

THE SUSTAINABILITY CRISIS OF ALEVIS

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ABSTRACT

THE SUSTAINABILITY CRISIS OF ALEVIS

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One of the important agendas of Turkey in the 2000s has been the “Alevi Revival”. The subject of this thesis, which claims that Alevis are in a search of identity rather than in a period of revival, is the sustainability crisis of the Alevis. Aleviness which has not been mentioned in the political sphere before has now turned into frequently spoken phenomenon. In this “Open Aleviness” period Alevis felt themselves more free and relieved and with this sense they started to claim more rights and freedoms. The most important and unexpected consequence of the period for the Alevis is the need for an identification of Aleviness. When Alevis realized the distance they have with Aleviness, they did not adopt different definitions of Aleviness made from different positions. Other identities of Alevis determine what kind of an Aleviness they would become. Nevertheless, while the variety of Aleviness understandings has increased, common points of different approaches have decreased. While Islamic Alevism which is one of the projects aiming at becoming hegemonic tries to sustain the tradition; the other one, Political Alevism refers to pressures and assaults of the past. As long as the Alevi elites can generate projects of Alevism which would encapsulate the tradition but differentiate itself from Islam and does not contradict with secularism; which could renew the traditional leadership; which could define positive elements; which have a mechanism of inclusion, and whose members will have the feeling of responsibility the sustainability crisis of Aleviness will deepen.

Keywords: Aleviness, Identity, Islam, Religion, Ethnicity

ÖZ

ALEVİLERİN SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK KRİZİ

Tol, Uğraş Ulaş

Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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2000’li yılların Türkiye’sinin önemli gündemlerinden biri “Alevi uyanışı” oldu. Alevilerin bir uyanış içerisinde olmaktan çok, bir kimlik arayışı içerisinde olduklarını savunan bu çalışma Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizini konu etmektedir. Daha önce politik alanda anılmayan bir kavram olan Alevilik günümüzde üzerinde sıkça konuşulan bir olgu haline dönüşmüştür. Bu “Açık Alevilik” döneminde Aleviler, kendileri daha özgür ve rahat hissetmiş ve bu hissiyatla daha fazla hak ve özgürlük talebinde bulunmaya başlamışlardır. Dönemin Aleviler için en önemli ve beklenmedik çıktısı, Aleviliğin tanımlanmasına dair duydukları ihtiyaçtır. Aleviler, Alevilik ile oluşturmuş oldukları mesafelerin de farkına vardıkça, farklı pozisyonlardan yapılmaya çalışılan Alevilik tanımlarını benimsemediler. Alevilerin, başka kimlikleri, onların nasıl bir Aleviliği olacağına da belirlemektedir. Hal böyleyken Alevilik anlayışlarındaki çeşitlilik artmış, farklı yaklaşımların ortak paydaları azalmıştır. Hegemonik olmaya çalışan başlıca iki projeden İslami Alevilik, geleneği yaşatmaya çalışırken, Politik Alevilik ise, Alevilere yönelik yakın geçmişteki baskı ve saldırıları işlemektedir. Alevi elitleri, geleneği kapsayan, fakat İslam ile farklarını oluşturabilen ve laiklik ile çelişmeyen, geleneksel liderliği yenileyebilmiş, pozitif unsurlar tanımlayabilmiş, bir kapsama mekanizması olan, üyelerinin sorumluluk duyacakları Alevilik projeleri üretmedikleri sürece Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizi derinleşecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Kimlik, İslam, Din, Etnisite

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the qualification and the nature of Aleviness as experienced by Alevi citizens in urban centers of Turkey in recent decades. It questions the debate on the identity of Alevis and its consequences for the future. The main argument of the study is that the identity of Alevis has been facing with a sustainability crisis in recent decades. The attempts for coping with this crisis aim at to hegemonize a form of Aleviness¹ through Alevis. Yet, main hegemonic projects on Aleviness are not compatible with each other. There are many tensions and conflicts between them. Alevis who have no more similar living styles and experiences have not set up any consensus on a hegemonic Alevism yet, and this does not appear to occur in the short term.

Since the beginning of 1990s, Alevis have become more visible. The Alevis have begun to establish associations and foundations, and they have become more active in asking for their rights. As Alevis became more and more public after hundreds of years of hiding and living in secret, they were led to debate their identity and even act upon issues concerning Aleviness.

Alevis, as one of the major ethnic/religious minorities in Turkey, think that they were oppressed for hundreds of years by the powers that be. Therefore, they lived as a closed community in order to protect themselves from oppression and discrimination. However, rapid urbanization changed the isolated status of traditional Alevi life. As a result of this, Alevis had to live together with others and experience citizenship practices. Yet, the already existent diversity of Alevis due to ethnic and regional differences has proliferated with this new opening and interaction with other citizens of the Turkish Republic.

Although the Republic offers equality-based citizenship sensitive to universal values, it essentially and practically has been trying to both homogenize its citizens and ignore their differences. Different ethnic, religious or cultural communities have been suffering from this fact. Still, Turkish modernization is welcomed by Alevis, because it asserted/committed to provide equal citizenship for them. On the other hand, modernization had never been in conformity with traditional Alevi life. Being blind and indifferent to the Alevis, the Republic reproduced discrimination against them. Thus, the contingent relation of Alevis –who were mainly rural– with the Turkish modernization project was paradoxical at many points. Alevis were an ally of the state in certain conjunctures, but they were also not recognized despite their faith in and identification with the state. In recent years they appeared on the agenda frequently with their demand of official recognition. After 1990s, it can be argued that there was the emergence of an Alevi politics of identity. The emergent “Alevi revivalism” and institutionalization of Alevis, the popularity of human rights issues, the state attempts for the integration of Alevis, the effects of European Union (EU) on Turkey and of Turkey’s EU candidacy have all motivated Alevi associations for demanding the rights of Alevis.

This so-called “Alevi revivalism” has brought out debates on the Alevi identity. The definition of the category “Alevi” and the way Aleviness should be experienced has become problematic. The question at that point is whether this emergence of Alevi identity politics led Alevis to struggle for their rights, and Alevism become a significant political movement; and whether a hegemonic project can satisfy to mobilize Alevi masses.

1.1. The Research Problem

The aim of this study is to examine the reorganization of the Alevi identity which has become publicly more visible in the last two decades. At the beginning, the study had aimed to analyze the relationship between the struggles of Alevis for their cultural rights and the discriminatory practices which they were exposed to; and the relationship between the consequences of discriminatory practices in the

daily lives of Alevi citizens and the reflections of these consequences on their identity. During my field research, I reached to the conclusion that after the second half of the 1990s, Alevis have begun to think that they have been facing much less discrimination than they had in the past²; and that they do not care about indirect discrimination which surfaces at the symbolic level.

There are some cultural issues regarding the demands for rights of Alevis. So called “*Alevi Açılımı*” (Opening for Alevis) of the government³ refers to cultural rights of Alevi community rather than individual rights or discriminatory practices on Alevi individuals. Nevertheless, Alevi individuals mostly do not complain any more about being victims of discriminatory practices which complicate their daily lives. They declare that they do not feel the necessity of hiding their identities as compared with the past. Yet, at community level some cultural rights are still important to be gained for them, especially for organized Alevis. The struggle regarding the recognition of cemhouses, cancellation of compulsory religion courses, the Directorate of Religious Affairs etc. are being conducted by Alevi civil society organizations, but many Alevis are still hesitant towards participating in such activities. For instance the number of applications made by individuals for veiling rights to the European Court of Human Rights is approximately five hundred, whereas applications of Alevis for compulsory religion courses are only two. The number of law suits filed by Alevis in the national court system is also low. For many Alevis I have interviewed, grievance has gained a nostalgic character, but still a threat for them.⁴ On the other hand, nowadays the most crucial problem, the most fundamental source of depravation for Alevis is neither the discrimination they face nor their lack of cultural rights. Many Alevis express the non-significance of discrimination. Concerning cultural rights, many steps are taken since the process for the European Union candidacy of Turkey has started. And nowadays, attempts regarding cultural rights also distinguish the position of Aleviness.

The main problem of Alevis today is the appearance of questions like “who are we?”, “what is Aleviness?”, “what am I going to tell when I am asked of Aleviness

by neighbors, colleagues or my kids?” Such questions are being publicly explored, because when Alevis were living more isolated lives, hiding themselves, these questions were not being asked. More importantly, while some Alevis deal with the question, “how can I define Aleviness so that a secular, modern Republican can accept it?”; for some others, the question, “what kind of uniqueness has Aleviness within Islam?” is more important. The decline, or even in some cases disappearance of the belief in the nobility and supernatural powers of dedes increased the importance of the dedes’ level of education and their level of information about Alevi issues. Only few Alevis participate in cem rituals and limited amount of them contact with and are “enlightened” by the dedes about Aleviness through the cem. Besides, the number of Alevis who do not appreciate, who underestimate dedes, and demand “scientific dedes” is considerably high among those Alevis who have contacts with dedes. These complaints and demands about dedes are also common among Alevis who are not in touch with dedes. Many of the Alevis I interviewed expressed that “we want educated, intellectual people who have a scientific approach to tell us about Aleviness”. The increasing priority and dominance of the question of “who are we” and the demand for “learning about who we are” are not coincidental. Alevis, who have suspended their Aleviness for a long time, have been only recently facing with their Aleviness and/or the opportunity of publicly expressing their Aleviness. This encounter with Aleviness is occurring in the shadow of Alevis’ historical, vital fear of “being assimilated” and their anxiety about the possibility of “depreciation of Aleviness”. Consequently, when the question “what Aleviness is” was not being answered sufficiently, Alevis’ perception of the possibility of decline, melting, dissolution, or disappearance strengthened despite their enthusiastic view of the emergence of public Alevi identity. This self-fulfilling prophecy is feeding the belief that this question cannot have a sufficient answer and it is gradually becoming impossible to produce a sufficient answer to it.

As a result of these points, the dissertation had to change the road map and focused on the sustainability question which becomes conspicuous during the recasting of the Alevi identity. Thus, this study investigates the positions of various replies to

the question of “what Aleviness is” and the lines of tension undercutting these different positions. The importance of this study lies in its claim that Aleviness is at the verge of a breaking point. Aleviness is in a period in which it is most open, its voice can be most heard but experiencing very existential problems. The tensions that Aleviness face in expressing, defining and experiencing its identity are essential. Facing these tensions, the Alevis, due to reasons like closeness in the previous periods and secrecy in urban life, cannot define a clear position. This ambiguity and variety regarding Alevi positioning make the Alevis to move away experiencing Aleviness. Indifference of the Alevis towards possible ways/options or tendency to stay neutral mainly results from a series of lines of tension. Since Aleviness rests on an experience and accumulation that has been shaped according to rural, closed and small communitarian structure; it is hard for Alevis to adopt the urban life. The positioning, which, before was between a citizen of the Republic and a member of the Alevi community, is now towards Republican citizenship. When the relationship between Aleviness and secularism was consolidated especially through strengthening of the ties with the left in the 1970s, the traditional Aleviness moved to a secondary place for many Alevis. For most of the Alevis, assuming a secular, modern and humanist outlook meant loss of sympathy towards the traditional values and qualities of Aleviness, and transformation of Aleviness to an agglomeration of cultural symbolic values. Within this context, the religious or Islamic quality of Aleviness has begun to be questioned and the debate whether Aleviness is in or outside Islam became a fundamental issue. However, an Aleviness which is purified of its religious or Islamic elements is troubled in presenting a “distinction” that will hold the Alevis together. This is why the religious and/or Islamic quality is not abandoned so easily and even the circles who locate Aleviness outside Islam cannot resist traditional Alevi rituals⁵. However, the traditional institutions of Aleviness have lost their prestige for the Alevis and new urban conduits like civil society organizations and cemhouses⁶ (with their cultural significance) became more attractive and prestigious. But also we must note that participation to these institutions is also limited. The trouble with passing over Aleviness to younger generations for the reasons that I have stated deepens the crisis that Alevis are

trying to cope with. Many Alevis fear that Aleviness is about to vanish and complain that younger Alevis are not interested in Aleviness anymore. Ancestral quality of Aleviness, in this context, loses its significance. The ethnic character, which has been shaped through hundreds of years of closed period, has begun to be eroded with opening to and mixing with other social sectors.

Today, for the Alevis and the circles that follow Alevis, Aleviness is represented by non-governmental organizations and their leading cadres. However, there are hundreds of associations or foundations related to Aleviness and Alevis. On the other hand, the abundance is not only limited with the number of organizations, but also there is a huge variety of Alevi positions. Even when we cluster different NGOs and come up with mainstream positions we do witness that they mostly present conflicting qualities. Conflicts and oppositions in definition and articulation of Aleviness make the Alevis' relationship with Alevism tense. The Alevis begun to constitute Alevi typologies, varying according to differences in their daily lives, closeness to Alevi traditions and the interest shown towards these traditions. Today there are many Alevi typologies from the ones living Aleviness as an Islamic interpretation to the ones experiencing it as something totally different from Islam; from the ones living it as a non-religious, philosophical culture to the ones who are satisfied with sympathizing Aleviness as an object of culture tourism; and from the ones who have sympathy towards Aleviness but have no organic ties with Aleviness to the ones who hardly have any knowledge or experience about Aleviness. The variety of typologies does not derive from heterogeneity in Alevi belief; rather it points to the fact that Aleviness is passing through a transformation and to different moments of this transformation. We should also note that this transformation has no single route and is directed towards different courses depending on other identities of the individuals. The Alevi leadership also deeply feels that Aleviness is in transformation which bears the danger of disintegration. This awareness which finds its expressions in terms like "being assimilated," "being degenerated," "devolution" and "apathy" results in emergence of hegemonic projects aimed at sustaining Aleviness.

Two distinctive hegemonic projects regarding Alevism are Islamic Alevism and political Alevism.⁷ The strength of the former, which is equipped with religious or traditional elements, lies in its higher articulatory capacity. The influence of political Alevism on the Alevi population is derived from the fresh traces of attacks towards the Alevis and systematic discriminatory politics upon them. On the other hand, since the constitutive outside (borrowing the term from Jacques Derrida (1988)) of Alevi identity is Sunnism and Islam, the project of Islamic Alevism is so limited and hard to be adopted. The main dilemma of political Alevism lies in its conjectural nature and in its limited ability to provide ground for assuming uniqueness and distinction of Alevi identity, since there is an ongoing tension between tradition and political openings. As for mid-way hegemonic projects, they fail since they underline the existing tensions, in contradistinction to their initial objectives. Both Alevism projects are aware of the sustainability crisis of Aleviness. To be able to cope with this crisis, Islamic Alevism calls Alevis towards Islam, whereas political Alevism, on the contrary, targets to cut the bonds of Alevism with Islam. The Islamic AKP government is also aware of these tensions. The Islamic currents which are not radical are welcomed with the movement towards Islam of Alevis. Therefore government aims at facilitating this movement and launched some reforms. On the other hand, these attempts of government have been widening the distance between Islamic Alevism and Political Alevism. The distinction between them proliferates as they react upon these reforms.

To sum up, in a period in which Aleviness can express itself best we witness that the Alevis are reassessing their commitment to Aleviness. The current tendencies within this reassessment process seem to move against the Alevi identity.

1.2. The Research Methodology

The research aims to map out the contemporary positions of Alevis about Aleviness. Alevi culture, enclosed and isolated from the outside for centuries, is today comparably more relaxed; yet still, Alevis are cautious when they speak

about their “internal” problems. Hiding, living in secret and using a symbolic language are common tactics among Alevis in struggling against discrimination. For this reason, first, one has to have knowledge and experience about the Alevi *habitus*, about their language, their daily lives. Secondly, it is crucial that a relation of trust should be established in order that the respondent can express himself directly and freely. I tried to meet the first condition by participating in the activities of Alevi associations. For the second condition, I made casual conversations with the respondents before the actual interviews and tried to use my experience on Aleviness.

The research has exploratory and descriptive qualifications. Therefore, qualitative research techniques like participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group meetings were preferred.

In the first phase of the research, I conducted participant observation studies in Alevi associations and cemhouses. First, I participated in activities where Alevi rituals were performed, followed panels and conferences on the topic of Aleviness. Later, I interviewed with the directors of associations and conversed with the visitors of these organizations. I reviewed the web sites and publications of these organizations. In the second part of the first phase, I participated in an EU project as a member of the project team, run by the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (PSAKD) headquarters, which was about the capacity building of the association’s branches in Turkey. I joined 30 focus group discussions in different provinces and districts and became part of the work on the compilation of Alevi stories of discrimination. In a similar project run by Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Cultural Association (HBVKD) headquarters, I directed workshop studies with branch directors on the topic of discrimination. During all this work, I had many opportunities to talk with directors and participants on Aleviness, Alevi identity and the Alevi way of life. Lastly, I kept track of the online discussions on Aleviness on Alevi internet forums.

At the end of this two-year period of study and observation, I designed the second phase of the research. I aimed to conduct in-depth interviews with Alevis who experience Aleviness in different ways. In order to understand the differences better, I used variables like residential area (Alevi neighborhood, apartment housing, gecekondü, etc.), socio-economic status (including level of education), and age. I excluded Kurdish and Arabic Alevis, Alevis living in villages and Alevi elites (directors of Alevi organizations and opinion leaders).⁸ I focused on Alevis living in metropolitan areas, conducting my interviews in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Samsun and Antalya, the last two provinces being the recent centers of Alevi migration in their region. I kept on interviewing people until I reached a level of saturation on Alevi experiences, thus I stopped when I was not encountering new positions any more. Thus I finished 55 in-depth interviews. As a result of the analysis of these, I categorized Alevis according to their experience of Aleviness, derived typical Alevi positions and used relevant citations from interviews under the discussion of each category. I used 25 examples as representing and narrating several Alevi positions on Aleviness. There is no doubt that this qualitative work does not let us to give us representative analyses and statistical data. But the 25 examples that I have chosen for reflecting the interviews consumed the Alevi positions. Thus, the inferences from the interviews provide us sufficient information to carry out a general debate on Alevis in general. But the generalizations on Alevis and Aleviness that the readers of this dissertation will come across throughout this dissertation do not rely on representative data, but on qualitative techniques like participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group meetings.

Finally, I would like to mention that in the beginning of the research, the main problematic concerned the discrimination faced by Alevis. However, I observed that discriminatory practices against Alevis have lost significance for Alevis and that there is an emergent need for knowing more about their identities. Thus I changed my problematic later and revised my research design. After that I focused on how Aleviness was experienced, how Alevis defined themselves and how they

practiced Aleviness in the light of their definition of it; so I designed my interviews accordingly.

CHAPTER 2

THE ACTUAL QUESTION OF ALEVIS: “WHAT IS ALEVINESS?”

Today, the most important issue for Alevis is to be able to answer the question of “what is Aleviness?” Yet, this study does not endeavor to respond to the question of what Aleviness is; rather its basic objective is to deal with the need and multifaceted expectations for such a response and various positionings and emergent clusters regarding the responses given. Before picturing the clusters that have been established by the Alevis and their positionings with respect to other issues, we should remind some of the debates regarding the issue and references related to Aleviness.

2.1. Revivalism as a New Period

The rapid social change that the Alevi religious groups have experienced in Turkey since the 1990s has drawn increasing scholarly, journalistic, and lay attention to the topic. This phenomenon of Alevi transformation has been labeled in different ways: process of rediscovery’, ‘revitalization’, ‘enlightenment’, ‘innovation’, ‘coming out’, ‘revival’, ‘remaking’, ‘re-politicization’, or even ‘the explosion of Aleviness’ (Alevilik patlaması) (Erdemir, 2005: 939).

Many scholars working on Aleviness in early 1980 thought that this community was going to dissolve with the secularizing Turkish society and could no longer operate as a community depending on a separate denomination (Vorhoff, 1998: 42). However, 1990s changed this opinion. As Subaşı (2005) states, after the relative relaxation of the sanctions against organizing in 1989, voluntary Alevi organizations rapidly emerged. Beginning with the second half of the 1990s, the establishment of associations accelerated and on the other hand, forbidden Alevi rituals (since 1925) like ayin-i cem began to be publicly performed, cemhouses

began to be founded. “The publicization of Alevis was made easy when the social and political conditions were combined by human power and capital” (Subaşı, 2005: 107). Along with the establishment of associations, there was also a rapid increase in the number of publications on Aleviness after the 1980s. Vorhoff mentions that Aleviness was no longer a mysterious faith, that publications on Aleviness (previously limited by academic concerns) diversified in the 1990s, a point exemplified by a 1993 book written by an Alevi dede, “Aleviness is not a Secret” (Vorhoff, 1998: 23). Following publication and organization activities, there were many public debates on Aleviness among Alevis and between Alevis and others. As a result of these developments, the revival of Alevi identity in 1990s first appeared in “The Declaration of Aleviness” published on May 6, 1990 in the daily Cumhuriyet. For Schüler (2001: 142-3), this was the first programmatic expression of a new emerging intelligentsia in the late 1980s. The principal demands in this declaration were the “acceptance of the difference of the Alevi faith and culture, and equal representation and opportunities in education, media and in receiving their own religious services” (Göker, 1999: 196). Additionally, in this declaration also a constitutional reform was demanded for regulating these issues and for the recognition of Alevis as a sect, religion or a religious order (Schüler, 2001: 145).

The coincidence of Alevi revivalism with the rise of identity politics that determined spirit of historical period necessitates thinking within the context of identity politics. In other words, the question is to what extent Alevi revivalism has been influenced by identity politics. Hall (1995: 75) emphasizes that the return to the local is a global reaction. Recently emerging new subjects, new perceptions of gender, new ethnicities, new communities during this period gained the opportunity to speak up in their own voices. According to Hall, new communities of today which were previously subordinated and whose representation abilities had been taken away, engaged in an effort to re-invent their hidden histories as the only way to sustain their existence towards facing the massive amount of culture, economy and history today. Ayata (1997: 59) mentions that despite the cultural diversity in Turkey, identity politics has only recently been central. According to

her, one of the reasons of this is the defense against the homogenization of culture due to globalization. It is true that globalization increases cultural homogeneity through transnational interaction. However, it can also be argued that depreciation of the national homogeneity through weakening the nation state, and in a sense, encouragement of the variety of ethnic, religious or cultural groups against the homogenous state is effectual in rise of the identity politics. Certainly, globalization is one of the dimensions that is connected to this mobilization. However, although Alevi revivalism is influenced by global dynamics, it is not limited to it.

When the Alevi case is considered, it will be realized that the apparent publicity of the identity politics of Alevis has several peculiar reasons. **The first one** is the disappointment they experienced because of their experiences with the Left. The defeat of the Turkish Left in 1980 and the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern countries facilitated the dearticulation of Aleviness from Turkish left movements. Alevis began to value their identity more than before and emphasize that they do not want this time to lose their own identity in favor of another identity. Çamuroğlu notes that the Alevis, who have participated in leftist movements and thus have been politicized, improving their organizational capacities, have recently asserted to be the vanguards of this form of identity politics (Çamuroğlu, 2000: 14).

The second impact on Alevi revivalism stems from the migration waves. It can be said that Alevis which were rural before are now overwhelmingly urban. About 25 % of Ankara's, 15-20 % of Istanbul's population is Alevi (Ayata, 1997: 66). First, the urbanization of Alevis has increased their capacity, giving way to form an intellectual field within the Alevi community. Second, as a result of mass migration to the European countries and especially to Germany, Alevis have developed their competences in the modern world. The emergent Alevi organizations in Germany and other European countries have after a while also affected Alevis in Turkey (Şahin, 2001 and Demiray, 2004). "Understanding of Aleviness constructed in Germany became an effective factor in directing the

discourses among the Alevi associations in Turkey. Alevi revival is a transnational event that occurred with the critical interaction between the pairs of the transnational Alevi space” (Demiray, 2004: 132).

It is important to note that although Alevi revivalism in Turkey is encouraged by the Alevi movement abroad, it is not necessarily the sole motivator. We can speak of the earlier developments of the conditions for revivalism in Europe, such as the rise of human rights and civil society discourses, globalization and the positive contributions of the spirit of the era. However, it cannot be argued that developments in Europe wholly determined the political processes in Turkey.

Thirdly, the revivalism of radical Islam has agitated the Alevis and accordingly, the attempts of state to incorporate Alevis in alliance against Islamism also motivated the Alevi movement.⁹ Erdemir (2004: 279) notes:

... as part of the post-Cold War transformation of governance in Turkey, Alevis and their nonprofit organizations have become one of the main targets of incorporation in Turkey. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the rise of political Islam in Turkey, the transition from import-substitution economy to an export-oriented one as part of the IMF's structural adjustment programs, the escalation of the Kurdish insurgency during the 1990s, the growing popularity of human rights discourse in Europe and elsewhere, and Turkey's candidacy to the European Union were influential in expanding certain fields of opportunities while contracting others.

The attitude of Alevis facing these integrationist attempts of the state had to be positive since they could no longer afford to be excluded from the state. As a result of this, we faced with “the Alevi organizational field emerging or being defined partly in response to the Turkish state's incorporative policies (Erdemir, 2004; 27).

The fourth reason of the rise of the Alevi movement pointed out in literature is the Kurdish movement. Concerning the Kurdish issue, there are two assumptions. First of them argues that the pro-state approach of Alevis accelerated the Alevi movement. The second, on the contrary, argues that the Kurdish movement helped Alevis to demand their own identity rights. Çamuroğlu (2000) asserts that rapprochement of Alevis with the discourse of unity of the state due to Kurdish nationalism accelerated the Alevi movement. In fact it is exaggerating to claim that the existence of the Alevi movement depends on an anti-Kurdish discourse. It is

apparent that there are many Kurdish-Alevi activists within the Alevi movement. It is also acceptable that the achievements of the Kurdish movement have also encouraged the Alevi movement. Surprisingly, it is also arguable that as a result of the rise of radical Islam and Kurdish movement in late 1980s and 1990s, the state has become once again Alevis' natural ally for the sake of secularism and "unity" of the state.

Fifth, some traumatic events such as the 1993 Sivas massacre, Gazi and Ümraniye districts events, the racist slander of the famous TV contest show host Güner Ümit (who, during live coverage, implied that Alevis have incest relations¹⁰), ingrained in the Alevi memories. The days these events occurred have become also sacred days of the Alevi movement.¹¹ These events were both accelerated as being reactionary against the Sunni radicalism and the state's discriminatory politics. Many Alevi associations were established just after these events occurred.

Sixth and relatively new facilitator of the Alevi movement is the EU and the membership candidacy of Turkey. The increasing popularity of human rights discourse and the EU's willingness to transport it to their eastern part has also affected struggles occurring in the field of citizenship. No doubt, Turkish candidacy process catalyzes this transportation. Alevis, like Kurds, had the opportunity to take advantages of this conjuncture such as lobbying activities or applications to the European Court of Human Rights. Yet, unlike the Kurds they did not enjoy the opportunities of these advantages.

This revivalism results in an identification process, which to some extent unfolds as a reconstruction as well as a reinvention. Thereby, it is impossible to speak of Alevis as a monolithic and homogenous community. As Okan expresses, Alevis are not constituted in a historical moment and then "frozen" and drawn into today, they are in a contingent state of formation (Okan, 2004: 18). Atalay (2004) argues that Aleviness was fragmented as it revealed itself to outside. Similarly, Okan (2004: 31) expresses that all of the interpretations/comments from inside upon Aleviness is a response or a message to "the foreigners". It is true that the

constitutive drivers of the Alevi identity have been much more related with the outside during the first period when publicity increased. However, this relation alone is not adequate to understand the formation of different Aleviness. As the hegemonic struggle deepens, the essential messages are directed towards the inside. Therefore, a period where the outside has become the triangulation point, but addressing to inside have begun. Before discussing these periods and moving on to the basic tensions of new period, 'Open Aleviness', some typical information on Aleviness should be reminded.

2.2. On Aleviness and its Rituals

According to many sources, Aleviness is described in connection to St. Ali (Ocak, 1992; Fıġlalı, 1990; Yalçınkaya, 1996; Melikoff, 1998). According to this description Aleviness is the general category defining groups who love, respect and support the Ehl-i Beyt of St. Ali and St. Muhammed and St. Ali's descendants. But the concept today mainly defines Anatolian Aleviness. In Arabic, Aleviness means "the love of Ali", "belonging to Ali", a follower of 'Ali ibn Talib, the son-in-law of the Prophet and first Imam of the Shi'a. It is the general category of those who show love and respect to the descendants of St. Muhammed and St. Ali (Subaşı, 2005: 17). In terms of accepting St. Ali the most superior companion to St. Muhammed and defending that he should have been made imam after St. Muhammed, Aleviness was used as synonymous with "Shia" ¹² (Fıġlalı, 1990: 233). The second reference with respect to Shia is the positioning of St. Ali supporters and Ehli Beyt against Muaviye in the Siffin War of 657. The Shia movement, emerging in 684, in order to avenge St. Hüseyin, to repent for being unable to help him, led to the politicization of this community. According to Zelyut (1992: 19) these references show that there is a political movement at the roots of Aleviness.

Although Sunni Muslims, which is the major denomination in Islam, follow the four caliphs - Abubekr, Omer, Othman and Ali -, Shiite Muslims, reject first three caliphs and they believe that Ali who was prior to the others. Shiite Islam has a

very strong belief in Ali's cult. Despite sharing the same theological references with Sunnis, they attribute a special importance to Ehl-i Beyt. They believe in the twelve imams, from the Prophet's lineage, each of which is believed to ordain a century. Like Shiite Muslims Alevis reject the caliphate of Abubekr, Omer and Othman. They believe that Ali's right was seized by other caliphs. The cult of Ali and his sons Hasan and Hüseyin seems to take a special part in the belief system of Alevi groups. Similar to Shiite Muslims, Alevis believe in the authority of the twelve imams and give a special place to Ali. Although they accept Muhammad as prophet, they mostly give reference to Ali in their folk songs and poems. Alevis mostly use Muhammad Ali, indicating the combination of Prophet with the body of Ali. Ali is the source of religious as well as philosophical knowledge. The name 'Alevi' is mainly interpreted as referring to the followers of Ali (Çaha, 2004).

The Allah-Muhammad-Ali trinity is fundamental to the Alevi belief system. It is expressed that these three bodies are the three faces of the God. St. Ali "emerges from a thousand bodies". Despite the equal emphasis in this trinity, in all stories Ali is prior to Muhammed. Even in the Ascension, it is believed that Muhammed has understood the secrets of Ali, and this is performed in the cem rituals (Gölpınarlı, 1969; cited in Subaşı, 2005: 36).

According to Gölpınarlı, it is impossible to clearly define the boundaries and rules of Aleviness. It is even hard to claim that Alevi beliefs constitute a system. Faith depends on traditions and customs in Alevis. For that reason, Alevi beliefs can be extrapolated through participant observation, hearing, seeing and understanding, or through their sacred texts, their songs ("deyişler") or religious poetry (*ibid*: 28). Subaşı states that we cannot claim that Aleviness is an esoteric form of Islam, a version of Muslimhood, a separate religion or a denomination. Rather, Aleviness should be assessed as "folk Islam", carrying religious-social group characteristics and maintaining itself in the form of a denomination. However, if we refer to common sense, it is also possible to define Aleviness as a religion, a cult or a social movement. Alevi theology includes an Gnostic, unificationist understanding of god, tightly connected to the "tasavvuf" tradition. It is not a written, systematic,

but a mythological, oral theology. Since Alevi theology, unlike Sunni theology, is unprocessed, undiscussed, not systematized, not heavily mystical, concepts in use are not clear, mostly symbolic. For large portions of history, Aleviness could not express itself freely, Alevis had to hide, which in turn led to the use of heavy symbolism in expressing theological issues (Subaşı, 2005: 35).

Schüler (1999: 159) defines the differences between Alevi and Sunni faith as follows:

Alevis do not see the God's word in Quran directly, they reinforce their beliefs through faith in St. Ali. Practicing namaz, giving zekat, fasting and pilgrimage are not compulsory for them. They do not recognize religious law, they despise going to the mosque as a formalistic way of religious practice and they ignore the Islamic ban against alcohol. In their rituals, they use the Turkish language.

Since Alevis do not use mosques for prayer, do not fast during Ramadan, drink alcohol, Alevi women do not cover their heads, participate rituals along side men, they were perceived outside Islam by the Sunni society (Melikoff, 1998: 321). Their rejection of the first three caliphs and their support for Ehl-i Beyt is in line with mainstream Shi'ism, but Aleviness also sustains elements borrowed from pre-Islamic Turkic religion and from pagan cultures of the Middle East (Subaşı, 2005: 34).

Aleviness, according to many Alevis, is the most perfect interpretation of Islam. Many thinkers have treated Aleviness and Bektashism as esoteric Islam. According to Gölpınarlı, the principles of esotericism are as follows (quoted from Gölpınarlı 1969: 110; in Subaşı, 2005: 36):

- a) Interpretation without method,
- b) extremist beliefs about the Prophet and Imam,
- c) belief in the materialization of Allah in any of his followers,
- ç) denial of the afterlife and the belief in reincarnation,
- d) and finally the belief that all religious commands (...) exist to maintain the order of the universe, and thus, arrival at full denial.

Aleviness is thus generally described as "heterodox folk Islam" (Okan, 2004: 19; Ocak, 1996: 16; Çamuroğlu, 1992: 123; Subaşı, 2005: 30-31). In Çamuroğlu's words, this form of faith is a "form of religion which goes against the grain of mainstream, official understanding of religion."

This definition uses the distinction of “high Islam” vs. “folk Islam” by Ernest Gellner. Gellner’s recently fashionable categorization of “high” Islam means the creed of the ulema, and the “folk” Islam, the practice of the masses. Compared to the structure of “high Islam” which is written, which forbids extremism and denies any mediators between Allah and believers, “folk Islam” is mainly institutionalized through mediators (Gellner, 1994: 23-31). Thus “high Islam” is the accepted official religious interpretation, while Folk Islam diverges from this. In the history of Turkey, high Islam is represented by an urban identity, and a rigid loyalty to the principles of the Quran which depends on the Ehl-i Sunnet or Sunni interpretation; and Folk Islam is identified with its rural character, based on mythological cults and elements, yet divided into a Sunni Folk Islam and a Heterodox Folk Islam (Ocak, 1996: 77).

There are no pure cultures; hence no society can be totally isolated. According to Ocak, heterodoxy should be assessed in three dimensions: political, social and theological. First, positioning against orthodoxy, it lacks the support of the political power, may even oppose it. Secondly, while orthodoxy is the interpretation of the centre, the palace and the religious elite, heterodoxy belongs to the periphery, that is, the nomadic or settled rural population. Finally, orthodoxy is based upon a systematic, literal reading of Islamic thought, while heterodoxy is syncretic, flexible, mythological, based on pre-Islamic elements of faith and it carries a spoken tradition (Ocak, 1996: 77). According to Melikoff (1994: 23), heterodox Folk Islam is defined by saint worship, shrine and burial place cults, glorification of Ali, transmigration of the soul, and the like. Moreover, Anatolian Aleviness has been influenced from Islamic Sufism through the Bektashi order, which has been developed by Hacı Bektasi Veli, a Sufi leader that lived during the thirteenth century (Melikoff, 1998).

Within this framework, according to Hocaoglu (1998: 45; cited in Subaşı, 2005: 31), Alevis’ religious approach should be assessed around the issues of folk religion, as many of them used to live in villages. In this sense Aleviness can be perceived as a religion of villagers, which depends on consensus related to

traditional and strong familial bonds, supported by the community living closely together inside the village.

Other scholars have drawn attention to the fact that Anatolian Aleviness is different than mainstream Shi'ism within the aforementioned framework (Çamuroğlu, 2000; 71-7, Subaşı, 2005: 34, Türkdoğan, 2004: 383-404). According to Subaşı, despite the fact that Alevis consider themselves as part of the Caferiye denomination, if we consider belief systems, it is impossible to think Aleviness in the mold of Shi'ism. Aleviness is in line with Caferism in terms of rejecting the first three caliphs and supporting Ehl-i Beyt, yet it carries the remnants of the pre-Islamic Turkic religions and pagan cultures. The formation of Aleviness begins with the migration of Turcomans to Anatolia. Despite the fact that Aleviness shares common characteristics with Twelve Imam Shi'ism, its oral beliefs and dogmas made Aleviness into a different religious-cultural form. As a result of these, Aleviness, by many thinkers, is defined as a syncretic religion. What is syncretic about this faith is its formation through the combination of elements from various cultures. The syncretic structure of Aleviness, combining a number of religions and cultures, is frequently mentioned. It is assumed that heterodox folk Islam contains elements from Maniheism, Zarathustrism, Buddhism, Shamanism, Gnosticism, Judaism, Christian and Islamic cultures. The word "syncretism" has a Greek root, used first to denote unorthodox elements articulated with orthodox religion. For example, in the Christian missionary literature, foreign aspects imported into Christianity were described with this category (Sharpe, 1971: 70-1; cited in Okan, 2004: 35). In anthropology the concept of syncretism was used generally to describe the hybridization of religious systems, divided by colonialization (Lindstrom, 1996: 540; cited in Okan, 2004: 35). Today syncretism is used to explain religious structures made up of elements from different religions.

From Buddhism, Aleviness is thought to borrow the belief in the transmigration of the soul. Thus the soul, until it arrives in happiness (to Nirvana) takes different corporeal forms (Ocak, 1983). From Maniheism, Aleviness borrows the principle of "the seal of the mouth, the seal of the hand, and the seal of the heart." Thus the

basic Alevi belief to “be the master of your tongue, your loins and your hand” is identical with the Maniheist motto (Ocak, 1983). The main similarity between Shamanism and Aleviness relates to the leadership of religious rituals (*kam* in shaman rituals, *dede* in Alevi rituals). (Ocak, 1983; Melikoff, 1994: 151).

To sum up, there are reasons to associate Aleviness with both Islamic and non-Islamic religious and cultural elements. Here, the consequences of positioning Aleviness within or outside Islam are crucial from the perspective of the formation of identity. The association of Aleviness with Islam requires the connection of the faith with the Holy Book Quran and Islamic rituals. Thus escaping from Quran is legitimized by the claims that the Book was changed and that Aleviness was/is nothing but Quran’s esoteric interpretation. As a result of this, some Alevis hold that Alevi believers are exempt from many of the Sunni or Shiite practices. This creates a scarcity of spiritual and ritual elements which normally establish a religion. On the other hand, those tendencies which try to weaken the connection between Aleviness and Islam put more emphasis on the syncretic structure mentioned above. However, in both cases the problem remains to be solved: Is Aleviness a religion, or part, interpretation, expansion of another religion? At this point in the discussion, an explanation is required with respect to the concept of religion.

Aleviness has been based on oral culture. Except the scripture *Buyruk* used by dedes, there are no holy writings. The carrier and basis of the cultural past has been oral folk literature. The existence of traditional institutions and rituals has a central role in the sustenance of the Alevi identity. These institutions distinguished Alevis from other groups. They serve the self-om the hierarchical structure composed by these institutions. This way, Aleviness could continue to exist together with Islam. Otherwise, As Türkdoğan (2004) mentions the inability to translate these informal structures to practice causes the system of Alevi norms and values to weaken. These activities, today, aim both to reinforce the ties between Alevis, and to speak to non-Alevis.

Alevi religious rituals can be summarized as follows: “Having a “*musahip*”, joining cem, confession, visiting the shrines of Alev-Bektashi saints, visiting dedes or babas, sacrifices (Hızır sacrifice, Abdal Musa sacrifice, offering sacrifice, sacrifice at the end of Muharrem fast), playing *saz*, performing ring/cult namaz during religious days, fasting (Muharrem fast, Hızır fast), “*niyaz*”, “*hakkullah*”, donating, “*hizmet görme ve baş okutma ücreti vermek*”, dancing *semah*, “*meydana girmek*”, “*don değiştirmek*” ” (Subaşı, 2005: 38). Moreover, mournful songs have a special place among Alevis. For this reason funeral services have ritualistic characteristics. On the other hand Alevis do not perform namaz, Ramadan fasting, pilgrimage, almsgiving practices. Among all these religious activities, three will be discussed in detail here: Dedelik, musahiplik and cem and/or cemhouse.

Dedes are the religious leaders of the Alevi community whose ancestry is believed to reach the *Oniki İmam* (Twelve Imams) and St. Ali. The principal requirement of being a dede is to belong to a dede lineage. They have been the most important carriers of oral culture in Aleviness. Oftentimes dedes are ascribed some supernatural powers in the community. Precognition, giving fertility to infertile parents, healing, rain-making are among such superhuman powers believed to be possessed by dedes.

Villagers dedicate a lot to dedes, they even kiss the ground on which dedes step. Once the dede is settled, villagers enter the house and begin kissing the rug from the entrance up to where the dede is sitting, continuing to kiss his feet, knees and hands. With the water used by the dede, they wash their own hands and faces for healing purposes. In return, the dede takes “*hakkullah*” (Allah’s share), the money or goods collected from the villagers to be taken to the order (Kaftancıoğlu, 1972: 23-27-28; cited in Okan, 2004: 83).

The “dede” and “dar” institutions are among the most important mechanisms which maintain the historical continuity of Aleviness (Bozkurt, 1999: 105-106; Dumont, 1997: 146-7; Yalçınkaya, 1996: 67-74; Subaşı, 2005: 41). “Dedes, on the one hand, are the focus, teachers, judges of the Alevi community; on the other

hand they are Alevis' ties to the religious legacy" (Shakland, 1999: 27). According to Subaşı, "as the St. Ali cult forms the foundation of Aleviness, the dede institution supplies the foundation for community organizing". The roots of this arrangement can be found in ancient Turkic religions, back in Shamanism. During the era of Shah Ismail, Aleviness was reformed and put into order, and the dede institution was integrated with a more functional and central role. Dede, in time, were seen as holy leaders of the community (Subaşı, 2005: 43). According to Yaman, dedes stand on top of the Alevi social hierarchy; their authority and power gain them special privileges in regulating the social life of the community (Yaman, 2004). As Yavuz maintains, dedes also function as a national network of knowledge. Unlike the Sunni religious order, dedes' education is not institutionalized, and for that reason they fulfill a charismatic leadership function in Alevi communities (Yavuz, 1999: 72).

Musahiplik is another institution which is sometimes used as "eternal brotherhood (ahret kardeşliği)" in Turkish but actually it means "brotherhood on the Way". It comes from Arabic, from the root "*sohpet*" (Okan, 2004: 75-6). In order to participate to cem, one needs to be married. Newly married couples are welcomed to the cem through a ceremony and are told to choose a *musahip* for themselves. Everybody is responsible for the *musahip* chosen until the end of their lives. They have to remain in solidarity with him and check him. So much so that in case a *musahip*'s wrongdoing, the person responsible for him is also considered guilty.

Cem is a gathering ceremony of Alevis that includes both rituals regarding Aleviness believing and socio-cultural dimension of Aleviness. For Fussolt, "rituals are most effectively designed to teach participants that they are members of one and the same community involve the rhythmic (regular, rule-governed) repetition of certain physical movements. For example singing and dancing are distinct from dogma as they do not necessarily refer any assertions. Obviously songs contain words, and dancing rhythms are set of verses. This is to say that the rhythmic repetition of words with or without melody can be regarded as a particularly effective form of ritual. But it is to say that in ritual the emphasis

is on the expression “song and dance” which can therefore be used in a derogatory sense for a ritual performance that fails to convince its audience by arguments. The point of singing and dancing is that they are rule-governed activities regardless of whether the collective movement involves the pronunciation of words, or whether the words are pronounced by the whole congregation, band, or tribe, or by individual leaders to whom the tribe responds in patterns of call-and-response, those who engage in the movement can be certain that they are doing “the same” as everybody else who is doing it with them.

Cem ritual includes rhythmic repetition of certain physical movements, of words with melody, dancing and singing. Repetition and sharing repetition is important, as well the fact that participants to a cem ceremony can distinguish themselves from those who do not: Participation provides the advantage of answering the question “who are we?” “we do the cem.”

2.3. Aleviness and Religiosity Claim

It has always been a question whether Aleviness is a religion, or a part of religion or not. Bozkurt mentions that Alevis had been struggling to prove their Muslimhood for the last 400 years. They see themselves Muslims, but the state and non-Alevis did not accept that (Bozkurt, 1999: 111). During this long process of inclusion demands and exclusion practices, certain theological claims have been produced about Aleviness. Whether Aleviness was a separate religion often became a topic of religious debate. Beginning with the Directorate of Religious Affairs, many religious leaders defined Aleviness “outside religion”. Yet as Bozkurt emphasizes, Alevis’ 400-year struggle to be recognized within Islam has today taken a different turn. Since 1990s, the state and the Sunni rank-and-file began to prove that Alevis are Muslims. An important portion of Alevis on the other hand, opted to place Aleviness as a separate entity from Islam, as even a non-religious, cultural entity. This time, there is a struggle to prove that Aleviness is not a religious form. For Çamuroğlu (1992: 53) Aleviness is a name of believing which express itself within the Muslim symbolic structure and has lived within the

Islamic cultural zone. Constantly to say that “you are not Muslim” and their endeavors to answer it as “no we are Muslim” destroy the nature of Aleviness resulting in a schizophrenic position. This position also stems from the combination being citizen in cities and trying sustains the traditional identity.

The question whether Aleviness is or is not a religion will not be part of this study. Yet general academic/theological debates on religion, how to define religion, and what sort of beliefs should be included in religion give us clues about the centrality of the place of the question of religion for the Alevi identity. Debates in the field of religion resemble the claims on whether Aleviness is in or outside religion. Especially the discussion on African religions, where oral culture is predominant, parallels the discussions on the relation between Aleviness and religion. Before moving on to the debate on African religions as a benchmark, it will be useful to mention a number of definitions of religion. This reflection is important as the debate of religious character of Aleviness is a central issue for the positions of Aleviness. I want to show here the difficulties in the definitions of Aleviness regarding religion which increased the identification crisis of Aleviness.

For an investigation on a specific religion the difficulty is that there is not any clear and agreed definition of “religion”. Bolaji (1973: 69) after considering the efforts of various scholars who try to define religion including Leuba who collected forty-eight definitions of religion, without satisfying the quest for authentic definition, says: “everybody who is seriously engaged in the study of religion has been convinced that to attempt a definition of religion is an almost impossible, if not altogether impossible task.” Although “Religion” has been defined by many social scientists, for every definition many examples of religions were in question whether they are covered and/or to be able covered or not. Definitions of religion are “both too narrow and excludes many belief systems which most agree are religions, or they are too vague and ambiguous, suggesting that just about anything and everything is a religion.” (Cline, 2008)

An older definition of religion is made as “belief in spiritual beings” by Edward Burnett Tylor ([1871] 1958), who is one of the first British anthropologist. Durkheim proposes such substantive definitions are all too narrow and exclude too many religions. E. B. Tylor’s definition excludes the religion of the Jains, some traditions of Buddhism, which admit of no gods or spirits. It is an implicitly Christian understanding of religion (Durkheim, [1915] 1965: 47). On the other hand Durkheim defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden –beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community called Church all who adhere to them” (*ibid*: 62). As McKinnon (2002: 62-64) asserts that this definition is to argue that religion is the cohesive force that unites members of society in the worship of sacred symbols. The etymology of the word “religion” also support this claim. The word ‘religion’ comes from the Latin *religare* which means to bind together, or from *religere* meaning to rehearse, suggesting ritual and group identity (Leustean, 2005: 366)

Durkheim’s definition is significant because of the social function of religion rather than being a comprehensive attempt of defining the religion. This approach is not useful to define what a religion is, but it is very useful as it tries to answer the question what the religion serve for. Thus, this definition is also not convenient for clustering religions. McKinnon thinks that Durkheim’s functional definition is too broad. He borrows from Spiro (1966: 86; cited in McKinnon, 2002: 63) that if “religion is as religion does”, then we cannot say that there is or ever has been a society with no “religion”. Spiro thinks that the belief in spirits as the essence of religion is a Western, ethnocentric idea that ends up being superimposed on a wide diversity of beliefs and cosmologies. Seeking what is universal in all religions, Melford Spiro suggests (1966: 96; cited in *ibid*: 64) that religion is “an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings”. Similarly, Stark and Beinbridge emphasize the “supernatural” as the essence of religion. For them Religions are “systems of general compensators based on supernatural assumptions” (1996: 39).

For MacKinnon (2002: 65), the dualistic assumptions of such definitions emerge from the worldview of Western, more specifically, Christian culture. Through numerous attempts have been made at defining religion in substantive terms, they are either too narrow or too broad. Narrow definitions exclude certain phenomena, whereas, others tend to include too much and make it difficult to decide where religion “ends”, or how to distinguish it from political ideologies, scientific systems, etc.

As Chidili (2007) notes, the early anthropologists provided what is obviously recognized as the outward view of religion when they defined religion as the intercourse of people with gods, spirits and the supernatural. Such attempts exclude usually the lesser known religions by the West. Many attempts towards defining religion like those did seek for the essence of it. Yet, every effort to grasp the “essence” of religion has resulted in the exclusion of some “actually existing” religion. As Harrison (2006: 148) writes: “according to an essentialist view, religion is one thing, and all religions are instances of that thing in virtue of possessing the same essential property or properties”.

On the other hand some other scholars, arguing that “religion” is a historical and social construction, try to make a discursive definition of the concept like some thinkers who are looking for an anti-essentialist definition of religion. Some of them have apply to the “family resemblance” approach, borrowed from Wittgenstein, defining religion or criticizing the other definitions (Fitzgerald (1996, 2003), Saler (2004), MacKinnon (2002), Harrison (2006), Insole (1998), etc).

For MacKinnon (2002: 67), with a Wittgensteinian adaptation, what most of these definitional attempts do is not to do “trace the outline of the thing’s nature, but trace ‘round the frame through which we look at it’”.¹³ Saler (2004: 227) says:

Wittgenstein maintains that it is not necessary for all the instantiations of a category to share features in common in order for them to be labeled by the same category term. He allows, however, that sometimes the instantiations of a category do share elements in common, albeit that sharing may not be of primary importance for understanding meaning.

MacKinnon (2002) argues that similar to the categorization approach to the term game, “if we are looking to define “religion” we should not be looking for the element that distinguishes religion from not-religion, but we should explore a set of family resemblances between things that we call religion.” However, the boundaries to religion become problematic.¹⁴

Many definition attempts complain about that the concept of “religion” is a western and a scholarly concept. For example Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1991), historicizes religion providing a genealogy of “religion” as a concept in the modern and western world. Smith suggests abandoning the term religion in favor of a distinction between cumulative tradition and the inner piety or faith of participants. Additionally, he asserts that religion “is solely the creation of the scholar’s study”. Smith further claims that there was no need for the term “religion” until the various cultures of the world began to have prolonged encounters with one another, particularly during the colonial period.

Saler (2004: 223) emphasizes that as numbers of scholars have noted, many non-Western populations lack traditional terms and categories that approximate to terms and categories for “religion” in the contemporary West. Smith (1978) indicates that most languages historically had no word that corresponds with the concept of “religion”. Even in Europe, for most of its history the word “religion” had a meaning something very different than it does today.

Like Smith, Timothy Fitzgerald (1996) also suggests to abolish the concept of “religion” altogether. The conceptualization of religion must have some essential characteristic, and if it does not, then the family of religion becomes so large to be practically meaningless and analytically useless (*ibid*: 216). He further notes that the concept of religion offers nothing of value to scholars seeking to understand particular social and cultural formations. In studies of non-Western societies, such as Japan and India, the concept merely distorts our analyses by imposing Western concepts merely distorts our analysis by imposing Western concepts onto non-Western “data” (2000: 4; cited in MacKinnon, 2002: 77). He asserts that such

studies are in reality “cultural studies”, or “theoretically informed ethnographic studies” here the term “religion” just confuses matters and distracts from fully social analyses. Fitzgerald calls the rituals, practices, and values in Japan as Japaneseness and sees what here is about is not religion.

Search for a definition of religion can be seen as quintessentially modern insofar as modernity was the first era in which a firm distinction between religion and the rest of human activity was presupposed. As previous eras made no such distinction, they had no need of the concepts “religious” and “secular.” Such concepts can be seen as a product of the modern impulse to separate “religion” from the rest of cultural life, in order to underwrite the independent autonomy of the “secular” realm of the social and political world. Harrison (2006: 147) states that like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the desire to separate a “religious” from a “secular” realm may have led to the emergence of two distinct realms – a sphere of identifiable religious practices and institutions, on the one hand, and a sphere of secular practices and institutions that explicitly exclude the religious, on the other. He adds: “to complicate matters further, though, the creation of distinct “religious” and “secular” realms would not appear to have taken place at the same speed throughout all parts of the world”

“Religion”, as a socially constructed term, denotes a number of traditions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. Yet, the “etc” here is important, since it does not claim that this marks the boundaries of religion, but it provides examples of what we mean by “religion”. Religion is identified best by the family resemblance approach beginning by denoting particular traditions that are “religions” and those traditions which resemble them in any number of ways. This also allows us to conceptualize a “quasi-religion” in a more fruitful way. What we conceptualize as “quasi-religions” are phenomena that are usefully interpreted and analyzed using the family of terms and categories (sacredness, sacrifice, ritual, salvation, sin, etc.) that we are traditionally used to understand “religions”. That is, they are not really sort-of-religions, but it can be useful to look at them in this way.

Saler (2004: 223) notes that for many Euro-Americans, those large families of religion that are popularly denominated “Judaism” and “Christianity”, constitute the most prototypical exemplars of religion. The term “prototype” is borrowed from the psychologist Eleanor Rosch (1978: 36). Eleanor Rosch developed the prototype theory of concepts, under the influence of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s remarks about family resemblance. Rosch (1978: 36) describes it: “we can judge how clear a case something is and deal with categories on the basis of clear cases in the total absence of information about boundaries.” For Rosch, concepts are complex mental representations of categories, membership in which is a matter of being similar enough to prototypical members of the class. Saler (2004: 223) says:

A scholarly model of religion, as I conceive it, should consist of a pool of elements that scholars associate with religions. Not all will be found in all religions. Some will be more typical of what we mean by religion than others, both in terms of distributions and weightings.

Using the family resemblance approach, many analyses begin with the so called world religion such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. They are regarded as prototypes of “religion”. On the other hand in the resemblance families as they are more likely each other many other religions differ from them constituting another clusters. For instance African religions are as such as we will discuss below.

Thus, we can classify definitions of religion into five basic types: essentialist definitions, affective definitions, sociological definitions, family resemblance definitions and cultural definitions. The first one seeks the essence of religion. Some examples are Tylor’s definition ([1871] 1958) of “belief in spiritual beings”, a newer version of it “belief in a nonmaterial (spiritual) dimension” (Fontana, 2003: 8), James Martineau’s definition of “belief in an ever living God”, Melford Spiro’s (1966: 96) reference to “superhuman beings”, or Stark and Beinbridge’s (1996) to “supernatural” are some examples. These examples exclude many religions that do not exhibit such “other-worldly” characteristics.

The second type, the affective definitions are mostly dealing with faith and emotions. The most famous example of this type comes from Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834): “the essence of religion consists in the feeling of

absolute dependence” (Harrison, 2006: 135). Paul Tillich's (1958) definition of religion as involving "questions of ultimate concern" and Sigmund Freud's definition (1959) “religion as the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity” are other examples. Such definitions are so narrow the concept become useless.

The sociological definitions are concentrated on the functions, relations and other implications of religion for the society. As examples of these category it can be given Durkheim's definition quoted above, Karl Marx's characterization of religion as the ‘opium of the masses’ or Weber's phrase for the relationship religion and modernism as ‘the disenchantment of the world’. Similarly, Berger (2001) notes that the sociology religion is very related with the phenomenon of secularization. For him it could be defined simply as a process in which religion diminishes in importance both in society and in the consciousness of individuals and secularization is the direct result of modernization. He adds that relation between religion and modernity is inverse – the more of the former, the less of latter. Such definitions are more concentrated on the function and meaning of religion for society instead what is to be counted as religion. That is the results or outcomes or the function of religion are important for them.

Family resemblance definitions argue to abandon a “correct” definition of religion. Instead, they look for the prototypes of religions and constitute clusters according them. Lastly, the cultural approach argues that religions should be analyzed as cultural systems. For example, according to Clifford Geertz (1973), religion is a cultural system. Religion is (*ibid*: 90):

a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic

Geertz argues that culture is “a system of socially established structures of meanings” (*ibid*: 12). Therefore, anthropologists are in search of meaning, and not in search of law (*ibid*: 5). The meaning of religious symbols is what constitutes religion to a person.

2.3.1. Benchmark: Is African Religion a “*Religion*”?

Regarding above discussion for defining religion a specific example, African religion case can be use for benchmark for the hegemonic struggle on definition on Aleviness regarding religion. The debate whether African religion is a religion is too similar to the Aleviness case.

Justin and Kenzo (2004: 245) argue that the relation of Africans and their religions is best understood in less deterministic terms of hybridity, mimicry, bricolage, improvisation, and pastiche. It is because of that cultural identity is a hybrid and a relational affair (*ibid*: 251). Human actors take various elements they find from a variety of sources, some endogenous and others exogenous to Africa, in order to construct their own religious identity (*ibid*: 252) In the particular case of Africa, the notion of hybridity presupposes, on the one hand, the rejection of the idea of a pristine African identity, which is recoverable through archaeological processes from the African past. It also presupposes, on the other hand, the rejection of the idea that is typical of the colonial discourse on Africa, according to which identities are biologically and culturally stable. Instead, it supports the idea that social and subjective identities are socio-cultural constructs which result from complex ‘cut-and-mix’ processes (*ibid*: 260). **This attribute is also an important dimension of the Alevi identity. Similarly, Aleviness has a very syncretic character as explained above. The religious character both of African and Alevi tradition is under discussion due to their heterogeneous structure.**

Bartholomew Chidili asserts that the African religion is not accepted as religion by western scholars. Chidili seeks for positive and negative evidence for the claim that African religions are “real religions”. First, according to the common definitions he tries to explain the religious characters of African religions. Secondly, he produces answers for the allegation that African religions are not religion (Chidili, 2007).

Aside from the question of African religion, the question whether Aleviness is a religion is not only an external question. The question whether Aleviness is a religion and/or part of Islam creates a two-fold pressure from the perspective of Alevi identity. On the one hand, Sunnis have tended to see Aleviness as outside Islam, thus as irreligious, thinking that Alevi rituals have no relation to Sunni practices, cannot be considered religious but can be accepted as a group of cultural rituals. On the other hand, the same position is defended by those Alevis and Alevi thinkers who want to dissociate Aleviness from Sunnism and who define the Aleviness as a lifestyle or a cultural form. This tendency to compare Aleviness to Islam's orthodox interpretation and define it as an irreligious cultural form resembles the treatment of African religions.

If one covers the works on world religions she will surprisingly discover that little or nothing is said about African Religion. For Chidili (2007: 325) the approach to African Religion is mostly negative, changing from labeling it as "native religion" up to asserting that Africa has no religion at all.

Hans Küng (1993: 24; cited in Chidili, 2007: 329) stated that religion is:

a believing view of life, approach to life, way of life, and therefore a fundamental pattern embracing the individual and society, man and the world, through which a person (though only partially conscious of this) sees and experiences, thinks and feels, acts and suffers, everything. It is a transcendently grounded and immanently operative system of coordinates by which man orients himself intellectually, emotionally, and existentially.

For Chidili (2007: 329), Kung's definition is explanatory for the **African religion, which is pragmatic, realistic and community-conscious, which is also valid for Aleviness.** This approach can be compared to the culturalist approaches thinking that finding a distinctive capturing of the concept religion is not possible. Study of a religion means study of the culture which covers that religion. In the words of J.S. Mbiti (1969: 2; cited in *ibid*: 329):

(B)ecause traditional religions permeate all the department of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and nonreligious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion.

Chidili (2007) adds that this means that an African lives religion, walks religion, breathes religion, talks religion and indeed does everything and goes everywhere religiously. For him this is why Magesa thinks that religion for an African is more than 'a believing way of life' or 'an approach to life'. Magesa insists on the tone of finality that religion is a "way of life" or life itself, where a distinction or separation is not made between religion and other areas of human existence (Magesa, 1997: 24-25; cited in *ibid*, 329, 330).

Religion is indeed the fundamental mode of behavior that every African expresses everyday life, each and every community in Africa embraces religion in its totality. It is the conundrum where an African person both consciously and unconsciously sees, experiences, thinks, feels, acts, suffers everything and finally dies. Even after physical death an African still remains religious. (*ibid*: 330).

These aspects of African religions can be compared to Aleviness. At first glance it is a “secular” religion because of Alevis’ relationship with Turkish secularism. However, since Aleviness organizes daily life, individuals have no social life independent of Aleviness, thus theoretically Aleviness cannot be considered as secular. Since the rules of Aleviness have become loose and heavily symbolic, and since Alevis have considered secularism as a power to stop Islamists (to whom Alevis are historically antipathetic), a secular Aleviness has become possible.

Chidili searched for a basis for pursuing to be able to claim the degree of religiosity of African religions. He asked, “what is the character of religion?” He found an answer in Groome (cited in *ibid*: 330), who suggests that for anything to be called 'religion' it must characteristically possess:

- (1) a confession of beliefs that summarizes its convictions;
- (2) spiritual practices and ways of worship that reflect relationship with the Transcendent; and
- (3) a code of ethics that guides and evaluates life choices.'

Similarly, Mbiti (1975: 10; cited *ibid*: 332) states that a religion must of necessity have the qualities of:

- (1) beliefs,
- (2) practices, ceremonies and festivals,
- (3) religious objects and places,
- (4) morals and values,
- (5) religious officials or leaders.

African religious beliefs are totally concerned with beliefs in God, beliefs in spirits, beliefs in human life, beliefs in magic, beliefs in medicine, beliefs in the hereafter and so forth. **Aleviness has similar beliefs. It has been influenced by esoteric interpretations of Islam and ancient Turkic religions. Beliefs about “4 kapı 40 makam” (4 gates, 40 stations), “don değiştirme” (body transformation), beliefs about “Ali” are exemplary. Even those who deny the relation of Aleviness to Islam accept that Aleviness is a faith which emphasizes love of Allah, rather than fear of Him, and which prioritize the humanity (“*benim kabem insandır*”).**

Secondly, any religion must be practical, ceremonious and festive. Mbiti (*ibid*) explains that these religious practices often disclose people's expression of their beliefs in practical terms. Among the practices are: praying, making sacrifices and offerings, performing ceremonies and rituals, observing various customs, and many others. As for the festivals, he correctly explains that they are typical joyful occasions when people sing, dance, eat and celebrate a particular occasion or event. Such events as harvest time, the beginning of the rainy season, planting season, the birth of a child, deaths, victory over enemies and so forth, call for celebrations. African religion is tremendously suffused with abundant religious practices and festivals. **There are many examples of practices, ceremonies and festivals also in Alevi faith; such as many forms of the cem ritual, *aşure* rites, funeral procedures, *muharrem* fasting.**

Thirdly, Mbiti (*ibid*) explains that there are places and things people normally set apart as holy or sacred. These places and things are used only for religious purposes. Africa's religion has abundant sacred places and objects. They include places such as shrines, groves, sacred hills or mountains and objects like rivers, amulets, charms, masks, and many others. While some of these places and objects

are human made, others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purposes. While some belong to private individuals and families, others belong to the whole community in a given religion.

In Aleviness, there are not many “sacred objects”. The pictures of Ali and similar religious portraits can be seen in many homes. However, portraits of Atatürk and the Turkish flag are much more common in Alevi homes today. On the other hand, holy places are prevalent in Alevi life. Alevis come together in “visits” to many different tombs and holy places, in festivals like the Hacı Bektaş Veli Festival, and their sense of “us” is empowered through such spatial means.

Fourthly, Mbiti (1975: 11 cited in Chidili, 2007: 333) enumerates other aspects of religion as 'values and morals.' He explains that this aspect of religion deals with the ideas that safeguard the life of the people in their relationship with one another and the world around them. Values and morals cover topics like truth, justice, love, right and wrong, good and evil, beauty, decency, respect for people and poverty, the keeping of promises and agreements, praise and blame, crime and punishment, the rights and responsibilities of both the individual and his community, character, integrity, and so on. They help people to live with one another, to settle their differences, to maintain peace and harmony, to make use of their belongings, to have a relationship with their total environment. Although these values and morals are virtually similar in many parts of Africa, differences abound in different cultures of peoples scattered in different countries of Africa.

The perhaps most important principle in Aleviness is the motto to “be the master of your tongue, your loin and your hand”. Looking through this characteristic, it is possible to argue that Aleviness has a conservative value system. Alevis who cannot control their speech manners, sexual urges or their material desires are declared to be “fallen” (düşkün) and cast away from the community.

And lastly, religious officials are the indispensable aspect of religion. According to Mbiti (*ibid*), these officials are the men and women of Africa who conduct religious matters such as ceremonies, sacrifices, formal prayers and divination. These officials are trained for their job but there are some who inherit their office by virtue of their family circumstances. In this case they are the head of the families, and/or communities. When they are trained, they obviously know more about religious affairs than ordinary people of the community, as a result they attract the respect of the members of the community. Even when they are not trained as such, they still perform their duties creditably with the attendant respects from the members of the family or community. These groups of experts hold offices as priests, rainmakers, ritual elders, diviners, medicine men, and even as kings and rulers. They may or may not be paid for their duties but in most cases people give them presents and gifts to show their gratitude. Their post in the community is so important that no community can do without them. In African communities, religious activities would neither survive nor function properly, without them. Virtually all the religious wisdom of the people would be neglected and totally forgotten, in their absence. In point of fact that is why they are considered the human keepers of the religious heritage. Africa is densely populated by religious experts; that is why the religion exuberantly flourishes at this moment in time.

In Aleviness, dedes, and in Bektashism, babas are similarly religious leaders. Dedes leadership is ascribed through nobility and babas leadership is achieved through the religious training in the orders. Although some pious Alevis may believe that dedes have supernatural capabilities, today these leaders have mostly lost their charisma among the educated Alevis.

According to Chidili, African religions have all the constituent elements to deserve to be called religions. Yet they still are not considered among other “authentic religions” of the world. Chidili notes that there are western allegations preventing the legitimacy of African religions. The first allegation leveled against African religion is that it is not a "revealed" religion. Chidili asserts that African religion is

also a revealed religion as you define revelation as Smith does; 'the transmission of knowledge from the divine to the human,". Every "revealed" religion claims that the truest revelation belongs to it, that others are either fake or distorted (*ibid*, 333-334). We may never know whether a religion is really revealed, and seeking an answer is not the task of social sciences. However, it is obvious that some religions may be distinguishing due to its design and rhetoric. Here Chidili is defensive: He is as orientalist as the Western scholars he is criticizing when he tries to justify African religions through their "revealed" nature.

Aleviness can also be interpreted as a "revealed" religion through the agency of Muhammad when considered as the essence of Islam. However, in Islam, revelations are transcribed in the form of Quran, which is not wholly accepted by Alevis. Although Alevis believe that there are revelations particular to Ali, Alevis have no commonly accepted revelations which can distinguish them from other denominations.

The second "western" allegation Chidili mentions is that African Religion lacks the quality of being a world religion since it has no written scriptures like Christianity, Islam or Judaism. Chidili complains about that scholars ignore that 'world' religions were once as oral as African religions. For example, Judaism was an orally-based religion for many centuries before its oral story was codified in writing. This is true of Christianity and Islam as well (*ibid*: 336). Although Chidili attempts to indicate the similarity between religions which has written scriptures and which has not, the reference to the "late" emergence of written scriptures does not weaken the difference. Therefore, we need to emphasize the fact that there are other cultures where religion is transmitted orally instead of attempting to "discover" the similarities. **In Aleviness, since there are no distinct revelations, there is no holy scriptures. Traditions and beliefs have been transferred through oral culture.**

Another allegation for denying African religions the status of a world religion that Chidili quoted is its lack of interest in aggressive proselytization. For Chidili, the

West thought that aggressive proselytizing makes a religion global religion simply because Islam and Christianity aggressively proselytize (*ibid*: 338). But Magesa (1997: 24 cited *ibid*) argues that aggressive proselytization is not even attractive to Africans nor is it an immediate recommendation for globalization of any religion since some of the so-called 'world' religions resort to means of cunning and even deceit not to talk of outright violence and war to proselytize. He further argues that the proponents of this idea failed to recognize that other major religions like Hinduism and Confucianism, do not actively proselytize. He explained that "Hinduism and Confucianism are 'tribal' in the sense that they do not as a rule engage in activities designed to convert people of other religious orientations to their religious view of life and yet they are counted as world religions.

Actually, proselytization of a religion has a more important effect than being a definitive characteristic of a "true religion": Proselytization is crucial for the sustainability of a religion. Religions can embrace people and communities through the claim for universality. If a religion lacks internally or externally embracing claims, its legitimacy would be damaged. Moreover, such a religion becomes unsustainable, because an exclusionist mechanism would be at work if particularistic rather than universalistic claims are dominant. Thus, regardless of success, proselytization is a vital characteristic for the survival of a religion.

Like African religions Aleviness does not have a proselytization characteristic. While its beliefs are universal, human-centered and all-embracing, it does not have a mechanism to expand among other people. On the contrary, it has an exclusionary function. People are "born Alevi" and marrying a non-Alevi is usually a reason for being "fallen". Therefore, Aleviness is almost impossible to proselytize. Through inter-denominational marriages, it could even be argued that the size of the Alevi population is getting smaller.

Another point about African religions asserted by scholars is that they have lost their influence (*ibid*: 339). Ejizu (1986: 134; cited in *ibid*) among other scholars

raises an unpretentious alarm on the demolition and erosion of Igbo and indeed the African traditional beliefs, sequel to the incursion of Christianity and Islam. According to him, "A majority of Africans have abandoned the traditional gods of their ancestors to embrace either Islam or Christianity, in vogue in the continent. Shrines have been left to crumble and sacred groves destroyed. Many traditional rituals have fallen into disuse and various cult objects and symbols cast away in the wake of conversions." This kind of alarm made scholars like David Barrett in his work in *World Christian Encyclopedia* to assert that African Religion is "moving toward extinction." (*ibid*: 339). For Chidili, while there is a noticeable change in the religious life of African people, it was not as terminal as such scholars mentioned. On the other hand, everyone is aware that rapid changes are taking place in Africa, so that traditional ideas are being abandoned, modified or colored by the changing situation (*ibid*).

These defensive arguments actually point to the fact that African religions are in the process of dissolution. As religions which are inseparable from daily life, their influence will diminish with increasing interactions between modernism and daily life. Chidili also accepts this much, while denying that African religions have weakened traditional ties. Herbert J. Gans (1994: 585-6) defines the continuation of religiosity with weakened traditionality and rituality as "symbolic religiosity"¹⁵. According to Gans (1994), although many religions still require regular participation in worship and obligatory participation in religious groups as well as individuals' practices and beliefs, the ability to enforce these requirements is ending. As a result, religious practices, organizations and cultures – and perhaps even personal beliefs- are also subject to acculturation. That is the acculturation is not only the problem of African religion, the so-called world religions are also subjected to dissolve.

In comparison, religiosity and **identification with the faith diminished among Alevis as the level of education and income increase**. For reasons already mentioned, lower and middle class Alevis who want to own their traditions can experience their faith only symbolically. Therefore, even for strong believers, an

Aleviness which wholly surrounds daily life, which determines the entirety of life and afterlife no longer exists. Only a symbolic religiosity is possible.

2.4. Aleviness and Ethnicity Claim

Within the responses given by the Alevis to the questions of who Alevis really are, whether Aleviness can or cannot be defined in terms of ethnicity and whether it is possible to become a member of Aleviness we come across with a central theme that Aleviness has an ancestral quality.¹⁶ However, what would be the rational measures by which we can determine whether Aleviness is an ethnic identity? Exploring the literature on ethnicity supplies us with ample material to assess the debates on ethnic character of Aleviness.

The term *ethnic* had already traveled from its derivation in the Greek, meaning “heathen”, which was translated early on as *nation* and originally applied in particular to the “non-Israelitish nations or Gentiles,” that is heathens and pagans (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1936 edition). In these early uses, the term “ethnic” referred to the foreign elements inside a majority-ruled country. Later, especially research on migration expanded the usage of the concept. Outside migration studies, the weakness of the concept of “nation” and the identity struggles of those groups which carry “national” characteristics caused the popularization of the concept of ethnicity in the last three decades. On the other hand while the concepts “Race”, “Nation”, “People” are in the agenda, adding ethnicity to these, makes the situation more complicated. Bartlett (2001) notes that the “literature” of the current social sciences, where race is viewed as the bad old word and ethnicity as the acceptable new one.

Ethnicity differs as demonstrated in the tables below, from the concept of tribe and defines lineage-based groups in modern societies as shown by Cohen and different than “nation”, can also be used to define the diversity within a nation-state as demonstrated Baumann.

Table 1. The Shift from “Tribe” to “Ethnicity”

	Tribe	Ethnic
Basic epistemological features	Isolated	Non-isolated
	primitive – atavistic	Contemporary
	non-Western	universally applicable
	objectivist emphasis	subjectivist emphasis or both objectivist and subjectivist
	bounded units	a unit only in relation to others, boundaries
	Systemic	Shift
		degree of systemic quality varies

Source: Cohen, 1978: 384

Table 2. Dictionary Definitions of “Ethnic Group” and “Nation”

Ethnic Group	Nation
Based on lineage	Based on lineage
Can be distinguished through appearance	Can be distinguished through appearance
Shares cultural characteristics (language, physical appearance, etc.)	Shares cultural characteristics (language, physical appearance, etc.)
Acquired by birth	Acquired by birth
Creates a unity in destiny and a form of political organization	At the root of the state lies the unity in destiny

Source: Baumann, 2006: 36

In the introduction to “Ethnicity in Modern Africa”, Brian Toit (1978) clustered meanings assigned to the term “ethnic” and its application as “ethnic group”, and found five general definitional sets.

In the first sense, the term was equated with race. The term is also used to refer specific major races. The third reference is to a socio-cultural group such as French, either in France or in another country. But some writers have narrowed this down and stated that ethnic really refers to a subgroup living among others in a foreign country. The fifth meaning uses ethnic group when a group of people contrast themselves or are contrasted by others on the basis primarily of sharing certain cultural criteria such as languages, beliefs and values, religion, or history.

Such an ethnic group may have geographical contiguity and may include “racial characteristics,” though neither is required (du Toit, 1978: 4)

Among these, the first two uses which have parallels with race are not very useful. There is somewhat a consensus on the use of race, and it is a concept which differentiates. Ethnicity on the other hand, should carry distinguishing characteristics than the concepts of race and nation. The third and fourth definitions based on diasporas have lost their defining quality with the appearance of various ethnicities in eroding nation-states, which have never found the opportunity to found their own states. Therefore, the fifth definition is more suitable for our purposes, yet there are varying arguments on what kind of cultural criteria could be declared and attached to the concept of ethnicity.

In the literature, there are roughly three positions about ethnicity: Primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism. Actually these distinctions are fed from the attempts to use ethnicity as a tool for comparison on the basis of criteria like age and gender. The dichotomy of objectivity-subjectivity becomes the main nourishing source of distinction. For Cohen (1978: 381) ethnicity opens up the question of categorization by nonmembers (the objectivist emphasis) as opposed to a person's own identity or identification with a particular ethnic group (the subjectivist emphasis). For example in the objectivity side Tariq Modood and his friends (1997: 14) argued that there are important boundaries which separate one ‘ethnic group’ from another on the basis ‘objective’ criterion of family background.

Kenneth Smith (2002: 405), in contrast to those who advocate the “family background” as a valid criterion for assigning ‘ethnic group’ membership, asserts that such assignments must always be elected (self-selected) by the individuals concerned. Modood et al (2002: 423) submit the importance of subjective identification and elaborate Smith’s arguments and argue that others from that group, though not necessarily all members, have to accept that s/he belongs. Yet, Smith would disagree with this elaboration as he wonders how someone from a

Jewish family background who may be, for example, an atheist, an/or who does not associate with Judaism, either religiously or culturally could justly be described as Jewish (Smith, 2002: 414). On the other hand this example might point to the fact that being “self-selected” is also not a necessary condition for interpellation as an “ethnic” label. For self-selection or being recognized by a group, a participatory ethnic membership might be required. However, in order to be labeled in an ethnic group, one does not require to be recognized by other group members or to accept the group. For various reasons, society in general may determine that person’s ethnicity. But as self selection and acceptance by the group have still crucial implications, the non-acceptance of ethnic membership both subjectively and objectively causes the dissolution of ethnic identity in time.

To assess ethnicity as a useful concept we need subjective and objective boundaries and tools. While primordialism tries to define these tools in a more rigid and objective way, constructivism focuses on more subjective and varying elements.

Instrumentalists conceptualize ethnicity as an expression of group interests. For them, ethnicity shares cultural, linguistic characteristics, sometimes kinship roots, for the purpose of group mobilization in competition for resources. For example, Abner Cohen (1979), who viewed ethnicity as an instrument for the articulation of informal organization in struggles for economic and political advantage? Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1975), are other instrumentalists who deemphasizes the cultural component and defines ethnic groups as interest groups. Thus, leadership and ideologies play important roles in this scenario of "emergent ethnicity." While "primordial ethnicity" both generates its own dynamic and is an end in itself, "interest group ethnicity" is instrumental and situational. For Young (1993: 21-25; cited in Le Vine, 1997: 48),

in everyday political and social interaction, ethnicity often appears in an instrumental guise, as a group weapon in the pursuit of material advantage; thus its activation is contingent, situational and circumstantial.

Epstein argued that instrumentalist approaches fail to explain the nature of ethnic identity. For Kebede (2001: 267), according to primordialist approach ethnicity lays in psycho-biological drives as it condition people to be part of affective and solidaristic closed groups:

In the words of a primordialism, Pierre L. van den Berghe, "ethnicity ... is extended kinship." Because ethnic and racial ties activate deep biological and affective thrusts, primordialism concludes that they are "more basic and 'primordial' than social groups organized on the basis of class." For there is no mistake about it: "blood runs thicker than money."

Edward Shills and Clifford Geertz, from a primordialist perspective, referred to the fact that members of ethnic groups perceive their group identity as ancient and eternal. They posited that "ethnic identities are not stamped on our genes" but noted that they endure once they have been formed (cited in Hale, 2004: 460). Harold Isaacs used the terminology of Edward Shills and Clifford Geertz, and developed a comprehensive framework. He pointed out that ethnic identity is seen as a basic group identity into which every individual is born. Depending on the family, place, and time of his birth, the new-born shares a set of identification markers which depend on family, place, and time of one's birth, dominate his/her future identity. These markers include physical appearance, birthplace, name, language, history, religion, and nationality, all of which will normally be influenced, in some cases determined, by circumstances beyond the control of the individual. According to Isaacs humans judge social interactions in "we-they" dichotomy (cited in Thaler, 1997).

For Kebede (2001), the term "primordialism" or "primordial attachment" could be understood in two senses: the hard and the soft. To him, hard version implies that people are attached to one another by mutual ties of blood that condition reciprocal feelings of trust and acceptance. It is attachment that siblings or parents and their offspring are said to experience, and implies an unquestioned loyalty or devotion on the basis of the intimacy of the tie. In the hard sense of primordial attachment, it is natural, automatic and prior to explicitly social interaction.

On the other hand, the soft meaning indicates the social, non-biological bases of attachment. Soft sense of the term draws attention to the importance of

“interpretation” and “symbolic meaning” in the individual's social life. In other words, feelings of intense intimacy can be socially constructed, without reference to blood, as in the case of love the country, and excite in adherents the same passion and devotion found among blood relatives. Therefore in the soft sense primordial attachment depends on the circumstances and understands that socio-political identities are not biological and not fixed.

According Hale (2004) primordialists set the limits of boundaries among ethnic groups. They describe each group as having distinct unchanging objective features referring to common histories, culture, language and religion that unite its members and distinguish them from members of other groups. Constructivists, oppose the centrality of changeless features of ethnic groups. According to them the matter is the perception of ethnic boundaries and persistence of such perceptions.

Barth (1969) summarizes anthropological definitions as usually having four elements:

- 1) biologically self-perpetuating population,
- 2) sharing of culture values and forms,
- 3) a field of communication and interaction,
- 4) a grouping that identifies itself and is identified by others as constituting a category different from other categories of the same type.

Among these definitions Barth emphasizes the boundaries rather than the cultural contents of ethnic groups. For Lindgren (2005) ethnic identification is not a priori a "basic" identification, as primordialist assume but rather one of several possible identifications. Therefore ethnic identity cannot be analyzed in isolation from other aspects of social life. Whether ethnicity is more important than, for instance, nationality or gender in a given situation is a matter for empirical researches. Moreover, it may be difficult to separate ethnic identification from other kinds of identification. This makes an analysis of the relation between ethnicity and other categories of belonging relevant. As Barth mentions, a focus on the making of social boundaries is important when studying the politics of ethnicity (Barth 1969). Barth views ethnicity as a subjective process of group identification in which people use ethnic labels to define themselves and their interaction with others.

Barth (1969; 13) uses the "most general identity, presumptively determined by origin and background" Ethnic groups are then those widest scaled subjectively utilized modes of identification used in interactions among and between groups. Demarcating self from other, in-group from out-group, the boundary component of ethnicity remained stable while society and culture changed. Individuals, moving across boundaries in response to changing conditions, could choose their ethnic identities from those available to them.

For Cohen, ethnicity is first and foremost situational. The interactive situation is a major determinant of the level of inclusiveness functioned in labeling self and others. The same person can be categorized according to different criteria of relevance in different situations. Hence, ethnicity is a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to specify persons to groupings that expand and contract in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the membership (Cohen, 1978: 388). The point is that ethnic boundaries are not as Barth (1969) implies, stable and continuing. They may be in some cases and may not be in others. They are multiple and include overlapping sets of loyalties that make for multiple identities. Ethnicity has no existence apart from interethnic relations.

Le Vine (1997: 50-53) in light of the literature he already surveyed concludes that there is scholarly consensus about ethnicity, which can be summarized by the following propositional inventory:

1. Ethnicity is a cognitive phenomenon shaped reciprocally in the perceptions of both the members of the group and others.
2. Ethnic identity are many and varied, such as language, names, color, physical appearance, dress, body decoration, gestures, nonverbal signaling, particular social behaviors (including religious orientations and observances and even cuisine), and that members of ethnic groups may use or emphasize one or more such markers, or clusters of markers, in their internal and external relations.
3. Ethnicity is a group phenomenon. Individuals identify themselves (or are so identified) as members of a reference group which, collectively,

imagines/characterizes itself (or is characterized) as distinct in some particular way or ways from other groups.

4. Ethnicity can be evoked or can arise endogenously as shared behaviors and/or modes of consciousness within the group, or more commonly, in the interplay between exogenous (stemming from the perceptions and actions of others) and endogenous (self-generated) referents. The endogenous elements of ethnicity can include the cosmologies and myths of origin and history that groups generate; the exogenous ones tend to be those developed as a result of interaction with others, including much of the range of social behaviors.
5. Ethnicity varies as to scope, intensity, and salience. Scope is the extent of self-conscious membership in the group. Intensity is the degree to which ethnic identity is invested with consequential emotional content. Salience is the heuristic significance of ethnic identity in situations of interaction with others/other groups.
6. Ethnicity also varies in both textual and operational complexity.
7. Ethnicity's operative content locates it at the larger end of relevant self- and group-referents, that is, beyond the more limited scope of such social formations as family, clan, age or gender groups and associations, and face-to-face groups such as neighborhoods.
8. At one of its core configurations, ethnicity involves kinship, real, fictive, or (more likely) imagined, and primordiality (the claim to ahistorical traditions), again, real, fictive, or imagined.
9. Ethnic identities represent variables in that the contents, expressions, and boundaries of ethnicity can change, and are not immutably fixed as ideas or configurations of primordial norms or referents.

While there are such arguments agreed upon by the literature, ethnicity debates bear sensitivity on the topic of the relation between ethnicity and discrimination. As Gerd Bauman (2006) states, ethnic thought commonly refers to blood lines. It emphasizes biological lineage and the claims that today's identities follow that lineage. Yet the past of a lineage is full of uncertainties. Regardless of scientific evidence, it cannot be safely claimed that lineage determines behavioral and

preference patterns among people. People are not given and fixed behaviors and emotions from birth. On the contrary, what determines the life of a person is the culture adopted by that person or the things that person does in compliance with that culture. For this reason, ethnicity is a matter of perception and will where culture is a medium, or it is a matter of culture where perception and will are media. Therefore, there is no direct correlation between lineage and behaviors. Physical appearance may be influenced by lineage, but we cannot talk about a cultural or mental determination (2006: 27-8).

Ethnic identity is not biological, yet it is beyond personal choice as well. We cannot control into which ethnic identity we are born. We cannot be exempt of the pressures created upon our ethnic identity, but this does not mean that this identity depends on biology or genetics. Ethnicity does not depend on natural operations; it is a product of people's actions and identifications. Thus ethnicity does not mean belonging to the same blood line or lineage. Rather it is a result of the development and refinement of all opportunities presented to people, by the nature, at the beginning of their lives. It is like wine: Wine is made from grapes and like ethnic identity, is tough to be a natural product. But nature cannot make wine, like lineage cannot make ethnicity. Both are creations of people's minds, skills and plans; natural products are used but the creation is beyond nature itself (Baumann, 2006: 59-66).

The term Aleviness first began to be used in the 19th century. The term "Alevi" is not proper in the documents of Ottoman before 19th century (Melikoff, 1998). Before 19th century, Alevis were called "Kızılbaş", "Rafizi", "Zındık", or "Mülhid" (Ocak, 1998; Melikoff, 1998). There is no other ethnicity against which Aleviness positions itself. In Turkey, there are Turkish, Kurdish and Arab Alevis. However, among Turkish Alevis, nationalism has been gaining strength in recent years. Yet this nationalism is not racist, but has an "ethno-religious" character¹⁷. There is a process of matching or identification. Arabs are identified with "Sunnism", Kurds with "Shafiism", Turks with "Aleviness" and for this reason prejudices are generated against Kurds and Arabs.

Both positive and negative answers can be given to the question whether Alevi are an ethnic group or not. Initially Aleviness appears to be unrelated to ethnicity because of its cross-cutting of various ethnicities and its religious dimension. Yet despite the difficulties in defining Alevi as an ethnical group, it is not possible to claim an unconnectedness between Aleviness and the concept of ethnicity. Seen from a primordialist and instrumentalist perspective, Aleviness can be interpreted as having ethnic characteristics; seen from a constructivist or a situationalist perspective Aleviness can be observed to be losing its ethnic character. In order to escape confusion, it will be useful to recall the “family resemblance” approach of Wittgenstein (1968) mentioned in the discussion on religion and compare Aleviness to other ethnic identities. Although he does not refer to the family resemblance approach, Smith’s exploration of the characteristics of ethnicity is suitable for clustering ethnicity. According to him (1991: 42), an ethnic group has the following characteristics:

1. A collective, specialized name,
2. a myth of common ancestry,
3. shared historical memories,
4. elements which differentiate the common culture,
5. connection to a special “land”,
6. sense of solidarity among important parts of the population.

If we utilize Smith’s definition, Alevi fulfill all of the conditions in his definition. Despite carrying various names in different historical periods, they had a common special name all the time. They have varying myths about common ancestry, with reference to religious tension lines of Aleviness. They share many historical memories, especially those related to repression, pogroms, and attacks against their community. Alevi emphasize Anatolia a lot as their special “home”. Wherever an Alevi’s roots are, being “Anatolian” is his or her unique characteristic. Solidarity is in every Alevi ritual and is the principal carrying element of the Alevi identity. Therefore, if we follow the Smith’s definition, we can conclude that Aleviness expresses ethnic properties. What complicate the picture are Alevi’s differing sources of ancestry, which might be Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic. For example, Cemal Şener, in reference to this complication, defines Aleviness as “Turkish translation of Islam”. He justifies the existence of non-Turkish Alevi by stating that they pray in Turkish.

Consequently, using Smith's definition, Alevis (at least in certain historical moments) can be described as an ethnic group. On the other hand it is beneficial to assess Aleviness according to the consensual approaches listed by Le Vine (1997), in order not to be stuck with a single definition.

Alevis have diverse forms of perceiving Aleviness. Yet despite all differences, Alevis ascribe themselves humanist-democratic values, based on loving human beings, on seeing all peoples from all nations in the same way¹⁸. On the other hand, non-Alevis also have certain prejudices about Alevis. Some of these judgments are negative and generate discriminatory practices, while some other are positive and create sympathy. In the light of the non-existence of field research on non-Alevi prejudices about Alevis, these judgments can be extrapolated from the narratives and experiences of Alevis themselves. On the other hand, this intra- and extra-group perception is more religious than ethnic. Yet among even irreligious Alevis, the aforementioned characteristics are commonly ascribed to Alevis, which might tell us the ethnic character of these perceptions. Many of the Alevis have acquired consciousness about their identity when they migrated to the cities and began interacting with others different than themselves. Keeping the existence of the "other" people from different cultures that will not be included by the ethnic group in the consciousness and the construction of the boundaries of the self identity with regards to the distance with others are the elements that sustain the identity (Okan, 2004: 26).

Alevis, linguistically speaking, do not have a separate language. Yet they certainly have a different linguistic habitus than the other Turkish citizens.¹⁹ Another Turk who is not familiar with this habitus, despite speaking the same language, will have difficulties in understanding some implicitness of Alevis. Alevi habitus is not limited to language. They have differentiating characteristics from dressing habits to moustache growing; they love folk songs, many Alevi men and women play *saz* instruments. "Crimson" has a symbolic meaning for Alevis. All of these meanings, symbols, habits are indicators for ethnicity.

Prejudice against a minority group, discriminatory practices and assimilation attempts go hand in hand with slurs and slanders against the group like “heretic”, “thief”, “atheist”. In response, the minority group might choose to close upon itself, create or reinforce intra-community solidarity networks, move to geographically hard-to-reach places or form ghettos in urban areas, or even more extremely, form cultural patterns like forbidding outside marriages (Kirişçi ve Winrow, 1997: 11). Oppression of and slanders against Alevis for centuries have helped reinforce the Alevi identity. Moreover, close and isolated ways of life, forbiddance of marriages with non-Alevis have caused limited cultural interaction with the outside. Thus, Alevis have formed an identity which was physically and culturally dissociated from other Turks and ethnicities.

According to Bodrogi (1993: 42-44), Aleviness began to show ethnic characteristics after 16th century with the impacts of drawing reactionary attention of the Ottomans, becoming marginalized, starting to live in inaccessible areas, having a closed and isolated life due to going under the religious-political influence of the Safawites. The sense of ethnic unity among Alevis was reinforced by the Ottoman State’s labeling them as *rafizi* or *zındık*. Their sense of unity in destiny has transformed them into a community bearing ethnic characteristics.

“The foreigner” has always been a source of threat for Alevis. The existence of foreigners connects Alevis to each other. The “vulgar” presence of foreigners causes Alevis to check themselves. An average Alevi individual thinks that a “foreigner” has implicit or explicit, certain or uncertain prejudices against all Alevis. He or she cannot feel comfortable around the stranger (Okan, 2004: 30-31).

In fact, the demonstration of ethnic group properties by Aleviness on the one hand, and the fact that these properties have their weak sides on the other hand, is related to the process of dissolution of the ethnic character of Aleviness. As Le Vine (1997: 54) notes, identities are usually multiple and layered; ethnicity is not the only attribute of social identity and in fact may not always be predominant or

significant. The strength (intensity) of ethnic identities may also vary over time and between societies.

Aleviness, too, came to be diversified, its ethnic properties discussed above began to be transformed as Alevis settled in cities, interacted with other social groups and accepted the citizenship of the secular republic.

Gans (1979: 8) argues that for third and later generations, ethnicity is often symbolic, free from affiliation with ethnic groups or ethnic cultures, and dominated instead by the consumption of symbols. He argues that “most people look for easy and intermittent ways of expressing their identity.” Thus, he defines “symbolic ethnicity” as “a nostalgic allegiance”. For him it is “a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior.”

Symbolic ethnicity is a suitable term to explain Alevis’ conditions today. Aleviness is a source of nostalgia for many Alevis. For example, playing the saz, singing folk songs, dancing the *semah* have become entertainment activities rather than being religious and traditional practices. For many Alevis, their Aleviness has become collateral, something they can be proud of, a source of identity through which prestige can be accumulated.

According to Andrews (1992: 17), the only valid measure in defining an ethnic group is accounting for how the group pictures and defines itself “now”. Some historical details might be forgotten, and some other might be over-emphasized. It can be argued that Alevis do not consider themselves a separate ethnicity today. Almost all Alevis have non-Alevi friends who happen to be very similar to themselves. Opening up and interaction necessitated that the tolerant and humanist Alevi tradition should embrace, at least, should not exclude others. However, in the absence of a working procedure for including non-Alevis into Aleviness, the identity began to corrode.

According Vermeulen and Govers (1994), an individual's membership of an ethnic group expresses the objective dimension of ethnic identity, while the individual's consciousness about membership expresses its subjective dimension. There is an organic relation between these two dimensions. A person who frequently interacts with her own group will have a reinforced consciousness about being a member of that group. Even if ethnicity's objective dimension devolves, it can continue its existence in a subjective dimension.

Today Aleviness is sustained by associations and foundations in the cities. However, the level and quality of interaction with these organizations is very limited. On the one hand, lack of ability of becoming hegemonic, diverse and inclusive of these organizations, on the other hand, priority of necessities of everyday life to participation to activities concerning Aleviness lead to limited contact between Alevi organizations and Alevis. *Cem* rituals can only be conducted in few places, and in limited numbers. A small number of Alevis participate in such activities. As a result of this lack of contact and interaction, the subjective dimension of Aleviness has also been weakening.

2.5. Periods of Aleviness

The entry of Aleviness into the political agenda in the 1990s, as described above, signifies a new period for the Alevis. The Alevis began to speak aloud, speak about themselves, thus having to reassess who they are. This period appears to be a revival, because voices have risen. However, for reasons like the transformation of Aleviness, distances between Alevis, urban integration et cetera Alevis had difficulties in defining an Aleviness to which they belong and which describes other Alevis. As they face with this difficulty, they reassess their ties with Aleviness and the Alevis. The current period pushes the Alevis towards paths deemed illegitimate by other Alevis or paths which are entirely disconnected from Aleviness. As a result, I think it is debatable to assert that this new period should be seen as a period of revival. The opening of Alevis within themselves and to the outside and questioning the meanings of Aleviness by them are the main

characteristics of this period. Therefore I prefer to call this period as “ ‘Open Aleviness’ period” also considering the previous periods and comparing with them. There are many differences between Alevis today. But the differences are not only today’s issue. Aleviness had experienced different periods thorough centuries.

Subaşı (2005: 18- 27) claims that Aleviness has three historical periods. In the first period, the *Kızılbaşlık* period, Aleviness was born, historicized and developed. The second period is that of *Aleviness*, where the tensions coming from the *Kızılbaşlık* period were identified in the form of a religious community with heterodox and syncretic characteristics, which tried to isolate itself from the rest of the society. The final period is described by the position of Aleviness within the process of *modernization*. This period reflects the positions taken by Aleviness with respect to modernism (Subaşı, 2005).

The term *Kızılbaş* refers to wearing a red rag on the head, which was used to indicate the Alevis before the sixteenth century. Ottoman authority experienced the Babai — dervishes and heterodox Sufi leaders — and *Kızılbaş* rebellions before the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Safavid shahs supported these rebellions (Ocak, 2000; 209–33). Alevis supported the Safavid dynasty under Shah Ismail, who had a battle against the Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Selim. Selim was victorious in 1514 over Shah Ismail. After this war Alevis were persecuted, which caused them to live in rural areas that were secure from the reach of the Empire forces.

***Kızılbaşlık* period** is the era when Alevis were in conflict with the ruling powers. It is the historical identity of Alevis. According to Ocak (2000: 209-233), the shahs of the Erbebiliye cult (who founded the Safavid dynasty in Iran) wore red crowns and red rags on their head, and thus were called *Kızılbaş*. According to stories, this “red crown” surfaced during the era of Shah Haydar, father of Shah İsmail, and was called Tac-i Haydari. Thus Alevis of Turkey, who have always belonged to the Erdebil lineage, were called “*Kızılbaş*” by the Sunnis, with the intention of exclusion. *Kızılbaşlık*, which was invented as a result of the ethnic and religious

conflicts in Anatolia during the 13th century and which spread as a result of the Safavid propaganda during the 16th century, was only used for Turkish Aleviness in time (Melikoff, 1999: 9). Kızılbaşlık became the source of a number of rebellions against the Ottoman state during the 16th and 17th centuries²⁰. Especially after the reign of Shah Ismail, riots against Ottoman central rule gave hope to the Kızılbaş. Within the religious repertoire of these rebellions, we find the deification of St. Ali, the incarnation of the godliness inside men and the saint cult, comprising a “heterodox popular religiosity” (Subaşı, 2005: 22-23). Alevis found the “*mehdi* of their time” in the person of Shah Ismail; they hoped that he would bring an era of just rule. For this reason, Ismail was expected to destroy Ottoman rule and establish justice. 16th century riots can be interpreted as a reflection of such expectations. Alevis have been marginalized as a result of the suppression of these riots, and in later times, they were content with passively opposing the state. The belief in the coming of the *mehdi* is related to Alevis’ passive waiting (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1991: 22, 23).

According to Subaşı, **Aleviness**, as a religious and ethnic group, was born in the 16th century, shaped by the polarization between Iranian Safavids and the Ottoman Empire. The declaration of Twelve Imam Shi’ism as the official religion of the state in Iran, and the acceptance of Sunnism as the official religion of the Ottoman Empire resulted with the following: The Ottomans accepted the “enemy” status of Alevis and whenever they saw a potential for disobedience, they moved to crush Aleviness in order to remove this threat. During the second half of the 16th century, the Ottomans succeeded to draw the Safavid-supported internal opposition into open war. Yavuz Sultan Selim, according to an estimation, ordered the massacre of 40 thousand migrants and villagers because of their alleged pro-Iran positions, in Eastern Anatolia (Subaşı, 2005: 23-4). According to Kehl-Bodrogi, as a consequence of this oppression, the Anatolian Kızılbaş community was disconnected from the Safavids and they embraced “heterodox popular Islam” which caused their marginalization within the Empire. This period became a period where Alevis resumed an isolated life style, replacing rioting and migration. After the defeats during the Kızılbaş riots, and as a result of the following pursuit

and oppression, Alevis retreated to mountainous areas, isolated and hard to access. As Sunnism got stronger within the Empire, Alevis separated themselves from the Ottoman society, socially, politically and religiously. Thus they have been forced underground (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1991: 23). According to Subaşı, Kızılbaş groups might have gotten their characteristics, known as Aleviness today, during this marginalization period. During this era, missionary activities of Kızılbaş groups were ended. Rules of marriage were recast inside Alevi communities (in the form of endogamy) and Alevis acquired the identity of a religious community (Subaşı, 2005: 35). The formation of Aleviness as an esoteric community occurred during this time. In order to protect themselves against the Sunni world, Alevis raised barriers of taboos between them and the outside world. This isolation not only limited their communication with the outside, but also reinforced their belief that they were a different and chosen people (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1993; 23). Alevi leaders such as “dedes” and “pirs” assumed responsibilities as juridical mediators. Thus the hearth system sustained the existence of Alevis for long years despite their isolation (Kehl-Bogrogi, 1991: 23).

Today’s common Alevi rituals like *musahiplik*, *dar*, *düşkünlük* and *Dervişlik* have their roots in this historical period of contention (Subaşı, 2005: 26). Living in rural areas led Alevis to develop a strong notion of solidarity. On the other hand, the isolation of Alevis led Sunni groups to accuse them of having incestuous relations. Many Sunnis still have prejudices and stereotypes about Alevi groups regarding incest during religious rituals. On the other hand, Alevis accuse Sunni groups of being followers of Muawiya and Yezid, the killers of Hasan and Huseyin. Because of being always felt oppressed in the Ottoman Empire, Alevis supported Atatürk during the 1920s. Many Alevis still perceive Atatürk as the savior (Çaha, 2004).

It is true that Alevis hoped that their position would improve after the foundation of the new Turkish Republic.²¹ During the single party period of the Republic, as a part of the aim of constituting a homogenous nation, it was intended to create individuals that were modern, secular, patriotic and nationalist as well as that were purified from Islam and adopt a ‘domesticated’ version of it (İçduygu ve Keyman,

1998-9: 150-151). Therefore, Alevis looked towards modernity, since it promised liberation for their essential problems. Besides, “The Alevis, for the most part, supported the Turkish War of Independence and the subsequent Republican project of modernization and secularization with the expectations of becoming equal citizens” (Erdemir: 2004; 126).

The support given by Alevi communities and the Bektashi order to the War of Liberation has been emphasized by many authors and even by many Alevis themselves. It is known that after Mustafa Kemal’s visit to Hacıbektaş in 23 December 1919 and his meeting with the Bektashi *postnişin* Cemalettin Ulusoy, Bektashi and Alevi communities were asked to join the War of Independence by Ulusoy. This person became deputy in the First Assembly (Okan, 2004: 89-90). However, this support of Alevis could not hinder the banning of the Bektashi order in 1925 like all other orders. All Bektashi orders were banned and all of their goods were confiscated after that period (Norton, 1983: 79; cited in Okan, 2004: 89-90).

In fact the allegiance of the Alevis to Mustafa Kemal was not full and absolute at the inception of the Republic. Cemal Bardakçı, who was the governor (*sancak*) of Çorum in 1921, declared that a rumor that national government would massacre Alevis was widespread in the current time (Bardakçı, 1945: 3-6; cited in Okan, 2004: 90). With the abolishment of the Caliphate Alevis started to feel relieved, since it had targeted official Islam. On the other hand, the reaction towards the transformation of social life (dress and finery, lodges etc.) was stronger than the reaction towards the abolishment of the Caliphate, which aimed only at official Islam. The abolishment of the Caliphate brought Alevis to support the state policies even though secular policies impact upon their daily lives negatively and this cause them to locate themselves once again in distinct poles with the Sunni branch of the Folk Islam (Okan, 2004: 1992).

Nevertheless, as Kieser (2002) maintains, they encounter modernity ambivalently. For the new Republican regime, the dominant Sunni culture was one of the main

obstacles before modernism, and tried to take some radical measures to curb its power. Yet, the measures to control Sunni culture which is seen as an obstacle before Turkish modernization were also against Alevi traditions. First, the law to abolish tekkes and zaviyes in 1925 has severely affected Alevi traditional life. Secondly, the establishing of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı)²² for the sake of the control of the Sunni cultures did serve the reconstruction of the Sunni dominance in a modern way. The governance, with the establishment of The Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1924, aimed both to provide the consent of the citizens through referring to the approval of this department when required (like the *fetvas* that Sultans take from *şeyhülislam*) and to prevent certain groups to become religious communities through the use of Islam. (Okan, 2004: 87-8). The Directorate of Religious Affairs was established by ignoring the existence of religious formations that fall outside Orthodox Sunni Islam from the beginning. The roots of this institution were dated back to the Otoman Empire. Today the department resembles a ministry with its organizational structure; its budget surpasses the budgets of many ministries.

On the other hand, these developments against Alevis did not affect Alevi traditional life in rural areas significantly. According to Dinçer (2004: 52):

Alevis ... neither lost their belief in the secular government, nor completely abandoned their religious practices; they practiced them, albeit secretly, as they always had. The initial surveys of the Republican Period demonstrate that despite the ban on the religious gatherings, the Alevis were able to conduct their rituals in their partially closed community structures for a fairly long time. The Alevis have managed to survive as a community in unfriendly environment through the construction of strong social and religious group ties. Organized into tight-knit communities in which recruitment into the sect was depended on the blood lineages, the strong social solidarity was strengthened by certain social mechanisms and a system of checks and balances and support systems that ensured a long-standing commitment to the institution of Alevi community. (...) Alevi communities formed their own mechanisms which made it possible for them to live in accordance with such taboos, and thus apart from the rule of the central authorities.

According to Bozarslan (2003), those who advocate the statement “Alevis were repressed by the despotic Sunni Ottoman” see both Alevis and Ottoman as reified entities. So such an approach ignores the discontinuities and assumes an eternal Aleviness which had always been against the powers that be. The historical Alevi riots are shown as the proof of this argument. However, Bozarslan asserts that since 1580, no more Alevi riots have occurred in Ottoman Empire. Moreover, he

adds that the reason of the riots against Yavuz Sultan Selim was not only religious but also economic and regional; Sunnis and even non-Muslims have also participated in the riots. Yet, for the purpose of this investigation such a challenge is useless. Because, regardless of historical facts, almost every Alevi sees herself/himself repressed during all periods of “Sunni”-Ottoman rule, especially by Yavuz Sultan Selim. Whether such repression is continuous or not, the Alevi feelings about this oppression have transformed into permanent anxiety. It can be said that the discourse of being oppressed is one of the main constituents of the Alevi identity.

The discourse of “being repressed” and “opposition to power” has facilitated the interaction with left. Alevis are usually perceived as if they are ‘naturally’ in alliance with the left-wing opposition. In other words, Alevi culture is seen as if it is essentially a democratic and progressive culture. Yet, as Bozarslan mentions, like political Islam, radical Sunni right or Kurdish nationalism, Aleviness, as a political issue, emerges only after the Republic. Thus, its political character is very contingent. The articulation of Alevis to the left or of the Turkish left to the Alevis reconfigured the components of Alevi faith. “Norbert Elias’s key concept configuration enables us to understand that, while being structurally determined, those relations constantly include new recompositions and conflicts, as well as negotiations and process of integration or exclusion. These recompositions and discontinuities enable the group members to give a historical meaning to their past. The group memory is formed within a ‘time’ framework” (Bozarslan, 2003). Even the term “Alevi” is created in the 19th century (Mélíhoff, 1994, 1998). Before that “*Kızılbaş*” was used, but the term was used with many aspersions, and thus had acquired a pejorative content.

In the 1970s, Alevis got acquainted with leftist thoughts. Due to the effects of the philosophy of enlightenment, leftist Alevis began to consider their Alevi identity as secondary. Çamuroğlu (1992: 8) offers the following syllogism: Alevis have said “let my being be bestowed upon the Turkish left” (“Varlığım Türk soluna armağan olsun”). Accordingly, the Alevi masses supported social democratic

parties in those years. Yet, this support was not essential or permanent. Alevis' tendency to support leftist politics has been primarily derived from their support for secular policies. The decisive application of secular policies with the foundation of Turkish Republic has caused an upward mobility in the statutes of Alevis who neither did have a place in hierarchical "nation" system nor had been in conformity with the Orthodox Islam approach of "officiality/conventionality" in Ottoman Empire. (Okan, 2004: 94). Schüler (2001) claims that this connection between social democrats and Alevis is very contingent. The reactionary attitudes of Sunnis against secular reforms between 1923 and 1927 which were supported by the Alevis led to indestructible ties between Alevis and the CHP. Alevis have been reactionary against bureaucratic, centralist and authoritarian policies of the 1940s like many other groups of society. In addition to that with the agricultural development promise, many of the Alevis had supported the Democratic Party in the 1950 elections. However, following the alliances between the Democratic Party and Sunni Muslim groups, Alevis turned back to CHP, starting with the 1957 elections (Schüler, 1999: 162). Especially in the 1960s and the 1970s, young people's participation in the socialist left effected the Alevi youths as well. Alevis had an important interaction with the Left and leftist enlightenment in the 1960-1980 period. As a consequence of these contacts, many Alevis started to distance themselves from tradition. Schüler supports his claim by referring to the results of the general elections in the Tunceli province which has the largest Alevi population in ratio. Between 1950 and 1969, Tunceli was not the castle of any political party. For instance, in 1950 the Democratic Party got the 58,7 % of the votes in Tunceli (Schüler, 2001: 155-156). Schüler also adds that up to the 1970s there is no significant evidence that the Alevis supported one specific party. However, regarding to the articulation of Alevis to the left, in the 1970s they significantly supported the social democratic CHP with its popular leader, Bülent Ecevit. On the other hand, although these bonds formed in the 1970s continued up to today, in the 1980s and the 1990s the relationship between Alevis and social democrats became complicated according to Schüler (2001). Many Alevis supported conservative parties in different conjunctures. Ayata (1997: 69) mentions: "The only solid supporter of the left in Turkey now is in the Alevi

minority. And this leftism has become one of the ways of demonstrating their identity”. However the considerable support of Alevis to CHP today is very fragile. In the last few elections (even since the start of increase of Islamic parties) Alevis have voted for the CHP reluctantly, many of them with the thought that “this is the last time”.

On the other hand, it should be added that the Turkish left has also been affected by the Alevi tradition and culture. As Çamuroğlu maintains (1998; 114), Alevis have lent their moustache and folk songs to leftists and borrowed more than enough positivism and statism from them.

Becoming the target of increasing fascist attacks at the end of the 1970s because of being Alevi, sometimes being targeted as a community (in Malatya, Çorum, Sivas and Maraş); the clashes between leftist and fascist groups; the pain and victims of 12 September coup caused Alevis to diverge from the Left in a defensive way and led them feel ambivalent in their approach towards the state. After each of the attacks mentioned above which targeted the Alevis as a community, reinforced with the attackers’ relationship with state and their Sunni identity, and furthered the politicization of Alevis. Each time, Alevis had to reconsider their relation to the state and religion.

After the events in the Gazi neighborhood, “Alevi associations have increased, politicizing their identity claiming that theirs is a cultural identity of leftism, communitarianism and sharing, rather than just a religious practice” (Ayata, 1997: 68). The events in Sivas, Maraş, Çorum, Gazi Mahallesi where the Alevis have suffered as a whole community have politicized the Alevi identity.

All of these events led to a traumatic, defensive position and strengthened the Alevi anxiety about the possibility of being attacked. Ayata points out that “Alevis feel they are discriminated against (informally) by the police”, “they feel discriminated against with the rise of Islamic “fundamentalism”. Alevis consider themselves unprotected against the threats coming from the Sunni groups. In daily

conflict, such as elopements or neighborhood quarrels, Alevis feel that the police will be on the other side and will not be willing to protect them” (Ayata, 1997: 68).

The third period of Aleviness describes their positions with respect to the process of modernization. According to Subaşı (2005: 27), Alevis needed to support and ally with pro-Western groups, beginning with the foundation of the Union and Progress Movement.²³ As modern discourses were directly juxtaposed with Sunnism, Alevis felt closer to modernization, despite the fact that the modernist discourse openly conflicted with the Alevi faith. This affinity cannot be explained in terms of religious belief. From the perspective of the positivist ideals of the Union and Progress Party, the Alevi metaphysics would openly be “nonsensical”. Yet the Party needed the Alevi support. With such expectations, Union and Progress militants took steps towards Alevi groups, which in time caused Hacı Bektaş festivities to be institutionalized (Çamuroğlu, 2000: 125-126).

With the establishment of republican rule, Alevis faced with modernization and entered another period of their history. According to Subaşı, Alevis felt more liberated under the rule of Mustafa Kemal, comparing their situation with their exclusion by the hegemonic Ottoman religion. Their expectations about justice and the destruction of Ottoman rule during the reign of Shah appeared to be satisfied with Mustafa Kemal’s leadership, who became sort of a savior for Alevis. As a result of this, Alevis became active participants of the Kemalist republican project, identifying with the contemporary Republican People’s Party. Yet this problematic strategy of alliance has transformed the traditionalist paths of Aleviness (Subaşı, 2005: 83).

Subaşı (2005: 27) defines the declaration of the republic as the breaking point of this final period. Yet, this last period could further be broken down to three periods. **The first** of these starts with the onset of Atatürk’s reforms, a process which transformed the denominational structure of Aleviness and affected rural Alevi life, making citizens out of Alevi. **The second period** corresponds to the urbanization process of Alevis as they move into cities. **The final period**, an era of

opening, which we are still in and which we will describe in detail begins with the 1990s, when Alevis went public and the isolated structure of Aleviness dissolved.

During the period of becoming citizens, as the state's influence reached the previously inaccessible Alevi regions, Alevi groups could no longer remain socially and geographically marginalized. With this opening, a stronger interaction between Alevis and central representatives was possible (Kelh-Bodrogi, 1993: 42). Bozkurt maintains that this interaction began when the state established communication with inaccessible villages where Alevis retreated years ago. Teachers were sent. "Strangers" begin to live in Alevi villages. Communication with the outside world became common. Dissolution of religious rule and the declaration of freedom of belief causes Alevis to see the outside world with different eyes, they stop seeing this world as their enemy (Bozkurt, 1999: 111). Shakland too emphasizes that the new social mechanisms imposed by the Republic created the weakening of traditional Alevi institutions. Yet for Shankland, who compared Alevi and Sunni villages in terms of modernization and integration with the state, Sunni villages were more successful in the process of transition to modern life. Sunni villages were in better harmony with the national central system of governance which required an ethical and social order and way of life, a patrimonial relation between citizens and the state. Alevis, according to Shankland, could only integrate with the modern world after abandoning their myths, rituals and ideals (Shankland, 1993).

Paradoxically, the integration of secularism and modernism with the Alevis' closed traditional life opens the way before a "differance" (the term implies both to differ and to defer, as Derrida (1982) suggest) in being a modern citizen. It is very common in literature that Alevi life was mainly rural (Shakland, 1993, Melikoff, 1994, Türkdoğan, 2004, Subaşı, 2005). Until the modern era, it was almost impossible to imagine urban forms of Aleviness. Yet there are those who claim that Aleviness does not have a "rural" basis. According to Çamuroğlu, it is possible to find both rural and urban traces in Aleviness (Çamuroğlu, 2000: 115). On the other hand, Çamuroğlu (1992: 7) also emphasizes that Alevis up to the

1950s had no social, economic or political impact on society and they organized their everyday life within their community without facing with the state or its institution. Besides, this state of being disconnected from the state is not new for the Alevis. Çamuroğlu (1992: 21) notes that they lived between 15th and 19th centuries much more isolated than the modernization period. For this reason, Alevis who have experienced modernization for the first time in their villages, managed to sustain their Aleviness to a certain extent, but their experience of Aleviness either diminished as they migrated to cities, or it changed, without being able to embrace urban life. Consequently, it can be argued that modernization's main effect of dissolution on Aleviness occurred during the process of Alevis' urbanization.

Şen (2002: 167) says that up to the 1950s almost all Alevis were living in rural areas. He states that the social-religious organization of Aleviness, shaped according to rural conditions, needed to undergo a radical transformation and to produce new urban forms of expression. For Bozkurt (1999: 105) too, Aleviness is a system of belief generally suited to rural life:

It lays down principles for the organization of daily life in an isolated location. Strict control forms the essence of this belief, which aims at keeping the community going without appealing to the state security forces and without state support.

Alevi migrations began intensively between 1948 and 1956 for the first time, and continued until the 1990s. As a result of this population move to urban areas, Alevis gave up their isolated, secretive lives. In the cities, Alevis became citizens of the Republic, interacting with non-Alevis, yet still preferring to live together and socialize with their own people. In their contact with the outside world, they chose the strategy of hiding their identities in order to deal with various forms of discrimination they faced. In urban Alevi neighborhoods, associations and foundations which "serve" the community functioned as placed of inter-community socialization and solidarity. Okan (2004: 120) mentions:

The identification of Aleviness with laicism, modernism and democracy in the discourses of these organizations is a new situation, which began with urban migration. The frequent usage of such concepts further gives the message that Alevis are in support of the state's modernization policies.

The traditional components of Alevi life also sustained this “difference” and complicated their adaptation as they were exposed to the world outside due to urbanization in the 1950s and the 1960s.²⁴ There are a lot of components of Alevi faith which require the existence of a small, self-enclosed community,²⁵ for example the “cem” gathering serves a function of sociality for such a community. The Alevi cast system depending on categories like “dede”, “*talip*” and “*efendi*”; “*görgü*” procedure as a justice system; “*musahiplik*”²⁶ as an institution of solidarity, etc. are similar examples. Moreover, it is also often mentioned that Alevi culture is mainly verbal (Şahin; 2001, Çamuroğlu, 1992), which makes the adaptation to the modern world difficult. On the other hand the modern world’s institutions and order were not suited to the demands of Alevi traditions or beliefs.²⁷ Because of these reasons “Aleviness, as it is embodied, performed and practiced in Istanbul, often fails to adhere to the prescriptions and prohibitions of an Alevi ideal situated in a rural and somewhat mystical past.” (Erdemir, 2004: 33)

Another difficulty in city life is that the Alevis had to live together with Sunnis and Sunni settings in cities. One adaptation strategy for the Alevis was hiding their identities. To be able to prevent potential problems, or in order to avoid facing with discrimination, Alevis tended to hide their identity, thus practising “*takiyye*”.²⁸ This protectionist character of Alevis also reflects their hegemonic struggle. As Demiray (2004: 131) states: “Whereas the main motive of the Alevi movement in Germany was the ‘demand of recognition of difference from the state’, the main motive of the Alevi movement in Turkey was ‘the demand of indifference from the state’ ”.

On the other hand the antagonistic relation between Sunnis and Alevis the might cause potential damages in society. “While there are many sub-groups among Alevis, the community tends to close ranks, when it comes to the Sunni world, employing an “us” versus “them” approach and emphasizing its position as a marginalized religious/ethnic minority” (Zeidan, 1999: 74). In this antagonistic confrontation the Turkish left did not remain impartial, they were pro-Alevi.

“Aleviness today experiences intellectually serious problems of belief and rituals... Migration, urbanization and education have pulled Aleviness into modernism” (Subaşı, 2005: 46). The search for identity, according to Subaşı, forces Alevis to decide between tradition and modernization. Complete surrender to modernization or attempts to revive tradition both force the limits of expressing the Alevi identity (Subaşı, 2005: 47).

On the other hand Alevis moved into cities along with their social capital, with their families, networks of relatives and co-villagers; they therefore continued their isolated community lives in the cities. Along with this, the Alevi society has differentiated with the effect of economic and educational differences, contact with the Left, working abroad, public experiences, marriages with Sunnis, and thus it became impossible to sustain the closed-community way of life. Younger Alevi generations born and/or raised in cities came to be less interested in Aleviness and less knowledgeable about being an Alevi. According to Shankland, new Alevi generations, in order to integrate with the modern society, do not want to follow the Alevi way, distancing themselves from religious and local affinities related with Aleviness (Shakland, 1999: 94).

Shakland mentions that Alevis traditionally did not allow strangers participate in their rituals and rejected making detailed explanations about their practices and doctrines. In his 1989 field study, he had to struggle hard in order to observe a cem ritual. Yet he adds that this situation dramatically changed after 1997 (Shakland, 1999: 28). This dissertation focuses on this current period of Aleviness, a period which began in the 1990s, generally referred to as “awakening”, an episode in which the Alevi identity began to open itself up. This period is an “open” era of Aleviness where secretive Alevi ways have almost entirely disappeared. In this “receptive” episode of Aleviness, Alevis have become more visible in terms of institutions and physical appearance. Alevi individuals in urban areas have matured; their integration with the city is nearly complete. On the other hand as Alevis opened to the outside they needed to define Aleviness, which resulted with differing tendencies. The claim that there is one single way of Aleviness was thus

falsified as a consequence of the circulation of a diversity of Alevi tendencies that sit within various axes of tension.

2.5.1. Representation of Alevi in ‘Open Aleviness’ Period: Alevi Civil Society Associations

One of the most important characteristics of ‘Open Aleviness’ period is representation of openness by the NGOs and their activities. Even the cemhouses that were established for carrying cem rituals are parts of these structures. In some cases association and cemhouse can be considered as interchangeable concepts. On the other hand there is no single NGO that can represent the Alevi ideologically and/or present a mass representation. Rather, we see the same variety characterizing today’s Aleviness also in the NGOs. The number of these institutions and their members is relatively high when compared to other NGOs in Turkey; however, they constitute a very limited section of the Alevi population. The quantity of active members is even more limited. The prominent Alevi organizations are mostly the ones who prioritize ideational representation and achieve to do so by the presence of governments and international organizations. We can say that civil organizations such as Cem Foundation²⁹, Hacı Bektaş Culture and Presentation Foundation, Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association, Pir Sultan Abdal 2 July Culture and Education Foundation, Hüseyin Gazi Association, Association for Cherishing and Presenting Karacahmet Sultan Culture, Hubyar Sultan Alevi Cultural Association, Association for Protecting, Repairing and Enriching Garip Dede Türbe and their upper organization for some of them aim at to represent the Aleviness.

Among the Alevi associations in Turkey 3 of them are more popular than the others:

1. Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association (Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği - PSAKD)
2. Cem Foundation (Cem Vakfı - CV)

3. Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Culture Association (Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli K lt r ve Tanıtma Derneđi - HBVD)

Although the demands declared are advocated by numerous Alevi organizations, they do not threat the issues similarly. It can be said three associations are more hegemonic than the others. The first one with more religious tones advocates that the real Islam is Aleviness and has more prone to depend on Quran (advocated mainly by Cem Foundation). This line defends that Aleviness is a “Turkish” interpretation of Islam, has its roots in tasavvuf, and its content is not formal but is located deep in the hearts of the people. The second block carries more leftist or materialist tones. They see Aleviness as secular, having some folkloric features and want to liberate it from religious superstition (the best represented by PSAKD).

According to PSAKD, Aleviness is a mosaic of culture and faith, formed by the combination of Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Hittite, Kurdish, Turcoman, Armenian, Christian, Byzantium and Anatolian civilization and cultures ( ahh seinođlu; 1997: 57-58 cited in Okan, 2004: 171).

The last significant elite block of Alevis, which lies in between two, aims to articulate modernism with traditional Aleviness. They are more prone not to lose their Alevi identity than the second one, but have less religious tendency than the first one (the best example of it is HBVD). Yet, HBVD in recent years become more close to PSAKD line as the polarization in Alevism positions has been deepening; the HBVD has made a preference between two poles. Another factor of this preference is that PSAKD line is softening its anti-traditional discourse. In the debate of Aleviness and Islam relations, CV advocates the tradition and as referring to tradition make credit trough Alevism, a hegemonic project on Aleviness could not make distance with tradition. Thus, the HBVD and PSAKD has been making alliance in the identification attempts of Aleviness. As a result two pole has become dominant in identification struggle of Aleviness: Islamic Alevism, which is represented by Cem Vakfi and Political Alevism, which is

represented by Alevi Bektaşî Federation (Alevi Bektaşî Federasyonu – ABF), which is formed mainly by PSAKD and HBVD. Both Alevism share a very common traditional culture and a linguistic habitus at first sight. Yet, they also differ from each other through political, practical and faith-related dimensions. These two poles move away from each other in their positions within various dimensions. In general most of the Alevi CSOs based on several common Aleviness features, but differ from each other as positioning themselves regarding their Aleviness approaches³⁰. The main features are as follows:

1. Progressivism

But Alevis are against cruelty. They support the equality of women and men. They are democratic and humanist people.³¹

Ali Balkız, President of ABF

It is essential to acknowledge that they are trying to destroy the **humanist-revolutionary** essence that has been passed to us from the Alevi history; on the one hand through generating degeneration and disunity in our organizations, and supporting the institutions in accordance with this objective on the other. We should realize that we must run a stringent struggle against the threat of transformation of Alevism into an emptied superstitious belief.³²

Tekin Özdil, President of HBVD

Rooting of Alevism's interpretation of **Quran** in such a peaceful, **humanitarian** manner; in a manner that will solidify love and respect which will restore justice... It is this **Humanist perception of Islam** of the Turks which has Muslimized the Anatolia and the Balkans, and which has transformed the Christianity, not with war and fight but with superior values and peace.³³

İzzettin Doğan, President of CV

Aleviness is highly influenced by enlightenment thoughts. Both Alevi believing and rhetoric put “human” to a central position. In many times even the concept of “God” or of the “Kabe” is humanized in Alevi discourse. This moment is an important dimension of all Alevi associations. Yet, while political Alevism embrace the humanism with more philosophical and political line, the Islamic Alevism prefers to sustain a religious approach.

“Enlightened Aleviness”, also with the interaction through left since 1960s, believes that Aleviness naturally is progressive. For political Alevism this nature of Aleviness has direct links with leftist ideas. On the other hand Islamic Alevism advocates that Aleviness has been distorted because of its contact with the left and

must now declare its own independent existence. Yet, although this distance with left has been deepening in all associations, CV is more prone to the increase it.

2. Republicanism

Since the Republic, elements like Kemalism and nationalism (*ulusalcılık*) have been inscribed to the souls of the Alevis. Although the Alevis had times of agony by events like 1938 Dersim massacre, Maraş, Malatya, Çorum, Sivas and Gazi their status within the republic has never been at the point of “being massacred where they are seen.” Because of this reason the Alevis embrace both the republic and democracy.³⁴

Kazım Genç, Secretary General of ABF

The black clouds surrounding Turkey; the efforts for transforming our Secular Republic to a moderate Islamic Republic –whatever it means–; the atmosphere that has been created by the ones who are backing these efforts; and our martyr sons who we have lost within this atmosphere, all of these prevents us from celebrating this day with joy. Today we are making this meeting under the shadow of the reality that the Secular Kemalist Republic has been surrounded by the forces who want to replace it with a moderate Islamic Republic and who also endeavors to step by step replace the unitary structure of the state with a federal one.³⁵

İzzettin Doğan, President of CV

Alevi discourse lies mainly on a secular and republican political line. While the “constitutive outside” of Aleviness is radical Islamist thoughts and movements, the secular Republic for Alevis constitutes the very guarantee of secular life and therefore, of Aleviness. Moreover, for many Alevis Atatürk is a “Mehdi” and the protector of this guarantee.

Republicanism is very dominant in the discourse of Aleviness in all associations. Political Alevism aims to hegemonize a Turkish originated and cultural Aleviness which is based on egalitarian and communitarian character. On the other hand Islamic Alevism’s Aleviness project based also on Turkish origin but with Islamic values. Yet, in spite of Islamic character for the sake of distinction with Sunnism, Islamic Alevism prioritizes laicism as a basic feature of Alevism. Therefore, political Alevism has a more leftist and nationalist republican line, while Islamic Alevism emphasizes laicist character of republicanism with nationalism.

3. Nationalism

[The political power] is exerting violence also by unashamedly serving the national accumulation of Turkey to the imperialists and opening up the most fundamental needs like health and education to free market.³⁶

Fevzi Gümüş, President of PSAKD

As it has been experienced in the past, the ones who want to play with the national unity and togetherness of Turkey used some sections of the Alevis for their interests; and they are still continuing to do so.³⁷

Ali Rıza Uğurlu, President of Islam Religious Services of CV

As Alevis see themselves as a constitutive figure of Republic, they try to prove their belonging to it. This reflex results in Turkism. It has two dimensions. One is a form of patriotism claiming the independency and unity of the land. The second dimension is related with the origin seeking for Aleviness. There are two results of this first dimension. The first one is to be against the imperialist forces, which is more significant in PSAKD discourse. The second is to see the Kurds as an enemy for the unity of the land, which is espoused by CV. Lastly, regarding to second dimension, the enmity against Arabs is also dominant in discourse of Aleviness of all associations. However, as the Cem Foundation constructs its rhetoric against the Arabic Islam as apolitical Islam of Turks, PDAKD is more prone to distant Alevis from Arabic culture. Yet, all associations, while seeking the origin of Aleviness, try to prove that it is a Turkish faith whereas orthodox Islam is Arabic.

4. Seeking Origins

The ones who define Aleviness as the sub-identity of Islam must not forget one thing. That is, it is not Aleviness which is a sub-branch of Islam; but Islam is the sub-branch of Aleviness. The development of Aleviness on these lands goes far back, more than that of Islam.³⁸

Ercan Geçmez, President of Hacıbektaş Veli Anadolu Culture Foundation

It is an absolute ignorance to claim that Aleviness had existed thousands of years before Islam did. These are the deeds of the ones who want to launch an Alevi-Sunni clash and whom we don't know from where they are being directed. In Aleviness you may always find the association between St. Ali, Prophet Mohammed and the Quran. Aleviness is defined as 'the way of God, Mohammed and Ali.'³⁹

İzzettin Doğan, President of CV

Alevis are seeking their origins both in Anatolia and in the former homelands of Turks. In this origin-seeking process, sometimes Aleviness tries to dissociate its elements coming from other beliefs or strong religion like orthodox Islam. The

dissociation from Arabism is shared by all associations. Yet, political Alevism is more prone to associate Aleviness with its “self-culture”. On the other hand for CV it is obvious that the unique origin is Islam and there isn’t any other source.

Among Alevis it is a popular debate whether Aleviness is part of Islam or not. As the answer for CV is exactly yes, political Alevism rejects including Aleviness inside Islam. Yet, practically, political Alevism also accept that many rituals and believing of Aleviness come from Islam.

5. Grievance rhetoric

The ones who were responsible for the massacres were awarded, respected and counted as “state official” by the state; they were turned into mobs, continued to murder and still continuing. Alevis are being told “not to dig the issue and forget it.”... Living without facing and getting square with Çorum, Maraş, Sivas, Istanbul-Gazi/Ümraniye events is equal with “living these things again.”⁴⁰

Turan Eser, Ex-President of Alevi Bektaşî Federation

... sufferings and rightness of the martyrs has been proved. Everyone was to learn about the atrocities of Yezid and his servers, who were allegedly the representative of Islam, towards the Dynasty of the Prophet. (...) One thing must be known clearly, the grains of sand that were colored red by the blood of St. Imam Huseyin –who have carried the torch of Islam which was lit by his grandfather Prophet Mohammed and his father St. Ali up to today and who have lost of his relatives as martyrs in this cause- and the ones who were close to him have spread all over the world with desert storms.⁴¹

Cem Foundation, Muharrem Conservations

Almost every Alevi citizen sees himself/herself as aggrieved. Similarly the Aleviness discourse of Alevi associations relies on such rhetoric of history. For them, from the beginning, Alevis are mistreated, wronged, discriminated against, cheated, suppressed and they suffered cruelty. This feature is come across in Islamic Alevism rhetoric in historical religious issues; in political Alevism discourse about near future issues like Maraş, Çorum, Sivas, and Gazimahalleli issues.

6. Identity on Rituals

Alevi associations, for the purpose of owning their Alevi identity, tend to conduct some Alevi rituals. Alevis who try to prove their Islamic character have very eager to fast during the holy Muharrem month. On the other hand, PSAKD, in order to distance itself from a degree of religiosity, does not encourage its members to fast.

For other Alevi associations organizing “*Aşure*”⁴² days in Muharrem is the most common activity. Another main practical function of Alevi associations is the proper conduct of Alevi **funeral** ceremonies.

Cem (gathering ceremony) is embraced by all Alevi associations. Yet, PSAKD wishes to construct cem-houses not only as places for praying and practicing religion but also as cultural centers. The view of Islamic Alevism on the “cem” ceremony is predominated by a faith-based emphasis. However, political Alevism criticizes CV for applying the “haremlık selamlık” policy, which is the spatial separation of women from men during the cem ceremony.

As the traditional instrument used in the cem ceremony, *saz* is very popular among all Alevis. Many Alevis, including the administrators of their associations, can play saz very well. One of the popular activities in associations is the courses for teaching playing saz. Saz is widespread among all associations. Yet, because PSAKD does not implement many rituals, especially those which are too religious, its emphasis on saz and folk music is much more pronounced as speaking about Aleviness.

Semah is the ritual dance performed during the cem ceremony. Like playing saz, semah dancing has become something that is taught in courses and performed in publicly. Again PSAKD has been transforming “semah” into a cultural and artistic performance rather than treating it as a religious activity.

All three institutions are in interaction of above mentioned moments of Aleviness discourse. Yet, the discourse of PSAKD on Aleviness lies mainly on the first two moments, progressivism and republicanism. On the contrary, the dominant moments of the Alevi discourse of the Cem Foundation are Turkism and Islamism. As Islamic Alevism try to preserve Aleviness from leftism, political Alevism is aware of assimilation of Alevis by Islamism.

2.5.2. Alevi Opening of Government and Alevi CSOs

After the 2007 general election, the government of AKP targeted some reforms to reply to demands of Alevis. The Alevi deputy of AKP, Reha Çamuroğlu, was the main actor of this so called Alevi opening as counselor to Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan. Three main targets were set up by this opening:

- 1. Putting Alevi dedes to salary**
- 2. Providing support for payment of electricity and water bills of cemhouses**
- 3. Making changes in Religion Courses curriculum towards including information about Aleviness.**

Except these basic targets, AKP has also been trying to show that it gives importance to Alevi issue through launching a series of initiatives. In 2008 and 2009 Prime Minister Erdoğan participated to *iftar* meals that have been organized by some Alevi organizations. President Gül has donated 10 thousand Turkish Liras to two foundations who gave the biggest support to the Alevi opening of government.⁴³ Turkish Radio Television Channel 1 has broadcasted the news report from Karacaahmet Cemhouse on the tenth day of Muharrem; and also has organized a concert with the theme of Muharrem Month and Kerbela. Besides, for 12 days of mourning fasting in Muharrem Month TRT have arranged and broadcasted special TV programs, shows and documentaries for Alevi audience.⁴⁴ The Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ertuğrul Günay, in opening ceremony of the Alevi Institute that has been constructed by Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Foundation, has apologized from the Alevis in the name of the state. He said, “As a state official of state in Turkey, I do apologize for all the wrongs done and really thank for your loyalty to these lands.”⁴⁵

The bold attempt of the AKP government regarding the Aleviness issue has been met with a grain of salt by many Alevi circles. It has been claimed that the moves of the AKP were not sincere and vote oriented or aimed at assimilation. Regardless of existence of any hidden agenda it seems that the opening that is targeted is in

accord with the wishes of many Alevi associations. On the other hand it seems clear that AKP also acknowledges the tensions within Alevism and the sustainability crisis that Alevism faces. Since the opening that has been targeted sees Islamic Alevism as closest to itself, causes the deepening of tensions within the projects of Alevism. Besides, the fear that the opening might empower the Alevis restricts the scope of it. The targets of opening regarding the cemhouses and Alevi dedes disturb the Directorate of Religious Affairs and some AKP members. The dissidents claim that “granting the status of places of worshipping to cemhouses will bring the idea that cemhouses are alternatives to mosques.” For instance the Head of Directorate of Religious Affairs Ali Bardakoğlu has asserted that since granting the status of places of worshipping to cemhouses would make Aleviness an independent religion and will detach the Alevis, who accept the **mosques** as the places of worshipping, from Islam, it will be a wrong deed.⁴⁶ This opposition to Alevi opening had resulted in redirecting of the opening route and Reha Çamuroğlu’s resignation from his advisory office.

After these developments the cemhouses have not been granted the status of places of worshipping as targeted by the opening; but it has been declared that they are going to be defined as culture houses and there is work in progress for making these places exempt from electricity and water bills. It has been also announced that a general directorate will be established within the body of Ministry of Culture and Tourism regarding the Alevi dedes will be put into salary by the state. How these things will be achieved still stands as a question.

The Cem Foundation circle, which, at the beginning, did not find the opening presented by the AKP government as sincere, at the end of 2008, become one of the most prominent supporter of the process. Even it became the interlocutor of the AKP for evaluating the deadlocks of government’s attempts. The demands of Islamic Alevism from government are as follows:

- Granting the status of places of worshipping to cemhouses;
- Equal representation in the Directorate of Religious Affairs;
- Benefiting from the state radio and television;

- Share from the general budget;
- Insertion of knowledge regarding Alevi-Islam understanding in a healthy manner and supervised by Alevi religious leaders;
- Providing personal benefits to Alevi dedes and Bektaşî fathers; granting them personal benefits equivalent to that of the imams and preachers.

On the other hand political Alevism is very suspicious on the Alevi opening of government. For example, for Alevi Bektaşî Federation Ex-President Turan Eser says: “the Alevi opening of the AKP is nothing but estranging Alevi identity to its substantive values and teaching through bringing Aleviness under state control and homogenizing it at the state level.” Balkız states that Alevis has no demand for being represented at the state level. He also stresses that they are against putting of dedes on salary by the state and it will be appropriate to remove compulsory religion courses rather than inserting knowledge on Aleviness into the curriculum.⁴⁷

The demands of Political Alevism that have been expressed in various instances and settings can be listed as such:

- The Alevi identity must be officially recognized and Alevis must be apologized;
- The Directorate of Religious Affairs must be removed;
- Compulsory religion courses must be removed from the curriculum;
- The state must end the politics of building mosques to Alevi villages;
- The cemhouses must be granted the status of places of worshipping;
- The religion section in the ID cards must be removed;
- One-sided broadcasting at state owned radio and televisions must be ceased;
- The expressions and definitions in textbooks, dictionaries and supplementary books advised by the Ministry of Education which denigrate Aleviness must be removed or reconfigured;

- The direction and maintenance of Hacı Bektaş Dervish Lodge must be left to Alevi institutions and local governments;
- Madımak must be turned into a museum.

To make a comparison, while political Alevism opposes the opening on particular issues like Directorate of Religious Affairs, putting of dedes on salary, and compulsory religious courses; Islamic Alevism supports these proposals. Both circles agree on one point: granting of the status of places of worshipping to cemhouses. This acquisition seems to occupy a key position regarding the sustainability of hegemonic Alevism projects for both sides. Political Alevism holds the belief those proposals regarding the status of dedes, Directorate of Religious Affairs and religion courses as projects for assimilating Alevis. Going beyond this argument they also believe that the state must be secularized and its Sunni character must be eroded. Islamic Alevism, on the other hand, is in search of reconciliation with the dominant currents in Islam rather than a conflict. This is why it supports the opening regarding Aleviness. However, even the Islamic Alevism does not find the steps taken for the opening satisfactory. Because neither the cemhouses are recognized as places of worshipping, nor is there any development about dedelik institution. Since the reconfigured religion course which gave place to Aleviness does not introduce Aleviness the way that Islamic Alevis wished, this move also in not satisfactory for them.

As a consequence all sides of the issue, namely the Political Alevism, Islamic Alevism and Islamist Government, are aware of the sustainability crisis of Aleviness and seem to have installed their own projects regarding this crisis. The steps taken by the government in some cases may deepen the crisis and these, in turn, may be used as material by the counter projects. Given these circumstances one may witness frequent drawbacks in the process. Alevism projects are trying to retain their bedrocks first and enlarge them second, through using the ground that has been provided by the opening. These increasingly polarized positions are not embraced by most of the Alevis. At least there is no sign of the contrary. On the contrary this polarization may cause the Alevis to keep away from these projects.

The variety of tensions within the positions and the structural problems of Alevi practices distance Alevis from Aleviness more and more.

CHAPTER 3

TYPOLOGIES OF ALEVINESS: “WAY” IS NOT ONE

Most of the Alevis have thought that the differences between them do not damage their “unity”, rather enrich Aleviness, because Aleviness has not been dogmatic and restrained by rules like the other belief systems. This idea has been characterized by the aphorism, “*yol bir sürek binbir*” (“way is one, paths are thousand and one”). In spite of that, recent years, it is not possible to talk about a unique “way” for the contemporary Aleviness anymore. There are interpretations, which have antagonistic relations with each other. The opposite answers given to the questions like whether Aleviness is a faith which is part of Islam or whether it can be considered as a religious form make it very difficult to reach a consensus. It is difficult to claim that these interpretations pointing opposite directions are on the same “way”. Addition to the variety in the approaches to Aleviness, Alevis experience Aleviness in various manners too. These two axes, **approach to Aleviness** and **experiencing Aleviness**, proliferate various clusters for Aleviness.

In ‘Open Aleviness’ period, as the question “what is Aleviness” became the most vital question among Alevis, Alevi opinion leaders and organizations attempted to produce the most meaningful answer. These groups are well aware that in case the question is left unanswered or ambiguous, Aleviness will start to disappear. Their attempts include defining Aleviness as a religion, a social/cultural/ and/or political structure, an ethnic element, a denomination, a philosophical approach.

The most widespread reference of Aleviness is Islam and Shia, which is related with devotion to St. Ali. **The second important reference** is the ancient religions of Turks. The syncretic structure of Aleviness, combining a number of religions and cultures, is frequently mentioned. Most scholars maintain that Aleviness is a product of conditions specific to Anatolia. Many other scholars emphasize that

Aleviness is a political organization, rather than a religious one, in terms of its development path (Subaşı, 2005: 23).

Thirdly, ethnic references of Aleviness might be mentioned; Aleviness has a characteristic of a social-religious category defined by the significance of group membership. Yet characteristics like the blood-based nature of being an Alevi, inter-group marriages, strict boundaries between Alevis and non-Alevi make it possible that Alevis are regarded as an ethnic minority. “So much so that in case of being unable to practice the faith or become a Sunni, being born to an Alevi family is enough to be a member of the community” (Subaşı, 2005: 27).

The fourth reference comes from the Left, related to the articulation of Aleviness with leftist movements in the 1970s. According to this reference Aleviness is a philosophy, a way of life which fed from different cultures, shaped in its adventures on Anatolian soil, which has humanist, left-wing, anti-power characteristics. According to Bilici, the approach which defines Aleviness as a popular movement and an ideology on the side of the oppressed was influenced by the “Liberation Theology” movement of South America in the 1970s and 1980s (1999: 68). The interaction between Alevis and left-wing thought, enlightenment and Marxism, according to Çamuroğlu, plays a different role today, compared to the 1970s. These ideals were not identified with Aleviness by Alevis during that period, they were prioritized with respect to Aleviness. Alevis could even face with the demand that they should abandon their Aleviness. Yet today, the rank-and-file who had lived through this previous interaction claim that “real Aleviness” is nothing but a democratic, progressive, laicist system of thought. In this form, it can even be argued that Aleviness is not much different than the Human Rights Declaration (Çamuroğlu, 1999: 99).

Today, Alevi civil society organizations assumed the leadership to produce and defend such references about Aleviness. Moreover, Alevi associations and foundations are not only executing the opinion leadership of Aleviness, but they are also the vanguards of religious, social and cultural practices and produce

services in order to fulfill socialization and solidarity needs. However, not only these organizations are numerous, but also they are diversified and in conflict in terms of their understanding of Aleviness. This situation harms the reputation of Alevi organizations.

3.1. Is there a Common Denominator of the Positions of Alevi Identity?

The most popular and essential question in ‘Open Aleviness’ period of Aleviness is the question of “What is Aleviness?” This question is an important factor which makes stress on Alevis during this ‘Open Aleviness’ period. Not being able to give a clear answer to this question and propose strong arguments because of not having enough knowledge about Aleviness, many Alevis began to question their identity. The answer of the question “What is Aleviness?” is essential among Alevis in determining their positions in the discussions about Aleviness. Alevis determine the answer of this question – in other words, determine their understanding of Aleviness – according to their other identities, to the social environment they live in and to the characteristics of the circles waiting for the answer of the question “What is Aleviness?”. In this sense, there are various contexts in which this question is asked and these contexts also influence the answers. The answers to the question vary in such a wide range that it is difficult to believe that they talk about the same identity. In this sense, it can be proposed that it is not possible to agree on a common understanding of Aleviness anymore. As we examine in the next chapter, it is even a reality for Alevis themselves today that Alevis are not on the different paths of the same way. The representatives of different positions of Aleviness frequently accuse the others as being assimilated or influenced by other “powers”. Today, for each Alevi, there is an Aleviness position she/he supports and an Aleviness position she/he rejects. As a result, there is not a unique way anymore. Moreover, there are ways falling far from the others and most of the Alevis have not decided which one of the ways they choose. If we classify Aleviness according to the axis of different interpretations of Aleviness, the following are the main positions:

1. **Muslim-Way:** According to Alevis on this way Aleviness and Islam are identical. Aleviness must be lived as an esoteric and sufistic interpretation of Islam.
2. **Syncretic-Way:** Alevis on the Syncretic-Way, primarily aim to preserve the Aleviness tradition as a unique entity. They advocate that Aleviness must be considered as a syncretic belief and culture, which is related with Islam but can be with it.
3. **Irreligious-Way:** For Alevis on this way, Aleviness is a way of life and/or philosophy, and it is not compatible with religion and/or Islam. It must be seen as a culture.

On the other hand, these three positions can be taken by Alevis who are not similar in their experiences of Aleviness and in their interests to Alevi identity. So each way has also differences in itself. Hence, to classify Alevis, a second axis and subcategories are needed to be defined. In other words, even though there is not one way, it is true that each way has ‘a thousand and one’ paths, as the aphorism mentioned above says.

I will come back to the classification of the ways and their paths below, but before doing this; it will be useful to go back to the question “Is there a common denominator of these ways?” Although Alevis have different ways, they share similar sociocultural circumstances since the memories of their shared past and their common life experiences in rural and urban areas are still fresh. Moreover, there are characteristics that make Alevis similar in their linguistic habitus. However, there are not much common points in their Aleviness discourses apart from some generally accepted similarities. What we mean by these generally accepted similarities is the emphasis on “human” which is common to all Alevisms. In their descriptions of Aleviness, almost all of the Alevis I interviewed emphasize “**for us, human comes before**”, “**Aleviness is honesty**”, “**Human love is essential in Aleviness**” and they propose: “**Alevis are modern, secular and Kemalist**”. Moreover, these descriptions do not only belong to the circles who consider Aleviness as a humanist philosophy. It is possible to observe this

emphasis even in the circles with strong Islamic references, but especially for Alevi who consider that there is a weak relation between Aleviness and the religion, this emphasis is the main basis of Aleviness. However, it is difficult to say that this emphasis is a distinguishing characteristic. These can be considered as generally accepted characteristics almost for all belief-based identities. It is difficult that these characteristics have a distinguishing feature, unless they are enriched with a series of rituals or worships or specific ethnic properties. Realizing this fact, Alevi head for either a religious ground related with belief elements of Aleviness or a political ground related with cultural rights of Aleviness. The differences formed with these tendencies make the similarities insignificant and suppress the common points.

The participants of this research referred these to these kind of clichés related with Aleviness, in spite of their different interpretations of Aleviness. The common point in all of these examples –from Murtaza who accepts Islamic way to Haydar who rejects the Islamic characteristic of Aleviness, from Hasan who thinks that Aleviness has taken the good characteristics of Islam and other religions to Onurcan who is sympathetic to Aleviness in spite of his rejection of its religious character and to Derviş whose relation with Aleviness is weak– is the humanist values of Aleviness.

Although Murtaza interprets Aleviness as the essence of Islam, he does not think that belief or traditional values are the first requirements for being an Alevi. For him, to be an Alevi is to obey the rules of the society. For Alevi these rules are given by the motto “eline, beline, diline sahip ol” which summarizes the moral values:

- So, what are the preconditions for being an Alevi in your opinion?
- For me, there are'nt any preconditions. Already there are **societal conditions**, the rules that society had developed through time.
- There is a rule of Aleviness which can clearly be expressed with six words: watch your hand, tongue, loins, food, mate and work. In fact, they are already seen as the **rules of humanity**.⁴⁸

According to Hasan, human love is the basis of Aleviness. Hasan thinks that Aleviness represents this characteristic of Islam. From other religions, Aleviness has taken the value of being human and developed human precedence:

- Aleviness is a philosophy according to me, but a philosophy which is not consisted only of ideas. In it one can find love, affection and pray. Also in Aleviness there is a principle which is stressed at first stage: You do exist, as **the most valuable creature**. The existence of a decent **human being and mankind**. (...) **our value judgments, being human**, in other words, **human perfectness** are at the heart of Aleviness.⁴⁹

For Haydar, what is essential in Aleviness is not belief and/or worship but the centrality of human beings. He interprets Aleviness as a culture, and adds socialist values like fighting against injustice and equality to the emphasis on ‘human beings’:

- What is Aleviness? At first, it something which has **a lot of humanism**. I did not read this from the books. My mom always says, do not ever hurt. This is not a coincidence. This is not something all moms say to their children.
- What do you like most in Aleviness?
- There is a principle called *Enel Hak*. **It means the identification of human and god**. What attaches me to Aleviness is this **over-valuing of human-beings**.
- What are the sacreds of Aleviness?
- **Variety**. Maybe we can relate this with **uneasiness with injustice**. Is it like cem or something? The concepts that feed Aleviness like **equality, humanism** and **Enel Hak** are sacreds of Aleviness for me. I guess I am not that **much a believer**.⁵⁰

Onurcan thinks that the motto of Aleviness is humanism and according to him neither worship nor belief is the main basis of Aleviness:

- What are things that are sacred for Aleviness in your opinion?
- In fact everyone’s response to this question will be the same. **Humanism and showing some humanity**. Hacı Bektaş has a well known phrase: keep your hand, tongue and loins. **Being a free, honest individual**. These are the things that comes to my mind when someone asks of Aleviness. In other words, by Aleviness I do not think of **going to cem and carrying cem ritual, fully fasting in Muharrem or learning to play the bağlama**.⁵¹

“Being modern” comes into prominence in Derviş’s interpretation of Aleviness. According to him, republican values like being modern, progressive, peaceful and favorable and not being discriminating, and moral values like honesty and kindness are the basis of Aleviness:

- What are the pillars of Aleviness?
- According to me **there is no such thing as the pillars of Aleviness**. There are cems if she or he is attending. Besides like in Islam the Muslims must pray or fast, praying is also a must for the Alevis. But according to me **adopting a modern philosophy of life is the most important thing**.
- What is Aleviness in your opinion?
- According to me Aleviness is firstly **being very honest as a human being, then it is modernism, progressivism and being enlightened**. In other words it is about loving

people and loving peace. It is a sect which aims to be **more beneficial to other people.**⁵²

Although Serap confesses that she does not have enough knowledge about Aleviness, she also thinks that Alevis are essentially humanist:

- So, what makes the Alevis different?
- They are so **humanist**. They refrain **from material concerns**. They see the world from a different window. **They know to give.** This is inscribed in their **genetic codings**. Everyone says to me that I am a fairy godmother because I know to give.⁵³

We observe that in Alevis' descriptions of Aleviness, there are common political values like being progressive, liberalistic and intellectual; non-discrimination, and common moral values like being honest and kind. Besides, values like being secular and modern which are characteristic properties of Kemalism can also be observed as the common Aleviness values.

'Human' emphasis of Alevis, who support that Aleviness is the essence of Islam, is related with the heterodox and esoteric interpretation of Islam. The idea behind this interpretation is the identification of human and God. On the other hand, as the Islamic and religious character weaken in an interpretation of Aleviness, the 'human' emphasis depends more on political and/or philosophical values like humanism, progressiveness and equality.

If the main carrier of a belief community is determined by political identities and values like equality, progressiveness and being modern, it is doubtful how long these values will be able to carry without eroding the religious identity. On the other hand, these values should not be seen as insignificant, because they indicate an oppositional position against Sunni Islam for Alevis in their tense alliance with the Turkish Republic. In fact, what Alevis do by saying "we are progressive" is not to 'describe' themselves, but to mean "Sunni Islam is reactionary and we are against it". This characteristic is the unique common point, which can easily be observed among today's Alevis. Moreover, when some Alevis consider other Alevis reactionary, in fact they propose that they are Sunnificated. The emphasis on the moral values is not distinguishing, since they are the values accepted by almost all beliefs.

3.2. Different Ways of Alevis on Aleviness

There are only a few characteristics common to Alevis apart from identification with general “human” values and republican values. On the other hand, there are a variety of differences. The approach to Islam, religion and origin of Aleviness are the main turnsole in differentiation of Aleviness positions. As we mentioned in previous chapter, it can roughly be said that, today there are three “ways” corresponding to the axis of different interpretations on Aleviness of the Alevis:

1. **Muslim-Way:** For Alevis on this way Aleviness and Islam are identical. Aleviness must be lived as an esoteric and sufistic interpretation of Islam. Their references for Aleviness are mostly Islamic. They practice Aleviness according to Islamic references as well. It will be theoretically not trough to say that the only religious dimension of Aleviness is Islam but practically, the dominant charachter of rituals is Islamic. Moreover, the “Muslim Alevis” are more prone to carry the rituals and tradition. Therefore, it can be said that his way is the most **religious** one.
2. **Syncretic-Way:** Alevis on Syncretic-Way advocate Aleviness must be considered as a syncretic belief and culture, which is related with Islam but not restricted with it. They do not deny the Islamic bond of Aleviness. They see Aleviness as the progressive face of Islam.
3. **Irreligious-Way:** For Alevis on this way, Aleviness is a way of life and/or philosophy, and it is not compatible with religion and/or Islam. It must be seen as a culture. They sometimes, especially when Aleviness come to agenda as an issue, find themselves as Aleviness advocates, but in the last instance Aleviness is not a religious identity for them.

Main distinction points in these ways are first of all having tools and terminology based on the philosophy of Islam and Qur'an for defining Aleviness and reflecting these to their experiences with Aleviness, and second, considering and experiencing the religious rituals of Aleviness as “religious”. In this sense, the first category consists of people living an Islamic Aleviness, second category consists

of people trying to live Aleviness as a belief without denying a connection with Islam and the third category consists of people who are contented with being sympathetic to this culture in terms of daily life and human relations.

In fact, most of the Alevis reject to describe Aleviness as a religion. However, this rejection does not result with an agreement on what Aleviness is. For Alevis accepting the Muslim-Way, Islam is a religion and Aleviness is the way. The ones on the Syncretic-Way consider Aleviness as a supra-religious phenomenon or a belief which has taken the good sides of many religions. On the other hand, irreligious Alevis interpret Aleviness as a cultural form and think and/or demand that Aleviness does not have any relation with religious affairs. In fact Alevis on the Muslim-Way are the ones closest to “religion.” In terms of belief in God and praying frequency, the ones in this group are at the top among Alevis. They consider Aleviness as an interpretation of Islam. Actually, they consider it as an interpretation that reveals the essence of Islam. However, even Alevis on this way do not reduce Aleviness to a belief, but they emphasize that Aleviness is exceptional with its cultural and community characteristics. Meanwhile, they resist the idea that Aleviness is a separate religion or belief. This makes their position also ambiguous. For them, on the one hand, Aleviness is not different from Islam in terms of belief, but on the other hand it is a different cultural form. For Alevis on the Syncretic-Way, Aleviness is a special belief and life form fed from many religions. Since preservation of Alevi traditions is the main priority of this position, they reject neither Islamic nor non-Islamic references. However, they are cautious about both references because of the scenarios of “dissolution of Aleviness” both by Islam and leftist politics. Irreligious Alevis explicitly try to separate “religion” and Aleviness, especially Islam and Aleviness. As a result, all three positions do not interpret Aleviness as a religion.

In the meantime, issues like religion and Islam reveal the anxieties of the Alevi categories. The main anxiety of the first category is the erosion and degeneration of the belief system of Aleviness, while the main anxiety of the second and third

category is Sunnification of Aleviness. Yet, through different mechanism these anxieties are common for each categories.

It can be said that the fear of Sunnification of Aleviness is also a concern of first category. The first category has this concern because of differences due to belief and sees Sunnification as an operation of Sunni environment and power. As they position themselves within Islam but against Sunnism, they try to set up their differences from Sunnism. Therefore the Sunnification attempts will destroy this category more than the others although this category is the much closer to Sunni Islam than the other. The concern of the second category stems from the emphasis on Islam in the definition attempts of Aleviness of both Islamic communities and their representatives in state and also Alevis in Muslim-Way. They think that the way of Muslim-Way is a interest based way and Sunnification and/or Islamization of Aleviness is an operation which aims to assimilate Aleviness with a soft transformation. Lastly, for third category this concern may come to agenda even with the existence of the belief dimension. For them the belief dimensions and regarding traditional rituals are part of the Sunnification process and the Alevis who credits such dimensions are in the wrong way.

In the same way, considering Aleviness as the essence of Islam is not only specific to the first category. The first category has this interpretation with Islamic references on esotericism, while there are people from the other categories, who have the similar interpretation with Enlightenment references like humanism and tolerance. Moreover all of first three categories are worried of forgetting and loss of Aleviness. However, attempts to sustain the Aleviness are to be a hegemonic struggle for first and second categories. As the Islamic Alevis try it with religious affairs, the cultural one brings forward the political demands.

Despite the differentiation of the ways, the heterogeneity within the ways is not lost. The aphorism “Way is one, paths are thousand and one” is still valid in the sense that it refers to the variety of paths of different ways. The differentiation of ways and the variety of the paths are also related with the form by which the

Alevis experience Aleviness. Cem rituals, cemhouse activities, NGO activities, Muharrem fasting, *Turbe* visits, watching Alevi TV channels, following the Alevi literature, festivals and funerals are the types of activities through which Aleviness is experienced. The differences in the quantity and the quality of the participation in these activities lead to different interpretations of Aleviness. Other than participating in these activities, factors like living in a region where the population consists mostly of Alevis, having connections with the village and the relatives, having an experience of village life, being married to a Sunni, and factors like age,⁵⁴ education, socioeconomic position, business life and the amount of transfers from Aleviness experiences of the elderly people in the family are variables that determine the preference of one of the ways defined above and the diversity of their paths.

Alevis interpret and experience Aleviness in a wide spectrum in terms of the mentioned variables and participation in the activities defined above. Most of them do not live Aleviness as their first and most important identity, although most of them have positive ideas about Aleviness. The tendency to theorize this as a flexibility provided to its community by Aleviness is prevalent through Alevis.

Other than these three ways described above, there are tendencies which represent two deviations. Both of these deviations depend on the assumption that in the last instance Aleviness is a religion, and not different than Islam. However, while the first deviation rejects Aleviness by giving priority to Islam, claiming that what is real is Islam, the second deviation moves away from Aleviness by claiming that Aleviness is reactionary and not different from Islam. These two deviations serve as references for the positioning of the three ways described. The followers of the first way are anxious about the second deviation –leftist deviation– while the followers of the second way are anxious about the second deviation –Islamization/Sunnification– and both of them determine their positions according to the deviation about which they are anxious. To sum up, a fourth situation close to the third category is the situation of people with Alevi origin who do not have any connection and relation with Aleviness because of their conditions, although

they do not have an intention to reject Aleviness. For these people, Aleviness is a sympathetic and ancient phenomenon, which does not have any place and significance in their life. They are not on any way of Aleviness because of lack of ties and knowledge on Aleviness.

Today, the relation between Aleviness and Islam, and the references related with Alevi history determine the differentiation points among the positions answering the question of what Aleviness is. But if we think about the interests and experiences of Alevis with Aleviness, for a classification of Alevis, to consider only the positions regarding the relation between Islam and Aleviness is not sufficient. Hence, the positioning of Aleviness in daily life must also be considered as a second determinant. If we reconsider the classification above with this perspective, it will be possible to deal with different ways of Alevis in a more distinguishing way. For example, for a person having no connection with Aleviness except having an Alevi origin, none of these ways mean anything. Moreover, there are Alevis, who have the same position regarding the relation between Aleviness and Islam, but have little similarity in experiencing Aleviness. Also, this classification does not include Alevis, who do not accept Aleviness as an identity or see Aleviness as a backward culture or (even if they do not see it as a backward culture and are sympathetic to it) see it as a secondary culture.

I have pointed out before that positioning approaches to Aleviness is one of the determinants in classifying ways of Aleviness and I have mentioned three ways with respect to this axis: Muslim-Way, Syncretic-Way and Irreligious-Way. In this section, I have specified that experiencing Aleviness and/or relation with Aleviness is also an important factor in classifying Aleviness. During my research, I have found opportunities to meet Alevi typologies close to the three positions, as I illustrate below. However, categories other than these also appeared. Hence, although the second axis that we mention overlaps most of the time with the first one and the main categories, it provides a suitable ground to understand the subcategories and the categories that are not included (in other words, to

differentiate the paths). When we consider both of the axes, we categorize the ways differently, and additionally use paths under the ways.

As I have mentioned above, the ones who live Aleviness as a religion most are the ones on the Muslim-Way. This will be the same in our integrative categorization. However, it is possible to talk about different paths on this way. The first path, whose members advocate **“Islamic Aleviness”** consider Aleviness as an esoteric and heterodox interpretation of Islam and try to live appropriate to this understanding. In fact, these Alevis try to live like Alevis living in the rural areas for centuries. The second category in the Muslim-Way is **“Symbolic Islamic Aleviness”**. The Alevis on Symbolic Islamic Aleviness path also accept the position of Muslim-Way considering Aleviness as the essence of Islam, but they do not have an experience appropriate to this understanding. They do not have an intensive traditional practice like the Alevis advocates Islamic Aleviness because of the practical consequences of urban life and/or being detached from the tradition. Their belief and religious knowledge is not as strong as Islamic Aleviness’ Alevis. Although, Islam occupies an important place in their description of Islam, the distinguishing characteristic of their Aleviness is not religious but socio-cultural factors and their histories. Their Aleviness experiences are generally passive.

We will call the second way as Mixed-Way. It embraces the syncretism, but as some irreligious Alevis are closer to syncretic Alevis regarding experiencing Aleviness we will cluster them under the same category. On the other hand some irreligious Alevis will be classified in the third cluster, The Sub-Way. We can talk about two paths of the **Mixed-Way**. One of these paths emphasizes that Aleviness has a socio-cultural characteristic including a belief dimension, which cannot be reduced to Islam. Alevis in this cluster neither reject Islamic references nor pre-Islamic references. What is important for them is making the existing traditions and belief of Aleviness live. We can call this path as **Syncretic Aleviness**. In most general terms, the Alevis in this cluster are the ones who claim the reel Aleviness, but do not reduce it to Islamic references. In fact, what they are interested in is not

whether Aleviness is Islamic or not, but to claim and preserve the existing and known traditions, rituals and worships of Aleviness. On one hand, they believe that the beautiful face of Islam is Aleviness; on the other hand they believe that Aleviness is fed with the beauties of other religions.

The second path of the Mixed-Way is **Anti-Islamic Aleviness**. Anti-Islamic Alevis, claim the existing traditionality and practices of Aleviness as a socio-cultural phenomenon but do not consider them as religious and/or Islamic characteristics. With this understanding, they are similar to a typology, this we describe below as sympathizers of Aleviness, but they differ from this typology with their interest in and closeness to Aleviness. Sympathizers of Aleviness are just sympathizers; they do not have experiences in Aleviness and demands for these experiences. However, Anti-Islamic Alevis have the tendency to organize and participate in the activities and make an economical and political effort for these in order to make Aleviness live and rituals survive, although they believe that Aleviness should get rid of religious elements.

We observe that for Alevis, who do not consider Aleviness as a belief and reject Alevi rituals and traditions apart from their cultural values, Aleviness occupies a very small place in the daily life and Alevi identity is secondary and insignificant. This kind of Aleviness practice is not experienced by only irreligious Alevis. Among some believer and half-believer Alevis, Aleviness may have been erased from daily life. Hence, we need a third category other than Muslim-Way and Mixed-Way which refers to experiencing Aleviness as a subordinate identity. Since it is not a main way, we call it a **Sub-Way** and it is possible to divide this sub-way into two paths. The first one of these is **Loosed Aleviness**. Alevis in this cluster have a Aleviness bond in their history, and they have much or less knowledge about Aleviness. This cluster consists of Alevis, whose relation with Aleviness is weak and are separated from Aleviness since there is no place for Aleviness and Alevis in their daily lives, but they are still sympathetic to Alevis and Aleviness. The **Sympathized Aleviness**, the second path, consists of Alevis who have no connection with the community life because of the environment they

are born in or their education level and/or shift in their socio-economical status. These people are generally proud of their relation with Aleviness. However, according to them Aleviness is a philosophical and mystical phenomenon rather than a religious one. Hence, even though they do not have any experiences related with Aleviness, they are still sympathetic to Alevis.

It is possible to talk about three sets among the Alevis who are on a way we call “**Non-way**” since it is not a Aleviness way and who cannot be described with Islamic or religious references and called by us “ex-Alevis” as they have a connection with Aleviness regarding to their histories and origins. The first of these sets consists of “**Rejected Aleviness**”. The Alevis in this cluster have/had a connection with Aleviness but reject the existence of Aleviness in their daily life. For the people in this set, Aleviness which has become secondary in some period of their lives has today lost its identity characteristic almost completely and decisively. The second set consists of Alevis choosing Sunnism and rejecting the distinction between Aleviness and Sunnism. This **Sunnified Aleviness** is the output of the famous assimilation attempts. The last path of ex-Alevis is the “**Indifference**”. The ones in this cluster have no connection with Aleviness both in theory and practice and have no Alevi identity in any period of their lives, although they have Alevi origins. As a result, ways and paths can be clustered as such:

1. Muslim-Way:
 - a. Islamic Aleviness
 - b. Symbolic Islamic Aleviness
2. Mixed-Way:
 - a. Syncretic Aleviness
 - b. Anti-Islamic Aleviness
3. Sub-Way:
 - a. Loosed Aleviness
 - b. Sympathized Aleviness
4. Non-way
 - a. Rejected Aleviness

- b. Sunnified Aleviness
- c. Indifference

Below, I give some examples of a variety of situations depending on these differences. I have to mention that there are ones who are clear about the way they follow, while there are also ones who are hesitant about their situation and the way they follow. Among these positions, I give a only few examples of people with Alevi origin who do not carry Alevi identity and –as the Alevis say– who are assimilated or Sunnificated. I mostly give examples of people who consider themselves as Alevis. That is because the ones who reject their Alevi identity do not represent any kind of Aleviness that can be depicted.

3.2.1. Muslim-Way

Alevis who adopt an Islamic Aleviness and prefer to call their belief Alevi Islam, experience Aleviness in a more traditional way and are more loyal to the rituals than other Alevis. These Alevis, who describe Aleviness with Islamic references emphasize and are interested in heterodox and mystical Islam. According to them, Islam takes a modern and contemporary form with Aleviness. The motivation to prove that they are in fact Muslims –this is a consequence of the previous ages in which Aleviness was defined outside Islam– still continues for them.

The main proposition of this way is that “Aleviness is the essence of Islam and it is an esoteric (batini) and sufistic interpretation of Islam”. According to this interpretation, Aleviness is the real Islam. Alevis live the essence of Islam, while the other sects are formalist. This essence consists of an esoteric interpretation and a sufistic belief. This conception of Aleviness is formed with references not only to St. Ali and Ehl-i Beyt, but also to Quran, St. Muhammed and history of Islam.

Although their references to Islam are very strong, they also keep a distance with the Sunni version, which they see as reactionary, like the other Alevis who are not

Islamic. They believe that Aleviness is the essence of Islam, and unlike Sunni Islam, which is characterized by reaction and formalism in faith, the innate values like modernism, humanism, the love of God are embedded in Aleviness. This attitude, makes Aleviness closer to Islam, but also it results with a step back because of its hesitant character. In this sense, on one hand these Alevis try to keep a distance with Sunni Islam, but on the other hand most of them are being accused of being reactionary and/or assimilated by the other Alevis.

We mention two paths on the Muslim-Way: Islamic Aleviness and Symbolic Islamic Aleviness. Both of these clusters consist of Alevis accepting the frame described above. But the first one of these clusters consists of Alevis who have internalized this frame and they live this as a faith experience. The second cluster consists of Alevis, whose Islamic position is an extension of the sociocultural structure they have been carrying from past to present and it is quality is restricted with. What remains from the past.

3.2.1.1. Islamic Aleviness

As mentioned before the typical reflex of the Alevis on Islamic Aleviness (Muslim Alevis) path is defending that Alevis are also Muslims for defining Aleviness. Murtaza and Cafer are typical examples of this way. Both of them have adequate knowledge and a clear attitude. They respect on traditions and rituals of Alevis and they are also knowledgeable in these areas.

Murtaza is one of those who interpret Aleviness as the essence of Islam, but he is not comfortable with the representatives and symbolic character of Aleviness. He emphasize on the Batini and sufistic interpretation. He makes references to Quran and Islam. According to him, Aleviness is not lived as it should be. Thus, his participation level to Alevi rituals and activities is low contrary to his Aleviness interpretation.

- I do not even use the term Aleviness. I say Islam. For me Aleviness is **Islam itself**.
- So, what is the most important thing that differs the Sunnis from the Alevis?
- Our point of view. What like most about Aleviness is its living of the **Sufi aspect of Islam**, whereas in Sunnism there is the rules of the Sheri'a. This is the biggest difference

between us. **We believe in the living Quran**, they to the normal. We believe that the human is also a Quran. We defend that living Quran comes first.⁵⁵

Murtaza, was born in 1979 in Erzincan. He lives in Istanbul since he was five years old. He is a high school graduate. He is in the textile business, a merchant. From time to time he visits his village in Erzincan. Where he lives in Istanbul is an Alevi neighborhood. His village people also live there. Most of his social environment is occupied by Alevi.

Murtaza defines himself as an Alevi, and does not need to hide his identity. He likes the Alevi way of life, and since he comes from a dede lineage, he says that he was raised up accordingly. At times, Murtaza presents himself as a “dede”. His uncle practically serves in the community as a dede. According to him, Aleviness is the “Turkishness” of Islam, it is even the very essence of Islam. He even prefers using the word “Islam” instead of “Aleviness”. However, when he speaks, he always uses “Aleviness” or “Islam of Aleviness”. For him, the difference between Aleviness and Sunnism is the practice of the elements of *tasavvuf*. He finds Arabs as fundamentalist and rigid. He thinks that the “real face of Quran” lies in Aleviness. According to him, St. Ali was a good Muslim, but should not have a very special place. Ali should not be given more importance than St. Muhammed.

Though he considers himself a dede, he does not have a musahib, he thinks that the application of this institution difficult. He fasts during Muharrem, participates in cem rituals whenever he can, but mentions that he does not try hard to follow such practices regularly, because in Aleviness regular religious practice is not a must. He does not like the cems he joined or watched at the TV. What disturbs him is that when cem is tried to be formalized and rules have been imposed upon it it loses its sincerity. He supports the trend that cemhouses are also utilized as educatory facilities, besides being religious centers. Despite his own emphasis on being a dede, he regards the institution as useless today. In the old times, dedes were mediums of communication between villages; but today access to information is much easier, thus dedes lost their previous importance. They have no roles left other than in the cem.

He does not think that “being an Alevi” has special requirements. According to him the belief that “Aleviness is acquired by birth” was produced under repression and fear. He thinks that a faith whose essence is Islam should be open to everybody.

Murtaza was introduced to Aleviness at an early age, because he came from a dede lineage. While many Alevis were ignorant about Aleviness and hid their identities around him, which he complains about, he was well trained by his uncle (who is a dede). He never kept his identity secret, and says that he paid the price for that: He was forced to practice *namaz* in religion classes, quarreled and fought with his friends.

According to him Aleviness has degenerated in the last decades, it began to disappear. Many Alevis keep their identities secret or are Sunnified. The most important problem of the Alevi community today, he thinks, that they are not recognized by the state. This problem is alleviated by the fact that Alevis are disorganized among themselves. Existing associations and structures are weak and being manipulated.

Cafer is one of those who interpret Aleviness as the essence of Islam. He emphasizes on the Batiniyya. He often makes references to Islam and Quran. He thinks that Aleviness has a philosophical dimension. But he is anxious of the danger of Sunnification. He maintains the participation in the activities of the unions and cemhouses.

- Defining Aleviness is so important. Aleviness is our understanding of Alevi Islam, is a **sufi interpretation of Quran**. There are apparent (*zahiri*) and hidden (*batini*) meanings in Quran. The apparent aspect is about knowing the 666 verses of Quran. This is the apparent and easily seen aspect. On the other hand there is the process of giving meaning to what you read and this is the **hidden aspect**. *Sufism* leans on this aspect, prioritizes it. It does not deal with form but with fitting yourself to that form and performing it at the same time. Aleviness is an interpretation of Quran which has been brought us by the prophet Mohammed and which is the order and command of Islam.
- Is Aleviness a part of Islam?
- **It is not a part but the essence of Islam. Aleviness is Islamism itself.** In Aleviness we do not make a distinction between duty and the Sunna like our Sunni brothers do. Rather we have style. It is finding ways of living and praying that fit to the requirements of age by adopting the life and lie-style of our prophet Mohammed and Ehli Beyt.

- I believe that we should unite against the mentality which proposes that Aleviness is outside Islam. I also contend that I could never be by their side and I believe that no one should.⁵⁶

Cafer was born in 1958, in a village of Tokat. He was educated in Sivas and started to work there, as a civil servant in State Railroads Directorate. In 1984 he was assigned to Istanbul and retired there. He lives in Küçükarmutlu, where Alevis are concentrated. Those from his village who live in Istanbul all live in the same neighborhood. Cafer states that in the neighborhood, they continue their lives in the village. Each year he spends at least 20 days in his village. He has strong relations with his village and villagers. Except at work, Alevis dominate his social life.

Cafer considers himself an Alevi, on the condition that one has to define Aleviness properly. He talks about Aleviness as “Alevi Islam approach”, and as the interpretation of Quran in terms of *tasavvuf*. He considers Aleviness not as part of Islam, but as the very essence of Islam. In other words, he believes that Aleviness gives priority to the esoteric, rather than apparent interpretation of the Quran. Moreover, he states that the Anatolian culture was added to this interpretation, thus Aleviness was not under Arab influence. Aleviness basically means that religion adopts to contemporary conditions. The most important difference of Alevis from Sunnis is their religious practice in their mother tongue (instead of Arabic), and that they read into the essence of the Quran. Alevis’ faith in Allah is not built upon fear but upon love.

Cafer considers Muhammed, his Ehli Beyt and Ali as the most important figures of Aleviness. According to him, the most sacred things in Aleviness is the Quran and Ehli Beyt. Except these two, defining other sacred things would be blasphemous. He does not think that the precondition for being an Alevi is being born to Alevi parents. One must also internalize and embrace the faith.

Cafer fulfills the requirements of Aleviness in the framework he defines. He was raised up in a village where Bektashism was strong, and all surrounding villages were also Alevi. So he was educated by dedes not only of his village, but also of

other villages. Aleviness was almost inscribed upon his flesh during those years in the village. For this reason, his faith is strong. He regularly fasts during Muharrem. He thinks namaz means praying and does not fast during Ramazan. He has been participating in cems whenever he can for long years. Since he comes from a Bektashi hearth and is a “dede”, sometimes he conducts the cem ritual. He also chairs a branch of the Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Association, and is a member of the neighborhood branch of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Association. Cafer complains about TV channels, stating that Aleviness is not known, that there is senseless talk about it, and that some people “try to appear pretty” on screen, using Aleviness.

He never hid his identity, but paid the price. He states that once, though he deserved a directoral position, he was not given it because of his Alevi identity, and thus he had to retire early. He further complains that because his neighborhood is Alevi, the municipality does not bring in enough services.

He thinks that Aleviness gained momentum and found itself after July 2, 1993. Alevis are not a minority in the sense defined by EU, they are one of the founding elements of the Anatolian geography since the time of Selchuks. However, Alevis are mostly assimilated, mosques have been forced upon villages, Yörüks and Tahtacıs have been Sunnified – they stay culturally Alevi, but lost their faiths. Including his village, villages fell afar off Aleviness; cems are no longer organized and are only conducted through cemhouses of large cities like Istanbul.

At one level these Alevis on **Islamic Aleviness path** are Alevis who accept and try to experience Aleviness as it is described theoretically. As it is understood, these people have a rich and dense Aleviness experience and they live in an Alevi community. They are small in number, because it is a difficult identity to realize in urban life. Actually, the factors contaminating the Aleviness of the other Alevis are also effective for them. Thus, their experiencing of Aleviness is also limited at practical level. What they could do consists of criticism declaring that the existing applications are not appropriate to the essence. They are the ones who are most

uncomfortable with where Aleviness is going, because the applications they could realize are limited and Aleviness that they comprehend seems to be vanishing. The motivation of the Muslim Alevis to refer to Islamic references originates from the attempt to prove that Alevis are Muslims. This leads some of them to come closer to Islam, even to Sunni Islam.

3.2.1.2. Symbolic Islamic Aleviness

The second typical group in Muslim-Way consists of people, who have the feeling that Aleviness is in Islam, but they do not know and follow the adequate references. Moreover, they do not reconstruct these references apart from some historical narratives, and they are not much familiar with the religious rituals of Aleviness, which either may be a consequence of their conditions or their choices. Different from Muslim Alevis, they use some references to Islamic history but do not prefer referring to Quran. Ali, Rıza, Döndü and Gül are typical examples of this group.

Ali considers Aleviness as a sect of Islam and as the section of the people who are essentially accepting Islam. But he does not make references to Quran and Islam, rather he only makes references to the history of Islam. His participation in the activities and rituals is restricted. He emphasizes that the struggle to make a living is the main concern.

- **The ones who say that Alevis are not Muslim, are themselves not Muslim.** This is my opinion. They do not know the real Islam. They do not know who the real Muslim is.
- What about Ali?
- Ali is the master of the Alevis and is the one **who really disseminated Islam.** Do not bother the Muslim stance of the Sunnis. They become Muslim for their fear of Zülfikar. They do not like Ali.⁵⁷

Ali was born in Antalya, in 1950, finished high school and “management branch” in Adana. Then he returned to Antalya and worked as a forest cutter until 1990. In 1991, he was employed in a marble factory and was retired 3 years ago. He still works, though. They come from the Tahtacı lineage. Originally they are from Manavgat, his family migrated to Antalya in 1958. He still has relatives in

Manavgat but most of them live in Ali's neighborhood. There are few non-Alevi families in the neighborhood. Ali does not socialize much with his relatives, says that everybody is busy earning their lives.

He defines himself as an Alevi and he is proud of it. If one says he is an Alevi, that should mean that he must not hide his identity. Ali never had to hide his Aleviness. Not even during military service. Since he plays bağlama, everyone knew who he was. Yet because he was leftist and Alevi, he fought with the MHP supporters a lot. He complains that his children do not understand Aleviness, that there is no one around to inform about Aleviness.

According to Ali, Aleviness comes from birth. The best thing about it is honesty. Aleviness means love, friendship, brotherhood. On the other hand, it should not be seen outside Islam, it is a denomination of Islam. "The true Muslimhood is Aleviness." And St. Ali is the saint of Alevis and the person who spread Muslimhood.

Ali used to regularly attend the cems in the neighborhood, but for the last five years, it has not been organized. He says that previous practices are abandoned. He thinks that Alevis are not as passionate as they were.

He fasts regularly during Muharrem. He does not find visits to sacred places appropriate, so does not participate in the Abdal Musa festivals. He is against the idea that dedes should be assigned, because being a dede comes from one's lineage. He is not informed about Alevi associations. He mentions that he cannot participate because he has to earn his living.

Rıza defines Aleviness inside Islam. He does not make references to Quran. He thinks that Aleviness is different in terms of religious practices from other Islamic sects. His knowledge about Aleviness is weak and his level of participation in the rituals is low.

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- Yes.
- So what is Aleviness for you as you experience it?
- I mostly try to obtain information through what has been told to me by our elders rather than books. It has been told to us that Alevis are the descendants of Ali's descent. Ali himself is the son of prophet Mohamed's uncle. I ask to my elders how these all come from. They said that Aleviness emerged because prophet Mohamed held the meetings in Ali's house since it was big. They said that Aleviness first emerged there.
- Do you consider Aleviness a religion?
- No
- Why?
- Aleviness is, in the last instance, a kind of Islam. We say thank god we are Muslims. It is a belief rather than a religion.⁵⁸

Rıza is from a village in Erzurum, born there in 1980, lived there until he was 11. They moved to Izmir 12-13 years ago. They can visit their village once every 3-4 years. Yet they have many of their villagers in their Izmir neighborhood, about 300-400 households, and most of them are relatives. He has strong family ties, socializes mostly with his relatives.

Rıza never hid his Aleviness. Sometimes he argued with people about his identity, but never had problems. He says he is an Alevi because of his leftism. But in fact the main determinant, he says, was the Alevi culture of his parents. The moral values propagated by Alevis are very important for him. Aleviness is not a religion, for the religion is Islam. Aleviness is distinct from Sunnism in terms of practices. What he most likes in Aleviness are the songs and the semahs. These things are most sacred for him.

The most important Alevi figures: St. Ali, Pir Sultan Abdal, "37 souls" killed in Sivas, poets like Muhlis Akarsu, Aşık Mahsuni. St. Ali symbolizes honesty for him. The main requirement of Aleviness is being honest. Rıza does not fast during Muharrem, behaves as he likes. He does not know about *musahiplik*. He joined some cems, but in general he does not practice.

Döndü is one of those, who believe that Aleviness is just Islam itself. She thinks that humanism is strong in Islam. She does not make references to Islam and Quran. She emphasizes on not being "fanatic". Both his knowledge about Aleviness and his participation in Alevi activities and rituals are restricted.

- So, do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- I do. I try to, in fact. I try to move in that direction.
- Is Aleviness a religion?
- It is a sect.
- **Is it a part of Islam.**
- Of course it is, **it is Islam itself.**
- Why?
- Because, Ali is the closest to Prophet Muhammed. **It is the Alevi who embrace Islam best.**⁵⁹

Döndü is from a village in Amasya. Born in 1980, she lived in the village until she was 12. They came to Istanbul in 1992. She finished secondary and high school externally. She is currently unemployed. She went to her village once since she came to Istanbul. She is not seeing her relatives much, except her aunt or uncle. None of her friends are Alevi. She does not talk about Aleviness with her friends.

She considers herself Alevi, because her lineage is Alevi. She defines Aleviness as “being a human like a human”. For her, Aleviness is Islam itself, because Ali was closest to Muhammed. The most important difference of Aleviness from Sunnism is the belief in Ali. Moreover, Alevi have stronger faith and their love of people is more emphasized.

She thinks that the most sacred thing about Aleviness is the love of humans. Aleviness was founded on humanism. So the main requirement of being an Alevi is being a human (*insan gibi insane olmak*). The first Alevi activity that comes to her mind is semah. In her childhood, she joined many cems because of her family’s lineage. She is also trying to participate cems in Istanbul; but very irregularly, because she lives very far to the cemhouse. She does not fast during Muharrem. She thinks that young people are distancing themselves from Aleviness.

Gül is one of those who define Aleviness inside Islam. What she likes about Alevi is their comparative easygoing nature. She has limited knowledge on Aleviness and limited participation in the Alevi activities and rituals.

- So, is Aleviness a part of Islam?
- I do think so.
- How do you establish the connection when you say that it is a part of Islam?

- Because it does not claim the opposite of the book. For example they also have prayers. To tell the truth it adopts the book as it is. Because of that, for instance, it did not accept the **Quran** I would not have considered it a part of Islam.
- So what is the meaning of Prophet Ali for you?
- Prophet Ali, for me, you know, a prophet. The head of Alevi or the primary defender of Alevi, something like that. In other words, the first Alevi, Ali ⁶⁰

Gül is from a central village of Urfa, born in 1974. She lived in various cities like Antep, Adıyaman because of her father's occupancy. She is a high school graduate, married and unemployed. She lives in Istanbul since finishing high school. At first she used to visit her village, but no more. There are Alevi in her social environment, but she knows mostly her relatives, has very few friends.

She defines herself as an Alevi. She thinks that Aleviness is respect for other people. It is a simple faith suitable for her life style, not a religion, but a way of life. Aleviness is a part of Islam, but Sunnis exaggerate religion, tend towards showing off their faith. Whereas what she likes about Alevi is their comparative easygoing nature.

She sometimes joins cems, but lately she was unable to attend because she lives far. Her parents regularly attend cems. She does not fast during Muharrem, but says that her parents do. She never hid her Aleviness, she did not need to, since she rarely went out. She observed that Alevi in Istanbul were more comfortable, more open. She likes the cemhouse services like charity, trainings and dinners. She also liked the dedes she met because they were young and conscious.

Like Muslim Alevi, **Alevi on Symbolic Islamic Aleviness path** contact with Aleviness is relatively dense, but their difference is that their experience of Aleviness is somehow interrupted and weak, and their knowledge about Aleviness is diminished. In any case, they still continue to preserve the assumption that Aleviness is the essence of Islam. However, since their contact with Aleviness is weak and interrupted, they are partially far from defending Aleviness through Islamic and Quranic references. Instead of that, like the Alevi on the Mixed-Way, they argue that Aleviness is an Islamic identity highlighting values like humanism, love and tolerance. Their Aleviness is socio-cultural more than religious. On the

other hand, their Alevi identity is more superficial. Their knowledge about Aleviness is limited and their defense of Aleviness is weak. They are in an Aleviness situation which can easily be transformed into different forms according to their social environments. The transition from this category to the Mixed-Way is very common.

3.2.2. Mixed-Way

According to followers of the Mixed-Way, Aleviness is a syncretic belief and culture, which is related with Islam but not restricted with it. Aleviness is a culture that has a philosophical aspect, but its belief and ritualistic dimensions should not be denied and they should be lived.

Alevis, who position themselves against reactionary and religious fanaticism and relate these with Islam are dissatisfied with being considered in Islam and even being related with Islam. This attitude goes so far to denial. Even the ones who highlight the traditional sides of Aleviness are affected by this denial tendency. Rather than the “religious” and “belief” dimensions, the cultural, philosophical and/or artistic dimensions of the rituals and practices are emphasized. The connection of Aleviness and Islam in terms of belief is constructed by highlighting humanism, tolerance, love of God and some moral values and most of the time by giving references to the other culture and belief systems. We can talk about two paths on the Mixed-Way: Syncretic Aleviness and Anti-Islamic Aleviness.

3.2.2.1. Syncretic Aleviness

The first path of Mixed-Way, **Syncretic Aleviness**, consists of people, who relate Aleviness with Islam like the followers of the Muslim-Way. But the difference is in referring to values like human love, modernism, progressiveness instead of referring to Islam and Quran. The relation with Islam depends on the assumption that the essence of Islam is human love and tolerance. Moreover, for them, Islam is

not the only reference point for Aleviness, but Aleviness is also inspired by other religions and beliefs. They sometimes define Aleviness as a belief located above all religions. In this manner Aleviness is not only a religion but also a socio-cultural lifestyle. Hasan, Sultan and Naciye are our examples for this cluster.

Hasan interpret Aleviness as the essence of Islam. But he thinks that Aleviness is not a religious phenomenon, rather it is philosophical; and this philosophy does not consist only of ideas, it also includes love and worship. According to him, it is the contemporary face of Islam depending on love of God. He does not participate in Alevi activities and rituals. He thinks that participation is not necessary.

- So, what is Aleviness for you, how do you define it?
- For me it is a philosophy, but a philosophy which is not consisted only of ideas. In it one can find love, affection and pray.
- So, can we talk of a shared Alevi belief?
- There is one thing: of course there is something in common. It is true for all religions. My concept of rightness, leave aside Aleviness, is this: **Bring me the four major books**, and define the intersection points of all: A, B, C and D. This is the truth in my perspective, since it is repeatedly stressed. But these are very simple things, things we all know; being clean, good, the right of the subjects, **one can find these also in Aleviness.**
- ...
- Can we say that Aleviness is an Islamic way of belief?
- Of course. **Islamic, Christian, Judaist.** There is one thing important for me: **There are no concepts in Aleviness which are against religious belief. They say you cannot pray with saz, dances and semah. For me, you can.**
- ...
- "If Islam is a religion which is open to innovations, if it is the dominant and the most advanced religion now, **what makes Islam Islam, is Aleviness.**"
- I think [The relationship between Islam and Aleviness] is so smooth. Because, **what modernizes Islam is Aleviness.** . . . Like in every religion there is closeness in Islam, a cycle in other words. It does not want to break this cycle. It is Aleviness which will help Islam to break that cycle, what will modernize it.⁶¹

Hasan was born in Ankara in 1980, lives in Samsun for his undergraduate studies. His father is from a Kırıkkale Keskin village and mother from a village of Malatya. Throughout his whole life, he visited his father's village 3-4 times. His relatives live in Ankara and he sees most of them.

He proudly defines himself as an Alevi. What is distinctive about Aleviness is the "absence of fear of Allah", where faith is based upon love of Allah. Aleviness is a philosophy, but it is not only made up of ideas. There is love and practice in it, and most importantly, there is no force or imposition in it.

For Hasan Aleviness is not a religion, but is in harmony with religious beliefs. It is different than other religions in that it does not question the individual. Yet Aleviness is also a part of Islam, it is the modern face of Islam. According to Hasan there are no blood requirements for Aleviness. Its requirements are stated by him as such: “You have to be the master of your hand, your tongue, your crotch. You will not lie, you will not steal, you will not molest others.” The most important Alevi problems are listed as such: lack of expressing themselves, inability to unite and being manipulated.

Hasan wants to carry out religious practices but says that he could not. He watched “divx” recordings of cems broadcasted on TV channels. He thinks that while participation is important, formalism is unnecessary. He likes the liberty in deciding whether to participate or not.

He is respectful of Alevi figures, but one should not glorify them. He thinks that the dede institution was functional for the era when communication was limited. It was through dedes that Alevis living in different regions could interact before. But it should not be passed on from father to son, dedes should know the way, and for that to happen, education and scientific knowledge is required. For Hasan, Alevis started to express themselves more freely, began to declare who they are. Yet nobody teaches them Aleviness, there is a problem of transmitting knowledge. Hasan contends that Alevis are closer to the left, because they do not idolize men. He was never wronged for being an Alevi. The worst thing he experienced was that he had to leave his girl friend because he was Alevi.

He thinks that Aleviness should be taught in religion courses and the Directorate of Religious Affairs should spare Alevis a budget. But cemhouses must not only be used as places of worshipping, but also be established as cultural centers. He is disturbed when people drink rakı in cems. He thinks that there is danger of corruption in Aleviness. This corruption, he fears, might divide Alevis further. He is also worried about the increasing popularity of Aleviness, which he thinks

occurs because Alevi are being manipulated. Alevi he knows also share this fear. He complains about self-interestedness of Alevi associations.

Sultan argues that Aleviness is neither a religion, nor a value. It is a part of Islam, but it is more than that. It stands above religions, and its motto is humanity. She participates in Alevi activities and rituals whenever she has an opportunity.

- Do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- Yes, of course.
- I see Aleviness as an **aggregate of all the things that have been resided from Shamanism. In Aleviness you can find influences from everything, Shamanism, Buddhism et cetera.** In other words I see it as an **aggregate of these.**
- Is Aleviness a sect?
- Not exactly. I see it as a culture. The way of behavior and the point of that is unique to us cannot be found in any other religion, or in anything. It is something like **above religions. Not a religion, but as if we are at the top of the religions.**
- We are at a higher point, from our point of view. For instance, even an atheist Alevi says that he loves Prophet Ali. Why. Prophet Ali is a humanist human being, by his thoughts, because he approaches humanity to everyone from an equal point.⁶²

Sultan is from Erzincan, born in 1960. She lived in the village for 9 years and then moved to Istanbul. After finishing college, she began working as an accountant. She never went back to her village after moving to Istanbul. She meets her relatives in Istanbul from time to time. Non-Alevi are mostly the ones that she finds in her social environment.

She defines herself as an Alevi. She thinks “universally”, “humanistically”, and does not emphasize religion. According to her, Aleviness means locating humans and humanity above everything. She sees Aleviness not as a religion, but as a ritual. She does not take Aleviness as a denomination; it is a culture standing above all religions. There are influences from Shamanism, Buddhism, also from parts of Islam. St. Ali is the symbol of Aleviness because of his trustworthy character.

According to her, the main condition for being an Alevi is being human. She does not think that Aleviness is acquired by birth. One does not need to be born “Alevi” in order to be Alevi. Being a good person is the most important requirement.

Sultan sometimes fasts during Muharrem. She attends cems with her friends, “if it suits them”. In her childhood, her uncle told her about Aleviness, Alevi rituals and

stories. She never hid her identity. Except rare slanders, she did not experience grievances. She thinks that today, Alevi do not hide themselves, they began to express themselves freely.

She complains about the disunity among the Alevi. She does not think that existence of over 400 Alevi organizations is appropriate. She does not like the Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Association, where she attends cems. She complains about being unable to access satisfactory resources and informed persons.

The most important Alevi problem is that parents do not teach Aleviness. There are good cemhouses, providing good services, but there are also those who have gone beyond their purposes. The dede institution has lost its function and is commercialized.

Naciye complains about the problems related to the cemhouses. She is against the definitions which locate Aleviness within Islam, but she respects the rituals of Aleviness and struggles to sustain these through Alevi Associations.

- How do you define Aleviness, what is Aleviness according to you?
- In my opinion Aleviness is **cultural**. I also see as a **religion**. As we have said before there are bigots in Aleviness also, but not too much. I see it that way, there are, but not so much.⁶³

Naciye is 48 years old, a housewife from Sivas. She was born and raised in Ankara but lives Antalya. She is the director of a branch of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Association. She has no connections with her village; she visited there only 3 times in her whole life. Most of her relatives are in Antalya, but she cannot see them much. There are not many Alevi close to her; she has many non-Alevi friends.

She did not learn about Aleviness in her family. She extrapolated by herself, from the music listened in the house, from the expressions used, etc. Her family did not talk about Aleviness, until the topic of marriage to a Sunni family was raised. She defines herself as an Alevi; Aleviness for her is being modern, not being

reactionary. The best aspect of Aleviness is its modernism, its stand against bigotry. According to her, Alevis prefer the left because they are humans first.

Aleviness is a philosophical fact, not religious. She has faith in Allah, but does not consider herself Muslim. According to her St. Ali is the most important figure in Aleviness. Naciye does not hide her Aleviness. She was not wronged because of her identity. However, some of her neighbors who did not know that she was Alevi and spoke about Aleviness negatively (e.g., “Alevis never take a bath”), which made her uncomfortable.

According to Naciye Aleviness comes from birth. One cannot be an Alevi if one is not born to Alevi parents. She does not think there are requirements in Aleviness. She attended cem once. That time, she had a knee ache, and complained about being unable to sit on chairs. For this reason she demands that cem should be modernized. At one time, she attended a Hacı Bektaş festival.

She is directing a branch of the Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli association, but does not know about other organizations. She also does not know what her organization’s aims are and how it differs from other Alevi organizations. For her the most important Alevi problem is the lack of cemhouses. She complains that they cannot collect donations like people do for mosques. She thinks that Alevis are more open and no longer under threat.

Like the ones on the Muslim-Way, **Alevis on Syncretic Aleviness path** have relatively strong ties with Aleviness. Their difference is that, they do not consider Aleviness only an Islamic sect or denomination, but as a belief which has taken the good sides of Islam but gone beyond it by having been enriched by other religions and belief systems. Hence, they differ from both paths of Muslim-Way. They do not try to describe Aleviness in terms of Quran and other Islamic references like Muslim Alevis do. Their curiosity, interest and experience in Aleviness are more compared with Alevis on Symbolic Islamic Aleviness. The position of Syncretic Alevis who want to preserve and live the essence of Aleviness is generally

temporary. They have the potential to transform into both Muslim Alevi and Anti-Islamic Alevi according to their other identities and social environments. If they are interested in esotericism and mysticism at a philosophical level and they have a social environment consisting of pious Alevi and Muslims, they get closer to Muslim Alevi, because they need to reveal the common denominator of Islam and Aleviness. On the other hand, if they have interactions with secular and/or democratic people during the education or at work, they try to transform their existing belief system to a philosophical/cultural ground, since they need to emphasize those sides of Aleviness which are not “reactionary” and “superstitious” and they move away from Islamic emphasis. However, since the potential of socializing in the second form is more likely, it can be said that the transformation is generally towards the anti-Islamic direction.

3.2.2.2. Anti-Islamic Alevi

The second path in this way consists of those who do not define Aleviness inside Islam and who emphasize the modernism of Aleviness. Although they do not reject the Islamic origin, they are not pleased with the ties with Islam. The ones in this cluster think that it is necessary to claim the tradition and to provide the continuity of the rituals and the worship, in spite of their Islamic references. Sevim, Deniz, Onurcan and Haydar are examples of this group. These are especially young Alevi who are interested in Aleviness

Sevim does not believe that Aleviness is a part of Islam. She interprets Aleviness as a modern belief and philosophy, which borrows humanistic elements from all religions, one of which is Islam. She is trying to participate in the Alevi activities and rituals in spite of their religious characters.

- Do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- **I do define, but I consider Aleviness more as a philosophical thought, a lifestyle.** Not something as I am a Muslim. I am an Alevi who adopts the philosophy and way of life of Aleviness.
- Is Aleviness a religion for you?
- There is something like that. I do consider it as such: Aleviness is **a way of life which borrowed from all religions the aspects that are unique for human beings.**⁶⁴

Sevim is from Sivas, born in a village in 1986, lived there until she was one years old. Later, she lived in Ankara until 4th grade, and she has been living in İzmir since 1994. She is a university student, receiving management training. Her grand parents still live in the village, so they go there once every year. She is a member of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Association, vice-chairman of its Youth Branch, and also is an active participant of the association's cemhouse. Including his father and many members of the family are members of such associations.

Sevim considers herself as an Alevi, “but”, she believes that Aleviness is “more of a philosophical thought”, “a way of life”. She defines Aleviness as “loving people because they are people”. Thus Aleviness for her is not a religion, but contains “every religions's humanistic aspects”. In this sense, it is not part of Islam. It is also not a denomination, because “forcing Aleviness into rigid models, certain limits” is wrong. What she likes most in Aleviness is the equality between men and women. According to her, to be an Alevi, it is not enough to come from Alevi parents, one should also be in control of one's “hand, tongue, and loin”. Sevim does not fast during Muharrem, she thinks she cannot fulfill its conditions. She participates in the association's cem rituals and is part of the semah team. She says that dedes are responsible for passing over Alevi culture.

For Sevim the most important figures of Aleviness are Nesimi, Pir Sultan, Hacı Bektaş-i Veli, not St. Ali as most people would say. She mentions that she had to hide her Alevi identity during high school years. Otherwise she says that she would not be able to pass some of the courses. According to her every 5 or 6 people out of 10 in Turkey are Alevis. Thus it is wrong to claim that Alevis are a minority.

She thinks that an Aleviness different than that experienced in villages has proliferated in cities. Unlike the religious emphasis in the rural side, urban Aleviness is more relaxed. Those who “embrace Aleviness with very harsh rules” are being moved away from Aleviness. She considers herself closer to the modern Alevis.

Deniz does not approve the identification of Aleviness with Islam. According to her, Aleviness is tolerant and open, like a way of life and philosophy. She thinks that the Alevi activities and rituals are important, and she tries to participate in them.

- Do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- Of course I do, according **to the Aleviness in my perception.**
- Do you think that Aleviness is a part of Islam?
- **It is, but I do not like it to be as such,** at least I think like that, I do not feel that way. When you say Islam it connotes different things. When you say Aleviness far different things.⁶⁵

Deniz is a college graduate, working as an accountant. She was born in 1981, in a village of Adıyaman and grew up there. She lives in Istanbul since secondary school. She visits her grandparents in the village every 2-3 years. She lives in an Alevi neighborhood and Alevis occupy her social life. Yet non-Alevis and Alevis are equal in number among her friends.

She defines herself as an Alevi, but she is not sure whether her definition is Aleviness, she has her own understanding. She named her “way of life” Aleviness. This way of life, according to her, is free, where she can behave as she likes, without being oppressed. She likes about Aleviness that there are no many requirements to fulfill; this “relaxed” aspect is the best thing about Aleviness. After one is born Alevi, even if one does not do anything, one remains an Alevi.

She attends a cem every three months, and does not fast during Muharrem because of its harsh rules. Yet she tells that nobody puts pressure on her when she does not practice Aleviness. According to her, the dede institution is positive as long as it is completely applied. Cemhouses are necessary, though she does not approve certain things done there.

She does not completely embrace religion. According to her Aleviness is not a religion, it is a denomination. Yet the definition of denomination is difficult, a way of life, a culture lived together is a denomination for her. Some accept that Aleviness is part of Islam, but she does not approve. She also believes that she and

others do not exactly know how Aleviness should be understood. Maybe that is because Aleviness, like any other philosophy, is open.

St. Ali does not have a special meaning for her. Yet when one says St. Ali, one remembers Aleviness, Ali portraits and paraphernalia is an identifier of Aleviness. There is nothing held sacred in Aleviness.

Her parents did not teach her about Aleviness. Deniz herself was interested, and learned certain things by talking to his grand-grandfather. After his death, she talks with her grandfather. She finds it inappropriate to introduce Aleviness to her surroundings. Yet she never hid her identity, which means that if people asked her, she told them that she was an Alevi, and if they talked badly about Aleviness, she corrected them. She thinks that Alevi do not know what they think about what. This is related to the nature of Aleviness, which is like a philosophy. She is not much interested in associations. She dislikes the association of Aleviness with Islam.

Onurcan defines Aleviness as a philosophy partially fed from Islam and borrowed its “*tasavvuf*” (sufism) dimension but it is not true to define Aleviness within Islam. It is a culture supporting free thought, in which humanism is central. He is anxious of the Sunnification of the Alevi activities and rituals. His participation is limited.

- What is Aleviness in your perspective?
- **I do not locate Aleviness in Islam.** It may have been nurtured from Islam but it is more like the *Sufism* of Islam. More like its philosophy.
- I do not see Aleviness as inside Islam but more as being fed from some of its values. For instance there are some things. They say that Aleviness come from Zoroastrianism. Ok, Aleviness has a long history, **maybe took something from Zoroastrianism. It took also from Islam**, but in the end it established its **own philosophy**. If you ask me, I do not see it in Islam.
- There is the issue of perception of women. And also praying is one of the things that differentiate. We do not perform the namaz. We do not fast in Ramadan. In fact, you know the **pillars of Islam, we do not follow them**. In other words **they have no place in our faith**, which is one of the fundamental differences.
- Is Aleviness a sect?
- **I do not see as a sect either. In order it to be a sect it must be a branch of islam**, as far as I know.⁶⁶

Onurcan was born in Erzurum, they moved to Erzincan when he was 3 months old. Until he got a place in İTÜ, they lived in Erzincan. In Istanbul they live in an Alevi neighborhood. But their ties with the neighbors are not strong, and he does not see many people. Among his own friends, Alevis are the minority. There is no village they visit, from both parents' side, they are disconnected.

Onurcan says he “first sees himself as an Alevi”, because he was grown up with Alevi faith and culture. According to him Aleviness is not a part of Islam, rather it is more like the *tasavvuf* side of Islam, a philosophy. The main factor distinguishing Alevis is their culture, way of life and perspectives on women. Thus Aleviness is not a religion, does not fulfill the conditions of a religion. It is not a denomination, because it is fed from Islam partially.

Ali does not have a deep meaning for Onurcan. Sacred elements of Aleviness are humanism and being humane. There are no prerequisites of Aleviness. The best thing he likes about Aleviness is its relaxity, its closeness to free thought. According to Onurcan there is an Alevi culture appealing to him. When one says Aleviness, one recalls saz, bağlama and cem. The most basic characteristic of Alevis are their radicalism, their disobedience, unlike other sections of the society. Onurcan is against the approach that Aleviness can only be acquired by birth. What is important is to embrace the culture, to live it. Yet it is impossible to acquire Aleviness that way, and being born an Alevi has thus a great advantage. He himself began to learn about Aleviness when he was little, but his parents had limited knowledge. He complains about the fact that the elders of his parents failed to teach them about Aleviness properly.

Onurcan attended cems in Erzincan, during Muharrem months, once he fully fasted (12 days) during Muharrem. But after coming to Istanbul, he fasted only for a day, and attended a cem once.

He never hid his Aleviness. He never had problems. Bu in Erzincan and other eastern provinces, being an Alevi creates problems, according to him. In his high

school days, he sometimes fought. He believes that today's Aleviness is not experienced the way it had been in the past; today, survival in life comes first. He complains that the attempts to sunnify Alevis have increased lately. The most important Alevi problem is Alevis' ignorance regarding Aleviness, and thinks that because there are a lot of different problems, solution is impossible. He thinks that cemhouses are necessary, but has suspicions about the things taught there. The dede institution is today, for the "West", unnecessary. He fears that after two generations, people may not be able to learn about Aleviness.

Haydar claims that it cannot be said that Aleviness is a part of Islam, although it is influenced by it. It is a culture for which humanism and equality are central. It does not have rigid rules and principles like that of a religion. He is anxious about the Sunnification of Aleviness and of the attempts to make it a religion. He does not participate in the Alevi activities and rituals.

- Is Aleviness a religion?
- To be honest, **it is not exactly a religion.**
- Why?
- Why? For instance, religions have a lot of **technical stuff**, like "you become Muslim or become Christian when you do this or that." But it is different when you examine the Alevi society. In our village everyone called him or herself as Alevi, but we could not say that **everyone strictly performed Aleviness**. But no one was blaming other for not being an Alevi for not performing it. In other words everyone accepted.
- Is it a sect of Islam?
- **It has been defined as such**, but let's not limit it as such.
- Is it a part of Islam?
- **It has been influenced** from Islam, but there is before that. **We should not call it only as a part of Islam. I do adopt the view which does not locate Aleviness in Islam much.**⁶⁷

Haydar is from a village in Erzincan. Born in 1985, he lived in the village since he was 12 years old. Later he came to Erzincan to register in an Anatolian High School. Now he is a student in Istanbul Technical University. During his Istanbul years, he has visited Erzincan two or three times a year, but it's been a long time since he last visited his village. His parents live in Erzincan. In Istanbul, he does not live in an Alevi neighborhood, but his roommates and closes friends are all Alevis.

Haydar defines himself as an Alevi. The foremost reason for this, he thinks, is his Alevi parents. He is not much religious, but Aleviness for him implies a “society” to which he “belongs”, which he “comes from”. He has difficulties in defining Aleviness and thinks that there are many dimensions. It is not like defining a nation or a religion, because Aleviness does not have rigid religious rules. He “lives his culture”, thinks that Aleviness is something “which very much contains humanism”; this is something that he “observed” in his family. Aleviness has been influenced by Islam but it is not correct to say that it is a part of Islam. In Aleviness, what he likes most is the importance given to human beings.

The most important figures of Aleviness, he thinks, are chairmen of associations. St. Ali reminds him of the oppressed, but he does not have special love or hate for him. According to him what is sacred in Aleviness are concepts like equality, humanism, identity of god and human beings. He believes that Aleviness is acquired by birth, in other words it is not enough to only embrace its philosophy. But it is also not enough to be born to Alevi parents, people should hold on to its philosophical values too.

Haydar fasted during Muharrem for a few days when he was a child. He never participated in a cem. His family “did not especially try” to teach him about Aleviness, and he thinks that they were not good practitioners of Aleviness. And he does not think that introducing Aleviness to other people he knows is appropriate. Cemhouse functions like funeral services, which are different than usual religious services are very important for him. He considers the dede institution significant for the transfer of Alevi culture to new generations; but hereditary appointment is not acceptable, because certain negative examples have come forward as a result of this practice.

Haydar never felt the need to hide his Alevi identity until today, and he never had grievances because of that. Yet when he was lodged in high school, he felt uncomfortable during Ramazan, he recalls a few quarrels about this.

Haydar believes that Aleviness has been disintegrating since the last 20-30 years. Urban migration and state policies are main reasons behind that. He thinks that there are great chasms between Alevi generations. The greatest threat against Aleviness is assimilation and Sunnification. He is not much hopeful for Aleviness. He emphasizes that young people, including himself, do not experience Aleviness.

Anti-Islamic Alevis consist of Alevis whose ties with Aleviness still persist, and Alevi population and Alevi activities occupy an important place in their social environment. They claim the traditional practices of Aleviness but they are uncomfortable with the Islamic elements in them. Mentioning Aleviness together with Islam trigger this uneasiness. Hence, they demand an Aleviness outside Islam. They want to make the traditions live in a cultural context. That is why it is important for them that Alevis continue to have their cultural characteristics, demand their rights with this intention and acquire them. The demand of an Aleviness outside Islam generally leads Alevis in this cluster to the Sub-Way that we describe below.

3.2.3. Sub-Way

Aleviness is a subordinate way in the lives of some Alevis. Practices related with Aleviness do not occupy a place in their lives. However, they are not reactive against Aleviness or deny it. They had contact and relation with Aleviness in some parts of their lives or have had curiosity and tried to understand and learn about Aleviness. Hence, on one hand Alevis in this sub-way have weak relation with Aleviness and they do not want detach from Aleviness completely on the other. The sub-way has two paths: Loosed Aleviness and Sympathized Aleviness.

3.2.3.1. Loosed Aleviness

On the first path of the sub-way, there are Alevis who have moved away from Aleviness or whose relation with Aleviness is loose. These can be considered as the people closest to the borders of Aleviness. Alevis on Loosed Aleviness path

are the people, whose relation with Aleviness have weakened or broken in some part of their lives because of work, migration or change in their environment. Their interest in Aleviness is related with their histories, but it does not occupy a place in their lives and futures. On the other hand, they do not reject Aleviness. They have different lives and Aleviness does not exist practically in their lives. Zeynel, Musa, Hıdır and Derviş are examples of this cluster.

Zeynel thinks that he cannot realize the necessary practice of Aleviness but he feels himself as Alevi. Zeynel thinks that it is not true to live Aleviness like a “religion”. He underlines the philosophical and modernist dimensions of Aleviness.

- Do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- **I have adopted the Alevi philosophy**, it's in my essence. But in practice I cannot perform the requirements of it. We do not attend a cem or we do not visit the association. They have special days, *halva* days or some other. **We cannot follow them but in spirit we live as such**. I do not see myself as a pure Alevi.
- How do you define Aleviness?
- As I said, as a life philosophy. I think it is the sole institution which embraces the modern, secular, Atatürkist order. The Alevis are automatically modern both in material and spiritual terms. I do not want to imagine any kind of bigotry.
- Some call it as the essence of Islam, do you agree?
- It's true. They live it best. Don't bother the ones who say that Alevis do not pray, fast. It's all lie. I have an uncle, he performs namaz five times a day and fasts in all of three months. **They are the genuine Muslims, there are no tricks.**⁶⁸

Zeynel was born in a village of Amasya in 1961, his origins are also from there. They came to Merzifon in the 1970s. He lives in Samsun since 1976. He works as an electric technician. They are wholly disconnected from their village and have no relations to their relatives. He says that he has Alevi friends he still sees, but Alevis do not occupy a place in his social life.

He likes Aleviness for its philosophy and modernity. The best aspect of Aleviness is its love of people. He defines himself as an Alevi. But he confesses that he does not practice. He never attended a cem, never fasted during Muharrem, never participated in an organization's activities. On the other hand, he is critical of those who live Aleviness as a religion; he thinks that this is anti-progressivist, not modern. Some cem scenes are very primitive, exaggerated.

Aleviness is a philosophy, a way of life, not a religion. He complains that Aleviness is tried to be transformed into a religion. The only requirement of Aleviness is being an Atatürkist. He is the grandson of a dede, but believes that the institution will be finished off, complaining that dedes pursue personal gain.

The importance of St. Ali comes from his being wronged many times, but he does not consider Ali a superhuman being. Aleviness is the essence of Islam. Zeynel learned that he is an Alevi in Merzifon during his youth. There, neighborhoods were divided as Sunni and Alevi. He was not informed until that time by his family that they were Alevi. And later, he was told to hide his identity. Thus he preferred to hide his Aleviness when he was with people he did not know, preferred to not respond when people talked about Alevis. He did not experience any problems for being Alevi. Only once, the family of a girl he loved rejected him because he was Alevi. Yet he later married another Sunni woman. Today the greatest Alevi problem is their assimilation and exclusion.

Musa cannot participate in the Alevi activities and rituals due to economic reasons. Musa is one of those who thinks that Aleviness is not a religion or a sect, but it is a culture. According to him, Aleviness is not a part of Islam, rather Islam is a part of Aleviness, because Alevis are the ones who spread Islam and the meaning of Aleviness is being human.

- Is Aleviness a religion?
- **No.** we do follow the sect of Imam Cafer. The Sunnis do follow Hanefi sect. I have seen on TV, St. Ali is a person who did not accept caliphate. He is that much selfless. The last caliph. Prophet Mohammed closed the doors of Ayşe, Ömer and Osman towards the kiblah, only left the door of Ali open since he was the last caliph. **Aleviness is not a religion but a culture.** We are from the sect of Imam Cafer. Aleviness **is not a religion but an eating house (*aşevi*)**. When you go back it is an eating house established by Ali where the poor fed themselves. There is nothing such as *Kızılbaş*. It is *Kızıлтаç*. If you have read Hacı Bektaş Veli you would know it well.⁶⁹

Musa, born 1952, is from Sivas. He left secondary school and went to Istanbul, started working there, in Demir Çelik, as a worker. After retiring from there, they came to Antalya, because his son was attending to the college there. They liked Antalya, and continued living there. He visits their village once every 1-2 years.

He does not have close relatives, so his connections are weak. There are many Alevis in his social circles, but he says that there is not much love among them.

Musa never hid his identity. Once someone wronged him in the workplace, which caused him to be reassigned, the reason being his identity. But in a week, he was returned to his old post. Other than that, he mentions that during Ramadan, he sometimes argues with his work mates.

He defines himself as an Alevi, because it is enough that he is born to Alevi parents. He does not talk about Aleviness to his children. Once, when they were in Divriği, his son was tried to be taken to the mosque, then he had to explain about Aleviness, but without any discriminatory expressions against Sunnis.

Musa attended cems a couple times after the ones he was taken to during his childhood, but he did not participate in rituals like semah. He complains about dedes, saying that they do not teach anything, but are concerned with filling their pockets. He thinks that academics should volunteer to be dedes; it should not pass from birth. But he also mentions that one has to be born to Alevi parents in order to become an Alevi.

Aleviness is not a religion or denomination; it is not a part of Islam either. First Muslims were already Alevis. Aleviness is a culture which loves and respects people and embraces Atatürk principles and reforms. The basic requirement of Aleviness is “treating humans as humans”. Other than the love of people, what he most likes about Aleviness is solidarity and sharing. St. Ali’s importance comes from his love of people and tolerance. He compares Ali and Imam Hüseyin to the 68 generation. Yet the greatest revolution was accomplished by Atatürk. He brought laicism and had Alevis relaxed. After Atatürk, rulers always favored Sunnis. After the “1960 revolution”, Alevis began to express themselves, but the 1980 coup caused the “resurrection” of Sunnis. He supports the restrictions on “turban”.

He is a member of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli and Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations. He thinks that there are no differences between the organizations, but for economic reasons, he cannot participate. He complains that Alevi lack harmony, they cannot unite, and they cannot tell others about Aleviness.

Hıdır mentions that he cannot define himself as an Alevi, because he does not know and practice Aleviness. Hıdır is also one of those who define Aleviness inside Islam. According to him Aleviness and Islam do not have many differences. The religious practices have the same intention as humanism; the difference is in the way of life. For him Aleviness is not a religion but a way of life.

- Can you define yourself as an Alevi?
- I can't.
- Why?
- **In order to call yourself an Alevi, you must know what Aleviness is.** You have to live it.
- So, what is Aleviness?
- As far as I heard and experienced, it is about keeping your hand, tongue and lions. In other words, as a way of life not lusting after anyone's holdings or money, and one someone's honor, knowing how to talk or not stealing from any one. It's a lifestyle.
- Is Aleviness a part of Islam?
- **I think it is.** Because Ali and Mohammed have an uncle-nephew relationship/ plus Ali is Mohammed's son in law. It is as far as I know; I did not read anything on it. There is not much difference in terms of lifestyle.⁷⁰

Hıdır is from a village in Adıyaman, but was born and raised in a district of the province. He came to Istanbul after high school. He earns his life as a driver. He continues his relations with the village, goes there once or twice. He lives in an Alevi neighborhood. Yet, he is mostly outside Istanbul as he is a driver. Alevi do not occupy much of his daily life.

He states that he would not call himself as an "Alevi". To do that, one has to know about Aleviness and Islam, and he feels very uninformed. He defines Aleviness inside Islam, there are not many differences between Islam and Aleviness, but what is different is the way of life. Thus Aleviness is not a religion, it is a lifestyle. The best thing about Aleviness is the freedom of the individual. There are no differences in terms of religious practices, compared to Sunnism, it is all in the lifestyle. St. Ali means truthfulness and honesty, which are sacred values in Aleviness.

Hıdır does not fast during Muharrem, he thinks that the fast means mourning, which cannot be practiced in modern life. He also does not participate in cems. He considers dedes similar to mosque imams and does not approve them. He likes the training and dinner services of cemhouses. He himself visited cemhouses to eat there or observe funeral services. From what he observed in TV, the same people are joining cem rituals. He thinks that he cannot completely experience his Aleviness, so he stays away from such practices. The biggest problem of Aleviness is the ignorance of people like himself about Aleviness, and their inability to experience it. His family never told anything about Aleviness to him. Almost nobody knows about it in his social circles. He wants his children to embrace not perhaps Aleviness itself, but its “way of life”. He does not know much about Alevi associations, has no connections. He is worried about a great danger in front of Alevis, which is war between sects.

Derviş’s knowledge about Aleviness is weak and his level of participation to the rituals is low. He thinks that Aleviness is not a separate religion, but it is a denomination within Islam. But his emphasis on Quran and Islam is weak. Rather, he emphasizes the values like honesty, modernism and progressiveness.

- What is Aleviness in your opinion?
- According to me Aleviness is firstly being very **honest** as a human being, then it is modernism, progressivism and being enlightened. In other words it is about loving people and loving peace. It is a sect which aims to be more beneficial to other people.
- You called it a sect, is Aleviness a religion?
- It is not a separate religion, **but a sect living within Islam.**
- So you say that Aleviness is a part of Islam?
- Yes. As a sect it is.⁷¹

Derviş was born in Adıyaman in 1953, and has his roots there. He is a primary school graduate. He lived in the village until he was 32 years old, later began to work as a transporter and moved to Istanbul in the 2000s, still has connections with his village, visits from time to time. He also socializes with his relatives in Istanbul. Yet most of his time is spent on the roads.

Derviş defines himself as an Alevi, the main reason for this is that Aleviness means loving humans and being enlightened. Aleviness means honesty, modernity, progress, enlightenment, love of people, love of peace. It is a denomination of Islam, but Alevis are different than Sunnis in terms of their look at the world, at

humans, in terms of their non-discriminatory perspective, being modern and libertarian.

St. Ali was a brave man who fought wrong-doers. The most sacred things in Aleviness are honesty, truthfulness, modernism. Yet he does not believe in fasting and does observe it during Muharrem. In his childhood he had attended cems, but not since he was 20.

Derviş learned about Aleviness from his family, but was not told about it thoroughly. His family used to observe all religious practices, yet today there is “corruption”. Still, his family did not lose their Alevi culture and faith. Derviş did not experience any problem about his Aleviness, except a few reactions he had from his friends. Yet he hid his identity in his work life and in the places he visited. Yet lately, he thinks that Alevis mostly stopped hiding themselves, that they can practice cem openly. Though the government does not have a concrete approach regarding Alevis, he appreciates that the prime minister “talks about Alevis”.

The most important Alevi problem is the state’s non-recognition of Alevis. The state does not treat Alevis as it treats Sunnis, thus it does not provide them the same opportunities for religious practice. To solve this problem, Alevis should unite, should leave their differences aside. They cannot do this because of individual interests and political expectations.

Derviş is positive about cemhouses. He finds them useful for the transmission of Alevi culture and for especially funeral services. But he does not approve certain acts of fanaticism. He sees the existence of dedes, “at least” their function of informing people, positive. But he does not trust all of them, there are self-interested ones among them. Today’s dedes are more knowledgeable, but old dedes were more faithful.

Alevis on Loosed Aleviness path consist of Alevis who feel themselves connected to Aleviness because of their origins and use an eclectic Aleviness discourse consisting of different elements of hegemonic Aleviness discourses. But they do not accept one of the Aleviness positions fully and Aleviness does not occupy an important place in their lives. Aleviness has been a secondary subject for them, since there are generally not many Alevis in their social environment. Their children are generally sympathizer Alevis.

3.2.3.2. Sympathized Aleviness

Most of the Alevis, who stay away from the traditional practices of Aleviness, are uncomfortable with the association of Aleviness with both Islam and religion. According to them Aleviness is outside Islam and/or not a religious phenomenon.

Alevis on Sympathized Aleviness path consists of people who prefer to consider Aleviness as a way of life, culture and philosophy; instead of as a religion, belief or denomination. These people reject worship and rituals, and reduce Aleviness to a cultural form, and they emphasize on the dimensions like human love and being modern. According to these people, the Alevi culture has an egalitarian and emancipating point of view with its perspectives on life and humanity. Thus, this culture should be kept alive, but they believe that while claiming these positive values, they must also get rid of the elements of this culture which are not compatible with contemporary world. They interpret the rituals and worship of Alevis as reactionary, and think that Aleviness must be lived only as a cultural form. On the other hand despite the sympathy, Aleviness do not have any space in the life of these persons. Barış, Hüseyin and Özgün are examples of this cluster.

Barış interprets Aleviness not as a religion, but as a culture based on love, which prioritizes human. According to him, although Aleviness is influenced by Islam, it is not compatible with Islam and Quran. He does not participate in the activities

and rituals. He does not accept the religious side. He is sympathetic to some of the rituals, since they reflect the culture, but he thinks that they must stay at a symbolic level.

- I would say that **it is not a religion**, if religion requires the existence of a prophet which receives messages from god and disseminates them to masses. Also since there is no book that only belongs to Aleviness or some **pillars** and rules. Also **St. Ali is not a prophet**.
- If the **essence of Islam is Quran**, which I have read, the series of rules that have been told there, prayers and other things do not **seem to accord with the Aleviness I know**.
- I wish it was [the essence of Islam]. **If it was Islam would not have been in such a condition**. But I do not say that it is like that now; **I see the philosophy of Aleviness above**.
- ... The Alevi philosophy and the love foundation is what I tell. **I am sure that there other currents who embrace and disseminate these values likewise.**⁷²

Barış is a doctor, born in Ankara, in 1975. His parents are from a village in Kırıkkale, migrated to Ankara when they were young. Barış finished primary, secondary and high school in Izmir and university in Ankara. He has been working in Samsun for the last 5 years. His family lives in Izmir. The neighborhood of his relatives in Ankara are mostly composed of by his villagers, a largely Alevi neighborhood. The last time he visited his village was 5 years ago. Only elderly people remains in their village, most of them live in Mamak. When he visits Ankara, he visits them too. There are not many Alevis in his social circles in Samsun.

He defines himself as an Alevi, but adds that his knowledge is limited. For him Aleviness is not a religion, because it does not fulfill the conditions of great religions, like holy book, prophet, etc. The most important Alevi figure is St. Ali, because he sees him “in all Alevi places, every time, everywhere”. Yet he does not know the reasons for that. According to him, Ali is a man who “have been wronged”, a man who “tries to continue Islam” but it would not be right to say that he is the founder, creator of Aleviness. For him, except St. Ali’s rebellious character, he has no special place.

Aleviness’s tie to Islam is weak and historical; nothing about it can be associated to the Quran. The “philosophical side of Aleviness is more pronounced” because Aleviness is “a philosophy based on love” which prioritizes the love of Allah, not

fear from Him. This “love” aspect is what he most likes about Aleviness. He knows about the rituals of Muharrem fast and cem, but he does not practice. The only Alevi activity he participated in was an “Abdal Musa” activity, which he calls a “small cem”. In this activity, problems of the Alevi community were discussed and people were socialized. He was just an onlooker.

Aleviness has a religious aspect, but he “could not embrace the religious aspect much”. He believes that one is an Alevi by birth, so one cannot become Alevi later. He is aware that his perspective which defines Aleviness as a philosophy conflicts with this latter view but he still does not believe that a person can choose to become an Alevi. Love of humans is enough to sustain one’s Aleviness.

Barış hid his identity, as advised by his family, until college. At the last years of high school, he thought that this was unnecessary. In college, he socialized with similar-minded people and did not have to hide his identity. Now in his work life, he does not hide. In all these years, he did not have problems because of his Aleviness. He only recalls some of the reactions of his friends: “Mum söndü”; “filthiness of Alevis”; people who learn that he is Alevi saying “but you are so good...(for an Alevi)”

Cemhouses are important for him not as places for religious practice but for their cultural mission. He similarly likes cem meetings culturally. Barış worries that Aleviness will disappear, so he thinks institutions like cemhouses, dedes are crucial. The dede institution, “as long as seen from symbolic perspective”, is not a problem.

Alevis do not fear like the Sunnis do. For that reason, there are Alevis who “do not believe in religion”. There are many people who move away from religion and embrace the philosophy of Aleviness. He is totally against “turban”.

According to Barış, the fact that Alevis have been oppressed since old times has moved them close to the left, which defends equality. The foundation of the

Republic is similar. It is the passage from empire to democracy, to a more egalitarian order, and thus positive for Alevi. Yet if one looks at what happened since then, things are not that positive.

Most important Alevi problems are listed by him as such: their ideas, philosophy, political demands “are not represented” and not known by other social groups. Moreover, economic difficulties constrain their activities, and survival becomes more important.

Hüseyin is an atheist, so he does not believe in Aleviness, but according to him, the most excellent religion is Aleviness, because it has an egalitarian and human-centered kernel. Aleviness is a culture, which took Islam’s essence, got rid of the fanatical aspects of Islam, and integrated it with Anatolian culture and beliefs. He does not participate in Alevi activities and rituals. He is against being religious and sectarian.

- There are a lot of differences between the Aleviness we know since we were child and the Aleviness which is explained in newspapers or the TVs by scientists. For me Aleviness is an excellent religion which has travelled to the essence of Islam. This is according to me. If you ask me it is a beautiful religion which thrown away the **unnecessary aspects and bigotry** of Islam. Or let’s call it a culture.
- Is Aleviness a religion, sect or order?
- **For me it is a culture.** It seems like a culture to me.
- Have you thought to your children?
- Not much. Because **our life passed in the city. What do we know to teach? We only thought them to be human.** Only being human.⁷³

Hüseyin, born in 1945, is from a village in Sivas. After finishing primary school, completed his education in Sivas, graduate of Junior Teacher’s College. He worked first in Sivas, then in Ankara. After teaching in private training firms, he retired in 2004. He has not visited his village for 30 years. He rarely sees his relatives. He socializes mostly with his teacher friends.

Since childhood, Hüseyin has not attended cems. He defines himself as an Alevi, because he was born Alevi. He likes the humanistic, egalitarian side of Aleviness. For him, Aleviness is not related to race. Yet one is born to Aleviness, one cannot become Alevi later. On the other hand, he describes Aleviness as a culture, saying that today’s Aleviness is defined differently than the Aleviness he knew. He

believes that Aleviness got rid of the esoteric aspects of Islam, reached Islam's essence and integrated Anatolian and Shamanic cultures. Yet today, Aleviness is expressed through religiously fundamentalist aspects. He criticizes the dede institution, but also thinks that Aleviness cannot do without dedes.

Hüseyin considers himself as an atheist, but accepts that Aleviness is the most beautiful religion in the world. He complains about bigotry in Aleviness. According to him, St. Ali is sacred because he was always on the side of the oppressed.

Hüseyin hid his Aleviness until he finished high school. After that, he stopped hiding. He was never wronged because he was Alevi. Yet he complains about slanders against Alevis he hears from his friends, from other people. He states that even the most enlightened Alevis hide their identities. They do this because of discrimination against them. Alevis are not represented in the state. This can be overcome only with a leftist government. He also protests about disunity among Alevi associations.

He did not tell about Aleviness to his children. The reason for that is that he himself knows little, but he says that he taught about "being human" to his children.

Özgün advocates that Aleviness does not have any relation with religion. It is rather a thought system, a philosophy. Although it has an Islamic origin, it does not have any relation with Islam anymore. Özgün does not participate in Alevi activities and rituals. She thinks that institutions like dede and cem are primitive and backwards. She is sympathetic to the culture that a person obtains through Aleviness

- Is Aleviness a religion?
- **No.** religion is a system of beliefs, an accumulation of prayers and there are a series of rules that you must abide. But belief is different. In my family while belief is in point zero, there is no religion. There is no praying, words fail me, and there is no culture of worship. **There is only belief in god in Alevi families.** If you ask me, I have sometimes and sometimes I do not, depending on my interests...
- I do mostly think that Aleviness has more a philosophical side. **That it does not much to do with faith.** It is more a system of thought, something you identify with but do not practice in your daily life through praying but which influences your point of view, your standing. It is a philosophy like that.

- For instance, for me **the first pillar of Aleviness is staying away from religion**. For instance, I consider Aleviness as moving away from itself when it comes closer to religion. For instance, as seen in the case of Shiites. In other words it should not come close to prayer, or to put it correctly, to Islam.
- Can we say that Aleviness is a part of Islam?
- **It may be in essence**, but if you want me to comment through taking my Alevi experience as a starting point you **cannot see any resemblance between Islam and Aleviness**. But there is one thing; since it is something that defines itself with reference to Islam it also encloses its elements. If it is against it, it is not affected from it. It produces its own terms to eliminate its own terms. In this sense I can say that it is the anti-thesis of Islam, it falsifies it. It tried to develop a theory to verify itself, but I cannot call it Islam. When I compare the things that Islam and Aleviness believes – let's not say believe but internalize– **I do not see Aleviness as a religion.**⁷⁴

Özgün is a psychologist who works in the public sector. She was born in 1982 in Adıyaman, originally is from a village there. Her family moved Istanbul when she was seven years old and she grew up in an Alevi neighborhood, where she still lives. Only during her college years she was away. Her villagers are also mostly living in the same neighborhood. Yet Özgün does not socialize with her relatives or other Alevis. She has very few Alevi friends.

She does not define herself as Alevi. Yet comparing herself to her Sunni friends, she mentions that she was raised under the influence of an Alevi culture, and as she grew up she gave more importance to that culture and her sympathy towards Aleviness increased. Still, this transformation she talks about coincides with the period when she returned to her neighborhood after college. For her, Aleviness is not a religion; it is not anything related to religious faith. It is a system of thought, a philosophy influencing one's way of looking at life. Though its origins are Islamic, it is "not even remotely related to Islam". Aleviness even positions itself as opposed to Islam.

She likes that Aleviness is Anatolian, she thinks that Aleviness could not be related to Aleviness in other countries. Yet she also thinks that Alevis do not have a nation, and do not have imperialistic desires. Best thing she likes about Aleviness is the absence of coercion and violence. Alevis are a relieved society. Ali (not St. Ali) is like some of her Alevi friends, he seems sympathetic. Özgün likes Ali's symbolic existence.

Özgün believes that a metaphysical “good” exists in Alevis. It cannot be a coincidence that they are kind-hearted, good people, with most of whom she can socialize. She claims that not anyone can become Alevi, one has to be born Alevi. The precondition of Aleviness is staying away from religion and conservatism. She has never fasted or joined a cem. And she does not appreciate those who have practiced these, considering these practices as obscurantism. Similarly, she finds cemhouses primitive, along with the dede institution; they are seen as part of a medieval culture.

She states that Alevis live like “sheeps”, she does not think anyone would try to harm them. She knows about the associations but stays away from them, because of their fanaticism.

Alevis on Sympathized Aleviness path, are Alevis who have moved away from Aleviness and do not have many Alevis in their social environment, but are sympathetic to Aleviness through cultural elements like *bağlama*, Alevi folk songs, semah and through “progressive” elements close to their understanding. Their contact with Aleviness is limited and/or in the form of cultural tourism. In their daily lives, the problems related with Alevis and Aleviness is rarely on their agenda. Their Alevi identity is almost erased whenever their other identities come into prominence. They are not tolerant against Alevis in religion and Islam problematic. They fear that Aleviness is becoming more “religious”. When they observe tendencies strengthening their anxieties, their sympathy diminishes, and they have a tendency to pass to the Non-Way from Sub-Way. This category generally consists of young or middle-aged Alevis, whose families have been living in the cities for long, but there are also old ones, who left their villages because of their occupations (like teachers). The children of the married ones are also generally sympathizer Alevis. In addition to that, it is highly possible that they marry a person who is not Alevi, because they do not especially look for Alevis in their social environment.

3.2.4. Non-Way

The ways described above correspond to different trajectories of Alevis as Alevis. There are people with Alevi origins, who are not in any one of these ways, and do not respect the reference related with Aleviness. There are different paths even for the loss of connection with Aleviness. The other and primary identities and the form of rupture from Aleviness determine these paths. Yet, the common character of all is that they do not prefer to follow any way of Aleviness. Three clusters are available in Non-Way: Rejected Aleviness, Sunnified Aleviness and Indifference.

3.2.4.1. Rejected Aleviness

Actually Alevis in Rejected Aleviness cluster do not lost their ties with Aleviness as the others on Non-Way, however they reject to carry Aleviness as an identity although they are conscious for Aleviness. They know Aleviness, they experienced Aleviness but they find it unnecessary to define themselves as Alevi. These Alevis usually interpret Aleviness as a race and/or religion, and since “racist” or “reactionary” perspectives and secular or left identity are irreconcilable they reject it. Bektaş and Naci are examples of this path.⁷⁵

Bektaş is an atheist. For him Alevi has been becoming more religious than they were before. Therefore, he is far from defining himself as an Alevi.

- I can say that Aleviness is a completely different life style. Or, I am not involved with faith dimension.
- Based on your observations, can you tell what kind of changes occurred in Aleviness?
- Degeneration. A degeneration caused by increasing focus on Sunni politics.⁷⁶

Bektaş is 31 years old and was born in Germany. They have returned to Tokat in 1987, where she finished high school. He attended college in Erzurum between 1997 and 2005. Later she moved to Izmir. He visits Tokat every two years. He is disconnected from his village, does not much socialize with relatives. Alevis constitute a minor part of his social life.

Bektaş defines himself as a human above all, but if he is forced by elderly, he sometimes sees himself as an Alevi. He is an atheist. He considers it wrong to emphasize his Alevi identity. Aleviness is not a religion; it is a way of life. It is part of Islam, a denomination, but not religious. Best thing he likes about Aleviness is its “humanism”. St. Ali does not have a special meaning for him.

Bektaş never fasted during Muharrem and never attended a cem after leaving Tokat. He was not informed about Aleviness by his family, but today he does not want to be dissociated from Aleviness. When his elders insisted, he visited a cemhouse. Cems he attended so far, he says, were rid of bigotry, but he dislikes conservative cems where “there are still people who perform zikir”. Old “bitme dedes” (innate dedes) are behind modern times, “çıkma dedes” are better and more modern.

Bektaş did not hide his Aleviness after primary school. Sometimes he was beaten by his friends at school because of being an Alevi and some teachers wronged him. He finds Cem Foundation and HBKD closer to the state, PSAKD more oppositionary. He fears that if the CHP comes to power, there will be massacres against Alevis. For him, Aleviness is being corrupted day by day. It comes under the influence of Sunni policies. Reform is necessary, but he is not certain towards what direction reforms should be.

Naci does not define herself as an Alevi, because he does not believe in “race”. He thinks that Aleviness, as a way of life, can only be practiced in small, distant villages or rural areas. In spite of this, he is still sympathetic towards it.

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- No. Just as a human. I do not believe in race.
- Is Aleviness a part of Islam?
- According to what I read there is nothing like Aleviness Sunnism distinction, there is Islam.
- All of your questions are on Aleviness, as I said, I do not believe in race.⁷⁷

Naci was born in Diyarbakır, in 1984. His lineage is also from there. They came to İzmir when he was seven years old. He is a high school graduate and works at a

barber shop. He seldom visits his village. He says that his ties to the family are weak and he lives in an Alevi neighborhood.

Naci does not define himself as an Alevi, since he does not “believe in race”. For him, Aleviness means “light”. It is not a religion; it is “a matter of faith”, “something that lies in one’s essence”. Naci thinks that this essence can only be experienced in villages, it is impossible to experience that in the capitalist urban life. According to him, in order to be an Alevi, one has to live its source, its purity and its nature. This essence is being honest and being human.

The most important thing about Aleviness is the principle of controlling ones’s “hand, tongue and loins”. Other than that, he does not think that there are requirements in Aleviness.

He never attended a cem ritual. He thinks that cemhouses are manipulated politically. For the same reason, he is not a member of any Alevi organization. He never hid his identity, and never had problems because of his identity. He thinks that old people experience Aleviness more sincerely, unlike young people.

Rejected Aleviness cluster is the cluster which is far away from Aleviness most both in terms of practice and being sympathetic to it. Because of their existing identities, the people in this cluster consider Aleviness as a backward culture, which is affected by other powers. For them Aleviness is now history and should stay as history. It is very difficult for denier Alevis to transform into other categories as time passes. Although it is possible that their identities may change and transform, they would never cling to Aleviness.

3.2.4.2. Sunnified Aleviness

The second cluster of Non-way is the Sunnified Aleviness, which we exemplify with Ayşe. The fear of Sunnification and assimilation, which is common among the Alevis, turns into a real fact with these citizens with Alevi origin.

Ayşe does not define herself as an Alevi, rather as a Muslim, by expressing it in a religious manner as “*elhamdülillah Müslüman*”. She thinks that Alevis should first learn Islam and know the mosque. Although she does not participate in the Alevi activities and rituals, she likes them. She complains about Alevis saying that they are sectarian.

- What would be your first answer if one asks whether you are a Turk, Alevi, Sunni or Muslim?
- I would say **I am a Turk. I am not saying I am an Alevi or something else.** In my opinion these are ridiculous things.
- So in your identity the primary is Turkishness?
- Yes, as I say, **I love both Aleviness and Sunnism, I also love religion.**
- In my opinion **we are all Muslims.** This is the fight of the old people. Not entering the mosques, indoctrinating the youth this. **The mosque belongs to us all, so does the cemhouse.** In my opinion **it is not a religion.**
- Amongst us **some goes to mosque, some fasts,** but we are not bigots.⁷⁸

Ayşe was born in Izmir, in 1965. She is a primary school graduate, a housewife. Always lived in the Narlıdere neighborhood, which was a village registered in the central province. Alevis are a majority in the neighborhood. Her husband is a Sunni. Except her husband's family, Alevis occupy her social life.

Ayşe never hid her Alevi identity. Except a few slandering words she heard about Alevis from her husband's family, she has never grieved because of her identity. She defines herself as “by Allah's will, I am Muslim”. She likes Aleviness, always did lived with Alevis. Her Turkish identity, though, comes first. She identifies Aleviness with honesty, sharing and humanism.

According to Ayşe Aleviness is not a religion. By her words, “We are all Muslims.” The division between Aleviness and Sunnism is “a conflict of old times”. Aleviness for her is part of Islam, but it is not a denomination, because “we are all brothers.” Alevis in Narlıdere are not bigots, they do not make a distinction between Aleviness and Sunnism. She is not much informed about Aleviness, saying that it was not taught to her.

She fasts during Ramadan. During Muharrem, she fasts Mondays and Thursdays. In her childhood once, she joined a cem. She liked the “semah performances” very much. But she thinks that people are not interested in Aleviness like in the old

days, especially the young people are trying to support themselves, and are not “bigots” like old people; youngsters are smart and conscious. She considers cemhouses as secondary, coming after mosques. Similarly, Muhammed comes before Ali. Ayşe does not know about *musahiplik*. She is negative about dedes, thinking that it is a “nonsensical” institution; she does not appreciate their powers like “punishing”.

Ayşe did not hear about any of the main Alevi organizations. She knows that there is an Alevi association in the neighborhood. She thinks that young people are more conscious, not discriminatory.

3.2.4.3. Indifference

The last path in this group consists of people, who lost their Alevi identity and reject Aleviness, because of the urban life style of their families for generations. This led to an amnesia and loss of the identity.

Ezgi does not have any knowledge about Aleviness, but she thinks that it is a culture which gives importance to humans. She did not have much relation with Aleviness.

- Do you think that Aleviness is a religion?
- I think **it is not a religion.**
- So what is Aleviness?
- I do know it as a community, a sect which is formed by the people, the settlers who came from Asia.
- What are the differences between religions and sects?
- Religion is the belief in God, however sect is something people created on their own, it is not of God.
- What is the most important difference between Alevis and Sunnis?
- The Sunnis adopt an extreme Islam, there are “Süleymancılar” and others, and they are overly attached to religion.
- What about the Alevis, aren't they?
- Not that much, they believe in St. Ali.
- Do they believe in God?
- **As far as I have heard most of them don't.**
- **Is Aleviness a part of Islam?**
- No. There is St. Ali, but it is something different.⁷⁹

Ezgi is 19 years old and is preparing for college exams. She was born in Izmir but her origins are in Çorum. Her grandparents live in the village; she visited them 2

years ago. Her father is a teacher, mother a housewife. They live in apartment blocks, with many non-Alevi in the neighborhood.

She does not define herself as an Alevi, but if the topic comes, she does not hide her identity. Nothing bad happened to her because of her Alevi identity. She thinks that Aleviness is not a religion but a denomination, defining a denomination independent from religion, as a community which has the same culture. She does not consider Aleviness as a part of Islam. She thinks that Sunnis represent the “extreme Islam” and Alevi are not attached to religion that much. According to her even many Alevi do not believe in Allah.

Best thing he likes about Aleviness is the importance given to human beings. For her, Aleviness is acquired through “one’s ancestors”. Yet it can be embraced later by anybody. She never fasted during Muharrem or attended a cem. She visited a shrine in Istanbul for once. Her parents do not fast, either. She states that she does not know much about Aleviness and does not practice. And most people, for the same reason, would lose their Aleviness in time. The most important Alevi problem is that other people do not know much about Alevi. Ezgi never heard about the *musahiplik* concept. She does not know much about the dede institution. She met a dede in a cemhouse she visited, and defines a dede as someone “who is the head of a cemhouse”. She is against *turban*, but she also disapproves wearing “mini-skirts”.

Serap has no ties with Aleviness. In other words, there is no Aleviness and Alevi in Serap’s life. In spite of this, she is sympathetic towards it.

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- I am so sorry that I am not, and I do not know anything. How can I know. I have a problem with Aleviness. It is the **political view of that period**, I consider it as **leftism and rightism. I do not consider it as a religion**. This is my point of view, maybe I talk that randomly since I do not know anything.
- With its current state **Aleviness is not a religion. It departed from being a religion**. But it also has beliefs or rituals which are closely tied with religion. **Cemhouse means the house of the God**. Like a church or a mosque. **Isn’t it?**⁸⁰

Serap was born in 1968, in Ankara, where she was raised and educated. Her roots are in a village in Çorum. She owns a dance school, is a ballerina and an academic. She lives in Izmir. She had a short marriage, divorced 10 years ago. She lives alone. Neither she, nor her parents saw their village in Çorum. She thinks that her parents are very progressive and defines herself and her family as “bourgeois.” Her maternal grandmother was born and raised in Samsun; only her paternal grandmother was a villager, who was also the “most Alevi” figure in the family. Yet her maternal grandmother is “progressive”, that is why her family is full of artists and writers. Her mother is a painter, father an academic and her aunt is an archaeologist. Her parents liked and respected Aleviness, but were never interested in it. Religion never had a hold on her family.

Serap does not define herself as an Alevi, and adds that she knows nothing about the subject. As far as she knows, she has no Alevi friends. In her social life, only her maids are Alevi, and she did not want to socialize with them and hid her identity from them. Other than that, never in her life she had to tell others about her Aleviness.

Though she does not know about Aleviness, she does not see it as a religion but as an ideology. It is a political view of an era, like leftism and rightism. She thinks that Alevis are very humanistic. The only thing she knows about Aleviness is the semah ritual, which interested her because of her profession. But she does not know when this ritual is performed.

Serap has partial information about Alevi rituals and practices, but does not perform any of them. She never saw a cemhouse and does not know what goes on in Izmir in terms of Alevi activities. Though she does not know why, she says she has sympathetic views regarding cemhouses.

If Alevis pass to Non-Way from other ways or if they are born into the Non-Way, it is not generally observed that they go back to the other ways. Non-Way is the way in which Aleviness has almost come to an end. It is only possible to pass to

the ways outside Aleviness from this way. It may rarely be observed that there are transitions to the sympathizer Alevi cluster from the Non-Way or their children. But the transition is generally to denier Alevis cluster.

3.2.5. On the Categorization of Ways of Aleviness

The classification I have made according to the situations I met (three ways classification) overlaps in some manner with the classification of the existing discourses made by Çamuroğlu (2000) to characterize the Alevi identity. According to Çamuroğlu, there are three main discourses: The first one argues that Aleviness is the real Islam, while the second one claims that Aleviness is a secular belief. The third one is a discourse, which tries to remain distant to both of these two discourses, wants to form a balance between traditional and modern, and aims to keep the originalities of Aleviness alive. These categories likens to some clusters of my classification. The first group of Çamuroğlu is like to the cluster of Muslim Alevis (Muslim-Way), the second to Anti-Islamic Alevis (Mixed-Way), and the third to Synretic Alevis (Mixed-Way), who are more **active** in the identification of Aleviness.

The three groups depicted by Çamuroğlu try to define what real Aleviness is by making an interpretation about Aleviness. Thus, the sets in this classification correspond to attitudes like the classification according to the axe of positions towards Aleviness definitions that I made above as, Muslim-Way, Mixed-Way and Irreligious-Way. By looking at the same thing, one group sees something identical to Islam, another group sees something related with Islam but not restricted with it and one another sees something exterior to Islam. On the other hand, my classification of ways according to axis explained above is related also with the existing situations of people rather than attitudes alone. Since Aleviness does not have a significant place in the lives of the third and fourth categories in my classification of ways, they do not have clear attitudes towards the depiction of Aleviness. That is why they do not take place in the classification of Çamuroğlu. These groups are the margins of Aleviness. In this sense, there are mobilizations in

the categories in the classification of ways. The tendencies preserving and strengthening the tradition get closer to the first way, which is Muslim-Way, while the ones criticizing the tradition move towards the fourth way, which is non-way. On the other hand, Alevis with Islamic tones do not contain the majority of Alevis, since it is closer to the Sunnification tendency. On the contrary, the Alevis with unclear attitude to Aleviness constitute the majority. In other words, the tendency of the Alevi masses is towards break of Aleviness.

3.2.5.1. The Differentials of Clusters of Aleviness

The number and variety of the clusters that we have described in the previous section illustrates the difficulty of bringing together Alevi identity in one set. On the other hand, this photograph which illustrates diversity also illustrates a dynamic characteristic. Moreover, this dynamism and change is not random and not from any set to any other set, but in specific directions and open to various interactions (See Figure 1). Hence, in order to describe the Aleviness of ‘Open Aleviness’ period, it is not enough to have a static classification (clustering). Moreover, it is necessary to understand the mobilization between the clusters and the potential differentiations of Alevis.

As it can be seen in Figure 1, there is a mobilization towards the two non-way clusters: Rejected Aleviness and Sunnified Aleviness. However, two tendencies are not equal in strength. Sunnification is not easy since Alevis have a strong opposition with Sunnism. The cluster closest to this is Islamic Aleviness. The efforts of Muslim Alevis to show the ties between Aleviness and Islam deepen the interactions with Islam. As a result, some of the Muslim Alevis may become close to Islam and even to Sunni Islam. On the other hand, some of the Muslim Alevis have tendency to transform into Syncretic Alevis. This tendency is based on the increasing interest in non-Islamic references of Islamism which is a result of motivation to preserve and illustrate the difference with Sunni Islam. However, the differentiation of Muslim Alevis, whose number is quite small compared with the other clusters do not occur easily. It depends on strongly to other interactions. On

the other hand, the differentiation between the Muslim Alevis and the new generation in their environment is stronger. If we accept that they are originally in the Muslim Alevis cluster, the new generation in this environment rarely differentiate to Syncretic Aleviness and Sunnified Aleviness clusters, but generally differentiate to loosed Aleviness and secondly to relatively passive Aleviness positions like Symbolic Islamic Aleviness.

Alevis on Symbolic Islamic Aleviness path do not have a rigid identity. They generally have an Islamic Aleviness coming from past. They are in an Aleviness position which can easily be transformed into different forms according to their social environment. If they are in a Sunni environment, their interaction beginning with fasting and praying may result with Sunnification. But since there is generally a strong reaction against Sunnism, the transformation is more towards loosed Alevis. As their participation in Alevi practices diminish and the number of Alevis in their social environment decreases, it becomes very easy for them to transform into loosed Alevis. The affects transformation can mainly be observed in the new generations in these circles. It is common for the new generation of these Alevis to differentiate to loosed Aleviness. The new generation of the ones who are far from Alevi practices especially transform into indifferent cluster.

The position of syncretic Alevis is temporary. These Alevis, who find it difficult to preserve the essence of Alevi identity in urban life and by interacting with different identities, have the potential to transform into both Muslim Alevis and Anti-Islamic Alevis according to their other identities and social environments. If they are interested in esotericism and mysticism in a philosophical level and they have a social environment consisting of believer Alevis and Muslims, they get closer to Muslim Alevis, because they need to reveal the common denominator of Islam and Aleviness. On the other hand, if they have interactions with secular and/or democratic people during the education or at work, they try to transform their existing belief system to a philosophical/cultural ground, since they need to emphasize those sides of Aleviness which are not “reactionary” and “superstitious” and they move away from Islamist emphasis. However, since the

potential of socializing in the second form is more likely, it can be said that the transformation is generally towards the anti-Islamic direction.

In the same way, the new generations of syncretic Alevis transform especially to sympathizer Alevis and loosed Alevis. According to the strength of family ties and social environment, it is sometimes possible that they may also transform into anti-Islamic Alevis or Muslim Alevis.

Since Anti-Islamic Alevis have no sensitivities about Islam, they almost never lean towards the clusters having Islamic tones mentioned above. Rather their emphasis on the difference of Aleviness and Islam lead them to question the Alevi practices and limit their participation in these practices. Anti-Islamic Alevis transform generally to sympathized Aleviness, and less frequently to rejected Aleviness. The second type of transformation is less frequent since they have a strong belonging which is difficult to erode depending on the claim of political demands most of the time. However, both transformations are strongly possible for their children, because they know both praisings about Aleviness and strong criticisms of “backward” elements of Aleviness.

Aleviness has been a secondary subject for Alevis on Loosed Aleviness path, since there are not many Alevis in their social environment. Generally, they preserve their position, but they have the tendency to transform into rejected Aleviness or sympathized Aleviness according to the environment in which they are socializing. Their children generally become sympathizer Alevis, because in their daily lives Aleviness is praised from time to time. The children turn into indifferent Alevis in the families, who do not mention Aleviness much.

The Alevi identity of the sympathizer Alevis is almost erased whenever their other identities come into prominence. They are not tolerant against Alevis in religion and Islam problematic. They are anxious of Aleviness becoming more “religious”. When they observe tendencies strengthening their anxieties, their sympathy diminishes, and they have a tendency to pass to the Non-Way from Sub-Way. This

category generally consists of young or middle-aged Alevis, whose families have long been living in the cities, but there are also old ones, who left their villages because of their occupations like teacher. The children of the married ones are also generally sympathizer Alevis. In addition to that, it is highly possible that they marry a person who is not Alevi, because they do not especially look for Alevis in their social environment.

It is very difficult for Alevis in rejected Aleviness cluster to transform into other categories as time passes. Although it is possible that their identities may change and transform, they never cling to Aleviness. If Alevis pass to Non-Way from the other ways or if they are born on the Non-Way, it is not generally observed that they go back to the other ways. Non-Way is the way on which Aleviness has almost come to an end. It is only possible to pass to the ways outside Aleviness from this way. It may rarely be observed that there are transitions to the sympathizers Aleviness cluster from the Non-Way or their children. But the transition is generally to rejected Aleviness cluster.

These movements or tendencies whose directions are determined play an important role in the future of next generations as seen in some of the examples. The existing tendencies generally result with differentiation to another cluster in the next generation. Hence, the differentiations between the generations occur more strongly than the mobilization of Alevis among the sets. (See Figure 2).

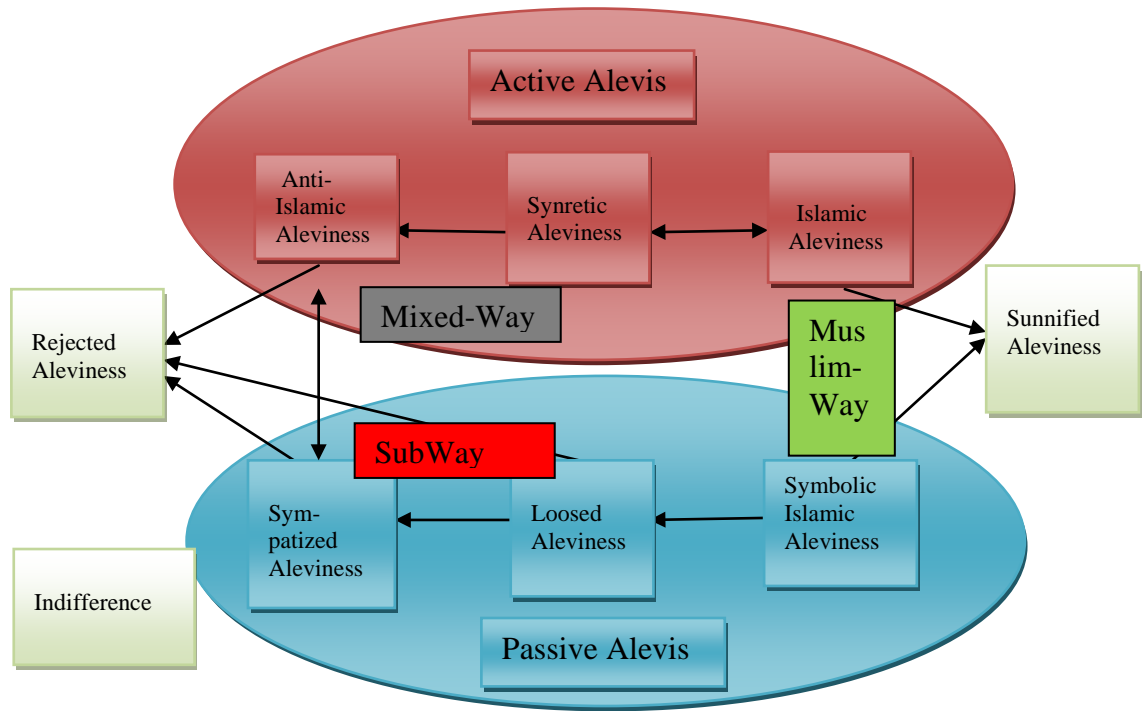


Figure 1: Alevi Mobilization Within Clusters.

The Figure 1 shows the direction of mobilization between clusters explained above, in other words the tendency to other cluster of Alevis within a cluster. Yet, the directions are not shown vectoral, that is they are not identical. For example, it is true that there are mobilizations between the clusters of Anti-Islamic Aleviness and Sympathized Aleviness in both directions. Yet, the mobilization towards cluster of Sympathized Aleviness is more to be realized. Moreover, the cluster “Indifference” is appeared irrelational in this figure as the other positions necessitate a consciousness on the Aleviness identified. On the other hand indifferent Alevis do not have such a consciousness on Aleviness. Thus, there cannot be a mobilization between indifferent Alevis cluster and other clusters. Yet, as it is seen in the figure, a differentiation can occur between lineages. Both figures show us that a differentiation has been realizing towards Non-Way, although some oscillation between clusters occurs. I must also mention that the mobilization between clusters is not so easy and seldom. It takes years and needs interaction with other identities. Yet the differentiation through lineages is very

seldom. A sign of this is that young Alevi in the clusters are mostly in the clusters close to the Non-Way.

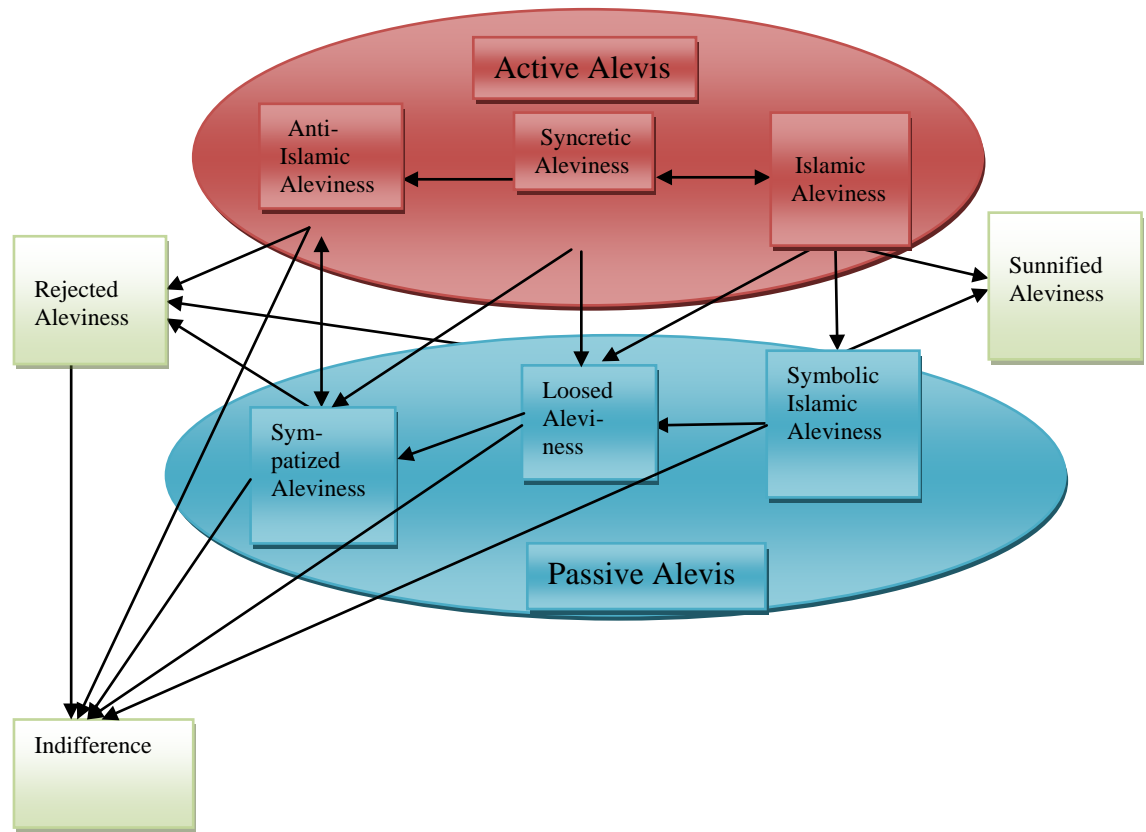


Figure 2. Alevi Differentiation within Clusters Between Lineages

CHAPTER 4

DIFFERENTIATION OF ALEVINESS IN 'OPEN ALEVINESS' PERIOD

The period of 'Open Aleviness' is a period in which, first of all, Alevis feel more comfortable than before in talking or thinking about Aleviness. The positions that are not taken and/or argued in the closed period came to the fore in that period also due to outer environment. Yet, today, Aleviness is on a hot wire coming from the past closed days. Alevis entered a period in which they both embrace Alevi identity– especially against the outside – and criticize it the most. Openness made Aleviness open to Alevis first. Below, some examples of different Alevi typologies will be given considering the hot wires Aleviness is on. These hot wires in fact result from the distance between social habits and cultural characteristics of closed period and Alevis' lives in the open period.

In the 'Open Aleviness' period, Alevis live the joy of opening outside. They even started to express the memories of closed and confidential period more comfortably. They talk about their Aleviness and Aleviness in general more easily. This makes them feel that they live a freer period compared to the past when they were subjected to discrimination in everyday life. However, they have not completely lost their feeling of grievance. Even though they claim that they preserved their identity in both past and present and do not bow down to injustice on the personal level, collective attacks on Alevis like Maraş, Çorum, Sivas incidents are quite fresh in memories and their repetition is still a matter of concern.

4.1. Transformations of Aleviness cum Opening

‘Open Aleviness’ period is perceived by all type of Alevis as a period in which Alevis no more feel themselves oppressed, be wronged, victimized like in the past but leave all this behind and speak more comfortably and fearlessly and act freely, or even want to think in that way. The dominant feeling of the period is that hiding, not revealing one’s identity is unnecessary, even wrong and it is time for Aleviness to display itself. Yet, there is not a complete sense of freedom. Traumatic past incidents are still in the memory of the Alevis and they keep worrying about the possibility that what today seems in their favor might turn opposite. On the other hand, in this period when Aleviness is opened, what is to be opened became a problem. Because this thing has been forgotten since it has not mentioned for a long time and a distance grew with experiences. Now it must be remembered. This remembering is of course not an innocent one; Alevi communities which are in interaction with different thoughts start to remember Aleviness different from each other. In such a situation, the characteristics that have been passed on and the ones that are not wanted any more are not the same. In a similar way, the forms of adoption and practice of what has been passed on become different. Alevis who are aware of this picture fear from Aleviness’ loss of power and worry about inability to establish a common Aleviness, loss of Aleviness in practice and decomposition of Aleviness with “assimilationist” interventions. Yet, even those worries were not enough to make Alevis to define an Alevi identity on which they all agree, and the dispersive influence of different definitions continued. In this context, either the participation to Alevi activities has ambiguous motives (e.g. treating it like a hobby) or there is no participation at all.

4. 1. 1. Aleviness “Opened”: “*Sırrı Faş Eylemek*”⁸¹

‘Open Aleviness’ period is a period which Alevis from all typologies think that they could express themselves more freely and hiding is over. The greatest change is, in Subaşı’s words: “*Sırrı faş eylemek*”. Alevis think that Aleviness is apparent now due to reasons such as emergence and activities of lots

of Alevi non-governmental organizations, even formation of institutions which use the name “Alevi”, news about Alevi associations taking place in TV channels and newspapers, establishment of Alevi TV channels, openly arguing Aleviness, consideration of rights and demands about Aleviness. Thus, for the Alevis hiding their Alevi roots become relatively unnecessary. Revealing of Aleviness is expressed in these ways:

- So, for you, what has changed in Aleviness in the last 20-30 years in your environment that you have observed?
- Aleviness suddenly emerged. It **emerged** in the last 20-30 years.⁸²

Ali

- Let's say if 20 years ago the ratio of the people who hid their Aleviness was around twenty or twenty five percent, **now it is around five percent.**⁸³

Derviş

- Of course many things have changed. I have firstly seen a cemhouse here. At least now **people do not feel the necessity of hiding their identities**, before they were looking people from above because they were Alevis. Now there is nothing like that, people can say that they are Alevis without hesitation.⁸⁴

Rıza

- I have seen a cemhouse first here when I came to Istanbul. I have concluded that in small cities it is secret, hidden; whereas in big cities it is different, with more consciousness, **without concealing and hiding**. There was the expression of “I am”, they were expressing themselves. **They have asserted their existence openly**, I think this is a **great development.**⁸⁵

Gül

- So, for you, what has changed in Aleviness in the last 20-30 years in your environment that you have observed?
- Firstly **people are not hiding but openly expressing themselves.**
- At least Alevis are not hiding themselves, says “I am an Alevi.” Music is listened freely, we watch the TV channels, we have our own channels.⁸⁶

Naciye

- So, for you, what has changed in Aleviness in the last 20-30 years in your environment that you have observed?
- With migration to big cities of course there was a dispersion among the Alevis; but through **associations**, and various civil society organizations **the conduits of expression has increased.** Before it was in itself, more closed **now it started to express itself in organizational terms.** Especially these increased in the last decade.⁸⁷

Haydar

As seen in the examples, Alevis' feeling about the increase in Aleviness's power and freedom of self-expression is strong. The strength of this emphasis among the Alevis who live in an Alevi environment further underlines this fixation. Another point among the emphases worth mentioning is participants' isolation of themselves while referring to the Alevis who are not concealing or hiding their

identities. While mentioning that they are “at least” not hiding “any more” mistrust towards other Alevis is being expressed.

The Alevis who faced with discrimination in the Ottoman Empire (in Yavuz Sultan Selim’s era it reached to its peak) have continued to experience discriminatory measures from the declaration of the Republic to today. The Alevis, for long years concealed their identities, their Aleviness from the circles that they have contacted. However, they state that they feel more “relax” in ‘Open Aleviness’ period, in which they started to open themselves and felt no necessity to hide. The years of concealment and hiding have started to be forgotten and even the number of Alevis who state that once they were hiding their Aleviness has decreased. On the other hand, the grievances that result from discriminatory actions now are expressed as “memories” or the past.⁸⁸

There are stories of school life, of rural life –especially the east or places where Sunni conservatism is strong– and of the times before they moved to big cities. The main themes of these stories and memories are school experiences –especially religion courses–, and insults, prejudiced expressions and exclusion of “impertinent” Sunnis which were in their neighborhood, among their friend circle or relatives. However, contemporary examples are limited in number. Even there is a need to feel and show that Aleviness is not a “wrong” identity to be hidden, but on the contrary a legitimate identity which must be borne with pride. This is why when quoting an instance of discrimination from the past the story is not constructed as a story of grievance. On the contrary, the stories focus on how the discrimination has been overcome without giving any concessions regarding identity and with teaching a lesson to the counterpart:

- I am 28 years old, lived among MHP supporters but until now I did not **deny my Aleviness**. Also just before you start dialogue, in the beginning you identity is clearly seen.⁸⁹

Rıza

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- **I proudly do.**⁹⁰

Ali

- I had to end a very important relationship because of this. **I had to leave my girlfriend.** But in this subject, **I have never been a secondary man.** Never been left aside because of being an Alevi, never been shut, I have never experienced such a thing.⁹¹

Hasan

- In the place I worked. I have been reinstated because I was an Alevi and because in some cases when I have felt that his behaviors were wrong and stand in his way. At that time there was a mining union, I have worked there. I worked for a week, did now **give up** and turned back to that same place. In other words I have not **compromised**.⁹²

Musa

The “I did not ever deny my Aleviness” emphasis of Rıza within this context tells us he thinks that the ones who hid their identities and concealed, in fact, denied their Aleviness. Likewise, by his response to the question “Do you define yourself as an Alevi?” with “yes, with pride” Ali implies that there are people who are ashamed of their Aleviness. Özgün, in underlining that she could express her Aleviness without hesitation even within the most fanatic crowds, in fact, complains about the coward Alevis. Hasan, while stating that he would not accept any insult towards his Aleviness and emphasizing that he is not a “secondary man”, calls the Alevis to live openly. Musa’s uncompromising stand in cases of facing discrimination, again points to his reaction towards concealment of Aleviness and the Alevis. Openness of the Alevis and the idea that they live in an era in which they can freely express their identities made the Alevis to think that hiding Alevi identity points to a hesitation regarding identity, or even to denial of Aleviness. Even there are so few Alevis who express that they hid or concealed their identity in the past. It can be seen that there is a common belief among the Alevis (that we have seen in our examples) that many Alevis done so in the past, or are still doing. This fact points to the mistrust of the Alevis regarding the other Alevis. Many Alevis think that the other Alevis are ashamed of their identities, and even suspect that they could deny their identities.

Urban setting brought a daily life pattern in which the Alevis more often encounters the other. In this encounter living in a small geography increased the conflict:

- Why would I hide? Maybe in some parts of the west such discrimination does not exist. **We have observed it in the east, when we were there.** In our high school there have been many quarrels, many fights. The only reason was we were Alevis.⁹³

Onurcan

Onurcan asserts that the main reason behind not being subjected to discrimination is not related with the age or period that we are living in, but more to his residing in Istanbul. He states that discrimination is observed more in eastern parts of Anatolia. Complacency of the Alevi population within the crowds in a city like Istanbul is one of the important properties of the period of ‘Open Aleviness’. The Alevis of this period demand to be within the crowds, since it gets easier for them to camouflage themselves nearby other identities. However, this camouflage strategy faces serious difficulties in high school years which find its most violent expressions in religion courses:

- For instance our religion teacher knew it so well. He knew I was an Alevi and made great deal of effort to bring us to mosque for performing namaz, he tried to make us perform it at school. I always failed in **religion courses**.⁹⁴

Murtaza

- If someone asks I would introduce. I should also add, since college years I have never hid myself. But till college, **in high school years, unfortunately we hid ourselves**. They would have not let us leave if we have not done so.⁹⁵

Hüseyin

- Have you ever hid your Aleviness?
- Actually, **not directly hiding but in some cases I did not tell**, for instance in a setting. But of course this has evolved after I have realized Aleviness in a seven or eight years period, the period between secondary-high school and college years. Because the first time I have realized and I have been told that I am an Alevi I was **advised not to express it openly** everywhere, **I have been warned** about that. After then they have told me the reason behind this, why should I not do it and I, in fact, followed their advises. There was nothing significant until the end of high school, **I did not need**, in other words, I have seen that it is pointless to hide it, or struggle to conceal my identity.⁹⁶

Barış

For the Alevis the most unforgettable instances of discrimination belongs to their high school years. Because it is in high school years that they recognize their Aleviness, face the other and become fragile. Since they were warned by their families to hide their Aleviness (at least in former periods this was a common practice) this recognition process is experienced under great tension all over. These acts of “hiding” and “camouflaging”, as we see in cases of Hüseyin and Barış, in later years, transform itself to shame.

Apart from high school life social life is also one of the arenas in which it is unavoidable for the Alevis to express their identity:

- The responses were as such: **are you really an Alevi?** Or, “you cannot really be an Alevi, you are just like us.” But in our social life while trying to be a moral and

honorable person we have worn the virtue of being human before anything. In our teaching being human comes first.⁹⁷

Cafer

- I have not been subjected to. I was in the house of a friend, there was also a lady whom I did not know, my friend's friend. . . . The lady said, my son is in love with an Alevi girl. She did not know that I was an Alevi. That lady once came to my house. I said her son fell in love with a nice person. The lady said that she did not want someone from the Alevis. I asked why, what did the Alevis do to you? She replied that the Alevis were **filthy** and **dirty**. I asked, what filthiness have you seen in Alevis. After listening me I have said to her that I was an Alevi, she was shocked. She said **"don't be ridiculous, they make tea with bath water, you cannot eat anything that they have cooked."** I said, "do you know, I am an Alevi," also added that it was so saddening hearing her words. You came to my house, I said, drank my tea, had I made it with bath water. She was shocked, become weird, really upset. She said "I am really sorry."⁹⁸

Naciye

- Have you ever hid your Aleviness?
- **No.**
- How?
- **I told when asked.** If not telling when not asked means hiding, I hid.
- There were some people who did not believe that I was an Alevi. I guess they have a strange notion of Aleviness. "You do not look like an Alevi." When I asked them about Aleviness they made strange comments.
- Like what?
- I made laundry at school a lot. I guess the Alevis, for them, **did not wash their clothes.** I had bath day and night, went to school so clean. Because of these they did not believe.⁹⁹

Deniz

Some memories about their social lives are the most stressed discriminatory practices by the Alevis. Many direct discriminatory acts that have been experienced at individual level are seen as unworthy for emphasizing. Even, the Alevis mostly fear that emphasizing discriminatory practices as such would be judged as a mere reaction to society by the others. However, as the cases that we have dealt have shown, the symbolic violence that has been experienced is so hard to pass over.

Alevis mostly underemphasize the individual grievances that rise from their Aleviness such as being pushed to hide themselves, inability to express their identity freely and unjust treatment. However, the attacks that targeted Alevi society as a whole like Maraş, Sivas, Çorum, Gazimahellesi, could never be erased from the memories. Thus, one of the most prominent sentiments that resided from the closed period is the fear of repetition of such attacks. What makes Alevis the most emotional with regarding the issue of their Aleviness, and what makes them so sympathetic towards Aleviness is such tragic incidents. Since these

attacks are still fresh in the collective memory and since there is an effort to keep it like that, the memories of these attacks act as an antidote to moving away from Aleviness. Especially opposition against Islamist political tendencies is a common property among the Alevis. However, within this commonality one cannot find a significant distinction between Kemalist and Republican citizens; and Alevis who align themselves with “laicist front” as against to all Islamist tendencies. Opposition to political Islam finds its expression mostly in opposition to the AKP.

- I do not approve the AKP.
- Bigotry is already so widespread. **If it increases more** than in Turkey **a clash between Alevis and Sunnis** would start.¹⁰⁰

Ali

- After seeing the political performance of the AKP **we have started to feel worried about our tomorrow. I hope it would not go further.**
- [With reference to turban issue] so, what will it trigger, what will be the endpoint of this issue?
- **Civil war.**
- Do you believe in the existence of such a threat?
- It is headed towards there, in the end **something will come out.** Even I, who before see ‘turban’ (headscarf) as something normal, now approach it with **fear. Something will come out at some point.**¹⁰¹

Rıza

- Are there any threats awaiting the Alevis?
- **Genocides.**
- You are afraid of genocide?
- Yes, **if this AKP does not fall from power there will be genocide.**

Gül

- By today, in this geography, I do not know about the possibility of an Alevi-Sunni clash, which I fear a lot. I don’t know if someone wants it but such a threat may exist.¹⁰²

Barış

- What is the danger that awaits the Alevis?
- After the last “turban” incidence I am afraid of a **sect clash** between Alevis and Sunnis.
- In what condition will Alevis find themselves?
- Nothing will happen. I mostly fear from a **civil dispute.** But I believe it will be better if such thing will not happen.¹⁰³

Hüdr

Today one of the things that brings Alevis together is anti-Islamism since, in the history, there has been many Islam oriented attacks took place against the Alevi population. Also, since the survivors of these attacks are still alive, and since the events are still recent history, Alevis keep fresh the anxiety and fear of attack, mass slaughter and genocide. These anxieties can also politicize the Alevis. Even, today, Aleviness of the Alevis which has slighter Islamic tones nourishes from this politicization. Besides, the strong presence of perception of danger in the Alevi

discourse is a result of the presence of a structured grievance. Even though they express that they feel more comfortable now, they still want to be cautious. Besides, Hıdır's belief that "it will be better" if there will be no confrontation shows that the narration of 'things are going to a better' found place in this grievance narrative. Özgün, an Alevi who does not establish an irrational emotional tie with Aleviness, on the contrary, thinks that the Alevis currently do not pose a threat to any circle. In other words, Aleviness is such an unimportant identity to be oppressed or destroyed through violence for power.

For the Alevis, as the exigency of hiding was halted and opening process had begun, this brought talking about Aleviness to the agenda. This opening and articulation which was in-group at first, begun to be directed outwards. Alevis on the one hand started to test their knowledge on Aleviness and question it; and reconsider their faith on the other. Many Alevis complain that their families could not teach Aleviness to their children properly and there is hardly anyone who has proper knowledge about Aleviness. They associate inability to experience Aleviness thoroughly with this rupture in knowledge and experience. On the other hand, most do not have any effort to learn. They submit themselves to the conformity of absence of any sanction for not knowing. They also anxiously add that future generations will be subjects of this conformity more and one day Aleviness will be forgotten:

- Since it does not have roots which have seen bright days, and since it is the **first, this generation is anxious**, sees itself as such. We will have a step, but who knows **our end will be good or bad. How are we going to tell people about us while we do not know anything about us.**

...

- **No one told me**, there was nothing like Quran courses **which told us this is this, that is that**, no one gathered us and told us about Aleviness unless we asked. We have tried to learn as much as we could and wanted. Because of this **we are so open to strikes**, and this is known well by others. **We are disconnected**; the Shiites are saying something from there and we are saying other. One comes and says that there is no book, and the other says there is no need for it, **there is a great cacophony**.¹⁰⁴

Hasan

As Hasan states, Alevis, in the 'Open Aleviness' period, together with the need for explaining themselves to outside wanted to know more about Aleviness. The weakness of knowledge about Aleviness, absence of a systematic learning/dissemination mechanism and a consensus on Aleviness and, on the

contrary the abundance of voices make things harder for the Alevi population. Alevis want to want to become “clear” about their identity; and they demand to freely talk about their identity to others, to their friends, neighbors and children.

- So, do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- **I can't.**
- In order to say that you are an Alevi **you must know what Aleviness is**, you have to live it, live Islam.
- ...
- Did your family tell you these?
- They did not. In our own environment **there is no one who properly knows about Aleviness.**
- ...
- When she grows up, are you going to tell her Aleviness?
- **I do not know anything, how am I going to teach her.** As I said, if it has been added to curriculum I could have something to add. But since I do not know anything I cannot tell her. **I do not believe she will do either.**¹⁰⁵

Hıdır

- Are you telling to the kids?
- **They do not understand even if you tell.**
- For instance, did you say that you were Alevis at a point?
- Of course. They accept Aleviness; they say that they are Alevis. **There is no one who properly teaches Aleviness.**¹⁰⁶

Ali

Hıdır and Ali also complain about the absence of an institution which passes Alevi knowledge to future generations. Given the circumstances they doubt that the new generation will by themselves spontaneously will be interested in Aleviness, since there is not a single mechanism which will make Aleviness a center of attraction. Even it is impossible for the ones who are sympathetic towards Aleviness to find conduits to learn Aleviness.

- When did you first realize that you are an Alevi?
- To be honest my family **did not inject me the culture** that this is Alevi and this is Sunni. How did we learn? Through music and sayings we heard. **We have never seen it in the family.** We did not have talks noting this is an Alevi and this is a Sunni.¹⁰⁷

Naciye

- How do you evaluate Hacı Bektaşî Veli Foundation?
- **It is not enough.** There aren't enough books, sources. **There is no one to enlighten you.** There are some but they are all **insignificant people.** There are no one who knows these rituals well, disseminate them, who explains well and properly, who disseminates the **true knowledge.** **There aren't enough sources** about this subject. They are all burned down, destroyed. The sources are unfortunately rare.¹⁰⁸

Sultan

- Have your family ever taught you Aleviness?
- As family, **I did not have any talk or chat with my parents**, but my grandfathers. We had a lot of conversations, not directly with my grandfathers but with the fathers of my grandfathers.¹⁰⁹

Deniz

- Have your parents ever explained you Aleviness?
- **They do not know anything, what will they tell me?** I tell them the things I have read, explaining this is this and this happened as such. The truth is that my parents are so ignorant about this issue. I guess **they did not have anything from their parents**, their elders.¹¹⁰

Onurcan

- Were they telling you about Aleviness?
- **They were not**, but we saw how they were living. **My dad never told me directly that Aleviness is something like this and like that.**¹¹¹

Zeynel

- Do you explain Aleviness to your children and people around you?
- Sometimes we do, **sometimes we don't. If I would try to tell I cannot do it properly.**
- **[Wife] We did not ever tell to our kids at all.**
- ...
- What are the conditions for being Alevi?
- When you say conditions, you should fulfill the requirements of Aleviness.
- What are those?
- Accepting human for being human, respecting human beings.
- **[Wife] We do not have such a deep knowledge**, we just say that we are Alevis, as you see he is just mumbling¹¹²

Musa

- **Have you thought to your own kids?**
- I can't say I did, because our life has passed in the cities. **What do we know to teach others.** We only taught them how to be human; only being human.¹¹³

Hüseyin

- Who are the most important persons or figures of Aleviness?
- **I have no information**, to be honest. **We have not been thought much.**¹¹⁴

Ayşe

- What are the most important problems of the Alevis?
- Of course they have problems, **like people's ignorance about them**, in the end Sunni, Alevi, **there is not enough information about them.** People do not have enough information and the comments with insufficient information will of course influence them.¹¹⁵

Ezgi

One of the most urgent needs of the Alevis today is to ability to answer the question of who an Alevi is and to obtain other information about Aleviness. Alevis complain about impossibility of obtaining such knowledge from their elder ones, Alevi elders or associations, and inability to pass this knowledge to their children. This need rises firstly from the desire to talk to the outside with confidence, and secondly from the fear that the new generations are moving away from Aleviness more and more. For overcoming both fears the Alevis demand a theoretical and practical definition of Aleviness, and the knowledge and experience which will nourish that definition. The cry of “there is no unity in Aleviness” is mostly accompanied by that of “we do not know Aleviness.” There

are two basic reasons behind this: firstly, the Alevis contend that the definitions, knowledge and experience regarding Aleviness must be unique to support the confidence in the processes of in-group and outside representation; secondly, they also demand that plurality of voices must not reach a level to disrupt group harmony.

The main concern of the Alevis in ‘Open Aleviness’ period is no more hiding, running away or being alerted against discriminatory acts. **The main concern now is to prove themselves; the ability to satisfy inside and outside in act of opening.** In this process ignorance regarding Aleviness and inability to define it stand as the major obstacles. Given these circumstances some even started to talk about the end or withering away of Aleviness. Among other points it has been emphasized that this process of rupture has started with migration from villages to city loosening of ties with the village.

- **The generation that is next to us is detached.** The village life, **today the village life has vanished.** Today, visit the villages; there you will see no cem ritual. The people who wanted to sustain this understanding have moved to big cities. Today there are cemhouses in Istanbul.¹¹⁶

Cafer

- As far as I read and I guess, **Aleviness is a bit far from being experienced.** The start of migration from village to the cities, there was something I said a moment ago, in the east, **in villages, Aleviness is lived denser** there.

...

You know that there was a dede relation, in my opinion the vanishing of this relation made younger generations to have less information about Aleviness and how it has been lived.¹¹⁷

Onurcan

- For instance, the guy says that he is an Alevi; but follows his interests nearby capital oriented political parties. But there is no such thing in the essence of Aleviness; there is no robbery, lies, stealing. But it is for sure that **Aleviness can exist in the village setting.** It is being experienced in villages of Tunceli or Muş.
- So you say that it cannot be lived in big cities?
- No it is not being lived.
- For instance, cannot you live Aleviness?
- No way my brother, as you know, **capitalist order. It does not let us to live anything.**

...

- **The earlier people** live Aleviness more honest. In other words they perform their prayers, their belief as such. But when you look at the youth, you see McDonald's, Coca-Cola youth.¹¹⁸

Naci

If it is focused on the Alevis who have village-life experience, it can be concluded that the difference between village and the city is one of the denominators of

dissolution of Aleviness. They complain that there is no sign of the old beliefs, commitment and passion. According to them, the departure from Aleviness started with migration from village to city. Naci extends this to argument by stating that Aleviness can only and only be experienced in villages because the capitalist ordering of the cities will provide any space for Aleviness. Likewise, according to Ali and Onurcan the new city-born generations hardly have any relation to Aleviness and the rupture from Aleviness mainly started with the city life of the new generation. The detachment of the youth from Aleviness and Aleviness from youth is not only a problem for Ali and Onurcan but for many Alevis:

- I do think that **the younger ones are so much indifferent towards Aleviness. They are so far away from their essence.** The youth has moved away. In the last 20 years. I am 28 years old and as far as I see, they got far away.¹¹⁹

Döndü

- You will help him/her even if you are in trouble. **Kirvelik is a serious burden in Aleviness. I do not think it will survive any more.**
- Are there any one around you still performing it?
- I do not think so any more. **The youth of today are finishing of kirvelik.**¹²⁰

Naciye

- What is the most important problem of Aleviness in your opinion?
- Hmm. We do not provide the necessary education to our children. Today, **our children does not even know one of ten of what I know, and they will not know.**¹²¹

Sultan

- **I wonder if the generation that is to come two generations after us will be able to learn Aleviness,** the ones who live in the big cities, **if they had a chance to learn to what extent they will learn.** Will they be able to learn as we have learnt?¹²²

Onurcan

- What are the most important problems of Aleviness?
- Insufficient communication, lack of awareness, the way they are treated. **Moving away from their essences, presence of an abyss between generations.**
- **I am not so hopeful** for Aleviness, although there is an emergent political awareness. **Including me the young do not practice Aleviness.** But they are more sensitive towards the problems of Aleviness. The future generations, including me, do not give much hope in terms of conceptual survival of Aleviness.¹²³

Haydar

- I see in most of the Alevis that thing, that they did not accept Islam with its all aspects, in other words Aleviness has a unique way of interpretation of religion. It started as such, **but what I observe is that both Aleviness and Alevi youth are moving away from religion.**¹²⁴

Barış

- Has Aleviness changed, keeping in mind what your elders have told you, what you already know?
- I do not know about other people, **but I do not perform many things,** I do say that I am an Alevi but I do not perform. If you think like me, **it is less when compared to past,** lesser.
- What kind of a future do Alevis have in Turkey?

- I think there will be a **decrease**. Too much I guess. But if we embrace there will be nothing. But if everyone is like me, **I do not have much information eventually.**¹²⁵

Ezgi

Many Alevis, including the younger ones, contend that Alevi youth is less interested in Aleviness. It has been thought that not only degeneration but also the ignorance and inexperience regarding Aleviness play a great role in making of this apathy. Alevis are not so optimistic about overcoming this apathy and they do not believe that new generations will embrace Aleviness. This is mainly because of, in addition to the absence of mechanisms of passing on knowledge, firstly, the interaction with other cultures, and secondly, the crucial ruptures in processes of experiencing Aleviness.

- You do not give bride, do you take?
- Both are same. **But there is no such thing currently, it was good before.**
- ...
- No one offers to make cem?
- None.
- How is the attitude of people in the neighborhood in general. Are they passionate about Aleviness?
- **Our people are passionate, but there is no process.** Before, we were gathering on Friday nights, the crossed ones were making peace. **Now there is no such thing.**¹²⁶

Ali

- Are there any Alevis in you surrounding?
- Yes. Many. There are Alevis, **but when you ask whether they are attached to each other, mostly not.**¹²⁷

Musa

- As change I can note this: first time I saw, it was about the religious issues; like their way of praying, not fasting in Ramadan **but other fasting, I see people are moving away from these.** But when saying moving away I do not mean embracing only the philosophical aspect. **I see a total withdrawal from religion.**

...

- I see the dangers awaiting the Alevis as such: it's the **danger of disappearance** of the Alevis who defend the philosophy of Aleviness and perform it.¹²⁸

Bariş

- Alevis were more all in one before. Maybe there was an invisible veil surrounding the society. But these political developments, you know the world is changing. When we come to the last two or three decades, **the Alevi society is dissolving.** The state policies and many other things have role in this. The closed structure of the Alevi society has dissolved. When we say the last two or three decades, the entrance of media in our life **makes people move away from local values.** The geographical dispersion of society and other factors have changed the Alevi society.
- My mother, in her period, when she was in my age, they were attending cem much more then we do now. They were doing this even under the hardest conditions. But our period is **more relaxed, to put it more correctly dispersed.** These are the things that have changed. For instance the **Alevis are growing away from their prayers.** The dissolution of that closed structure of the society **degeneration, or more correctly, decomposition took place.**

...

For me the biggest problem that Aleviness is facing is this: firstly they must understand the realities of the world and Turkey and must struggle for other issues as they have done before. They have to do these if they want to maintain and sustain their culture. If they don't they are **damned to be a lost culture**, which visited the world history but then vanished. May be they are already vanished, I do not know. When we consider that we are currently so far away from this knowledge, **maybe after 50 or 100 years they will search Alevis, as they are observatory examples, and maybe they will not be able to find at all. They will not be able to state that an Alevi lives like that, her house is like this and so on. All things like folk songs, saz and semah have vanished by now.**¹²⁹

Haydar

- No one is **rigid as they were before**. Nobody is experiencing Aleviness as they did before, **they do not live with that identity**.

...

- **Alevis are incredulously loose. There is an amazing complacency**. They should leave this mood immediately, overcome complacency.
- ... They must decide this: they must determine the distance between Aleviness and Islam. If it is a religion it must be lived as such, if a philosophy, like philosophy then. When there is a dual existence **there is a multiple system and this causes Aleviness to melt down within other identities**. So, you must decide what you are. **If you shelter such a multitude you are doomed to vanish already. It is like Aleviness is everything. What is good, or modern and outside conservatism is all Aleviness**. This can be communism, Atatürkism, party this and partly that, even Buddhism. **A teaching that tries to shelter everything. This is why it is turning into something very much confused, unconvincing and ambiguous**. In that sense I think it must decide what it is.¹³⁰

Özgün

- What kind of changes took place in Aleviness in the last two or three decades?
- 30 years ago it was more bigoted, as I have said, **now the young are freer**, there are mixed marriages, before marrying with a stranger was impossible.
- What do you mean by bigotry?
- **They were more attached to Aleviness**. They were finding the outsiders strange, but because the strangers were finding them so, they were doing it. But there is no more, there is no such a problem.

...

- How do you evaluate the future of the Alevis?
- As I have said, **the young are cleverer, more conscious**. I think it gets **better**. For instance they make presentations. We have new places built. Our children are going to school. **They do not move according to the will of dedes or elders**. They are educated.¹³¹

Ayşe

Ali, an Alevi who adopts an Islamic Aleviness and who has strong ties with the Alevi community states that the Alevi population is connected to each other but their ties with Aleviness is loosened and they cannot practice Aleviness properly. Musa, to whom we referred as an example of Alevi on loosed Aleviness path, thinks that the number of Alevis who are attached to each other with passion decreased gradually. Barış underscores the move way from religious practices and he see nothing wrong about that; but he is concerned with abandonment of

Aleviness at a philosophical level. Haydar is also among the one who argue that Alevi community is being disintegrated and dissolved. He emphasizes that Alevis are moving away from local values and the number of religious practitioners is decreasing and Aleviness is more and more becoming an antique culture. Özgün points to the danger because of the absence of a commonality in definition and practices of Aleviness, it turned out to be an identity which encompasses everything and, consequently, which does not present any distinction. For Özgün, this process may result in complete vanishing of Aleviness. However she is also glad that Aleviness is not rigid now as it was before.

To sum up Alevis share the opinion that Aleviness of today is different from that of the past and they contend that Aleviness faces the danger of dissolution. However, the motivations behind these evaluations differ with respect to different positioning within Aleviness. For the ones with relatively denser Alevi sentiments (especially the ones on Muslim-Way) the main motivation is to restore Alevi belief within the community. If we depict a linear line starting from Muslim-way, and continuing respectively by Mixed-way, Sub-way and Non-way; as we come closer to the Non-way, erosion of Aleviness is articulated as a factual statement, not as a fear. Even in some cases decrease in significance of religious elements is welcomed.

For the Alevis, the representation of Aleviness gained significance within ‘Open Aleviness’ period. What other sections of society think about Aleviness or how Aleviness is seen from outside became one of the primary issues for the Alevis. On the other hand, the presence of conflicting position within Aleviness stands as an obstacle to reaching a clear definition of Aleviness. For the Alevis, the urge for a shared definition can only be sustained through reaching **a unity among the Alevis**. Because of this, Alevis are disturbed by issues like inability of Alevi leadership to form a “unity”, personal contentions, and presence of variety of organizations. This uneasiness is about to transform itself to hopelessness about the permanence of Aleviness:

- Are there the ones within Aleviness who are on the wrong track?
- Yes.
- Who, which circles?
- It is because of **associational activities**. For instance Alevis have inside problems. Some of the Alevi associations claim that Aleviness is within Islam, some argues the opposite. **There is no unity amongst them.** The main reason behind is that **the Alevi associations are being overly manipulated.** None of those institutions is strong. In most you may find people who does not have 100 million lira in their wallets, starting from the head to the member. When there is any flow of hot money they cannot open their perspectives on different thoughts.¹³²

Murtaza

- I think the main reason behind **collusion** is personal interests. The cultural philosophy of Aleviness is unique, but there are different interpretations. These are mainly guided by their **personal gain**. Like the politicians are after a seat, some Alevis also **run after career or seat**. In normal it has different belief or philosophy.
- ...
- Fanaticism has no good side. Within these, as the Sunnis are getting fanatic there are also within the Alevis This has a negative effect **since it causes division.**¹³³

Derviş

- The first danger awaiting the Alevis is degeneration of Aleviness. Fading of dedelik concept. Being manipulated by the ones who want to **divide us** for rent and interest (be it the interest of this country or another, whatever), by treating us like we are nothing.¹³⁴

Hasan

Murtaza, Derviş and Hasan think that there is disunity because the administrators of Alevi association act for the sake of their careers and personal material gains. In this sense they think Alevi CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) as products of personal interests, not as platforms for achieving unity. Furthermore, another point of criticism is association's being hostile to each other because of defending domination of their own position if not their personal gains:

- In your opinion, what are the three important problems of the Alevis?
- First one is the Cem foundation. I am joking. I guess the problem of the Alevis is ignorance. That we do not have enough information about this subject. That we cannot establish ourselves in this country. In fact we do not have such an aim. That this country does not accept us. I do have nothing in my mind except these.
- How do you think that these problems would be solved?
- They are so hard to be solved. **Everyone has a different point of view regarding Aleviness.** There are various foundations. In Hatay I guess, there was one, Abdal Musa Foundation. That foundation is sharing the iftar fast with Tayyip Erdogan, other foundations don't. I approve the ones who don't. But there are Alevis who support the Abdal Musa Foundation. I definitely do not support the Cem Foundations but there are thousands of Alevis who do. **There different points of view. This is why it is so hard to solve the Alevi problem. So hard the keep it in track...** You ask me about the solution. Honestly, **I think it cannot be solved.**¹³⁵

Onurcan

- There are so many **divisions. Many foundations** were popped-up. So many that some said me there are more than 400 foundations. A dede told me a few days ago. He said there are so many divisions. They said we must enter a period of uniting, there are so many divisions.¹³⁶

- So, if we go like this we can lose each other. In other words we can lose our faith. **All these associations must meet at a common point. These fights for post must end and they must constitute a shared view.**¹³⁷

Sultan

- Let me tell what is wrong. There is Pir Sultan Abdal Association, Hacı Bektaş Veli Association, cemhouses. **Ok with the variety, but all shall defend the same idea. There must be no divisions.** PSAKD is more leftist, cemhouses are more conservative, closer to right wing. Hacı Bektaş Veli Association is a different idea. It should not be like that. They should be united; they should not defend different things. I see this; **they even may be totally exclusive.** It's all wrong.¹³⁸

Hüseyin

Onurcan, Sultan and Hüseyin believe that it is dangerous for Aleviness that there are many associations which are hostile to each other. Yet, in spite of their discomfort they do not hesitate to express their antipathy towards some of these formations. Even those who have limited information about associations have an idea about separations and divisions:

- So, do you define yourself as an Alevi?
- I have adopted the Alevi philosophy, it's in my essence. But in practice I cannot fulfill the requirements of Aleviness. We do not attend a cem, or go to the association. They have their special days, helva days and others. We cannot do those but we live it spiritually. I do not see myself as a pure Alevi.
- You were talking about the associations.
- Their differences resemble that of the political parties. There are **personal differences**. In essence they defend the same idea but their actions are personal. Pir Sultan is insufficient. I would not like to denigrate it, but they are insufficient. There are personal differences of ideas. This should not be. **I do not know them, I have never been within them.**¹³⁹

Zeynel

- What are the problems of Alevis? The three important one.
- Honestly, Alevis have no problems. They create them themselves.
- Do you find anything wrong with the Alevis?
- To be honest, **I have never been within them.** Not that I did not, I could not, so I do not know.¹⁴⁰

Ali

- Do you have membership of any Alevi organization?
- No way. [laughs] **How absurd!**
- Why?
- It is about my standing. I do not feel fanatic enough to live under an identity. Like felling weird when seeing the ones swallowing blades, iyyy. **I find it so primitive, like worshipping a totem.** It is not something that I would fight for, that I believe that it will have an influence over the world. I approach the problems in more universal, more global terms. While there are problems like whether we have a universe to live in, or if we will have in the future, I do not find the problems Aleviness facing important. So, **being a member of an Alevi association and defending the rights of Alevis is not a priority for me.** For me the issue of human rights in Turkey is more important. As an Alevi, as an Alevi Turkish citizen I do pursue such a struggle more.¹⁴¹

Özgün

- Do you have membership of any Alevi organization?
- **I never felt the necessity.**
- Any Alevi associations you know?
- **I do not know any.**¹⁴²

Serap

Özgün and Serap think that it is unnecessary to be a member of an Alevi organization even though they are both Alevis. Özgün takes it further and argues that it is primitive to be a member since it contradicts with human rights to give priority to the rights of a community.

The examples in this part show that the greatest dynamic behind the inability of Aleviness to unite is the disorganization and approaches of Alevi NGOs. In fact this idea shows that leadership of Alevi NGOs are recognized. Yet these associations which have an important position in terms of ideological representation are not that successful in terms of mass representation. Most Alevis are not in touch with those associations. A lot of Alevis do not know those associations. And the ones who know those associations have negative judgments about them and do not think that it is right to make a choice among them.

One characteristic of the Alevis left from closed period is encoding various developments as threats, attacks, or operations directed towards themselves.

On the other hand, the knowledge of such threats, attacks and plots is doubtlessly influential in transformation of this behavior into a reflex. One of these reflexes is the fear of assimilation. Alevis see many developments as attempts to assimilate them. Even within the ‘Open Aleviness’ period state’s removal of some oppressive measures against and bans on the Alevis and more cooperative attitude of the state can be evaluated as moves aimed at banishing Aleviness. There are many Alevis who underline that efforts for assimilating Aleviness in Sunni Islam and other moves for assimilation succeed in some cases. There is no doubt that developments and phenomena like building mosques to Alevi villages by force after the 1980 military takeover, compulsory religion courses, rising Islamic movement and empowerment of Islamists with the state play an important role in constitution of the fear of “assimilation.” However, it is not clear whether the fundamental reason behind moving away from Aleviness is assimilation. Many

Alevi think that Alevis are influenced by other identities because Aleviness became “degenerated” and “corrupted”:

- My family has introduced me. But in many places, many people do not. This is why the exact number of the Alevi population is not known in Turkey. It has been **overly degenerated**. We experienced this a lot. The ones arrived Istanbul between 1970 and 1985 do not declare their Aleviness. **They lived in Sunni way. The next generations, since had no information, thought that they were Sunni.** We know people. We see people from our village.

...

- They do not live Aleviness anymore. Most of them even will not tell you. In Anatolia they are known. They have their villages. But the ones in Istanbul, they are different. He tell to people that knows him, but not to the Sunnis. Even we have friends, people we know who fast in Ramadan.

- Are there any dangers awaiting the Alevis?

- We experience all the dangers. **The biggest danger is total degeneration and disappearance.**¹⁴³

Murtaza

- When I look that way I think about this: I see that in the last few years **they are trying to fit Aleviness to a cast and make it like Sunnism**. For example there are meetings with the Prime Minister. Statements like cemhouse are a cultural house. As if these are absurd, go and put them in order. There are books on this. I try to keep up with recently; when I go to the bookstores I see a lot of books on Aleviness. I guess some are **trying to fit Aleviness to a cast**.

- How are Alevis being affected?

- Too much I guess. **Especially Sunnification**. When we look at our people I see that they see Aleviness in Islam more.¹⁴⁴

Onurcan

- According to your observations, what kind of changes took place in Aleviness in the last two or three decades?

- **Degeneration**. A degeneration through increasing **focus of Sunni politics**.¹⁴⁵

Bektaş

- **Assimilation**. Absence of organized institutions and absence of state support play a great role in assimilation. There are masses who are guided by associations which are sheltered under the umbrella of the state and there are also Alevis who are **Sunnificated**. The Alevis must get rid of the Cem Foundation. This does not only depend on the Alevis, since the state supports the Cem Foundation. They should solve this collectively.

¹⁴⁶

Haydar

Actually, the ones who state that Alevis are “degenerated” or “corrupted” imply that they approach to the “Sunni” version of Islam. This critique does not only rise from anti-Islamist or irreligious Alevis, but also the Muslim ones. Even in some cases they raise their criticisms in a stronger manner. Because a non-Sunni Islam is the essence of their existence, approaching to Sunni Islam will be most destructive. On the other hand, for others these people have already become Sunni. As we approach from Islamic-way to Non-way the performance of criticizing Alevis for approaching to Sunni-way becomes more frequent, because for the ones within

Non-way, the indicators of “becoming Sunni” comprise a wide range of determinants. For instance, whereas for the Muslim Alevis becoming Sunni implies embracing Sunni beliefs and rituals; for the others references to Quran and Islamic history or Islamic tones in Alevi rituals are enough to reach such a judgment.

Because the Alevis for a considerable time span have left aside the practical requirements of their religion, some Alevi practices begun to be seen as “**reactionary**” and it has also been suggested that these practices must be abandoned at all. The Alevis who embraced the secular republican values and modern and urban lifestyle associate rituals and practices which resemble Sunni Islamic with reaction and they tend to preserve a distance towards them. For them the Alevis must be proud of the philosophical aspects of their beliefs, not in those backward rituals. On the other hand purifying Aleviness from these rituals reduces Aleviness to a mere cultural form. These Alevis considers Aleviness primarily as a cultural togetherness. But the cements of this unity in the past were solidarity, socialization, closeness and religious practices. Today, the former ones are loosened because of urbanization and modernization and only religious elements are saved. The Alevis who try to abandon religious practices also, in fact, in a way try to get rid of their Aleviness all together.

- There are visits. Do the Alevis visit the mausoleums?
- **I do not believe in mausoleums.** Every year, in June. I am not visiting for two years. Everyone meets there every year.

Ali

- Go to the villages of Merzifon, they still try to live with the same mentality. They cannot pass over themselves. **Kissing hands or other things are unnecessary.** They cannot crack their shells and open up. They still try to live with the same mentality. I said my father passed away recently; they came and said let's make *dar* ritual. My uncles in Merzifon were **praying and doing other stuff.** For me these things were so absurd. Meaningless. **I say let's cultivate ourselves instead of doing these.**
- **But, on the one hand while criticizing the superstitions; our people should not do meaningless things on the other.** ¹⁴⁷

Zeynel

Ali and Zeynel believe that some Alevi rituals which can be considered as parts of folk Islam must be abandoned. This shows us that even the Alevis who respect religious aspects of Aleviness approach to Aleviness with a rational manner and

propose that Aleviness must be purified from its irrational aspects. So, they base their critique of (Sunni) Islam on this ground.

- When did you first realize that you are an Alevi?
- I did not even notice. This is something that has been talked at home all the time. But it is normal in our house; we do not play or do something. Our home is a bit different. We know that our parents love to be Alevis but they do not talk about it much. They both are proud but they did not pass that culture on us. **Since religion is not a dominant issue, and since we do not have much notion of religion much and since we are not a pious family we are not an Alevi family.** It is parallel with religion. We are not pious. **Religion did not impose any pressure on us. This is why we progressed a lot, moved up.** We have a wide horizon we are investigative, do you get it? The pressure of religion pulls people back. Religion, fanaticism. We can progress since we are not fanatics.¹⁴⁸

Serap

Serap underscores that Aleviness cannot flourish in the absence of religion. In the absence of religion Aleviness is reduced to a cultural value which is approached by sympathy, and which is a source of pride that cannot be denied or accepted. She states that her family could go “further” and overcome backwardness for applying such an Alevi perspective. In other words, Aleviness for Serap is a backward phenomenon.

- Do you think that this a wrong way among the Alevis?
- For the ones **who have a rigid attachment to Aleviness** it means abandoning Aleviness.
- Within these variety of positions and clusters within Aleviness to which position do you feel yourself close?
- I am a defender of **modern Aleviness**.¹⁴⁹

Sevim

- What is Aleviness for you?
- According to me there are a lot of differences between Aleviness we know since we were children and the Aleviness that we see on the TVs as explained by the scientists. For me Aleviness is an excellent religion which reached the essence of Islam. This is for me. It is a nice and purified religion, or let's call it a culture, **which has eliminated the unnecessary parts and bigotry of Islam.**
- ...
- [By referring to Alevis] They are mostly **bigoted**. From the existence of the God to Mohammed, to his verses.
- For me they is bigoted. That is to say they are attached to religion. I know people who go to Hacı Bektaş for years and give their dimes to people in Hacı Bektaş. Why these man would help me the god will. Who will help, **Hacı Bektaş?**¹⁵⁰

Hüseyin

Alevis like Hüseyin and Sevim who do not get along with religion, keeps a distance on religious expressions and aspects of Aleviness. Irreligious Alevis who do not affiliate Aleviness with religion also feels distanced from religious Alevis and negatively respond to them.

Absence of a systematic for religious aspects of Aleviness results in emergence of varying and conflicting interpretations and practices of Aleviness. Alevis who approach belief issues from different Alevi positions come up with different conclusions; also their respective positions may result in reactional consequences. Especially anti-Islamic and irreligious Alevis harshly react against approachment between Alevi and Sunni practices. On the other hand, even these irreligious positions accept that an Aleviness which is purified from religious and traditional elements will lack a content that will make Aleviness a center of attraction. This is why these positions do not propose a total withdrawal from Alevi traditions.

4.1.2. Aleviness “Loosed”

Rural Aleviness dictates Aleviness in different faces of everyday life. Yet, Aleviness in urban life is impossible as practiced in Alevi villages. Therefore there is much erosion in different aspects of Alevi believing. For example, **for the Alevis “St. Ali” is no longer a central but a symbolic figure.** Many Alevis criticize sublimation of Ali and underline the inexactness of attributing superhuman values to and deifying of a human being in Aleviness. On the other hand we cannot conclude that the sympathy felt towards Ali is gone at all. We can still see commendation of Ali:

- What does St. Ali mean for you?
- A religious leader, but a religious leader who lived in ancient times. Eventually I do not have an intention to attach Aleviness to Islam or Ali. Aleviness start with the birth of Prophet Mohammed, by the birth of Islam. So I do not see a difference. **I do not place St. Ali do a different place. I see him as person who lived Aleviness better after St. Mohammed.**¹⁵¹

Murtaza

Murtaza does not locate Ali in a special place. Since his references are Islam he does not have a ground to provide such a place. Therefore, his feeling regarding Ali is restricted with sympathy towards his leadership skills and the way he lived Islam. Like Murtaza, Islamic-way Alevis also oppose attributing sacred values to Ali. In defense of Aleviness they must prove to Islam that they really differ from Shi'ism. Thence they adopt a line which respects Ali like other Islamic figures but which does not prioritize him.

- I know him as a **brave person** coming from Ehli Beyt lineage. Coming from Alevi lineage, he is a person **who opposed and fought against injustices**.¹⁵²

Derviş

- St. Ali means a lot to us. We learn being right and honesty from him. The things he left us, his vestiges tell us what to do. **He is a sort of leader to us**.¹⁵³

Rıza

- The greatest ones, Imam Hasan, Imam Hüseyin come from St. Ali. They also believe in Prophet Mohammed a lot. He has nothing. Excuse me but **Prophet Mohammed does not have a shit at all [he is nothing]**...The things I say of God, Mohammed, I do not believe in the at all.
- What does St. Ali mean to you?
- He is the lion of the earth for me. **His tolerance, love, the way he looks to human beings** is all so different. I cannot tell anything to St. Ali; but for Mohammed I have many bad things to say.¹⁵⁴

Musa

- For instance even an atheist Alevi says that I love St. Ali. Why? St. Ali is a **humanist human being**, really, with his point of view, because he approaches to humanity from an **equal point of view**.
- Anything else?
- He is a really **reliable** person, very **credible**. Also he is from the lineage of the prophet, both his son-in-law and son of his uncle. So, I see him as the **symbol of Aleviness**.¹⁵⁵

Sultan

- What makes St. Ali sacred?
- Firstly, he is a man **that fought all the time**; but interestingly he has always been on the side of the suppressed. **Always on the side of the suppressed, always been just, fair and had an excellent love and respect for people**. In many Alevi cultures, I know it; they believe that Ali is God.¹⁵⁶

Hüseyin

- Does St. Ali have a special meaning for you?
- Of course. He is a really important of his period and a person who was **honorable** and had a **distinctive personality**.¹⁵⁷

Naci

Derviş, Rıza, Musa, Sultan, Hüseyin and Naci are among the ones who are sympathetic towards Ali. But their relatively high respect and love does not imply deification of Ali. Rather they see Ali as a role model and a guide for the Alevis who was honorable, brave, just, honest and who fought with injustices throughout his life. On the other hand there are also some who, though praising his humanly virtues, oppose sublimation and exaggeration his properties:

- Are the any sacred things in Aleviness?
- In Aleviness believing, in Ali after believing in God and Prophet, is sacred. That is the most sacred thing. I read about the life of Ali also. As a Muslim I cannot apprehend the **injustices that he has been subjected to**.
- I read a book called *The Shari a and Woman*. After reading that book **I do not believe in the exaggerated figure of Ali**. The book tells that **St. Ali was not as awe-inspiring as it has been pictured in the paintings**. He was **skinny, short and stocky**. Ok, he has

been subjected to injustices, he was a human of flesh and bones at the end. That's how I see it.¹⁵⁸

Zeynel

- For me he is, as a person, is holy as the prophet is. But in the end **he is a mediator**, I see him that way. **Not a person or a concept that I treat like god.** Because there things above this. I am Ali, you are Ali we are all Ali, anyone who likes to be Ali is Ali... I did not see him, I do know him, he is person that has been told to us. Because of this I do not stick up with these issues.¹⁵⁹

Hasan

- You say St. Ali, what does he mean to you?
- I do not know a lot. **I firstly think of Aleviness when one says St. Ali, nothing else.**¹⁶⁰

Deniz

- Who is the most important figure of Alevism?
- St. Ali of course. He has become the symbol of the Alevis, but **I do not see it that way.** Recently I have asked to a friend of mine; because I wanted to learn. There was a friend in the association; I said that **St. Ali is an Arab eventually**, the son-in-law of our prophet. It is said that he was killed during performing namaz. So, why the Alevis do not perform namaz then? You hang his picture everywhere. My friend tells me that it is not true; that St. Ali was not murdered during performing namaz. I said, "no way, he was killed during performing namaz." He is the son-in-law of our prophet, our prophet gave her daughter to him. "What do you think," I asked, "was **St. Ali Sunni or Alevi?**" Of course he could not answer. He was just muted.¹⁶¹

Naciye

- Who are the most important figures and persons of Aleviness?
- Everyone would have St. Ali in their minds at first. But I have also other people who have done something for this issue, like Nesimi, Pir Sultan or Hacı Bektaş Veli in my mind. St. Ali is one of them but I see these people as the ones who have done a lot for Aleviness.
- What does St. Ali mean for you?
- In general terms, he is a person to whom **they want to believe** or see as their leader.¹⁶²

Sevim

- So what does St. Ali mean for you?
- The lion of God. Honestly **it does not mean deep things** when you say St. Ali. This is my interpretation, not as it is true for Aleviness in general. He does not mean a lot. He is the son of our Prophet's uncle, caliphate was his right and all other stuff. I am not interested in these. But I know that he has an importance in Aleviness. But for me he does not **have much deep meanings for me.**¹⁶³

Onurcan

- Eventually St. Ali is one of the Four Caliphs that have come after the prophet and helped the survival of Islam. **I do not attribute a lot to Ali since I do not identify Aleviness with love and sublimation of Ali.** I do not see him as the creator, founder or the philosopher of Aleviness. He is a person, as we know from the books on religion, who has struggled to maintain and sustain Islam and **have been wronged** in his effort.¹⁶⁴

Barış

- Who are the most important figures of Aleviness?
 - The head of the associations. If you have asked me this question five or ten years ago I would have relied as St. Ali, but know he is not. **I cannot associate Aleviness with persons.**
- ...

- St. Ali is an Islamic figure, but has a special place. He reminded me of the **oppressed**. He became the symbol of Aleviness for me for that reason. Now I do neither have **hate towards or a special affection**. He is an **Arabic guy** who had his place in history.¹⁶⁵

Haydar

As we have seen in these examples, the Alevis who stand against the irrational religious aspects of Aleviness, as a critique of the narrative which attributes superhuman features to Ali, underline that, Ali is a human being no matter what, and things should not be exaggerated. Even for some, Ali is only an Arab and a Muslim. These examples indicate that the traditional Alevi commitment to Ali is started to be questioned. However, the sympathy felt towards Ali is still widespread among the Alevis. But this sympathy is no more an act of deification, as it was in traditional Aleviness. The symbolic meanings of Ali are twofold; while for the traditional line Ali refers to moral values like honesty, righteousness, and being human, for the political line Ali is a figure who is for the oppressed and wronged and who fought injustices throughout his life.

Cemhouses, in general, are important institutions for the Alevis. But this importance does not rise because they are seen as sacred spaces or places of worshipping. For many Alevis this is secondary; even for some a negative aspect. **Cemhouses are spaces which has the potential to provide possibilities for reconstituting the lost unity and togetherness of the Alevis, which were felt in the closed period and about to fade in the open period.** Solidarity and socialization is important specifically for the Alevis which live together. This is why the main functions of cemhouses turned out to be organizing funerals, funeral and wedding meals, courses on various subjects, dormitories, health services and organization of solidarity, socialization and cultural activities. The Alevis demand these places to provide these services and to be places where they can acquire information about Aleviness; rather than being places of cem.¹⁶⁶ However, the cemhouses as they are cannot satisfy and attract the Alevis. Even some Alevis criticize these places for being cem oriented and state that **“cem is a “backward” element.”**

- The images we come across in cem rituals, are, in my opinion, **are not in accord with our age**. There are many intellectual and enlightened dedes, they should deliver their speeches but there is no need for the others. Like the need for renewing the Islamic

traditions, like eating with fork not with hands, Aleviness must also have aspects in need of renewal and update. Like the exaggerated things in the cem.¹⁶⁷

Zeynel

- For example, on the TVs. I cannot associate those with Aleviness. The thing that has been presented in the TVs as Aleviness, the shots from cem rituals, **head-banging, that dede image;** these are the things that I cannot identify myself with. How can you represent Aleviness as such? These are taking place before the public; **they are gathering around the dede, head-banging, kissing the grounds, with strange dresses and non-modern clothes.** I think this is a wrong representation of our way of existence. If cem is being performed as such, I must say that I have an antipathy. I do not think that Aleviness is that **primitive.** I think the prayers must not be performed as such. **Semah is something that has its own visual aspects, its own view or cycle;** but that way of performing cem is not something that I support.
- How do you evaluate the cemhouses?
- Not good at all. It resembles the images that we see on the TVs. As a tool or **extremely primitive institutions** for injecting or pumping a kind of Aleviness. A tool for making the Alevis backward, for pointing that you are like this, you treat like this. **I see it as a structure that downgrades Aleviness.**¹⁶⁸

Özgün

Zeynel and Özgün think that cem ritual is anachronistic and Aleviness must be purified from these backward elements. Özgün proposes keeping the dance and music parts of cem ritual but underlines the need to abandon religious elements. The Alevis' efforts to purify religious elements from Aleviness points to the transformation of Aleviness to a museum, or antique culture. Among Alevis there are many who approach to religious practices in cemhouses with suspicion; especially the ones which keeps a distance between themselves and the concept of religion. This is peculiar to 'Open Aleviness' period and motivated by the opening period. The Alevis who associates cem ritual with Islam and approached to the question with suspicion find it "backward." There are also some who do not essentially oppose cem and cemhouse activities but think that these institutions and practices are misused and misguided, and "**deviated**" from their original purposes:

- The people were in more comfort in the villages. In Istanbul and on the TVs **they are forced to fit a cast or an order.** The meaning of cem, as you know, is gathering. When you look at the mystic dimension of cem it refers to the moment of **mounting to sema.** And this is **not much experienced in current cems.** But here it is bound with rules. There is the Kiblah in namaz. Now they are trying to insert something like that in contemporary cems. **They are trying to turn in the same way.**¹⁶⁹

Murtaza

- I will say that the cemhouses must be like mosques, but I will be misunderstood. Today, when you visit any mosque, you will that all of them are quite the same. **I do not approve the misuse of the cemhouses.** For example there was something in the forum: **they are listening to semah in rakı table and** making semah. I am definitely against this. Ok we are modern and farsighted people, but these should not be that worthless. Let's not put into a cast through deifying it like the Sheri'a; but let's not make it so

worthless. Our cemhouses must be like that, there must be a system. Let's not call for system which will not be criticized, but for one which will cause distress for no one.¹⁷⁰

Hasan

- **Some of the cemhouses are so bad now.** For example, there is one in Bursa, a really tiny place. You cannot gather properly or you cannot even sit in it. There some which serve for the purposes; but also there are the ones which do not. In many places, for instance in Haci Bektas Association, the guys are drinking. That is to say, **there are places which have diverted from their purposes** as there are others serving well.¹⁷¹

Sultan

- How do you evaluate the cemhouses?
- There were no cemhouses before. The people gathered in their houses to carry cem ritual. There is need for a place to gather people; this is why we need cemhouses. **But it is also important whether today's cemhouses are responding well to this need.**
- How do you evaluate?
- I don't know. **There are things that I do not approve.** Once I have participated in a cem ritual in Erzincan. The prayers were different from the ones here. For instance it is starting with good wishes for Atatürk, the police, the soldiers. Their names are quoted. I could not understand why they are trying to inject this to people in the cemhouses. I heard somewhere but I don't know if it is true, one of my friends told me. In Ankara a retired colonel organized everything in formation of a cemhouse: everything from arranging the place to finding the dedes for it. I have impression that the **state is supporting and letting the development** of cemhouses as a back-door strategy against the rising community movements and **something like that is being injected to people in the cemhouses.**¹⁷²

Onurcan

- How do you evaluate the cemhouses?
- **This is a process, politics.**
- How do evaluate their current structuring?
- For instance, in Narlıdere a new one will be opened just before the elections. Because they will have votes. Everything is being manipulated. **Ideas, Aleviness, Sunnism they are all being used.**¹⁷³

Naci

Murtaza, Hasan and Sultan think that the cem rituals that are organized within urban life are contaminated. While Murtaza is against routinization of cem like being organized as standard demonstrations, Hasan complains about the way cem is organized. So, we can state that pious Alevis complain about the current state of cem rituals that are carried in cemhouses. Onurcan and Naci's concerns are more conspiracy guided. Among the Alevis who have loosened ties and connections with the religious aspects of Aleviness, nearly all developments are met with suspicion. It makes them uncomfortable when Aleviness is referred to as a belief and Alevi population as a community. They believe that behind such naming there are powers which use Alevis and Aleviness for their interest. As a consequence Alevis of different typology have low levels of expectation from the cemhouses

regarding organization of cem ritual. But the Alevis emphasize the cultural and social functions of the cemhouses:

- There is no computer or English courses in the mosques. The people who are in need can find a shelter in the cemhouses. **For education, for literacy courses.** It is so nice that many cemhouses had such initiatives. I know many cemhouses and I try to visit most of them. Nearly all of them have **computer courses.** Some have **English courses. Mathematics, physics and chemistry courses for the students.**¹⁷⁴

Murtaza

- How do you see the cemhouses?
- Their definition is different for us. They are not seen only as places of worshipping. **These places are also spheres of culture.** Because our understanding of religion is at the same time a reflection of a culture. We see cemhouses as places where everything is maintained from education to lifestyle; from manners to worshipping. **Places where people are getting closer, young are educated, poor are supported, illiterate are taught how to read and write.**¹⁷⁵

Cafer

- The cemhouses.... **No extremism has a good side.** Of course cemhouses has good sides. They are gathering together to maintain Alevi culture, carrying cem ritual. Secondly, the best aspect of cemhouses for Alevis is **funeral service.** An Alevi citizen, even if she does not have anyone, can bring the deceased to cemhouse. Cemhouses are so helpful in these issues.¹⁷⁶

Derviş

- How do you evaluate the cem?
- There is a cemhouse, just nearby our street. If you ask me whether I have been there, **there was meal and funeral** I went because of that. I preferred to stay away because I do not know it well; I will not be able to experience it because of that.
- Now they have exaggerated. In Cem TV, you always watch cem rituals all day. I live in Yenibosna, there are many Alevis there. When I see it on Cem TV I see that the number of people going there is not much. When I look at the TV for more than once I think that **I see the same people every time.**¹⁷⁷

Hüdr

- How do you evaluate the cemhouses?
- There are **services to poor** in cemhouses, they are helping people, **supporting education, scholarships for students.** They are trying to do something. **I cannot say that there is nothing at all. At least** in some special days they are delivering meals, clothes and education for children. Like a revolving fund, they are giving back to people what they took from people.¹⁷⁸

Gül

- Mosques are places for fulfilling religious duties and of worshipping. I do not see cemhouses like that. They are places **which have cultural missions more.** I like this aspect of cemhouses, at least as far as I see. Even we can further develop this; maybe places for occupation or handcrafts courses can be opened nearby cemhouses.¹⁷⁹

Barış

All these instances show us that **today, the main point regarding the place of cemhouses for the Alevi population is not religious. Cemhouses are considered more as “cultural houses.”** The most frequently quoted function of cemhouses are providing ground for social activities like funerals, meals, and *aşure*. Besides

these activities social services like scholarships and organization of various courses which resemble that of the People's Houses (Halkevleri) are seen as the most important functions of cemhouses. Alevis visit cemhouses for socialization and continue their solidarity ties, or in other words to stand together and keep in touch; not to prey. Standing together is critical for survival of Aleviness today; because moving away from it also means moving away from Aleviness.

The dedes have been the most important and respected persons of Aleviness in its closed rural period. However, in 'Open Aleviness' period their number is quite low and they no longer have the same prestige they had before. They are no longer the sacred leaders for the Alevi population whose basic mission was to perpetuate and pass over Aleviness and to act as a cultural bridge between generations. Many Alevi think that this institution has fulfilled its task.

- How do you evaluate dedelik?
- It is a really bad problem. As I have said, these come to this point **through a process.** Before the big cities like Istanbul, the dedes fulfilled the task of **communication** between the villages, the **task of mailing** in other words. Their cultures or technological developments and communication all were made possible by the dedes. Can you say do they still have a role? It is debatable. But in the process the dedes had a great role: riding their horses from village to village. They can be considered as the **communication tools of their times; carrier pigeons or envoys.** Now we have a chance to reach everything. Besides **what will be their role in Alevi Islam?** Maybe during cem, **but now you are reaching any kind of information.**¹⁸⁰

Murtaza

- My grandfather is a dede. **Back then, there were no tools of communication...** But now, we have everything available to us. In fact, this degenerates us, is making us virtual. But **since before people did not have the tools of communication dedelik institution had an importance; but now it is dying.**
- But the bad thing is: who is a dede? **The one who comes from the dede lineage. I do not believe in this a bit. I am one of the first ones who opposed to this.** Why he is a dede? **For he comes from the lineage of this or that. I am really sorry, but do you have three balls, or do you have six fingers, what makes you different from me?**¹⁸¹

Hasan

- How do you evaluate dedelik?
- I do **approve it with reference to western lifestyle.** Back then the people did not know Aleviness, and these people were guiding them, informing them somehow. But in today's world, especially in the west, within the struggle for life **I do not see dedelik as an operational institution.**¹⁸²

Onurcan

Murtaza and Hasan, who came from dede lineage, consider dedelik as an institution which has acted as a bridge of knowledge and culture before. According to Murtaza and Hasan, in today's world this institution is completely nonfunctional. Likewise, Onurcan asserts that dedelik is a non-operational

institution. In fact, they underline that dedelik had crucial tasks in rural life and pre-modern times like acting as the cement of small Alevi communities. But today there is no place for such a mission. On the one hand development in communication technologies reduced the role of human factor; and on the other hand conduits of interaction for empowering cultural ties are diversified. Nearby the approach which at one and the same time underlines the nonfunctional state of dedes but respects them, there are also some who are reactive against dedes.

- In our period **dedes were coming and we were gathering to carry cem ritual**. In our period, the dedes gave no information about who is an Alevi, Sunni, Christian, Jew or Armenian. The dedes were coming and **working for their pockets. They were not informing people clearly.**¹⁸³

Musa

- How do you evaluate Aleviness?
- **Dedelik will end**, and Aleviness will end in the rural areas. The Alevis have their internal enmities like that, they are crossing each other because of land issues or girl issues.
- ...
- There are even **some dedes who are seeking rent.**¹⁸⁴

Zeynel

- How do you evaluate dedelik?
- Dede **is a position which has fulfilled its task, it's only living in words**. At least neither my father nor my brothers have such an ambition. Maybe there are some types who are still in that post, **exploiting people**. I think that **it is not serving for the right purpose**, as it did before. I guess they see it as **a resource to earn money without effort.**¹⁸⁵

Sultan

- How do you evaluate the dedes?
- In Turkey, as it is the same elsewhere, **the dedes also acted as the thing of imperialism. They always suppressed.**¹⁸⁶

Hüseyin

- How do you evaluate dedelik in Aleviness?
- You will ask me what kind of an Alevi you are, **but I see dedes as imams in the mosque**. As I have said, because I did not live it, **it is so unacceptable for me**. Maybe dedelik is good, but it is **so absurd** for me since I have not experienced it.¹⁸⁷

Hudır

- How do you evaluate the dedes?
- There are serious differences between the dedes that have been told to us and the current ones in the cemhouses. When I go to cemhouses, I **do not look them with sympathy**. It seems as an **institution of middle age culture**, which I am so afraid of. These are the institution that must have been eliminated, ended. **But the dedes of the old times that have been narrated to us like Pir Sultan Abdal, Hacı Bektasi Veli are more legendary, more like coming out of fables**. They are like coming out of fables, but the dedes after them, no. They are not the figures that I would embrace.¹⁸⁸

Özgün

- What is dedelik? How do you evaluate it?
- I find it so absurd. The husband of my aunt is a dede. It is absurd for me.
- Why do you find it absurd?
- How cannot it be. **No one has right to punish another.**¹⁸⁹

Ayşe

Whereas Musa, Zeynel, Sultan and Hüseyin criticizes dedelik for being open to misuse and exploitation, Hıdır, Özgün and Ayşe see it as an unnecessary institution. So, not only the sanctity of dedes and practical function rising from it has undermined, but also the prestige of dedes was diminished. The Alevi do no longer respect dedes as they did in the past. Some argue that it is an institution which belongs to the rural period and completely unnecessary in Today's world; some see it as a "backward" institution at all; and lastly there are some Alevi who understate that dedelik institution is being exploited. The ones who do not completely oppose dedelik propose a reformulation of the institution: accordingly, "at least" the dedes must be educated and trained and must approach Aleviness through scientific lenses:

- I wanted to say what we need: **The conscious person is the dede for me. I do never accept the concept of lineage.**
- **Today dedes must exist but they should carry the concept of dedelik to different dimensions. They should develop it; make it more modern and carry it forward. By this we will wait for them, wait for them at our doorsteps.**
- What I demand from the state is that, while I am paying all kind of taxes, why can't I be served by the Directorate of Religious Affairs? The state must build cemhouses. Why we do not have one in Samsun? But in forming cemhouses it must send conscious people. For example it must send you; I want Ulaş from the state. It must say Ulaş will be talking on this subject. Must deliver banners noting he will be talking in that cemhouse. I do not want conspicuous conference rooms, conspicuous things. I want Ulaş, a guy like Ulaş **who is making the science of this issue. I want people who can tell the truth, who can say this is like this, and that is like that.** A guy is coming up saying that he is a dede. **He is using the words that he was using in 1946. He is saying that's all from me.** He is talking so clear, c'mon dede, don't do this to me. **Today, the ones who know these issues must talk; the licensed ones shall talk. And you must develop yourself, we are open to progress.** Since we do not do this we are so open to strikes, to manipulation.¹⁹⁰

Hasan

- How do you evaluate the dedelik institution?
- There are two kinds of dedes: the first is the ones by birth and the second is the ones that emerged afterwards. Our dede was cultured. He bought book for me, read them. He was ell mannered, **keeping up with the age. With no beard, he was always clean.** I do not mean that the dedes are filthy, don't misunderstand. Before there was these one by birth, dedelik is passed over to son or grandson. **These dedes are mostly uncultivated. They cannot keep up with the age, they only believe in superstitions and confuse people.** This is how I see them. But the ones emerged afterwards are more observant and keep up with the age better.¹⁹¹

Bektaş

- **In the times of dedelik** there were the honest ones and the crooks also. If dede is leading the society well and making people more conscious I accept him. But if he impedes progress I do not.
- Where should the dedes must come from?
- We have academics in Bosporus and Istanbul Technical Universities. For instance, Izzettin Dogan. He has his Ph. D., he is a doctor. He knows everything. But he must not act according to his interests, but according to society. He will not be paid but volunteer.
- If he is not from the dede lineage the teachers cannot be dedes? What about this?
- They are not from that lineage but they have **intellectual accumulation**. I am not a dede, which means that if I could go to school, **you don't have to be a dede.**¹⁹²

Musa

- I see them like this: **when seen as symbolic they do not constitute a problem for me.** But in the end they are humans. This is a position open to manipulation. As soon as they do not give themselves to manipulation they may stay as symbols.
- If it is a post there will be mass that these people will lead and direct. According to me, **as soon as these people do not misdirect** the masses, as soon as they involve in these kinds of things; in other words, **as soon as they stay as the representative of a culture,** there is no problem for me. But **if they act in the contrary, there is no need for them.**¹⁹³

Barış

Hasan, Bektaş and Musa actually want the continuation of dedelik, but they do not like the current state of the institution. Since the post of dedelik acquired by lineage and there has been some grievances about former dedelik practices the capacity of dedes are to be questioned. **The Alevis demand educated dedes who will present an intellectual leadership as well as spiritual one.** Because, the current dedes are far from satisfying the demands of the Alevis, especially the ones related with providing a clear definition of Aleviness and proper representation of it.

Up to now we gave space to the Alevis who have information about dedelik and demand change. But the Alevi population is mostly composed of people who have never interacted with a dede or who do not know anything about dedelik. As we have seen in Barış's case, the Alevis of this kind have a shallow knowledge about dedelik. It can be argued that the ones who have less contact with dedelik are more sympathetic towards the institution. The main dynamics behind this sympathy is that it is the main institution which will respond the question of what Aleviness is and other questions regarding Aleviness. However, on the one hand the contact with the dedes is limited, and the demands of the ones contacted with them are hardly satisfied on the other.

As a general conclusion we can state that the Alevis are uneasy with the current state of dedelik institution. The dedes have lost their charismatic influence on their followers as they had once in rural period of Aleviness. The more educated and more knowledgeable Alevis who have more insight on religion and culture are no longer satisfied by the intellectual equipment of dedes which relied on oral culture. In many localities the heads of the CSO which organizes the cemhouses are more prestigious than the dedes. Especially the younger generations do not attribute a sacred value to dedes and many Alevis started to question the place of dedelik in Aleviness. Even the more pious or traditionalist Alevis think that dedelik has fulfilled its role and must renovate itself.

4.1.3. Aleviness “Sympathized”

Nearly all of the Alevis agree that Aleviness is not experienced as it was before and the Alevis is no longer a community composed of people passionately attached to each other. Many Alevis recognize that Aleviness cannot be experienced in cities like it was experienced in villages. Besides, for many Alevis Aleviness is a secondary identity since they are in interaction with other sectors in the society. But no matter what the Alevi collective memory is still so fresh. Regardless of interacting with other cultures or deficiencies and ruptures and major transformations experienced in Aleviness, many Alevis still live in an Alevis Habitus. Even though Aleviness faced erosion it is still a sympathetic “belief” and/or “culture” for the Alevis. With its current state Aleviness has a tendency turn into a museum object or an object of cultural tourism. Sometimes being Alevis can be a source of pride and Alevis rituals can turn into interesting and attractive activities. So, on the one hand we see a change towards Aleviness which is forgotten and not performed or practiced; but at the same time a growing sympathy towards Aleviness on the other.

For some the main reason behind defining themselves as Alevis is the **sympathy** felt towards Alevis culture and values. Especially the ones who distance themselves from Alevis belief and rituals state that they sustain their ties with Aleviness for

loving the culture that they were born and raised in. These people have an unexplained belief that Aleviness is “good”, although they do approach many aspects of Aleviness in a critical manner and do not fully practice Alevi rituals. The definition of this “goodness” is limited with phrases like love for human beings, or humanism and they refer to an “essence” which is found in Alevis:

- Aleviness... In general I am a leftist, I have a leftist identity. Aleviness, you know, since we were child, our families, elder ones told us we are coming from an **Alevi lineage**. They tried to pass over that **culture** to us. But of course if we came from a Sunni family we were going to defend Sunnism.
- What is Aleviness for you in terms of values?
- Sure there are many. For instance they say keep you hand, tongue and loins. Never enter to the lodge with doing injustice to someone. These are in our **sayings**. These are all **our values**.¹⁹⁴

Rıza

- How do you define Aleviness?
- It is coming **from our** parents. **We are Alevi and we love it.**
- Why do you love it?
- We don't know why we love it.¹⁹⁵

Musa

- I see Aleviness mostly as respect to human beings. This is closer to me. Maybe it is because I am in the middle of the things. It is **closer** to me. Maybe it is because I do not exaggerate religion in my head. I feel myself as an Alevi more.
- What is Aleviness for you?
- I say it is respect to people. A person's keeping of his hand, tongue and loins. **You have to live it.** You feel that way as you live it. It fits to my lifestyle. I see a lifestyle here.
- It is the place where a person feels comfortable. I see some Alevis. **The way they speak, the way they look other people are all the same.** While walking on the street I say, this one is an Alevi. It is familiar. They say **to warm to someone, I guess it is this.**¹⁹⁶

Gül

- So you say being born as an Alevi is enough?
- Of course being born as an Alevi and feeling that way are the most important things. Eventually I feel myself as such; **sometimes you can feel something that you cannot name.** This is something like that. **I cannot explain much but I feel that way.** I am an Alevi, I was borne to an Alevi family, and **I have been raised with that culture.** Also when one says Aleviness I do not have religions in my mind, but, for instance, folk songs.¹⁹⁷

Deniz

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- I don't know but **eventually I see** myself as an Alevi.
- Why?
- Because **I have been nurtured by its culture.**
- When one says Aleviness, firstly, **there is a culture that makes our people distinctive,** besides faith.
- What kind of things?
- Lifestyle.
- When you walk in streets of Istanbul, or, let me give an example from my faculty. When you met with someone you can guess whether she is an Alevi or not. The look, **attitude, the way she talks, type** really distinguishes.¹⁹⁸

Onurcan

- I do define myself as an Alevi because I was born to an Alevi family. I do define myself as an Alevi. I do not see Aleviness only as a religion. It is a culture, **a society where I feel I belong, where I come from.** Maybe I cannot live the religion well. Not much but rare. But I can recognize myself as an Alevi, due to the society that I come from.¹⁹⁹

Haydar

- **I do not define myself as an Alevi, but I realize that I have been raised under big influence of this culture.** Especially, when we make comparisons with our Sunni friends, no matter how much I deny, **I see the influence if that culture.**

...

- **I believe in the well intentioned nature of Alevis too much.** That is to say, except in some conditions, if it is not so necessary, I know that **they will not act badly so easily.** As I know that they are **good people both in form and essence,** I believe in that holy power more. Convincing people without any questioning, with such a **clear heart;** and achieving this in daily life... Could I express myself? **I see in my environment and in my friends from cities far away the same thing. They love humans so much.**²⁰⁰

Özgün

- Aleviness would never end. Because it is like a **genetic culture** to me. It is my contention that it is a culture that has been inscribed into genes. **Alevi person has a good heart.** I see her as winning the game of good will, one to zero. The idea of evil is discarded. It is a culture which does not know evil and shiftiness. I feel that they will maintain this innocence. You will ask me how many Alevis I see to think of these.²⁰¹

Serap

As seen in above examples among sympathy towards Aleviness has not diminished among the Alevis who do not practice or distanced themselves from Aleviness. According to them, being shaped by an Alevi culture which they cannot clearly define or distinguish is the main motivation behind such sympathy. Even the Alevis who approach issues like ‘Aleviness’, ‘belief’, or ‘religion’ in a rationalist manner believe that Alevis have some positive qualities by birth. This sympathy resembles the efforts for creation of a culture museum in which the cultures facing extinction are preserved. Or, a kind of social responsibility which aims at preserving cultures which are historically suppressed, faced injustice, and which present local and pastoral peculiarities and philosophical qualities.

One other dimension of perception of sympathetic Aleviness is the loosening of ties within Aleviness. Because of the loosened ties the Alevi belief and rituals become flexible in the urban setting. This flexibility is adopted by many Alevis. Even this peculiarity is expressed as a distinctive feature with respect to Sunni Islam. Flexibility is described as comfort and ergo freedom. It has been thought that flexibility is in conformity with the “emancipator” essence of Aleviness:

- What do you like most in Aleviness?
- It is better since **its lifestyle is more relaxed, it leaves you free**. For instance In **Sunnism we see**, what they call, pillars, forcing of girls to cover or boys to perform namaz, fasting and **worshipping** after a certain age. But because there is no such thing in Aleviness, people are more comfortable.²⁰²

Hıdır

- In fact Aleviness is a sort of **lifestyle. I am free; I can move however I like. I am not subjected to anyone's pressure. I feel relax.**
- So that's ok, but what is important in your Aleviness?
- As I have said, I am **relaxed**. Everything is beautiful, **no pressures**.²⁰³

Deniz

- First of all I can say this: Aleviness that is experienced in the villages or the one in the cities are different. **In the villages the people are more into the religious, faith related aspects.** For instance **the Sunnis today see Quran as their own book.** Not like a universal book that has been sent to humanity. And they believe that they will become Muslims by applying everything written on that book. In Aleviness there are no **books or casts**. For example they learn it from their elders, grandfathers; from what they have been told them. Because of this they are attached to it. But today, **in the cities that we live, Alevis is more flexible.** It is more adapted to the city, **more relaxed**. But I can say this; from that time to today, Aleviness has **begun to be lived in a more relaxed manner**.²⁰⁴

Sevim

- **The main philosophy is this: you don't do anything for you have to. Since it presents you such a flexible point of view** you just find yourself alone with yourself; with your consciousness, good will. You are defining your own truest and wrongs. There your own definition of morality and good and bad is at work. Besides, **it is a philosophy that has a flexible attitude towards everything.** It is the way it is experienced in our family. Maybe what I understand from Aleviness is the culture that has been provided to me by my family.²⁰⁵

Özgün

- What do you like most in Aleviness?
- It's **giving you some free space**; the look towards the woman; and the absence of extortion. And also it addresses the free thought to some extent.²⁰⁶
- What are the pillars of Aleviness?
- **There is no such thing as the pillars of Aleviness.**
- None?
- None. There is the philosophy of Yunus Emre for instance. He said, whatever you seek, seek it inside you. Personally **I think that anyone can do whatever she wants**.²⁰⁷

Naci

Alevis firstly compare Aleviness with Sunni line and underline the relaxer life style it provides with pride. They feel themselves comfortable and free because worshipping is not compulsory and nobody oppresses their Aleviness. They express this as a flexibility of belief and movement that Aleviness provides. In fact, as Sevim says, transition from a rural closed, communal life in which one has to explain and take responsibility of his behaviours to life in cities in which there is nearly no responsibility except social and cultural ones and no need for any explanations is the most important reason of this flexibility and comfort. Alevis,

who grew a distance with Aleviness in this transition period, evaluate their own experience of Aleviness as a flexible and free practice.

The struggle for survival at the cities made Aleviness for some Alevis a secondary issue. Especially the ones who has a relatively low level of income and who have no rural or solidarity ties started to spare no place for Aleviness in their daily life routines. On the other hand, the more educated Alevis also experience Aleviness as a subsidiary identity and have little interaction with Aleviness. This is mainly because Aleviness has a little place in their lives and they interact with the “strangers” more.

- There are many associations. Do you know the differences between them?
- I do not at all. Since I do not take part in them I do not know. I could have known if I did but I have never taken part.
- Why don't you?
- **How could I? I do not have time, I am arriving home so tired.** Last year I have lost 15 kilograms because of working hard. 15 kilograms. I am starting work at 8 am and finishing at 10 pm.²⁰⁸

Ali

- By migrating from village to cities people are more **involved with life struggle** and moving away from Aleviness. I do think that Aleviness is not experienced because people are struggling for their earnings.²⁰⁹

Onurcan

- Normally it is about love. I think as such: **if I have not been introduced Aleviness, maybe I could have not been identified myself as an Alevi.**
- ...
- I see people around me practicing these; **the Alevis around me are practicing as much as possible. But depending on the circumstances. Because there are many problems, economic issues and others.** Eventually the Alevis are also facing many problems in life. They do it as much as they can within these problems.²¹⁰

Bariş

- Let me put it in the clearest way as possible. **Everyone is now dealing with their subsistence.**
- Are there any people following up with these kinds of things?
- **Nor anymore. Everyone is after their food. In the villages we have the elder ones, our uncles; they are not even like the way they used to be. The new generation, as I said, is more modern, more logical; they do not worship Aleviness.**²¹¹

Ayşe

Ali, Barış, Onurcan and Ayşe underscore the difficulty of practicing Aleviness in today's conditions although they have quite distinct understanding and experiences of Aleviness. They especially underline that it is really hard for new generations to show interest in Aleviness within their daily life struggles. It has been thought given today's life conditions the way to increase the interest shown, especially by

the ones who have weaker ties, towards Aleviness is to form civil society organizations. But at the same time civil society membership in some cases may have some financial burdens and also requires devotion of some time and energy. As a consequence, especially it is really hard for the Alevis who are busy to participate into associations as a free time activity.

The flexibility that we have referred to above shows itself mostly in religious practices. **In ‘Open Aleviness’ period the Alevis lost the limits of accountability. In other words there were no sanctions at all. In addition to this there is no social pressure on anyone regarding the Alevi religious practices and/or rituals.** This led to emergence of flexibility in religious practice. The most basic motivation behind practicing religious aspects of Aleviness is socialization. Seeing friends in cem or just visiting for the sake of saying “I have been to cem” may constitute the main motivations. The liberty regarding the issue can promote what I have called sympathized Aleviness. For example a considerable part of visitors of cemhouses or Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli fests do so in order to experience the thing itself; not for preying or spiritual reasons. Participating in cem or taking place in Hacı Bektaş-Veli fests are important for satisfying the curiosity and having information about their identity. However, many participants attend these meetings not with faith which will strengthen the feeling of belonging to a community and being a follower of a religious path; but with a critical stance towards these activities. The main reason behind keeping a sympathetic attitude towards these practices in spite of their critical stances is the comfort of absence of any religious or social sanctions for non-participation. The Alevis feel themselves more comfortable and free when they do not participate in Aleviness.

- I am proud to be an Alevi when I enter to a society at first, because of the constraints and inhibitions that ere brought by the Sheri’ a. ... **I do like running riots, this is my personality. Maybe what catches me in Alevi philosophy is about this point. I do everything from the depths of my heart.** I do everything from my heart; I pray from my heart. But praying on my own terms.
- As I have said in the beginning **you are an individual and you are free.** You can shape yourself as you like, you will do it. And you will define your way with god yourself. I do not know if this is right or not. I do not like the comments like **you are a sinful man, you did not come to cem, and you did not fast during Muharrem. I do not make judgments like these.** Like “Ulaş is a really good Alevi, he never misses fasting.” I

am sure that they do these in the rural areas or they were doing in the past; but not today.²¹²

Hasan

- What do you like most in Aleviness?
- **Ease.** Religion and consciousness is at ease. Man **can do wrong**, but this is the right way. There is nothing like “You did this and you shall cover, you committed a sin you shall fast.”²¹³

Gül

- What do you like most about the Alevis?
- Do you know what? **Not fasting for 30 days. Not going to the mosque, not performing namaz.**²¹⁴

Musa

- We do not have **such a pillar**. To be honest, I have been working in the association for five years. Since I came here I have been saying that I will fast for 12 days, **but I am not doing it.** That’s the truth.²¹⁵

Naciye

- I do not have that much thing in my mind in general terms. **There are things that we have to do and fulfill, but I do not know to what extent we will do them.** What I do most is going to cem once in every 3ot 5 months. Besides that I don’t do much.

...

- **In other religions when you do not fulfill those duties you are out of religion.** But there is nothing like that when we do not. **Because we are Alevi. We were born Alevi. We are relaxed; we do not have any problem.** For example I go to cem for only once in 5 our 6 months; **the ones who never go are not kicked out from the religion.**²¹⁶

Deniz

- I have tried to fast once when I was a kid but I couldn’t. But **since Aleviness is flexible** I did not see it as a problem. **No one is getting mad, there are no sanctions.**²¹⁷

Özgün

The Alevis who position Aleviness as opposed to Sunni Islam state that, unlike in Sunni Islam, in Aleviness, participation to religious practices and rituals is up to individuals, and fulfilling these practices must come from inside; so there no heavy provisions. They also think that there is no social pressure over individuals regarding practicing religion, and Alevi religious practices do not have a structure which prioritizes shape or form. This discourse of “comfort” is in fact an expression of a disorder, existence of conflicting practices and choices and withdrawal of many Alevis from religious practices. It is doubtful whether in closed Aleviness of the rural period one can find such flexibility and disunity. Then, the Alevis consider withdrawal as comfort and flexibility and they are sympathetic towards this relaxed setting which does not exert any pressure upon them.

- Are there any Alevi practices that you perform?
- In our surrounding there are some who fast during Muharrem month.
- Why?
- Because **I do not believe in fasting**. Instead of fasting **I prefer to live through not setting sight on anybody's holdings, life or honor**. I believe that this is **more sacred than fasting**. This is why I do not fast.²¹⁸

Derviş

- Do you consider Muharrem fasting like that?
- I do not. As far as I know it is mourning rather than fasting. They tell so. **It is not being performed as such for instance**. As far as I know and heard, during the Muharrem fasting you should not take shower, eat meat, drink water, and look at the mirror. But think of a man in today's Istanbul who is fasting in Muharrem. How can't you bath, you will take a bus and travel for at last half hour. There is no standard for this. **How will you practice this?** It has been lived in that period.
- Do you call yourself an Alevi even if you do not practice religion?
- Actually **I call, but I do not practice anything**. When they ask whether I am Alevi or Sunni **I answer as we are Alevis**.²¹⁹

Hüdr

- The sacred things, values in Aleviness... **Semahs, sayings**, they are all values.
- Do you fast during Muharrem?
- For instance my wife is fasting for the last 3 or 5 years in Muharrem. **I would like to fast also**, but unfortunately we cannot practice something.
- We cannot full practice our religion.
- Have you ever heard the concept of *musahiplik*?
- No.
- For my part, if you ask whether I represent Aleviness, or I follow the rules of Aleviness; I do not. But at least **in Aleviness honesty is always the priority**; then we try to be honest as much as possible. We are trying to help the ones in need. It is a sort of worshipping.²²⁰

Rıza

- Do you fast during Muharrem?
- I was in primary school years, but not later. But my wife tries to fast. She fasts three days in Ramadan, also in Muharrem. I cannot fast.
- **Fasting is not very important, it is loving people what is important**.²²¹

Musa

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- I have **adopted Alevi philosophy**, it's in my essence. But **in practice I cannot fulfill the requirements of Aleviness**. We **do not participate in a cem or go to association**. They have special days, halve days, and others. We cannot do those but we **live like it spiritually**.
- I said, Aleviness is a philosophy, a lifestyle. Do you leave Islam when you do not go to mosque? According to some you do. I do not know if there is something like that in Aleviness; but today Aleviness is a lifestyle. **I do not think that you quit Aleviness when you do not go to cem**.²²²

Zeynel

Especially the Alevis, like that of loosened ones, who has emotional but not physical ties with Aleviness feel sympathetic towards Aleviness and experiences the comfort of not being forced to practice religion. For these people social values like being a decent, moral and hardworking human being is equal to religious

practice. Furthermore, participation is not compulsory and there are no sanctions for non-participation. Also there many Alevis who hardly have any knowledge on practicing religion or on traditions:

- Are there any Alevi activities that you participate? For instance, do you fast during Muharrem?
- **No, because it is so hard.**
- You said you go to cem. How often?
- Not frequently. Twice in this year. **Because of our work tempo we cannot go.** I want to go but the conditions would not let me.²²³

Deniz

- I fasted in Muharrem once when I was a kid, but not afterwards.²²⁴

Onurcan

- I do not define myself as an Alevi in that way, but there are things I have seen afterwards. Different kinds of worshipping, like fasting, but not the Ramadan fasting but the one in Muharrem. I do not full know, but **I do not perform either.** I don't see them important.²²⁵

Barış

- I have taught my kid the traditional things; like "aşure". Ok, it is a very good tradition, but **it seems unnecessary for me, not taking bath for 12 days,** reversing the pictures. For me these are very absurd and I do not teach these things to my kid.
- Do you know what musahiplik is?
- I do not know.²²⁶

Ayşe

- Do you know what musahiplik is?
- I heard, but I had no time for research.
- For instance, your friend called his friend musahip, what does it mean?
- The man says, "He is a musahip, this is an Alevi, this is a socialist." But when you look at the lifestyle, they have nothing to do with these.²²⁷

Naci

- What are the sacred things in Aleviness?
- **I know that they do not fast in June.**
- They talk about *musahiplik*, have you ever heard of it?
- I have never heard.²²⁸

Ezgi

Among the Alevi population, the ratio of people practicing religion is so limited. The main reason behind low level of participation, even within the ones whose faith is stronger, is the above mentioned perception of flexibility. Another important factor is the excuse that these practices do not fit to the today's circumstances. The dominant view asserts the sufficiency of moral values like being humane and honest; rather than following these rituals. The transformed nature of the rituals and absence of a systematic are quoted as among the other

factors that led to withdrawal. The main motivation behind limited participation is the touristic curiosity.

The Alevi show interest in the activity side of religious practices or rituals, rather than the belief aspect. These activities, which are novel to many, attract the attention and curiosity. Therefore they are perceived as recreational or free-time activities. The curiosity and attraction considerably increases if these activities were not been experienced before. People participate in these activities as if they are visiting a “museum”, “exhibition”, play, movie or a concert; and the main motivation is seeing socialization through seeing some friends:

- What do you like most in Aleviness?
- **Our sayings, semahs. We go to our cems.** You cannot find such a beauty in anything. Eventually that is our worshipping.²²⁹

Rıza

- What are the figures that come to your mind when one says Aleviness?
- Pir Sultan Abdal, Şah İsmail and St. Ali, these are the first ones.
- Why them?
- Because when you say Aleviness **saz, bağlama, cem comes to mind.** Within these you always see these people, their philosophy.²³⁰

Onurcan

- I have never been to a cem. I have seen on TV. Since it is practiced collectively it is a **social worshipping.** It is really nice that it is **performed with bağlama.**²³¹

Haydar

- I have never participated in cems. But I don't know, I don't know whether it is the same in everywhere. **I have participated to an activity called “Abdal Musa.”** ... There were **music, saz and semah.**²³²

Barış

- Do you participate in cem?
- I have. Somewhere in a semah.
- (His wife) Did you really participate to a cem?
- I have, in Tekir village. **We just watched,** I did not take part in semah. The kids **animated the Sivas massacre.** We went to a village of Isparta, we participated to a cem there on 21st of June, the birthday of St. Ali. **The cem was in a coliseum,** in Karaoğlan Park. We participated.
- What they do there?
- They bring sacrificial, kill the animal as a sacrifice, the dedes talk. We have **funny things.**²³³

Musa

- Which of these activities do you practice? Worshipping about Aleviness?
- I am a person who takes duties in cemhouses. They call it the 12 services. **I do semah.**²³⁴

Sevim

- You said sometimes, how frequently do you go?
- For instance in some Thursdays, **when we feel it** we go with our friends.²³⁵

Sultan

- Have you ever been to places like Hacı Bektaş?
- I have gone twice this year to Hacı Bektaş. But I did not like the activities.
- Why?
- Why? **It was not organized enough**, there were artists, for three days people watched standing. **Trashes, dirt and other things**. The municipality have involved into the issue. I hope next year it will be better. I did not like much.
- I have participated in cem for once. But they are not routinized yet. I told this to our dede. You know we are sitting on the ground. I have participated but I could not sit a lot, because of my knees. I have meniscus. I told to my dede, can't we arrange some chairs and **make cem more modern**.²³⁶

Naciye

- We call ourselves Alevi, but what do we do about it? Do I fast, or go to cem. I have never seen a cem. I don't know and I don't go. My wife is sometimes in Hacı Bektaş, we sometimes go. They are a bit strange. **It is like theater to me**. Here in Ankara it is different. I have never seen in the village, it is like theater to me.²³⁷

Hüsniye

- Do you participate in cem?
- Once in an Alevi village. I liked it very much. **They played semah**, it was beautiful.
- Recently in our place, Narlıdere, we had derman soup, with everyone's participation. There were preachings, the Kaymakam has talked, samahs were played, the old ones.²³⁸

Ayşe

- How do you see the cemhouses? Have you ever seen a cemhouse?
- Yes I have, **I have even seen inside. They call the elder ones dede if I am not wrong**. It is good. They have sacrificial. They help people. **There were dances**.²³⁹

Ezgi

- What do you know about Aleviness?
- **I know semah**. But I know it as a ritual.
- What kind of a ritual.
- I do not even know when they do it. They are gathering and performing it in weddings or mournings I guess. But semah is their ritual. I know the crying, that ritual. I say "their" because I have never been inside them. I have never seen it live. The thing I certainly know about them is that they are humanists and they know giving well, instead of taking.
- Cemhouses?
- **I have never seen a cemhouse in my life**. I do not know their places. Is there one in İzmir?²⁴⁰

Serap

Onurcan, Rıza, Haydar and Barış are sympathetic towards *saz*, *deyiş* and *semah* because of their interest in these activities. Musa refers to a cem that has been carried in a gymnasium as it was a social activity. For Sultan, participating in cem ritual is something like hanging out with some friends. Sevim feels herself as a folk dancer when taking place in a *semah* ritual. For Hüsniye cem resembles a theatrical play. Naciye criticizes the organization of an activity, which she calls a

“trip”, and does not like the logistics of cem rituals. Ayşe, Ezgi and Serap do not know much about Aleviness and refers to *semah* as a “dance-like” practice.

Most of the Alevis interviewed have limited or no participation into traditional activities and religious practices of Aleviness. For the ones who participate, touristic curiosity is the primary motivation. Some of the activities are already organized in line with satisfying that curiosity. Developments like organizing cems, which have an audience consisted of a closed community and organization, in gymnasiums and of Abdal Musa, Hacı Bektaş visits as festivals promote this culture tourism.

4.2. Aleviness: An Ethnic Identity?

The main quality of Closed Aleviness period is minimum level of interaction and exchange of any kind with the outside. Marrying the outsiders is strictly forbidden. Who breaks this rule is counted as “decayed” (*düşkün*), in other words is pushed outside of the community. In the Open period addressing the outside has been an objective, however, the Aleviness which lacked the cultural habit of expansion and instruments for inclusion, had staggered in this process. Besides, the prevalence of the perception that what makes Aleviness distinctive is not the “religious” references and associating Aleviness with a shared “past” and common origin caused the perception that Aleviness is an ethnic identity. We have discussed above that there are some Closed Period experiences that contributed to the perception that Aleviness is an ethnic identity. We have also added that in the Open Period this perception had weakened or eroded. However, belief in inborn qualities that are peculiar to the Alevis and continuation of common cultural and sociological habitus sustains this perception. But, contacting with the “stranger”, especially marriages with the outsiders increasingly corrodes this perception. Among the ones who prioritize the cultural form and philosophical aspects of Aleviness “ethnic identity” label is seen as “backward.” On the other hand, the Alevis who embrace Turkish nationalism tend to strengthen the relationship between Aleviness and Turkishness:

- I think **Aleviness is the Turkish form of Islam.**²⁴¹

Murtaza

- I believe in this, that **it comes from Turkness.** That's ok, we, the defenders of St. Ali, we were from the Turkic tribes and adopted Aleviness while we were passing 30 kilometers below Horasan. They were 30 kilometers above. This is the general framework, as it has been written by the historians. As far as I know it happened like that.

- I am also a **nationalist.** If nationalism is fighting for my country with grabbing my flag and running with Allah Allah shoutings in case of a war or invasion, I am the king of the nationalists. I love this land. **I am a Turk, Muslim, Alevi, I use original Turkish,** my own language. **I own this land, I am a nationalist and for this, for protecting this land I would do anything.**²⁴²

Hasan

This tendency that we observe in Murtaza and Hasan is common to the Alevis who tend to locate Aleviness within Islam but through differentiating it from Sunnism (and Arabism which is associated with Sunnism).

The most important debate regarding the issue of ethnic identity is whether Aleviness is ancestral or adoptable. There are four tendencies among the Alevis regarding the question. The first position asserts that the only condition for being and Alevi is to be born into an Alevi family, with Alevi parents. For the second one the parents must be Alevi, but, in addition to that, the person must embrace Aleviness. The third position asserts that Aleviness is not something innate or given by birth, but the person must be shaped in an Alevi cultural environment from the beginning. The last position holds that, since Aleviness is a belief it can be adopted afterwards.

- No way. **Their ideas may be close to yours,** you accept them and respect also. **But there is nothing like "I was a Sunni before, but now I become and Alevi."**²⁴³

Musa

- Do you say that you have to be born as an Alevi in order to be an Alevi?

- I would like to say that. **You have to be born as an Alevi.**

- You say birth is the prerequisite, are there any other?

- I do not know the others. Although as an Alevi I do not fulfill those duties, and although I do not know well, **as an Alevi, I guess I would not marry to a Sunni.**²⁴⁴

Deniz

- **Anyone who comes cannot be an Alevi.** For instance if the father is Alevi and the mother is Sunni she cannot be an Alevi completely; or if the father is Sunni and mother is Alevi, again it is not possible. But if both are Alevis the child would also be an Alevi. The other one is something like hybrid; mixed, you know.²⁴⁵

Naciye

- **You have to be born from Alevi parents.** Maybe you can adopt the Alevi philosophy. There are many good people. There are people who embraced the beautiful values of Aleviness; who say that they see themselves as Alevi. But it does not seem so convincing. **You have to come from an Alevi family.**²⁴⁶

Haydar

- Do you identify yourself as an Alevi?
- No, only as a human being. I do not believe in **race**.
- ...
- All of your questions are on Aleviness, as I said, I do not believe in race.²⁴⁷

Naci

- What is Aleviness?
- I do know it as a community, a sect which is formed by the people, the settlers who came from Asia.²⁴⁸

Ezgi

The Alevis who defend “inborn” Aleviness cannot accept and internalize the contrary cases. The perception that Aleviness is ancestral, as it has been for centuries, is so strong among the Alevis. For these people, no matter how good a person is, or how she is close to Aleviness, if she is not born as an Alevi, she cannot adopt Aleviness onwards: there definitely be something missing. In fact, this will cause problems not for the person who has become an Alevi but for the Alevis who accepted her as one of them; because it will always be remembered that she is a stranger and there will be cultural conflicts. The Alevis who think that these cases will harm Aleviness does not approve, as they were not doing so before, “blurring” of their cultures. In brief, on the one hand the idea that Aleviness is an ethnic identity is not embraced since Turkish identity is already there. However, on the other hand, there is a common perception that Aleviness has some ethnic qualities, and like ethnicity, has ancestral, inborn and blood dimensions. But, although being born as an Alevi is the necessary condition it is not sufficient:

- What are the preconditions for being an Alevi?
- We should see the issue from this perspective: Aleviness is not about membership to an association. It is not about being born to an Alevi family. You’d **have the blood** but if you do not have the philosophy and culture of Aleviness inside you, you cannot be an Alevi. You can only become an Alevi through living the culture that I have tried to explain. If you do not believe and practice, it is like an empty walnut. If you seed the walnut it will end, but what will you do with an empty walnut, nothing.
- If you want to define yourself as an Alevi **of course you will be given birth by someone who is Alevi. This is how you will learn this culture.** How will you otherwise? I define Aleviness as a culture. You will be born into that culture, be raised in it and internalize it. **This is how you learn your native language. You will become Alevi by learning in this way.**²⁴⁹

Cafer

- What are the preconditions for becoming an Alevi? How do you become an Alevi? What conditions you should fulfill?
- **Having birth from Alevi parents does not necessarily bring being Alevi. You shall live and think like an Alevi.**²⁵⁰

Sevim

As it is seen in the quotations from Cafer and Sevim, the argument that having Alevi ancestors is not enough to be an Alevi is another strong perception among the Alevis. Accordingly, to become an Alevi, firstly you should have Alevi roots, then you must be raised in Alevi culture and internalize it. If not, you there will be something missing in your Aleviness. The issues of raising in an Alevi environment and embracing Aleviness are more important than blood ties for many Alevis:

- What are the conditions for becoming an Alevi? How do one become an Alevi?
- Among my friends there were some who saw Aleviness as Judaism. That is to say a man cannot become an Alevi, it is acquired by birth, passes from parents. It must be like that according to them. But I don't see that way. It is **a sort of racism. There were the ones who saw Aleviness as a race.** I don't see that way. How can a person become Alevi? In my opinion **by entering into the environments that Alevis live. By living that culture.** There were five pillars of Islam. There is nothing like five pillars in Aleviness.
- You say being an Alevi is about raising in that culture.
- It is about raising. **But I do not think that an outsider can easily become an Alevi. She cannot be; it would be so absurd.** These are the things that are known by everyone. She asks how do you believe in god here. I think it is so hard.²⁵¹

Onurcan

- The conditions for becoming an Alevi... Recently someone asked me. They said can you become an Alevi, or you are born as an Alevi. I said **you cannot become an Alevi afterwards.** But why have I said that? Actually I do not know much. Eventually **I see it as a philosophy,** according to me anyone can become Alevi, anyone. But I cannot give a clear answer. But I guess you are born as an Alevi. **It does seem like you can adopt afterwards.** But I cannot give solid proofs for that, I do not know.²⁵²

Barış

- I do not really believe this. **That is to say you cannot become an Alevi afterwards. This is not an ideology that you can adopt by saying I love Aleviness, or by cultivating yourself and learn. It is something that you can internalize only through being born in it, and even without recognizing.** That's why there is this rule. For example I can think that a person whose father is Sunni and mother is Alevi is less Alevi than a person whose father and mother are both Alevis.²⁵³

Özgün

- I have thought about this issue a lot. How can a person be born as an Alevi? **You cannot also call a person who adopted Aleviness afterwards an Alevi.**
- Why can't you call?
- It is ok for me but you cannot say. You say **he is not an Alevi in essence.** But she also has Aleviness. There are many people so much better than Alevis; who adopted this culture.
- Look, recently, Aleviness is not a race. Let me tell you something, is not prophet Mohammed is the son of St. Ali's uncle? They are relatives.
- Isn't it the son-in-law?

- Does he have grandsons? Hasan and Hüseyin are his grandsons.
- Are these Arabs? Aren't them Arabs? Where we reach from here: we are Turk but we are Alevi, which means that **Aleviness has nothing to do with race**. Any citizen can be Alevi in my opinion. An English man may become an Alevi easily in my opinion. Aleviness has a thing.
- Think of a man, a Sunni who wants to become an Alevi. If he adopts Aleviness, there is nothing. It's all about being interesting. You have to have knowledge about that. A person **must be Alevi by birth**. It is impossible to become afterwards by accepting the conditions of Aleviness. How this could be possible?
- You cannot call everyone in the world who keep his hand, tongue and lions as Alevi.
- These issues are so deep. It is not about knowledge. According to me **Aleviness is acquired by birth**. Not afterwards.²⁵⁴

Hüseyin

As the examples demonstrate, the Alevis who seize upon Aleviness as a philosophical issue realizes that they conflict with the ancestral argument. However they also contend that Aleviness cannot be adopted afterwards and this culture can only be transferred if it has been lived and experienced in an Alevi environment after birth. Some even think that Alevi culture is inscribed on genes. As a consequence they find themselves trapped in a paradox: on the one hand they assert that Aleviness must be purified from backward elements and see Aleviness as a philosophical and contemplative issue; but on the other hand, they do not believe that one can “become” an Alevi afterwards.

- How do you become an Alevi afterwards?
- I can answer this in two ways. Firstly, normally in Anatolian Aleviness there is the belief that you cannot be Alevi but you are born as an Alevi. To me, this is unacceptable. Because anyone can adopt Aleviness like **adopting Islam**. In my opinion since the Alevis were afraid and lived in their communities, on the mountains for long, they established such a rule.²⁵⁵

Murtaza

- Then, according to you, one can be an Alevi afterwards. Do you have to be born as an Alevi?
- No, not, absolutely not. It is not true for any religion, why should it be of Aleviness? **You don't have to be Alevi in order to be an Alevi**. If you can fulfill the conditions, you can be an Alevi.²⁵⁶

Sultan

The ones who contend that Aleviness is a religion tend to accept the idea that it can be adopted afterwards. Especially the ones who consider Aleviness as an Islamic belief assert that Aleviness must share the expansionist character of Islam; otherwise, Aleviness will be conflicting with Islam.

If we evaluate the positioning regarding the ethnic quality of Aleviness all together we can conclude that there is a tension within the Open Period which has been

inherited from exclusiveness of the Closed Period. Aleviness, which has started to explain and express itself, must answer the demands for inclusion. However, it lacks the mechanisms to do so. There is a prevalent consensus among the Alevis that Aleviness has a cultural dimension and this dimension is one of the essential elements of the Alevi identity. Thus, growing in an Alevi environment becomes important. We have noted that the Alevis, who live in environments within which Alevis live close to each other, are more connected to each other. So the inclusion problem is not valid only for the newcomers but also for the ones who leave the circle by time. The motivation of unity and togetherness has shadowed the question “Who is an Alevi?” However, it can be foreseen that the antagonistic relations over the Alevi identity will impose this question at a moment.

4.3. On Turkish Republic: “Bu Memleket Bizim”²⁵⁷

On the one hand Alevis see themselves as the owner of the state and on the other hand they think that the state is against them. In other words, for the Alevis the state belongs to them in terms of regime but belongs to their “enemies” in terms of administration.

4.3.1. Atatürk for Alevis: “Ulu Önder Atatürk”²⁵⁸

Atatürk is a crucial figure for the Alevis. For the Alevis, among many distinctive personalities Atatürk is regarded as a prestigious and leading figure. In many cases he comes before Ali, Şah İsmail or Hacı Bektaş. He is believed to be the *mehdi* that had been waited for centuries. He already is the central reference point for the ones who approach towards Aleviness though a secular outlook. He is one the one hand equal to “St. Ali” and on the other hand the most important genius and leader of the twentieth century. The “savior Atatürk” portrait that one can find in primary school textbooks also is dominant in the Alevi imagination. Also there are many rumors about Aleviness of Atatürk by his origins.

- How do you see Atatürk?
- I have tried to describe Atatürk. He is from Kızıloğlu quarry, he is one of us. So we see Atatürk as a genius who has been created in the end of the 19th century. Even **we see him as coming after St. Ali and very close to Sultan Hacı Bektaş Veli**. You see it too, **the pictures of Atatürk are hanged nearby that of St. Ali's**. Like flesh and bone they are so close, we intend to keep them alive.²⁵⁹

Cafer

- **A very good leader**. Since he founded the Republic the Alevis cannot approach him with bad feelings. They see him as a **savior**. Because they believe that he gave them their freedom. Only there is anger for Dersim events, an event that is not well known by the society. Dersim events took place in 1938. It was in 1937 when Atatürk fell sick. In that last year he was not in the administration. But they think that Atatürk is responsible for the Dersim events.²⁶⁰

Murtaza

- How do you see Atatürk?
- I see him very good. **He is a farsighted, enlightened man**. He has farseen the centuries, **gave direction to centuries**. He is a person leading the way with his mind and thoughts.²⁶¹

Derviş

- He was a commander, **a leader**, founder of the Turkish Republic. If we can talk of the secular Turkish Republic, **it's all because of him**.²⁶²

Rıza

- **It is impossible to say bad things about Atatürk**. Why? If he did never exist, we could not have established this order, we could not have survived. Why **another Atatürk is not emerging?** He is the one who founded the Turkish Republic with his rights and wrongs, good deeds and sins. He founded it in such a beautiful manner that it could still stay alive by the help of the military.²⁶³

Zeynel

- It will be a bit childish, but he is extremely important since he is the one which had **gifted us the republic** and had always been ahead of his time.²⁶⁴

Döndü

- They say that the sun is the satellite of the earth; I see him as **the sun**. As you know it is the sun that illuminates the earth.²⁶⁵

Gül

- Atatürk is **a good leader**. Eventually **we owe** to him what we have today, really. If today I can say that I am an Alevi without hiding we owe this to him.²⁶⁶

Sultan

- **I cannot think of any Alevi section which does not love Atatürk**. There is a big love and respect towards him. The Republic can't have any negative effects.
- I can say that **Atatürk is cleverer than Ali**. Actually you can't know because the latter does not have education. I can say he could have been if he was educated.²⁶⁷

Hüseyin

- I am a person who is absolutely **in love with Atatürk**. About Atatürkism, I do not completely define myself as an Atatürkist. For me **it is a definition which is really hard to fit in**.²⁶⁸

Sevim

- He is one of the **unique** persons that has come, **not only to Turkey but also to the world.**²⁶⁹

Deniz

- He is our **idol**. Following his track, his virtue is so important. He has a lot of virtue. He is our idol, who is filled with love for human beings. He is not bigoted, not fanatic. He is like that for us. While saying “us” have I suddenly become an Alevi? Look how disguised I am.²⁷⁰

Serap

Most of the Alevis praise Atatürk. Even though very little in number, among those Alevis who have a rather weak Alevi belief, there are critical ones about Atatürk. Those people think that Atatürk is **exaggerated** like Ali and also had done wrong to Alevis like the **Dersim incidents**. For example Haydar says that Atatürk is “one of national leaders in history” and he does not think that “He has a difference from them”. On the other hand, Onurcan is reactive against Atatürk because he thinks that Atatürk himself had planned the Dersim incidents. However both Onurcan and Haydar emphasize that Atatürk is an important leader because he has separated religion from state despite of their criticisms.

Alevis’ approach to Atatürk comprises all Atatürk lyrics that are taught in primary schools. Alevis are also the section of society who has mostly adopted Atatürkism emotionally that has been given by the educational system. For them, Atatürk is a great leader, an intellectual and far-sighted thinker and a smart commander. We owe our today to him, he had provided laicism, modernism and all we have today, and no one similar to him has come after. Owning Atatürk that much, seeing him as the centuries-long waited savior (*mehdi*), and believing that he was originally Alevi result from the belief that Atatürk has impeded the progress of Sunni Islam. For the Alevis Atatürk has stooped the Sunni Islam which has been trying to eliminate the Alevis by centuries by claiming a laicist and free order and abolished the privileges of that group.

4.3.2. The Republic For Alevis: “The Republic is our salvation” but “there is no full acceptance”²⁷¹

For the Alevis the establishment of the republic which really means the destruction of Ottoman Empire is a salvation. Freedom of religion, and most important of all the reforms against Sunni Islam made Alevis to become sympathetic towards the republic. This ownership today is in a state that for the most Alevis they are the biggest supporter, even establisher of the republic. On the other hand, Alevis are also aware that the mission they give to the establishment did not come into existence or the project of republic even created many defects for them. That is why the expressions like the freedom that was brought by the republic are made in comparison with the past and expressed with prepositions like “at least”, “a little more”. In other words, they are again not in a good condition but Ottoman empire is destroyed and the Sunni section is harmed, restrained which is great development:

- Already, **in the foundation stage the Alevis had played a great role.** It has been in Mustafa Kemal’s period; it’s good in my opinion. The republic was found as a good system, but the **Republic now is moving outside the logic of the Republic.** That’s what I think.
- Did the foundation of the Republic gave Alevis anything?
- Sort of, it helped Alevis to recognize their identities **more comfortably.** Because after Yavuz Sultan Selim, especially in his period the Alevis have lived with great fear and suppression. They had a chance to **come to front** a bit more with the republic. Maybe not five but two persons could find the way to call herself.²⁷²

Murtaza

- What did the foundation of the Republic give the Alevis? Was it a benefit or deficit for the Alevis?
- **Firstly, who won the war of independence?** Why did not he launched the war in the west but gone to east, to Erzurum, to Sivas. **He went there because he trusted the Alevis.** Don’t listen what they say. Atatürk knew that the Alevis would fight to death; so he went to the east.²⁷³

Ali

- What did the foundation of the Republic bring to the Alevis? And what did it take from them?
- For instance, even Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself, before going to have visited Alevis **for support in Hacı Bektaşî Veli** and stayed there. And the Alevis gave their support to him. And they maintained his principles more than anyone have done.
- What is the contribution of declaration of the Republic to the Alevis?
- For instance, **secularism, revolutionarism.** These principles are more suitable to their lifestyle that they live. They are more republican. At least I guess they are.²⁷⁴

Gül

- The Republic has been founded **because of the Alevis**. It made their life easier. If it had not been founded, Yavuz Sultan Selim's regime would have maintained. But when we look now, yes it is too far from its beginning.²⁷⁵

Döndü

- You know **Atatürk personally visited the Çelebi** of the time in Hacı Bektaş and told him **-as off the record-** that the Republic will be found. The Çelebi have gifted him a can of gold to him to be used in war or independence. The Alevis fought with everything they got in the War of Independence and gave full support in foundation of the Republic. They have always been behind and nearby Kuvayi Milliye. The first head of the constitutive assembly is a Çelebi. From many general who fought in the War of Independence to close circle around Atatürk, **even Atatürk himself is Alevi**. He is from the Kızıloğlu lodge. The documentary about it has been broadcasted for many times. So, **the Alevis are the first hand founders of the Republic**.
- Alevis are **begun to be counted as humans**. While they were performing their duties they came to a position to demand their rights. The Alevis has progresses after the second of July, but weren't there any before that. **Alevis had many acquisitions** by the foundation of the Republic. Although the dervish lodges were banned the Hünkar lodge was left open. So, **there was a special care and attention towards them**. But **after Atatürk had moved to his special place in god's side**, the ones who took the administration –since they guarded their personal interests before the interests of the country- started to cut off the rights of Alevis; they have arrested and oppressed Alevis; put them under pressure. After the 1950s they have built mosques in Alevi villages; and after 1979 they wanted to associate Aleviness with Shi'ism, with the Shiites in Iran.²⁷⁶

Cafer

- First of all, **in fact**, the banning of the dervish lodges is a strike to the concept of Aleviness. . . **This has hurt us the most. But modernization of society is a reason for us to take some breath. That is to say, while he is destroying somewhere he founded good ones also; transformed it.**²⁷⁷

Hasan

Murtaza is among the ones who think that by the Republic the Alevis had “slightly” been bettered off and to some extent have come to the forefront. But according to him, today there is a tendency towards moving away from the “logic of the republic.” Döndü, Gül, Ali and Cafer think that it was the Alevis who found the republic. According to Cafer it is by the republic that the Alevis begun to be treated like humans, but after the death of Atatürk the Alevis lost most of their acquisitions. It is a common view among the Alevis that in the “War of Independence” the Alevis played a crucial role, and in fact, Atatürk launched this war for he trusted that he could rely on the Alevi support and later on he protected the Alevis. Although there were developments against the Alevis after the foundation of the republic, since the primary target of the revolutionary republic was Sunni Islam it has been considered as an important acquisition. But also the fact that throughout the Republican history the Alevis were subjected to discriminatory policies at the state level, its inability to prevent Alevis from the attacks and on the contrary the information regarding the state's possible involvement in these attacks cause the Alevis to bear a hesitant attitude towards the Republic.

- The establishment of the Turkish republic brought many good things not only to Alevis but many other people. For example I think that with the establishment of the republic **the revolutions of Atatürk benefited Alevis very much**. I always defend that Alevis are open to developing themselves. If they are given an opportunity, believe me, they use it to the end. It carried forward but it did not end with the establishment of the republic. The Maraş, Çorum and Sivas incidents brought Aleviness 10 years forward and 5 years back. I mean progressive or recessive period did not end with the establishment of the republic.²⁷⁸

Sevim

- Before the establishment of the republic Mustafa Kemal goes to Hacı Bektaş Veli dervish lodge, stays there 3 days and **becomes enlightened**. If you read Atatürk's life story he is from Salonica but he **comes from an Alevi origin**. And when Atatürk established the republic he closed down all madrasahs, turbehs, and so on. He **only did not close down Hacı Bektaş**, which means that Atatürk values the philosophy of that person much more. But Atatürk **did not put a pressure upon Alevis**. The laicist institution. Religion and state does not go together. Everyone lives his belief but it does not merge with the state. **But it is no more like that.**²⁷⁹

Musa

- The **only thing** that the republic has provided us is **the separation of religious and state affairs**. **Dervish lodges were closed** and this **provided a freedom for us**. From that time on **we don't need you**. After that the decision was made to establish our own organizations and go on like that. Because in the establishment of the republic Atatürk **went to Celalettin Ulusoy and took his support**. Later on he was elected as a deputy.²⁸⁰

Sultan

- Right, they **may have opened a little** after the establishment of the republic and the **advent of laicism**. This may be the advantage that the establishment of the Turkish Republic had provided to the Alevis. It may make them **express themselves more freely**. I don't know if it had provided any other things.²⁸¹

Onurcan

Alevis adopt and own the laicist republican regime as a guarantee against Islamic regimes. That is why they are more interested in what republic has made the Sunnis lost rather than what gains it provided for the Alevis. This is also the reason behind their inclination to own the republic and laicist order as a regime which has to be supported against Sunni Islam even though they are antipathic to the state because of many discriminative practices. This may be the reason of the identity of citizenship becoming the primary identity for many Alevis who has loosened ties with Aleviness.

In spite of the positive attitude towards the establishment of the republic which has destroyed the Ottoman regime and relatively weathered crisis for Alevis, the fact that discrimination against Aleviness has continued during the republican era made the Alevis become remote and skeptical towards the republic which they think they have established. Especially the fresh memories of attacks on Alevis in the

last 30-40 years reinforce the mistrust towards the state. On the other hand, since the state is the guarantee of laicism, in other words, keeping Sunnism away from political power not the state but the state officials are accused. The belief that the era until 1950s has been useful but the era after the 1950s has been harmful to Alevis is very strong among the Alevis.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the establishment of the Turkish Republic for the Alevis?
- I never read a negative thing within the Atatürk period. They were oppressed during the Ottoman era but **were untroubled** during Atatürk era, but only until the 1950s. As far as we have read they were untroubled until the power of the Democrat Party. It caused Alevis to gain until the 1950s **but started to lose after 1951**. After 1950, it has no gain but **harm**. In the old times they were free to make cem and introduce themselves. Now they are assimilated because of the people who chase rants.
- How do you think is the relation of the Alevis with the state?
- I think **the state has no problem but the governments do**. They don't ask you **if you are Alevi** in the public offices. But it is asked in the posts which are selected according to oral interviews. The military is in secrecy and you cannot put an Alevi in police posts.²⁸²

Zeynel

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the establishment of the Turkish Republic for the Alevis?
- Alevis established the Turkish Republic but **the governors of the republic did not do the altruism an Alevi has made during the establishment**.
- Are there any gains?
- Of course it provided or protected some gains. Not the republic but the governors. **The republic has never made discrimination but the governors did different things**. For example, in a university or public office a Sunni would not do the work of an Alevi if he knows it. We lived such things.²⁸³

Derviş

- The process after the establishment?
- I think there is **unacceptance of Aleviness**. When you visit some of the villages near our hometown the village is an Alevi village but **there is a mosque**. The state goes there and builds a mosque. This means not accepting Aleviness.²⁸⁴

Onurcan

- The Ottomans were an Islamic country and there was pressure upon Alevis in that period but the Turkish Republic was **established as a laicist country**. But when we look at the practices the **Dersim Revolt** and after, and then **Sivas Massacre, Maraş, Çorum**, the other massacres made a **destructing effect** on Aleviness.
- The thing it provided could be as such; it compelled itself to be a **laic country**, may be it had **provided some space** but there is a contradiction here. Things did not happen as they were supposed to be.²⁸⁵

Haydar

- How do you see the state of Turkish Republic?
- yes, there was a state during the establishment process in the 1920s, but **now** there is a state which **transforms within the hands of the governments** and only its name is Turkish Republic.²⁸⁶

Sevim

Zeynel thinks that starting with the 1950s, Alevis have been assimilated. For Zeynel, the discriminative attitude of the state is seen in the inability of Alevis to rise up in the state hierarchy. For Derviş, it is not the republic but the state officials. Derviş emphasizes that they feel the most difficulties in official bureaus. Onurcan argue that the republic has not fully acknowledged Aleviness. For him, trying built mosques in Alevi villages is an evidence of that. For Haydar, republic has been discriminative towards Alevis despite of laicism: such incidents in Dersim, Sivas, Maraş and Çorum were systematical attacks against the Alevis. For Sevim, the republic changes its form in the hands of the political powers today. In summary, while commenting on republic, the Alevis own it when they evaluate the consequences of laicism for them and for the Sunnis, and when they evaluate the recent history, the last 50-60 years they are reactive against the republic because of the discriminations Alevis have experienced.

4.3.3. The State for Alevis: “The State is not Ours”

It is a common perception among the Alevis that the state is beyond their reach and as opposed to them. The Alevis contend that, despite the secular project of the Republic of Turkey the Sunni quality of the state has not been removed and Sunnism holds critical bureaucratic posts and so the state acts against the interests of the Alevis. In addition, for the leftist Alevis the state is under the influence of the imperialist powers and for this reason is against the Alevis. What is common among all Alevis is their fear from the state.

- There is a rule in the Alevis in Anatolia. They say that Alevi community is the last one that goes to court among other communities until 1985 because they make their own courts within, in cems. But we were raised intimidated against the outside. **We see the state as a Sunni state.** That is why we are afraid. If we say we are not afraid than that's a lie. It is in our subconscious. **We are afraid of the state.**²⁸⁷

Murtaza

- Even though it is a laicist country, **Islam never left Turkey's self.** It has insisted on Islamic rules via the media, **state policy** and education even if it is not in the law, and this made **Aleviness to lose many things.** In the old times society was developing in itself but now state has penetrated into it. There was a state but societies were existing in themselves as communities. But the state has penetrated into our lives too much. And because it has **adopted Islam** even if not completely, this was a negative position for the Alevis.²⁸⁸

Haydar

- How do you see the state?
- Today **we don't have a state**.
- Whose state is it?
- Others'. **The imperialists'**. When Bush says stand up, it stands up; sit down, it sits down; go to toilet, it goes to toilet; and excuse me but if he says fart, it farts.²⁸⁹

Musa

- What do you think are the most important 3 problems of Alevis?
- State is **not dealing with** the Alevis much, which they **don't see, Alevis as themselves**. They don't say that Alevis are like Sunnis. They say that we are Sunni, we can do everything, Alevis are a minority. They **don't give so much right to speak** to Alevis. I think it is also related with the fact that they are from **the poorer section of the society**. They are not very rich, is it because of that? I think these may be the problems.²⁹⁰

Gül

- Do you trust in the state?
- No, because the **AKP** is in power.²⁹¹

Ezgi

- I **trust in the state the least**. There is no institution that I trust.²⁹²

Deniz

- How do you consider the army?
- We used to trust in the army. But I really believe that there is **degeneration** in there. They **located their own men in every position**.²⁹³

Sultan

- Sometimes I think that **modern people also follow the lead of the state**.
....
- The establishment of the republic provided many advantages; it did not do any harm. Besides **Alevis are protecting the republic**. But when you look you see that the **state proclaims Alevis as Satanist and try to get rid of them everywhere**.²⁹⁴

Naciye

The examples show us that they clearly express their fear from state. Murtaza articulates the feelings of many Alevis by underlining the Sunni character of the state. Likewise, Haydar states that the Islamic quality of state has never been eroded in any period; on the contrary its strengthening. For Musa, since the state is the state of the imperialists it is distant from the Alevis. In Alevi perspective state could not be their state, not only for its negative attitude towards the Alevis, but also for its reluctance to take positive steps towards them. Gül feels the same resentment and thinks that the state does not show any interest in the Alevis since it does not see Alevis as its kind. She also claims that this is also one of the reasons why the Alevis are not wealthy people in general. Ezgi, like many Alevis lost confidence in state because of the AKP's taking power. Deniz is one who considers the military as the only reliable state institution. However, Sultan states she has lost in confidence on the military since there has been Islamic infiltration.

Naciye gives away her thoughts on the state while mentioning the intellectuals' attitude. For her the intellectuals support the state's stance towards Aleviness; the state which is against the Alevis. All these examples demonstrate the distant and timid attitude of the Alevis towards the state. The Alevis, while seeing themselves the real owners of the state, consider the state as a structure which they fear from and does not belong to them, and which is beyond their reach.

4.3.4. Alevis and Being a Minority

Providing the Alevis the status of minority came to the agenda in Turkey's membership process to the European Union. The Alevis felt aggrieved by this label and show it as a part of a move towards assimilating, pressuring and eliminating the Alevis. In the Alevi perception, being "minority" implies being "few", rather than a secondary element: it means constituting the sector of society which the state does not like, looks down on and oppresses. Since at one and the same time they see themselves as the primary element of the state and feel themselves as elements not liked by the state they feel irritated by being referred to as a "minority." By the expression of "minority" the Alevis feel like being interpellated as "you are few", and "you are getting fewer." These expressions imply that Alevis, who deeply face the fear of being dissolved, are not recording any progress and loosing what they have already got. As a response they refer the abundance of Alevi population in Anatolian districts:

- Are Alevis a minority?
- I do not see us as a minority. **28 million** people of Turkey are Alevi, how can you call this a minority? If it was one or two million you would call that a minority. But there are 28 million Alevis neither you nor anybody can call this a minority.²⁹⁵

Ali

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- Absolutely not.
- Why?
- Why, because this land exists thanks to us. Nobody claims the opposite. There are **25-30 million** Alevis in this country.²⁹⁶

Döndü

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- No.
- Do you think how many Alevis are there in Turkey?
- About 20 - 25 million.²⁹⁷

Rıza

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- If **5-6 of every ten person** on the street is Alevi, then this is not exactly a minority. If they are hiding it, I don't think they are.²⁹⁸

Sevim

- Are Alevis a minority?
- Alevis are **majority. There are 25 million Alevis in Turkey.** But they don't reveal it.²⁹⁹

Musa

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- No, never. Minority is 3-5 persons, would **20 million be a minority?**³⁰⁰

Sultan

- Who do you think is the majority in Turkey? Who is majority and who is minority?
- Sunnis are the majority and **Alevis are the minority. But you should not see them as a minority.** Because minority means the small groups living in a country. In fact Alevis are not small groups **but this is wanted.** If 70 million people are living in Turkey, then **20-30 million of it** are Alevis. But most of them cannot reveal or claim it. They don't see themselves as such, there are such people. I don't know in person but there are people who are Alevi but don't tell it.³⁰¹

Zeynel

The Alevis' constitution of a considerable portion of the population is the most frequently quoted proof for asserting that they are not a minority. In general the Alevis associate the concept of "minority" with "being few." The "dominant sectors" want to erase, suppress and even eliminate them, as they did to other minorities before, by showing the Alevis as an insignificant part of the population. But the Alevis assert that a significant portion of the Anatolian population is composed of the Alevis and they do not deserve the title of "minority." This is why in the interviews the Alevi population is guessed by the interviewees as between 20 million to half of the overall population. Because of this, the Alevis demand to be recognized as the "constituting component" of this country, not as a minority:

- Do you think Alevis are a minority?
- No. It has been the **constitutive element of the state** from the Seljuks, Ottomans. The Seljuks were collapsed because they were dissociated from their religion and people, which is the basic element. Atatürk the great's taking Alevis on his side while establishing the Turkish republic is an example of this. That is to say **Alevis are the material, cement of this country.**³⁰²

Cafer

- Are Alevis a minority?
- Isn't that name minority is given to Lazs and Circassians? I think **Alevis are not a minority** but a culture. If they ask me **I am more Turkish than anyone else. I am genuine Turkish.** But I am Alevi.³⁰³

Hüseyin

- You said that Alevis are not a minority, and then who is minority in Turkey?
- **The Armenians, Greeks, the people from outside.**
- Why do you think they are minorities?
- **Because they come from another country but live in Turkey.**
- What is the criteria of being a minority for you?
- For example Americans or the British come as a community then they are.³⁰⁴

Ezgi

- I don't see **anyone as minority**. The Greek and the Armenian are living here for 500 years, how can you call them minority. **He is also a man of this land.** I really don't see anyone as minority who **love this country and live in this country.**³⁰⁵

Sultan

- One should not think of them as minority. Its Turkey's mosaics, richness. One should not see them **as Jews**. He is the man who came from Central Asia and lived in Anatolia.³⁰⁶

Zeynel

- Do you think there is minority in Turkey?
- In fact **there is no minority in Turkey**, only a class who defines itself as majority. And when you look at that Sunni section, it is known that they **come from different ethnic origins**.
- I think of minority not in numbers but in ideas. When you look at from Alevis side the **Sunnis are minority**, and when you look from Sunnis side Alevis, non-Muslims, Kurds are minorities. It totally depends on from where you look, what you think.³⁰⁷

Sevim

As the Alevis interviewed see themselves as the constituting component, they do not want to be called as a minority. As they consider the Republic as an outcome of a war against bigotry and reaction, they think of it as an outcome of their own efforts. Given these, being called as a “minority” in a country that they have founded makes them feel as being secondary. This is why they frequently emphasize the influential role played by the Alevis in the War of Independence. An interesting point in the examples is the tendency of the Alevis to name the non-Muslim communities in Anatolia, whose number has been diminished throughout the Ottoman-Turkish history, as minorities, while they reject to be called as such. Some Alevis also resent from being called as a minority nearby the Jews, Rums and Armenians. Sultan even goes further by arguing that, like Alevis, they also do not deserve this adjective and must not be seen as minorities. Thus, the concept of “minority” has pejorative content in the Alevi imagination. It has been perceived as a degrading label which implies the desire to eliminate the other cultures. The reaction towards minority concept demonstrates the Alevis' demand to integrate with or own the state and to not to become an “other.” An indicator of integration is the openness of Aleviness. The common perception is that calling identities

which can fully express themselves and live freely in a country cannot be called “minorities:”

- Do you think that Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- Not minority. When you use the word you have to know its meaning. Is it used for 1 million people or 20 million people. I don't see a minority. May be someone has seen Alevis as minority because **they were intimidated and could not express themselves very comfortably in the earlier times.**³⁰⁸

Hüdr

- I think there is **no minority in Turkey**. I think no one is minority, everyone is in the Turkish Republic, we have so great territory, **and everyone is comfortable**.
- Do you think that non-Muslims are a minority?
- They can be but I don't want to pronounce that word. **The prime minister also made a blunder by saying that Alevis are a minority.** I don't think they are, **they live comfortably on Turkish soil**, the immigrants also live comfortably.³⁰⁹

Rıza

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- No. **You are a minority when you take too much reaction, excluded or exiled from a country.** No one is exiled from Turkey, even though they get too much reaction we did not see anyone who had been exiled from Turkey. **There is a sense of belongingness and they do not admit other people but exclude them.**³¹⁰

Deniz

- **Being able to continue** the traditions without going under any pressure is not being a minority. When you look at the Kurds they are like that, too.³¹¹

Bektaş

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- No, never. If you separate us into different small groups, if you don't give me job or a classroom, then we become minority. Otherwise no one says without rhyme or reason let's murder half of this population and make them a minority. I perceive the **concept of minority as bowed down**. We got advantage of less, we are minority, we ate less, we saw less, we read less, we drank less but we were despised, humiliated and so on. **Compared to your life standard we are a minority.** Is that experienced today? If I speak for myself, I don't experience it, **I am not a minority at the moment, I can express myself freely.** I am not despised because I am Alevi or I am not treated differently or I don't get any privileges, I don't get any bad treatment, therefore I am not a minority.³¹²

Hasan

- Do you think Alevis are a minority in Turkey?
- No, they are majority.
- Are there any minorities in Turkey?
- Yes, there are.
- Who are them?
- They are the **ones without education**, when you look they are the regions in south eastern.³¹³

Naci

As seen in through the examples the Alevis, who associate being minority with being repressed and suppressed, deny the minority tag especially in the ‘Open Aleviness’ period, since they claim that they can live freely and express

themselves. What this shows is that, today, the Alevis deny that they are suppressed and being subjected to discrimination. By this, they would like to present themselves as the “hardworking” child, rather than as the “mischievous” or “disobedient” one.

On the other hand, few Alevis who bear the “leftist” themes like “rights” and “struggle for rights” accept that the Alevis are in a minority position and claim that the Alevis must demand their rights. For them, since they always stand at the background and their rights are not recognized they are minority.

- Do you think Alevis are one of the minorities in Turkey?
- I think this is the most important subject. Do you know why, if I am not wrong in the year 2004, during the EU process, the EU insisted on Alevis being a minority, they said that Alevis are a minority. We are a minority, it was very important for us to pass this law in the EU but state, government and Cem Foundation allied and by somehow affecting the Alevis, rejected this. Now there is an impression in the Anatolian people that they say they are not a minority, **they are the backbone of this country**. But **what right has this country given to us?**³¹⁴

Onurcan

- Are Alevis a minority?
- **Considering rights and quality**, I think they are but they are not on paper. And they cannot be because it is not a race only religious differences...³¹⁵

Bariş

- Are Alevis a minority?
- **Definitely, they experience everything a minority can experience**. The state does not accept Aleviness. Today with the pressure of EU and NGOs, the rights were started to be given partially. It is not accepted. Therefore it is treated as a minority. There has been physical violence either by state or by political groups. Alevis have been a minority within the society since the Ottoman era. And they still are.³¹⁶

Haydar

For the Alevis who emphasize the cultural aspects of Aleviness –rather than that of religious–, political demands regarding the Alevi identity are the most important bearers of Alevi identity. The Alevis like Haydar, Onurcan and Bariş believe that Aleviness must move forward through following this political line.

4.3.5. Kurds for Alevis

Alevis who see themselves not as a minority but basic element are affected by the discourse of the unity of the country. One aspect of laicist republicanism among Alevis is seen as opposition to Kurds. Due to reasons such as Aleviness is a

Turkish belief and seeing themselves as founder and real owner of republic, and even though there are Kurdish Alevis, there is an increase in the number of Alevis who has negative thoughts about Kurds in the 'Open Aleviness' period. On the other hand, there are those Alevis who has Kurdish people in their families or close environment and have been in leftist circles, and they are sensitive about the Kurdish issue, do not hold any hostilities and believe that they have been done wrong. It is possible to see various aspects of anti-Kurdism among Turkish Alevis: Murtaza and Zeynel's antipathy towards Kurdishness is expressed in the thought that Kurds are used by the government and foreign powers. Although Barış respects the demands of the Kurds, states that the instruments they use are wrong and react against the Kurds for becoming "the toy and instrument of the dominant powers." Hasan, Sultan and Döndü react against Kurds because of the Turkish soldiers that have been killed. Döndü even responds to the question "Who are the minorities in this country?" as Kurds and Armenians; since minority is a pejorative concept and like the Armenians, the Kurds also try to kill the Turks. Sultan also complains about the killing of "30 thousand people" and asks "before there was no Kurdishness, has it started from this point?" and adds "if they know how to live in this country properly, there will no problems." Her comments in a way resembles MHP's slogan "Love or Leave!" All these comments bear the traces of dominant nationalist discourse regarding the Kurdish issue. Even the ones who are more empathetic towards the Kurds are affected by these traces. Most of the Interviewees associate "wrong doings" of the Kurds with their "backwardness" and "ignorance." Naci asserts that the Kurds have no fault because they are the ones who are "oppressed, abandoned to ignorance and provided with nothing." Derviş believes that Kurdish population is "the reality of Turkey whose ninety percent is composed of backward and illiterate/ignorant people." Haydar associates the "backwardness" of the Kurds with the density of experiences like "berdel, blood feud, and bride price" among the Kurdish population. On the other hand there are many Alevis who hold stronger prejudices against the Kurdish population. For instance, Özgün does not like the Kurds because she sees them as a group of people:

Whose beliefs, habits, daily lives and political perceptions cannot be urbanized; who are organized around their causes and got stuck there; who cannot think and act universally; and who stubbornly resist any moves towards modernization by sticking to backwardness and primitivity.³¹⁷

Serap is among the Alevi who have strong prejudices against the Kurds. She articulates that she does not like the Kurds at all. She finds them “idiotic, primitive, closed to change and stuck to one way.”

As a consequence although the Kurdish Alevi constitute a considerable part of overall Alevi population, the most of the Turkish Alevi approach to the Kurds and Kurdish issue through the framework provided by dominant discourse of Turkish nationalism. Especially the Alevi, who do not have any Kurdish friends or relatives and who did not take place in socialist-left, have taken their places in anti-Kurdish sentiments as the real owners of Turkishness.

4.4. Sunnis for Alevi

The antagonistic “other” of the Alevi identity is “Sunnism”; which, for the Alevi, represent ‘reactionarism’ (gericilik). For the Alevi “Sunnism” is both the main opposite and an entity which must be kept away. Overemphasizing the differences between Aleviness and Sunnism emanates from the need to keep this distance. For this reason while Sunnism is being accused for being formalistic, fear-based, showy, superficial and reactionary; Aleviness is described with reference to qualities like being based on love, experiencing belief for real, modernity and progressiveness.

- We, Alevi **worship in our own language**. But Sunnis reject Turkish worshipping. ... Our Alevi Islamic faith depends on the **love of God**. We fear only one thing, which is hurting our loved ones. Otherwise we do not be human for the houris and golden silver rivers in the heaven given as **brib-[stops while saying bribery]**, benefactions.³¹⁸

Cafer

- These are the characteristics that differentiate Aleviness: ... Shut the music off during azan time and after the hodja finishes open it again. These are very commercial things for me. Praying during azan time. Why do you pray during azan time, will it be more advantageous for you? This is so **formalistic** for me, like a habit, like the **morning gym**. It is like going to the store and buy your bread and newspaper in the morning and many people do that. As we are Alevi these people do not reveal this to us but I know that they are very well aware of it. I am aware that they sometimes **fast unwillingly and that fear is making them consciencely uncomfortable**. A bicycle is given to you and its

user's manual is the Quran. That is okay, use it like that but there will be moments when you violate it; the moments you break, fall, hide, throw away, revolt, clean and love. **Do not ride it for only riding, feel it; that is not present in Sunnism.** But it is in Aleviness. For example there is **no hypocrisy**. If I speak for myself I can say that we cannot fool ourselves. Let loose yourself, I could not control myself and took it. This burns you. May be you live heaven and hell here.³¹⁹

Hasan

- I observe that while **Sunnis approach religion with fear Alevis approach it with love.** And I think that there are many Alevis who does not believe in religion. But there is also a religious side, which is being unafraid of religion and teaching to love God and religion. But as far as I see **fear is dominant in Sunnism**, it aimed to **shape people by scaring them.**³²⁰

Barış

- According to you what is the most important thing that differentiates Sunnis from Alevis?
- **Exaggeration in clothing**, prayers, **Quran** and everything. It is as if they are doing everything in secrecy. Different in the home and outside it. I believe it is **show off**.
- Their thoughts. They think very exaggerated. They see everything from their own perspective. They criticize much. For example you say a prayer but they seem more knowledgeable.³²¹

Gül

- What is the difference between them according to you?
- In the simplest sense, us Alevis, they do not go to mosque. For us you can worship everywhere, in your home. But they go to mosque, a lot of people go to mosque. You cannot understand **if they are good or bad people**. But this is not valid for us. When you see a person you can understand from his **appearance and his character**. It is **different**. We are different.³²²

Rıza

- As far as you see..
- As far as I see, for example I have Sunni friends who are perfect. There are people who are superior than an Alevi. But **70 percent of the Sunnis are not like that in our society**.
- Why?
- **They are very calculating and self-seeking. They are also swindler and everything about deceiting.** It is also present in the Alevi society, but less. It is the majority of them.³²³

Musa

- According to you what is the most important thing that differentiates Alevis from Sunnis?
- As far as I have seen I can say that Alevis are **far more modern than many Sunnis** and a group of people who have long before learned that everything ends in human.³²⁴

Sevim

- **Our difference from Sunnis is modernism.** That is we are so modern.³²⁵

Naciye

- For example one of the most striking things about Alevis is their **rebelliousness**. It may seem funny but it is in our souls. When the time comes we may refuse everything and say no. but this is not valid for the other sect. For example the number of religious communities is increasing. **They don't leave their leader's path.** It not like that in Aleviness.³²⁶

Onurcan

Cafer, Hasan and Barış believe that Sunnism is form and shape based and the religious obligations are not fulfilled with love and will, but rather with fear and promise. Briefly, according to them the Sunnis are not sincere in their belief. Likewise Gül thinks that the practices of the Sunnis are too much exaggerated. According to her exaggeration regarding many issues is just for show; no really an outcome of their inner commitment. Musa contends that although there are decent people among the Sunnis, most of them are immoral. Sevim and Naciye assert that the Sunnis are not modern. Onurcan considers Sunnis as obedient and states that they cannot act according to their will, and lack the quality to resist and deny what does not seem right and just.

As a conclusion, the Alevis believe that the Sunnis are not sincere in their belief. They find their actions and belief fake and contend that their practices are based on show.

4.4.1. Never With the Reactionaries

“Reaction”, in their saying “bigotry”, is a concept which is pronounced with anger nearly by all Alevis. For most Alevis, Aleviness is opposing those concepts. That is, even those who have adopted religious side of Aleviness are against “piety”. For most of the Alevis religion is not a neutral but negative concept and points to conservatism rather than belief.

- The present political authority is in an attempt to **transform the country in a modest Islamic one, abolish laicism, make bigoted and bring it behind the age.**³²⁷

Cafer

- The attitude of the government, its **emphasis on piety** and polarization in Turkey is very dangerous for the Alevis.³²⁸

Derviş

- It was not so obvious during the term of Demirel but since the term of Motherland Party and increasingly in the recent years there is **yearning for sheri’a, Iranization and Arabianization.**³²⁹

Zeynel

- I define myself as Alevi and I say to myself that it was very good for me to be born Alevi because I get sad when I see the **bigots** around, especially the Shafi Kurds. I do not discriminate or exclude Kurds but, for example, when a woman is ablated she does not

even give her hand to a little boy. When I see such things I say to myself that **luckily I am Alevi, we don't have such reactionarism.**

- The best part of Aleviness is that we are modern. As I said, **our reactionaries are even better than those reactionaries, bigots.** Because they are more reactionary.
- **Our difference from the Sunnis is modernism.** We are so modern.³³⁰

Naciye

- If you ask me there is a **big danger of religionism.** I know before the AKP. One of them became the prime minister and the other is president. They have been **bigots** for a long time. ...
- What is the danger?
- Because of the **bigotry** of this religion Turkey may turn into Iran, may experience many problems. I think of Islam as a **underdeveloped religion.** Christianity is better. It is a more modern religion.³³¹

Hüseyin

- I liked saying I am Alevi, not one of you. It is something like saying that one is Armenian in Turkey. **I don't know but feel like I have moved away from the backwardness of Turkey when I say that I am an Alevi. I am not one of you.** Even though I am not ethnically different I am still different from you.³³²

Özgün

Hostile interpellations like “the ones that want Turkey to turn into an Islamic country”, or “the ones that want an Islamic regime”, “the ones that yearn Sheri’a”, “the religious ones”, “reactionaries”, “fanatics”, “sectarians”, “the ones that want to be like Iran and Arabia” are concepts which Alevis most refer in order to express their opposition. The biggest danger for them is the strengthening of these enemies in terms of political power. Alevis believe that any kind of evil that happened to them or even any kind of negativity that has nothing to do with them result from existence of those enemies. That is why those hostile interpellations determine what Aleviness is for Alevis; in other words, they form the constitutive outside of Aleviness, what Aleviness is not.

4.4.2. Never With the Arabs

Alevis believe that the concepts which they position Aleviness against as piety, reactionarism and fanaticism are cherished by Arabian culture. They cannot help themselves to be prejudiced against the Arabs even if they know that it contradicts with their saying “looking at 72 nations with one eye”. The term Arab reminds Alevis of people that adopt Islamic rules and their life style in countries which apply this regime on a hardline. This lifestyle is identical with

“Sunnism” which Aleviness is positioned on the opposite side. International equivalent of the danger of making Sunni/assimilation is the expansion of Islamic regimes. For Alevi, the agent of this expansion is the Arabs:

- What do you think about the Arabs?
- I think they are fragmented within. They have forgotten the tolerance of Islam. They cannot move within the framework of their own rules.
- Do you have any other evaluation? How do you see Arabs?
- I think they are strict, which means **thick, firm**. I see them as **bigoted**, they live sheri'a very differently.
- How do you see the AKP?
- Not good. Because, for example, I think they want to impose **Arab dependence** in an extreme level.³³³

Murtaza

- Its practice in Anatolia is moulding this way of life with their own culture and absorbing and living it in their own mother tongue without going under **Arabic hegemony**.
- How do you see Arabs? What do you think of them?
- I think of **laziness**. Yet even though they seem lazy the Arabs are people who use Islam as their own property and showing that our prophet had lived in the Arab peninsula and Quran has come in Arabic as evidence, they think that Islam is not lived without the Arab world. Therefore they aim to convey **Arab imperialism** to the world. Unfortunately Sunni Islamic belief in our country serves this thesis. (...) **The mentality which defines itself as Islamic sees Islam as Arabification from a bigoted, reactionary perspective.** This is the worst part of it.³³⁴

Cafer

Murtaza and Cafer's hostility towards Arabness who evaluate Aleviness as the core of Islam is an unexpected attitude when their frequent reference to Quran and Islam is considered. However, Muslim Alevi are as much as prejudiced and negative towards Arabs like the other Alevi. Because according to them Arabs blur Islamic faith with Arabian culture and their real aim is not conveying Islamism but Arabian culture. The strong emphasis which Muslim Alevi aim to make in terms of Alevi identity besides the idea that Aleviness is the core of Islamic faith is that Alevi did not take Islam in a formalistic manner accompanied by Arabian culture like the Sunnis, but they took its essence and mould it with their own culture. That is why Turkish Alevi prayers are often shown as a sign of the possibility of a non-Arabian Islam.

- So you said Arabs, what do you think about them?
- I am a **little negative about them**. As I have seen **their treatment of the people and intolerance** is an obvious thing.
- Where did you go?
- Iran, Iraq, Syria. I respect them as humans but **I do not support their treatment of the people and Arabic culture.**³³⁵

Derviş

- What do you think about the Arabs?
- They are **very reactionary** people. They are **obnoxious**, I don't know.
- What comes to your mind when one says Arab?
- **Very unsympathetic things. Reactionary**, I don't know. They are still like that, aren't they? They still **cut people's hands and arms**.³³⁶

Sultan

- So what do you think about the Arabs?
- I cannot exactly know how they are from where I live. They wear **long garments, very dark**, I don't know.³³⁷

Gül

- So what do you think about the Arabs?
- Nothing. I think Arabs are **the most unnecessary people on earth**.³³⁸

Hüdr

- So what do you think about the Arabs?
- I don't like them a bit. They **stink**.
- Why don't you like them?
- I have lots of reasons, they are **murderers, enemies**.³³⁹

Döndü

- So what do you think about the Arabs?
- **I don't like them.**
- I don't know much about their life style and culture. Mine is **completely prejudiced. I don't like Arabic, I hate it**. Now you will ask why don't you like it, is it because of the Quran? **I don't know, I don't like it somehow**. It seems **unsympathetic** to me. You like or dislike something in the first glance, it is something like that. **As far as I know myself, I don't like Arabs and Arabic**.³⁴⁰

Deniz

- What do you think of Arabs in general?
- My point of view is **negative in general**. Some negativity is originating from the past. I am negative towards them because of the alliances they had made during the war of independence and their **stabbing us in the back**. Today you see that they are extremely wealthy. But they have **no wealth in scientific or cultural means**.³⁴¹

Bektaş

- Before going to university, or rather before knowing an Arab, things like **primitiveness** and **women who do not leave their homes** came to my mind. **After** coming here and **meeting different Arabs, this idea perished**. But when you say Arab there is still something that has been **engrained in our minds**.³⁴²

Haydar

- What do you think about the Arabs?
- **I don't like them much.**
- Why?
- First of all, they have nothing to do with my worldview. It is the same in terms of culture, their habits, lifestyles, I think they are **primitive**. Here may be a prejudice, insulting a nation but if we see the Sunnis as of Arabic origin, a continuance of the Arabic culture, there are many things and attitudes we don't like, despise, **uncivilized, unmodern** in them.³⁴³

Özgün

Alevis I interviewed who look at 72 nations with one eye, do not hesitate to express their hostility and prejudices towards Arabs despite of this saying and even expressing it by arguing that they do not discriminate among people. Furthermore, they do not think positively about Arabs even though they know that figures like St. Ali, his descendant Alevi dedes, and the family of Mohammad which mean a lot to them are Arabs. Alevis clearly associate Arabs with an Islam dominated by Sheri'a. The term Arab reminds them of countries which are ruled by Sheri'a. Even Persian Iran takes its share. That is why they use terms like reactionarism, premodernity, fanaticism and piety for Arabs which they also use for Sunnis, even if they had never met an Arab before. Certainly, the most important reason of that is the Alevis' strong identification of Sunnism and Arabness.

4.4.3. Turban, Never

For almost all Alevis, turban is the symbol of reactionarism. Even though they think that it contradicts with freedom of thought, Alevis mostly support banishment of turban. Alevis are supportive of the anti-turban discourse in society. Arguments like turban is a political symbol, not like the scarf of our mothers and if it is allowed it will continue which are frequently spoken in the society are also frequently uttered within the Alevis. There also those who has conspirative thoughts such as turban is an instrument for other plans or used to manipulate the agenda. A small number of Alevis who has a more libertarian view on the subject have always a "but" and a hesitation.

- How do you consider scarf turban issue?
- Turban is a **symbol** as the Prime Minister has said. But there is **no turban problem** in Turkey. For example, in **our sisters, own family** there are ones wearing turban. (...) Turban turned into a political thing in Turkey. They bring turban to the agenda **to collect votes**.³⁴⁴

Derviş

- How do you consider the turban issue discussed within this framework?
- I think these are all works of the **enemies who try to conquer** the country from inside, I think this is all **USA's game**.³⁴⁵

Rıza

- What do you think about scarf turban issue?
- I think in the recent events turban is very well used to **mislead** people; the reactions of the people were directed to there and other deeds are undertaken. While people are dealing with it, the JDP made everything, raised the prices and our soldiers again became martyrs. I am not against scarf, everyone is free, one who wants to wear it wears it, but turban is like a **bogy**, I am **totally against** it.³⁴⁶

Ayşe

- I think it is completely an **instrument**, a very good one to cover the real problems, it will lose its fruitfulness in the near future.³⁴⁷

Haydar

- Turban issue?
- It is completely Turkey's shame, 10-15 years ago. It is about imam hatips and **totally political**. Why don't they say anything to the one wearing turban? They see **turban as a flag, use it** for attracting attention. They are **manipulated**.³⁴⁸

Zeynel

- There can be scarf but **there is nothing like turban**. It something they have invented. And no one can prove me the existence of turban, I do not believe it.³⁴⁹

Döndü

In the above examples it is implied that the issue of turban is superficial and serve other purposes. Having a hard time to defend a ban, the Alevis express their belief in the insincerity of turban in many different ways. The most cliché of them all is that turban is different from the scarf that our mothers and aunts wear. Another explanation that follows it is that turban is an instrument to manipulate the agenda and the demand of freedom for turban is not sincere.

- I get **nauseous** when I see a woman wearing turban. I have a very strong sixth sense, for aught, I get nauseous when I see them. It is like they are **pretentious**, just **doing it for the people**. I feel that way, sometimes I am about to **vomit**.³⁵⁰

Gül

- Scarf, turban issue
- If there is a civic code in this country you have to obey it. If it was put into the constitution in 1923 as an unchangeable article. While you are roaming around the streets wearing turban no one asks you why. But with **black garment like a bat**.³⁵¹

Musa

- What about the turban issue?
- I certainly disagree with the idea of freedom of turban in the universities.
- Why?
- Today turban, tomorrow **veil**, then Taliban costume burka.³⁵²

Serap

- What about your approach to scarf, turban issue?
- They hold on to it; they believe in it or not but do it with money. They distribute gold and do other unbelievable things and gain supporters. Yet the **people who do this do not do it because they believe in it**. It became something like a **trend**.³⁵³

Sultan

- So how do you see scarf, turban issue?
- The JDP made it, too. If there was such a viewpoint like in the older times, **everyone was already wearing scarves, not turbans**. I think wearing a scarf is not an abnormal thing but if you change it into turban, then everything changes. Everyone could wear it; I think wearing a scarf was not a **religious symbol** before but now it turned into one.³⁵⁴

Deniz

- So what are your thoughts about the turban issue?
- When we look at the **ninety per cent of those** who wants to enter university, they **do not do it for religious belief**.³⁵⁵

Sevim

- How do you see scarf, turban issue?
- I think it might be worn. **Anyone who wants should wear it.** It is the same thing for one to come and tell an Alevi to wear it or take it off. **But** there is such a reality, which was very popular once, street pressure; there is a social pressure. Turban issue came to that point. People who wear it **do not wear it because they want to**; there is a social pressure upon it.³⁵⁶

Onurcan

- How do you approach this scarf, turban issue? Do you think there is a problem?
- I am totally liberal.
- For example should it be free in public institutions?
- Let's see, it is **a bit difficult** in such a system. It is also **difficult in schools** today.
- Do you think should it be free or not?
- I think it should be but **they will lose control of it.**³⁵⁷

Bektaş

- How do you see turban issue?
- **Turban issue, I could not say that anyone who wants to wear it should wear it and anyone who does not should not.** (...) Where should one be covered and where not? **I do not want people wearing turban in my workplace. I do not want them in other places, too.**
- Where can one be covered?
- Consequently I do not want it as myself, I do not want them **anywhere.**³⁵⁸

Barış

- Turban?
- How did I approach the issue once? **A real Alevi naivity**, which means **no problem, she could enter the university.** I thought that they were not so strong, if they would bring sheri'a by entering the university. Of course, recently when I see that they do not want this for such an innocent end, I certainly think that **they should not enter university by any means.** In fact **I am aware that this is a fascistic attitude**, but I think it is necessary when you relate it with the political side of the issue.³⁵⁹

Özgün

- Turban issue?
- **I am absolutely against.** One has to admit that turban **does not fit** the Turkish Republic, has **never been modern** and has always been **a religious symbol.** I think it is an obstacle behind the development of Turkey.
- What shall be done?
- It should be **abolished, banned.** She should wear modern.³⁶⁰

Hüseyin

- **Scarf was worn by other mothers, aunts.** But if they are trying **to give a message** by using as a **symbol**, I oppose it.³⁶¹

Naci

The common point that all the given examples show is that Alevis do not believe that Turban issue is not a sincere problem. Alevis generally believe that turban issue is invented for the interests of the Sunnis and other dominant groups. Yet, Alevis opposition against turban goes beyond their disbelief that turban ban is a problem. Alevis I interviewed detest turban. They nearly feel the same abjection about turban which they feel for the Sunnis. Another motive beyond this

detestation in terms of opposition to turban is the concern that other demands would follow turban freedom in the road to Islamization. In fact, turban issue is a point of compromise which no other issue could be among the Alevis. There is no other qualification among the qualifications that constitute the Alevi identity which is that much agreed upon. For Alevis the popularity of turban issue is both a superficial problem and a step towards Sheri'a. That is why being against the turban ban in the name of freedom is nothing but "naivety".

4.5. Differentiation of Aleviness Regarding Ways and Paths

The most prominent feature of the 'Open Aleviness' period is that the Alevis have become more open both within themselves and towards outside. And this openness is an open phenomenon for the Alevis fitting to all categories. All Alevi types that fit into our categorization admit that they are living in a more relaxed era, and that Alevis do not hide and clearly express their identities. This perception even made the Alevis feel that they are no more subjected to discriminatory policies based on their Aleviness. Opening brings together with itself contacting with the outside and talking about Aleviness both inside and towards outside. This situation has increased the urge for a definition of Aleviness. This is specifically true for the group of Alevis whom we can name as the active Alevis –according to our clusters, Islamic Aleviness, Syncretic Aleviness and anti-Islamic Aleviness– who embrace Aleviness as their primary identity and who struggle for the dominance of their perception of Alevism. When we come to the passive Alevis –especially the ones in Sub-Way and Non-Way– since their level of responsibility regarding the issues related to Aleviness is lower, they are not eager to reach and embrace a clear definition of Aleviness as much as the active Alevis are. Yet, due to their sympathy towards Aleviness, a shared definition of Aleviness is one of their wishes. The difference for the active Alevis is, beyond wish, the need and desire for a clear definition of and maximum knowledge on Aleviness. The plurality of voices regarding this issue is disturbing for Alevis of any cluster. The active Alevis demand a clear and unique Alevism for hegemonizing the Aleviness they

feel themselves close to; the passive Alevis want it for driving the risk of dissolution away.

All Alevi typologies agree that Aleviness is not like it used to be. The assertions like Aleviness is in a process of dissolution; the young Alevis are not interested in Aleviness; and Aleviness is “degenerated”, “assimilated” and “perverted” are being expressed by many Alevis. Many Alevis state that they cannot learn Aleviness from their families and even their families do not have enough information on the subject. But we can state that Muslim-Way Alevis are more supported by their families in this sense. They are also the ones who have more rural ties and live in neighborhoods in which Alevi population is dense and connected.

The stress on the “degeneration” of Aleviness in general implies the Sunnification of Aleviness. This stress is mainly shared by the Alevis who are not on the Muslim-Way. For Alevism Sunnism is a constitutive outside with a critical importance. This is why Alevis refrain from any stress connoting Sunnism; and try to purify Aleviness from Sunnism. On the other hand, even the Muslim-Way Alevis share this tendency, because their positive definition of Aleviness must be able to differentiate itself from Sunnism. Blurring of this line might mean Sunnification, which is the main concern of the others. While the critique of reaction may be directed towards the folk Islamic rituals which have been carried to Aleviness from heterodoxy, the critiques of the others may be targeting Islamic references as a whole. Deification of Ali is criticized by many Alevis. St. Ali is perceived as a prophet, which is wrong according to the Muslim Alevis. Accordingly, St. Ali is an important figure of Islam; but mightn’t be held equal to God or the Prophet. For the Alevis who are not in the Muslim-Way, Ali’s status as an Islamic figure makes them to assume a critical stance towards love of Ali. These Alevis think that Ali has a symbolic value for Aleviness as a person who was brave, just, fair and wronged.

The anti-Sunni Islam stance of Alevis manifests itself with hostility towards Arabs and opposition to *turban*. These qualities are shared by Alevis of different categories. The dominance of anti-Sunni Islam stance within the Alevis also encapsulates the Muslim-Way Alevis. These Alevis try to differentiate themselves from the perception of Islam that has been dominated by the Arabs. By this, Aleviness is interpreted as the Turkish interpretation of Islam. The stress on Turkishness is common amongst the Alevis who interpret Aleviness in Islamic tone. But among the Alevis of the same kind the tendency of evaluating Aleviness as a belief, rather than an ethnicity, is more widespread. For non-Islamic Alevis there are the ones who believe that Aleviness is originated through lineage. This tendency is weakened among the Alevis who have higher levels of education and diminished ties with Aleviness. But even these people have doubts about adopting Aleviness afterwards; since Aleviness is a culture which has been acquired by birth and years of cultivation. Given these it is nearly impossible for Alevism to recruit new actors.

Cem ritual and cemhouses are criticized by many irreligious Alevis. But the cemhouses are regarded as important for their cultural qualities and their contribution to solidarity and togetherness among the Alevis. Muslim Alevis define cemhouses as cultural houses rather than places of worshipping. But they do not approve the cems that are organized in these places which are sometimes broadcasted in the TVs. They think that cem rituals are contaminated through these. But the cem rituals that are turned into touristic activities may become objects of curiosity for other Alevis. But they want prioritization of the cultural and philosophical aspect of cem rituals like semah dance and sayings; they argue that cem rituals must be purified of their religious elements. Dedelik institution is another Alevi tradition that lost its priority. Among the Alevis I interviewed, nearly none of them approach the dedes like the Alevis of past generation did. There are nearly no Alevis left who believe in the superhuman qualities of the dedes. The dedes who are thought to have had a function in the past like teaching Aleviness and providing communication between villages, now are regarded as

nonfunctional. The ones who still care about the missions of learning and teaching Aleviness understate the need for breeding educated, mannered and modern dedes.

For the ones who moved away from Alevi tradition –especially for the Sub-Way and Non-Way Alevis and Anti-Islamic Alevis– Aleviness is turned into a sympathetic culture. For them Alevi rituals and culture are things to be proud of but also things that are not compulsory. Absence of feeling of responsibility and any sanctions makes them to conceive Aleviness as a flexible and relaxed culture.

Ataturk is a subject on which most of the Alevis have a consensus. Alevis have a great respect for Ataturk because he has weakened the hundreds of years of dominance of Sunni Islam. Sunni Islam is an entity against which all Alevi categories oppose and which must be restrained. For the same reason the Republic is embraced by the majority of Alevis. But political Alevism, with reference to events like Çorum, Maraş and Sivas, claim that although the Republic in its early years have backed Alevis, this have changed by time against Alevis. This thought generates the idea that the state is against the Alevis. Thus, the Alevis are ambivalent towards the state. On the one hand they feel that they own the state and see it as a threat on the other. The perception of “owners of the state” causes Alevis to deny being recognized as minorities. The Alevis beside the leftist Alevis –although their number is so limited– reject to be seen as minorities since their number is so high and since they think themselves as the fundamental element of the state.

4.6. Tension Lines of Aleviness in ‘Open Aleviness’ Period

All of the references mentioned above create lines of tension in the definition of Alevi identity and of Alevi experiences. All of these lines of tension are placed on the positioning of Alevis in terms of politics, religion, ethnicity, Alevi organizations and with respect to the state. Thus, Aleviness is a cultural construct, nourished by ethnic, religious, socio-cultural and political dimensions. Yet these different dimensions lead Alevis to diverse positions. There are several non-

identical states of Aleviness. Although it is uncertain which of these positions are likely to come closer to or to converge from each other, it can be argued that the common denominators of them are lessening. Since, there are less amount of dimensions which are shared and formed by consensus, a person's position upon Aleviness is over determined by his/her other identities.

There are various tension lines which determine the forms of different Aleviness:

1. Positioning with respect to the Republic
2. Political positioning
3. Religious positioning
4. Ethnic positioning
5. Institutional Positioning

Alevis -sometimes even same people- sway in between different positions along these lines. Both the diversity of these lines and the differences in responding to the tension create a difficulty to speak of a homogenous Aleviness. As this difficulty becomes more complicated, Alevi identity erodes. Even though the position and approach of organizations which undertook the organic leadership and the Alevi intellectuals who are closer to these organizations indicate a polarization; neither of these poles have been found satisfying by the majority of Alevis yet.

One of the constitutive drivers of the Alevi identity is the positioning of Alevis with respect to the Republic. This tension has two dimensions. **First one is the tension between being the agent of modern citizenship of republicanism and having a communitarian attitude** as a will to return to the tradition. Yet it is essential to return to the traditional or at least to reproduce the traditional in order to ensure the sustainability of Aleviness. On the other hand, almost all Alevis are in agreement with the integration of Aleviness to the modern secular republic. **The second tension is between pro-state and anti-state positioning.** Alevis, on the one hand, are supporters of the Turkish Republic as they believe that the constitution and continuation of the republic weaken Sunni hegemony; but on the

other hand, they have an anti-state approach as they believe that their representation in the state has been prevented, that they are systematically discriminated against, that they have faced and still face systematic oppression and cruelty.

It is widely argued that the new Turkish Republic has been welcomed by most of the Alevis. The benefits or costs of the new Republic are debatable. Yet, until today, almost all Alevis regard the foundation of the republic as the elimination or at least weakening of Sunni traditions. Thus, Alevis has become advocates of laicism, which means being against Islamism or Sunnism for them.³⁶²

On the other hand, in recent decades Alevis feel threatened by the assimilation/Sunnification of the State. Therefore 1990s were the years of alliance of Alevis with the state against the radicalization of Sunni Islam. The Sunni threat, on the other hand, is a threat that will never disappear for the Alevis. Although Alevis are more open today and feel freer and privileged compared to the past, their anxiety about being exposed to Sunni assaults has never been diminished. The only thing that Alevis depend on against this threat is the secular Republic of Turkey. Put differently, the most important motive of the Alevi passion for secularism stems from the function that secularism fulfills against Sunnis. According to the common Alevi narrative, the establishment of the Republic of Turkey is the only success story among the struggles that Alevis have taken part. The outcome of this passion and allegiance has been an enlightenment which has come as an extension of the requirements of modern secular life and the rupture from the tradition or the disenchantment of tradition due to this enlightenment. Alevis embrace secularism in order to protect themselves, but this has transformed them as well.

Another constitutive driver of the Alevi identity is the approach to “leftist” values. Alevis think that they naturally have the “leftist” values such as equality, democracy due to the repression discourse. Obviously the premise that “all the Alevis are leftist” is extreme and exaggerated. However, the interaction between a

considerable number of Alevis with leftist political groups in 1970s, Alevis long-term electoral support for CHP indicate that there is a solid link between Alevis and the Left. Moreover, for many Alevi being a leftist means being a member of CHP or defending laicism. Embracing this laicist, left-wing politics, for the Alevis, means that they become critical of “tradition”, of rituals, of traditional institutions. In extreme cases, some Alevis have a materialist understanding of Aleviness. In turn, religious Alevis are worried about the assimilation of Aleviness by the left and are cautious about this interaction.

Almost all of the Alevis interviewed stated that Alevis have been repressed since Yavuz Sultan Selim. The phobia of Sunnification and insecurity against discrimination are the essential constitutive drivers of Alevi identity. On the other hand, the weakening of threats and the consolidation of the incorporation with the state decreased the significance of the political character of the Alevi identity. In turn, traditional emphases of the Alevi identity became more hegemonic. Since the second half of the 1990s, Alevis’ political character has weakened due to the state’s changing perception of Alevis as allies against the rise of political Islam and as allies for national unity against the Kurdish issue; due to democratization provided by the process of EU candidacy; due to the AKP government’s steps towards dialogue and compromise. These reasons led Alevi associations, even the most political ones, to prioritize traditional issues such as cemhouse construction, aşure, funerals. Thus in recent times, Alevis put more distance between them and the Left and moved closer to tradition. Nevertheless, leftist values still have an impact on Alevis, still complicating their relation to tradition. As a result of this problematic relation, some Alevis are dissatisfied with their tradition.

The relation between Aleviness as a form of belief and Islam constitutes another line of tension in the formation of the Alevi identity. This tension basically is maintained by the difference of the approaches between the attempt to support Alevi faith through different essentialist references and the advocacy of multidimensionality and the inability to fixate Alevi faith. There are two dimensions to this tension. The first dimension is based on the relation of mutual

compromise between Aleviness and Islam, and the second dimension is based on the relation between the concept of religion and Aleviness. “Alevi tend to be less observant of some Islamic practices, which gives them a reputation for apostasy (Ayata, 1997).” For this reason, claiming that Aleviness is a faith which is part of Islam requires special emphasis. Supporters of this position claim that “real Islam”, the essence of Islam is Aleviness. On the other hand, some people dislike the inclusion of Aleviness within Islam for various reasons due to heresy claims against Aleviness, identification of their faith with Sunnism, or impacts of leftism. For such people, defining Aleviness as part of Islam is the same thing as being reactionary and/or religious bigotry.

As Aziz El-Azmeh (1993) states, from Morocco to Indonesia, in the countries that have accepted Islam, Islam changes meaning. Therefore, according to El-Azmeh, there is no unique Islam but many Islams. The Islamic reference of Aleviness cannot be denied. However, as today’s Aleviness positions itself opposite to Sunnism and Islamism, its formation depends on the distance with Islam or Islamism or through differing from them. This form of Aleviness maintains its distance from Islamism by either claiming that it is the true face of Islam, or by weakening its own Islamic references. The most advanced form of this position holds that Aleviness cannot have religious references, that Aleviness is a philosophy or a way of life.

In comparison, religiosity and identification with the faith diminished among Alevi as the level of education and income increase. For reasons already mentioned, lower and middle class Alevi who want to own their traditions can experience their faith only symbolically. Therefore, even for strong believers, an Aleviness which wholly surrounds daily life, which determines the entirety of life and afterlife no longer exists. Only a symbolic religiosity is possible.

As mentioned before, Berger (2001) notes that the sociology religion is very related with the phenomenon of secularization. This approach is very debatable

according to factual situation of many religions. Yet, for Aleviness it is true that modernism and secularism has been weakening its religious character.

The ontological dimension, about which Alevis generally do not speak on or ignore, constitutes another characteristic of the tension in Alevis' identity formation. The ontological dimension is the question of who Alevis really are, whether Aleviness can or cannot be defined in terms of ethnicity, whether it is possible to become a member of Aleviness. Aleviness as an identity is inherited from the parents. And theoretically, those who do not follow the line are cast away, they become "fallen". On the other hand, positioning itself as a universal teaching or a philosophy or a faith to cover the humanity, is in conflict with the urge to fixate the Alevi identity as a particularistic identity. Aleviness is not a proselytizing form of faith, it has no intrinsic desire to expand. It does not have a procedure of inclusion for non-Alevi people. Nevertheless, Alevi beliefs and teachings are universal and human-centered. Thus by definition, Aleviness should embrace all people – yet it is not open to others. This characteristic of Aleviness supports the perception that it has an ethnic character. However, what would be the rational measures by which we can determine whether Aleviness is an ethnic identity? Exploring the literature on ethnicity supplies us with ample material to assess the ethnic character of Aleviness.

Another line of tension of the Alevi identity is the institutionalization of Aleviness. This tension line has two dimensions. First is the weakening of Alevi traditional institutions in urban life, rediscovery of these institutions during the "return to tradition" process, difficulties in the adaptation of these old institutions shaped according to rural life and closed community frame to urban life. Second dimension is diversity of urban adaptive institutions, their conflicts among themselves and incapability of representation resulting from these conflicts.

Aleviness has been based on oral culture. The carrier and basis of the cultural past has been oral folk literature. **The existence of traditional institutions and rituals has a central role in the sustenance of the Alevi identity.** These institutions

distinguished Alevis from other groups. They serve the self-on the hierarchical structure composed by these institutions. This way, Aleviness could continue to exist together with Islam. Otherwise, the inability to translate these informal structures to practice causes the system of Alevi norms and values to weaken (Türkdoğan, 2004; 640-650). These activities, today, aim both to reinforce the ties between Alevis, and to speak to non-Alevis.

As years passed with the absence of dedes, Alevis became distant to tradition. During the Alevi revival in 1990s, some dedes regained part of their prestige and were recruited in the cemhouses of urban centers. Yet their old charisma and power was not restored. Charisma was passed partly on to the chairs of Alevi associations and power to public institutions. Dedes' new mission became more ritualistic and spiritual. In the decision-making process, chairmen and opinion leaders were more influential. In urban life, musahiplik institution has disappeared for practical reasons. Many Alevis are ignorant about what musahiplik is.

Rituals are main nutrition of a religious or a traditional identity. Constantin Fasolt says:

When a given group of people acts according to one and the same ritual and does so in a manner explicitly designed to draw the attention of its members to the regularity of the action, the members of the group can tell that they are following the same rule. Participation in a ritual teaches the participants that, at least on this occasion and in regard to this particular performance, they are doing the same thing. Ritual rides over the border between self and other.

For Alevis, cem is the most important ritual that fulfils this condition. Even participation to this ritual is one of the fundamental requirements of being an Alevi. Cem is not only a medium for releasing tensions and strengthening beliefs but at the same time it is an institution through which intra-community justice is operated, solidarity is reinforced, conflicts are resolved and peace is made between people who has problems with each other. Thus on the one hand, cem³⁶³ helps the reinforcement of Alevi faith, and it causes the raising of collective consciousness and the development of the sense of solidarity on the other. Therefore, Alevis think that they are distinct from Sunnis who pray in mosques, because those who practice in mosques may unintentionally be praying along side with murderers and

thieves. Whereas in cem, strangers are not welcomed and before the ritual begins, people resolve their problems among each other.

Fasolt argues that when dogma is divorced from ritual, it leaves the believer isolated or in opposition to the community of which he is a member. This is the greatest problem for modern Alevis: Dogmas are the most important carriers of religion. However, once dogma is known that it is dogma, it loses its function. Many Alevis are aware and conscious about the dogmatic aspects of the cem. Yet if the ceremony is “cleared” of dogma, it has no value at all, since modern institutions have already been assigned with many previous functions of the cem, like justice, marriage, solidarity, etc. and mostly the ritualistic and faith-based dimension of the ceremony remains.

Matters related to content are not the only problem of the cem. For also practical reasons, there is an incompatibility between urban life and the cem ritual. Theoretically it is an activity about the “togetherness” of a community living together. Yet in the cities, one cannot talk about “living together” anymore, many Alevi groups live separate from one another. Therefore the application of cem in urban life can only be possible in symbolic terms. In recent years symbolic dimension has reached to such a level that this secluded and communal event is now open to outside participation, and is even organized in the form of public performances. Bozkurt defines this situation as “evening cems, filling the long winter evenings, were replaced by weekend cems” (1999; 106).

Alevi civil society organizations established in the form of associations and foundations are today in danger of depreciation or disappearing altogether. Rather than rights advocacy, these organizations are important as they organize rituals and religious practices according to urban life and provide legal basis for realization of these rituals. These organizations have a leadership character in terms of replacing the weakened institutions such as dedelik, musahiplik and cem in urban life and attempting to reorganize them.

The hegemonic struggle between Alevi CSOs on Aleviness occurs on the field of definition of Aleviness. Associating Aleviness with ethnicity would simplify the work of definition. However, this would contradict with the universality claim of Aleviness. On the other hand, there are people of Alevi origins who do not share the same “Alevi” identity as the others. Besides, there are also some people with Sunni-origin who want to identify himself /herself as Alevi. Additionally, the Bektashi tradition in which participation depends on voluntariness makes the problem more difficult. Despite these differences, there is an Alevi intelligentsia organized in civil associations claiming to represent the Alevi communities. Some researchers or rhetoricians prefer to call them, using the Gramscian term, “organic intellectuals of Alevis”. Nevertheless, a lot of problems arise when we say that these intellectuals achieve to capture the Alevis’ demands and solve their everyday problems. It is true that they are more competent and more involved in the modern world than the Alevi masses.

It cannot be argued that these CSOs have a widespread and strong connection to the masses. Many Alevis are uninformed about these associations and do not know about the differences among them. Those Alevis who know about them always complain about the lack of “unity” among them, about their versions of Aleviness. On the other hand, though these organizations are few in number, they are significant in terms of reflecting the views of those Alevis who still have some form of connection to Aleviness. Even among Alevis who do not know about these organizations, it is possible to encounter people who came to accept (even advocate) one of the three represented positions. Therefore, describing the Alevi discourses represented by these CSOs will set the ground for the discussion of Alevi typologies.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Alevis have been looking for their identity with anxiety. The fundamental element nourishing this anxiety for some Alevis is the threat of assimilation, as for some others it is threat of disappearance. It is being stated by many Alevis that compared with the past there is not such an intense discrimination problem for Alevis in their daily life today. Alevis feel that they do not have to hide themselves, they are not under physical attack and they do not confront with several direct discriminatory practices any more that they were previously subject to. There are many reasons behind this such as the merging and camouflaging character of the city life; apprehension of Alevis by the state not as a threat but rather as an ally regarding the Kurdish and radical Islam questions, becoming more recognized. The importance of this for this study is the relationship between the decrease of the discriminatory practices and increasing indistinctness of Aleviness of the Alevis.

Alevis, during the period that they confronted with systematic discrimination, have been politicized and got in touch with the left, despite being questioned for this relationship have not dealt with the meaning of being Alevi and have been diverged from the tradition. Another reason of the divergence from tradition was, no doubt, migration from rural to cities. The tradition which was conditional upon being rural and closed community was dissolved by the migration to cities. The tradition inclined to be disappeared with the addition of enlightenment stemming from the modern life, the advocacy of the secular democratic republic and the contact with the left. As the periods that politicized Alevis were passed and a perception of identity loss came into being, the return to the identity turned them back to the traditional. Forasmuch the Alevi identity is confronted with the threat of melting, disappearing and return to the tradition is one among two things that

could hold Alevis together. The second, following this return, on the other hand is the cultural rights claims that the city life rendered necessary for Alevis. Tradition serves for Alevis as a social cement, an existential meaning and the rights claims on the other hand ensure them political agitation, a sense of rowing in the same boat.

When we examine the relationship between the tension lines within the context of this anxiety of identity, we realize that Aleviness has a sustainability problem and as a consequence of this, Alevi identity is in the process of dissolution. We can enumerate the results supporting this argument as follows:

1. Alevis passing to an **‘open’** life and contacting with the other rendered the question of ‘who’ they are a vital one. Alevis are not in a situation of identity awakening; rather they are **in search of identity**. They are worried about their identity and feel the threats of disappearance, melting and assimilation. The fact that lack of a coherent and comprehensive answer to the question of ‘who we are’ strengthens this anxiety.
2. The attitude of Alevis towards the state is ambivalent. On the one hand, the drive of the state of the Republic of Turkey against Sunni Islamism is held as, maybe the only success in Alevi history; while, on the other hand they are concerned because of the Sunni Islamic activity within the state. The state is an alliance for Alevis, whereas the power did never belong to them. They believe in that there is no such possibility. On the other hand, the power, to which they could never approach but be in coalescence from time to time, can pass to the Islamists, or even, it may already be passed.
3. Alevis have advocated the secular Republic against Sunnism/Islamism. Their contact with secularism has secularized them as well, and as they are secularized their religious characteristics weakened. Moreover, many Alevis are “enlightened”. Enlightened Alevi’s relation to the tradition is distant. Their Aleviness is unstable. On the one hand, they are Alevis, but on the other, their faith in Aleviness, hope and future imagination for Aleviness is not strong. Many Alevis experience Aleviness at a symbolic level.

4. Alevis were diverged from Aleviness after their affiliation with left wing politics. Besides, this affiliation resulted in disappointment for them. Despite that a part of the Alevis who joined leftist organizations willed to articulate Aleviness with left, in line with the thought that Aleviness as a cultural form was susceptible to left, it can be said that, a wish for returning to tradition is predominant in most Alevis. This return to tradition, however, cannot be possible through reducing the “raised consciousness”. A tradition that grasps the existent culture is necessary.
5. The fact that there is a large Sunni section of society, supporting the secular state is realized by Alevis and as this fact increases the level of interaction with Sunnis alike, the main contradiction for Alevis turns into the one between those with democratic minded and bigots rather than between Alevis and Sunnis.
6. The city life has weakened the traditional Alevi institutions and the new ones have not been interiorized by them yet.
7. The leadership that would perpetuate tradition -dedelik- has lost its charisma. The new charisma belongs to the chairs of associations but they could only be influential upon partial segments and not known by the wide population of Alevis.
8. The tradition is forgotten and/or lost its esteem. The rituals of Aleviness and its approaches concerning religion or faith are not known or not remembered by a wide section of Alevis. They are restricted with the memories of the old, uneducated and rural segments. When the traditional elements are remembered or reminded, they are not found respective as they conform with the qualities that are criticized for being “reactionary”, looking from the perspective of modern urban life.
9. Identity based on ethnicity lost its value as closed life-style is abandoned. Alevis who were sharing the same habitus and similar to each other in biological terms lost the characteristics of an ethnic group with the inevitable increase of both the interaction with other groups and marriages (kız alıp verme).

10. There is no consensus on the tradition which has become a necessity to be returned for the identity. The opposite ideas and practices concerning the relations between the tradition and the phenomenon of religion refer to Aleviness that are quite different from each other. While one side advocates abandoning the 'religion'/Islam; the other side advocates identifying Aleviness with it. Alevis could not determine a clear position between these two positions. Thus both could not describe an original religious position unique to Aleviness. In the absence of religion, tradition cannot exist too; the rituals and institutions lose their meanings.
11. The formation of distinct poles of all these tensions explained above prevent the constitution of a charm of identity that will gather Alevis round. There are many different Aleviness positions. Many Alevis are swaying between these positions. Yet, due to the tensions of these positions, mostly this sway results in loosening of ties with the identity of Aleviness.
12. The CSOs that claim to represent Alevis are not able to comprehend them and the wide spectrum considering the stances against the tensions described above makes it difficult for Alevis to adopt a particular position. The Alevisms of Alevi CSOs are not accepted widely by Alevis. As rhetorically, the debates and argument of CSOs may impact upon Alevi individuals. Yet, it does not transform to regarding practices in most cases. On the contrary, many Alevis are distancing from Alevisms.
13. Two poles of Alevism is more hegemonic than the others: Islamic Alevism and Political Alevism. The first one try to hegemonize an Islam based Alevism, whereas the second a cultural form of Alevism. Both are unable to become hegemonic through Alevi masses. The first one suffers from closeness to Islam as the second to left. The first one takes the advantage of calling the tradition as the second of reminding the attacks made towards Alevis in recent history.
14. The AKP Government is also aware of the sustainability crisis of Aleviness. It aims to impact upon Alevis making some Alevi openings allying with Islamic Alevism. Yet, it is hesitant to liberate Aleviness for not to empower Aleviness.

Nevertheless, the driver of “being of Aleviness under pressure” has been losing its credit for Alevism projects.

15. Both poles of Alevism are suspicious on the Alevi opening of the AKP government. Yet Islamic Alevism supports the targets of attempts, whereas political Alevism is against most of the dimensions of Alevi opening of the AKP and do not find satisfactory some other. As a result of this is the polarization between Alevisms has been deepening which means that it seems to be difficult that the “unity” expectations of Alevi will be realized.

Starting with the 1990s the Alevi and circles following them brought Aleviness to the agenda. As it has been emphasized throughout this study, there is no doubt that entering into ‘Open Aleviness’ period is the main factor behind this process. It is in this period that the Alevi and the ones following them intellectually and politically began to talk about Aleviness without any hesitation or concealment. Visibility of Alevi activities and rituals accompanied to this state of talking. Today Alevi started to feel as if the burden of hiding and concealing had never existed before. Of course incidents with critical damnifications like Maraş, Çorum and Sivas are still fresh in memories. But discriminatory practices they faced individually due to their Alevi identity now turned into ironic memories. In referring to these memories a retrospective story telling is at work in which the subject of discrimination is always proud of her identity and gives no concessions. On the other hand there are some disconnections between open period and the former periods: tradition could not be passed over. There is a need for reminding Aleviness in general. This act of reminding Aleviness, however, is under the control of other contemporary identities. Also the Alevi contend that Aleviness that began to be described in such different ways weakens the effectiveness of Aleviness. For these reasons, today, the biggest problem and/or need of the Alevi is to define Aleviness without splitting, decomposing and abolishing it. The severity of this demand comes from its arduousness. Because each definition excludes some Alevi qualities that are known up today and make Aleviness unable to present itself as a distinctive identity. Together with this, the perception that Aleviness is weaker when compared to that of the closed period increases the

anxiety that Aleviness is about to vanish and on the other hand strengthens the conspiracies of assimilation. However, this anxiety did not bring out outcomes which will nurture the hegemonic projects that will stop disintegration. On the contrary, many projects on Aleviness, due to lack of their hegemonic capacity became either inconsistent through being dispersed to other lines of action or ineffective. Most of the Alevis, faced with this diversification which is far beyond reaching a “unity”, cannot find an Alevi identity which they can “re-acquire” or “rediscover.” Today, the Alevis who still embrace Alevi identity, due to the pains of these developments, experience their participation to the Alevi rituals, or even Aleviness itself as free-time, in other words, “associational” activities (*dernekçilik etkinlikleri*), and make their Alevi identity secondary. As a consequence the openness in ‘Open Aleviness’ period has weakened the closed ends of Aleviness and the Alevis started to find ways out through these open ends.

Answering the most critical and popular question of ‘Open Aleviness’ period, namely “What is Aleviness?” has become one of the requirements of debating on the Alevi identity. The responses to this question occupy such a wide spectrum that it is even hard for one to notice that the “same” identity is being discussed in different instances. As a consequence, the ground for meeting in a shared perception of Aleviness gradually disappears. Since all initiatives for reaching such a meeting point and references of these initiatives touch upon matters of tension none of the positions can present itself a center of power and attraction.

The most common characteristics of Aleviness for the Alevis is anti-Sunnism. The Alevis, who see themselves as the “defenders,” “guards” and “guarantee” of the “secular democratic republic”, as a part of their historical mission, locate themselves as opposed to Sunnism, which they believe to be representing the essential source of coercion and cruelty directed against the Alevis. However, this negative positioning is not enough for defining Aleviness. One should also present what Aleviness and its practices are. The Alevis felt the necessity for such a positive definition deeper in the opening period. This is mainly because a clear definition is an integral part of the confidence needed in exposing yourself to the

outside world. So, to be able to define Aleviness, and acquiring historical and structural knowledge on Aleviness gained importance. However, the conduits and sources for establishing it never emerged. Already available information could never provide a satisfying definition of identity for the Alevis. Aleviness, which had been passed over by various traditional institutions and family in closed periods up to now, has mostly been forgotten by the Alevis who were detached from their communities and traditional practices years ago by stepping into urban setting. Even, for the younger generations it is not something that had been “forgotten” but to be learnt for the first time. However, for the Alevis who experienced tradition as a rural experience and/or lived in Alevi neighborhoods with little contact with the “strangers”, this remembrance is on the forefront. But we cannot say that this active effort for recalling or remembering Aleviness is shared by most of the Alevis. Besides, urban life and economic difficulties made Aleviness secondary for the Alevis who have low level of income and/or fewer ties with their villages and/or relatives. Since there is more place for “strangers” and less for Aleviness in lives of educated Alevis with relatively high level of income, Aleviness, for them, turned into a secondary identity which is hardly or never practiced. More and more the interest shown towards Aleviness acquires a “museum-visit” like character. The difficulties in definition and practicing Aleviness make Alevis to consider Aleviness as a vanishing identity. On the other hand, the moves towards making Aleviness attractive again are devoid of any hegemonic quality or capacity. The diversification of positions regarding Aleviness, in a culture for which diversity points to richness, manifests itself as disintegration of unity. The lines of tensions on which these positions are located cause the emergence of irreconcilable conflicts. Even many Alevis label and exclude other positions as perversion or abuse of Aleviness, or as reaction, assimilation et cetera. There is a variety of references which causes different interpretations and definitions of Aleviness ranging from Aleviness as a philosophical outlook to Aleviness as an Islamic religious form. The midway solutions which aim at achieving conciliation between different poles fail at articulating the differences and mostly end up with swarming up of the previous tensions.

Two prominent hegemonic projects regarding Aleviness are Islamic Alevism and political Alevism. Since the project of Islamic Alevism aims at establishing and Alevi identity which is based on religious and traditional elements has a high capacity of articulating many elements of Aleviness that has been inherited from the past and tradition. The strength of the project of political Aleviness is the freshness of memories and traces of the past attacks and discriminatory policies directed towards the Alevi population and the Islamic character of the existing government. On the other hand, since the constitutive outside of Alevi identity is Sunnism and Islam for the Alevis, the project of Islamic Alevism remains limited and hard to be embraced by the Alevis. For the Alevis any kind of Islamic connotation, or religious and faith related element brings Sunni Islam to mind. The dilemma for political Alevism is the infectivity and inability of hardly established political demands to provide a ground for a positive definition of Aleviness and the conjunctural nature of these demands. For the Alevis whose ties with Aleviness have already been loosened none of these projects is far from being a center of attraction. Lastly, the sustainability crisis of Alevi identity, which is valid both for Alevism in general and the so-called hegemonizing projects, is a deeply felt phenomenon. Not only the representative CSOs of Alevism projects but also the political power is aware of this crisis. The government's attempts to make credit with coping Alevi issues targeted to incooperation with the Alevism closer to Sunni-Islam. This made the polarization between Alevisms deeper.

To sum up, Islamic Alevism prefer to empower the Alevi tradition with Islamic bonds the cope with the crisis of sustainability, whereas political Alevism targets to develop a modernism and laicism integrated Alevism dissolving Islamic bond or transforming it to cultural rituals. In this respect, both of them constitute an impact on Alevis. Yet, both projects fail to embrace Alevis at a practical level. They don't have any mechanisms of inclusion both for Alevi and non-Alevi individuals. They can't attract Alevis to participate in Alevism activities. Alevis mostly do not feel any responsibility to any Alevi institution or tradition and there are no sanctions for Alevis for non-participation. Thus, neither project has been able to hegemonize

Alevi masses. As a result of these, Alevi masses do not constitute an Alevi movement to advocate an Alevism project.

Lastly, it can be said the “Alevi awakening” does not refer to an awakening in which Aleviness had emancipated itself through embracing the rights of the Alevi identity, but rather to realization of the sustainability crisis of Aleviness by the Alevis.

ENDNOTES

¹ For Turkish term “Alevilik” which means the state of being Alevi I will use “Aleviness” in English. Some texts uses Alevism for the same word. I will use Alevism for Turkish term “Alevicilik” which refers to dealing with Aleviness.

² The two basic forms of discrimination are direct and indirect discrimination. In direct discrimination, a person is not treated the same way others are. Whereas in indirect discrimination, a measure, a decision or regulation which is neutral in appearance creates disadvantages for the persons who belong to a protected group. Such measures, etc. might sometimes be intentionally designed to discriminate, but they may as well create unintentional effects (“Equality and non-discrimination Annual report”, **European Commission**, 2005).

³ The Islamic political Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – Justice and Development Party) in the government, started an Alevi opening after the 2007 elections. The main targets of the opening was:

1. **Putting Alevi dedes to salary**
2. **Providing support for payment of electricity and water bills of cemhouses**
3. **Making changes in Region Courses curriculum towards including information about Alevism.**

⁴ For instance, the question “were you ever wronged for being an Alevi?” was answered “many times” by quite a few Alevis. But when queried about their specific grievances, they said, “we were always oppressed, Yavuz Sultan massacred us, we hid in the mountains”. When insisted about personal cases of discrimination experienced by the respondents, the general reply was “I have never experienced such things”. Later, it was observed that most such cases of experienced discrimination happened a long time ago in the respondents’ lives.

⁵ For Example, Ali Balkız, the president of Alevi Bektashi Fedaration, although he is against the argument that Aleviness is inside the Islam, emphasizes Kerbala events. On his speech on the Muharrem Month Balkız reminds the Kerbela events and states “The Islamic history has never seen such an atrocity not until and since Muharrem of 680. Even the children were killed.” He also adds that the “Kerbela events have left deep traces **not only** on Muslism, **but also on humanity as a whole.**” (*Star*, 2008-12-27, <http://www.stargazete.com>). By this, Balkız on the one hand flatters the traditional side of Alevis; and tries to show that this stress does not have an Islamic motivation but it is humanism what is at stake here, on the other.

⁶ Cemhouses literally means “place of gathering.” Cemhouses emerged in the urban centers since 1990s and are religious and/or cultural centers for Alevis.

⁷ Cem Foundation and Alevi Unions Fedaration are two basic actors of these two positions.

⁸ The assumption in the design of the study was that the picture which the findings may draw will not exactly match the expectations of Alevi elites in civil society organizations. For this reason the study did not target the associations, intellectuals or leaders of Alevis who assert themselves as representatives of Alevis, but the Alevis themselves. Thus, the study investigated how Alevis identify themselves and tried to cluster the different ways of identification.

⁹ Even Süleyman Demirel, one of the main figures responsible for discriminatory policies against the Alevis during 1960s and 1970s, stated repeatedly during 1990s that ‘the Alevis are first-class citizens of this country’ (Erdemir, 2004: 218).

¹⁰ For some other publicly made blunders see Erdemir (2004: 88-94)

¹¹ In my previous observation I notice a tongue slip about the Sivas events. In every 2 July Alevi organizations, especially Pir Sultan Abdal Culture Association organizes some activities for remembrance the Alevis and intellectuals died in Sivas events. The administrators of organization often could not achieve saying “Sivas remembrances” truly. Instead of saying “remembrance” (“anma”) they are used to say “celebration” (“kutlama”). For the activist the “remembrance” transformed to “celebration”. Since this event, even nowadays, is one of the main accelerators of the organizing factor of the organization, for them to celebrate it is more convenient than to remember.

¹² Shia is the short version of the Arabic phrase, *Shia-ı Ali*, meaning “the supporters of Ali”. Its dictionary meaning is “follower, supporter”.

¹³ Wittgenstein (1968) illustrates the futility of the searches for an essence of a concept by means of the word “game”. There is no essence of game, but rather a series of “family resemblance” between the things we call “games”. It is fruitless to search for a single feature that all games have in common. Prior to reflection, most of us probably assume that if a game is called a game, then there must be some feature they all games possess that makes them all games. But as Wittgenstein asks: “What is common to them all? – Don’t say: “There must be something in common, or they would not be called ‘games’” – but look and see whether there is anything common to all. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.” (1968; I.66). Games “form a family”, and Wittgenstein uses to characterize these similarities the term ‘family resemblances’” (I.67).

¹⁴ MacKinnon (2002: 76) appeal again to Wittgenstein for the solution: “how is the concept of a game bounded? What still counts as a game and what no longer does? Can you give the boundary? No. You can draw one; for none has so far been drawn. (But that never troubled you used the word “game”). Accordingly, there is no “natural” boundary to “religion”, but we can define one if we want to. That is “meaning” of a word is best understood by its use. Wittgenstein (1968: I.381) asks the question, “How do I know that this color is red? – It would be an answer to say: I have learnt English”. MacKinnon (2002: 76) ask similarly, “how do I know that this is religion? I have learnt English (or French, German, Japanese, Hindi, etc.)” People use “religion” as part of their “common language game.” Despite the very significant differences in what they actually believe, they know how to use the word “religion”, and recognize the set of phenomena that we are talking about. Thus, the essence is expressed in “discourse”, that is the discourse of “religion” is part of the common language game we share.

¹⁵ For Gans, “symbolic religiosity refers to the consumption of religious symbols, apart from regular participation in a religious culture and in religious affiliations –other than for purely secular purposes. As a sacred rather than secular activity, symbolic religiosity is presumably not as often a leisure-time activity, but none the less, it involves the consumption of religious symbols in such a way as to create no complications on barriers for dominant secular lifestyles.” (Gans, 1994: 585-586) He adds, “many instances of possible symbolic religiosity suggest themselves. For example, people who come as occasional spectators of, rather than participants in, religious worship may be prime practitioners of symbolic religiosity. Some people collect religious artifacts, or express pride in civic leaders, entertainers and celebrities who are known to be religious. Others tune occasionally into religious programming, or take ‘tours that emphasize visits to religious sites, but which are not pilgrimages.” (*ibid*: 586). “Since the rules and norms of most religions are codified in sacred texts, symbolic religiosity is a degenerated an even heretical practice, since its norms are uncoded and secular.” (*ibid*: 587-588).

¹⁶ Alevism, in constructing the borderlines with the outside also made use of the “myth of being selected.” Departing from a hadith that professedly belongs to St. Muhammed, the Alevis perceive themselves as the only community which is saved by Allah (güruh-u naci) and which will be able to go to heaven. According to them, being born as an Alevi is a guarantee for acquiring the spiritual and moral requirements to be able to follow the “holy way of Muhammed Ali.” Only the ones who are born into this community may possess the right and secret that has been noted. (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1993: 41).

¹⁷ We can depict two authors as examples: Cemil Kılıç and Cemal Şener. Kılıç asserts that Alevism is not only a religious/sectarian identity but an “ethnocentric identity which conserves the thousands of years of the essence of Turkish ethnicity.” He also adds that the attacks against Alevism is not only restricted to theological level, but also there are “ethnic assimilation and degeneration” attempts towards imposing a “Kurdish and Zaza consciousness to the youth of this society who have truly Turk/Turcoman origins.” (Kılıç, 2005: 17-8). Kılıç’s claim that the Alevis constitute the essence of Turkish ethnicity is shared by many Alevis. Şener emphasizes that although there are various ethnicities that speak different languages but adopted Alevism, they mostly conduct their rituals in Turkish. He also adds that even the Zaza and Kurdish Alevi tribes have Turkish names. According to Şener this points to the fact that the Alevis who spoke these languages were once Turkish and the Ottomans moved these territories in order to assimilate the Turcomans. (Şener, 2003)

¹⁸ “72 millete bir nazarla bakarız”

¹⁹ Bourdieu (1977: 82) defines habitus as: “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perception, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfer of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems”

²⁰ Principal rebellions against Ottoman central rule are the following: (a) The Şahkulu Movement, emerging in Antalya around the cult of millenerianism, (b) Sheikh Bedreddin rebellion, (c) Celali riots (1592- 1613), (d) Bektashi activities, (e) Pavandoğlu, (f) Tepedelenli, (g) Baba Zunun, (h) Kalenderilik and (i) Haydarilik (Türkdoğan, 2004: 14).

²¹ “For many Alevis, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, was the Mahdi that they have long been waiting for.” The Mahdi is a member of the Prophet’s family who will appear at the end of time ‘to fill the world with justice as it is filled with injustice’. Therefore, Atatürk’s secular and republican project in 1920s was seen as the implementation of peace and order by the Mahdi (Erdemir, 2004: 111-113). Today, one of the signifiers of this loyalty is the commonplace Atatürk portrait in Alevi households, placed near the portrait of St. Ali. Some Alevis even compare St. Ali and Atatürk (Melikoff, 1999: 11).

²² From my observations for the previous studies, it is interesting that most Alevis call this institution in short as “Dinayet” instead of “Diyanet” referring to “Din” (Religion) and “Ayet” (verse). Yet, some of the intellectuals prefer to use saying “Dinayet” consciously. However, I think other one who are not much educated as them do it unconsciously as a slip of the tongue which gives up their feelings about this institution.

²³ It is known that Union and Progress sponsored research on Alevism and Bekthashism in 1910s. The most important of these studies was conducted by Baha Said in Ankara and Kırşehir (Türkdoğan, 2004: 16).

²⁴ The research on migration shows that Alevis are more likely to migrate than Sunnis both to the cities and to the other countries (see Demiray (2004)).

²⁵ Shankland (1995) asserts even the form villages of modern Republic does not match to the Alevi living.

²⁶ There are many sociological and anthropological studies which explain these components (Shankland (1995), Demiray (2004), Erdemir (2004), Dinçer (2004), Yalçınkaya (1996), Şahin (2001), Melikoff (1994, 1998), etc.)

²⁷ Shankland proposes that “the Sunni villages are more successful than the Alevi villages at moving to the modern world, because their ethics, social order and life-style is compatible with the concept of ‘national, centralized administrative system’, which demands a patrimonial relation between citizen and state. The Alevi could only integrate, after relinquishing their belief in their myths, rituals and ideals.” (1993: 29)

²⁸ A term in the Islam symbolic world which means hiding one’s true intentions until the time is appropriate to denounce it.

²⁹ The term “CEM” used in the name of Foundation is the abbreviation of “Cumhuriyet Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi” referring to the “cem”, holy ceremony of Alevi.

³⁰ These abstractions are produced based on the interviews conducted with CSO directors and the information available in their web sites.

³¹ Quoted from Radikal, 13.11.2008,
www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&ArticleID=908176&CategoryID=125

³² Quoted from the speech in the panel named “Dünden bu güne Alevilerin kültürel ve siyasal sorunları” by HBVKD Antalya branch, 19.11.2006,
www.alevifederasyonu.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=1

³³ Quoted from the speech in meeting in the Bostancı Gösteri Merkezi, 28.10.2007,
www.cemvakfi.org/etkinlikler.asp

³⁴ Quoted from the interview by Neşe Düzel, Taraf, 23.03.2009,
www.taraf.com.tr/makale/4650.htm

³⁵ Quoted from the speech in meeting in the Bostancı Gösteri Merkezi, 28.10.2007,
www.cemvakfi.org/etkinlikler.asp

³⁶ Quoted from the speech in “Alevi Meeting Against Discrimination”, 9.11.2009, *Alevi Haber Ajansı*.
http://www.alevihaberajansi.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5917&Itemid=45

³⁷ Quoted from the speech of of Ali Rıza Uğurlu in Cem Foundation website, 19.05.2005,
<http://www.cemvakfi.org/blddetay.asp?ID=101>

³⁸ Anka, 21.6.2007, www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2108687

³⁹ Habertürk, 1.10.2004,
www.alevihaberajansi.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4548&Itemid=45

⁴⁰ Quoted from interview of Karadeniz Umut Radyo, 22.12.2008,
www.karadenizumutradyo.com/detay.asp?hid=4793&kategori=0.

⁴¹ Quoted from Muharrem conversations, Cem Foundation, 08.01.2009,
http://www.cemvakfi.org/haber_detay.asp?ID=368.

⁴² Aşure is a special soup made in muharrem, holy month of Aleviness.

⁴³ Gül have donated 10 thousand Liras from Presidential Budget to Cem Foundation and Foundation for Researching and Presenting Abdal Musa Culture.
(http://www.renkhaber.com/haberler/Bizim_Gundem.15/Alevi_acilimina_Gul_yardimi/8299.html)

⁴⁴ CNNTURK, 20.12.2008,
<http://www.cnnturk.com/2008/turkiye/12/29/muharrem.ayinda.trtden.alevi.acilimi/506795.0/index.html>

⁴⁵ Taraf, 24.12.2008, <http://www.taraf.com.tr>

⁴⁶ 9.4.2008, Miliyet,
http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Siyaset/SonDakika.aspx?aType=SonDakika&ArticleID=514986&Date=09.04.2008&Kategori=siyaset&b=Bardakoglu:%20Cemevlerine%20ibadethane%20statusu%20ve_rilmesi,%20Alevileri%20Muslumanlikten%20koparir

⁴⁷ Evrensel, 21.06.08

⁴⁸ - Peki Alevi olmanın koşulları nedir size göre?
- Bana göre bir koşulu yok. Zaten **toplumun koşulları** var, toplumun zaman içinde koyduğu kurallar var.
- 6 kelime ile çok net anlatılacak bir kuralı vardır Aleviliğin. Eline, diline, beline, aşına, eşine, işine. Yani **insanlığın kuralı** olarak görülüyor zaten bunlar.

⁴⁹ - Bana göre Alevilik bir felsefedir. Ama düşüncelerden ibaret olmayan bir felsefe. Bunun içinde aşk var, sevgi var, ibadet var. Alevilikte şu var: Siz varsınız, **en değerli olan varlık siz**, ilk başta bu vurgulanıyor. Aciz bir kuldan ziyade, değerli bir **insanoğlunun, ademoğlunun varlığı**. (...) **Değer yargılarımız, insan olmak, yani insanı kamil** dediğimiz kavram bence Aleviliktir.

⁵⁰ - Nedir Alevilik. Bir kere **fazlasıyla hümanizmayı içinde barındıran bir şey**, hani bunu kitaplardan okumadım, annemin hep, hani zarar verme sakın, bu bir tesadüf değil her annenin çocuklarına söylediği şey değil.
- Alevilikte en hoşuna giden şey nedir?
- Enel Hak denen bir şey var ya. **İnsanla tanrıyı özdeşleştirmesi** Aleviliğe beni en fazla bağlayan şey bu **insana fazla değer vermesi**
- Alevilikte kutsal olan şeyler neler?
- **Çeşitlik**. Bunu belki şöyle de bağdaştırabiliriz. **Haksızlığa dayanamamak**. Cem falan gibi mi ki. Yani, Aleviliğin beslendiği kavramlar bana kutsal geliyor, **eşitlik, humanizm, Enel Hak**, Aleviliğin kutsalları bunlar gibi geliyor. Ben **pek inanmıyorum sanırım**.

⁵¹ - Aleviliğe göre kutsal olan şeyler neler, sana göre?
- Buna aslında herkesin verdiği cevap ortak gibidir ya. **Hümanizm, biraz insancıl olmak**. Hacı Bektaşî'nin meşhur bir sözü var, eline, diline, beline sahip ol. **Özgür, dürüst bir birey olmak**, Alevilik deyince hemen aklıma oturan şeyler bunlar yani. Yoksa Alevilik deyince **benim aklıma oturan şeyler ceme gidip cem yapmak, böyle katı bir şekilde, muharrem ayını tutmak, bağlama öğrenmek falan değil** yani.

⁵² - Aleviliğin şartları ne?
- Bana göre **şartı diye bir şey yok**. Çizmiş olduğu cemler var ona devam ediyorsa, Aleviliğin İslamiyet'te Müslümanların nasıl namaz kılması oruç tutması şartsa Aleviler de ibadet şart da bana göre **en önemlisi çağdaş bir yaşam felsefesini kabul** etmektir.
- Size göre Alevilik nedir?
- Bana göre **Alevilik bir insan olarak çok çok dürüstlüktür, ondan sonra çağdaşlıktır, ilericiliktir, aydınlıktır. Yani insanları sevmektir, barışı sevmektir, insanlara daha çok faydalı olmaya çalışan bir mezheptir**.

⁵³ - Farkı nedir peki Alevilerin?

- **Hümanistler** çok. Daha **materyalden uzak** yaşarlar. Dünyaya diğerlerinden daha farklı yerden bakarlar. **Vermeyi bilirler. Genetik kodlamamda** o var. Bana herkes sen iyilik perisi değilsin der. Çünkü vermeyi biliyo.

⁵⁴ Sometimes it is possible to distinct the positions of Alevi only according to age. As age also determines other mentioned variables. An event that took place in Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Cultural Association's conference room can be shown as an example: after Erdoğan Çınar's comments speech which pointed Alevism as a non-Islamic religion some of the seniors left the conference room. One person from the audience who wanted to ask a question commented: "If you name Alevism as non-Islamic you will lose people just it happened a few moments ago." Çınar's reply was: "Either we will lose the seniors, or we will win the young." The response of the audience to this reply was applauding.

⁵⁵ - Ben Alevilik kelimesini bile kullanmıyorum. İslamiyet diyorum. Bence Alevilik, **İslamiyet'in kendisi** diyorum.

- Peki Sünnilerden Alevileri ayıran en önemli şey nedir sizce?

- Olaylara bakış açımız. Aleviliğin en sevdiğim yanı, Sünnilikte Şeriat kuralları vardır, Alevilik **İslamiyetin tasavvuf kısmını** yaşar. Aramızdaki en büyük fark bu. **Biz canlı Kuran'a inanırız**, onlar normal Kuran'a inanır. Biz insanın da Kuran olduğunu düşünürüz. Canlı Kuran'ın daha öne plana çıktığını savurunuz.

⁵⁶ - Aleviliği tanımlamak çok önemli. Alevilik, bizim **Alevi İslam anlayışımız**, Alevilik **Kuran'ın tasavvufi yorumudur**. Ne demek istiyorum, Kuran'da bir zahiri bir batını mana vardır. Zahiri yönü Kuran'ın 666 ayetini bilmektir. Bunu öğrenirsiniz, bu zahiri, görünen yönüdür. Bir de okuduğunuzu manalandırma vardır bu da **batını yönüdür**. İşte *tasavvufta* bu yöne eğilir. Öncelik verir. Daha çok onunla ilgilenir. Yani şekille değil, bu şekle kendinizi uydurmakla, ve aynı zamanda da icra etmekle ilgilenir. Alevilik, İslam'ın ve dolayısıyla İslam'ın emri, buyruğu olan Hazreti Muhammed'in bize tebliğ etmiş olduğu Kuran'ın yorumudur.

- Alevilik İslamiyet'in bir parçası mıdır?

- Elbette özüdür. **Parçası değil özüdür**. Alevilik, **İslam'ın ta kendisidir**. Alevilik'te önemli olan, Sünni kardeşlerimizin ayırdığı gibi farz sünnet ayrımı değil, tarz vardır. Peygamber efendimizin, Ehli Beyt'in, soyunun yaşamını, yaşam şeklini kendi **çağdaş yaşam şeklimizle kaynaştırılıp** günün gereklerine uygun ibadet şekli, dinin yaşama biçimidir.

- **Alevilik İslam dışıdır diyen zihniyete karşı olduğumu, onlara karşı birlik** olunması gerektiğini ve **yanlarında kesinlikle olamayacağıma**, olmamız gerektiğine inanıyorum.

⁵⁷ - Aleviler **Müslüman değil diyenler, onlar kendi Müslüman değil**. Benim görüşüm öyle. Gerçek Müslümanlığı bilmiyorlar. Gerçek Müslüman'ın kim olduğunu bilmiyor.

- Hz. Ali?

- Hz. Ali, Alevilerin piri ve **İslamiyet'i esas yayan Hz. Ali'dir**. Sünnilerin Müslüman kesildiğine bakma sen. Onlar Zülfikar'dan korkularından hep Müslüman oldular. Hz. Ali'yi sevmezler.

⁵⁸ - Kendinizi Alevi olarak mı tanımlarsınız kimlik olarak?

- Evet.

- Peki sizin yaşadığınız kadarıyla Alevilik nedir?

- Alevilik bize anlatılan, ben genelde kitaplardan ziyade, büyüklerden bir takım bilgiler almaya çalışıyorum. İşte Hz. Alinin soyunda gelenler Alevi diye söylendi. İşte Hz. Ali sonuçta Hz. Muhammedin amcasının çocuğu. Ben işte nerden çıktı bu dedim büyüklerle. işte o zamanlar Hz. Ali'nin evi büyük olduğu için Hz. Muhammed toplantıları orda yapıyorlarmış, Alevilik de orda çıktı diye söylediler.

- Peki Alevilik sizce bir din midir?

- Hayır.

- Neden?

- Alevilik de sonuçta bi Müslümanlıktır. Elhamdürillah müslümanız diyoruz. Alevilik bir din değil de inanışdır.

⁵⁹ - Peki siz kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

-
- Tanımlıyorum. Tanımlamaya çalışıyorum, yani o yönde ilerlemeye çalışıyorum.
 - Peki Alevilik bir din midir?
 - Mezhep.
 - Peki Alevilik **İslamiyet'in bir parçası** mıdır?
 - **Elbette, ta kendisidir.**
 - Neden?
 - Hz Muhammet'in en yakın en yakın şeyi Hz. Ali. Ondan kaynaklı. **İslamiyet'e en iyi sahip çıkanlar Aleviler.**

- ⁶⁰ - Peki Alevilik sizce İslamiyet'in bir parçası mı?
- Bence bir parçası.
 - Yani İslamiyet'in bir parçası derken nasıl kurdunuz bu bağlantıyı?
 - Kitabın tersini iddia etmediği için. Mesela onların da duası var. Kitabı olduğu gibi kabul ediyor açıkçası. Onun yüzünden. Eğer mesela **Kur'anı** kabul etmeseydi ona İslam'ın bir parçası demezdim.
 - Peki Hz. Ali sizin için ne anlama geliyor?
 - Benim için Hz. Ali, işte peygamber. Alevilerin baş savunucusu mu diyeyim, başı mı diyeyim öyle bir şey geliyor. Yani ilk Alevi Ali geliyor.

- ⁶¹ - Peki, sana göre Alevilik nedir, nasıl tanımlıyorsun?
- Bana göre Alevilik bir felsefedir. Ama düşüncelerden ibaret olmayan bir felsefe. Bunun içinde aşk var, sevgi var, ibadet var.
 - Peki, ortak bir Alevi inancından bahsedilebilir mi?
 - Şu var: Ortak bir şey var, muhakkak ki var. Bütün dinlerde var. Benim için zaten Alevilikten ziyade doğru kavramı şudur: **Dört büyük kitabı getirin**, koyun önüme, dört büyük küme olarak keşiştirin. A keşişim, b keşişim, c keşişim, d keşişim benim için doğrudur, çünkü üstüne basa basa söylenmiştir. Ama bunlar çok basit şeylerdir, hepimizin bildiği şeyler; temiz olmak, iyi olmak, kul hakkı, **bunlar Alevilikte de vardır.**
 - Peki, Alevilik İslami bir inanç tarzıdır diyebilir miyiz?
 - Gayet tabii. **İslami, Hristiyanlık, Musevidir.** Bir kere şu var benim için: **Dini inanca ters düşen bir kavram yoktur bence Alevilikte. Sazla, dansla, semah dönmele ibadet olmaz derler. Bence olur efendim.**

...

"Eğer İslam yeniliklere açık, eğer İslam en güzel din, eğer İslam en baskın, en ileri dinse, bence **İslam'ı İslam yapan Aleviliktir.**"

- [Aleviliğin İslamla ilişkisi] Bence çok uyumlu. Şundan dolayı çok uyumlu: **İslamiyet'i çağdaşlaştıran** aslında Alevilik. ...Her din gibi, İslamiyet'te de bir kapalılık var, yani bir devirdaim var, bu devirdaimin dışına çıkmak istemiyor. Bu devirdaimi dışarıya taşıracak olan Aleviliktir, çağdaşlaştıracak olan Aleviliktir.

- ⁶² - Peki siz kendinizi bir Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?
- Tabii ki.
 - ... Alevilik geleneği ta **Şamanizm zamanından kalan, bütün şeylerin bir toplamı** olarak görüyorum. **Şamanizm'in, Budizm'in, ondan sonra ne bileyim yani, her türlü şeyden bir etki var Alevilikte.** Yani tüm bunların toplamı olarak görüyorum ben.
 - Peki bir mezhep midir Alevilik?
 - Mezhep de değil ya, ben **bir kültür** olarak görüyorum. Çünkü bizde olan davranış tarzı, düşünce açısı başka hiçbir dinde, hiçbir şeyde yok. Böyle **dinler üstü bir şey** sanki. **Din değil de, sanki dinlerin ta tepesindeyiz gibi yani. Onların daha üstündeyiz**, daha üst noktadayız bakış açımızla. Mesela hiç ateist olan bir Alevi bile, der ki ben Hz. Ali'yi seviyorum. Neden, Hz. Ali hümanist bir insan, düşünce tarzı olarak, şey olarak hakikaten. Tüm insanlığa, tüm herkese eşit açıdan bakması nedeniyle.

- ⁶³ - Aleviliği nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz, size göre nedir Alevilik?
- Bana göre Alevilik bir **kültüredir. Din olarak da** bakıyorum. Tamam dini şeyleri dediğimiz gibi biraz önce Alevilerin de tabi ki yobazları var, ama çok fazla yok, ben öyle görüyorum vardır ama çok fazla yoktur.

⁶⁴ - Peki kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlar mısınız?

- Yani **Alevi olarak tanımlarım ama**, ben Aleviliği daha çok bi **felsefi düşünce, bi yaşayış biçimi** olarak algılıyorum. hani **ben Müslümanım gibi değil**, ben Alevi felsefesini, Alevi yaşayış biçimini benimsemiş bir Aleviyim.

- Peki size göre Alevilik bir din midir?

- Ya şöyle bişey var, ben Aleviliği şöyle algılıyorum. Alevilik **her dinin insana özgü yönlerini almış**, ve ortak bir paydada buluşturmuş bir **yaşam biçimi**.

⁶⁵ - Peki sen kendini Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musun?

- **Kafamdaki Aleviliğe göre evet**, tabii ki Aleviyim.

- Peki İslamiyet'in bir parçası mıdır sence Alevilik?

- **Parçasıymış ama ben çok fazla olması taraftarı değilim** ya da öyle düşünmüyorum, ben öyle hissetmiyorum. İslamiyet deyince bana farklı şeyler çağrıştırıyor, Alevilik deyince çok farklı şeyler çağrıştırıyor.

⁶⁶ - Peki nedir sana göre Alevilik?

- Aleviliği ben pek **İslamiyet'in içinde görmüyorum**. Tamam İslamiyet'ten **beslenmiş** olabilir fakat sonuçta daha çok İslamiyet'in *tasavvufu* gibi geliyor bana. Daha çok felsefesi gibi geliyor.

- Ben Aleviliğin **İslamiyet'in içinde değil, sadece onun bazı değerlerinden beslenmiş** olarak görüyorum. Mesela bazı şeyler çıkıyor, Alevilik Zerdüştlükten gelmiştir diyorlar ya. Tamam Alevilik eskiden beri gelmiştir, biraz **belki Zerdüştlükten almıştır, İslamiyet'ten almıştır ama sonuçta kendi felsefesini** oluşturmuştur. Bana kalırsa ben İslamiyet'in içinde de görmüyorum.

- Kadına bakış açısı var. Sonra ayıran temel şeylerden birisi ibadet. Biz namaz kılmıyoruz, bu var. Ramazan orucu tutmuyoruz. Aslında biz **İslamiyet'in gereklilikleri** var ya, biz bunları **yerine getirmiyoruz. Yani bunlar bizim inancımızda yer almıyor**, temel farklardan birisi de bu yani.

- Peki mezhep midir Alevilik?

- **Mezhep olarak da görmüyorum. Mezhep olması için İslamiyet'in bir kolu gibi olması gerekir** anladığım kadarıyla.

⁶⁷ - Peki Alevilik bir din midir?

- Samimi olmak gerekirse, **tam olarak bir din değildir**.

- Neden

- Neden? Hımm. Dinlerin mesela çok **teknik şeyleri** vardır, hani şunu şunu yaparsın, Müslüman olursun, Hristiyan olursun diye di mi. Ama Alevi toplumunu incelediğinizde. Örneğin yaşadığımız köyde, herkes kendine Aleviyim derdi, ama herkes **Aleviliği birebir uyguladığını** söyleyemedik. Ama kimse kalkıp da bir diğerine bak şu şunu yapmıyor da bu Alevi değil demezdi yaşamazdı. Yani herkes kabul ederdi.

- Müslümanlığın bir mezhebi midir?

- **Öyle tanımlıyor**, ama öyle sınırlamayalım

- İslam'ın bir parçası mıdır?

- İslamiyet'ten **etkilenmiştir**, ama öncesi de vardır, sadece **İslamiyetin bir parçasıdır dememek lazım**.

- Aleviliği çok **İslam'ın içinde tutmayan yaklaşıma** yakınım ben.

⁶⁸ - Peki siz kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- **Alevi felsefesini benimsemişim**, özünde o var. Ama fiiliyatta Aleviliğin gereklerini yerine getiremiyorum. Bir ceme katılmıyoruz, derneğe gitmiyoruz. Yani onların özel günleri oluyor, helva günleri şu günü bu günü. Onları **yapamıyoruz ama ruhen öyle yaşıyoruz**. Kendimi saf iyi bir Alevi görüyorum.

- Nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz Aleviliği?

- Yaşam felsefesi dedim ya. Şu ortamda çağdaş, laik, Atatürkçü düzene sahip çıkan tek kurum bence. Yani görmek istediğim Aleviler, otomatikmen ruhen ve bedenlen çağdaş olur. Hiçbir bağınazlığı hayal etmek bile istemiyorum.

- İslamiyet'in özüdür diyorlar, buna katılıyor musunuz?

- Doğrudur. En iyi yaşayanlar onlardır. Bakma derler ki Alevi namaz kılmaz, oruç tutmaz. Yalan. Benim öyle amcam var ki beş vakiti kılıyor, 3 ayların 3'ünü de tutuyor. **Gerçek Müslümanlar onlardır**, hile yok.

⁶⁹ - Alevilik bir din midir

- **Değildir.** Biz İmam Cafer mezhepini şey yapıyoruz, Sünniler Hanefi mezhebini şey yapıyor. Aslında demin televizyonda da izledim Hazreti Ali Halifeliği kabul etmeyen bir insan. O kadar özverili. Son halife. Hepsinin Ayşenin, Ömer'in Osman'ın kapılarını Muhammed kapattı kibleye karşı sadece Ali'nin kapısı açık kaldı son halife olduğundan dolayı. **Alevilik bir din değildir bir kültürdür.** Biz imam cafer mezhebinden işte. Ama Alevilik bir din değil, **insanı sevmek, hoşgörüdür.** Alevilik **din değil, aşevidir.** Eskiye dönersen Ali'nin kurduğu bir aşevidir, fakirlerin karnının doyurduğu yerdir. Kızılbaş aslında Kızılbaş diye bir şey yok. Kızıltaç. Hacı Bektaş Veli'yi okuduysanız çok iyi bilirsiniz.

⁷⁰ - Peki kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- Ben diyemiyorum.

- Neden?

- **Aleviyim diyebilmek için Aleviliği bilmek lazım, Aleviliği yaşamak lazım...**

- Peki size göre Alevilik nedir?

- Duyduğum, yaşadığım kadarıyla eline, diline, beline sahip ol. Yani yaşam tarzı olarak kimsenin malında, parasında gözün olmaması, kimsenin namusunda gözü olmaması, nasıl konuşacağını bilmek, hırsızlık yapmamak yani bir yaşam tarzı

- Bir din midir Alevilik?

- **Din değil. Yaşam tarzı.** Din derken zaten dünya üzerinde zaten yaşam tarzların dinden sayarsan dünya üzerinde bin bir çeşit din olur. Bir nevi ben yaşam tarzı olarak görüyorum.

- Alevilik İslamiyetin bir parçası mı?

- **Bence parçası.** Çünkü Aliyle Muhammed amca yeğen, artı Ali Muhammed'in damadı. Bildiğim kadarıyla yani hiçbir şey okumadım da. Yaşam tarzı olarak aralarında bir fark yok.

⁷¹ - **Size göre Alevilik nedir?**

- Bana göre Alevilik bir insan olarak çok çok **dürüstlüktür**, ondan sonra **çağdaşlıktır**, ilericiylik, aydınlıktır. Yani insanları sevmektir, barışı sevmektir, insanlara daha çok faydalı olmaya çalışan bir mezheptir.

- Mezheptir diyorsunuz peki Alevilik bir din midir?

- Ayrı bir din değil yani **İslam'ın içindeki yaşayan bir mezheptir.**

- Yani İslam'ın bir parçası mı diyorsunuz Aleviliğe?

- Evet. Mezhep olarak bir parçasıdır.

⁷² - Sonuçta din olarak tanımlayacağım şey eğer tanrı tarafından birtakım mesajları alan bir peygamberi ve bu mesajları kitlelere ileten bir peygamberi olmadığı, sadece Aleviliğe ait olmadığı için diyeyim, benim bildiğim kadarıyla, **farzları**, birtakım kuralları, bir **kitabı** olmadığı için **din değildir. Hz. Ali de peygamber değildir** zaten.

- İslamiyet'in **özü eğer Kuran'sa** ve Kuran'ı da okudum, yani orada okuduklarım, anlatılan bir sürü kurallar dizesi, dualar bilmem falan, benim bildiğim **Alevilikle öyle çok bağdaşan bir şey** değil yani.

- Keşke öyle [İslamiyetin özü] olsaydı da, **bence İslamiyet şu halde olmazdı.** Ama şu an öyledir demiyorum, **ben Aleviliği daha, felsefesini daha üst görüyorum.**

-... Sonuçta benim anlattığım Aleviliğin felsefesi, sevgi temeli, **bunu herhalde böyle benimseyen ve aktaran başka akımlar da vardır** eminim ki.

⁷³ - Alevilik bana göre şimdi bizim küçüklükten beri bildiğimiz Alevilikle son zamanlarda gazetelerde, televizyonlarda bilim adamlarının açıkladığı Alevilik arasında çok fark var. Bana göre Alevilik Müslümanlığın özüne inmiş enfes bir din. Bana göre. Bana sorarsınız Müslümanlıktan daha böyle, **ıvrını, zıvrını, bağnazlığını atmış** özünlenmiş güzel bir din. Kültür diyelim veya.

- Peki Alevilik bir din mi, mezhep mi tarikat mı?

- **Bana göre bir kültür yani.** Yani kültür gibi geliyor bana.

- Kendi çocuklarınıza öğrettiniz mi?

- Çok söyleyemem. Çünkü **yaşantımız şehirde geçti. Biz ne biliyoruz ki ne öğreteceğiz. Biz sadece insan olmayı öğrettik.** Sadece insan olmayı öğrettik yani.

⁷⁴ - Peki bir din midir Alevilik?

- **Değil.** Din bir inanç sistemi, bir ibadetler toplamıdır, yerine getirmen gereken kurallar silsilesi vardır. Ama inanç farklı bir şey. Bizim ailede inanç sıfır noktada varken, din yoktur. İbadet yapılmaz, hiç kimseye karşı böyle bir şey yoktur, ne derler, tapınma kültürü yoktur. **Sadece tanrı inancı vardır, Alevi ailelerinde.** Ben de var mı dersin, işime geldiğinde var işime geldiğinde yok.

...

- Ben nedense daha çok böyle bir felsefi yönü olduğunu düşünüyorum Aleviliğin. **İnançla çok yakından alakası olmadığını,** daha çok böyle bir düşünce sistemi, özdeşleştiğin, bunu gündelik pratiğine bir ibadet şekline dökemediğin ama hayata bakışını etkileyen, duruşunu etkileyen böyle bir felsefe olduğunu düşünüyorum.

- Mesela **Alevi olmanın şartları,** bana göre birincisi **dinden uzak durmak.** Mesela ben Aleviliği dine yaklaştırdıkça kafamda onun Alevilikten uzaklaştığını düşünürüm hep. Mesela Şiiler örneğinde olduğu gibi. Yani bir ibadete, bir ibadete demeyim de, yani İslam'a yakınlaşmaması gerekiyor.

- Peki Alevilik İslamiyet'in bir parçasıdır diyebilir miyiz?

- **Özde öyle olabilir** ama benim yaşadığımı Alevilikten yola çıkarak değerlendirme yapmamı istersen, **İslamiyet'le yakından uzaktan bir alaka** göremiyorsun. Ama şöyle, İslamiyeti kendine referans olarak kendini tanımlayan bir şey olduğu için, bunun unsurlarını da kapsayan bir şey. Ona karşısıyla bir kere ondan etkilenemez. Onun bir terimini yok etmek için kendi terimini üretmiş, o yüzden İslamiyet'in bu anlamda .bir karşı tezi diyebilirim onu çürütmeye yarıyor, kendini doğrulamaya yönelik bir teori geliştirmeye çalışmış ama buna İslamiyet diyemem. İslamiyetin inandığı şeylerle, Aleviliğin inandığı şeyleri, yani inandığı demeyeyim, içselleştirdiği şeyleri karşılaştırdığında, **Aleviliği bir din gibi görmüyorum.**

⁷⁵ In fact since this research is based on Alevis' search for Alevisism it did not aim to interview with Alevis who reject Alevi identity at all. We should also note that, our examples, Fikret and Sezgin are not fully rejecting Alevi identity. With respect to their respective qualities they can also be seen as on the sympathized or loosed Alevisness paths. But since there are elements of rejection and denial in their relationship with Alevisism they can be considered in this cluster. Because the types of denial, in fact, reflects the style of these people within this cluster whose number is considerably high among the Alevis.

⁷⁶ - Alevilik tamamıyla farklı bir yaşam tarzı diyebilirim. Ya da inanış olarak zaten pek birşeyim yok.

- Sizin gözlemlediğiniz kadarıyla son 20-30 yılda Alevilikde ne gibi değişiklikler oldu sizce?

- Yozlaşma. yani giderek Sünni politikalarının yoğunlaşması nedeniyle gerçekleşen bir yozlaşma.

⁷⁷ - Kendinizi Alevi olarak mı tanımlarsınız?

- Hayır, insan olarak. İrka inanmam ben.

- Peki Alevilik İslamiyetin bir parçası mıdır?

- Yani benim okuduklarıma göre, Alevilik Sünnilik diye birşey yoktur, islamiyet vardır.

- Ya sorular hep Alevilik üzerine, ben dedim ben ırka inanmıyorum.

⁷⁸ - Türk müsünüz, Alevi misiniz, Sünni müsünüz, Müslüman mısınız diye sorulsa, önce ne dersiniz?

- **Türküm derim. Ne Aleviliyim diyorum, ne bir şey.** Bence zaten **bunlar saçma sapan şeyler.**

- Yani kimliğinizde birincil olarak Türklük mü var?

- Evet. İşte diyorum ya ben **Aleviliği de Sünniliği de çok seviyorum, dini de çok seviyorum.**

- Bence **hepimiz Müslümanız,** eski insanların bir çarpışması bu. Camiye girmek, gençlere bunu aşlamak. **Cami hepimizin camisi, cemevi hepimizin cemevi.** Yani bence **din değildir.**

- Bizler de **camiiye gidenimiz** de vardır, **orucunu tutanımız** da vardır, ama yobaz değiliz.

⁷⁹ - Peki Alevilik bir din midir sizce?

- **Din değildir** bence.

- Nedir Alevilik peki?
- İnsanların hanı Asya'dan geldiklerinde **göçmenlerin oluşturdukları topluluk**, mezhep olarak biliyorum.
- Mezheple din arasında ne gibi bir fark vardır sizce?
- Din Allaha olan inançtır, mezhepse insanların kendilerine oluşturdukları kendi inançlarıdır, Allah dışı bir şeydir.
- Alevilerle Sünnilerin arasındaki en önemli fark nedir sizce?
- Sünnilerin aşarı İslam, Süleymancı falan filan, aşırı dine bağlı olduklarını biliyorum sadece.
- Aleviler dine o kadar bağlı değiller midir?
- Değillerdir, Hz Aliye inanırlar.
- Allaha inanırlar mı?
- **Duyduğum kadarıyla inanmıyor** çoğu.
- Alevilik İslamiyetin bir parçası mıdır?
- Değildir. Yani Hz Ali falan var ama bence ayrı bir şeydir.

⁸⁰ - Kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- Çok üzülerek ama yani değilim hiçbir şey bilmediğim. Nasıl bilebilirim bir de. Alevilik hakkında bir sorunun var benim. O **dönemin siyasi görüşü** bu, ben **sağcılık ve solculuk** olarak değerlendiriyorum. **Din olarak kabul etmiyorum**. Benim görüşüm oldu belki de çok bilmediğim içi bu kadar afakî konuşuyorum.

- Mevcut Alevilik **ideoloji** aslında **din** değil. **Dinden ayrılmış**. Ama gene de dinle beraber göbekten bağlı olduğu için ritüelleri işte inançları. **Cemevi demek Tanrı evi demek**. Kilise gibi yahut cami gibi. **Öyle değil mi?**

⁸¹ In English: "**Revealing The Secret**"

⁸² - Peki 20-30 yıl içinde Alevilikte neler değişti, sizin çevrenizde, gözleminiz?

- Alevilik piyasaya çıktı. Alevilik 20-30 yılda **piyasaya çıktı**.

⁸³ - Bundan diyelim 20 yıl önce [Aleviliğini] saklayan oranı yüzde yirmi yüzde yirmi beş ise **şimdi belki bu yüzde beşlere düşmüştür**.

⁸⁴ - Çok şey değişti tabi, o zamanları çok rahat yapamıyorduk. Şimdi insanlar en azından **Alevi kimliğini gizleme gereği duymuyorlar**. İnsanlara siz Alevi misiniz diye şöyle bir bakarlardı. Şimdi öyle birşey yok, insanlar net bir şekilde Aleviyim diyorlar.

⁸⁵ - Yani ben İstanbul'a geldiğimde, ilk cemevini ben burada gördüm. Anladım ki, küçük şehirde daha böyle gizli saklı oluyor ama büyük şehirde daha böyle bilinçli **saklama olmadan, gizleme olmadan**. Ben varım ifadesi vardı, kendilerine ifade ediyorlardı. **Varlıklarını yani açıkça** ortaya koymuşlardı, bence bu **büyük bir gelişme**.

⁸⁶ - Peki siz gördüğünüz ya da duyduğunuz kadarıyla, son 20-30 yıldır Türkiye'de Alevilikte neler değişmiştir ya da neler değişti size göre?

- Bir kere **insanlar artık kendini saklamıyor, açıkça ifade ediyor**.

- Aleviler en azından kendini saklamıyor, ben Aleviyim diyor. Müzikler çok rahat dinleniyor, televizyonları seyrediyoruz, kanallarımız var

⁸⁷ - Büyük kentlere göçü ile birlikte Alevilerin, tabi orda bir dağılma oldu belki ama burada da **dernekleşme** yoluyla olsun, çeşitli Sivil toplum örgütleriyle olsun, **kendini ifade yolu arttı**. Önceden kendi içindeydi, daha içe kapalıydı şimdi **kendini örgütsel olarak ifade etmeye** başladı. Özellikle son 10 yılda bu daha da arttı.

⁸⁸ In our previous studies (Tol, 2004, 2005) in stories of discrimination against the Alevi population we have observed that those stories were not of recent past. It has also been observed that the Alevis living in urban settings and big cities, in the last two decades, face less discrimination on the one hand; and have better conditions and precautionary conduits for coping with and overcoming these kinds of actions. However, the grievances of discriminations of the past are not erased from

the memories at all. We can gather the discriminations that Alevis faced under two categories (Tol 2005). The first one is at community level and the second is at individual. The former refers to unjust treatment of Alevism in general, not to individual instances of discrimination. The major topics of this category can be listed as such:

1. Non-recognition of cemhouses as sacred places of Alevism,
2. Partial use of public resources, through prioritizing service to a particular (especially Sunni population) section of society
3. Encouragement of a particular belief through obligatory religion courses and offending Alevism,
4. Building mosques in Alevi villages by force,
5. The religion section of identity cards,
6. Assaults towards Alevism

Whereas the personal or the *individual instances of discrimination* are:

1. Organization of social life according to Sunni rituals and grievances emanating from this,
2. Favoring the dominant identity and grievances emanating from Aleviness,
3. Acts towards isolating Alevi individuals,
4. Insults towards Alevis, which are full of fantasies.

⁸⁹ - Bugüne kadar, ben 28 yaşındayım, MHP'lilerin içinde de yaşadım. Ama kesinlikle bugüne kadar **Aleviliğimi reddetmedim**, zaten ilk başta diyalog kurmadan, kimliğin kesinlikle ortaya çıkıyor yani.

⁹⁰ - Kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlar mısınız?

- **Gurur duyuyorum.**

⁹¹ - Çok ciddi bir ilişkimden oldum ben bu yüzden. **Kızarkadaşımdan ayrıldım**. Ama bu konuda ben **ikincil bir adam olmadım hiçbir zaman**, Aleviyim diye çağrılmamazlık edilmedim, ben Alevi olduğum için **susturulmadım**, böyle bir şeyi hiçbir zaman yaşamadım.

⁹² - İşyerinde işte. Ben Alevi olduğumdan dolayı veya onun hareketleri bana ters geldiğinde ben ona karşı geldiğim zaman iş yerinden başka bir işyerine gönderildim. O zaman yer altı maden iş sendikası vardı, orda durdum. Bir hafta çalıştım ve **yılmadım** ve aynı işyerine geri döndüm. Geldiğimde kendi de yani mahcup oldu. Yani **taviz vermedim**.

⁹³ - Niye saklayayım ki. Belki batının bazı yerlerinde böyle bir ayırım yapılmıyordur ama özellikle **doğuda bunun ayrımı, biz oradayken çok vardı**. Bizim lisede hır gür oldu, dövüş kavga oldu. Bunun da tek sebebi bizim Alevi olmamızdı.

⁹⁴ - Mesela din hocası bunu çok iyi bilirdi. Alevi olduğumu bilirdi özellikle bizi namaza götürmek için çok büyük çaba harcardı, okulda bize namaz kıldırarak isterdi. Ben bütün **din derslerinden kalmışım**.

⁹⁵ - Yani bana sorana tanıtırım. Ve şunu da söyleyim ben fakülteden itibaren kendimi hiç saklamamışım. Ama **fakülteye kadar lisede hep maalesef sakladık** yani. Saklamasaydık zaten bizi yaşatmazlardı.

⁹⁶ - Sen hiç Alevi olduğunı sakladın mı?

- Aslında şöyle: **Direkt saklama değil de, söylemediğim durum oldu**. Mesela, bir ortamda, ilk tabii bu, şeyden sonra gelişti, Aleviliği ilk fark edişim ile, ta ki üniversiteye kadar olan yıl arasında, yani lise ve ortaokul, 7-8 senelik bir süreçte. Çünkü ilk fark ettiğimde, bana bu söylendiğinde, her yerde bunu böyle **alenen açıklamaman gerektiği tembih** edildi, bu konuda **uyarıldım**. Sonra direkt bunu söylememe, hani nedenleri de anlatıldı, neden direkt açıklayamamam gerektiği ve ben de uydun buna aslında. Lise sonlarına doğru yavaş yavaş artık çok da şey olmadı, **gerekli olmadı**, hani bunu saklamamın veya bunun için çaba sarf etmemin gereksiz olduğunu gördüm.

⁹⁷ - Tepkiler şöyle oldu. Yani ‘A ben senin Alevi olduğunu bilmiyordum, **sen gerçekten Alevi misin?**’ gibi. ‘Sen Alevi olamazsın’ yani değilsin, bizdensin gibi. Ama sosyal yaşamımızla hep ahlakımızla insan olmaya çalıştık her şeyden önce ve insan olmanın erdemini taşıdık. Zaten bizim öğretimizde önce insan olmaktır.

⁹⁸ - Öyle bir maruz kalmadım. Bir arkadaşın evindeydim, iste tabi diğeri onun arkadaşı tanımiyorum o bayanı. ... Bayan dedi ki, benim oğlum bir Alevi kıza aşık olmuş dedi. Beni bilmiyor ama, Alevi olduğumu. Bir kere benim evime geldi o bayan. Ne güzel dedim ben de. Güzel bir yere aşık olmuş dedim. Bayan dedi ki, hayır dedi ben istemiyorum Alevilerden. Neden istemiyorsun, Alevilerden ne kötülük gördün, dedim. Aleviler dedi **pis, mundar** dedi. Neyini gördün dedim mundarlık. Ben kadını dinledikten sonra, ben kendimin Alevi olduğunu söyledim, çok şaşırdı. Ya saçmalama dedi, **banyo suyuyla çay yapıyorlar, bilmem pisler, yani onların ellerinden bir şey yenmez.** Dedim ki, ben de Alevi’yim biliyor musun dedim. Çok üzuldüm böyle dediğin için dedim. Sen evime bir kere geldin çayımı içtin, peki dedim ben banyo suyuyla mı size çay verdim dedim. Kadın tabii ki afalladı, tuhaf oldu, çok bozuldu. Gerçekten çok özür dilerim dedi.

⁹⁹ - Peki hiç Alevi olduğunu sakladın mı?

- **Saklamadım.**

- Nasıl?

- **Yani sorulduğu zaman söyledim.** Sorulmadığında söylememek saklamak anlamına geliyorsa saklamış oluyorum.

- Alevi olduğuma inanmayan oldu. Alevilik onlara göre nasıl bir şeyse, değişik bir şey herhalde. **Hiç Alevi’ye benzemiyorsun,** Alevi nasıl bir şeymiş falan diye sorduğumda değişik yorumlar yaptılar.

- Ne dediler mesela?

- Ben çok sık okulda çamaşır yıkardım. **Aleviler çamaşır yıkamazmış** herhalde. Ben her sabah akşam duş alırdım, okula öyle giderdim. Ondan dolayı da inanmadılar tabii.

¹⁰⁰ - AKP’ye hiç iyi bakmıyorum ben.

- Yobazlık var. Zaten aldı yürüdü. **Biraz daha çoğalırsa o zaman Türkiye’de Alevi Sünni çatışması** başlar.

¹⁰¹ - AKP’nin yaptığı bu iktidar politikasını da gördükçe **yarınımızdan da endişe duymaya başladık.** İnşallah **daha fazla açılmaz.**

- Peki neye yol açar bu sorun [türbanı kastederek] sizce, bu işin dayanacağı nokta nedir sizce?

- **İç savaş.**

- Böyle bir tehlike var mı sizce?

- Oraya doğru gidiyor yani sonuçta bir yerde **patlak verecek** yani. Ben bile bir başörtüsüne normal bakarken, şimdi **ürpererek** bakmaya başladım. Yani patlak verecek bir yerden.

¹⁰² - Şu anki günümüz itibariyle, şu yaşadığımız coğrafyada, benim de biraz böyle korktuğum bir **Alevi-Sünni çatışması** isteniyor mu, istenmiyor mu tam da bilmiyorum, ama böyle bir tehlike olabilir yani.

¹⁰³ - Alevileri bekleyen tehlike nedir?

- En son bu türban olayından sonra belki bir **mezhep çatışması** yaşanmasından korkuyorum. Birileri bir şeyleri tetikleyebilir son olaylardan sonra diye düşünüyorum.

- Ne olur Alevilerin hali?

- Hiçbir şey olmaz. Ben en çok iç **çatışmanın çıkmasından** korkuyorum. Ama **eğer çıkmazsa daha iyi olacağına** inanıyorum.

¹⁰⁴ - Gün yüzü görmüş bir kökeni olmadığı için, çünkü **ilk** olduğu için **tedirgin bu nesil,** öyle görüyor kendini. Bizler bir adım atacağız, ama **sonumuz iyi mi olacak, kötü mü** olacak. **Daha biz kendimizi tanımlayamıyorken, insanlara nasıl anlatacağız.**

...

- **Bana anlatan olmadı**, yani sormadıkça veya bizi şöyle bir toplayan, hani çocukların **Kuran kursu gibi, bizi anlatan, bu böyledir, şu şöyledir**, iki laf arasında, şununla, bununla, hikâyelerle bize bunu şey yapan çok olmadı. Biz kendimiz öğrenmek istediğimiz kadar öğrenmeye çalıştık. Bunun için de **darbe yemeye çok açığız** ve bu da çok iyi biliniyor. **Kopuğuz**, işte Şiiler oradan kalkıyor bir şey diyor, biz buradan kalkıyoruz, bir şey diyoruz, oradan biri diyor ki, kitap yoktur, o diyor ki gerek yoktur, **her kafadan bir ses çıkıyor**.

¹⁰⁵ - Peki kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- Ben **diyemiyorum**.

-Neden?

- Aleviyim diyebilmek için **Aleviliği bilmek** lazım, Aleviliği yaşamak lazım, İslamiyeti yaşamak lazım.

...

- Peki ailen sana bunu anlattı mı?

- Anlatmadı. Bizim kendi çevremizde **Aleviliği dört dörtlük bilen anlatan kimse yok**.

...

- Büyüdüğünde ona Aleviliği anlatacak mısın ?

- **Ben bir şey bilmiyorum ki** ona öğretem. Dediğim gibi bu bir eğitim olarak verilse okulda, benim de ona katacağım şeyler olabilir. Ama ben bir şey bilmediğim için ona da anlatamam. **Onun da yapacağına inanmıyorum**.

¹⁰⁶ Çocuklara anlatıyor musunuz?

- **Anlatsan da anlamıyorlar ki**.

- Mesela bir noktada dediniz mi biz Aleviyiz?

- Tabii. Aleviliği kabul ediyorlar, Aleviyiz diyorlar. Aleviliği **doğru dürüst öğreten** yok.

¹⁰⁷ - İlk ne zaman fark ettiniz Alevi olduğunuzu?

- Valla, ailemin tabii ki bu Alevidir, Sünnidir **o tür kültürleri vermediler**, tabi ki neden öğrendik, çalınan müziklerden, dinlediğimiz deyişlerden. Yani **hiçbir zaman ailede görmedik yani**, bu Sünni bu Alevi, meclis türü sohbetler olmadı.

¹⁰⁸

- Peki Hacı Bektaşî Veli Vakfı'nı, onu nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

- O da öyle, aynı şekilde ama şey değil, **yeterli değil**. Yeterli kitap yok, yeterli kaynak yok, **gittiğinizde sizi aydınlatacak kimse yok**. Var ama **abur cubur insanlar** hakikaten. Bu ritüelleri iyi bilen, bunları insanlara yayan insanlar yok yani, iyi anlatan, doğru anlatan, hakikaten doğru **bilgi aktaran**, bu konuda **çok fazla kaynak da yok**. Yakılmış, yıkılmış, olagelen kaynaklar da çok az maalesef.

¹⁰⁹ Peki ailen sana hiç Aleviliği anlattı mı?

- Ailem derken, **annemle babamla birebir öyle bir konuşmamız, öyle bir muhabbetimiz olmadı** da, dedem. Aslında ben biraz da merak ettiğim için direkt dedem de değil de, dedelerimin babalarıyla çok muhabbet ettik.

¹¹⁰ - Peki ailen sana hiç Aleviliği anlattı mı?

- **Ailem bilmiyor ki bana anlatsın**. Ben okudukça onlara söylüyorum, bak diyorum böyle böyleymiş falan. İşin gerçeği, annem babam bu konuda gerçekten çok bilgisiz. Onlar da herhalde **kendi ebeveynlerinden alamamışlar**, büyüklerinden fazla bir şey alamamışlar.

¹¹¹ - Anlatırlar mıydı Alevilik şöyle diye?

- **Anlatma yoktu** ama yaşayışlarını görüyorduk. **Babam beni alıp karşısına Alevilik şöyle böyle demedi**.

¹¹² - Çevrenizdekilere ve çocuklarınıza Aleviliği anlatıyor musunuz?

- Ya, bazen anlatıyoruz, **bazen es geçiyoruz**. **Anlatım desem dört dörtlük anlatamam** yani.

- **[Eşi] Hiç de anlatmadık** çocuklarımıza.

...

-
- Alevi olmanın şartları nedir size göre?
 - Ya şimdi Alevi olmanın şartları Aleviyim dediğin zaman ben Aleviliğin gereklerini yerine getirmek gerek.
 - Nedir onlar?
 - İnsanı insan olarak kabul etmek bir, insana saygı duymak,

Eşi - Öyle derin bir bilgimiz de yok, sadece Aleviyiz diyoz, öyle deminden beri geveleyip duruyor da.

¹¹³ - Kendi çocuklarınıza öğrettiniz mi?

- Çok söyleyemem. Çünkü yaşantımız şehirde geçti. **Biz ne biliyoruz ki ne öğreteceğiz.** Biz sadece insan olmayı öğrettik. Sadece insan olmayı öğrettik yani.

¹¹⁴ - Sizce Aleviliğin en önemli kişileri figürleri kimlerdir?

- **Hiç bir bilgin yok** vallaha. **Çok fazla öğretilmedi bize.**

¹¹⁵ - Alevilerin en önemli sorunları neler?

- Vardır tabi sorunları, **insanların onlar hakkında çok şey bilmemesi**, sonuçta Sünni Alevidir, **onlar hakkında bilgiler az.** Sonuçta insanların bilgisi tam değil, ve bilgileri azken insanların yorum yapması etkiler tabii ki onları.

¹¹⁶ - **Bizden sonraki nesiller, bağlarını koparmış.** Köy yaşamı, **bugün köylerdeki yaşam ortadan kalktı.** Bugün gidin artık köylerde de cem yapılmıyor. O anlayışı yaşatmak isteyen insanlar da büyük şehirlere taşındı. Bugün İstanbul'da cemevi var.

¹¹⁷ - Okuduğum ve tahmin ettiğim kadarıyla **Alevilik yaşanmaktan biraz uzaklaşmıştır** bana göre. Köyden kente göç başladıktan sonra, biraz önce söylediğim şey vardı ya doğuda **köyde Alevilik daha koyu yaşanıyor** orada.

...

Dede ilişkisi varmış ya, bunun kopmasına bu da kopunca yeni kuşakların Alevilik hakkında bilgisinin olmamasına, nasıl yaşadığının bilinmemesine yol açmış bence.

¹¹⁸ - Mesela adam Aleviyim diyor, mütahhit, sermaye partilerinin yanında, çıkarına gidiyor. Ama Aleviliğin özünde bu yoktur, hırsızlıktır, yalandır, dolandır yoktur. Ama kesin olarak baktığım zaman **Alevilik bir köy yerinde olur**, işte bir Tunceli'nin, Muş'un köylerinde yaşıyorlardı.

- Yani büyük şehirlerde yaşanmıyor mu diyorsun?
- Yok yaşanmıyor.
- Mesela siz yaşayamıyor musunuz?
- Yok abi **kapitalist düzen. Hiçbir şey yaşatmıyor.**

..

- Ya **eski insanlar** Aleviliği biraz daha içten yaşıyorlar. Yani inançlarını ibadetlerini öyle yapıyorlar. Ama gençliğe baktığında Mc Donald's, Coca-Cola gençliği.

¹¹⁹ - Alevilikte **genç kesimin çok ilgisiz olduğunu** düşünüyorum, **çok uzakta, yaklaşmıyorlar kendi özlere.** Gençler uzaklaştı ya. 20 sene içerisinde, ben 28 yaşındayım. Gördüğüm kadarıyla uzaklar.

¹²⁰ Darda olsan ona yardımcı olacaksın, **kirvelik çok ağır Alevilerde. Bundan sonra zannetmiyorum.**

- Uygulayan var mı çevrenizde?
- Artık bundan sonra zannetmiyorum. **Şimdiki gençler kirveliği bitiriyorlar** yavaş, yavaş.

¹²¹ - Peki Alevilerin en önemli sorunu ne size göre?

- Sorunu ne acaba. Çocuklarımıza gerekli eğitimi vermiyoruz. Bugün, bu **çocuklarımız şuanda benim bildiğim bilginin onda birini bilmiyor ve bilmeyecek de.**

¹²² - **Bizden iki kuşak sonrası acaba Aleviliği öğrenebilecek mi**, büyük şehirlerde yaşayan kişiler ya da **öğrenseler bile ne ölçüde öğrenecekler.** Bizim öğrendiğimiz gibi öğrenebilecekler mi.

¹²³ - Aleviliğin en önemli sorunları nelerdir?

- Yetersiz iletişim, farkındalık eksiliği, bulundukları eksikliklerin gördükleri muamelenin. Kendi **özünden uzaklaşmalar, bir önceki nesilden bir sonraki nesile uçurum var.**

- Bugün biraz siyasi duyarlılık oluşmasına rağmen, **çok umutlu değilim** Alevilik adına. **Gençler ben de dahil Aleviliği pek uygulamıyorlar**, Aleviliğin sorunlarına daha fazla sahip çıkıyor biraz daha duyarlı belki bu konuda ama, Alevilin kavram olarak yaşaması açısından gelecek nesiller çok umut vermiyor bana ben de dahil.

¹²⁴ - Alevilerin çoğunda şeyi görüyorum, hani İslamiyet'i her şeyiyle kabul etmemiş, yani yorumu kendine has Alevilikte dinin. Böyle başlamış, **ama giderek Aleviliği de, Alevi gençler olsun, şey olsun, daha böyle dinden uzaklaşır görüyorum.**

¹²⁵ - Büyüklerinizden dinledikleriniz veya bildiklerinizle, Alevilik son dönemde değişmiş midir?

- Yani sonuçta insanlar ne kadar üstünde duruyor bilmiyorum ama ben şahsen, **yerine getirmiyorum çoğu şeyi** Aleviyim diyorum ama yerine getirmiyorum, benim gibi düşünersek, çoğu kişi böyleyse, **eskiye göre az**, daha az.

- Size göre Alevileri nasıl bir gelecek bekliyor Türkiye'de?

- **Azalacağını** düşünüyorum. Çok fazla yani.sahiplenilirse eğer tabi ki de şey olmaz ama. Şu anda ama benim gibiler olduktan sonra, **fazla bir bilgin yok sonuçta.**

¹²⁶ - Kız verilmez yani. Kız alınır mı peki?

- Alırsan da aynı. **Ama şimdi eski uygulama kalmadı yani, eskiden iyiydi.**

...

- Bir cem yapalım diyen olmuyor mu?

- Olmuyor.

- Genelde nasıl peki bu mahallenin. Tutkun mu Aleviliğe insanlar yoksa?

- Aleviliğe bizim **milletimiz tutkun ama süreç yok.** Toplanıp, cuma akşamları falan toplanıp da eskiden cuma akşamı toplanılırdı, dargınlar olursa barıştırılırdı. **Şimdi yok.**

¹²⁷ - Sizin çevrenizde Aleviler var mı?

- Var. Alevi çok. Bayağı Alevi var yani. Alevi var ama **sorarsın ki bunlar birbirine tutkun mu büyük oranda fire verir yani.**

¹²⁸ - Değişim olarak şu: Dini yönleri benim ilk gördüğüm zamanlar, en azından kendilerine göre birtakım ibadet çeşitleri, Ramazan orucunu tutmayıp, **diğer orucu tutmak gibi, bunlardan da uzaklaştığını görüyorum çevremde.** Ama tabii, bunlardan uzaklaşırken, onun felsefesine sarılmak değil bu uzaklaşış. Ben **topyekûn dinden uzaklaşış görüyorum.**

...

- Alevileri bekleyen tehlikeler, ben şöyle görüyorum: Alevilik felsefesini savunup, uygulayan Alevilerin **yok olacağı tehlikesi** bence.

¹²⁹ - Aleviler hani eskiden daha bir aradaydı, toplumun çevresinde görünmez bir perde vardı belki de. Ama hani bu siyasal gelişmeler, ha dünya değişiyor sonuçta değil mi, Son 20-30 yıla gelecek olursak, **Alevi toplumu dağılmakta**, devlet politikaları olsun bir sürü etkenler var bunda. Alevi toplumunun o kapalı yapısı dağıldı. 20-30 yıl dediğimize göre medya da hayatımıza girdi genel olarak **yerel değerlerden uzaklaşıyor insanlar.** Hem toplumun coğrafi olarak dağılması, hem bu tür Aleviliğin dışından gelen faktörler, Alevi toplumunu değiştirdi.

- Annemler, onların döneminde bizim yaşımızda çocuklar kesinlikle ceme gidiyorlarmış, en zor şartlarda bile cem yapıyorlarmış, ama bizim dönemimiz **daha rahat, daha rahattan ziyade dağılmış** da diyebiliriz. Değişen bunlar, Aleviler Alevi **ibadetlerinden uzaklaştı** örneğin. Toplumun o kapalı yapısının dağılmasıyla birlikte **dejenerasyon çok doğru olmaz da bir çözülme** oldu.

....

- Aleviliğin önündeki en büyük sorunu da şu olarak görüyorum; eğer kendi kültürlerini devam ettirmek istiyorlarsa önce dünyanın gerçeklerini, Türkiye gerçeklerini kavrayıp önce başka meseleler için, eskiden olduğu gibi mücadele etmeleri gerektiğini anlamalılar. Bunu yapmadıkları sürece dünya tarihinde yaşamış, gelmiş ama kaybolmuş, **yitip gitmiş bir kültür** olmak

durumundalar yani, başka bir şey göremiyorum. Belki de oldular zaten, bilemiyorum. Biz bile bu kadar uzağındayken bu bilginin **bir 50 yıl sonra, 100 yıl sonra Alevi arayıp, hani örnekler üzerinde göstermeye çalışacaklar, belki bulup gösteremeyecekler böyle bir örnek. Bu bir Alevi, bu böyle yaşar, böyle davranır, bunun evi böyledir falan diyemeyecekler. Bu türküler dinler, çaldığı alet sazdır, yaptığı semahtır falan böyle şeyler yok olmuş durumda.**

¹³⁰ - Kimse **eskisi kadar katı** değil, kimse eskisi kadar Aleviliği de yaşamıyor, **o kimlikle yaşamıyor.**

...

- **Aleviler inanılmaz gevşek.** Yani böyle **müthiş bir rehavet.** Hani bundan sıyrılmaları gerekiyor, bu rehavetten sıyrılmaları gerekiyor.

- ...Şeye karar vermeleri gerekiyor. İslamiyet'le aralarındaki mesafeye karar vermeleri gerekiyor. Yani bu bir dinse, inançsa inanç gibi yaşanmalı, bir felsefeyse felsefe gibi yaşanmalı. İkisi bir arada olduğu zaman, bir de ayrıca böyle ideolojilerle birleştiği zaman **çoklu bir sistem** oluyor ve, zaten bu senin **kimlikler içerisinde yitip gitmesine** sebep oluyor. Yani ne olduğuna karar vermesi lazım. **Bu kadar çokluğu içinde barındırırsan yok olup gitmeye mahkumsun** zaten. Alevilik **her şeydir gibi bir şey olmuş durumda. İyi olan, modern olan, muhafazakarlığın dışında olan her şey Aleviliktir.** Bu şey de olabilir, komünizm de olabilir, bu Atatürkçülük de olabilir mesela kısmen, kısmen başka bir şey, kısmen Budizm bile olabilir. **Her şeyi barındırmaya çalışan bir öğreti. Öyle olduğu için de çok kafası karışık, çok inandırıcı olmayan, çok ne olduğu anlaşılmayan bir şeye dönüşüyor.** O anlamda ne olduğuna karar vermeleri gerekiyor diye düşünüyorum.

¹³¹ - 20-30 sene içerisinde sizce Alevilik'te ne gibi değişiklikler olmuştur?

- 30 sene önce daha yobaz, dediğim gibi **şimdi gençler daha özgür,** evlilikler karıştı, eskiden kesinlikle yabancıyla olmazdı.

- Yobazlık derken neyi kastediyorsunuz?

- Yani **Aleviliğe daha düşkünlerdi.** Yabancıları yadırgıyorlardı, ama yabancılar Alevileri yadırgadığı için, onlar da öyle yapıyorlardı. Ama bu kalmadı, şimdi böyle bir sorun yok.

...

- Alevilerin geleceğini nasıl görüyorsunuz?

- Dediğim gibi **gençler çok daha akıllı, bilinçli.** Bence **daha iyiye** gidiyor. Ne biliyim tanıtım yapıyorlar mesela. Yeni yapılan yerimiz olsun. Okuyo çocuklarımız. **Dedelerden veya atalardan duyduklarıyla hareket etmiyorlar.** Okuyorlar.

¹³² - Peki Alevilerin içinde sizce yanlış yolda gidenler var mı?

- Var.

- Kimler mesela, hangi çevreler?

- **Dernekleşmelerden** dolayı. Mesela Alevilerin kendi içinde de sıkıntılar var. Bir kısım Alevi dernekleri Alevilik İslamiyet'in içindedir derler, bir kısmı değil derler. **Kendi içinde bir birlik yok.** Bunun da sebebi Alevi dernekleri **aşırı derecede kullanılıyor.** Güçlü kurumlar değil hiçbiri. Çoğunun 100 milyon cebinde olmayan insanlar var, başkanından tutun üyeye kadar. Her hangi bir sıcak para akışı olduğu zaman da türlü düşünceye de kendilerini açıyorlar.

¹³³ - Bence **fikir ayrılığının** nedeni bireysel çıkarlar. Aleviliğin kültürü felsefesi bir tanedir ama bunu yorumlayanlar farklı farklı var. Bu da **bireysel menfaatleri** uğruna. Bu da sadece aynı siyasilerin koltuk peşinde koşmaları gibi bu da bazı Alevilerin **koltuk peşinde kariyer peşinde** koşmaları. Normalde hiç ayrı kültürü, felsefesi var olan inançları aynı.

...

- Fanatikliğin hiç iyi yanı yoktur. Bunların içinde de Sünnilerin fanatikleştiği gibi diğer Alevi kesimlere değişik gözle baktıkları gibi bu kanallarda [TV kanalları kastediyor] da bir çokları farklı yorumlara gidiyor bu iyi olmuyor. ... Bu da **bölünmeye yol açtığı** için olumsuz yanı oluyor.

¹³⁴ - İlk başta Alevileri bekleyen tehlikeler Alevilerin yozlaşması. Dedelik kavramındaki o kaybolup gitmeler. **Bizi bölmek** isteyen, rant uğruna, çıkar uğruna, bu ülkenin çıkarları veya başka şeylerin çıkarları, her neyse, hiçe sayarak bizleri, kullanılması.

¹³⁵ - Peki sence Alevilerin en önemli 3 sorunu nedir?

- Birincisi Cem Vakfı. Yok işin şakasıydı. Alevilerin sorunu **bilgisizlik** herhalde, bu konuda yeterince bilgiye sahip olamamamız. Bu ülkeye kendimizi kabul ettiremememiz, aslında öyle bir gayemiz yok da. Bu ülkenin bizi kabul etmemesi. Bunun haricinde bir şey gelmedi aklıma.

- Peki nasıl çözülür sence bu sorunlar?

- Bu sorunların çözülmesi zor. **Herkesin Aleviliğe farklı bakış açısı var**, bu konuda birçok vakıf var. Hatay'da mı bir yerde vardı, Abdal Musa Vakfı. O gidip Tayyip Erdoğan'la iftar yemeğine oturuyor, diğer vakfılar oturmuyor. Ben oturmayan vakıfları haklı görüyordum. Ama Abdal Musa Vakfı'nı destekleyen Aleviler de var. Ben Cem Vakfı'nı kesinlikle hiç desteklemiyorum ama Cem Vakfı'nı destekleyen binlerce Alevi var. **Aleviliğe farklı bakış açıları var, bu yüzden Alevilik sorununu çözmek çok zor, onu direkt bir raya sokmak çok zor..** Siz diyorsunuz ki, sence nasıl çözümlenebilir sorun. Valla **bence çözümlenemez yani.**

¹³⁶ - **Çok bölünme** var bir kere. **Çok dernek** çıktı, o kadar çok ki, 400'den fazla dernek varmış, öyle dediler geçen gün bir dede konuştu. Dedi ki, çok fazla bölünme var dedi. Bir toparlanma dönemine girmeliyiz dediler, çok fazla bölünme var.

¹³⁷ - Yani **bu şekilde olursa birbirimizi kaybedebiliriz. Yani inançlarımızı kaybedebiliriz, biran önce bu derneklerin ortak bir şeyde buluşmaları lazım.** Yani bu **post kavgasından** çıkıp, birbirleriyle ortak bir görüş olması lazım.

¹³⁸ - Ben yanlış söyleyim Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği var, Hacı Bektaş Veli Derneği var, cemevleri var. **bunlar farklı farklı olsun ama hepsi de aynı fikri savunmalı. Ayrılan yönü asla olmamalı.** PSAKD biraz daha sol yapıda, cemevleri biraz daha tutucu, sağa yakın gibi gözüküyor. Hacı Bektaş Kültür Derneği daha değişik bir fikir. Bu olmamalı. Birlik beraberliklerini asla farklı yönlerde savunmamalılar. Ben şunu görüyorum **tamamen birbirini dışlayacak nitelikte olabiliyorlar.** Tamamen yanlış.

¹³⁹ - Peki siz kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- Alevi felsefesini benimsemişim, özünde o var. Ama fiiliyatta Aleviliğin gereklerini yerine getiremiyorum. Bir ceme katılmıyoruz, **derneğe** gitmiyoruz. Yani onların özel günleri oluyor, helva günleri şu günü bu günü. Onları yapamıyoruz ama ruhen öyle yaşıyoruz. Kendimi saf iyi bir Alevi görüyorum.

- Dernekleri diyordunuz

- Farkları tamamen siyasi partiler gibi **kişisel görüş farklılıkları** var. Özünde aynı fikri savunuyorlar ama şey yaptıkça kişisel. Pir Sultan yetersiz veya kötülemek istemiyorum ama yetersiz deyim. Kişisel görüş farklılıkları var. Olmaması gerekiyor. **Tanımlıyorum, içlerine girmedim** ama.

¹⁴⁰ - Alevilerin en önemli sorunları neler? En önemli 3 sorunu mesela?

- Valla Alevilerin bence hiçbir sorunu yok. Sorunu kendi yaratıyor.

- Yanlış bulduğunuz şeyler var mı Aleviler arasında?

- Valla **pek içlerine girmedim için.** Girmedim değil, giremediğim için bilmiyorum pek.

¹⁴¹ - Bir Alevi derneğine üyeliğin var mı?

- Yok canım. [gülmeler] **Daha neler.**

- Neden?

- Bu benim duruşumla alakalı. Ben bir kimliğin altında yaşayabilecek kadar kendimi şey hissetmiyorum, hiçbir şeyin fanatığı hissetmiyorum. Şey gibi, boynuna kılıcı takıp gezenleri görünce, iyiyi diye yapmak gibi bir şey. **Çok ilkel ve çok şey buluyorum bir toteme kapılmak gibi bir şey gibi geliyor bana.** Uğruna mücadele edebileceğim, hâlâ dünya üzerinde bir etkisi olduğunu düşündüğüm bir şey değil bu. Ben biraz daha evrensel, biraz daha global bakıyorum sorunlara. Ne bileyim işte, yaşayacak bir evren var mı yok mu, olacak mı olmayacak mı gibi bir gündem varken, ben kalkıp Aleviliğin karşısındaki sorunlar meselesini çok fazla önemsemiyorum. O yüzden **böyle bir derneğe üye olup, Alevi haklarını savunmak benim için öncelikli bir mesele değil.** Daha çok insan hakları meselesi benim için önemli, Türkiye'de. Burada da ben bir Alevi olarak, Alevi bir Türk vatandaşı olarak böyle bir mücadeleye hani daha çok sarılıyorum.

¹⁴² - Bir Alevi derneğine üyeliğiniz var mı?

- **Gerek bile görmedim hiç.**

- Bildiğiniz bir Alevi Derneği var mı?

- **Hiç bilmiyorum.**

¹⁴³ - Benim ailem tanıttı. Ama bir çok yerde bir çok insan tanıtmıyor. Türkiye'deki Alevi nüfusunun net belli olmamasının nedeni de budur. **Aşırı dejenere** olmuştur. Biz bunu çok yaşadık. İstanbul göçlerinde 1970-1985 arasındaki göçlerde gelen hiç kimse Alevi olduğunu beyan etmiyor. **Sünni yaşam biçiminde yaşayıp** gittiler. **Sonradan gelen kuşak da bilmediği için devamlı kendilerini böyle biliyorlar.** Tanıdıklarımız var. Aynı köyden çıkıp gelen tanıdıklarımızı görüyoruz.

...

- Yaşamıyorlar. Artık Aleviliği yaşamıyorlar. Çoğu da söylemiyor. Anadoludakiler bellidir. Köyü bellidir. Ama İstanbul'dakiler öyle değil. Bilen çevrelere Alevi olduğunu söylüyor ama Sünniyse söylemiyor. Hatta oruç tutan arkadaşlarımız var, tanıdıklarımız var.

- Alevileri bekleyen tehlikeler var mı?

- Bütün tehlikeleri yaşıyoruz. **En büyük tehlike de komple dejenere olup kaybolmak.**

¹⁴⁴ - Öyle baktığım zaman şunu düşünüyorum; son yıllarda benim gözlemlerime göre **Aleviliği bir kalıba sokmak, Sünnileştirmek.** Mesela başbakanla falan görüşmeler oluyor. Cemevi kültür evidir, falan filan. Sanki bunlar saçmadır, gidin bunları bir düzene koyun getirin. Bunun üzerine kitaplar yazılıyor. Mesela son dönemlerde ben takip etmeye çalışıyorum, gidip raflara baktığım zaman Alevilik üzerine bir sürü kitap çıkıyor. Son dönemlerde **Aleviliği belli bir kalıba, bir şekle sokma çalışması** var gibi.

- Peki Aleviler bundan nasıl etkileniyor sence?

- Çok etkileniyorlar bence. **Özellikle Sünnileştirme.** Baktığımız zaman şimdiki insanlarımıza, Aleviliği daha çok İslamiyet'in içinde gördüklerini görüyorum.

¹⁴⁵ - Sizin gözlemlediğiniz kadarıyla son 20-30 yılda Alevilikte ne gibi değişiklikler oldu sizce?

- **Yozlaşma.** Yani giderek **Sünni politikalarının yoğunlaşması** nedeniyle gerçekleşen bir yozlaşma.

¹⁴⁶ - **Asimilasyon** organik kurumlarının olmaması devletin de bunu desteklememesi asimilasyona büyük yol açıyor. Devletçilik şemsiyesine sarılmış olan derneklerin önünü çektiği kalabalık ve **Sünnileşen** Aleviler var. Alevilerin cem vakfından kurtulması gerek. Bu sadece Alevilerin elinde değil. Devletin de Cem Vakfını desteklediği için. Bunu kolektif olarak çözmeleri lazım.

¹⁴⁷ - Merzifon'un köylerine git hala aynı zihniyette yaşamaya çalışıyorlar. Kendilerini aşamıyorlar. **El öpmeler filan artık gereksiz.** Kabuğunu kırıp açılmıyorlar, hala aynı zihniyette yaşamaya çalışıyorlar. Geçen babam rahmetli oldu demiştim ya, dar çekelim dediler. Merzifondaki amcam **dualar okuyor filan**, bana göre yapılan hareketler çok saçma. Anlamsız geliyor. **Onun yerine diyorum kendimizi yetiştirelim.**

- Ama **öbür tarafta batıl inançlıları eleştirirken**, bu tarafta bence **bizimkilerin anlamsız hareketler yapmaması** gerekiyor.

¹⁴⁸ - Siz peki ilk ne zaman farkına vardınız Alevi olduğunuzun?

- Farkına varmadım bizim evde konuşulan bir konudur bu. Ama bizim evde normal hani diğerleri gibi saz çalınıp şey yapılmaz. Bizim ev biraz daha farklı. Annem de babam da biliriz ama çok konuşulmaz babam da annem de çok severler Alevi olmayı. Gurur duyarlar ikisi de ama bize o kültürü geçirmediler. **Din biz de çok baskın bir şey olmadığı için, bizde din kavramı olmadığı için aslında dindar bir aile olmadığımız için Alevi ailesi değiliz.** Dinle paralel ya. Biz dindar değiliz. **Din üzerimizde baskı kurmadı bizim. Biz o yüzden çok yukarılara gittik, çok ilerlere gittik.** Araştırmacı ve ufkumuz geniş, anladın mı? Din baskısı insanları geri çekiyor. Din. Fanatizm. Biz de fanatizm olmadığı için ileri gidebiliyoruz anladın mı?

¹⁴⁹ - Peki sizce bu Aleviler içerisinde yanlış bir yola sapmak mıdır?

- Aleviliği **çok sert kurallarla benimseyenler** için Alevilikten çıkmadır.

- Bu Alevilerin içindeki farklı anlayışlar ya da kümelenmeler içinde hangi kesime yakın hissediyorsunuz?

- Ben **çağdaş**, Aleviliğin gelişmesi için uğraşan taraftayım.

¹⁵⁰ - Nedir Alevilik size göre?

- Alevilik bana göre şimdi bizim küçüklükten beri bildiğimiz Alevilikle son zamanlarda gazetelerde, televizyonlarda bilim adamlarının açıkladığı Alevilik arasında çok fark var. Bana göre Alevilik Müslümanlığın özüne inmiş enfes bir din. Bana göre. Bana sorarsınız **Müslümanlıktan daha böyle, ıvrırını, zıvrırını, bağnazlığını atmış özünlenmiş** güzel bir din. Kültür diyelim veya.

...

- [Alevileri kastederek] **Bağnazlar** çoğu. Yani Tanrının varlığından Muhammed'e onun ayetlerine. Bana göre yani bağnazca. Dine bağlılar yani. Hacı Bektaş'a gidip yıllarca Hacı Bektaş'taki insanlara kendi cebindeki üç kuruşu, beş kuruşu verdiklerini ben çok iyi biliyorum. Adamlar ne bana yardımcı olacak. Tanrı yardımcı olacak. Ne yardımcı olacak **Hacı Bektaş mı yardımcı olacak.**

¹⁵¹ - Hazreti Ali sizin için ne anlama geliyor?

- Dini bir lider, ama eski, eski zamanlarda yaşamış bir lider. İslamiyet'in kendisi sonuçta Aleviliği İslamiyet'e ya da Hazreti Ali'ye bağlamam gibi bir şeyim yok. Alevilik Hazreti Muhammed'in doğuşu ile başlar zaten, İslamiyet'in doğuşu ile başlar. O yüzden farklı görmüyorum. **Hazreti Ali'yi ayrı bir yere koymuyorum. Hazreti Muhammed'den sonra Aleviliği daha iyi yaşayan kişi olarak görüyorum.**

Murtaza

¹⁵² - Ehli Beyt soyundan gelen, **biraz cesur bir insan** olarak biliyorum. Alevilerin soyundan gelmiş, **haksızlığa karşı çıkan haksızlarla mücadele eden**, savaştan, Ehli Beyt soyundan gelmiş biri.

¹⁵³ - Hz. Ali bizim için çok şey anlamına geliyor. Bir kere gerçekten **doğruluğu dürüstlüğü, en azından** onun şeyi ile doğruluğu dürüstlüğü öğreniyoruz onda. Bizlere bırakmış olduğu eserleri ve sözleri ile ne yapmamız gerektiğini görüyoruz. **Bir nevi bizim öncümüz.**

¹⁵⁴ - Bak en büyükleri İmam Hasan, İmam Hüseyin, Hazreti Ali'den dolayı gelmiştir. Hazreti Muhammed'e de çok inanıyorlar. Hiçbir şeyi yok. Hz. **Muhammed'in hiçbir boku yok** afedersin. ...Söylediğim şeyler de yani hep Allah, Muhammed'e ben bunlara inanmam.

- Hazreti Ali sizin için ne anlam ifade ediyor.

- Hazreti Ali benim için bu dünyanın aslanı. **Hoşgörüsü, sevgisi, insanlara bakış açısı** çok farklı Hazreti Ali'nin onun için bir şey demem, ama Muhammed için her şeyi söylerim.

¹⁵⁵ - Mesela hiç ateist olan bir Alevi bile, der ki ben Hz. Ali'yi seviyorum. Neden, Hz. Ali **hümanist bir insan**, düşünce tarzı olarak, şey olarak hakikaten. Tüm insanlığa, tüm **herkese eşit** açıdan bakması nedeniyle.

- Başka?

- Çok **inanılır** bir insan, çok **güvenilir** ondan sonra peygamberin soyundan, hem damadı, hem amcasının oğlu. Yani **Aleviliğin simgesi** olarak görüyorum ben.

¹⁵⁶ - Nedir Hazreti Ali'yi kutsal yapan

- Şimdi **sürekli savaşmış bir adam** ama daima şeyin yanında olmuş ilginç bir şey ezilenin yanında olmuş. **Hep ezilenin yanında olmuş, adaletli, hakkaniyetli, insanlara karşı saygısı mükemmel.** Aslında bakın çoğu Alevi kültüründe, ben şimdi biliyorum Ali'nin Allah olduğuna inanırlar.

¹⁵⁷ - Hz. Ali'nin sizin için ayrı bir anlamı var mıdır?

- Tabii ki. Zamanında yaşamış çok önemli bir **düşünür** ve onurlu **kişilikli** bir insan.

¹⁵⁸ - Kutsal olan şeyler var mı Alevilikte?

- Alevilik'te kutsal olan Allah'tan sonra, peygamberden sonra Ali'ye inanmaktır. En kutsalı odur. Ali'nin hayatını da okudum. Onun **uğradığı haksızlıkları** Müslüman olarak mantığım almıyor.

- Ben bir kitap okudum Şeriat ve Kadın diye. O kitabı okuduktan sonra ben **Hazreti Ali'nin de o kadar abartıldığına inanmıyorum**. Orada da yazıyor Hazreti Ali **resimlerde görüldüğü gibi heybetli biri** değilmiş. **Cıltz, kısa boylu, tıknaz** biriymiş. Yani **tamam haksızlığa uğramıştır, o da nihayetinde etten kemikten bir insandı**. Öyle yani.

¹⁵⁹ - Benim için Hz. Ali, hani zat olarak, peygamber kadar ulu bir insan, ama o da **bir aracı nihayetinde**, ben onu öyle görüyorum. **İlahlaştırdığım bir kişilik, ilahlaştırdığım bir kavram değil**. Çünkü bunun daha üstünde olan şeyler var. Ben de bir Ali'yim, sen de bir Ali'sin, hepimiz bir Ali'yiz, Ali olmak isteyen herkes Ali.... Görmedim, bilmiyorum, bana anlatılan bir insan. Onun için ben bu konulara pek takılmıyorum,

¹⁶⁰ - Peki Hz. Ali diyorsun, Hz. Ali ne anlama geliyor senin için?

- Çok fazla bir şey bilmiyorum. Bana çağrıştırdığı şey, **Hz. Ali deyince Alevilik geliyor, başka bir şey gelmiyor**.

¹⁶¹ - Aleviliğin en önemli figürü kimdir?

- Hz. Ali. Tabii ki Aleviler'in artık şeyi olmuş, simgesi olmuş, ama **ben öyle görmüyorum**. Hz. Ali'den, mesela ben geçen sordum, çünkü kendimde öğrenmek istiyordum. Dernekte bir arkadaş vardı, dedim ki, **Hz. Ali de Arap sonuçta**, peygamber efendimizin damadı. Namazda öldürüldü deniliyor. Peki niye Aleviler namaz kılmıyor o zaman, Hz. Ali'yi her yere asıyorsunuz. Adamcağızın dediği şu, o yanlış yanlış diyor, namazda öldürülmedi. Olur mu öyle şey dedim, namazda öldürülmüş. Peygamber efendimizin damadı, kızını vermiş. Sence **Hz. Ali Sünni mi, Alevi mi**. Tabi, adam cevap vermedi. Yani ora sustu kaldı.

¹⁶² - Peki Aleviliğin en önemli kişileri, figürleri kimlerdir?

- İlk Alevilik diyince herkesin aklına Hz. Ali gelir. **Ama ben daha çok** bu iş için bişeyler yapmış, yani tabi Hz. Ali de bunlardan biridir, ama işte ben bir Nesimi, bir Pir Sultan, işte bir Hacı Bektaş Veli'yi, daha çok bu yolda Alevilik adına çok uğraşlar vermiş insanlar olarak görüyorum.

- Hz. Ali sizin için neyi ifade eder?

- Hz. Ali benim için temel hatlarıyla, Alevilerin **inanmak istedikleri** ya da önlerinde lider olarak görmek istedikleri bir kişidir.

¹⁶³ - Peki Hz. Ali senin için ne anlama geliyor?

- Allahın aslanı. Hz. Ali deyince işin açıkçası **çok derin şeyler ifade etmiyor**. Kendi açımdan yorumluyorum, genel Alevilik açısından değil de, çok fazla bir şey ifade etmiyor. Peygamber efendimizin amcasının oğluymuş, halifelik onun hakkıymış falan, filan. Bunlarla çok ilgilenmiyorum ama Alevilikte bir öneminin olduğunu biliyorum. Ama benim açımdan öyle **çok da derin bir anlamı yok**.

¹⁶⁴ - Hz. Ali benim için sonuçta İslamiyet'in sürmesini sağlayan, peygamberden sonra gelen dört halifeden biridir. **Ben Aleviliği direkt Ali'yi sevmek ya da Ali'yi yüceltmekle aynı tutmadığım için, Hz. Ali'yi çok şey görmüyorum**, Aleviliğin yaratıcısıdır, kurucusudur veya bu felsefeyi ortaya atan kişidir diye görmüyorum Hz. Ali. O da İslamiyet'i sürdüren, sürdürmeye çalışan, ama sürdürürken birtakım, din kitaplarından bildiğimiz kadarıyla, **birtakım haksızlıklara uğrayan** bir kişidir Hz. Ali.

¹⁶⁵ - Aleviliğin en önemli figürleri kimler?

- Dernek başkanları. Bunu bana 5-10 yıl önce sorsan Hz. Ali derdim, ama şimdi o gelmiyor. **Kişilerle bağdaştıramıyorum** Aleviliği.

...

- Hz. Ali'nin İslamiyet'in bir figürü ama ayrı bir yer var. Bana **mazlumu** anımsatıyordu. O yüzden de hani Aleviliğin sembolü haline gelmişti gözümde. Ama şu an **bir nefretim, özel bir sevgim yok** ama tarihin bir sahnesinde bulunan, **Arap biri**.

¹⁶⁶ Cem: Alevi religious ritual.

¹⁶⁷ - Cemdeki bana göre tamamen şahsı fikrim cemdeki görüntüler **bu çağa yakışmayan görüntüler**. O kadaraydın dedeler var ki onlar konuşmasını yapsın ama diğerlerine gerek yok. Nasıl ki İslam gelenekleri yenilenmeli, o zaman çatal mı vardı da çatala yemiyordu, elle yemiyordu? Bunun gibi Aleviliğin de güncellenmesi gereken yerleri var. Cemdeki abartılı olaylar.

¹⁶⁸ - Mesela televizyonlarda falan. Öyle bir özdeşleşme kuramıyorum. Televizyonlarda Alevilik diye tanıtılan şey, cemlerden alınma görüntüler, **oradaki böyle eğilip kalkmalar, o dede görüntüsü** mesela benim çok kendimle özdeşleştirmedığım bir şey ve şey diye düşünüyorum; nasıl bir Aleviliği böyle temsil edebilir. Bütün kamuoyunun gözü önünde Aleviler bunlar, **böyle toplanmış, dedenin önünde eğilip kalkan, yerleri öpen, böyle garip gurup giyinen, modern dışı kıyafetler içerisinde** takılan. Var oluş şeklimizin çok uzak bir şeyle temsil edildiğini düşünüyorum o anlamda. Cem oysa, o şekilde yapılıyorsa bir antipatim var onu söyleyeyim. Ben Aleviliğin, **o kadar ilkel** olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Bir Alevinin ibadetinin o şekilde yapılmaması gerektiğini düşünüyorum. **Semah kendi içinde bir seyri, görüntüsü olan**, bir dönüşü olan şey ama o cemin yapılış şekli bana göre, desteklemediğim bir şey.

- Cemevlerine nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Hiç iyi bakmıyorum. Şey gözüyle geliyor bana, o televizyonda gördüğüm görüntülerin, yaratılmaya çalışıldığı Alevilik imajının pompalanmaya çalışıldığı, Alevileri olduğu noktadan daha geriye götürmeye, siz böylesiniz, böyle davranırsınız, **acayip ilkel kurumlar** gibi geliyor. **Çok fazla geriye götüren bir yapı** gibi geliyor Alevileri.

¹⁶⁹ - Köylerde insanlar kendi hallerinde çok daha rahatları. İstanbul'daki ve televizyondakilerde **bir şekil ve şemal içine sokulmak** isteniyor. Cemin zaten biliyorsunuz kelime anlamı toplanma. *Tasavvuf*'teki cem boyutuna baktığınızda da kişinin o esnadaki **semaya çıkma** anıdır. Bu da **şu anki cemlerde pek yaşanmıyor**. Ama burada kurallar içinde. Nasıl namaz olayında kible olayı var. Şimdiki cemlerde de böyle şeyler konmaya çalışılıyor. **Aynı şekilde dönme**ye çalışılıyor.

¹⁷⁰ - "**Cemevleri** cami gibi olmalı diyeceğim, yanlış anlaşılacak. Bugün hangi camiye giderseniz gidin, üç aşağı beş yukarı birbirinin aynısıdır. **Ben cemevlerinin kötüye kullanılmasını doğru bulmuyorum**. Mesela, forumda şu var: **Rakı sofrasında semah dinleyip**, semah dönüyorlar. Ben buna kesinlikle karşıyım. Tamam, biz çağdaş, ileri görüşlü bir toplumuz, ama bu değil, bu kadar değersiz olmamalı. Bunu tamam, ilahlaştırıp, şeriat gibi kalıplaştırmayalım, ama bu kadar da değersizleştirmeyelim. Cemevlerimiz de öyle olmalı, **bir sistemi olmalı**. Kimsenin eleştiremeyeceği demeyeyim de, kimsenin hoşnutsuzluk yaşamayacağı bir sistem olmalı."

¹⁷¹ - Cemevlerinin **bir kısmı da çok kötü** artık. Mesela var bir tane, Bursa'da, yani avuç içi kadar bir yer, doğru düzgün toplanılamıyor, oturulamıyor ondan sonra amacına hizmet eden, bazı yerlerde var ama bazı yerlerde amaca hizmet eden bir yapısı yok yani. Çoğu yerde, Mesela Hacı Bektaş Derneği'nde adamlar oturmuş içiyor, yani **amacından sapmış yerler de var**, çok iyi hizmet veren yerler olduğu gibi amacından sapmış şeyler de var.

¹⁷² - Peki cemevlerini nasıl görüyorsun?

- Eskiden cemevleri yokmuş. İnsanlar cem yapmak için bir kişinin evine toplanır yaparlarmış. İnsanları bir arada toplayacak bir yer gerekiyor, bunun için cemevlerinin olması gerekiyor **ama bugünkü cemevleri de ne ölçüde insanlara nasıl hitap ediyor, bu da önemli**.

- Nasıl görüyorsun?

- Bilmiyorum. **Bazı şeyleri mesela tasvip etmiyorum**. Erzincan'da cem törenlerine katıldığım olmuştu. Orada okunan, söylenen dualar falan buradakiler farklı. Başlıyor mesela, Atatürk'ten, polisten, askerden başlıyor, bunları koruyun falan. Onların bir ismi geçiyor. Cemevlerinde insanlara neden bu verilmeye çalışılıyor, ben bunu anlayamadım. Orada bir fikir verilmeye çalışılıyormuş gibi. Bir yerde duymuştum, doğru mu yanlış mı hiç bilmiyorum, bir arkadaşım söylemişti. Ankara'da bir cemevinin kuruluşunda, oradaki dedelerin yerleştirilmesine kadar, bunun örgütlenmesini yapan kişinin emekli bir albay olduğunu söylemişti. Son yıllarda yükselen bu cemaatçiliğe falan karşı, **biraz el altından devletin destekleyip, gelişmesine izin verdiği** ve bu cemevlerinde de insanlara böyle bir şey **aşılarmaya** çalışılıyormuş gibi bir izlenim var bende.

¹⁷³ - Cemevlerini nasıl görüyorsunuz?

- **Onlar bir süreç, siyaset.**

- Şu anki yapılarını nasıl buluyorsunuz?

- Yani açılacak şimdi Narlıdere'de de, seçime yakın açılacak. Çünkü oy gelecek. Kullanılıyor yani herşey. **Düşünceler de Alevilik de Sünnilik de kullanılıyor.**

¹⁷⁴ - Camilerde Bilgisayar, İngilizce kursu filan yok. İhtiyacı olan insanların yeri geldiğinde cemevlerine sığınabilme şansları var. **Eğitim için, okuma yazma kursu** için. Bir çok cemevi bu konuda adım atmaları çok güzel oldu. Bir çok cemevini biliyorum, çoğunu da ziyaret etmeye çalışıyorum. **Bilgisayar kursları** hemen hepsinde var. Bazısında **İngilizce kursları** var. **Matematik dersi verenler, fizik, kimya öğrencilere.**

¹⁷⁵ - Cemevlerini nasıl görüyorsunuz?

- Cemevleri bizde tanımı çok farklı. Sadece ibadet yeri olarak görülüyor, **aynı zamanda kültür.** Çünkü din anlayışımız aynı zamanda kültürün yansıması, eğitimden yaşantısına, oturup kalkmasından ibadetine, kendini tanımasına kadar her şeyin yaşatıldığı yer olarak görüyoruz. **İnsanların kaynaştığı, kültürlerini yaşattığı, gençlerin eğitim aldığı, fakirlere yardım edildiği, okuma yazma bilmeyenlere okuma yazma öğretildiği.**

¹⁷⁶ - Cemevleri değil de yani **hiçbir aşırılığın iyi yanı** yoktur. cemevlerinin elbette iyi yanları var Alevi kültürünü tanıtmak için bir araya geliyorlar, cem yapıyorlar. İkincisi Aleviler için bence en güzel yanı **cenaze** işinde oluyor, bir Alevi vatandaş hiçbir çevresi yoksa bile en azından götürüp cemevinde defnettirebiliyor. Yani cemevleri gerçekten o konularda vatandaşa çok yardımcı oluyor, faydalı oluyor.

¹⁷⁷ - Peki nasıl değerlendiriyorsun cemi?

- Benim evimin bir üst sokağında cemevi var, bugüne kadar gittin mi dersin **yemek vardı, cenaze vardı** onun için gittim. Tam bilmediğim için daha doğrusu yaşasam da dört dörtlük yaşamayacağımı bildiğim için uzak kalmayı tercih ettim.

- Şimdi biraz abarttılar. Cem Tv çıkıyor sabahtan akşama kadar sürekli cem şeyleri. Ben Yenibosna'da yaşıyorum, orada Aleviler de çok. Ama bir Cem Tv'de cem izlediğim zaman oraya giden insanlar da çok değil. Birkaç hafta üst üste dikkatli baksam televizyona **oraya gidenlerin de hep aynı insanlar** olduğunu görürüm diye düşünüyorum.

¹⁷⁸ - Peki cemevlerine nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Cemevinde **fakirlere yardım** oluyor, insanlara yardım, **eğitime yardım, burslu öğrenci** var. Yani bir şeyler yapmaya çalışılıyor. **Hani öyle bomboş diyemem. En azından** belli günlerde yemek veriyorlar, çocuklara eğitim, kıyafet. Bir döner sermaye gibi, halktan alıp halka dağıtıyorlar.

¹⁷⁹ - Ben cemevlerini şey gibi görmüyorum, mesela camiye daha çok böyle dini gerekleri yerine getirilecek bir yer, ibadet yeri olarak görürken, **cemevlerini daha böyle kültürel misyonu da olan** yerler olarak görüyorum, bu hoşuma gidiyor; en azından gördüğüm kadarıyla. Hatta daha da geliştirilip, böyle ne bileyim, değişik dersler ve beceri dersleri verilen yerler bile küçük küçük açılabilir cemevlerinin yanında.

¹⁸⁰ - Dedeliğe nasıl bakıyorsunuz, dede soyundan gelen biri olarak?

- Çok kötü bir soru. dediğim gibi bunlar zaten **süreç içinde bu şekle geldi.** İstanbul'da ve metropol şehirlerinde yaşamadan önce toplum arasındaki, köyler arasındaki **haberleşmeyi, yani posta görevini** yapmışlardır dedeler. Kültürlerini veya bir teknolojinin gelişmesini, herhangi bir olayın yetişmesini, bu şekilde dedeler sayesinde olmuştur. Şu an var mı, o tartışılabilir. Ama süreç içinde dedeler aşırı derecede önemli yer, çünkü at sırtında, yürüyerek o köyden o köye. **Zamanın iletişim araçları, elçileri, posta güvercinleri** olarak değerlendirilebilir. Şimdi her şeye ulaşabilme şansımız var. Zaten Alevi İslamiyetinin içinde **ne kadar ihtiyaç olabilir**, ha cem esnasında olabilir, ama **şu an zaten her türlü bilgiye ulaşıyorsun.**

¹⁸¹ - Ben dede torunuyum, ama **eskiden iletişim araçları** yok, ... Artık her şey elimizin altında, artık birçok şey elimizin altında. Bu bizi yozlaştırıyor aslında, sanallaştırıyor. Ama bir şeyi de, yani

dedelik kavramını da öldürmesi çok normal, çünkü insanlar eskiden bu iletişim araçlarına sahip olmadıkları için.

- Ama kötü olan şu: Dede kimdir? **Dede dede soyundan gelendir. Ben buna asla inanmıyorum, buna da ilk karşı çıkanlardan biriyim.** O talip, o dede, niye? **Bilmem neyin soyundan gelmiş, Allah Allah. Çok özür dilerim, senin üç tasmağın mı var, altı parmağın mı var, seni benden farklı yapan ne?**

¹⁸² - Peki dedeliğe nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Günümüz, mesela **batıdaki yaşayış tarzı için pek olumlu bakmıyorum.** Eskiden insanlar Aleviliği bilmiyormuş dede bunlara ne yapıyor, yol gösteriyor, bir şekilde bazı bilgiler vermeye falan çalışıyormuş. Ama günümüzde batıda falan yani, yaşam mücadelesi içerisinde **dedeliğin artık pek işleyecek bir durum olduğunu düşünmüyorum.**

¹⁸³ - Bizim yaşadığımız dönemde **dedeler gelirdi**, toplanılırdı **cem yapardı** ama. Ama dedelerde bizim yaşadığımız dönemde de yani Alevi ne demek Sünni ne demek, Hristiyan, Ermeni ne demek, Yahudi ne demek, böyle bir açıklama getirmiyorlardı. Geliyordu dedeler ama **kendi cebine** çalışıyordu. **İnsanlara böyle açıkça bilgi vermiyorlardı.**

¹⁸⁴ - Siz dedeliğe nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- **Dedelik kalkar**, Alevilik biter kırsal kesimde. Aleviler de kendi içinde böyle husumet sahibi oluyorlar ki küsüyorlar, tarla sınırı yüzünden, kız meselesi yüzünden küsüyorlarmış.

...

- Yani öyle **dede var ki rant peşinde koşanlar** da var.

¹⁸⁵ - Peki dedeliğe nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Dede **şu anda işlevini yitirmiş bir konum, sözde kalmış.** Yani en azından, ne babamın ne kardeşlerimin böyle bir şeyi yok, böyle bir davası yok yani. Belki olanlar vardır yani, hâlâ yürüten, hâlâ **milleti sömüren** tipler vardı ama ben **çok fazla gerçek amaca hizmet ettiğini düşünmüyorum**, eski zamanlarda olduğu gibi. Şimdi buna **sağlam yoldan para kazanmak** için bir kaynak olarak görüyorlar herhalde.

¹⁸⁶ - Dedelere nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Türkiye’de de dünyanın her yerinde olduğu gibi **dedeler de emperyalizmin bir şeyi gibi davranmış hep ezmiş.**

¹⁸⁷ - Alevilikte dedelere nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Sen nasıl Alevisin diyeceksin ama **dedeleri camideki imamlar gibi görüyorum.** Dedim ya yaşamadığım için **bana çok ters** geliyor. Dedelik belki çok güzeldir ama ben yaşamadığım için bana **çok saçma** geliyor.

¹⁸⁸ - Dedelere nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Valla dedelere şöyle, bize anlatılan o dedelerle şuan cemevlerinde gördüğüm dedeler arasında ciddi bir fark var. Şuan cemevlerine girdiğim de dedelere **çok sempatiyle bakmıyorum.** Yani benim çok kaygılı olduğum **ortaçağ kültürünün bir kurumu** gibi geliyor. Yani yıkılmış, ortadan kalmış olması gereken böyle garip kurumlar yani onlar. Ama **eski anlatılan dedeler, daha masalsı, daha efsanevi**, daha böyle Pir Sultan gibi, Hacı Bektaş gibi anlatılan adamlar. Yani o anlamda masalsı yaratıklar ama sonraki dedeler, yok. Çok fazla benimsediğim figürler değil.

¹⁸⁹ - Dedelik nedir? Nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

- Onu da **çok saçma** buluyorum. Benim halamın kocası dede. Bana göre saçma.

- Neden saçma buluyorsunuz?

- Yani, nasıl saçma değil, **bir insanın bir insana ceza kesmeye hakkı yok.**

¹⁹⁰ - Bugün için gerekli olanı şu demek istedim: **Bilinçli kişi benim için dededir. Bir soy sop kavramı benim için asla dede değildir.**

- **Bugün dedeler olmalı, ama bugün dedelik kavramını farklı boyuta taşımaları, geliştirmeliler, daha çağdaş, daha ileriye taşımaları ki, hani biz onları bekleyelim, kapımızda bekleyelim.**

-Benim de devletten istediğim, ben vergimi her türlü veriyorum, niye Diyanet'in şeylerinden yararlanamıyorum? Cemevi kursun, Samsun'da niye yok? Ama cemevi kurarken de, **bana akli başında insanlar**, seni göndersin mesela Ulaş, ben devletten seni istiyorum. Desin ki, Ulaş bu konu hakkında konuşacak. Assın üç beş yere, şu evde konuşacak. Ben öyle şaşalı konferans salonları, şaşalı şeyler istemiyorum. Benim istediğim Ulaş, Ulaş gibi **bu işin ilmini yapan, eğriye eğri, doğruya doğru, bu böyledir diyebilen insanları bana sunsun.**"

Ben dedeyim diyor biri çıkıyor, bu budur arkadaş diyor. **1946'daki kullandığı cümleleri kullanıyor dedem, ben buyum, budur diyor.** O kadar net konuşuyor ki, **yapma dede işte, yapma. Bu işi bugün bilenler konuşsun, bu ehliyeteye sahip olan kişiler konuşsun artık. Sen de ilerlet kendini, ilerlemeye açığız.** Bunu yapmıyoruz, bunun için darbe yemeye, kullanılmaya çok açığız.

¹⁹¹ - Dedelik kurumunu nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

- Ya şimdi bitme dede vardır, sonradan piyasaya çıkma dede vardır. Bizim dede kültürlüydü, bana kitaplar alırdı, okurdu. Görgülü bir insandı, **çağa ayak uyduran** bir insandı. **Sakalsızdı, temizdi.** Yani kirli olduğunu söylemeye çalışmıyorum onların, yanlış anlamayın. Daha önceki dedeler, ben duymuşumdur, görmüşümdür, dedeliği torun alır ya da oğul olur, bitme dede derler buna. Yani bu **kendisini yetiştirmeyen bir dedelik vardır** bu bitme dedelerde. Yetiştirmeyen, **çağa ayak uydurmayan**, sadece **boş inanışlara inanıp, milletin kafasını kurcalayan** kişiler olarak görüyorum bazen. Ama bu daha sonradan çıkma dedeler, biraz daha ortamı daha iyi gözlemleyen, çağa ayak uyduran insanlardır.

¹⁹² - **Dedelik zamanında** dürüstü de vardı, sahtekarı da. Dede topluma iyi bir lider oluyorsa, iyi bilinçlendiriyorsa onu kabul ederim ama geriletirse ben onu kabul etmem.

- Peki nereden gelmeli dedeler?

- **Hocalarımız var. Boğaziçinde, İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi'nde** hocalarımız var. Mesela İzzettin Doğan. Doktorasını yapmış, doktorluğu var. Her şeyi biliyor. Ama kendi şeyine göre davranmayacak, topluma göre. Işık tutacak aydınlatacak. Maaşlı olmayacak ama, gönüllü olacak.

- Okullardaki hocalar dede olamaz, dede soyundan değil peki?

- Değil, ama **birikimli**. Ben de dede değilim ama yani demek ki okusaydım **illa dede olmak şart değil.**

¹⁹³ - Onlara şöyle bakıyorum: Böyle bir **simgesel olarak bakıldığı sürece, benim için bir sorun teşkil etmiyor**, ama sonuçta onlar da insan, yani bu çok kolay kullanılabilir bir mevki bunlar bence. Bu tip böyle yönlendirmelere kaptırmadıkları sürece kendilerine, bir simge olarak durabilir.

- Bunlar sonuçta bir mevki ise, bu insanların da yönlendireceği, etkileyeceği kitleler olabilecek. Bunlar sonuçta bana göre, **yanlış yönlendirmedikleri sürece**, bu tip olaylara girmedikleri sürece, yani **bir kültür temsilcisi olarak kaldıkları sürece**, bir sorun yok. Ama **diğer yönden olursa, gerek yok yani.**

¹⁹⁴ - Alevilik, genelde solcu bir insanım sol kimliğe sahip insanım. Alevilikte sonuçta, **çocukluğumuzdan beri** bize ailelerimizin büyüklerimizin, işte **soyundan geldiğimizi**, Aleviliği bildikleri kadar, ne kadar biliyorlarsa bizlere de **o kültürü** de aktarmaya çalıştılar. **Biz de Aleviyiz diyoruz.** Tabi Sünni bir ana babadan gelseydik belki de onu savunacaktık.

- Peki değerler olarak Alevilik sizce nedir?

- Tabii ki değerleri çok fazla, ne biliyim mesela, Alevilikte eline beline diline sahip ol derler. Kesinlikle birisinin hakkını yiyerek dergaha girme derler. **Bizim deyişlerde** geçer. Bunlar **hep bizim değerlerdir.**

¹⁹⁵ - Siz Aleviliği nasıl tanımlıyorsunuz?

- Yani Alevilik şöyledir, böyledir değil de, **anneden babadan** veya şeyden gelen bir Alevi. Biz **Alevi olmuşuz, çok seviyoruz ne bileyim.**

- Niye seviyorsunuz?

Neden sevdiğimizi de bilmiyoruz.

¹⁹⁶ - En çok da Aleviliği insana saygı olarak görüyorum ya da ne bileyim daha bana yakın. Belki içinde olduğum içindir, bana **daha yakın** geliyor. Şöyle bir şey, dini kafamda büyütüyorum ya da yaşam tarzımda belki onun yüzünden. Yani kendimi daha çok Alevi hissediyorum.

- Peki size göre Alevilik nedir?

- İnsanlara saygı derim ya da kişinin eline, beline diline sahip olmasıdır. Ya da bilmiyorum bunu **yaşamak lazım**. Yaşadıkça daha böyle hissediyorsun. Yaşam tarzıma uyuyor. Yaşam tarzı görüyorum ben.

- İnsanın rahat ettiği yerdir.

- Şöyle bir şey, mesela bazı Alevilere bakıyorum, **konuşma tarzları, insanlara bakış açıları** hemen hemen aynı. Yolda yürürken bile diyorum, işte şu Alevi ya da bu işte. Tanıdık geliyor, hani **kan ısınması derler ya, kanın çekiyor herhalde**.

¹⁹⁷ - Ya şey diyorsun, Alevi doğmak yetiyor?

- Tabii ki Alevi doğmak, hissetmek en önemli şeylerden birisi. Sonuçta ben kendimi öyle hissediyorum, bazen **ne olduğunu bilmediğin şeyleri de hissedebilirsin**. Bu da öyle bir şey. **Çok fazla açıklayabileceğim bir şey yok ama** ben öyle hissediyorum. Aleviyim yani, Alevi bir anne babadan doğdum, **o kültürle büyüdüm**. Bir de Alevilik deyince aklıma dinler, değil. Aklıma tek gelen şey türkü mesela.

¹⁹⁸ - Peki sen kendini bir Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musun?

- Bilmiyorum ama **sonuçta** kendimi Alevi olarak **görüyorum** yani.

- Neden?

- Çünkü **onun kültürüyle beslendim, ...**

- Alevilik deyince, Alevi insanlarımızı **diğer insanlardan ayıran bir kültür** var öncelikle, **inancın dışında**.

- Ne gibi şeyler?

- Yaşayış tarzı. İstanbul'da yürüdüğünüz zaman ya da kendi fakültemden örnek vereyim. Bir kişiyle tanıştığınız zaman bu kişinin Alevi olup olmayabileceğini insan tahmin edebiliyor. Görünüş, **tavır, konuşma biçimi, tip** gerçekten kendi ayrımını yapıyor yani.

¹⁹⁹ - Kendimi Alevi olarak tanımlıyorum, çünkü Alevi anne babadan doğdum desem. Kendimi Alevi olarak tanımlıyorum. Aleviliğin sadece bir din değil, kültür, **kendimi ait hissettiğim**, hem **içerisinden geldiğim bir toplum**, belki dini açıdan çok iyi yaşayamıyorum, çok değil çok nadir yaşıyorum diyorum, ama kendimi Alevi olarak kabul edebiliyorum, geldiğim toplumdan kaynaklı.

²⁰⁰ - Kendimi Alevi olarak **tanımlamıyorum** ama bu kültürün **çok fazla etkisinde** kalarak **büyüdüğümün farkına varıyorum**. Özellikle Sünni olan arkadaşlarımla karşılaştırmalar yaptığımızda, çok inkâr etsem de **o kültürün üzerimdeki etkilerini görüyorum** açıkçası.

...

- **Alevilerin iyi niyetliliğine çok fazla inananlardanım**. Yani çok gerekmediği sürece belli haller dışında, **kolay kolay kötülük yapamayacak, özde ve sözde iyi insanlar** olduğunu bilmem, o ilahi güce inancım daha şey oluyor. Yani bu kadar, insanları bir sorgu olmadan, bu kadar **temiz yürekliliğe** ikna etmek ve bunu onun gündelik süresi içinde başarmasını sağlamak. Anlatabiliyor muyum. En ufak yaptığı şeyden kildi kalbinden korkmasını sağlamak büyük bir başarı. Ve **çevremde gördüğüm, çok uzak illerden tanıdığım arkadaşlarda hep aynı şeyi görüyorum. Çok fazla böyle insan severlik var**.

²⁰¹ - Alevilik bitmez. Çünkü Alevilik bana **genetik kültür** gibi geliyor. Genlere işlemiş bir kültür çünkü bu benim inancım. Hümanizm genlere işlemiş bir kavram. **Alevi insanı en iyi kalpli** ve 1-0 iyi niyet anlamında önde görüyorum ben yani. Şer fikir geri planda. Şer, kurnazlıktan pek nasibini almamış bir kültür bu ve bu masumluluğu da devam ettirecekler gibi hissediyorum sadece. Diyeceksin ki kaç tane Aleviyle görüşüyorsun da bunu düşünüyorsun.

²⁰² - Alevilikte en hoşunuza giden şey ne? Gördüğün, yaşadığın kadarıyla

- Alevilik olarak, **yaşam tarzı biraz daha rahat** olduğu için, **daha serbest bıraktığı** için daha iyi. **Sünnilikte** mesela ibadet olarak, farz mı derler bir kız çocuğunun başının kapanması, bir erkek çocuğunun belli bir yaşa geldikten sonra istese de istemese de namaza zorlanması, oruca

zorlanması, **ibadete zorlanması**. Ama Alevilikte öyle bir şey olmadığı için biraz daha rahat insanlar.

²⁰³ - Aslında Alevilik bir bakımı da **yaşam tarzı, özgürüm, istediğim şekilde** hareket ediyorum, kimsenin hani bazı şeylerde **baskısına maruz** kalmıyorum. **Rahatım**.

- Peki tamam da, senin anladığın Alevilik nedir o önemli?

- Dediğim gibi, **rahatım**. Her şey çok güzel, **kimsenin baskısı yok**.

²⁰⁴ - Şimdi şunu söyleyebilirim. Bir kere köy ve şehirde yaşanan Alevilikler birbirinden farklı. **Köylerde insanlar bunun biraz daha dinsel, inançsal boyutunda**. İşte bugün **Sünniler Kuran-ı Kerimi onların kitabı** olarak görüyor. İnsanlığa inmiş evrensel bir kitap değil gibi. Ve o kitaptaki herşeyi uygulayarak Müslüman olduklarına inanıyorlar. Alevilikte **kitaplar, kalıplar yok**. Ve o dönemde anlatılanlarla, babaannem dedesinden, o da onun dedesinden öğrenmiş mesela. Böyle gittiği için onlar daha sıkı sıkıya bağlı. Fakat bugün **bizim şehirlerde yaşadığımız Alevilikler daha esnek**. Daha şehre adapte edilmiş, **daha rahat**. Ama şunu söyleyebilirim, o dönemden bu döneme Alevilik artık **daha rahat yaşamaya** başladı.

²⁰⁵ - Temel felsefe şu; **hiçbir şeyi yapmak zorunda olduğun için yapmıyorsun. Bu kadar esnek bir bakış açısı sunduğu için sana** hani en temelde iyi niyetle hareket edip, kendi vicdanının sesini dinleyip, hayatta doğrularını kendin oluşturup, yani yapıp ettiğin şeyler karşısında kendi vicdanınla baş başa kalıyorsun. Orada kendi ahlak yargıların ve kendi iyilik kötülük hesabın devreye giriyor. Onun dışında **her şeye esneklik gösterebilen bir felsefe**, bizim ailemizin içinde yaşanmış şekliyle böyle açıkçası. Belki de benim Alevilikten anladığım benim ailemin bana sunmuş olduğu kültür.

²⁰⁶ - Peki Alevilikte en hoşuna giden şey nedir?

- Biraz **kişiyi özgür bırakması**, kadına bakış açısı, zorbalığın olmaması. Birazcık daha özgür düşünceye hitap etmesi.

²⁰⁷ - Peki Aleviliğin şartları nelerdir? Hani var ya islamin şartları gibi mesela.

- Yok **Aleviliğin şartları diye birşey yoktur**.

- Yok mu böyle birşey?

- Yok. Yunus Emre felsefesi vardır mesela, ne ararsan kendinde ara demiş. Kişisel olarak **herkesin istediği şeyi yapabileceğini düşünüyorum**.

²⁰⁸ - Bir çok dernek var, farklılıklarını hiç biliyor musunuz?

- Hiç bilmiyorum. İçlerine katılmadığım için bilmiyorum, katılsam gözlemlerim ama katılmadım.

- İçlerine niye katılmıyorsunuz?

- **Nasıl katılayım. Vakit mi var, yorgun geliyorum**. Geçen sene ben 15 kilo verdim çalışmamdan dolayı, 15 kilo zayıflamıştım. Sabah 8'de iş alıyorum gece saat 10'da bırakıyordum.

²⁰⁹ - Fakat köyden kente göçtükten sonra insanlar daha çok **yaşam mücadelesine** yüzünü çevirdiği için Alevilikten uzaklaşıyor.

İnsanlar daha çok yaşam mücadelesiyle didiştigi için Aleviliği yaşanmadığını düşünüyorum.

²¹⁰ - Normalde o sevgi olayı, ama normalde şöyle düşünüyorum, şu anki olaylara bakışım, **bana o öğretilmemiş olsaydı, ben Aleviliği çok fazla böyle kendimi Alevi olarak tanımlamayabilirdim** diye düşünüyorum.

...

- Bunu da uyguladıklarını görüyorum, yani en azından benim çevremdeki **Aleviler mümkün olduğunca bunu uygulamaya da geçiyorlar**. Tabii şu şartlarda ne kadar geçirebilirse, çünkü **sonuçta bunlar bir sürü sorun da var, ekonomik sorun, bilmem ne**, hayatta bir sürü sorunla karşılaşılıyor Aleviler de sonuç itibarıyla. Bu sorunlar içerisinde ne kadar olabilirse, oluyorlar.

²¹¹ - Artık yok en açık şekilde söylüyüm. Eskisi gibi yok, **herkes artık geçim şeyine düştü**.

- Bu tür şeyleri takip eden ilgilenen insanlar var mı?

- **Kalmadı artık, herkes geçim derdine düştü, köyün içinde yaşlılarımız var artık**, dayılarımız, amcalarımız var, onlar da eskisi gibi değil. Yani **yeni nesil** dediğim gibi **daha modern, daha mantıklı** düşünüyorlar, **Aleviliğe tapmıyorlar**.

²¹² - ... bir toplumun içine girdiğim zaman Alevi olmakla ilk başta gurur duyuyorum, çünkü şeriatın getirmiş olduğu o zorlamalar, yasaklar, ... **kural tanımaz bir kişiliğim var biraz, belki de Alevi felsefesinin beni yakalayan noktası bu**. Her şeyi **gönlümden yapıyorum**, ibadetimi de gönlümden yapıyorum, benim tanımlamalara göre ibadet tabii. S

- En başında da söylediğim gibi, **siz bir bireysiniz ve siz hürsünüz**, kendinizi biçimlendirmek, nasıl biçimlendirmek istiyorsanız, Allah'la aranızdaki o yolu kendiniz öyle biçimlendiriyorsunuz. ...ama bu doğru mu, yanlış mı bilmiyorum, yapmadığın için, **sen çok günahlıksın, ceme gelmedin, muharrem orucunu tutmadın, bu denli yargılamalar yok** veya değerlendirirken, "Ulaş çok iyi Alevidir, muharrem orucunu sektirmez" gibi. Var böyle, köylerde, daha kırsal kesimde veya geçmişte vardır mutlaka, ama bugün yok.

²¹³ - Peki Alevilikte en hoşunuza giden şey ne?

- **Rahatlık**. Din, vicdan, rahat. İnsan **yanlış yapabilir** ama doğru yol bu diyorlar. Sen şunu yaptın kapanacaksın ya da işte şöyle günahın var oruç tutacaksın, şu bu öyle bir şey yoktur.

²¹⁴ - En hoşunuza giden tarafı ne Alevilerin

- En çok hoşuma giden tarafı ne biliyor musun? **30 gün oruç tutmamak. Camiye gitmemek, namaz kılmamak.**

²¹⁵ - Biz de **öyle bir şart yok**, ben sana açık söyleyeyim. Ben 5 senedir [dernekte] çalışıyorum. Geldiğimden beri 12 gün oruç tutacağım diyorum, **tutmuyorum**. Açık söyleyeyim yani.

²¹⁶ - Alevilik bu mu sana göre?

- Bana göre değil de, genel anlamda çok fazla şey yok, **yapılması gereken, yerine getirmemiz gereken bazı şeyleri var ama ne derece getiririz bilmiyorum**. Benim en fazla yaptığım 3-5 ayda bir kere ceme gitmek. Onun haricinde çok fazla yaptığımız bir şey yok.

...

- **Başkaları yerine getiremediği zaman dinden çıkıyor**, bilmem ne oluyor, başka şeyler oluyor. Ama biz getiremediğimiz zaman öyle bir şey yok. **Biz çünkü Aleviyiz, Alevi doğduk, rahatız, hiçbir problemimiz, sorunumuz kendi adımıza yok**. Ben mesela, üç ayda bir cemevine gidiyorsam **hiç gitmeyen cemevinden kovulmuyor**.

²¹⁷ - Çok küçükken bir kere tutmaya çalıştım ama yapamadım. Ama **o esnek olduğu** için, hiç orali olmadım. **Kimse kızmıyor, bedeli yok, yaptırımı yok** yani.

²¹⁸ - Yerine getirdiğiniz Alevi etkinlikleri var mı?

- Muharrem orucu tutan da var çevremizde ben şahsen tutmuyorum.

- Neden?

- Biraz şeye yani **oruca inanmadığım** için oruç tutmak yerine kendime **kimsenin malında, canında, namusunda gözü yoksa dürüst yaşıyorsam** bunun **oruçtan daha kutsal** olduğuna inandığım için tutmuyorum.

²¹⁹ - Muharrem orucunu da böyle mi sayıyorsun?

- Muharrem orucunu böyle saymıyorum. Daha doğrusu bildiğim kadarıyla o oruç değil de yas olarak biliyorum. Yani anlatılanlar öyle. **O da yapılmıyor mesela**. Bildiğim, duyduğum kadarıyla anlatılanlardan muharrem orucunda banyo yapmamak gerekiyor, etli yemek yememek gerekiyor, su içilmemesi gerekiyor, aynaya bakılmaması gerekiyor diye biliyorum. Ama bugün düşünsene İstanbul'da muharrem orucu tutan bir Alevi düşün. Banyo yapma nasıl yapmayacaksın bir belediye otobüsüne binip yarım saat yol gidiyorsun. Bunun standardı yok. **Bunu nasıl uygulayacaksın**. O dönemde yaşanmış bir şey.

- İbadetini yapmasan da Aleviyim diyor musun?

- Aslına bakarsan **diyorum ama yapmıyorum hiçbir şeyini**. Artık bizde de Alevi misin, Sünni misin diye **sorduklarında Aleviyiz diyorum**.

²²⁰ - Alevilik'te kutsal olan şey, değer. Yani nedir değer, işte Alevilikte **semahlar, deyişler**, bunların hepsi **değerdir**.

- Muharrem Orucu tutar mısınız?

- Benim eşim mesela 3-4 senedir muharrem orucu tutuyor. **Gönül ister ki biz de tutalım**, ama maalesef ki belirli şeylerini yerine getiremiyoruz.

- İbadetleri tam olarak yerine getiremiyoruz.

- Müsahiplik kavramını hiç duydunuz mu?

- Hayır.

- Ben kendim adıma, Aleviliği yeteri kadar temsil ediyor muyum, Aleviliğin kurallarını yeteri kadar yerine getirebiliyorum desem getiremiyorum. Ama **en azından Alevilikte dürüstlük hep ön plandadır**, biz de elimizden geldiğince dürüst olmaya çalışıyoruz, muhtaç olanlara yardım etmeye çalışıyoruz. Bu da bir nevi bir ibadettir.

²²¹ - Muharrem orucunu tutuyor musunuz?

- İlkokul çağlarında tutuyordum ama ondan sonra tutmadım. Ama hanım hasbelkader tutar yani. O Ramazan'da da üç gün tutar, muharrem orucunda da. Ben tutamıyorum.

- **Oruç tutmak çok önemli bir şey değil yani. İnsanları sevmek önemli.**

²²² - Peki siz kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz?

- Alevi **felsefesini benimsemişim**, özünde o var. Ama **fiiliyatta Aleviliğin gereklerini yerine getiremiyorum**. Bir ceme **katılmıyoruz, derneğe gitmiyoruz**. Yani onların özel günleri oluyor, helva günleri şu günü bu günü. Onları yapamıyoruz ama **ruhen öyle yaşıyoruz**.

- Ne dedim bak Alevilik bir felsefedir, yaşam biçimidir. Şimdi sen camiye gitmeyince Müslümanlıktan çıkıyor musun, bazılarına göre çıkıyorsun. Alevilik'te böyle bir şey var mı bilmiyorum ama bana göre Alevilik bir yaşam felsefesi. **Ceme gitmiyorsun diye Alevilik'ten çıkıldığını zannetmiyorum**.

²²³ - Peki senin yerine getirdiğin Alevi etkinlikleri var mı? Mesela Muharrem orucunu tutar mısın?

- **Yok çok ağır olduğu için.**

- Peki ceme gidiyorum dedin. Ceme mesela ne sıklıkta gidiyorsun?

- Ceme çok sık gidemiyorum. Bu sene içerisinde bir kez gittim. **Çalışma temposundan dolayı gidemiyorum**. Gitmek istiyorum ama koşullarımdan dolayı gidemiyorum.

²²⁴ - Muharrem orucu küçükken tutmuştum birkaç gün, daha sonra hiç tutmadım.

²²⁵ - Kendimi o anlamda Alevi olarak tanımlıyorum, ama sonradan gördüğüm şeyler var, Aleviliğin de çeşitli ibadet değişiklikleri diyeyim ona, hani Ramazan orucu değil de, Muharrem orucu gibi, bu tip ibadet şekillerini tam bilmiyorum hepsini de, **bunları uygulamiyorum** da. O bakımlardan şey olarak görmüyorum onları.

²²⁶ - Geleneksel şeyi öğrettim ben ona [çocuğunu kastediyor], aşureyi, tamam çok güzel bir adet, bayramlarımızı, ama **gereksiz geliyor bana işte 12 gün yıkanmamak**, ne bilim resmi ters çevirmek, bana göre bunlar çok saçma ve ben böyle şeyleri de öğretmem çocuğuma.

- Müsahiplik nedir biliyor musunuz?

- Hiç bilmiyorum.

²²⁷ - Müsahiplik nedir biliyor musunuz?

- Duydum ama araştırmaya zamanım olmadı.

- Mesela demin arkadaşınız arkadaşına musahip dedi. Nedir onun anlamı?

- Adam söylüyor abi, o diyor bu musahiptir, o diyor bu Alevidir, o diyor bu sosyalisttir, ama yaşam tarzına baktığınız zaman alakası yok.

²²⁸ - Alevilikde kutsal olan şeyler nelerdir?

- Haziran ayında **oruç tuttuklarını biliyorum**.

- Müsahiplik diye birşeyden bahsedilir, hiç duydunuz mu böyle birşey?

- Hayır duymadım.

- ²²⁹ - Alevilikde en çok hoşuna giden şey nedir?
- **Değişlerimiz, semahlarımız. İşte gidiyoruz cemlerimize.** O güzellik başka hiçbir şeyde yok. O da sonuçta ibadetimiz.
- ²³⁰ - Aklına Alevilik deyince ilk gelen figürler?
- İlk gelen figürler bunlar. Pir Sultan A bdal olsun, Şah İsmail, Hz. Ali.
- Neden bunlar geliyor?
- Çünkü, Alevilik deyince **saz, bağlama gelir, cem gelir.** Bunların içinde de bu kişiler sürekli geçer, bu kişilerin felsefesi geçer yani.
- ²³¹ - Ceme hiç gitmedim, TV’de gördüm. Toplu olarak yapıldığı için **sosyal bir ibadet. Bağlamayla birlikte** yapılması, iyi buluyorum, hoş.
- ²³² - Cemlere katılamadım, ama bilmiyorum, her yerde böyle midir bilmiyorum. **“Abdal Musa” diye bir aktiviteye** katıldım. Burada **müzik, saz muhabbeti** var zaten, **semah dönülmesi aktivitesi** var.
- ²³³ - Ceme katılıyor musunuz?
- Ceme katıldım. Yani öyle bir semahta, şurda burada.
Eşi - Sen ceme katıldın mı hakaten?
- Ya niye Tekir köyüne katıldım. **İzledik** ama ben yani **semahta, şurda burada falan bir şey yapmadım.** Çocuklar **Sivas katliamını canlandırdılar.** Isparta’nın bir köyüne gittik ceme nevrüz bayramı martın 21’i Hazreti Ali’nin doğum günü orada ceme katıldık. Karaoğlan Parkında **spor salonunda cem yapıldı.** Katıldık yani.
- Ne yapılır orada?
- Kurbanlar götürürler, keserler, cem yaparlar, dedeler konuşur. **Şamata şeyler** olur bizde daha farklı
- ²³⁴ - Peki siz bu etkinliklerden hangilerini yaparsınız? İşte ibadet ya da Alevilikle ilgili ibadetler?
- Ben cemlerde görev alan biriyimdir, işte o 12 hizmet denilen hizmetleri yapanlardan biriyimdir. İşte semah deriz, hem ibadet hem gösteri semahında, **ben semah dönerim.**
- ²³⁵ - Ne sıklıkla, ara sıra dediğiniz mesela?
- Mesela perşembe günleri olur, **kafamıza estiği zaman** bazen arkadaşlarla çıkıp gidiyoruz yani.
- ²³⁶ - Hacı Bektaş gibi yerlere gittiniz mi, ziyaretlere?
- Hacı Bektaş’a bu sene ilk kez gittim. Ama etkinliklerini beğenmedim.
- Neden?
- Şöyle beğenmedim. **Çok düzenli değildi,** sanatçı getirdiler işte, 3 gün boyunca insanlar hep ayakta izledi. **Çöpler, pislikler ne bileyim** ben artık. Tabii oranın belediyesi el atmış oraya. Umarım, inşallah seneye çok güzel bir şey olur. Yani çok beğenmedim.
- Cem’e bir kere katıldım. Tabii cemlerimiz tam şeye oturmadı, daha henüz. Bunu ben kendi dedemize de söyledim. Biliyorsunuz yerlerde çöküp oturuluyor. Yani katıldım, çok fazla da oturamadım dizlerimden dolayı, menisküs var dizlerimde. Dedim ki, dedem dedim bir **sandalıye, mandalıye** hani koysak da **daha modern bir cem** olsa.
- ²³⁷ - Aleviyim denir de, Aleviliğin neyini yapıyoruz. Orucunu mu tutuyosun, cemlerine katılıyor musun, ben hiç cem görmedim, bilmiyorum da, gitmiyorum da. Eşim, Hacı Bektaş’ta falan oluyor bazen gideriz de ne bileyim. Biraz onlar da şey gibi ya, nasıl diyeyim sana. **Tiyatro falan gibi geliyo bana.** Burada, Ankara’da daha bir değişik, köyde hiç görmedim de, tiyatro gibi geliyo bana.
- ²³⁸ - Ceme katılır mısınız?
- Ben bir kez Alevi köyünde katıldım. Çok da hoşuma gitti. **Samahlar falan oynandı,** çok güzeldi.
- Bizim Narlıdere’de geçen gün derman çorbamız vardı, bütün herkesin katkılarıyla, vaazlar verildi, kaymakam konuştu, samahlar oynandı, yaşlılar.
- ²³⁹ - Cemevlerini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Hiç cemevi gördünüz mü?

- Gördüm, **hatta gezdim içini. Dede mi diyorlar onların büyükleri.** Yani iyi. Kurban falan kesiyorlar. Yardımları falan oluyor. **Dans falan** vardı.

²⁴⁰ - Ne biliyorsunuz mesela bildiğiniz kadarı ne Aleviliğin?

- **Semah biliyorum** ama onun sadece bir ritüel olduğunu biliyorum.

- Nasıl bir ritüel?

- Ne zaman yaptıklarını bile bilmiyorum. Toplanıyorlar düğün törenlerinde mi kullanıyorlar ağıtlarında mı onu bilmiyorum ama semah onların ritüeli. Bir yakarmaları, bir ayinleri onu biliyorum. Onların diyorum çünkü hiç içine girmedim, hiç görmedim canlı olarak, ama onlara ait en çok bildiğim şey hümanist oldukları ve vermeyi çok iyi bildikleri almak yerine. - Cemevleri?

- Hayatımda **hiç cemevi görmedim.** Nerededir bilmem bile İzmir’de var mı?

²⁴¹ - Alevilik **İslamiyet’in Türklük** hali bana göre.

²⁴² -Bu konuda ben de inanıyorum, **Türklükten geldiğine.** Tamam, İslamiyet’e biz Hz. Ali taraftarları, Horasan’ın 30 kilometre aşağısından geçerken kabullendik, öz Türk boyuyduk biz de, onlar da 30 kilometre yukarısından; budur kaba taslak, aktardılar tarihçiler. Bildiğim kadarıyla böyle.

- Ben de **milliyetçi** bir insanım. Milliyetçilik şuyse, bugün bir savaş çıktığında, bu topraklar için evime pısıp oturmayıp da, bayrağımı alıp, göndere çekip, hurra diye Allah Allah diye koşturacaksam, ben milliyetçiliğin kralıyım, bu toprağı seviyorum, **Türk’üm, Müslüman’ım, Aleviyim, öz Türkçeyi kullanıyorum,** kendi dilimi kullanıyorum. **Bu topraklara sahibim, milliyetçiyim ve bunun için de, bunu korumak namına her şeyi de yaparım.**

²⁴³ - Olamaz. **Görüşleri sana yakın olur,** kabul edersin, saygı duyarsın. **Ama öyle ben Sünniyim, Alevi oldum böyle bir şey yok.**

²⁴⁴ - Mesela Alevi doğmak gerekir diyor musun Alevi olmak için?

- Yani, onu zaten demek isterim de. **Alevi olarak doğmak** gerekiyor.

- Doğmak ön şart diyorsun, ondan sonra şartlar var mı?

-O şartlarını bilmiyorum da, ben bir Alevi olarak çok fazla yerine getirememe rağmen, çok aşırı bilmememe rağmen bir Sünni’yle evlenmem herhalde. Bana göre şartlardan biri o olmalı. **Alevi olarak Sünni birisiyle evlenmem.**

²⁴⁵ - **Her gelen Alevi olamaz.** Mesela anne Sünni’yse baba Alevi’yse o çocuk tamamıyla olamaz. Ya da baba Alevi, anne Sünni’yse olamaz, mümkün değil. Ama anne baba Alevi olursa o çocuk Alevidir yani. Öbürü melez gibi bir şey oluyor yani, karışık.

²⁴⁶ - Alevi **anne babadan doğmak lazım.** Alevilik felsefesini belki benimseyebilirsin. Çok iyi insan da var, bu Aleviliğin güzel değerlerini benimsemiş bir sürü insan var, ben kendimi Alevi olarak görüyorum diyen, ama ne kadar inandırıcı, **Alevi aileden gelmesi lazım.**

²⁴⁷ - Kendinizi Alevi olarak mı tanımlarsınız?

- Hayır, insan olarak. **Irka** inanmam ben.

...

- Ya sorular hep Alevilik üzerine, ben dedim ben ırka inanmıyorum

²⁴⁸ - Nedir Alevilik peki?

- İnsanların hani Asya’dan geldiklerinde **göçmenlerin oluşturdukları topluluk,** mezhep olarak biliyorum.

²⁴⁹ - Alevi olmanın koşulları nedir, nasıl Alevi olunur?

- Şimdi olaya şöyle bakmak lazım Alevi bir dernek üyeliği değil, inanca tabi olmak. Alevi anadan babadan doğmak değil, Alevi anadan babadan doğarsınız, **kanını taşırsınız** ama Alevi felsefe ve kültüründen eser yoksa Alevi olamazsınız. Alevi ancak tanımlamaya çalıştığım bu kültürü yaşamakla olur. Bir kültür, inançtır. Eğer siz inanmıyorsanız, dini uygulamıyorsanız, içi boş cevize benzer. Cevizi ekerseniz biter, ama içi boş çürük bir cevizin bitme şansı var mıdır?

- Yani Alevi miyim ben diye kendinizi tanımlamak istiyorsanız elbette **Alevi birinden doğacaksınız ki bu kültürü öğreneceksiniz,** nasıl öğreneceksiniz? Ben Aleviliği kültür olarak

tanımıyorum. O kültür içinde doğup, büyüyecek ve özümseyecek. **Ana dilinizi nasıl öğreniyorsunuz. Böyle öğrenerek Alevi olacaksınız.**

²⁵⁰ - Aleviliğin şartları nelerdir, nasıl Alevi olunur? Neler yerine getirilirse Alevi olunur?

- **Alevi bir anne-babadan doğmak Alevi olmayı gerektirmez. Alevi gibi yaşayıp, Alevi gibi düşüneceksiniz..**

²⁵¹ - Peki sana göre Alevi olmanın koşulları nelerdir? Nasıl Alevi olunur?

- Arkadaşlarımın arasında Aleviliği böyle şey gibi görenler dahi vardı, Yahudilik gibi görenler vardı. Yani bir kişi Alevi olamaz, doğuştan, anneden babadan gelen bir şey olmalı diye görenler vardı. Ama ben böyle görmüyorum. O biraz daha **ırkçılığa kayıyor, Aleviliği ırk gibi görenler** vardı. Ben böyle görmüyorum. Bir kişi Alevi nasıl olur; **bence Alevilerin yaşadığı çevreye girerek, o kültürü yaşayarak olur.** İslamiyet'in 5 şartı mı vardı, onun gibi Aleviliğin 5 kuralı diye bir şey yok yani.

- Peki Alevi olmak diyorsun, o kültürün içerisinde yetişmekle alakalı diyorsun.

- Yetişmekle alakalı. **Ama dışarıdan gelen bir kişinin kolay kolay Alevi olabileceğini de düşünmüyorum. Olamaz yani, çünkü saçma gelir.** Bunlar zaten bilindik şeyler der, şudur budur der. Burada sen nasıl Allaha inanıyorsun der, bir şekilde bunu kabul etmesi çok zor gibi geliyor bana.

²⁵² - Alevi olmanın koşulu, bunu geçen de sordular bana, Alevi doğulur mu, Alevi olunur mu sonradan diye. Alevi **sonradan olunmaz** dedim, ama bunu niye dedim? Aslında çok bilmiyorum. Sonuç itibarıyla, benim gördüğüm, bunu **felsefi olarak görüyorum** dedim, benim bakış açımdan Alevi olabilir, herkes olabilir. Ama işte tam cevabını veremiyorum, ama sanırım, Alevi doğulur yani. **Sonradan olunur gibi gelmiyor** bana. Ama bunun somut şeylerini söyleyemeyeceğim, bilmiyorum.

²⁵³ - Ben şeye inanmıyorum, hakikaten buna inanmıyorum, **Alevi olunmaz yani, sonradan ben Aleviliğe gönül verdim, ben Alevi olacağım, yani bu şey değil ideoloji değil, okuyup olabileceğin, kendini geliştirip öğrenebileceğin bir şey değil ki. Bu kültürün içinde doğup, hiç farkında olmadan içine sindirerek geliştirebileceğin bir şey.** O yüzden böyle bir şey var. Mesela ben bir Alevi bir anne Sünni bir babadan doğma bir insanın Alevi anne babadan doğma bir insandan daha az Alevi olduğunu düşünebilirim.

²⁵⁴ - Asıl sorun ben bunu çok düşündüm yani. Bir insan doğarken nasıl oluyor Alevi doğuyor. **Sonradan Alevi olsa da ona Alevi diyemiyorsun yani.**

- Niye diyemiyorsun?

- Efendim benim içime siniyor ama ona diyemiyorsun yani. Bunun **özünde Alevi değildir diyorsun** ama Alevilik var yani. Aleviden kat kat iyi insanlar var yani bu kültürü gerçekten kabul etmiş insanlar.

- Bakın son zamanlarda Alevi bir ırk değil bir kere. Bakın gene bir şey deyim Hazreti Muhammed Hazreti Ali ile akraba değil mi? Amca oğlu.

- Damadı değil mi? Damadı.

- Torunları var mı? Var. Hasan'la Hüseyin onların torunu.

- Bunlar Arap mı? Arap değil mi bunlar? Buradan nereye geliyoruz. Biz de Türk'üz ama Aleviyiz. Demek ki **Aleviliğin ırkla alakası yok.** Her vatandaş Alevi olabilir bana göre. Öyle oluyor yani. Bir İngiliz rahat rahat Alevi olabilir bana göre. Aleviliğin bir şeyi var.

- Bir insan şimdi düşün ki Sünni bir insan, gerçi Aleviliği benimsese Sünni Ben Alevi olmak istiyorum dese bunun şeyi yok ki yani. Yeter ki ilginç bir şey. Sizin bu konuda bilginiz olması lazım. İnsan **doğuştan Alevi olmalı** yani. Sonradan Aleviliğin koşullarını kabul ederse olamaz yani nasıl olur bu?

- Dünyadaki bütün eline, diline, beline sahip olana Alevi diyemezsin

- Şimdi bu konular çok derin de Alevilik yani bir insan doğarken. Bilgi değil. Bana göre **doğuştan oluyor Alevi** olmak. Sonradan olmuyor ki.

²⁵⁵ - Peki nasıl Alevi olunur?

- Bunu şöyle yanıtlayabilirim. İki türlü. Birincisi normalde Anadolu Aleviliğinde Alevi olunmaz, doğulur inancı var. Benim bakış açımda böyle bir şey mümkün değil. Çünkü herkes **İslamiyet'i nasıl kabul ediyorsa** Aleviliği de kabul edebilir. Bence sonradan, Aleviler korktuğu için, kendi içinde yaşadığı için bir süre, uzun süre dağlarda yaşamışlıktan dolayı bir süre sonra kendi içinde çıkardıkları kural olarak düşünüyorum.

²⁵⁶ - Peki yani, o zaman Alevi sonradan olunan bir şey size göre. Alevi doğmak şart mıdır?

- Hayır değil, kesinlikle değil. Hiçbir din için değil ki, Alevilik için olsun. Yani **Alevi olmak için, bence Alevi olmak gerekli değil**. Yeter ki onun koşullarını yerine getirebilen insan olsun yani.

²⁵⁷ In English: **"This country is ours"**

²⁵⁸ In English: **"Atatürk, the Great Leader"**

²⁵⁹ - Atatürk'e nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Ben Atatürk'ü tarif etmeye çalıştım. Atatürk Kızıloğlu ocağından, bizden birisi. Dolayısıyla biz Atatürk'e 19. yy nin sonunda yaratılmış büyük bir deha ve hatta **seviyesini de Hazreti Ali'ye murtaza'den ayırmayacak kadar yakın görürüz**. Siz de görüyorsunuz **Hazreti Ali'nin resminin yanında Atatürk'ün resmi de vardır**. Etle tırnak gibi birbirinden ayırmaz, onları yaşatmakta kararlıyız.

²⁶⁰ - **Çok iyi bir lider**. Zaten Cumhuriyet'i kurmasından dolayı Aleviler ona kötü bakamıyorlar. Bir **kurtarıcı** gözüyle bakıyor. Çünkü özgürlüklerini verdiğini düşünüyorlar. Alevilerin içinde çok bir şey görmedim. Bir tek toplumda bilinmeyen Dersim olayı nedeniyle, Alevilerdeki cahillikten dolayı bir kızılan nokta var. Orda da tarih bilgilerimizin eksikliğinden dolayı. Dersim olayları 1938'de olmuştur. Atatürk'ün yatağa düşüşü 1937'dir. Son bir yılda zaten devlet yönetiminde Atatürk yoktur. Ama Dersim olaylarının Atatürk tarafından yaptırıldığını düşünüyorlar.

²⁶¹ - Atatürk'e nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- İyi bakıyorum çok. **İleriye gören, aydın bir insan**. Yüzyılları gören, **yüzyılların geleceğine yön veren**, akli düşüncesiyle yol gösteren bir insandır.

²⁶² - Bir komutandı, **liderdi**, laik Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin kurucusu, bugün bu şekilde laik Türkiye Cumhuriyeti diyebiliyorsak, **onun sayesinde**.

²⁶³ - Atatürk'e **kötü bir şey demek mümkün değil**. Neden? O olmasaydı biz bu düzeni kuramazdık, yaşatamazdık. Niye **çıkamıyor bir tane daha**, doğruları, yanlışlarıyla, hataları, sevaplarıyla Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni kurandır. Öyle güzel kurmuştur ki Askeriye'nin yardımıyla hala ayakta durabiliyor.

²⁶⁴ - Biraz çocukça olacak ama, **cumhuriyeti armağan eden**, onun ötesinde daha ilerden gelen bir isim olduğu için çok önemli.

²⁶⁵ - Hani dünyanın uydusu güneştir derler ya, ne bileyim ben onu **bir güneş** gibi. Dünya güneşe o kadar şey ya, bir aydınlatıyor, onun gibi.

²⁶⁶ - Atatürk **iyi bir lider**. Yani sonuçta bugünümüzü biraz da **ona borçluyuz** yani, hakikaten. Bugün eğer ben hiç saklamadan ben Aleviyim diyorsam bunu ona borçluyuz.

²⁶⁷ - **Atatürk'ü sevmeyen Alevi kesimi düşünemiyorum**. Büyük saygısı sevgisi var. Cumhuriyet'in olumsuz etkisi olamaz.

- Yani şimdi Atatürk'e **Ali'den daha akıllı** diyebilirim. Belli olmaz gerçi öbürünün tahsili yok. Tahsili olsa öyle olurdu diyebilirim.

²⁶⁸ - Ben tamamen **Atatürk aşığı biriyim**. Atatürkçülükse bu, kendimi tam olarak Atatürkçü de tanımlayamıyorum. Bence o da çok **içine zor girilecek bi tanım**.

²⁶⁹ - Türkiye'ye değil, **dünyaya gelebilecek nadide insanlardan** birisiydi.

²⁷⁰ - Yani, **idolümüz** o bizim. Onun erdemleri onun izinde gidebilmek çok önemli. O çok erdem sahibi. O bizim idolümüz hümanist insan sevgisiyle dolu, bağnaz değil fanatik değil. Bizim için öyle. Biz derken ben de Alevi mi oldum birden. Gizliliğe de bakınız.

²⁷¹ In Turkish: "Tam bir kabullenme yok"

²⁷² - Zaten **kuruluş aşamasında Alevilerin payı çok büyük**. Mustafa Kemal'in döneminde olsun ama bence iyi oldu. Cumhuriyet'in kurulması güzel bir sistem içinde kuruluyor ama daha sonra **şu an Cumhuriyet, Cumhuriyet mantığı dışında gidiyor** diye düşünüyorum.

- Peki Cumhuriyet'in kuruluşu Aleviler'e bir şey sağlamış mıdır?

- Bir nevi kimliklerini **biraz daha rahat** tanımlarını sağlamıştır. Çünkü Yavuz Sultan Selim'den sonraki özellikle Yavuz döneminde Alevilerin çoğu aşırı baskı ve korkuyla yaşamış. Cumhuriyet döneminde **biraz daha ön plana** çıkabilmişlerdir. Belki beş kişi değil de iki kişi daha kendine hitap etme şeklini bulmuştur

²⁷³ - Peki cumhuriyetin kurulması Alevilerin yararına mı olmuştur, zararına mı olmuştur ya da ne sağlamıştır?

- **İstiklal savaşını kim kazandı bir kere**. Atatürk niye batıda şey etmedi, doğuya gitti. Erzurum'a gitti, Sivas'a gitti. **Atatürk Alevilere güvendiği için** gitti oraya. Sanma ki, bunların öyle dediklerine bakma sen. Atatürk Alevilerin ölümüne gideceğini bildiği için, Atatürk doğuya gitti.

²⁷⁴ - Peki Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin kuruluşu Alevilere ne sağlamıştır, ne kaybettirmiştir size göre?

- Mesela Mustafa Kemal Atatürk bile ilk şeye gitmeden, **TBMM açıldığında Alevilere gidip**, Hacı Bektaşî Veli'de kalıp, **destek istemiştir** ve bu desteği de vermişlerdir Aleviler. Ve ilkelerine daha çok sahip çıkmışlardır.

- Peki Alevilere olan katkısı nedir, cumhuriyetin ilanının?

- Mesela **laikçiliğe, inkılapçılığa** bunlar kendi içlerinde yaşadıkları, yaşam tarzlarına daha uygun. Daha cumhuriyetçiler, ne bileyim ben öyle zannediyorum.

²⁷⁵ - [Alevileri kastederek] Zaten **onların sayesinde** kurulmuş. Onların yaşamı daha kolaylaştırmıştır. Kurulmasaydı, Yavuz Sultan Selim'in yaptığı aynı şey devam ederdi. baktığımız zaman evet, çok uzaklaşmış.

²⁷⁶ - Biliyorsunuz o zamanlar Hacı Bektaş'taki **Çelebi'yi, Atatürk bizzat** ziyaret etmiş ve Cumhuriyet'in kurulacağını, kendisine sohpet sırasında, **aralarında kalmak koşuluyla** söylemiş. Çelebi de kendisine biliyorsunuz Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda kullanılmak üzere bir teneke altın hediye etmiş. Aleviler, Cumhuriyetin kuruluşunda Kurtuluş savaşında her şeyleriyle, Cumhuriyetin kurulması için, Kuvayi Milliye'nin arkasında ve yanında olmuşlardır, ilk Kurucu Meclis Başkanvekili de Çelebidir. Kuruluş Savaşı mücadelesi veren birçok generalden, Atatürk'ün yakın çevresine kadar, **Atatürk'ün kendisi dahi Alevidir**. Kızıoğlu ocağındandır bunun belgeselleri televizyonlarda defalarca yayınlandı. Dolayısıyla **Aleviler Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin bizzat kuruculardır**.

- Aleviler, **insan yerine konmuş**, sorumluluklarını yerine getirirken hak talep etme dönemine gelmiştir. Yani Aleviler'in 2 Temmuz'dan sonra gelişmeleri vardır ama ondan önce yok mudur. Cumhuriyetle beraber **Alevilerin kazanımları** da olmuş. Tekke ve zaviyeler kapatılmasına rağmen Hünkar ocağı kapatılmamış. Dolayısıyla **onlara ayrı bir önem ve özen gösterilmiştir**. Ama **ondan sonraki, Atatürk'ün hakka yürümesinden sonraki olan süreçte** idareyi eline geçirenler, kendi çıkarlarını vatanın çıkar ve menfaatlerinin öne koyduğu için, Alevi hakları yine tirpanlamaya, tutuklanmaya, baskı ve zulm altına alınmaya, özellikle de asimilasyon politikalarının yoğunlaştığı 1950'lerden sonra, Alevi köylerine cami yaparak ve 1979'dan sonra Şiileştirme, Aleviler'i İran'daki Şiilere benzetme çalışmaları olmuştur.

²⁷⁷ - Bir kere, tekke ve zaviyelerin kapatılması, **aslında** Alevilik kavramına vurulan bir damga, ... **En çok bizim aleyhimize olmuş bu. Ama toplumun çağdaştırılması bizim rahat bir nefes almamıza sebep, yani bir yeri yıkarken de, güzel bir yerleri de yapmış, biçim değiştirmiş.**

²⁷⁸ - Türkiye cumhuriyetinin kuruluşu, sadece Alevilere değil pek çok insana iyi şeyler getirdi. Ben mesela cumhuriyetin kuruluşuyla birlikte, **Atatürk'ün devrimlerinin çok fazla yaradığını düşünüyorum** Alevilere. Ben her zaman şunu savunuyorum, Aleviler kendilerini geliştirmeye açık insanlar. Önerilerine bir fırsat verildiği anda inanın sonuna kadar kullanıyorlar. Çok ileriye götürdü, fakat cumhuriyetin ilanıyla bitmedi. Yaşanan işte maraş olayları, çorum olayları, sivas olayları, Aleviliği 10 yıl ileri götürüp 5 yıl geri götürdü. Cumhuriyetin ilanıyla bitmedi yani ilerleme ya da gerileme dönemi.

²⁷⁹ - Cumhuriyet kurulmadan önce Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Hacı Bektaş Veli dergahına gidiyor 3 gün orada kalıyor ve **feyzini oradan aldıktan sonra**. Atatürk'ün hayatını okursanız o da Selanikli ama Alevi **kökeninden gelen biri**. Ve Atatürk Cumhuriyet'i kurduğu zaman tüm medreseleri, türbeleri falan şunları bunları kapattı. **Sadece Hacı Bektaş'ı kapatmadı**. Yani o insanın felsefesine Atatürk daha çok değer veriyor. Ama Atatürk **Aleviler üzerinde bir baskı kurmadı**. Laik kurum. Dinle devlet bir araya gelmez. Herkes inancını yapar ama devletle bir araya gelmez. **Ama şimdi öyle değil.**

²⁸⁰ - Cumhuriyetin **tek şeyi**, bize **din ve devlet işlerinin birbirinden ayrılıp**, Aleviliği kendini bir yerde şey olarak, **tekke ve zaviyelere kapatıp**, nasıl **bize özgürlük sağladı**. Bundan **sonra size ihtiyacımız yok**. Ondan sonra siz kendi örgütlerimizi kurup, bu şekilde devam etme kararı alınmıştır. Çünkü cumhuriyetin kuruluşunda da, **Celalettin Ulusoy'a gitmiştir** Atatürk, ondan **gerekli desteği** almıştır. Daha sonra da milletvekili seçilmiştir zaten.

²⁸¹ - Türkiye Cumhuriyeti kurulduktan sonra, **laiklik geldikten sonra**, doğru **birazcık açılmış** olabilirler. Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin kurulmuş olmasının Alevilere sağladığı yarar bu olabilir. **Birazcık da kendilerini ifade edebilmeleri** olabilir. Onun haricinde bir şey sağlamış mıdır bilmiyorum yani.

²⁸² - Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu Aleviler'e ne kazandırmıştır, ne kaybettirmiştir?
- Atatürk döneminde hiç aksi bir şey okumadım. Atatürk döneminde Osmanlı'da eziliyorlar ama Atatürk döneminde **rahat etmişlerdir**. 50'li yıllara kadar ama. Demokrat Parti iktidarına kadar rahatlar okuduğumuz kadarıyla o dönemlerde yaşamamışlar. 50'li yıllara kadar kazandırmıştır, **51'den sonra kaybettirmeye başlamıştır**. 50'den sonra hiçbir faydası olmadığı gibi, **zararı** olmuştur. Eskiden istedikleri gibi cem yapabiliyorlar, kendilerini tanıtıyorlardı. Şimdi tamamen rant peşindeki insanlar yüzünden asimile ediliyorlar.
- Devletin Aleviler'le ilişkisi nasıl sizce?
- Bence **devletin bir sorunu yok, hükümetler soruyor**. Devlet Dairesinde size sormuyorlar **Alevi misin diye**. Ama mülakata göre alınan yerlerde soruluyor. Askeriye'nin gizli kapaklı, polislerin aldığı yerlere Aleviler'i geçiremiyorsun.

²⁸³ - Peki Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu Alevilere ne kazandırmıştır, ne kaybettirmiştir?
- Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu, Aleviler Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni kurmuştur fakat Aleviler'e bir dini özgürlüğü veya bir Aleviye, **Cumhuriyeti kurduğunda yaptığı fedakarlığı Cumhuriyeti yöneten yöneticiler Alevilere yapmamıştır**.
- Kazandırdığı şeyler olmuş mudur?
- Kazandırdığı mutlaka zaman zaman koruduğu şeyler de olmuştur. Dört dörtlük, cumhuriyet demeyim de cumhuriyeti yönetenler deyim. **Cumhuriyet hiçbir zaman ayrımcılık çağırmamıştır fakat yöneticiler** olarak farklı şeyler olmuştur. Diyelim bir üniversitede okuyan bir çocuğa yahut da resmi dairede Sünni olan bir insan Alevi olduğunu bildiği bir insanın işini yapmıyordu. Bunları yaşıyorduk biz.

²⁸⁴ - Kurulduktan sonraki süreç?

- Kurulduktan sonraki süreç için şöyle bir şey diyebilirim, aslında **Aleviliği kabullenememe** de var. Bizim o tarafta bazı köylere gittiğinizde, köy Alevi köyü ama bakıyorsunuz **köyün içinde cami** var. Devlet gelip oraya cami diyor. Bu Aleviliği kabullenmemek demektir.

²⁸⁵ - Osmanlı tabi şey İslam ülkesiydi, o dönemde de Alevilerin üzerinde baskı vardı, ama Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, şöyle söyleyeyim, **laik ülke diye kuruldu**. Ama uygulamalarına baktığınızda **Dersim isyanı** ve sonrası, daha sonra işte **Sivas katliamı, Maraş, Çorum**, bilenen katliamlar Alevilik üzerinde **yıkıcı etkiye** sebep oldu diyebilirim.

- Sağladığı şeyler şöyle olabilir; Sonuçta **laik ülke** olma adına kendini zorladı o da bir gerçek, belki **biraz daha hareket alanı** yaratmış olabilir ama burada bir çelişki var olması gerektiği gibi olmadı olay.

²⁸⁶ - Devlete bakışınız nedir? Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti'ni nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?

- Kuruluş dönemlerinde, 20'lerde evet bir devlet vardı, ama **şu anda iktidarların elinde şekil değiştiren**, ama adı Türkiye Cumhuriyeti olan bir devlet.

²⁸⁷ - Anadolu'daki Alevilerde şöyle bir kural vardır. Şunu anlatırlar tarih olarak 1985'e kadar en az mahkemeye giden toplum Alevilerdir. Kendi mahkemelerini kendi içlerinde, cemlerde yaptıkları için. Ama dışarıya karşı da korkak yetiştirildik. **Devlet gözümüzde Sünni bir devlet olarak görülüyor**. Bu yüzden de korkuyoruz. Korkmuyoruz dersek yalan olur. O bilinç alta var zaten. Şöyle düşünmüyorsun zaten, aklına bile gelmiyor, **çünkü devletten korkuyoruz**.

²⁸⁸ - Laik bir ülke olmasına rağmen **İslam** aslında **hiçbir zaman Türkiye'nin denliğinden dışına çıkmadı**. Bugüne kadar de her türlü, İslamiyetin kurallarını her türlü, nasıl deyim, belki yasada geçmedi ama toplumun geneline dayattı, medyasıyla olsun, **devlet politikasıyla** olsun, Milli eğitimiyle olsun, bu Aleviliğe **çok şey kaybettirdi**. Eskiden toplumlar kendi içerisinde kendi gelişimini sağlarken, şimdi devlet denilen aygıt fazlıyla girdi. Devlet vardı, ama toplumlar kendi halinde cemaat haline yaşıyorlardı. Ama devlet fazlasıyla hayatımıza girdi. **İslamiyeti** de harfiyen olmasa da **benimsediği için**, Bu Aleviler için eksi bir durum oldu.

²⁸⁹ - Devlete nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Bugün **bizim devletimiz yok**.

- Kimin devleti?

- Başkalarının devleti. **Emperyalistlerin devleti**. Bush kalk derse kalkar, otur derse oturur, tuvalete git derse gider afedersin osur deyince osurur.

²⁹⁰ - Peki Alevilerin en önemli 3 sorunu nedir size göre?

- Devletin Alevilere yeterince **ilgi vermemesi**. Yani **kendileri gibi görmemesi**, Aleviler de Sünniler gibi demiyorlar da, biz Sünni'yiz biz her şeyi yaparız, Aleviler çok daha azınlık, **söz hakkı fazla vermiyorlar**. Biraz da şey bence, **biraz daha fakir kesimden** diye. Çok zengin değiller herhalde, onun yüzünden mi. Bence sorunları bunlar olabilir.

²⁹¹ - Devlete güvenir misiniz?

- Yok hayır, **AKP** başta çünkü.

²⁹² - **En az devlete güveniyorum**. Güvendiğim bir kurum yok yani.

²⁹³ - Peki orduya bakışınız nasıl?

- Orduya güvenli olarak bakardık, hakikaten orada da bir **dejenerasyon** olduğuna inanıyorum. Adamlar, **kendi adamlarını her tarafa saldılar** yani.

²⁹⁴ Nerede bizim **çağdaşlarımız**, nerede bizim şeylerimiz. Bazen düşünüyorsun, artık onlar da aynen **devletin yaptığı gibi**, devletin söylediklerinin arkasında **gidiyorlar**.

....

- Çok güzel şeyler kazandırdı cumhuriyetin kurulması, kötü bir şey kazandırmadı yani. Zaten **cumhuriyeti Aleviler koruyor**. Ama bakıyorsun maalesef **devlet Alevileri satanist ediyor, her şeyden kovuyor**.

²⁹⁵ - Peki Aleviler bir azınlık mıdır?

- Ben kendimizi azınlık olarak görmüyorum. Nasıl azınlık olur, Türkiye'nin **28 milyonu** Alevi. Nasıl azınlık olur, 28 milyon Alevi azınlık olur mu. Senin azınlık dediğin, azınlık denen şey, bir iki milyon olur da ona azınlık dersin. Ama 28 milyon Alevi var, sen buna azınlık gözüyle, kimse azınlık gözüyle bakamaz.

²⁹⁶ - Peki sizce Aleviler Türkiye'deki azınlıklardan biri mi?

- Kesinlikle değil.

- Neden?

- Neden, zaten bizim sayemizde var olan bir toprak burası. Bunun aksini iddia eden yok. **25-30 milyon** bu ülkede Alevi.

²⁹⁷ - Sizce Aleviler Türkiye'deki azınlıklardan biri midir?

- Hayır.

- Ne kadar Alevi vardır sizce Türkiye'de?

- 20 - 25 milyon kadar.

²⁹⁸ - Aleviler azınlıklardan biri midir size göre Türkiye'de?

- Şu anda yolda çevirdiğiniz **her on insandan 5'i 6'sı** Aleviyse pek de azınlık sayılamaz. ha bunu gizliyorlar mıdır, gizlemiyorlardır.

²⁹⁹ - Peki Aleviler azınlık mıdır?

- Aleviler **çoğunlukta. Türkiye'de 25 milyon Alevi** insan var. Ama açıklamıyorlar.

³⁰⁰ - Peki sizce Aleviler Türkiye'deki azınlıklardan biri mi?

- Hayır, asla. Azınlık dediğin, 3-5 kişi olur, **20 milyon azınlık olur mu?**

³⁰¹ - Türkiye'de çoğunluk kim sizce? Çoğunluğu kim, azınlığı kim?

- Çoğunluğu Sünniler, **azınlığı Aleviler. Ama azınlık olarak da görmemek lazım.** Şu anlamda azınlık nedir, bir ülkede yaşayan küçük gruplardır. Aleviler küçük gruplar değildir aslında ama o konuma getirilmek isteniyor. Türkiye'de 70 milyon insan yaşıyorsa belki bunların **20-30 milyonu** Alevidir. Ama çoğu açıklayamıyor. Veya sahip çıkmıyor. Kendini o gözle görmüyor. O tür kişiler de var. Tanıdığım çevrede yok ama olup da söylemeyen var.

³⁰² - Sizce Aleviler bir azınlık mı?

- Hayır. Onu tanımlamaya başladım. Ta Osmanlı'dan, Selçuklu'dan bu yana Türkiye'de, Anadolu coğrafyasında **devletin kurucu unsurudur.** Selçuklu da dininden ve halkından koptuğu için yıkılmıştır. Yani aslı unsurundan koptuğu için. Yüce Atatürk'ün Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni kurarken Aleviler'i yanına alışı bunun örneğidir. Dolayısıyla **Aleviler bu ülkenin harcı, çimentosudur.**

³⁰³ - Aleviler azınlık mıdır?

- Vallahi bu azınlık meselesi adı daha çok Lazlara, Çerkezlere verilen ad değil mi? Bence **Aleviler azınlık değil** bir kültür. Bana sorsalar ben **herkesten daha çok Türküm. Özbeöz Türk benim.** Ama Aleviyim.

³⁰⁴ - Bu Alevilerin azınlık olmadığını söylediniz, peki sizce Türkiye'de kim azınlıktır?

- İşte **Ermeni, Rum dışardan gelen insanlar.**

- Neden azınlıktır peki sizce onlar?

- **Türkiye'de yaşayıp başka ülkeden geldiği için.**

- Azınlık olmanın kriteri nedir sizce?

- Yani bir Amerikan, bir İngiliz işte geldiği zaman topluluk halinde, olur yani.

³⁰⁵ - Ya ben **kimseyi azınlık olarak** görmüyorum. Adam Rum, adam Ermeni 500 senedir burada yaşıyor, azınlık olur mu ya. **O da bu memleketin insanı.** Ben cidden bu memlekete gönül vermiş,

hakikaten bu memlekette oturan, bu memleketi seven hiç kimseyi azınlık olarak görmüyorum açıkçası.

³⁰⁶ - Azınlık olarak düşünmemek lazım. Bu da Türkiye'nin mozaiğidir, zenginliğidir. **Yahudi gibi** görmemek lazım. Orta Asya'dan gelip Anadolu'da yaşamış insandır.

³⁰⁷ - Peki sizce Türkiye de azınlık var mıdır?

- Aslında **Türkiyede azınlık yok**, sadece kendini çoğunluk olarak adlandıran bir sınıf var. O kendini çoğunluk sayan Sünni kesime baktığınızda da, **onların da farklı etnik köklerden geldiği** biliniyordu.

- Ben azınlığı sayı olarak değil de, bakış açısı olarak değerlendirdiğim için. Alevilerden baktığınızda **Sünniler azınlık**, Sünnilerden baktığınızda, Aleviler, gayrimüslimler, Kürtler azınlık. Yani tamamen bakış açısıyla alakalı. Ne düşündüğünüzle alakalı.

³⁰⁸ - Peki Türkiye'de sizce Aleviler azınlıklardan biri mi?

- Azınlık değil. Azınlık derken şimdi azınlığın kelime anlamını bilmek lazım. Azınlık derken bu 1 milyon kişiye de mi azınlık deniyor, 20 milyon kişiye de mi azınlık deniyor. Ben azınlık görmüyorum. Sadece belki **daha önceki dönemlerde sindirildiği için kendisini çok rahat ifade edemediği için azınlık olarak görenler** olmuştur.

³⁰⁹ - Bence **Türkiye'de azınlık diye bir şey yoktur**. Bence azınlık değildir kimse, herkes Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde, zaten sınırlarımız çok büyük, **herkes rahat** bir şekilde.

- Azınlık mıdır peki sizce gayrimüslimler?

- Ya azınlık olabilir ama ben o kelimeyi ağızıma almak istemiyorum. Şimdi **başbakan da gaf yaptı Aleviler azınlıktır** diye. Yani değildir bence, **rahat bir şekilde Türkiye topraklarında yaşıyorlar**, göçmenlerimiz geldi rahat yaşıyor.

³¹⁰ - Peki sence Aleviler Türkiye'de azınlıklardan bir tanesi mi?

- Ya yok. Azınlık nedir, **bir ülkede çok tepki alırsın, dışlanırsın, bir şeyler yapılır seni sürerler sen o zaman azınlıksındır**. Türkiye'de hiç kimse sürülüyor, tepki alsa bile Türkiye'den sürülen birilerini gördük mü, görmedik. Bana göre azınlık nedir; bir grup insan vardır, **o çevreye ait olma hissi vardır, insanları kabullenmezler, dışlarlar**.

³¹¹ - Geleneklerle, kültürle, göreneklerle, bir baskıya maruz kalmadan bunları **idame ettirmeyi** azınlık olmak olarak görmüyorum yani. Baktığınızda Kürtlerde böyledir.

³¹² - Aleviler bir azınlık mıdır?

“Hayır, asla. Bizi öbek öbek obalara, şunlara, bunlara dağıtırsanız, bana iş vermezseniz, bana sınıf vermezseniz, atılmışlar, azınlık olan kısım, şu, bu diye, yoksa adam durduk yere hiçbir insana, şu nüfusun yarısını katledeyim de, azınlık kalsın demez. **Azınlık kavramı, ezilmiş kavramı** olarak algılıyorum ben onu. Biz az yararlandık, biz azınlığız, az yedik, az gördük, az okuduk, az içtik, ama çok hor görüldük, çok aşağılandık şu, bu. İyi olan, senin **yaşadığın hayat standardına göre biz azınlığız**. Bugün bu yaşıyor mu? Ben kendi adıma yaşamıyorum, **ben bir azınlık değilim şu an, rahat rahat kendimi ifade edebiliyorum**, Alevi olduğum için hor görülmüyorum veya bana farklı bir şey yapılmıyor, ayrıcalıklar görmüyorum, kötü bir şey görmüyorum, onun için azınlık değilim.

³¹³ - Peki Aleviler sizce Türkiye'de bir azınlık mıdır?

- Hayır, çoğunluktur.

- Peki Türkiyede azınlık var mıdır?

- Vardır.

- Kimdir azınlık olanlar Türkiye'de.

- Azınlık olan bölgeler, **eğitimsiz kalan**, işte baktığınızda güneydoğuda kalmış bölgelerdir.

³¹⁴ - Peki sence Türkiye'deki azınlıklardan biri midir Aleviler?

- Bu bence en önemli konu. Niye biliyor musunuz, yanılmıyorsam 2004 senesinde, AB sürecinde Aleviler azınlık diye AB dayattı, azınlıktır dedi. Biz azınlığız, bizim için o yasayı AB'nden geçirtmek çok önemliydi ama devlet, hükümet ve Cem Vakfı el ele verip bir şekilde Alevilerin de

kanına girerek bunu reddettiler. Şimdi mesela şöyle bir izlenim var, Anadolu halkında da. Diyorlar ki; yok canım biz azınlık değiliz, biz **bu ülkenin bel kemiği**yiz diyorlar. Sonuçta **bu ülke bize ne tanıdı ki ya da ne tanıyor ki**.

³¹⁵ - Aleviler azınlık mıdır?

- Bence şu an azınlık, **nitelik açısından**, şey açısından, **hakları açısından**, ama kâğıt üstünde azınlık olarak görülüyor zaten ve görülemez de herhalde, sonuçta bir ırk olarak, yani ırk olmadığı için, hani dini farklılıklar...

³¹⁶ - Peki Aleviler bir azınlık mıdır?

- **Kesinlikle, bir azınlığın yaşayabileceği her şeyi yaşıyorlar**. Devlet birebir Aleviliği kabul etmiyor. Bugün biraz AB ve derneklerinin, Sivil toplum örgütlerinin baskısıyla hakları kısmen, ucundan ucundan girmeye başladı. Kabul edilmiyor. Dolayısıyla gayet azınlık muamelesi görüyor. Fiziksel şiddete oldu, devlet tarafından olsun, çeşitli siyasi gruplar tarafından olsun. Aleviler bulundukları toplumda Osmanlı döneminden beri azınlık. Halen de azınlık.

³¹⁷ İnançları, alışkanlıkları, gündelik yaşamları, politika anlayışları çok fazla kentleşemeyen, kendi mücadelelerinin etrafında örgütlenip orada sıkışıp kalan, çok evrensel düşünemeyen, bu anlamda böyle bir mücadele vermeyen, geriliğe yani modernliğe giremeyip sürekli gerilik, ilkelik diye böyle inat eden bir toplum

³¹⁸ Biz Aleviler **kendi dilimizde ibadet ederiz**. Ama Sünniler Türkçe ibadeti yadsırlar. ... Bizdeki Alevi İslam inancı **Allah sevgisine** dayanır. Biz bir tek şeyden korkarız, sevdiğimizi incitmekten. Yoksa bizde cennette huriler verecek, altınlar gümüşler akan derelerde yaşayacağız, bu sebeple bu **rüşş [rüşvet diyecekken kesiyor]**, nimete sahip olmak için insan olmayız, onun gayreti içinde olmayız.

³¹⁹ - Aleviliği ayırt eden yanlar şunlar: ... Ezan vakti müziği kıs, hoca bitirsin, kapatsın, şimdi pin kodlu oldu biliyorsun, kapatsın, hadi müziği bir daha aç. Böyle yok, bunlar çok ticari geliyor bana. Ezan vakti dua etmeler. Niye ezan vakti dua ediyorsun ki, daha mı, artı 5 puan mı geliyor sana, niye yani? Bu **şekilci geliyor** bana, bu alışkanlıkmış gibi geliyor, **sabah sporu** gibi geliyor. Sabah gidip, gazeteni, ekmeğini almak gibi geliyor ve birçok insan bunu yapıyorlar. Bakmayın siz, Alevi olduğumuz için, bunları bize ibraz edemiyor bu insanlar, ama bunun eşek gibi farkında olduklarının da ben farkındayım. Onların aslında **bazen istemeden oruç tuttuklarını, o korkunun, vicdani rahatsızlık verdiğini**. Size bir bisiklet veriliyor, kullanım kılavuzu Kuran'ı Kerim diyor adam ve ben bunu böyle kullanacağım. Tamam, bunu böyle kullan, bu çok güzel bir şey, ama bunun aşırılığına kaçacağın anlar da olacaktır, kıracağın, düşüreceğin, saklanacağın, kaldırıp atacağın, isyan edeceğin, yıkayıp, temizleyeceğin, öpüp seveceğin anlar da olacaktır. **Sadece binmek için binme, onu hisset; bu yok Sünnilikte**. Alevilikte bu var. Bir kere **riyakârlık yok**. Ben kendi adıma söyleyeyim, kendimizi kandıramıyoruz, bırak, elime sahip olamadım, aldım işte onu oradan, bu sizi yakıyor. Siz burada yaşıyorsunuz belki cennet ve cehennemi.

³²⁰ - Valla benim gördüğüm, gözlemlediğim, **Sünnilerin daha çok dine korkuyla** bakmaları, **Alevilerin ise sevgiyle** bakmaları. Alevilerin de, şöyle düşünüyorum, dine inanmayan da bence çok sayıda Alevi var, ama ben dini bir yönü olduğu için söylüyorum. Dini yönünü de dinden korkmama, tanrıyı ve dini sevmeyi öğreten, ama gördüğüm kadarıyla, **Sünnilikte** daha böyle **korku baskın, korkutarak insanları bir kalıba sokma yoluna gitmiş**, bana öyle geldi yani.

³²¹ - Sünnilerden Alevileri ayıran en önemli şey nedir size göre?

- **Kıyafetlerindeki abartı ve Kur'anı Kerimi** çok böyle şey yapıyorlar. Nasıl desem, duayı **abartıyorlar**, her şeyi abartıyorlar. Yaşam tarzlarını, sanki gizli saklı yapıyorlar, evin içinde bir başka, dışarıda bir başka. **Gösteriş** zannediyorum.

- Düşünceleri. Çok abartılı düşünüyorlar. Her şeyi kendilerine göre yontuyorlar diyeyim. Çok eleştirirler. Duaları mesela sen okursun, onların ki daha böyle şey geliyor, sanki onlar çok daha biliyormuş gibi.

³²² - Peki aralarında ne fark var sizce?

- Bizde kesinlikle, en basiti, Aleviler kesinlikle camiye gitmiyor. Bize göre ibadet camide değil, her yere olur, evinde de ibadet yapabilirsiniz. Onlarda camiye giriliyor, işte bir sürü insan giriyor. O insanın **hır mıdır hırsız mıdır, kopuk mudur**. Ama bizde öyle bir şey yok. İnsan girdiğinde o insanın nasıl bir şeye sahip olduğunu **görüntüsüyle, kişiliğiyle** anlıyor. Daha farklı **yaa**. Bizim daha farklı.

³²³ - Gördüğünüz kadarıyla

- Gördüğüm kadarıyla Sünnilerin içinde de mesela benim arkadaşlarım var dört dörtlük. Aleviden de üstün insanlar var. Ama **Sünni insanların yüzde 70'i aynı kefeye konacak bir toplum değil**.

- Neden?

- **Çok menfaatçi, çıkarıcı. Dolandırıcı, sahtekar, kandırma yönünden** her yönüyle her şeyi var. Alevi toplumunda yok mu, onda da var. Ama bu sayılı. Onlar da çoğunluk.

³²⁴ - Peki Sünnilerden Alevileri ayıran en önemli şey nedir sizce?

- Bugüne kadar gördüğümde yola çıkarak şöyle bir şey söyleyebilirim. Aleviler **pek çok Sünni insana göre çok daha çağdaş** ve her şeyin sadece insanda bittiğini çok yıllar önce öğrenmiş bir insan grubu diyebilirim.

³²⁵ - **Sünnilerden farkımız çağdaşlık**. Biz çok çağdaşız yani.

³²⁶ -- Mesela ilk göze çarpan şeylerden birisi **isyankardır**. Yani komik gelebilir ama bizim ruhumuzda var. Yeri geldiğinde her şeyi elimizin tersiyle itip, bazı şeylere itiraz edebiliyoruz. Ama diğer mezhepteki arkadaşlarda öyle değildir. Bugün mesela büyük oranda cemaatleşme falan var. **Onların başındaki insan ne yol gösteriyorsa o, onun dışına çıkmıyorlar ki**. Alevilikte böyle değil.

³²⁷ - Mevcut iktidar ülkeyi **ılımlı İslam devletine dönüştürme, laikliği yıkma, yobazlaştırma, çağın gerisine götürme çabası** içinde.

³²⁸ - Hükümetin tutumu, **dinciliği ön plana** çıkarması, Türkiye'nin kutuplar oluşması Aleviler için tehlikeli.

³²⁹ - Anavatan iktidarından beri. Demirel'de bu kadar aleni yapılmıyordu ama Anavatan'dan beri bir son yıllarda daha da artarak, **şeriata özlem, İranlaşma, Arabistanlaşma** var.

³³⁰ - Ben kendimi Alevi olarak tanımlıyorum, diyorum ki kendi kendime zaten soruyorum bunu, iyi ki de Alevi doğmuşum, çünkü etrafımdaki **yobazları** gördüğüm zaten çok üzüldüğüm, özellikle de bu şafi Kürtleri, ben Kürtleri ayırmıyorum, dışlamıyorum ama mesela abdestli iken küçük bir erkek çocuğuna bile bayan elini vermiyor. Bunları da görünce kendi kendime diyorum ki **iyi ki de Aleviymişim, yani gericiliğimiz yok**.

- Aleviliğin en güzel yanı bizim çağdaş olmamız. Dedim ya, **bizim gericilerimiz bile o gerici, yobazlardan daha iyidir**. Bin kat daha iyi görüyorum ben. Çünkü onlar daha bir gerici.

- **Sünnilerden farkımız çağdaşlık**. Biz çok çağdaşız yani.

³³¹ - Bana sorarsanız **çok büyük bir dincilik tehlikesi** var. AKP'nin öncesini biliyorum. Bunların biri başbakan diğeri cumhurbaşkanı oldu. Bunların ta öteden beri **bir bağnazlığı** var yani. ...

- Tehlike ne?

- Türkiye İran'a döndüğü anda yani olay şu dinin **bağnazlığından** dolayı bu ülke büyük sorunlar yaşayabilir, İran'a dönüşebilir. Bu bence **İslamiyet'i biraz geri kalmış bir din** olarak görüyorum. Hristiyanlığı daha iyi görüyorum. Daha modern bir din.

³³² - Sonra hoşuma giden bir şey oldu, Aleviyim, sizden değilim falan demek. Bu şey gibi, Türkiye'de Ermeni'yim demek gibi bir şey. **Aleviyim deyince kendimi Türkiye'nin geriliğinden uzaklaştığımı hissediyorum nedense. Sizden değilim ben**. Ben de etnik olarak farklı olmasam da aslında sizden o kadar farklıyım yani.

³³³ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

-
- Kendi içlerinde parçalanmış olarak düşünüyorum. İslamiyet'in hoşgörü kısmını unutmuşlar. Kendi kuralları içinde dönemiyorlar.
 - Başka bir değerlendirmeniz var mı? Nasıl bakarsınız Araplar'a.
 - Sert görüyorum açıkcası. Yani **koyu, katı**. Yani **yobaz** olarak görüyorum, şeriatı çok farklı yaşıyorlar.
 - Peki AKP'ye bakışınız nasıl?
 - İyi değil. Çünkü mesela **Arap tabiyetini** aşırı derecede uç noktada yaşatmak istiyorlar diye düşünüyorum.³³³

³³⁴ - Anadolu'daki uygulandığı da bu yaşam şeklini geçmişteki kendi kültürleri ile yoğurarak özümseyip, kendi dillerinde, ana dillerinde, **Arapça hegemonyası** altında kalmadan kendi dilinde yaşama şeklidir.

- Peki Araplar'a nasıl bakıyorsunuz? Ne geliyor aklınıza?
- **Tembellik** gelir benim aklıma. Araplar aslında tembel gibi görünseler bile İslamiyet'i aslında kendi babalarının malıymış gibi kullanarak, dolayısıyla Peygamber efendimizin Arabistan yarım adasında yaşamış olmasından ve Kuran'ın da Arapça inmiş olmasını da kanıt göstererek İslam'ın Arap dışında yaşanmadığı kanısında olan insanlar. Dolayısıyla **Arap emperyalizmini** dünyaya yayma istediğinde olan insanlar. Maalesef ülkemizdeki Sünni İslam inancı da bu teze hizmet eder durumda. (...) **Kendilerini İslam tarif eden anlayışla bağnaz, gerici zihniyetle İslam'ı Araplaşma olarak görmekte**. İşin acı yanı da bu.

- ³³⁵ - Peki Araplar dediniz Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Araplar hakkında **biraz olumsuzum iyi bakmıyorum**. Ben gidip gördüğüm için **insanlara davranışları, hoşgörüsüzlükleri** gözle görünen tespit edilmiş bir şey.
 - Nerelere gittiniz?
 - İran, Irak, Suriye'ye, buraları gördüğüm için. İnsan olarak saygı duyuyorum da **Arap kültürü** olarak insanlara bakışı olarak **pek olumlu bakmıyorum**.

- ³³⁶ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Araplar **çok gerici** insanlar. Yani **sevilmeyen**, ne diyeyim ben bilmiyorum yani.
 - Sizin fikriniz, Arap deyince aklınıza ne gelir mesela?
 - **Hiç hoş olmayan şeyler** gelir yani. **Gericici**, ne bileyim ben. Hâlâ da öyle değil mi yani, görüyoruz. Adamlar hâlâ, **milletin elini, kolunu kesmekle**. Gerçekten öyle

- ³³⁷ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Yaşadığım yerde Arapları ne bileyim, **uzun entari giyen, kapkara böyle şey** yani, ne bileyim.

- ³³⁸ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Hiçbir şey düşünmüyorum. Bence **veryüzündeki en gereksiz insanlar** Araplar.

- ³³⁹ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Hiç sevmem kendilerini. **Pis kokuyorlar**.
 - Neden sevmiyorsun?
 - Nedenleri çok fazla, **katiller, düşmanlar**.

- ³⁴⁰ - Peki Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- **Sevmiyorum**.
 - Onların yaşam tarzı, kültürüyle ilgili çok fazla bir bilgim yok da. Benim ki biraz **tamamen önyargı**. **Arapçayı hiç sevmem, nefret ederim**. Diyeceksin onu neden sevmiyorsun, Kuranı Kerimden mi sevmiyorsun. **Bilmiyorum bir şekilde sevmiyorum**. Bana **itici** geliyor. Böyle ilk baktığında bir şey hoşuna gider ya da gitmez öyle bir şey. **Kendimi bildiğimden beri Arapçayı, Arapları sevmiyorum**.

- ³⁴¹ - Genel olarak araplarla ilgili düşünceleriniz nelerdir?
- Bakış açım **olumsuz genel olarak**, yani geçmişten kaynaklanan bir olumsuzluk. Çünkü kurtuluş savaşı döneminde yapmış oldukları ittifaklar ya da **arkadan vurma** gibi bir olayın içine

girmelerinden dolayı olumsuz bakıyorum. Yani bugün baktığınızda paranın içinde yüzdüklerini görüyorsunuz. Ama **bilimsel veya kültürel açıdan herhangi bir zenginlikleri yoktur**.

³⁴² - Araplar hakkında, Üniversiteye gelmeden önce, daha doğrusu bir Arap tanımadan önce, **ilkellik, evden çıkmayan kadınlar**, gibi şeyler gelirdi. Buraya gelip farklı Araplar'ı **taniyınca bu yıkıldı**. Ama Araplar deyince hala var naparsanız yapın hani **bellegimize yerleşmiş**.

³⁴³ - Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsun?

- **Çok hazzetmiyorum** ya.

- Neden?

- İnandığım dünya görüşlerine uzaktan yakından alakası yok bir kere, onun için. Kültürel olarak da öyle, alışkanlıklar yaşayış biçimleri, **İlkel** olduklarını düşünüyorum. Mesela burada önyargı olabilir, bir milleti aşağı görmek gibi olabilir ama bugün Sünnilerin Arap kökenli, Arap kültürünün devamı olarak görürsek Sünnileri, onlarda beğenmediğimiz şeyler aslında bizim hor gördüğümüz, ilkel bulduğumuz, **medeni bulmadığımız, modern bulmadığımız davranışlar**, düşünce kalıpları.

³⁴⁴ - Başörtüsü türban sorununa nasıl bakıyorsunuz?

- Türban Başbakanın söylediği gibi **bir simgedir**. Ama Türkiye'de **başörtüsü sorunu yoktur**. Mesela bizim **bacılarımız, kendi ailemizde** kapananlar da var. (...) Türban sanki Türkiye'de siyasi şey haline geldi. **Oy peşinde koşmak için** türbanı gündeme getiriyorlar.

³⁴⁵ - O çerçevede tartışılan başörtüsü konusuna bakışınız nedir?

- Bu tamamen, bence bunların hep **içten fethetmeye çalışan düşmanların** işidir, bence bu tamamen **ABD'nin oyunudur**.

³⁴⁶ - Başörtüsü türban sorunu hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

- Bence şu son olaylarda öyle güzel onlan göz boyandı ki, insanların tepkisini oraya çekilip başka şeyler halloluyor. İnsanlar onla şey yaparken, AKP yapacağını yaptı, zamları konurdu, askerlerimiz gene şehit oldu. Başörtüsüne karşı değilim, herkes özgürdür kapatmak isteyen kapatır, ama türban öcü gibi ona tamamen karşıyım.

³⁴⁷ - Bence tamamen **bir malzeme**, çok iyi bir malzeme reel sorunların üzerini örtmek için sürekli sürekli kullanılan, yakın dönemde verimliliği yitirecek.

³⁴⁸ - Türban meselesi?

- O tamamen Türkiye'nin bir ayıbı. Bundan 10-15 sene önce. İmam hatiplerle ilgili **tamamen siyasi içerikli**. Başı bağliya niye bir şey demiyorlar, türbanı adamlar **tamamen bayrak** olarak görüyorlar, göze batmak için. **Kullanıyorlar, resmen kullanılıyorlar**.

³⁴⁹ Başörtüsü olabilir ama **türban diye bir şey yoktur**. Onların kendi çıkarttığı bir şeydir. Hiç kimse de bana türbanın var olduğunu kanıtlayamaz, ben inanmıyorum.

³⁵⁰ Başörtülü görünce midem bulanıyor. Benim altıncı hissim çok kuvvetlidir, ne bileyim midem bulanıyor onları görünce. Gösteriş meraklısı, sırf desinler gibi. Öyle hissediyorum, bazen kusmam bile geliyor.

³⁵¹ - Başörtüsü türban meselesi

- Bu ülkede medeni kanun varsa sen buna uymak zorundasın. Bu 1923'te Anayasa'ya değişmez bir madde olarak konmuşsa. Sen sokakta başörtüsü ile dolaşırken kimse sana demiyor niye geziyorsun. Ama **yarasa gibi çarşaf**.

³⁵² - Türban meselesi peki?

- Kesinlikle katılmıyorum türbanın üniversitede serbest bırakılmasına.

- Neden?

- Şimdi türban, **yarın peçe**, sonra Taliban kostümü, burka.

³⁵³ - Peki başörtüsü, türban konusuna yaklaşımınız nedir?

- Adamlar bunu tuttu, inansa da inanmasa da parayla, pulla. İşte altın dağıtıyorlar neler yapıyorlar, akıl almaz şeyler yapıyorlar ve taraftar topluyorlar yani. Buna çok inandıklarından, yani yapan insanlar da çok **inandığı için yapmıyor**. Akım gibi bir şey oldu yani.

³⁵⁴ - Peki başörtüsü, türban sorununa nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Onu da yine AKP yaptı. Önceki gibi bir bakış açısı olmuş olsaydı, **herkes türban değil de, başörtüsü zaten takıyordu**. Başörtüsü takmak bana göre anormal bir şey değil ama onu farklı boyutlara getirip de türban olduğu zaman işin rengi değişiyor. Herkes de takabiliyor, başörtüsü takmak bana göre önceden **dini bir simge** değildi ama artık bu bir simge haline dönüştü.

³⁵⁵ - Peki bu türban sorunuyla ilgili düşünceleriniz neler?

- Ya baktığımızda o üniversiteye girmeye uğraşanların **yüzde 90'ı dini inanç için yapmıyorlar bunu**.

³⁵⁶ - Başörtüsü, türban sorununa nasıl bakıyorsun?

- Bence takılabilir. **Takmak isteyen taksın**. Biri gelip, bir Alevi'ye sen başına tak demesiyle, sen başını aç demesi aynı şey. **Ama** şöyle bir gerçek de var, bir ara gündeme çok geldi ya, **mahalle baskısı**, bunun bir de toplumsal baskısı var. Türban konusu bu noktaya geldi yani. Bunu takan kişiler **kendi istedikleri için takmıyor**, bir de bunun çevrede oluşturulan bir baskısı var..

³⁵⁷ - Bu başörtüsü, türban meselesine bakışınız nedir? Bir sorun var mıdır sizce?

- Tamamiyle özgürlükçü bakıyorum ben.
- Mesela kamu kurumlarında serbest olmalı mı?
- Yani şimdi, böyle bir sistemde **biraz zor**. Bugün **okullarda da zor**.
- Sizce serbest olmalı mı olmamalı mı?
- Olmalı diye düşünüyorum **ama ipin ucunu kaçıracaklar**.

³⁵⁸ - Türban sorununa nasıl bakıyorsun?

- **Türban sorunu, yani şunu diyemiyorum, isteyen türban taksın, istemeyen takmasın diyemiyorum**. (...) Nerelerde kapanılmalı, nerelerde kapanmamalı? **Ben çalıştığım yerde türbanlı kişiler olsun istemiyorum. Diğer yerlerde de istemiyorum yani**.
- Nerede kapalı olabilir peki?
- Çalıştığım yerlerde, ben açıkçası bu anlattığım şeyler belki başta tutarlı geliyor, ama sonuçta ben kendim olarak bunu istemiyorum, **hiçbir yerde istemiyorum**.

³⁵⁹ - Türban?

- Bir ara nasıl bakıyordum biliyor musun? **Tam bir Alevi saflığı**, yani ya kardeşim **ne olacak, girsin üniversiteye** bu adam. Üniversiteye girmesiyle sanki şeriatı mı getirecek bunlar, o kadar güçlü değiller, gözüyle bakıyordum. Tabii son günlerde bunların şey olduğunu görünce, istedikleri bu şeyin çok masumane olmadığı fikrine kapılınca, ben de **artık kesinlikle ve kesinlikle girmeyecek üniversiteye, girmemesi gerekir** gözüyle bakıyorum. Bunun **faşizan bir tavır olduğunun farkındayım** aslında, ama bunun siyasal kısmıyla ilintilendirdiğinde gerekli olduğunu düşünüyorum.

³⁶⁰ - Türban meselesi?

- **Kesinlikle karşıyım**. Yani türbanın Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne **yakışmadığını**, asla **çağdaş olmadığını** tamamen **dini bir simge** olduğunu kesinlikle kabul etmek gerekiyor. Türkiye'nin gelişmesinin önünde görüyorum.
- Ne yapmalı peki?
- **Kaldırılmalı, Yasaklanmalı**. Çağdaş giyinsin.

³⁶¹ - **Başörtüsünü bizim annelerimiz de takıyordu, teyzelerimiz de takıyor**. Ama bunu bir **simge** olarak, dışarıya **mesaj vermeye** çalışıyorlarsa buna karşıyım.

³⁶² A Sünni is for Alevi an abjected object for many times. Every Alevi thinks that Sünnis have always been against them. This is like what Volkan (1997, p. 36) called a "chosen trauma." A chosen trauma describes the mental recollection of a calamity that befell a group's ancestors and

includes information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thought. Religious and cultural rituals and ritualistic observances of anniversaries can serve to sustain the trauma and feed into the continued demonization of the other while sacralizing the self. Through the use of symbols, memories, myths, and heritage, the attempt is to trace the (constructed) genealogy of an identity group back to a specific place, time, and ancestor in order to derive an ideological lineage and to provide a guide for future actions.

³⁶³ According to Eyuboğlu, while the word “cem”, written with the Arabic letters *cim-mim-ayn*, means meeting, gathering together, amassing; the cem in Alevism comes from Persian. In Iran myths, cem is the name of the *kisra* (the sultan) who gets the wine and organizes the get-together. In the old Zarathusrian religion of Iran, in the name of this *kisra* rituals are practices in certain months, people gather, drink wine, sing and play, read poems and play games. In Persian, this ceremony is called “ayin-i cem” (Eyuboğlu, 1997; 43). Eyüboğlu further adds that the Arabic word “cem” and the Persian word “ayin” are synonymous, so with the phrase “ayin-i cem”, one does not mean the Arabic “cem” (Eyuboğlu, 1997; 44).

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Kısaca sizi tanıyabilir miyiz? Ne zaman nerde doğup, büyüdüünüz? Eğitim durumunuz nedir? Çalışma yaşamınızdan bahseder misiniz?
2. Nerelisiniz? [Eğer köy kökenli ise] Ne kadar köyde yaşadınız? Ne sıklıkla gidip gelirsiniz? Köyde kimleri görürsünüz? Bağınız sürüyor mu? Şehirdeki köylülerle görüşür müsünüz?
3. Çevrenizde Aleviler var mı? Ne kadar görüşürsünüz?
4. Alevi olmayan arkadaşlarınız var mı? Alevi olduğunuz biliyorlar mı? Öğrendiklerinde tepkileri nasıl oldu?
5. Kendinizi Alevi olarak tanımlıyor musunuz? Neden?
6. Size göre Alevilik nedir?
7. Alevilik bir din midir? Neden?
8. Alevilik İslamiyetin bir parçası mıdır?
9. Alevilik bir mezhep midir? Neden?
10. Sünnilerden Alevileri ayıran en önemli şey nedir?
11. Ateizme nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
12. Alevilik Türk'lere özgü bir şey midir?
13. Alevilerin vatanı neresidir?
14. Araplar hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
15. Alevilikte en hoşunuza giden şey nedir?
16. Sizce Aleviliğin en önemli kişileri, figürleri kimdir ya da kimlerdir? Neden?
17. Hz. Ali sizin için ne anlama geliyor?
18. Size göre Alevilikte kutsal olan şeyler nelerdir?
19. Tenesühe/don değiştirmeye/ruh dolaşımına inanıyor musunuz?
20. Size göre Alevi olmanın koşulları nedir? Nasıl Alevi olunur?

21. Aleviliğin şartları nelerdir? Sizin katıldığınız, yerine getirdiğiniz Alevilik etkinlikleri neler? Hangi sıklıkla?
22. Alevi TV'lerini izliyor musunuz? Nasıl buluyorsunuz?
23. Alevi olduğunuzu ilk ne zaman ve nasıl farkına vardınız? Aileniz size Aleviliği anlattı mı?
24. Ailede Alevilikle kim daha ilgili?
25. Çocuklarınıza ya da çevrenize Aleviliği tanıtıyor musunuz? Nasıl?
26. Alevi olduğunuz hiç sakladınız mı? Neden?
27. Başınıza Alevi olmaktan kaynaklı ne gibi sorunlar geldi?
28. Bu güne kadar Alevi olmanızdan kaynaklı yaşadığınız sorunlarda hukuksal yollara başvurduğunuz oldu mu? Evetse, neler oldu? Hayırsa neden?
29. Sizin gördüğünüz, duyduğunuz kadarıyla son 20-30 yılda Alevilikte neler değişmiştir?
30. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşu Alevilere ne sağlamıştır, ne kaybettirmiştir?
31. Atatürk'e nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
32. Sizce Aleviler Türkiye'de azınlıklardan biri midir?
33. Türkiye'de ne kadar Alevi vardır?
34. Kimler azınlık bu ülkede? Neden?
35. Alevilerin en önemli 3 sorunu nedir? Nasıl çözülürler?
36. Diyanete bakışınız nedir?
37. İmam hatip liselerine bakışınız nedir?
38. Cemevlerini nasıl görüyorsunuz?
39. Din derslerine bakışınız nedir?
40. Musahipliği biliyor musunuz? Sizin ya da çevrenizin deneyimi var mı?
41. Dedeliğe nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
42. Dedeler de devlet tarafından Alevilerin dini adamları olarak kabul edilmeli ve görevlendirmeli midir?
43. CHP'ye bakışınız nedir? CHP'nin Alevilere tavrını nasıl buluyorsunuz?
44. AKP'ye bakışınız nedir? AKP'nin Alevilere tavrını nasıl buluyorsunuz?
45. Başörtüsü/Turban sorununa yaklaşımınız nedir?
46. MHP'ye bakışınız nedir?

47. Milliyetçiliğe bakışınız nasıl?
48. DTP'ye bakışınız nedir?
49. Kürtlere nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
50. Türkiye'nin AB'ye adaylığı sürecini nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Siz üyeliğe olumlu bakıyor musunuz?
51. AB süreci Alevileri nasıl etkilemiştir?
52. Devlete bakışınız nasıl?
53. Orduya bakışınız nasıl?
54. Alevileri bekleyen tehlikeler neler?
55. Aleviler arasında size göre yanlış yolda gidenler var mı? Siz Aleviler arasında hangi yaklaşıma daha yakınsınız?
56. Bir Alevi derneğine üyeliğiniz var mı? Katılımınız nasıl?
57. Cem vakfını tanıyor musunuz? Nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
58. Pir Sultan Abdal derneğini tanıyor musunuz? Nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
59. Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli vakfını tanıyor musunuz? Nasıl bakıyorsunuz?
60. Ne olur Alevilerin hali?

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself? Where were you born and grown up? What is your educational status? Can you give us some information about your working life?
2. Where are you from? [If he/she has village origins] For how long have you lived in village? How often do you visit your village? Do you see your villagers in town?
3. Are there Alevis in your surrounding? How often do you see them?
4. Do you have non-Alevi friends? Do they know that you are an Alevi? What was their response when they found out/were informed?
5. Do you identify yourself as an Alevi? Why?
6. What does Alevism mean for you?
7. Is Alevism a religion? Why?
8. Is Alevism a part of Islam?
9. Is Alevism a sect? Why?
10. What is the most important thing that separates Sunnis from the Alevis?
11. How do you evaluate atheism?
12. Is Alevism something peculiar to Turks?
13. Where is the homeland of Alevis?
14. What do you think of the Arabs?
15. What do you like most in Alevism?
16. Who is/are the most important person(s), figure(s) of Alevism for you? Why?
17. What does St. Ali mean for you?
18. What are the sacred things in Alevism for you?
19. Do you believe in body transformation?
20. What are the conditions of being an Alevi for you?

21. What are the pillars of Alevism? What activities do you participate or take place in? And how often?
22. Do you watch the Alevi TV channels? How do you find them?
23. When and how did you first realize that you are an Alevi?
24. Who in your family is more interested in Alevism?
25. Do you present Alevism to your kids and in your environment? How?
26. Have you ever hid your identity?
27. What kind of problems have you faced resulted from being an Alevi?
28. Have you ever used any legal means against the problems that you have faced resulted from being an Alevi? If yes, what have happened? If no, why not?
29. Based on your observations and hearings, what have changed in Alevism in the last two or three decades?
30. What did the formation of the Turkish Republic bring to Alevis and what did it take from them?
31. How do you evaluate Ataturk?
32. Are Alevis one amongst other minorities in Turkey?
33. How many Alevis live in Turkey?
34. Who are the minorities in this country? Why?
35. What are the three prominent problems of Alevis? How can they be solved?
36. How do you evaluate the Directorate of Religious Affairs?
37. How do you evaluate the *Imam Hatip* Schools?
38. How do you evaluate the cemhouses?
39. How do you evaluate the religious courses?
40. Do you know what *musahiplik* is? Are you or your environment had such an experience?
41. How do you evaluate dedelik?
42. Do you think that the dedes must be recognized by the state as the religious officer for the Alevis and be entrusted by them?
43. How do you evaluate the CHP? How do you evaluate the attitude of the CHP towards Alevis?
44. How do you evaluate the AKP? How do you evaluate the attitude of the AKP towards Alevis?

45. What is your position regarding the headscarf/turban issue?
46. How do you evaluate the MHP?
47. How do you evaluate nationalism?
48. How do you evaluate the DTP?
49. How do you evaluate the Kurds?
50. How do you evaluate Turkey's candidacy process to the EU? Do you evaluate it positively?
51. How has the candidacy process affected the Alevis?
52. How do you evaluate the state?
53. How do you evaluate the military?
54. What are the danger awaiting Alevis?
55. Are there the one in Alevis going on the wrong track in your perspective? To which approach within the Alevis you feel yourself close to?
56. Do you have membership of any Alevi association? How is your participation?
57. Do you know Cem Foundation? How do you evaluate it?
58. Do you know Pir Sultan Abdal Association? How do you evaluate it?
59. Do you know Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Foundation? How do you evaluate it?
60. What do you think about the well being of Alevis in the near future?

APPENDIX C

LIST OF THE INTERVIEWEES

City of Birth	Name	Gender (Male(M) Female (F))	Date of Birth	Place of Origin of his/her Family	City of Birth	Type of Place of Birth (City (C) Village (V))	Where he lives	Level Of Education (Primary School (P) Secondary School (S) High School (H), University (U))	Occupation	Living Environment(In Alevi district or not)
1	Murtaza	M	1979	Erzincan	Erzincan	C	İstanbul	H	merchant	yes
2	Cafer	M	1958	Tokat	Tokat	V	İstanbul	H	civil servant	yes
3	Ali	M	1950	Antalya	Antalya	V	Antalya	H	worker	yes
4	Rıza	M	1980	Erzurum	Erzurum	C	İzmir	H	tradesman	yes
5	Döndü	F	1980	Amasya	Amasya	V	İstanbul	H	unemployed	yes
6	Gül	F	1974	Urfa	Urfa	V	İstanbul	H	unemployed	yes
7	Hasan	M	1980	Ankara	Ankara	C	Samsun	H	university student	no
8	Sultan	F	1960	Erzincan	Erzincan	V	İstanbul	U	accountant	yes
9	Naciye	F	1961	Sivas	Ankara	C	Antalya	S	housewife	no
10	Sevim	F	1986	Sivas	Sivas	V	İzmir	H	university student	no
11	Deniz	F	1981	Adıyaman	Adıyaman	V	İstanbul	U	accountant	yes
12	Onur	M	1986	Erzurum	Erzurum	C	İstanbul	H	university student	yes
13	Haydar	M	1985	Erzincan	Erzincan	V	İstanbul	H	university student	no
14	Zeynel	M	1961	Amasya	Amasya	V	Samsun	H	technician	no
15	Musa	M	1952	Sivas	Sivas	V	Antalya	S	worker	no
16	Hıdır	M	1975	Adıyaman	Adıyaman	C	İstanbul	H	driver	yes
17	Derviş	M	1953	Adıyaman	Adıyaman	V	İstanbul	P	driver	no

18	Bariş	M	1975	Ankara	Ankara	C	Samsun	U	doctor	no
19	Hüseyin	M	1945	Sivas	Sivas	V	Ankara	U	teacher	no
20	Özgün	F	1982	Adıyaman	Adıyaman	V	İstanbul	U	psycologist	yes
21	Bektaş	M	1978	Tokat	Germany	C	İzmir	U	teacher	no
22	Naci	M	1984	Diyarbakır	Diyarbakır	C	İzmir	H	barber	yes
23	Ayşe	F	1965	İzmir	İzmir	V	İzmir	P	housewife	no
24	Ezgi	F	1989	Çorum	İzmir	C	İzmir	H	unemployed	no
25	Serap	F	1968	Çorum	Ankara	C	İzmir	H	ballerina	no
26	İsmail	M	1949	Antalya	Mersin	C	Antalya	P	tradesman	yes
27	İsmail	M	1935	Malatya	Malatya	V	İstanbul	P	construction worker	yes
28	İsmail	M	1945	Sivas	Sivas	V	Ankara	P	worker	yes
29	Mahmut	M	1934	Tokat	Tokat	V	İstanbul	P	barber	yes
30	Özlem	F	1985	Tunceli	İstanbul	C	İstanbul	H	unemployed	yes
31	Paşa	M	1954	Sivas	Sivas	V	İstanbul	P	worker	yes
32	Bariş	M	1976	Nevşehir	Nevşehir	C	İzmir	H	tradesman	no
33	Eren	M	1980	çorum	Ankara	C	Ankara	U	graduate student	no
34	Erhan	M	1977	Diyarbakır	Diyarbakır	C	İzmir	S	hairdresser	no
35	Güldürsün	F	1957	Tunceli	İstanbul	C	İstanbul	P	health officer	no
36	Hüsniye	F	1950	Sivas	Sivas	V	Ankara	P	housewife	yes
37	İbrahim	M	1958	İzmir	İzmir	V	İzmir	H	official	no
38	Özgür	M	1973	Sivas	Ankara	C	Samsun	U	doctor	no
39	Bülent	M	1979	Yozgat	Ankara	C	Ankara	H	university student	no
40	Hüsniye	F	1968	Amasya	Amasya	V	Samsun	P	cleaning woman	no
41	Gülsüm	F	1967	Sivas	Sivas	V	Ankara	H	official	no
42	Tülin	F	1975	Yozgat	Zonguldak	C	Ankara	U	teacher	no
43	Çiğdem	F	1980	Sivas	Ankara	C	Ankara	U	unemployed	no
44	Veysel	M	1969	Yozgat						
45	Necmi	M	1956	Kayseri	Kars	C	Antalya	U	teacher	no
46	Özlem	F	1988	Sivas	Antalya	C	Antalya	H	Student	no
47	Sami	M	1960	Sivas	Sivas	V	Antalya	U	manufacturer	no
48	Nurhan	F	1958	Sivas	Ankara	C	İzmir	U	teacher	no
49	Veysel	M	1956	Yozgat	Yozgat	V	Ankara	H	official	no
50	Sultan	F	1966	Amasya	Amasya	V	Samsun	S	housewife	no
51	Ali	M	1981	Amasya	Samsun	C	Samsun	H	tradesmen	no
52	Hüsnü	M	1947	Amasya	Amasya	V	Samsun	H	tradesmen	no
53	Hüseyin	M	1979	Sivas	Ankara	C	Antalya	H	tradesmen	no

54	Cem	M	1978	Tokat	İstanbul	C	İstanbul	H	tradesmen	no
55	Muharrem	M	1930	Tokat	Tokat	V	Ankara	P	farmer	no

APPENDIX D

TURKISH SUMMARY

2000’li yılların Türkiye’sinin önemli gündemlerinden biri “Alevi uyanışı” oldu. Alevilerin bir uyanış içerisinde olmaktan çok, bir kimlik arayışı içerisinde olduklarını savunan bu çalışma Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizini konu etmektedir. Daha önce politik alanda anılmayan bir kavram olan Alevilik günümüzde üzerinde sıkça konuşulan bir olgu haline dönüşmüştür.

Bu çalışmanın önemi Aleviliğin önemli bir kırılma noktasında olduğu savıdır. Alevilik, en açık olduğu, sesini en fazla yükselttiği, fakat varoluşsal sorunlar yaşadığı bir dönemdedir. Bu dönemde, kendi kimliğini ortaya koymaya, tanımlamaya, deneyimlemeye çalışırken karşılaştığı gerilimler asli gerilimlerdir. Bu gerilimler karşısında, daha önce kapalılık ve kent yaşamındaki gizlilik gibi nedenlerle Alevilik deneyiminden uzak kalmış Aleviler net bir pozisyon tanımlayamamaktadır. Bu belirsizlik ve Alevilik pozisyonlarındaki çeşitlilik karşısındaki kararsızlık Alevileri Alevilik deneyiminden daha da uzaklaştırmaktadır. Alevilerin önlerindeki yollar karşısındaki kayıtsızlığı ya da tarafgir olmama tercihleri bir dizi gerilim hattından beslenmektedir. Aleviliğin esasen kırsal, kapalı ve küçük cemaatsel bir yapıya göre şekillenmiş bir deneyim ve birikime dayanması, kentlerdeki yaşama adapte olamamasına neden olmuştur. Cumhuriyetin birer yurttaşı olarak varolmak ile Aleviliğin cemaatsel üyeliği arasındaki konumlanış, yurttaşlığa doğru yönelmiştir. Aleviliğin laiklik ile olan ilişkisi özellikle 1970’lerde sol ile bağlarının güçlenmesi ile de birleşince çoğu Alevi için geleneksel olan Alevilik talileşmiştir. Çoğu Alevi için, laik, çağdaş, hümanist bir pozisyon benimsenince, Aleviliğin geleneksel niteliklerine olan sempati kaybolmaya ya da kültürel sembolik değerlere dönüşmeye başlamıştır. Bu minvalde Aleviliğin dini ve/veya İslami karakteri sorgulanmaya başlanmış,

İslam'ın içinde ya da dışında oluşu temel bir tartışma konusu haline gelmiştir. Dini ya da İslami öğelerinden arınmış bir Alevilik ise Alevileri birarada tutacak bir “fark” ortaya koymakta zorlanmaktadır. Bu yüzden inançsal ve/veya İslami olma özelliği kolayca terkedilememekte, Aleviliği İslam dışı olarak tanımlayan çevreler dahi Aleviliğin geleneksel ritüellerine karşı durmamaktadırlar. Ancak Aleviliğin geleneksel kurumları Aleviler için itibarını yitirmiş, kentlerdeki yeni oluşumlar olan sivil toplum örgütleri ve onlar etrafında daha çok kültürevleri niteliği önemsenen cemevleri daha muteber hale gelmişlerdir. Fakat bu kurumlara katılımın sınırlı olduğunu da belirtmekte fayda var. Aleviliğin saydığımız nedenlerle yeni nesillere taşınamaması da Alevilik kimliğinin krizini derinleştirmektedir. Birçok Alevi Aleviliğin kaybolmakta oluşundan endişe duymakta, genç Alevilerin Alevilik ile ilgilenmemesinden yakınmaktadır. Aleviliğin soydan geçen bir kimlik olma özelliği bu bağlamda etkisini yitirmektedir. Yüzyıllar süren kapalılık dönemlerinin sonucu olarak oluşan etnik karakter, açılma ve diğer toplumsal kesimlerle karışma ile birlikte aşınmaya başlamıştır.

Günümüzde Aleviliği, Aleviler ve Aleviliği takip eden çevreler için Alevi sivil toplum kuruluşları ve onların lider kadrosu temsil etmektedir. Ancak Alevilik ve Aleviler ile ilgili yüzlerce dernek ve vakıf bulunmaktadır. Öte yandan çokluk sadece Sivil Toplum Kuruluşu (STK) sayısında değil, aynı zamanda bu STK'ların temsil ettiği Alevilik pozisyonları için de geçerlidir. Ortak paydalara göre tasnif edildiklerinde dahi STK'larca öne çıkartılan anaakım Alevilik pozisyonlarının birbiri ile uyuşmaz bir karşıtlık içerisinde nitelikler sergilediklerine tanık oluruz. Aleviliğin tarifinde ve eklemeneceği söylemlerde karşımıza çıkan bu karşıtlıklar, Alevilerin Alevilik ile olan ilişkisini gerilimli bir ilişkiye çevirmektedir. Hakim Alevilik söylemleri karşısında kendi pozisyonlarını üreten Aleviler, gündelik yaşamlarındaki farklılıklara ve Alevilik gelenekleriyle kurdukları yakınlığa ve bunlara gösterdikleri ilgiye göre farklı Alevi tipolojileri meydana getirmeye başlamışlardır. Günümüzde, Aleviliği İslami bir yorum olarak yaşayanlardan, İslam'dan tamamen ayrık bir inanış olarak deneyimleyenlere; din-dışı, felsefi niteliklerle dolu bir kültür olarak yaşatmaya çalışanlardan, Aleviliğe bir kültür

turizmi nesnesi olarak sempati duymakla yetinenlere; Aleviliğe sempatisi olsa da organik olarak Alevilikle hiç bir ilişkisi kalmamış Alevilerden, bir kimlik olarak reddedenlere ya da Alevilik hakkında yok denecek kadar az bilgi ve deneyime sahip olanlara birçok çeşit Alevi tiplemesi mevcuttur. Bu tiplemelerdeki çeşitlilik, Alevi inancındaki heterojenlikten kaynaklanmaktan ziyade, Aleviliğin bir dönüşüm geçirmekte olduğuna ve bu dönüşümün farklı duraklarının meydana geldiğine işaret ediyor. Bu dönüşümün tek bir rota izlemediğini, kişilerin diğer kimliklerine göre farklı yönlerde doğru gerçekleştiğini de belirtelim. Aleviliğin farklı rotalardan bir çözülme eğilimi taşıyan bir dönüşüm içerisinde olduğu Alevi önderliği tarafından da yoğun olarak hissedilmektedir. “Asimile olma”, “dejenere olma”, “yozlaşma”, “kayıtsızlaşma” gibi tabirlerle dile gelen bu farkındalık, Aleviliği sürdürebilme hedefiyle hegemonik projelerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmaktadır. Alevilik üzerine hegemonik olmayı hedefleyen projeler arasında en belirgin iki proje, İslami Alevilik ile politik Alevilik projeleridir. Birincisinin gücü dini, inançsal ya da geleneksel öğelerle bezenmiş bir Aleviliğin eklemlene kapasitesinin daha fazla oluşundadır. Politik Aleviliğin Aleviler üzerindeki tesiri ise, hafızalarda taze olan Alevilere yönelik saldırıların izleri ve Aleviler üzerindeki sistematik ayrımcı politikalarından beslenmektedir. Öte yandan Aleviler için Alevi kimliğinin “kurucu dışarı”sının Sünnilik ve onunla geçişli bir olgu olarak “İslam” oluşu, İslami Aleviliğin sınırlarını zorlamakta, kabullenişini sınırlandırmaktadır. Politik Aleviliğin açmazı ise konjunktürel oluşu ve politik açılımların gelenekle gerilim oluşturmaları sonucu Alevi kimliğinin özgünlüğünün ya da fark ortaya koyabilme gücünün sınırlı olmasıdır. Orta yolcu hegemonik projeler ise hedefinin aksine, gerilimlerin altını çizdiği için, tutunum sağlama başarısı gösterememektedir.

AKP’nin cumhuriyet tarihince yok sayılan Alevilik meselesine korkusuzca el atması, birçok Alevi çevresi tarafından kuşkuyla karşılandı. AKP’nin bu hamlelerinin samimi olmadığı, oy kaygılı olduğu ya da asimilasyon hedefli olduğu iddia edildi. Bir gizli hedefi olsun olmasın, hedeflenen açılım, Alevi derneklerinin gerçekleşmesini arzulayacağı türdendir. Öte yandan AKP’nin de Alevilik projelerinin gerilimlerinin ve sürdürülebilirlik krizinin farkında olduğu açık

görülmektedir. Hedeflenen açılımın İslami Aleviliği kendine daha yakın görmesi, Alevilik projelerindeki gerilimin derinleşmesine neden olmaktadır. Öte yandan açılımın Alevileri güçlendirmesinden de endişe duyulması, açılıma sınırlar getirmektedir. Cemevleri ve dedelerle ilgili bu açılım hedefleri, Diyanet İşleri Müdürlüğünü ve bazı AKP'lileri rahatsız etmektedir. Alevilik açılımlarından rahatsız olanlar, "[Cemevine](#) ibadethane statüsü verilmesi, caminin alternatifi olarak" anlaşıldığını ve Aleviliği müstakil bir din haline getireceğini ileri sürerler

Alevilik projelerinin Aleviler üzerinde bir etki ve hegemonya oluşturma girişimlerine dönemin hükümeti de ilgi göstermiştir. Aydınlanma ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) hükümeti, Alevilere mücadelesini verdikleri bazı hakları sağlamak için "Alevi Açılımı" adını verdiği bir reform girişimi başlatmıştır. AKP'nin Alevi açılımının başlangıcında AKP'yi samimi bulmayan İslami Aleviliğin önde gelen çevresi olan Cem Vakfı çevresi, 2008 sonunda yoğunlaşan açılımın önde gelen Alevi destekçileri arasında yer aldı. Hatta öyle ki hükümetin tıkanan açılımı değerlendirmek üzere muhatap aldığı Alevi dernekleri arasında yer aldı. Diğer yandan politik Alevilik ise Alevi Açılımına tamamen şüphe ile yaklaştı. `Alevi Açılımı`nın Aleviliği devletleştirme amacı güderek, Alevi kimliğini devlet katında homojenleştirip, asli değerlerine ve öğretisine yabancılaştırmaktan başka bir şey olmadığını iddia etti. Karşılaştıracak olursak, politik Alevilik, diyanet, zorunlu din dersi ve dedelere maaş bağlanması gibi konularda hükümetin Alevilik açılımı paketine karşı çıkarken, İslami Alevilik, bu konulardaki adımları destekliyor. İki tarafın da üzerlerinde anlaştıkları bir nokta ise cemevlerine ibadethane statüsü verilmesi oldu. Bu kazanım iki taraf için de Alevilik projelerinin sürdürülebilirliği için kilit bir noktada görülüyor. Politik Alevilik Diyanet, dedeler ve din dersi konusundaki hamlelerin Aleviliği asimile edici projeler olduğu inancını taşıyor. Bunların ötesine geçerek devletin Sünni karakterinin aşındırılarak laikleştirilmesi gerektiğine inanıyor. İslami Alevilik ise hakim İslami uygulamalar ile bir çatışma yerine uzlaşma arayışı içinde ve diyalogdan yana. Bu yüzden Alevilik ile ilgili açılımları desteklemekten yana. Buna karşın İslami Alevilik dahi atılan adımları yeterli bulmuyor. Zira henüz ne cemevleri ibadethane olarak tanındı, ne diyanette temsil sağlandı, ne de dedelere yönelik bir gelişme sağlandı. Değiştirilen ve

Aleviliğe yer verilen din dersi müfredatı da Aleviliği istedikleri biçimde aktaramadığı için onları tatmin etmiş değil.

Sonuç olarak üç taraf da, politik Alevilik, İslami Alevilik ve İslamcı hükümet, Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizinin farkında ve duruma ilişkin kendi pozisyonlarına uygun projelerini devreye sokmuş görünüyor. Hükümetin adımları bir yandan krizi derinleştirmeye neden olurken, bir yandan da karşı projelere malzeme sağlayabiliyor. Bu durumda geri çekilmelere sıkça rastlanıyor. Alevilik projeleri ise açılımın sağladığı zemini kullanarak kendi tabanlarını önce elde tutmaya sonra genişletmeye çalışıyor. Alevilerin çoğunluğu arasında ise gittikçe polarize olan bu pozisyonlar benimsenmiş değiller. En azından bunun göstergeleri henüz oluşmuş değil. Aksine polarizasyon onların bu tür projelerden uzak kalmalarına neden olabiliyor. Pozisyonlardaki gerilimlerin çeşitliliği, Alevi pratiklerinin yapısal sorunları, Alevileri Alevilikten gittikçe uzaklaştırıyor.

1990'lı yıllarda başlayarak Aleviler ve onları takip eden çevreler Aleviliği gündemlerine aldılar. Şüphesiz bu gündeme almada Aleviliğin “Açık Alevilik” dönemine girmiş olması etkindir, zira bu dönemde Aleviler ve onları hem siyaseten hem de entelektüel olarak izleyenler, Alevilik hakkında gizleme gereği duymadan ve çekinmeden konuşmaya başladılar. Bu konuşma haline Alevilik ile ilgili etkinliklerin ve ritüellerin görünür olmaya başlaması da eşlik etti. Günümüzde Aleviler, bir zamanlar gizlenme ve saklanmalarla, kimliklerinin görünür olmamasına özen gösterdikleri dönemleri hiç olmamış gibi hissetmeye başlamışlardır. Hafızalarda Maraş, Çorum, Sivas gibi sonuçları ağır mağduriyetler elbette tazedir. Ancak kişisel olarak Alevi oldukları için başlarına gelen ayrımcılıklar kendileri için mesele olmaktan çıkmış, ironik anılara dönüşmüştür. Bu anılarda ise Alevilik kimliğinin gururla taşınması ve bundan ödün verilmemesi gibi retrospektif bir hikayeleme tarzı geçerlidir. Öte yandan açık dönem ile önceki dönemler arasında bir geçişsizlik de sözkonusudur: gelenek aktarılamamıştır. Geleneği, hatta genel olarak Aleviliği hatırlamak gerekmektedir. Bu hatırlama eylemi ise diğer güncel kimliklerin kontrolünde gerçekleşmektedir. Üstelik Aleviler bu farklı biçimlerde yeniden tarif edilmeye başlanan Aleviliklerin

Aleviliğin etkinliğini zayıflattığını da düşünmektedir. Bu nedenlerle bugün Alevilerin en büyük sorunu, ihtiyacı ve/veya beklentisi Aleviliğin Aleviliği bölmeden, parçalamadan, yok etmeden tarif edilebilmesidir. Bu talebin şiddetli olmasının nedeni ise zorluğundan ileri gelmektedir. Zira her tarif ya bugüne kadar bilinen bazı Alevi nitelikleri dışlamakta ya da Aleviliği ayırteci bir kimlik olmaktan çıkarmaktadır. Bu durum ve Aleviliğin Alevilerce kapalı dönemlere nazaran daha zayıf olarak bilinmesi ve deneyimlenmesi Aleviliğin kaybolmaya başladığı kaygısını artırmakta, öte yandan da asimilasyon komplolarını da güçlendirmektedir. Ne var ki bu endişe çözülmeyi durduracak hegemonik projeleri besleyecek çıktılar meydana getirememiştir. Aksine Alevilik kimliği üzerindeki birçok farklı hegemonik proje, hegemonik olamamanın sancısı ile ya diğer çizgilere savrularak, tutarsızlaşmışlar ya da etkisizleşmişlerdir. Alevilerin çoğunluğu, bu “birlik” oluşturmamayan farklılaşmalar karşısında kendi gündelik yaşamlarından vazgeçerek “geri dönecekleri” ya da “yeniden keşfedecekleri” bir Alevi kimliği bulamamaktadır. Bugün yine de Alevi kimliğine sarılan Aleviler, bu sancıların etkisiyle Alevi ritüellerine katılım biçimlerini, hatta Alevilik denen şeyi bir hobi, bir anlamda da “dernekçilik” aktiviteleri olarak deneyimlemekte, bu şekilde de Alevi kimliklerini talileştirmektedirler. Sonuç olarak açık Alevilik dönemindeki açıklık, Alevi kimliğinin kapalı uçlarını zayıflatmış, Alevilerin bu açıklıktan dışarıya çıkmaya başlamalarına neden olmuştur.

Açık Alevilik döneminin en kritik ve popüler sorusu olan ‘Alevilik Nedir’ sorusuna yanıt verebilmek, Alevilik kimliğini taşımanın gereklerinden biri haline gelmiştir. Bu soruya verilen yanıtlar ise öyle geniş bir spektrumdadır ki aynı kimlikten bahsedildiğini düşünmeyi bile zorlaştırır. Bu yüzden ortak bir Alevilik anlayışında bulaşabilmenin koşulları giderek ortadan kalkmaktadır. Tüm bu Aleviliği Aleviler için kabul edilebilir ve benimsenebilir bir tarifini yapma ve buna uygun bir deneyimleme mekanizması kurma çabalarıyla yapılan referansların çeşitli gerilim hatları üzerinde kalması sebebiyle, hiç bir pozisyon bir güç ve cazibe merkezi haline gelememektedir. Aleviler için en ortak olan Alevilik özelliği “Sünnilik” karşıtlığıdır. Kendilerini “Laik demokratik” cumhuriyetin “savunucuları”, “bekçileri”, “garantis” olarak gören Aleviler, Aleviliği, bunun

karşısında olan ve tarihten gelen bir misyonla Alevilere yönelik baskı ve zulmün en önemli kaynağı olduklarına inandıkları Sünniliğe karşısında konumlandırırlar. Fakat bu negatif konumlandırma Aleviliği tarif edebilmek için yeterli değildir. Aleviliğin ne olduğunu ve hangi pratikleri kapsadığını da ortaya koymak gerekmektedir. Aleviler pozitif tarif ihtiyacını bu açılma döneminde daha şiddetli hissetmişlerdir. Zira bu, dışarıya gururla kimliklerini ifşa etmek için gerekli özgüvenin önemli bir direğidir. Hal böyleyken Aleviliğin tarifi, Alevilik hakkında tarihi ve yapısal bilgilere sahip olma önem kazanmıştır. Ne var ki bunu sağlamanın ne kaynakları ne de kanalları oluşmamıştır. Elde edilen bilgi ise Aleviler için tatmin edici bir kimlik tarifi ortaya koyabilmiş değildir. Bugüne kadar kapalılık dönemlerinde çeşitli geleneksel kurumlar ve aile yoluyla aktarılmış olan Alevilik, kent yaşamında cemaatten ve geleneksel pratiklerden yıllar önce kopmuş olan Aleviler için önemli ölçüde unutulmuştur. Yeni nesiller için ise “unutulmuş” değil, ilk kez öğrenilecek niteliktedir. Ne var ki geleneği kırsal bir tecrübe ile deneyimlemiş ve/veya Alevilerin yoğun olarak yaşadığı, “yabancı”larla teması sınırlı olan ve az sayıda Alevi için bu hatırlama süreci ön plandadır, Alevilerin çoğunluğu için ise hatırlamaya yönelik aktif bir çaba sözkonusu değildir. Bunun yanında kent yaşamı ve ekonomik zorluklar, özellikle gelir düzeyi düşük ve köy ve/veya akrabalık bağları zayıflamış Alevilerde Aleviliğin talileşmesine neden olmuştur. Eğitimli ve gelir düzeyi görece yüksek Alevilerin ise yaşamlarında daha az Alevilik ve daha çok “yabancı” yer kapladığı için, Alevilik genellikle ya hiç deneyimlenmeyen ya da tali olarak yer eden bir kimlik haline dönüşmüştür. Aleviliğe ilgi gitgide kültürel ve simgesel bir sempati ile “müzelik” bir ilgiye dönüşmektedir. Aleviliğin tanımlanmasındaki ve deneyimlenmesindeki zorluklar, artık en başta Alevilerin kendilerinin Aleviliğin sönümlenmekte olduğu kanısına sahip olmaya başlamalarına neden olmuştur. Aleviliği yeniden cazip kılmaya yönelik hamleler ise Alevileri kavrayacak bir hegemonik nitelik gösteremiyor. Alevilik pozisyonlarındaki çeşitlilik, çeşitliliğin zenginliğe işaret ettiği bu kültürde günümüzde birliğin dağılması olarak tezahür etmektedir. Bu pozisyonların üzerinde durduğu hatlardaki gerilimler birbirleriyle uzlaşmaz karşıtlıkların oluşmasına neden olmaktadır. Öyle ki birçok Alevi, yakın olduğu Alevilik pozisyonu dışındaki pozisyonları, Aleviliğin saptırılması veya kullanılması,

gericilik, asimilasyon, vb. şekillerde dışlayabilmektedir. Aleviliği tanımlarken, felsefi bir bakıştan, İslami bir forma kadar çeşitlenen pozisyonların birbirinden önemli ölçüde uzaklaşmasına sebep olan referans çeşitliliği mevcuttur. Alevilik pozisyonlarındaki kutuplaşmalar karşısındaki arabulucu ya da ortayolcu girişimler ise genellikle kutuplar arasındaki gerilimlerin keskinleşmesine neden olmakta, farklılıkları eklemleme başarısı elde edememektedir.

“Alevilik Nedir?” sorusu “Açık Alevilik” döneminde Alevilerin temel gerilimi olmuştur. Bu soruyla karşılaştıklarında net bir yanıt üretememe, argümanlar öne sürebilmek için Alevilik hakkında yeterli bir bilgi birikiminden yoksun olma, Alevilerin Aleviliklerini sorgulamaya başlamalarına neden olmuştur. “Alevilik nedir” sorusunun yanıtı bugün Aleviler açısından Alevilik tartışmasındaki saflaşmadaki taraflarını belirlemeleri açısından kilit bir noktadadır. Aleviler, bu sorunun yanıtını, bir başka deyişle Alevilik pozisyonunu, diğer kimliklerine, bulundukları sosyal çevreye ve kendilerinden “Alevilik nedir” sorusunun yanıtını bekleyen çevrelerin niteliklerine göre belirlerler. Dolayısıyla sorunun sorulduğu farklı bağlamlar vardır ve bu bağlamlar verilen yanıtları da etkilemektedir. Neticede de soruya verilen yanıtlar öyle geniş bir spektrumdadır ki yanıtlar değerlendirildiğinde, aynı kimlikten bahsedildiğine inanmak zorlaşır. Bu bağlamda ortak bir Alevilik anlayışında bulaşabilmenin koşulları giderek ortadan kalktığı düşünülebilir. Alevilerin aynı yolun ayrı patikalarında olmadıkları günümüzde artık Alevilerin kendileri için bile bir gerçeklik haline dönüşmüştür. Sıklıkla çeşitli Alevilik pozisyonlarının temsilcileri diğer pozisyonları asimile olmuşlukla ya da başka “güçlerin” tesiri altına girmişlikle suçlarlar. Günümüzde her Alevinin karşısında olduğu ve bir arada olmak istemeyeceği bir Alevilik hali vardır. Sonuç olarak artık tek bir yol yoktur, gittikçe birbirinden uzaklaşan yollar vardır ve Alevilerin çoğunluğu da henüz hangi yola sapacağına karar kılabilmiş değildir. Aleviliğe yaklaşımlara göre Aleviliği sınıflandıracak olursak temel pozisyonlar şunlardır: 1. İslam Yolu, 2. Senkretik Yol, 3. Din-Dışı Yol. Öte yandan bu 3 yaklaşım, aslında Alevilik deneyimleri ve Alevilik kimliğine ilgileri açısından birbirine benzemez Aleviler tarafından da sahiplenilebilmektedir ve kendi içinde de farklılık gösterebilmektedirler. Dolayısı ile Alevileri tasnif edecek ikinci bir

eksene ve alt kategorileri tanımlamaya ihtiyaç vardır. Bir başka deyişle yol bir olmasa da çeşitli yolların süreklilerinin bin bir olduğu doğrudur.

Peki Alevilerin ortak bir paydasından bahsedilebilir mi? Aleviler farklı yollara girmiş olsalar dahi, henüz ortak geçmiş hafızasının taze oluşu, kırsal ve kentlerdeki bir arada yaşam deneyimlerinin hatıralarda olması gibi faktörler nedeniyle birbirine benzer bir sosyokültürel halleri olduğu söylenebilir. Ayrıca, Alevileri dilsel (linguistik habitus) açıdan birbirine benzer kılan nitelikler de mevcuttur. Alevilik söylemi üzerine ise genel geçer bir benzerlik dışında fazla ortak yön bulunmaz. Kastettiğimiz genel geçer benzerlik ise farklı Aleviliklerin ortak yanı olan “insan” vurgusudur. Alevilerin neredeyse tamamının Alevilik tariflerinde; “bizim için insan önce gelir”, ‘Alevilik dürüstlüktür’, “Alevilikte insan sevgisi esastır” gibi vurgular, “Aleviler çağdaş, laik, Atatürkçüdür” gibi önermeler vardır. Üstelik bu tarifler sadece Aleviliği hümanist bir felsefe olarak gören kesimlere ait değildir. İslami referansları kuvvetli olanlarda dahi bu tür vurgulara rastlamak mümkündür. Ancak, Alevilik ve din ilişkisini zayıf görenlerde ise bu vurgular Aleviliğin oturduğu asıl temeldir. Ne var ki bu temelin Aleviliği ayırteci bir nitelik arzettiğini söylemek zor. Neredeyse tüm inanç bazlı kimliklerin kendisi için dillendireceği genel-geçer niteliklerdir bunlar. Bunları bir dizi ritüel ya da ibadet ile ya da belli etnik özelliklerle bezemedikten sonra ayırteci olma niteliği sergilemesi zordur. Bunun farkında olan Aleviler ya inançsal unsurlara yönelmektedir, ya da Aleviliğin kültürel haklarıyla ilgili politik bir zemine. Bu yönelimlerde oluşan farklar ise benzerlikleri silikleştirme ve ortak olanı bastırmaktadır.

Alevilerde en genel “insani” değerler ve cumhuriyetçi değerleriyle özdeşleşme dışında ortak olarak beliren pek az nitelik vardır. Bunun aksine Aleviler arasında fark bulmak için malzeme ise çok çeşitlidir. İslam’a, dine ve Aleviliğin kökenine yaklaşım, bunlar arasında Alevilik pozisyonlarının farklılaşmasındaki en temel ayraçlardır.

Aslında, Alevilerin çoğu, Aleviliğin bir din olarak tanımlanmasına karşı çıkarlar. Ancak bu ortak duruş, Aleviliğin ne olduğu konusunda bir uzlaşma ile sonuçlanmaz. İslam Yolu'ndakilere göre zaten din İslam, Alevilik bir yoldur. Senkretik Yol'dakilere göre, Aleviliği dinlerüstü bir olgu ya da bir çok dinin iyi taraflarını almış bir inanç olarak benimserler. Din-dışı Alevilik ise Aleviliğin kültürel bir form olduğunu ve dini meselelerle ilgisi olmadığını düşünür ve/veya talep eder. Esasen İslam Yolu'ndaki Aleviler “din” olgusuna en yakın kesimdir. Allah inancı, ibadetlere sadakat ve uygulama frekansı en fazla olan Alevi kesimi bu kesimdir. Aleviliğin tanımlama girişimlerinde bu kesim, Aleviliği İslam'a getirilen bir yorum –ki İslam'ın özünü açığa çıkartan bir yorumdur bu- olarak değerlendirmektedir. Ne var ki bu kesim dahi Aleviliği salt inançsal öğelere indirgememekte, Aleviliğin kültürel ve cemaatsel özellikleriyle de ayrıksı olduğuna vurgu yapmaktadır. Öte yandan yine bu kesim Aleviliğin müstakil bir inanç ya da din olduğu iddialarına karşı durur. Hal böyleyken iddiayı taşıyanların pozisyonları da karışık bir hal alır. Bir yandan Alevilik inançsal olarak İslam'dan farklı bir şey değildir, bir yandan da ayrı bir kültürel formdur. Katışık yoldakiler için ise Alevilik birçok dinden beslenmiş özel bir inanış ve yaşayış biçimidir. Bu kesim daha ziyade Alevilik geleneklerini korumayı önüne koyduğundan ne İslami referansları ne de İslam dışı referansları reddetmemektedir. Ne var ki hem İslam tarafından hem de sol siyaset tarafından “Aleviliğin eritilmesi” senaryoları onları her iki referans türüne karşı da temkinli kılmaktadır. Din-dışı Aleviler ise açıkça “din” olgusu ile, özellikle de İslam ile Aleviliği birbirinden ayırmaya çalışırlar. Sonuç olarak üç kesim de Aleviliğin bir din olarak değerlendirmemektedir.

Din ve İslam meselesi aynı zamanda kategorilerin kaygılarını açığa çıkarmaktadır. Günümüzde Alevilik nedir sorusunun yanıtlarına yönelik pozisyonların ayırım noktalarını Aleviliğin İslam ile ilişkisi ve Aleviliğin tarihi ile ilgili referanslar belirlemektedir. Fakat Alevilerin Alevilik ile olan ilgi ve deneyimlerini de gözetirsek, Alevilere yönelik bir tasnif çalışması için sadece Aleviliğin İslam karşısındaki konumuna yönelik tartışmadaki pozisyonları veri almak yeterli olmamaktadır. Bu pozisyonlara paralel olarak gündelik yaşamdaki Aleviliğin konumlanması da ikinci bir belirleyen olarak gözetilmelidir. Bu açıdan yukarıdaki

tasnifi yeniden deęerlendirecek olursak Alevilerin iinde bulunduęu farklı yolları daha ayrıřtırıcı bir řekilde ele almak mmkn olabilir. Szgelimi Alevilik ile yakından uzaktan bir ilgisi kalmamıř sadece kkeni itibari ile bir baęı olan kiřiler iin bu pozisyonların hibiri bir anlam ifade etmemektedir. Ayrıca Alevilięin İřlam ile iliřkisi karřısında aynı pozisyona yakın olan, fakat Alevilik ile ilgili temasları ve pratikleri bakımından pek az benzerlięi bulunan Aleviler mevcuttur. Alevilięi bir kimlik olarak benimsemeyen, geri bir kltr olarak gren ya da geri bulmasa sempati ile yaklařsa dahi tali bir kltrel zellik olarak gren Alevileri de yukarıdaki tasnif kavramamaktadır. Sz konusu tasnifte 3 yoldan bahsetmiřtik: 1. İřlam Yolu, 2. Senkretik Yol, 3. Din-Dıřı Yol. Bunlar yaklařımlara gre farklı kategorilerdi. Alevilięin nasıl deneyimlendięi ve/veya Alevilik ile temas da hesaba katılacak olursa farklı bir sınıflandırmaya gitmek gerekiyor.

Bunlardan ilki tek eksenli (Alevilik yaklařımı eksenli) sınıflandırmamızda da var olan İřlam Yolu. Ancak bu yol zerinde farklı sreklerden bahsetmek mmkn. Birincisi, ki bu kmedekilere **“İřlami Alevilik”** diyeceęiz, Alevilięi İřlam’ın batını yorumu olarak gren ve buna uygun yařamaya alıřan kiřilerden oluřur. Aslında bu kiřiler kırsalda yzyıllarca Alevilerin yařadıkları biime uygun yařamaya alıřanlardır. İřlam Yolu’daki ikinci kategori ise **“Sembolik İřlam Alevilięi”**dir. Bu kategorideki Aleviler de İřlami Aleviler gibi, Alevilięin İřlam’ın z olduęuna dair pozisyonu byk lde kabullenir, fakat tam olarak buna uygun bir deneyim ierisinde olmazlar. Kent hayatının pratik sonularından ve/veya gelenekten kopmuř olmaktan kaynaklı İřlami Aleviler kadar yoęun bir geleneksel pratik ierisinde olmazlar. İnanıř ve dini bilgileri de onlar kadar kuvvetli deęildir. Her ne kadar Alevilik tanımlarında İřlam nemli bir yer tutsa da, mevcut Aleviliklerinde belirleyici olan dini olmaktan ziyade sosyo-klterel nitelikleri ve gemiřleridir. Alevilik deneyimleri daha ziyade edilgendir.

Aleviler arasında İřlami bir Alevilięi benimsemiř olanlar, ki oęu kez inanlarını Alevi İřlamı olarak adlandırmayı yeęlerler, dięer Alevilere gre Alevilięi daha geleneksel biimde ve ritellerine daha fazla sadık kalan bir deneyim iinde yařarlar. Alevilięi İřlami referanslarla tanımlayan bu kesim, tasavvuf ve Batınilik

gibi heteredoks İslam'a ilgi gösterir ve vurgu yaparlar. Onlara göre İslam, Alevilik ile çağa uygun bir biçim almaktadır. Alevilerin önceki dönemlerde, Müslümanlık dışı bir kategori olarak tarif edilmelerinden kaynaklı süregelen Müslümanlık rüşdü ispatı motivasyonu, bu kişiler için hala devam etmektedir.

İslam'a yaptıkları göndermelerin kuvvetliliğine rağmen, İslami olmayan Aleviler gibi, bu kişiler de gericilik olarak gördükleri Sünni İslam ile mesafelerini oluşturmaktan geri durmamaktadırlar. Aleviliğin İslam'ın özü olduğunu, bu özde de Sünni İslam'ın aksine gericiliğin değil, çağdaşlığın, hümanizmanın, şekilci bir ibadet anlayışının değil, Tanrı sevgisine dayalı içten gelen bir inancın gömülü olduğunu düşünürler. Bu tavır, Aleviliği, bir yandan İslam'a yaklaştıırken bir yandan da bu tereddütlü karakteri yüzünden bir geri çekilişe sürükler. Hal böyle iken, bu yaklaşım içerisindekiler, bir yandan Sünni İslam'la mesafeye koymaya çalışırken bir yandan da çoğu Alevilerce gericilik ve/veya asimile olmakla suçlanırlar.

İslami Aleviler, bir düzeyde Aleviliği teorik olarak tarif edildiği biçimiyle benimseyen ve yaşamaya çalışan Alevilerdir. Bu kişiler yoğun bir Alevilik deneyiminden gelmekte ve Alevi bir cemaat içerisinde yaşamaktadırlar. Sayıca azdırlar, zira gerçekleştirmesi kentsel yaşam için zor bir kimliktir. Hattı zatında diğer Alevilerin Aleviliğini bulandıran etkenler onlar için de geçerlidir. Bu yüzden onların da pratik düzeyde Aleviliği deneyimlemeleri sınırlıdır. Yapabildikleri mevcut uygulamaların özüne uygun olmadığına yönelik eleştirilerden ibarettir. Aleviliğin gidişatından en rahatsız kesimlerin başında gelirler. Zira kendilerini gerçekleştirebilecekleri uygulamalar sınırlıdır ve anladıkları anlamda Alevilik yokolmaya doğru gitmektedir. İslami Alevilerin İslami referanslara başvurma motivasyonu, Aleviliğin Müslümanlığının kanıtlanması çabasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu kimi İslami Alevileri İslam'a, hatta Sünni İslam'a yakınlaştırmaktadır.

Sembolik İslam Aleviliği kümesindeki Aleviler de İslami Aleviler gibi Alevilik ile teması görece yoğun kişilerden oluşur. Fakat onlardan farkı, bir şekilde bu

deneyimlerinin kesintiye uğramış olması ve Alevilik tecrübelerinin zayıflamış, bilgilerinin azalmış olmasıdır. Buna karşın Aleviliğin İslam'ın özü olduğu varsayımlarını muhafaza etmeye devam ederler. Ne var ki Alevilik ile temaslarının kesintiye uğramış ve zayıflamış olması sonucu, İslami ve Kuran referanslı bir Alevilik savunusu yapmaktan kısmen uzaklaşmışlardır. Bunun yerine Katışık yoldaki Alevilere benzer bir şekilde Aleviliğin hümanizm, sevgi dini, hoşgörü gibi değerleri öne çıkaran bir İslami kimlik olduğunu savunurlar. Alevilikleri dini olmaktan daha çok sosyo-kültürelidir. Öte yandan bu kesimin Alevilik kimlikleri daha yüzeyseldir. Alevilik hakkındaki bilgileri sınırlı, Alevilik savunuculukları düşüktür. Eğitim düzeyleri genellikle düşüktür. Sosyal çevrelerine göre kolaylıkla başka biçimlere dönüşebilecek bir Alevilik hali içindedirler. Bu kategoriden katışık yoldaki kategoriye geçiş sık rastlanan bir dönüşümdür.

Kendilerini gericiliğin, yobazlığın karşısında konumlandıran, bu kavramları da İslam ile ilişkilendiren Aleviler, çoğu zaman İslam kümesi içinde yer almaktan, hatta onunla ilişkilendirilmekten hoşnutsuz olurlar. Bu tutum bazılarında redde kadar ilerler. Aleviliğin geleneksel yanlarını öne çıkaranların bile bu ret rüzgarına kapıldıkları olur. Ritüel ve pratiklerin “dini” ya da “inançsal” boyutlarından çok kültürel, felsefi ve/veya sanatsal yanları öne çıkartılır. İnançsal açıdan ise Aleviliğin İslam ile ilişkisi, hümanizm, hoşgörü, Tanrı sevgisi ve bazı ahlaki değerler öne çıkartılarak ve çoğu zaman başka kültür ve inanç sistemlerine de referans verilerek kurulur.

İki eksenli sınıflandırmamızdaki (Alevilik yaklaşımı ve Alevilik deneyimi eksenleri) kategoriye **“Katışık Yol”** diyeceğiz. Daha önce bahsettiğimiz Senkretik Yol, bu kategori kapsamında. Fakat yaklaşım olarak din-dışı bir Alevilik benimseyenlerin bir kısmı, İslam'ı öncelememek üzere Senkretik bir Alevilik anlayışına yakındır. Din-dışı bir Aleviliği benimseyenlerden bazılarını –gelenek ile daha mesafeli olanları- ise 3. bir kategoride (Yan-Yol) ele alacağız. Katışık Yol'un iki süreğinden bahsedebiliriz. Bunlardan birinin, İslam'a indirgenmeyen bir biçimde inançsal boyutu da kavrayan bir sosyo-kültürel nitelik arzettiğini söyleyebiliriz. Bu kümedeki Aleviler ne İslami referansları reddederler ne de İslam

öncesini. Onlar için önemli olan ortaya çıkmış ve bilinen Aleviliğin gelenek ve inancının yaşatılmasıdır. Aleviliğin İslam'ın, çeşitli din ve inanışlarının güzel yanlarından oluşan bir özü olduğunu savunan bu Aleviler, senkretizmi öncelikle için bu sürece **“Senkretik Alevilik”** diyebiliriz. Senkretik Aleviler en genel olarak Aleviliğin özlerine sahip çıkan, fakat bunu İslami referanslara indirgemeyen kişilerdir. Aslında ilgilendikleri asıl mesele Aleviliğin İslami olup olmadığından ziyade, Aleviliğin özünü, bilinen geleneklerini, ritüellerini, ibadetlerini sahiplenmek ve sürdürmektir. Bir yandan İslam'ın güzel yüzünün Alevilik olduğunu savunur bir yandan da diğer dinlerin de güzelliklerinden beslendiğine inanırlar.

Katışık Yol'un diğer süresi ise **“İslam-karşıtı Alevilik”** tir. İslam-karşıtı Aleviler, mevcut gelenekselliği ve Alevilik pratiklerini sosyo-kültürel olarak sahiplenmekte fakat bunların dini ve/veya İslami özellikler olarak değerlendirmemektedir. Bu nitelikleriyle Alevilik sempatizanı olarak adlandırdığımız bir tipolojiye benzerlik gösterirler. Fakat Aleviliğe ilgileri ve yakınlıkları itibari ile onlardan ayrışırlar. Alevilik sempatizanları sadece sempatizandır, bir Alevilik deneyimleri ve bu deneyime talepleri bulunmamaktadır. İslam-karşıtı Aleviler ise Aleviliği dini öğelerden arındırmak gerektiğine inansalar da ritüelleri sürdürmek, Aleviliği yaşatmak için çeşitli etkinliklere katılmak ya da düzenlemek ve bunlar için siyasal ve ekonomik çaba harcamak eğilimindedirler.

Senkretik Aleviler, İslami Aleviler gibi, Alevilik bağları görece kuvvetli olan Alevilerdir. Onlardan farkı, Aleviliği yalnız İslami bir mezhep olarak değerlendirmeyip, İslam'ın iyi yönlerini almış, fakat onu aşan başka din ve inanışlardan beslenmiş bir inanış olarak değerlendirmeleridir. Bu yüzden hem İslami Alevilerden hem de Sembolik İslam Alevilerinden farklılık gösterirler. İslami Aleviler gibi Aleviliği ağırlıkla Kuran'a ve diğer İslami referanslarla tanımlamaya çalışmazlar. Sembolik İslam Alevilerinden farklı olarak Aleviliğe daha ilgilidirler ve Alevilik hakkındaki merak, bilgi ve görgüleri de daha fazladır. Aleviliğin özünü yaşamaya ve yaşatmaya çalışan Senkretik Alevilerin işgal ettiği konum, genellikle geçici bir konum olmaktadır. Bu kişiler, diğer kimliklerine ve

sosyal çevrelerine göre, hem İslami Alevilere hem de İslam-karşıtı Alevilere dönüşme potansiyeli taşırlar. Şayet Batınlık ile felsefî düzeyde ilgili iseler ve genellikle inançlı Alevilerden ya da Müslümanlardan oluşan bir sosyal çevre edinir iseler İslami Aleviliğe yaklaşırlar, zira Aleviliğin İslam ile ortak paydalarını açık etmeye ihtiyaçları artar. Öte yandan eğitim ve iş çevrelerinde laik ve/veya demokrat çevrelerle etkileşim içinde olurlarsa, Aleviliğin “batıl” ve “gerici” olmayan yanlarını vurgulama ihtiyaçları artacağından mevcut inançsal pozisyonlarını felsefî/kültürel bir zemine taşımaya çalışırlar ve İslami vurgulardan uzaklaşırlar. Öte yandan, ikinci ihtimaldeki sosyalleşme potansiyeli daha fazla olduğundan dönüşümün daha fazla anti-İslami yönde yaşandığını söylenebilir.

İslam-karşıtı Aleviler, Alevilik ile bağları devam eden, sosyal çevrelerinde Alevi nüfusun ya da Alevilik ile ilgili faaliyetlerin önemli bir yer tuttuğu kimselerden oluşur. Aleviliğin geleneksel pratiklerine sahip çıkarlar, fakat bunlardaki İslami öğelerden rahatsız olurlar. Aleviliğin İslam ile birlikte anılması bu rahatsızlığı tetikler. Bu yüzden İslam dışı bir Alevilik talep ederler. Geleneği kültürel olarak yaşatmak isterler. Bu yüzden Alevilerin kültürel özelliklerini sürdürmeleri bu minvaldeki hak taleplerini dile getirmeleri ve hakları elde etmeleri, onlar için önemlidir. İslam dışı bir Alevilik arzusu bu kümedeki Alevileri zamanla Yan-Yol’a sürükler.

Aleviliği bir inanç meselesi olarak görmeyen ve Alevilik ritüellerini ve geleneklerini kültürel değerleri dışında reddeden Alevilerin gündelik hayatında, Aleviliğin çok az yer kapladığına ve Alevilik kimliğinin tali, çoğu zaman da silinmiş bir kimlik olduğuna tanık olmaktadır. Bu Alevilik pratiğini sergileyenler sadece din-dışı bir Aleviliği benimseyen Aleviler değildirler. Bazı inançlı ya da yarı inançlı Aleviler arasında da Alevilik gündelik yaşamdan silinmiş olabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla İslam Yolu ve Katışık Yol dışında, Aleviliğin tali bir kimlik olarak yaşanmasına gönderme yapan bir üçüncü kategoriye ihtiyaç vardır. Ana bir yol olmadığı için **Yan-Yol** diyeceğimiz bu kategoriye ikiye ayırmak mümkün. Bunlardan birincisi **“Gevşek Alevilik”** tir. Bu Aleviler, Alevilikle kuvvetli bir geçmişi olup az çok Alevilik hakkında bilgi görgü sahibi kişilerdir. Bu

sürek, Aleviliğe ve Alevilere karşı sempatileri sürüyor olsa da Alevilik ile ilgili temasları zayıflamış, gündelik hayatında Aleviliğe ve Alevilere yer kalmadığı için Alevilikten kopmuş kimselerden oluşur. İkinci süre -**Alevilik Sempatizanlığı**- ise genellikle doğduğu çevreden ya da eğitim düzeylerindeki ve/veya sosyo-ekonomik statülerindeki atlamalardan kaynaklı cemaatsel yaşamla ilgileri bulunmayan ya da kalmayan Alevilerden oluşur. Bu kişiler için Alevilik ile ilgili bağları genellikle bir övünç kaynağıdır. Ancak onların konumlandıkları Alevilik dini bir olgudan ziyade, felsefi ve mistik bir olgudur. Bu yüzden Alevilik ile ilgili bir deneyimleri olmasa da Aleviliğe sempatileri devam eder.

Kimi Alevilerin hayatlarında Alevilik tali bir yoldur. Alevilik ile ilgili pratikler yaşamlarında yer kaplamaz. Buna karşın bu kişiler Aleviliğe tepkili ya da Aleviliği reddeden kişiler de değildirler. Bu kişiler hayatlarının belli bir döneminde ya Alevilikle temasları, bağları olmuş kişiler ya da Aleviliği merak etmiş, anlamaya öğrenmeye çalışmış kişilerdir. Dolayısıyla bu **Yan-Yol**'da yer alan Aleviler bir yandan Alevilikle bağları zayıf olan kişiler iken bir yandan da Alevilikten bütünüyle kopmak istemeyen kişilerdir.

Gevşek Aleviler, kendilerini kökenleri gereği Aleviliğe bağlı hisseden, fakat gündelik hayatlarında Aleviliğin bir yer kaplamadığı ve Alevilik pozisyonlarından herhangi birini net bir biçimde benimsememiş, hegemonik Alevilik söylemlerinden çeşitli öğeleri kararak dillerine dolamış kimselerden oluşur. Genellikle sosyal çevrelerinde fazla Alevi bulunmadığı için onlar için Alevilik tali bir konu haline gelmiştir. Bu kişilerin çocukları genellikle Alevilik sempatizanı olurlar.

Gevşek Alevilerin, Aleviliğin sınırının hemen berisindeki kişiler olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Gevşek Aleviler, Alevilikle bağları hayatlarının bir döneminde iş, göç ve sosyal çevrelerindeki değişimler nedeniyle zayıflamış ya da kopmuş olan kişilerdir. Alevilikle ilgileri geçmişlerinden gelir, fakat yaşamlarında ve geleceklerinde bir yer kaplamaz. Buna karşın Alevilikle retçi bir ilişki içerisinde

de değildirler. Sadece artık başka bir yaşamları vardır ve pratik olarak bu yaşamlarında Alevilik pek az yer kaplar.

Aleviliğin geleneksel pratiklerinden pratik ve yaklaşım olarak uzak duran Alevilerin önemli bir kısmı Aleviliğin hem İslam ile hem de din kavramı ile ilişkilendirilmesinden rahatsız olurlar. Onlara göre Alevilik İslam dışı bir şeydir ve/veya dini bir olgu değildir. Alevilik sempatizanları, Alevilikten uzaklaşmış, genellikle çevresinde fazla Alevi olmayan, fakat bağlama, türkü, semah gibi kültürel öğeler ve kendilerine yakın buldukları “ilerici” unsurları vasıtasıyla Aleviliğe sempati duyan kimselerdir. Alevilikle temasları sınırlıdır ve/veya kültür turizmi mahiyetindedir. Gündelik hayatlarında Aleviler, Alevilik ve Alevilik ile ilgili meseleler nadiren gündeme gelir. Başka kimlikleri öne çıktığında Alevilikleri neredeyse silinir. Din ve İslam meselelerinde Alevilere karşı hoşgörölü değildirler. Aleviliğin “dincileşmesinden” kaygılıdırlar. Kaygılarını besleyen gelişmelere tanık olduklarında sempatileri aşınır, Yan-Yol’dan Yol-Dışı’na sapma eğilimi taşırlar. Bu kategori genellikle genç ya da orta yaşlı, ailesi erken kente yerleşmiş Alevilerden oluşur, ancak özellikle öğretmen gibi meslekler nedeniyle köylerinden erken ayrılmış yaşlılar da mevcuttur. Evli olanlarının çocukları da genellikle Alevilik sempatizanlarıdır. Ayrıca Alevilik sempatizanları sosyal çevrelerinde özellikle Alevi aramadıkları için Alevi olmayan biriyle evlenme ihtimalleri yüksektir.

İslam ya da din referansları ile tarif edemeyeceğimiz, yolları bir Alevilik yolu olmadığı için “**Yol-Dışı**” olarak adlandırdığımız kategoride olan, Alevilik ile geçmiş ve köken itibarı ile bir bağları olduğu için “eski Aleviler” dediğimiz Aleviler arasında üç kümenin varlığından bahsetmek mümkün. Birincisi Alevilik ile teması, bağları olan veya olmuş olan fakat Aleviliği reddeden Alevilerin yer aldığı “**Retçi Alevilik**” dir. Bu kümedeki kişiler için hayatlarının bir döneminde talileşmiş olan Alevilik bugün bir kimlik niteliğini neredeyse tamamen ve de kararlı bir şekilde kaybetmiştir. İkinci kategori ise Sünniliği tercih ederek Alevilik ile Sünnilik arasındaki ayrımı reddedenlerden oluşur. **Sünnileşen Alevilik**, meşhur Sünnileştirme ya da asimilasyon hamlelerinin çıktılarıdır. Son bir Yol-Dışı

kategorisi ise “**Kayıtsızlar**” dır. Bu kategoridekiler Alevi kökenli olmalarına karşın hem bilgi düzeyinde hem de pratik olarak Alevilik ile teması olmamış olan, yaşamlarının herhangi bir döneminde Alevilik kimliğini taşımamış olanlardır.

Retçi Aleviler, Alevilikle hem pratik olarak hem gönül bağı olarak en uzak kümelerden birini oluşturur. Bu kişiler mevcut kimliklerinden dolayı Aleviliği geri ve başka güçlerin etkisi altında bir kültür olarak görürler. Alevilik onlar için tarihte kalmış ve kalması gereken bir kimliktir. Bu kişilerin Alevilerin zaman içinde diğer kategorilere dönüşmesi çok zordur. Başka kimlikleri dönüşebilir, değişebilir olsa da Aleviliğe geri sarıldıklarına pek rastlanmaz.

Aleviler bir kere diğer yollardan Yol-Dışı’na sapmışlar ya da orada dünyaya gelmiş iseler, diğer yollara geri döndükleri pek görünmez. Yol-Dışı Aleviliğin neredeyse tamamen bittiği yerdir. Buradan ancak Alevilik dışı yollara geçişler mümkündür. Yol-Dışı’ndaki Alevilerden ya da onların çocuklarından nadiren de olsa Alevilik sempaticanlığına geçenler olduğu gözlenir. Fakat genellikle o patikadan da geçilen yer Retçi Aleviliktir.

Açık Alevilik döneminin en önemli özelliği Alevilerin hem kendi içlerinde hem de dışarıya karşı açık hale gelmeleridir. Üstelik bu açıklık, tüm kategorilerdeki Aleviler için açık olan bir olgudur. Kategorizasyonumuza giren tüm Alevi tipleri artık daha rahat bir dönemde olduklarını, Alevilerin eskisi gibi kimliklerini saklamadıklarını, rahatlıkla ortaya koyabildiklerini teslim ederler. Hatta bu algı, günümüzde kendileri üzerinde Alevi olmalarından kaynaklı bir ayrımcılığın olmadığı hissiyatını da beslemiş durumdadır. Açılma, dışarı ile teması ve hem içeriye hem dışarıya Alevilik hakkında konuşmayı beraberinde getirir. Bu durum bir Alevilik tarifine ihtiyacı perçinlemiş durumda. Özellikle aktif Aleviler diyeceğimiz, -bizim kategorilerimizden İslami Alevilik, Senkretik Alevilik ve İslam-karşıtı Alevilik- başta geliyor- Alevi kimliğini birinci ve öncelikli kimlik olarak benimseyen ve bir tür Aleviciliğin hakim olması için mücadele eden ya da bunu arzulayan Aleviler için Aleviliğin tarifi en önemli ihtiyaçtır. Pasif Aleviler için ise –özellikle “Yan-Yol” ve “Yol-Dışı” Alevileri- Alevilik ile ilgili

sorumluluk düzeyi daha gevşek olduğu için Alevilik ile ilgili tüm meselelerde olduğu gibi bir Alevilik tanımına sahip olmakta da aktif Aleviler kadar arzulu değildirler. Yine de Aleviliğe olan sempatilerinden kaynaklı, üzerine anlaşılan bir Alevilik tarifi olması onların da temennileri arasında gelir. Aktif Aleviler için farkı ise temenninin de ötesinde hem net bir tarif hem de Alevilik hakkında maksimum bilgiye sahip olmak istemeleridir. Bu konudaki çokseslilik her tipteki Alevi için rahatsız edicidir. Aktifler, yakın oldukları Aleviliğin hegemonik olması için, pasif olanlar ise dağılma riski nedeniyle tekil bir Alevilik talep ederler.

Tüm Alevi tiplerini Aleviliğin eskisi gibi olmadığında hemfikirdir. Aleviliğin bir dağılma sürecinde olduğu, genç Alevilerin Aleviliğe ilgisiz olduğu, Aleviliğin “dejenere” olduğu, “yozlaştığı”, “asimile” olduğu, “saptığı” bir çok Alevi tarafından dile getirirler. Birçok Alevi ailesinden Aleviliği öğrenemediğini, hatta ailesinde Aleviliği bilen pek olmadığını dile getirir. Ancak İslam Yolu’ndaki Alevilerin ailelerinden Alevili konusunda daha fazla beslendiklerini söyleyebiliriz. Bu Aleviler ayrıca kırsal bağları, Alevilik geçmişleri daha fazla olan Alevilerdir ve genellikle hala Alevilerin yoğun ve birarada yaşadıkları muhitlerde yaşarlar. Aleviliğin yozlaştığı ya da gericileştiği vurgusu ise genellikle Sünnilikten etkilendiği imasını taşır. Bu vurgu daha ziyade İslami Aleviler dışındaki Alevilerden gelir. Alevilik için Sünnilik önemli bir “kurucu dışı”dır. Bu yüzden Aleviler her tür Sünni çağrışımından itina ile kaçınırlar. Aleviliği de Sünnilikten arındırmaya çalışırlar. Öte yandan İslam Yolu’ndaki Aleviler dahi bu eğilimi taşırlar. Zira onların da pozitif olarak tanımladıkları Aleviliğin Sünnilikten farklı olması icap eder. Bu çizgi silikleştiğinde diğerlerinin kaygısı olan Sünnileşme gerçekleşmiş olur. İslam Yolu’ndaki Alevilerin gericilik eleştirisi, Aleviliğin heterodoksiden taşıdığı halk İslam’ı ritüellerine yönelikken, diğerlerinin eleştirileri tüm İslami referanslara yönelebilir. Ali’nin ilahlaştırılması çoğu Alevi tarafından eleştirilmektedir. İslami Aleviler için, Hz. Ali, peygamber mertebesine getirilmektedir, bu yanlıştır. Onlara göre Hz. Ali, İslam’ın önemli bir figürüdür, fakat Allah’la, peygamberle bir tutulmamalıdır. İslam Yolu’nda olmayan Aleviler için ise Ali’nin İslami bir figür olması Ali tutkunluğuna eleştirel yaklaşımlarına neden olmaktadır. Bu Aleviler, Ali’nin Alevilik için önemli olmasını ise Ali’nin

cesur, adaletli, haksızlığa uğramış bir kişi olarak simgesel değeri olduğunu düşünürler.

Alevilerin Sünni İslam karşıtlığı, Arap düşmanlığı ve türban karşıtlığı ile de tezahür eder. Bu nitelikler Alevilerin farklı kategorilerde olmalarına karşın ortaklaştıkları niteliklerdir. Aleviler arasındaki Sünni İslam karşıtlığının hakimiyeti, İslam Yolu'ndaki Alevileri de sarmalar. Bu Aleviler, kendilerini Arap hakimiyetindeki İslami anlayıştan ayırmaya çalışırlar. Böyle olunca, Alevilik İslam'ın Türk yorumu olarak yorumlanır. Aleviliği İslami tonda yorumlayan Alevilerin Türklüğe vurgusu yaygındır. Oysa yine aynı tür Aleviler arasında Aleviliği bir etnisite olarak değil de bir inanç olarak ele alma eğilimi daha ağır basar. İslami olmayan Aleviler arasında ise Aleviliğin soydan geldiğine inananlar vardır. Eğitim düzeyi daha yüksek olan ve/veya Alevilik ile bağları daha zayıf olan Aleviler arasında ise Aleviliğin soydan geçtiği inancı zayıflamıştır. Fakat bu kişiler dahi, sonradan Alevi olunabileceğine dair şüphe taşırlar, zira Alevilik onlar için içine doğulan ve uzun yıllar boyunca edinilen bir kültürdür. Hal böyle iken Aleviliğin yeni neferler kazanması neredeyse imkansızdır.

Cem ritüeli ve cemevleri de bir çok din-dışı Alevi tarafından eleştirilir. Fakat cemevlerinin kültürel nitelikleri, Alevilerin dayanışmasına ve biraradalığına katkısı nedeniyle cemevleri önemsenir. İslami Aleviler dahi cemevlerini birer ibadethane olmaktan ziyade kültürevi olarak tanımlarlar. Yalnız bu yerlerde yapılan ve kimi zaman TV'lerden canlı gösterilen cemlere sıcak bakmazlar. Cemlerin bu şekilde bulandırıldığını düşünürler. Bu şekilde turistikleştirilen cemler ise diğer Alevilerin merak konusu olabilir. Fakat onlarda cemlerin semah dansı, deyişler gibi kültürel ve felsefi yanının öne çıkması dini öğelerden arındırılması gerektiğine inanırlar. Dede kurumu da önceliğini yitiren diğer bir Alevilik geleneğidir. Görüştüğüm Aleviler arasında cemlere katılan dedeleri tanıyan Aleviler dahil, İslami olsun olmasın, neredeyse tüm Aleviler, dedelere geçmişte Alevilerin yaklaştığı gibi yaklaşıyor. Dedelerin insanüstü nitelikleri olduğuna inanan Alevi neredeyse yoktur. Geçmişte Aleviliği öğretmeleri ve köyler arasında iletişim rolleri nedeniyle gerekli olduğu teslim edilen dedeler bugün için

işlevsiz bulunuyor. Aleviliği öğrenme ve öğretme misyonunu hala önemseyenler ise eğitilmiş, görgülü, çağdaş dedeler yetişmesi gerektiğine inanıyor.

Alevi geleneğinden uzaklaşmış olan –özellikle Yan-Yol ve Yol-Dışı’ndaki Aleviler ve İslam-karşıtı Aleviler- için Alevilik sempati duyulan bir kültüre dönüşmüştür. Alevi ritüelleri ve kültürü onlar için övünülecek fakat yerine getirilmesi gerekmeyen şeylerdir. Kendilerini sorunlu hissetmemeleri ve bir yaptırıma tabi olmamaları, Aleviliği esnek, rahat bir kültür olarak değerlendirmelerine neden olmaktadır. Alevilerin çoğunluğunun üzerinde uzlaştığı bir konu ise Atatürk’tür. Aleviler Atatürk’e büyük saygı duyarlar, çünkü yüzyıllardır süregelen Sünni İslam hakimiyetini zayıflatmıştır. Sünni İslam tüm Alevi kategorilerinin karşısında olduğu ve geriletilmesi gereken bir kendiliktir. Aynı nedenle cumhuriyet de Alevilerin çoğunluğunca sahiplenilir. Fakat politik Alevilik, Çorum, Maraş, Sivas gibi olaylar nedeniyle Cumhuriyetin başlangıçta Aleviler lehine olsa da zamanla yine Alevilerin aleyhinde yönetildiğini savlar. Bu düşünce devletin Alevilere karşı olduğu kanısı oluşturur. Dolayısıyla Aleviler devlete karşı zıt hisler besler. Bir yandan sahibi gibi hissedeler, bir yandan da tehdit olarak algırlar. Devletin sahibi olma algısı Alevilerin “azınlık olma” statüsünü reddetmelerine de neden olur. Az sayıda hak nosyonu olan solcu Aleviler dışındaki Aleviler, sayıca çok olduklarını ve bu devletin memleketin temel unsurları olduklarını düşündükleri için azınlık olarak görülmeyle reddederler.

Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizi belli bir Alevilik anlayışını hakim kılmak isteyen Alevi çevreleri tarafından da yoğun olarak hissedilmektedir. Aleviliğin tanımlanması bu çevreler için de hayati bir önem kazanmıştır. Bahsettiğimiz iki hakim tutumdan İslami Alevilik projesi dini, inançsal ya da geleneksel öğelerle bezenmiş bir Aleviliği hedeflediğinden Aleviliğin geçmişten bugüne taşıdığı bir çok unsurunu ekleme kapasitesi yüksektir. Politik Aleviliğin Aleviler üzerindeki tesiri ise, hafızalarda taze olan Alevilere yönelik saldırıların izleri ve Aleviler üzerindeki sistematik ayrımcı politikalarıdır. Öte yandan Aleviler için Alevi kimliğinin kurucu dışarısının Sünnilik ve onunla geçişli bir kendilik olarak İslam oluşu, İslami bir Aleviliğin sınırlarını zorlamakta, kabullenişini

sınırlandırmaktadır. Aleviler için her tür İslami çağrışım, hatta dini ya da inançsal öğeler, o ya da bu şekilde gerici Sünni İslam'ı çağırılmaktadır. Politik bir Aleviliğin açmazı ise zor bela oluşturulan politik taleplerin konjüktürel oluşu ve pozitif bir Alevilik kimliği tanımlamakta etkisiz kalışıdır. Halihazırda Alevilik bağları gevşemiş, Alevilikleri bir tutkudan bir sempatiye dönüşmüş olan Aleviler için her iki proje de bir cazibe merkezi haline gelememektedir. Son olarak hem bahsi geçen hegemonik projeler, hem de Alevilerin geneli için sözedilen Alevi kimliğinin sürdürülebilirlik krizi yoğun olarak hissedilen bir olgudur. “Alevi uyanışı”, Alevi kimliğinin haklarına sahip çıkarak, kendini özgürleştirdiği bir uyanıştan çok, Aleviliğin sürdürülebilirlik krizinin ayırdedilişine denk düşmektedir.

APPENDIX E

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	University of Ankara Political Science	2001
BS	METU Civil Engineering	1998
High School	Ankara Anadolu High School, Ankara	1992

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2004- Present	YADA Foundation	General Coordinator
2000-2004	Free Lance	Researcher

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Fluent German

PUBLICATIONS

- “Alevis and Discrimination” in **Alevis, Discrimination and Human Rights**. Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Culture Foundation. 2007. Ankara.
- “Being an Alevi: Daily Life and Samples of Discrimination” in **Turkey's Minority Rights Question: A Citizenship and Democracy Based Approach**. TESEV, 9-10 December 2005. Istanbul.
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HOBBIES

Mountaineering, Go, Bicycle.