designations- that is, what *you* think your ethnicity is, versus what *they* think your ethnicity is....Ethnic boundaries, and thus identities, are constructed by both the individual and group as well as the outside agents and organisations.

In addition to this, Benedict Anderson (Anderson, 1995) advocates the constructionist approach by claiming that all societies except *face-to-face* (to a certain degree they are too) communities are more or less imaginative.

In sum, according to the constructionist approach, the ethnic group plays a central role in the process of propagation of group formation, the re-definition of a group's identity and the drawing of boundaries. Also, similar to what instrumentalists argue, the mobilization of an ethnic group is not connected to the circumstances but to the perception of the circumstance by the ethnic group.

Different from the classical views of ethnic studies, Gans (1979), in 1979, used the term symbolic ethnicity and defined ethnicity as a nostalgic affiliation. The main concern of ethno-symbolist Gans is that ethnicity, even though it cannot be observed as a concrete fact, is a reality which is being felt. The ethno-symbolist approach has been corroborated by most scholars (Crispino, 1980). Anthony Smith, known as an ethno-symbolist, argues that in the continuity of an ethnic group, myths and symbols play a key role. According to Smith, ethnic groups are communities that have shared historical memory, a collective name and a common myth belonging to a common lineage. That is to say, according to ethno-symbolists, the main reasons for the survival of ethnic groups are the continuity of shared memories and symbols. Furthermore, Smith (2002a) notes that historical culture and the concept of historical territory are indispensable traits of ethnic groups.

Smith (2002a: 38-39) explains the main concern of the ethno-symbolist approach as follows:

> If the special characteristics of ethnic identities is desired to be understood, the nature (shape and content) of historical memories, which we can summarize as the combination of the "myth-symbol" in the mechanisms of conveying to the future generations and of spreading to a specific group, common values, myths and symbols should be examined.
>
> As ethnicity is mostly in a "mythical" and "symbolic" manner and that myth, symbol, memory and values are conveyed through forms and styles of the very slowly changing activities and speculations, once it is established, *ethnie*, by creating "patterns" inside of which social and cultural processes will appear and be affected by any condition and repression, tends to continue its existence throughout generations even centuries and to show continuity under the "normally" changing conditions.

Additionally, Smith (2002a: 38) notes that senses, manners and perceptions are coded in myths, values and symbols. As ethno-symbolists argue these ties can change from society to society and from person to person, with this assertion they come close to Geertz, but, as mentioned above, they too give secondary importance to these ties.

Contrary to ethno-symbolists who evaluate ethnicity as a fact having continuity, modernists argue that ethnicity is a pre-modern social fact. The ethno-symbolist approach is criticized for failing to take the phenomenon of ethnicity into consideration with its massive origins. According to critiques, ethno-symbolists define ethnicity with abstract concepts like myth and collective memory, but they do not emphasize the material aspects (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 10).

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY

In examining the history of the term "Alevi" and the structures constituting the Alevis, two significant phenomena are confronted. The first of these phenomena is *Bektaşilik,* which had formed the orthodox insight of the state[28] for a period of time, and the other one is *Kızılbaşlık,* which appeared around the 16th century when the Safavid threat arose for the Ottoman Empire and Sunni Islam. As *Bektaşilik* and Kızılbaşlık form two different sides of the history of *Alevilik*, it is not only important but also necessary to understand the brief histories of both terms in order to define the other movements that can be seen as the pioneers of *Alevilik*.

2.1. Turks and Islam

In order to understand the syncretic composition of Anatolian *Alevilik*, analysing three different dynamics with their interrelations will be the correct methodological approach. One of them is the social conditions and religious organizations of the region which supported *Alevilik* before Turks confronted Islam. The second dynamic is the conversion of Turks to Islam and the difficulties of this process. During the conversion process, Turks brought along some cults pertaining to their culture, and these cults were dispersed in the Islamic ones and consequently, transformed to another form and meaning. The third problematic dynamic is related to the conflicts between the Turks converting to Islam and both settled and nomadic Turks. The reflections of interior debates went on in the Islamic society for a long time on the mentioned conflicts.

[28] Here, what is meant by the orthodox understanding of the state is not only its attitude towards the beliefs and the style of the political relationship it constructed with them, but is also that of the very official discourse itself which is tried to be created independently. For a more broader evaluation on this see Ocak (2004: 73-81).

Muslims and political Islam had a weak influence on the nomadic Turks during the three centuries in which Turks had begun to confront Islam. One of the reasons underlying Islam's political defeat against nomadic Turks was the former religions. Although Fuad Köprülü and some other scholars (Mardin, 2002: 86; Birdoğan, 1995c: 24; Erseven, 1990) put forward the proposal that Shamanism, the former religion of Turks before Islam, affected Anatolian Aleviness, it can be claimed that Islam had easily spread among the Shamanist Turks, but confronted resistance from the Maniheist[29] Turks. The concealed resistance revealed among the Maniheist Turks against Islam had continued for a long time. The thesis that the ancient religion of Turks was Shamanism had started to be forsaken by the 1980s.

It is well known that Turks refused to accept the Arabization and Islamization process of Arabs (Aydın, 1994). According to Köprülü (2003: 44), both the West Göktürks and the East Göktürks had resisted the invasion of Islam but the new religion had advanced by "blood and iron" and sometimes by peaceful means. However, Ocak (2002a: 27) argues that approaches insisting that Turks had converted to Islam by means of the massacres and constraints, or that Turks had accepted Islam because of their former religions which were harmonious with Islam, do not reflect the reality. According to Ocak, there are a lot of complicated socio-economic, political and cultural factors to this process. The Turcomans had amalgamated their beliefs and traditions with the *Batıni*[30] factions and interpretations of Iran and Mesopotamia which had appeared in Islam. The belief structure of the Turcoman tribes became syncretic gradually. Köprülü (2003: 51) also pointed out that the Turks had acquired and internalized the Islamic tradition through Iran, not through the Arabs.

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[29] It is a religion founded by Mani (216-276). Its teaching has simply delevoped over the struggle between the light and darkness. The purpose of the religion is is to provide revealing of the "arrested" light. According to the teaching, for this purpose, firstly Buddha, later various prophets, Jesus and Mani were sent.

[30] According to the Batıni (Heretic) movement, apart from and beyond the visible (*zahiri* in Turkish) meaning of the Quran, it has inner (*batıni* in Turkish) meaning and the main purpose is to reach this meaning.

2.2. The Establishment Years of the Ottoman Empire and Bektaşilik

The most influential event in Alevi history during the foundation of the Ottoman Empire was the formation of the Bektaşi sect around the teachings of Hacı Bektaş Veli (1209-1271). Bektaşis pioneered the *Gaza*s of Sultan Orhan and had been missioned in the foundation of the Janissary corps. Moreover, Bektaşis played crucial roles in the Islamisation of the Christian Balkans. As *Bektaşilik* has showed more tolerance to others than Sunni Islam, most of the Christians living in their environment had been converted to Islam peacefully.

Aşıkpaşazade, the grandchild of Baba İlyas, a leader of the Babai rebellion, gave broad information about Hacı Bektaş Veli, who had given his name to the Bektaşi sect. Meanwhile, it should be stated that Bektaşis accept Hacı Bektaş Veli as Pir[31] (Fığlalı, 1996: 133). During his reign, Hacı Bektaş, prevented the activities of the Christian missionaries and sought to make the Mongols Muslim (Ocak, 2002b: 172).

To describe and understand who the ancestors of Aleviness and the people defining themselves as Alevi are, the first thing to be revealed should certainly be who the Bektaşis are and how their relations with Ottomans developed.

2.2.1. The Ottoman Empire and the Bektaşis

The period between the foundation era and the Çaldıran War[32] (1514) was a more brilliant epoch for the Bektaşis and Bektaşiness. This period was a privileged era during which the Bektaşis played a vital role in the foundation of the Ottoman state. For instance, Bektaşis and the other dervishes had a very important influence on the Janissaries, the armed power of the Ottomans. Dierl (1991: 54) insisted that the relation between the Bektaşi *tekkes* (lodges) and the Janissaries had been proven after the Kosova War (1389). Melikoff (1999: 200) explained

[31] Chief of the Dervish Order (Melikoff, 1999: 356).

[32] Between Yavuz Sultan Selim and Safavid monarch Shah İsmail.

why the Janissaries had been connected to the Bektaşis but not to others in this way:

> Maybe, this was because he was a war prisoner; namely its being a possessionist dervish sect that is charged to look after and train a young war prisoner soldier -who later were to be a devşirme- coming from a Christian environment.

One of the most important points for this era was that the Ottoman administration did not yet need to play the role of the Sunni Islamic tradition during the foundation of the state.

However, following a pre-determined process, when control over dervishes was lost, *father*s and *dede*s continued their spread, out of the will of the Ottomans. Owing to the potency of these dervishes over the people and the increase in the threat rising from the East against the integrity of the country, the Ottomans sought to eliminate these structures, which failed to be controlled and started to get closer to the Safavid State, and the state started to evaluate these elements as heterodox (extra-community) phenomena.

The era of Beyazıt II (1481-1512) was an outstanding period for the Bektaşis and for the Kızılbaşes, who had not yet appeared as a social fact. Bektaşiness and the Bektaşi sect were subjected to the fundamental dissociations and cultural changes guiding the maturing of the Kızılbaş-Alevi tradition. Additionally, one of the most important reasons for the transition of the Bektaşi tradition to the Kızılbaş Alevi tradition was the limited definition of the state. The state recognized Bektaşiness within the borders of the establishment of the state. During this period, Hurufi elements infiltrating into *Bektaşilik* made permanent modifications in the structure of the sect and the belief of the Kızılbaş, which was an outside sect organization.

Balım Sultan[33] came to the leadership of the Bektaşis in 1500 (Clarke, 1999: 61) or 1501 (Ocak, 1999b: 187; Fığlalı, 1996: 197). According to Türkdoğan (1995:

[33] Birge (1965: 62) puts forward that depending on the sources we have, it is impossible to say definite things about Balım Sultan's Hurufism.

21) there are several scholars[34] who claim that the seizing of power by Balım Sultan was an "Ottoman Trick." Reha Çamuroğlu also made a similar assertion. According to Çamuroğlu (2004: 5), Beyazıd the Second appointed Balım Sultan to the Hacı Bektaş leadership against the Safavid threat and settled the Hacı Bektaş down by means of the power of the state.

2.2.2. Emergence of Kızılbaşlık

This period witnessed a wide usage of the term "Kızılbaş." Although it is claimed that the word "Kızılbaş" had appeared because of the *Tac-ı Haydari,* which was an item of red headgear made up of twelve pieces worn by Turcomans (Dierl, 1991: 60, Birge, 1965: 64), Çetinkaya (2003: 389) notes that wearing red headgear is a Turkish tradition and the term Kızılbaş had originated from this practice[35]. However, it should be noted that Anatolian and Azerbaijan Turcomans also wear the traditional red felt conical hat, and it was the symbol of the Kızılbaşes supporting the Safavids (Kunt 2000: 108).

Since the emergence of the Safavid threat against the Ottoman Empire, the terms Kızılbaş and Kızılbaşlık have been used as a tool of humiliation and despisal[36].

The foundation of the Safavid state in 1501 had been a touchstone for both the Ottoman Empire and the heterodox and heretic communities in Anatolia. Safavids deeply influenced the Anatolian religious configuration. After the Safavids, Shi'a cults started to invade the sophisticated sects systematically. Moreover, these

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[34] Türkdoğan states that in his talks with Jaferis in Çorum Milönü neighbourhood (at this point, without mentioning them as Jaferi, Türkdoğan defines them with an ambiguous expression as Milönü members) stated that "Bektaşism is a lure organized by Turks to intercept *Alevilik*" (Türkdoğan, 1995: 95).

[35] According to Çetinkaya (2003: 406), the upper side of Turcoman börks (caps), namely the side looking to God should be in red color according to Turkish traditions. Also, today it is known that Efe, Zeybek and Seymens also wear such caps (For detailed information refer to Çetinkaya (2003: 406-421), chapters of *Türklerde Kızıl/Al Rengi, Türklerde Başlık Anlayışı ve Kızıl Börk Geleneği*).

[36] For example in Germany, in the dictionary written by Karl Steuerwald and Cemal Köprülü (*Langenscheidts Taschenwörterbuch Deutsch-Türkisch, Berlin-München 1975:139*) as the equivalent of the word "*Blautschande*" meaning the one having incest Kızılbaş is written (Bozkurt, 1993: 43). Such examples can be increased. On the other hand, it should be clearly stated that especially in the new Republic of Turkey, the word Kızılbaş is used as a negation.

Shi'a cults were internalized by the Bektaşis and the other cliques that were trying to legitimize themselves in this dervish order. Furthermore, these Shi'i cults, myths and traditions started to be used by the Turcomans and the Kurds, who had based their beliefs chiefly on non-Islamic conceptions. This has this facilitated to the dissociation of the syncretic and heretic properties of the Kızılbaşes and Kızılbaşlık from the Bektaşi order.

The Bektaşi order, in one respect, had been estranged from the state power owing to the Safavid threat, the act of disgracing the Bektaşi sect and the altered politics of the state that had pioneered the conversion of Bektaşis to Kızılbaşlık. Apart from the influence of the Safavids on the Turcomans, the head of the Safavids, Shah Ismail, was skillfully using the Turkish language and was writing Turkish poems which created a strong cultural symbolism among Turcomans[37]. As a result of all of these, the Ottoman administration altered its policies against the Turcoman elements. For instance, İnalcık (1999: 28) noted that the Ottoman bureaucracy began to separate their Turcomans from the East Anatolian Turcomans by calling them *Yörük*. Subsequently, the officials of the Ottoman Empire mostly defined the Turcomans as Alevi-Kızılbaş. During all of these events, as most of the Turcoman tribes started to send their religious taxes called "nezir" to the "Shah," the existing tension had increased (Cinemre and Akşit, 1995: 61).

As a result of the correspondence between Shah Ismail and Yavuz Sultan Selim, which led to offensive language, Selim marched over to Shah Ismail with his army, but in the preparation process, on various occasions, he faced revolts by the janissaries connected to the Bektaşi order.

As is well-known, the consequence of the tension between the two leaders was the war of Çaldıran (1514), which ended with the triumph of Selim I. Ottoman history has been a setting for miscellaneous Turcoman rebellions. These were the uprisings, the causes of which were generally socio-economic rather than

[37] The sayings (*deyiş*s) and *nefes*es written by Shah Ismail with the appellation of Hatayi (Hata'i: Faulty, sinful) comprises the most important part of today's Alevi literature (Birge, 1965: 66).

religious. For example, the most important rebellions were by the rebels of Pir Sultan Abdal[38] (16th century) and the Celali rebellions[39] (16th and 17th centuries).

2.2.3. The Annihilation of the Janissaries and Bektaşilik

In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II put an end to the Janissary battalions. This was a great disaster for the Bektaşi order as well. The destruction of the Janissaries took its place in Ottoman history as an event called "Vaka-i Hayriye." As is known, the foundation of a new army played a part in the modernization and westernization process. The name of the new modernized army was *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye*.

In the beginning, the Janissaries reacted imperturbably to the foundation of the new army. However, subsequently, Janissaries began to hold some meetings and expressed their uneasiness. After the Vaka-i Hayriye, which had a connection to the Janissaries, the Bektaşi order was officially abolished. The act of dissolving the Janissary corps had a great influence on the Bektaşi order. During this period, the appointment of a Naqshibandi Sheikh to the Hacı Bektaş *postnişin*ship (Melikoff, 1993: 227) is a more important detail. The community continued its semi-official activites until its complete abolishment in 1925 by the new republic (Melikoff, 1993: 228). After the *ocak* was closed, the Bektaşi *tekke*s became illegal organizations, and these were supported by other illegal unions. Interaction between the Bektaşis and the other illegal unions was reciprocal. The most important movement supporting the Bektaşis was Jeune Turks. A vital interaction occurred with Franc-Maconnerie. The open-minded vision of the Bektaşis, their

[38] Pir Sultan Abdal is known as one of the most important symbols of socialist Alevi left. The real name of Pir Sultan is Haydar and in many of his poems it's possible to encounter Kızılbaş elements. Gölpınarlı (1995: 18) stating that the source of the Alevi-Bektaşi literature is Yunus Emre, the founder is Kaygusuz Abdal and the person giving the most original didactic work is Hata'i, adds that Pir Sultan is the greatest poet of this literature.

[39] Celali insurrection is called with the name of Celali Revolts as they were initiated by Shah Veli bin Celal. All the insurrections that happened in this period of Ottomans were called Celali as being synonymous with Şaki. In coeval sources Shah is named as mülhid or Celali. (Sümer, 1999: 73) Shah Veli Celal, who was active in the environs of Tokat, initiated the revolt called with his own name by declaring himself to be Mehdi and gathering about 20.000 Kızılbaşes around himself. (Timur, 1979: 129) According to Melikoff (1993: 191) Celali insurrections were the revolts of the people or craftsmen under the luster of Shi'i.

explanation of the world mostly with profane reference points and their flexibility in defining orthodox Islam made it easy for them to get closer to the masonic movement.

It is known that several prominent figures, who were the members of the tarikats, were at the same time missioned in the Jeune Turk movements. Importantly, it is claimed that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was a member of the Bektaşi tarikat or that he participated in the Bektaşi meetings (Öz, 1995: 27).

2.2.4. İttihat Terakki and the Bektaşis

The relation of the İttihat and Terakki with the Bektaşis was mainly based on the domestic problems such as the great Armenian deportation. Jeune Turks became suspicious, especially of the Kızılbaş-Alevis, because the emergence of the Armenian problem was being carefully observed from abroad. In this period a number of nationalist reporters, scholars and ideologists went to the region (Gezik, 2000: 10) and sought to draw most of the Kızılbaş-Alevis to their side, especially before 1913.

In 1915, Unionists carried out propaganda among the Kızılbaş-Alevis. However, by 1913 the ideological shift of the Unionists to a more nationalist line reasoned a significant alteration of the Kızılbaş-Alevis' positions towards the regime. The most important result of the mentioned shift was the protection of Armenians, whom the Kızılbaş neighborhoods wanted to deport (McDowall, 1996: 128). According to Kieser (2001: 104), Kızılbaşes acted to defend the Armenians because they imagined that they would experience the same course of conduct. Chailand (1992: 16) notes that during the great Armenian deportation, a lot of Sunni-Kurdish tribes acted with the Unionists, and attacks spread among the Christian communities in the region. The most striking discourse in this period was "the Real Turk/the Pure Turk" approach claimed by the Jeune Turks for the Alevis. This discourse would become a current issue a century later when another threat arose from "the East."

2.3. The Alevi Identity and the New Turkish Republic

War of Independence and the declaration of the republic were watersheds in general for the Turkish history and in particular for the Kızılbaş-Bektaşi society. The Alevis supporting the orthodox discourse of the new republic was the most important characteristic of the era for the Alevi community. The Alevis claimed and tried to save the orthodox property of the state. Although, their temples were closed down, the community spiritualized the "virtues" of the republic. In this period, the borders of the community shifted from the traditional religious spheres to the modern social spaces.

It would be a proper method to examine the encountered predicaments of the Alevis in the new era. One of the used intervals is, no doubt, the single party era. In addition to the misunderstanding of the Alevis in the single party era, Sunni-Kurd and Alevi-Kurd rebellions raised parallel to the increased ethnic consciousness of the Kurds and the new republic's evaluation of these rebellions with a powerful Turkishness consciousness facilitated the emergence of great conflicts among the Alevi communities. The most important contradiction was the adaptation of the Alevi communities to the emphasized value of the new republic. These conflicts had prepared a historical background for the Marxist movements divulged after the 1960s. In the new republic, the term Kızılbaş was used with the connotation of humiliation and since the 16th century, it was replaced by the "3K"[40] threat. One of the main reasons was the increase in the Kurdishness consciousness of the Kızılbaş community, having different religious and social dynamics coming from Bektaşis. Kızılbaş communities made contacts with the Kurdish nationalist movements within a manner of relation having fluctuations and this led to the establishment of imbalanced relations in the attitudes of these groups towards the Kurdish national movements and also to the attitudes of both the Kurdish national movement and the state towards these communities. Although Kızılbaşlık had problems in joining Sunni Kurdish structures, the

[40] Kızılbaş-Kurd-Communist

hesitant attitude of the state with increasing consciousness of Turkishness creates the reason why these structures began to develop their own dynamics.

In Turkey, the seizuring of power by the elite-bureaucratic group was challenged by the cliques representing the periphery between 1950 and 1960. This period can be called the period of the Democrat Party (DP). Paradoxically, most of the Alevi communities supported the conservative DP during this period.

Following this period, the period in which the Alevi youth found place for themselves was the leftist movement, which had begun with the structural change in the 1960s. These structures caused an increase in the inner conflicts inside the Alevi community. Another important incident of the post-1960 period was the establishment of various associations and parties which emerged with the increase in opportunities of organization or opening and acting more freely in these areas with the Alevi identity. As Alevi youth internalized the practices of organization by participating in Marxist movements and by playing a central role in most of these formations, it is also observed that a different inner process had started in the community.

The last among the most important periods which will be examined in the republic's history is the period that starts in September 12. This period refers to a process in which the Alevi identity has been highlighting itself more than ever in its history and, has even made an effort towards this end.

2.3.1. Kızılbaşes-Bektaşis and the War of Independence

The establishment of modern Turkey was based on a secularization and westernization process. The early republican elite distanced themselves from the cultural and ideological heritage of the Ottoman Empire. To achieve the modernization and westernization process, the new ideological formation of the country, Kemalism, which can be defined as a positivist wing of the Jeune Turks (Kazancıgil, 1982: 83), showed more effort than its predecessors. The act of

abolishing the Bektaşi order can be defined as one of the obvious prerequisities of this progression.

Also, in the discussion of the Alevi identity in the early republic, we should mention three crucial themes. The first one is the relation of Mustafa Kemal with the Alevi communities during the War of Independence, which has insistently been emphasized by the Alevi scholars and amateurs. Therefore, how the Alevi communities positioned themselves within the War of Independence, and how the abolishing of the *tekke* and *zaviyes* influenced the community should be examined more closely. All of the matters mentioned above materialized with the historically reciprocal influence of the events occurring in that period[41].

The governors of the single party era exhibited a tension between their considerations and the implementions of Islam. The Ottoman heritage refused by the governors of the new republic in the hegemonic grounds played an important role in the administrative establishment of the republic. This led to the maturation of several domestic dilemmas, which were to occur in the future.

One of the most fundamental secularization reforms was the abolishing of the caliphate known as the main heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the resistance against the institutional secularization (Küçükcan, 2003: 475) efforts consisted of the main dynamics of the rebellions observed during the single party era. It can be seen that the religion has been either a positive or a negative variable of all ideological approaches since the foundation of the republic until today and has also been an important reference to explain social events.

Mobilizing the religious groups and the landlords using the religious symbols during the War of Independence was essential to continue the war. War of Independence was a setting to use symbolic tools. The Bektaşi sect was one of the orders wanting to be mobilized as well. At this point, the issue of Bektaşiness related to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the founder of the Turkish Republic, should

[41] As examples of such events, the abolition of caliphacy, the Koçgiri and Sheikh Sait revolts may be given.

be mentioned. Despite lack of accurate evidence, some Alevi scholars, like Baki Öz, insists that there was a close spiritual relation between Atatürk and Bektaşis. For instance, Öz (1995: 13-16) sought to create a material relation in his book. Another Alevi scholar Cemal Şener (Şener, 1994: 40-41) bases the family tree of Atatürk on the *Babai*s[42] and makes the same emphasis.

As pointed out before, discursive opinions of Mustafa Kemal were based on the enlightenment and positivist ideology, which had affected the views of the Unionists. Mustafa Kemal sought to mobilize the masses by means of the symbols of the caliphate and the sultanate. As a matter of fact, these efforts provided an international support for the War of Independence. It can be claimed that hesitant and instrumentalist approaches exhibited by Mustafa Kemal against the caliphate before and after the abolition are clearly to be seen in his speeches. In this context, the claim that Mustafa Kemal revealed an exceptional interest in Bektaşis should be revised.

Implying that Mustafa Kemal had such an interest and using it in general as an indicator for the Kemalist side of Alevi-Bektaşis can even lead to the ignorance of Mustafa Kemal's relationships with other sects. But, it is clearly known that Mustafa Kemal's attitudes towards the Mevlevi *dergah* were as positive as his attitudes towards Bektaşis. While Önder (1964) claimed that Mustafa Kemal admired the Mevlevis as "an upper-class dervish" sect rather than the Bektaşis, Falih Rıfkı Atay (Küçük, 2002: 262-263) stated that Mustafa Kemal had participated in the Mevlevi ceremonies in Thessaloniki. Additionaly, Egeli (1959) also argues that Atatürk considers Mevlana as "a great reformist" and defines Mevleviness as "the Turkish Islam". Although it seems as an acceptable fact that in general the Alevi-Bektaşi community had also given support to Mustafa Kemal in the War of Independence, this attitude is mostly a one-sided fact related with Bektaşi identity's perception of the republic. However, it should be kept in mind

[42] Babais is defined by Şener as pro-Bektaşi.

that several Bektaşi organizations withstanded the nationalists and propagandized against Mustafa Kemal (Küçük, 2002: 192)[43].

In this period, Kızılbaşes distanced themselves from the Bektaşi communities. As known, Çelebi Cemaleddin Efendi, who was the head of the dergah in Hacı Bektaş during the visit of Mustafa Kemal, had a partial influence on the Kızılbaş Alevis. The main reason for the limited activeness of Bektaşis especially throughout the Koçgiri uprising[44] was the emphasis of *Turkish Nationality* made dominantly by the state.

Because of these, Çelebi did not attempt to suppress the Kızılbaş-Alevi riot. Although the structure of the Bektaşis was disorganized during the War of Independence, Kızılbaş-Alevis represented stricter group characteristics and succeeded in constituting a shared attitude towards the War of Independence.

2.3.2. Sheikh Sait Uprising

One of the most important uprisings against the Turkish Republic was Sheikh Sait, which broke out on February 15, 1925. This uprising caused a financial strait for the new republic (Kutschera, 2001: 107). Gasratyan (2001: 233) claims that the riot was not supported by European countries and, Kürkçüoğlu (1978: 311-313) argues that England did not play a role in the uprising. However, Mumcu (1992) maintains that England played an important role in the Sheikh Sait riot. Zürcher draws attention to the role of the abolition of the caliphate. According to Zürcher (2004: 248-249), the Sheyhk Sait riot was definetely related to the abolished caliphate and resulted from the religious re-construction of the new republic. At this point, one of the most important points is about how the Kurdish

[43] Bektaşis' existence in such organizations is not mentioned in the works of any Alevi writer. Especially Alevi originated writers and researchers intend to prove that this community as a whole stood beside the War of Independence without questioning.

[44] Koçgiri uprising started on March 6, 1921 and lasted for two months affecting today's provinces of Sivas, Erzincan and Tunceli. Turkish Grand National Assembly charged Central Army under the commandership of Nurettin Pasha and the uprising was suppressed in June (Cinemre and Akşit, 1995: 75-76).

and Zaza Alevis view these riots, which have a fairly dominant Kurdish and religious Sunni identity.

Bruinessen (2001: 33) and Zürcher (2004: 249) stated that the riot had been initiated by the Sunni *Zaza*s, and Dersim[45] Alevis hesitated to support the riot and kept themselves away from the uprising. Bruinessen (2001: 33), in the same study, emphasizes that none of the Sunni Kurd tribes would have supported the Dersim uprising in 1937[46].

As seen, the Kurdish Alevis in the region assumed an abstainer attitude towards this riot having powerful ethnic properties. Frankly, the religious prejudices of the Kurdish Kızılbaşes were more dominant than their ethnic interests. Similarly, Sunni tribes behaved in the same manner towards the Alevi Kurdish riots that happened at different times.

Interestingly, although uprisings that broke out in the early years of the republic had significant ethnic traits and were kinship-based, their ends were determined by religious approaches. However, in the last analysis, in every riot (Koçgiri, Sheikh Sait and Dersim which will be mentioned later) the mobilization finds its supporters dependent on its religious aspects.

Because of this, it can clearly be seen that borders between the Kızılbaş and Shafii Kurds, representing the Kurdish ethnic identity, took shape according to the religious characteristics rather than ethnic ones. This was to be a social fact used by some governors. Throughout these incidents, *tekke*s and *zaviye*s were outlawed by the legislative proposal of Konya deputy Refik Bey and his five friends in

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[45] Dersim is a region located in the Eastern Anatolia Region's Upper Firat section, between Perisuyu Valley from the East, Murat from the South, Karasu Valley from the West and North. Today Tunceli province is located in this region. In 1926 Dersim was made a township and connected to Elazığ, in 1936, it became a province with the name of Tunceli (Büyük Larousse Sözlük ve Ansiklopedi, 6 Cilt: 3073)

[46] In a talk with someone who was said to be one of the grandchildren of Seyit Rıza, he said that Sheikh Sait's men had come to Seyit Rıza to receive support; however, as they had not eaten the meat that was cut in the feast held for them (according to the common public opinion, the meat cut by Alevis should not be eaten), Kızılbaş-Kurds did not give this support.

November 30, 1925. Even though it occurred after the rebellion of Sheikh Sait, the act of abolishing the *tekke*s and the *zaviye*s seems to be a result of the secularization process. Henceforth, the Bektaşi sect was to become silent and the *dergah* in Hacı Bektaş was used for miscellaneous aims. According to Küçük (2002: 264), *dergah* in Hacı Bektaş was less protected by the government than the Mevlevi dergah. Although the Hacı Bektaş *dergah* remained closed, Mevlevi *dergah* was opened in 1926 and it was visited by Mustafa Kemal in 1931 in paradox with the secularization policies of the new republic (Küçük, 2002: 263)[47]. Throughout this period, Bektaşis were coerced to worship secretly and in general they started to be named as "Alevi". The use of the term "Alevi" became widespread and was accepted by modern institutions in general.

2.3.3. A Kızılbaş Uprising: Dersim

During the single party era, the state interfered with the economic and social life more, and the construction of ideology based on Turkish ethnicity was implemented in discursive grounds. *Türk Tarih Tezi (Turkish History Thesis)* and *Güneş Dil Teorisi (Sun-Language Theory)* were put forward to provide a national historical background. Thereafter, the other communities that were not Turkish were claimed to be of Turkish origin[48]. Ethnonationalist practices accelerated the process of homogenization during the 1930s. For instance, by a law enacted in 1937, education in any other language except Turkish and all books written in foreign languages were banned (Kutschera, 2001: 148). The uprisings led by the Sunni Kurds against the state were no longer a threat for the government. After these revolts were extinguished, Dersim, a relatively autonomous region, became and remained a focus of primary threat for the republic. The Dersim riot (1936-

[47] As Küçük (2002: 263) qutoes here, Mustafa Kemal wrote the following in his notebook: "I have taken pleasure from the harmony and order in the dergâh that could only come from a great knowledge".

[48] This ideological structure was also evidently manifesting itself in the Republican People's Party (RPP, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP in Turkish) regulations of the 1930s. For instance, in the articles organizing conditions of the party membership, in 1935 regulation 9/Ç, in 1931 regulation 7/Ç, in 1927 regulation 5th, in 1923 regulation 3rd items, knowing Turkish, accepting Turkish culture were considered among the conditions of membership (Erdoğan, 2000: 33).

1938) was triggered and evolved by the assimilationist policies and external involvements.

Related to this period, Kirişçi and Winrow (1997: 111) state the following:

> In 1930, the Government adopted the advice of the Chief of General Staff Marshal Fevzi Cakmak. According to Cakmak, Kurdish origined state officers in Eastern Anatolia should be removed from office, and Kurds who had participated in the riots should be exiled to the west of Turkey ... In December 1935, the Parliament enacted a law giving extraordinary authorities to the government in ruling Tunceli vicinity. People might be arrested transitorily and those not obeying the law and order of the country might be exiled out of the region.

After the enacting of the mentioned law, Seyyid Rıza, the leader of the Dersim Kurds, sent a massage to the General Alpdoğan and asked for both the cancelation of the law concerning the Dersim region and the acceptance of Kurdish rights (Gasratyan, 2001: 245). Goverments refused to accept these demands and skirmishes broke out. Conflicts between the Dersim tribes and the Turkish army ended with the execution of Seyyid Rıza (Gasratyan, 2001: 245). The Dersim riot was a Kızılbaş uprising demanding the continuation of their autonomy. The riot was not supported by the Sunni Kurds because of the reasons mentioned earlier in the Sheikh Sait rebellion. The religious inclinations and the borders between two ethno-religious groups were the main determinants of the mobilizations during the conflicts. In brief, all Sunni or Kızılbaş Kurd rebellions against the state between 1924 and 1938 were because of the economic regression of the region and the increased ethnocentric implementations of the governors.

2.4. The Multi Party Era and the Alevis

During the transition to multi-party politics in late 1940s, the power of the state was shared by the elite-bureaucratic groups. As mentioned earlier, the religious conception of Kemalists was Jacobinist, and they undervalued both the traditional symbols of Islam and the religious rituals, which had been playing an important role in public and private spaces. Moreover, the governers of the Republican People's Party (RPP) forsaked religion to religious communities. In this way, Islam began to get politicized in the hands of these communities. The reasons for the opposition during the single party era can mainly be based on religion. On the

political front, the Democrat Party created policies based on creeds which had been dealt hesitantly by the state before the elections of 1946. In January 1947, although the RPP enacted a law granting permission to found *Imam Hatip Lise*s and initiate religious education in state schools, most of the Sunnis supported the Democrat Party in the 1950 elections (McDowall, 1996: 396). As the most prominent leader of the religious communities, Said Nursi supported the Democrat Party[49]. Likewise, *Mevlana Halid Naqshibandi*s, a vigorous movement around the Bitlis and Hizan provinces, and the *Kadiri*s gave their supports to the Democrat Party (McDowall, 1996: 396). The most interesting thing of this era is the support of the Alevis to the Democrat Party. In the elections of 1950, the entire Alevi community in some Alevi regions voted for the Democrat Party (Okan, 2004: 95).

Coming to power with the elections held in May, 1950, DP took some decisions in its early days as follows: the prohibition on the Muslim call to prayer in Arabic was cancelled; many people got arrested with the claim of being *red-agents*, some of the real-estates belonging to the Republican People's Party were transferred to the Treasury; Turkey joined NATO in addition to becoming a member of the Baghdat Pact; Hagia Sophia was transformed into a mosque.

In October 1950, religious instruction in schools was made virtually compulsory; by 1960 the construction of 5000 mosques had been financed (McDowall, 1996: 396). Islam as a political voice had started to be legitimized since the early 1950s (White, 2000: 98). The early years of DP was regarded by Islamists as "happiness years" (Şengül, 2004: 526). The Democrats based their appeal not only on economic liberalism but also on greater civic freedom. Paradoxically, the Alevis also supported DP as mentioned earlier. Because DP's practices were challenged by the *etatism* of the Kemalists in the late 1950s, this challenge paved the way for a military *coup* in 1960.

[49] When DP came to power, Said Nursî wrote the following in his telegram sent to the President Celal Bayar: "I do congratulate your excellency. Let Heaven make you succeed in the service of Islam, home and nation. From and on behalf of the Nur students, Said Nursi" (Çakır, 2002: 87).

2.4.1. The Turkish Left and the Alevis

After the military *coup*, the number of the left and right-conservative organizations increased significantly. In contrast to the general belief, despite the 1960 *coup* the pioneering of civilian rights and organizations, in parallel to the world conjuncture, led to the standing out of the left in Turkey. It also caused political Islam to organize permanently.

In this period, the Alevis were beginning to find their voices by means of several organizations. The Alevi elites sought to awaken the moral and social identity of the Alevis. A group, organized as the Cem Foundation by the early 1990s, published a journal entitled *Cem,* and another one, organized as Ehlibeyt Vakfı after 1980, published another journal entitled *Ehlibeyt*. *Ehlibeyt* had been published until the era of March 12th, and *Cem* had continued to be published till the 18th issue (Cinemre and Akşit, 1995: 80). On the other hand, the first association founded by the Alevi identity was the "Hacı Bektaş Tourism and Promotion Association". The second association, "The Association for Promoting and Research of the Culture of Hacı Bektaş Veli" was founded in the same year (Kaleli, 2000: 18). In 1963, the government, when the RPP was in power, prepared a legislative proposal to form a "Chamber of Sects" inside the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

This project was withdrawn because of the counter-propaganda of the conservative media against the Alevis and İnönü, the leader of the RPP (Cinemre and Akşit, 1995: 81). This withdrawal had been condemned by a declaration[50] signed by fifty Alevi students. In the declaration, the term Alevi was for the first time publicly used within the history of Turkish Republic.

[50] During the preparation of the declaration, there was a debate between Kurdish Alevis and Turkish Alevis on whether the title of the declaration was to start with the title *To the Great Turkish Nation* or with *To the Peoples of Turkey* and the number of representatives preparing the declaration decreased to 4. These were Seyfi Oktay, Mustafa Timisi, Ali İlhan and Engin Dikmen (Şener and İlknur, 1995: 82-83).

The 10th article of the withdrawn proposal was as follows (Selçuk et.al., 1994: 44):

> Article No. 10
> Among the responsibilities of the Directorate of Doctrines are solving complicated problems and their different manisfestations in relation to the characteristics of the geography and the places where Shii and Sunni sects are settled in accordance with Islamic rules by refraining from myths, and carrying out the necessary procedures in enlightening and guiding the right path, treating the Muslim community on a completely equal basis without making any discrimination in the fundamentals of the Islamic Religion.

After the withdrawal of the proposal and the fall of the İnönü government from power, the law organizing the functioning and organization of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was changed in 1965; however, diversities of the sects was not taking place in the new arrangement (Selçuk et. al., 1994: 44).

The Alevis sought to found organizations beyond the associations in the 1960s. The Turkish Union Party (TUP) was founded on 12 October 1966 by the Alevis. Dierl (1991: 69) argues that TUP was founded by *dede*s and *baba*s afraid of losing their control on the Alevi youth who had begun to be Marxist. The symbol of the party consisted of twelve stars[51] and an image of a lion[52]. TUP in its program emphasized that it was a revolutionary left party (Şener and İlknur, 1995: 71). Yet, in the part on democracy of the 1972 program (TBP Tüzük ve Programı, 1972: 55), the party was emphasized to be against fascism and communism. Moreover, in the last part of the program it was stated in a Marxist language that "It should construct a new way apart from capitalism which is the final stage of the imperialism". Additionally, in the two articles of the program published in 1972, the party was declared to be against discrimination according to the denominations. In the same program, the re-arrangement, not abolishment, of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was demanded (Şener and İlknur 1995: 73)[53].

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[51] It represents the Twelver Imams.

[52] Ali is known as the "Lion of Allah".

[53] Despite this assertion of Şener and İlknur (1995: 73) under the title of Religion in the Principles section of the Programme the following is stated. "…The religion is business of the community and therefore the Directorate of Religious Affairs has no place in the secular Republic". The following year, in the party programme of RPP, under which the votes of Alevis were intensively gathering, named "Ak Günlere" ("To the White Days"), under the title of The Religion (CHP 1973 Seçim Bildirgesi: 163) without mentioning the sect conflicts, these were given: The imam staff of

Contrary to all leftist discourses and references, the party seemed to be Kemalist and used religious symbols belonging to Aleviness. The clearest example of this was a speech made on the radio by Dursun Bila, the general secretary of the party, on 26 May 1977 (Türkiye Birlik Partisi 1977 Genel Seçimi Radyo Konuşmaları, 1977: 18):

> My citizens,
> …In order to give an end to this system, to establish a system on the side of labor your most powerful weapon is your right to vote. Not going to the polls is submitting your destiny to the exploiter on your shoulder."
>
> Descents of this people who had rioted against cruelty and exploitation throughout the history, grandchildren of **Sheikh Bedrettin, Pir Sultan,** the real followers of **Mustafa Kemal**… (Bold letters mine)

TUP, all candidates of which were the Alevis had acquired only eight seats in the elections of 1969. The number of its votes was 254,695,000 (Ahmad and Ahmad, 1976: 376).

Throughout the 1960s, the revolutionary left became aware of the rise of the cultural and social revival of the Alevis. The rediscovery of the Alevi dynamic as a political factor led to an amalgamation of the Alevis and the leftist movement. Moreover, the politization of the Alevis accelerated in a sense. Some political groups recognized the Alevis as a "pool of votes" (Ocak, 2002b: 305-306). Organizational links between the Alevis and parties were being set up. Surely, the most important and sturdy link was the connection between the RPP and the Alevis. The RPP, during the 1960s, was challenged by the socialist left and strained in order to evolve into "left" from the authoritarian-bureaucratic formation. These efforts, to some extent, provided the support of the Alevis settled in the suburbs. Considering this period, the RPP was the greatest party which was addressing the traditional rural structure of the Alevis. (Ocak, 2000: 323).

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the villages will be filled under a speeded up programme. The mosque projects of the villages that need mosques and the required materials for the construction of mosques will be provided by the state. The freedom of belief will be protected in all respects.

Cultural patterns started to emerge with the shanties (*gecekondu*) phenomenon, which had started to appear in the changing social structure and in the spheres of the city. Its effect was felt more and more day by day on the social structure, leading to a union with the socialist left which was seeking itself a space. This gave way to the conveying of most of the frequently used elements in Alevi oral literature to the leftist movement by telescoping cultural patterns. On the other hand, it could also be easily seen that various cultural elements were used in the organizations having an Alevi identity and in the organizational structures having a more dominant leftist identity. For instance, although most of the associations having a strong Alevi identity closer to the orthodox approach of the republican state were formed with the name of "Hacı Bektaş", the socialist left started to use images such as Pir Sultan Abdal, who was referred to as a "rebel, revolutionist" in the fields of written and oral literature combining it with the leftist tradition. Bruinessen (2001: 120) states that the left wing defines the Alevi revolts in the past as proto-communist revolts and that it regards Alevis as natural allies, and adds that during this period the fascist and religious extremist right wing focuses on the Sunni Muslims and provoking the bloody events.

The National Order Party (NOP, *Milli Nizam Partisi*, MNP in Turkish)), founded by Prof. Dr. Necmettin Erbakan in 1970, emerged as an outcome of the mentioned events. The foundation of NOP constitutes the beginning of the point in time when a modern political understanding is seriously considered by political Islamists, who until that time had not tried to go beyond their communal organization except for one or two attempts[54], and at the same time did not lose their essence.

NOP, being suppressed by those who made the *coup* in 1971, left its place, in the elections of 1973, to the National Salvation Party (NSP, *Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP in Turkish) that made a coalition with the RPP. Another party in the elections was the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP, *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP in Turkish) headed by a retired colonel of the National Unity Committee,

[54] Nurists getting nearer to DP may be seen as one of these attempts.

Alparslan Türkeş. The main view of the party was based on the creation of an economically and socially powerful Turkey. NMP was being supported by lots of militant youth organizations[55] but its main supporters were lower-middle class people located in small towns and cities. In fact, NMP was nothing more than an authoritarian and a right conservative image of the statist-elitist structure.

In this period, the most important phenomenon that had marked the daily politics was the fight called the left-right fight, which sometimes showed up as Alevi-Sunni fight. Some of the most intensified provinces in which this occurred were Malatya, Sivas, Çorum and Kahramanmaraş. Events that occured in Sivas, Malatya and Kahramanmaraş in 1978 were repeated in Çorum in 1980. The events escalated especially after the local elections of December 11, 1977, in which the RPP gained a great success.[56] From this date on, terrorism targeting specific and narrow groups was transformed into massive dimensions (Çavdar, 2004: 248).

2.4.2. Shi'ism Activities of the State

In the midst of these unusual events, it is known that, in 1979, when Süleyman Ateş, who was the president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, went to Iran for a visit, one of the companions of Ayatollah Maderi said that "Either make the Alevis Sunni or let us make them Shi'i" (Cumhuriyet, May 19: 13, 1998). This proposition was put into action in the 1980s. Since the mid-1980s, Shi'i missionaries have been strolling around the Alevi villages in Sivas and Çorum and trying to gather pupils for the *medrese*s in Iran (Cumhuriyet, July 30: 7, 1998).

One of the participants of the Shi'ism "crusade" was Cemal Şahin, who had been the former Çorum deputy of True Path Party (TPP, *Doğru Yol Partisi*, DYP in Turkish). Şahin had supported the construction of mosques in Alevi villages. According to Şahin, groups wanting to prevent the mosque construction in Alevi

[55] See Ülkücü Komando Kampları (1997)

[56] According to the Provincial Council elections, the results of voting are as follows: RPP 44 %, Justice Party 39 %, NMP 7.1 %, NSP 6.6 % (Çavdar, 2004: 248).

villages were the Marxists and they had been frightened that if mosques entered the Alevi villages, *Alevilik* would come to an end (Cumhuriyet, May 29, 1998: 1/15). It is clear that the concept of Marxism, which is a disturbing word for some Alevi groups, was used to bewilder the Alevis' view of the mosque construction in villages. However, both *Sunnization* and *Shi'ization* activities met with the displeasure of Alevi groups in general (Cumhuriyet June 20, 2003: 1/8).

2.5. September 12, Islam and the Kurds

It is well known that, the rising of the terrorist activities in Turkey was treated as a reason for the military regime which had ruled the country until 1983. By the 1980 *coup*, democratic instutitions of the society had indefinitely been suspended; people had been arrested, tortured and even executed. It is clear that this era called as the "September 12 Regime" has led to immense moral and social confusion in Turkey. People suffered from the consequences of the military *coup*'s autocratic attitude. What's more, the *coup* has caused ideological re-structuring of the "left" and the democratic manners' becoming abstruse and the constitution of an eclectic tissue for approximately twenty years after the *coup*.

The *coup* has led to the establishment of miscellaneous ideological organizations and institutions. Political Islam has become a power hub after the *coup*. Although "left" and "right" had been considered as fundamental motives for the civic turmoils in the country before the *coup*, Islam was relatively being evaluated as a discrepant. Political Islam gained more advantages in this era. It had been more alienated to secularism and other modern issues criticized by new fashion movements. This led political Islam to stay away from critiques.

The source of the tension between Islam and the system on the interpretation of religion, according to Ete (2003: 52), was the republic's policies aiming to adapt the people to the state-Islamism and cover Islam with nationalism. This type of politization was used against the communist threat in the 1970s and the PKK in the 1990s. Cizre (1999: 91) points out that in order to develop a policy of the secular state, the Republic has a tradition of using religion. Although these types

of policies in which Islam is employed as a tool, the Islamic revolution in Iran and the effects of international developments have turned Islam into a political alternavite to the statist discourses since the early 1980s.

The fact that Islam had been a central power in the region where Kurds lived was known for a long time. In all activities and organizations based on the anti-laicism, the Sunni Kurds has played important roles in Turkey. The votes of NSP in the elections of 1973 and 1977 expose this reality clearly (Laçiner, 1991: 27).

In 1977, Abdullah Öcalan and his companions adopted a program openly declaring that many groups including Turkish nationalists were their targets and that they would follow a policy based on violence. In 1978 they founded the PKK (Kirişçi and Winrow, 2002: 130). The leaders of the PKK left Turkey after the 1980 *coup* and fled to Syria and Lebanon. They came back to Turkey in 1984.

As known even though the migration movements observed until the 1980s brought with it especially proleterization (Saatçi, 2002: 559), migration towards Europe, which started subsequent to the military coup, brought back a mass of people who were relatively more freely organized, conscious and most important of all, had economic support, and enabled these people to become more easily organized in their own areas of settlement[57].

Before and after the 1980 *coup*, the separatist Kurdish movement was evaluated as distinct from the "*left*" and "*right*" activisms. The separatist Kurdish movement was regarded and referred to "*bölücü*" and, sometimes, "*Kürtçü*" or "*Apocu*". In 1976, in a book titled *Kürtçülük Sorunu* written by General Kenan Esengin, there are some remarkable arguments about the Alevis and Bektaşis. According to Esengin (1976: 67), there is no doubt on the Turkishness of the Alevis and Bektaşis; and *Zaza*s talking the *Kırmançi* dialect of the Kurdish language known

[57] From a personal interview made with a Turkish-Sunni (Male, 26, ÇKE) who has grown in Maraş vicinage. He told us that from the mid of 1980s on, Kurdish people who had gone to Germany, after coming back to Maraş, have began to organize secret meetings with those who had stayed there and that they have started to organize secretly.

as *Zazaki* are also Turks. Esengin (1976: 77-82) claimed that the acceptance of the Kurdish language, which was invented during the Ottoman era by the Turkish Alevi tribes, was because of their divergence from Turkness in the period of Yavuz Sultan Selim. According to Esengin (1976: 77-82), Turkish Alevis have consequently started to become Kurdish. Esengin (1976: 69) argues that *Bektaşilik*, *but not Alevilik*, belongs to the Turkish ethnicity. This argument is important because it emphasizes a historical concurrence between the state and the Bektaşi sect. Founded in 1978, the PKK took advantages from these racist discourses and the political grounds.

2.6. Alevi Identity after the 1980 Coup

Following the 1980 *coup*, Turkey underwent a process of social and economic change. This era led to the formation of new social strata similar to the other changing processes seen in the history of the republic. These strata pioneered a social metamorphosis. These changes were slow but effective on the social and the economic bases. However, changes bore a philosophical concern. September 12 aimed to use religion as an adhesive factor to re-structure the society. Religion was the most outstanding subject of these changes. It was considered in a conservative manner. Nationalism and conservatism were appended to religion and a new synthesis called Turkish-Islam Synthesis consisting of Turkish nationalism, conservatism and Islamism was formed. The leaders of the 1980 *coup* premeditated that mobilizing religion could provide some vital advantages for the internal threats like communism and Kurdish separatism (Oran, 2001: 27). Because of this, religion was to be mobilized. In this context, various modifications were made in the constitution. For instance, with the article 24[58], religious education was made compulsory for every citizen. This was part of the

[58] Article 24: Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction… Education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be conducted under state supervision and control. Instruction in religious culture and moral education shall be compulsory in the curricula of primary and secondary schools...

policy consisting of a Turkish-Islam Synthesis, which was largely about Islamism[59].

Although the state was clinging to and re-evaluating Islam as a tool, Islam, because of its enormous power of autonomy created throughout history, succeeded in its emancipation from *belonging to the state* and became *the religion along with the state*. For example, although the Naqshibandi sect, which is a widespread and powerful sect in Turkey, was in trouble in the 1980 coup, organically congregated with the state by means of the Motherland Party (MP, Anavatan Partisi, ANAP in Turkish) and the Welfare Party (WP, *Refah Partisi*, RP in Turkish) under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. In reality, this alliance was a reflection of the organic transformations as of the 1970s. In addition, the Iranian revolution and the other conjunctural changes, like the awakening of Islam as a political power in the Middle East, encouraged the Turkish Islamists to establish an Islamist Republic in secular Turkey. This was the turning point for Islamists, because, henceforth, Islam became a political power as a separate body[60].

As mentioned earlier, Islam was used by the state to re-structure the society which was under impact of the neo-liberal policies of the governments. Neo-liberal policies were put into practice by Turgut Özal who came to power in the elections of 1983. In favour of the "Özal Policies" [61], liberal-conservative *victorian* values were sought to be penetrated into daily life. During this period, significant alterations and modifications have been observed in the characteristics of the

[59] Especially with the year 1990, the budget of the Directorate of the Religious Affairs has been increased in large proportions. Similarly, as Oran (2001: 28) quotes, the number of staff has been raised to 84,717 in 1988 and in 1990 to 90,000 from 53,582 in 1983. However, a more important point than this is that, after the 1990s the Directorate of the Religious Affairs has started publishing fetwa books determining lots of daily lifestyles varying from sexual life to the eating habits (Oran, 2001: 28). This simply matches a hegemonic approach.

[60] According to Bulaç (2004: 49-50) the Iran Islamic Revolution of 1979 caused the second generation Islamists to increase their power.

[61] One of the important features of the Özal period is Özal's political attitude which was put into practice for "unification of the four tendencies". This means continuation of the relation of center right politics with Islamist section over a new discourse (Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 4. Cilt, 2003: 3).

Marxist movements, perceived by the capitalist mode of production as a threat. Class-based politics which were implemented by the leftist organizations before the *coup* fell into a dilemma because their leadership had been systematically annihilated by the state. When the organizational crisis of the left combined with the shrinking of its living spaces, particularly following the economic structural transformation, the organic connections of the left with the Alevis, which were among the extra-class structures that Marxist groups sought to stay close to, became loose and thus led to the emergence of an identity crisis which was felt to create and carry on with their own dynamics.

It can be said that the Alevis, who had found their identities in the left, identified themselves within the socialist left and sought to produce solutions to the social problems by looking from the left until that time, stayed by themselves and this caused them to turn to tradition. However, it should be particularly stated at this point that the Alevis had the desire of *having an identity,* which was observed to have started from the end of the 1980s. The reason lying under their anxiety to get an identity was certainly not the dispersion of Marxist structures before the *coup* by which they would create a living space. As Erman and Göker (2000: 99) also state in detail, there were other factors causing in some sense the re-revival of the Alevis. At the top of these factors was the process of disintegration of the real socialist structure in the Soviet Union, which had also deeply influenced the leftist movements in Turkey, just as the whole world. This disintegration seems to have two important influences in Turkey. One of these was the falling of socialist and social democratic organizations, whose leading staff was dispersed and isolated with the September 12 *coup*, into a serious credibility problem and the shock that the leftist identity faced. At this point, a representative of the conservative stream, Prof. Dr. Türkdoğan, makes the following determination (Türkdoğan, 1995: 39): "Following September 12, especially with the collapse of Marxism, Turkish Left fell in vain. Just **like all Marxists**, **Alevi youth** were also looking for something; they should be after something…" (Bold letters mine)

Another influence was the Islamist section's getting stronger, and most important of all, the provision of an environment in which it would educate its own political cadres despite the fact that its leaders were dispersed. The rise of political Islam did not only occur in Turkey. In all the countries which were regarded to be under the "Soviet threat", various moderate Islamist models were tried out, but with the disappearance of this possible threat, these structures found a freer field of movement. The disappearance of the external control mechanisms on Islamist movements created one of the main reasons of the escalation of political Islam with its own dynamics. The rise of political Islam in Turkey also coincided with this period, and this escalation caused vivacity among the ethnic structures and the belief groups out of Islam. At the top of the ethnic vivacity, there was the increasing ethno-nationalist "rebellion" in Kurdish areas having close relationship with political Islam. The ethnic consciousness, which started to realize its own development independently of the Turkish left after the1960s, and as mentioned earlier, a part of which confronted with the Turkish state through armed struggle at the end of 1970s under the name of the PKK just as the Islamist movement had been affected, increased interaction and vivacity between the ethnic and religious communities. In this environment of vivacity and interaction, it is clear that the Alevis were not only disturbed by the erosion of their own identities but also by being defined in different ways by the rising Islamist and Kurdish movements. For this reason, in opposition to the PKK's will to establish a separate state apart from the Republic of Turkey by creating a consciousness of nationalizing and by the method of armed struggle and, in this sense seeking to gain Alevi support, it is seen that the Alevis desired to create their own dynamics relatively in an independent manner. It should be stated that the structures of the Alevis coming from previous leftist organizations were effective in this and they did not face so much trouble in establishing a discourse. The Alevis, who were seeking to situate themselves somewhere that was legitimate and, that would give them the least possible damage especially in the war between the PKK and the state powers, insistently sought to avoid the Kurdish movement with the discourses it produced on its own. Another factor causing the re-construction of the Alevi identity is the Alevis who went abroad via the external immigration wave beginning in the

1960s. They sought to maintain their own identities by way of organizing in these countries and, they could more easily transfer their accumulated capital to the organizations in Turkey. By stating that Alevi organizations abroad had stronger regulations than the ones in the country, it was also emphasized that although these organizations did have anxiety about the essence and existence of their identity, at the same time, they declined to use this identity instrumentally.

2.6.1. The 1989 Alevi Manifesto and the Alevi Identity Afterwards

The Alevi manifesto written in March 1989 and manifested in February 1990 (Erman and Göker, 2000: 102) is the most considerable event in the history of the Alevis in the post-*coup* era. The manifest was signed not only by the Alevis but also by some Sunni intellectuals. Demands expressed on the manifest were connected with the secular and modern inclinations of a religious group. At the top of the list of demands in the manifest, in addition to halting the construction of mosques in Alevi villages which was initiated after the September 12 *coup* and introducing the Alevis into the religious educational sphere, the desire of stating the difference of Alevi belief and culture is also evident. The demand for the abolition of the Directorate of Religious Affairs was also stated in the manifest. But this scheme was repudiated by Cem Dergisi[62]. Cem group argued that in case of the abolition of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, it would give rise to the Sunni sects and the state institutions would be caught by political Islamic sects. However, the daily *Zaman* exposed considerably higher reaction to the manifest. In a column titled as "Ateists are exploiting the Alevis", it was suggested that, the representation right of the Alevis should belong to people educated in İmam Hatip Lises or İlahiyat Faculties. The manifest was discussed in a meeting held in Hamburg Alevi Culture Center on July 1989, but the Alevi notables and elites did not reach an agreement on some critical issues. For instance, some founders of the Alevi Culture Center emphasized that after the manifest the Alevis might divide as those taking the side with the state and the others (Kaleli, 1997: 267). Here, it

[62] On February 22, 1992, İzzetin Doğan, owner of the Cem Journal and the future founder of the Cem Foundation accompanied by some prominent Alevis, attended a panel entitled 'Alevi-Sunni Hand in Hand' organized by the European 'The National Vision Organization' in Köln.

should be stated that the term state calls attention to the ideological discourse of Turk-Islam synthesis.

2.6.2. Repeated Activities of Shi'ization

The religious awareness of the Alevi communities led to the implementation of rather different policies. Especially, the policy of constructing mosques in Alevi villages, which had been put into practice in late the 1970s, started to reiterate by December 1991. Moreover, the Directorate of Religious Affairs held a gathering in Ankara with the Alevis who were demanding "equal rights" and invited some Alevi politicians, clergymen and academicians, most of whom were getting closer to its discourses. In this gathering, *Alevilik* was defined as a sect of Islam and it was emphasized that there were no severe differences between *Alevilik* and Sunnism (Nokta, December 15, 1991: 45)[63]. Shortly, the Alevis were evaluated in the Islamic circle. This meeting was held with the supervision of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, but it received reactions from miscellaneous Alevi groups (Nokta, December 22, 1991: 22). The Alevis objected to the meeting because of two points. One of them was the existence of the Directorate of Religious Affairs inspector, Abdulkadir Sezgin, who had been claimed to be operating as a Sunni missionary among the Alevis. And the second point was that the Directorate of Religious Affairs had the desire to get the Alevis closer to Sunnism step by step (Nokta, December 22, 1991: 23)[64].

[63] A similar meeting was repeated in Ankara on January 10, 2003. Alevi Bektaşi Federation (ABF) harshly reacted to the meeting which was organized by the Gazi University Research Center on Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş Veli in Gölbaşı, Ankara to discuss the problems of Alevis on January 10, 2003. Members of ABF representing about 450 Alevi organizations drew attention that they were not invited to the meeting and met with the Secretary of State Mehmet Aydın, who was in charge of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and asked for information about the meeting in which he attended (Cumhuriyet, January 31, 2003: 5).

[64] As in this meeting, in general, the Directorate of Religious Affairs takes *Alevilik* as a belief having *no difference* with Sunnism.

2.6.3. PKK, Political Islam and the Alevis

In the early 1990s when the Alevis started to convey their identities, People's Labor Party (PLP, *Halkın Emek Partisi,* HEP in Turkish), which was to be accused of having a connection with the illegal Kurdish movement, was founded by some deputies who had resigned from the Social Democratic Peoples' Party, (SDPP, *Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti,* SHP in Turkish)[65] and played an imperative role on the political agenda in Turkey until its closure. The time for the foundation of the party ran into the era in which the PKK's actions rose. The party which made an effort to discuss the Kurdish problem on a legal platform was considered by the state as being on the same platform as the PKK, and the state applied psychological pressures to undermine the policies of the party. At the beginning of the 1990s, in addition to the combats carried out in the southeastern and eastern regions of the country, a different, ideological war was starting to emerge. In the region called Dersim, the PKK was starting to initiate ideological approaches and organizations.

The state institutions were forced to develop counter-ideological contentions. For instance, Oran (2001: 27) argued that Islamic Hezbollah[66] was supported against the PKK in this era. Moreover, it is argued that some announcements containing the hadiths and ayets were distributed by planes over the district. The instrumentalist approach to the religion was used by the PKK and furthermore Islamic speeches became clear in the PKK's discourse to gain the supports of the tribes. Religion was usually treated as a reactionary force on a par with tribalism

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[65] As a result of the process starting with the attendance of seven Social Democratic Peoples' Party deputies (Kenan Sönmez, İsmail Önal, Ahmet Türk, Mehmet Ali Eren, Adnan Ekmen, Mahmut Alınak and Salih Sümer) to a conference about Kurds organized in Paris under the presidency of France President's wife Danielle Mitterand, these deputies were expelled from the party and as a response to this expelling Abdullah Baştürk, Fehmi Işıklar, Cüneyt Canver, Mehmet Kahraman, Arif Sağ and İlhami Binici had resigned from the party. Following these resignations, later, Kemal Anadol, Hüsnü Okçuoğlu, Tevfik Koçak, Kamil Ateşoğulları and Aydın Güven Gürkan had resigned (Cumhuriyet Tarihi Ansiklopedisi Cilt 4: 277).

[66] Hezbollah is a Shi'i organization. Its word meaning means "The Party of Allah". Hezbollah was founded in 1973 in Kum city of Iran by Muhammed Gaffari. Although Gaffari was arrested by the Shah regime, it was kept alive in the government of Khomeini and Gaffari's son Hadi Gaffari became leader of the organization.

(Leezenberg, 2003: 204). It is clear that the political discourse on religion in the region were becoming more essential after 1991 when Hezbollah began to rise. After this year, religion was started to be treated as an instrumental "gizmo" by the PKK until 1994 in which secular policies were gaining power. The PKK "waged the war" against the proclamations distributed by the Turkish army.

In addition to this, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, gave some brief information to his supporters about how and why they dealt with the "religion problem" in his book entitled "*Revolutionary Approach to the Problem of Religion*":

> We should pioneer the use of the religion on an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial basis and as a tool of struggle fitting to the historical traditions of the people. As it is in the Iranian experience, utilizing the examples of anti-imperialist ascents, we can reach the result by evaluating the positive sides of these on our own circumstances and responding with more positive answers (Nokta, August 23, 1992: 14).

Besides, the foundation of the Kurdistan Devouts' Association (KDA, *Kurdistan Dindarlar Birliği,* KDB in Turkish) by the PKK (Nokta, August 23, 1992: 15) as an "alternative" to the Directorate of Religious Affairs shows that the PKK attaches importance to the influence of Islam on the district. As mentioned above, after 1994, as the religious discourse put forward by the PKK started to change, the hegemony tricks on Sunni Islam shifted to a clear polarization. After that year, as the Welfare Party came to power and started to use the state institutions, the PKK returned to modernist approaches to Islam and maintained a secular manner during the discursive clashes between the secularists and supporters of shari'a.

But in the settlements of the Kurdish Alevis, another distinct ideological striving was being endured. Although security forces and the PKK were fighting by similar ideological discourses, both the PKK and the Turkish army had vital deficiency to have sovereignty on the district. Firstly, as the illegal Alevi organizations had traditionally significant power in the region and among the settled people, difficulties for the PKK to ensconce in the region remained

unchanged for a long time[67]. For the state institutions there were several difficulties. For instance, the traditional approach to religion and *Alevilik* of the state hindered the establishment of more enduring ideological bases of the state in the Dersim region[68]. The army had entirely or partly deported the inhabitants of the villages in the region. On the contrary, the PKK was at pains to do action on the Kurdish-Alevi villages. But Kemalist peculiarities of the Turkish Alevis in the region gradually became a dilemma for the PKK. Moreover, Kurdish-Alevis had some religious (but not historical and ethnical) drawbacks against the Sunni Kurds. This was another vital problem for the PKK to set up a moral relation with the Dersim region.

Bruinessen's (2001: 109-110) arguments mentioned below should be taken into consideration to clarify why the Alevis' approaches to the PKK contain some discontents:

> ... the PKK, who were initially against religion in a militant way, adopted an increasingly compromising attitude towards Sunni Islam in mid-1980s with a successful initiative on finding more public support in the Sunni regions. Evidently this did not contribute to the popularity of the PKK among Alevis, but perhaps even reinforced the subjectiveness of the Alevis.

According to the PKK, the whole Alevi revival was directly managed by the state to create discrimination among Kurdish people and all those initiating this were spies. At the same time, this caused the PKK to suspect from the Alevis in the

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[67] It is possible to see an example of the struggle among the PKK and other illegal organizations on the internet site of DHKP-C. On the site, while worries about PKK's seeing itself as the homeowner and other organizations as the guest was mentioned, it was claimed that according to a declaration signed by PKK Dersim Province Military Council in October 1993, all other organizations in this region should consult with PKK in their decisions. On the internet site, it was also stated that this attitude is annoying and PKK was charged with killing members of other illegal leftist organizations (http://www.kurtulus-online.com/eskisayilar/H-ICIN86/PKK.HTML).

[68] As it was also mentioned before, especially in the one-party period, in the provinces that Kurds lived densely, membership to the RPP was quite low and in general this was related to the effect of party officers' expressions that were exceeding nationalism and reaching to racism. No matter Alevi or Sunni, membership of Kurds to the party was in equal ratio. For example, in Urfa, Mardin, Siirt, Bitlis, Hakkari, Van, Ağrı, Muş, Bingöl, Diyarbakır, Malatya, Elazığ and in Tunceli where Alevi population is dominant, the rate of the RPP members in the population of the province was nearly the same (between 0-2 %) (Schüler, 1999: 50).

PKK and their elimination in such a way that the Alevis could diverge from the PKK.

In order to provide advantages in the Dersim region the most important activity of the PKK was the establishment of Kurdistan Alevi' Association (KAA, *Kurdistan Aleviler Birligi*, KAB in Turkish) in 1994. Furthermore, *Zülfikar*, a periodical journal addressing to the Kurd Alevis, started to be published[69]. KAA whose activities can be traced back to the end of 1992, started to work actively as of 1994 (Bulut, 1998a: 46). Bulut (1998a: 46) argues that this establishment founded by the PKK was part of the struggle to prevent the state to manipulate the Alevis.

What was declared on the website of PKK-KADEK[70] as the reasons of the establishment of KAA was used as a means to draw the Alevis to the PKK side.

> ... Historically Alevism has been in a continuous struggle for their national values and beliefs and thus has always been subject to massacre, pressure and interventions....
> ... The Alevi reality that they are on the side of the oppressed and against the tyrannical people who pressurize the national-faithful communities on our land is made more meaningful with Mr. Öcalan's claim made in his previously mentioned work that Alevis are leaders of oppressed people.
> ... Leader Apo initiated and continued his first organization with the Alevi youth. He said, 'I started my struggle with a handful of Alevi youth, and I will conclude it with the Alevis'...
> ... What are the fundamental values of Alevis? Based on the philosophy that goes 'Whoever denies his origin is sinful,' it is to gain ownership to one's identity democratically and standing against every kind of pressure imposed upon the national identity!..."
> ... The fundemantel power of democracy in today's Turkey is the Kurdish Democracy struggle and from this point of view the Alevis are the allies of this power....

In the introduction titled *"From Zülfikar"* published in the 6th issue of the journal (March-April 15) (Zülfikar, April-March 1995: 2) the uneasiness about the Turkish state's support to the Alevi awakening to separate Kurds and the Alevis was stated, and Alevi Kurds were warned not to fall into this trap.

> Our brothers, who started to see more clearly the intrigues of the TR[71] carried on the Alevis, started to be on our side. The interest shown in Zülfikar grew each day. This situation scares the "Alevis" who are on the side of the order of Muaviye, the collaborators and the tyrants...

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[69] The journal has changed its name to *Semah* in November 2002 and was continued to be published.
[70] http://www.pkkkadek.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=271

[71] The Turkish Republic.

> Dear Brothers! Is it a concidence that it is the Kurdish Alevis who are always massacred? 'Why are those who try to deceive the society by saying shafis will slaughter us' keeping silent in face of these massacres?... [72]

In a review published in the same issue, Abdullah Öcalan claims that "there is a Kemalist ruse on Aleviness" and interestingly argues that "likewise Bektaşi ruse, this is a kemalist ruse[73] [sic]" (Zülfikar, April-March 1995: 17). Öcalan adds:

> They say to Shafis that the PKK is an Alevi movement and they say to the Alevis that the PKK is a Shafi movement. Abdulkadir Aksu, Minister of Internal Affairs, is a renowned Nakshi. Ozal was a Nakshi as well. They insisted on the war against the PKK. They fight against the PKK. If the PKK was a Shafi movement, could the Shafis fight against the PKK?" (Zülfikar, April-March 1995: 18).

Obviously, Öcalan instrumentally sought to provide the support of the Alevis by emphasizing the separateness of the PKK from political Sunnism. But it is well known that the PKK has also founded another organization whose name was KDA. By all means, the PKK attempted to get hold of the hegemonic power on Sunni Islam in the region throughout the "low intensity war".

However, among these comments, certainly one of the most important explanations is Öcalan's definition as "It will be true to consider M. Kemal as a typical Muaviye"[74]

In 1991, the law (1985/2987) banning broadcasting in any language except Turkish was abrogated. The abrogation of the law also made a facilitative effect on the organization of ethnic groups except Kurds, such as *Circassian*s and the *Laz*es (Bruinessen, 2001: 116). This period in which the consciousness of being organized began to rise was the beginning years for the foundation of Alevi organizations. The religious effect on the Alevi organizations evidently started to rise. The PKK noticed that it would not improve any advanced policy with the

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[72] The importance of this issue is its being the first issue right after the Gazi events which will later be mentioned in detail. The cover header of this issue is "TR will not able to capture Alevis."

[73] Punctuation is the same as the original.

[74] Again in the 32nd issue of Zülfikar Journal, it is stated that there exists a significant link between *Alevilik* and PKK and the importance of the speculated link between PKK and *Alevilik* is mentioned by claiming that *Alevilik* has advanced, promoted with PKK and PKK's defeat means the defeat of *Alevilik* (Zülfikar, July-August, 1999: 25).

Marxist elements in the long run. This was the starting point for the PKK to use religious leaders, myths and arguments.

Some Alevi *dede*s were invited to help out the PKK in gaining the Alevi support to the PKK movement. Some *dede*s were used by the PKK as an instrumental tool. One of the most well-known *dede*s is Ali Haydar Cilasun[75]. Cilasun (1995), in his book named "*Alevilik Bir Sır Değildir",* ("Aleviness is not a Secret") pointed out fourteen articles bringing about the *düşkünlük*[76]. According to Cilasun (1995) these are the main rules to be obeyed by the Alevis. Certainly, it can easily be seen that these articles bear ideological approaches concerning the core of the Alevi belief[77]. In the last chapter of the book, Cilasun (1995: 130) asks for leveling of outworn ideas and symbols of Aleviness and in away describes the provisions for the modernist-pozitivist *Alevilik*.

2.6.4. Alevistan, a State of the Alevis

Within the rising Kurdish and Turkish ethnical awareness and the social chaos establishing in Turkey, the emphasis and importance of religious identities started to increase slowly. One of the most important results of the Alevis starting to be considered as a political power is clearing the way for this community to make similar demands to the wants and demands of other ethnic groups. However, for the solution of the Kurdish problem, during the years when democratic demands were expressed by Alevi organizations, these demands were from time to time perverted by dominant discourse. The best example of this was the *Alevistan country* claim.

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[75] In one of his articles on Ali Haydar Cilasun, Emin Çölaşan, who is known with his Kemalist discourses shows a typical example of the combat about Alevis on discourse grounds. Çölaşan (Hürriyet, October 2, 1998) while stating that Rıza Zelyut who is another Alevi writer is "a **Atatürkist, secular, modern** person as any other Alevi", adds Ali Haydar Cilasun is a fake Alevi dede and that he makes "**Kurdism**" trade.

[76] Exclusion from the society.

[77] These articles are: [1.*Cooperating with police* 2.*Delation* 3.Gossip 4.*Being traitorously disposed* 5.*Cooperating with the state* 6.*Cooperating with imperialism* 7.*Cooperating with racism* 8.*Rejecting his/her Origin Nation*] 9.Careerism 10.Disowning his/her past 11.Making the man dominant 12.To lie 13.To look for a miracle 14.Avoiding science. (Cilasun, 1995: 128)

Alevistan is a term which took place in a periodical called *Kızıl Yol*[78] (Red Path) ephemerally published in France by a limited staff. The term *Alevistan* referred to the region in which Zaza Alevis live. And it was spontaneously excluding the other ethnic and religious groups, such as Turkish and the Kurdish Alevis. The concept was based on frail arguments. Moreover, this was a utopic and fantastic country in the ideas of its creators. However, the term *Alevistan* has become a topic for some groups and has been used for political manipulation (Akşam, August 22, 2001: 6).

For instance, Abdülkadir Sezgin, a former chief inspector of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and a preacher of Mersin müftiship, argued in an interview published in *Milliyet* that after the PKK, the second important problem for Turkey is some of the Alevis. According to Sezgin[79]:

> There are Alevi groups demanding land from Turkey. They want to establish a state called 'Alevistan', and they are publishing maps. These are second major separatist threats for Turkey after the PKK…In the sense of belief and act of worship there is little or no difference between Alevi and Sunni. I wanted to tell to the state, especially to the Religious Affairs: These are Moslem, these are proper
>
> Those standing nearby Alparslan Türkeş, for instance his guards were Alevi. He was aiming to unite Turkish descent. If the deceased Türkeş was not supporting me, I say it clearly that I could not succeed in these studies

The Alevi organizations condemned the statement of Sezgin. Organizations declared that Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, the president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and Abdülkadir Sezgin made an effort to manipulate the Alevis and sought to determine the worship place of the Alevis. Organizations also stated that "the Alevis had not projected to live under a different flag". Furthermore, the most important statement on the issue was made by Ali Balkız, a writer. According to Balkız (Akşam, August 22: 6, 2001) 'Instead of talking about Alevis, shouldn't Directorate of Religious Affairs, which is on the side of the state

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[78] Kızıl Yol journal is a journal which was only published four issues between 1983-1985. However, the journal is important as it seeks to establish Anatolian Alevistan (Aleviya) and mentioning this in all of its issues. (Engin, 2004: 532-533). According to the journal common language of Alevis and Alevi nation is Zazaki or Zazaish. There exists an independent Anatolian Alevistan Socialist People's Republic, and its capital is Dersim.

[79] http://www.milliyet.com/2001/08/18/guncel/gun00.html

in daylight and on the side of Hezbollah at night and which turned mosques into the headquarters of Hezbollah providing them with opportunity and facilities, repair his own rents?

Nevertheless, Sezgin claimed in the introduction chapter of his book *Hacı Bektaş Veli ve Bektaşilik*, published by Ministry of Culture, that:

> I want to mention a very important reason for the increase in the publications about *Alevilik*-Bektaşism. Those willing to damage the Turkish national integrity, to break Turkish nation into pieces by pitting one against another, to weaken and divide Turkish nation want to put this subject on the agenda for their own purposes. Even going further, those willing to divide the homeland in the east of Turkey are also using the Alevilik-Bektaşism subject as a reserve force and power in this act of dividing the homeland. (Cumhuriyet, July 28, 1998: 6)

As supporters of the separatist policies of the PKK argue that Aleviness was awakened by the state to impede the rising Kurdish movement, Sezgin also claimed that some of the Alevis were becoming tools in separating the Turkish Republic. According to Sezgin, the terms Sunni and Alevi do not have opposite meanings and those using these terms as if they have opposite meanings are the enemies of this country and religion if not ignorant or remiss (Cumhuriyet, July 28, 1998: 6).

As the Kurdish movement and political Islam became the most important subjects on the agenda of the country, the state had to struggle against these organizations. It will be reminded that in Turkey, the 1990s had an intense agenda consisting especially of torture and murders committed by unknown perpetrators. Checking the reports on this period, it is seen that there were both violations of human rights and also at times the suspension of fundamental rights and freedoms, and mostly such fundamental rights and freedoms were totally violated[80]. Intensification of

[80] For instance, according to the 1994 report of Human Rights Foundation, in 1990, 329; in 1991, 552; in 1992, 594; in 1993, 827 and in 1994, 1128 torture victims were determined (Turkey Human Rights Report 1994 (1995: 208)). Also, giving an example from 1996 dated Helsinki Watch Report: In the first period between 1990 and 1994, despite the fact that authorities have often proclaimed "the practice of banning publications is no longer carried out", the practice of confiscating books, magazines and the like continued throughout the years. For instance, in 1994, 102 out of 104 issues of Özgür Gündem, 220 out of 247 issues of Özgür Ülke, 36 out of 36 issues of Mücadele, 19 out of 20 issues of the newspaper Emeğin Bayrağı, when it was weekly, 16 out of 16 issues of Taraf when it was published weekly, 19 out of 21 issues of Devrimci Çözüm, 8 out of 8 issues of Kızıl Bayrak, 7 out of 8 issues of Serketin, 13 out of 13 issues of Atılım were

these violations by the state, particularly in the Kurdish and Alevi areas, led the Alevis to regard the existing separatist Kurdish movement, indirectly at least on the subject of democratic demands.

In the period starting from the end of the 1980s continuing to March 1992, the ongoing war between the state powers and the PKK in the southeast region of Turkey accelerated and with Newruz events in 1992 it reached its peak. This date is the beginning of the period in which Kurdish separatist movement had evidently started to decline. The establishment of the People's Labour Party, which was to play an important role in the country's agenda during this period, and its enterance into the parliament with unanimous voting in the 1991 General elections, ensured the representation of the Kurdish reality in the parliament, which was not what was wanted. This mentioned period witnessed the emergence of another ideological stance. In the 1991 general elections, the conservative and Islamist sects, who unanimously entered the elections under the roof of the Welfare Party but could not gain the success they expected, started to gain momentum because of their "an order of justice" slogan in addition to creating a suitable environment owing to their desire to use the unitary power of the Islamic religion in the regions where the state's combats prevailed. In addition to these, the "secular reaction", which occured as a result of the murders of writers and intellectuals[81] ranging widely from Kemalizm to the central right such as especially Muammer Aksoy, Çetin Emeç, Bahriye Üçok, Turan Dursun and Uğur Mumcu, facilitated the emergence of a distinct border between two organizations and forced the common citizen in many regions to prefer one of these

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confiscated. The figures were 121 newspapers and journals and 29 books in 1991; 189 newspapers and journals and 20 books in 1992; and 425 newspapers and journals; and 29 books in 1993.

[81] Çetin Emeç, who is among those people who were murdered, had no other political attribute than being the editor-in-chief of Hürriyet. (Çavdar, 2004: 319). Among these assassinations, it is especially interesting that Uğur Mumcu's murder could not be lightened. The remarks of the public prosecutor Ülkü Coşkun, who was conducting the investigation on Mumcu assasination, as "It is the state who made this event, if the political authority wishes, this action can be solved" have brought a new dimension to the event about the perpetrators of the murder (Cumhuriyet, January 24, 2002: 6). It draws attention that in Turkey murders by unknown perpetrators has particularly increased after 1990. According to the Turkish Grand National Assembly's Research Commision of Murders by Unknown Perpetrators, while 91 murders were realized by unknown perpetrators in 1979 which was one of the most dense periods of the country in the means of terror incidents, in 1992 this number reached to 316 and in 1993 to 314. (Cumhuriyet, January 24, 2002: 6).

organizations. In places where the Kurdish population is high, it can be said that the state, which focused on the unifying influence of religion, contributed to the preferences being made in this region "towards those who were not secular". The "order of justice" slogan ensured a significant contribution to this as well. As opposed to those parties who asked for votes promising to proceed towards "improvement" until that time, the Welfare Party with their "order of justice" slogan put forward in their own way the presence of an "unjust order" and aggressively criticised the system. This made a strong impact on the people in the region where there were combats. The people of the region showed a tendency towards the Welfare Party, who observed the difficulties experienced, was aware of the problem and planned a resolution based on a change in system. Such factors as the legitimate nature of the Welfare Party at the level of state (religion is an important source of legitimization) and the use of religion in an organized way to control its power in the region paved its way to success. However, some organizations that were obviously discontent with the situation felt that this procession pushed the country towards an irreversable point and made effort to prevent this. Meanwhile, their endeavours to free the PKK from being trapped in the region are important details. The PKK, who had been trapped in the region, made various attempts to enter the country in general via the Black Sea and Sivas. Especially the Sivas and Tokat region are the places where the PKK provided logistic support and the state's attention was focused upon Sivas and the Black Sea during this period.

2.6.5. The Sivas Massacre

Amidst these developments, a massacre happened on July 2, 1993 in Sivas resulting with the death of 37 people. All democratic structures of the society reacted to the massacre together with the Alevi community. However, it is clear that Sivas massacre pioneered some significant transformations from the standpoint of both the Alevi community and also the structures that were against the radical Islamic movements which were known to rise. Although the massacre continued from the Friday Prayer *(Cuma Namazı)* till late at night, no measure was taken against it, and that the massacre occurred in front of the eyes of the

security forces and the state institutions caused significant changes in Alevis' view of the state.

On the second day of the Pir Sultan Abdal activities, which had begun on July 1, 1993, after the Friday Prayer, a group came together in front of the courthouse and started to shout slogans against Aziz Nesin[82], the government and the governor, and in favor of sheriat. Being sent away from there, the group later came back to the courthouse, after gathering in front of the culture center. There, they shouted "Governor go out, governor resign", "Oh God, Revenge, *Allahu Ekber*" "Honourless Governor" (Sarıhan, 2002: 23-24). According to "The Sivas Governership Incident Situation Report" signed by Governer Ahmet Karabilgin, in view of the fact that the security forces were inadequate, additional aid was demanded from the commander of the brigade at 14.15. Additionally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs was informed via faxes and phones at 14.30. But as the turmoil had not been subsided at 14.45, reinforcement units were demanded from the head offices of Hafik, Yıldızeli, Kangal, Şarkışla and Zara districts. Lots of attempts were carried on to provide additional support from the commandership of the brigade. The number of the crowd reached approximately 5.000-15.000 people. In contrast to this, the number of the security forces was only 442 consisting of untrained privates and policemen and they could barely gather at the sunset time. The hotel was set on fire and the fire brigade vehicles were stopped by the people waylaying the vehicles. Totally, 35 people died and 60 were wounded by midnight (Sarıhan, 2002: 23-25).

The following is written on the Event Record of Sivas Police Department about the development of the "event":

> ... additional force was continously demanded as of 14.20, and especially around 19.00 the military powers were urged to come to the place of incidence at once, but no additional support was received except for 20 police from the Tokat Headquarters, who were not Agile Force, and 31 police from the Kayseri Police Headquarters and about 20 forces from the Genderme Alay Directory...

[82] A while ago, Aziz Nesin had started publishing Salman Rushdi's book, The Satanic Verses, in Aydınlık newspaper of which he was the editor. That's why he was targeted by conservative and religious circles.

In the "Report about the Sivas Events" prepared by the Investigation Committee of the Assembly (numbered 10/107, 108, 109, 111, 114) it was stated that the commander of the brigade[83] came to the place with untrained soldiers at 20.08 after the hotel was set on fire. After he came, the group shouted slogans against the commander and in favour of the privates and then, assaulted to the commander's car and he rapidly went away. Thereupon, untrained privates began to wait behind the mass (Sarıhan, 2002: 142).

Approximately 400,000 people have participated in the funeral ceremony held in Ankara. The group shouted the following slogans in front of the Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü (Turkish National Police): "İnsanlık onuru işkenceyi yenecek" ("Humanity dignity will defeat torture"), "Polis durdu, mollalar vurdu" ("Police halted, mollas stroke"), "Katil polis" ("Killer police"). At about 13.30, the cortege arrived at the Grand National Assembly. Gillyflowers and stones were thrown among the crowd towards the assembly. The crowd shouted "Katiller mecliste" ("Killers are in the parliament") and "Katil devlet" ("Killer state") slogans as well (İnsan Hakları Derneği-Human Rights Association, 5. Olağan Genel Kurulu Çalışma Raporu, 1994: 99).

As *Alevilik* and Alevis started to feel the threat of the rise of Shari'a after the Sivas massacre, they moved back to the arena of secularism upon which they set their discourses and demands. The period ends with the establishment of the Democratic Peace Movement by a group of Alevis in 1996; this was soon to become an Alevi party.

2.6.6. The Başbağlar Massacre

On July 5, 1993, three days after the Sivas massacre, Başbağlar village of Erzincan was attacked by the PKK and 33 people were executed by shooting. This massacre initiated a series of discussions because the village was surrounded by

[83] The commander of the brigade of that period had later been forced to retire. By giving a notice of question, Deputy of İstanbul, Ibrahim Gürsoy has brought it to the agenda that why the person who was in charge during the Sivas massacre was forced to retire and that why no legal procedure was started against this person neither as a culprit nor as a witness.

Alevi villages and it was outside the State of Emergency Region (*Olağananüstü Hal Bölgesi*, OHAL in Turkish)[84]. There are two main characteristics of Başbağlar massacre. One of them was the relation of the massacre with the PKK and the second one was the struggle of creating a hegemonic discourse by the newspapers, such as *Milli Gazete*[85], *Zaman*, *Akit* and *Yeni Şafak*. These newspapers used the discursive tool of "Başbağlar massacre" against the "Sivas massacre" in the political agenda.

As it is seen, Sivas and Başbağlar massacres are events that are related to the rising Islamist movements in practical or discoursal meaning. The secular and modern state, which was said to be under threat, had created its own discourse over these massacres in its struggle with the "supporters of shari'a". At the same time the massacres were sought to be used by the ethno-centrist Kurdish movement to provide Alevis' support.

It is seen that Alevis, who definitely found themselves between these two combats and who were mentioned as the objects of these combats, identified themselves more with the "secular" nature of the state after these massacres in pursuit of security whether or not they wanted it. On the other hand, the state did not do anything other than just send their representatives to official organizations or accept their representatives to recognize the Alevis, who came so close to them at least in discourse. For instance, on 5 April 1997, President Süleyman Demirel invited İzzettin Doğan, an Alevi *dede*, together with other religious representatives to the Çankaya House for the first time (Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi Vol. 4, 2003:564). However, even though the demands of the Alevis regarding improvement in the situation of the secular state, and such demands as the abolition of the Directorate of Religious Affairs or the representation of Alevis in

[84] In this period, it is known that by the order of Abdullah Öcalan, the combat zones were strived to be taken out of the State of Emergency Region. The combat zones included Ağrı, Kars, Erzurum and Erzincan in which the organization could get logistic support (Düzgören, 1994: 409).

[85] In that period, seeing each other as rivals, the conflicts between Democracy Party (*Demokrasi Partisi*) and the Islamist Welfare Party increased with the increasing of WP's vote in overall Turkey and with its coming to power. *Milli Gazete* has the feature of being the publication organ of the structures that have initiated and carried on the WP tradition.

Directorate of Religious Affairs, the abolition of compulsory religious courses, giving Alevis a place in the the curriculum of the National Education Ministry were brought to the agenda occassionally, they were not completely finalized. On the other hand, for the first in the history of the republic during the 55th Government[86], a certain amount of budget was allocated to the Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture Asociation in the name of Alevis within the 1998 financial year budget. This money was about 0.44% of the money allocated to the budget of the DRA[87]. In conclusion, it can be said that the Alevis were recognized out of areas where a hegemonic state discourse[88] was established and that their close relationship was used by the state as a means to guide the Alevis on the existing conjuncture.

The results of the rise of the organizations that have been mentioned above and which were seen as a danger by the regime were revealed in the 24 December 1995 general elections. Even though the Welfare Party could not gain the majority's vote on its own, with a vote rate of 21.4%, 158 of its ministers were elected and came to power via coalition partnership.

2.6.7. Political Islam and Cemhouses

Throughout the history of the republic, political Islam has developed in different ways and was fed by different dynamics. Political Islamist groups, which didn't have legal organization grounds until the 1950s, have had opportunity to show themselves more in the political arena in the multi-party era. This mutual interaction with political parties and formations willy-nilly caused the development of Islam in conjunction with the conservative ideology. But, as Islam has appeared as a significant phenomenon particularly starting from the 1970s, an ideological expansion has occurred from the national to the international level, towards *ummah* (Muslim community). From that date on, no matter how the

[86] Coalition of Motherland Party, Democratic Left Party and Democratic Turkey Party.

[87] http://www.alevi.org.au/meclis_tutanaklari.htm

[88] Religious Affairs, school syllabuses etc.

Islamist movement situates itself, its emphasis on the *ummah* will certainly continue to be important. The nationalist-conservative movements, which have particularly developed after the 1990s in the country, brought many different interpretations of Islam. One of these is for sure the Nationalist Movement Party as the most powerful representative of the conservative parties and one other is the Grand Unity Party founded by the people who broke away from this formation. Islamist discources of these two parties and the practice of the Welfare Party, which seems more ummahist, create divergent Islam interpretations.

In the local elections held on March 27, 1994, the Welfare Party gained the metropolitan municipalities of İstanbul and Ankara and became the party that gained the maximum number of municipalities country-wide. Following the elections on September 7, 1994, which was a significant step for the Islamist rise in Turkey, Welfare Party's Mayor of the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, sent the municipality's vehicles to destroy Karacaahmet Cemhouse construction and caused the initiation of a new discussion.[89] The demands for acceptance of cemhouses as Alevis' place of worship and allocation of money from the state budget for the constructions of cemhouses were at times uttered by various Alevi organizations and circles. Alevis' not being able to use the mosques as places of worship, their demand for the construction of cemhouses as an alternative to mosques by the state, and moreover, among these discussions their will of being representated in the Directorate of Religious Affairs or their demand towards abolishing this institution had been re-flared up with this incident. In fact, as the destruction of the cemhouse construction was done by the Welfare Party's municipality, by gaining a great success in the local elections the rising of which was perceived as a threat and which was claimed to be "anti secular" and "sheriatist", the incident per se gained a different dimension.

[89] Cemhouse constructions has increased particularly after 1990. Although there is not enough information on the number of cemhouses, especially as the constructions are carried out by various associations, foundations and independently; it is estimated that the number of cemhouses in İstanbul, as of 1998, have reached 25 (http://www.milliyet.com/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html).

2.6.8. Gazi Events and Direct Combat with the State

Another incident that should be considered as much as the Sivas massacre and that was effective in the re-evaluation of the political group boundaries by having influence on the Alevi identity is the events of the Gazi vicinity, which occurred in March 1995. Though the Gazi vicinity incident is as important as the Sivas massacre, in some significant points it differentiates from the latter. The first one of these is that the perpetrators of this massacre have not been found yet and that the target was directly the Alevis without any provocation as it was claimed to be in Sivas. Because of the way discussions and discourse proceeded on the issue of massacre subsequent to the Sivas massacre, Aziz Nesin being launched as a provocative element, the events, to a certain extent, were considered less grave by the public[90]. During this period, some discourses both in and out of the Alevi community were observed to include claims that the massacre had happened because there was a provocative element. In addition, this general belief, that the reason underlying the Sivas massacre was the rising danger of sheriat, is criticized by those holding the idea that far, from being just a speculation, this event was partially effective and instrumentally used. This is one of the main factors causing the event to diverge away from its focal point. However, some time later, the Gazi Neighbourhood events turned into a dispute between the aggrieved people and the state powers and then between the legal-illegal organizations and state powers.

[90] As mentioned earlier, the fact that Aziz Nesin was a source of provocation was stated by different sources. Various organizations and media foundations, primarily the state itself, presented similar views on this issue. However, in a report prepared by National Intelligence Organization (NIO, *Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, MIT in Turkish), one of the important sources on this issue, we understand that it regards Nesin as an important source of provocation. On this issue in the report it is written: "... Even though the reaction that the work entitled Şeytan Ayetleri created in the entire İslamic world is known, bringing it to the attention of the public in our country as well, bringing the pious public face to face with the administration with approaches similar to those causing the Sivas incidents to undermine the authority of the state are some examples that can be extended further (Nokta, 25 February-3 March 1995, p. 25). Linking the basis of the threat claimed to be formed in the country by the state's intelligence agency to "an element of provocation" rather than organized structures entails insufficiency.

The development of the events is explained as follows in the Gazi Neighborhood Report of the Human Rights Association (Parlar, 1997: 195-196):

> On the day of March 12, 1995, at 20.45, in Gaziosmanpaşa district's Gazi Neighborhood, 4 cafes and 1 candy store were volleyed by unidentified people. 2 people died in the incident, many injured… Gazi neighborhood inhabitants… started a march towards Gazi Police Station... The crowd reaching about 3 thousand people turned back to the Cemhouse as the police fired to air… The general tendency of the people towards protesting the police was because of previous events of torture and deaths in torture[91] that occurred in Gazi Police Station and pro-NMP attitude of the station… On the morning of March 13, Monday, gathering in front of Cemhouse and the Association for Promoting the Culture of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the people again started marching towards the Gazi Police Station chanting the slogans "Katil Polis" ("Killer Police"), "Katil Devlet" ("Killer State"), "Katiller Karakolda" ("Killers in the Police Station")... The crowd reaching upto 20 thousand people confronted panzers, agile force and soldiers' barricade. At this moment, security forces fired up. The crowd including the old and the children did not disperse…police…wanted to disperse the people by besieging them. Noticing this, a group of youth started stoning the police. Policemen from the agile force, plain-clothes policemen and the officers who had taken up positions in the buildings in the venue targeted and volleyed on the people…

After the events 17 people lost their lives. According to the reports prepared as results of the autopsies, it is seen that most of the dead were targeted to be shot dead (Korkmaz, 1997: 78).

The Gazi incidents produced different reactions in different Alevi circles. It is worthwhile to pay attention to the variation in interpretations that can be characterized with the difference in the perception of state and the relationship established with the state. For example, while İzzet Doğan, the head of the Cem Association, claimed that the incident is "an intrigue played out against the State," Abidin Özgünay, the General Publishing Director of the Cem Magazine, states that those responsible for this incident can be PKK, radical Islamists or the darbeciler who do not favour the democratic system in Turkey (Aksiyon, 18-24 March 1995; 20-21). On the other hand, İbrahim Gürsoy, who was a member of parliament from Istanbul from the Republican People's Party of the time and who was of Alevi origin, claims that the state provoked this incident and makes a criticism of the state from within the state.

[91] The citizens were angry at the police station with the claim that a *simit* seller Alevi citizen had previously been killed there by torture (Aksiyon, March 18-24, 1995:17).

2.6.9. The Democratic Peace Movement and the Power of the Elites on the Mass

The Democratic Peace Movement (DPM, *Demokratik Barış Hareketi*, DBH in Turkish) is important in the sense of measuring Alevi elites' efficiency on the mass. This movement can be seen as the second important attempt of the elites, in which the power limits of the elites' by using the mass identity in order to manipulate and use the mass in the context of interest can be evaluated.

The Democratic Peace Movement was founded by the ex-Deputy of Tunceli, Ali Haydar Veziroğlu, on September 1, 1995, using the slogan of "*Our name is different, our surname is Turkey*". The movement opened centers in 79 provinces and about one year later on October 1, 1996, with a petition presented to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it became a party under the presidentship of Prof. Dr. Mehmet Eti (Cumhuriyet Ansiklopedisi 1981-2000 Cilt 4, 2003: 535). Although the movement sought to leave the identity of being an Alevi movement, it could not manage to do so and in general was mentioned as an Alevi movement. In the booklet named "Aims and Principles" printed in July 1996, it is stated that those who are not from the Sunni sect are being excluded (Demokratik Barış Hareketi, 1996: 112), that Islam started to leave its characteristic of being a higher identity (Demokratik Barış Hareketi, 1996:113), and that lies, slanders, and humiliative propaganda was made against Alevi beliefs (Demokratik Barış Hareketi, 1996: 115). As opposed to the efforts on becoming organized and the significant amounts of money spent by DPM, the founders of DPM resigned from the party with the fear of the party being dissolved and established the Peace Party. However, the party did not achieve the level of success it expected in the April 1999 elections[92]. There are some reasons underlying the failure of the second party which the Alevi elites founded by emphasizing merely the Alevi identity. The first of these is the desire of not having the power divided and the fear that in case when the existent power is divided some situations threatening the Alevis might occur. Consequently, Alevis regard the continuity of the existence of the

[92] The Public Prosecutor of the Supreme Court has pleaded for the closure of the Democratic Peace Movement Party by an indictment dated 25.10.1996 and titled SP.88 Hz. 1996/307.

group with more priority than the fact that the group is formed out of mutual benefit, and they do not take risks. This is one of the most important reasons why Alevis come together generally in the Republican People's Party. It is evident that they occasionally feel "forced" to side with the Republican People's Party, which they regard as "lesser of the two evils" and that no other organization other than this party creates a sense of trust in them.

CHAPTER 3

THE TRANSFORMATION of THE ALEVI IDENTITY in BREAKING POINTS

This chapter treats various incidents which have affected the emergence and the alteration of the Alevi identity with breaking points. Here, the analysis is devoted to the influences exerted on the Alevi identity by the state and the other dynamics emerging in this period.

3.1. Sivas: Massacre or Incident?

Sivas massacre constitutes one of the most crucial steps which caused an increase in the consciousness among the Alevis as regards their identity. The revelation of the secular characteristics of the Alevis against many murders and slaughters allegedly carried out by the 'religious fundamentalist terror' has been possible in the aftermath of the massacre.

Sivas massacre bears differences in form and meaning compared to the organized acts of slaughter carried out at the end of the 1970s. Bruinessen (2001: 125) claims that the difference stems from the selection of Aziz Nesin and many other intellectuals as targets, most of whom were the Alevis, instead of a mass assault on the regions densely populated with Alevi people. However, the passage quoted from the journal *Cuma*, which appeared in *Milli Gazete* on February 20, 1993, about five months before the massacre, is worth noting. The quoted passage is as follows (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 6, 1993: 7):

> Edict of Death for Aziz Nesin! A mangy-looking dog howls at the innocent people in the neighborhood, attacks them, takes their peace of mind away. And when he is put to silence by whatsoever means, there comes the hell of a fuss: 'Woe...! Animal Rights'. Yes gentlemen! Should howling be considered as an animal right, silencing it out of necessity will appear as an even more sacred human right.

Another crucial point was the designation of the Pir Sultan Abdal statue by the crowd as a target, since Pir Sultan symbolized the rebellious and 'leftist' tradition within *Alevilik* rather than *Alevilik* itself (Bruinessen, 2001: 125-126).

Sivas massacre also signifies an incident, which somehow could not be prevented, despite the fact that, SDPP, enjoying considerable mass support from the Alevis, operated as a coalition partner and its chairperson Erdal İnönü was in office as deputy prime minister in at the time. This event further intensified the feeling of 'being abandoned' among the Alevis and provided the major motive behind their dynamics of organization. Yet, of crucial importance here is the conduct of these activities through the establishment of associations which rendered religious identity as a dominant -if not primary- position.

Frankly speaking, today, Sivas massacre is generally perceived as the outcome of an ascending appeal for shari'a and evaluated as a revolt against the secular republic during that period as well. The perception of the perpetrators as 'those who favor the rule of shari'a' (sheriatist), seems to have served in the end for drawing the Alevis nearer to the other common enemies of religious fanatics. In other words, once again during this period, the Alevis have developed the sense of sharing a common fate with those structures threatened by religious fanatics. Oral Çalışlar wrote in his column in the newspaper Cumhuriyet (Cumhuriyet, July 2, 2002: 4) that:

> ...Sivas massacre is a very crucial social and political event the boundaries of which far exceed shari'a... Sivas massacre is doomed to remain unraveled as long as it is seen as a simple 'uprising for shari'a rule'... Why were the soldiers' hands tied? How could it be that the military forces arriving instantly everywhere without hesitating to resort to arms, abounding in panzers, stirring up a state of alarm and confusion acted so sluggish in Sivas?

The creation of yet another common memory for the Alevis also arised as an important consequence of the Sivas massacre. The event has been utilized in most Alevi and Kemalist sources as identical with Kerbela, Maraş and Çorum massacres. Interestingly, different groups using similar codification and identifications arrive at different conclusions and attempt to manipulate the Alevis in accordance with their own ends. For instance, while Türkkaya Ataöv, in an article published in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Cumhuriyet, May 5, 2002: 7) writes that "...even the Kerbela event is a common memory that brings forth the agony of people suffering under tyranny as the agony of humankind. The

condition of existence of the Alevis is secularism. For this reason, the Alevis are sincere Republicans, Atatürkists and secularists..."

A declaration dated July 1, 1999 and signed by the *Federation of Kurdistan Alevis* (Zülfikar, July-August 1999: 17) states the following: "The Semah of those, who perform it before the fire in Sivas, turns toward İmralı... Naturally, our people of Alevi, Yezidi, Sunni origin will not comply with the edict of genocide issued by TR and shall never submit to it..."

The massacre is generally elaborated in Alevi publications as a reactionary and fascist uprising against the republic, and the state also reveals the obscurity on part of the Alevis in comprehending the state. The concept of state is regarded by Alevis in some cases as a structure, the alteration of which is presensted as objective, and in other cases by some groups as a structure differentiated from the state during Atatürk's rule, acquiring a form which the reactionary and fascist structures nurture on. For instance, in the Sivas massacre case, the public declarations of the intervening lawyers reveal that the state is identified with the republic and yet a different interpretation of the state is presented. While it is claimed in the declaration that the executive organ of the state and the security forces operating under its command were unable to prevent the events from happening, it was also emphasized that the event is a planned, organized, pre-arranged *(reactionary*) uprising, the target of which was the state and the republic (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 9, 1993: 4-5). Again, according to Akar (2000: 51), Maraş, Çorum and Sivas massacres were instigated by the mosque. It is further indicated that the state was tolerant of religion and that the unity between the state and religion was continued, thereby attributing the state an independent character.

It is observed that the Alevis reinforce their group identity through the unification of Sivas massacre with various images and myths which they utilize as common memory. In the course of this identification, the condition of the state, as stated before, varies according to space, time and the actual position enjoyed:

> Yavuz, in massacring ten thousands of the Alevis in Sivas, had found support in the shari'a; after hundreds of years, as a bitter consequence of history, **the grandchildren of Yavuz**, in setting Madımak on fire in the same Sivas, had based their act in the shari'a... (Işık, 2001: 65) (Bold letters mine)

Similar images are utilized by different sources. For instance, the *Savaş Haberleri* (War News) section of the journal *Taraf* writes on the Sivas massacre that (Taraf, July 15-21, 1994: 5):

> The companions in the Metris Prison... As the Glorious Sivas Revolt (*Kıyam* in Turkish) was being carried out, have shouted the slogans: 'Shari'a or Death', 'We Will Destroy the Infidel State', 'Sivas Will be a Graveyard for the Secular', '**We Belong to the Generation of Yavuz'**. (Bold letters mine)

In addition to these, the bulletin *Hacıbektaş*, published as the organ of Hacı Bektaş Association, puts forward the idea that 'Sivas massacre was carried under state supervision' (Hacıbektaş, 11, 1995: 1), emphasizing that "the state, which caught the disciples of Dervish Mehmet and hung them in the Kubilay event, placed dribbling fanatics under protection this time." At this point, it may be argued that the state is perceived by the Alevis as an independent, changing and dynamic structure, the democratization of which is possible.

Another question more important than by whom the Sivas massacre was carried out is to whom the situation emerging after the massacre provided benefit. Understanding what measures the government took in the region after the massacre and to what extent the Sivas massacre was important in taking these measures is important in giving an idea about the situation following the massacre. In addition to these, determining to what direction the distinct deviation observed in the Alevi identity developed and in what way the internal dynamics and the external boundaries changed with this deviation seems to be important in understanding the Sivas massacre.

Additionally, the determination of the direction of the evident deviation observed in the Alevi identity after the massacre, and of the actual change in the internal

dynamics and external political group boundaries of the Alevis seem to stand as crucial elements in understanding the Sivas massacre.

First and foremost, it should be stated that the year of the massacre represents the climax of a period of intensive war with the PKK. During this period, the PKK, experiencing difficulty in the region, was indulged in a search for transit points, particularly for penetrating into the Black Sea Region and then achieving countrywide diffusion. The vicinities of Tokat and Sivas, locations of Alevi community settlements, were of those routes attempted to be used by the organization for expanding into the Black Sea Region (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 38, 2000: 16). It has been claimed that the state, in an effort to prevent this penetration, conducted operations in the region more smoothly after the massacre and that Alevi villages were evacuated and encountered forced migration through various practices (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 33, 1999: 37-38). The remarks of a villager, Ejder Aygün, during a conversation on life in Sivas after the Madımak event, published under the heading "Madımak Migration" as part of a series of articles in Milliyet is worth paying attention:

> ...Not only the Alevis, but Sunnis as well are experiencing migration in Sivas, yet purely out of economic reasons on part of the latter. The Alevis on the other hand are migrating out of unease. They are frightened by the thought of new Madımaks. They are full of anxiety. They find it very hard to get a job because of their Alevi origin. And in case their identities are revealed, they are excluded by their acquaintances...[93]

It is seen that forced migration and evacuation of villages amount to the destruction of possible transit points of logistic support for the PKK.

Apparently, Sivas massacre has contributed to the organization of the Alevis and the acquisition of an identity by the Alevi individual[94]. From this date onwards, The Alevis have, to a certain extent, grown distant from the state and the social democratic structures which the community confided in or gave its support to. Hence, the community, hitherto given credit for its voting potential, has found

[93] http://www.milliyet.com/1997/10/19/

[94] Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association, rising as the focus of attention after the Sivas massacre had reached a number of branches as high as 35 with some 30,000- 40,000 members. Furthermore, the requests for establishing new branches in certain places were rejected due to economical impossibilities.

itself in a vacuum. This vacuum was tried to be filled in by a number of parties ranging from the right to the left side of the political spectrum. Apart from extra group manipulations, a process of self criticism as regards the traditional political standing of the Alevi community was initiated among the mass itself. Despite all these efforts, the community's traditional model of behavior seems to have triumphed. The Alevis, in spite of their short lived resentment, have attended to their overwhelmingly social democratic identities.

Another event, which was the object of widespread discussion during this period, was the establishment of a foundation by those circled around the Cem Journal and the bringing of an offer by the then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller on some 3 trillion Turkish Liras to be utilized in the name of the Alevis in accordance with their wishes. It may be argued that the chairperson of the Cem Foundation, İzzettin Doğan's remarks on the need to search for alternatives other than the left (Cumhuriyet, July 25, 1998: 6) was an attempt to create a timely alternative for the Alevis, resentful to the left after the Sivas massacre. It is known that, many parties endeavored to find Alevi candidates in Alevi settlements during the period.

It is also observed that the Sivas massacre accelerated the establishment of an Alevi party, already being debated among the Alevis and resulted in at least discursive expressions. The discourse that the solution to the Alevis' problem with the system lay in the establishment of their own party is seen to acquire primacy for the first time after the experience with the Union Party of Turkey founded with Alevi participation. However, as it happened in the meeting arranged by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1991, the attempt to establish an Alevi party caught the Alevis in the middle of two different points of view. The Cem Journal has been involved in various activities to this end. The journal, striving to develop a perspective on political authority distinct from the traditional Alevi line through the discourse "at peace with the state" seems to have lost this objective because of, literally speaking, "pushing the limits too far". The article published in the 19th issue of the journal under the title "Why not a partnership between WP and a

party established by Alevi believers" has invited a strong reaction and left the attempts stranded in the middle (Nokta, August 29-September 4, 1993: 22).

Sivas massacre has also greatly affected the Alevi youth. It is observed that after this period, the Alevi youth have begun to assemble and organize in Alevi associations and people's houses (*halkevleri* in Turkish), Pir Sultan Abdal Association being the foremost among them. These meetings which were loosely structured and did not have any organizational ties were carried out on emotional attachments and through references to the religious elements of *Alevilik*.

3.2. Başbağlar Massacre and New Hegemonic Discourses

It was emphasized before that 33 people were executed by shooting in a raid in the Başbağlar village in Erzincan immediately after the Sivas massacre. Two important features of the Başbağlar massacre stand out. The first one concern its relationship with the PKK and the second one is the effort to create a hegemonic discourse clustered around the newspapers *Milli Gazete*[95], *Zaman*, *Akit* and *Yeni Şafak* that is carried out in connection with the Sivas massacre.

The widespread interpretation of the Sivas massacre from the axis of secularism has facilitated the emergence of a discourse on the increasing reactionary threat, as a matter of primary importance on the agenda. The discourse on the increasing reactionary threat, even if true, has determined the limits of the discussions and functioned as a tool for an easier manipulation of the political agenda. It is observed that the events of the 1990s, including the Sivas massacre, were generally interpreted in terms of the secularism- shari'a division.

Among the arguments developed contrary to the discourses created by the Alevis and Kemalists after the Sivas massacre, those pertaining to the Başbağlar

[95] The clash between Democracy Party and Welfare Party, which were engaged in a political rivalry in the region has proliferated after the country-wide increase in the votes cast for WP and the assuming of power by this party. *Milli Gazete* functions as a publishing organ for those structures which have established and continued the WP tradition.

massacre rank first in significance. It is observed that the Başbağlar massacre was recalled by some structures through discourses and constructs similar to the Sivas massacre and was attempted to be presented through similar codification. The designation of the victims of the massacre as "martyrs"[96] (Milli Gazete, July 7: 1, 1993), the statements on the anniversaries of the massacre emphasizing that the "murderers were not found yet" (Beklenen Vakit, February 12, 1995: 9), and "the adjudication process was not initiated"[97] or "brought to a conclusion" (Milli Gazete, July 5, 2004)[98], the construction of the discourse "Başbağlar fire" against the literary discourse "Sivas fire", the emphasis on "state responsibility" in the massacre and most significant of all, without ever *mentioning* the Sivas massacre all the while or only *mentioning it along with the Başbağlar massacre*, constitute the most crucial indicators of this[99]. Interesting arguments in an article titled "Madimak Terror...Unease" by Mehmet Yavuz, a columnist in the newspaper *Yeni Şafak* is worth nothing "Nobody has the right to remain indifferent to the people in flames even if they are '**atheists** or '**communists'**. Just as they do not have the right to remain indifferent to the deliberately committed murder in Başbağlar"[100] (Bold letters mine).

These examples indicate the efforts to use the Başbağlar massacre in a functional way similar to the Sivas massacre. However, it can easily be observed in both

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[96] http://www.zaman.com.tr/2003/07/05/haberler/h13.htm

[97] http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2001/temmuz/04/meyavuz.html

[98] The process of adjudication after the Sivas massacre is highly complicated. Though a similar case is observed in the Başbağlar massacre, there exist evident differences between the two. Above all, despite the identification of the perpetrators, the fact that those who were allegedly negligent in the event were not tried before the court, not even had their testimonies taken and that the relations between the arrested persons, the security forces and the relatives/lawyers of the victims were disputable, distinguishes the case from the Başbağlar massacre on legal grounds. The indication of PKK as the perpetrator in the Başbağlar massacre has given the event a concrete form and brought about a certain level of relief. Nine convicts punished with aggravated felony after an adjudication process which took approximately eleven years, are released in accordance with the new Turkish Penal Code. Thus, the number of people released in the Sivas case has reached a total of twelve.

[99] Certainly, a similar approach is valid for the media groups which recall the Sivas massacre omitting the Başbağlar massacre. In addition to these, there also exist media groups which do not recall both massacres or mention them only in commenting articles. In either case, it is easily observed that these two incidents are made use of as two distinct arguments.

[100] www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2001/temmuz/10/meyavuz.html

cases that the debates were carried out within predetermined limits. The Kemalist discourse of the modernist state and the conservative and Kemalist-nationalist structures in opposition to it, have debated the issue on the same hegemonic ground.

For instance, the quotations and comments on the Sivas and Başbağlar massacres published in the newspaper *Evrensel* on July 4, 2000 are interesting in this sense:

> ...Akit[101] strives to win credit through playing "politics" even over the brutally massacred bodies of these people. The headline of the first spot that begins with the sentence '33 more lives demanded at court in addition to the 33 lives taken in Başbağlar as a response to the 33 deceased (!)' is 'Howling Together in Ankara', just appropriate for Akit. Translated from Akit language, this means: The rabid, red Marxists who have carried out the Başbağlar **massacre** in retaliation to Sivas; dissatisfied, want to see the 33 people involved in the Sivas **events** hanged, too. Despite all these, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, prohibiting the celebrations for the conquest of İstanbul, is completely silent against these disrupters bawling as 'Marx, Lenin, Mao' out on streets, provocating the people. What are you waiting for, officials, take control...![102] (Bold letters mine)

As emphasized before, a second feature of the Başbağlar massacre concerns its relationship with the PKK. Various factors such as the carrying out of the massacre immediately after the Sivas massacre, the proximity of the death tolls and the presentation of the massacre by its perpetrators as the revenge of Sivas, have rendered the event a different dimension. The presentation of the event, clarified as the PKK act, as the "revenge of Sivas", has functioned as a tool for the assumption by the PKK of a role as the protector and guardian of the Alevis on the one hand and the exploitation of this situation by the nationalist-conservative front on the other. That the PKK took the vengeance of Sivas or that this massacre was carried out independently of the other has, in the end led to a dichotomy generally undesired by the Alevis, and the dominance of the PKK's role in the political and social arena as the guardian of the Alevis was felt by the community. The belief that the Başbağlar massacre was carried out by the PKK as an extension of its desire and efforts to achieve sympathy among the Alevis, though hardly elaborated in the public sphere, has been put forward both in the local press and in various hegemonic areas without much influence on a national level.

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[101] Akit was a radical Islamist newspaper.

[102] http://www.evrensel.net/00/07/04/medya.html

For instance, lawyer Sıtkı Zilan from *Diyarbakır Söz Gazetesi* wrote the following in his column "*Sözün Özü*":

> ...The differentiation of Kurds as Alevi-Sunni, pro Islamic-pro Kurdish, village ranger-PKK member, fighting each other is the outcome of a policy followed and occasionally practiced by the PKK. **The PKK, in carrying out the Başbağlar massacre in retaliation to the Sivas massacre** has displayed the clearest example of this. It is known that Sunni Başbağlar villagers were not connected to the Sivas massacre by any means whatsoever. **It is also known that those who died in the Sivas massacre have nothing in line with the PKK, but their view on religion.**[103] (Bold letters mine)

The most interesting emphasis in the article is the indication of the existence of a parallel view of religion (Islam) between the PKK and those who died in the Sivas massacre. Under the influence of the perception of the PKK as an anti Islamic organization, hostile to religion, it is emphasized that the Alevis, as well as the Sunni writers and intellectuals who died in the massacre hold the same view on Islam with the PKK; thereby describing the Alevis as anti religious.

Another important consequence of the Başbağlar massacre is the initiation of a process in which the people of Tunceli are seen as "the other" and presented as enemy. The comments on the internet site known to belong to the Halidiye sect of the Naqshibandi order can be given as an example of this. The article by Halil Necatioğlu titled "*Neredesin Ey Gerçek Adalet*" (Where are You, O True Justice?) states that:

> ... As far as the expressions of the eyewitnesses are concerned, the murderers have told that they took the revenge of the Sivas **event**s and the old 1938 Dersim Rebellion Movement. These expressions bring the conclusion that they are, most certainly, ALEVIS (Capital letters in original, bold letters mine)[104]

The emphasis in capital letters seems like a clear indication that the Alevis are held responsible for this massacre. It is possible to observe various approaches by the state supportive of the Alevi identity on the ground that the bringing to the fore of their identity might frustrate the Kurdish identity rising particularly in conflict areas. Bruinessen (2001: 128) claims that, the Başbağlar massacre was carried out by the PKK in order to "avenge the anti Alevi brutality", emphasizing that this caused the acquisition of a crucial support by the organization after 1994

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[103] http://www.diyarbakirsoz.com/yazarlar/zilan/ekim_02_04.htm

[104] http://gumushkhanawidargah.8m.com/byazilar/islam/i9308.html

among the Kurdish Alevis who remained distant to the PKK, which flirted with Sunni Islam particularly up to the 1990s.

3.3. Cemhouses (Cemevleri) - The Compelling Power of the Whole

It is known that cem rites, the religious worship of the Alevis can be practiced in *any* place or at *any* time and this is exactly how they are being practiced especially in rural areas; namely, independent of time and space. It is also known that cem rites are practiced in any house available at the time being, which is then called a cemhouse. In rural areas, this house is generally the most convenient dwelling in the village. Considering that the rites are continuously practiced in the same house due to the convenience of the place, it can easily be observed that the sanctity of the rite and the sanctity of the dwelling are not of primary importance in cem worship. Therefore, the sanctity of the mosque, observed and generally accepted in Islam does not exist in Alevi places of worship. In that sense, sanctity is not attributed to the place and spatial properties are limited to and interpreted upon its convenient and functional characteristics.

The recent debates, however, seem to have caused the shaping of the political group boundaries of the Alevis along with the dominant discourses. The attempts at self definition and setting limits out of an identity crisis has resulted, during this period, in the Alevis discussing about themselves within the boundaries drawn by Sunni Islam. Sunni Islam, departing from its understanding on *the necessity of a place of worship for a celestial religion*, evaluates *Alevilik* with respect to this point. This understanding has also created among the Alevis an urge and obligation to select a place of worship for themselves. The understanding of the Alevis to act in accordance with the dominant standards of judgment of the society they live in has caused the erosion of the Batinite characteristics of their belief(s) through a modernist understanding[105].

[105] Türkdoğan (1995: 127), in quoting from İbrahim Özkan, a teacher in Kızılcapınar, one of the Alevi villages in Aydın gives the best example of this. Özkan states that "...we carried out the establishment of the association to get rid of being embarrassed under the gaze of the neighborhood. So, we tried to spread the impression that 'mosques exist in Alevi villages as well. This undertaking rescued us from the embarrassment and pressure prevailing for hundreds of years."

During the process of discussion on cemhouses, significant differences have emerged between the attitudes of the state towards the Alevi demands, the actual way these demands were elaborated by the state and the approach of the ideological apparatuses under state control towards *Alevilik*. Foremost among those structures of the state producing ideology were the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education. The definition of *Alevilik* made by state representatives over the points they were in touch with the Alevis contains crucial deficiencies compared to the perceptions of *Alevilik* put forward in the publishing organs of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the *khutbahs* (*Hutbe* in Turkish) prepared and the curriculum of the Ministry of Education. For instance, while in the town of Hacı Bektaş emphasis is laid upon the universal values of the Alevis, mentioning them as the oppressed, in areas of ideological production, the definitions are deepened, accompanied by the attempt to keep them within the desired boundaries.

The claims relating to the cemhouses, which originate from the Directorate of Religious Affairs and other sources, may be summarized under four points: 1) as a place for worship, cemhouse does not exist in the history of the Alevis and that mosques constitute a common place of worship, 2) the acquisition by cemhouses the functions of mosques would destroy the integrity of the places of worship in Islam and hence damage the unity of the people, 3) the building of cemhouses in every corner is not a proper act 4) leftist organizations abuse the cemhouses[106].

The chairperson of Directorate of Religious Affairs Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, in a speech delivered at a meeting in Izmir in 1994 attended by officials of religious bodies, claimed that *Alevilik* was not a religious sect, but a disposition (*meşrep*) (Cumhuriyet, August 23, 2001: 4): "*Alevilik* is not a religion, not a religious sect either. It is a culture, a disposition (meşrep) with its folkloric dances, folk songs,

[106] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html

its music and anecdotes... The Alevis may want us to build cemhouses. But cemhouses are not mosques; they are a carousel of dervishes[107]"

In opposition to these claims, writer Gülağ Öz states that:

> Cemhouses have existed ever since the time Alevilik first came into being. The largest house in every village has been used as a cemhouse and they are surely found in every Alevi türbe (tomb) and tekke (dervish lodge). Cemhouses are built to keep this culture alive in today's conditions of urban life. The brotherhood of the Alevi thought pioneers in the achievement of peace and integrity... The Alevis do not have the slightest intention of going to the mosque... The Directorate of Religious Affairs continues to be involved in discrimination and divisive behavior. Let them abandon their desire to see the Alevis as Sunnis. Tolerate different opinions from now on[108].

On the other hand, in evaluating the holding of funerals of radical left militants at cemhouses, writer Cemal Şener in a series of articles titled *Yolunu Arayan Alevilik* (*Alevilik in Search of Its Way*), prepared by Ruşen Çakır and İhsan Yılmaz and published in the newspaper Milliyet on August 21, 2001, remarks that:

> The Alevi family brings the body of their child prepared for funeral to the Cemhouse. Sometimes the funeral of a Sunni family's child is held at the Cemhouse as well. A connection is immediately established between militancy and Cemhouses. The death fasting and activism in prisons are presented as receiving support from Cemhouses. This, however, is not the case at all[109].

As can be understood, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, as one of the centers of ideological dissemination of the state, attempts to demarcate the boundaries of *Alevilik* within the confines of Islam, and to draw these boundaries of a formal understanding of *Alevilik*. While the boundaries are being determined, apparently a relationship is also tried to be established between Cemhouses and "terrorist" activities of these organizations, which intensively appear on the agenda[110].

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[107] In the aftermath of these statements, many Alevi organizations have sent faxes condemning the event to Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Cumhuriyet, August 23, 2001: 4).

[108] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html

[109] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html

[110] First of all, it should be kept in mind that Cemhouses constitute a place for worship. The involvement of the dead person in acts of terror does not mean that he/she does not have religious beliefs. On the other hand, the same evaluations may have validity for mosques as well.

3.4. The Alevi Notion of the State

The Alevi notion of the state holds a position which is generally vague and changeable according to different conditions. The state for the Alevis sometimes constitutes a structure removed from its essence; standing distant from its actual position, it assumes a stand which is protected or preserved or one that needs to be watched for. It is observed that the Alevis do not evaluate the state in its totality, and in their relations with the state, they support various structures within the state while criticizing various others. It is known that the criticisms were particularly directed towards the Directorate of Religious Affairs and that pressure is exerted on either the abolition of this insititution or the representation of the Alevis in it. A point worth paying attention to is the emphasis that this institution, established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, gradually lost its main function and grew distant from its original posture. According to Özbey (1998:17), the accountant of the Pir Sultan Abdal Association, this religious police organization, established out of necessity in the past, has been transformed into the propaganda and logistic support center of a particular sect in the last fifty years. First of all, the nature of Alevis' criticisms against the state concerning certain institutions, with their pro-Ataturk identities kept intact, may be evaluated as a contribution, on part of the Alevis, to the efforts directed towards the democratization of the state on a line close to social democracy. While the Cem Journal, the organ of the Cem Foundation, pursues such policy of publication, Pir Sultan Abdal Journal is involved in certain discrusive areas of conflict directly encountered by the state. For instance, the particular emphasis of Pir Sultan Abdal Journal on the Kurdish question -within the context of human rights though- is clearly observed. This attitude undoubtedly constitutes the origins of the criticisms directed at the organization.

As a prevalent tendency, it is observed that the state is identified with various structures and sometimes transformed into a myth by the Alevis. The loyalty to the republican revolution has begun to assume the form of a nostalgic longing for the past. It can be argued that even though the Alevis do not possess a sense of

being protected by the state, as a myth and longing to the past, they are attached to it. In fact, the object of this attachment is modernism, the modernist and secular freedom. As a consequence of their evolutionist thoughts, Alevi-Bektaşi communities have permitted the infiltration of the liberal political discourses of Jeune Turks into their own structures in the nineteenth century and the Marxist discourses in the twentieth (Melikoff, 1999: 21), thereby conforming throughout centuries, to every form of the struggle being waged.

Nevertheless, the Alevi notion of the state is mixed with a feeling of being alienated as a whole in certain breaking points. Alevi writer Ali Balkız reflects this dilemma in his article written after the Sivas massacre (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 9, 1993: 3):

> ...What actually burned us in Sivas was neither the organization of the festival in this city nor Aziz Nesin. The true reason was the emergence of a confusion, a weakness in our consciousness of the state. Even if for a moment, you disregard the class basis of the state, ignore the fact that it is a means for exploitation, plunder and robbery... Well, this is how you burn like this...
>
> Now just what does the state exist for? It exists to keep alive those we reject, those we stand in opposition to. To prevent our desires from happening...[111]

Along with this vague and varying approach to the state, it is observed that the state itself also attempts to either deny or shape *Alevilik* in various areas. It is appropriate to designate the areas of state intervention to religion by distinguishing between formal and informal areas. The approach of the state toward *Alevilik* through the mediation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, despite occasional changes, bears resemblance to a great extent to those of textbooks and various other sources of information. In spite of this, it is also observed that the state experiences difficulty in defining *Alevilik* in closed public spheres of encounter, such as the courts.

[111] Another example is the headline in the Hacıbektaş Journal which is the publishing organ of the Hacı Bektaş Association, a typical example of traditional *Alevilik*, on the second anniversary of the Sivas massacre (Hacıbektaş, 11, 1995: 1): "Second Anniversary of the State Supervised Sivas Massacre Commemorated".

The best examples of the state's approach to *Alevilik* through its structures can be found in the basic tools of definition and information. For instance, that the non-appearance of the word "cemevi" in Turkish Language Institution (*Türk Dil Kurumu*, TDK) Spelling Guide is an indication of the refusal to acknowledge the word as a concept. On the other hand, in TDK dictionaries, *Alevilik* is considered a sect and evaluated as belonging to the Islamic circle. However, the statement of Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz on January 5, 1994, that *Alevilik* is not a *sect*, but a *disposition* displays the extent of contradiction. While the state, through its institutions, accepts *Alevilik* as a sect in written forms of formal discourse, verbal evaluations of *Alevilik* as a disposition are also made by the most competent authorities. In short, both the Alevis and the state encounter difficulties in defining one another. The fact that the Alevis are the most powerful allies of the secular front is a significant contribution and that *Alevilik* bears a nature, which the state, despite its unease, cannot confront or deny it like various other structures, creates this contradiction.

As indicated before, Hacı Bektaş Veli is the historical figure most commonly referred to by various state institutions during the debates on *Alevilik*. The affinity of Hacı Bektaş with orthodox Islam is frequently emphasized both in the publications of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Hacı Bektaş Veli Journal, the organ of the *Gazi University Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş Veli Research Center*, functioning within the body of the Gazi University:

> ...Hacı Bektaş Veli has strived to reveal the essence of religion, of Allah, the holy Quran, the next world, in short the fundamental principles of belief, benefiting from the sacred verses... (Diyanet Aylık Dergi, 122, 2002: 14)
>
> ...Bektaş Veli, charged in Anatolia with the duty of arousing lines of fraternity, raising new generations, contributing to the Turkification and Islamization of many continents, achieving national unity and cooperation... (Diyanet Aylık Dergi, 128, 2003: 13)

Similarly, by frequently mentioning the Turkish and Muslim elements of Hacı Bektaş and *Alevilik*, the Hacı Bektaş Veli Journal, overlooks the Kızılbaş elements and attempts to codify the whole Bektaşi order as *Alevilik*.

In this context, Mahçupyan's (2004a) approach on the Alevis and the Directorate of Religious Affairs is worth noting:

> However, what matters most perhaps is the attitude of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, pretending not to see the Alevis, condemning them to an average understanding of Islam... Bardakoğlu, proposing that piety be criticized for the sake of protecting religion, is silent when Alevilik is at stake; also an indication of how patriarchy has become the 'spirit' of the state...

In short, the attitude of the state and its various institutions in approaching *Alevilik* reflected by putting emphasis on similar elements of *Alevilik* and the acceptance of differences seems not valid to this end. At this point, the Alevis are tried to be wedged between atheism and Sunnism. As also stated by Mahçupyan (2004b), this bears the impression that the state supports various formations similar to a 'yellow labor union' inside the community. It is observed that these efforts oriented towards the transformation or at least the controlling of Alevi identity is being cautiously watched by this group.

3.5. Alevilik and the Conservative Tradition, Analysis of Reproduction: Islam, Folk Islam and Alevilik

In fact, the expression "Not Islam, but Islams exist in Turkey" points at a reality. This point may be better understood bearing in mind that the relationship between Turks and Islam has been problematic since the beginning. It is evident that the effort by Turks to dissolve the Islamic culture within their strong customs and traditions used in organizing their social life inevitably made significant contributions to the diversification of Islamic understandings. Due to the strong state tradition of Turks and the nurturing of this tradition on the Islamic understanding of the state, Islam has been mostly perceived by Turks on a political level, resulting in the development of the religious aspects regarding social life.

The most important consequence of the utilization of orthodox Islam in carrying out the state tradition was adopting a formal understanding of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, which was transferred to the republic with slight changes. It is manifest that a *folk Islam* has come out in the Ottoman Empire against the

practices -impositions to a certain measure- of the formal understanding. Nevertheless, whether they are formal or folk Islam, the *sine qua non* rules used by all these Islams in comprehending Allah and in regulating social life, starts with complying with the five pillars of Sunni Islam. Sezgin (2004: 39), in defining Muslims, indicates that those performing ablution, the namaz, gusül (the ritual ablution of the whole body) or the morning services in the first day of Bairam and prayers at funerals, belong to the Maturidi sect as far as their belief systems are concerned and to the Hanefi sect in terms of the actual way these practices are carried out. He further claims that, in case these are performed by the Alevis, they would be included within these sects as well. However, as will be mentioned below, distinct differences exist between the Alevis and Sunnis regarding *namaz* (prayer), ablution, and *gusül* (cleansing the whole body), which are maintained in group structuring and evaluations. Taking into account all these *sine qua non* rules, it is observed that, while various structures encompass *Alevilik* as a supra identity conforming to these practices, various others are deprived of them. Therefore it is not possible to talk about a pure folk Islamism regarding Alevilik.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The increasing influence of ethnic structures in world politics particularly after World War II has resulted in the multiplying of the studies focusing on these structures. Ethnic studies, acquiring for itself a crucial place in social sciences after the 1950s, achieved greater space for maneuver and possibility of articulation, particularly through the developments in the field of philosophy.

Apart from these developments, the breaking loose of those designated as the other from the macro concept of race, which, to a great extent, was replaced with ethnic structure, designed as a more dynamic structure, has brought about the proliferation of the discussions on local groups, congregations and communities.

4.1. Objective and Subjective Shortcomings

The diversity observed in inter-group interactions creates some problems as regards the application of the theories utilized in the classification of ethnic groups and the analysis of ethnic relations. The diversity observed in interactions causes insufficiency on part of various theories in defining some ethnic structures. Due to this reason, the need to support the approaches assembled under theories of ethnicity with anthropological approaches emerges.

The concern for attributing an exhaustive meaning to ethnicity may be presented as a reason for the failure of the theories of ethnicity in explaining different ethnic structures. Isajiw (1974: 11) claims that some theories and approaches are inadequate in defining the ethnic group studied due to their rather narrow scope, or that various general definitions lack sufficiency in bringing explanations pertaining to the essence of the subject.

4.2. Transactionalist Premise and the Group Borders of the Alevi Community

Another issue arising in the debates on ethnicity is related with the criteria of reference in defining ethnic groups. In spite of the presence of views defending the validity of definitions introduced from within or completely outside the group, it should also be considered that these definitions may vary for different groups. Hence, the definitions should be renewed in accordance with the changing conditions of the group in question. For instance, Fredrikh Barth is overcome by such deficiency. One of the most prominent figures of the transactionalist premise, Barth (2001: 18) argues that:

> ...However much the people differ in the attitudes they display, if they feel themselves as belonging to group A and not a relative group B, this definition cannot be inhibited. Here, differences determined by social interaction rather than objective differences matter. What we need to consider is then, not the objective differences between groups, but the elements used by individuals in defining their own identities.

Barth understands ethnic groups as *social organizations*, arguing that ethnic groups should be defined over individuals (Eriksen, 2002: 63). As may be observed here, Barth introduces his definition of ethnic groups as founded on the subjective evaluations introduced by the group itself. However, beyond the self definition and self articulation of the group, to what extent this is meaningful in practice is undoubtedly more crucial in ethnic group studies. Namely, of more importance in studies in ethnicity than the self perception of a person as being in a state of belonging is the inclusion of him/her by the other group and the importance of this in the network of social relations. Therefore, objective differences determining social interaction take part at this point.

The shortcoming in Barth's example concerns the exposure of a person belonging to group "A" to various social sanctions regarding this belonging, as well as to those regarding who may not belong to the group "B". Therefore, even if the emphasis on the subjectivity of the individual belonging to the group A is crucial, one of the prerequisites for this individual to feel that he/she belongs to group B, is whether this individual will be included by the "subjectivity" in Barth's reading according to their criteria of belonging. Therefore, the acceptance as subjective the mechanisms of self understanding, self interpretation and self definition of

ethnic groups, are rendered void with the taking precedence of a comprehensive and objective definition. Thus, Barth's approach does not seem to have currency for various identities interacting with their environment through pre-modern myths and symbols. For this reason, "the formation of group identity through the self definitions of individuals" contains some deficiencies. Foremost among these deficiencies is the fact that though ethnic categories, the primordial ties of which are evidently on the foreground, -Alevis may be evaluated as one of these categories as well- perceive themselves as belonging to a different identity, this constitutes a situation which does not have validity both for themselves and their defining complements (Sunnis).

Another dilemma of the transactionalist approach for the Alevis is the anticipation that cultural differences could diminish and similarities could increase following the mutual interaction of the people from different cultures (Barth, 1966)[112]. Though this anticipation seems valid for almost all categories that as social categories, belong to the modern period; it creates a manifest dilemma in explaining religious-ethnic categories. For instance, if the myths and doctrines possessed by the religious-ethnic group collide with those of the structure representing the 'other majority' and if the sources on which the two doctrines nurture are identical, it is apparent that the clash will create differentiation. The assimilation put forward by transactionalists is difficult in case one of the two structures nurturing on the same source constitutes the existing power and authority. However, many examples are present regarding the assimilation of two different structures of a heterodox nature facing the same power, as a consequence of interaction. The Christians in Bulgaria converting into the Bektaşi sect provides the best example of this.

In stating that the continuation of ethnic identity is not imperative in every condition and that new identities may be acquired in changing circumstances, Barth (2001: 28) in fact repeats many of the approaches to identity. It is known that, with the exception of primordialists and sociobiologists, almost all

[112] Despite this concrete argument, afterwards Barth noticed that it is possible to determine that differences could be continued (Barth, 2001:19).

approaches accept the formation of new ethnic structures and the disappearance of various others. Looking back in the history of Alevis, it is possible to come across cases of ethnic fading or ethnic formation, though in different forms. For instance, it is observed today that structures defined within the Alevi identity (Kalenderi, Vefai, Bektaşi, Kızılbaş etc.) are dissolved under a single name. Yet, it should be stated that, in the Alevi case the interaction of more than one ethnic structure has paved the way for the formation of a large community with similar boundaries and dynamics.

4.3. Similarities, Differences

The indication of ethnic differentiation between two or more groups is revealed through the analysis of the routine behavior displayed by the group (Eidheim, 2001: 41). When the routine behavior of the Alevi community is observed, it is seen that an evident difference does not exist between it and the Sunni community. However, in areas where Sunnism is overwhelmingly practiced, where the determinants of Sunnism are clearer, the Alevis perceive themselves under threat. Where the Alevi individual is able to continue his/her way of living as an average Sunni individual does, through the eroding or declining in importance of group boundaries by the boundaries of different structures such as work, working environment and centers of consumption; the clarification leads to an identity crisis for the Alevis.

It is known that evident differences do not exist between the Alevis and Sunnis in various areas of social interaction (employment areas, business organizations and such)[113] and the revelation of the identity of an Alevi person is generally through the formation of a general opinion with respect to place of birth, the scarcity or absence of religious references used in colloquial language or the non existence of various rituals pertaining to Islam and willingly carried out by a Sunni individual, such as the Friday prayers. However, of determining influence here, is the possession by others external to the Alevi individual of such characteristics which

[113] Due to the ability of Alevis in successfully concealing their identities with the exception of the cases of self declaration, they are able to interact with Sunnis in areas of social interaction and particularly in big cities without hardship.

take such codification into consideration, namely the intensity of the exclusive power possessed by them and directed at the Alevi individual. It should be noted at this point that, this mechanism of exclusion is present not only among Sunnis, but the Alevis as well, though with stronger connotations. This stems from the fact that an average Alevi individual feeling insecure within the Sunni community is indulged in an effort to analyze his/her surroundings more frequently. Therefore, in most cases a Sunni individual does not feel the need for analyzing his/her surroundings, while the mechanism functions in reverse for the Alevis[114].

As can be seen, all phenomena that make a difference and create the other in this case constitute points of reference existing outside the actors and operating as an extension of a systematic structure. Both the Alevi and Sunni individual are aware of the fact that such points may be imposed upon them as a tool of discrimination and internalize the form of behavior of a structure, the influence of which they perceive and which they are not able to dominate.

To briefly return to the group boundaries stated by Barth as having been determined as a consequence of social interaction, it is plainly observed in this case that, apart from areas of reciprocal influence, they start primarily with perceptions of authority, cultural patterns and primordial affectivity transported to areas of reciprocal influence by the actors.

Therefore, the need to construct methodology in studies of ethnicity in the direction designated by the field instead of a deductionist approach comes to the fore. Nevertheless, apart from defining an ethnic group, whether various codifications utilized by the ethnic group in establishing relations are transferred to the group by previous generations or created by the group itself during the process of interaction appears as an important problem. Undoubtedly, primordialists constitute the most prominent advocates of the former approach,

[114] Sunnis generally do not experience a crisis or problem of confidence thanks to their size constituting a major section of society. Yet, the issue of marriage continues to rank first in areas of problem. The advice given to children, who are considered to have reached the age of matrimony in particular, constitutes the best examples of this. It may be argued that this pattern of behavior is developed by the family particularly for fear of being excluded.

which as stated before; defend the view that the community in defining itself place the powers external to it and mostly those it cannot control, to the focal point of its definitions. The advocates of the latter approach, on the other hand, are phenomenologists arguing that the perceptions of the community concerning the external world are produced by the internal dynamics of the community and that each member of the group establishes an imaginary bond between himself/ herself and the other members of the group he/she is not acquainted with and has not even seen before.

While the primordialist approach which treats identity as fixed, unchanging and naturally given, perceives group culture as ahistorical, attributing it invariable properties; phenomenologists put forward the claim that identity is socially constructed, restructured through interaction and reassessed and codified particularly after the crises experienced by the group. Evaluating the arguments of primordialists in general, it is observed that in assigning culture and identity a fixed role, they exceedingly overlook the subjectivity of society. On the contrary, the "pure" phenomenologist approach displays an idealist attitude due to its strong emphasis on subjectivity. Another approach, which should be considered apart from these two main approaches, is functionalism, defending the view that culture and identity may change depending on the alterations in relations of power and identity. Functionalists argue that the group emerges and takes form as an outcome of rational group choices[115].

Almost all ethnic structures display the forms of behavior put forward by the approaches mentioned above. However, bloodline, culture and all of the similar codifications join different ethnic groups during different processes and these processes function in different ways in different ethnic structures. In this context, the primordialist, functionalist or phenomenologist approaches, owing to their generalizing attitude, view the cultural codes brought along, carried and

[115] Functionalism is an anthropological approach which has emerged at the beginning of twentieth century. Bronislaw Malinowski and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown are the two most commonly known figures within this approach. Malinowski argues that the social needs of the individual are met by social institutions and that each institution overlaps with a social need.

transmitted by the community and hence lack adequacy on their own in defining ethnic structures in most cases[116].

4.4. The Political Borders of the Alevis in the Context of the Relation Between Religion and Ethnicity

Religion appears as one of the most significant components used in the formation of communities during periods of the dissolution of modernism and increasing community formation. Religion undertakes crucial roles in providing social codification during periods of the dissolution of nation state structure. Roy (2001: 91) in indicating that religion provides the finding of a code during crises of culture emphasizes the constructive role of religion in this context as well.

During the post 1980 period, which witnessed the coming out of the constructive role of religion on more strong terms, religion in Turkey also started to bear various symbols, with increasing influence in the public sphere. In Turkey, as in other societies, various symbols pertaining to religion and being religious exist; also signifying and denoting social status. For instance, the practice of being a Muslim is learned, various symbols regarding this exist and are being constantly utilized (Roy, 2001: 92). It goes without saying that, among these symbols, the use of headscarf occupies the primary place. It is known that headscarf is intended to convey messages not only to the external world, but to the community itself as well. The Alevis also utilize such religious symbols. An evident proliferation in the use of these symbols is observed, particularly during periods such as the Sivas

[116] One other impasse observed in studies of ethnicity concerns the subjective construction of the structure or the area within which the ethnic group studied in the context of ethnicity theories exists and the process of nation building for the nationalities in the area. For instance, it is of common knowledge that the practice of ethnicity in North America and Europe are marked by significant differences and that these differences lead to manifest differentiation in the definition of ethnic groups. Whilst in North America ethnic groups are evaluated as a sub-community, in theories of European origin, those structures capable of nation building are defined as ethnic groups in general. Though culture occupies a prominent role in both approaches, it is interpreted as a product of self awareness in approaches of European origin and the cultural codification of ethnic groups are evaluated in this context. To state the matter in clear terms, a general tendency prevails in the European practice in perceiving the ethnic group as a community close to nation building or as politically self aware. Despite the fact that ethnic groups are defined as a cultural structure in North America, the majority of theories originating from Europe, place the emphasis on the political aspect rather than cultural structure.

massacre, accompanied by a revelation of a crisis of identity and increasingly perceived external threat[117].

Religion, alongside its activity in social sphere also carries an importance for ethnic structures, particularly for pre-modern ethnies in providing them an intensive energy (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 187). This intensive energy, along with many communities in Turkey, includes the Alevis as well. In this context, due to its large size and political activism, occupying a prominent place in Turkish politics, the Alevi population was attempted to be used both by political Kurdish and Islamic movement. Additionally, it is of common knowledge that the state was also indulged in an effort to make use of this energy.

4.5. Components Constituting the Political Group Identity of Alevilik

The Alevis are a religious community defined on the basis of a religious-social identity, establishing their political group boundaries over a self developed distinction between us and them. The boundaries established between the group and the external world enjoys transparency in fairly rare situations, without any repercussions in the Alevi community in general. However, it should be strongly emphasized that most of the components assumed by the group as separating them from the external world is equally perceived by others as causes of separation. In other words, the boundaries between the group and the others are established over the same points of reference.

As can be observed in any community, the Alevis also possess various characteristics, which may be used in the establishment of political group boundaries. Among these, the external determinants of a community (language, race, inhabited geography) undoubtedly occupy a primary place. The first two of these characteristics, namely language and race constitute structures rather commonly resorted to in the depiction of the Alevis by the other.

[117] Among these, most commonly utilized are Pir Sultan Abdal necklaces and badges and pictures of Ali.

4.6. Primordialist Elements and the Alevis

4.6.1. Language

Contrary to Anatolian Alevis who carry out their religious practices generally in Turkish, Dersim Alevis speak other languages, mostly Zaza language and use them in their religious practices. The issue is one of great contention. The mitigation of the prohibitions imposed upon Kurdish language, beginning from the end of the 1980s has dealt a strong blow to the use and speaking of Turkish, a fairly common point of reference during the dominant ideological conjuncture adamantly denying the existence of Kurds, resorted to by approaches arguing that the Alevis are pure Turks. The common use of Turkish in Alevi rituals today constitutes a significant fulcrum for the shaping and shifting of political group boundaries by the state. Interestingly, the overwhelming belief in the majority of the debates within the community on the dominance of Turkish, however realistic, does not seem to bear significance in the establishment of the political group boundaries of the Alevis[118].

The superior tendency to disregard the Kurdish factor in trying to shape the ethnic identity of the Alevis over language is another issue worth paying attention. The disregarding of the Kurdish factor functions in favor of reinforcing the contention that Kurds are in some way, included in *Alevilik*, which is originally a Turkish belief. This point also stands out as the origin of the denial of Kurdish contribution in terms of faith. The comments of Cemal Şener, an Alevi writer arguing that Kurdish or Zaza Alevis could not have appeared as a consequence of the adoption of *Alevilik* by these groups constitute one of the best examples in this sense (Şener, 2002: 188) "The emergence of the Alevis speaking Kurdish or Zaza language is not a consequence of the adoption of *Alevilik* by Kurds or Zazas...

[118] Many discussions exist regarding the use of Turkish in the rituals of Kurdish and Turkish Alevis. Melikoff (1999: 22) states that whether Turkish or Kurdish, the pleading language used by Alevis during Ayin-i Cem is Turkish. This being so, it is also known that many sayings and semah are sung in Zaza language.

Arguing in favor of the adoption of *Alevilik* by Kurds amounts to an ignorance of Ottoman history".

Additionally, Professor Orhan Türkdoğan, known to have a conservative stand, in emphasizing that signs of Turkishness can be traced within the Bektaşi Sect, adds that their language and the poems sung by dervishes (*nefes*) are in Turkish (Türkdoğan, 1995: 102). Türkdoğan then puts forward an even more assertive claim, similar to Cemal Şener, on the Turkish background of Kurdish speaking Alevis (Türkdoğan, 1995: 102). In order to support this claim, he relies on the prevalence among the "people recognized as Kurdish" of various customs, which in his wording have a Turkish origin[119].

In fact, these two examples are parallel to the views put forward in the Dersim Report prepared by the Genderme in 1930s. Here, the emphasis is placed on the continuing or already completed process of the Kurdization of the Alevis. Therefore, in emphasizing that the beliefs and rituals of the Alevis originate from genuine Turkish traditions or those Kurdish beliefs and traditions have made meager contribution on the matter; elements to help the Alevis distance themselves from Kurdishness are presented.

The assertion of language as of determining influence in the arguments regarding the ethnic origins of a group has acquired prominence for the state particularly during the war intensifying in Kurdish-Alevi and Zaza-Alevi regions, during 1990-1995. As emphasized before, the occupation of the agenda by discussions on the existence of Kurds, led to the designation of Kurds as an independent ethnic group and not a version of Turks; followed by recognition of this by the state itself. These developments then have emerged as the greatest obstacle to the assumption that the Alevis are or should be "pure or genuine Turks". While the evaluation of Kurdish Alevis over the a priori assumption on their Turkish origin, as presented by many other structures in the country, may be thought to provide

[119] Here, Türkdoğan prefers the expression "people recognized as Kurdish" instead of "Kurdish people". The expression on its own accord causes confusion on the origins of the people recognized as Kurdish. A similar expression is observed in the preliminary works of Melikoff (1993: 104) as well.

plenty of advantages, it is also known that it was mostly devoid of providing favors during the period of war with the PKK. Nevertheless, the influence on Turkish Alevis of the emphasis on Turkishness during the period has exceeded the actual anticipations.

As can be observed, language can be evaluated as a hidden phenomenon used in the reconstruction of Alevi identity. It is hidden for the reason that through imagination, identity is attempted to be attributed a meaning using various indicators.

4.6.2. Geographical Unity

Another indicator apart from the language concerns the geographical dispersion of the community. It is evident that the Alevis should be perceived as an ethnic structure with religious priorities and dominant points of definition regarding belief. The geographical dispersion of the community, concentrated in certain cities and areas in Anatolia, may be indicated as the reason for both the high level of the perception of us in Alevi community and the feeling of insecurity against the external world. Tunceli undoubtedly ranks first among these geographical areas. There are several cities where a certain level of Alevi concentration is observed. Tunceli being the first, these are Malatya, Erzincan, Erzurum, Nevşehir, Sivas, Tokat, Çorum, Hatay, Mersin, Kahramanmaraş, Amasya and Adana. It is known that in case they come across someone from one of these cities, the Alevis display an inquiring attitude, trying to understand whether they have encountered an Alevi person or not. In spite of this, Tunceli is the sole place identified with *Alevilik*. Today, many cults belonging to Tunceli are kept alive and works focusing on these cults are presented as crucial elements for the continuation of identity. The naming of Dersim as Tunceli can be seen as an extension of the project of nation building in Turkey.

4.6.3. Common Name

The change underwent by the word Alevi, in fact provides a short account of how the community was reconstructed. The term Alevi, which was first used at the end of the nineteenth century, does not possess any indicators prior to this period. However, the term was taken from the Syrian Alevis (Nusayris), the extensions of which are also present in Turkey, yet lacking similarity with Anatolian Alevis besides a unity of fate and a spiritual attachment. In addition to many Batinite and extra-Islamic elements, the involvement in this structure of the Bektaşi sect constituting the heterodox understanding of Islam, is one of the most crucial indicators of the construction of the name as a supra identity. The collection of these structures in question by the modern understanding, under a single name, open for classification, seems to have eliminated the ease of self articulation escaped from certain indicators. For instance, while the people or groups in Anatolia, calling themselves Haydari, Kalenderi or Yesevi, defined themselves with reference to these identities not more than a century ago, they have endorsed the imaginary name of Alevi due to their attainment of comparably more secure ways of living in the modern Turkish Republic under this name. It is known that the term is generally used today by two large groups under *Alevilik*; Bektaşis and Kızılbaş elements without difficulty, since it does not bear negative overtones. This definition has had positive consequences in terms of its massive use by the community despite the lack of information on its ideological structure and intended utilities in its initial introduction. The definition of Alevi, while placing many different groups under its embrace, has resulted in the enclosing of the newly formed structure by sharper and clear boundaries. This event has consequently created constrictions in opportunities of self articulation for the group.

4.6.4. Common Historical Conscience

Whether the Alevi community possesses a common history and whether this conscience is reproduced in time are crucial in terms of the continuity and preservation of the group boundaries. It observed that the Alevis create myths concerning historical moments rather than a common historical conscience and that these myths are reconstructed in certain periods. Elements belonging to the common historical conscience which lacks clarity, are generally shaped over the concept of "Ali" endorsed as a common cult by the Alevis; the historical conscience is being reproduced over this concept. For instance, the redesigning of the Kerbela event in conformity with the epoch functions in fact as a means for resisting Sunnis through some reality they cannot refuse to acknowledge. Besides, the common themes used by the Alevis in products of oral culture constituting one of the most important tools in the acquisition of identity by the community, are structures emphasizing the agony and hardship suffered by the group and the common history of identity constructed in such a way so as to shape the contemporary age over these periods. Suffering agony emphasized as a common theme, beyond the formation of group identity, is used in reproducing it, also constitutes a point of appeal for the individual. It is observed that the Alevi individual, in breaking points of his/her identity formation, clings to group identity using references in retrospect[120]. For instance, Sivas massacre and Gazi events are described through retrospective reference and constructed today over past myths. The famous Alevi poet Aşık Mahsuni Şerif uses these elements in one of his poems (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, 9, 1993: 36):

> Bin dokuzyüz doksan üçün, iki Temmuz cuması/ Alevden bir lağnet kustu Sivas eli seması/ Şah Hüseyni katledip Nesimiyi yüzenler/ Bunlar Allahı Vicdanı yok etmeye gezenler/... Cahilden kalkan duman sanma kamili boğar/ Bir Pir Sultan kurban olur yüzbin Mahsuni doğar.
>
> (July 2, Friday, of nineteen ninety three/ A curse of fire poured down from the Sivas sky/... those who slaughtered Şah Hüseyin and flayed Nesimi/ Those are the wanderers for destroying God and conscience/ Never thinkest thou the mist of ignorance chokes the spiritually mature/ A Pir Sultan is sacrificed, a hundred thousand Mahsunis are born.)

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[120] A Turkish Alevi I have interviewed (Female, 28, B.M.) has indicated that after the Sivas massacre they were more politicized and that she increasingly developed an interest in *Alevilik* in her university years after the massacre. It is also known that after the massacre, necklaces symbolizing Pir Sultan Abdal and Zülfikar icons were commonly used and sold.

Similarly, on the account of the assassination of Uğur Mumcu, the Cem Journal has published the picture of Mumcu on its front cover and used the famous verses of Pir Sultan "Üçüncü Ölmem Bu Hain/ Pir Sultan Ölür Dirilir" as a headline below it. Another example is the evaluation of Sivas massacre by the journal Bilim ve Ütopya through a positivist view. According to the journal (Bilim ve Ütopya, July 1996: 3), the people who were burned to death in Sivas, resembled Bruno, Jean D'arc, Nesimi or Pir Sultan destroyed in the dark Middle Ages.

As stated in the detailed account above, it is seen that several primordial and given characteristics are subject to change in the course of time for the Alevis. We observe that several characteristics argued by primordialists to have been transmitted to the individual as given and marked as unchanging are reproduced in various periods so as to bear different meanings for the Alevis. In spite of the fact that primordial ties undertake a crucial role concerning the influence of structure over the individual, it is also observed that the structure itself is changeable, forming different individual types in different periods. It is also seen that the newly formed individual is shaped through the constructed world of the structure. Although the elements pertaining to language and faith are varying, it is clear that the myths carried from the past to the present appear as the main themes in the construction of group identity. In this context, the primordialist premise reducing the dynamics of the group and the world external to it to the slightest level does not have currency in this example.

Although the main fulcrum for the Alevis in regulating their relationship with other beliefs and ethnic groups around them concerns faith, it is observed that the reconstruction of myths is of more significance in the continuation of group identity.

The relations between the Alevis and Sunni Kurds belonging to Kurdish ethnicity is one of the best examples that signify faith as the most crucial dynamic in the regulation of the relationship between the Alevis and other social structures. As

clearly emphasized in the study on various occasions, a problematic relationship prevails between Kurdish Alevis and Kurdish Sunnis. This situation confronts us with the problem of "distrust" among the Kurds[121]. It was mentioned previously that the state and the PKK possess different functionalist approaches between the overcoming or continuation of this problem of "trust" existing between Alevi and Sunni Kurds. It is plainly observed that the religious identities of groups take precedence over at least racial identities.

4.7. Instrumentalism and the Alevi "Identity"

Apart from all these approaches, a functionalist analysis of the groups brings to the fore phenomena, which can create problems for functionalists (instrumentalists). Generally speaking, instrumentalists put forward the idea that an ethnic structure or category is based on the acquisition of "interests" or "benefits" or that these structures before all else, operate on the basis of interests in establishing their group boundaries. This type of interest-oriented activity is observed among Alevi people as well. The Cem Foundation constitutes one of the best examples of these kinds of political structures. As a policy, the foundation aims at achieving some form of "reconciliation" between the Alevis and the structures with which the Alevis have had a problematic relationship throughout their whole history; namely, Islam and the state. Though this effort is undertaken for the sake of preserving social peace, it inevitably results in the erosion of Alevi values. The eroding of group boundaries by the approaches to orthodox Islam, which as discussed previously, is considered as a source for Alevi myths, seems to be a high possibility. This stems from the fact that the group identity is not solely established through the influence of Islam. On the other hand, the strong Kızılbaş remnants and the Shaman culture, which have in some way resisted Islam do not provide proper ground for such deliberations. Nevertheless, the activity of instrumentalist approaches prompting the internal dynamic of the group is clearly observed in the Alevi community. At this point, it is useful to state that modernist institutions and areas of identity production are extremely utilized. It should be

[121] A Kurdish Alevi I have interviewed (Male, 27, H.A) has indicated that he would eventually prefer a Turkish Alevi than a Kurdish Sunni in his relationships.

noted that Alevi intellectuals assume roles in the reproduction of identity than in the provision of its continuity and that identity functions not as an end but as a means in this case.

Whatever the intentions of the intellectual strata were, its initiation of a debate over identity has had almost negative repercussions among the Alevi mass. Such that, the comments and statements of Alevi intellectuals concerning the characteristics, limits and scope of Alevi identity, hitherto concealed, unspoken and indulged in an effort to maintain itself as a supra identity with determined boundaries, yet constructed in such way so as to avoid modern areas of conflict; has caused a certain level of discontent among the mass. The need for definition brought about by this exposure has inevitably led to the emergence of new interpretations. This is exactly the process experienced by Kurds after 1980s. One of the most important consequences of such process is the initiation of a debate on identity by an orthodox Sunni intellectual formation as well, conducted in comparably more open areas of discussion.

Two problems emerge at this point. The first one is related with the question of why the group did not endeavor for a complete and clear definition of itself (and factors preventing dissolution in spite of this) and the second problem is how the dissolution of the group was prevented if different definitions were in existence all the while. In my opinion, though the functionalist approaches have significance concerning these points, they still lack adequacy in shedding light on the formation of group identities or of dynamics holding these identities.

To return to these questions/problems above, first of all, it should be stated that as a term and a signifier, *Alevilik* has emerged at the beginning of the century and that the Bektaşi sect, previously one of the largest of those communities constituting *Alevilik*, was detached from its own unique nature, increasingly treated as heretic and the other and expressed under the Alevi signifier. At this point, it may be argued that *Alevilik* or the Alevi signifier is produced as a common name for these masses and that its scope was also designed in

accordance with this context. Despite the abstruse origins of the dynamics producing the Alevi signifier, the acceptance of this signifier by the mass itself, thought to be encompassed by it, is crucial. This point can be seen as the outcome of an agreement with the modern, secular state, unconsciously made by these strata.

However, it should be stated that the Alevi signifier does not fully indicate a more specific structure such as the terms of Bektaşi or Kızılbaş. The evident heterodox structure of the Bektaşi sect coexists with the evident heretic structure of the Kızılbaş elements. Taken together, all these factors present obstacles to the clarification of the boundaries and definition of the Alevi signifier. The reason for this is the attempt to define all these structures (which can be considered as internal or external to Islam) under the same classification and to restructure them over modernist concerns.

As for most ethnic and religious structures, such a transformation has created highly risky situations for the Alevis as well, for it is clear that in a geography where religious activity and religious points of reference used in defining social life are abundant, any structure, which has failed to determine the limits of change as a community is prone to disintegrate or be exposed to assimilation.

4.8. Constructionism and the Constructed Determinants of the Alevi Boundaries

Alevi identity is a concealed one. Since its revelation or exposure results in the increasing of tension in society, it has either been subjected to policies of denial or attempted to be restructured. Interestingly however, including the representatives of orthodox Islam, several official institutions of the state have refrained from openly assaulting it. Instead, paramilitary powers were preferably driven forward in areas of conflict. One of the most important reasons for this is the size of the Alevi population, able to escape surveillance and their common commitment to the principles of foundation and existence of the state. This situation, even though they are heretics, overrules the possibility of creating a direct confrontation and openly carrying out of a process of assimilation concerning them. Nevertheless,

the efforts focus on the dissolution of the group through drawing them near to the general.

The conflict between the Alevis and the dominant orthodox structure has appeared in parallel to the transformation of social structure. It is seen that the Alevis experience more severe crises of identity concerning phenomena with deep social influence such as the intensifying of Marxist activities, trade union movements and so on. The doublet Kızılbaş and Communist constitutes the best example of this. In all these moments of conflict, *Alevilik* is designated as a "sect" and its similarities with Sunnism are emphasized. Distinct from the ideology of fascism in other geographies, the inclinations of fascist nuclei also observed in Turkey during 1930s, of considering the other as an insider enforces itself here.

Whether the differences observed to exist between the Alevis and Sunnis and enjoying a determining influence in relationships are social or cultural in nature is a question that demands priority in answering.

It is generally known that the Alevis are a community tending to conceal their identities. Despite the fact that most Sunnis possess an opinion regarding what *Alevilik* is or is not, it may be argued that in areas lacking direct contact, this information is acquired in advanced years of age. It is known that such information is given to the children of a Sunni family during their age of matrimony, in case of the existence of "threats", which might lead to direct contact. On the other hand, the situation is rather different for the Alevis. Since the group possesses a continuous perception of threat, knowing that they would encounter difficulties in case their identities are revealed[122], they inform their children about the necessity of concealing their identities in earlier age.

The word Kızılbaş is highly used among Sunnis in a pejorative sense to denote the Alevis. Apart from this, general opinions prevail about the Alevis as that it is not proper to eat meat sacrificed by them and that they engage in free sexual

[122] Not being able to obtain a job, have friends or being outcast and so on...

intercourse within the family through the practice of blowing out the candle (mum söndü)[123]. The non compliance by the Alevis with the daily practices relating to the five pillars of Islam, such as performing namaz and fasting, also brings about questions on the reliability of the Alevis. Besides, for Sunnis, whether the Alevis have faith in Allah or the Alevi conception of the prophet of Islam are not clear. The Alevis on the other hand, generally designate Sunnis as *yezit* (devil or scamp), *gerici* (reactionary), *yerli* (nonnomadic) or *yabancı* (outsider)[124]. Among these definitions, the word yezit has pejorative overtones.

In more official areas, it is observed that the nature and sharpness of definitions diminish and assume a loose form. The Alevis, defined as above within the group, are referred to in areas external to the group and with unclear boundaries, this time as brothers and sisters, believing in the same Allah and prophet. In the same areas, the Alevis state that "there exist good people", "modern people among the Sunnis" and that "not all are reactionary".

The Alevis have been subject to several accusations due to the closed nature of their community, attempted to be continued through endogamy. For instance, Sunnis are highly convinced that that "their food should not be eaten"[125] and "their tea should not be tasted because they spit in it" In addition to these, claims are also put forward that they use stones instead of water for cleansing, that they do not perform ablution and are involved in the candle blowing out activity (Türkdoğan, 1995: 34).

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[123] The slander of candle fading (mum söndü) has historical roots and is not an accusation directed solely at Alevis. Accusations of this kind were also made against any structure of a heretic and heterodox nature conducting secret meetings. For instance, while similar groups in Iran were accused of carrying out drinking rituals (orgiaque) (Melikoff, 1993: 58); Austen Henry Layard who has conducted research in Mesopotamia at the end of nineteenth century, states that a similar accusation was made against people belonging to Yezidi religion.

[124] It is used among some Erzurum Alevis.

[125] The refusal to eat sacrificed meat is the most significant sign that the person sacrificing the meat is seen as extra Islamic. Many examples of this may be encountered in Anatolia. It is also known that a similar discourse is utilized by the Seljuklus against the people affiliated with the Nizari order of Hasan Sabbah (Birdoğan, 1999: 264).

Most probably, these rumors appear owing to the closed structure of the Alevi community. At various times, Sunnis express their distress stemming from the generally closed structure of the Alevis. Even though the Alevis may be justified for their closed structure due to historical reasons, the perceptions of Sunnis relating to this attitude result in the formation of a natural boundary and hence the Alevis are defined at various times as unreliable people, with a tendency for lying. It strikes attention that distrust arises as a crucial factor in the protection and reproduction of group boundaries by the family and that this constitutes an almost insurmountable situation for the Alevis[126].

It should be noted that definitions introduced from within the group itself convey pejorative meanings. Almost all of the Sunni definitions in particular are introduced as regards religious references and sexuality, which constitutes one of the most intimate areas[127]. On the other hand, one of the most commonly used Alevi definitions; *yezit* constitutes a religious-historical reference and a fragile issue for the opposite group. It may be argued that the actual construction of group boundaries shows variations, depending particularly on the environs and the characteristics of the area of interaction in the inhabited geography.

Although it is almost impossible that an average Sunni individual in Turkey defines himself/herself as Alevi, the Alevis themselves experience a different situation. In most cases, the Alevi individual conceals or changes his/her identity or strives to behave as a Sunni. For instance, depending on their work environment or the social structure they live in, some Alevis perform Friday prayers and display the attitude of an average Sunni. A similar behavior asserts itself in the form of fasting during Ramadan. In this context, a relationship is tried to be established with Sunnis through changing social behavior. In short, even if

[126] Distrust arising as an outcome of the closed structure causes on part of some Sunnis, the formation of counter-distrust. For instance, the villagers of Direcik in Aydın have told that Alevis of Alamut are "a closed community and would die rather than disclosing a secret" also adding that "they cannot be trusted" (Türkdoğan, 1995: 112). A similar attitude is also displayed by a Turkish Sunni lady I have interviewed (Female, 28, T.D.). T.D. has stated that in fact Alevis establish the remoteness between the communities, and has, in a sense, complained from this closed structure.

[127] The newspaper clipping providing examples of candle fading and stating that Alevi girls do not have maidenhead.

they are not directly threatened by Sunnis, the Alevis perceive themselves under threat in the society they live in because of their identities and possibly change their forms of behavior. At this point, how a common response is organized by the group despite the fact that not all sub-groups and layers in *Alevilik* confront a continuos threat is a crucial question, since the Alevis are not homogeneously dispersed in terms of faith and social structure and they are equally exposed to the assumed external threats. Apart from this, they are devoid of various homogeneous structures such as common class positions and common working areas, which can facilitate the defining of ethnic structure. In spite of this, forms of behavior and counter definitions mentioned above can be observed in almost all Alevi communities. One of the most important reasons of this is that though the Alevis constitute a supra identity, established through the adjoining of socially and religiously distinct groups; this supra identity as a whole, is defined in exactly the same way by the "other". Therefore, beyond the definitions internally introduced by the group, the totality of the concept encompassed by the mechanism of exclusion established by the other is the determinant here.

4.9. "Pure" Constructionism and the Alevi Identity

It is seen that the idealist and subject-oriented depictions of "pure" phenomenologists are not totally valid here. In spite of the fact that the subject is constituted by different structures and forms of thought, developing different approaches towards the other; being defined by the other operates as the main dynamic of the relationship between groups and of interpretations. A fluent property is observed in the utilization of the cults possessed by Alevi community. Cults and myths such as the cult of Ali, the cult of the twelve imams and so on vary in accordance with the actual locations in the establishment of group boundaries over these myths. Another factor in the utilization of these cults is the fluctuations observed in the internal group dynamics. The differences constituting a group within the group, assume different functions in the establishment and transmission of these cults. For instance, it is observed that the intensity of the cult of Ali varies according to age and education (Taşgın, 2002). Apart from this,

it is also known that different strata attempt to demarcate different boundaries in the establishment of group boundaries.

In this context, the depiction of social interaction as the *work done by meanings*, as argued by some "pure" phenomenologists, contains various defects. In this definition as well, one comes across a handicap resulting from the commitment to interpretation over meanings and to the relativity enjoyed by meanings, which is found particularly in the post modern doctrine. Cohen (1999: 15) for instance, while indicating that social interaction is based on interpretations, also emphasizes that these interpretations embody the element of "subjectivity". This statement, though it is true, contains several shortcomings. For instance, bearing in mind the fact that the symbols utilized by the group in establishing its boundaries in several ethnic categories or structures are interpreted before any individual member of the group at the moment and that this interpretation is capable of changing solely the subjectivity of the individual, with the proviso that the boundaries of the structure are not violated; it can be observed that the interpretation and comprehension of symbols involves sociality more than subjectivity[128].

Points of reference, which determine a group, better to say, which are resorted to by the group in order to define both itself and the rest outside, can be named as the *group boundaries*. While elements constituting these boundaries may have symbolic attributes (Cohen, 1999: 9), they may as well be concrete phenomena that have emerged during the process of one to one interaction. Approaching the issue in terms of Anatolian Alevis, it can be seen that most groups possessing

[128] Cohen's (1999: 16) communities "people with radically opposing views can, in spite of all, find their own meanings in symbols of a general nature..." This is true as well, but it has more validity for the constructed phenomena of nation... It is equally true that ethnic and other pre-modern structures unite their differences under general symbols. Particularly in the political field, since the beginning of a period of identity acquisition through mass parties or associations, these general symbols have caused subjective interpretations and the eroding of values attributed meaning by the group. A crucial handicap arises at this point. Although the building blocks stay firm against the withering influence of modernism, the denatured ethnic categories are either faced with completely escaping modernism, thereby avoiding this influence or developing ways of articulation within the confines of the limited areas presented to them by modernism. By this, I intend to state that, in order to avoid the dominant influence of a larger and systematic structure, the nation state, and to exist by its own dynamics, it is imperative that the group finds out the ways to have the general line assent to its own definitions and interpretations.

concrete differences are defined under this name. The introduction of a definition concerning such a community prior to the nineteenth century or the absence of such a term in the self definitions of individuals is in verification of this situation. In spite of the fact that the Alevis are formed through the gathering of communities, having unity of fate with the Alevis due to various social events, under the same name; the question of how the boundaries are made common remains. It should be stated at this point that the formation of the structure of Anatolian Alevis and the achievement of permanence by this ethnic structure has taken place through the transfer of the social and not the subjective meaning attributed to common myths and rituals rather than interpretation.

4.10. Constructed Primordialism, the Alevis and the Continuity of the Alevi Identity

One of the most crucial questions in ethnic group studies concerns the actual ways of preservation of their differences by ethnic groups in changing social conditions. Bearing in mind the fact that Alevi identity has emerged in the past nineteenth century, it can be seen that while several identities have disappeared, several others have been reconstructed. For instance, while various currents, which have contributed to the formation of Alevi identity such as Melamism, Bedreddinism, Kalenderism have begun to fade, Kızılbaş and Bektaşi trends have been taken over by the Alevi supra identity. Kızılbaş, Bektaşi and other identities and symbols were used in the continuation of Alevi supra identity; these symbols, myths and cults were also utilized in reproduction in a functional way during the reconstruction of identity. In this context, it may be argued that the identity of the mass defined as Alevi today has been reproduced and reconstructed throughout history.

However, it is observed that "primordial attachments" play a highly crucial role during this process of construction and that this construction is re-fulfilled through these symbols and myths. For this reason, evaluated historically, it can be argued that Alevi identity is formed through a "constructed primordialist"[129]

[129] For the use of the term, see Cornell and Hartmann (1998: 89).

understanding. It is observed that the structures constituting *Alevilik* or its prerequisites throughout history bear certain cults and symbols and that identity is rebuilt without digressing from these symbols and cults, regardless of process. In addition to this, it is useful to state that that Alevi ethnic identity as a group, is shaped departing from the phenomenon of exclusion and that the political group boundaries take shape in accordance with the violence and form of exclusion, which is determined by the group. In this context, as observed particularly in the Sivas and Gazi events of 1990s, the emphasis placed by the group on its own identity increases in these points of exclusion and breaking points. Beyond this, the attempt to live in "conformity with the system" remains in effect.

It is seen that that the Alevis construct their identities over primordial attachments or that they are constructed or defined by others through these attachments. This stems from the fact that the reevaluations concerning Alevi identity are tried to be introduced mostly over their primordial characteristics such as shared myths and cults. It is seen that during the 1960s and the 1970s, when the Alevis were most politicized, various symbols pertaining to faith, such as Pir Sultan Abdal were utilized in political organizations, even in the Marxist movement. The Alevi mass, during this period, was tried to be engaged in political action using these symbols.

The most important effect of primordial attachments over the Alevis is the continuation of the practice of endogamy, though exceptions to this can be found, the attempt to maintain the brotherhood (*müsahip* in Turkish) institution (for social attendance) and the presence of a system for poverty. All these are oriented towards preventing external infiltration and internal escaping and towards providing political group boundaries on clearer ground. Although the strength of primordial attachments is observed, it is also seen that symbols and myths assume more significant roles in the redesigning of group identity. In spite of the change taking place in group identity, its name and boundaries, the fact that communication with the external environment is regulated through the symbols possessed by the group, remains constant. However, the self definition introduced by the group constitutes one of the two points with determining influence, the

other being the perceptions regarding the group of those external to it. In this context, it is seen that in being defined by Sunnis, the major group surrounding them, distortions take place and the Alevis are not *accepted* as they are. For the majority of Sunnism, *Alevilik* is an *aberred* and *flawed* faith and can only de defined within the context of Islam. Therefore, an excluding inclination is observed here and primordial norms designated by this external structure gain significance in the creation of group boundaries.

While the instrumentalist approach can be justified on various grounds in defining not only the Alevis, but many other ethnic and religious groups, it is also seen to contain gross shortcomings. First of all, even if the Alevis are defined as an ethnic group, they still maintain the tradition of preserving their own structure and identity over certain symbols, regardless of their actual orientation concerning a definite interest group (including the state). It goes without saying that the best example of this is the staunch endorsement by the Cem Foundation, the actions of which overlaps with the functionalist approach; of myths, symbols and cults belonging to *Alevilik*, however utilized for different ends. In short, many of the approaches put forward by the instrumentalist approach for ethnic groups, also mentioned in the introduction part of the study, are not materialized in case of the Alevis, who possess strong primordial attachments.

To conclude, it should be stated that ethnic and religious activity proliferating in the aftermath of 1989 has strengthened the introduction of definitions concerning both the Alevis and extra group structures; consequently prompting the Alevi community to develop a discourse against the external interventions regarding their identity. It is seen that in the course of increasing ethnic activity during the period after 1989, the ruling strata and other structures have functionally approached *Alevilik* and that this rapprochement was carried out with the concern for providing the continuity of the group in existing conditions of high tension, rather than representing an aim to achieve political interest by the group despite the observed mobilizing outcomes of this effort among the Alevi mass. It is seen that, during this period as well, Alevi identity was restructured in accordance with

the conjuncture of the period and that this restructuring was realized over certain myths and symbols, with the proviso that primordial attachments be kept intact. In this context, Alevi identity can be evaluated as a constructed primordial totality lacking continuity. Despite the fact that it emerges as an outcome of the interaction between the group itself and the external structures, the restructuring and reevaluation concerning the *sine qua non* of identity discussed previously, is conducted on a line evidently parallel to the strength and intensity of the extra group mechanism of *exclusion*.

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