FRAGMENTED YET UNITED: ALEVIS' PEREGRINATION TO "URBAN"

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis aims to recount the current situation of the Alevi community in the urban Turkish setting. The data were collected during eight months of ethnographic field research from February 2009 to October 2009 in a complex preferred to be called as the Dikmen Alevi Community Center, in Ankara.

I present different ways adopted by various groups while explaining what Alevism is and I stress the fact that there is a certain degree of fragmentalization within the community due to such diverse descriptions. Thenceforth, I emphasize the reasons behind the existence of divergent classifications and analyze Alevis' migration from rural to urban areas during 1970s and 1980s as it relates to the changes in the institutions.

After offering an evaluation of the changes accompanying migration, I accentuate the competitive sharing of the city as a religious space between Alevis and Sunnis concentrating on Alevis' perception of religious space and providing a comparison between Sunni and Alevi perceptions regarding the places of worship. Subsequently, I attempt to show that there is a competitive sharing relationship present within the community giving the example of Dikmen Alevi Community Center after the establishment of the Alevi Institute for Research, Documentation and Application. I conclude that this kind of a relationship and the current state of affairs are the results of the struggle to adapt to a changing environment, which in turn alters the individuals themselves.

Keywords: Alevism, Rural to Urban Migration, Politization, Competitive Sharing

ÖZ

PARÇALI BİR BÜTÜN: ALEVİLERİN KENTE GÖÇÜ

Alataş, İrem

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Bu tezde amaçlanan Alevi toplumunun Türkiye'deki şehir hayatına dair saptamalarda bulunmaktır. Tezde aktarılan veriler Ankara'da araştırmacı tarafından Dikmen Alevi Toplum Merkezi olarak anılan bir komplekste gerçekleştirilen, Şubat 2009'dan Ekim 2009'a kadar süren etnografik alan araştırması sonucu elde edilmiştir.

Alevi toplumu içinde var olan farklı Alevilik tanımları ele alınmış ve bu farklı tanımlamalardan doğan cemaat icindeki gruplaşmaya vurgu yapılmıştır. Sonrasında, var olan bu farklı tanımlamaların nedenleri incelenmiş ve 1970 ve 1980'li yıllarda Alevilerin köyden kente göçü analiz edilerek Aleviliğin kurumlarında gerçekleşen değişiklikler aktarılmıştır. Göçle birlikte gelen değişimi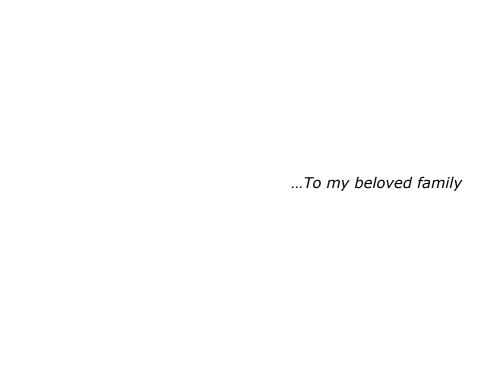n bir değerlendirmesi sunulduktan sonra, Alevilerin dini mekan algısı analiz edilmiş ve ibadet yerleri açısından Alevi ve Sunni algıları karşılaştırılmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak dinsel bir mekan

olan şehrin bu iki grup tarafından nasıl rekabetçi bir şekilde paylaşıldığının altı çizilmiştir. Bütün bunlara ek olarak, Alevi Araştırma, Dokümantasyon ve Uygulama Enstitüsü'nün açılması sonrasında Dikmen Alevi Toplum Merkezi örneği üzerinden, Alevi cemaatinin içindeki rekabetçi paylaşım akratılmaya çalışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, aktarılan durumun süregelen bir değişim içinde bulunan çevreye uyum sağlama çabası gösteren Alevilerin bu süreç içinde kendilerinin de değişmesinden kaynaklandığı vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Köyden Kente Göç, Siyasallaşma, Rekabetçi Paylaşım

…To my beloved family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It was especially hard to wake up in the morning on December 23rd, 2008. I had gone to bed quite late the night before because I had to prepare the name tags for the opening ceremony of the Alevi Institute for Research, Documentation and Application in Dikmen, Ankara; in a building hosting five other organizations.

The day before, when I went there to see how the preparations were coming along, it was clear that more help was needed so I have taken the responsibility to prepare the name tags for the board members of the Institute. To be perfectly honest, I knew nothing about designing name tags, but I had to improvise. I had to use the little piece of knowledge I had of computers to do the best I can since there was no one else to do the job, but me. I had to come with a simple design with the logo of the Institute in the middle and the names of the board members just under the logo. It was past 8 o'clock in the evening, and I had to get a cab to go to the Middle East Technical University to get the cards printed and to go back to the Institute. I have cut them with my own two hands one by one and placed them in plastic protectors. I have prepared approximately 70 name tags with spares that night. It was about midnight when I got

home and I had to be up by six o'clock in the morning to go there and make the remaining arrangements until it was time for the guests to arrive.

It was early in the morning, but I had prepared what to wear the night before. I had even done my hair in the night before I went to bed to sleep. I clearly remember that I was disappointed somehow when I saw that it was raining outside. It could even be snowing and it would be perfectly normal for Ankara weather in December; nonetheless, I was somehow disappointed to see the rain pouring down. I have worn my skirt, a polo-neck pullover, and my jacket. I was happy that I had listened to my mother and bought that suit at the time. This was a serious occasion and it had a dress code. I had to look the part.

It was not yet seven o'clock when I got to the building. I was very much excited to be a part of something as significant as this. I was constantly repeating to myself, "This is basically history in the making and you are a part of it." I have run to the library and checked out the name tags, I have also made copies of the seating plan to distribute to others who would be volunteering as me to be of help on such a significant day. The Minister of Culture was coming to officially open the Alevi Institute for Research, Documentation and Application. I was in charge of dealing with

guests and showing them their seats in the conference room. I had the chance to meet important religious leaders as well as opinion leaders. I clearly remember feeling important myself. I was witnessing something simply groundbreaking. To see that many religious groups getting together under the same roof was hope-inspiring. To be a part of such an event in which so many important figures played crucial parts was fundamentally remarkable.

The speech delivered by the Minister of Culture at the time, Ertuğrul Günay, was a first in many senses. It was the first step for recognition of the Alevi community by the Turkish State. The speech touched upon different issues and sensitivities. The first official promise for turning Madımak Hotel in Sivas into a museum was given in the opening ceremony of the Alevi Institute on December 23rd, 2008. The Hotel was known with the Madımak Incident, in which 33 people, who were poets, singers, authors, and thinkers, have died in the fire. I remember the feeling I got when I heard that part of the speech, I was pleasantly surprised.

While the Minister of Culture was on the stage giving his speech, relatives of the victims of the Madımak Incident cried for justice. It was one of the most emotional moments that I have ever witnessed in my entire life. All

of the guests, who came to experience this major event in Turkish history, have turned to these people in the hall and all of them shared their pain. I was responsible for taking care of the conference hall during the event. It was expected of me to immediately intervene and control the situation. I acted as soon as possible and I found myself holding the hand of the women who was crying and trying to talk at the same time. She was asking for justice and nothing else. I tried to calm her down, but I have felt her pain, her anger, and her disappointment. After such an emotional experience, it was very hard to act as though everything would immediately go back to normal, nevertheless, a mini concert by a well-known folk music group, Kardeş Türküler, softened the air.

After the day was over, every single person who was a part of this event looked proud. It was over; Alevi Institute was established and open from that day on. This is how it all started. The beginning of my journey as a researcher trying to connect with my roots was that day in Dikmen, Ankara.

1.1. Learning about Self through Research Subjects

One would expect to find learning anything quite easy in this age of Information Technologies. There is the internet, the printed and visual media, and many other mass communication tools. Nonetheless,

"learning" is a significantly hard process when it comes to learn about rather fragile issue. Being an Alevi, I grew up with a certain sense of secretiveness about certain issues, when it came to my roots or who I was. I was raised to be silent about these issues so that I would not get hurt or be excluded. My parents did not know any better, but to warn us and scare us about the ramifications of us being honest and open about our ethnic background or religion. My family could not afford to be openly Alevi at the expense of ostracism and social exclusion. Nonetheless, I started to dig into my history and roots when I went to college in Ankara at the Middle East Technical University.

For the purposes of this study, I have conducted ethnographic field research in Ankara, Turkey for eight months (February 2009 to October 2009). I focused my research onto a building I would like to call as Dikmen Alevi Community Center, housing different Alevi organizations. I have worked for Alevi Cultural Associations (ACA) as a Project Assistant, at the same time I was the Research Coordinator for Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation (HBVACF) ; and a Research Assistant for Alevi Institute for Research, Documentation and Application. The more I was involved with the organizations, the more I got to learn about the belief, itself, with all the other noteworthy issues such as the social, political, and economic dynamics existing in the community. As a crucial part of the Project I worked for, Mobilizing Towards Equality and Non

Discrimination financed by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, I was a member of a field crew consisting of nine fieldworkers. We have travelled all around Turkey and conducted in-depth interviews alongside surveys in 14 different cities, two from each geographical region, namely, Adıyaman, Amasya, Ankara, Aydın, Bursa, Erzincan, Gaziantep, Isparta, İstanbul, İzmir, Kars, Mersin, Sivas, and Zonguldak.

Through my involvement with the organizations, I got to learn about many people, those who have helped in my study with the inexplicably valuable pieces of information they have provided me with, or the trust they have had in me enough to share their lives, hearts, feelings, and even personal ambitions. They have helped me understand who I am through my humble attempts at understanding them. They have shared more than enough and helped me see with their own eyes; put me in their own shoes so that I could see for myself what it was to live the life they have lived or feel the way they have felt.

The more they have trusted me the more I have learned. The more I have learned about them the more I have learned about myself. The fear of "going native" did not apply to me, I was one of them, yet I was also an outsider both because I was "observing" them and because I did not

know "who or what I was". "One can hardly deny the potential advantages of being an insider, keeping in mind that there can also be disadvantages to being an insider," (Erdemir and Ergun, 2010:17). My informants were the volunteers, employees, visitors coming to a building in Dikmen, Ankara, Turkey. Dikmen Alevi Community Center, as I would like to call it, is a building, which is both politically active and religiously holy. They were between the ages of 18 and 80 from both sexes, different ethnic backgrounds, and professions. It would be most appropriate to state that the range of my informants reflected the composition of the Alevi community and helped me understand the community in the full sense of the word.

Malinowski (1961:25) states that an ethnographer is "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world." In my case, I was trying to grasp the native's point of view to realize his vision of world, but in doing so I was also getting a sense of my world, of which I was deprived of for many reasons, be it political, social, or cultural. The only way to be able to grasp someone's point of view or relation to life is through participant observation. Participant observation is the key to provide the answer to the question the humankind is anxious to answer since the very beginning, "Why?" Nonetheless, this certain methodology is rather problematic to fully apply. "Participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires

detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity," (Paul, 1953:441). I was an outsider since I did not actually know the dynamics of the society, but I was also an insider, emotionally involved and very intrigued to be finally getting to learn about "myself" alongside my beloved informants through self-reflexive methods of research with the use of interviews, formal and informal conversation.

What is more is that in this humble attempt, I had an upper-hand compared to other researchers working with Alevis and trying to understand them. Other researchers who were Sunnis had to gain the trust of the community as well as learning "appropriate behavior" patterns (Tedlock, 1991:70), and having to do so takes a long time when it comes to a closed community like the Alevi community in Turkey. Alevis are "…reluctant to talk about their religion… simply because there was a proscription against disclosing their lives to outsiders," (Shankland, 2003:3).

> *For the insider, shared citizenship, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and cultural identities or simply affinities facilitate the researcher's access to the field. Such common ground has the potential to increase the perceived trustworthiness of the researcher while also ensuring openness on the part of the respondents, thereby facilitating rapport* (Erdemir and Ergun, 2010:18)

 I was not an outsider for the community I was trying to understand although I actually was because of my lack of knowledge and

involvement. I was one of them, they had nothing to be intimidated by, and they were talking to one of their daughters, sisters, or friends. I have listened to their life histories. We have had long lunches during which we have discussed personal relations they have had with others. We have eaten together, drank together, and lived together for eight long months. I have never felt left aside. They were not just talking about themselves, they were telling me about me because I was one of them.

1.2. Description of the Field Site: Dikmen Alevi Community Center

It is quite critical to see a certain place in order to be able to understand the very nature of the relations or interrelations taking place among entities or individuals in that certain setting. The ethnographic fieldwork conducted for the purposes of this thesis was in a web of organizations residing in the same building. If one were to comprehend and interpret the relations both among the organizations and various personalities either officially working or volunteering for the organizations one should examine the physical conditions of co-existence that bind both these organizations and individuals to one another. For this particular case, one should analyze physical characteristics of the building the organizations co-exist in with respect to human relations.

A building with four floors stands tall on a hill in Ankara. The rainbow constructed to symbolize the unity of different entities is right above it. One would be amazed at the bravery of this building, and the calmness surrounding it. Passing through the fences of the garden, one faces two mighty lions guarding the door of the building. A giant statue of Hacı Bektaş Veli sits strongly and on one side of the building whereas a statue of Ataturk firmly stands on the other. It is quite exquisite the way the building looks from outside. It is almost as if it is a clear manifestation of the power that lies within. Spatial manifestations of power are utterly visible. Looking at the scale of a statue, for instance, one can without a doubt have a somewhat accurate idea concerning the significance of that certain figure for the organization or the organizations present in the building. Once you enter the building, there is the reception desk to the right and through the glass almost always there is someone who greets you as you pass the door. They might help you find what you are looking for, but they would never question the reason why you came to the place.

The person at the reception desk might change every single time you enter the building. It might be Uncle Veli (Veli Amca), who is almost 70 years-old; or it might be Brother Hasan (Hasan Abi), in mid mid-forties. It could easily be Sister Necla (Necla Abla), with a phone in her hand, talking to the person on the line and greeting you with a smile on her

face. It can very-well be someone you had never seen in eight long months you have been there. I have seen people at the reception desk, whom I had never seen before, and some of them I have seen after that either.

When you enter the building, in the narrow isle you see on your left, there are three offices and a larger conference room used for the monthly paper the Alevi Cultural Associations (ACA) Headquarters used to publish. The isle reaches to a larger lobby and there are bathrooms right-passed the lobby. There are also two classrooms used for music lessons. If you straight ahead as you enter the building there is a big lounge; half empty, half filled with old newspaper that prepared by ACA Headquarters. The doors of this lounge are often covered by posters of the events organized by the NGOs in the building or other fellow organizations. A couple of steps further, the staircase greats you with marble steps and brass handrail, which has a shiny yellowish hue. An elevator, left to the stairs, takes you down to İmece Clinic and to the cafeteria. The cafeteria is also used as the lounge for the cem (congregational) rites since it is the largest lounge in the building. The physical characteristics of the cafeteria, in other words the cem "lounge" will be analyzed later on in detail. Relating to the case of cemhouses as the worshipping places of Alevis, since they are built as parts of associations, foundations or other organizations, as parts of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in general, the inevitability to analyze the physical characteristics of these places is absolutely evident.

The elevator does not take you to upper floors. You have to use the stairs. On the first floor, a large lobby takes up almost one third of the space. As soon as you complete the step, there is a little kitchen to your left, which is usually used to make tea, which is consumed in bulk. Next to the kitchen, there is again a narrow isle which belongs to Alevi Bektashi Federation (ABF). There are two offices in this isle and one is used by the secretary of the federation. The other office is filled with plastic chairs and a plastic table.

If you do not enter the isle and walk passed it, the door to your left opens up to the Alevi Institute for Research, Documentation and Application, with its logo hanging beside the door, symbolizing the perfect human being. Alevi Institute takes almost one fourth of the space on the first floor. As soon as you enter the Institute, you get a different feel. Once you pass through the doors of the Institute, the first thing you notice is the new wall papers and new furniture. As the organization which was established the lasts among all of them in the building, Alevi Institute is the one that receives the most attention both tangibly and intangibly. Within the walls that confine the Institute, the first door to

your left is the office of the secretary. Then the second door on the left is the project office, dealing with the projects undertaken by the Institute. The door across the hall is the conference room of the Institute. Inside the conference room there is an archive room, as well. Finally, the third door on the left in the hall is the office of the Chairperson of the Institute, Prof. Dr. Cengiz Güleç. On the first floor, there is also a bigger conference hall named after Ali Doğan, former Chairperson of the Foundation and one of the leaders of the Alevi movement in Turkey. It suffices to state that this particular conference hall is large enough to accommodate over 200 people. The largest events such as general assemblies of the Foundation, Association, and/or the Federation are held in this auditorium.

The second floor of the building is occupied generally by the Headquarters of Haci Bektas Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation and Alevi Cultural Associations. Right after the stairs, there are bathrooms on both sides, and behind a glass door, there is Haci Bektashi Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation and Alevi Cultural Associations. Before the glass doors, there is the old library to your left, which is now used as the office of the Project Coordinator. There are many books on the shelves and the large room is divided with these shelves into smaller half-open offices. The door opens up to a large lobby with the desk of the secretary of the foundation on the left. Whether it is summer or winter, this floor is

always cold since it does not receive direct sunlight. In the hall to your left, there is the office of the Foundation's Chairperson. In the same hall, there are three more offices used by the senior officers of the organizations, and one of them is the office for the Chairperson of the Association. Across from the hall, there is the office of Alevi Cultural Associations Ankara Branch.

On the top floor of the building, there is an Alevi TV station called YOL TV. Neither the executive staff nor other workers of YOL TV get engaged in any serious discussion about Alevism or politics in the building. They often tend to have a much more laid-back approach regarding politics. They, of course, have a political stance, but I have never heard them getting involved in any discussions about belief, religion or politics.

As mentioned earlier, one floor down from the entrance, there is a private clinic named Imece Clinic. The foundation and the association used to run this clinic together; nevertheless, they had to lease the place for economic reasons. It would be suffice to state that the clinic had posed as a problem and could be considered as the reason behind some of the conflicts within the building.

Right under the Clinic, there is the cafeteria, which is also used as a cem hall. The hall is used as a cafeteria during the day for seven days, but when the foundation or the association organizes a cem ceremony, the whole set up of the hall changes. One could easily claim that since there is a big stage facing the hall, the hall was built as a cem hall, but then it is used as a cafeteria. When there is a cem to be held in the hall the tables are stacked in one corner of the lounge and the plastic chairs are lined up in front of the stage. The stage, in the middle of the back wall, becomes the center of attention. Large banners are hanged right behind the stage. A poster of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk hangs in the middle and a Turkish flag and a portrait of Hz. Ali on its sides. The floors are made of marble and the stage is almost 30 centimeters higher than the ground. A sound system is installed in the hall for the cem ceremonies; and the sound echoes in the hall during the ceremony even if it is a full house. The hall is built so that every single sound is amplified in one way or the other.

To conclude, it is of high level significance to understand the architectural structure of religious places, especially the places of worship. That is basically to say, the place and the physical characteristics of the constructed space reflect the very nature of the rituals practiced in that certain space along with the essential attributes of the religion or the belief that the place belongs to.

1.3. Topic Selection and Outline of the Thesis

The reasons behind such a study are beyond my own personal interest in the issue. Trying to understand the relationship between Sunni and Alevi communities in Turkey is of high level of significance since after Sunnis Alevis are the largest religious group in Turkey. The working dynamics of such a relationship is very critical in understanding Turkey in general. The history of Alevism is filled with examples of inhumane treatments, stories of discrimination, and fear of exclusion. Alevis' struggle to get recognition in such an environment is to be analyzed fully in order to be able to comprehend the power relations between Alevis and Sunnis. Understanding such a relationship is also imperative in grasping the methods of Alevis in their fight over equal citizenship and nondiscrimination.

The second chapter of the study focuses on the historical background and attempts at providing a general overview of the current situation of the community in Turkey. Consequently, the third chapter is centered around the issue of migration as the start of change and aims to deliver reasons in order to be able to understand the current condition of the community. The changes that they have gone through are analyzed in detail to provide a better understanding of the community and their ways of living in the urban setting. The fourth chapter, on the other hand, goes into the details of the relationship between Sunnis and Alevis utilizing the debate

that revolves around cemhouses. What is more is that, antagonistic tolerance experienced both between Alevis and Sunnis and within the community is examined with detailed examples from the field. Lastly, in the fifth chapter, a brief summary of the thesis is given with closing remarks on the issue.

1.4. Grounded Theory

The research conducted for the purposes of this thesis was done so according to the premises of grounded theory. In other words, the theory was formulated in accordance with the data collected through the ethnographic field research. This would simply assure that the theory devised would be fitting to analyze the data collected (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

At this point, it is critical to emphasize that anthropological research complies best with grounded theory because of the simple fact that anthropological inquiry involves human beings. Predetermined theories might and probably eventually will prove to be insufficient in endeavoring to provide well-balanced and thorough answers for questions regarding the essence of human relations. Although individual stories or histories are significant for a better application of the grounded theory, the main purpose is to understand and conceptualize the underlying social

phenomenon manifesting in these stories. In simple words, content is analyzed as it relates to the context (Suddaby, 2006). Accordingly, the questions asked, the categories formulated have been constantly updated during the time of the ethnographic research to fit the purposes of grounded theory.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND AN OVERVIEW HISTORICAL OF THE PRESENT

The coup d'état in 1980 was aimed at putting an end to the high level of politization. Alevi organizations were also one of the foci in this sense. For instance, Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture and Tourism Association was one of the organization closed at the time. The executive staff was accused of engaging separatist activities, which were regarded as menaces to society. Above and beyond, Alevi traditions and religious practices were almost abandoned with the effects of migration. On the other hand, the breakthrough experienced within the Alevi Movement had other reasons than solely religious ones since, as mentioned several times in different chapters, Alevis had to hide their religious identities to fight against discrimination and ostracism.

There are many reasons as to why the Alevi community in Turkey found the "courage" to organize and move as a united body to be able to make demands. First of all, the political context and the economic circumstances of the decade were not in favor of Alevis and they had to "stick together" as one of my informants stresses. Nevertheless, this particular need to ensemble cannot be explained with only economic

disadvantages. Moreover, the class politics revolving around economic circumstances were found to be insufficient in the attempt to mobilize the masses. A very-much needed change in the discourse used to organize the movement was made with respect to the global political conjuncture. One should underline the fact that with the fall of class politics, the emphasis on identity was much more perceptible in assembling the community.

What is more is that it would be appropriate to state that Alevis, having faced numerous types of discrimination at varying levels in the society, have mobilized into groups with the intention of "negation". They are gathered to form a collective force and did that with the influence of the negative character of the collective behavior, as claimed by Simmel. Simmel simply states that individuals cannot move a firm group and act together without the existence of an unpleasant situation (Simmel, 1950), in this case, the discrimination against them. In other words, the violent acts, discriminatory practices, and the existence of an oppressive environment were influential in the thriving of the movement, in general (Massicard, 2005).

2.1. Rise of Non-Governmental Organizations and Faith-Based Organizations: Weapons of Mass Advocation

NGOs have always been key elements in the struggle for human rights and the mobilization of different political, religious, economics, and social groups. With the effect of identity politics rising on a global scale, the emphasis on identity related issues and the focus on" particularities" have paved the way for minorities to get organized in the form of such organizations with legal personalities. Organizations of this nature would be able to lead a legal fight against undesirable and unacceptable practices. Group involvement, especially through NGOs becomes very significant in this sense with the transition to urban life; using the urban ways of expression and urban means of political involvement.

In addition, as the citizenship studies have evolved, a tendency of exploring citizenship in four dimensions has emerged. These dimensions are namely; legal status, rights, (political) participation, and a sense of belonging (Bloemraad 2000, Bosniak 2000). Hence, one could easily emphasize that political participation as being an important element of citizenship studies should be investigated. Political participation, being "exclusionary by gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and class; in practice, old exclusion continue to affect political participation," (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul, 2008:156). Political participation cannot simply

be defined as voting. Political participation, meaning to take part in politics, goes way beyond voting. It involves every single activity to take part in civil society to make a difference, to change certain things in one's or a community's life. Though voting is a very important indicator of political participation, being a member of intermediary organizations such as NGOs and FBOs, which have the power to make an influence on the decision-making processes and implementation mechanisms, is also a key act of political participation, itself. Engaging in activities of such nature, citizens of a society will have the power and the means of effecting politics.

Furthermore, "citizenship involves *active* capacities to influence politics and *passive* rights of existence under a legal system," (Janoski and Gran, 2002:13). Through the involvement in the political realm, that they experience, the citizens will fully realize their active capacities to influence politics and they will have the opportunity to use their rights and fulfill their legal obligations. "Citizenship rights and obligations exist at the individual, organizational or societal levels. At the organizational level, they concern the rights and obligations of groups to form and act in public arenas," (Janoski and Gran, 2002:14). By their given rights citizens are entitled perform political activities in groups; such as members of NGOs and FBOs. This approach used to conceptualize citizenship in general is also applicable to the notion of identity since the

involvement in NGOs and FBOs is a critical part of one's identity in urban life. This way of contemplating the boundaries of the term "identity" also complies with the very premise emphasizing the subjective nature of the concept since involvement in such organizations is through personal choice.

The Alevi Movement in Turkey has also flourished with Non-Governmental Organizations. With this in mind, one should also draw attention to the fact that this kind of mobilization is always subject to high levels of polarization and fragmentation since different interpretations can also be influential through the mobilization under the name of associations and foundations. It is significant to note that the mere existence of many different organizations and interpretations is itself a paramount sign of fragmentation.

In order to be able to analyze such dynamics involving the politization process of the movement with a specific focus on the matter of fragmentation within the movement, a diachronic approach will be utilized. The histories of the NGOs concerned will be narrated to a certain extent in the following parts with the intention of being able to make a comprehensive conceptualization as to why the current circumstances exist and conditions of today have evolved the way they did.

It is of high level of importance to note that some of the debates suggest low levels of politization with/within organizations, which were founded before the period of excessive political involvement. Nonetheless, the changing executive bodies, members, and conditions have led to politization and fragmentation at each and every level within the community including earlier-established organizations.

Furthermore, one should take into consideration that NGOs and FBOs are hosts of many different ideologies, definitions, understandings, and perceptions. Nonetheless, it is critical to disentangle this web of interconnected definitions and perceptions in order to be able to provide a much more detailed analysis. However, the fact that many of these interpretations and comprehensions go hand-in-hand is a pressing matter that one should always cogitate on.

2.2. Alevi Identity

Alevi identity has many facets and each every facet should be analyzed in detail in order to present a holistic understanding encompassing all of the aspects of what Alevi identity is, in general. To be able to propose comprehensive interpretation these facets will be explained in depth in different parts. These different perceptions resulting in different definitions of Alevism are very significant in understanding the

compartmentalization within the Alevi community since they are these definitions that pave the way to contrasting viewpoints.

2.2.1. Alevism as a Belief

It is critical to emphasize that when dealing with definitions and analysis concerning religious phenomenon the boundaries of the discussion should be set forth immediately to avoid any complications. In this part of the discussion, Alevism will be investigated as a belief and the subjective perceptions of the informants will be presented to able to draw a much more accurate picture as to how Alevism is perceived as a belief within the community.

Those who define Alevism as a belief system do so in various ways, some of which are fundamentally different. The religious definitions concerning Alevism could most certainly said to be in conflict. Some strongly assert that Alevism is the real form of Islam set forth by Mohammed and practiced by Ali (Massicard, 2005). As Elise Massicard suggests, this particular definition has an ethnic side to it claiming that Alevi Islam is a "pure" form of Islam purged of detrimental Arab influence (Noyan, 1989). On the other hand, there are those who describe Alevism as a part of Islam just like Sunni Islam. Alevism is a legitimate, rightful part of Islam, but those stressing that kind of a definition do not use religious elements

as central as the first group. "I do not understand what they are trying to do. We recognize Mohammed, we respect him, we believe in Allah. We are as good Muslims as they are, but just different," one of my informants states while discussing the distinctive ways of defining Alevism. One could most certainly assert that this second group puts more emphasis on secularism and the secularist characteristic of Alevism. In addition to all these, there are also those who refrain from defining Alevism as a part of Islam.

It would be appropriate to recite a quote from one of my informants at this very point. "Alevism is a religion on its own just like Islam. The faster we understand and explain this the more likely we will find a solution to all of our problems," she suggests. The different ways of defining what Alevism is as a belief and what it stands for in this sense is one of the reasons of compartmentalization within the community on its own. Nevertheless, it is not the only factor and when the factors are blended together the clashes become inevitable.

2.2.2. Alevism and Ethnicity

Aside from the religious elements used to describe Alevism, there are also ethnic nuances, which are brought into play. When analyzing the effects of utilizing ethnicity in demarcating the boundaries of Alevism,

one should bear in mind the fact that religious definitions bring about ethnic connotations in the sense that religious ways of describing Alevism have certain ethnic subtexts. There is a group of Alevis claiming that Alevism is peculiar to "Turkishness". Alevism has emerged when Turks have converted to Islam, according to the assertions set forth by this group. This certain group perceives Alevism as a syntheis of "Turkishness" and Islam. This particular understanding of Alevism draws attention to Shamanist practices and the resemblances between such practices and Alevi rituals. "Alevis are Turks and nothing else, anyone who claims to be something different cannot be an Alevi," as stated during a group discussion by one of my informants in the field could easily summarize the general understanding embraced by this group. In addition, there is another group of Alevis, Kurdish Alevis, stressing that Alevism is the cultural resistance of Kurdish people (Massicard, 2005). This distinct comprehension, on the other hand, places emphasis on Zoroastrian roots of the Kurdish and identifies Alevism as an extension of Zoroastrianism and Yezidi (Bender, 1991). It is quite significant to note at this point that I have never come across a person during my fieldwork stating that Alevism is peculiar to Kurds. Nonetheless, it would be suitable to point out that Kurdish Alevis among my informants also have the tendency to draw parallels between Alevism and Zoroastrianism.

As to explain the parallelisms between religious and ethnic definitions, one should highlight the general inclination that those defining Alevism within the boundaries of Islam tend to associate being an Alevi with being Turkish, whereas those abstaining from using Islamic elements in explaining what Alevism is do not stress ethnicity as often as the first group.

2.2.3. Alevism and Politics

Alevism, when perceived as a political ideology, steps out of the restricting understanding of religion and ethnicity. To define Alevism as a political ideology makes it possible for non-believers to be included in the group called Alevis.

What is set forth by this certain understanding is the main premise that Alevism is a revolutionary ideology, which is strived to be dominated under the notions of religion and ethnicity. The main emphasis made utilizing this sort of a definition of Alevism is on the struggle against subordination and the notion of opposition believed to be embraced by the Alevi community (Özkırımlı, 1990).

> *Alevis are the ones who are subordinated over the years in almost every are of life. We have been opposing such practices and defending liberation for many decades now. To deny the political struggle inherent in Alevism is to deny Alevism as a whole. Alevism is not just a belief or religion. It is a political stance,*

affirms a forty five year-old male during a daily conversation we had drinking tea. At this point it becomes significant to point out that be it a political stance or some other phenomenon, Alevism has a political nature in the Turkish context. The political side of the phenomenon manifests itself in almost every conversation or activity.

2.2.4. Alevism as a Culture

The definitions of Alevism were said to be contradicting with the very nature of Alevi practices and teachings by those who placed emphasis on the notion of culture. Alevism stands out as a value system, which constructs itself around the notion of tolerance and fights against discrimination of any kind according to this particular conceptualization. Hence, it certainly cannot have any central essential elements which are discriminatory or exclusionary in nature. Therefore, to describe Alevism with the help of the concepts such as religious or ethnic ones becomes problematic.

Due to its embracing values, Alevism is asserted to be pertaining to all of humanity. A group of people perceiving Alevism as a culture, claim that Alevism is an Anatolian phenomenon (Pehlivan, 1992). That is to say, Alevism is free of any connotation related to ethnicity and religion since Anatolia is home to many different ethnicities with various religions or

beliefs. This kind of an understanding frees Alevism of ethnic and religious constraints.

> *Alevism is more than a simple religion or belief; it is a culture in which the life of a society with every single aspect you can possibly think of is organized in a certain way… We have a saying and almost everybody, who defines oneself as a true Alevi, lives one's life by this saying. 'Control your hand, your waist (loin), and your tongue.' This is not just a religious saying; it is a philosophy of life,*

states one of my informants, who strongly believes that Alevism is a culture.

In addition to all these, this sort of an understanding supposes that Alevism is something more than mere religion since the ideas of faith and worshipping go beyond rituals and are diffused into every aspect of life. This in turn makes it possible to define Alevism as a philosophy with a certain emphasis on rational and logical attributes (Massicard, 2005).

2.3. Political and Ethnic Fragmentation

Fragmentation or polarization is often the end-result of different identification processes leading to distinct definitions. It is highly significant to comprehend and internalize that identity is something subjective. Subjective perception in this sense is one of the fundamental elements affecting the process of identifying who or what one is. What group identity is utterly related to socialization, social interaction, and the

sense of belonging, albeit group identities are often attempted to be described with objective markers such as the nationality of the family, religion of the family, or sex, for instance. Even ethnic identity, which is often discussed to be something related with objective determinants, is intimately associated with the notions of belonging and social interaction. Furthermore, it is certainly fitting to assert that political identity is solely based on personal choice since the political affiliations of individuals are of their own choosing. Fredrikh Barth also stresses the importance of social interaction:

> …*differences determined by social interaction rather than objective differences matter. What we need to consider is then, not the objective differences between groups, but the elements used by individuals in defining their own identities* (Barth, 1966:18).

Therefore, it is critical to note that the following discussions are to be considered with such premises in mind.

2.3.1. Political Fragmentation within the Alevi Community

One should first state that political fragmentation within the community has many facets. There are different NGOs and FBOs representing diverse political stances and there are also political parties that individuals are affiliated with, which again advocate distinct ideologies. Such stances and ideologies tend to clash in a certain way that the community is compartmentalized when advocating their views. As it is evident that taking aforementioned divergent definitions of Alevism into

consideration makes it comprehensible that these definitions also denote certain political standpoints and they are likely to be conflicting under a variety of circumstances.

The general convention states that Alevis stand close to leftist ideologies. In 1960s and 1970s leftist political movements and Alevism find a common ground. Alevis are considered to be fitting allies of the left by those who embrace such ideologies. This is claimed to be so because of the fact that, like Kurds, Alevis are a groups of individuals who are also marginalized, discriminated against, and economically disadvantaged (Bozarslan, 1999). This is one of the main reasons why the younger generations of both Alevis and Kurds mobilize in leftist political movements. Moreover, such tendencies prove to be useful in liberating Alevism of ethnic and religious ties, giving it a much more universal definition as a movement identified with resistance.

What is more is that this process intertwines with the global change in handling political affairs, which leads to a discourse change focusing mainly on rights and liberties. As Massicard puts it, this relation between left and Alevism goes both ways. As Alevism moves closer to the left, the left becomes strongly associated with Alevism (Massicard, 2005).

Although this appears to be the case in general, there are those Alevis, especially the ones define Alevism as exclusive to Turks tend to stand closer to some right-wing ideologies. Nationalist Movement Party has attracted Alevis with the emphasis put on "Turkishness". "Can you believe it, there are those who support the Nationalist Movement Party. It goes against the nature of being an Alevi," says one of the elder members of the foundation during lunch. The signs of conflict and fragmentation are manifested even in daily life as in the example.

In addition, one should also stress that there is a certain level of conflict within the group of Alevis identifying themselves as leftists. There are orthodox Marxist Alevis, who support a historical materialist explanation of the phenomenon and there are those who are blamed to be liberals by orthodox Marxists. To get into detail of this conflict goes beyond the purposes of the discussions aimed to be presented in this thesis; hence, it would be appropriate to conclude that the fragmentation within the community does not solely take place on the axis of left versus right.

2.3.2. Ethnic Fragmentation within the Alevi Community

Distinctive ethnic definitions were analyzed in detail in previous parts, but the repercussions of such definitions were left aside to be investigated further. Different ethnic explanations of what Alevism stands for tend to

be exclusive of one another and this causes a particular level of antagonism between groups advocating diverging theses. At this point it is crucial to assert that even the individuals having the same or similar political stances might differ in adding an ethnic side to their classifications.

There are two main ethnic groups in Turkey, which identify themselves as Alevis. As mentioned earlier those groups are Turkish Alevis and Kurdish Alevis. Kurdish Alevis centrally are from Dersim in Turkey (Bruinessen, 2000). Nonetheless, there are many Alevi (aşiret) tribes all around Turkey settled in many different cities like İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Bursa, Sivas, Malatya, Adıyaman, Maraş, Mersin, Adana, Kars, Antep, etc. Almost all of the tribes in these cities claim to have connections to Dersim one way or the other.

It is a known fact that some of the religious practices of Alevi Kurds are very divergent from those of Alevi Turks. Melville Charter, who had spent time with Alevi Kurds in Malatya draws attention to some practices like worshipping sun in the form of bowing (Chater, 1928). This particular ritual or tradition resembles similar traditions of Yezidis. On the other hand, Bruinessen stresses, reciting from Kemali (1992) the fact that

there are no Gülbenks (prayers) in Kurdish. Hence, some practices like cem rituals are quite similar to those of Alevi Turks (Bruinessen, 2000).

Because of such differences and either politically or religiously constructed definitions of Alevism, there exists a certain tension between Kurdish and Turkish Alevis. Although both Alevi Kurds and Alevi Turks are affiliated with the same NGOs, FBOs or political parties, this tension surfaces at certain cases involving nationalistic claims. When attempting to comprehend these dynamics, Turkey's unique conditions should also be taken into account. Kurds are often blamed to be supportive of Partiye Karkeren Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK or KWP). Sensitivities towards terrorist activities of PKK and other similar separatist undertakings manifest as antagonism direct towards the Kurdish citizens of Turkey in general. Moreover, Kurds demanding certain rights and liberties such as education in one's mother tongue have a propensity to be susceptible to such antagonisms and the tension, even within a group sharing an identity marker, might get unmanageable at times. That is to say, other senses of belonging such nationality or political affiliations might cause friction as a result of undesirable circumstances.

For instance, Gazi Neighborhood Incident is a key historical event in trying to understand this tension between Alevi Turks and Alevi Kurds.

The neighborhood was called a "liberated zone" also stressed by Erdemir since there was simply "little or no state presence" (2004:6). Young generations of Alevi Kurds stress that treating each and every nation equally is one of the fundamental principles of Alevism; moreover, they declare that they support Kurdish nationalist movement. This declaration leads the way for Kurdish Alevis to attempt at mobilizing amongst themselves and Gazi Neighborhood is then referred to as a Kurdish neighborhood, not an Alevi one (Massicard, 2005).

2.4. The Problem of Representation: An Attempt at Formulating a Solution

Representation has always been an issue for minorities or, in other words, for those groups which either are perceived or define themselves as minorities. Aside from such an understanding of the matter at hand, there are many reasons why the issue of representation is rather problematical for the Alevi community in Turkey, which will be discussed and analyzed in detail.

First of all, with the presented differences in identifications and definitions, there exist many distinct claims and demands to be voiced. Each and every divergent definition requires certain different methods and elements incorporated to be fully represented in the political arena,

for instance. Such requirements stem from the fact that there exist variant sensitivities specific to each classification. An attempt at addressing them at once is bound to have several severe shortcomings, to the basic sense of the word. Who or which organization has the right to talk on behalf of all the Alevis? Can anybody or any organization talk on behalf of the community as a whole? Who grants the right to someone or some organization to represent Alevis? It is possible to list a long line of different questions on the issue when the matter is related to a group, like Alevis, which has just in the beginning of the process of professionalization and institutionalization.

Besides the difficulties pertaining to the peculiarities in existing descriptions of Alevism, there is also the problem of finding a proper arbiter, or an addressee to answer to the demands of the community. It should be noted that the Turkish state does not still recognize Alevis as a religious community.

These obstacles have, on the other hand, caused a change within the community in the discourse used to seek representation and togetherness. Discourse could be defined as a certain way of communication, which is not only verbal. It is a way that is highly authoritative and artificial. It is constructed by and within a group of

people. One might also argue that it is highly institutionalized. It has strict and close relations with ideology, politics, economy, and social context. It would also be quite appropriate to state that different discourses imply different realities, which are all lived and existent; but for different sets of people from different settings or in the very same setting.

However, discourse is not just a certain way of communication. It defines what is said, in what way, what is to be done, certain ways of behaving alongside with what is not to be done, what is not to be said. For instance, Foucault had defined discourse to be "an entity of sequences of signs in that they are enouncements" used by a group (Foucault, 1969:141). It might be argued that this certain group of people share the same ideals, have the same advantages, are interested in the same things, and also have the same predispositions to act in certain ways because of their social status and ideology. In the light of such an explanation, it becomes quite evident that a discourse is legitimized by the use of power. This is true for the dominant discourse in a society, per se. Nonetheless, it can be also stated that a discourse legitimizes itself; since there exist many other discourses in a society other than the dominant one. Furthermore, without any analysis of a discourse used by a certain group, investigating the dynamics inherent to that group is

reduced to what is on the surface and proves to be rather raw in this sense.

The new discourse to be constructed was built upon the foundations, which relied on the notions such as rights and liberties. Despite the fact that the rise of identity politics and the emergence of different definitions have led the community to divide into groups from within, it is again the emphasis put on identity and the fragmentation as its end-result, which in-turn pushed Alevis to make a significant change in their methods of handling the issue of representation. The very fact that without the use of an encompassing discourse to approach the issue, it becomes almost impossible represent such a diverse community, let alone being taken seriously by the dominant discourse and the authorities. This constructed discourse, which is rather young and new, was a necessity in this case. The rising values of the globe, namely rights and liberties, were incorporated into the general discourse used by the Alevi community.

The emphasis put on the notions of rights and liberties were accepted in general since it touched upon a common problem for all the sub-groups. Moreover, when this specific hassle for recognition is conducted on an abstract level relating to such concepts, it attracted more attention

without exasperating some other community since the new discourse appertained to a pliable, inferable nature.

CHAPTER 3

ALEVIS' MIGRATION FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS

The reasons behind such differences in defining Alevism discussed in detail in the second chapter are going to be examined carefully in this chapter of this thesis. It should be kept in mind that only after the migration from rural to urban centers Alevis had gone through certain changes.

One of the most drastic changes in the societies has come with this transition from rural areas to urban centers. As also stated by Louis Wirth (1938) from Chicago School, urbanization which proceeds migration is a way of life. Once you consider the way people live in cities, it becomes very clear as to how migration deeply and strongly has affected lives and how it still does.

Migration, be it from rural to urban areas or from one country to another, means leaving some things behind, things that define the world one lives in. This particular phenomenon cannot and should not be solely associated with leaving a piece of land; one should not overlook the fact that what is called home is meticulously related with the piece of land one lives on and the traditions, rites, rituals, and ways of life practiced on

that certain land. Migration is leaving the world that one has socialized in. Ergo, the world one lives in is to a certain extend sculpted with the influence of the place that surrounds one's world.

3.1. Getting "Urban" with It: Alevis' Migration

Migration from rural areas to urban centers has started with the building of roads, which connected cities to villages. It should be noted that according to the field work conducted for the purposes of this study, the my informants and their families had migrated to city center in 1970s and 1980s. It would be appropriate to state that education, job, and health related concerns have contributed to the allure of urban centers. People living in the rural areas were also complaining about the lack of opportunities in villages and small towns when compared with big cities (Taşğın, 2009). It is important to note that understanding migration is critical in comprehending the rural-urban duality in accordance with social relations.

The change in the cultural mosaic of the big cities has led to a change in the understanding and conceptualization of urban values. This change in the perception of such values happened so that the new set of urban values was set forth conscious of the diversity. Alongside these new values, new definitions were formulated in order to explain who is urban

and who is not. With such debates guided the political circles, especially ethnic and religious groups, to voice their demands with a specific stress on cultural rights and liberties. These discussions focused on the notion of assimilation concerning religious and ethnic minorities. For instance, two of the most significant concepts changed in this process of re-definition of a certain set of values is the concept of tolerance and conflict, which will be elaborated in much more detail in the following chapters. It could most certainly be appropriate to state that these disputes have originated from within the United States of America and Europe; and respectively have had a significant bearing on the countries in the process of modernization (Taşğın, 2009).

In the cases of Alevism and Sunni Islam, One should carefully consider the fact that, just as Fuat Bozkurt states, "Alevism is a system of belief generally suited for rural life," (Bozkurt, 2005:100). The belief is based upon the strict control of everyday life, religious practices, and rituals. Throughout the history of the country, the transition to the urban way of life has been much more evident as the years passed; nonetheless, "While the signs of modernization are evident throughout the country, many Alevis feel that they have not been equal beneficiaries in the transition from a predominantly rural to an urban society," (Shankland, 2003:2).

The Alevis in Turkey, have been a closed community for many years because of many reasons some of which can be named as religious, political, and societal. Due to such reasons, they have been in opposition to the Sunni community and the power centers in domination of Sunni Islam. One could also claim that throughout the years, Alevis have been in the periphery while the Sunni Islam was a part of the center (Yılmaz, 2005). Nonetheless, it would be appropriate to state that the movements to change the traditional characteristics of the Turkish society; especially in the process of establishing the Turkish Republic, the Alevi community was very much influenced and Alevis have become somewhat neutral to the central authority; paving the way for them to get even close to the center. Moreover, the urbanization movement, reaching its peak in 1950s, has fastened this process for the Alevis in Turkey.

The effects of migration making its mark on almost every single aspect of life is critical in analyzing the way the rural relations are transformed, the new form that they gain, and the means used to transform them. One could effortlessly claim that there are certain limits to what kind of traditional or rural practices can be performed in urban settings. It would be most fitting to assert that the traditional practices of Alevis have changed after their migration to cities, since the urban way of expression is quite significantly different than that of rural life. It should be highlighted that Alevis have the needed flexible view towards life to make

the necessary changes with the intention of adapting to the changing society (Karpat, 1967).

However, the Alevis were not visible parts of the public life until the 1980s. Nevertheless, with the political trends of 1990s, Alevis have also started to engage in identity politics and they have set out to build their identity within an urban setting. This was rather a problematic attempt for the community since the means they had to use were those shaped by Sunni Islam. Distinctive versions of Alevism started to be constituted depending on the setting, the differences in practices, and different ways of perceiving the urban style of living. As mentioned earlier, there is a certain level of diversity within the Alevis in Turkey. Certain groups choose to define themselves differently, yet again under the umbrella of Alevism. Nonetheless, as Koçan and Öncü emphasize

> *it is difficult to describe what Alevism is because there is no single element in terms of political, cultural and social leanings or in a sense of overall consciousness to which Alevis are supposed to subscribe* (2004:473).

It would be the most appropriate to express that Alevi NGOs and FBOs are very significant in mobilizing people into social movements and providing them with a sense of belonging. At this point, it is of high level significance to point out that with the new political trend of 1990s, there emerged a need to establish a common discourse to be used in regards to rights and liberties. This need later affected the political affiliations

both of and within the community, causing fragmentation to a certain extent. This issue will be further analyzed in depth. Furthermore, it is critical to note that relating to the case of Alevis, religious identities have become significant in politics in 1990s. It is only during those years that the Alevis have mobilized and established associations, foundations, and cemhouses in urban areas.

To conclude, as mentioned earlier several times, migration to urban areas has provided the conditions for a quick rupture from what is traditional. The Alevism has also experienced a certain change, which in turn has caused a break from the traditional values of the community in that sense, with the use of urban ways of expression and urban life itself. These changes have occurred in almost every single aspect of life.

3.2. Socio-Cultural Mutation: Alevism And Social Change Through Migration

Change is a crucial issue when the main purpose is attempting to understand communities and their histories. Synchronic approaches, which do not contain any historicity whatsoever, are not sufficient to understand societies in any manner. It is essential to note that the way any given society has evolved throughout the history is key to conceptualize and comprehend the current situation of that certain

society. Change and evolution in that sense are fundamentally substantial for an anthropological analysis of any given community. It would be most fitting to define social change in Kuhnian terms. Social change is a paradigm shift concerning way of life. It is a paradigm shift since the way of living undergoes through a transformation affecting the very perception pertaining to life. Be it closed, open, rural, or urban, each and every community is affected by social change one way or the other. Change is always associated with a direction and the way it is perceived becomes influenced with the direction attributed to it. What is crucial for the analysis in this thesis is to note that the concept of change does not denote any kind of direction, either negative or positive. Change has a sole connotation in this case, which could easily be expressed as difference, variation, diversity, divergence, or distinction from the earlier version of what has gone through it.

It is appropriate to put emphasis on the fact that social change could manifest in various ways. It could manifest as changes happening in the practices, institutions, traditions, rituals, human interactions, interrelations between different parts, and/or social patterns of a community. Through the changes taking place in the aforementioned areas of the life of a community, the culture of that community is also affected by social change. Ergo, it would be of utmost importance to underline the fact social change manifests itself in the culture and cultural

practices. Morris Ginsberg accentuates the factors leading to social change in a community. Moreover, social change is a process in which the old values or traditions are somehow transformed; some new values are adopted and blended with the old ones. This alteration might happen in different ways. The change can be either revolutionary or it could easily be in a way which by some means amends or modifies the old values in such a manner that the process goes rather smoothly as opposed to a revolutionary one.

3.2.1. Political Change is the "Beloved Fiancé" of Social Change: Alevis and Urban Politics

It is critical to understand that the main reason Alevis have faced social change as a community is the high rate of migration from rural areas to urban centers. It should be noted that in this time, in an IT age as we are in now, there are certain facilitators affecting the nature of social change that the communities or institutions, traditions, or individuals are going through. Mass media is one of the strongest factors having an impact on a change of such nature. For instance, social media has become an important means used by Alevis in their attempt to construct a new discourse for the community. Furthermore, globalization has become of the facilitators of this sort of a change. The issue of identity has become central in many of the political debates.

Starting from 1960s, class identity has been replaced with ethnic or religious identities. Identity politics has become one of the main approaches when dealing with minorities and minority rights, all around the world. Additionally, after the coup d'états in 1980 in Turkey, minority groups such as Kurds and Alevis have struggled to be recognized in the public sphere through identity politics putting emphasis on rights, duties, liberties, etc. At this very point, the concept of nation-state should also be taken into consideration as relating to the issue. With the effect of identity politics, more prominence was put on religious and ethnic markers; however, the nation-state was aimed to establish a unified, homogeneous society with differences cast aside. This understanding was in opposition with the political context of the time. Hence, a new common ground was sought to be found for these two approaches, a new and fresh concept of citizenship was formulated. Group involvement has become one of the key elements when constructing this new concept. Moreover, it should be emphasized that certain political conceptions are also known to have a high opinion of group involvement. Participatory Republicanism, Habermas, Bohman, van Gunsteren, Baber, and Warren, as being representative of this understanding, have also believed that "Individuals are under-represented, and their participations in groups should be encouraged," (Janoski and Gran, 2002:18). Moreover, Kymlicka, Laclau, and Mouffe, as being representatives of Moderate Post-Modern Pluralism, have also advocated that "Citizens pursue group

identities through group or cultural rights, or resist and attain such rights in social movements," (Janoski and Gran, 2002:18).

 The roots of this new concept could easily be found in the reaction to the centralist understanding of the concept of nation-state. Alevis also choose to pursue their group identities and group or cultural rights by mobilizing into social movements. They also choose to mobilize into groups so that they can resist certain practices such as discrimination on the bases of religion.

"National citizenship involves a specific principle of exclusion on the basis of national identity and membership, and therefore there are problems about citizenship as a political framework in societies that are multicultural and in a context of global governance," (Turner, 2002:272). Turkey, as being a multicultural, multi ethnic, multireligious, and multilingual country in a context of global governance has the same problems mentioned by Turner, in this case. National identity, in the Turkish context, means that a citizen is a Muslim Turk, in general. The Sunni conception of Islam is dominant and other religions, other sects of Islam, and other nationalities suffer to be pushed aside and excluded, just as Turner describes it. What is more is that Turkish Republic has come across numerous attempts at synthesizing Islam and nationalism

(Mardin, 2000). Sunni Islam has always been an important characteristic of the Turkish society. Nationalistic values almost always tend to include Islamic emphases, causing non-Islamic communities, or communities defining themselves without referring to these elements to feel excluded. Secularism, as often defined as the separation of state affairs and religion, has been rather practiced differently in Turkey continues to further deepen the problem, in this sense. Turkish secularism had not meant the separation of religion and the state, and it did not abolish, by any means the Islamic power and control over both public and private arenas of life; nonetheless it only sustained a situation in which state controlled religion (Margulies and Yıldızoğlu, 1988; Geyikdağı, 1984). Hence, there exists a level of discrimination at certain levels both in the society and under state control. This aforementioned discrimination is felt the most when a significant change takes place, such as the encounter with the urban life.

3.2.2. Family and Marriage Going Urban

As mentioned above, almost every aspect of life of the Alevi community in Turkey has changed with social change stemming from the transition to urban life. The family structure has changed in accordance with the change needed to accommodate to the economic conditions of urban life. The struggle to earn a living has changed the perception about traditional values. These changes affected different groups in different ways and

that has caused a differentiation within the Alevi community. For instance, the division of labor in the cities, the degree of specialization, and ways of organization within the community in urban centers are naturally quite different than those of rural areas. These in return shape and help formulate new patterns of behavior and new perceptions of the world that the people live in, such new patterns and worldviews constitute the bases of a new set of values.

It is crucial to understand that the transition from rural to urban life has broken the ties between Alevism and the place in which it was born and shaped. As a result of this rupture the generations born into the urban life could not stay as close to the belief as their predecessors were For instance, Ali, one of my informants born in Istanbul, who now lives in Ankara states that he grew up in a house where there was no religion, be it Sunni Islam or Alevism. He stresses that his father was too busy trying to make a living and his mother was both working and taking care of him and his 2 younger siblings that none of them have "bothered" to teach him or his siblings about Alevism, then he adds, laughing, that they are descendents of a Dede and he could have chosen to be a Dede. In the light of such a "confession", one could also claim that divine authority has lost its place to worldly concerns, social interrelations among individuals, goal-oriented patterns of behavior, and economic problems in the urban setting. It should not be overlooked that migration from rural to urban

centers is not just a mere change of place. The changing family structure did not include living with elder members of the family which paved the way to a disrupted connection with the past. This kind of disruption is vertical disruption. Considering the fact the Alevism has an oral tradition, the absence of elder family members has caused some the essential elements of the belief to be abandoned. There is also horizontal disruption; a break happening due to the lack of an environment in which the encounter with the practices of the belief is almost very unlikely. In the absence of an encounter with the religious practices or other Alevis in an urban setting makes it hard for the younger generations to get curious about the belief and to have the need to go searching to learn more about their roots. Zuhre, one of my informants who is 26 years of age, openly states that when she was living in her village just 6 years ago, she would fast, go to cem rituals, and participate in the religious activities. After she had moved to Ankara for her college education, she was "too busy" to go to cem ceremonies, or "too tired" to fast during for 12 Imams and the innocents because she was working and studying at the same time. She says "I had to accommodate to the city, and there was no time for me to be an Alevi anymore, it is only after I got affiliated with some Non-Governmental Organizations and had a certain group of Alevi friends, I restarted to be 'interested' in Alevism." It becomes very central at this point to reassert that with the new concerns related to the urban life; such as social and economic ones, the necessities of the belief lose priority. This is not specific to Zuhre, I should add. Almost all of my

informants, who are somewhat members of the younger generations, perceive Alevism to be as a political movement. It is a known fact that the belief has gained a political characteristic with the efforts of certain groups, individuals or with the political context of the country; nevertheless, to see the belief only as a political struggle and to ignore the religious aspect are ramifications of the transition from rural to urban life. It should be underlined that the politization of the belief is going to be discussed later on in another chapter.

In addition, there is the institute of marriage, closely related to the institution of family. Alevis were traditionally an endogamic society. Nevertheless, after migrating to cities, Alevis married people whose beliefs or roots were different because socio-cultural status became more important than the aim to preserve the belief. This has also led to the decay of the traditions in the family. When one of the spouses did not the traditions, the other either fell short on educating the children of the family or simply did not chose to. One of my informants states that his father is a Sunni Turk, who is an atheist, and his mother is an Alevi. Even though his mother was not an atheist, she did not feel the need to educate him about Alevism because she was busy trying to make a living. He did not also have the chance to turn to his father to learn about his roots. He says "I had to learn for myself from my friends, and there is a limit to what you can learn from your friends, especially if they are also

from mixed families or if they also grew up in a world where they had to hide who they are." Trying to hide one's identity is one of the serious problems the Alevi community had to cope with in Turkey. "When you try that hard to hide your identity, you eventually get detached from it," uttered an informant during a cigarette break after lunch. He was so sincere and frank in the way he said it that I had nothing to do but to nod, with an aggrieved expression stuck on my face.

3.2.3. Dede Institution

In addition, there is also the change in religious views and practices. It is noteworthy to stress the fact that no religion or belief can be understood or analyzed thoroughly without reflecting on the link between that certain belief or religion and the political, social, economic, and geographical conditions that belief was born and shaped in. It is an undisputable fact that religion or a set of belief influences the society, which has adopted it, and the society in response, shapes and changes the religion to a certain extent. Hence, Alevism cannot be studied devoid of looking into the rural life as whole, with all of its aspects such as political, social, economic, and cultural characteristics.

Moreover, Alevis of Turkey have politically affiliated with various movements after 1980 coup d'états. As a consequence, this religious

identity with the new political characteristics it has acquired has evolved detaching itself from its traditions more and more as the years pass by. This is especially the case with the younger generations. As in Ali's case, in the urban setting, the prestige of the institution of dede is in decay. Fuat Bozkurt states that:

> *As the old dedes gradually die off, no new dedes are found to take their place. Young people trained as dedes nolonger feel any interest in it as a profession. They tend to choose more substantial jobs by which they can earn a better livelihood. Moreover, dedes who chose another profession are very often opposed to and highly critical of the whole dede institution.* (Bozkurt, 2005:101).

With all these in mind, one should highlight some key points about the decay of the institution as a whole. Normally, sons would follow fathers as dedes; nonetheless, the urban way of life left no room for such a tradition to thrive with all the economic concerns and other such as politization. Moreover, there is the issue of educating new dedes. As the old dedes passed away over the years, some of the traditions, especially those who are specific to some regions were lost with them. Additionally, the oral tradition of Alevism made it almost impossible for the new dedes to be properly educated. Dedes are expected to perform marriage and funeral ceremonies, let alone cem ceremonies.

3.2.4. Görgü Ceremonies

Related to the decay of the institution of dede, there are different institution, religiously, getting negatively affected. Görgü cem ceremony

is one of such institutions. Görgü cem is a ceremony in which the congregation gathers and anyone accused of any crime, be it major or minor, is not allowed to attend to these meetings.

Dede questions anyone who is accused of committing a crime and he or she recites his or her side of the story. The main function of such an institution is to maintain order and balance within the community. Nonetheless, one should draw attention to the fact that in order for such a tradition to be able fully practiced, the community should be bound with close ties and every single individual should know one another very closely. Unfortunately, in an urban setting, individuals do not know each other close enough to be able know what the other does in their lives or whether their behavior is appropriate or not. Under such circumstances, görgü cem cannot be practiced. For instance, I have never seen a görgü cem during the time, while I was conducting fieldwork.

What is more is that, if found guilty one of the punishments for a person could easily be excommunication (düşkünlük) for an individual. Excommunication is a kind of punishment, which dictates that the individual be ostracized from the community. Excommunication might very well be permanent for an individual. It is evident that in cities, it is inapplicable.

Anyone who has committed an offense will, in any case, be punished by the judge. Moreover, some actions which are regarded as offenses in traditional Alevism are not regarded as offenses in secular society (Bozkurt, 2005:105).

3.2.5. Musahiplik (Brotherhood)

Musahiplik simply means brotherhood for Alevis. It mainly is the one of the most important sources of solidarity for the community. One should at first highlight the fact that in the rural Anatolia, this institution was a requirement. Two men become brothers binding their families together. It would be most appropriate to state that brothers, in this sense, share almost everything. They share a life together, as long as they live. For instance, financially the two families share their properties and assets.

It is very critical to point out that this type of a tradition, or institution if you will, is not compatible with the urban way of life, in which each and every single person is for him/herself. Furthermore, in order to be able to trust to a person, or a family for that matter, one should know him or the family very closely and the relations in the urban setting act in such a way that even door-to-door neighbors do not know each other. This makes even harder for this type of brotherhood to be practices in the full sense of the tradition. "I do not have a musahip, my father does; but we are not that close, if you know what I mean. What would you expect, it is the big city," says one of my informants. It would be most suitable assert that none of my informants who are of 18-30 years of age do not have

musahips (brothers). When asked why, they say that they have very close friends they see as brothers, but the institution requires more than a mere close-friendship and under the circumstances, living in the big city, it is almost unachievable for two people to trust each other in that certain way.

CHAPTER 4

ANTAGONISTIC TOLERANCE: CITY AS THE NEW PLAYGROUND

After the migration to the cities Alevis co-existed with Sunnis. Robert M. Hayden's famous concept "Antagonistic Tolerance" on the issue of competitive sharing of religious sites is a key concept in understanding the relationship of co-existence between Alevis and Sunnis. Although the original article is on the issue of competitive sharing of sacred sites such as shrines in South Asia and the Balkans, the application of the concept as it relates to the case Alevis and Sunnis co-existence in the cities is somehow extended to the city as a whole, not merely the religious sites. The reason why such an approach is preferred for the purposes of this thesis is basically the fact that the urban city as one has become the playground for different groups to make their marks, be it religious, political, economic, and/or cultural. That is to say, with respect to the Turkish case regarding Alevis and Sunnis, the urban city en bloc is the main milieu, which is subject to competitive sharing.

As stated by Hayden, the article underlines the following; "This competitive sharing is compatible with the passive meaning of 'tolerance' as noninterference but incompatible with the active meaning of tolerance as embrace of the Other," (Hayden, 2002:205). The relationship between

the bloc of Sunnis and Alevis might be considered to be in the same fashion although the stress in this type of a relationship is on the antagonistic side of the phrase. Especially during the reign of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the level of antagonism has risen considerably. After the migration process of Alevis, they have struggled to define themselves using urban ways of expression and make a mark as a religious group.

This particular struggle had its roots in the villages. The state builds mosques in the villages and Alevis feel "insulted" as one of my informants puts it. "They, very well, know that we do not go to mosques, we hold cem in our houses, but they insist on building mosques and appointing imams to our villages. This is a clear attack, this is what it is!" he stresses.

> *The city belongs to all of us; we deserve to have a place of worship, just as the Sunnis. They say that they do not interfere in our affairs, but they do not recognize us. This is not noninterference, this is ignorance. They ignore the fact that we exist as a different religious group. We see a mosque in every 500 meters, but there are only a few cemhouses in the cities. They use their power and dominance to show us how mighty they are. This is the definition of antagonism (kavga), not tolerance (hoşgörü).*

This is how one of my informants states her feelings about the imbalance of power manifesting in the number of places of worship belonging to different groups. "The construction of mosques in Alevi villages and the appointment of hocas paid from the state coffers is simply an attempt to

bring about the complete dissolution of Alevism," asserts Bozkurt, in accordance with the perception of this phenomenon by the Alevi citizens of Turkey (2005:113).

When considering the further stated arguments stated in this chapter, one should bear in mind the fact that in the area of social sciences, tangible, ostensible, or countable findings, such as the numbers or statistics, do not always reflect the reality; however, regarding the manifestations of power and dominance through the use of space, such findings are very significant and could make a strong statement.

4.1. Alevis' Perception and Construction of Religious Space

The idea of worshipping and the actual rituals or rites of Alevis are quite different than those of Sunnis. According to the Alevi belief, cem rituals can be performed or practices everywhere that is to say that cem can be "held" in any place at any time. As mentioned earlier, Alevis, being a closed rural community in essence, practice cem rites at a house available in the village at the time being. That certain house is called the cemhouse for that period of time, as one of my informants, who is working in one of the Alevi NGOs in Ankara, states it. "Cemhouse is the house where the cem is held," he says. "Whichever house is enough to accommodate the people attending the ceremony is fine. It is cem what

is important not the place it is practiced," he later adds. It is somehow a common understanding among my informants that cem rites do not have to be practiced at the same place or house all the time. In a group discussion, another member of the Alevi NGOs stresses that the cem hall in the building was built for the community since cem could not be held in houses in cities. "That is why you do not see cemhouses in the villages, any house would do it," he concludes. Practicality or expediency is the most essential element when considering the issue at hand. It is the ritual that is important and sacred, neither the place used to practice the ritual nor the time the ritual is practiced. As mentioned earlier, even the very basic notions or conceptions regarding the places of worship are utterly dissimilar between Alevi and Sunni communities in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the existing political concerns, debates surrounding the issue, and the new demands of the community have changed the very nature of the perception of religious space among Alevis. As it has already been discussed in the previous chapter, there have been different factors affecting how Alevis attempted and "somehow" managed to accomplish that with respect to the dominant discourse. Alevis had to and did use the means set out by the Sunni Islam in order to be able to define themselves and solve their identity crisis. It is quite appropriate at this very point, to stress the fact that urban ways of expression and the means used to conduct social, political, and economic relations were

those of Sunnis, since they were formulated, altered, and re-structured again and again with the dominant discourse i.e. the Sunni discourse.

Alevism as a belief had to open space for itself in the urban setting to be recognized and respected. What was needed to be done was to level the playground. With this particular intention in mind, Alevis have started to question their belief system and attempted to "construct" a similar place of worship like mosques of Sunnis. Türkdoğan also stresses this point by giving quotations from his informants that Alevis tried to construct an image that Alevis also had 'mosques' (Türkdoğan, 1995). Alevis have tried to convey the message that they were a legitimate and acceptable religious group such as the Sunnis in Turkey with their religious practices and most importantly with their own place of worship. This endeavor to be recognized by the state and to increase the visibility of Alevism would result in a change in the way the state and the society perceived Alevis and Alevism.

Demands about the cemhouses were then related not only to the struggle to get recognized by the state but also with the phenomenon of migration since it is the same process that has led to the emergence of such a need for recognition. What is more is that this plea to get official recognition from the state was and still is closely linked to the status of cemhouses

by the Alevi community. That is the reason why the discussions about the issue go rather fierce.

The existence of such an institution as the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey makes it even harder for other beliefs to be acknowledged by the state. The Directorate of Religious Affairs is the embodiment of Sunni Islam and it is directly under the Prime Ministry in Turkey. Therefore, it would be quite accurate to claim that the implementations of the institution are those of Prime Ministry and the government. There is a state involvement, in this sense when the concerns are related to beliefs and the focus is on recognition.

It is crucial to once again stress the general notion within Alevi community that granting cemhouses official statuses by the state organs is comprehended as officially recognizing Alevism. That is fundamentally the reason why the debates surrounding the issue are rather fragile. Accordingly, whenever the issue of cemhouses is the case, there are certain remarks made about the essence or the nature of Alevism by state officials which strike the attention of the Alevi community causing the relations to get even tenser.

In addition to all these significant debates, it was again the Directorate of Religious Affairs officially stating that Alevism was neither a religion, nor a sect. The Chairman of the Directorate of Religious Affairs has classified Alevism as a culture in 1994. The directorate then in 2001 gave an official statement stressing that cemhouses do not exist in the history of Alevism, therefore they cannot be recognized as places of worship. It was emphasized that the existence of such places as places of worship would cause fragmentation within the Muslim community in Turkey (Cumhuriyet, August 23, 2001).

Moreover, the statement again made by the Directorate asserting that leftist organizations would use and even abuse cemhouses to gain more power clearly shows how politics is made a part of the issue (http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html). This certainly conflicts with the idea of laicism or secularity. One of my informants, a female employee of an Alevi NGO, firmly believes that Alevis are outcasts only because they have been supporter of the left-wing parties. "If we were to vote for a right wing party, be it Justice and Development Party or Nationalist Movement Party, we would not be dealing with these problems," she says. The dominant ideology perceives cemhouses as dervish lodges and nothing beyond.

At this very point, it is of high level significance to comprehend that after the migration to cities there emerged a need for a place of worship for the Alevi community in Turkey; the fact that a cemhouse was the house the cem ritual was held and the place could easily change from time to time upon availability does not alter the necessity felt by the community for the existence of such a place. Famous Writer Gülağ Öz also stresses that cem houses existed in the history of Alevism and cemhouses are built in the cities to keep Alevism alive in an urban setting. He further asserts that Alevis are not the least bit interested in going to mosques and they should be granted the opportunity to practice their rituals in a place of their choosing, a place which satisfies their need of belonging to somewhere. According to Öz, The Directorate of Religious Affairs, as a key institution in matters relating to religion, becomes a key instrument of discrimination in the current state of affairs in Turkey; and through these discriminatory statements and implementations Alevis are pushed to forsake their religious practices and drift apart from their roots even more (http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2001/08/21/guncel/gun00.html).

4.2. Sunni vs. Alevi Perception of Religious Space

To start with, it should be underlined that in order to be able to compare different perceptions or constructions of space, one should analyze each in detail with a special focus on socio-cultural, political, economic, and evidently religious aspects of the religious spaces in question. These

aspects are especially significant since they are the factors instigating the differences. Thus, each and every single one of these factors should be investigated thoroughly to comprehend the differences alongside an attempt to conceptualize the effects of such macro determinants on the subject-matter at hand.

First of all, the economic reasons as one of the significant macro determinants should be taken into consideration to be able to apprehend some of the major dissimilarities between Sunni and Alevi perceptions or constructions of religious space. At this very point, one should emphasize the fact that unlike mosques, cemhouses have to pay for the maintenance costs. This particular reality influences the way in which mosques and cemhouses should be compared. All in all, it would be appropriate to assert that the physical characteristics of any architectural construction are solidly related to economic availability and resources. In this case, Alevi community, not receiving any state reinforcements, lack certain economic resources to realize their own perception of a place of worship.

What is more is that the socio-cultural aspect of the issue is also quite crucial in the sense that Alevis, performing their cem ceremonies in regular houses in villages, did not need to conceptualize what a

cemhouse was supposed to be like before they migrated to city centers. It was an enclosed space, large enough to accommodate the Alevi population in the village. Basically, a living room of a house would do it. Dede would sit somewhere facing the whole crowd, and no matter how crowded the room is everyone would find a place for his or herself, sitting very close to one another, if needed. The necessity to build large and envisioned cemhouses became an issue with migration, whereas mosques have always existed in Sunni Islam. In this sense, it would be rather pertinent to accentuate the fact that Sunni Islam has a settled nature. In this sense, one could also assert that in the urban context there are Alevis from all around Turkey and cemhouses are the places where they get together. When the tendency to abandon the traditions is a serious threat, as in the case of Alevis, permanent places of worship like cemhouses pose as unifying factors for those from different traditions as well as those who are on verge of losing touch with their roots. In the urban setting, such a place becomes a necessity to hold the community together.

Moreover, the political context in which Alevism and Sunni Islam came to be and interacted with each other also affected the spatial manifestations of the religious characteristics of these beliefs. For instance, Alevis, with the minority consciousness, have always felt that they had to be more like Sunnis in order to be recognized as a "legitimate" religious group.

If Sunnis have mosques we have cemhouses, we have as legitimate a belief as they do, but the dominant ideology purposefully neglects our existence and rejects the idea that we deserve to be treated as we wish. What does this mean? We want to be respected. We might be minority, but we exist! We have different needs and traditions. If they could just accept the fact that cemhouses are places of worship and Alevism is a belief then we might be able to fight against the discriminatory practices in our daily lives or work places,

states one of my informants. The political nature of the relations with the state and the Sunnis, manipulates and alters the discussions on the issue and makes it look as though these web of relations revolve around the issue regarding cemhouses and their statuses. Thus, the discussions are bound to be fruitless since political concerns interfere with religious ones. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, politization of the Alevi Community in Turkey has influenced the discussions related to the issue of religion and the main focus of the debates has shifted somehow. The struggle for the recognition of cemhouses as official places of worship, which is a serious struggle for human rights, has turned into a political fight among different groups. Furthermore, it becomes critical to note that mosques are perceived to be public offices, whereas cemhouses do not have a legal standing.

In addition to all these, there are also religious aspects affecting the perception and construction religious space. It then becomes more or less straightforward to a certain extent to contemplate the divergences between mosques and cemhouses, i.e. Sunni and Alevi perception and

construction of religious space. As mentioned several times in various ways, the oral tradition of Alevi belief has no specific requirements for the places that cem rituals are held whereas the written tradition of Sunni Islam states the requirements to be fulfilled for the construction of the places of worship alongside the accepted codes of behavior. Qur'an is a special resource in this sense for Sunni Islam. It is noteworthy to stress that the perception of religious places is densely related to the rituals practiced in them. The place where the ritual or the rite is practiced is structured in relation with the characteristics of that certain ritual, in one way or the other.

It would be fitting to assert that rituals have a transforming nature and they transform and define, to a certain extent, not only the people performing such rituals, but also the environments they are practiced in. In this case, the places of worship are structured, organized, and ascribed meaning to with relation to religious rituals. Overall, it would be most-fitting to conclude that ritual, and specifically, religious ritual is a way of expression

Cem ceremonies are practiced in the evenings and even at night in the cities, because of the urban concerns such as economic ones. Although is neither acceptable nor welcomed, people attending the ceremonies

often leave the hall and return after a certain period of time for usually personal reasons. Moreover, there is no certain time for the ritual to start; the ceremonies may start at different times. One might claim that this kind of "flexibility" of cem ceremonies is somehow reflected in the construction of the cemhouses; en closed space large enough for the attendance of a usual cem ritual is often constructed for these purposes. It should also be noted that men and women attend cem ceremonies side by side. Ergo, no compartmentalization is needed for cemhouses. Nevertheless, if one considers namaz and mosques in relation with the principle that the places of worship are constructed in accordance with the characteristics of the rituals to be practiced in them, it becomes clear as to why and how mosques are constructed and perceived the way they are. Namaz is a ritual practices five times a day at certain hours. The call to prayer denotes those specific periods of time. The Imam working in the mosque recites the azan, the call to prayer, and he should be in the mosque to do so. He is a state official, who is also responsible for taking care of the mosques. Moreover, women and men pray in different sections in the mosques according to the rules stated in Qur'an and the space is needed to be constructed with respect to such requirements. In other words, unlike cemhouses, there is compartmentalization in mosques.

What is more is that cemhouses have many functions aside from those that are purely religious. They are used as gathering places for the community, just as in the literal sense of the word "cem", which means gathering. It is a vibrant place, with people coming and going at any hour of the day. "We sit there, eat our meals there, drink our teas and chat through the whole day," stresses one of my informants during a conversation where he tells me about the cemhouse in his home town. Unlike cemhouses, the time to enter a mosque and to leave one is quite definite. One goes there to pray at certain hours of the day and it is a significant difference that none of the abovementioned activities are allowed to be performed within the walls of a mosque.

In conclusion, cemhouses and mosques are essentially different due to many reasons such as socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious ones. Both the discourse used for comparison and the context in which the two are compared and contrasted should be reconsidered in relation to such reasons and an attitude change should be put into action if the end-goal is to find a common ground for Alevism and Sunni Islam to co-exist without discrimination, misunderstanding, and violation of human rights.

4.3. Antagonism and Tolerance within the Household: A Taste of "Sibling Rivalry" after a New Addition to the Family

After a detailed analysis of the competitive sharing of the city between Alevis and Sunnis, the sibling rivalry within different NGOs and FBOs caused by the competitive sharing of the same space will be examined in this part of this study.

For the Alevi community in Turkey, there was a serious a need to formulate a new discourse to unite the community, but this certainly did not mean the differences would be dissolved and a homogeneous community would be achieved. There existed and still exists severe conflicts within the community; within NGOs and FBOs.

What is more interesting is that not all the conflicts are related to ideology, economic circumstances, religious definitions, or cultural indicators. In order to be able to get into the details of such a statement, one should underline a certain characteristic of the Alevi community in Turkey. The relations amongst individuals in the community are formed on a personal level. Needless to say that it is quite significant that one shares the other's worldview or political stance; however, personal connections prove to be noteworthy in forming relationships and/or

breaking them. Moreover, even within the same sub-group, one is expected to have confidantes and act with those confidantes. For instance, you do not get close to those, who have or have had problems with your confidantes in one way or the other. Hence, it is quite appropriate to assert that conflicts might arise from personal grudges against a certain individual or alliances might be formed based on personal fondness of someone. Under these circumstances, it is both easy to unite and hard to stay as one.

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the fieldwork conducted for the purposes of this thesis consisted of participant observation within a web of organization co-existing in the same building, as mentioned earlier. It has also been noted that six different organizations with six different legal personalities co-existed in the same building. There bound to be a certain level of tension in-between distinct organizations when said organizations have to utilize the very same space to realize their existence. In order to be able to draw an accurate portrait as how the internal dynamics of such a medium work, several examples from the field will be presented and analyzed.

When dealing with different organizations with different executive bodies, be it intertwined or not, the relationships are built upon a rather fragile

ground, such as personal connections. It is critical to highlight that while these personal connections make up the concrete that holds these organizations all together, a wrongdoing, a misunderstanding, or a case of miscommunication might do more damage than one would expect. Furthermore, the existing diversity of ethnicities, religious inclinations, cultural values, and political ideologies, it becomes much harder to attain balance of powers.

The building belongs to Hacı Bektas Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation, which is one of the first Alevi NGOs established in Turkey. The organization was established in 1994 and it has 32 local branches all around Turkey. The foundation aims to disseminate Hacı Bektas Veli's principles both nationally and internationally and to analyze and document these principles in order to be used in a constructive way in favor of the Alevi community and humanity, in general. Alevi Cultural Associations, first established under the name Haci Bektas Veli Anatolian Culture and Promotion Association (Haci Bektas Veli Kültür ve Tanıtma Dernegi) was founded in 1991, sharing the same goals as the foundation. ACA has 86 local branches and the number is growing as the years pass. Alevi Bektasi Federation, on the other hand, was first initiated with the name Alevi Bektasi Organizations Union and was issued to be closed. The federation was then established in 2002. The establishment of the federation was very significant in the sense that it was the first federation

to be established in accordance with the process of adaptation to European Union standards. The federation is an umbrella organization gathering largest Alevi NGOs and FBOs under its legal personality. Yol TV is an Alevi Television station established in 2006. With the involvements of Haci Bektaş Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation (HBVACF) Central Office and Alevi Culture Associations (ACA) Head Office and with the cooperation of scientists and their connections, it has been decided to establish Alevism Research, Documentation and Application Institute also known as the Alevi Institute.   The declaration of establishment was issued on December 23, 2008. IMECE Clinic, on the other hand existed from the early times since the building was built, it was managed by the collaboration of both the foundation and the association, but then the management of the clinic was handed over another company.

After a brief history of each organization, it becomes somewhat easier to conceptualize the balances of power in the building. It is crucial to note the fact that the Foundation has a financial upper-hand over all the other organizations residing in the building since the legal property rights of the construction is owned by the foundation.

However it may be, one of the most delicately established organization of all is the Alevi Institute. The establishers of the Institute, both the

foundation and the association had to spend money and time to make this "dream" come true, as one of my informants puts it.

> *HBVACF and ACA as the establishers and supporters of this formation accept that it is autonomous in its internal affairs and the guarantee of protecting and improving this autonomy is their legal personalities; they also declare to do required legal changes in order to protect the basis of its autonomy determining their relations with this institution, both in its current situation and its process of being an independent legal personality.* (Alevi Institute's Declaration of Establishment)

This was simply how important the Alevi Institute was perceived to be by its founders and to protect its autonomy was of utmost significance. Nonetheless, some of the employees of both the foundation and the association were at first intimidated by the idea of a new formation inside the building. The general ideology behind supporting such an organization was embraced by all, but the idea of having share the financial resources with more people, the employees of the Institute in this case, was disturbing and hard to except when both the foundation and the association were dealing with severe financial problems. Moreover, the money spent to convert the hall spared for the hall into a decent working environment for the Institute was subject to criticism from the very beginning. However, Alevis, having to learn to communicate using urban, i.e. Sunni, ways of expression, were just starting learn how important it was to "look the part" they were getting ready to play. Ergo, it is critical to note that it was somehow inevitable to make such an investment in the Institute, in the form of both human resources and capital since the Institute was the new hope for the

community and all the resources were to be used in the name of this new hope.

In addition, with the news of the upcoming establishment of the Institute in 2008, the expectations were extremely high. Almost every member of both the foundation and the association were excited to see results, let alone the employees and the executive board members of the supporting organizations. The establishment ceremony proved to be a success in many senses. The attendance of the Minister of Culture to the ceremony alongside various significant opinion leaders from different minorities in Turkey was highly appreciated. In addition, the involvement of the Ministry of Culture in the event was a serious political step in the sense that it was the first official recognition the Alevi community acquired. However, to see tangible results took almost three years, when the results of the project named "Mobilizing Towards Equality and Non Discrimination", funded by the European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights under the European Commission, were published. The Institute was responsible for execution of the project although the grant was legally given to Alevi Cultural Associations. The needed cultural, symbolic, and academic capitals were in the possession of the Institute. This has caused some antagonism amongst the employees of the organizations in the building since a large portion of the financial resources were invested in the Institute. "I do not think that they do

many things there, I see them sitting around and talking… Just talking… They get paid for talking," I have heard one of the employees in the building say during a lunch break, while waiting in line to take his food.

It is important to highlight that no matter the problems or differences, when it came to dealing with outside affairs, there were no problems at all. Even the most serious personal conflicts were overlooked. You could see two men who had a loud fight the day before, smiling while talking to an outsider (yabancı), who is not an Alevi. The content of the personal quarrels between individuals will not be disclosed out of respect to private lives of my informants; even though such quarrels had serious effects on the sense of unity within and among organizations. It suffices to state that there were many reasons for individuals to get into conflict, be it differences in political opinions, opposing economic interests, clash of egos, divergent religious values, or different ethnic backgrounds.

One has to acknowledge the fact that these "rehearsed" appearances of togetherness are deeds done out of necessity, although they may seem hypocritical to some and noble to others. The political context and the dominant ideology determine the ways in which a political struggle is carried out. The methods to be utilized when having to make a great effort in the name of a cause such as the fight against discrimination and

attempt at gaining recognition are set forth by those in power. In this sort of a political environment, the game should be played by the rules; otherwise, the players get disqualified and the efforts made by their team members do not account for anything. Beyond the shadow of doubt, all the personal differences are cast aside in the name of a greater cause. The greater cause, as it relates to the case of Alevis, is to pose as a united front to able to fight in consideration of their rightful struggle for human rights, non-discrimination, and equal citizenship.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: LONG JOURNEY OF A BELIEF

A photograph shows "what is" at the time it is taken. It gives details; and it makes a statement. It provides a description of the time it is taken. Imagine a photograph of a collapsed building. You see the debris, broken pieces of glass from the windows. You notice the fallen wall and a couch crushed under the bricks. You notice the dark stain on the couch. You notice even the slightest details. Subsequently, you find yourself wondering about why the building has collapsed. Was it an explosion? Did a plane crashed into the building? You might very well be wondering about where that dark stain came from. Was it a naughty teenager who spilled coffee on the couch? Or was it because of an explosion? Did the tremors knock something over the couch? Where are the residents of the building? Did they die? How many of them survived? Despite all the details the photograph provides you with, you are left with at least twice as many questions left unanswered, and each question leads you to another.

A movie, just a like a photograph, has a story to tell. It gives details, while telling the story. The protagonist is diagnosed with cancer. Subsequent to an emotional denial period, she decides to travel around the world after she beats cancer. She had always wanted to do so, but

she had never had the time because of her work and ambitions in life. During her journey, she falls in love with a man, who has gone through some of the same problems that she has gone through; gradually they discover that they have so much in common. At the end, they get married. The difference in this example is that, the movie does not leave you with more questions than it answers. You know why she got to have cancer in the first place. She had had a very stressful work life and she smoked, for instance. You learn how she gets treated. You learn that she had always wanted to travel around the world; hence, you do not wonder why she has chosen to do so. You watch how she and the man meet and how they get to know each other. You watch how he proposes to her and you watch the fairytale wedding they have at the end of the movie. Yes, the movie also tells a story, just as the photograph. Just like the photograph, yet different. It has an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. It shows "what was", "what is", and possibly "what will be" in the future; in other words it gives you the opportunity to prognosticate the future of the phenomenon in one way or the other. It provides answers to questions "Why?" and "How?".

A photograph is a synchronic way of telling a story, it lacks historicity whereas the movie has a diachronic way of approaching the story; it gives the history of the events. Historicity is a critical part of any

phenomenon. One cannot possibly fully comprehend the current conditions of a certain issue without any proper knowledge of its past.

The purpose of this thesis is to give a detailed account of the long journey of Alevism from the start of the migration process. A diachronic approach is adopted to provide a comprehensive outlook regarding the issue. A comprehensive narrative of the politization of the community has been provided with a special focus on the matter of fragmentation within caused by such a politization process and different methods of defining Alevism. The necessities leading to a discourse change has been discussed thoroughly in relation with the political context of the time both in the country and around the world. The reasons behind such relations are tried to be examined for the sole purpose of delivering an all-embracing interpretation of the contemporary status of matter at hand. Consequently, the changes the community has gone through in the urban setting have been investigated in order to present a thorough account of the certain phenomena relating to the way of life adopted by the community and struggle that Alevis have gone through. With the use of "perception of space" the competitive nature of the relationship between Sunnis and Alevis has been evaluated as to answer questions regarding the discussions about places of worship and the conditions of co-existence of the two communities.

The way that this thesis is organized is ultimately associated with the reasons of studying such a subject-matter. With the intention of comprehending the rationale behind the way the Alevis act the way they do, the current state of affairs in the country as they relate to the case of Alevis; and the conflict both between Alevis and Sunnis and within the community, a historical approach has been offered. This humble attempt is aimed at striving to reach a better understanding of the dynamics of urban life with all the conflicts it hosts for Alevis in their co-existence with Sunnis and with the different groups cohabitating within the same community. Taking into account the analysis provided in this study, I would like to conclude by emphasizing the difficulties regarding the issue of "being and staying together" for a minority in an environment, which is ever-changing and a transforming and every single individual stands for him or herself striving to fight against discrimination in almost every aspect of life.

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