

MAKING THE CEMEVIS OF TUZLUÇAYIR:
THE POSSIBILITIES OF AND LIMITS TO POLITICS OF COMMONS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

JANUARY 2019

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ABSTRACT

MAKING THE *CEMEVİS* OF TUZLUÇAYIR: THE POSSIBILITIES OF AND LIMITS TO POLITICS OF COMMONS

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January 2019, 237 pages

This thesis examines *Cemevis* of Tuzluçayır, a neighborhood in Ankara, in the context of politics of Commons. This politics aims for practical solutions to social, economic, political and ecological problems by acting beyond the dominant political-economic structure, the state-market duopoly. As the Alevi social movement, was not able to form definite ways of integration into the political-economic structure of Turkey, it has represented tactics to reformulate its religio-political practices by following actions of exceeding the boundaries of the institutional limits of the structure. This is so especially in the context of *Cemevi*-making practices. The social and political struggle over the right to *Cemevis*, has made the foundation of them possible, despite their illegal status. This means that these practices of placemaking are in the margins of the existing political-economic structure, and in that regard reveal a potential for politics of Commons. However, this politics is introduced as a limited solution in this work, if the movement does not articulate itself to the politics “against” the dominant structure and continues as a tool of survival in margins. This means that economic political structure, either transforms these practices of survival subject to its own political and economic order, or, it totally abolishes these movements by using force.

Keywords: Alevism, *Cemevis*, Commons, placemaking, religious field

ÖZ

TUZLUÇAYIR'IN CEMEVLERİNİN ÜRETİMİ MÜŞTEREKLER SİYASETİNİN OLANAKLARI VE SINIRLILIKLARI

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Mustafa Kemal Bayırbağ

Ocak 2019, 237 sayfa

Bu tez Ankara'nın bir mahallesi olan Tuzluçayır'ın Cemevlerini müşterekler siyaseti bağlamında incelemektedir. Bu siyaset, hakim siyasal-ekonomik siyasal yapının, toplumsal, siyasal, ekonomik ve ekolojik sorunlara devlet-piyasa tekelinin ötesinde çözümler bulmayı hedeflemektedir. Alevi toplumsal hareketi Türkiye'nin siyasal-ekonomik yapısına entegre olmanın belirli yollarını kuramadığından bu yapının kurumsal biçimlerinin dışında kalmıştır. Bu özellikle *Cemevi*-üretimi bağlamında böyledir. Yasal bir statüye sahip olmamalarına rağmen, Cemevleri kurma hakkı üzerinde verilen sosyal ve politik mücadeleler, Cemevlerinin kurulmasını ve işlenmesini mümkün kılmıştır. Yani bu eylemlilikler Alevilik'in bir şekilde mevcut siyasal-ekonomik yapının da sınırlarının dışında var olabilmesini sağlamıştır. Bu da müşterekler siyaseti bağlamında bir yorumlamayı mümkün kılmaktadır. Fakat bu, eğer bu müşterekler siyaseti bir şekilde mevcut ekonomik-politik yapıyla bir mücadeleye girişmeyi, sınırlarda bir var olma savaşını sürdürmenin bir aracı haline dönüşürse, sınırlı bir siyaset olarak kalacaktır. Çünkü siyasal-ekonomik yapının belirleyici gücü, bu varolma siyasetini ya kendi siyasal ekonomik düzeninin bir parçasına dönüştürür, ya da sınırlardaki bu hareketleri güç kullanarak yok eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Cemevleri, Müşterekler, Yer-Üretimi, Dinsel Alan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER	
1.INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Thesis	3
1.2 Method of the Thesis	8
1.3 Structure of the Thesis.....	11
1.4 Limitations of the Thesis	12
2.THE QUESTION OF COMMONING IN THE CONTEXT OF CEMEVİ-MAKING: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS	14
2.1 Introduction: A Theoretical Contribution to the Problematic of Alevism: <i>Cemevis</i> as Places of Commons?	16
2.2 Literature Review: The Religio-Political Problematic of Alevism- <i>Cemevis</i> in Secular Age.....	21
2.2.1 The Literature of History and Theology of Alevism/ <i>Cemevis</i>	24
2.2.1.1 Writing the History of Heterodoxy/Syncretism: Köprülü Thesis and its Critiques	24
2.2.1.2 Alevi vs. Sunni Theology: The Discussions on the ‘Position’ of Alevism in relation to the ‘Orthodoxies’ ..	31
2.2.2 Alevism/ <i>Cemevis</i> as a Political Issue	39
2.2.3 Modernization-Urbanization of Alevism: The Socio-Political and Spatial Transformation	53

2.2.3.1 The Transformation in the social-political organization of Alevism.....	53
2.2.3.2 Cemevis and Cem Ritual in the context of Spatial Transformation of Alevism	67
2.3 Making the Place of Commons: The Analysis of <i>Cemevis</i> as Commoning Practice.....	72
2.3.1 The Social-Initiative Taker and His/Her Capital.....	72
2.3.2 Donation Economy vs. Exchange Economy	77
2.3.3 Different Tactics on the Revival of Religious Practices	79
2.3.4 The Question of Threshold: Insider/Outsider – Invisibility/Visibility	80
2.4 Conclusion: Network Closure vs. Network Expanding/Cohesion and Struggle Beyond, Against or Within Market-State Structure	83
3. CEM RITUAL AND <i>CEMEVİS</i> : THEOLOGY AND HISTORY	86
3.1 The Tradition of Cem Ritual and <i>Cemevis</i> : Esoteric Perception of Ritual and Its Place	86
3.2 The Modern <i>Cemevi</i> : Between Association and Cultural Center.....	100
4. <i>CEMEVİS</i> OF TUZLUÇAYIR: QUESTIONING THE COMMONING PRACTICE	107
4.1 Short History of Tuzluçayır.....	107
4.2 The Social Initiative Taker: Social and Symbolic Capital in the Field of <i>Cemevi</i> -making	109
4.2.1 <i>Cemevi</i> A: The Result of the Failed Attempt to Build a Big <i>Cemevi</i> in Mamak.....	110
4.2.2 <i>Cemevi</i> B: <i>Cemevi</i> of Relatives and Fellowmen	119
4.2.3 <i>Cemevi</i> C: A Return to the Local Initiatives	123
4.3 The Struggle over The Reproduction of the <i>Cemevis</i> : Donation Economy	127
4.3.1 <i>Cemevi</i> A and C: Irregular Donations and Subscription Fees.....	128
4.3.2 <i>Cemevi</i> B: Regular Donations and Subscription Fees.....	133
4.4 Reforming the Ritual and the ‘Sacred’: Developing Tactics to attract Visitors and/or Providing Services to Sell	135
4.4.1 <i>Cemevi</i> A: <i>Ozanlar Günü</i> as Place for Encounters	139
4.4.2 <i>Cemevi</i> B: Shared Devotion, Formalism and Service Selling.....	144

4.4.3 <i>Cemevi</i> C: Monthly <i>Cem</i> Sessions and Spectacular <i>Dedes</i>	157
4.5 The Question of The Inside/Outside: Between Visibility / Invisibility	165
4.5.1 <i>Cemevi</i> A: The Problem of Security and Intimacy under the Unintentional Visibility	166
4.5.2 <i>Cemevi</i> B: Participation in Some Public Events and the Undesired Image They Create	175
4.5.3 <i>Cemevi</i> C: The Open Door, Recordings and the Loss of Authenticity	180
4.6 Conclusion: Is <i>Cemevi</i> -Making Practice Beyond, Within or Against the Political-Economic Structure?.....	184
5. CONCLUSION.....	192
5.1 Short Summary and Empirical Findings.....	192
5.2 Concluding Remarks and Future Directions.....	200
REFERENCES	202
APPENDICES	213
A. CURRICULUM VITAE.....	213
B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET	215
C. TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM	237

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines three *Cemevis*¹ in the Tuzluçayır neighborhood of Ankara via the theory of Commons² and questions the possibilities and limits of considering the *Cemevi*-making process of Alevi as a process of “Commoning.” In that regard, it is argued that although the *Cemevis* in some aspects is similar to horizontal networking, cooperation and heteropraxis reveal such potential; the structural limits of the fields in which it has to condition itself prevents the realization of the main motivation of the Commons, i.e., the founding of a socialization that lies beyond market-state relations. More clearly, as Alevism in modern terms is preconditioned through the history-theology writing of Sunni Islam (ideologically), the religio-political structuring of religion in the Turkish state bureaucracy and the un-institutionalized form of Alevism against it (politically) and the disadvantageous positions of

¹ *Cemevis*, are the places of worship of Alevism, a belief system that acquired its current name in 15th-16th century. Despite the fact that the name of Alevism is argued to be a relatively new name, it is also clear that the communities that formed the current form of Alevism existed before the referred dates. This belief system basis itself on esoteric explanations of Islam and has lived in a wide geographical range, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Balkans. Separated from the two big Orthodoxies of Islam, Sunnism and Shiism, it has developed its autonomous economic, political, social and theological institutions, and relatedly, its own rituals and places of worship. *Cemevis* are these places of worship. They have not been legal, both in the Ottoman Empire period, and in the Turkish Republic. Yet Alevi not only in the traditional sense, but also in the modern context, have developed tactics to found them despite the legal restrictions. They are continuing to be found and operate in the contemporary Turkish state, without having acquired a legal status.

² Commons refer to the material and immaterial goods that belongs to all members of the society, and is accessible for everyone. In the theoretical context used here, Commons and Commoning Practice refer to a political interpretation of such collective ownership. Following the argument that state and market forces are not able to solve some representation, economy and ecology problems and even create more of them, the theory argues that the Commons are an alternative way to solve these problems beyond market-state relations, basically through collective ownership and organization of the material and immaterial goods.

Alevism have been experiencing in the capitalist market relations (economically). It is hard to assume an “autonomous” revival without being challenged by all these centralized and dense powers, simply by subjectively rejecting them as the Commons theory assumes. While I still see potential in the Commons theory in terms of its intention to form and continuously-dynamically-participatory search on practical ways of from-below politics-economics against/beyond the state-market relations, I still see such an analysis made through the lens of Commoning as important, with the intention of seeking its articulation to the structural struggle.

To defend this argumentation, the most important obstacle to address is the claim that the Commons theory is based on the rejection of the structural boundaries on the action. As such, some would contend that I am challenging the Commons theory with structural limits, while the theory itself is the theory of acting out of such limits. The answer is that the reproduction of structures does not depend on the acceptance of these structures or their denunciations. Instead, following Roy Bhaskar, I stand on the ontological-epistemological standpoint to posit that structures enjoy relative autonomy over the free-will of the agency. This does not necessarily mean that there is no way out from such structural restrictions. Bashkar’s approach says two things. First, even if the cases that represent the autonomous actions of the agency that go beyond the ways of doing and being out of the structure (i.e., the actions that the Commons theory sees as the ground of the Commoning practice), the agent inevitably reproduces the structure by articulating its actions to the structure because of its lack of power against the repressive and ideological powers of the structure. Second, the structural determination does not necessarily cause a deadlock, in which the actor continuously reproducing the structure. This would make a transformation impossible. The structure’s reproduction depends also to the reproduction of its oppositional forces, which include the potential to make it collapse.³

³ To exemplify this, the simple Marxist conflict, capitalism and working class might be given. Capitalism itself is the creator of the working class, and depends on the labor of this class to reproduce itself. On the other hand, the working class is the potential subject to make Capitalism collapse. Engels, Friedrich, and Karl Marx. *The communist manifesto*. Penguin UK, 2004.

The politics of Alevism lies simply in this inside-outside dichotomy of the structure, which we are able to discuss through the introduction of the Commons theory. Alevism has been, outside the traditional political-economic structures. In the period of Ottoman Empire, Alevi communities were somehow able to represent a weak but an outside force against the political-ideological-economic structure of the state by forming their own political-ideological-economic institutions. However, the Turkish state has included the Alevi subject into its power circles. Therefore, Alevism has been introduced into the structure via the modernization-urbanization-secularization process. Yet this inclusion has not been an unproblematic one as the Turkish state has been in continuity, although it also represents some ruptures, with the ideology of the Ottoman Empire.

As a result, Alevism through its re-politicization attempts has struggled exactly in the middle of such inclusion-exclusion. There are positions assert especially the state as a reflection of Sunni Islamism and tries to remain outside of it, while also seeing the state through the Kemalist ideologies' laicist principle as an arena of struggle. In that regard, *Cemevis* are the particular domain in which we may discuss not simply the basic problematics of Alevism but also the problematics of the Commons theory.

1.1 Background of the Thesis

Since the end of the 1980s, Turkey has experienced a so-called Alevi revival, which has centered on the problematic religio-political status of Alevism, theological questions and the economic difficulties Alevis face. *Cemevis* are places where the urban Alevi community has tried to be both the actor and outcome of overall Alevi politics. However, what we recently observe is that *Cemevis* have become one of the focal points of the discussion of Alevi religio-politics. Therefore, the analysis of the processes of *Cemevi*-making helps us to understand the clues of overall Alevi religio-politics, as the placemaking process represents a kind of dense point of the overall problematics of Alevism.

Although *Cemevis* represent a key issue in discussion, the debate about differences between Alevism and Sunnism includes more than the issues of ritual and places of worship, with respect to this, the last two or three decades have somehow centered the issue of *Cemevis* in

the dispute. This could simply be grasped by the recent declaration of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious Affairs, *Diyanet* hereafter): “*Cemevis* are our red lines.” This expression indicates that the Sunni Islamist perception reproduced by the *Diyanet* is never and will never be keen to accept *Cemevis* as alternatives to mosques; therefore, *Cemevis* will never obtain a legal status that makes them equal to mosques or reach the degree that Alevism becomes something economically supported and politically represented. What makes this interesting is that *Diyanet* addresses *Cemevis* as the central topic of Alevi politics. As will be shown throughout this study, the economic, social, ideological and political positioning against the Alevi issue intersects with Sunni Islamist theology, and finally, the problem ends up on the doorsteps of the *Cemevis*.

The *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, AKP hereafter) government, which was silent about the Alevi issue until the end of 2000s, manifested its concrete interest to deal with the overall problem of Alevism with the Alevi workshops organized in 2007-2009. The workshops consisted of seven meetings where the Alevi issue was discussed in terms of solving the practical problems of Alevis. These workshops demonstrated two important things. First, Sunni Islamism has dominated the religio-political field of the Turkish Republic and remained unchallenged by the governmental and intellectual representatives but had only changed its strategy to deal with the Alevi problem. The official perception, that has swayed between positions of overlooking or violently involving to the Alevi question, transformed into a political involvement, taking the form of ‘listening to the problems of Alevis’ However, what that involvement had produced, was more or less the same of the positions represented by the Sunni Islamist ideology, which has been based on the presupposition that Alevism is inferior to Sunni Islam and had to be managed without harming the theological necessities of (Sunni) Islam. Second, the government and Sunni intellectuals’ position to guarantee such a solution was using a method to benefit from the existing separation among Alevi positions, which were roughly divided into two categories: Alevism as a religion and Alevism as a secular-cultural way of life. The power of the Sunni Islamist side had come from its power to determine the religious field had simultaneously functioned

as an attractive field for the religious Alevism by supporting the idea that for Alevism to be a religious identity, it has to narrow gaps with Sunni Islam.⁴

The revival of Alevism is also clearly a response to the religio-political empowerment of the Sunni Islamist positions, especially after 1980s. However, the revival has had to cope with a major problem of resacralizing a practically and theoretically secularized religion. The institution of *dedelik*, the *sorgu cemi*⁵, the *Ocak*⁶ ties and *müsahtiplik*⁷ were damaged and they have received wide range of scholarly attention.⁸ The revival of Alevism in the 1990s has

⁴ For all these discussions, see the following: Lord, Ceren. "Rethinking the justice and development party's 'Alevi openings'," *Turkish Studies*, 18.2, 2017, pp. 278-296.; Borovali, Murat, and Cemil Boyraz. "Turkish secularism and Islam: A difficult dialogue with the Alevis." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40.4-5, 2014, pp. 479-488; Borovali, Murat, and Cemil Boyraz. "The Alevi Workshops: An Opening Without an Outcome?" *Turkish Studies*, 16.2, 2015, pp. 145-160 ; Borovali, Murat, and Cemil Boyraz. "Türkiye'de Cemevleri Sorunu: Haklar ve Özgürlükler Bağlamında Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım." *Mülkiye Dergisi* 40.3, 2016, pp. 55-86.

⁵ The Ritual (Cem) of Interrogation: a traditional ritual done generally in winters in Alevi villages when the *dede* comes to the village. In this ritual, the *müsahtips* are interrogated and questioned about whether they fulfilled their duties to each other and to the community. If there is a dispute between parties, the *dede* and community together decide what to do. In unsolved cases, the *dede* asks his own *dede* for a solution.

⁶ Hearth; lineage. *Ocaks* are institutions that are founded by *dedes* who come from the prophet Muhammad's lineage. *Ocaks* have religious leaders called a "*dede*," and followers of that leader are referred to as "*talips*." *Talips* are dependent according to their ancestors to an *Ocak*, which means that the *dede* of thatn *Ocak* has the right to interrogate the *talip* with the community of that *Ocak*.

⁷ A brotherhood-sisterhood institution in Alevism. Alevis from the same *Ocak* can become *müsahtips*. Although there are some places where single people can become *müsahtips*, it is generally done between two married couples. After a ritualistic ceremony performed with the leading of the *dede*, four people become brothers and sisters, which is considered a sacred tie, and it is important than the tie between brotherhood and sisterhood. These four people become economically and morally dependent on each other. If one makes a mistake, the others becomes also responsible. Every year, a *sorgu cemi* is done with all the *müsahtips*. This institution is so important for Alevis that Alevis who do not have *müsahtips* are not even considered as being real Alevi. See also: *ikrar vermek* and *yola girmek*

⁸ Şahin, Şehriban. "The rise of Alevism as a public religion." *Current Sociology*, 53.3, 2005, pp.465-485.; Dressler, Markus. "Religio-secular metamorphoses: The re-making of Turkish Alevism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76.2,2008, pp. 280-311.; Yaman, Ali. "Alevilikte ocak kavramı: anlam ve tarihsel arka plan." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, 60, 2011, pp.43-64; Yıldırım, Rıza. "Geleneksel Alevilikten Modern Aleviliğe: Tarihsel Bir Dönüşümün Ana Eksenleri." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, 62, 2012,pp.17-38

grown regarding the basic question of “how to rebuild the lost religious institutions and reform the lost authority of the religion.”

The ritual and places of worship were one of the strongest answers to this inquiry, which caused the Sunni Islamist perspective to focus on this issue. In the organization of the justice, economy and society mechanisms brought about by the secularization practices, which were once ordered within the community through the leadership of the *dede*, the revival of the institutions like “*dedelik*,” “*Ocak*,” “*sorgu cemi*” and “*müsahtiplik*” has not been fully possible. Here, *Cemevis* have been given the chance to emerge at least two of these institutions, although not same with the traditional context. *Cemevis* have become places in cities where people eligible to sit the *post*,⁹ and potential *dedes* could finally find a place where they meet with the lost Alevi subjects, although not in Alevism’s traditional form. However, this newly emerging community was not the community in the traditional context; in other words, a full recovery of the *Ocak* has not been possible. *Cemevis* in that regard have become meeting points of *dedes* and *talips* who come from different *Ocaks*. This in turn, could only recover one type of *Cem* ritual, which is the *Karma cem*.¹⁰ As a result, *Cemevis* have been given the possibility to revive the sacredness of Alevism without fully restoring the authority structures. Without reviving the sacralized justice, economy and political ways of being in traditional Alevism, which were ensured by the *Ocak-dede-musahtiplik-sorgu cemi* system, *Cemevis* have been granted the possibility to reach for the feeling of the “sacred.” In one sense, the resacralization through secular means has become possible. The networking capabilities gained through political, social and economic engagements have been more clearly transformed into a resacralized form of Alevism.

⁹ Sheepskin. I will generally use as “sit to post,” meaning sitting on the sheepskin, which has a sacred meaning. Hussain, one of the sons of Ali (Muhammad’s nephew), has been explained as guiding his community by sitting on a sheepskin. By sitting on a sheepskin, *dedes* are believed to be representing Hussain. “*Post*” is here seen as a sacred material, and the *dede* before sitting on it, kisses it. All the people entering the *Cem* ritual also salute the *post*, although it could misleadingly be understood as they are saluting the *dede*. During this salutation, *dedes* sometimes say, “Your salutes are to the *post*.”

¹⁰ This gets different names. Weekly Cems, Mixed Cems, Union Cems, Muhabbet Cems, Education Cems and so on. These *Cem* rituals are opened to every *talip* and *dede* from every *Ocak* and does not include the interrogation part of the *Sorgu Cemi*.

Cemevis in that regard have brought their particular problems to the foreground. First, these places in their traditional forms¹¹ were interconnected within the profane order of the community, i.e., the simple social-political-economic organization of the communal village rested outside the bureaucratic structure of the state or any other major authority. As such, in the transformation of the profane order of the Alevi communities, it is almost impossible to revive the *Cem* ritual and *Cemevis* as they once were. Second, although the revival of the traditional context has not been possible, Alevi still, as a way of engaging with the sacred elements of their beliefs, following a formalistic manner, have prioritized the *Cemevis*. This prioritization might be interpreted also as a reaction to the mosque and Namaz of Sunni Islam. However, this response has had many problems. While it reflects a resistance to assimilation, it also shows the possibility of becoming something alien to the belief itself via becoming a similar institutionalized forced within the state-market system, i.e., a hierarchical, homogenous religion of inequalities. Third, under the light of all these problematics, Alevi re-politicization reflects a multi-perspective position that show subjectification in different ideologies, ranging from ultra-nationalism to socialism. Fourth, the Alevi revival is generally a reformation of *Cemevis* that happens in a class-based society and has brought about vertical divisions have been problematized in the traditional sense.¹² Therefore, the community must have coped with vertical positioning reached through the accumulation of social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital.

We now are able to look to the issue in a broader perspective. We experience all over the world with the so-called autonomy movements, in forms of Occupying and Commoning practices, where the existing ways of political representation and market inequalities are highly

¹¹ Even this notion of the traditional form of *Cemevis* is a matter of discussion in the sense of whether it existed in the traditional context. Moreover, even if it is accepted that the *Cemevis* existed, their traditional functions have been discussed.

¹² Although the Alevi social-economic ideal, even in the existence of status figures like the *dedes*, promoted an economic, more-or-less equal communal functioning through the institutions, in its actual practice, without being properly analyzed in detail, it reflected counter-currents to the ideal. However, it is possible to argue that, due to the lack of institutions and resources (i.e., a bureaucratic state-like structure and capital accumulation through land) to reflect such power densifications, the history of Alevism has not allowed for substantial economic inequalities.

questioned. As the liberal state and market lose more of its power to integrate people in the lack of political organizations to represent this emerging “force,” what we see is autonomous practices all over the world. As I classify the above explained religio-political problem of Alevism in such a scope (i.e., being in an ambiguous position of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the Turkish Republic), I find it important to analyze the *Cemevi*-making practice in such a theoretical dimension. The *Cemevi*-making practice done by local initiatives in Alevi-dense neighborhoods does not have a legal status that integrates them into the state bureaucracy. The association building is legal, but the form of *Cemevi*-making in associations is not included in this legality. Due to the lack of representative central political organizations of these places, they become autonomous. There is no clear-cut centralized agenda to found, operate and follow, and what we see is a much more open-ended process that includes the potential of Commoning.

1.2 Method of the Thesis

In this work, I mainly question whether the process of *Cemevi*-making in Alevi neighborhoods shows that unregulated, self-organizing and cooperating socializations can form Commoning practices, and if not, what are the limits to form such a practice.

The process that made me formulate the basic motives of this question began in 2014-2015. In addition to my academic profession, I have been a “amateur” guerilla filmmaker¹³ and have organized especially low-class youngsters’ ways of self-representation with low-budget cinema equipment via the means of cinema and video. To start this process, I went to Tuzluçayır, a neighborhood in Ankara’s Mamak district to begin the relational teaching-learning process. More concretely, I tried to organize the process of shooting a long-narrative film that was written, acted and shot by the inhabitants of the neighborhood. The only “outsider” was myself; the equipment used was provided from my own resources, and there

¹³ A filmmaking method that utilizes available resources. This type of filmmaking depends on small crews, and the film budget comes from the donations of the crew itself. All crew members are voluntary enthusiasts.

were no sponsors. It was a kind of neighborhood initiative, i.e., a process of learning the ways of cooperative filmmaking against mainstream ways, that demanded integration to market-state relations.

As my experience shows, my political motivation itself was based on the theory of politics of autonomy.¹⁴ During the shooting process of the film, we had to engage with the neighborhood's *Cemevis* in terms of cooperation. The *Cemevis* provided us a place and human capital, and in exchange, we helped with the daily functioning of these *Cemevis*. During that time, I started to question and problematize the *Cemevis* in the context of my theoretical concerns. As such, the process of participant observation started there.

However, my selection of Tuzluçayır could not be reduced into the simple fact that I had already established relations and connections. Tuzluçayır is an important neighborhood for discussing the issue of Alevism in many regards. First, the neighborhood is a cooperatively founded neighborhood of Alevis, who migrated to Ankara from mostly middle-Anatolian villages in the 1960s and 1970s. Second, it was not simply an Alevi neighborhood; it was also one of the key neighborhoods where the socialist movement of the 1970s was grounded. Third, the neighborhood experienced an "integration" process after the 1980s coup, which has shown itself via incorporation to the administrative order and then through apartmentization. Fourth, the actors of the neighborhood contributed to the Alevi revival experienced in the 1990s.¹⁵ Fifth, in 2013, a mosque-*Cemevi* project was implemented with civil society organizations that were close to the Gülen movement and İzzettin Doğan.¹⁶ There were months-long resistance in the neighborhood, which ended with the prevention of the implementation of the named project. With all these characteristics, I may argue that the *Cemevis* of the neighborhood are

¹⁴ To see my theoretical discussions in that regard, consider: Konuşlu, Fırat Bir Mücadele Alanı Olarak "Otonomi": Türkiye'de Dizi Üretim Süreçleri Üzerinden Sömürü-Tahakküm İlişkilerini ve Siyasal Özneyi Tartışmak; *Modus Operandi*, 3, 2015, pp.75-110.

¹⁵ Feyzullah Çınar is one of the most known figures, both as an activist and an Alevi Ozan.

¹⁶ The founder of the Cem foundation and a professor of law. A figure representing a high level of economic and social capital, accumulated via his family and political relations.

relevant places to seek not simply the directions of the theory but also places reflecting the main tensions within the overall religio-politics and modern history of Alevism.

After long talks with my advisor, we reshaped the problems and narrowed down my research questions to prioritize the actors-resources-relations in terms of placemaking. What are the economic, social and cultural resources in the foundation and operation of a *Cemevi*? What are the basic functions of a *Cemevi*, and what are its needs? What are the religious practices and organizations, are the joiners of the *Cemevi* happy with the result of their practices and organizations?

The fieldwork was done between 2016-2017, excluding the participant observations during the film shooting period. In the first three months when I visited the three neighborhood *Cemevis*, I did not conduct any interviews. I only joined the organizations and rituals or simply sat there all day long. I said my specific purpose of research visit and expressed that I was simply observing. This was important in the sense of understanding the everyday functioning of a *Cemevi*. In addition to the administrative members of the *Cemevi* who are the everyday contributors to the place, I also identified frequent visitors. These individuals became my interviewees.

The semi-structured interviews included some common questions asked of everyone, but also there were personal questions that were mainly derived from my observations about that person or about an incident he or she also saw. During the time that I spent in these *Cemevis*, I noted carefully some expressions that drew my attention and asked about them later to understand what he or she really meant.

Thus, my interviewees were not limited to people in these three *Cemevis*. There were ones that sometimes visited a specific *Cemevi* or had been a member of that *Cemevi* previously. Having finished my interviews in these *Cemevis*, I also visited those individuals and conducted interviews.

As a result, I conducted 5 focus group interviews—2 in *Cemevi* A, 2 in *Cemevi* B, 1 in *Cemevi* C and 37 in-depth interviews. I also participated in 9 *Cem* sessions, as well as in other events

such as courses, Ozanlar Günü¹⁷ and conferences. At the beginning of each interview, I informed the participants that their names would not appear in my study and that they could therefore feel them free to express their ideas and feelings about happenings and people they wanted to talk about. None of the interviewees were informed of the other participants that I met.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis consists of three main parts and a conclusion. In the second chapter, which follows this introduction, the theory section is summarized. It has three sub-parts. The first sub-part introduces the basic notions of the theory of Commons and establishes the research question, asking whether the *Cemevi*-making process might be contextualized as a Commoning practice, and if not; what the limits are to the realization of such practices. Are there theoretical limits, and what are the particular limits of Alevism in this overall questioning? The second sub-part deals with the Alevi literature covering a wide-range of works, including theological, historical, political and sociological studies. In this part, I deal with Alevism generally, the *Cemevi*-making process particularly and argue them as being in an unregulated, decentralized and unmonopolized religio-political field.

As such, this part in the background is in constant dialogue with the theory of Commons. The final sub-part of chapter 2 is where I concretize the mentioned dialogue by developing the analytical tools of my fieldwork. Here, I list some limits and possibilities regarding the *Cemevi*-making process with respect to the research question and that problematize the *Cemevi*-making as a Commoning practice.

Chapter 3 is much more descriptive and deals with the *Cem* ritual and *Cemevis* in a traditional-historical context to provide the reader information about some particular concepts and notions of Alevism.

¹⁷ This is a specific day in which Ozans visit Cemevi A and sing or read their own deyişs.

Chapter 4 describes my fieldwork, and I operationalize the analytical tools that I developed and explain and discuss them with respect to the Commons theory. I divide each sub-part into the three *Cemevis*' particular analysis (i.e., as *Cemevi* A, B and C) and discuss their foundational processes in terms of economic and social capital, the tensions between a donation and exchange economy in their functioning, the religious heteropraxis they developed as a tactical response to their available conditions and analyze their insider/outsider relations with a reference to an important discussion of Alevism, i.e.; visibility/invisibility. Then I conclude that the *Cemevis* reveal tendencies toward forming network closures, instead of expanding Commoning practices, or those able to become network-wise more open to outside does this through integration to the market strategies not expanding their cooperative networks. As a result, I conclude that because of the preconditioning of Alevism within market-state relations, it is hard to find successful autonomous practices that go beyond these relations, but the Commons theory with its contribution to the "problematic of how to revive Alevism from-below through cooperative and self-organizing practices of the Alevi subjects" still has to be considered.

1.4 Limitations of the Thesis

There are two major limitations for this study. First, in the neighborhood of Tuzluçayır where the fieldwork was done consists generally of Middle-Anatolian inhabitants. Obviously, there are also Kurdish Alevs, but the circle of *Cemevis* were predominantly made of non-Kurdish ones. Therefore, in this thesis I did not get involved with the very important question of Kurdish Alevism, which surely needs particular attention, especially by analyzing how the increasing Kurdish movement has affected the *Cemevis* in an urban context.

Second, regarding the functioning and operation and thinking the unregulated overall religious field of Alevism, it is hard to make characteristic differences between these *Cemevis*. The organization of Cems still depend on different Alevi groups who rent the place. However, the municipal involvement transforms the way of socialization in a *Cemevi* by preventing everyday encounters where I see the real potential of religio-political revival of Alevism having the background of Commoning practice. Here, the municipal *Cemevis* might be thought

of as preventing Commoning, in the sense of being in the bureaucratic structure of the state so they are not self-organized and governed or operated via cooperation in comparison to other *Cemevis*. My analysis considers Municipal *Cemevis* as a part of the overall problem in the Alevi religious field but leaves them outside in the Com

CHAPTER 2

THE QUESTION OF COMMONING IN THE CONTEXT OF *CEMEVİ*- MAKING: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS

This part tries to develop the theoretical background of my analysis. The main aim of this part is to formulate the analytical tools to discuss the *Cemevi*-making phenomena in relation to the theory of Commons. To draw the framework of this particular aim, I follow three steps. In the first part, I try to clarify why the *Cemevi*-making process might be thought as a Commoning practice and what are the theoretical limits of the theory to make such an analysis. This is argued to be not only offering an alternative approach to the Alevi-religio politics, but also as being empirical evidence for the discussion of the Commoning practices.

In the second part, I engage with the Alevi literature. Here, approaching Alevism generally, and *Cemevis* particularly, through discussing the literature provided in the fields of theology, history, politics and sociology; I show that the religious field of Alevism and *Cemevis*, are politically, ideologically and economically preconditioned. Sunni-Islamism, the religious institutionalization of the Turkish Republic and the objective facts of market capitalism have been effective forces on the re-formulation of Alevi religio-politics. I challenge the Commons theory with a reference to this basic fact. I describe the Alevi religio-politics in the Turkish Republic as swaying between struggling with the forces within or beyond the structures. As the Commons theory favors the political action that goes beyond market-state relations; by simply denying it and acting differently, the Alevi religio-politicization process might be interpreted through this theoretical scope.

Particularly, the *Cemevi*-making practice is actually illegal according to the Law of Dervish Lodges. While the associational form is somehow connected to the state bureaucracy, the *Cemevi* dimension as places of worship is not regulated. The legal limits were not the only problem. The dominance of the Sunni theology and ideology in the religious field, combined with the secularization process that caused for deauthorization of the traditional religious

institutions, put the re-politicization of Alevism into a sustainability crisis¹⁸ the modern mechanisms of inclusion and recognition haven't functioned properly. More clearly, the religious field of Alevism is politically decentralized and unregulated. Under these conditions, the *Cemevi*-making process have had to engage with some strategies and tactics that by-passes the existing structural limitations. So, following the theoretical framework offered by the Commons; the *Cemevi*-making practice thinking also the relatively disadvantageous economic positions of Alevis living in the Alevi-dense neighborhoods might be argued as revealing cooperative placemaking practices, self-organized horizontal-networking allowing improvisations in the sense of religious reformation. However, as I describe the Alevi subject just under the exposition of a religious field, is it possible to argue for a totally autonomous existence that exceeds the limits of market-state forces as the Commons theory argues. The main question that combines the theory of Commons with the overall problematics of the Alevi literature is this.

In the third part, I develop the analytical tools for my analysis that tries to discuss the above-mentioned question. I follow here four characteristics of the Commoning practice to analyze the limits and possibilities of the theory of Commons; affection, gift economy, heteropraxis-flow; threshold. Here, first of all I challenge, the self-interested entrepreneur description that we observe in the Alevi literature in terms of describing the Alevi revival with a reference to resource mobilization theory, and question for the potential of a social-initiative taking behavior motivated mostly by affection as the trigger of *Cemevi*-making practices. Secondly, I discuss in the role of the Gift/Donation Economy in the reproduction of *Cemevis*. Thirdly, I analyze the improvised tactics of Alevis in *Cemevis* in order to reformulate the ritualistic practices in modern context. Fourthly, I discuss the aspect of threshold in the *Cemevis*. More clearly, I question the openness of *Cemevis* to the outsiders.

¹⁸ Tol, Uğraş Ulaş. "The Sustainability Crisis of Alevis." Unpublished Dissertation Thesis, Ankara: METU,2009.

2.1 Introduction: A Theoretical Contribution to the Problematic of Alevism: *Cemevis* as Places of Commons?

This study does not make a descriptive analysis of the Neighborhood *Cemevis* only. It goes one step further and discusses them in the context of political theory, particularly in the context of the theory of Commons. It asks whether the *Cemevi*-making as a placemaking practice might be considered in the repertoire of the empirical studies done by scholars through the analyses of “Commoning practices”. The answer is positive, in two major terms. Firstly, the practice of *Cemevi*-making, especially what is named here the practice of Neighborhood *Cemevis*, gives us the basic premises in a reference we may question the theory and practice of Commons. Secondly, the theological-political existence of traditional Alevism, reveals philosophy and forms of organization that corresponds to the notion through which we may problematize the concerns of the literature of Commons. So, the religio-political problematic of Alevism both in its traditional and modern senses, is dealt here particularly in the context of *Cemevis*, might give us insight for an alternative way to approach the issue through contributing to the wide-range of discussions of Alevism covering various fields as well as to the ones in the theory and practice of Commons.

To begin with a rough description of what is meant by commons generally, and places of commons particularly, needs to be expressed. Places of commons are “places in continuous making”, that manifest and produce practices “beyond state and market” relations and apparatuses, revealing the affective initiative of producing material and immaterial goods, through the self-organizing and self-governing horizontal networking of the subjects taking part, by continuously re-emerging and improvised tactics, that are continuously negotiated and actualized through cooperation-collaboration of this subjects.¹⁹ Surely, this is an ideal

¹⁹ Bollier, David, and Silke Helfrich, eds. *The wealth of the commons: A world beyond market and state*. Levellers Press, 2014; Stavrides, Stavros *Common Space: The City as Commons*, Zed Books, 2016; De Angelis, Massimo and Stavrides, Stavros. "On the commons: A public interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides." *An Architektur* 23 (2010).; De Angelis, Massimo. "Reflections on alternatives, commons and communities." *The Commoner* 6. Winter (2003): 1-14.

definition. The commons literature engages with these practices that questions such potential that is in “becoming”. This means that the making of a common place does not inevitably need to cover all of these characteristics, instead, it refers to the process of politics that includes a potential that reveals alternative ways of acting and being in terms of solving problems, creating, using, revitalizing and reviving material and immaterial goods. It is in one sense, a negative description. The practice of commons incorporates values, which are not possible to be represented through the hierarchical or self-interested ways of action, that in its most general sense problematize state-market. This is not simply a rejection of state-market as objects but also rejecting the political language those objects have made hegemonic; simply the politics of hierarchy and self-interested individual. So, it is a reactive process of resisting to the “old” ways of political-economic engagement, which have found their major form in the form of state and market capitalism. It is also an active process of becoming a new subject that acts with a reasoning that the human-being potentially has, that is acting and being through collaboration and cooperation.²⁰

Neighborhood *Cemevis* by which I mean the *Cemevis* found by local initiative takers’ attempts to make a place that serves for the Alevis in a particular neighborhood with the primary intention to organize the community and revive the ritual. In the lack of a centralized-bureaucratized order in the context of *Cemevis*, the initiative taking behavior finds itself a place to express. So, what we see is that Alevis transform some existing places, in the form of association building into *Cemevis*, which have not only religious functions, also cultural-political ones. As there is no direct, pre-determined path to follow in the placemaking process, both in terms of religious revival²¹ and political organization²², these places in their foundation and operation processes have to depend on such voluntary efforts and affective involvement to reproduce their immaterial good (as well as material goods) through developing self-

²⁰ David B. And Silke, H., 2014

²¹ By this I mean that there isn’t a particular consensus of how the collapsed authority structures could be refunctioning in a totally altered economic and political structure.

²² There have been variety of Alevi associations offering political perspectives but they are far away from representing the Alevis front of the state and market.

organizing and-governing tactics and relying on their own social networking capabilities. These type of acting and being becomes so important in the context of Alevism also, as these have been in traditional sense somehow the strategies of Alevi in order to live and secure their way of personal and communal being. So, the political problematic that is approached in the sense of modern Alevism through the discussion of Commons, makes it also possible to go in a dialogue with the traditional form(s) of Alevism.

However, seeking for the placemaking practices beyond-market-state relations is simply the bright side of the picture, we have to look at the dark side of the moon, which has strong preconditioning power over the represented potential. Even if the intention of the subject would be totally bound up with an autonomous reasoning and consciousness in terms of reviving the religio-political being of Alevism outside the state and market structures²³, the very basic concrete existence of the subject, the rules where the game is played, are preconditioning the acts and even the conscious of the subject. Particularly, in terms of Alevism, the religio-political subject struggles, on the one hand with a strong bureaucratized-centralized power of Sunni Islam, which not only challenges the existence of it through the legal means of Turkish Republic, but also through official history-writing utilized for religio-political identity-formation of Alevism. On the other hand, these subjects' economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital are predetermined also under the dominance of the market capitalism²⁴ that gives limit to their potential actions and consciousness. The argument of "stop what you have done so far and act/think differently"²⁵, or as Esteva puts it in different words, "what actually commons are offering is not an alternative economy, an alternative to

²³ Market and religion relations might be seen as an overlooked topic in that regard in the sense that politics and sociology has dealt much more with the state-religion relations in the last centuries it is also clear that market itself has a primary role in the reshaping of religion, not only through the commodification of the so-called "new spiritualities", but also in terms of the traditional religions. See; Iannaccone, Laurence R. "Voodoo economics? Reviewing the rational choice approach to religion." *Journal for the scientific study of religion*, 1995, pp.76-88. Young, Lawrence A *Rational choice theory and religion: Summary and assessment*. Routledge, 2016

²⁴ It is better to understand this in a relational way with the state, that is, I mean here the particularities of the Turkish Republic has formed in its relation to national and global market.

²⁵ Holloway, John. *Crack capitalism*. Pluto Press, 2010.

economy”²⁶ are surely a challenge to this structuralist way of approach, but besides all their idealist intention they overlook is the ontology of the structure. We name structures so, because they have the power to stage the game in a field its oppositions have somehow rely on. Structures do not change with our intentions ²⁷as our intentions have to use and utilize at the end of the day the resources produced within the structure, even if we are totally devoted to act out of it.

In the last 30 years state’s coercive apparatuses have shown a wide-range of repertoire of engagement with the issue of *Cemevis* by closing, judging, and demolishing the *Cemevis* or even kill the inhabitants. Moreover, there have been an established negative common-sense and discourse swaying between hate or exclusion over Alevism and Alevis, that is not simply reproduced only in a more ‘intellectualized’ way in the academy by the historians and theologians, it is rooted in the discourse of the society, not only through the reinvented official form of Alevism, but at the very basis of the historical heritage of Sunni Islam. Most importantly, putting this very basic reality both under the ideological manipulation and social-political exclusion caused within the dominance of Sunni Islam, combined with the subverted religious knowledge which has been not able to be reformulated and represented by strong Alevi institutions, the distorted self-perception of the Alevi subject has to be a problem that has to be confronted.²⁸ Using Yalçinkaya’s words “the dirt of the state”²⁹ the very basic practice of Commoning of Alevis in the context of *Cemevis* has to confront with the concrete conditions of the dirt this structure causes.

²⁶ Esteva, Gustavo. "Commoning in the new society." *Community Development Journal*, 49, 2014, pp. i144-i159.

²⁷ Bhaskar, Roy. *The possibility of naturalism: A philosophical critique of the contemporary human sciences*. Routledge, 2014.

²⁸ The religio-political struggle that I frequently mention is the field reflecting such conflicting effort.

²⁹ Yalçinkaya, Ayhan. *Pas: Foucault'dan Agamben'e sivilleşmiş iktidar ve gelenek*. Phoneix Yayınevi, 2005.

Besides these particular conditions of Alevism, Alevis have developed the *Cemevi*-making praxis as a remedy. Through this they have had to cope also with very basic structural necessities of placemaking.³⁰ Although the Commoning practice is described as the process of finding the ways of Commoning itself, there is no escape from the precondition of the field that puts limits to it. Finding the necessary resources, the economic, social, cultural and human capital to found and then expand the Commoning, is restricted with the objective positions of these people within the power structure preconditioned through the market-state relations.

However, an important remainder has to be put here. Arguing for the structural preconditioning I am not reproducing the well-known structuralist deadlock³¹ that reaches to the argumentation connoting like ‘change is impossible, the structure is always reproducing itself’. My intention is neither to convince the reader to the impossibility of a Commoning practice and abandon it, nor to the defense of the structuralist standpoint.

By arguing for the limits of the Commoning practice I still try to emphasize the importance of the theoretical-political effort that benefits from the rich possibilities of the Commoning practice, while at the same time thinking on their integration to the ‘old’ way of politics (political parties and trade unions) as necessitating vertical and representative relations in order to cope with the ideological and repressive forces of the state-market.³²

³⁰ Finding a place, finding and organizing the necessary material and immaterial goods for its foundation, fitting all these efforts into the legal structure and then continuously reproducing all of these efforts.

³¹ Hall, Stuart. "The problem of ideology-Marxism without guarantees." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10.2, 1986, pp. 28-44.

³² For a comprehensive discussion on this topic see; Callinicos, Alex and Holloway, John Can we change the world without taking power? ; *International Socialism* 2 : 106, Spring 2005. ; Bensaid, Daniel. "Change the World without taking Power?" *danielbensaid*, <http://danielbensaid.org/Change-the-World-without-Taking-Power?lang=fr>, access date: 12.10.2018; Holloway, John Drive your cart and your plough over the bones of the dead; <https://libcom.org/library/drive-your-cart-your-plough-over-bones-dead-john-holloway>

While this seems like an oxymoron in the first glance, it is not. The field of Commoning is already putting theoretical and practical effort on this, by trying to figure out structural ways to defend the Commoning practices through creating ‘an architecture of law and policy to support the commons.’³³ On the other hand, it is not an alien idea for the representative politics to find ways for politics from-below.³⁴ Here, as some scholars of Commoning would also argue for the limits of the Commoning practice, the effort has to be on underlining the potential of such practices, but at the same time revealing the limits they confront. The intention of this study engaging with the three neighborhood *Cemevis* follows this notion.

The next part deals with the literature of *Cemevis* produced in different fields of research including, theology, history, politics and sociology. It emphasizes the grounds to question the connection between the everyday practice and theory of Alevism.

2.2 Literature Review: The Religio-Political Problematic of Alevism-Cemevis in Secular Age

In this part, I deal with the overall Alevi-*Cemevi* literature focusing on theology, politics and sociology. My argument is that all the discussed issues might be put into a kind of relation with the Commons literature’s main problematic; a social practice that lies beyond state-market relations.

My main context is the Alevism-*Cemevis* nexus. It is clear that these two are not easy to separate. The arguments on *Cemevis* cannot be considered without any reference to the main tendencies within the history writing of Alevism and the self-perception/reproduction of the Sunni Islam. Following the paths, I reach finally to the narrowed down context, that is the *Cemevis*. This journey reveals in one sense how I engage with the literature methodologically.

³³ Bollier, D. and Silke, H.,; 2014: 25

³⁴ Callinicos, A and Holloway, J, 2005; Thomas, Peter D. "The communist hypothesis and the question of organization." *Theory & Event*, 16.4, 2013

I deal with the structural conditioning of Alevism in relation to its traditional and modern forms and try to explain the rules in which the game of *Cemevis* is played.

I make the literature review in four parts. The first one is the history and theology discussion which cannot be separated from each other since I derive from the thesis that every religion (tradition in a most general sense) is actually an invention, and so to speak, every religion is actually syncretic and is a result of a political struggle of writing the history of that religion. Not hard to guess, the political struggle on this continuous rewriting is actually dedicated to the effort of reformulating a religion as anti-syncretic which automatically makes 'the history pellucid' and reauthorizes theology. This means, if a religion is declared as anti-syncretic, it dismisses politics-history and argues that it is not a human creation³⁵. Therefore, it has to be dealt with autonomous experts, the theologian. This part shows, how this process is produced particularly within the conflict of Sunni Islam and Alevism.

Departing from this finding, the power of Sunni Islam that has to show itself as an anti-syncretic religion by dismissing Alevism as syncretic and heterodox, subverts also the self-perception of the Alevi subject. This is surely not the only reason for this, the urbanization-modernization period which the Alevis have lived through caused at the same time to the collapse of the religious authority structures and damaged its self-perception. This revitalized the reformulation of what actually Alevism is, which has become the main problem of the Alevi religio-politics in the modern age.

The second sub-part deals with the re-politicization Alevism. This literature shows us that the religious field of Alevism is unmonopolized³⁶, where actually the problematic of *Cemevis* structures itself in a field of tension and conflict in/through the fluidity of the unmonopolized

³⁵ By this I do not argue for an Atheist claim. It is a claim that even in the case we accept that the world is divinely created and the religion is the expression of it, it is not possible for a religion to remain as it is spoken by the God because it has to be practiced, which means it is subject to politics. So, the argument is not that religion is ontologically a creation of human, instead its practice is the creation of human.

³⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre. "Genesis and structure of the religious field." *Comparative social research*, 13.1, 1991, pp. 1-44.

field of Alevism. Alevi associations, the Turkish State's overall ideological position, political parties and the Alevi subjects have to be put into this picture.

To summarize this picture, we might argue that the Alevi associations as the strongest existing representors of the Alevi religio-politics, are far way from a unified perspective and centralized control, representation and organization of the Alevi subjects. Turkish State's relation with Alevism included ambiguous and paradoxical positions. On the one hand, there are theologically exclusive reflexes, on the other hand ways for integration/assimilation/control³⁷. Political parties, produce arguments-opinions to express their positions on Alevism or engage with the Alevi practice directly especially through municipal activities. Moreover, there are Alevi subjects living the actual practice of Alevism in their everyday life.³⁸

The third part is the literature of sociology where my study mostly belongs. Here, scholars deal with the question of how and why Alevism is not able to reformulate their religious authority structures they once had in the rural areas of Anatolia. This point reveals how the religious dimension inherited tries to negotiate with the conditions of secularity brought by the institutions and culture of urbanization and modernization. This literature gives us on which grounds the "inner problematic" of *Cemevis* is arise, which might be described as a struggle to find points between the pressure of the secular age and religious necessities. Moreover, sociologists give also attention to the spatial transformation of Alevism. This part discusses the Alevi literature in the light of the contributions focusing on space and place; so, through

³⁷ Actually as I will Show in the theology-history literatures analysis, a theological exclusion leads to assimilation and control which might be summarized as "Makul/Makbul Alevilik" ; Ecevitoglu, Pinar. "Aleviligi Tanımlamanın Dayanılmaz Siyasal Cazibesi." *Ankara üniversitesi sbf dergisi*, 66.03, 2011,pp. 137-156.; Öğüt, Özcan. *Ulemanın Asimilasyon Modeli: 'Makbul Alevilik'*. Nika Yayınları, 2018

³⁸ Surely it is not easy to argue for the category of Alevi subjects living the actual/everyday practice of Alevism from the associations. Here there is an intersection point, however as it is revealed in the literature that Alevi civil society organizations are far away from establishing a control, a representative power, a way of action an agenda that embrace all of the Alevis, it is important to note that there is a kind of autonomous initiative that arises from the below. This is surely one of the points from which the main concerns of the study are determined also.

this the place becomes as a kind of dense point in which we find the reflections and manifestations of all the discussions have provided so far

2.2.1 The Literature of History and Theology of Alevism/*Cemevis*

This part deals with the approaches on the issue of Alevism/*Cemevis* in the light of history and theology, which, as will be shown, are reproducing each other. The first sub-part deals with the Köprülü Thesis first, and how it reinvents Alevism as a syncretic-heterodox tradition and how this actually in turn function for the legitimization of the “anti-syncretic”-“orthodox” character of Sunni Islam. This connects us to the second part where I focus on the theologians of Sunni Islam in the context of *Cemevis* and the counter-positions coming from the theology of Alevism.

2.2.1.1 Writing the History of Heterodoxy/Syncretism: Köprülü Thesis and its Critiques

The arguments on *Cem* and *Cemevis* produced in the circles of Sunni Islam are simple. *Cem* and *Cemevis* might be named as worshipping practices and places of worship, but they must not be considered as alternatives to *Namaz* and mosque. According to this perspective, a *Cemevi* is not more than a dervish lodge. This implicitly means that the Alevis are also bound up with the Islamic obligation of *Namaz* and visiting the Mosque. When they follow this or simply accept these obligations without practicing them, as many of the Sunnis also do³⁹, there

³⁹ An overall examination of the European practice of Christianity in that regard is made by Grace Davie. Although each religion has its own social Dynamics in modern age, the overall characterization of ‘believe without belonging’ might be seen as applicable for the case of Turkish society also. A more radical response to Davie’s thesis comes from Voas and Crockett where they argue in the specific case of Britain; with their argument of ‘Neither Believing nor Belonging’. Davie, Grace. "Believing without belonging: is this the future of religion in Britain?." *Social compass* ,37.4, 1990, pp. 455-469. Voas, David, and Alasdair Crockett. "Religion in Britain: Neither believing nor belonging." *Sociology*, 39.1,2005, pp.11-28.The recent discussions on the increasing Deistic arguments in Imam Hatip High Schools; or Volkan Ertit’s analysis revealing the increasing secular practices among the conservative people could be thought as an overall problematic of Sunni Islam in Turkey in recent years. Ertit, Volkan. *Endişeli Muhafazakarlar Çağı*, Orient Publishing, 2015,.

is no problem for the Sunni Islamist on naming the *Cem* as a worshipping practice, and *Cemevi* as places of worship. This means more generally that Alevism is considered not as an alternative way or interpretation of Islam having its unique religious practices; instead, it is seen as one of the many *Tarikat* orders, which I will be explain in detail.

While this is the very basic argument of the Sunni Islamist theological perspective on *Cem* and *Cemevis*, the Turkish Nationalist idea backs up this by purifying Sunni Islam as Orthodoxy and Anti-Syncretic religion by declaring Alevism on the contrary as heterodoxy and syncretic. This is not a direct theological claim, yet becomes at the end one supporting them.

The first attempts to deal with Alevism, were a kind of researching-data collecting and interpreting manner backs up to the Young Turks period actually. The Committee of Union and Progress that held power between 1908 and 1918 in the Ottoman Empire was prioritizing the ethnic composition of the Anatolian population and saw Turkish nationalism as the remedy for the collapsing Ottoman State. In that regard, there were wide-ranging attempts to learn about the different ethnicities-religions within the Anatolian population with the vision of creating the Turkish nationalism. Alevi got also their share from this project. Baha Said Bey was appointed for the investigation of the Alevi populations of the Anatolian region. His report was explaining the Alevi as authentic Turkoman tribes, having heterodox Islamic beliefs, a least Arabized Muslim community.⁴⁰ This was actually an important departure point, that would suit to the Turkish Nationalism's theoretical-political establishment, showing intentions of describing Turkishness in a secular way. Alevi were at least ideally fitting to the ideal of Turkishness, by offering the possibility of equaling the belief with the Turkoman-Shamanistic interpretation of Islam.⁴¹

Mehmet Fuad Köprülü was a historian in Young Turks and the Republican Period and known with his contribution to the main paradigm dominated the history-writing of Alevism.

⁴⁰ Birdoğan, Nejat. *İttihat-Terakki'nin Alevilik-Bektasilik araştırması: Baha Sait Bey*. Berfin yayınları, 1994.

⁴¹ Köprülü, Mehmed, Fuad. "Türk edebiyatının menşei." *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, 1966, pp. 49-130.; Melikoff, Irene. *Hacı Bektaş: efsaneden gerçeğe*. Cumhuriyet, 1999.

Köprülü's work could be described as aiming for the establishment of the historical roots of the Turkish Nationalism through finding evidence to a continuous history of Turkishness.⁴² The continuity he tried to formulate evidenced the Turkish Literature, where he draws a line starting from the early Shamanistic-Turkoman literary productions⁴³ and reaching to the early Middle Eastern and also Anatolian Tasavvuf schools of Islam.⁴⁴

Yessawism, the school of the followers of a Middle Eastern Tasavvuf, Hoca Ahmed Yessawi, was argued to be the bearer of this geographically huge passage from Middle Asia to Anatolia. Hoca Ahmed Yessawi described as an important ideological contributor of Islam lived in 13th century Middle East, Horasan; where he was in contact with the Turkoman Tribes coming from Middle Asia. His teachings and literary productions were argued to be influential on the Islamization process of the Turkoman Tribes, who transferred through different paths and actors this teaching of Islam to Anatolia, where Hadji Bektashi Veli, the key figure of the Anatolian Alevism was one of those.⁴⁵

This was the theoretical heritage of Köprülü⁴⁶ that dominated the historical analysis aiming to find the "roots of Alevism." His much recent followers, mainly Irene Melikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak were the two most known representors of this Köprülü Thesis introducing variations to it. Melikoff's work underlines the Middle Asia Shamanism side of it, which was already expressed by Köprülü but not so much deepened. Her work is dedicated to show the

⁴² Dressler, Markus *Türk Aleviliğinin İnşası - Oryantalizm, Tarihçilik, Milliyetçilik ve Din Yazımı*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016: 177-178

⁴³ Köprülü, F., 1999

⁴⁴ Köprülü, Fuat. *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*. Diyanet Yayınları, 1991.

⁴⁵ Dressler, 2016 191-2

⁴⁶ Here Dressler argues that Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, a student of Köprülü, could not become successful and dominant as his teacher in terms of the Alevi history thesis, although he found and introduced historical evidence to challenge Köprülü's nationalist and Islamist thesis of Alevism. His findings although not some much deepened were in the direction of arguing Alevism as a different religion having multi-ethnic influences, whose unpopularity could be understood because of its political problematic potential.

similarities between the Shamanistic beliefs and rituals of the Turkoman Tribes which they practiced in Middle Asia before getting exposed to the Islamic influence. Alevism for her is the Shamanistic interpretation of the People's Islam. According to her, Alevism is an Islamized Shamanism, whose evidences are derived from the so-called similarities between Alevism's and Shamanism's rituals, belief and social system. According to her, the *Cem* ritual that includes songs called *deyişs* and *nefes*, holy dances, holy drinkings and women's unveiled participation are similar with the Shamanistic rituals. She also establishes similarities regarding the places of worship. She says Alevis just like the Shamans do, do not have a special place for organizing rituals as they think that God is everywhere and does not require a specific place. Moreover, Kam-Ozan, who is the leader of the community as well as the organizer and main performer of the Shamanistic ritual, in Melikoff's context forms similarities with the *Dede* and *ozan* figures in Alevism. Besides these, the mythology of Forties, the belief on soul and thinking the soul as a bird, reincarnation, beliefs on the universe's creation or divinizing Ali similar to the divine sun of Shamanism are seen as other similarities.⁴⁷

While Melikoff's works' connection between Islam and Alevism appears to be weak, Ocak fills this gap. While Köprülü's thesis was simply on the Yessawist tradition to connect the Shamanistic residual elements with the Tassavvuf Islam, Ocak challenges this and opens another path to reveal the Vefai roots, which is another school of Tasavvuf developed in the Syrian and Iraqian region.⁴⁸ So, Ocak without rejecting the shamanism thesis⁴⁹ opens actually a way for this contribution a potential to challenge the Turkish Nationalist ideas, with the introduction of Kurdish roots into the question, which is however still subordinated with the 'real roots come from Middle Asia' argumentation.

⁴⁷ Melikoff, I., 1999.

⁴⁸ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. *Babailer isyanı: alevî tarihsel altyapısı yahut Anadolu'da İslâm-Türk heterodoksisinin teşekkülü*. Dergâh Yayınları, 2000a

⁴⁹ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. *Alevî ve Bektaşî inançlarının İslâm öncesi temelleri*. İletişim Yayınları, 2000b.

How are these scholars challenged? Karakaya-Stump⁵⁰, in her work engages directly with the problem of history-writing in the specific context of Alevism and she introduces three main myths, through which Alevism is constructed as a historical object of inquiry. The first myth according to her refers to the well-known ‘oral-history’ argument. Although she accepts that face-to-face interaction and oral communication is the main mechanism on the transfer of the knowledge in the Alevi tradition, she argues for the existence of written resources especially belonging to Alevi *Dedes* and also basis her thesis on these written documents. The second myth is the so-called nomadic character of Alevism. She challenges the dualism which constructs Alevism as nomadic tribes while putting Sunni traditions and communities as settled people. In that sense she argues that this argument both lacks empirical evidence and also conflicts with the revealing evidence that there are many settled Alevi villages and even ones connected to the Ottoman bureaucracy.

These two arguments are opening the path of another myth which is more theoretical; the heterodoxy and syncretism of Alevism. This is in my opinion where these two other myths connect themselves and support this theoretical standpoint which at the end is used politically to establish the hierarchy between Sunni Islam and Alevism. While on the one hand the superiority of written traditions over oral traditions is manifested, the same is done through the argument that settled traditions are more complete than the diffused character of the nomadic tribes. This finds its theoretical reflection, as Karakaya-Stump argues in the third myth, on the syncretism and heterodoxy of Alevism. Although these conceptualizations seem to show the historical dynamism and variety of resources of Alevism, they actually reproduce in a negational way the existing political dualities that put Sunni Islam as an orthodox, pure, unchanged, genuine and anti-syncretic religion.

This makes a short theoretical engagement with syncretism/heterodoxy inevitable. Syncretism is one of the commonly used conceptualizations while describing Alevism. Alevism has been affected from different traditions, this is true, yet this fact is mainly conceived without discussing the conceptualization of syncretism itself. This concept has been a debatable one

⁵⁰ Karakaya-Stump, Ayfer. *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık: Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarihyazımını Yeniden Düşünmek*. Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016

especially in the context of “religious syncretism.” Yet, a discussion on the meaning of “syncretism” does not imply a simple “conceptual” problem. It connects us directly to the hearth of the problem of “power” and “politics”, since naming a religion as syncretic means according to orthodox perspectives a way to guarantee the anti-syncretic, pure and orthodox character of another religion. Following this direction, in our context, syncretism becomes a tool within the hands of the Sunni Islamist perspective to describe Alevism as an invention while the ‘other’ is the authentic one, something not-genuine, especially when the discussion comes to *Cemevis*. Instead of this, I will defend and base my approach on the idea that there is no possible way to name a religion as pure. In other words, I argue that every religion is syncretic.⁵¹

Similarly, Langer and Simon analyze in that regard different references in the use of the concept of orthodoxy.⁵² While in one sense orthodoxy refers to the umbrella term of Sunnism that includes a wide range of folk traditions and local cults⁵³, some scholars emphasize the process of *ijma*⁵⁴ as the accepted way of forming an Islamic orthodoxy.⁵⁵ As the process of *ijma* implies, we should not reduce this discussion into a sort of way to establish the truth, instead underlining the process as a relationship of power to make others believe on the ‘truth’. This means that orthodoxy has to be interpreted as it is in the context of anti-syncretism “a prize in the ongoing struggle for the power to define and control the right belief.”⁵⁶

⁵¹For these discussions see; Shaw, Rosalind, and Charles Stewart. *Syncretism/anti-syncretism: the politics of religious synthesis*. Routledge, 2003

⁵² Langer, Robert, and Udo Simon. "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies." *Die Welt des Islams*, 48.3/4, 2008, pp. 273-288.

⁵³ Ibid. 274-5

⁵⁴ The agreement and consensus reached on some points by all doctors of law from different traditions in Islam. *Ijma* is particularly important in my opinion as it refers two important agencies in the construction of orthodoxy; school and law.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 275, 278

⁵⁶ Ibid. 281

To pass from this conceptual discussion of syncretism and heterodoxy to their particular operationalization in the context of history writing of Alevism, Dressler might be referred⁵⁷. Dressler shows how such ‘ethic’ conceptual categories like heterodoxy and syncretism are transformed as objective concepts and replaced the already existing ‘emic’ usages within the history of Islam. While Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy are ‘objective-ethic’ concepts produced in the western literature to understand Christianity, they are transferred into different cultural contexts which have emic, essentialist categories, which are words like *kâfir* (*non-believer*), *zındık* (*Godless*), *râfizi* (*deviant*) and *mülhid* (*non-orthodox*) used for representing the Alevi communities. This helps in one sense to reproduce inequalities in the history through a modernized objective knowledge construction. Speaking about Alevism as heterodoxy and syncretic becomes actually a scholarly veiled way of reproducing the historical.

Following this, the next part shows how Sunnism’s historically superior position is transformed into an objectified-knowledge. This is especially important as this the exact root of how Orthodoxy of mosques and *Namaz* is built front of the heterodoxy of *Cem* and *Cemevis*. The process of religious placemaking in the history is nothing more than a spatial manifestation of political power and religion’s relations, objectifying them through the construction of knowledge of an Orthodox Islam. This becomes the way to reproduce the history of *Cemevi* as a heterodox and syncretic deviance.

As a result, studies on Islam, which are backed up with Sunni Islamist insights or at least situated in a history paradigm dominated by Sunnism, defines Sunnism in a sort of arbitrary way as an Orthodoxy, by putting aside the knowledge that in the medieval Islam, there has been no such clear-cut boundaries in the lived forms of the religions.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Dressler, M. 2016

⁵⁸ Karamustafa, Ahmet. "Anadolu'nun İslamlaşması Bağlamında Aleviliğin Oluşumu." *Kızılbaşlık, Alevilik, Bektaşılık Tarih-Kimlik-İnanç-Ritüel*, edited by Yalçın Çakmak and İmran Gürtaş, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015, pp. 43-54.

As Algar⁵⁹ marks Melikoff's notion as an interpretative mistake, Dressler's challenge deepens this methodological challenge. He criticizes Melikoff on the ground that she sees Shamanism as a systematic religion. In that regard, Shamanism in the course of the history remains as a religion having an essence and static character from which some properties could be taken as residual elements and included into Alevism⁶⁰. Alevism here is left in the intersection point of two genuinely described, Orthodox religions as heterodox and syncretic, which is the intersection of Shamanism and Sunnism. Under such a perspective, It is not hard to interpret that *Cemevi* and *Cem* ritual are residual elements formulated during the dynamic adaptation process of the Turkoman tribes from Shamanism to Islam. Melikoff surely does not make such a deduction, but the point is that her findings make these possible, in the ideological shadow of the Turkish nationalist history-writing.

So, through this process the Sunni Islamist perspective on *Cem* and *Cemevis* find actually their 'historical' evidence, which are both methodologically and empirically mistaken. Knowing this, dealing with the Sunni Islamist perspective on *Cem* and *Cemevis* becomes easier. In the following part, I deal with the theological arguments on which the Sunni Islam tries to reproduce its Orthodox position by putting Alevism into the category of heterodoxy and syncretism, with a specific focus on the writings on *Cemevis*.

2.2.1.2 Alevi vs. Sunni Theology: The Discussions on the 'Position' of Alevism in relation to the 'Orthodoxies'.

As the main paradigm on the Alevi history puts the heterodoxy and syncretism as a methodological tool into operation, some Sunni Islamist theologians⁶¹ reject also their usage.

⁵⁹ Algar, Hamid. "International Journal of Middle East Studies." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2004, pp. 687–689.

⁶⁰ Dressler, M.; 2016: 255-6

⁶¹ Gürsoy, Şahin, and Recep Kılıç. *Türkiye Aleviliği: sosyo-kültürel dinsel yapı çözümlemesi*. Nobel Yayınları, 2009.; Kutlu, Sönmez. "Aleviliğin Teolojisi, Aleviliğin Dini Statüsü, Din, Mezhep, Tarikat, Heterodoksi, Ortadoksi ve Metadoksi." *İslamiyat Dergisi*, 2003, pp. 31-54

The main idea is that especially heterodoxy and orthodoxy are concepts specific to the history of Christianity and as it was historically organized under the dominance of the church, the central institution had such a capability to declare heterodoxies as being deviant as not obeying the church-based rules. So, here the argument is that in Islam after the death of the Prophet there were many different interpretations and practices of Islam, forming different *mezheps* and *tarikats*, and they are not easy to deduce into heterodoxies. Islam allows differences, but as it will be shown, only within some boundaries.

Having declared this, the main intention becomes to show that Alevism is “in-Islam”. Sunni Islamist theologians show an effort here to convince that Alevi history, literacy and theology have elements that reveal connections with the elements of Islam.⁶² This is not a problem because they defend a wrong claim, instead, but their description of the notion ‘being in Islam’ is the main problem.

The description of being in-Islam finds its grounds simply on the acceptance that there is a transcendental reality of Islam, having its ‘theological’ limits (mainly and most importantly described through rituals, obligations to follow). The variations are allowed only if they do not challenge those limits.⁶³ If those rules and limits are accepted, obeyed and followed, a ‘variation’ becomes legit. It then becomes able to add, additional interpretative elements to its practices and philosophy. If so, depending on the notion of such differences this variation may become a *mezhep* or a *tarikat* within the boundaries of Islam.

Following this dualist possibilities, theologians of Sunni Islam⁶⁴ argue themselves that Alevism could not be considered as a *mezhep*. The definition of the term is as follows: “A thought system showing differences in understanding and interpretation of the belief and practice of a religion and a school of scientific and intellectual thought formed around these

⁶² This is interesting in the sense that the heritage of Sunni Islam is full of fetwas that declared just the opposite as referenced above.

⁶³ Gürsoy and Kılıç, 2009 Sönmez Kutlu, 2003; Üzüm, İlyas. "Alevilik-Caferilik İlişkisi veya İlişkisizliği." *İslâmiyât Dergisi*, 2003, pp.127-150.

⁶⁴ Gürsoy, Ş. and Kılıç,R., 2009 Kutlu,S. 2003, Üzüm, İ., 2003

different approaches.”⁶⁵ Scholars dealing with the context of Alevism in that regard similarly argue that the necessary condition of being a *mezhep* is such “systemization” and “institutionalization”, which lacks in the particular example of Alevism.⁶⁶ Here, Alevism although it can be seen a thought having a deep intellectual background and its own institutionalization mechanisms, is dismissed from this category as being not in the institutional structure of Islam.⁶⁷

To remember again according to the Sunni Theologian’s Islam is celebrated with its openness to different ideas and interpretations, therefore does not use dichotomies such as heterodoxy/orthodoxy. However, the conceptualization of these differences function within the category of orthodoxy, in a systematic-institutional form of a religion, having power to declare what is according to rules and what is not.

Having rejected the categories of *Mezhep* for the categorization of Alevism in-Islam, *tarikât* becomes the remaining category Alevism fits. Through this the aim is to put Alevism ‘in Islam’, then most importantly bounding it up with the theological limits. *Tarikât* is described as follows: The different mystic-sufi ways of living in Islam to reach the reality/God.⁶⁸To do this, on the one hand a member of *Tarikât* has to follow a way of life and being, moral and ethical directions much more in ascetic form, and also is allowed to have its own rituals, ceremonies and political social organizational order. As it is listed in the Encyclopedia of Islam published by the *Diyanet*, Alevism, by showing a moral-ethical way of life and being, having its own rituals and social-political organizational order is introduced as sharing characteristics fitting with the description of a *Tarikât*. However, in the broad description of the *Tarikât*, there is an important notion that does the important trick of making Alevism the part of the

⁶⁵ Üzüm, İ. 2003

⁶⁶ Kutlu, S. 2003 ; Gürsoy, Ş. and Kılıç,R., 2009

⁶⁷ Alevis do not see themselves as a different mezhep although there are some arguments regarding this. Kul Nesimi, a dervish from the seven Mighties of the Alevi tradition says: “we don’t know something like mezhep, we have a *yol*(way)” original: biz mezhep bilmeyiz, yolumuz vardır.

⁶⁸ İslam Ansiklopedisi, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/>, section: Mezhep

Orthodoxy. That is, members of the *tarikats* order are also obliged to follow the *şeriat* order, roughly speaking, the theological limits that the Orthodox form of Islam puts.⁶⁹

To consider this in our particular context, this means that if Alevism is a *tarikats* order it has also to follow, the ritualistic necessities of Islam and has to embrace the places of worship of Islam as primary, as the other *Tarikats* do. However, this is not the case. Alevism while showing characters which might be conceptualized within the definition of *Tarikats* such as being a mystic-Sufi order, exceeds this. It does not accept the *şeriat* as the *Tarikats* orders do⁷⁰. Moreover, Alevism does not offer simply an additional way of living and being to the limits of theology, it offers challenge to the religious belief and practice of that theology and replaces it with its own understanding and interpretation. More particularly, the *Cem* and *Cemevi* ritual, the *Dede*/talip/ocak relation as most Sunni Theolog argue might show similarities with the so-called *tarikats* order, but it exceeds it and challenges the *Namaz* and *Mosque*, or the religious authorities of Islam be it *Khalifa* or simply *Ulema*. *Cem* and *Cemevi*, and the social organization of Alevism achieved through its own religious authorities and institutions does not belong the umbrella of the determined Islamic theological limits and institutions, it totally abandons them and replaces them with its own structure. It is a particular way in-Islam.

What remains to Alevism then if the fact is described in that way? Is it an argument that puts Alevism outside-Islam? Absolutely not. This was the primary reason why I introduced the discussion of heterodoxy and syncretism at the beginning. Alevism, as most of the historians have shown, most of the practice has revealed, considers itself within the boundaries of the

⁶⁹ İslam Ansiklopedisi; <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/>, section: *Tarikats*

⁷⁰ Here the frequently repeated argument to challenge this is that the book of Hadji Bektash actually covers the *şeriat*, but most importantly *Namaz* as one of the ten *şeriat* rules also. There are many problems in that regard. First of all, the book's originality is simply debatable. Secondly and most importantly, in the published version of *Makalat*, where Hadji Bektash writes in the third rule of the *şeriat* stage, he does not mention *Namaz*, he writes the Qur'an verse in which there is the word *salat*, that is directly translated as *Namaz* in the Turkish translation. However, as I will discuss in detail later on, *salat* does not directly mean *Namaz*, it is one of the historical meanings it has acquired. Moreover, there are centuries long heritage, practice and teaching of Alevis that deny some of the *şeriat* rules of Islam, most importantly *Namaz*. If an evidence of this is sought there is nothing clear than the heritage itself, instead of a book whose historical-political conditions are still debatable, while the simple manipulation of *Diyanet* is also apparent in translation.

Islam, but not in the institutionalized forms of it. It is more than a *mezhep*, if being a *mezhep* requires systematization and institutionalization as it is argued, and it is more than a *tarikât*, if being a *tarikât* requires the acceptance of all *şeriat* rules. The practice and heritage of Alevîs reveal such an Islamic form. If the religious field of Islam is described in that way, no matter what the theologians would say about heterodoxy and syncretism, their claims and their definitions would correspond to the discourse and methodology of the historians conceptualizing Alevism as heterodoxy and syncretism. In return of this, a heterodox and syncretic religion, which in turn with its ‘undescriptive and uncategorizable’ elements reproduce actually the different Orthodoxies who can freely enjoy the power of one embracing umbrella of the transcendental theologies of Islam.

Having rescued Alevism from the deadlock of the centralized religio-political institutionalization of Islam, we can establish the own path of Alevism.⁷¹ To do this, there is no strong evidence than the Alevîs themselves. While the discussion on theology has many areas, I limit myself with the scope of the study, that is the ritual and places of worship. The argument is simple. Alevîs do not accept Namaz and Mosque as an obligatory religious practice and places of worship by interpreting the Islam differently.

As said, according to the perspective of Sunni Islamism if the Alevîs ‘want’ to be named within the boundaries of Islam, they need to be dependent on the unique rituals and places of worships of the religion that it belongs. The reference determining such uniqueness is the divine source, in Islam’s context Qur’an. Here, *Salât* the Arabic word that is used in Qur’an, is translated

⁷¹ As said repeatedly this is not a claim that puts Alevism outside Islam necessarily. It can only be understood in that way if we agree with the Islamic theological categorizations that describe and have the power to declare ‘objectively’ what is in-out Islam. Alevism rejects those categorizations and by doing this establishes its unique place, which again does not necessarily mean that it is a separate religion. It is better to understand Alevism as a historical-methodological-political and finally theological challenge to the Islam’s religio-politics, that ends up with a way that can not be grasped with the ‘hidden’ methodology of Islam, orthodoxy-heterodoxy dichotomy.

accordingly as it is addressing the Sunni ritual “*Namaz*”, although there are disputes on the meaning of the concepts semantically⁷² and most importantly in historical terms.⁷³

Alevis consider the esoteric meaning of the word, reject the idea that formal ritualistic practices are not able and enough to cover the deeper meaning of the world. It is interpreted in the direction that it reflects a deeper, non-formalistic connection between the God and human being. On the other hand, in religious terms, in Qur’an the form and frequency are not stated openly, so it is actually open to interpretation. The formalist meaning, they cover like naming the name of God or prostration, might be performed also in different ways, as it is also done in the *Cem* ritual not in the form of *Namaz*.

However, once Sunni Islamism is sure that *Namaz* is the actual interpretation of “*salât*” that finally marks this as Sunni Islam’s unique worshiping practice, there is no problem in accepting that *Cem* is also a type of worshiping but under the category of “*nafile*” worshipping⁷⁴. In that sense, once the unique ritual of Islam is accepted arbitrarily (actually as a result of a historical struggle over the word) as *Namaz* the place where this ritual is performed with a community is granted as the unique “*mabed*”. As the reduction of the *Cem* ritual from the primary category to a secondary worshiping practice, *Cemevi* is also reduced to this level automatically. According to this perspective, as many Alevis argue *Cemevis* could be accepted as places of worship (*ibadethane*), because according to Islam any place that is specifically designed for activities to pray for and name God, is actually a place of worship.⁷⁵ However,

⁷² Okumuş, Mesut. "Semantik ve Analitik Açından Kur'an'da "Salât" Kavramı." *Hitit Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 3.6, 2004, pp. 1-30. ; Soysaldı, Mehmet. "Kur'an'da Salat Kavramının Semantik Analizi." *Yalova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 1.1, 2011, pp. 43-56; Güllüce, Hüseyin. "Salât Kavramı: Etimolojisi ve Bazı Mülâhazalar" *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyât Tetkikleri Dergisi*, 23, 2005, pp. 171-184.

⁷³ Emrah Dindi makes an analysis of the historical dispute in theological terms by comparing the esoteric vs. exoteric schools in Islam. Dindi, Emrah. "Alevî-Bektaşî Buyruk Ve Makâlâtlarında Namaz Ve Abdestin Ezoterik Yorumu." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi*, 82,2017,pp.125-151

⁷⁴ *Nafile* means actually “useless, ineffectual, empty”. In religious terms it refers to the worshipping that is not obligatory but is good to do.

⁷⁵ The Tarikat orders have their own ritualistic practices and places for example.

according to this perspective, they are not “*mabed*”⁷⁶. The only *mabed* is where the actual worshipping activity, *Namaz*, is done which is in that sense the “*Cami*” (Mosque). As a result of all these, a political interpretation of a word is transformed and realized as being grounded on religious sources. Having done this, it becomes easy to systematically reduce the *Cem* ritual and *Cemevi* into a secondary category and represent it as if it is a religious meaning while it is also political.

In addition to this, the theologians of Sunni Islam insist to show that actually the history of Alevism has *Namaz* in it, where the only evidence for this is some written documents, which are under the control of the centuries long Sunni Islamist institutionalization. However, even if we accept one moment that the documents are actually true, does this mean that Alevis has a tradition that embraces such a ritualistic practice. There is a literature and oral history that has been transferred until today arguing just the opposite, rejecting it and also embraced by most of the Alevis as their real resource of religious heritage. These are not put into consideration, as argued, since the power of the theology of Islam functions actually within the dichotomous reading of heterodoxy-orthodoxy, syncretism-anti-syncretism. What is left for Alevis in such a picture is to accept the main rule that determines all the institutionalized *mezheps* and *tarikats*, in order to claim a position within Islam.

As said, the same functions in the context of *Cemevis* also. The claim here is that declares the *Cemevis* as a new modern formation that has never existed in the history. They are argued to be a novelty.⁷⁷ Interestingly, some of the Alevis also reproduce this argument in a different manner.⁷⁸ It is sure that, the associational form is a novelty. However, in spatial terms, *Cemevis*

⁷⁶ Ünal, Asife. "Dinler Tarihi Açısından Alevîlik-Bektaşilikte İbadet ve Cemevleri Üzerine Bir Deneme." *Çukurova Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 10.2, 2010, pp. 151-176 ; Gürsoy, Ş. and Kılıç, R. , 2009.

⁷⁷ Subaşı, Necdet. "Concept and consensus: Alevi initiative and workshops." *İlahiyat Studies: A Journal on Islamic and Religious Studies* 1.1 (2010): 109-118 ; Kutlu, Sönmez "Sönmez Kutlu ile Alevîlik Üzerine Söyleşi." *Dini Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 12.33, 2009, pp.141-160

⁷⁸ See Salman, Cemal Göç Ve Kentleşme Sürecinde Alevi Kimliğinin Kültürel-Siyasal Değişimi Ve Dönüşümü, Unpublished Dissertation Thesis, Ankara University, 2017

always existed. It is better to call it with its theological name, the *dar meydani*⁷⁹. Here, I use the word space purposefully, as in its traditional sense the *Cemevi* was actually an open-ended space, that is possible to be concretized in any place which allows people to come together and perform the ritual. It did not require a specific place⁸⁰, because it was not necessary at all. What we are sure about is that historically, a space, having some minimum requirements to become the place of the *Cem* ritual, such as being close, having a fireplace and a wide space to both perform the ritual and inhabit the performers. As it will be analyzed in detail, the immigration from villages to cities has made it necessary to transform into a fixed place. So, it is not new in terms of its content, but in terms of its form, which is not a theological problem for Alevism as the esoteric understanding of the religion does not engage with formalistic procedures.

So, both the consideration of *Cem* and *Cemevi*, reveals the fact that when the point comes to Alevism and particularly to *Cemevi*, the discussion is tried to be done in the realm of Sunni Islam's theological limits. The proposition to embrace such a perspective would mean for the Sunni Islamist position to lose its superior political position, which has given it the power to determine and speak for the "other" religious positions. This superior position gives Sunni Islamism the possibility to blame Alevism as reflecting political orientations not theological, so harming the Islamist religious unification.⁸¹

The next part deals with the political results of this history-writing and theologizing process. Alevism coping on the one hand with its own historical problematic raising from its different interpretations, practices, spatial differences, understandings and also the reinterpretation of these in modern terms; has to deal with the religio-political power of the state growing on the shoulder of the Sunni Islam's heritage.

⁷⁹ The Space for Interrogation

⁸⁰ The opposite is also shown. There are studies revealing *Cemevis*' historical forms. See, Cemal Şener

⁸¹ Yıldırım, Erdal. "Cemevleri ve Cemevlerinin Dini ve Toplumsal Fonksiyonları." *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2012, pp. 157-176

2.2.2 Alevism/Cemevis as a Political Issue

Having dealt with the problematic of the history-writing and theology of Alevism, I argued actually that the domain has to be seen political itself. More clearly, I argued that dichotomies like orthodoxy/heterodoxy and syncretism/anti-syncretism functions to transform relations of power into a theological field that is already politically determined.

Alevism has experienced a re-politicization in the modern context under the shadow of such history-writing and theology. The major problematic starts in modern political context with the Turkish republican revolution and its Laicism principle, and continues with the secularization of Alevism experienced through urbanization and modernization.

The problematization of the Turkish Secularism starts in many scholars' works with the establishment of *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious affairs, *Diyanet* hereafter). *Diyanet* founded in 1924 was stated as being authorized with "managing and implementing the practices and institutions dealing with the Islam religion's faith and worship and enlighten society about religion"⁸².

In that context, *Diyanet*, has been seen as the cause of the paradox or exception of Turkish secularism. This is because it functioned just in the opposite direction of the description of the French term *laicite*. In its actual meaning, Laicism is mainly the underscoring of the distinction between the clergy class and lay members, which particularly addresses to dismiss the religious class from the political strata while secularization addresses the social political process of referencing and understanding the world through the means coming "from world" instead of religion. ⁸³

⁸² Arslan, Berna Zengin. "Aleviliği Tanımlamak: Türkiye'de Dinin Yönetimi, Sekülerlik ve Diyanet." *Mülkiye Dergisi*, 39.1, 2015, pp.135-158; Gozaydin, Istar and Ozturk, Ahmet, Erdi: *The Management of Religion in Turkey*. Turkey Institute, 2014.

⁸³ Davison, Andrew. "Turkey, a "secular" state?: The challenge of description." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 102.2, 2003, pp. 333-350.

On the other hand, Turkish laicism, through the effort of establishing institutional elements of controlling religion, state was bounding itself with the religion. Most importantly, while the control mechanisms of religion were established with the argument of constructing and teaching the ‘true’ Islam, the boundaries of the religion was narrowed down, where the so called ‘true’ Islam equaled with the Sunni Hanefi Islamic interpretation.⁸⁴ In that regard, it is better to argue that the institution was not a guarantee of a religious neutrality instead a governing apparatus to control other religions and variations.⁸⁵ So, the state formulated its “legitimate” form of Islam through *Diyanet* with the claim of advocating its ‘reasonable and natural’ model, through the legitimization of enlightenment claims arguing for a religion rescued from fanaticism, superstition and obscurantism.⁸⁶ Yet, this religion was still the Sunni Hanefi Islam, so it was declared as an embracing form of Islam.

While *Diyanet* was argued to be the necessary tool of organizing the religious education and services this meant actually that it was bounded up with political missions. The main aim was to educate the people with true Islam so that they would voluntarily abandon the superstitious versions of it and through it diminish the power of other rival Islamic groups. This continued with other similar trends like training religious officials in state schools⁸⁷, opening of Qur’an courses, religious education in the national schools first as elective then as compulsory after 1980’s coup, and so on.⁸⁸ With the Law of Number 633 issued in 1965, the main principles and duties of the presidency was reorganized, and it got the mission of “pursuing and executing goals for moral issues in the society”⁸⁹; and with 1982 constitution it also got the mission of

⁸⁴ Arslan, B.Z, 2015, Açıkel, Fethi, and Kazim Ateş. "Ambivalent Citizens: The Alevi as the ‘Authentic Self’ and the ‘Stigmatized Other’ of Turkish nationalism." *European societies*, 13.5, 2011, pp. 713-733

⁸⁵ Berna Arslan, following Asad argues that this is not an exceptional case for secularism, instead it is just the way that describes how secularism works. Secularism in that regard does not seek for religious neutrality instead of a governing strategy to reconstruct the religious field fitting with the requirements of all fields of political, social and economic life.

⁸⁶ Davison, A., 2003:339-41

⁸⁷ Orhan, Özgüç. "The Paradox of Turkish Secularism." *Turkish Journal of Politics*, 4.1, 2013:34

⁸⁸ Davison, A. 2003:338

⁸⁹ Gözaydın, İftar. *Diyanet: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Dinin Tanzimi*. İletişim Yayınları, 2016: 252

ensuring “national solidarity and unification”.⁹⁰ In short, although the early republican period has manifested itself as the success of the Kemalist “laicist” cadres over the Islamic positions⁹¹, putting Islam as a “politicized” tool in the center of the Turkish Politics, by institutionalization and also by using it as an apparatus to seek state’s ideological goals. This has opened the domain of politics to religious intervention in which different actors have taken part.⁹² S

Alongside the process that structured Sunni Islam as a field of politics in the history of Turkish, the position of Alevism became vulnerable. The law issued in 1925, Law of for the Closing for the Dervish Lodges, had harsh results for Alevis. So, *Cem* rituals and the institution of *Dedelik* was forbidden. This is harsh especially when it is considered that there was no way⁹³ for representing Alevi religious practices and beliefs within the Sunni circle. In other words, the closing of other Dervish Lodges at least gave different Tarikat orders the chance to be represented within a theological circle to which they are not as alien as Alevism.

Besides the stigmatizing/exclusive policies⁹⁴ Turkish Republic pursued on the other hand authenticating/including properties for Alevism, paradoxically. There were some perspectives that saw Alevis as the root of Turkish version of Islam and therefore a key element of the Turkish Nationalist discourse. Such perspective had been established in the nationalist movement of the Young Turks actually. The Committee of Union and Progress that held power between 1908 and 1918 was prioritizing the ethnic composition of the Anatolian population and saw Turkish nationalism as the remedy had to be offered for the collapsing Ottoman State.

Arslan, B.Z., 2015

⁹⁰ Gözaydın, İ., 2016:253

⁹¹ Kuru, Ahmet T. "Passive and assertive secularism: Historical conditions, ideological struggles, and state policies toward religion." *World Politics*, 59.4, 2007, pp. 568-594.

⁹² Orhan, Ö., 2013:31

⁹³ As explained in the previous part, the theologians try to find a way for such unification, and try to Show Alevism as a sub-part that has to connect itself to the ‘objective’ rules.

⁹⁴ Açıkel, F., and Ateş, K; 2011

Baha Said Bey⁹⁵, was appointed for the investigation of the Alevi populations of the Anatolian region. His report was explaining the Alevis as authentic Turkoman tribes, having heterodox Islamic beliefs, a non-Arabized Muslim community. ⁹⁶

This presentation was suitable with the “religious” ideal of the “secular” nationalist ideas of the revolutionary elites, which were seeking a non-superstitious and enlightened form of Islam. Yet, this did not result in the adaptation of Alevism as the national religion or at least a cause for a developing a politics of religious pluralism. One of the major reasons for this was the encounter with the Kurdish Alevism that was a problem for Turkish Nationalism thesis. To overcome this problem there were like Hasan Reşit Tankut’s perspective, where he represents the Kurdish-speaking Alevi community Zaza’s and Arab-speaking Alevis as “Turkish” in origin by referring to the “authentic Turkoman tribes” thesis. So, Alevism was also used for the Turkification of other ethnic-minorities, not only to represent an ‘enlightened’ Islam.

However, even in these cases there were no total embracement of Alevism, instead, a suspicious look was always at stake, because the community was closed and not easy to get information from, and also Kurdish Alevism having established fellowship with “Christian” and “Armenian” communities, was a potential danger for national unification. ⁹⁷

While on the state side the perspective of Alevism has reflected such a two-sided coin, we may also question how the responses of Alevis were towards this. It is like a common-sense expression that Alevis have enjoyed the new state ideology and integrated themselves into it without questioning it, since Kemalist “laicism” was thought to abolish the political

⁹⁵ Birdoğan, N. 1994

⁹⁶ Kieser, Hans-Lukas. "The Alevis' Ambivalent Encounter With Modernity. Islam, Reform and Ethnopolitics in Turkey (19th-20th cc.)." *Anthropology, Archaeology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia or The Life and Times of FW Hasluck (1878-1920)*, University of Wales, Gregynog, 3, 6, 2001, pp.1-23 ; Açıklak, F. and Ateş, K.; 2011

⁹⁷ Açıklak, F. and Ateş, K.; 2011:723

dominance of Sunni Islam from which Alevi centuries long suffered. Alevi in that regard has been represented as the natural allies of the new state.

Speaking from some concrete alliances it is sure that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk before starting the Anatolian resistance visited and applied for the support of the highest authority of Alevi Çelebi Cemalettin Efendi in Hadji Bektash. Moreover, the Çelebi became an active member as a deputy in the first parliament. It is also known that there were other Alevi deputies in the same first parliament. Additionally, the son of the Çelebi who later became the leader wrote an open declaration to all Alevi to support Kemalists. However, all of these are suitable to consider as an overall strategy of Kemalists to receive different communities' support through their leaders, and it is hard to argue in that regard that these were a part of a pluralist perspective. They were, temporal, pragmatic political actions.

Besides all of these positive relations, scholars underline other presenting evidence that the early republican relations with Alevism might not be unproblematic as it is assumed. Especially the case of the Kurdish-Alevi is an important question mark. Although the two rebellions Koçgiri and Dersim were not directly related to Alevism, it is also said that Alevism has played a role in the organization of them.⁹⁸ If we combine this together with the case that the rituals became difficult to pursue and the authorities of the *Dedes* have been challenged by the law that closed the dervish lodges and shrines and permitted sheikdom and *dedelik*, expecting a natural and dedicated support seems not possible.⁹⁹ It is more meaningful to see the Turkish Republic as an authority that forced Alevi to remain invisible in the ritualistic practice, even more than before, as the gaze of the modern state was more directed to such activities.

⁹⁸ Massicard, Elise. *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi hareketinin siyasallaşması*. İletişim Yayınları, 2007: 50; Kehl-Bodrogi, Krisztina. *Kızılbaşlar/Aleviler*. Ayrıntı Yayınları 2012: 51-2, Açikel, F. and Ateş, K; 2011

⁹⁹Çamuroğlu, Reha. "Resmi İdeoloji ve Aleviler." *Birikim Dergisi*, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/6268/resm%C3%AE-ideoloji-ve-aleviler#.XDicclVKiUk> access date: 07.01.2018

However, besides all these problematic issues and tension that existed in the construction of a modern Alevi identity, the new republic's position against the radical Sunni Islam received also a kind of welcome, as it was criticizing Sunni Islam as being superstitious and obscurant. Moreover, more concrete political actions such as abolishing the Caliphate, grounding the principles of the Republic on the laicist discourse, might be thought as other important notions causing a relatively positive position.¹⁰⁰

This step opens up a new problematic in the re-politicization process of Alevism. Under the shadow of this various political positioning both in-Alevis and against Alevis, a different dynamic in the re-politicization issue of Alevism might be argued as starting in the urbanization-modernization period in the 60s and 70s. In the 60s and 70s the Alevism met with the political claims of class struggle. This was not simply a theoretical reformulation of Alevism achieved through the Marxist reading of the Alevi history¹⁰¹, but this was incorporated also practically; shortly, the Alevis were representing a lower-class section in the neighborhoods of the big metropolitan cities where the socialist left was able to establish legitimacy.¹⁰²

It is not so much written in the relationship between the socialist left and Alevism. Yet, Murat Küçük's analysis provides a path to follow. According to his analysis, the engagement of the socialist left and Alevism started with the folkloric studies especially the musical work of Ruhi Su. He addresses them as a discovery, a return to the roots of the tradition, however at the same time underlines their secularization through their transformation, rewriting and adaptation to the socialist ideology by dismissing, overlooking and reinterpreting the religious ingredient of them¹⁰³. *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Workers Party of Turkey, TİP hereafter), the

¹⁰⁰ Massicard, E. 2012: 56-8

¹⁰¹ Küçük, Murat. "Türkiye'de sol düşünce ve Aleviler." *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce-Sol*, 2007, pp.896-934

¹⁰² Erman, Tahire, and Emrah Göker. "Alevi politics in contemporary Turkey." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36.4, 2000, pp. 99-118.

¹⁰³ Küçük, M, 2007: 900-3

socialist political party of 60s and 70s used and reproduced the discovered potential of the Alevi culture (music and poems) in the election by especially using the music of Ruhi Su.¹⁰⁴ This image supported with the criticism of conservatism, is used in the election campaign and three Alevi deputy candidates from Adıyaman, Malatya and Yozgat has brought the party an electoral success, where the Alevi support could not be underestimated, although in the declaration of the party was nothing specific about Alevism.

Besides these ‘legal’ political incidents, the socialist engagement with some guerrilla organizations have to be underlined. There was a given logistic/strategic support to the socialist guerillas in the rural sides of Anatolia¹⁰⁵; so, Alevi villages were planned as suitable headquarters for the guerilla fight. Moreover, In the cities, the so-called liberated neighborhoods were named so as places offering a reciprocal security and relative comfort which made a kind of organic mixture of the two sides more easily.¹⁰⁶ On the other side, state and counter-revolutionary forces counter reproduced this Alevi-Socialist ‘image’, with the anti-Alevi expressions, since it was not difficult to combine a community that has been declared centuries long as godless, with atheist socialists.¹⁰⁷

Turning back to the ‘legal’ domain of the politics we have to refer the *Birlik Partisi* (Union Party, hereafter BP) as a politicization attempt¹⁰⁸. The program of the party did not declare an open Alevism but its emblem used Alevi iconography, although there were also disputes about

¹⁰⁴ This was actually a method used by the Kemalists through Aşık Veysel and Ali İzzet Özkan either.

¹⁰⁵ Küçük, M.; 2007: 909-11

¹⁰⁶ Obviously these were not limited with Alevi settlements.

¹⁰⁷ Küçük, M. ; 2007: 906 ; Here especially two incidents have to be underlined to exemplify the existing tension. The Maraş and Çorum massacres were two incidents in which many Alevis were murdered by Ultrationalist and Islamist counter-guerilla groups. In these massacres The already existing, centuries long hate towards Alevism was ‘legitimized’ with the image of Alevis ‘supporting socialist guerillas’ resulted to two big massacres in villages of Maraş and Çorum. Mehmet Ertan underlines the importance of such incidents in the formation of the modern politicization of Alevism. See, Ertan, Mehmet *Alevilğin Politiklesme Süreci: Kimlik Siyasetinin Kısıtlılıkları ve İmkanları*, 2017:173-189

¹⁰⁸ later named as Turkish Union Party (Türkiye Birlik Partisi)

such symbolism.¹⁰⁹ In 1969, the party was able to send 8 deputies to the parliament by getting receiving the support of the Alevi community. However, this was a short-term success since the Alevis themselves were questioning the case of putting religion (although it is their own religion) as a political matter. On the other hand, the ideological ground of the party was not clear. The question marks on whether following a secularist trend without referring to religion or being actually a party to support the Alevi religiosity, was the basis of the discussions.

Under the light of the complications, finally, five of the elected eight deputies supported and gave vote of confidence to AP, the right-wing party lead by Süleyman Demirel, which made those five being dismissed from the party and other remaining ones to finally declare that they are not a party for Alevi religiosity. They declared themselves as a revolutionary, anti-fascist party of working class and tried to compete with TİP¹¹⁰. This attempt was also unsuccessful.

Here, we may argue that with its relation to the socialist ideologies Alevism did not simply reproduced itself in a different social-political context, it discovered an already existing dimension, that is the class dimension. This discovery was not an ideological attempt only, it was concretized in practice with the more or less combination of the Alevi cause and socialist ideology, where the latter was strong enough to make the former its subject. This on the other hand reveals a recently forgotten notion of Alevi religio-politics also. The modern religio politicization of Alevism has also a dimension of politics of distribution, it shouldn't be reduced into a mere recognition problem.¹¹¹ This study, should also be read as an attempt to make this more or less forgotten notion re-shine.

¹⁰⁹ Massicard, E.; 2005:128

¹¹⁰ Massicard, E.; 2005:130

¹¹¹ Massicard, E. 2005 and Schüler's work dealing with the 90s Alevi revival might be seen in the domain of politics of distribution. Massicard argues that the cultural and social capital of the socialist left was revitalized in the form of Alevi social movement together with the middle-class of Alevis living in cities. So, the Alevi social movement functioned as a way of mobilization for Alevi communities, while Schüler's work underlines the importance of social democratic parties in terms of this Alevi mobilization.

Following this, we reach to the politicization of Alevism in the 90s. The Alevi revival in 1990s show a shift from such class-based politics to recognition politics¹¹², in which the main problem has become reconstructing the Alevi belief, sociology and politics. What we see in this re-awakening process has been a widespread attempt to gain public visibility, through different channels. Alevi by publishing journalistic books, founding associations (in the form of *Cemevis* or cultural-political ones; or simply inhabiting both characters), TV and radio channels, organizing festivals have entered the public space.¹¹³ Through these means the overall Alevi identity has become in question in different aspects, ranging from theology to history, from politics to sociology. In this pool of very difficult problematic however, some questions have shown themselves as the bold ones, some of which I already covered here. Mehmet Ertan lists three domains of sub-questions: Is Alevism in-Islam or out-Islam? What is the motherland of Alevism? Is Alevism an opposition or is it one of the founding actors?¹¹⁴ The answers which were tried to be given to these meta-questions, were so critic, that have had influences on the political decisions regarding the Alevi religio-politics and mainly its relation to the Turkish State and Sunni Islam, not simply an intra-positioning problem. The positions represented in that regard, have been positioning Alevism in its relation to *Diyanet*¹¹⁵, to different ethnicities, mainly Turkish-Kurdish¹¹⁶ and to Kemalist and Socialist ideologies.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Erman, T. and Göker, E.; 2000

¹¹³ Şahin, Ş., 2005

¹¹⁴ Ertan, M.; 2017:173-189

¹¹⁵ I covered it in detail above but this might simply be explained as the conflict between, Alevism is outside Islam therefore it does not require any relation established with Islamic institutions, while other would argue that it is in-Islam therefore it requires a debate over Islam and surely with the state being somehow the representative.

¹¹⁶ The mainstream reading that I offered above as the Köprülü thesis establishes a continuous history of Turkoman tribes from Middle Asia to Anatolia, as representing Alevism an Islamized form of Shamanism as the religion of these Turkomans. This thesis advocated widely sees Alevism as a pure Turkish form of Islam, while this is rightfully criticized by Kurdish people by establishing the Alevi theologies roots with Kurdish traditional religions before Islam.

¹¹⁷ Here, Alevism is on the one hand thought to be the religion of oppressed and exploited people of Anatolia, so reflecting an opposition against the Ottoman state defending the Sunni Islam as the religion

Two of the strongest associations founded in the 90s, *Pirsultan Abdal Kültür Derneği* (PSAKD) and *Cem Vakfı (CV)* lies on the two opposite sides of these discussions. It is not easy to separate the modern re-politicization of Alevism into these two oppositional positions, instead there is a much more sided ideological-political spectrum, including mystic, ultra-nationalist, Shiist reading of Alevism¹¹⁸. Most importantly, no matter in how much and different camps the religio-politics of Alevism is divided, the lack of systematization and institutionalization of these ideas, there is a kind of flux and flow of these ideas and opinions cross-cutting all these associations or thoughts in practice. More clearly, it is sure that there are some defined and categorized positions within the reconstruction of Alevism, however, in practice the so-called religio-political ‘clusters’¹¹⁹ are the lived practice of Alevism in a kind of flow and conflict, instead of clear-cut boundaries. So, the religio-political field as well as its reflections to the social level in how people perceive Alevism¹²⁰ reveals us a field build upon the tension between competition and cooperation, but also more of it. The positions themselves do not have the power to institutionalize their perspectives. So, if we name the religious field through competition and cooperation, we should also underline these relations are not lived between unified-described organizations and positions, instead just in the spontaneous flowing of an unmonopolized field, where the boundaries might get blurred.

of oppressing and exploiting classes. On the other hand, the idea of seeing Alevism as the defender of Turkish form of Islam, Alevism is argued to be as one of the founding elements in the Ottoman Empire whose position was downgraded with the adaptation of Sunni Islam as the official ideology of Ottoman Empire mainly in the era of Yavuz Sultan Selim. The latter perspective rejects the oppositional image of Alevism against the state, including the new Turkish Republic which is seen as a kind of success against the Sunni Islamist hegemony through which the Kemalist ideology is celebrated. So, the early Turkish Republic is seen as having an inclusionary vision towards Alevis that has been damaged by the politics of Sunnification in time, which also against the Kemalist ideology. So, differently from the idea defended here, the Kemalist policies mainly represented through the foundation and political-social organization of Diyanet, is not seen as a part of the Sunnification process.

¹¹⁸ Erman, T. and Göker, E.; 2000, Bilici, Faruk. "The function of Alevi-Bektashi theology in modern Turkey." *Alevi identity: cultural, religious and social perspectives*, edited by Elizabeth Özdalga and Catharina Rauduvere, 1998, pp. 59-73.

¹¹⁹ Tol, U.U.;2009

¹²⁰ Ibid.

What does this say us then in terms of *Cemevis*? How to approach the *Cemevis* issue, in a case where there are questions producing some dichotomies as following: Are *Cemevis* religious places or socio-cultural places¹²¹? Did they exist in the traditional context? Does the Alevi religiosity need to be represented within the state structure or following the principle of laic state, should the *Diyanet* be closed also to guarantee laicism, which relatedly abolishes also the requirement of an institution to represent Alevism?

As shown so far, besides all the intra-discussions within Alevi about the meta-question of what Alevism is, there are more practical-political discussions that somehow reflect ‘common’ problems. The recent attempt of Alevi Opening consisting of seven workshops was declared by the AKP government at least in theory as an organization to listen problems of Alevism and find solutions to them. However, this was an opening without an outcome and actually because of its very basic structure, it would not have been the opposite. As the seven workshops declared to find practical solutions to the practical problems of Alevi, first of all, only two of the workshops was done with the contribution of Alevi. The first workshop, where the Minister authorized for the government side, was the one where the claims of Alevi were listened, and the last one was done with the contribution of all stakeholders, where the third party was the representors of the Theology of Sunni Islam. The other five inhabited a low number of Alevi contributors, while it was done between the AKP government and the Theologians of Sunni Islam.¹²²As Borovalı and Boyraz stated, just this structuration of the discussion itself shows the overall attitude towards the Alevi issue. The practical-political problems of Alevism were overshadowed with the theological problems and concerns of Sunni Islam, in which there has been an already declared ‘objective’ reality, front of which Alevi have only two options: declaring itself as being outside Islam¹²³ or accepting the rules of institutionalized Islam, which puts Alevism in the shown place to the category of

¹²¹ Salman, C.; 2017

¹²² Borovalı, M and Boyraz, C.; 2015

¹²³ Actually, as showed before Sunni Theologians do not allow Alevi to claim such an argument also. They come with historical references in which they show the connection points of Alevism and Islam and declare such Alevism automatically as Marxist-Atheist contribution.

tarikats.¹²⁴So, the Opening which has formulated itself as a new page in the Sunni-Alevi relations was not more than a continuity with the past in its actual sense.¹²⁵

So, to summarize broadly, in the context of the modern political reconstruction attempts of Alevism we engage with three main problems. (1) First, the relationship of Alevism with the state is problematic not because of the politics specific to the Turkish Republic, but also as the politics represents a continuity with the religio-political structure of Sunni Islam. It normalizes, the categorizations of Sunni Islam, objectifies it and creates the knowledge and discourse, where Alevi have no choice than accepting the hegemony of Sunni Islam, which shows its most direct result in the necessity of accepting Namaz and mosque as ritual and primary place of worship. If so, they are free to declare their Aleviness.

Moreover, the relationship with the state is problematic in ethnical terms as the Alevism is a multi-ethnic belief, and therefore in order to found ties with the Turkish state, the Kurdish side of the belief represents another problem.

The other problematic side in the relationship with the state, related to all of these, comes from its relation to Kemalism-secularism nexus. An unproblematic relationship between Kemalist ideology and Alevism is not so much possible to assume¹²⁶, because of the difficulties that policies for secularization caused, alongside the Turkish Nationalist pressure over Kurdish Alevi. Actually, we might argue that especially in the Turkish Alevi a kind of embodiment with the politics of laicism in the form of defending Kemalist principles. So, on the one side

¹²⁴ Even in a hypothetical case that Alevism is declared as Tarikat, for example the Cemevi problem would also remain unsolved because of the legal boundaries preventing the foundation of Tarikat houses, that is the Dervish Lodges.

¹²⁵ For example, in her study Ceren Lord makes a comparative analysis between the Alevi Opening of JDP and the legislative attempt in 1960s to form a body representing Alevism within *Diyanet*, what she calls as the first Alevi opening in terms of the integration of Alevi through Turkification and Sunnification. Lord, C.; 2017

¹²⁶ Hamit Bozarslan argues here that the ideal relationship between Alevism and Kemalism was established in the 1960s by the involvement of a leftist Kemalist cadre, that tried to formulate a Turkish-Islam against the Sunni Islamist rising in the conservative side of the country's politics. Bozarslan, Hamit. "Alevism and the myths of research: the need for a new research agenda." *Turkey's Alevi enigma: a comprehensive overview*, edited by Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden Brill, 2003, pp.3-15.

of the token, regarding the official position of the Turkish state, there is an inherited notion of Sunni Islam within the very basic structure of Turkish republic represented also within the Kemalist laicist principle. Moreover, there have been also a nationalist pressure that directs its attention not only to Kurds but also to Alevi referring to close relationship established with the socialist movement. On the other side, as long as state is seen as an arena of struggle whose laicism should be defended or revised-reformulated to make it reach its actual potential, it still becomes one of the parties with which relations tried to be established.

How are *Cemevis* practically engaged with in this complicated field by the State forces? There are multiple ways illustrating paradoxes. *Cemevis* on the one hand remain unregulated, some of which are judged, closed, attacked by state forces, while some of which founded or opened by state or municipalities. While people on the one hand try to found *Cemevis* with their initiatives in very difficult physical conditions with low economic and social capital, there are also executed mega-*Cemevi* constructions with the contribution of state, political parties of municipalities. While the historical-theological questions on the *Cemevis* and mosques are still debated, there are implemented construction projects of a new architectural form of mosque-*Cemevi*, which is supported by the government and civil society organizations. Clearly, the overall complicated field, becomes more complicated through such practices.

Second field of problematic in the religio-political reconstruction of Alevism derives from the unmonopolized religious We do not deny the existence of different religio-political positions advocating definite types of religio-politics for, however, their lack of power in the religious field not only to dominate all of the field, prevents them to form strong-functional connections with the organized or non-organized Alevi. For example, in two of my exemplified *Cemevis* we see actually a formal tie with two of the national/transnational organizations, however in practice, there is no influence of these centrality over these two *Cemevis*, and moreover, even there is an overall ideological similarity, it is also possible to hear counter-positions that is totally opposite with the association that the *Cemevi* is tied. This is what I mean here by a spontaneity, flux and flow of ideas and practices, having no particular predefined strategy, only some developed mostly contingent and temporal tactics.

Then we may ask if it is possible to formulate a religio-political formula, as those referred positions have somehow tried, to overcome all of these multi-dynamic and multi-actor problems? This is actually a problem of methodology, where I defend that identity constructions are not possible to done as abstract formulations, instead in the social practice itself. So, instead of focusing as the first task to the difficult-to-solve problems of theology and history, it is better to understand and follow the practices of the experienced Alevism. Actually, my departure point here in this study is the observation that Alevis somehow try to found their own ways of action, since there is no one-way of action that dominates the field. That is, even in the case of organizations-associations that organized formally with a religio-political position so. Since these organizations lack the power to form a hierarchical-centralized order, even in the cases where more centralized actors like state/government, municipalities or political parties enter the field.

So, in that regard we may summarize that referring to the Commoning methodology, such confrontation of multi-dimensional, negotiated, flowing encounters in concrete places, mostly in *Cemevis* founded by local initiatives might reflect at least potentially a possibility to form an Alevism as becoming. These places might be questioned in terms of such potential in the direction whether they are able to form Commons, if not; what are the obstacles preventing such a dynamic of this formulation of Alevism. This basic research question of this study connects itself to the literature on Alevism's re-politicization question in that regard. More clearly, is it possible to think Commoning practice for Alevism as an alternative re-politicization since the existing ones are somehow proven to be unsuccessful.

Through this question we enter actually to the sociological field. The next part deals with this and connects itself to the political literature by answering why all these reflected positions about Alevism, including both Alevi or non-Alevi positions, are not able to form a unified theory and practice of Alevism. Here, we see that the secularization process of Alevism has damaged the authority structures which were actually organized for the functioning of a closed-relatively small-rural-communal living community. So, the awakening in the urban way of life has to be done within a citizenship structure of a modern state within a different spatial and economic order. As these structures transformed, the religion has to find itself to reconstruct not only in theological ways but also in economic-political-social ways.

2.2.3 Modernization-Urbanization of Alevism: The Socio-Political and Spatial Transformation

This part deals with the social transformation of Alevism. It questions the potential socio-political reasons that have prevented a unified religio-political existence of Alevism, besides the already explained ones. We know that, as a rule or exception, Turkish Laicism structured Alevism in a problematic religio-political field, while the secularization process brought by the urbanization and modernization functioned for the social transformation of Alevism.

Shortly, the transformation of a community, that was formed its religious, political, social and economic structure in the spatial form of village, had to integrate itself into a structure to which it is mostly alien. In that regard, the secularization process caused through the urbanization and modernization process of the community might be argued to cause to change the socio-political organization of Alevism, the economic relations of the subjects as well as the spatial perception of the belief.

2.2.3.1 The Transformation in the social-political organization of Alevism

Alevism had acquired its social-political organization, which might be summarized as the *ocakzade-talip-ocak* system, throughout centuries long history that peaked on the Qızılbaş movement in 16th century.¹²⁷ This system was both a combination of the organization of certain mystic/esoteric perceptions of Anatolian-Mesopotamian Islam with the security strategies that had to be developed against the Ottoman Empire's coercive power. So, contrary to the thesis that repeats the 'nomadic, fanatic, ignorant' Turkoman tribes' millenarian and messianic Islam on the one hand, exaggerating the Safavi/Shia influence on the other¹²⁸; it is better to define it an autonomous organization, having its own institutions, allowing the

¹²⁷ Kehl-Bodrogi, K., 2012

¹²⁸ I am going to discuss these in chapter 3 in detail.

constituent parts different ways to follow the more or less same ethical-religious teaching and path.¹²⁹

The Qızılbaş movement is the alliance of Alevi communities¹³⁰ with the Safavi State against the Ottoman Empire that adapted especially in the 16th century strategies of Sunnification. This was done through social-political organization¹³¹ and resulted to increasing pressure on the social life, demanding specifically the judging, surveying, capturing and killing of the ‘heterodox’ existences.¹³² To prevent a misunderstanding here we have to underline that the which became the ground of Alevism, were already existing communities, having their autonomous existence and leaders. So, the Safavi State was not the director and manipulator of some nomadic tribes as it is described commonly.¹³³

This strengthens the thesis supporting the autonomous but interrelated *ocak-ocakzade-talip* social-political organization of Alevism. We see a community, lying outside the centralized state’s bureaucratic religions, both independent from Sunni Islam, which was not systematically established and followed widely within the ‘lay’-people between 11th-16th century¹³⁴, and from Shia Islam of Safavi State which was even itself not strongly Shia during the period of Shah Ismail¹³⁵, when the interaction between the state-Alevi were at peak. This also makes us possible to argue that the narration on the Alevi *Dedes* as the representors of the Shia Islam in Anatolia is also weak, the connection is much more in symbolic terms, where

¹²⁹ Karakaya-Stump, A., 2016

¹³⁰ The name is known as being widely used to describe these communities in 19th century. The name used before were the Qızılbaş, representing the name of the movement. However, as Karakaya-Stump showed with the evidence of new documents, there were the name Alevi used to describe the communities in 17th century.

¹³¹ Karamustafa, A. 2016:52

¹³² Öz, Baki. *Alevilikle İlgili Osmanlı Belgeleri*. Can Yayınları, 1997.

¹³³ Karamustafa, A. 2016 and Karakaya-Stump, A, 2016

¹³⁴ Karamustafa, A. 2016

¹³⁵ Kehl-Bodrogi, K. 2012

actually the communities are free not only in their everyday social-political organization but also in theological sense¹³⁶.

So, we may answer some key questions to understand this autonomous social political organization then? What was the *ocak-ocakzade-talip* social-political organization then? Ocaks are the main communities their combination creates the umbrella of Alevism. *Ocaks* consists of *Ocakzade* families and *talips*. An *Ocakzade* family is a family that comes from the lineage of the Ehl-i Beyt¹³⁷. *Talips* are the *non-Ocakzade* families, following the leadership of the one member of that *Ocakzade* family that had shown ethical-religious leadership (*dede*). These both groups of people together form an *Ocak* that continues through lineage ties. This means, the successors of the *dede* who found that *Ocak*, that is mostly named with the name of the *dede* or the place where the *Ocak* was founded, are ‘potentially’ eligible to be the *dede* of that *Ocak* while the *talips*’ successors similarly have to follow the same *Ocak*.¹³⁸ It has been strictly prohibited for the *Ocakzade* families to marry with *talips*, not only with those of their own *Ocak*, through which the ‘holy’ lineage’s purity was protected.¹³⁹

The *Ocaks* were communities, living in villages¹⁴⁰, having a self-sufficient communal economy, based on breeding and agriculture. Especially after 16th Century, experienced the

¹³⁶ Karakaya-Stump shows some documents coming from the Safavi State trying to direct-manipulate the religious practices of the Alevi communities in the direction to follow the Orthodox path they started to follow, the Shia way of life, like demanding the teaching and practicing Namaz and Oruç and stopping the forbidden practices (playing music instruments, singing holy songs and so on) Even this shows that in the tradition such ‘orthodox’ practices was not followed by Alevis, and thinking the distant-autonomous character it established from two of the Orthodoxies, it was not a case after 17th century also.; 2016:87

¹³⁷Ehl-iBeyt: While this is the major way to found an *Ocak* there are also two different ways to form it. People who have believed to be shown a supernatural character (*Keramet*) and those who had served the Hadji Bektash Veli Dervish Lodge years long with devotion and effort were also allowed to form an *Ocak*.

¹³⁸ Yaman, Ali. *Alevilik ve Kızılbaşlık tarihi*. Nokta Kitap, 2007; Kehl-Bodrogi, 2012.

¹³⁹ Yalçinkaya, Ayhan *Kavim Kırım İkliminde Alevilik*. İletişim Yayınları, 2014: 356

¹⁴⁰ An *Ocak* consists of many villages and many different family lines of *talips*, but organized under one *Dede*.

witch-hunt of Ottoman Empire, they became closed. There was almost no connection with the state and outsider communities, where their communication with each other were dependent on the *Dedes*' effort, who were travelling all Anatolia.¹⁴¹

What is the religio-political organization scheme of the *Ocaks*, or, how are these *Ocaks* organizationally connected with each other? There are four accepted groups of *Ocaks*¹⁴²: 1) The *Ocaks* connected to the Hadji Bektash Dervish Lodge (Çelebis): These *Ocaks*' *Dedes* had had to take the written permission of the Çelebi¹⁴³ and had to donate money to this Main Dervish Lodge as *Kara Kazan Hakkı*¹⁴⁴. 2) Independent *Ocaks*: Although they symbolically see the Hadji Bektash Dervish lodge as the center of the main way, they were independently proven *Ocakzade* families' and talips' *Ocak*. 3) *Ocaks* founded by *Dikme* (assigned) *Dedes*: These *Ocaks* were founded with the permission of an *Ocakzade Dede* in some places. These assigned *Dedes* are not from *Ocakzade* families and work on behalf of the *Ocakzade Dede*'s assignment. 4) Other Independent *Ocaks*: These are the ones rejecting the Çelebi system with the claim that Hadji Bektash had no children and therefore a lineage claim is impossible. Organize mostly in the Balkans, Thrace and West Anatolia, but continuing the main cause of Hadji Bektash also. The two are the dominant types. Being not totally clarified, according to Ali Yaman's analysis there are more than 200 Alevi *Ocaks* only in Anatolia.¹⁴⁵

The main duty/service of a *dede* is to be the neutral judge and advisor of the *Ocak* he serves. He does this judgement in the *meydan* of the *Sorgu Cemevi* (Interrogation *Cem*) where all

¹⁴¹ Yaman, A., 2007; Kehl-Bodrogi, K., 2012; Yalçınkaya, Ayhan *Alevilikte toplumsal kurumlar ve iktidar*. Mülkiyeliler Derneği, 1999

¹⁴² Yaman, A, 2007.

¹⁴³ Those religious-ethical leaders that are from the lineage of Hadji Bektashi Veli, who is seen as the founder of the Anatolian Alevism.

¹⁴⁴ The Share of the Black Pot: symbolizing the resources required by the Dervish Lodge.

¹⁴⁵ Yalman, A, 2007

eligible¹⁴⁶ *talips* are present. Here, the *dede*, in existence of a dispute¹⁴⁷ asks for opinions and witnesses, listens everyone and reaches to a judgement according to the religious-ethical teaching of the Alevi way. The *talips* however, before the interrogation starts, have the right to deauthorize the *dede* from doing his service/duty. This means that it is not enough for a *Dede* to get the approval of the *Çelebi* (in the case of Hadji Bektashi Veli Ocaks) or simply prove its 'holy-lineage' but also, he has to receive every time before the ritual the approval of his *talips*.

Moreover, a *Dede* is also a talip of a *Dede* who is in service of another Ocak. Through this circle of *El Ele, El Hakka* every *Dede* (*Dede A*) is interrogated by another *Dede* (*Dede B*) and he is interrogated by another (*Dede C*) and the cycle goes like this. Here two important things have to be marked. Firstly, in this picture, while *Dede B* has the authority to interrogate *Dede A*, while *Dede C* has the authority to interrogate B; this does not automatically situate the *Dede C* in a superior position front of *Dede A*, so, he cannot interrogate *Dede A*. This is the system that prevents a vertically growing hierarchical structure. Secondly, the relationship between *Dede A* and B doesn't have an effect on the relationships of the talips of their Ocaks. That is, talip B has no superiority over Talip A, because the former ones *Dede* has the authority to interrogate the latter's *Dede*.¹⁴⁸

This is the systematic of the traditional Alevi communities. It is, as discussed above in detail an autonomous systematic of socio-politics that is independent from two big religious

¹⁴⁶ The eligibility criteria depend on having a *Müşahip*, another important religious institution in the Alevi social-economic order, which will be analyzed in the context of Alevi social-economic transformation. However, shortly it is a A brotherhood-sisterhood institution in Alevism. Alevis from the same Ocak can become müşahips. Although there are some places where single people can become müşahips, it is generally done between two married couples. After a ritualistic ceremony performed with the leading of the dede four people become brothers and sisters, which is considered as a sacred tie and is important than the tie between blood brother-sisters. These four people become through ties tie economically and morally dependent. If one makes a mistake the other becomes also responsible.

¹⁴⁷ Disputes have to be solved actually before the Sorgu Cemi without the dede's existence. Sides who have a problem, and their müşahips have to give approval to each other before they enter the Sorgu Cemi.

¹⁴⁸ Yalçınkaya, A., 2014

‘Orthodoxies’ of the geography, Sunni and Shia religio-politics. However, one might ask whether this is not an aristocratic/feudal order in its own kind? Does it base itself into equality or is it an alternative class-status based organization? This question is also important in the context of re-politicization discussions of Alevism.¹⁴⁹ As Yalçinkaya has showed in detail, the aristocratic-status oriented consideration of the institution of *Dedelik* causes in the contemporary discussions of Alevism major political problems, basically, giving the chance to articulate *Dedelik* as a “religious elite of Alevism” into the bureaucracy of religion.¹⁵⁰

Without dwelling into the details of the discussion, it is enough to say that the ‘ideal’ functioning and design of this socio-political practice has some control mechanisms that prevents a class-status based society¹⁵¹. Surely, the institution of *Dedelik*, although it was open to challenge both by the talips and other *Dedes*, shows a symbolic superiority and status that is not open to everyone. Through this ‘closeness’ it surely establishes a status, but this status does not have a socio-economic reflection that gives the *dede* a superior position in politics of distribution as well as power of governing, since the decisions that are disputable are solved in the assembly of the community and the decisions given are open to challenge.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ This becomes also important in the theoretical discussion on the Commoning practice and needs to be revisited.

¹⁵⁰ Yalçinkaya, A., 2014

¹⁵¹ Sure, this is the ideal design of the system, in its actual practice it is hard to argue for a purely functioning ‘equal’ system as Yalçinkaya and Kehl-Bodrogi also expresses. See; Yalçinkaya,; 2005 Kehl-Bodrogi; 2012 Monarchy and feudality were the two big ‘ideal types’ of social-political-economic organization in the historical period in which Alevism has grown and developed. Alevism as being somehow able to form itself away from two big ‘monarchies’ could be thought including the ‘potential’ of a feudal social-political-economic system that bases on the alliances of ‘holy-families’ and their followers. However, in the political-economic conditions in the particular context of Alevism was also not able to become such an order. This was basically so for Alevis as the capital, its accumulation and reproduction, the agricultural production based on land ownership system basically, did not coincide with the existing religious structuring of the community that potentially allowed a status-class based organization. As being deprived from big lands, labor and means of production to reproduce a feudal system, Alevism seems mostly able to form mechanisms that have limited the *dedes*’ power coming from their status and transform it into a more or less a system of social-economic equality.

¹⁵² They can be challenged in the assembly by the talips but also in some cases the *mürşid* of the *dede*, referring to the *dede* having the authority to interrogate the *dede*, takes also part in the assembly with the intention to evaluate the *dede*.

Economically speaking, the Ocakzade families themselves were farmers. They were also interrogated and also dependent on their own labor.

Having explained the social-political traditional system on which the religio-politics of Alevism formed, it is possible to look at the transformation it experienced. Alevism, so far underlined as a closed system to which the state involvement especially after the 16th century had been limited, in the 19th century, started to get imposed to interactions with the state-bureaucracy. However, it is hard to argue that such interactions had been because of a structural transformation. Abdülhamid II's policies aiming for the 'unification' of heterodox elements under the Sunni Islamic umbrella had also effects on Alevi communities. Here the main policy of the state-bureaucracy was to build mosques in the Alevi villages and sending Imams as the representor of the state bureaucracy.¹⁵³ Here following this, the Young Turks interaction with the Alevis, which was based much more on a 'nationalist' standpoint, had seen Alevism as an element of this ideological project, which I analyzed in the previous part in detail. The perspective that reformulated Alevism as the form of Turkish Islam, has rooted itself in this involvement. Moreover, it established organic relations with the Bektashis.¹⁵⁴ Although this involvement has had impacts on the re-politicization of Alevism throughout the history, it is hard to argue that this had a transformative influence on the social-political organization of the Alevi villages. To experience this, we had to reach the Turkish Republican revolution.

The urbanization-modernization side of Alevism that started in the 60s has been a widely covered topic while the other side of the picture, the structural transformation experienced after republican revolution is understudied. What we know roughly as explained so far by banning all the 'heterodox' activities as illegal, the religious practices of Alevis became also so. Also, the social-economic-politic system by making the Alevis part of the state-

¹⁵³ Massicard, E., 2005:40

¹⁵⁴ Massicard, E., 2005: 41-2

bureaucracy, the centuries long inherited social-economic organizations in the village had to be transformed.

It is not possible to find a comprehensive study on Rural Alevism in the early republican period. What we see is a lot of publication on how Alevis contributed to the common cause in the First World War, and how Alevis celebrated Kemalist principles¹⁵⁵. Except limited works focusing on the massacre of 1938 Dersim we have no comprehensive study on the concrete relations of Alevis with the early republican state. What we know however, as discussed in the previous part, the relationship between the Turkish republic and Alevi communities are not forming an organic unity as some writers have dedicated their efforts to show. Most importantly in that regard, we know that the social-economic conditions that Alevis had experienced with the encounter of the state, had forced to migrate them earlier and massively than the Sunni villagers.¹⁵⁶

Starting with 1950s and reaching at its top in 1970s, Alevis migrated with their families into the big cities of Turkey, primarily to Istanbul and Ankara and settled there to the landed properties of the state, by forming *Gecekondu*¹⁵⁷ neighborhoods. This spatial strategy which has caused in the cities of Turkey to expand and create new districts and provinces has been an important phenomenon in the country's social, political and economic life. While on the one hand it has been seen as an unavoidable necessary part of the formulation of a new industrial capitalism through making the reproduction of the labor force possible, on the other hand, it has resulted problems in central and local governing.¹⁵⁸ This process of urbanization-

¹⁵⁵Şener, Cemal. *Atatürk ve aleviler*. Ant Yayınları, 1991; Keçeli, Şakir. *Uluslaşma Sürecinde Bektaşî Aleviler ve Atatürk*, Kaynak Yayınları, 2016

¹⁵⁶ Karpat, Kemal. *The Gecekondu: Rural migration and urbanization*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

¹⁵⁷ An illegal housing type, founded collectively with available resources, mostly for one household.

¹⁵⁸Şengül, H. Tarık. *Kentsel çelişki ve siyaset: Kapitalist kentleşme süreçleri üzerine yazılar*. Demokrasi Kitaplığı, 2001.

modernization had social result. The already damaged traditional authority structures with the implementation of policies of laicism, have experienced a huge blow of secularization also.

Firstly, the immigration was a transformation of the spatial context and have had a drastic result for Alevi. The transformation from rural to urban regardless to the ethnic-religious context is expected to trigger transformations, but in the context of Alevism it has been a blow that has affected directly the religiously designed social organization of the community. Simply, as explained, the traditional Alevi village has been itself the manifestation of the *Ocakzade-Dede-Talip* relation, the immigration caused to the spatial separation of the talip from other members of the community including his/her *Dede* and other talips. This has been so firstly because the immigration was not done all together, spread in a long period of time, and secondly not always to the same place. What we see is the separation of a community, not only in national scale, thinking those migrating to Germany and other foreign countries, it has become a transnational one. Although the connections both with the efforts of talips and *Dedes*, tried to be maintained¹⁵⁹, but new generations developed more and more unwillingness to follow the rules of religious authority.

Secondly, alongside the decline in the authority of religion, the organizational power of a nation-state in fields like; work, education and health¹⁶⁰ were hard to cope with in terms of the religious setting. State with its comprehensive tools in the city¹⁶¹, had become a power functioning through coercion and consent. The services given by the *Dede* in the traditional context, were given by the state institutions, at least the ideal of the modern state, was so.

Thirdly, the urban context has introduced a new type of economic organization by introducing market economy based on class relations and inequalities. The traditional economy discussed

¹⁵⁹ In some cases, the talips living in different places returned to their villages temporally especially in *Sorgu Cemi* times, or the *dede* visited the cities where their talips lived.

¹⁶⁰ Especially education and health were a field where the *dedes* offered service. As *dedes* through their travelling character were the primary resources of information and knowledge not simply in religious terms also in fields of agriculture, communication and health.

¹⁶¹ Actually, in some places this had been an already experienced phenomenon in the rural context through the re-institutionalization of the New Republic in the villages.

above, functioned as a more or less economic equality among its members, despite the potential deviations it revealed throughout the Alevi history. For example, *Müsahtiplik* has been a criterion to become an actual Alevi has been a system ensuring economic equality among talips. A müsahtip, is obliged to (and has no chance of return from this obligation, unless he/she accepts to become a *düşkün*) to take care of his/her müsahtips family both ethically and economically. This sisterhood/brotherhood tie, binds four talips (two married couple) to each other with duties of supporting each other in any case; and actually, what the Sorgu Cemi does also, is the judging mechanism front of all the community in terms of questioning whether there is an observed problem in these once accepted obligation.

One may assume that, the inequalities that the market system inevitably caused, might be compensated with this institution and argue that it has become more crucial in such context. It might be true hypothetically , however, in the actual practice, relying on the works of other scholars¹⁶² and my own interviews, there is a drastic decline in the *Müsahtiplik* ties, because the obligations of this oath bring are considered to be impossible to bear in the insecure conditions of the market.¹⁶³ As especially in the context of traditional Alevism where in the village a self-sufficient household economy is functioning, the risk of ‘economic fail’ is relatively low compared to the market economy; it is easy to compensate such risks. However, as Alevis express when it is asked them the reason why they do not have a müsahtip, besides all the spatial boundaries that distance between talips, the primary reasons is expressed as economic which might be summarized through an expression of one of my Interviewees: “I have no guarantee myself to look after my own children, I can’t take the responsibility of someone else’s”¹⁶⁴

So, because of all these processes, the major social, economic and political authorities on which Alevism was reproduced; have lost their functionality in the level of communities,

¹⁶² Yaman, Ali. "Geçmişten Günümüze Alevi Ocaklarında Değişime Dair Sosyo-Antropolojik Gözlemler." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi*, 63, 2012, pp.17-38. Yıldırım, R. 2012.

¹⁶³ This is also an understudied area in the sociological research of Modern Alevism.

¹⁶⁴ Man, age 54, unemployed, primary school (19)

although it has somehow continued in personal levels. Some *Dedes* for example visit still their talips even in different countries yearly, but these functions in a kind of in-demand. Some of Alevi talips who have given their *ikrar*¹⁶⁵ to the *Yol*; demand their *Dedes* for *görgüden geçme*¹⁶⁶. However, this happens in a personal setting, mostly and most importantly not in setting of community, even in its best case, where other talips' existence is also maintained, it is not possible to make all the talips joining the *Sorgu Cemi*, simply because they do not 'demand' it.

Hence, all the obligations have become dependent on 'individual choice and preference'. Under these circumstances a new way to build a community/communities is sought by Alevi. Here, what I mean by 'a' community instead of 'the', means that the building of this/these new community/communities, refers not to the rebuilding of the traditional *Ocak*, which seems not to be possible in a case where the talips' life and survival does not depend anymore to the existence of his/her *Ocak*. Instead what we see is that the Alevi community is tried to be revived as a modern political identity, that is achieved through the means of 'representation', and in concrete sense through representation in/by associations.

So, this newly desired 'society'¹⁶⁷ forms itself in the new way of social-political organization of the 'modern' subject, through voluntary contracts¹⁶⁸. Here, the associational form of Alevi society, makes on the one hand the Alevi if he/she desires or demands it, a 'political Alevi'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Oath for following the necessities

¹⁶⁶ Literary, to pass the interrogation; the yearly interrogation done in traditional sense in the villages by *dedes* in the existence of other talips.

¹⁶⁷ Through this new terminology I refer to the well-known dichotomy between *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* of Tönnies; community/society.

¹⁶⁸ The social contract theory on which the liberal state forms itself transforms almost every rule-bounded social relationship into micro contracts, in which the sides have the freedom to choose to be part of that contract or not. Here, one of the most important marking is that the contract system bounds the political subject to the major political actor; to the state. It is hear important to note that the contract that the modern subject could not simply disagree is the contract with the state and the market. As our discussion will reach, these are not unchallenged structures and become even more questionable in the specific context of migration, especially in the context of refugees.

¹⁶⁹ Alevi, who is ready to represent or being represented by an institution with the specific recognition of an abstract Alevi identity.

subject to the recognition of the state. However, still the existence of an Alevi as referring himself/herself outside the Alevi associations is possible,¹⁷⁰ together with the Alevi subject who tries to maintain the traditional ways of being an ‘Alevi’. However, when state enters to the picture, as a ‘shareholder’¹⁷¹, as an accepting, controlling, regulating or simply rejecting political authority to be applied, all of the alternative subjectifications become dominated by this field.

Moreover, the associations of Alevism, although they have appeared to be the strongest political subject after 90s¹⁷² that gave the chance of self-determination for Alevi; they do not enjoy the power to regulate and control the Alevi subjects. Alevi might accept the legitimacy of these political subjects, so might the state also. Yet, as there is no totally accepted and followed path line¹⁷³, and an institutional-bureaucratic and centralized structure, such legitimacy is not more than symbolic and showing some ideological commonalities among Alevi subjects. Simply a common social-political praxis dominant in the Alevi social movement is hard to find.

We might ask here the simple question of who the organizers of these associations are and start a sociological approach. The subject organizing the modern Alevism in the urban context has been, as many scholars have pointed out is the Alevi intellectual, on the one hand; the Alevi middle-class artisan on the other. In the former one we talk about a socialist-leftist militant of pre-80s Turkey, who transformed his/her cultural capital gained through the

¹⁷⁰ Tol’s study shows different subject positions in relation to different political and ideological existences of Alevism in modern context. Tol, U.,U., 2009

¹⁷¹ I use this term purposefully not simply because the Turkish Republic in the Alevi workshops named itself so, (see Borovalı, M. and Boyraz,C. 2014); but also because of it shows exactly the ‘active’ position of the state got in the modern sense.

¹⁷² A micro social contract that a state makes with associations in constitutional terms.

¹⁷³ Cem Vakfı has founded a Diyanet-like institution within its own administrative body an Institution for Alevi Belief, where they decided some common regulations for the ‘eligibility’ of dedes and also a formula sheet of ritualistic practice, but even in their case it is hard to argue that their members are showing total commitment, putting aside the rejections of other Alevi associations.

revision of already existing readings of Alevism¹⁷⁴ and social capital of having been a political activist. The latter, the middle-class artisan is the one, who accumulated in time economic capital with the relatively advantageous position in the market compared to formal and informal labor forces; and also, social capital not only through the market relations he/she involved, but also the associational activities he/she involved in *hemsehri* organizations.

In that sense, the Alevi subject, positions itself also in a field, where there is an accumulated social, cultural and economic capital¹⁷⁵ that finds its reflections also in the political field. Here, Herald Schüler's work¹⁷⁶ focuses on the Sosyal Demokrat Halk Partisi (SDP) in the context of revealing the political mobilization of such potential in the beginning of the 90s, which might be assumed to be transferred into CHP mostly.

We might continue where Massicard and Schüler left. They describe the sociological field as a struggle for opportunity seeking behavior, but, as the recent past has shown, the Alevi social movement has far away from representing a successful economic, social and political mobilization. However, did these actors abandoned the field totally? Surely not. The social movement seems unsuccessful on articulating itself into the existing institutions of state-market duopoly. This is where we finally reach the theoretical departure point, the Commoning practice again. What I want to reveal in this work is the Alevism that has multi-dynamic paths and practices that again and again multiply and expand in everyday practice, because of their lack of strategies-power to enjoy the advantages of the market-state structure. The practice here becomes somehow spontaneous and contingent, hard to grasp and categorize as unification. The question becomes in that regard, whether a Commoning practice is

¹⁷⁴ Mainly in three different forms: a Kemalist Social Democracy and Alevism as the guarantee of its principles, the Marxist-Atheist reading of Alevism, the socialist-liberation theology backed up on the Kurdish roots of Alevism. See, Erman and Göker for their evaluation, similarities and differences.

¹⁷⁵ Here one of the peak points of this accumulation might be shown as Izzettin Doğan; the honorary president and founder of Cem Vakfi. See, Dressler, Markus. "The Modern Dede: Changing Parameters for Religious Authority in Contemporary Turkish Alevism." *Speaking for Islam*. Brill, 2006, pp.269-294.

¹⁷⁶ Schüler, Harald, *Türkiye'de sosyal demokrasi: partililik, hemşehrilik, alevilik*. İletişim, 1999.

observed here, or not, because it potentially shows the low-class Alevism's organization that is not able to use the market rules and state as a power to connect.

Thus, this does not absolutely mean that the not-yet exploited and dominated Alevi subjects lie simply out of a properly functioning market-state articulated organized Alevism. There is no such Alevism, although there is an effort on centralizing and monopolizing at least some of the Alevi subjects, if not all. However, this still does not deny the fact that Alevism has to connect to the market and state structure, basically through its dominant form of associationalism. As a result, what we see here is, speaking openly, an Alevism of relatively low economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital; that is not centrally organized but also not totally separated from the Alevis that enjoy relatively high levels of power.

In that regard, we can move to the next and final step. The complicated space of Alevism, in which the different ideologies, relations to other authorities¹⁷⁷ and different degrees of capitals flow through networks. In this flow, Alevism needs places for temporal-everyday fixations, where the building of the association functions potentially as an open space for encounter. In the lack of a central organization that has the power to determine places for the expression and reproduction of its centrality, the new place of Alevism, even in the cases that is formed by a central order, cannot prevent the flow.¹⁷⁸ In that sense, the place itself becomes a continuously reproduced product of those heteropraxis. However, when we talk about such a flow, we should not imagine a cacophony also. We speak here about places that are not strategically designed and working, but instead places reproduced through the dynamic and evolving tactics of their reproducers, which are developed mostly as responses to the necessities of the structure in which they are working.

Then finally again, *Cemevis*, which I will introduce as one of such places of Alevi encounters, might be potentially thought as a combined tactics of commoning practice developed by Alevis. Each place, because we are talking about 'tactics' has its uniqueness and opens a way

¹⁷⁷ Civil society organizations, municipalities, government, political parties and so on.

¹⁷⁸ Here I am going to express some exceptional practices in the next part.

for potential commoning practices. Then *Cemevis* have to be analyzed separately with this intention to question whether they are reflecting a commoning practice, practices that try to show the self-organizing, open to flow and new comers, negotiation of cooperative practices that lie outside market-state relations; or not. If not, why, what are the problems preventing such an alternative effort of existence?

Before dwelling into the analytical tools of such analysis, we have to look lastly to the *Cemevis* in the context of spatial transformation. What are the necessities of such places, and how they differ from the places of the past, and in that case, what are the difficulties caused by the adaptation of the traditional social-political forms in the new type?

2.2.3.2 *Cemevis* and Cem Ritual in the context of Spatial Transformation of Alevism

Finally, through all the complicated and multi-leveled discussions on Alevism, we are ready to grasp *Cemevis* as a spatial problematic. I focus on some scholars' works questioning the philosophical-theological meaning of space and place for Alevism, who specifically ask how did it transform with the emergence of this new type of *Cemevis*. Secondly, I introduce 'placemaking' as an overall common activity among the world religions in their revival, as an inseparable part of religious revival in modern times and try to open the way for the development of my analytical tools.

In the Alevi religio-political circles the common positions might be summarized as follows. Firstly, there are perspectives arguing that the *Cemevi* is a new phenomenon, that hadn't existed until the urbanization of Alevism and urbanization brought a specific need for place to revive religion, therefore the new form has to be taken as something alien to the Alevi theology. Secondly, there are perspectives being semi-critical to the new form of *Cemevis* by arguing that they should be considered only as places of worship; not as a cultural or social center as it is mostly used with additional services like education and cultural organizations. Thirdly, there is the perspective of seeing *Cemevis* as a continuing form of the Dervish Lodges,

in which not only *Cem* rituals were organized but also other social and cultural activities. Therefore, the new form of *Cemevi* has to be thought with a reference to this phenomenon.¹⁷⁹

These discussions could not be properly grasped without asking the question of what the perception of space for Alevism has been philosophically. Yalçinkaya may guide us to enter such questioning. According to him, *Cemevis* are heterotopias. Without going into the details, we may summarize the main philosophical outcome. He advocates that the *Cemevis* should not be understood with the basic dichotomies produced by the modern-liberal mind or the pre-modern Orthodox reasoning; such as, private-public, sacred-profane, belief-culture and so on. In our particular case, although all of them could be considered within a relation with each other, the sacred-profane might be approached as an umbrella through which we may continue the discussion, since the particular case of *Cemevis* both by Alevi and Non-Alevi has been questioned with this dichotomy as the above provided three sets of problematization reveals: Are *Cemevis* sacred places; is it possible to organize profane activities there? Or simply; if they are sacred, how does its sacredness differ from the one of mosque?

According to Yalçinkaya's position, which I agree with in a certain degree, *Cemevis* in their traditional setting¹⁸⁰, responding to the Alevi theology, have been places that rejects and goes beyond the sacred-profane dichotomy. It on the one hand is the place where the this-worldly problems or disputes of Alevi were discussed and solved, while on the other hand, the God is continuously reproduced in a dynamic manner, both in the existence of each person and in the harmonious relations of the community. In other words, the profanity was itself sacred. The very basic concreteness, the human being itself was a part of the God, where the *Cem* rituals as a ritualistic expression of the communal gathering, meant in that regard the reunification of the parts of the God.

While this is true, we need to approach this through different means to make my upcoming task easier. Turning back to Durkheim's 'Elementary forms of Religion' just at the beginning

¹⁷⁹ Salman, C; 2017

¹⁸⁰ Yalçinkaya, A., 2005.

we see that his theory bases itself on the rejection of a dichotomous reading of primitive religions. According to him, the dichotomous thinking through the terms natural/super-natural is quite problematic, as there is no such distinction on the mind of the ‘primitive’; because he/she does not have a category of natural in mind through which the supernatural is produced. For the primitive human being, everything is both natural or supernatural. This dichotomy is a modern product. As nature, has been constructed through the scientific involvement as something to be observed and known, a field of non-observable and unknowable things-existences emerged. ¹⁸¹

So, in the context of Alevism and probably in all religions which were not able to be designed as Orthodoxies, the gap between internal-external¹⁸² and sacred-profane was narrow. *Cemevis* in their traditional meaning were places closing the gap. If we just remember the fact that, as Yalçinkaya also marks, *Cemevis* did not require a particular fixed place, they could be everywhere and were organized in places where people used actually for their profane

¹⁸¹ But carefully, through this expression I do not fell into the trap of marking Alevism as a form of ‘primitive’ religion while arguing there are more ‘civilized’ religions. I think that I already gave the answer for this in the anti-syncretism/heterodoxy part. Religions have pre-modern and non-orthodox forms and actually they raise on such non-orthodox ways, in which we can still talk about a similar harmonious unification of natural/supernatural or sacred/profane. However, the path to becoming an Orthodoxy, which might be a way to understand the modernization-secularization process also; creates additional fields for the sacred and profane, without harming the unified perception of the world. By this, I mean that sacredness establishes an autonomous field to itself, that makes it possible to be experienced as an external practice also. This autonomous field, which I may finally name as the politically organized domain of the religion, reaching to a monopolized field through the institutions of the state, becomes established as a place ‘something over there’ as a distant, partially and temporarily experienced entity For example, it is possible for a Sunni to perform Namaz simply wherever he/she wants; so everywhere is open for prayer as it is in the philosophy of Alevism, but the existence of a mosque and its signifiers, the practice of going to mosque reaches an additional meaning. In its pre-modern sense, this does not mean that the sacred/profane distinction in philosophical terms is formed where the distinctions are easy to be made. Here, I mean that while to totalistic understanding of the world still continues, we can still say that a section through the autonomous power of the state was possible to tear some notions of the sacredness from the everyday profanity and monopolize it.

¹⁸² Internal-external in the sense that sacredness as something happening just right here, in my bodily existence, in my everyday life, in the places that use (Internal) vs. as something that can be reached somewhere else and through somebody else. (External)

activities; the argumentation becomes clearer. It was a place for worship, in a constant dynamic, in which the sacred and profane translates to each other.

Secularization in that regard might be formulated as a process widening these gaps, not as something eliminating the sacred side, rather than as something rearranging the places of sacred and profane. In this rearrangement, turning back to the Durkhemian way of thinking, since the world has started to be known through observation and experience, the sacred has been put outside of the domain of the observable and experienceable. Moreover through political secularism, the public space became the domain of observable and experienceable, to which the sacred involvements were prohibited.¹⁸³

However, as scholars have written on this topic has shown the actually practiced secularization has been not able to this. The sacred, which has to be argued to remain in the private sphere; entered the domain of the public space.¹⁸⁴ Yet, this reentrance was not an ontological challenge to the status of the secular; since there has been the category of ‘natural’ was created, which put supernatural into a distant domain, which has been only possible when the believer demands its existence. Speaking In Durkheim’s sense, the totalistic view of the world, was collapsed; divided into two ontological realms in which the natural, with its power backed up with its characters of observation and experience; has become the structure, on which the supernatural has to adopt itself to survive.

To narrow it down this already squeezed discussion of the secularization process and theory, we can turn back to the Yalçinkaya’s claim on *Cemevis*. He underlines the ‘universal’ characteristic of the *Cemevis*, its notion of translating the sacred and profane into each other. Arguing for the heterotopic notion of *Cemevis*, he criticizes the attempts of reformulating

¹⁸³ The particular case of Turkey in that regard is discussed above and is marked as being not able to maintain this ideal.

¹⁸⁴ Casanova, José. Public religions in the modern world. *University of Chicago Press*, 2011; Taylor, Charles. *A secular age*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

Cemevis as places of worship as similar to the ones described by the Orthodoxies, as something external; more particularly as something that is somehow connected to the institutions of state.

Yalçinkaya's consideration of *Cemevis* as heterotopia contributes to the problematic of *Cemevis* through its non-Orthodox political position it supports. However, we have to move one step further. What is our answer in the light of the philosophical discussions provided so far to the very important question: How to reform *Cemevis*, where the gap between the sacred-profane of Alevism is too wide¹⁸⁵, where all the fields of life is embedded into and dominated by the profanity of the market-state forces; and also, where the hegemony of science is so strong as a way of producing information, knowledge and worldviews? More clearly, what is the possibility for Alevis to translate their sacredness as something corresponding to this simple profanity, which was once possible with the heterotopic character of the *Cemevis*?

Alevi re-politicization similarly with the Orthodox method, try to create autonomous fields for the representation of their sacredness¹⁸⁶, which is quite problematic as Yalçinkaya also argues. Through these means we have to question, whether such translation is possible. I mean here that we have to ask the question whether in the existing historical conditions is it possible to reform an Alevism, and particularly *Cemevi*, as a place that is able to translate the profanity of life (that is class-based, natural, bureaucratically organized and so on) into its sacredness (demanding a profanity that is communal, cosmologic, decentralized/anti-statist)?

There is no particular answer for this and does not have a formula. Here, we have to engage the issue politically then. Through this we reach to the politics of Commoning Practice. Approaching the politics of *Cemevis* from the perspective of autonomous places seeking for the political organization beyond market and state might provide us insight. So, in that regard

¹⁸⁵ Here, I refer to the urbanization-modernization discussion above and particularly mean that all the religious authority that was somehow embedded in the profane life of the traditional Alevi has become non-functioning because they do not correspond anymore to the profanity produced by the secular age. So, the sacred remains still there but is not able to touch the profane.

¹⁸⁶ Or in some cases totally eliminate the sacred character of it and reinvent it as a culture where the religious elements are not more than simple articulations to the common cause of the history; that is, class struggle.

my proposal is to look at the placemaking processes of Alevism within such a theoretical perspective.

2.3 Making the Place of Commons: The Analysis of *Cemevis* as Commoning Practice

Finally, we have reached to the main question of this study: Is it possible to question *Cemevis* in the direction, whether they are able to form a Common Place, if not; what are the obstacles preventing such a dynamic of this from-below formulation of Alevism? This part introduces the analytical tools for such an analysis.

To remember, we have to ask again, how the politics of Commoning is discussed, what the major problematics of the politics of common places are. Places of commons, are the continuous placemaking process to form a social existence that is done through cooperative practices that lie beyond market and state relations and actors; consisting of voluntary efforts triggered by affective initiative-taking behavior, encouraging self-organizing/self-governing tactics achieved through horizontal networking, developing tactics that are in flow; that is open to changes and differences; being not closed to outsiders on the contrary representing a threshold to new comers following the intention of network expansion (cohesion).

So, each of these characteristics could be analyzed through the analytical categories that I developed in my fieldwork. Those analytical categories are, the social-initiative taker and his/her capital; donation economy vs. exchange economy; different tactics in the reformation of the religious engagement; the insider/outsider-invisibility/visibility; network closure vs. network cohesion. These are through which I categorize the different dynamics within the *Cemevi*-making process; and show then how they relate to the major discussions of the Commoning practice.

2.3.1 The Social-Initiative Taker and His/Her Capital

The social initiative taker is the concept used in this study to refer the people undertaking the duty of founding a *Cemevi*. Massicard in her study, speaking of the increasing association

building practices in the 90s, prefers to use a different name for such engagement; social entrepreneur. First of all, I state my reasons to not use this concept.

In its general context the concept of social entrepreneur is used actually for those people who start up an institution to seek social missions, instead of mere economic needs. Although the social and public character of action is frequently underlined in the context of social entrepreneur, the sensual notion of the word entrepreneur bears some meanings which directly connote economic and rational reasoning whether being profit or non-profit oriented. In other words, it always assumes some rational and calculating behavior seeking for chances and avoiding from dangers. The social entrepreneur does not act in the 'economic' field, but the main 'reasoning' behind the social action, does not differ from the one that is sought in the market. It is still, a 'rational' reasoning, and a calculative one.

Here, as it might be guessed, I make a discussion between affective¹⁸⁷ and calculative engagement or behavior. Differently from the language produced from some of the scholars on Alevi social movement that connotes self-interested behavior and rational calculation of the entrepreneurs; I interpret the picture as underlining the engagement as a non-precalculated one.

This needs theoretical clarification. Bourdieu¹⁸⁸ in one of his conferences asks a simple question that directs him to discuss the calculative and non-calculative actions; Is a disinterested act possible? Although his overall answer to this question is a "no"; he avoids himself from falling into the trap of liberal calculative, self-interested, rational individual, by arguing that even each action at the end is for gaining at least a symbolic value, the action itself should not necessarily have the precalculated intention to it, where you develop strategies and make plans and so on. Instead the very basic reason to act in that way is the simple

¹⁸⁷ Some scholars emphasize the importance of affection as the basis of the Commoning practice. See; Bollier, D. "Affective Labor as the Lifeblood of a Commons." *bollier*, <http://www.bollier.org/blog/affective-labor-lifeblood-commons>, access date: 28.12.2018; Singh, Neera M. "The affective labor of growing forests and the becoming of environmental subjects: Rethinking environmentality in Odisha, India." *Geoforum*, 47, 2013, pp.189-198.

¹⁸⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre, *Pratik nedenler: Eylem kuramı üzerine*. Hil Yayın, 2006

positioning within the field asking questions like; what is my devotion, how I subjectify myself, what is my place in this world and so on.

To explain this Bourdieu gives the religious action as example. In the religious action, he states, there is no precalculated plan-project and strategy, it is simply the preoccupation in that field that makes people to act. The symbolic value of that field, is also embedded in the very basic subjectivity of the actor. He/she does not calculate, the possible positive outcomes before the action. Moreover, the symbolic value comes actually from the rejection of the reasoning represented in the economic action. If someone is not using a calculative reason, is thought to be more religious, in this sense.

On the other hand, Bourdieu also argues that the simple fact of people acting in religious field are at the end fighting actually to gain a symbolic value, a symbolic advantage in relation to the other people who are actually actors (in that sense the fighters) of the symbolic field. So, at the end, he still does not mean that there is a total disinterest in such action. The actor here tries to be symbolically valuable in the field in which he/she finds his/her own subjectivity. However, such a notion of “being interested” does not connote directly a market reasoning. On the contrary, there are symbolic fields in which the rejection of such precalculative-strategic reasoning becomes itself symbolically valuable. So, this might be thought as the very basic ground of action in the *Cemevi*-making process also, where people are voluntarily engaging with an activity, that brings more danger than security, more expenses than economic gains.

To make it clearer in the specific context it might be better to look at Massicard’s work. As discussed above in her explanation about the formation of the Alevi social movement, she uses the words of ‘available opportunities.’¹⁸⁹ The 1980s were for Alevis a period of economic and political marginalization under the ideological-political agenda of the state, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. This marginalization has been the ground to form the social-movement for Alevis in order to overcome the relatively disadvantageous position brought by the 1980s. Alevis were struggling for their interests in the 1970s within the circles of the socialist/social

¹⁸⁹ Massicard, E.; 2005: 71

democratic politics without an autonomous reference to their religiosity. Religion was only an articulation as a kind of liberation theology within the class politics and that has changed since the 1990s by forming an autonomous social movement, which has been for Massicard an opportunity structure to mobilize the Alevi circles. The already existing political repertoire, the social and cultural capital of who Massicard calls as political entrepreneurs, have been the leader of the movement.

According to Massicard, the Alevi movement that had started in these intellectual circles' regaining of authority, had spread to the local middle-class artisans. Being related to the booming of *hemşehri* associations experienced in the Turkish social-political life in 1990s, local Alevi people having a relatively good economic and social capital in the field entered also the opportunity structure to benefit from. As a result of this, she arrives to a conclusion of an emerging middle-class elite mobilizing their networks and relate themselves to the national/transnational Alevi movement.

Massicard writes also that such a potential did not end up with an emergence of a stabilized and centralized national/transnational integration with the political field. Yet, there have been local opportunities to be benefit from for the Alevis.¹⁹⁰ She underlines in that regard the municipalities supporting Alevi social entrepreneurs or the clientelist relationships with the political field. Here we end up with an entrepreneur figure, being able to expand his/her social-political effect zone with the help of their already existing economic, social and cultural capital.

Is this explanation a total myth? Surely not. However, we have to ask what does it answer today, in the case of where there is almost no such opportunity available, especially for the local initiatives, who still continue their efforts in the field, even after enormous failures, personal economic losses and even security issues. More importantly, can the motivation of the entrepreneur figures simply be reduced into an 'opportunity seeking' one, or is this actually the structure of the field that supports only one type of action. Does the religious field of Alevism permit us to be develop an alternative look? Are the initiatives simply efforts to

¹⁹⁰ Massicard, E.; 2005: 263

integrate the ‘movement’ into the existing political and economic structure, even if they are read so, is this because it is the ‘nature’ of political-economic action, or is it the only available action, in the lack of an alternative economic-political engagement?

I argue for the latter. This is where I find the involvement of the Commons perspective important. In cases, where the ‘opportunity-seeking’ behavior haven’t been fully realized and been transformed into an integration to the existing economic-political structures, there emerges a potential of acting economically and politically different. This does not undermine the potential of the former; on the contrary, the perspective that I defend here is that opportunity seeking, self-interested, pre-calculative reasoning is much stronger than self-organizing and cooperative action, because that is how the state-market duopoly structures itself in the economic, social and cultural capital of the agencies. However, not in the specific case of Alevism, but also all over the world in different social, political and economic actions, the structure fails to reproduce itself also.

Therefore, instead of reducing a social movement into the basic economic, political and ideological structuring of the field, we have to underline the opposite potential. Surely, as I frequently repeat that the alternative potential that Commoning practices offer, as I show has certain limits besides their possibilities, however underlining the possibilities, reveal, when we turn the picture upside down, also the limits of the structure.

Turning back to the particular case of the social-initiative taker we might finalize, as Bourdieu says, the analysis of ‘disinterest’ becomes possible, in the cases where actually the two types of action, economic/rational vs. symbolic/affective, coincide in the same field.¹⁹¹ The question becomes then; what happens in a religious field while there is symbolic value on remaining outside the market-state reasoning, while at the same time there is the possibility of using the available opportunities in a kind of calculative manner, to integrate into the market-state structure.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹Bourdieu,P; 2006:152

¹⁹² This allows us to criticize the increasing trend in the religion studies, that is described as the rational choice theory of religion.

This also becomes the first ground where we relate the discussions on Commoning with the literature of Alevism and question simply this affective involvement that makes the subject to act in a way of bearing all the difficulties that the process of *Cemevi*-making demands and brings, where there is not so much “gain”? What is the possibility of the reproduction of a much more calculative, strategic and self-interested action, although the trigger of the initiative taking behavior could not simply be reduced into such motivation?

2.3.2 Donation Economy vs. Exchange Economy

Firstly, we need to make clear distinctions of these two different types of economic action. In the donation economy, there is no necessary correlation between the received service or good and the donated service or good (mostly in form of money). In other words, there is no fixed exchange value. The service provider serves a ‘public good’ that is open for everyone’s consumption regardless he/she donates for it or how much he/she donates. This according to Bourdieu lies on the very basis of the subjectification process of the disinterested behavior that is discussed above. As there is no direct relation of exchange between the server and donor what we reach here is a symbolic value; that rescues both sides from establishing an instrumentality with the service and good received. The exchange economy, is the opposite of it in the sense that the server demands a fixed value, either in the form of a good/money or a simple service.

The main economic source *Cemevis* is as expected donations and subscription fees. However, through this we cannot simply reach to the argument of voluntary organizations and the donation economy they rely on is necessarily a ‘disadvantageous’ economic action. Most importantly, the non-profit organizations are not necessarily out-side market economics. As scholars have provided a significant amount of theoretical and empirical research¹⁹³ we can

¹⁹³ Andreasen, Alan R., Philip Kotler, and David Parker *Strategic marketing for nonprofit organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008; Arrow, Kenneth J. *To profit or not to profit: The commercial transformation of the nonprofit sector*. Cambridge University Press, 2000

easily say that especially in a successfully functioning donation economy or even through the adaptation of the characteristics of exchange economy it is possible to make a non-profit organization a market actor, having shareholders like state and profit organizations. As this literature shows, this way of engaging with the non-profit organizations even becomes in one sense the hegemonic idea of the neo-liberal perspective about how the third-sector should operate. The non-profit organizations are argued to be finding their own ways to articulate themselves into the market economics.

Here in our context, *Cemevis* which primarily based on the donation economy, as being still not a fully realized part of the neo-liberal governance model¹⁹⁴, represent a potential of cooperative-voluntary involvement, where the donation is not simply made through money, but also through human-capital. In that sense, we see here well-functioning and non-functioning donation economies. However, most importantly, the well-functioning donation economy should not be grasped as triggering a more and more cooperative action, instead it might have also a possibility to transform the ‘economic’ model of the *Cemevi*, or at least, to produce also an alternative, where the *Cemevi* becomes the service ‘selling’ place, achieved through not simply selling religious services, but also others such as offering the place of the *Cemevi* as a means of exchange or providing transportation services. Therefore, we have to approach the issue carefully, as revealing all the potentials; and most importantly to see the potential of donation economy as an arena of struggle. More clearly, donation economy might be a temporal form followed by exchange relations, or the donation itself might become a governance strategy to ensure the reproduction of market-state duopoly.

Here, our question in the context of Commoning practice is to approach the cases of *Cemevis* in two terms. First, we can question, whether the notion of ‘cooperation’ works or not, that might be interpreted as the motive behind the donation economy. Secondly and most importantly, we can question whether the donation economy is challenged by exchange or not.

¹⁹⁴ Here, especially what I think to be called as municipal *Cemevis* have to be taken into consideration as potential exceptions. We see recently attempts of municipalities to organize projects with some Alevi associations to build *Cemevis* in the form of cultural centers. These projects need to be analyzed in that perspective.

2.3.3 Different Tactics on the Revival of Religious Practices

One of the most important criteria in the Commoning practices is its production of immaterial goods that are continuously in making, that is, open to improvisation and different perspectives and ideas. In that sense, *Cemevis* might be producing heterodox praxis in the sense of their effort to revive their religious engagement. While on the side of the Commoning literature enjoys the multiplicity and different tactics that the subjects develop as a way of improvised engagement with the problems they confront; we have to show the other problematic side of this in the context of Alevism.

As discussed in detail in the previous part, in which the religious revival in the specific case of ritual has lost actually its ontological ground in the secular age; this makes the religious practices revival in its 'genuine/authentic' form¹⁹⁵ a difficult to achieve problem, as it is dependent on the social, political and economic structure of the traditional community. In other words, where the ritualistic practice in its traditional sense was the reproduction of the existing community and it itself was dependent on its reproduction also, in the collapse of the community, the ritual loses its core notions that make it authentic. Even in that case, there is still a demand and argument for standardization of the *Cem* rituals, as in the lack of the structural guide of the ritual¹⁹⁶, some standardized characteristics wanted to be achieved to receive the lost aura of the ritual, even if they are somehow empty signifiers in the sense that they do not have a connection with the social, political and economic life. In that sense, such developed, improvised, spontaneously found tactics might be interpreted as something undesired, but necessary to be followed.

¹⁹⁵ Erdemir, Aykan. "Tradition and modernity: Alevis' ambiguous terms and Turkey's ambivalent subjects." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41.6, 2005, pp. 937-951.

¹⁹⁶ Characteristics of the Cem ritual like the interrogation in the Sorgu Cemi; and *muhabbet* (*conversation*) in the Muhabbet Cemi. For Muhabbet, see Işık, Caner. "Alevi-Bektaşî Geleneğinde Muhabbet: Ruhsal Bir Bilgi Ortamı." *Millî Folklor* 23.89, 2011, pp.147-158. Alevi oral tradition is strictly connected to the notion of *muhabbet*, where the philosophical, political, ethical and religious discussions were made with the existence of the community, which made the reproduction of knowledge and information possible centuries long. In both cases, the ground is the community as repeated.

Alevi have also formulated alternative organizations where the philosophy and theology of Alevism is also reproduced. This surely does not revive the *Cem* ritual or the authority as these necessitate a structural transformation, yet they are important in the sense of Commoning practice generally, and the Alevi religio-politicization particularly. This is so because they make encounters of different Alevi subjects possible, give them the chance of self-organizing and governing, and to develop their own ways of reviving Alevism. Such potential might be the not-yet formed bridge between the tradition and modern.

Here, we enter a field of action, where standardization is thought to be the key to bring back the lost of aura, with the sense of reviving at least the formalistic characters of the traditional ritual while the structure remains collapsed. However, I offer the opposite. The insistence of formalism might end up with exclusiveness, when the Alevi subject is especially struggling in terms of establishing the relation of the ritual with its own profane life. *Cemevis* might cause to close communities instead of providing expansion of the community.

2.3.4 The Question of Threshold: Insider/Outsider – Invisibility/Visibility

The space of Commons is described also as a threshold, not simply a public space controlled mostly by authorities of state, government and market; instead, a kind of meeting ground, a place for continuous encounters. Here, the main underlined notion is that it makes the space a threshold, where the insider and outsider relations become transformative. In the sense of this transformative character, it is simply not meant a creation of a fixed meaning that starts in the doorsteps of a particular place, instead, while it becomes a kind of autonomous space by establishing a clear-cut distance with the outside, it also gives the chance to represent a connection with the outside.

In the context of traditional Alevism and *Cemevis*, the boundary of insider/outsider is both clearly defined and also blurred at the same time. Firstly, the regulations of the ability to enter a *Cemevi* is clear in the sense that, only an Alevi is allowed to enter the *Cem* ritual, but also not every Alevi, who has received the approval/consent of the community before the ritual starts. In the existence of a dispute, although the ‘*meydan*’ is open to the sides of the dispute

with the motivation to solve the problem that was not being solved before the entrance; the place that is entered is not defined as *Cem* yet.¹⁹⁷ So, in that case there are some clear cut separations between the inside and outside (such as being Alevi, receiving the communities' consent and so on) the physical existence 'in' the place, does not necessarily mean that you are inside. Then secondly, the *Cemevi* itself functions as a place of connection, a threshold, in its simple sense, that makes the passage from outside to inside possible.

In its modern context, the *Cemevis* seem to have lost such character in a certain degree. The separation from 'outside' is not ensured, simply a Sunni can not only enter the place, but also the *Cem*. This was discussed in the literature also¹⁹⁸, where the Alevis want to reveal their religious notions and beliefs publicly with the intention of preventing the centuries long accusations towards their belief; but also, to represent a call for a re-union for the other Alevis who live after the immigration all over the country and even the world. Additionally, the *Cemevi* become not a place of a particular *Ocak*, on the contrary, every *Ocak* has been a potential attendant of the *Cem* ritual. Actually, this is not a problem as the first expressed one, since *Karma Cem*¹⁹⁹ was also not a new invention, but this becomes a problem in a case where the *Sorgu Cem*'s to which all members of the village from the same *Ocak* were allowed.

This connects us actually to the other problematic of this threshold discussion, that is, the blurred function of it, which allows the place to be a connection with the outsider. Firstly, in the lack of traditional *Cem* rituals in which the *rızalık*²⁰⁰ is the primary rule of its entrance, it is possible to be in the *Cem* ritual with someone you have a problem with, and most importantly you leave the place without settling an agreement. Secondly, in the impossibility

¹⁹⁷ *Cem birleme (unifying community)* is a key stage here. A community is not reproduced simply with the entrance to the place. To unify the community, stages have to be passed, such as interrogation and *muhabbet*.

¹⁹⁸ Şehriban Ş,2005; Es, Murat. Alevist politics of place and the construction of *cemevis* in Turkey. Diss. MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Mixed *Cem*, the *cem* ritual to which different *Ocaks* are allowed to attend.

²⁰⁰ Getting the approval of attendance from all the village members. In the case of there is a dispute between two parties the problem is expected to be solved before the *Cem*.

of a properly functioning *Sorgu Cemi*, the interrogation process with the existence of the community becomes not fulfilled. In both cases the ‘connecting’ notion of the *Cemevi* has lost.

On the other hand, *Cemevis* in their modern context might be thought as having actually formed a different form of such threshold, a much more modern meaning the literature Commons underlines. This is not necessarily a good or bad thing however. It opens up the way of heteropraxis, a potential of creating a much more horizontally organized form of Alevism that is able to self-organization, however, on the dark side of the picture, besides the problems explained above crucial problems such as intimacy, authenticity, surveillance and security appear. The ‘closed’ traditional communities of Alevism, who especially after 16th century developed strategies to prevent their visibility and to form mechanisms of security, is not enjoying a neutral-secure place in the modern Turkish Republic. The short history of Turkish Republic inhabits big Alevi massacres, while still there are continuing threats not only in terms of coercive violence but also as symbolic violence.²⁰¹

This opens up a second dimension within the same context, the problem of visibility/invisibility. Visibility has become a crucial social-political phenomenon to be discussed²⁰²; so, it is not specific on the publicization of the Alevi social-political-religious existence after 1990s²⁰³. In the tension of above explained positions, it is not easy to simply assume that Alevis are enjoying a kind of visibility. Alevis also create new forms of invisibilities.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the *Cemevis*, are not simply a threshold that connects the inside and outside, on the contrary, they are also places of security concerns and intimacy problems.

²⁰¹ To see the importance of massacres in the formation of the Alevi social-political identity see Ertan, M., 2017

²⁰² Brighenti, Andrea. "Visibility: A category for the social sciences." *Current sociology*, 55.3, 2007, pp. 323-342.

²⁰³ Es, M., 2012

²⁰⁴ See, Knott in terms of religious invisibility/visibility discussion Knott, Kim. "The Tactics of (In) Visibility among Religious Communities in Contemporary Europe." *Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present. Proceedings of the XXI World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions. Vol. 67. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG*, 2017, pp.47-68

Moreover, the opening of the *Cem* rituals to the ‘outsider’ through different channels, including social media; might be also damaging the authenticity of the ritual.

2.4 Conclusion: Network Closure vs. Network Expanding/Cohesion and Struggle Beyond, Against or Within Market-State Structure

Urban enclosures are one of the problematics that the literature of Common places carefully approaches. As the places of Commons have in themselves the potential to be closed communities without having the intention to expand their network, reach other places and open themselves to new comers, in terms of being happy with their own existence, they might be argued to inhabit a potential to become enclosures. Here we have to note that the major political motivation of the Commons is actually to create places alternative to the enclosures created by the state-market forces; and go beyond them through formulating a multiplicity of such Commoning practices²⁰⁵; the Commoning practice might itself become a way of enclosures.²⁰⁶ Now, we lie on the shore of two major possibilities of politics in its most general sense. On the one hand, the reproduction of a closed community, protecting its once-determined way of being, on the other hand, possibilities of expanding common ways of being outside the market and state structures through collaboration and interaction.²⁰⁷

These two dimensions have been discussed in a totally different but relatable literature also; the debate on the social capital in terms of network closure and cohesion. This market-motivated literature that defines ‘success’ in the background as becoming successful in the market, puts social capital formation as an important asset to have. As a result, the discussion becomes whether the closure brings more social capital or the cohesion. More clearly, the former is defined through closed community-like strong ties but not being able to act in a kind

²⁰⁵ Holloway, J.; 2010; Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. Penguin, 2005.

²⁰⁶ Stavrides, S. , 2016 31-2

²⁰⁷ De Peuter, Greig, and Nick Dyer-Witheford. "Commons and cooperatives." *Affinities: a journal of radical theory, culture, and action*, 2010, pp.30-56

of flexibility and having effects on distant actors; while the latter is simply the loose connections that have the power to reach the distant opportunities but does not entail strong ties (mostly implying strong trust and sanctions/rewards).

The introduction of a similar discussion, although it is in a different political context, reveals us the potential problematic notion in terms of network expansion/cohesion. Surely, the Commoning practice describes the expanding commons as the expansion of Commoning practice, not simply an expansion articulating the practice into the market-state forces. However, in its actual practice, is it possible to prevent such an expansion. Thinking this together with the more crucial question of whether a pure existence and practice beyond the market-state relations is possible and even desirable in the existing structural conditioning of the field; we end up with a more complicated scenario. As state-market forms and relations, existing with its repressive and ideological apparatus' as big giants, how long can politics of Commons survive without representing counter-positions and struggles against the system not beyond?

In the specific context of *Cemevis*, which I question as reflecting a potential towards politics of Commons, finally makes us possible to discuss this major question of the theory of Commons. I still advocate being aware of all of this problematic fields that such practices have to be crucial notions of an alternative politics, but still besides all the above introduced problematics, we have to question the actual practice of Commons in the sense of network closure and expansion/cohesion. Even if we prove that *Cemevis* are Commoning practices, my fieldwork shows me that *Cemevis* are keen to adapt closure as their strategy to guarantee their survival, while in a different example, the one who represent strategies to expand its networks does this not through the direction of other commons.

As a result, still, we need to embrace the potential of such places as representing a potential from-below politics, although they are not realized and far away from realization yet. Here my intervention has to be read as an approach towards changing the perspective, and most importantly to combine two conflicting political positions in the anti 'market-state' struggle as Callinicos argue in its debate with John Holloway:

[...] any struggles that begin to build towards self-organisation are pointing the way towards the way a future non-capitalist, socialist, society can be organised. The problem is that for any movement towards self-organisation to succeed in breaking the power of capital, there has to be a moment of concentration and centralisation. You can't deal with the concentrated power of capital – the state and the multinational corporations – without the movements themselves becoming focused to confront the power of those corporations directly. ²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Alex C. and Holloway, J.2005: 101

CHAPTER 3

CEM RITUAL AND *CEMEVİS*: THEOLOGY AND HISTORY

This part of the thesis is descriptive and describes the theological framework in which the *Cem* ritual and *Cemevis* have been organized and performed. The primary aim, is to show the correlation between the Alevi traditional life, more particularly, economic, social and political life, and the theology. The *Cem* ritual and *Cemevis* are represented as ideal guidelines, as philosophical and ethical framework, not for the personal life of the Alevi only, but also to his/her social being. Following this, *Cem* ritual and *Cemevi* is argued as being a manifestation of political, social and economic ideals seeking for equality, unification of differences, communicative action and solidarity.

While these basic principles are referred to be the philosophical-ethical guidelines of the Alevi way of being, it is argued that the belief has developed some institutions to make these possible. In that regard, institutions like *Dedelik*, *Rızalık*, *Müşahiplik*, *El Ele El Hakka* are explained alongside the particular services during the *Cem* ritual. Second part deals with the modern context, and asks how these are transformed?

3.1 The Tradition of Cem Ritual and *Cemevis*: Esoteric Perception of Ritual and Its Place

The *Cem* ritual is the symbolization of the first *Cem*, that is explained in the ritual also. The first *Cem* ritual in the belief is argued to be the *Cem* of Forties. There are many studies trying to question the actual historical roots of the ritual, but at the end, regardless what the historical and anthropological studies argue, the Alevi belief commonly accepts that the root of the *Cem* ritual is the following event, named as the *Cem* of Forties. I am going to explain the story in detail in order to be able to emphasize the symbolism after:

The first *Cem* organization happens after Prophet Muhammad's visit to Heaven, named as the *Miraç* incident. Prophet Muhammad while he was flying to Heaven with the Archangel Gabriel, he saw a lion, he demanded from him a sign. Prophet Muhammad gave him his ring, and continued. In heaven the Prophet saw God, talked 90.000 secret words, 30.000 of these words were for all the people in the world, the 60.000 of them were shared with Ali only, the prophet's nephew.

He saw a house in his return path. He wanted to visit the house and knocked the door, but he was not allowed, since he named himself as the Prophet Muhammad. The answer he got from inside was that they do not need a prophet in the house. In his third trial to enter, when he was asked who he is, he said: I am *seyyidül – kavm, hâdimül – fukarâ*, which might be translated roughly as "the servant of the poor". After this expression, he is allowed inside.

He saw there 39 people, 22 men, 17 women; talking with each other. He sat next to one of them, he was actually Ali. The prophet could not recognize Ali, his nephew.²⁰⁹ Prophet Muhammad asked them: Who are you? They answered: We are the Forties? Prophet Muhammad asked: Who is your leader/head (*ulu*), who is your weakest one? They answered:

Our weakest/smallest is the leader, our strongest/biggest is also the leader. We are the Forties, we are all unified, we are only one! Prophet Muhammad replied: But you are 39 people here, where is the one that is missing? Forties answered: The one who is missing is Selman, he is outside, gathering food (or other necessary things they need), but why are you asking? We said that we are all one, you can consider him as being here. Prophet Muhammad said: You have to show me that you are only one, that you are unified then.

Ali, sitting next to Muhammad made one of his own arms open and one of the Forties made a scratch; so, Ali's arm started to bleed. Muhammad saw that all of the others were also bleeding, and even Selman's blood drop, the one who was outside came from the window. As a result, he was convinced that they were unified, they were one.

²⁰⁹ The reason for this is believed to be that all of the forties had actually the same face, so Ali's face was also different from its ordinary state.

Then Selman came back with only one small grape and gave it to Muhammad and asked him to divide the one grape to forty and share with everybody. They thought that if he was the servant of the poor as he claims to be, he had to be capable of doing this. Muhammad got confused and couldn't figure it out, so; to help him, the Archangel Gabriel came and brought him a plate out of light (*nur*) and said that God wants him to make a juice out of that grape. Muhammad dropped water into the plate and smashed the grape into pieces with his fingers and readied the juice. He served it to Forties. Forties drank the juice, and they felt enthusiastic and started to perform the *semah*²¹⁰. Muhammad joined them, and during the performance his *imamah* (a kind of headscarf) felt down and he got into 40 pieces, so that the Forties were able to fasten their own share into their belts.

This story is full of symbolism, which are debated and interpreted through scholarly work²¹¹ in addition to the continuing and evolving interpretations in the simple social life of the believers. Here, we have to underline that the interpretation of Alevism, has to be understood on the interpretative side of the Islamic tradition, which has been one side of the two most general argumentations especially on the ritual practice.²¹²

For Alevism there are Bâtîni and Zahiri sides of belief and practice. The ritualistic act, mainly the prayer, has been philosophically and theologically criticized as being Zahiri, literally meaning 'seen', or available to senses.²¹³ The Bâtîni side refers to the inner-meaning of the seen acts, that is the 'unseen', hidden. In the Zahiri side, reason and contemplation is not allowed, as it would mean to question the God's will, instead, the performer is expected to

²¹⁰ The Alevi ritualistic dance-like performance. It is done in a circle, where everybody is turning circumsolve and around a circle path.

²¹¹ Günşen, Ahmet. "Gizli Dil Açısından Alevilik-Bektaşılık Erkân Ve Deyimlerine Bir Bakış." *Electronic Turkish Studies*, 2.2, 2007, pp. 328-350; Sümer, Derya. "Alevi-Bektaşî Miraç Söyleminden Cemin Simgesel Temsillerine Hakk'ın Birlik Bilinci." *Turkish Culture & Haci Bektas Veli Research Quarterly*, 57, 2011, pp. 57-83; Üzümlü, Gülten. "Cem Törenlerinin Semiotik Analizi." *Turkish Culture & Haci Bektas Veli Research Quarterly*, 48, 2008, pp.141-164

²¹² Katz, Marion Holmes. *Prayer in Islamic thought and practice*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

²¹³ Aslandoğan, Seyyid, İsmail; *Kaynakları ile Alevilik.*; Kaleli, Lütfi *Anadolu Gerçeği Alevilik*. Can Yayınları, 2012

perform the ritual according to its formalist basis and not question the deeper meaning. For Alevism, this is just the opposite. The human-being is believed to be the part of the God, as it is 'potentially' one of the reflections of the God, it is capable to reach the hidden meaning, that is put as a secret in to the very deep sections of the humanly existence. This secret is both hidden in the being of oneself, and also in the being of others. The way to reach the hidden meaning, human-beings are wanted to join, come together and create a harmony, and discover both their own beings and also the other's beings. This is the very basic definition of the *Yol*, meaning way or path. It is not a path which has an end, it is a continuous process in-making, a search for the non-existing end, or an end that has to be continuously reproduced. So, the believer is imagined to be in an unfinished journey.

Here, the Zâhiri side of the belief, is only some seen gestures that does not reveal the 'hidden' state of the believer, instead it only creates an 'image of believer' on the surface. Someone seen as performing some ritualistic practices are simply be interpreted as a believer considering his/her devotion, performance and so on. Yet the 'real' believer, has to discover the ethical-social dimensions of being a believer, this means, belief is not in the simple acts represented to God (and other human-beings), it is on the ethical-social ways of being outside the ritual. The Zâhiri side then is thought to be functioning as a mechanism that hides the most important part from the eyes of the others. It creates an image of an ethical believer, but as the believer's hidden life, that is social, economic, political and personal life is behind the veil and remains unquestioned, the 'real' state of the believer, is not reached.

In that sense, the ritualistic practices are only there if they have to say something and actually change/challenge the real being of the humanly life. The ritual has inner-meanings that guides and remembers the human being the ethical necessities, and even guarantees them with its organizational structure. So, actually the real belief is not reached through ritual performance, it is reached outside and only reproduced inside the ritual.

Turning back to the Forties incident in that regard, what could be said for the ethical, social, political, philosophical and economic teaching of this story? Having nuances changing from interpretation to interpretation, four commonly accepted teachings for the being of the believers are apparent here; equality, difference/similarity (the unification of differences);

solidarity/sharing, communication/discussion/argumentation. It is important to note here that these are both what the teachings of Alevism puts front of us, as well as representing more or less²¹⁴ the historical life of Alevi communities.

Equality in the incident of Forties might be considered as emphasized in two happenings. First, when the Prophet arrives at the doorsteps of the house, which might be named as the *Cemevi*, isn't allowed unless he declared that he is no one, he is the servant of the poor. Before entering the community, even the Prophet had to give up from his social ranks. Secondly, equality is emphasized, related to the first one, by rejecting a status or class system, when the Forties say that their strongest is the weakest, the weakest is their strongest. They underline the social equality. At the end, each of the Forties getting their own share of the *imamah* of the prophet, might be interpreted as sharing the political authority of Muhammad, as things worn on the head symbolized especially in eastern literature the political ranks of the wearer.

In terms of differences, the Forties, each of them has a unique name and are real historical persons, which is argued to be the first 40 Muslims who believed in the prophecy of Muhammad. Although they are different persons, from the same source, as if they one whole body. They appear similar, so that even the Prophet was not able to recognize his own nephew, Ali; who was his right-hand man. The *Cem* is argued to be a place where the differences come together and end up with a joyful harmony, creating a whole, a community. Solidarity and sharing appear to be the basis of the 'economic' functioning of the community. The Prophet is expected to share a small grape to forty people, so that his social justice could be measured. On the other hand, the 12 services represented during a *Cem*, like door keeping, or food bringing reveal the division of labor within the community. Lastly, the communication/discussion and argumentation side might also be underlined through some happenings. In the *Cem* the Prophet himself gets interrogated, as well as he interrogates the Forties. These two sides, discuss and argue reach an outcome by convincing each other.

²¹⁴ Here the emphasis on more or less important. As expressed above, the Yol is explained as a becoming, a path. This might be said that such ideals are not be able to reach in their purest forms (if such thing ever exists), yet, it is a call of God that has to guide all the life.

It is important to note that, the *Cem* ritual becomes only possible, after the community is ensured. Before the ritual, where there are ranks and differences, or problems of justice the ritual does not begin. This does not correspond to this mythological story only, but also to the traditional practice of the *Cem* ritual. As explained also in the previous chapter, *Cem* is not that is creating the community. *Cem* becomes possible if the community already exists. This was ensured in the traditional experience by maintaining five institutions. These institutions might be interpreted as the concretized forms of the symbolism in the Forties incident.

First, we have to underline the overall village communities' class-status structure. Alevi villages, especially following the defeat of the Qızılbaş movement, had to be situated in distant places of Anatolia where both the Sunni and Shia state was not easy to reach. They were somehow autonomous from the economic structure. The household production was depending on livelihood, based on farming and breeding. In such a case, it is hard to expect a kind of accumulation and creating major economic inequalities.

Here, the institution of *Dedelik*, as it is commonly interpreted in a wrong direction²¹⁵ might be seen as a status rank in an aristocratic order, but this is hard to claim so. The very basic reason for this is related with the above given explanation. Alevism was not able to form an accumulating economic production, being deprived of large lands, labor power and means of production. The *Dedes* were themselves farmers, the life of *Ocakzades* were dependent on agricultural production also. Differently from anyone else in the community, the *Dedes* received Hakkullah from the community, after their service. This was not a tax-like system which one would probably imagine. It was the goods or money donated to the *Dede*, after the *Cem* ritual as a kind of gratitude.

The reason for this was simple and reveals the second institution. The *Dedes* were travelling. They were actually most of the time in duty and service in Anatolia, becomes the service of *Dede* is not restricted with his service to his own *Ocak*. He had to be interrogated by his own *Pir* by another *Dede*, who lived in another place of Anatolia, and he had to interrogate also his *rehber*, who is another *Dede*. This system is called the system of *El Ele El Hakka* (Hand to

²¹⁵ See, Yalçınkaya, A., 2005

Hand, Hand to Truth/God) Moreover, he had to visit other villages as a kind of information/knowledge gatherer. The *Hakkullah* was given with the intention that during these times of services the *Dede* was not able to work in his own farm, and this would make his family also vulnerable.

The system of *El Ele El Hakka* was a checking mechanism, *Dedes* were controlled by the *Dedes* again, where there was no hierarchy, instead a circular control mechanism. This means every *Dede* becomes checked by another at the end. In addition to this, which is the most important notion, the *Dedes* were also checked by the Talips again and again. This leads us to the third institution, that is *Rızalık*. Actually, *Rızalık* has two dimensions. The *Dede* had to get first of all the consent of his Talips to have the authority to interrogate. Even if one Talip rejected the *Dede* by not giving his/her consent, the *Dede* was not able to sit to the *post* and fulfill his service. Moreover, this was not a one-time given authority, the Talip had the right to challenge this authority every time.²¹⁶

The second dimension of *Rızalık*, is the consent between the Talips. The Talips before every *Cem* ritual, weekly or in the yearly Interrogation Cems, had to get the approval of everybody in the village. If somebody had a problem with someone else, he/she were asked to solve their problems and give each other consent to enter the *Cemevi*. If the dispute was unsolved, it became a matter of the community, and it was tried to be solved in the *Cem*. If the problem wasn't solved, they had to wait the *Dedes* return if he was outside the village. In that case the service he gave was done by the *rehber*. Yet, both sides were not allowed to join the ritual, if their dispute were not solved by the *rehber* and community.

Fourth, the system of *Müsahiplik* is another strong mechanism in the traditional context that ensured the community. This institution, is the brotherhood-sisterhood ties of married couples²¹⁷, an oath to be followed until death and even stronger when one party of the given

²¹⁶In the ideal case, the *Pir* of the *Dede*, who is the one who is authorized to interrogate the *Dede*, had to be also in the Interrogation *Cem*, so that he could learn the opinions of the Talips about the *Dede*.

²¹⁷ In some places marriage isn't seen obligatory.

oath dies. In *Müsahtiplik*, two married couple, this means four people give the oath in the Musahiplik Cemi, where the community witnesses the given oath. With the oath given, the parties become responsible from each other, they have to take care of each other's family, they have the responsibility of the acts of the other.

The final mechanism is the punishment, named as *Düşkünlik*, which translates roughly as fallenness. Having developed its more or less autonomous justice and judgement system, the highest punishment, dismisses one from the community. They are not only disallowed to enter the ritual, they might even be excluded from the social life and left alone. Depending on the fault they could even be sent to exile.

To repeat the important warning again, none of these claims on equality, solidarity and so on are argued to be unique for the particular case of Alevism. These notions are intrinsic into each different religion, repeating the well-known Marxist claim on religion, describing it as "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions."²¹⁸ On the other side of the picture, Alevism is also open to relations of subordination or social inequalities, if it would not be so there would not a necessity for such harsh social-economic-political checking mechanisms. These described institutions, the checking mechanisms are the ideal design of the society. Yet, the practice surely reveals the opposite potential also.²¹⁹ Even in that case, the checking, criticizing and punishing the deviant behavior has brought at least a political, social and economic philosophy to follow. To remember the notion of *Yol*, the path, the community is thought to be an evolving existence, not a finished project. So, the guide is the above referred philosophy and the institutions ensuring it.

²¹⁸ Marx, Karl. "Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Religion*. Progress, 1957.

²¹⁹ For example, Yalçinkaya refers to one claimed to be Pirsultan Abdal's Deyiş describing a greedy and cruel dede. One passage says: Your yellow coat shows many miracles, You have a sign of Dedelik on your hat, What are those in your pocket; silver or gold? Dede are you coming from plundering?; (Çok keramet gördüm sari kürkünde, dedelik nişanı var borkünde, altın mıdır gümüş müdür erkinde, bre dede yağmadan mı gelirsin?) Yalçinkaya, A, , 2014: 348

Having explained the hidden-meaning of the ritualistic practice, we can finally focus on the formal side of the ritual. There are three major types of *Cem* rituals made in different times and/or circumstances. The first one is the *Sorgu/Görgü /İkrar Cem* (Interrogation Cems): The *Cem* rituals in which the *Yol* is accepted, the oath is given or the where the ones who entered the *Yol* (being adolescent) were interrogated. Those from outside the *Ocaks* were not allowed to enter. The second one is the weekly Cems. *Cem* rituals done each week by the ones who were passed the interrogation. Outsiders were not allowed. The third and last *Cem* rituals are the *Abdal Musa/Nevruz/Hızır Cems*: These are done once a year, where the members of other *Ocaks* were also allowed. ²²⁰

Each ritual has its unique parts. Also, there are different *Erkans* (way of doing) differentiating from *Ocak* to *Ocak*, from place to place, but, the main guide is similar. This is expressed in the belief with the saying: *Yol Bir, Sürek Binbir* (The path is one, the ways you walk are one thousand one). Knowing this, we can describe the *Cem* ritual roughly as follows.

The *Cem* ritual, requires a relatively large hall, where everybody joining could sit, and has also a *meydan* (an arena) where the 12 services are given. The 12 services might be summarized as following: (1) *Dede*: directs the ritual, muhabbet and interrogation (2) *Rehber*: assists the *Dede* (3) *Gözcü*: is responsible from the silence and order during the *Cem* (4) *Çerağcı/Delilci*: is responsible from the lighting of the ritual, in traditional sense from the candles. (5) *Zâkir*: musician, *saz*²²¹ player (6) *Süpürgeci*: responsible from the cleanness of the place (7) *Sakka/ibrikçi*: in charge of water, brings water for those who are thirsty, and also the water for the *tarikât abdesti*²²² (8) *Kapıcı*: the doorman, responsible from the security and closeness of the door of the *Cemevi* (9) *Kurbanacı/Lokmacı/Sofracı*: responsible for the preparation of the food (*Lokma*) (10) *Semahcı*: *semah* performer (11) *Izникçi*: guards the shoes of the participants

²²⁰ Özdemir, Ulaş. *Kimlik, Ritüel, Müzik İcrası İstanbul Cemevlerinde Zakirlik Hizmeti*. Kolektif Kitap, 2016

²²¹ A stringed music instrument very popular in Anatolia. It is expressed like; *Telli Kuran* (Qur'an with Strings)

²²² Ritual washing, washing the hands symbolically during the ritual.

(12) *Peyikçi* : Announces the *Cem* ritual, makes sure that everybody knows the place and time of the ritual.

As this division of labor in the ritual also explains, all of these services are actually serving for the worldly necessities, before and during the ritual. Yet, they are also sacred duties, as they symbolize the services given in the *Cem* of Forties. It is believed that there is a holy alliance between the service performer and the first representor of the service.

The *Cem* ritual happens roughly following this sequence. Participants come and sit to their places. *Dede* comes and sits to his post and starts a discussion and gives a speech, *Zakirs* play a *deyiş*, *Süpürgeci* comes and cleans the meydan, the sheepskin is laid, *Dede* asks for consent and having received if there is a dispute between talips to solve the problem the interrogation and argumentation starts. This continues until the problem is solved. Having solved, the 12 servers are blessed by the community with prayer, three candles, symbolizing God, Muhammad and Ali are lit, the ritual washing is done, the foods are blessed, *Dede* makes a speech and informs the talips, a break might be given here. After the break, 12 servers go to meydan and get blessed, three *düvaz-ı Imams* are singed, three *tevhids* are singed, *miraçlama* is singed and then starts the *semah* of Forties, and is followed by other types of *semah*, the *Sakka* water is served, *mersiyes* are singed, the *Lokma* is served, the food is blessed and then eaten. Having finished the food, the sheepskin is put away, 12 services are blessed, the three candles are put out and the ritual finishes.

As it can be guessed, the ritual takes long time. In traditional setting, it starts at Thursday evenings and lasts until Friday morning. It is done 48 Thursdays of a year, that is, only one month, in the month of Muharram, there is a 4-week long mourning period, when there is no *Cem* ritual performed.

Now, we can focus also shortly on the ‘place’ of the ritual, which is actually the main discussion point of modern Alevism. Firstly, we better start with the common claim “*Cemevis* did not exist in the traditional setting”. This argumentation is nothing more than a misperception of the Alevi belief. This argument comes from a perspective, just like in the context of ritual, that considers the places of worship with its surface-meaning. More clearly, it demands a ‘seen’, an openly declared place for ritual. However, as said, Alevism problematizes such ‘openness’, with the

philosophy that the 'seen' side of the belief only creates an image of belief. The image of belief has the potential to veil of actual state of the being. The way of life, the social, political, economic and ethical life of the believer might be totally conflicting with the theological and philosophical argumentations and requirements of the belief, while the image of belief, created through openly declared rituals and places of worship, veils the truth.

Having this philosophy Alevi did not see a fixed place for *Cemevis* a requirement. Sure, this has other important reasons that backs up this interpretation of the space. This has something to do with security concerns. A fixed place used as a *Cemevi* is potentially available to senses of the outsiders, which makes 'marking' of the Alevi communities easier. Thinking the official orders of the Ottoman Empire that declared an open witch-hunt for Alevi communities, this concern should not be underestimated.

It might also be thought as a pragmatic/economic decision. Considering the relatively disadvantageous position of the Alevi living in distant villages, there has to be an economic usage of the scarce resources. Here space becomes one of the problems in that sense. Therefore, building a fixed place used once a week, might be not a pragmatic decision for Alevi already suffering from lack of space to continue their everyday life.

The reason for such decision might be multiplied, but what is crucial is here the point that the belief system allows such an interpretation. Actually, not only for Alevism, but also for Sunni Islam the perception of space is not different from Alevism. The prophet Mohammad is told to be doing his everyday prayers in his own house just behind a veil. Moreover, this is also the daily practice of the Sunni or Shia Muslims. The prayer can be performed everywhere that is clean and the performer is not disturbed. This means actually that Islam has in principle no place for worship either.

To develop this discussion, it might be meaningful to focus on the short history, and the main idea of the development of the form of *Cami* (mosque). The monotheistic religions in the era of Mohammad in Mecca had already some worshipping practices which could be seen as the

formalistic framework of *Namaz* (prayer)²²³. Mohammad was also one of its performers, but where? At the beginning of Mohammad's revelations, he is told to be performed in *Masjid al-Haram*; however, it is told that *Dârülerkam* was due to security reasons the "invisible" place that Mohammad continued his prayers having been threaten by the supporters of the old polytheistic belief of Mecca. *Dârülerkam* was the house of one of the first Muslims *Erkam b. Ebü'l-Erkam el-Mahzûm*. In that regard, we know that the first place of worship was actually a house, which was used because of necessity to be invisible. The general acceptance is that the first real *masjids* were founded in Medina after the *Hijrad* in 622. The first built *masjid* in *Medina*²²⁴ is named as *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi* which is a separate building built with this specific purpose. The importance of this *masjid* is said to be coming actually from its character of serving a central one in which the prophet performs his prayers in every Friday with the community coming from different places of Medina. However, instead of being a "worship" centered place, this place was a sort of assembly in which the political, social and military problems of the community was discussed and commanded. The everyday prayer was performed in other small *masjids* in other parts of the cities' neighborhoods. Actually, for nomadic Arab tribes on which the Islam grounded socially, buildings were temporary physical units to which the appeal of sacredness was not something common. This fits actually for the instrumental use of the first places of worship either. Therefore, we have to say that the emergence of a separate central building articulates itself increasingly with the city-building practice of the Islamic world. Therefore, it is not so easy to separate the place of worship from such political and administrative reasons at the beginning.

In short, the early mosques were political centers from which the city was commanded.²²⁵ At least, we know the architectural integration of the central mosques and the so called *Darü'l*

²²³ Yüksek, Ali "Namaz İbadetinin Tarihi Süreci", *Manas Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 2018, pp.111-25; Katz, M.H.; 2013

²²⁴Before the Prophet stayed short time in Quba and ordered the *Masjid al Quba* to be built there.

²²⁵Kuban, Dogan. "The central arab lands." *The Mosque. History, architectural development and regional diversity*, London Press, 1994: 78

*Imaret*²²⁶ that are the administrative centers and the governor's house, where they live and administer. The first examples of such an integration in which the governor's house is connected to the mosque could be found in Kufa and Basra.²²⁷

The problematic relation that Alevi establish with the mosque could be backed up to this era of the mosques in historical terms. The period of the four caliphs named as the *Rashidun*, being far away from harmony, in which the third caliph Osman's cousins Muawiyah who was the governor of Damascus, declared Ali, the fourth caliph, as the murderer of Osman and sought for revenge. The war between the new caliph and the governor, in which the latter could reach the success by killing Ali and the new caliph was eventually Muawiyah. Damascus was declared the capital city of the newly established monarchic order of the Ummayyad family.²²⁸ At the same time, the mosques at least the ones under the control of the Ummayyad dynasty, as having the power of being the political headquarters at the same time became the center of where the supporters and family of Ali was mentioned with insults and swearing. For Alevi this period is seen where *Namaz* and mosque became at the same time a tool of political manipulation.²²⁹

Shortly, this history as the beginning of the Sunni-Shia conflict intersects with the Alevi discourse, for which the "mosques" are addressed as the places where their respected leader and his holy family has been treated disrespectfully. *Namaz* remained the main prayer of the Ummayyad and the following Abbasid dynasty continuing their tortures and mistreating of Alevi. Almost in every book written by Alevi researchers that has a part dealing with the "Islam related history of Alevism" the dispute with "*Namaz*" and "mosque" is addressed in that direction.²³⁰ Therefore, we have to say that the theological perspective developed against

²²⁶ Serjeant, Robert Bertram. "The Islamic City." *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization*, 1980

²²⁷ Kuban, D. 1994; 79-80

²²⁸ Armstrong, Karen *Islam: A short history*. Modern Library, 2007; Nasr, Vali. *The Shia revival: How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*. WW norton & Company, 2007.

²²⁹ Zelyut, Rıza. *Öz kaynaklarına göre Alevilik*. Anadolu Kültürü Yayınları, 1990, pp. 67-8

²³⁰ Yalçın, Aziz. *Hız. Ali ve Alevilik gerçeği*. Der Yayınları, 2001:114-5; Aslandoğan, İ.S; 2009:284-9

the mosques and *Namaz* has also combined with a historical background that is shaped by political conflicts.^{231 232}

As a result of all these, we might conclude two important things that will guide the next part. First, the *Cem* ritual is not a simple formalistic set of ritualistic actions, it has inner-meanings. It requires a formation of community, that is based on equality, unification of differences, solidarity, communicative action and justice. The ritual itself becomes the reproduction of the community. Moreover, it is not a finished project. It is a path, knowing that the human-being and the life has the potential to cause deviant behavior, it is a struggle of making the community again and again. The mechanisms and institutions are there to prevent and judge deviances.

As these are the ideals of the Alevi belief, they highly depend on the economic, political and social structure in which the belief is lived. A transformation in the structure, more concretely, the passage from a village centered, agricultural household economy to city centered market production, the objective base on which the Alevi belief and institutions have formed themselves has lost their traditional importance and meaning. The market-state duopoly in which Alevism tries to survive is based on inequalities, prioritizes individualism and creating and reproducing differences, creates distance between people that makes the communication difficult, or with the developing technologies it transforms the ways of communication from

²³¹ Moreover, the rejection of the “mosque” and “” as the place and worshiping practice of Islam has caused among some Alevis to relate the Cemevi and Cem Ritual to the Islamic history, such as addressing the first masjids built in the era of Mohammad as the first and primitive form of the cemevis. This connection seems analogical.

²³² However, here one important mark has to be put. Shi’ism which in the historical context embraces the common history of Ali, Ahl al Bayt and Twelve Imams as it is in a widely-accepted interpretation of Alevism so, do not share the same position in ritualistic terms with each other. In other words, one of the reasons that make Alevis distanced towards the and mosques is not followed by Shi’ism that addresses the same “mosque-centered” torture, massacre and disrespect of Ali, Ahl al Bayt and Twelve Imams and their followers. Shia instead built its own mosques while some of the followers even do not required such a separation from the Sunni mosque. In that regard, the historical roots that Alevis establish against namaz and mosques has not been interpreted in the same direction by the Shia belief. Although there are differences on the performance and times of *Namaz* and architecture of Mosques between Shi’ism and Sunnism it is clear that they share the same ritualistic practice and place. At least it is clear that Shi’ism has more commonalities with Sunnism in terms of ritualistic practice and its place than Alevism.

face to face into virtual dominantly. The Alevi revival has to take place in such structural difficulties. The theology and philosophy remain more or less the same as an unrealized ideal, but the ritualistic practices and the institutions are hard to be reproduced as they are, because the objective conditions of life do not produce them as it was in the traditional setting. This means that the religio-political problem of Alevism is not simply a particular problem, instead a universal one which requires the challenge of the structure.

Secondly, we can conclude that *Cemevis* existed also in the traditional sense. The *Cemevi* is the place where the *Cem* is held. It might be the house of the *Dede*, it might be the house of a Talip, it might be another place big enough to make the performance possible and even in some places it might also be a fixed place. It is a continuously evolving place, as the Yol itself, it is a place in becoming. So, *Cemevis* in modern context, is another form in the historical moment of this becoming. Because of the structural necessities in which it has to form itself, it uses associational forms. In this moment of history, they function as causing encounters of the physically, socially and economically differentiated Alevi subjects. Through this characteristics it opens a potential to reform the community according to the philosophical and theological ideals. This is a political struggle. As said frequently, regardless the ideals of equality, solidarity, unification and so on the belief grounds itself, history reveals that the power relations might able to reproduce a belief just with the opposite of the ideals it supports. More clearly, Sunni Islam, although it has also similar ideals, has been reproduced under the dominance of two major Orthodoxies, Sunni and Shia Islam, as representing different ideals. Therefore, without idealizing or attributing an essential character to a belief, it is better to consider their historical existence as a political struggle having the potential of reinventing the religion in different, totally opposing ways. The *Cemevis*, in their modern terms, are where the struggle is happening today.

3.2 The Modern *Cemevi*: Between Association and Cultural Center

Alevi between the 50s and the 90s had migrated from villages to the cities of Turkey mainly to Ankara and Istanbul. Being a part of the commonly developed survival strategy of the poor, they formed *Gecekondu* Neighborhoods. *Gecekondu* has been a housing type, roughly

meaning, build at night. They are built illegally into state lands, mainly lying outside the city centers, with a cooperative effort of the villagers and neighbors. This strategy made the immigration a sustainable strategy not only for Alevis but also for other ethnic and religious groups living in villages.

What did happen to the *Cem* rituals and *Cemevis* in these transformed objective settings? As explained in detail in the previous part, the perception of ritual of Alevism presupposes a community, but not a community that comes randomly together in a place. A short comparison with Namaz and mosque both in terms of their ritualistic interpretation and historical practice might help us to understand this, as well as giving the answer how the Sunni was much easier to adapt into city life in that regard.

First of all, Namaz is a personal performance. Each believer knowing the basic ritualistic movements and the necessary praying verses and words, can perform Namaz everywhere. Historically, mainly because of political reasons, Namaz was encouraged to be practiced with the community. Masjid and Mosques were result of this aim. This means, the gathering of the community was not important for the reproduction of the feeling of community and belongingness, it had also a political meaning. Especially, centrally organized and appointed Hodjas, gave speeches before Namaz and they became potential reproducers of the central authority in the places of worship. Mosques in that sense have become the central places of worship, not because each performance of Namaz is done there, that is five times for some Mezheps a day for some three times. However, Friday prayer, has been traditionally at least once the Namaz is performed with the other joining community. State, which has been centuries long the primary founder or authorizing power of the mosque, was always there for the Sunni, and this was not a difficulty when he/she moved to the city, where he/she could find mosques. In cases where there wasn't a mosque, the state, or other political authorities used the foundation of mosques as a way of forming legitimization.

In the case of Alevis, first of all the performance of *Cem* ritual requires a fixed Community, Talips of the Ocak and the *Dede*. After migration, the Talips were physically separated. They did not migrate to same places, while some of them did not migrate at all. In the first years of migration, when only a relatively low number of Alevis migrated, the *Cem* ritual was still

possible more or less. Alevis at least once a year, to join the Interrogation *Cem* were visiting their villages, or the *Dede* had visited their Talips. As it is not hard to guess, after the migration became rapid and dense this was not possible because of the above referred reasons. The community was tearing apart.²³³

However, even under these circumstances, Alevis tried to continue their ritualistic practices by inviting the *Dedes* or visiting their villages. Yet, the overall decline of belief that secular age has caused²³⁴, combined with the collapse of the community because of losing its economic, political and social grounds that makes it a community; the authority of belief has declined and required a revival.

The revival happened in the 90s. *Cem* and *Cemevi* was the revivals integral part, but it become more than that. It transformed into a central issue. Alevis started to organize *Cem* rituals and found *Cemevis*. What was the new form of *Cem*, in the lack of community? Expressing through the three major types of *Cemevis* above, *Sorgu Cemi*, weekly *Cems* and *Abdal Musa Cems*, it was a combination of these two. The *Cems* have been held every week but they have not done with the same *Ocak* members. Instead, as it were in *Abdal Musa Cems*, they have had an educative duty and allowing every *Talip* from different *Ocak* possible. The 12 services have been still done, but the Interrogation was not possible. Simply because when the *Talip* even he/she accepted the authority of his/her *Dede*, the community was not there in the Interrogation, so the *Dede* could ask whether there has been a dispute with others. Moreover, if the *Dede* would declare someone as *Düşkün* for example, the exclusion, the punishment would not effective as the closed-community life was not as effective as it was once.

Shortly, in the lack of the ground of the community, the inner-meaning of the *Cem* ritual has not been followed accordingly, it has become more or less a formalist reproduction. Yet, we should not underestimate the importance of such formalism, but also not attributing it too much

²³³ Shankland's study argues that such collapse had started actually even before migration, as the central political authority and market capitalism entered into picture. Shankland, David. *The Alevis in Turkey: the emergence of a secular Islamic tradition*. Routledge, 2003.

²³⁴ Taylor, C., 2007

importance. The formalistic characters and the educative duty these types of *Cem* rituals provide is at least the way where the main philosophy of Alevi belief is reproduced. They make a potential to survive, although they are not the only way to produce such philosophy. So, such formalism should be a part of the debate that will guide us.

Then the second major question has to be asked: Where have been these *Cem* rituals held? In other words, what do we mean by modern *Cemevi*? There are two general forms, *Cemevis* as associations or *Cemevis* as cultural Centers. The debate of the fixed *Cemevi* or the debate on its traditional existence arises from these new types. This cannot be understood without asking the simple question where actually the Alevis in the urban form live. At the beginning it had been the Gecekondu, which were one-flatted, small houses, physically limited and always under the danger of being demolished by the state authorities. The 80s and the 90s had been the start of a still continuing trend; apartmentization. Gecekondu, as being illegal, had been legalized in different periods through policy implementations, mostly because of legitimization of the local and central political authorities. This means that, people living in Gecekondu if they were legalized, were given an apartment flat in exchange of their Gecekondu place, where an apartment is built by private construction firms or the state/municipality itself. Those who weren't able to get the legal documents for their Gecekondu were dismissed out of their homes, and mostly had to find alternative places to found a new Gecekondu.

Basically, the Gecekondu and apartment flat are the places where Alevis live today. This process of apartmentization and in-city migration has caused on the one hand the separation of the Alevi neighborhoods. This means, the neighborhood, which had been with the Gecekondu life an imitation of the village life in the peripheries of the city, had the potential to reproduce the grounds of community life, such as solidarity, cooperation, face to face interaction.²³⁵ Yet, the apartmentization has also damaged this type of community life.

²³⁵ Again this is an ideal description. There are fieldworks showing how individualist rent strategies were adopted in the context of Gecekondu neighborhoods, as well as cooperative organizations. Erder, Sema. İstanbul'a bir kent kondu: Ümraniye. İletişim Yayınları, 2013.; Aslan, Şükrü. *1 Mayıs Mahallesi*. İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2013

So, the place for the *Cemevi* had to be a separated and fixed place in order to fix the already separated Alevis living in the urban flow in a definite place. The legal restrictions, haven't allowed the building of a separate places of worship possible. So, it had to be disguised in an alternative form. Here helped the already learned strategy of associationalism. As Kurtoğlu shows in her study, the village associations have been one of the primary ways of networking and survival strategies for the immigrants living in the Gecekondu families. These associations have been places, where the interests of people organized. They have become in the social-political history of Turkey, one of the important variants that made the political-economic integration of some possible.

This inherited tactic was the basis of the new *Cemevi*. Alevis have started to open associations, and organized *Cem* rituals there. Yet, this has not been an unproblematic case. Legally such activities were prohibited, but still such associations have been used to organize such religious practices. The problem started especially when an association directly declared in its name the word *Cem*, or have written *Cem* rituals in its official regulation. The 90s, had been full of legal cases, between state and associations. The problem of status is far away from solved today, yet the *Cemevis* function still in associational status, as 'illegal' places.

Another notion to underline is the places where these *Cemevis* have been built physically. The Alevi social movement, although it also revealed the contribution of economically well-off Alevi figures' actions, have raised mostly on the shoulders of the described people from the Alevi neighborhoods. This means it is both difficult to argue for a high economic and social capital, and also a political support that is definite and permanent. Under these circumstances, the cooperation tactics have been the only way to found *Cemevis* in most of the cases. Social Initiative Takers, organizing their close networks, by accumulating the necessary resources have found associations, mostly in some apartment flats. Especially the entrance flats of apartments have been designed much bigger than a regular flat, since they have been used as warehouses. This has been somehow suitable for the physical requirements of the *Cem* ritual. So, the associational form combined mostly with the apartment flats have been one of the major types of *Cemevis* in cities.

On the other side of the picture, a relatively recent trend is emerging. Actually, this type of *Cemevi* foundation strategy has also apparent at the beginning of the revival also but it has gained a new form. *Cemevis*, have also been imagined by some of the people in the form of Cultural Centers. Actually, this could also be associations, but the main difference was that these places have been planned as big and separate buildings, including different facilities in it. Some of the *Cemevis* of associations are so today.

This desire might be backed up to the competition organized by *Cem Vakfi* with the aim of defining a fixed architectural design for *Cemevis*. The aim was to declare a fixed form for *Cemevis*, including additional facilities for education, health, social life and so on, parallel to the overall religio-political perspective of *Cem Vakfi* which might be summarized as bureaucratization and centralization of Alevi religious practices²³⁶.

This is not simply theological problem for Alevism, instead a political-economic one. If such form would have become fixed for example, this would not only give the authority into the hands of some people, it would have also made such above-explained neighborhood initiatives impossible. In that regard, although in the first glance such mega-projects seem appealing to eye, they come with religio-political problems.

A similar mentality is pursued by municipalities today. Surely, making this a part of their political legitimization, municipalities are seen as the remedy of the legal status problem. Here, by authorizing municipalities for the foundation and operation of *Cemevis* the religio-political problematic of Alevism is ‘solved’ in the opposite direction of the cooperatively and solidary foundation process of Alevi revival. By doing this, the Alevi problematic would be pushed into a local problematic, that is tried to be made sustainable by offering some facilities to Alevis. However, as it is frequently underlined Alevis have historically been, at least in ideal philosophical terms, the self-organizers and self-governors of their community and religious life. On the other hand, passing this problem to the authority of municipalities, would veil the major national/universal problem of ‘constitutional’ rights of Alevis, which has been damaged with the religio-political embeddedness of Sunni Islam into the institutional structure of

²³⁶ Ertan, M., 2017

Turkey. Moreover, as such places would organize and governed by the officials of the municipality, it would prevent one of the biggest power of the Alevi social movement, the everyday encounter of the Alevis, which seems only possible in the setting of *Cemevis* that are found in the Alevi neighborhoods.

CHAPTER 4

CEMEVİS OF TUZLUÇAYIR: QUESTIONING THE COMMONING PRACTICE

This part consists of the fieldwork and operationalizes the analytical tools developed in the second chapter. These tools for analysis are the social initiative taker, donation and exchange economy, ritual and heterodox practices and threshold problem.

This part starts with a short introduction of the history of Tuzluçayır. Then, enters to the analysis of three *Cemevis*. Each *Cemevi* is explained in relation to the above given analytical tools. These tools are operationalized for the analysis of the *Cemevis* in terms of commoning practice. The concluding part of this chapter, makes an overall elaboration, much more referring to the theoretical side of the discussion, while the analytical parts focus on the empirical side of the main question going around *Cemevi*-making and Commoning practice.

4.1 Short History of Tuzluçayır

Tuzluçayır is a neighborhood, situated in Ankara's districts named Mamak. Mamak is a huge district, starting from the boundaries of Turkey's biggest district Çankaya, reaching to the end of the cities' settlement in the east. Tuzluçayır finds itself in Mamak's middle, but it is used actually to refer more than one neighborhood, it exceeds its actual limits. Tuzluçayır refers mostly, with a reference to its informal ages an area inhabiting other Alevi-dense neighborhoods next to it, such as Şahintepe and Şirintepe. In that regard, it is better to understand with the word Tuzluçayır, its expanded form.

The neighborhood was established in 1950s, by the immigrants coming from the Alevi villages of Turkey. Following the overall story of immigration of Turkey, the economic difficulties,

which had harsher results on the Alevi villages²³⁷ forced Alevis to migration in the closest biggest city which was for Çorum and Sivas Alevis, Ankara. Through the spatial form of settlement known as *gecekondu*²³⁸ and the continuing village ties, sustainability was possible and the population in the neighborhood grew up.²³⁹

The overall violent and discriminating behavior which had centuries long past against Alevis; concretized itself here. The unofficial settlement through *gecekondu*, was a legitimization for violent actions. This happened when the socialist left was theoretically building its leaders and cadres especially in the universities of metropolitan cities. Under these circumstances an organic alliance between the socialist left and Alevis was not something unexpected. The neighborhood has become a mutually produced shelter for both sides against the state forces and right-wing ideologies.

1980 Coup was a huge blow to the socialist left from which Tuzluçayır got its share. While personally the families in the neighborhood experienced arrestments, tortures and killings; in the 80s the implementation of the ideology of Turkish-Islam synthesis had chosen such neighborhoods including Tuzluçayır as experimental areas. What the neighborhood experienced was especially constructions of official buildings like police departments, schools and streets named with Sunni Islamist symbolism and also settlements of Sunni population into the neighborhood.

This systematic process of Sunnification, which was backed up with the official ideology, especially in the lack of a class-based politics; provided the conditions on which an autonomous Alevi revival could be formed. Tuzluçayır's response for this was positive. While many of the people were maintaining their tolerant view against the socialist left, the practical direction of the politics among Alevis have become an autonomous movement dismissing the

²³⁷ Shankland, D., 2013

²³⁸ Houses that are built illegally, with primitive available resources into the empty places owned by the state.

²³⁹ Yürekli Yelda, "*Küçük Moskova*" *Tuzluçayır*, İletişim Yayınları, 2016 ; Işık, Oğuz, and M. Melih Pınarcıoğlu. *Nöbetleşe yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma ve kent yoksulları: Sultanbeyli örneği*. İletişim Yayınları, 2012.

socialist leftist ‘radicalism’. So, it has been swaying between the defenses of the Kemalist secularism; -which was the most legitimate way to defend themselves from the Sunni Islamist pressure; and reviving the lost tradition of Alevism. As a result, social democratic ideas were seen as a guarantee as including secularist claims in it, while the religious dimension of Alevism were tried to be revived through the attempts of rebuilding the community.

While the neighborhood had experienced such an ideological transformation, the physical setting was also transforming. A process of apertmentalization starting with the 90s, which is still continuing, was at stake. The *gecekondu* life, which was actually a form of rebuilding the village community in the urban context, offered a different socialization compared to the apartments. While the *gecekondu*s used streets, outdoors and gardens as creating spontaneous spaces for socialization, the apartment life prevents such spontanous encounters and bases more on a kind of distance with the public space through its isolated physical structure.²⁴⁰ Here most importantly, for such encounters like parks, squares, coffee shops and house visiting becomes crucial for the continuity of the previous relative and village ties which were the primary characteristic of the *gecekondu* life. Referring to Tuzluçayır in that regard, it is still possible to say that especially between the old generations such close relations tried to be maintained, but it actually requires a specific effort while the physical setting does not promote a spontaneous relationship and encounter possible.

4.2 The Social Initiative Taker: Social and Symbolic Capital in the Field of *Cemevi*-making

The social initiative taker is the concept used here to describe the initiative takers of the *Cemevi*-founding activity. In a religio-political field, where there is no clear-cut path to follow, no strong central order to provide the necessary human and economic capital for the foundation

²⁴⁰ Yaylagül, Nilüfer Gecekondu dan apartmana geçiş sürecinde kültürel dönüşüm: Ankara Şentepe ve Birlik Mahallesi örneğinin Bourdieucu bir çözümleme denemesi, Unpublished Dissertaition Thesis, Hacettepe University, 2008

of a *Cemevi*, people are mostly left with their own capacities to organize such foundation. This makes the initiative taking behavior crucial.

In the light of this, the main discussion that needs to be provided here if we take the Commons as our theoretical background is to dwell into the motivating reasons behind the foundation. Here, I oppose to the ideas that simply explain the politicization process of Alevism and *Cemevis* with the perspective of resource mobilization theory.

Although it is possible to read some actors²⁴¹ as using the Alevi social movement as a kind of opportunity structure, this is not enough to explain the overall picture. Following Massicard, although the booming period of the social movement might be thought as being dominated from an ‘opportunity-seeking’ behavior, where social ‘entrepreneurs’ have used their already existing social, cultural and economic capital to mobilize available resources of Alevism, this perspective does not help us to follow the recent potentials of Alevism. There are some questions to be asked? What did happen to the people who did fail in the integration to the existing opportunity structures? Did they simply abandoned the field and sought for other available opportunities, or those who continue in acting in the field do this because they wait for new opportunities to emerge? In a contrary look, does the lack of opportunities prevent the social initiative takers to be away from calculating-strategic reasoning and from such opportunity-seeking behavior? This part focuses on the answers of these question through revealing the conflicting potentials, possibilities and limits of the so-called social initiative-takers, and try to explain the *Cemevi*-making process in that regard.

4.2.1 *Cemevi* A: The Result of the Failed Attempt to Build a Big *Cemevi* in Mamak

In the case of *Cemevi* A, we see a social-initiative taker, trying to found a *Cemevi* in the most problematic times, in the 90s, where actually the associational type of *Cemevis* were

²⁴¹ For example, İzzettin Doğan might be seen as such a figure, as being available to use his social, economic and cultural capital to gain advantageous positions not only in the Alevi religio-political field, but also in the overall political field of Turkey.

considered as ‘illegal’.²⁴² Through initiative taking behavior, in a political-social environment where Alevism started to be publicized, a retired craftsman and his fellows joined the cause, and tried to found an association and a *Cemevi* in it. It was planned as a big facility, they sought for the help of some political parties, municipalities and financially well-off Alevi associations; using Massicard’s terminology, they tried to use the existing opportunities, but as I will show, they failed. In this process of ‘failure’ the social-initiative taker survived as the only one figure to continue for his cause today. Sure, he is not alone, he turned to his much closer social ties, to his neighbors and fellowmen. The social initiative taker and his relatively ‘new’ fellows, although there has been a ‘failure’ in the process, still continue their struggle even in a form where they do not have any economic gain, not a strong social support also. This part explains the process in detail and discusses it in relation to theory.

Cemevi A’s story started in 1992-1993. 7 retired friends being middle-class artisans and civil servants came together to found a *Cemevi* in the neighborhood. ¹²⁴³ the founding and current president of *Cemevi A* was the primary organizer in this group and is the only one remaining in the circle of *Cemevi A* today. The others were at the beginning there but the difficulties faced up at the beginning had made them leave one by one.

The major difficulty they faced was the trial process. Having written into the regulation of their association an article in which they stated that the primary duty of the associations is to organize *Cem* rituals; they were not allowed for operation. So, a trial process where the ruling government (particularly the Ministry of International affairs) was the other party, has started. During this process it is told that they received a lot of pressure from different state forces, from police or intelligence service, including some physical dangers to the operating²⁴⁴ association building. This caused on retreats of the founding members of the administrative board, they resigned. The president had to find new board members, which were the neighbors

²⁴² such illegality still continues today. However, the struggle has made the ‘de facto’ operation of the *Cemevis* possible.

²⁴³ Man; age 63; retired Artisan, high school graduate (1)

²⁴⁴ There was a suspension of execution, so the decision that prevents the *Cemevis* operation, could not be prevented while the trial was continuing.

and fellowmen who were voluntarily joining to the *Cemevis* foundation process. Compared to the others, these were less educated and economically disadvantageous, however, what they could provide was their human capital. While the founding president, the social-initiative taker, dealt much more with the organizational side of the foundation process, those voluntaries, whom I prefer to call as everyday contributors, have given their physical effort for the operation and survival of the place.

The main problem was not simply the legal side. The main ideal was to found a big *Cemevi* in Mamak; having its own educational, cultural and religious facilities in it. Just similar to the so-called Kulliyah. This surely required money but most importantly a place to fulfill this plan. The place they found the association was a simple flat, spared for warehouses, within a small *işham* (commercial apartment) in Tuzluçayır, and surely was not enough for such a plan. So, first of all they needed space. The main plan was to find the necessary support from the municipality. The place of the association was thought as a temporal one.

The desired place was after some official talks with the municipality in the Cengizhan district of Mamak, which is situated 3 kilometers away from Tuzluçayır, a less restructured place at that time. A big empty area of 840 m² was offered them in exchange of some money. There was not enough capital to buy it, there had to be some networking done. Being an artisan gave Interviewee-1 the necessary background on financial matters, as well as experience, primarily in money lending and loaning. So, he somehow knew from 'whom' and 'how' to find the money. Although they were not able to collect all of the money the municipality demanded, the amount that was offered, somehow convinced the municipality, and they bought the place.

Having registered the place as the property of the association the next step was building the *Cemevi* Center they planned. Friends and relatives were the primary resource of the networking done here. The process was simple: some friends or relatives working in X company, go to their bosses; mostly being *Alevi*s and demand donation for the new *Cemevi* plan. Moreover, some other construction services started to be given by the municipality, simply cement, diggers and iron was received free. Yet the collected money was only enough for laying the base of the building. The available resources were consumed in the 'buying period' of the place, so that there wasn't so much left to continue the building also.

A national-level Alevi foundation was the first stage to ask for support. The project having plans like founding radio and television centers, alongside other religious and cultural facilities was offered to the Alevi foundation. Actually, an already bought 840m² place which the Alevi foundation could use for their own operations, was thought to be appreciated. This offer for partnership however, was not accepted. The foundation wanted to buy the place instead of becoming partners with them. This counter-offer was not accepted also.

As this counter-offer reveals surely, the main motivation of the national level foundation is somehow to make the local initiative raised in the neighborhood a part of its own order and authority. The reaction given by the figures of *Cemevi A* was in one sense a rejection of an absorption by the relatively more powerful actors in the Alevi Social Movement. What Massicard here underlines as one of the characteristics within the movement, the ‘local initiatives who connect themselves to the national organizations’²⁴⁵ does not correspond to the fact here.

The second plan to find the necessary finance was to use the primary potential of the *hemşehri* associations’ motivation of economic opportunity. A *hemşehri* village association aiming to organize and mobilize the villages of a county in Ankara was applied to, offering warehouses in the cultural center that was planned to be found. It is known in the social-economic analysis of Turkey that the *hemşehri* associations have played both a crucial role in economic and political integration. Massicard also underlines the importance of those in the mobilization process of Alevism, but as apparent it is again an unrealized one, in the context of *Cemevi A*.²⁴⁶

The third plan to find the necessary finance continued with another important figure within the Alevi politics, İzzettin Doğan. Interviewee-1 says he had a meeting with İzzettin Doğan in İstanbul and got the promise that he will be visiting their place in the first time he comes to Ankara. But he didn’t, until Interviewee-1 somehow managed him to visit the place struggled with a kind of insistent behavior. As a result, İzzettin Doğan visited the construction place

²⁴⁵ Massicard, E. , 2005: 83

²⁴⁶ Massicard, E., 2005:82-3

with an engineer and demanded for the feasibility plans and promised for approximately 10 billion TL's support. That promise was welcomed with huge gratification, but apparently that was the last time they could contact again with him, so the project remained again unsupported.

Being successful on the first attempt with the municipality in terms of buying the place was not a long-term successful investment for *Cemevi A*, the other figures in the Alevi religio-political network, the central organizations, were the second potential chance. But they couldn't offer a chance *Cemevi A* was seeking for. A relatively equal party from which collaboration is demanded, the *hemşehri* association was also not an opportunity for network expansion. *Cemevi A* was alone with the close network of interviewee-1 and other founders. The project was terminated and the place that was bought by this initiative was compulsory sold to a contractor, in exchange of a warehouse and an apartment flat which is the current place of *Cemevi A*.

This so far was the economic side. What about the political side in terms of the legal problems with the state? Did the political struggle opened an opportunity for these local initiatives? To answer this, we have to look first of all the ambiguous position the political actors offered against Alevism.

The Alevi-religio politics in the beginning of the 90s experienced a booming in association founding, but not all of them confronted with legal restrictions. The 'religious' side, namely the *Cem* ritual and *Cemevis* were at the core of the political problematic. The branches of state had no common agenda on how to deal with the demand coming from Alevi in terms of opening *Cemevis*. It was referring to the Law of Dervish Lodges, opening places of worships outside the state's organizational structure was prohibited. Alevi could legally form associations, but simply, they were not allowed to name the place with words like '*Cem*' or '*Cemevi*' and they were also not allowed to organize their rituals. So, there were de-facto functioning *Cemevis*, but the state (as today) was able to declare illegality of these places.

In this ambiguity, there were however two different actions: (1) in some classes the political authorities (political authorities, we mean party leaders, presidents, governors and municipalities) were the promoters of the foundation process of associations and also *Cemevis*. We see different examples of where those figures either financially supporting *Cemevis*

foundation or symbolically by attending to their opening ceremonies. (2) On the other hand, there were places which were tried to be closed by arguing that these places organize illegal activities or raising opposition to the constructional plans of these places. Within this swaying what we see actually is a kind of selective approach among political authorities.

While *Cemevi A* as explained in the context of its relationship with the municipality, might be thought as falling into the first type, however it is not. The legal constraints were much more effective.

The *Cemevi* had in its foundation regulation an article stating that the place is authorized to build *Cemevis* and organize *Cem* Sessions. The regulation including this statement was approved actually in the first appeal to the ‘desk of associations’²⁴⁷. Despite the fact that *Alevi*s were even supported by political authorities to build *Cemevis* and organize *Cem* rituals, as it is declared in the first category above; writing this statement into the regulation was seen as a problem by the Internal Affairs, and the regulation even it was approved in the first case, was declared to be revised after the first approval.

Cemevi A remained 6 months closed after the declaration of the Internal Affairs, but they filed a lawsuit against the institution. After a decision of suspension of execution given by the court, *Cemevi A* was able to continue its activities until the end decision was given. The court wanted the opinions of 24 Ministries and the Presidency of Religious Affairs about the *Cemevi*’s official position from which only one, the Ministry of Culture hold by a minister from SDPP, approved its cultural character²⁴⁸, while the others were agreeing with the position of Internal Affairs.

The trial was followed by many social democratic/socialist organizations while at the same time it received media attention. With the power of the political attention the place received, the administration of the *Cemevi* tried to expand the field of political expansion. Here RPP

²⁴⁷ Dernekler Masası, an official institution under the organization of Internal Affairs.

²⁴⁸ The opinion of ministry was to see the *cem* ritual as something folkloric instead of a religious worshipping practice, so, they proposed to consider it as not damaging the constitution.

was the first available actor to appeal. A meeting with Deniz Baykal, the leader of RPP was arranged.

Deniz Baykal during that period was known with his positive attitude towards *Cemevis* at least the public image was in that direction; an attender of *Cemevi* opening ceremonies, which he continued during his later office period until 2010. While the picture was so and that was one of the reasons that gave courage and hope to the administrators of *Cemevi A*, the fact was not so in this particular case. The demand for political support during the trial was declined:

He said, I have no such concern like *Alevism*. I said, is that the case, OK then! I went out, there was Önder Sav, the general secretary, he tried to calm me down, said that he is appreciating our struggle. He remembered me that he had come to our *Cemevi* to deliver a speech and so on. But I said, your president shouldn't have used such words, if he does not have a concern like *Alevism*, what is his concern then, *Sunnism*? He is receiving 98% of the *Alevi* votes, how can he talk like this?²⁴⁹

While the top political position whose support was expected didn't work well in the political networking plans of *Cemevi A*, on the other side, the micro-level political attention given to the trial, started to decline. Representor of political parties and deputies declared support at the beginning of the trial, started to disappear alongside the media attention that was also flourishing.

As explained shortly before, the hardest blow came from the close network of the *Cemevi*. The founding figures were leaving the field by resignation. The founding figures of the *Cemevi* appealed to the administration of the association, with the reason that they did not expect such a harsh process and struggle. So, under these circumstances they apparently argued that they could not invest the necessary human capital to this process.

This time the president had to choose some others, but this time instead of the middle-class artisan and his civil servant friends, who were somehow equal with Interviewee-1 especially in terms of their social and cultural capital, the new ones were chosen from the investors of

²⁴⁹ Man; age 63; retired Artisan, high school graduate (1)

the human capital of *Cemevi A*. Figures relatively older than the president who were retired blue-collar workers and a small amount of them civil servants, were well-known with their devotion to the common cause and that was enough for taking the decision to be in the administrative board. I still says that they may not provide so much back-up in terms of the administrative staff, but they have always been devoted to the place's functioning.

Actually, they were those figures already serving for the everyday operation of the place even before their selection to the administrative board. Just opening the doors of the *Cemevi*, being to serve for the everyday requirements of the place "instead of wasting time in coffee-houses and parks" using their somehow commonly heard expression; was their service, it seems that had served for the survival of the place.

Here, using the word survival is not contingent, because the trial was only the one side of the difficulties they had to face. This trial, according to the expressions of these figures played crucial role in the survival of *Cemevi A*, was followed by a kind of informal imposition coming from the government officials and servants. Police officials frequently surveying the place in their police cars, personal invitations to state institutions and continuous advises to subtract the problematic article in the regulation and even the destruction of the *Cemevis'* sign are commonly repeated problems they faced.

As a result of all these processes, the expressed loneliness against the repression seems to strengthen the self-image of the small group. There were approximately 15 people. While this on the one hand strengthened their attachment and embodiment they feel with the place, it was surely a strong ground for their still continuing legitimization claim over the association.

The foundation process of *Cemevi A* exemplifies the conflict that I want to put forward. The field of the *Cemevi*-making/Association-making process as Massicard argues has directed the social-initiative takers to act in a certain way, as figures, by trying to use their available social capital find a place within the economic-political structure by mobilizing the available opportunities. Alevism in Massicard's work is described with its potential of becoming a part of the overall "associationalist" (*dernekçilik*) strategies having an effect on Turkey's socio-economic field. Especially village associations through the personal-group networking strategies of a subject (the social entrepreneur) who establishes relations with political and

economic authorities in the state institutions, political parties and economic elites; become places of opportunities to connect themselves to the resources of state and market. Alevism generally and the local initiatives particularly, are explained through their potential.²⁵⁰

Moreover, although not analyzed in detail, she is aware of the fact that the movement in time has actually lost its power of action as long as it wasn't able to finish this vertical mobilization successfully through a centralized-nationalized-universalized movement, and asks similarly what has remained. This failure according to her, left the field into a careerist-individualist ideology, where the low amounts of resources are at the target.²⁵¹

My perspective is different. I argue that the Alevi social movement is in the way that Massicard described, not because it has no potential of cooperative economic and political potential; (in fact the history reveals that it has such potential) it is so because the field it is structured in allows-favors such political, economic and ideological activity only, so that the alternative vision loses its power or tries to find ways to articulate itself into the structure. If it wouldn't be so, the never-ending struggle to make the *Cemevi* survive would not be explained, especially in a condition where there is no gain except the symbolic value it produces. Alevism in that regard, does not only survive because there are still resources to consume and mobilize, because there are still affectively involved people, trying to find ways to live their beliefs through cooperation and solidarity. The problem is that such an alternative existence in the existing political, economic and ideological field is not so strong and easy to continue without becoming extinct. The field has to be read then, as bearing two conflicting forces:

This association stuff is corrupted. They say “you do not ask, I do not tell”. This (*showing a gesture with his hands implying money*) involved in the relations. Here we do not have such thing. Actually, once... Some people tried... Things happened... They tried to involve with it. We prevented them. This involved in the relations.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Massicard, 2005, 270-1

²⁵¹ Massicard, 2005:272

²⁵² Man, age 78, retired civil servant, elementary school (11)

4.2.2 *Cemevi B: Cemevi of Relatives and Fellowmen*

Cemevi B's story starts where we left *Cemevi A*'s. In *Cemevi A*, the community organized there has been introduced as a close network of approximately 15 people who apparently formed an embodiment with the place determined mainly by trust to each other. One may simply ask, haven't their authority been challenged ever; or what did happen when it has been challenged? *Cemevi B*'s story lies on the answer of these questions.

The social initiative takers of *Cemevi B*, who are two close friends, were actually members of *Cemevi A*. They were two of the everyday contributors of *Cemevi A*, the members of the close network of that *Cemevi*. Being relatively younger from the other members of the small-group, somehow near to the age of Interviewee-1, they had the energy to develop their personal knowledge and abilities in the *Cemevi*. They were at the same time active members serving for the necessities of the place. Especially their voice during singing and capability of memorizing put them into showcase; they were visiting radio and TV Channels within the name of *Cemevi A*, while such capabilities were appreciated also by the visitors.

Cemevi A, after all those explained struggles has transformed its strategy into a kind of defensive and protective form. Their motivation become the defense of the already-gained instead of searching for new opportunities, that might bring them a financial flexibility in time. But those two figures were critical about this, in two terms. Their criticisms seem to have become the basic mental framework in the foundation process of their own *Cemevi*.

Firstly, the economic strategies of *Cemevi A* were not welcomed by these figures. Their implication was somehow targeting the unsuccessfully handled economic-political opportunities *Cemevi A* once had. During the early period of *Cemevi A*, which was the time they were seeking for economic and political support, those figures were not there, at least as active members. However, after a certain time, they got their place within the close network of *Cemevi A* as also becoming the administrative members. The protective and modest economic tactics barely guaranteed the survival of *Cemevi A*, but the desire of these two figures were different. They imagined a more attractive place being especially good at the reproduction of the ritualistic practices.

To fulfill their dream by knowing the financial difficulties of the *Cemevi* was confronting they offered alternative strategies to bring some money to the *Cemevi*. Yet, this vision was not a demand of cooperating with third party actors. They basically imagined for some alternative services, which in turn would have brought money for the place. But their offerings were not welcomed by the others. The majority coded some propositions as rent-seeking behavior and this caused to discomfort. As a reaction to this rejection and discomfort, they started to blame the old members of the association with mismanagement.

Secondly, there was a discomfort from the ‘quality’ of the *Cem* rituals organized in the *Cemevi*. Actually, at the beginning there was no such problem. 25²⁵³, a hardworking and knowledgeable *Dede*, working voluntarily, who had gained most of his knowledge during his service in *Cemevi A* in time, had also gained a widespread appreciation among the Alevi circles. He started to receive even invitations from different *Cemevis* in Ankara to somehow exemplify and teach the others how the *Cem* session is properly organized.

Finally, this horizontal cooperation of *Cemevis*, were interrupted with the involvement of a stronger actor. The *Cem* foundation offered the *Dede* an office and presidency in one of its institutions. He was promised for salary, but most importantly he was given the opportunity to fulfill his service of ‘teaching the *Yol*’ in a much wider scale. So, the *Dede* finally resigned.

Cemevi A was faced with the hard task to find a new *Dede*. The main problem, was to find a voluntary one, but there was no such opportunity. The *Dede*, who is still doing the service today, was not satisfying the two figures. The criticisms had grown, but the majority was not in favor of paying money for a ‘better’ *Dede*, so this had become, according to their opinion the biggest sign of mismanagement. While this dispute connecting itself with the general claim of financial passivity, had become harsher. These two figures by the decision of the administrative board were officially dismissed from the *Cemevi*.

What does this picture say us about the religious field of Alevism? Firstly, the *Dede*’s (25) cultural capital that had developed in time should not be reduced into a personal success story. As he admits, before he entered the doorsteps of the *Cemevi*, he hadn’t sat into the post, he

²⁵³ Man, age 72; retired worker, elementary school graduate (25)

was even not so much knowledgeable. He was a hardworking man a good listener, reader and writer. His abilities, willingness and passion to learn had made him a suitable figure for the post, to represent and re-educate the community he had served in *Cemevi A*. So, it is better to think of him as the representor of the common knowledge produced/reproduced there.

Secondly, the material reproduction of such cooperative relations and the co-creation of immaterial goods is not easy, and is vulnerable to challenges coming from economically, politically and socially strong actors. *Cem* foundation's main political goal, could be expressed as homogenization of the modern Alevism, in which the standardization and institutionalization of the *Dedelik* service plays the primary role.²⁵⁴ Their institution called as the Committee of *Dedes* (*Dedeler Kurulu*) seeks for an organization in which the *Dedes* decide the belief principles and ritual guides, and to give the decision of who is capable to do the service. So, the *Dede* (25) was made the president of the Committee. To interpret this, we may argue that the cooperatively built up knowledge and experience of Alevism, is endangered by a contrary political trend; that is the homogenization, standardization and centralization of such cooperative productions. It is not hard to guess, with the existing economic, political and social power of *Cemevi A*, a competition with *Cem* foundation was not possible.

This leads us to the third outcome to be underlined. Competitive disadvantageous of *Cemevis*, as in the case of *Cemevi A*, produces an alternative reasoning. One of the messages that these incidents made an interpretation possible: 'to be strong a *Cemevi* needs money, if it does not acquire it, it cannot compete with others and has to consent to losing'. This was the grounding vision of the two founding figures of *Cemevi B*, as having been sacked from the membership of the *Cemevi A*.

Those two figures at the beginning had no chance other than relying on their own close social networks. As a result, relatively different from *Cemevi A*, *Cemevi B* used the *hemşehri* notion stronger for the mobilization of the foundation. Those figures being still connected with their village ties, especially with the Çorum and Yozgat *Alevis* in the neighborhood were able to manage such potential. This had caused *Cemevi B* to receive relatively good donation as the

²⁵⁴ Ertan, M; 2017: 204-5

close and strong ties, of fellowship and kinship might be thought as having more control and trust mechanisms.

Although the *hemşehrilik* ties have been an important notion in the foundation of some *Cemevis* it is not a rule. For example, the close network of *Cemevi A* does not consist only from Sivas *Alevis*, there are people from Yozgat, Çorum and Erzincan either. And most importantly, the above explained conflict causing the formation of a new community at least didn't reflect such a notion. What is tried to be said here is that the initiative takers' already existing social capital, which might derive from many roots, becomes a positive asset. And here *hemşehrilik* is a stronger fact compared to the other *Cemevis*.

Cemevi B, had relatively few but strong contributors. Moreover, the constantly repeated claim of 'political neutrality' has played a crucial role for the formation of the community ties. The first rule of the *Cemevi B* was simple; they will never be tied to a national/transnational association and will dismiss any direct connection with socialist actors. However, the result derived from this shouldn't be that the *Cemevi B* is actually supporting one of the right-wing interpretations of Alevism. On the contrary, as the other two, it is similarly a Kemalist-Social Democratic perspective dominant here. However, this is not so much expressed and prioritized, as they also interpret the other two *Cemevis* too much involved into politics.²⁵⁵

According to them *Cemevi A* had once received political support from the social democratic/socialist circles, but were managed by incapable men, so the once existed opportunity was passed. According to them, that is the reason why they struggle in survival conditions.

While this is a simple differentiation strategy it functions in a certain degree also for support in the neighborhood. The 'no political connection-no rent' image they were able to produce, in the background implies also a claim of 'we are only motivated to serve our belief'. This has

²⁵⁵ As Massicard also underlines the ideological differentiations that finds its place in the language of the actors does not reflect a strong and different ideological separation as they seem to imply. Massicard, 2005:207

received also a positive response by some of the neighbors, also during the current operation), this apparently worked for the mobilization of their organization in their closed circle.

As a result, in the case of *Cemevi B* we end up with a different outcome. *Cemevi B*, was a result of strong ties, reproducing an image of religious devotion, that is supported with the celebration of “apolitical” standpoint. This closeness had a positive result, the donations and subscription fees were much more regular, so the way towards their main desire, a *Cemevi* being strong enough to compete with other actors as serving the best religious service; had found a ground to be realized. As I will show in the upcoming part, one of the beginning motivations, a successful, profiting *Cemevi*, was primarily realized by these two notions; closer ties of relatives and fellowmen and their devoted reproduction of religious practices.

Is it finally possible to argue for *Cemevi B* as representing a much more instrumentalist, calculative and economist standpoint? I would not argue so. If there isn't a well-acted theatrical *mise en scene* there, which is surely not the case, the devotion and attachment to the belief reproduced, could not be explained through simple instrumentalization for an alternative cause. However, the field in which Alevism has to find out its ways of revival and reproduction, is argued to be requiring the support of an economist reasoning. Most importantly, it is conceived as something not damaging the symbolic reasoning, on the contrary as something promoting it.

4.2.3 *Cemevi C: A Return to the Local Initiatives*

Cemevi C was founded in 2013. The social initiative taker of this *Cemevi* was actually a president in a central level Alevi association and federation.²⁵⁶ Differently from the *Cemevis* and associations working in a much closer environment, it is in these places possible to expect a kind of competition for the office. So, the elections are tougher. In the neighborhood, there are also elections, however, it is not possible to expect a competitive election where two equal

²⁵⁶ There are central branches of some Alevi associations. They are generally in the city centers, not simply in Alevi-dense neighborhoods.

parties apply for the presidential office, at least in the three cases that I observed. As a result of an election in his former duty, Interviewee-3, the social-initiative taker of *Cemevi C*, lost his presidency.

Instead of continuing opposition in that association, he resigned from the membership and wanted to build his own place with a few fellows there. He and two of his close friends who were in his administrative board resigned from membership with the motivation to found a new association. This might be read actually as a clear sign, how decentralized and personalized the religious field of Alevism is. In the lack of a comprehensive plan to mobilize the Alevi subjects, everyone has the potential to represent a position, so the initiative taking behavior becomes the trigger somehow.

Cemevi C has been their alternative. Here, two things are crucial to underline, the central association in which they were in rule, was not a *Cemevi*. As legal status, surely each of them are associations. But by this, it is meant that the former central branch didn't have a regular *Cemevi* in it. *Cemevi* was the part of their new plan.

Secondly, the social initiative taker, have lived in Tuzluçayır during his presidency in the central branch, but the association was not situated in Tuzluçayır, instead in Dikmen, a neighborhood close to the city center of Ankara known with its contribution to the Alevi social movement as well.²⁵⁷ Differently, *Cemevi C* was founded in Tuzluçayır. So, it implies also a turning back to the local initiatives, to much more close social ties, a place close to his living environment.

This had surely an economic background. Having an office for the association in the center of Ankara is not easy to afford where most of the potential revenues are received from irregular

²⁵⁷ For example, Massicard gives Dikmen as one of her examples in order to explain the spatial dynamics behind the Alevi social movement. As Massicard puts, Dikmen played the role of a headquarter at the beginning of the 90s, it was somehow a point where different networks engaged. However, it is hard to assume that it has become a central power within the movement. The 'central' branch refers to a much more formal characteristic instead of a de facto centrality.

donations, but the reason behind those decisions cannot be easily reduced into this single perspective. There were political reasons, especially prioritizing the importance of the 'local'.

The resignation from the other association and the foundation of a new *Cemevi* happened during the Occupy Gezi Protests. One of the reactive energies produced during the movement was, as frequently underlined, the very popular image of *Alevi*s in the resistance.²⁵⁸ Some even made the deduction of equating the resistance with the *Alevi* movement. In this or that way, *Alevi* neighborhoods had shown a remarkable and activism during the resistance, by which we mean the long protest corteges starting their walks from their neighborhood to reach the city center. The *Alevi* neighborhoods especially, in Ankara's context, Dikmen and Tuzluçayır started their protests in their neighborhood and connected themselves with the center of the resistance. Even when the protests went dim or totally stopped, Dikmen and Tuzluçayır continued their reactions.

The Gezi Resistance was followed by another resistance, this time in Tuzluçayır. The resistance against the *Cami-Cemevi* project²⁵⁹, received days long resistant acts with the energy produced by the Occupy Gezi movement. So, the problematic of *Cemevis* had shined also during the same period when the decision of founding a *Cemevi* in Tuzluçayır was made.

So, against the biggest standardization and centralization attempts of *Alevi* religio-politics, and also a direct attempt to make *Alevism* subject to Sunni-Islam through the local resistance, revealed an existing social energy coinciding with the social-initiative takers' aims. This in one sense declared that *Cemevis* had increasingly become one of the center issues of *Alevi* religio-politics and had also a local dimension to be solved.

So, having decided to use the energy of the local they rented the place where the *Cemevi* is still situated. For the necessary finance they applied to the president of Çankaya municipality,

²⁵⁸ Yılmaz, Nail, and Ahmet Kemal Bayram. "Taksim Gezi Parkı Olayları ve Bir Muhalefet Ögesi Olarak Aleviler." *Siyasal Bilimler Dergisi*, 4.1, 2016, pp. 1-21.

²⁵⁹ a new architectural plan trying to be built in Tuzluçayır where those two types of places of worship are tried to be articulated

in order to demand support. As a result of this, most of the design and construction was done through the support of the municipality:

I was the president of an Alevi federation. I was the president of one local branch. I know people. Having rent this place, I asked for the president of Cankaya Municipality for support. He provided some cupbards, some cushion and mattress, made also the walls painted. My personal relation with him was great. That's why he helped. ²⁶⁰

The foundation of the *Cemevi* reveals a reliance to central political authorities, but the social capital concretized at the beginning was not a permanent one. It is important to note that such supports, which are surely not new and were always there, have been very contingent, and as this case indicates, have relied on personal relations.

As the municipal support received is in that kind, temporal and contingent, *Cemevi C* had to rely on more permanent support. To get this, again the well-known formula was put forward, which is the close network ties. The president as similar to the cases of other two *Cemevis*, had to rely on the social capital which is embedded in the neighborhood; neighbors, relatives and friends.

So, while the foundation of the *Cemevi* depended somehow to the 'weak ties' of the president, the functioning of the place reflects the strong ties of the president situated in the neighborhood. As a result, the social initiative takers of the *Cemevi* some of which are still members of the administrative board of the association are still there to maintain the previously gained but increasingly damaged weak ties of the *Cemevi* within the social movement. In other words, the placemaking in that place similarly with the other two *Cemevis* grounds on the closed network formed around the everyday contributors of the *Cemevi*. However, among all others, putting the *Cemevi B*'s not fully realized potential on network expansion, it might also be seen as the 'closest' to the bureaucratic structure.

In the direction of this particular case, it is still important to ask, even in the existence of such contingent, temporal and unregulated supports, is it possible to imagine a full autonomy from

²⁶⁰ Men, age 50, early retired civil-servant, high school graduate (3)

such authorities? Moreover, turning the picture upside down, is it possible to imagine such local supports established through personal ties, to reveal a potential of a nationalized perspective for Alevi-religio politics within the political agenda of the political party, in this case particularly in CHP? It seems that in the lack of a strong alternative, it is hard to expect a total separation from such connections, however, as long as Alevism is not able to become a challenge to the political structure, it is also not possible to expect such local initiatives would exceed this scope and reach to a national policy. It is more possible to argue that the loose strings between two sides are going to be reproduced loosely without becoming totally extinct.

Turning back to the theory of Commons, we have to focus on the trend questioning whether the relationship of such Commoning practices could establish a governance model²⁶¹, where the political authorities through policy implementation seeks for the establishment of some legal basis of these kinds of relations. Although the provided example above is far away from such permanency, thinking this together with the increasing municipal initiatives taken in the context of *Cemevis*, it is possible to think this as a political problematic. Here, I have to repeat again, this would bring additional problematics to discuss, in which we cannot grasp the overall framework without considering the structure of the field. It is sure that such a potential achievement would bring ways for the Commoning practice to function much more secure, but as we cannot assume a ‘neutral’ political authority, it is hard to expect from such legal regulations to reproduce the existing inequalities both in the relation between Alevis and Alevis with other subjectivities.

4.3 The Struggle over The Reproduction of the *Cemevis*: Donation Economy

As described above with their different dynamics, each *Cemevi*, with their closed network structure depend heavily on the economic and human capital of the social initiative taker and

²⁶¹ Weston, Burns H., and David Bollier. *Green governance: ecological survival, human rights, and the law of the commons*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

everyday contributors; so, they are expected to rely economically on donations and subscription fees²⁶².

The reproduction of *Cemevis* depend heavily on this conflict. While the symbolic value of the donation/gift economy is much higher than the exchange economy²⁶³, the *Cemevis* seem keen to rely on it, although it might not function regularly. This part mainly focuses on the reasons of such functionality and dysfunctionality. Two of the *Cemevis* observed, *Cemevi A* and *C* reveal irregular donation/gift economies, while *Cemevi B* is relatively successful than the two others. Here, it is critique to underline that the reason for the functioning donation/gift economy depends still on close and strong ties. Different from the non-profit organizations relying on successfully functioning national and transnational weak donation ties²⁶⁴, a successfully working donation economy means close and strong social ties, manifested through kinship and fellowship ties. In the case of *Cemevi A* and *C* such close ties are lacking, while in *Cemevi B*, as explained above, this is much more effective. So, the community reproduced in these *Cemevis* seem closer to small enclosed cooperating units, trying to be expanded.

4.3.1 *Cemevi A* and *C*: Irregular Donations and Subscription Fees

Each *Cemevi* reflects a comparative advantage front of the other ones, as well as disadvantages in terms of their economic functioning. While the common problem of *Cemevi A* and *C*

²⁶² Subscription fees in the sense of *Cemevis* do not have functional legal power. Someone could be the member of the *Cemevi*, but he/she in actual practice might not be a regular payer of the fee. In the lack of strong rewards and sanction system it is not surprising. So, although the subscriptions are in principle in a different category, they work similar with donations.

²⁶³ Bourdieu, P; 2006

²⁶⁴ Here Robert D. Putnam's analysis on the voluntary organizations' donation system might be referred. As he puts, the increasing membership in the voluntary non-profit organizations does not produce a strong social capital, as the donations are not followed by physical participation in the organizations. Instead, people are keen to donate the money through the relations established on the street, telephone or internet. Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling alone*. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

compared to *Cemevi B* are their irregular donations, they rely on tactics of reducing the expenses, as well as alternative strategies to receive more visitors and potential donations.

Cemevi A's advantage compared to the other two *Cemevis* is having the ownership of the apartment flat where the association is situated. This means they are freed from expenses coming from monthly rents. So, monthly bills and ritual costs²⁶⁵ become the primary problem to manage. As a result, the finance is somehow in balance, but to reach this, some sacrifices had to be given.

In that regard it is observed that they mostly try in the everyday functioning of the place to use the electricity and gas in a kind of economical way. In some of the visits, when there was no activity and organization, it was observed that people were sitting in dark by turning the lights off. The same applies to the use of gas for heating. During one of my visits, the heating system of the place went off, as they were trying to find a reasonable price for its repair, they couldn't make it be fixed one week long.

The above explained case is one side of the story, the real strategy for cutting the expenses happens in the ritualistic side. The *Dede* organizing the ritual here receives no money from the *Cemevi*. While both the everyday contributors of the *Cemevi* and the visitors are not so much happy from the performance of the *Dede*; they still feel themselves obliged to rely on him, because he does not demand money and does the duty voluntarily. Such voluntary service becomes among 'retired' *Dedes* possible. As they get retirement fees from the state, they might be able to serve relatively easier without getting any fee in these *Cemevis*.

The story of this could be expressed by exemplifying some processes in the selection of the *Dede* in *Cemevi A*. *Cemevi A*, had actually a *Dede*, who was a retired one. Apparently most of the people were happy from the *Dede*'s service, he even got famous within the *Alevi* circles,

²⁶⁵ The ritual costs might be summarized as follows: 1) the Cem ritual even in the urban form continues at least 3 hours (in traditional context it starts at Thursday night continues all night long), it requires electricity and heating gas 2) the hakullah given to the dede (some dedes do not want it anymore as they now the financial difficulties the *Cemevis* are faced.) 3) the lokma, that is the food served during the cem ritual, which in principle has to include meat in it. Actually, this food has to be brought by the visitors of the Cem ritual in traditional terms. Although some of the visitors still continue to bring some homemade or bought food, it is hard to expect that the brought food meets the required amount.

finally, he received an offer of a paid position from the *Cem* Foundation, a job that is also prestigious. As *Cemevi A* could not compete with this offer, they had to find a new *Dede*. The next one they found was also a retired figure but one coming from *Nevşehir*, a city approximately two hours away from central Ankara, three hours from *Tuzluca*. A few months the *Dede* continued his duty without asking for money, but surely the weekly visit had also a cost for the *Dede*, therefore he asked it to be supplied from the *Cemevi*. So, this was also rejected and they started to look for a new *Dede*. After that they found another one, who was a young one (21), not retired but also unemployed. He did not ask for money, he did the job voluntarily. Yet, in his case, having found a regular job he could not continue the duty as he was not able to visit the place every Thursday in daytime²⁶⁶, when the *Cem* sessions were organized. He explains and compares the traditional and modern necessities as follows:

As we are in city life, we work. Let's say I do not work, have no income, and live in a village. I have to go some places, to solve the problems of my talips. To do this we have to have some income. People thing money as something material, they think that *Dedes* come and receive money. Actually, we get it to stand on our own feet. [...] A *Dede* to stand on his feet... The system is not as it was once, let me farm the field and be free in winters, it is not like this. We get money to stand on our feet. [...] *Cemevi A's Dede* was me before the one who is there now. I was not working that time for example. Then I found the job in which I am currently working. Shortly, I have to continue my life.²⁶⁷

This reveals the picture then. A *Cemevi* that is experiencing difficulties in terms of meeting the very basic expenses have to somehow rely on retired, voluntary and ones coming not from far cities and places. The current *Dede* in the particular example of *Cemevi A* meets these criteria and was actually a kind of remedy for the problem they confronted. He lives in the neighborhood, is retired, and does the service voluntarily without asking for money. The

²⁶⁶ As the visitors are relatively older, the *Cem* rituals are organized in day times.

²⁶⁷ Man, age 38, civil servant, high school graduate (21)

current *Dede* has all of the advantages the *Cemevi* seeks, but in exchange they say that they have to sacrifice from the quality of the *Cem* sessions.

Yet this causes a kind of dilemma. As the relatively low appreciated *Cem* sessions are generally not able to get the attention of visitors, this actually results a decrease in potential donations, in form of *lokma* or money. More clearly, to cut the expenses of the *Cemevi*, they are not able to give the post to a *Dede*, whose performance they would appreciate, but such decision in turn results to low participation into the *Cem* rituals they organize, which in turn means that they prevent potential donations.²⁶⁸ This *Cemevi* has found an alternative strategy to overcome this problematic, which will be explained in detail in the next part.

In the lack of regular donations and subscription fees, the additional costs have to be paid from the small-group of the *Cemevi*, who are nothing more than old, retired workers and low-level civil servants.²⁶⁹ It is not hard to guess that there is not much economic capital to invest here. When the bills come it tried to be payed out of the donations, if it is not enough, it has to be paid from the personal money of these everyday contributors.

Cemevi C deals with the same problem, but has also a comparative disadvantage; in addition to *Cemevi A*, they have to pay the rent of the warehouse in which the *Cemevi* is situated, that is approximately more than 1000 additional Turkish liras compared to the case of *Cemevi A*. As this the case, the *Cemevi* has to increasingly rely on the personal contributions of the small-group, and mostly to the president. The municipal support might be thought as another possibility, but as explained above, such support is not frequent, contingent and mostly in terms of providing the necessary material and labor for the physical renewal.

²⁶⁸ Visitors are potential donors because as referred above *Cemevis* lack in terms of communication means to collect donations outside the boundaries of the *Cemevis*' physical setting. It is first of all not seen ethical, as the donation in modern context actually replaces the traditional *lokma*, the food brought by the *talips* to the ritual. Although it is not widespread, we also see that people sending money to the *Cemevis* as donations even if they do not visit the place frequently. Therefore, the expectation from the visitor is whether to bring *lokma*, or throw money into the donation box of the *Cemevi*. However, this is surely not forced.

²⁶⁹ Some examples from my Interviewees: a retired truck driver worked in the municipality, a janitor in a state institution, a retired farm-worker, a stallholder.

We did not say anything like, we have such expenses and such income and so on. How can we manage all those things? The president pays here, I also do. From our own pocket, we share the expenses also. We are just like beggars here.²⁷⁰

As a result of this, while alternative strategies are found for additional resources the primary strategy for cutting expenses is directed again for the ritual organization. Differently from *Cemevi A*, *Cemevi C* does not organize regular *Cem* sessions each week. As they argue that organizing *Cem* sessions each week does not get the necessary attention from the neighborhood, they do it once a month, so relatively more people are attending. Moreover, this is surely an alternative way for cutting the costs. Since each *Cem* session somehow brings additional costs, by reducing the frequency the *Cemevi* becomes able to cut from expenses.

In normal circumstances, we have to organize Thursday nights the *Cem* ritual, but there is something important. This place has 1500 liras expenses each month, 200 liras are paid by donations at most. 1300 liras are paid from my pocket. I pay the half of my salary here. We considered whether we should organize *Cem* rituals each Thursday. The *Cemevi A* organizes each Thursday, 30 people join their rituals at most. In *Cemevi B*, it is also so. When I would organize, I would take 10 people from one, 10 people from the other, this would be meaningless. Each week a *Cem* ritual with 10 to 20 people... OK, the numbers are not important but... They come to ask why we do not do every week. They criticize us but do not ask how the electricity of this place is paid.²⁷¹

Here we may summarize that there are two possible ways to deal with the problem; the first one is to follow the path-lines of *Cemevi A*, finding a *Dede* serving for free; or reducing the frequencies of the *Cem* sessions. *Cemevi C* chooses the latter one. Even in the case of *Cemevi A* having the advantage of owning the property of the flat they situated in, the additional expenses a *Dede* brings each week could not be handled. Therefore, *Cemevi C* decided to reduce the costs that regular *Cem* sessions bring, which is not only the expenses of the *Dede*, but also *lokma* served and the electricity-gas used during the *Cem* sessions. As a result, *Cem*

²⁷⁰ Man, age 42, worker, elementary school (20)

²⁷¹ Men, age 50, early retired civil-servant, high school graduate (3)

organizations done once a month give them the opportunity to call different *Dedes* from even outside Ankara, in exchange of paying their transportation costs and some portion of the donation received.

This detailed analysis provided so far reveals one crucial thing on the simple operation of *Cemevis*. The neighborhood *Cemevis* entering to the field of religious production of Alevism fall directly to the inescapable trap of market inequalities. They do not even meet their basic requirements, live in precarious conditions and this simple disadvantageous position they entail in terms of their economic capital prevents the realization of their main motivation, the production of symbolic capital, while at the same time this economic dependence to their close network reproduces the closure again and again. The donation economy evoking and promoting the cooperative action seems not expanding in the lack of interest to Alevism. On the other hand, the market-state opportunities do not seem to be fully realized, therefore it is reasonable to expect that such *Cemevis* will remain in their close communities in the lack of an alternative politics that makes the network cohesion of different Commoning practices possible.

4.3.2 *Cemevi B: Regular Donations and Subscription Fees*

The cases of *Cemevi A* and *C* reveal the simple precariousness of the *Cemevis* especially when they are not able to receive regular donations and subscription fees. *Cemevi B* represents the other side of the picture here. Their closer ties within the *Cemevi*, relying on kinship and fellowship ties, *Cemevi B* has been able to establish a relatively better control over the donations and subscription fees.

To remember, on the foundation process of *Cemevi B*, it is argued that the social initiative takers of the *Cemevi* have used their already existing strong ties coming mainly from their relatives and village connections. Additionally, their exclusion from *Cemevi A* has become a strong asset, on which a counter-reaction could be organized.

The everyday contributors are those people, who invest their human capital, time and effort for the everyday functioning of the *Cemevi*. Every *Cemevi* relies on the effort of these groups

consisting of approximately 10 people for each. On the other hand, there are also visitors, those only attend the *Cem* sessions sometimes and do not establish strict ties with the place.

However, this is less likely the case in *Cemevi B* and this is an exception. This means, in addition to the fixed and loyal category of everyday contributors, who exists in every *Cemevi*, the visitors of *Cemevi B* offer a different dynamic compared the other two. It is most likely to see the same people in the next *Cem* session or in randomly visited other *Cem* sessions, while this is much more irregular in the other two. This is mainly because of the already existing close ties between the visitors of *Cemevi B*. The observation has shown that there are many people among the visitors of *Cemevi B*, who are relatives, while the closeness among the visitors of other *Cemevis* mostly reach to the category of neighbors. Sure, in other *Cemevis* relatives-same villagers could be found but compared to *Cemevi B* it is relatively an exception. In this situation, a homogenous visitor group is not surprising.

As a result of this simple fact *Cemevi B* reflects actually a relatively more homogenous group, this in return reflects a kind of higher trust and loyalty network among the members and visitors, that is at the end manifested through regularly paid subscription fees and donations.

So, through having this comparative advantage, the tactics observed in other *Cemevis* on cutting expenses, is less likely to observe here. As explained above, *Cemevi A* and *C* have had to cut somehow from the additional expenses caused by the regularly organized *Cem* sessions. On the former the solution was to find a *Dede* that doesn't demand money, although this has prevented them to organize the *Cem* sessions according to their desire, as they are not so happy from the performance of the *Dede*. The latter's solution was to organize the *Cem* rituals irregularly, mainly once a month. Here, in *Cemevi B*, while there is a kind of scarcity in the neighborhood in terms of finding a *Dede* for the organization of the *Cem* sessions, we see two *Dedes* here to organize the *Cem* ritual both of them being also the members of the administrative board. Additionally, while sometimes in *Cemevi A* the decision to cut the *Cem* session short because of lacking interest, in *Cemevi B*, the *Cem* sessions are done comparatively longer that causes additional costs to the *Cemevi*. While the *lokma* in *Cemevi A* and *C* is mainly fruit and pie, *Cemevi B* uses catering firms to serve it. In short, *Cemevi B* has additional costs, but is able to pay them.

It might be asked here, what this brings about in terms of the community building process. Does the relatively well working donation economy, the cooperative reproduction of the place, cause for the expansion of this cooperation network? More clearly, does it exceed the small-closed community of these relatives or villagers?

To answer these questions carefully, it is necessary to underline an important nuance here. *Cemevi B* does not use some tactics to cause attraction, but this does not mean that they are totally closed to outside. On the contrary, what we observe in the case of *Cemevi C* is that, they actually develop some services which they sell, so actually open the doors of the *Cemevi* to outside, by evoking a different economy method. While *Cemevi B* reveals a disinterest on attracting new visitors for their *Cem* ritual, they establish an alternative relationship with the outsiders; through selling services.

So, the last important point to underline here is that the donation economy, repeated often as the economic model of the Commons, does not necessarily lead to an expansion of such kind of economy. As obvious, while this type of economy creates a symbolic value that exceeds the ‘symbolism’ of the money relation (even if it might include money it cannot be reduced into it, because labor might be donated also, which is observable in the case of *Cemevis* easily), so goes ‘beyond Market’, yet does not necessarily remain beyond it. The case of two other *Cemevis* still reject such social relations and depend on donation, and criticize the other method ethically. However, this does not function in the way they desire in the lack of demand towards cooperation.

4.4 Reforming the Ritual and the ‘Sacred’: Developing Tactics to attract Visitors and/or Providing Services to Sell

The previous part explained why and how the *Cemevis*’ primary functioning depends on their donations and subscription fees, and actually how and why their regularity or irregularity transforms the basic functioning of a *Cemevi*. The regular subscription fees and donations somehow depend on regular and loyal visitors. Someone joining the *Cem* ritual whether brings *lokma* he/she cooked or bought and donates it to be served after the ritual, or the donation could be directly in form of money, thrown into the donation box.

One point is quite important. The demand on attracting visitors should not be reduced into an economic reasoning. First of all, such desire, at the first instance serves for the symbolic capital of the *Cemevi*. The small-group who has a symbolic capital with their position on that place, reproduces this if they are chosen among all other alternatives in the neighborhood. Moreover, related to this also, the motivation for more visitors might simply evoke a positive feeling towards the success of the common cause. More people visiting a *Cemevi* is a kind of symbol of ‘more and more Alevi’ interest on the common cause’, ‘the place that I embody my subjectivity plays a role for evoking such interest’ and that is something satisfying for someone who has already embodied his/her personality with the overall cause of Alevism.

Besides the demand on visitors, there is also the demand of visitors, which makes the picture more complicated. There is no one fixed demand coming from the visitors, they may conflict with each other. This so because on the one side, the demands of the visitors are affected from different subjectifications within the Alevi religio-politics’ multidimensional environment, on the other side, the priorities of everyday life of the visitors might conflict with the served service and this causes an expectation to fit the service with such priorities. Some examples to clarify this might be given²⁷². There are people thinking that the *Cemevis* are important for the modern organization of Alevism, the *Cem* ritual is also so, but the religious dimension of it should not be emphasized, because it is pure obscurantism. On the other hand, there are some everyday priorities. The *Cem* rituals are mainly organized in day times, as most of the visitors in the neighborhood are thought to be ‘retired’ or ‘unemployed ones’ (mainly housewives), but this conflicts at the end with the demand of students and working people, who somehow show interest to the *Cem* ritual. So, the *Cem* ritual suffers also from the work-life balance problems of the Market economy and modern life.

Secondly, we have to remember the above-mentioned financial restrictions. A *Cemevi* transforms its primary services according to the regularity/irregularity of the donations and subscription fees. Particularly the quality, frequency and duration of the *Cem* ritual depend somehow on the financial restrictions. Frequent and long *Cem* sessions and experienced/professional *Cem* performers necessitate human and economic capital, which is

²⁷² For a detailed comparison see; Erdemir, A.; 2005

not easy to meet, and as shown, only the ones who have succeeded in the donation process, have the flexibility to organize the *Cem* ritual as the way they want.

Thirdly, the symbolic value of the *Cem* ritual somehow dictates some necessities, some rules have to be followed to do the right thing for the sake of the ritual, which does not totally disappear within the pressure of the two. Yet, this is not unproblematic also. Turning back to the multidimensional religio-political field of Alevism, the description of ‘necessities’ may also vary. In addition to this, Alevism even in its traditional context had allowed different variations in terms of religious practice. In that case, it is not also possible to assume a strict domain of dictating its necessities.

As a result, regarding the religious practices, mainly the *Cem* ritual, we end up with a multi-dynamic decision-making zone, both for the service provider and receiver. This in one sense, is an obstacle for the Commoning practice, because it ends up with the fact of deciding on some inclusionary ways, while on the other side this causes exclusions. In the lack of an expanded body of collaboration and decision-making process, the method becomes more or less ‘trial and error’. This means, the service providers make a decision, under the tri-partite pressure explained above, if it does not end up in the desired way, they revise the decision.

Having described this tri-partite pressure zone, I have to underline that one of these three sides, which might be summarized as, financial restrictions, visitor demand, religious necessities; play a dominant role over the others. If this would not be so, a decision would impossible to make, basically they cannot be met at the same. Yet, it is critical to read this by underlining the fact that, none of these prioritizations are based on ethical-political positioning. For example, *Cemevi B* does not prioritize religious necessities because it is more religious than the others. It is because of their capability to prioritize religious functions due to their relatively well-functioning economic system. In that regard, this means that actually they do not open themselves to the visitor demands, they have much more strict decision-making processes, preventing the entrance of the visitor.

Hence, we end up with a picture in the evaluation of the tri-partite pressure zone, a relatively autonomous power of the financial restrictions in relation to others. Those somehow capable to be less restricted financially, may follow the religious necessities. On the other side, the

financially restricted ones, are not able to meet their religious preferences, therefore try to find a balance between those three.

Turning back to theory, we have to remember that one of the underlining notions of the Commoning practice has been its potential to allow heteropraxis, a negotiative process of decision-making and giving place to potential becoming, instead of favoring pre-determined and fixed practices. Not surely, as strong and systematic as some national Alevi associations try for the homogenization, standardization and centralization of the Alevi practices, *Cemevi B*'s example reveal such a tendency. In the case of other *Cemevis*, surely being related with the concern of the following part, as being relatively more open to the outsiders *Cemevi A* and *C*'s practices allow encounters, in which the Commons theory sees a potential of horizontal networking. However, we have to underline here carefully that such relatively openness and the heterodox practices allows is not guaranteed. This means in a hypothetical way, if *Cemevi A* or *C* would be able to collect their donations regularly, they might have also adopted much more strict and fixed strategies if the donors demand were in that direction. It is important to see two conflicting possibilities always in a struggle.

This is exactly where again the language of the Commoning practice has to enter. The expansion of the donation networking as an ideal, should not be restricted with its financial benefits for the *Cemevis*. The expansion of donation becomes the expansion of cooperation only if it is also followed by negotiative, heterodox and continuously-dynamically transforming practices. On the other hand, seeking for such heterogeneity and for practices in continuous making, is not simply for the sake of Commoning politics, it is the only way to revive Alevism with its main philosophical and theological insights. As explained in the theory chapter in detail, since Alevism's religious practices in their traditional context are so much embedded in the social-economic and political functioning of the community, in the transformation of the traditional organization of the community, the religious practice, even if it is produced 'formalistically', it still would have no correlation with the economic, political and social life of Alevis necessarily.

So, the practice of Commoning enters here with a different language and prioritizes such encounters underlining their potential to cause alternative becoming. Here we have to question the 'ideological' framework of the becoming at the end. We have to ask whether the

Commoning practice reproduces the existing structure, in its most general sense, the market-state duopoly, which conflicts with Alevism's basic philosophical and theological arguments, or does it entail a potential to challenge the structure in a way where the philosophical-theological arguments of Alevism, such as economic cooperation, equality, solidarity is reproduced?

4.4.1 Cemevi A: Ozanlar Günü as Place for Encounters

The decisions of *Cemevi A* in terms of their religious practices is affected by the performance of the *Dede*. While this *Cemevi* had a settled *Dede*, from whose performance there was a common appreciation, with the resignation of him, it hasn't been possible so far to replace him with a *Dede*, who gets a similar appreciation.

Actually, the *Cem* ritual is actually a collective performance. There are 12 services, each fulfilled by one people at least. Among those services one of them has been attributed as having the primary importance; the service of the *Dede*. While *Dede* is only the name of the service fulfilled during the ritual, it is commonly used to refer a position outside the ritual. Actually, *Dedes* could only be selected from the figures having one of the three ranks; *pir*, *mürşid*, *rehber*. *Alevis* who are from the family lineage of 12 imams, are eligible to receive one of these three ranks.

However, this is the basic requirement. The talips of an *Ocak*, whom the *Dede* offers his service, should also accept the *Dede*'s eligibility for this service. If the *Dede* does not get the approval of his talips, he could not claim the position. As a result, the approval of the *Dede* has a critical importance, but as it is easy to guess such approval has not been sought in the modern context. There is always the possibility of a *Dede* to sit to the *post*, who doesn't represent the common will of the community. This is simply because, there is no community to give such an approval. In the traditional context, the talips of that *Ocak* were the ones who were authorized with this, but in the modern sense, the *Dede* serves not only to his *Ocak* in a *Cemevi*. Therefore, he cannot be approved commonly. So, there is a decision made according to different dynamics, and a pseudo-consensus has been reached. Combining this together with the non-functioning mechanisms of the *Ocak* system, mainly interrogation and sanction

systems, it is hard for a *Dede*, who even has got a full approval to interrogate the visitors of the *Cemevi*. So, the primary role of the *Dede* becomes to organize a ritualistic performance. Following this, in the case of *Cemevi A*, it is hard to argue for an appreciated performance of the existing *Dede*. The primary motivation to approve the *Dede* here is because he is the only free one, showing interest to sit to the *post*.

Looking closely to the problematic we might say that the *Dede* is firstly not able to perform his judicial power. In the existence of a dispute the *Dede* has to represent the theological-ethical law of Alevism, and has to make a neutral trial front of everyone. He is only authorized to do this with his *Ocak*'s talips. In a case where, the talips are from different *Ocaks*, and also the *Dede* hasn't got the approval of his own *Ocak*'s talips, cannot fulfill this duty.

In the lack of such mechanisms, another expectation from the *Dede* might be seen as his duty of education. Here education refers to ethical-theological guidance mostly. In traditional sense, while the *Dede* has been seen as an ethical role model, representing and educating the virtues of the *Alevi* theology; he has been also an educator of the daily issues, such as health and farming. The *Dede*, was mostly the only travelling figure between different *Alevi* villages. As expected, *Alevi*s having lived in a kind of isolated life being away from the available knowledge resources, the *Dede*, as the traveler was the center of the knowledge and communication transfer between different *Alevi* regions.

After the modernization period of such institutions, as expected, the knowledge has democratized. This means that the *talip* has potentially the equal opportunity to reach the knowledge and information as the *Dede*. While this has freed in one sense the *Dede* from such responsibility, the lived experience of such fact has not been so. An argument of knowledgeable *Dede* was frequently heard within the *Alevi* circles, following the claim that a *Dede* should be knowledgeable than his talips.

Here, knowledgeable means two things. Firstly, the *Dede*'s knowledge on the *Alevi* theology and history is referred. Secondly, it refers to the requirement of being knowledgeable in secular areas, natural and social sciences roughly. The reason for this might be seen as a reaction to the common 'religion vs. science' debate, where actually the Sunni Islamist religious figures are mainly fitted in regressive perspectives being against the scientific thought among *Alevi*s.

The effect of the Kemalist ideologies' modernization and enlightenment claims caused among Alevis to think about their religious leaders, differently from the Sunni Islamist once showing an anti-scientist tendency. As a result, it might be argued that the restructured modern *Dede* is the *Dede* able to make the negotiation between the scientific knowledge and *Alevi* theology. In that sense this also becomes one of the primary ways for the *Dede* to enjoy a kind of authority within the circle of *Cemevi A*.

In that sense, the *Dedes*' authority becomes primarily important within the narrow boundaries of the *Cem* sessions. In other words, the decrease within the symbolic and cultural capital that *Dedes* acquired their authority from, has minimized the importance of *pir*, *mürşid*, *rehber* characteristics (the duty towards ethical-theological guidance-education) of the *Dede* and prioritized only the service they give during the *Cem* ritual. As this has become the case, a relatively new notion has become the root of *Dedes*' authority; the performance. In short, while *Dedes* outside the ritual are expected to maintain secular-modern knowledge in addition to their religious knowledge, during the ritual, their performance becomes the primary determinant.

The traditional *Cem* ritual attributed a transcendental meaning, such as social justice, communicative praxis and decision-making among equals. But as long as the *Cem* rituals are mixed ones and do not fulfill their primary duty, the word performance becomes limited mainly with, the proper symbolization of the ritual, or its education and or devotion represented during the ritual. Generally, the *Cem* ritual, particularly *Dedes*' performances are measured through their formalistic means.

The *Dede* of *Cemevi A* struggles in that sense also, as he is really old, has health problems causing adverse effects on his reading, hearing and speaking. As a result, the educational and devotional sides of the *Cem* ritual receive relatively less appreciation from the visitors and the small-group of the *Cemevi*. According to the them, the *Dede* performs the *Cem* ritual by reading from written papers instead of memorizing the speech, makes spelling mistakes, confuses the sequence of the ritual and lacks the capability of oratory. The discomfort can easily be observed from the chatting crowd as well as the heard huffs and puffs. Some expressions might summarize the overall view:

Why should anybody come here? To see this *Dede*? The one who visits here wants to get satisfaction. If he does not get it, he comes one week, two weeks, in the third week he would say goodbye if he would not learn anything here. I come here, because I know people here, they need help. That is why I am coming here.²⁷³

However, the performance of the *Cem* ritual does not only depend on *Dede*, as he isn't the only performance provider of the ritual. Especially the performance of *zâkir*, *semah* performers²⁷⁴ and the *kurbançı* are still the effective servants, services and performances among the 12 services. But currently, those still depend somehow on the *Dede*. Especially, as the above quoted expressions reveal, if the *Dede* does not provide the necessary satisfaction to the visitors, the number of visitors start to decline.

Cemevi A is a great example for this. Their *Cem* rituals are done roughly by 30 people. Young or mid-aged people are rare; as a result of this the services have to be provided by the available visitors. Mostly, because of the physical problems of old people, the services cannot be performed in desired manner, as those services demand physical activities like speech, memorizing, shouting, bowing, kneeling and bending. Sometimes, if there are no enough people the *Cem* ritual finishes without performing the services, by only singing, reading and discussing. In that regard, as the *Cem* ritual is perceived dominantly as a kind of spectacle and performance, it becomes hard for this *Cemevi* to provide the requirements of these.

Therefore, the small-group of the *Cemevi* has come up with an alternative strategy, to attract the visitors. The *Cem* ritual has become a weekly routine with the same people, and actually the association does not want to change the context by being convinced with the idea that the *Cem* rituals have lost their attraction already. In that sense, the administrative board has established an alternative day and invested their efforts and resources to this particular day. It is "the day of *Ozans*", which is at the same time *unritualistic* in terms of sharing poems, giving some speeches, but sometimes might be transformed to a semi-ritualistic setting, with *deyişs*, *duaz-i imams*, *semah* and *duas*. It is a kind of combination of sacred and secular practices.

²⁷³ Man, age 59, retired worker, elementary school graduate (12)

²⁷⁴ Semah is not one of the 12 services but is still important within the *Cem* ritual as a performance.

As a result of making this possible, in these days someone could expect different people from those visiting the *Cem* rituals and related to this they are the most crowded days. For example, the 32²⁷⁵ and 28²⁷⁶ could find themselves a place in these days to read and sing, although I never saw them in the *Cem* ritual. On the other hand, some other people, who mainly want to refer to more ritualistic involvement, can also find there a place. For example, the *Dede* attends also this day. He still blesses the *lokma* brought to the place. He sits to the *post*; some people perform a *niyaz*. During the singing of *deyişs* one may expect the shouting of “Allah Allah” and so on.

This activity has a relatively broader effect-zone as it attracts people from outside the neighborhood. Surely, a *Cem* ritual could also get attention from outside, but this is rarely happening. However, the day of Ozans, gets attention from all over Ankara, or even outside Ankara; it is a kind of platform for *Alevi* Ozans to share their poems and *deyişs*. It is a successful organization, in terms of reproducing the religio-cultural elements of *Alevism*, is dynamic, allowing different encounters. The general aura of this organization compared to the ‘atmosphere of the *Cem* ritual, is enthusiastic-participative.

As this is the case, the Day of Ozans becomes the primary activity for the *Cemevi*. This does not mean that they underestimate the *Cem* ritual. They still feel the necessity to organize the *Cem* ritual each week. However, it can be said that, at least, in terms of using the material resources of the *Cemevi*, the day of Ozans has a priority. Since there are more visitors, the day of Ozans gets more attention, the *lokma*, which is one of the most important sides of the *Cem* ritual, is not served in *Cem* ritual, rather than in the day of *Ozans*. Actually, in *Cem* ritual there has to be the *lokma* and there is some. However, the main *lokma* that is donated or bought, which includes meat for example²⁷⁷ is reserved for the day of *Ozans*.

So, we may conclude that these alternative organizations fulfilling the desired satisfaction *Alevi*s. These alternatives surely cannot challenge the symbolic value of the *Cem* ritual, but

²⁷⁵ Man, age 47, unemployed, high school graduate (32)

²⁷⁶ Man, age 43, unemployed, high school graduate (28)

²⁷⁷ In the *Cem* ritual has to include *Kurban* (meat) in the *lokma* that is served.

practical necessities and opportunities force *Cemevis* to find balanced solutions for functioning through collaboration. The *Cem* ritual, with its all unrealized ‘potential’ for the reformation of the community continues to exist much more in a symbolic way. On the other side, Alevis, who have not been able to find the necessary connection of the *Cem* ritual with their social, economic and political life, try to challenge this fact by inventing other organizations. These organizations might have the potential to form the lacking connection between the theological-cultural elements of the belief with social-economic and political being of the Alevi subjects in modern, urban and secular age, primarily because they do not impose restrictions and are open to improvisations, and are inclusive.

To conclude, the claim here is not a call for scratching the *Cem* ritual out and replacing it with such alternatives. The struggle to continue the *Cem* rituals, although it is simply done through formalistic ways, is also the way to protect at least the form, through which the not-yet-realized potential could be passed to the future. As said, these organizations like *Ozanlar Günü*, are more inclusive and open to improvisations on the one hand, and somehow reproduce the theological-cultural elements of Alevism on the other. Through this particular character allowing for encounters and rejoining of the community, might function also for the re-interpretation of the *Cem* ritual as something concretely responding to the ways of being of the modern Alevi subject, by exceeding its formalistic characters. It is not possible to formulize this, it is a process of becoming. However, the main claim is that there is no necessity to draw a clear-cut boundary between such cultural organizations organized and the *Cem* ritual.

4.4.2 *Cemevi B*: Shared Devotion, Formalism and Service Selling

As explained above, one of the conflicts happened between *Cemevi A* and *B* was on the ground of the *Dede*. The two figures, the social initiative takers who found *Cemevi B* were not satisfied with the capabilities of the *Dede* in *Cemevi A*. They criticized this administrative decision to let the current *Dede* to give the service there. Their discomfort was interpreted as a kind of disrespectful attitude towards the *Dede* and were one of the charges during their trial period that ended with their dismissal from the association.

So, the motivation here has been to find a *Dede*, who is knowledgeable and could serve with a desired performance. The first step was this. In that regard,²⁷⁸ was eligible to become a *Dede* having proven his lineage, but had never done such duty until that time. Therefore, he was not the first choice. The first candidate was the *Dede*, who had left *Cemevi A* to work in *Cem Vakfi*'s institution. They asked him, whom they know already from *Cemevi A*; but he denied it. As a result of some other unsuccessful attempts, the only available possibility for this *Cemevi* was 7.

Actually, at the beginning of the foundation process, the *Dede* was given the role of being responsible from the accounting of the *Cemevi*, as he was an experienced accountant worked years long as an official in the state institutions and also because he had a great experience and knowledge in associational foundation and functioning. But as he was the only available figure to give the service, he felt himself obliged to take this responsibility:

We wanted him actually, but he didn't sit to *post*, we really wanted him but he didn't. Because of his presidency in the institution of *Dedes*. We wanted him to guide us, to enlighten us, to give a leg up us. I said come and teach us things that we don't know. But sadly, he didn't sit. [...] Then I said no offence but I will sit to the post then. Either this way or that way. I made such a decision. I sat, I still continue.²⁷⁹

This has been a kind of *deviation* from the starting motivation of the social initiative takers. They were critical about the capability of the *Dede* of *Cemevi A*, but somehow, they had to do the same thing; give the service to a *Dede* from whose performance they are not sure. Having questioned this, according to their perspective, they still argue that their *Dede* was not comparable to the one in *Cemevi A*. The main difference they represent does not come from the religious knowledge actually. 7, being a relatively literate man, having proven his merits on secular fields, has given them the necessary courage. According to them he was energetic, ambitious, healthy, experienced and literate enough to learn the service quick.

²⁷⁸ Man; age 68, retired civil servant, middle-school (1)

²⁷⁹ Man; age 68, retired civil servant, middle-school (7)

As a result of this, a period of education started. Actually, in traditional sense, such education had to be done in Hacı Bektaş lodge, or at least, a *Dede*, who has taught himself outside the lodge informally by being a pupil of his master *Dede*, has to prove his capacity and receive the approval from the lodge. The founding figures of this *Cemevi* say that they checked and verified the *Dede*'s bloodline but the 'education' was done in the *Cemevi*.

The teachers have been both the older non-*Dede talips* having a great knowledge of *Cem* sessions, as well as the two social initiative takers who got experienced and informed by being a kind of *pupil* of the previous *Dede* (25) of *Cemevi* A. It is here important to note that, as in the case of 25, the current *Dede* of *Cemevi* B, is also a result of a collaborated and accumulated knowledge of the community forming the *Cemevi*. On the other hand, their main satisfaction does not come from the *Dede*'s performance at the first instance. The main reason for his approval from his capacities as an accountant:

I can't say that the *Dede*'s knowledge, talk or praying and so on is alright but he is like an accountant. An accountant. Look he is the accountant of our *Cemevi*.²⁸⁰

Our *Dede*... Sure he has some deficiencies, we are actually supporting him from outside. [...] We still have deficiencies. We are not fully OK! But our *Dede* as he knows some organizational stuff and rules he is an important force for us.²⁸¹

While this has been the case, as said, their primary motivation was to found a *Cemevi*, which will attract the people of the neighborhood, contrary to the less appreciated *Cem* rituals in *Cemevi* A. Therefore, the notion of knowledge and performance that are said to be the primary determinants of visitor interest, had to be rescued from the responsibility of the *Dede* only. The *Dede* giving an optimum service had to be supported.

Here, the *zakirs* come to the foreground.²⁸² Actually, while the *Cem* sessions, have actually lost their most basic ground as judicial and political reproduction of the community, and has

²⁸⁰ Man, age 60, self-employed, elementary school (5)

²⁸¹ Man, age 58, self-employed, elementary school (6)

²⁸² Özdemir, U., 2016

transformed into a kind of symbolic reproduction of the ritualistic form, the primary element in that sense becomes the produced music and literature there. In an overall picture, both during the early politicization of *Alevism* during the sixties-seventies and also in the *Alevi revival* period in the nineties, the reproduction of the *Alevi* music and literature had always been in the foreground. Thinking this together with the traditional importance of this oral culture within the theology and culture itself, this is not something unexpected. As shown in the previous example of *Cemevi A* also, the *ozan-aşık* tradition, seems to be more functional and stronger than the institution of *Dede*. In practical terms, the performance itself turns out to be closely related with the *zakir* especially when the *Dede* is considered as not enough to give the required performance.

Cemevi B has a comparative advantage in that sense. Firstly, the advantage comes from their *zakir*. He is a professional musician, a popular figure, at least in local circles. The *zakir* was invited to the opening fest of this *Cemevi* to give a mini-concert like some other *Ozans* from Ankara and nearby cities. His performance got the interest of the founding figures who were already in search for a *zakir* to perform in the *Cemevi*. They invited him to serve in a *Müsahtiplik Cemi*. That was also a kind of test, and the *Ozan* got also the appreciation with his performance and service provided there. As a result, they came with a long-term agreement, and so he became the permanent *zakir* of the *Cemevi*. Although he does not live actually in the neighborhood and comes from approximately a 2 hours-long district, the *zakir* serves every Thursday in this *Cemevi*.

In addition to the aesthetic value the experienced *zakir* brings to this *Cemevi*, they also prioritize the performance of the two social-initiative takers whose voices are great and have strong memories in terms of recalling different *Alevi deyişs*, which is an appreciated performance among people, when they enrich the stories with suitable *deyişs*, crying and shouting. So, the *Cem* session, with the effect of these three figures primarily, becomes a long, detailed and impressive one that actually frees the *Dede* from the expectations awaited from other *Cemevis' Dedes*.

The important thing to underline in this example is actually not the performance of these three figures only. One of the differences derives from the visitors themselves. Here, differently

from the other two *Cemevis*, the visitors are not passive watchers of the performance²⁸³, they themselves are becoming the part of the performance by the devotion they produce. Crying, shouting, chest hitting and singing along with the performers transforms the perception of the ritual. The main characteristic of the *Cem* sessions that is appreciated by the visitors are also referred as this shared devotion which is difficult to escape from

Cemevi B with these examples show actually the other side of the picture. Although the performance of the *Dede* has mainly put into foreground while evaluating the performance of a *Cemevi* at least in narrow sense, in *Cemevi B* it expands to the to the everyday contributors and visitors. In that sense, it might be argued that there are two types of expectation from the ritualistic performance all over. On the one hand, there are people joining in the *Cem* ritual demanding from the *Dede*, a high degree of personal devotion from *Dede*, performance and knowledge. Shortly, they start to enjoy the *Cem* ritual through the well-done performance of the *Dede*. In that example, the thesis of “vicarious religion”²⁸⁴ seems to be valid in a certain degree, since the *Dede*’s performance builds a reflection for the believers’ own worshipping practice. On the other hand, there are other believers, who actually reject this perception of vicariousness, and argue for the necessity of personal devotion during the ritual as observed in *Cemevi B*. Moreover, the notion of devotion exceeds the boundaries of the personal body. There is an expectation from the people joining the ritual to see an overall devotion to represent the overall sacredness of that ritual. In this sense, for some the personal engagement is not enough to feel satisfaction. The performance of the *Cemevi* depends also on the performance of others in the ritual, the devotion goes from the personal to a shared and commonly produced notion.

The *Cem* ritual in this *Cemevi*, with the fixed and loyal visitors are easily reproduced in the desired way somehow. They know and admit the fact that their *Cem* ritual does not have the

²⁸³ It is not possible to argue that the other *Cemevis* do not allow for acts of devotion, however, as an overall picture, evaluating not in personal level, the crowd of visitors are much more devoted here.

²⁸⁴ Davie, Grace. "Vicarious religion: a methodological challenge." *Everyday religion: Observing modern religious lives*, 2007, pp. 21-35.

actual religio-political necessities they seek for; yet their effort satisfies them especially comparing themselves with the other *Cemevis* in the neighborhood.

So, differently from the other two *Cemevis*, where the strict rules and criteria of the *Cem* ritual tried to be maintained but not successfully realized in practice, the case in *Cemevi B* shows us a much more controlled form, that is the formalistic character of the *Cem* ritual is realized relatively non-disturbed and fluent.

The reason for this might be explained by referring three notions. Firstly, as explained in the context of the social capital of this *Cemevi*, the relative and fellowship ties seem more powerful than the simple neighborhood ties in terms of maintaining such relatively more formal rituals, as everyone functions as a kind of guardian of the other. So, the same reason that makes this *Cemevi* relatively better at collecting donations, applies also for the ritual performance. Secondly, an existence of an education process of 12 services makes the formalistic character better to be reproduced. Comparing to *Cemevi A* for example, in this *Cemevi* the services are provided mostly by same people, and they seem well-educated in terms of their service. More clearly, they do not have memorizing problems as it might be observed in other *Cemevis* more frequently. Thirdly, related to the first two, the majorities' acts of devotion create an overall aura, in which the deviant behavior becomes 'anomalous'.

Moreover, the formal ritualistic acts are not restricted with the boundary of the ritual also. Outside the ritual, I observed that for the enterers of the *Cemevi*, there are frequently repeated ritualistic acts like door-kissing, or *niyaz* to the *post*. These are also seen in other two places, but it looks much more personal. Here, the frequency and diversity (for example, the younger members even the children follow the same routine) of such acts is comparatively higher.

As a result, it might be argued that *Cemevi B* collectively reproduces, much stricter, rule-based, formal ritualistic acts within the boundaries of *Cemevi* that is not limited with the ritual only, instead, it becomes an everyday part of the routine. This effort of collective reproduction of the formalist characters of the *Cem* ritual might be appreciated in the sense of contributing at least for the reproduction of the formalist character. However, this might be problematized in two ways. Firstly, we have to question the formalism with a reference to the philosophical-theological background of Alevism.

In the Alevi thought and belief the ritual is interpreted in two ways²⁸⁵, *Zahiri* (exoteric) and *Bâtîni* (esoteric). This has been actually one of the main discussions of Alevism against the two Orthodoxies it confronted, Shia and Sunni Islam. The ritualistic act, mainly the prayer, has been philosophically and theologically criticized as being *Zahiri*, literarily meaning ‘seen’, or available to senses. This means that it does not emphasize an “unseen” meaning, does not have anything to do with the social-economic-political and ethical being of the performer. Everybody can perform it without any reference to its actual position in his/her life. Someone, rich or poor, king or slave, moral or unmoral²⁸⁶ is able to perform the same ritualistic act, while someone observing this action would not be able to evaluate these characteristics of him/her with the ‘seen’ side of the ritual. Most importantly, as religion has been thought in common sense of the believers as a ‘purifying’ attitude, it might function to hide some ‘undesired’ elements of society, politics, economics or ethics. So, the seen side of the ritual functions to hide the unseen sides. Rich and poor, king or slave, moral or unmoral, just by performing the *Namaz* together or separately, become the part of the same community, they become equal, although in fact they are not.

As this ‘seen’ side of the religion, the ritual as a simple rule-based personal action that prioritizes the seen, while hiding the unseen; is criticized by the opposite perspective of Alevism. The community is only possible when the ‘unseen’ side of the performers create a community. If there are social, economic, politic and ethical inequalities, the actors of such inequality, are not allowed to be performing the ‘seen’ side of the ritual. As seen, it is just the opposite.²⁸⁷ Without an economically, socially, politically and ethically equal community, a ritualistic practice is not possible. The formalistic ritual starts only after these are ensured through some religious institutions like *Müşahiplik*, *Rızalık* and *Sorgu*. So, when some

²⁸⁵ This perspective is not specific to Alevism, there are many thoughts within Islam that interprets the ritual through this duality.

²⁸⁶ These are surely different from the other two mentioned examples and have to be approached carefully as the boundaries are strongly blurred between moral and unmoral. However, to explain this with a frequently given example by Alevi we might say that a killer is an unmoral person.

²⁸⁷ The reference for this is the so-called first Cem ritual, the Cem of Forties, where the prophet Muhammed was not allowed, because he called himself as prophet. He was only able to enter the cem ritual when he declared that he is a simple man.

‘outsider’ sees someone performing in the *Cem*, he/she can be sure that the performer lives together with the other performers in an economically, socially and politically equal community. In that sense the, seen side of the ritual does not symbolize an imagined, not-actualized equality, as in the Namaz practice, it symbolizes and reproduces the equality of all the performers sitting in the meydan.

In that regard we might ask finally the question: What does bring the formalistic reproduction of the ritual then? Simply, this formalism, in the modern context of Alevism, that is experienced in a society where the potential community members are divided by social, political and economic inequalities, has the potential to transform into a *Zahiri* form. Still, the esoteric meaning of some ritualistic acts symbolizes a philosophy of equality and justice, however, as in the explained context of *Zahiri* ritualistic performance, it grounds itself where actually there is no experienced equality among the community members.

Turning back to the main theoretical discussion, yet still, the formalistic reproduction of *Cem* ritual is still important in terms of the Commoning practice, mainly because it still reproduces ‘claims’ of social, political and economic equality, although outside the *Cemevi* the community is not ensured in the way of the philosophically supported claims. In that sense, the reproduction of the *Cem* ritual only in formal terms, is in one sense the prioritization of the *Zahiri* meaning of the ritual.

So, with a reference to Commoning practice we have to question how such symbolized claims of equality and justice might be ensured also outside the ritual. Sure, as argued repeatedly, in the existing social, economic, political and spatial organization of the market-state duopoly, it is hard to reach the traditional type of community, that was based on villages and household production in a more or less self-organized closed political order. It is hard to expect an *Ocak* to reorganize in the traditional sense. However, the Commoning practice theoretically seeks for the prioritization of an alternative politics of making the cooperative, horizontal self-organization of the people beyond the structure possible. In that sense, there is a potential of a common language to be built. Alternative ways of seeking political, economic and social equality through Commoning practice might also be thought together with the ‘*Bâtuni*’ side of the Alevi theology.

Sure, this has no formula again. This is why we have to prioritize the political claim of becoming. More clearly then, the Commoning practice is at the same time a way to think to reach the lost *Bâtuni* character of the *Cem* ritual, it is a search for realizing the meaning of the equality and justice claims symbolized in the *Cem* ritual as corresponding to the actual practice of the community.

Departing from this formalist, but also ideological reproduction of the *Cem* ritual, and also from some other religious signs reproduced outside the ritual, this *Cemevi* is capable of creating an image of devotion. As said, this creates a relatively less openness to the outsider, comparing to other two *Cemevis*. For example, as it will be analyzed in detail in the next part, in the case of *Cemevi C*, it is common to hear the expressions which might be summarized as ‘not freaking the visitors out by showing them a kind of strict attitude’. Surely this does not mean that in *Cemevi B*, everybody is acting like a guardian, instead, the commonly produced environment, the aura, becomes dominant where the deviant behavior creates a high contrast. Here it might be meaningful to reveal this by contrasting the following expressions.

I went there once. A *Dede* from Mersin was there. It had nothing to do with *Cem*. The serving youth were going out and smoking cigarettes, talking, go out when they do not like the *Dede*’s speech.²⁸⁸

My friends record the 12 services, or if they see something interesting. If you would say them don’t do this, they would not come next time to the *Cemevi*, by feeling under pressure. Our president is careful about this. He does not get involved to much, allows everybody, acts like a friend. That’s why here in this *Cemevi* the population is much younger than the others.

So, *Cemevi B* in that regard remains a relatively closed community, securing their social capital. However, this does not mean again this *Cemevi* has no relation with the outside, on the contrary, through their service selling strategy, they exceed the boundaries of the *Cemevi* and create themselves new places to represent the *Cemevi*. To be clear, they offer three services that makes them enter to a different economic strategy, mainly into exchange relations; they

²⁸⁸ Man, age 72; retired worker, elementary school graduate (25)

rent the place of the *Cemevi* for meetings, mainly for village and family meetings²⁸⁹; they serve in the households as prayers or *deyiş / duaz-ı Imam* singers; they organize tours to some holy places like tombs or lodges in Anatolia.

In the first sold service, place renting, *Cemevis* directly function as *hemşehri* associations, offering place for feasts organized by *hemşehris*. The *Cemevi*, as having the required materials, large desks, enough chairs and kitchen equipment in order to supply a crowded feast for approximately 50-80 people, they become suitable for such service. The main logic of the service-receivers is simple, instead of paying the money to an ‘ordinary’ association, getting this service from the *Cemevi* is ‘better’. It functions like a support, and as a kind of ‘donation’ to the *Cemevi*. Moreover, as the *Cemevis* have to deal with cooking already, because of the *lokma* served, they are already equipped to provide such service. On the other hand, *Cemevis*, with their symbolic power, also have the advantage to be places for memorial-feasts, done after someone’s death. They offer place for animal sacrifice and also the religious service for blessing off the *Kurban*. So, *Cemevis* become one of the primary places to be rent for such activities in the neighborhood and as said, *Cemevi B* with the relatively better village and relative ties, transforms this into a comparative advantage:

They rent this place as *Cemevi*. Let’s say your mother or father has died, you may serve for food, or *lokma*, they rent this place for it. The others do it also, but they do not save it, they spend it. But this place can not do it. The other day, I came here again, in this side there was a food serving organization of a village, on the other side there was other one of another village. ²⁹⁰

We have made this *Cemevi* rich. We serve two times in a day for food organizations, to prevent the loss of customers. [...] Someone comes here, wants someone to read the Qur’an or serves for *lokma*, under the name of the *Cemevi*. The server of *Cemevi*, whoever he is, when he receives 20 liras for the service, he donates 10 liras to the *Cemevi*, saves 10 liras for himself. But if someone sees you outside the *Cemevi*, invites you to his/her house. This is

²⁸⁹ This is physically still within the boundaries of the *Cemevi*, however, as they transform the sign value of the place (places of worship) into pure use value of the place (a room), this means that it becomes temporarily a different place.

²⁹⁰ Man, age 56, retired worker, elementary school graduate (16)

different. If you use the name of the *Cemevi*, you have to donate. If we haven't worked under such rules, we would not succeed.²⁹¹

The expression of Interviewee-5 connects us to the second service that might be called as religious service at households. In the Sunni everyday experience, the house gatherings of *mevlüt* and Quran reading sessions are common. The case of *Cemevi B* shows that this has also become one of the everyday *Alevi* experiences, but surely as not so common as the Sunni examples. In the Sunni example, mostly women, organize house-gatherings and they invite *imams* or *hodjas* which could be found from personal ties, the local mosque, organization companies and even from municipalities. *Cemevi B* provides such service for the *Alevi* neighborhood.

Here one of the most important things, the figures offering such services are not limited with the *Dede*. *Dede* goes also to such in-demand meetings, but also, other figures taking actively part in 12 services, especially having the knowledge and experience on *deyiş* and *duaz-ı imam* singing as well as on delivering *dua*, are also offering the service. As the above taken quotation reveals, the *Cemevi* gets a share from this, but only if the service is bought directly from the *Cemevi*. If someone applies to the *Cemevi* by demanding such service, the available figure offers the service, but as the above expressions reveal, this also becomes a way for the formation of personal connections which are autonomous from the *Cemevi*.

The third service is the most common one and is a great example how a personal business initiative gets connected with the *Cemevi*. One of the members in *Cemevi B* has been a tour-organizer before *Cemevi B*'s foundation. In the neighborhood, there has been a great demand for touristic tours to the villages they migrated from and also to religious places like lodges or tombs of some *Alevi* holy figures all over the Anatolia.

Having founded the *Cemevi*, it somehow became the headquarter of the bus-organization, since the bus-owner himself is one of the founding figures of the place and invests his social and human capital to the place every day. This caused a dispute within the *Cemevi*. The bus-

²⁹¹ Man, age 60, self-employed, elementary school (5)

owner as being told to benefit from the *Cemevi*'s symbolic and social capital has become obliged to share the revenue with the *Cemevi*. They agreed with these terms but this time, the bus-owner after a few trips, was not happy with the share the *Cemevi* got. According to the bus-owner, while the place had surely caused for additional advantages in terms of finding customers, it had caused him additional expenses. The new tours organized via the *Cemevi*, promises also *Cem* rituals in the visited places. While this bounds the touristic tours with a kind of religious symbolism, it means for the organizer additional expenses, as the *Dedes* and *zakirs* do not pay for the seats and also additionally receive money for the service provided. So, they come to a new deal, and it is said that the *Cemevis*' share has dropped from approximately 20 percent to 5 percent.

You organize a tour and find the people participating from the circle of this *Cemevi*. After all this means that you are using the network of this *Cemevi*, you find it with the name of this place. This is not true. We gave a warning for this, we said, you should not do it in this way. You have to pay to the *Cemevi* then. You use the name of this place.²⁹²

This expression gives a perfect clue on the fact that how actually an individual-interest and utility is transferred to the *Cemevi* and legitimized through this. The 'inappropriate' behavior has been cleared by sharing its 'utility' with the *Cemevi*. Such behavior includes a different reasoning, a pre-calculative one, while at the same time it reproduces a different engagement with the *Cemevi*. It reformulates the *Cemevi* as a service-selling religious institution (different from the service-provider of the donation economy), and the visitor as a buyer of that service. Here to remember again Bourdieu's claims, the donation economy establishes a different social relationship. While it is still based on a kind of supplier-demander relationship, as the service does not have a fixed value, and also, there is no necessary connection between the service received and good/money donated, it symbolizes a kind of economic disinterest.

²⁹² Man; age 68, retired civil servant, middle-school (7)

Some might argue that the already explained small-group socialization of these *Cemevis* and the perception of *Cem* rituals as a performance-service imply also such supplier and demander relationship. This could be argued in a certain degree, but even in the worst scenario due to two primary reasons, we have to argue that such involvements are not the same engagement as like the service-selling one. Firstly, in the *Cem* ritual or in the alternative organizations like the Ozanlar Day in *Cemevi A*, the boundary between the performer and audience is not clear-cut as in the above given services. Secondly donation is not an exchange relation since there is no necessary correlation between donation and service received. The service has not a fixed value, it is contingent and subjective, however service-selling predetermines the value of a service, through which commodification starts to exist between the things and their so-called utility is reduced into its exchange value.

This discussion lets us to turn back to the discussion on Commons. As said, the Commons theory prioritizes the donation/gift economy for its horizontal-cooperative networking. Although integrating market strategies (exchange, service-selling) might help *Cemevis* to grow, expand their boundaries and effect-zones²⁹³ but I think that we still have to approach the produced social relations through such actions in a problematic way, as the language and logic of the social relations transforms. As seen in the above taken words of 5, ‘making the *Cemevi* rich’ and ‘costumers’ find place in the expressions. It is still hard to argue that a totally instrumentalized religious production, however it starts to grow at the same time as a counter-potential, producing profit as the primary gain. Some might argue that the logic of profit-gaining does not necessarily harm the existence of cooperation, self-expression and mutual dependence. Yes, they might exist together in a certain degree. However, they produce also different subjectifications. The donation economy is the relationship between the service-provider and receiver. In this kind of relationship, the receiver to become one of the providers of the service requires simply human capital as many of the everyday contributors do. It is much easier to exceed the boundaries and exchange the sides. In exchange economy, we have

²⁹³ I am going to deal this in the next part in detail. For now, shortly, *Cemevi B* during the last days of my fieldwork in 2017 expressed a plan of buying a large land and founding a big, separate *Cemevi* in Mamak.

the service seller and buyer, where there are organizational limits to become a seller, where actually the notion of “sold” good, comes as a fixed-strict package. It is not open-ended and depends highly on the performance of the seller of it. Simply, in *Ozanlar Günü* of *Cemevi A*’s case, the service offered-provided is the *Cem* arena, and the performance is contingent, subjective and open-ended, while for example on the bus tours, the seller provides a package of services and explains them in detail to the customer and sells it; and becomes obliged to meet the requirements of the exchange contract.

Here then, the field where the Commoning practice is only a potential, which might have to confront with an opposing potential in the sense of the *Cemevis*’ economic reproduction. It is important to note that the continuation of cooperative practices is not guaranteed, even if they function well. *Cemevi B*, the *Cemevi* that is relatively successful in collecting donations is the one at the same time leaning to an alternative economic strategy. So, a successfully functioning donation economy does not prevent the emergence of an alternative economic rationality. This is not a surprise. This is why we have to repeat frequently that the Commoning practice exists ‘within’ the structure and the argument of acting ‘beyond’ is not so easy to maintain and does not totally depend on the intention of the actor. Not simply the political organization of the state, or the necessities of market economy, but simply, the mentality in which the social-economic life is reproduced, is also structured. The language of the market economy has the potential to infiltrate into the Commoning practice. The political requirement then is not simply being “beyond” of the structure, but being “against” the structure at the same time.

4.4.3 *Cemevi C: Monthly Cem Sessions and Spectacular Dedes*

So, while the example of *Cemevi A* latently implies the fact that the *Cem* rituals have been perceived more or less as a performance, in which the *Dedes*’ knowledge and devotion is the primary indicator; in *Cemevi C* such perception becomes more explicit. *Cemevi C* being deprived from some advantages the other two *Cemevis* have, such as owning the warehouse the *Cemevi* is situated (*Cemevi A*) or being grounded on already existing strong relative and village ties (*Cemevi B*); is argued to be facing with financial difficulties more than the other two. The municipal support they receive is temporary and mostly in the form of the

construction necessities of the *Cemevi*. Following this, as explained in the previous part, *Cemevi C*'s strategy to decrease the expenses of the *Cem* ritual, they organize it once in a month instead of every week.

There are not enough people every week. 5 or 10. What can you do with these?
We do therefore monthly. In other places for example, if 5 or 10 people are there, it is OK for them. If we would do every week nobody would come. There would be too much costs. For example, *Cemevi A* owns its own place. They do not pay rent. They have such an advantage.²⁹⁴

As they do not organize the *Cem* ritual every week they are more flexible. This gives the *Cemevi* the chance of inviting different *Dedes* outside the neighborhood; and the possibility for offering the potential visitors different performances.

Before we deal with the spectacular performances of the *Dedes* we have to argue that such kind of organization done in *Cemevi C* itself results to a kind of spectacularity. In *Cemevi A* and *B* there are settled *Dedes*, who are always there and doing more or less the same service. Someone missing the *Cem* ritual in a particular week has the chance to join it next week. However, when a *Dede* comes to the neighborhood a few times in one year, especially when he is a kind of popular figure, the demand towards it becomes higher. Less frequency ends up with a more enthusiastic demand, relatively crowded *Cem* rituals.²⁹⁵

Such enthusiasm raises from the expectation of hearing a different word and watching a different performance. The well-known saying, *Yol Bir Sürek Binbir* (The Way is One, the drive is One Thousand One) is the simplest expression of differences within the belief. This becomes even more important by thinking it in historical context. Since traditionally to watch or perform in another *Ocak*'s *Cem* ritual was not so much possible, this kind of spectacularity offers this chance. In that regard, it becomes easier to understand why such *Cem* rituals are able to even attract the other *Cemevis*' frequent visitors.

²⁹⁴ Man, age 54, unemployed worker, primary school (19)

²⁹⁵ *Cemevi A* and *B*'s *Cem* rituals consist of 20-50 people, while *Cemevi C* is able to reach 50-100 people.

As this is the case, we have to question the basic determinants of the selection criteria behind. Differently from the other two *Cemevis*' organizers who somewhat have had to be fixed at the available resources in terms of finding the settled *Dede* for their *Cemevis*, because of the above explained reasons, *Cemevi C* is able to be flexible

What is expected from these visiting *Dedes*? First of all, they are expected to deliver some general speeches, present their overall perspectives and ideas about the *yol* and ritual. The knowledge of the *Dede* is important as selection criteria in *Cemevi C*, but because of the particular case of the *Cem* rituals in *Cemevi C*, the visitors become somehow distanced from the knowledge of the *Dede*. This means that, even if the *Dede* invited to the *Cem* ritual in *Cemevi C* is really appreciated in terms of his knowledge, there is no chance to deepen the interaction with him, as he is not settled and will be not there next week. He might be invited the following month when the *Cem* ritual is organized, but it is more important to note that there is no everyday encounter with the *Dede*.

This opens a way to discuss the modern and traditional experience comparatively. Actually, in the traditional context of Alevism, the *Dedes* were not settled also. They sure lived in a village where actually his family members also live, but most of the time of a year, *Dedes* were travelling. In such situations, for the organization of weekly *Cem* rituals, or the everyday problems of the talips, there were the *rehbers*. These were figures authorized by the *Dede* to deal with the problems of the community and also guide the weekly *Cem* rituals. In that regard, even in the cases of settled *Dedes* in *Cemevis* or in the case of such temporarily visiting *Dedes*, their service has to be seen close to the *rehber*, as they primarily serve for such educational duties and are not able to organize interrogations in these *Cem* rituals.²⁹⁶ This offers a kind of solution to the settled *Dede*/non-settled *Dede* debate. *Cemevis* might invite *Dedes* from different places, or do the *Cem* ritual with only one *Dede*, in both cases, as these *Cem* rituals are not restricted to the talips of the same Ocak, most importantly not *Sorgu Cems*, such flexibility is not a problem.

²⁹⁶ As said previously, there are still *Dedes* who continue their Pirlık duty by interrogating their talips, but they are exceptional in our context.

Yet, there is also another way to solve the ‘distance’ problem. The talips have found their own way of founding the connection with those knowledgeable *Dedes*. The first way to do this, is an organization of a kind of workshop with the *Dedes* in which the talips could be trained. Such trainings are mostly restricted with the education of ritualistic concerns, that is the training on 12 services.

Secondly, if a deeper education is desired, this demands a personal effort. Visitors having watched the performance of a *Dede*, might get affected from the knowledge of the *Dede*, and desires for more guidance. So just after the *Cem* ritual, some talips go up to the *Dede* and ask for their contact information with the intention to keep in touch for asking further questions. *Dedes* are generally positive in that sense, they give their cellphone numbers, some additionally direct them to their Facebook groups. This seems a burgeoning trend, *Dedes* do not connect only with their own talips, with the power of such information technology they become on the other hand a kind of digital *Alevi* theology teachers:

He mentioned this in one of our discussions. Some verses of Qur’an. These here. I photographed them and sent them to the *Dede*. I read too much. If something comes to my mind, I send a message to *Dede* and ask him. ²⁹⁷(20)

While this kind of relations become increasingly common, we might argue that the duty of *rehberlik* becomes the basis of the *Dede-talip* relations in modern times. However, this seems to have a side-effect also. Actually, the decline of the authority of the institution of *Dedelik* might be argued as a decline in the ‘Pirlik’ duties of the *Dede*, which gave them the authority to interrogate their *Ocaks’* talips. So, the already weakened authority, might also be challenged with the relatively less damaged service of *rehberlik*. If a talip, in one of his/her performance in the *Cem* ritual appreciates a *Dedes* performance and follows his educational guidance as in the above given example, they start to ask to be interrogated by this *Dede*, which is not possible in the belief’s principles. Each talip has to be interrogated by his own Pir. A *Dede* performed in *Cemevi C* explains this:

²⁹⁷ Man, age 42, worker, elementary school (20)

“Outside my own talips, other talips come and ask for being my talips. Such thing is impossible. OK, I can teach you the Yol but I cannot make somebody’s talip and make my own. But I can teach you.”²⁹⁸

So, through the increasing power of the communication technologies, it is much more possible to expect a cooperative production of knowledge of Alevism. Sure, the expressions and the reactions given by the talips reveal that a restructured Ocak in modern context is far away, but there is also a kind of interest to the ‘knowledge’ side of the Alevi belief. This kind of knowledge reproduction is surely not enough for the restructuration of the Alevi community in the form of Ocaks, but still, this might also be the potential basis of a not-yet-realized reconnection between the Ocak talips. *Dedes* become the dense point giving raise to talips’ encounters, as the *Cemevis* do potentially the same.

Having dealt with this, we might focus on another selection criteria. In terms of *Cemevi C* the most important motivation in the selection process is the performance of the *Dede*. This is not something unexpected because of the temporally formed connections with the *Dedes*. Visitors come to watch the performance of a different *Dede*.

Here what is understood from good performance is mostly devotion. The audience wants to see devotion from the *Dede*, evaluates how much he actually gets affected, feels and expresses inner-pain or gets overwhelmed. This gets even more affective when the *Dede* joins to the performance of the zakir by singing or playing the instrument.

Here however a tension has to be highlighted which is important on the perception of the so-called devotion. To remember, in *Cemevi B*, actually the shared devotion was underlined. The visitors of *Cemevi B* together with the service providers were told to be sharing production of the overall performance. In *Cemevi C*, the visitor wants the service provider to do the service with devotion although he/she does not show an affective involvement necessarily. More clearly, instead of becoming the part of the performance by blurring the boundaries between the service provider and receiver, the action might be described as an audience attitude.

²⁹⁸ Man, age 37, civil servant, high school (27)

Cemevi C somehow correlates with the argumentation of Grace Davie on vicarious religion, in which she says that the religion is mostly lived in the modern society in a kind of vicarious form, meaning that the religiousness is not a personally inherited experience, instead something attached to a representative figure.²⁹⁹ The religious engagement itself could be for some reason be reproduced not directly as a personal devotion, instead, a devotion that is wanted to be watched and represented by the *Dede*.

Surely, the perspective represented in this study does not have a normative attitude favoring one over the other as better, but we might still discuss this in relation to the overall political problematic. First of all, as explained in the case of *Cemevi B*, the devotion, the affective engagement with the ritual does not necessarily guarantee an open community that is allowing expansion. On the contrary, it functions more and more for the reproduction of the same closed community. In the case of *Cemevi C*, although there is an argued ‘problem’ in the overall produced devotion, it is more crowded, is open to different contributors even from all over Ankara depending on the popularity of the *Dede*.

Here therefore, we have to compare the two different socializations these *Cemevis* offer. Surely, the lack of auratic experience in the context of *Cemevi C* might also cause for some a discomfort, followed by decisions to not join the *Cem* rituals there. Moreover, becoming a simple audience might be again the reason of simple formalistic reproduction of the ritual, where the inner-meaning is again missed.³⁰⁰ However, we have to note that the devotion is not only the guarantee of such inner-meaning as discussed in the last part. In that sense, in the context of Commoning practice, it is better to engage with the socialization side, where the more open one shows a higher potential.

Another advantage of flexibility for *Cemevi C* is the possibility of inviting young *Dedes*. Here the youngness is actually correlated with the other two criteria that are mentioned; knowledge

²⁹⁹ Actually, this argument does not restrict itself with the ritual, instead, through an overall analysis in the same context, the relatively less involvement of Alevi to the practices of *Cemevis* as a part of their everyday life activity while they politically support the legitimacy of the *Cemevis*.

³⁰⁰ Here there is a beautiful expression shout during the *Cem* ritual this is directly related with this problematic: “Hakk için ola, seyir için olmaya.” Meaning let the performance be for God/truth, not for watching.

and performance. The young *Dedes* are seen more literate compared to the older ones, however this literacy or knowledge is not considered restricted to the *Alevi* theology, instead, more in terms of being open to secular dimensions of knowledge. As the youth is described and perceived as more open-minded and familiar to science and technology, *Alevism*, especially having developed a discourse against the Sunni conservative view by underlining the importance of science over religious superstition, imagines the ‘ideal’ *Dede* figure as being able to communicate with the youth by speaking a common language and sharing a common perspective. As explained in the context of *Cemevi A* more in detail, there is a desire to educate the old *Dedes* in the direction of scientific knowledge also.

Besides the knowledge side, performance has also been put to the foreground. Young *Dedes*, being more energetic and having fewer physical problems than their old fellows, are argued to be better on long-lasting *Cem* rituals that especially depend mostly on the performance of the *Dede*. While some of the young *Dedes* that are invited are appreciated especially on their knowledge, are put to the foreground with their capacities on delivering a devotional performance. It is common to hear words like ‘this *Dede* might not be a literate one like the other we invited, but I like the other one better because his performance is more impressive’.

301

In addition to all of these, again related to the notion of vicariousness somehow, a young *Dede* who is serving with its appreciated knowledge and performance during the *Cem* ritual fulfills actually one of the desires in the *Alevi* movement. As there is a frequently expressed concern of the ‘indifference of the *Alevi* youth towards their identity’, such *Dedes* are somehow helping to solve the problem

Cemevi C’s self-determined mission follows roughly the basic motivation of introducing more or less young *Dedes* to the visitors, but at the same time to have more young visitors. When we look at the demanding side, it is easy to observe this positive correlation between those two parties. The young visitors compare mostly the *Dedes* of the other *Cemevis* with the ones

³⁰¹ Man, age 42, worker, elementary school (20)

they watched in *Cemevi C*, and argue that the *Dedes* are more or less easy to communicate and get in touch with.

I did not go to *Cem* rituals before this place opened. I came here, and the *semah* performance was really beautiful. [...] The *Dedes* of other *Cemevis*, we shouldn't say that maybe but... Actually, our *Dedes* here in this *Cemevi*, they are young, they can talk to you.³⁰²

While the mostly expressed reasons on the question of 'why do you come to this *Cemevi*' follow somehow the same argument-line, here we have to add another dimension depending on observation. The young visitors of *Cemevi C* are more or less in ease during the *Cem* ritual. There are young visitors, which vary from 12 to 25 ages more than any other two *Cemevis* in the neighborhood. They even take part in the 12 services in the ritual. Some of them get involved with the *Cem* ritual, in a kind of devotional way, by concentrating and joining to the performance. But in addition to this, we may say that the *Cem* rituals in *Cemevi C*, for most of the young visitors become a place for their everyday socialization, where they can meet with their friends. It is common to see in this *Cemevi* during the *Cem* ritual that the young visitors go outside, chat with their friends or even play with their cell phones during the *Cem* ritual. The *Dedes* are in that regard, somehow warned not to get critically involve with such 'misdemeanors' while some appreciated role-model young figures are demanded to give advice to their friends. Sure, such misdemeanors are not restricted with the young but it is underlined here specifically, since the motivation of the *Cemevi* is mostly on 'not freaking the young people out'.

As a result, *Cemevis* form different tactics that create different socializations. Here, while *Cemevi A* and *C* experience relatively more problems in the reproduction of the formalistic characters of the *Cem* ritual compared to *Cemevi B*, in principle there are similarities. In each case, being formalistically better or worse does not have a direct contribution to the realization of the esoteric meaning of the *Cem* ritual. While it is still important to reproduce the formalistic characters of the ritual, the main theological and philosophical aim of Alevism to prioritize the equal, solidary and cooperative community is the prior side of the belief system. Therefore,

³⁰² Woman, age 32, unemployed, high school (26)

the *Cemevis*, *Cem* rituals and other religious practices with a reference to politics of Commons have to be dealt through their socialization first and foremost.

In that regard, it seems that ‘openness’ is a key asset to reach this. Yet, this is not unproblematic. Here, finally we reach to the next parts concern the insider/outsider debate, the threshold problem of *Cemevis*, which is where the limits of the Commoning practice becomes much clearer.

4.5 The Question of The Inside/Outside: Between Visibility / Invisibility

With the transformation of social, economic, political and spatial character of Alevism, the notion of the insider-outsider relation has also transformed. *Cemevis* lie on the center of such transformation. Firstly, in modern context, *Cemevis* are open to non-Alevis. In traditional context, being an Alevi has been the primary necessity to enter the *Cem*. This was much more a protective strategy, as Alevis experienced many accusations, insults and manipulations regarding their belief and ritual. The outsider, was a thread to security and intimacy. Secondly, as Alevis were also distanced to other Alevis all over the Anatolia, because of security concerns combined with the transportation difficulties. The *Dedes* were at the center of communication.

In modern context, Alevism opened itself to the outsiders, step by step. First there have been political and investigative involvements started in the 19th century and continued in the beginning of the 20th century. This was an encounter with the state and the non-Alevi subjects, the second encounter, happened in the 60s and 70s period, through immigration and urbanization. Alevis migrated from their villages to cities, which meant both an encounter with other Alevis and non-Alevis. While all of these were somehow necessary and forced encounters, the 90s had caused an intentional visibilization period, but much more an intentional one.

Cemevis as explained in the previous parts, lie exactly on the core of this discussion. The modern form of *Cemevis* as associations have been the central points of such visibility claim.

The doors of the *Cemevis* were opened to outsiders, and actually, have become the dense point of such visibility production.

Yet, this is hypothetically so. While the politics of Commons as expressed in the previous parts, would appreciate this as providing a connection between insiders and outsiders to make the collaborative, horizontal-networking potentially possible, in practice this causes many problems to discuss. I classify these problems in three notions: intimacy, security and authenticity.

More clearly, it is true that this new type of *Cemevi*-making practice causes Alevism to open itself to ‘universal’ problems, possibilities for collaboration with other *Cemevis* and other causes of Commons. However, the inner-tension of the religion and also the overall religio-political position of Alevism in the Turkish Republic forces still the community to remain somehow invisible at the same time. In other words, the *Cemevis* are not simply reproducers of Alevi visibility, they might also be at the same time the reproducers of new types of invisibilities. This part deals with this tension in detail, and underlines the limits of the Commoning practice.

4.5.1 *Cemevi* A: The Problem of Security and Intimacy under the Unintentional Visibility

While the 90s have been a period where Alevis somehow publicized themselves and become visible we have to ask whether we could simply assume that every *Cemevi* has a desire to become visible? Actually, in a society of spectacle where everything is valued and re-valued through their appearances, it is also important to note that the production of invisibilities is at the same time the counterpart of the production of visibilities. So, the practice of becoming visible in everyday life might not be a desired one and forge for attitudes to hide from the gaze or reproduce the existing image through modification.

Actually, the *Cemevis* that I analyze are to serve the neighborhood at the first instance, and their first intention is to get the attention of the people in the neighborhood. Yet, this is not always possible. *Cemevi* A has no specific strategy to make their place shine in the field of visual consumption. Here, especially social media as it will be explained in the case of *Cemevi*

C has a potential to realize this intention, but as *Cemevi A* is organized with the voluntary work of the relatively old people, it is hard to expect them to join into this field of image production as they are somehow away from this kind of technology. The *Cemevi* has actually a facebook account, but its password is unknown and the latest post-sharing has been done in 2015. Instead, the president of the *Cemevi* uses his own facebook account to share the events and rituals; however, it is hard to argue for a continuous strategy like we observe in *Cemevi C* in that regard.

While this has been the case, *Cemevi A* is unintentionally the mostly known and also ‘seen’ *Cemevi* for those who come from outside the neighborhood.³⁰³ Although they do not have a regular strategy to appear in the social media, still, the anonymously produced information in the internet, makes this place appear in a simple search-engine search. This is the way what makes them at the center of the attention.

These assets cause this place to get also media attention, not simply the attention of ordinary people. To exemplify this, BBC and Al Jazeera are the two channels that recorded the *Cem* ritual in this *Cemevi*. Moreover, there are also other newspapers conducting interviews with this *Cemevi*. However, the most important confrontation happens with the students of Faculty of Religion³⁰⁴ visiting this place very frequently. This is a critical point as it makes the encounter of Alevis and Sunnis possible.

Although it might be thought at the first glance that such visibility is appreciated in *Cemevi A* with the symbolic satisfaction of popularity, it is actually undesired as well as unintentional; because there is no specific strategy of the *Cemevi* to get attention of the outsiders. The following expression reveals a sort of disturbance from the existence of such Non-Alevi outsider gaze:

They suddenly come my friend. The other day for example, a newspaper called, one of the newspapers of the government. He found the telephone number from Internet. He asked for an Interview? Ok, I said, you can come.

³⁰³ The other two are situated in neighborhoods next to.

³⁰⁴ Here the education is mostly based on Sunni Islamic teaching.

He said, let it do via telephone. Come on man! Who are you, are you a ghost or something like that? We do not eat people here. [...] Moreover, are we the only *Cemevi* here. OK! This is God's house, everybody can come, but ask us whether we are ready for a visit or not ³⁰⁵

So, such confrontations are not unproblematic and reveals a tension this *Cemevi* feels. As it is tried to be explained in the previous parts, the "old" people of the *Cemevi*, who are actually the ones spending their everyday time in that place mostly, named as everyday contributors, are thought to be lacking some properties to put under the gaze of the outsider. However, to prevent an important misunderstanding, this appearance is not problematized for the ones in the neighborhood. To evoke such feeling, the outsider has to be seen as an adversary, as someone who visits the place to find mistakes and faults. It is surely not an unexpected reaction thinking the collective memory of Alevism.

In that regard, visitors who especially show any connection to the Sunni Islamist ideology, be it a newspaper or a student, are thought to be to visit the place to find defects. By this, we do not mean anyone who is not an *Alevi*, but instead, someone marked with an ideology or institution that is known or assumed as potentially having a negative perspective towards *Alevi*s. Surely this is not a paranoid attitude, it grounds itself to some experience:

If somebody comes, they always come to find our mistakes. One day, an Arabic TV channel, they asked for recording a *Cem* ritual. OK, we said, you can do. We didn't see what they actually shoot. I got a bit suspicious. I went to their place, asked them to watch the recording. Look my friend. While there was a *Cem* ritual, they didn't shoot it, they shot the socks of people having holes, they shot the open zippers of people. I asked: Did you come to record the *Cem* ritual or the mistakes of the people? ³⁰⁶

This gives us some clues on the existing but not so frequently mentioned notion of the production of invisibilities in *Alevi* social movement. Having experienced such things, the everyday contributors of this *Cemevi* is observed to reflect a negative attitude towards such coverage from media, a kind of regressive feeling. Most importantly, this engages with a kind

³⁰⁵ Man; age 63; retired Artisan, high school graduate (1)

³⁰⁶ Man; age 63; retired Artisan, high school graduate (1)

of self-devaluation among some of the people there, especially grounding on illiteracy and elderliness. The *Cemevi* depends as explained on the voluntary investment of those aged people actually, but when an outsider visits that place those people show an attitude to step back, and call some other people for help, who are relatively literate and young, are thought to be suitable to represent the image of the *Cemevi*. This applies not to the case of president, he mostly shows a representative attitude and tries to confront with the outsiders, however especially in visits like media coverage or crowded student visits, he demands some help, which could not be provided from the everyday contributors who are actually the actual body of the *Cemevi*.

This was one of the struggles of this study either. I was welcomed by those everyday contributors of the *Cemevi* actually, but when I after a certain time wanted to conduct an interview with them, they stepped themselves back and started to give me some names, which I could find from the neighborhood. I tried to explain them that I actually wanted their opinion as being the actual figures representing the image of this *Cemevi*, they were expressing their feelings and ideas as ‘fearing from saying something wrong’ and ‘being illiterate or ignorant’. I was told that if I want to get the knowledge I had to talk with the president or someone he advises me.

Sure, after a certain time spent there, they were convinced to talk. Yet, this had already shown the regressive attitude. Especially, some similar traumatic feelings they actually experienced, one of which was the above referred Al-Jazeera documentary, has caused a sort of devaluation on the self-perception of the aged people. Combining with the collective memory and a centuries long social existence preaching *Sir* (secrecy), it is hard to expect that the modern liberal political notion of publicity has a total transformative effect among the Alevi subjects.

Here, the actual body of the *Cemevi A*, the everyday contributors mostly do not see themselves as having a representative power. The president (Interviewee-1), being relatively younger and literate engages with this duty, but also, some other figures, being younger and seen as relatively better in expression were invited to the *Cemevi* if there is a visit from an outsider, especially if they are seen as related with Sunni Islamism somehow. The non-*Cemevi* Alevi associations which are physically close to *Cemevi A* is an advantage here. Although it is hard to claim an organic relation between the *Cemevi A* and these associations, the physical

closeness, the everyday collaboration in everyday matters makes the personal connections possible.³⁰⁷

This is a problematic incident also, creating its own conflictual dynamics. Here, the relatively younger and literate collaborators, compared to the everyday contributors and frequent visitors of *Cemevi A* are representing a much more offensive and political attitude in confrontations. This is not something meaningless and unexpected, thinking again the heritage of centuries long massacres and insults the identity of Alevism experienced; and also, some recent happenings³⁰⁸ establishing an ideological continuity with this past. So, this becomes exactly where the inclusive and exclusive attitudes coincide. Two types of language conflict here. On the one side there is the peaceful and humanist language of Alevism summarized with the well-known expression: “We see the 72 nation³⁰⁹ with one eye” (*72 Millete aynı nazarda bakıyoruz*). On the other side; there is the protectionist and rebellious language putting forward the massacres and dangers, the existence of hostiles of Alevis and call for an active-reactive defensive attitude. So, the relatively younger invited to *Cemevi A*, or if they are already there become themselves the active engagers with the outsiders, representing the latter language.

Let’s elaborate this through an example experienced during a visit. One day, when I was there for everyday observation, some students and teachers of Faculty of Religion³¹⁰ from Gazi University, arrived at the doorsteps of *Cemevi A*. There were approximately 30 students and

³⁰⁷ Here again, the Ozanlar Günü’s contribution to such connections have to be underlined.

³⁰⁸ A few news from past 1-2 would be enough to illustrate overall picture: “Attack to Cemevi in Istanbul during worshipping”: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201711091030943587-istanbul-cemevi-ibadet-sirasinda-saldiri/>; 2017 ; Attack to Cemevi in Bursa: Swearwords were written to the walls; <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/bursada-cemevine-cirkin-saldiri?page=1>; 2018 ; In Malatya the doors and walls in an Alevi neighborhood were marked: <http://www.diken.com.tr/malatyadaki-alevi-mahallesinde-kapi-ve-duvarlar-isaretlendi/>; 2017

³⁰⁹ Here the nation is not used with its modern meaning. It symbolizes all humanity and derives from the religious story of the creation of the mankind. According to the told story, 72 represents the 72 children of Adam and Eve, who and their lineage are the Non-Alevis. After Eve became infertile, Adam is believed to be created Gürüh with his own breath. Actually, God created another woman for Adam, named Naci, but Adam promised Eve that he won’t be with any other woman, so Gürüh and Naci married. Alevis are believed to be children of Gürüh and Naci.

³¹⁰ The official undergraduate form in the context of religion is mainly Hanefi Sunni Oriented.

their teachers. The president welcomed them, asked for their purpose and demand as well as the everyday contributors. They said that they want to ask questions and to watch the *Cem* ritual. They were told that they could ask their questions, however a performance of a *Cem* ritual is not possible by demand. So, the students and their teachers were invited to sit in the *meydan* to ask their questions. But the everyday contributors remained on their places, while the so-called literate relatively young figures, which are not always there, take also place in the *meydan*. One of them came and took the microphone from *Dede*'s hand and started to answer the questions. The students and teachers asked the man whether he is the *Dede* or not. He answered negatively. The teachers asked why the *Dede* isn't answering the questions. The president of the *Cemevi* interrupted the talk and said that in *Alevism* it is not always necessary to make the *Dede* to talk. They expressed their desire to hear the *Dede* by arguing that they are curious about this religious rank and want to hear something from him. The man having the microphone and said them to ask their questions, during answering them he argued that the *Dede* would also give some answers, but this did not happen.

So expectantly, the confrontation resulted with a kind of argumentation between two parts, the man answering the questions and the students-teachers from the Faculty of Theology. The disputes ranged from theological differences to the historical-political happenings, massacres and insults in the *Alevi* question.

It is clear that the tension between *Alevism* and *Sunni Islam* in Turkey could not be solved through political involvement and reducing it into a simple theological difference. It grounds itself clearly on the religio-political domination of the *Sunni Islam* over *Alevism*, and such confrontations and visits are not free from such structural pre-conditioning. The man was actually underlining this fact through the following expressions:

You came here and are asking questions. Have you ever imagined us like going to the mosques and asking questions about your religion, such as why are you doing this in that way and so on? Are we doing such things? Are we coming and asking such questions? Why are you doing this and we do not? ³¹¹

³¹¹ Man, age 61, retired civil servant, high school

Here we need a short theoretical simplification to make things clearer. Being related to the desire of the liberal dialogue, the *Alevi* subject is reproduced here with the assumption that it is ready to talk, express and demand within the pre-determined rules of communication where the dominant subject is assumed as democratically mature being ready to listen and hear. The assumption is that there is an *Alevi* who wants to be seen and heard by the *Sunni*. Moreover, ‘tolerance’ the *magnus opum* of the public sphere theory, has operationalized here, for the neutralization of the inequality.

Turning back to the case exemplified; under such condition the political reaction expressed against the visitors coded with *Sunni-Islam* is not unexpected and in one sense politically inevitable. But yet, remembering the much more regressive and passive position legitimized through the humanist perspective of *Alevism*, the everyday contributors of *Cemevi A* are not happy from this incident. At the end of the argumentation they apologized from the visitors and tried to underline that this was a misrepresentation. After the visitors went away, harsh critics took part. One of the expressions is really key to elaborate the discussion on visibility/invisibility finally:

What did he say? That boy. He said, why are you accusing as? Is he wrong? No, he is right. Why are you telling such things to these people? One day, they will down on our necks. Those children. Tayyip’s men. They come from a school of religion, you know.³¹² (12)

These expressions are revealing the discomfort from the representation but it gets interesting when the ending words are taken into consideration. Through these words, Interviewee-12 actually agrees in one sense that there is a kind of potential thread coming from the representatives of *Sunni Islamism*, and it in one sense includes an affirmation of Interviewee-31’s above given expressions. We have to underline this boldly. This case shows that the two conflicting languages in terms of *Alevism*’s relation to *Sunni Islam*, are actually not conflicting in the interpretation of the ‘objective’ side of the problem. More clearly, Interviewee-12 advising to not ‘needle’ the adversary, thinks also that the representors of the adversary, in this case the students-teachers, are potential dangers and also representatives of

³¹² Man, age 52, retired worker, elementary school

a ‘guilty’ religio-political position. His position represents however, differently to remain invisible, disguised and advises to refrain from a direct confrontation.

Actually, in the context of *Cemevi A*, a perception of danger and threat, related to it the susceptibility towards security might be observed, more than the other two. This is surely related with the memories of the problematic past of this *Cemevi* as well as being somehow the visible one for the outsiders with its relatively old history. Such apprehension does not rise out of nowhere, actually the *Cemevi* confronted with a direct thread a few years ago together with *Cemevi C*. They were invited to the police office of Ankara and told that two ISIS terrorists who were caught in the TOKI houses in Mamak were actually planning to attack those two *Cemevis*, and they were shown the drawings and information of those two which was found in the investigation of those two terrorists. Besides these concrete threats, there is also a widespread observation by the inhabitants of the neighborhood arguing for an executed plan to transform the *Alevi*-dense social basis of the neighborhood by promoting especially the Syrian and Afghan refugees’ settlement to Tuzluçayır. So, because of all these feelings and ideas especially *Cemevi A*, coded as being deprived from self-defense because of its relatively old small-group, has somehow become a center of attention for the non-*Cemevi* associations and socialist organizations in the neighborhood:

I told them, we have to organize our own security forces. We are defenseless here. You go freely inside, nobody is asking you who you are. If one day we got attacked, what would you do? [...] Somebody said, if we say such things, we would afraid people, they would not come to the *Cemevi* anymore. I said, is this a simple warehouse, what a meaningless excuse is this? You have to develop your own defense mechanisms. If you do this, everybody would come. He accused me as making provocations about nonsense³¹³.

The verbal clash between one of the members of *Cemevi A* and 32 expressed in the above taken quotation reveals actually the ground of the tension here. It is sure that there is a commonly accepted threat and security problem in *Cemevi A*, even the small-group of the *Cemevi A* are aware of that fact. Interviewee-12’s expressions given above uncloak that feeling, but the reaction given to that might be categorized in two basic notions. On the one hand, such openly declared threats are not welcomed because it fans the flames of the already

³¹³ Man, age 47, unemployed, high school graduate (32)

existing fear and apprehension. So, it is somehow seen as a kind of barrier that prevents the potential visitors, who are already low in number. On the other hand, as observed in the case of Interviewee-31 who confronted with the faculty of theology students and teachers, those figures are seen the representors of the potential threat somehow.

The unintentional visibility of *Cemevi A* becomes a problem in the cases where especially a 'powerful' subject enters the field. The doors are open for non-Alevis, there is no doubt. However, if the outsider is a non-Alevi, or particularly Sunni, having an institutional character, be it a journalist, teacher, student or politician and so on; the openness starts to be questioned in two senses. Firstly, it disturbs intimacy. As *Cemevis* are at the same time everyday places of encounter, a place where actually people spend their everyday spare times there, an unexpected visit might cause disturbance. Sure, such disturbances might happen everywhere, but this disturbance that I underline here, has a religio-political value in it. Since Alevi theology does not attribute a permanent sacredness to their places of worship, as they function as a kind of passage point from profane life to sacred, the profane existence and appearance in that place is not a problem. The image produced in a *Cemevi*, in that regard, is contingent. However, the perception of sacred place for a Sunni attributes their places of worship a kind of permanent sacred value, for example where you have to enter by leaving your shoes outside or for women with headscarves and so on. The Alevi subject constructed under the Sunni gaze, with all the accumulated knowledge and heritage, knows that the gaze comes always with a kind of surveying, judging and comparing attitude. More clearly, the values of the Alevi belief are evaluated by the Sunni Gaze with a reference to religious values of Sunnism. The profane existences which is not problem in the context of Alevi belief, creates a self-disturbance, and even a self-devaluation as a result of such encounters.

Secondly, it is not easy to talk about a neutral openness without referring to the 'security' problems these encounters cause. There is no paranoia, the *Cemevis* are under danger, they are attacked, they are watched. In such an unequally constructed field, where the 'inferior' is under the constant threat of the 'superior', how can someone simply expect a welcoming politics with the political ideal of openness?

Sure, the openness has to be supported in the sense that it allows encounters, has the potential to expand the Commoning practice, is the ground of finding the potential of alternative ways

of political, social and economic engagement. However, as these cases reveal, it is not possible to talk about an abstract openness in the existence of structural inequalities. This is again, where the limits of politics of Commons have to be underlined. A political praxis “beyond” the structure is a great ideal to seek, but it would function as in the above referred cases to the reproduction of the existing inequalities as long as it is not transformed into a movement “against” the existing structure. More particularly, it is not possible to expect an equal encounter with the outsider, without challenging the ideological, political, social and economic preconditioning of the religious field of Alevism.

4.5.2 *Cemevi B: Participation in Some Public Events and the Undesired Image They Create*

In the case of *Cemevi B*, we can continue where we left the previous part. *Cemevi B* in one sense might be seen as an anti-thesis of *Cemevi A*, as it is a *Cemevi* found by two figures dismissed from *Cemevi A*. As explained above, the founders, the two social initiative takers of *Cemevi B*, were somehow two figures contributing to the visibility of *Cemevi A* when they were members there. Simply, their capability on singing and memorizing *devis*s and poems were appreciated, so they represented the *Cemevi* in different places they were invited to.

In that regard, the image that *Cemevi B* tried to produce was based on two main ideas: first; a *Cemevi* has to put a distance towards politics. Here the reference has been to the above-mentioned figures from non-*Cemevi* associations, emphasizing the political dimension of Alevism continuously, especially underlining the necessity of defense mechanisms against the adversaries.³¹⁴ As explained above, the ‘political’ interventions they had experienced during their period in *Cemevi A*, have somehow caused to a kind of allergic reaction against Alevism as pure politics. In that regard, the consent in the formation of *Cemevi B*, underlined this very basic notion; there was no room to such figures in the *Cemevi*, but most importantly the *Cemevi* shouldn’t get close to such organizations, especially in some demonstrations and activities

³¹⁴ For example 31-32

organized in the neighborhood with the cooperation of *Cemevi A/C* and other non-*Cemevi* associations, or political organizations:

Three two five years, there has been an effort to build the *Cami-Cemevi*. The construction is stopped. I live close to the construction yard. Three years, five years long we suffered there. They ask: Why is the *Cami-Cemevi* made here? [...] Until today, we haven't said anything about mosques. There is mosque in Hacı Bektaş, Seyyid Nizamoglu, Hasan *Dede*, Sultan Sücaattin. There are everywhere *Cami-Cemevis*. Everywhere.³¹⁵

You have to embrace the culture first. Go and ask them one Duaz-I Imam of Pirsultan, you would find nobody saying it with its meaning. Their way... They say we are leftists, that is their way.³¹⁶

These perspectives are actually not alien for *Alevi* politics. Such arguments could be found almost in every expression of İzzettin Doğan for example.³¹⁷ However, it was somehow surprising to hear such expressions in Tuzluçayır, in a *Cemevi*, just a few years later from the violent clashes with the police forces experienced in the protests against the *Cami-Cemevi* project. While still it is not possible to argue for an organic relation with *Cem Vakfi* and İzzettin Doğan in *Cemevi B*, the anti-leftist notions that has become dominant in Turkish politics finds its ground and even organizes itself in a neighborhood, which has been particularly known with its key role in the emergence of the Turkish socialist left. The same dichotomous view that puts the religious image of Alevism separated from its political notion, which is also the ground on which the *Cem Vakfi* has received its power, apparently reproduces itself in this neighborhood.

Yet, I do not think that such reaction against those figures, which they refer as 'leftists' or 'political', is so different than the ones we observe in *Cemevi A*. As explained in detail, due to the protectionist approach, they want to remain away from an image that is seen as one of reasons of the massacres in the recent past, such as Çorum, Maraş and Sivas. But differently, *Cemevi A* is physically close to these associations and also has an history of struggle with the

³¹⁵ Man, age 60, self-employed, elementary school (5)

³¹⁶ Man, age 79, retired, elementary school (8)

³¹⁷ Yalçınkaya, A., 2014

state that have made them naturally to defend a political standpoint. It also requires somehow the help of those figures in the everyday functioning of the *Cemevi*. Moreover, the *Ozanlar Günü* makes a collaboration possible. This causes, as expressed above, conflicts within the body of the *Cemevi* A, as it would cause in *Cemevi* B, but the difference of the latter is their ability to succeed to maintain a physical distance with these ‘undesired figures’.³¹⁸

To continue, the second idea in terms of managing the insider/outsider relationship they decided to embrace an outgoing attitude exceeding the boundaries of the neighborhood and take part in different organizations and institutions by representing their successfully produced image on *Alevi* theology and culture. Some might argue here that this would conflict with their perspective of remaining closed. Both are actually true, but emphasizing different characteristics. The closed community, the fellowship and kinship ties, are helpful for creating a relatively well-controlled donation economy, as well as a relatively more formalistic, rule-based ritualistic practice. This creates an image of ‘devoted/religious Alevis respecting the formal characters of Alevism’. This image is appreciated by some other Alevis all over Turkey, although some would criticize this as being too much religious, and overlooking the political problems. No matter, the existing appreciation gives them the chance to represent their *Cemevi* in different public events, while at the same time reproducing their closed community that is settled in the neighborhood.³¹⁹

This means at the end that *Cemevi* B, becomes somehow open, not simply through its service-selling activities, but also through its participation in nation-wide events.³²⁰ Yet, this openness

³¹⁸ We have to be careful here. This so-called distance, does not make any *Cemevi* an anti-leftist, or a supporter of right wing/ultranationalist Alevism. More or less, the three *Cemevis* are defending similar political standpoints, a Kemalist-Social Democratic Alevism, which has sure problems with the socialist left, yet, the everyday practice is not as huge as it is in the ideological field. Especially, the emphasis on laicism and the dominance of Sunni Islamist politics in recent years makes an alliance possible.

³¹⁹ It is also important to note that the ‘anti-politics’ argument strengthens their ‘religiousness’, according to their self-perception. This ‘political vs. religious Alevism’ dichotomy is also emphasized in the literature. For example, see, Yıldırım, R., 2012. However, as the examples given makes it clear, the actual lived Alevism is quite complicated, and the boundaries are blurred. It is hard to make, dichotomous distinctions.

³²⁰ *Cemevi* C does this also, however emphasizing *Cemevi* B in that sense is more important because it reflects at the same time a much more closed community compared to two others.

does not realize itself in the physical body of the *Cemevi*, in that sense it becomes much more temporal, depending on some events ‘outside’. To exemplify these, they attend to much bigger organizations, like restaurant-hotel opening ceremonies owned mostly by *Alevi* entrepreneurs. They go to the sacred gatherings arranged in someone’s home, to read Qur’an or sing *deyiş* and *duaz-ı* Imams.

This is a quite important variant in terms of the discussion of the visibility of *Cemevi B*. The simple house gatherings serve for the expansion of the image of the *Cemevi* in the neighborhood, whose returns are already explained above. Through these engagements the members of this *Cemevi* serving for the neighborhood produce actually new opportunities of confrontations with potential visitors or service-demanders. However, this is strict with the boundaries of the neighborhood. What is more important and in return challenging, is the image produced through their visibility in much more public arrangements.

This comes with a side-effect. These *Cemevis* have not so much power to effect, transform and represent the image they want. They have not the necessary media tools firstly, the only available tool for self-expression is the social media, which is a problem for *Cemevi A* and *B*, as they are not so much familiar with the technology. Secondly, they do not have always the knowledge of the ‘public space’ they are appearing. This becomes even more problematic if we imagine the already complicated religious field of Turkey in which *Alevism* finds its place.

To make it clear, as said, although this *Cemevi* has no connection with any central *Alevi* organization officially or formally, their relatively well produced religious performance becomes somehow known within the *Alevi* circles. The social initiative takers as underlined have also been somehow well-known figures and were producing public visibility, in radio, TV Channels, opening ceremonies and so on. This continued with an increasing fashion in *Cemevi B* as one of their motivations were also this. In that regard, being away from political gatherings, which are for the other two *Cemevis* one of the most probable ways to gain public visibility, *Cemevi B* engages not only in *Alevi* festivals, they serve for establishing religious engagements, or simply go to non-religious gatherings, like opening ceremonies of restaurants and hotels.

Although they interpret this as a marker of ‘apolitical Alevism’ or ‘religious Alevism’, it is sure that this produces a new political visibility, they recently and suddenly realized, simply because the public space, far away from the liberal imagination, not neutrally structured. According to their perspective, their only political motivation is to produce a counter-image, a response, using their words, to the ‘irreligious Alevis’ by producing religious appearances. Yet, the inevitable political dimension of this claim, creates a political image for them. More clearly, they are thought together with *Cem Vakfi* or with some newly founded *Alevi* organizations close to the AKP government or even with *Gülen* Movement.

Not only here, we experienced this also in Abdal Musa, they didn’t allow us to perform the Semah by accusing us as being *Gülenists*. They didn’t. We came back and said to *Dede* to open the computer. I am not a *Gülenist*, open and write.³²¹

The case is quite interesting, it shows first and foremost why the dualistic view of religious vs. political Alevism is highly debatable. It is clear that such dualist separations do not function as it is assumed mainly because of the methodological problem of liberalism. Simply, it is not possible to create a politically neutral public space in the existence of structural inequalities. Yet we do not need a methodological discussion, this case empirically shows it. Simply, the religious field is itself politically preconditioned in which a claim of autonomous religious action is impossible.

To be careful, this does not mean that all the accusations on *Cemevi B* are true and they are actually using with their religiosity a strategy of dissolution. This would be nothing more than a conspiracy theory. What is defended here is the determinative power of the structure. If we accept this once, every organized action³²² has to be thought as appropriating a place within the structure, unrelated with the ideological position or personal intention. This becomes much more possible if we consider the complicated religio-political positions they represent within

³²¹ Man, age 58, self-employed, elementary school (6)

³²² Actually, personal actions also, but as we do not discuss this in personal levels by questioning how the structure is subjectified, the claim of organized action is preferred.

Alevism. As the boundaries between positions are really blurred, an action reproduces itself within the effect-zone of different positions on which the subject has no strong control.

Here, the most important thing is that within all this almost catastrophic religious field, being deprived of the means of representation, especially such small *Cemevis* become vulnerable against such attacks. They create, unintentionally, undesired visibilities. Here, as it reveals, *Cemevi A* and *B* ‘suffer’ from the same problem.

Finally, this connects us into the core of the politics of Commons. Long story short, a politically neutral Commoning practice is not possible. It finds itself in a field of political positions, in a field of religio-political negotiations. The Commoning practice is a political becoming at the same time. The openness, either in this or that way, makes the ideas flow to inside, where a negotiation starts, intentional or unintentional. The major political decision in that regard is finally the decision on whether remaining beyond the economic-political structure, or representing a political action that is against it.

4.5.3 *Cemevi C*: The Open Door, Recordings and the Loss of Authenticity

As explained above, two main characteristics of *Cemevi C* comes to the foreground in its comparison to *Cemevi A* and *B*; and these two have also something to do with the invisibility/visibility discussion. The first one has been the choice of organizing *Cem* rituals once a month or even less frequent, instead of once a week like the other two *Cemevis*. The reason for this has been expressed as their lack of financial resources to organize a *Cem* ritual each week, especially in a case where the visitors are not so much interested to join the ritual. Instead, they choose to invite each month generally a different *Dede* each time, who is somehow close to the generally accepted norms of being a ‘good’ *Dede*, described with the properties of being knowledgeable, spectacular and young. With these characteristics, the *Cem* rituals within *Cemevi C* are expected to become more crowded and attention gathering. Here virtual image production, such as video and photography, and their distribution to social media becomes a way to make their *Cemevi* visible.

The second property that differs *Cemevi C* from others has been its relatively younger everyday contributors and visitors. As explained in detail in the previous part *Cemevi C* follows a purposeful strategy to not frighten the youth visiting their rituals and sacrifices from some sensibilities. Here, the youth becomes important in the sense that being much closer to technology and social media, which is important more than thought. For example, *Cemevi A* and *B* suffer simply from this fact. Their everyday contributors are relatively old and being somehow distanced from the increasingly developing digital technologies. Their social media sites are not actively used.

Combing these two notions somehow grounds the basis of the visibility/invisibility strategies of *Cemevi C*. Here virtual reproduction of *Cem* ritual becomes a key way to engage with the ritual. Since a *Dede*'s performance in *Cemevi C* is unique and temporal, recording technologies takes important part in this *Cemevi*. For example, in the context of *Cemevi A*, as said, the *Cemevi* does not have purposeful strategies to become visible, but becomes visible because its relatively long history and place. Because of its generic place and relatively old history it becomes open to contingent encounters and this might in return cause a contrary desire to change the appearance or to hide themselves as much as possible. In the example of *Cemevi C* we come up with a different case in which the *Cemevi* tries to reproduce its own image and lets it circulate especially through the channel of social media. More clearly, there is an ongoing trend of image reproduction through photography and videos shared in the Facebook account of the members of association and also the main page of the *Cemevi*.

Yet, this causes a problematic. Here are two conflicting cases. Explained shortly in the previous part the attitude of "making the sacred visible" is argued by some to be damaging the sacred nature. On the other hand, such recordings and social media sharing are seen necessary in order to attract attention and receive much visitors. In that sense, the head of the association expresses it as following:

Our association has a webpage. I have 10.000 followers there. Let me give you an example. I share a video, it gets 2000-2500 views. For example, the other day a girl called and said mister president I have a Sunni friend, he wants to see the *Cem* ritual, she is curious about it. Does she come? I said sure. She

gave me her own number. I asked her where she has found us. She said that she saw one of our videos.³²³

As expressed here, producing a social media visibility becomes a primary strategy for this *Cemevi*. They for example design announcement posters for their *Cem* rituals which are at the same time shared in Facebook and also as leaflets in the neighborhood. The idea behind such productions are the opinion that the virtual image that is put into circulation in social media helps the *Cemevi* to get attention from people coming from different places and social environments. It is actually somehow working. Moreover, such social media representation does not make only such visits possible; it opens also the possibility for the *Cemevi* to visit other places that are not able to organize a *Cem* rituals.

They might want to organize a *Cem* ritual, somewhere, but they might have no one to perform the 12 services, has no semahcı for example. They find us, they communicate with the president. We go and do their *Cem* rituals.³²⁴

It is not only the “announcements” that are shared. What is most important for our context is the sharing of the “*Cem* ritual” in Facebook especially through the live broadcasting facilities this social media platform offers. In that sense, people may somehow able to join the *Cem* ritual through virtual means. People joining the “live broadcasting” of *Cem* rituals which is possible in Facebook and leaving comments like “Allah Allah”, “Hak için olsun seyir için olmasın³²⁵”. Regarding this, the *Cemevi* does not become only a visible place through its existing physical setting. In general, particularly the *Cem* ritual, lokma, kurban and semah are transformed into shared visualities.

Obviously, such actions become an arena for theological disputes however many of the Alevis at least in the context of *Cemevi C* find such visual reproductions a field for possible identification. However, we can also see counter expressions that could be translated loosely

³²³ Man, age 58, self-employed, elementary school (6)

³²⁴ Man, age 54, unemployed, primary school (19)

³²⁵ Let it be for God not for watching.

as “live broadcasting is not true, you transform it into a watching experience”.³²⁶ Yet, besides the watching experience which requires a long discussion, it is clear that the main problem is not the ‘watching’ attitude, it is the ‘recording’ that is problematized. As said, even in the traditional sense, the concern of transforming the *Cem* ritual into a spectacle, had been a problem, evidenced by the above referred shouting. However, recording brings additional problems. With the increase of the recording technologies, the visitor, becomes a potential recorder that takes him/her away from devotion, at least in the eyes of the other visitors:

In the other two *Cemevis* as explained, such engagements are not so much followed however it is hard to argue that their choice is completely a theological or ethical one. Although, especially *Cemevi B* expresses that they are totally against to recording the *Cem* rituals with theological grounding, it has to be noted that they actually lack the necessary knowledge of dealing with social media and overall technology at the same time. The reason for this might be argued because of lacking a youth cadre who are more familiar with the newly developing technologies.

In that regard, the case of *Cemevi C* somehow reveals how the upcoming engagement with the ritualistic side of Alevism evolves. The coverage of *Cem* rituals via TV Channels is not something new and has always been there with the expansion of Alevi TV Channels. The dynamics of social media however transforms the relationship at the same time. As the production of the visual is much more spontaneous than a TV channel, the image that is circulating becomes increasingly spontaneous while the consumption of it does also so with the social media tools. Such production and consumption relations which would probably more widespread in the future could be seen as an important field for further analysis.

This debate is surely connected with the social media networking and digital democracy discussions. Turning again back to the theory of Commons, the virtually produced Common

³²⁶ To broaden up the scale of this discussion for a moment, interestingly, when you type these words in google and search for it, what one finds out from the results is the fact that there are enormous numbers of posts in YouTube and Facebook actually, which share the moment of the *Cem* ritual especially the performance of *semah* together with this specific quotation. In that sense, while the *semah* is turned out to be something “visualized”, it comes together with the warning of “do not treat it as a sort of visual experience”.

good, the collaboratively produced and shared image, might be celebrated with its potential of contributing to the expanding Commoning practices. Yet, as it is also underlined the sustainability and its transformation from online participation to offline, needs still long discussions.

In addition to these, the problem of authenticity emerges in the particular case of Alevism and has to be discussed also. More clearly, Alevism is closed to the outsiders, that is symbolized in the *Cem* ritual with the service of doorkeeper. The doorkeeper has to be sure that the door is closed, nobody is outside, who is threatening the authenticity of the ritual. In the modern context, as the Interviewee-32 said ‘the service of doorkeeper’ has lost its importance. The door of the *Cemevi* is not open only in its everyday functioning but also during the *Cem* ritual. People can come inside or go outside during the ritual. The social media, is another way of such inside-outside going attitude, yet has a bigger scope. It is not in personal level, it makes the ritual public. It is not temporal, it is also permanent as it includes ‘recording’. Besides the authenticity problems it causes, surely, the intimacy and security sides become also a part of the overall problematic.

As a result, in all these three cases, the insider/outsider connection which is reached through the modern *Cemevi* with different ways, lies on the core of the Commoning practice by showing both the possibilities and limits. Social encounter is made possible, yet the political dimensions of such encounters are not discussed sufficiently. Related to this, problems of intimacy, security and authenticity in the unequally structured religious field, have to be referred as requiring necessary attention.

4.6 Conclusion: Is *Cemevi*-Making Practice Beyond, Within or Against the Political-Economic Structure?

The politics of Commons is a new breath for the Alevi social movement, it is a way to re-interpret the existing practices of Alevism and re-politicize them. Yet this potential comes with its own limits. Two general notions might be underlined as the cause of such limits: the methodological limits of the theory and the particular problematics emerging in the particularity of Alevi religio-politics.

Starting with the first one, it is clear that politics of Commons offers a new vision in the general politics where actually the politics is experiencing serious crisis in terms of representation and integration all over the world. Moreover, economically, the market structure is causing inequalities, the hypothetical welfare state seems to be away from offering solutions. In short, people are getting more and more pushed into the margins of the political-economic structure. On the other side of the picture, neither political parties, civil society organizations in the political side, nor the trade unions and labor organizations, seem to be successful in evoking a mass organization and representation mechanisms. People at the margins of the system try increasingly develop their own cooperation, self-organization and networking strategies, although their sustainability and effectiveness is still in question.

Before summarizing the particular problematics in the context of Alevism/*Cemevi*-making and Commons, discussing the general sustainability and effectiveness of the politics of Commons is necessary. Where do these movements lying ‘beyond’ the market-state duopoly leading to at the last instance? There are three possible answers to this question. The first answer sees the Commoning practice as an autonomous alternative political engagement and participation that has to be regulated through law and policy. More clearly, Commons are imagined to be a shareholder in the governance process, becoming the third-party distinct from the market and state forces.³²⁷

The second answer, might come from the autonomous Marxist side with the political agenda of being ‘against’ the duopoly. This is different from the first one that articulates the Commoning practice into the existing economic-political structure of liberal state and market capitalism. Here, the political ideal is anti-capitalist, where Commons are the autonomous units that are cracking capitalism³²⁸. Commons, expand the cracks by networking with each other and thought to be capable to make capitalism collapse at the last instance. They do not function only to realize such collapse, but also to form at the same time the desired way of

³²⁷ Bollier, D. and Silke, H.,; 2014

³²⁸ Holloway, J., 2010

economic-political being, which is away from the structural inequalities of capitalism, and hierarchic and representative politics of the Leviathan.³²⁹

Multitude, emphasizes not only an anti-capitalist ideal, it is also against to centralized politics. The multitude that is forming itself through the connection of such Commons, conflicts actually with the so-called ideal of centralized politics. The politics of multitude, is against to the moment of centralization, within a political party or central organizations such as labor unions. Therefore, the ideal politics for Commons is described here as remaining decentralized, protecting their 'difference' and collaborating with other Commons, and expanding the cracks.³³⁰

There is also a third possible answer arising from the challenge of the former two. The first answer, which I want to name as the liberal solution, tries to find fixed ways for the integration of the Commons to the existing system. Here, the reasons that actually forced in one sense the emergence of the Commoning practice, that is the market and state, is argued to be the remedy. For example, in the case of Alevism, as discussed in detail, the heritage of the Ottoman Empire, the ideological domination of the Sunni Islam, laicism of Turkey that reproduced Alevism as an inferior belief, and the centuries-long-reproduced economic disadvantage of the Alevi communities, have left the community with no choice other than developing their own Commoning tactics. Their survival under such economic, political and ideological pressure is not guaranteed, yet, if it would be the opposite and the existence of the Alevi in the margins would become somehow sustainable, the final position would not offer a challenge to the economic-political order that has been actually the reason of the inequalities. Such method, should be seen only a moment that makes the inequalities much more bearable, but at the same time guaranteeing the continuity of these inequalities. It guarantees the survival, but at the

³²⁹ Dyer-Witheford, Nick. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and circuits of struggle in high-technology capitalism*. University of Illinois Press, 1999.

³³⁰ Holloway, J., 2010; Virno, Paul, *Çokluğun Grameri: Çağdaş Yaşam Biçimlerine Dair Bir Çözümleme İçin*. Otonom Yayınları, 2005; Hardt, M. and Negri, A.; 2005.

same time guarantees the survival of the inequalities that is embedded in the structure. They have to be exceeded and seen as temporal solutions.

So, the structure has to be challenged as the second answer argues. As it is emphasized here, the Commoning practice should not be a way to find ways of survival and make the inequalities sustainable, instead, as the politics of Multitude also argues for, it has to challenge the structure and replace it, without centrally organizing the differences into one body of political totality. This is surely not a problematic that could be discussed with a few sentences, there are wide-range of studies doing this discussion with different perspectives. Here we can refer two bodies of critiques, which are surely related with each other: There are criticisms on the theory of immaterial labor, emphasizing the empirical data which does not correspond to this theory.³³¹ The second body of criticism focuses on the political subject of Multitude and primarily criticizes that the political subject could not offer the necessary strength if it does not challenge the economic-political structure within, basically through working class movement as the major conflict of the market-state duopoly. So basically, the argument is that a struggle against the economic-political structure requires moments of centralization in order to represent a strong force against the powerful ideological and repressive tools of the market-state duopoly. Yet this does not directly dismiss the possibilities of such particular movements of Commons might offer to the centralized movements.³³² On the contrary, they might be argued as the trigger and bearer of the requirement of a from-below politics. In that regard, movements by securing their autonomies on the one side by self-organizing, self-governing, cooperative, horizontal-networking strategies are not seen as necessarily against for centralization moments, on the contrary seen also necessary.³³³ Yet, besides this desire for the ‘participation-collaboration of differences’, the centralization is seen also as the historical requirement to fight against the centralized power of the state-market duopoly.

³³¹ I made an evaluation of these studies at Konuşlu, F., 2016 based on the data of my master thesis.

³³² Choonara, Joseph. "Marx or the Multitude?" *International Socialism* 105, 2005, pp.1-7; Callinicos, Alex. "Toni Negri in perspective." *International Socialism*, 2001, pp. 33-62.

³³³ Callinicos, A. and Holloway, J, 2006; Thomas, P.D., 2013

Hence, there are these three overall political potentials in which a ‘successful’ Commoning practice might be thought. The Commons might be within-beyond-against the market-state duopoly. As a result of this evaluation, we might move to the final step of thinking about Alevism in its own particularity and ask the question what does the practice of *Cemevi*-making reveal in these terms? Is *Cemevi*-making a successful Commoning practice? This questions whether it is based on collaboration, self-organization, self-governing, threshold places of horizontal-networking strategies in the creation of heterodox praxis? Additionally, what are the dynamics that cause such successfulness and unsuccessfulness? Having answered these, we might ask finally the ending political question, what do these practices show in actuality and potential in terms of being within-beyond-against market-state duopoly.

In this part, I did a detailed analysis of three *Cemevis* trying to answering these questions on the background. The answers might be summarized as follows: Firstly, the *Cemevis* are results of collaboration. Here, collaboration refers to three groups’ alliance. A *Cemevis* foundation and operation is possible because of the social-initiative taker’s social capital. Here, the social capital is important. It is much more plausible to speak of a horizontal-networking of fellows, neighbors, friends and relatives; a collaboration among more or less equals. More concretely, a collaboration of workers, artisans, farmers, unemployed, students and civil servants.

The collaboration is not economic only, there is the donation of human capital also. As it is not hard to imagine, where the level of economic capital is not high, doing daily tasks of *Cemevis* and also some ritualistic duties, becomes a way to engage with the continuous *Cemevi*-making practice. Here, the second group of collaborators might be thought as the everyday contributors of the *Cemevi*, which are again neighbors, friends, relatives and fellows living in the neighborhood.

The third group which might be considered as the part of the collaborators are the visitors of the *Cemevis*. Their collaboration might be again in terms of money, that is donating or paying subscription fees if they are at the same time members of the associations. They might bring *lokma*, the food that is served in the *Cem* ritual, or simply they can take an active part in the performance of the *Cemevi*.

Here, one might question the collaborative dimension since there are three ‘defined’ groups. It might be argued that these groups actually do not form a collaborative whole. This would be a meaningful critique, and actually discussed in the context of functioning and non-functioning donation economy. The *Cemevis*, although they represent in their basis a collaborative organization, as some of which suffer from irregular donations and subscription fees, they start heavily depend on one of these groups, primarily to social initiative takers and everyday contributors. Therefore, we might argue that a relation that damages the collaborative potential in a certain degree, is still observable. That is, the collaboration is divided into the ‘donation’ relationship between two groups service-providers and service receivers. This might be argued as preventing the expansion of the Commoning practice.

In relation to this rejection, as the primary donors of the *Cemevis* are tend to be the social initiative takers and everyday contributors, one might argue that this also damages the self-governing and organizing principle of the *Cemevis*. It is understandable that the ones investing more human and economic capital to these places are much stronger in terms of decision-making. Yet, my analysis reveal that this would be simple reduction. It is true that, the administrative body of the associations are hard to challenge, but thinking the overall fragility of these *Cemevis* and dependence to the visitors, to make the place sustainable, the visitors play a role of balancing power. As explained in detail, a *Cemevi* has to correspond to the demands of the visitors in order to operate successfully.

On the other side of the picture, *Cemevis* in which the collaboration seems to be more successful, represented by a relatively well-functioning donation economy, one would expect a better result in terms of self-organization and self-governing. This is logically so, because the donors are imagined to be participating in the organization and governing process of the *Cemevi* as they are active donors that gives them the ‘right’ to claim. However, in the actual practice, this is not so. *Cemevi B*, is successful in terms of the functioning of the donation economy, not because it is able to manage different demands, it is so because it has much stronger control mechanisms over the visitors. They form a closed community, based on kinship and fellowship ties, the trust is relatively higher as well as the control. Moreover, this is helpful not simply in terms of the control of the donation economy, but also this causes

relatively less struggles and challenges coming from the visitors. The visitor demand is much more identical with the service providers at least compared to the other two.

This has also something to do with the threshold characteristics of the Commons. The theory of Commons imagines a politics that clearly defines its boundaries, mainly by representing their distance to market-state enclosures³³⁴, but also representing a connection with the outsiders. It is open to new-comers. In that regard, *Cemevis* represent by adapting tactics to make their places open to encounters, to do this, they retreat even from some of the religious necessities. Actually, we have to read this not as a kind of deviation and distancing from the religiousness, as some would criticize them in that regard. These tactics of adaptation to the dynamics of the social movements' field, opens the potential for revitalizing the religious elements, especially the social, political and economic core of the theology. This means that, in the particular case of Alevism, as the religious practices are strictly depended on the economic, political and social conditions of the traditional village setting, it is hard to expect a revival of these practices in the urban context as they were once in the village. A revival of these practices has been only possible in terms of reproducing their formalist characters. Here, without underestimating the reproduction of formalism, we should not consider it as the primary duty. The primary political motivation has to be the focus on revitalizing the philosophical and theological characteristics of Alevism, which is only possible when the religious practice produced is opened to differences coming from outside, from the Alevi subjects that try to find the balance between their everyday life and religious belief. The formalist character can only be reproduced meaningfully, if the connection between the esoteric meaning of the religious practice and everyday life is established. It is clear that, more formalism makes the community more closed to outside, it makes the community strongly connected to each other, reproduces auratic experiences within the ritual, yet it creates enclosures, whereas tactics that open the doors of the *Cemevi* to outsiders expands the effect-zone of the belief, as well as the tactics of Commoning.

As it might be guessed, the *Cemevis* that are open to encounters are keen for the development of heterodox practices, and this has to be the point of appreciation in terms of the practice of

³³⁴ Stavrides,S.2016

Commoning. This is not only the way to revive Alevism in the modern context, and even rescue at the end some formalistic characters of the belief from pure formalism. This also gives the chance to offer Alevism with its own philosophy and theology support for universal problems. Alevism theologizes economic equality and social-political cooperation of differences, which are universal concerns that are prioritized also by the theory of Commons. Therefore, such heterodox practices have to be embraced with the motivation of making an alternative religio-political existence of Alevism possible.

Having considered the particular notions of Alevisms, we finally might end by returning to the general political problematic. How to consider a successful Commoning practice of Alevism? Is it within, beyond and against the market-state duopoly? To answer this shortly, the dynamism of Alevi practices makes each of them possible. This means the Commoning practice is an arena of political struggle. I introduced three basic potential political directions to which a Commoning practice might articulate itself. Also, the particular problematics of Alevism reveal that the actual practice of the *Cemevi*-making process represent three of these potentials at the same time. Then the political problematic in that regard becomes which of these political perspectives will be successful in articulating the Commoning practices into its own political end.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that *Cemevi*-making practices in the Alevi-dense neighborhoods founded via local initiatives with relatively low social and economic capital reveal the potential of Commoning practices in terms of allowing the cooperative self-organization of continuous heteropraxis; however, as the *Cemevis* are structured in a preconditioned religious field of Alevism that has strong political, economic and ideologic influences on identity formation, it is hard to argue for a completely autonomous placemaking process that exceeds the boundaries of state-market relations. As a result, these *Cemevis* form enclosures or market strategies for vertical mobilization instead of expanding Commoning practices. In that regard, although it is worth to think about *Cemevis* in relation to the theory and practice of Commons in terms of its allowance for a from-below formation of Alevism, it also becomes necessary to consider the ways of articulating the Commoning process into centralized struggles against the market-state structures.

This part concludes my work and uses two sub-parts that summarize the work, reveal the key empirical and theoretical findings and major conclusions, and assesses possible future works.

5.1 Short Summary and Empirical Findings

In this thesis, I engaged with the discussions of Alevism through the particular problematic nature of *Cemevis* as *Cemevis* have become a central issue within the religio-politics of Alevism. I did this via a theoretical background that questioned *Cemevis* as a potential for politics of Commons. To make such an analysis, I chose three *Cemevis* in the Tuzluçayır neighborhood in Mamak, Ankara. There were many reasons for this selection. First, the *Cemevis* differed from the overall presumption in the literature and were not formed through the mobilization of high social and economic capital; instead, they were much more small-

circle places that manifested social-initiative takers' efforts with his or her relatively close network of kinship, fellowmen and neighbors. In that sense, these places have had to rely on tactics of horizontal networking, which has brought about the potential for Commoning practices in the sense of being beyond market-state relations. Second, the neighborhood in which they were situated was a cooperatively founded neighborhood of Alevi, who had migrated to Ankara from mostly middle-Anatolian villages in the 1960s and 1970s. As such, it might be assumed that there was a socio-political heritage passed from the near-past. Third, the neighborhood had contributed to the Alevi revival experienced in the 1990s, both in terms of cadres and grassroots. Fourth, as being a critical political place where the Alevi social movement has intersected with the socialist leftist heritage, a Mosque-*Cemevi* project was implemented with civil society organizations that were close to the Gülen Movement and İzzettin Doğan in 2013. This attempt might be seen in a kind of ideological-political continuity with the Sunni Islamist religio-politics, with the intention to establish a power position in the Alevi social movement from-below in one of the core places of the religio-politics of Alevism.

I had three theoretical departure points for my analysis. First, the theory of Commons guided my general perspective in this study. This theory argues that the human being is capable of political action that is outside the ideological, political and economic limits of the market and state. More clearly, the subjectification process of these two major forces creates a human being who is self-interested, possesses instrumental reason and only capable of acting through hierarchical chain of command. Commons theory contends an alternative subjectification process, seeks a cooperative, self-organizing and self-governing human being, who is capable of forming an alternative political engagement that rests outside the market-state structures. I hypothesized that the *Cemevi*-making process opens potential for discussion in that regard.

Second, I departed from the field theory and described the religious field of Alevism as somehow being excluded from the market-state forces of the capitalist market economy and Turkish state. More clearly, the theological-historical construction of the dominant ideology around Sunni Islam is argued to create a religious field in which the modern state has positioned Alevism in an ambiguous position and where the politics of exclusion and inclusion go hand-in-hand. This position has structured the state in the re-politicization process of Alevism as something to be stayed away from in the sense of being the representative of the

Sunni Islamic ideology inherited from the Ottoman Empire and also as something to be struggled for with a reference to laicism claims of the state.

Another notion that determined the re-politicization process of Alevism in the modern age has been the unmonopolized religio-political positions in the movement. As the religio-political structure of Alevism was totally dependent on the closed-community of villages, the modernization and urbanization process, and the inevitable secularization that has damaged the religious authority structures of beliefs, the re-politicization attempts have had no objective ground in political, social and economic terms. As a result, Alevism has tried to be reinvented with reference to different ideological positions, none of which have been successful thus far in centralizing the social movement.

Putting these on the one side, the economic structure and the market economy have structured economic inequalities within the community, which have shown in the traditional context as more or less a communal economic functioning where the class-based inequalities have been checked by religious mechanisms such as *Sorgu* and *Müşahiplik*. The class-based inequalities have made the community also vertically divided. As a result, we end up in the context of Alevi social movement in a religious field, where market-state relations could not be easily abandoned and with subjective decisions as the Commons theory hopes. Here, as has been seen, I have offered a methodological challenge in which I have argued that the field in which the agency has acted has established limits to the actions.

However, I have still posited for the potential of the theory of Commons, especially in regard to questioning a from-below heteropraxis for Alevi re-politicization. In which centralization attempts have failed. Yet the Commoning initiative must be carefully approached because the structure is always stronger than a particular agency's free-will. So, the practice of Commoning becomes meaningful only in the sense of looking for the ways of structural fights that are struggles confronting the state-market forces. Within this scope, an analysis of *Cemevis* with such potential finally put me in a dialogue with the problems of the Commoning practice.

As such, I sought to analyze the placemaking process of three *Cemevis* in relation to the problematics of the Commoning practice. First, placemaking, or *Cemevi*-making particularly,

questions the *Cemevis*' foundation processes and the actors of them, in terms of their economic and social capital. Second, as placemaking is a continuous process of reproduction, the question turns to the problematization of how the place is economically and socially reproduced. Third, the placemaking process also questions the subjective dimension of the reproduction process, where the Alevi subjects taking part are analyzed in their relation to the practices, particularly religious practices organized in that specific place.

The analysis of the placemaking processes of the three *Cemevis* resulted into four main analytical categories through which I discussed my empirical findings. First is the social initiative-taking behavior. Because I argued the political field of Alevism to be unmonopolized and decentralized, *Cemevis* has become dependent on initiative-taking behavior as one of the focus points of the religious revival of Alevism. More clearly, *Cemevis* become possible in the urban context via some figures' potential to mobilize the necessary social and economic capital in the existing legal boundaries. As the legal form including the status of *Cemevis* in relation to the Turkish constitution allows *Cemevis* only in the form of associations, such figures get involved into placemaking actions by founding associations in which they could organize the Alevi subjects and religious practices.

In relation to the Commoning practice, what has to be discussed is the motivation behind such actions. In the Alevi literature, there is a tone affected by the resource mobilization approach to see the *Cemevi*-making process particularly and the Alevi social movement generally as a political opportunity structure. According to this view, some "entrepreneur" figures who possess the necessary economic and social capital have been able to mobilize the Alevis, where the movement has caused a kind of opportunity for the subjects mainly in the market and state. Although this might reflect some part of the truth, it is hard to assume such a pre-calculative, strategic action in the examples that I analyzed. The strongest argument to support my claim comes from the basic fact that the *Cemevis* that tried to be reproduced did not bring a material utility, or more clearly, a vertical mobilization of the joiners of the cause; instead, *Cemevi*-making practice demanded an affective effort only in exchange for symbolic capital. In such cases, it is hard to assume a subject taking initiative with pre-calculating reasoning. The subject's motivation has to be seen to serve the cause and go for symbolic value at most. However, as I also argued, because the structure itself is somehow under the dominance of the

market economy and its ideology, the result might be a vertical mobilization that is somehow independent from the motivation of action. I can claim this because the Alevi social movement does not promise, at least on that scale, a successful mobilization for its participators.

Having put the social initiative behavior as an affective engagement, the organization of economic and social capital mostly depended again on such investments. As the founders of the *Cemevis* did not represent high economic and social capital, they relied on their own closed social network in the foundation process of a *Cemevi*, i.e., mostly the traditional strong ties as the networking theory would suggest to call upon neighbors, relatives and fellowmen. In that sense, a *Cemevi* is found through cooperative horizontal networking as the Commoning practice would propose. To follow this claim, placemaking has depended on the donation economy or gift economy as the theory of Commons uses. These places survive due to the voluntary economic or human capital donations of a closed social network.

However, under the circumstances of a secularized social life of people, where the appeal of religion does not have a crucial effect, it is hard to find voluntary subjects for donation. In two of the *Cemevis* in my analysis, I revealed a non-functioning donation economy, where the *Cemevis* did not receive enough donations for reproduction from the people lying outside the closed small circle of the *Cemevi*; therefore, they depended on the personal efforts of their small groups. In another example, what we saw was a successfully functioning donation economy, which I explained the reason for this with the relatively strong ties between the small-group members (i.e., they depended much more on relative ties). While this might be assumed as a success in the Commoning practice, we ended up with a different result. The relatively successful economic functioning of this *Cemevi* did not continue with a reason for expanding Commoning; instead, the motivation turned out to be finding new strategies for opening the place in an exchange economy. An exchange economy, which differs from the donation economy, causes a different subjectification. In the case of the former, the service provider becomes the seller of the good, and the good acquires a fixed value. However, in the case of the latter, the service is not sold. The service depends on voluntary investment and has no fixed value. Thus, while the excess of the donation economy is a symbolic notion connoting cooperation, in the exchange economy, we end up with the production-consumption cycle.

This finding allows us to contribute to the Commons theory in a critical way. We can argue that the prioritized donation/gift economy of the Commoning practice does not necessarily lead to the expansion of donation practices. On the contrary, donation practice might be considered as a step, which transforms in one sense the initiating motivation to exchange practices. This does not mean that exchange economy transforms everyone into calculating market actors as the rational choice of religion theory would argue, but the action it demands, how it subjectifies the participators of exchange relation, constructs another reasoning that is not possible to survive together with the cooperative notion long-term. Here, therefore, without challenging the market structure itself, it is hard to argue for a wishful expectation of agencies continuing in a much smaller economy where the market offers other opportunities, not simply economic but symbolic also.

So far, I summarized the structuring of the religious field. We then dealt with *Cemevis* who were freed from central control as many *Cemevis* were, representing a small group of low economic-social capital and swaying between donation and exchange economy. Here, the decision-making process found itself under the pressure of these structural necessities. More clearly, it was a tri-partite pressure zone. The *Cemevi* needs visitors as the visitors mean potential donations, which are necessary for survival. In the secularized field, where the religion's effect on the individual is only symbolic, i.e., it does not influence the political, social and economic organization of the community, the demand becomes flexible. It is hard to meet such demands. Moreover, there is also the necessities of the belief, i.e., the symbolic domain needs to be reproduced at least through some ritualistic elements. This requirement pressures the decision-making process, and this pressure is not simply a symbolic weight; the fulfillment of the religious practice needs both economic and human capital. So, there comes the third party of the pressure zone, which includes the material requirements of the *Cemevi*. While on the one hand the *Cemevi* needs to produce some immaterial and symbolic elements to fulfill its main duty, it must cut expenses when in a situation of unsuccessful economic conditions.

Each of the *Cemevis* felt a different side of the pressure more than the other ones. Under these circumstances, each of them was required to develop tactics to reach a kind of balance point to make decisions. Here, we reach to the third notion that might be discussed under the

category of the theory of Commons. These necessities allowed the development of different heteropraxis. As especially the religious authorities and ritualistic practices of Alevism have not been possible to be revived as they were once in their traditional context, they demand somehow a reformulation under the necessary economic, political and social conditions, and surely, this has not a formula. This revival and reinterpretation is a process of becoming. Such tactics of reviving the religious practice might be considered in that regard.

It is clear that such heterodox practices with the flexibility they offer give subjects the chance of participation instead of objectifying them under some standardizations. However still, it is hard to argue that such improvisations are establishing connections with the real conditions of life of their performers. As said, it is hard to assume for an urban *Cem* ritual to reproduce the traditional community under the structural obstacles of market capitalism and modern state. Still, these notions of dynamic improvisation, might be argued as including a not-yet-actualized potential to form new ways of subjectivities that conflict with the market-state forces, the making of the political subject of Commons might become at the same time the root of the revival of Alevi theological and philosophical ideals and practices representing them.

The last critical notion is the threshold problem. The Commons theory argues that a Commoning practice must allow newcomers and must function as a kind of bridge between the inside/outside connection of the cooperatively functioning, self-organized horizontal networks. More clearly, the argument is that places of Commoning need to be both isolated from the outside world in terms of not allowing the authority structures of the market-state but also open to the newcomers who are volunteers of the Commoning. This corresponds one of the major discussions in the Alevi literature. In their modern-urban context, *Cemevis* become open to outsiders, contrary to the traditional context that did not allow the non-Alevi through the formulated strategies of invisibility. So, the very basic liberal argumentation of the dialogue between “differences” becomes theoretically possible, which is also celebrated by the theory of Commons; however, in the basic practice, there are huge problems to be solved regarding such potential. I might summarize these problems as intimacy, authenticity and security. More clearly, although as the literature assumes that Alevis with the modern notions of politics are ready to be apparent in the public sphere, this appearance has some side effects.

First, especially the Sunni-subject entering to the open space, in that sense the *Cemevi*, might cause a problem as he/she might be thought as a potential surveyor. Thus, intimacy is disturbed. Second, especially the ritualistic practices that prioritize a ritualistic role Kapıcı (Doorkeeper) to prevent authenticity of the ritual, do not function in the strategy of such openness; i.e., everyone is able to enter or go out during the ritual. This freedom becomes even more problematic in the sense of social media screenings, where the joiners of the ritual open the *Cem* to the outside world with their cell-phones and damage authenticity. Third, related to the first one, the outsider is still perceived as threat and actually is so. Considering a near-past full of Alevi massacres and the vulnerability of the *Cemevis*, it is hard to argue for a well-functioning attitude of welcoming.

As a result of these all particular notions of Commons theory with a reference to the *Cemevis* in the context of placemaking, I analyzed the particular areas of problems to be considered. I may argue that there are structural problems in the context of *Cemevis* that prevent a successful Commoning practice. All these specific problems have developed from the structural preconditioning of the religious field that puts Alevism in a position in which an assumption toward “a new subjectivity acting beyond market-state” is not easily possible. A Commoning practice in the existing structural conditions of Alevism is keen to produce enclosures or strategies of articulation into the market order.

This methodological problem of the Commons theory, i.e., assuming structures could be overcome with subjective intentions, is concretely discussed through the means of the *Cemevi*-making practice. Although I have raised methodological opposition to the theory of Commons, I have still argued that the political approach the theory of Commons offer is worth to discuss. In particular, the theory opens a way for the construction of the subject opposing the hegemony of state-market relations from-below and in a dynamic way and most importantly, as a process of becoming in struggle itself. The praxis of Commoning rescues us from the standardized and centralized perceptions of the pre-described subject and sees potential in the not-yet-complete subjective-affective practices to form the organization in process. However, as the process itself hits the wall of the market-state structures in the last instance, it must develop mechanisms to articulate itself in the struggle within the structure, not simply seeking survival “beyond” the structure. It has to confront with it sooner or later.

5.2 Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

I want to stress that this thesis excludes the municipal *Cemevis*, a relatively new form of *Cemevi*-making practices. These forms must be seen as a potential danger to the overall religio-politics of Alevism, especially in the context of Commoning because they produce the *Cemevi* as an enclosure under a centralized authority.

To make this clearer and open a way for future works, I want to summarize the problems of municipal *Cemevis* in the context that I have offered. Municipality *Cemevis*, are the ones founded by municipalities to serve the Alevi people in the district of the municipality. These types of *Cemevis* are generally opened with the cooperation of some Alevi associations, and they server as a central place to hire and appeal to more crowded believers and audiences.

I argue that this kind of placemaking becomes a way of an alternative centralization and standardization of the places of worship and ritual in the Alevi religio-political praxis. A municipality takes the main responsibility of the *Cemevis*' daily functioning, and this organization reduces the possibility of *Cemevi*-centered everyday socialization.

Cemevis, due to their various kinds and because they are associations and foundations at the same time, have a social-economic-political functioning, in which those services are fulfilled by some members of that association. A *Cemevi*, whether offering alternative religious services or not, have been used by members and visitors as a kind of public sphere, where one goes, sits and chats, similar to spaces to coffee houses as discussed in the context of threshold. In that regard, *Cemevis* of this kind prevent such everyday encounters.

Moreover, these places surely with the effect of the financial power the municipalities have, compared to some associations, foundations or local inhabitants, use available spaces to build large and aesthetically designed *Cemevis*. Comparing the 'appearance value' of such places with the *Cemevis* that are built in apartment buildings, it might be argued that it is possible to organize these places for 'spectacular' *Cem* rituals. As discussed also in this work, *Cem* rituals and their "spectacularization" is an overall problem, and in that regard, where the relationship

between *Cem* rituals and their joiners has become heavily a spectacle-audience relationship. It is possible to assume such places are becoming more and more popular.

Thinking about all these problematics with the overall “legal status” problem of Alevism, this type of *Cemevis* might be believed by state officials to be a kind of solution to the legal problem. First, by passing the legal duty of *Cemevi*-making to municipalities, there is the possibility to make the other *Cemevis* founded by local initiatives remain illegal. Second, as these *Cemevis* become more and more popular, there is the possibility to lose the already low number of volunteers joining to the cause of *Cemevis* in the neighborhoods. As I see the everyday encounters and cooperative heteropraxis as a crucial point in the re-politicization of Alevism, the questioning of municipal *Cemevis* becomes an important focal point.

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APPENDICES

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Konuşlu, Fırat
Nationality: Turkish (TC)
Date and Place of Birth: 27 March 1986, Dortmund/Germany
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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	METU Media Cultural Studies	2012
BS	METU Political Science and Public Administration	2009
High School	Izmir Anatolian High School, Izmir	2004

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2011-2018	Baskent University	Research Assistant

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Fluent German

PUBLICATIONS

1. Konuşlu, Fırat “Emek Süreci Analizinden Sınıf Tartışmasına Bir Yol Denemesi: Türkiye Özel Televizyon Dizilerinin Üretim ve Emek Sürecinde Sınıfsal İlişkiler”, *Praksis Dergisi*, 32, 2013, pp. 165-189
2. Konuşlu, Fırat “İslami Burjuvazi'nin İktisadi, Kültürel ve İdeolojik Varlığı”, *21.Yüzyılda Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2013, pp. 222-255

3. Konuşlu, Fırat “Bir Mücadele Alanı Olarak "Otonomi": Türkiye'de Dizi Üretim Süreçleri Üzerinden Sömürü-Tahakküm İlişkilerini ve Siyasal Özneyi Tartışmak”, *Modus Operandi*, 3, 2015, pp. 75-110

4.Konuşlu, Fırat “Seksenler Yeşilçam Güldürülerinde Düzenbazlık Şans ve Delirme”, *Modernizmin Yansımaları: 80li Yıllarda Türkiye*, edited by, Funda Barbaros and Erik Jan Zürcher, Efil Yayınları, 2017, pp348-364

5. Konuşlu, Fırat “Doksanlardan İki binlere Yeni Bir Müzikal Birleşim: Kültürel Politik Eksende Arabesk Rap.” *Modernizm'in Yansımaları: 90lı Yıllarda Türkiye*, edited by Funda Barbaros and Erik Jan Zürcher, Efil Yayınevi, 2017, pp. 312-328

HOBBIES

Cinema, Filmmaking, Photopgraphy, Football

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez Ankara Mamak ilçesinde bir mahalle olan Tuzluçayır'daki cemevlerini müşterekler siyaseti bağlamında analiz ediyor. Tezin temel iddiası, müşterekler siyasetinin *Cemevi* üretimi bağlamında, Alevi siyasallığına dair potansiyeller barındırdığı, fakat bunun hem Alevi siyasetinin özgül durumundan hem de müşterekler siyasetinin metodolojik problemlerinden kaynaklı olarak sınırlılıklara sahip olduğudur. Bu imkanları ve sınırlılıkları tartışmak bu çalışmanın temel amacıdır.

Müşterekler siyaseti denilince, kabaca, toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal eylemliliğin üzerinde çok büyük bir belirlenim gücü oluşturmuş devlet-piyasa eklemlenmesinin çözüm üretmediği, toplumsal, ekonomik, siyasal ve ekolojik sorunlara, bu eklemlenmenin dışında ve ötesinde kalarak çözüm üretmeye çabalayan siyasal-toplumsal-ekonomik ve ekolojik eylemlilik biçimlerini anlıyoruz. Bu eylemlilik biçimleri ortak mülkiyete, yatay örgütlenmeye, dayanışmaya, öz-yönetim ve belirlenime, farklılıklara, uzlaşmacı siyasete ve katılımcılığa dayanıyor. Dünya üzerinde birçok farklı örnekle karşımıza çıkan müşterek eyleme pratiği, devlet-piyasa eklemlenmesinin yaşadığı temsil, adalet ve eşitlik sorunlarına karşı bir alternatifin mümkün olduğuna bunu bizatihi kendi dar çerçevesinde ürettiği pratiklerle gerçekleştirerek işaret ediyor. Bu eyleme pratikleri, kendilerini bir müşterek olarak tanımlasınlar ya da tanımlamasınlar, teori, dünyanın farklı farklı yerlerinde ortaya çıkan bu varoluş çabalarının ortak bir siyasal-ekonomik söyleme dayanmaya başladığını, basitçe özünde sınıfsız ve öz-yönetim ile şekillenen bir söylemin var olduğunu ifade etmeye çalışıyorlar. Yani teori, pratikten ortaya çıkıyor. Bu çalışma da cemevleri üretiminin böyle bir mücadelenin parçalarından biri olarak teorize edilip edilemeyeceğini, bu teorizasyonun önünde bir problem varsa, bunun neden kaynaklandığı ve nasıl aşılabileceği soruyor.

Bütün bu analizi yapmadan önce, cemevlerine bu şekilde bakmamızı anlamlı kılacak zemini kurmamız gerekiyor. Bu zemin iki temel kaynak ile kurulabilir. Bunlardan ilki modern bağlamdaki cemevleri üretme pratiğinin kendisidir. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin anayasal

çerçevesi içinde azınlık olarak tanımlanmayan grupların ibadethaneleri cami olarak belirlenmiştir. Tarihsel olarak bu ibadet mekanını ve mekanda icra edilen ibadet pratiklerinden olan namazı dinsel mekan ve pratikleri olarak benimsememiş Aleviler, özellikle cumhuriyetin ilanıyla birlikte gelen Tekke ve Zaviyeler Kanunu çerçevesinde, resmi bağlamda kendi ibadethanelerini kuramamışlar ve ülke çerçevesinde Sünni İslam'ın ibadethanesine mecbur bırakılmışlardır. Tarihsel pratiklerinin içinde, birçok katliam ve soykırım karşısında gizli ve görünmez olarak kendi yaşam biçimlerini sürdürebilme taktiklerinin mekanizma ve örneklerini geliştirebilmiş olan Aleviler, bu devlet politikasının dışında kalmak istedikleri ölçüde, *Cem* düzenleme faaliyetlerini sürdürmeye çalışmışlardır.

Cem törenlerine mevcut siyasal ve toplumsal baskı içerisinde bir şekilde devam edebilmeyi başarmış Aleviler'in cemevlerini bir ibadet mekanı olarak kurma ve yasal statüye kavuşturma çabası, doksanlardaki Alevi siyasal yükselişi ile birlikte olmuştur. Yasal olmayan *Cemevi* açma faaliyeti, Alevi dernekleri vasıtasıyla dolaylı yollardan fiilen gerçekleşmiştir. Çeşitli dernekler açan Aleviler, bu derneklerini cemevleri olarak da kurgulamışlardır. Bunu yasallaştırmaya ya da en azından yasal çerçevenin içine sembolik olarak yerleştirme çabaları yine birçok baskıyla karşılaşmalarına neden olmuştur. Devlet kurumları, isimlerinde ya da tüzüklerinde *Cem* ya da *Cemevi* geçen derneklerin açılmalarına müsaade etmemiş, yargı yoluna başvurmuş ya da ideolojik/zor aygıtları vesilesiyle faaliyetleri engellemeye çalışmıştır. Bu süreç içerisinde Alevilerin bu pratiği üretebilme çabası onları bir şekilde devlet mekanizmalarının içine girememelerine neden olmuştur.

Bu bağlamı daha derinden inceleyecek olursak karşımıza Alevi siyasetinin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni bağlamındaki muğlak ve bir ölçüde paradoksal olan kimlik üretimiyle paralel sonuçlar çıkıyor. Bu alanda yapılan birçok çalışma göstermektedir ki Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Laiklik ilkesi, pratikte ideal siyasal-toplumsal amacını karşılayamamıştır. Basitçe, devletin, devleti oluşturan vatandaş toplamı karşısında herhangi bir dinsel kimliği temsil etmeyeceği, devletin kurumlarının ve yasalarının dinsel referanslardan arınmış olacağı, vatandaş bağının belirleyicisinin hiçbir din olamayacağını ifade eden bu ilke, pratikte, tanımına uygun bir siyasal pratik ile beraberinde gelmemiştir. Sadece Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş dönemi ve ilk yıllarındaki tartışmalar bile, vatandaşlar arası soyut bağı belirleme konusunda, özellikle

gayr-i Müslimlerin vatandaşlık hakları bağlamında, yoğun fikir ayrılıkları, kavramı anlamlandırma, yorumlama ve uygulamada sıkıntılar olduğunu göstermiştir.

Öte yandan, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurumsal yapısı içerisinde kendisine yer bulmayı başarmış olan Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı bu ilkeye zarar veren temel kurum olarak ifade edilmektedir. Fransız tipi Laiklik ilkesi çerçevesinde, temel görevleri ve işlevi din alanının devlet tekeline alınması, dinsel üretimin yasalarla kontrol edilmesi, yönetilmesi ve sunulması olarak tanımlanan bu kurum, bu tanım bağlamında düşünüldüğünde Laiklik ilkesiyle çelişmez. Fakat kimilerinin paradoks, kimilerinin istisna, kimilerinin de Laiklik ilkesinin tam da kendisi olarak ifade edilmiş Diyanet kurumunun pratikteki işleyişi bu ilkeye zarar verdiği iddia edilen temel kurum olarak ifade edilmesine neden olmuştur.

Bu iddiayı iki çok genel çerçeve aracılığıyla ifade edebiliriz. İlki dinsel anlamda nötr olması gereken bu kurum, kontrol edilecek, yönetilecek ve sunulacak dinin kaynağını Sünni Hanefî İslam olarak belirlemiştir. Bu kurum halihazırda İslam'ın Anadolu coğrafyası içindeki birçok farklılaşmasını yok sayarak; ki yalnızca Sünnilik içindeki birçok varyasyonu dahi görmezden gelerek; kendini tek bir mezhep üzerine kurgulamıştır. Öte yandan hurafe ve batıl inançlardan arındırılmış, Türk kültürüne uygun, bilimsellik ile çelişmeyen bir dinin teolojik sınırlarının belirlenmesi, öğretilmesi ve hizmetlerinin sunulması temel misyonu ile donatılmıştır. Her ne kadar bu misyon, toplumsal ve siyasal bağlamda uygulamaya geçirilen modernleşme-sekülerleşme planlarıyla uyumlu gibi gözükse de esas sorun, İslam'ın Sünni Hanefî İslam çatısı altında tekelleştirilmesinden ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu meseleyi Alevilik bağlamında düşündüğümüzde ve Alevilik'in durumunu Sünni İslam'ın içindeki mezhepsel farklılıklar ile Hanefî Sünni İslam arasındaki farklılıkların örtüştürülebilme olasılığı ile kıyasladığımızda, bu iki İslam yorumu kanadının tek bir çatı altında uzlaşabilmesinin zorluğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Basitçe, konumuz çerçevesinde açacak olursak, tüm tekil farklılıklarına rağmen farklı Sünni mezhepleri ve tarikatları, cami ve namaz bağlamında bir ortaklaşma zemini kurabileceklerken, Alevilik'in bu bağlamda bir ortaklaşma kuramayacağı çok açıktır. Bu da bu ilkenin bu şekilde uygulanışının Alevilik üzerinde bıraktığı tahribatı çok açık bir şekilde ortaya koyar.

İkinci çerçeve ise, Diyanet'in Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihi boyunca aldığı siyasal konumlanışlara işaret eder. Diyanet'in görev ve ilkeleri bağlamında yapılan birçok anayasal düzenleme, başta dini hizmetlerin sunulması ve halka dinin öğretilmesi olarak sınırlandırılmış

görev ve ilkelerin genişletilmesi ve siyasal bir alana taşınmasını sağlamıştır. Diyanet, milliyetçilik, dindar ve ahlaklı bir toplum yaratma gibi ideoloji ve ilkelerle donatılmış, yetkileri ve bütçeleri genişletilmiş, bu ölçüde de toplum içindeki dinsel cemaatleşmelerle etkileşim içine sokulmuştur. Temelde, toplumdaki dini varoluş biçimlerine tek bir kaynaktan yön vermeyi bu anlamda da devlet ile toplumdaki dinsel farklılaşmaları yönetebilmeyi hedefleyen bu kurum din dolayımında yaşanan toplumsal-siyasal güç ilişkilerinin odağına konulanmıştır. Fakat bu, tarih içerisindeki uygulamaların bir sonucu gibi gözükse de ilk çerçeveden ayrı olarak düşünülmemelidir, çünkü ilkenin tarih içinde esas hedeflerinden sapması, ilkenin kuruluş aşamasında sorunlu olarak kurgulanmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. İlkenin temeli böyle bir binaya izin vermiş, yolunu açmıştır. Sünni Hanefi İslam devletin kollarından biri olmuştur.

Kısaca özetlenen bu tablo, Alevilik'in devlet kurumsallaşması karşısında dışarıda bırakılışına işaret eder. Fakat Alevilik'in Türkiye Cumhuriyeti karşısındaki konumu basit bir 'dışarıda kalma' haliyle özetlenemez, zira bu tablonun, daha önce söylenildiği gibi, muğlak ve kısmen paradoksal bir yönünü oluşturan, 'içine alma' boyutu da vardır. Bunun için de yine iki çerçeve sunabiliriz. İlki, kökeni Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurucu ilkelerinin kısmi temellerinin atıldığı söyleyebileceğimiz Jön Türkler hareketinden başlayan ve Mehmed Fuat Köprülü'nün çalışmalarına uzanan bir yelpazede cereyan eder. Türk milliyetçiliği ideolojisinin teorik kuruluşu için yapılan çalışmalar dahilinde Jön Türkler Anadolu'daki farklı etnik ve dinsel gruplar hakkında bilgi toplama çalışması içine girmiş, Alevilik de bu çalışmalardan payını almıştır. Baha Said Bey'in Alevilik üzerine yaptığı çalışmalarda, Alevilik'in Türk milliyetçiliğinin kuruluşunda bir köprü görevi gördüğü karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Şöyle ki, yaşanan Sünni İslam'ı bir Türk milliyetçiliği bilinci kurmanın önünde bir engel olarak gören bu görüş, Alevilik'te İslam'ın Orta Asya Türk geleneklerinin izlerini bulmuştur. Araplaşmamış, batıldan uzak, şekilci-biçimci bir İslam yerine Batını bir yorumu benimsemiş olan bu Türkmen göçmenler, Türklük ile İslam arasında kurulmaya çalışılan köprünün kaynağı olarak düşünülmüştür.

Elbette ki bu tespit büyük bir sorunu beraberinde getirir. Burada en temel problemi Kürt ve Arap Alevileri'nin varlığı ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bir devamı olarak görülebilecek Hasan Reşit Tankut'un Alevilik üzerine yaptığı çalışma Baha Said'in tespitlerini

yeniden üretmekle birlikte Kürt ve Arap Alevilerini, Kürtleşmiş ve Araplaşmış Türkmenler olarak işaret eder ve Türk milliyetçiliği kaynağına geri döner. Fakat, bu 'içine alma' çabasını yeni bir dışsallaştırma da takip eder. Özellikle Kürt Alevileri'nin Hristiyan ve Ermenilerle yakın oldukları ve iş birliği yaptıkları gibi tespitler üzerinden Alevilik'in çok da güvenilir olmadığı, zaten kapalı bir toplum yapısıyla var olagelmiş bu dinsel grubun bir tehdit unsuru da oluşturabileceği tespitleri de yapılmıştır.

Tüm bu gelişmeler ışığında, çoğunlukla iddia edilenin aksine Alevilik ile Türkiye Cumhuriyeti arasındaki ilişki, sorunsuz, bir tarafın diğer tarafı doğrudan kucakladığı bir ilişki olmamıştır. Şu bellidir ki, tüm bu dışlayıcı tabloya rağmen bir yandan içine alan ve zirvesini altmışlarda yaşayan bu ideolojik çaba Kemalist milliyetçilik ve laiklik ilkelerini benimseyen bir Alevilik kurulmuştur. Bir yandan laiklik ilkesinin Sünni İslam'a getirdiği eleştiri ve revizyon, halifeliğin kaldırılması, aydınlanma, modernlik ve bilimsellik vurgusu, Alevilik'in yüzyıllarca geliştirdiği öğretisiyle olumlu bir etkileşim içine sokulabilmiştir. Yine de aynı ilkeden doğan bazı pratikler, başta Tekke ve Zaviyelerin kapatılması olmak üzere, Alevilerin dinsel pratiklerini yaşamaları konusunda sorunlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Öte yandan, Kürt Alevilik'i Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ile etnik kimlik bağlamında girdiği mücadele üzerinden dostane bir şekilde kurulmamıştır ve bunun Alevilik üzerinde genel bir negatif etkisinden bahsetmek hatalı olmaz. İlişkinin bu problemi tarafı, özellikle altmış ve yetmişlerde Alevilik Türkiye soluna, sosyalist hareketine yaklaştığı ölçüde, devlet ve devletin temsil ettiği Kemalizm imge ve yönelimleriyle, Alevilik üzerinde yoğun bir baskı ve şiddet dalgasıyla da pekiştirilmiştir. Seksenlerde ve doksanlarda yükselen İslamcı hareketlere cevaben, Kemalizm ile Alevilik arasında yeniden kurulan bir bağdan bahsetmek mümkün olsa da, özellikle Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihinin ortaya çıkardığı bu dengesiz siyasal pratikler ve son otuz yılı etkisi altına almış Sünnileşme politikaları ile birlikte düşünülünce, devlet, Aleviler için üzerinde mücadele verilecek net bir kurum olma özelliğini tartışmasız bir biçimde sürdürüyor diyebilmek zordur.

Doksanlar Alevilik'in bir toplumsal hareket olarak devletten taleplerini kurguladığı yıllar olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Şu ana kadar yapılan tüm bu tartışmaları zemine alan bu siyasallık biçimleri, sosyalist Alevilik yorumundan, Aşırı-Milliyetçi bir Alevilik yorumuna kadar çok geniş bir yelpazeyi de içerse, temelde üç sorunsala verilen farklı cevaplar çevresinde varlığını kurmuştur. Bunlardan ilki, milliyetçiliği tartışan, Alevilik'in anavatanı sorusudur. Türkiye

milliyetçiliği ile sorunsuz olmasa da bir şekilde kurulmayı başarabilmiş ilişki, resmi tarih yazımının gücünü de arkasına alarak, Alevilik'i bir Türk İslamı, kökenini Orta Asya Türk inanışları olarak kurgulayan bir tezi savunur. Bu yükselen Kürt milliyetçiliği karşısında Alevilik'in devlet içindeki meşru ideolojilerden birinin saflarına yakınlaşmasını sağlarken, karşısında bunu redDeden, Alevi tarihini Mezopotamya ve Anadolu ekseninde yeniden tanımlayan ve bu ölçüde Türk-Kürt-Arap Alevilik'i çerçevesini savunan çoklu-etnik bir yorum da mevcuttur. Bu pozisyon, devletin meşru ideolojisine karşı aldığı karşıt konum bağlamında, Alevilik'i resmi siyaset yollarının dışında tutmaya devam etmektedir.

Bir diğer büyük sorunsal ise, Alevilik'in kendi iç tartışması gibi gözükmesine rağmen, Sünni İslamcı ideolojilerle olan ilişkideki problem alanlarına işaret eder. Bu, Alevilik'in bir din mi yoksa kültür mü olduğu sorusuna da ulaşabilen, Alevilik'in İslam içinde mi dışında mı olduğu tartışmasıdır. Burada basitçe Alevilik'i islam-içi bir inanç biçimi olarak savunmanın, doğru olsa da çok dikkatle yaklaşılması gereken bir ifade olduğu kanaatindeyim. Zira bu ifade, tam da Diyanet'in kuruluşuyla cisimleşen, Sünni İslam'ı tüm dinsel farklılıkların çatısı olarak kurma işlevini rahatlıkla yerine getirebilmekte, Alevilik'in kendi inançsal farklılıklarını savunmasının önünü de tıkamaktadır.

Bu sürecin nasıl işlediğine daha yakından bakalım. Her ne kadar, Osmanlı Devleti'nin resmi ideolojisi, yüzyıllar boyunca Alevilik'i İslam-dışı ilan etmeye yönelik, Zındık, Rafizi, Mülhid ve Kafir gibi ifadeleri dolaşıma soktuysa da, benzer bir ideolojik-teolojik kaynak üzerine kendini bina eden modern Sünni İslamcılık, özellikle doksanlardan sonraki Alevi uyanışına bir karşı atak olarak, Alevilik'i 'içeri alarak yönetmek' stratejisini devreye soktu. İlahiyatçı birçok yazarın çabasına mazhar olan bu hedef, şöyle bir metodoloji kuruyordu. İslam'ın Hristiyanlık'taki Ortodoksi ve Heterodoksi ikiliğindeki gibi bir ayırım üzerinden yorumlanamayacağını belirterek, İslam'ın farklılıklara açık olduğunu söyleyerek Alevilik'in bir heteredoksi olarak anlaşılamayacağını ifade ettiler. Bu bir kez belirlendikten sonra Alevilik İslam içindeki farklılaşmalara müsaade eden kurumsallaşmaların bir parçası haline getirilebilirdi, bu kurumsallaşma mezhep ya da tarikat olmaya izin veriyordu. Alevilik bir mezhep olamazdı, çünkü tarihsel olarak sistematik bir yapı kuramamış, tutarlı bir teoloji ve bu teolojiyi örgütleyebilecek bir kurumsallık kuramamıştı. Alevilik olsa olsa bir tarikat olabilirdi ki, Alevilik bir tarikatı tanımlamaya yönelik her şeyi içinde barındırıyordu.

Tam da bu noktada bir problem ortaya çıkar ve bizim konumuzla göbekten bağlıdır. Bu iddiaya göre, Alevilik inanç mekanizmaları, basitçe ritüelleri ve toplumsal örgütlenişi, tarikatlardaki gibiydi, örneğin tarikatların zikir törenleri ile *Cem* törenleri birbirleriyle benzer kategoride olan ‘ibadetlerdi’. Fakat, bir tarikat, şeriat kapısının kurallarını hiçe saymazdı. Yani tarikatlar, tarikat içerisinde kendilerine has pratikleri yerine getirirlerdi, ama şeriatın ibadet ilkelerini de yerine getirmek zorundaydılar. Burada da konumuz dahilinde namaz ve onun cemaat bağlamında ibadet mekanı olan cami karşımıza çıkıyor. Yani basitçe, Aleviler için İslam-içi olmanın şartı, bir tarikat olmaktan, bir tarikat olmanın şartı da İslam’ın şer’i pratiklerine ve ilkelerine uymaktan geçiyordu. Bunu kanıtlamak için de namaz ibadeti kritik bir rol oynuyordu. Bu anlamda az sayıdaki ve çoğunlukla devlet kontrolü altında bugünlere ulaşmış Alevi yazılı kaynakları örnek gösteriliyor ve orada namaz ilkesinin varlığına işaret ediliyordu. Bu yazılı metinlerin ‘saflığının’ bizatihi bir tartışma konusu olmasını bir kenara bırakırsak, en temel sorun basit bir kavramsal manipülasyondan ibaretti. Söz konusu kavram “salat” kavramıdır ve yazılı metinlerdeki salat kavramı (örneğin Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli’ye ait olduğu söylenen Makalat’ta) doğrudan namaz olarak çevrilmiştir. Tarihsel olarak birçok ilahiyatçının kendilerinin de tartıştığı gibi, salat, kelimesi, tek başına namaz anlamına gelmemektedir. Yine birçok ilahiyatçının kabul ettiği gibi Kur’an içinde salat kelimesi, dua, niyaz, eğilme, yakarma gibi anlamlarda da kullanılmaktadır ve bir ritüel pratiğini işaret eden, yani namaz olarak çevrilen kısımlar, bizatihi Kur’an’ın içinde tartışmalıdır. Basitçe, namaz salat’ın anlamından sadece bir tanesidir, ama Alevi metinlerindeki salat doğrudan namaz olarak çevrilir.

Tüm bu tartışmaların ötesinde kesin olan başka bir şey daha vardır, o da şudur. Bizatihi Alevi tarihsel pratiğinin ve öğretisinin kendisi namazı reddettiğini, kabul etmediğini, kılmadığını açıkça ifade eder. Gerek Şii Safevi Devleti, gerek Osmanlı Devleti yazmalarında Aleviler için kullanılan ‘namaz kılmayan topluluklar’ tanımlaması da bunu destekler. Dolayısıyla Alevilerin namaz kıldığını ifade eden hiçbir belge, tarihsel pratikle örtüşmemektedir.

Bu tartışmanın ışığında, yeniden söyleyecek olursak, Alevilik’in İslam içinde olma argümanı doğru sayılabilecek bir argüman olmakla birlikte bunun nasıl ifade edileceği önem kazanmaktadır. Alevilik, İslam’ın kurumsallaşmış teolojik siyasal yapısının içinde değildir. Yani ne bir mezhep, ne bir tarikattır. Fakat mezhep ve tarikat dışında olmak, İslam’ın önceden

kurumsal olarak belirlenmiş (ve bu açıdan da reddedildiği söylenen Ortodoksi/Heteredoksi ikiliğini yeniden üreten) teolojik ve siyasal yapısının içinde olmaması, Alevilik'i İslam dışı da yapmamaktadır. Alevilik'i İslam'ın kurumsal yapıları dışında kalan bir yorum olarak düşünmek, hem Alevi söylemiyle hem de tarihsel gerçeklikle örtüşüyor gibi gözükmektedir.

Burada Alevi konumu yüzyıllar boyunca ideolojik aygıtların kontrolüne sahip olamamanın neticesinde savunmasız bir konuma düşer. Çünkü diğer tarafta, Alevilik'i İslam içinde tanımlamaya çalışırken, onu aslında kendi siyasal-ideolojik yöneliminin bir uzantısı yapmaya çalışan Sünni İslamcılığa cevap verebilmenin yolunu, Alevilik'in İslam'ın dışında olduğunu iddia eden bir başka ideolojik yönelim vardır. Bu yönelim Alevilik'in esasında bir inanç sistemi olmadığı, kendisini baskılar karşısında bir inanç gibi gizleyen, özünde bir siyasal-toplumsal inançsız bir komün kültürünün din sosuna bulanmış hali olduğunu iddia eden bir yönelimi de içerir. Fakat bir inanç sistemi olduğunu kabul etmek gerekliliği söz konusu olduğu ölçüde, bu inancın eski Orta Asya Türk inanışları ile İslam öncesi Kürt inanışlarının harmanlanmış hali olan 'kendine özgü bir din' olduğunu, İslam'ın sadece bunu gizleyen bir sos olduğunu iddia etmişlerdir. Birçok Alevi'nin bu iki yorum arasına sıkışıp kalmış olduğunu, İslam dışılığı da İslam kurumsallaşması içinde sayılmaya da eş derecede karşıt bir tepki verdiğini belirtmemiz gerekiyor.

Uzunca bir açıklamadan sonra, bu ikinci sorunsal çerçevesinde Alevilik'in resmi siyaset karşısında aldığı konumu yeniden tartışacak olursak, bu yukarıdaki ikili salınım çerçevesinde, bir dahil olma-dahil olmama ikilemi karşımıza çıkar. Eğer İslam içindeyse Diyanet'te mi temsil edilmeliyiz yoksa diyanet komple kapatılmalı mı ya da kendi dinsel kurumumuz mu olmalı, eğer bir inanç değilsek, kültürümüzün vazettiği söylenilegelen sınıfsal mücadeleye mi yönelmeliyiz şeklinde basite indirgenebilecek sorunsallar, resmi siyasetle ilişkilerin nasıl kurulacağını bir sorun haline getiren bir diğer unsurdur.

Üçüncü ve son tartışmaya değinecek olursak, yine diğer ikisiyle bağıntılı bir şekilde Alevilerin Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurucu unsuru mu olduğu, yoksa bir muhalefeti mi temsil ettiği sorusudur. Bir yandan Kemalist Laiklik ilkesinin temel hedefini benimsemiş Alevilik, bu ilkeyi uygulandığındaki sorunsallar nedeniyle gitgide etkinliğini yitirmiş olarak tarif eder. Bu ilkeyi, Sünnileşmenin elinden kurtarmak ve Türkiye'yi yeniden laik bir devlet yapmayı hedeflemek temel bir siyasal amaca bürünür. Bu anlamda bu mücadele Alevilik bağlamına

sıkıştırılmayacak, birçok Laik Sünni, farklı inanç grupları ya da inançsız gruplar ile de kader birliği yapmayı gerektirecek evrensel bir mücadeleye işaret eder. Bu bağlamda Alevilik'in temsil ve statü sorunu ortaya çıkar. Laik bir devlette Diyanet gibi bir kurumun olamayacağından, Alevilik'in de Diyanet dışında bir kurumu olması gerektiğine kadar farklı argümanlar desteklenmektedir. Bu Kemalist ideoloji ile Alevilik arasındaki yakınlaşmanın ana hattıdır.

Fakat bu resmin öte yanında, basit bir şekilde ifade edecek olursak, Kemalizm'i, Alevilik'in Türkiye Cumhuriyet'i tarihi boyunca ezilmesinde pay sahibi olarak gören bir pozisyon, laiklik ideali karşısında Kemalizmle ortaklaşan Alevilik fikrini sorunlu bulur. Alevilik'in özellikle Kemalizmle bir paket halinde gelen sosyal demokrasi ve milliyetçilik ilkeleriyle ilişkilenmesi esas sorun kaynağıdır.

Uzunca bir tartışmayla ifade ettiğim doksanlardaki Alevi siyasallaşmasına dair yapılacak genel çıkarım, tüm bu muğlak tablo içinde Alevilik'in kendisine devlet içinde bir temsil yolu bulamadığı, kendisini temsil eden, genellikle dernek ve vakıf statüsündeki kurumların Alevi pratikleri üzerinde bir tekelleşme ve merkezileşme kuramadığı tespitidir. Alevilik dinsel alanı, tekelleşmiş, bürokratik bir Sünni İslam karşısında, tekelleşmemiş, dağınık, resmi siyasete karşı konumunu belirleyememiş, bir yol haritası bulmaktan uzak bir yapıda karşımıza çıkar.

Şu ana kadarki tablo, Alevilik'in yalnızca siyasal alanda yaşadığı belirsizlik ve kırılmalığa işaret eder, fakat müşterekler teorisi bağlamında siyasal alanın ötesinde ekonomik alanı da tartışmaya açmalıyız. Elbette ki devlet-piyasa şeklindeki kullanımından da anlaşılacağı gibi siyasal ve ekonomik arasında mutlak bir geçişlilik tarif ediyorum. Dolayısıyla devlet alanında yaşanan temsiliyet sorununun ekonomik alanda da bir karşılığı olduğunu ve bunların birlikte düşünülmesi gerektiğini de belirtmiş oluyorum.

Bu alanda baktığımızda ise, Alevi geleneksel tarihinin, içinde istisnalar barındırmakla birlikte devlet sisteminden ayrı bir ekonomik varoluş kurduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Özellikle 16.yüzyıldan sonra yenilgiye uğrayan Kızılbaş hareketinin neticesinde, uzak dağ köylerine sığınmanın etkisiyle, devlet ve toplumla ilişkisi kısıtlanmış, yoğun bir birikim yapabileceği üretim araçlarından uzak kalmış bir toplumdaki bahsediyoruz. Bu tablo, modern devletin ortaya çıkışıyla yeni bir boyut kazanır. Bir yandan dinden bağımsız olarak bütün ülke köylüsünü

etkilemiş ve köyden kente göçe neden olmuş sorunlar, devletle ilişkisi pek de eski ve kuvvetli birlikteliklere dayanmayan bir köylü olarak Alevi köylüsünü, daha erken ve daha yoğun bir göçe mecbur bırakmıştır. Bu göçler neticesinde bir ayakta kalma stratejisi olarak ortaya çıkan büyükşehirlerin çeperlerine gecekondulu mahalleleri kurma stratejisi, hem şehirde tutunmayı, ama bir yandan da bir kent yoksulluğunun ortaya çıkışını mümkün kılmıştır.

Tam da bu noktada altmış ve yetmişlerde gecekondulu mahallelerinde, Aleviler, devletle ve piyasayla ilişkilendenmekten çok, sosyalist sol ideolojilerle birlikte bir savunma stratejisi uygulamıştır. Buradaki başarısızlığı takiben, siyasete ve piyasaya eklenme olasılığını doksanların başında ele geçirmiştir. Sosyalist ideolojinin, ülke ve dünya genelinde yaşadığı çöküşün etkisine paralel olarak özellikle yerel belediyeçilik stratejileriyle kendini var etmeyi başarabilmiş sosyal demokrat siyasallıklar ile dernekçilik faaliyetleri arasındaki ilişki bir dikey kitle mobilizasyonu olasılığı ortaya çıkarmıştır. Fakat bir yandan sosyal demokrasinin de bir kriz içine girişi, paralelindeki Sünni İslamcı yükseliş, öte yandan Alevilik'in yukarıda değindiğim açmazlar ekseninde siyasal temsiliyet yollarını yaratamayışı kuvvetli bir mobilizasyonu mümkün kılamamış ve Aleviler siyasal-ekonomik bir temsiliyet kurabilecek örgütlü orta ve üst sınıflarını oluşturamamıştır.

Dolayısıyla ortada kuvvetli bir devlet-piyasa bloğuna eklenememe ama tam anlamıyla da dışında olamama durumundan bahsedebiliriz. İşte tam da bu noktada müşterekler siyasetinin zemini kendini kurmuş oluyor. Bu blok içinde temsiliyet bulamayan Aleviler acaba müşterek pratikler üretiyorlar mı, üretebilirler mi sorusu temel bir soru olarak karşımıza çıkıyor.

Bu noktada *Cemevi* üretiminin tam da böyle bir tartışmanın merkezine oturtulabileceğini düşünüyorum. Doksanlarla birlikte özerk bir hareket olarak ortaya çıkmaya başlayan Alevi toplumsal hareketinin pratiklerinden biri cemevleri açmaktı. Köyden kente göç öncesinde de sonrasında da tahribata uğramış Alevi dinsel kurumlarını topyekün bir şekilde yeniden canlandırmak mümkün değildi. Çünkü Alevi dinselliği içinde kurulduğu toplumsal-siyasal-ekonomik yapıya göbekten bağlıydı ve kapalı bir köy yaşantısını, hane ölçekli tarım ve hayvancılığı, sınıfsız bir dayanışmayı önceliyordu, kent yaşantısı ise basitçe, endüstriyel üretime, işçiliğe, emek değer ilişkisine ve sınıflı bir toplum yapısına bağlıydı. Her ne kadar Alevi toplumsal-siyasal ve ekonomik yapısı geleneksel anlamda da inancın vazettiği eşitlikçi-dayanışmacı-sınıfsız toplumu eksiksiz bir şekilde yaratamamış olsa da, Alevi inancı sürekli bu

ideali gerçekleştirmeye ve bunu garanti altına almaya çalışan bir adalet ve ceza sistemini yeniden üretmeye çalışıyordu. Bu çabanın, kentsel ekonomik, siyasal ve toplumsal ilişkiler karşısında varlığını, olduğu şekilde sürdürebilmesi pek mümkün değildi ve öyle de oldu.

Fakat, dinsel uyanışını sağlamak konusunda örgütlenmeye çabalayan Alevi hareketi inançsal ideallerinden uzak da olsa, pratikte bir karşılık bulmuştur. Bu noktada da geleneksel kurumlarını canlandıramayan Alevilik, kent yaşamında, özellikle ritüellerini yeni bir cemaatleşmenin olanağı olarak düşünmeye başlar ve *Cem* ritüelleri organize edilmeye başlanır. Bu *Cem* ritüelleri, geleneksel olan cemlerle biçimsel olarak benzeşse de *Cem* ritüeli esasında toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal kurumların yeniden üretildiği, yani biçimseli, zahiri olanı aşan ve batını bir yöne işaret eden bir ritüel olduğundan, üretilen *Cem* ritüelleri bu zeminin yokluğunda gerçekleşmeye mecburdu. Fakat yine de tüm bu sorunlarına rağmen *Cem* yapmak, geleneksel anlamdaki bir cemaati yeniden üretemese de modern anlamda bir cemaatleşmenin olasılığını içinde barındırıyordu ve bir yandan da ritüelin aşkın hissini üretiyor, her şeyden önemlisi kültürün ve felsefenin yeniden üretimini sağlıyordu. Bu pratik bu temeller sayesinde, süreç içerisinde, bir talep olmanın ötesine geçerek, merkezi bir siyasal eylemlilik haline gelmiştir ve ana taleplerden birini oluşturmayı başarmıştır.

Sorumuz şuna dönüşmüş oluyor: devlet, resmi siyasal kurumlar ve piyasa güçlerinin yokluğunda ya da belirsizlik ve rastlantısallığı altında, Alevi siyasal örgütlenmesinin yönsüzlüğü ve örgütsüzlüğü içinde Alevi öznesi *Cemevi* kurmak isterse ne yapar? Dernek kurmak ve bu derneğin içinde *Cem* faaliyetleri yürütmek, derneğin yasallığı çerçevesinde mümkün oluyor, bu da en bilindik yöntem olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Her ne kadar içinde *Cem* ve *Cemevini* çağrıştıran ifadeler siyasal alanda özellikle doksanlarda sorun olmuş olsa da mücadele bir kazanımla sonuçlanır. Resmi bir statü kazanımı değildir bu, çünkü yukarıda uzun uzadıya yapmaya çalıştığım Sünni İslamcılık, bu statüyü veremez, zira vermesi kendi siyasal hükümlerini sekteye uğratacaktır. Bu fiili bir işleyebilme, yolu yöntemi belirsiz, rastlantısal ve keyfi olsa da desteklenebilme kazanımından ibarettir.

Bu noktada bu kurma ve işletme işini, yani daha basitçe ifade edecek olursam *Cemevi* üretimini, daha derinden incelemek için bazı örneklere bakmak gerekiyor. Bu noktada da şu ana kadar yaptığım kentleşme, siyasallaşma ve ekonomi tartışmalarının hepsinin odak mekanlarından biri olarak Tuzluca'yı'daki farklı cemevleri üretimlerine bakmak bir yöntem

olabilir. Burada temel hipotez, bu cemevlerinde müşterekler teorisinin öngördüğü üzere, temsiliyet mekanizmalarından ve piyasa ilişkilerinden faydalanamayan öznelere, maddi ya da maddi olmayan ürünlerini, müşterekler siyasetinin değerleri bağlamında üretebileceğidir. Bunu dört temel unsur üzerinden sorgulayabiliriz. Bunlar benim analizimi belirleyen analitik araçlarımla müşterekler siyasetinin teorik araçlarının bir harmanlanması olarak okunabilecek unsurlar şunlardır: toplumsal inisiyatif alıcılar ve duygulanımsal emek, bağış ekonomisi, heteredoks pratikler, dışa açıklık.

Bu araçlar bir ideal müşterek pratiğine işaret ediyor. İdeal kelimesinin altını çizmek gerekiyor, ki müşterekler teorisi ile olan tartışma tam da bu noktada başlıyor. Acaba bu idealler yerine getirilmeye çalışıldığında, imkanları ve sınırlılıkları neler oluyor? Temel sorunsalımız bu, bunu yanıtladıktan sonra, yanıtlara göre nedenleri sorgulayarak, müşterekler teorisini tartışmaya açabiliriz.

Cemevleri benim ifademle toplumsal inisiyatif alıcılar aracılığıyla kuruluyor. Şu ana kadarki Alevilik literatürü, bu toplumsal grubu toplumsal girişimci olarak tanımladı. Benim bu kavramı kullanmaya itirazımın teorik bir yönü var. Bu kavramın içinden çıktığı kaynak mobilizasyonu teorisinin arka planındaki temel teorik yaklaşıma bakarsak, aslında bireyci, fırsatları değerlendiren, hesapçı bir bireyin toplumsal hareketlerin öncüsü olduğuna işaret ediyor. Benzer bir inisiyatif alma halinden bahsedilse bile ortaya yapılan işle girilen ilişkiyi anlamlandırmada bir potansiyelin yalnızca tek tarafı görülmüş oluyor.

Benim kullanmayı tercih ettiğim kavramın teorik arka planında ise, Bourdieu'nun simgesel eylemi tanımlarken kullandığı anti-ekonomist bakış açısı var. Buradaki tanıma göre bazı eylemlerin sebebi, sonunda bir çıkar, fayda olup olmasına bakmaksızın, eyleyenin kendini o simgesel alan içinde tanımlaması, duygusal bağı, hayat amacı, varoluş sebebi olmasından kaynaklanıyor. Hatta ekonomist bakış açısının aksine burada eyleyenin simgesel gücü, tam olarak çıkar gütmeyen bir bakış açısından geliyor. Bunun için Bourdieu'nun kendisi de dinsel eylemlilik örneğini veriyor, ve ömrünü bir manastırda yaşamaya adanmış bir keşişin, elini eteğini dünya hayatından çekmiş bir kişinin eyleminin önceden hesaplanmış bir bakış açısı içermediğini, en nihayetinde sembolik bir güç kazanacak olmasının onun çıkarına olduğunu bilse bile, keşişin bunu sonunda getireceği belirsiz fayda için değil, yapması gerektiğini, kendisini kendisi yapan şey olduğunu düşündüğü için yaptığını, zaten çıkarını gözetiyor

olduğu ölçüde bu eylemin sembolik gücünü kaybedeceğini bildiğini söylüyor. Yani aslında neticesinde sembolik bir faydaya ulaşacak olsa bile, bunun bir sonuç olduğunu ve ekonomik faydadaki gibi bir rasyonellik değil, aksine bence kimi teorisyenlerin duygulanım olarak tarif ettikleri kategoriye sokabileceğimiz, ait olma, bağlılık gibi rasyonel olmayan duygusal sebepleri öncellediğini iddia ediyor.

Burada Alevi toplumsal inisiyatif alıcısını mutlak olarak ikinci tanımlamayla sınırlandırmıyorum, ama bunun da ekonomik rasyonalite ve onun yöntemlerini kullanan fırsat değerlendiren birey söyleminin karşısında bir olasılık olduğunu söylüyorum. Daha da önemlisi, bir eyleyen içinde eylediği alana faydacı-ekonomik rasyonalite ile yaklaşıyorsa bunun kaynak mobilizasyon teorisinin arka planındaki metafizik bir ifade olan insan davranışları son kertede çıkarıcıdır ve bencildir şeklindeki insan doğası tespitinden kaynaklanmadığını, aksine tam da içinde eylenilen alanın kendisinin bu eyleme biçimi dışında bütün eyleme biçimlerini başarısızlığa mahkum etmesinden kaynaklandığını söylüyorum. Yani Alevilik'in de içinde eylemek zorunda kaldığı ekonomik, toplumsal ve siyasal alan başarı için faydacı ve rasyonel bir eylemliliği ön şart olarak koşuyor, ama bu diğer varoluş biçiminin bir potansiyeli olmadığı anlamına gelmiyor.

Bu nedenle örneklerim dahilinde yaptığım incelemede de detaylı olarak gösterdiğim gibi bu inisiyatif alıcı davranış, ikili bir potansiyeli içinde barındıran ve müşterekler teorisinin de belirttiği üzere iki farklı insan eylemliliği ve bunları anlamlandıran dilin çatışması olarak anlaşılmalı. Cemevleri üretimi, mevcut Türkiye koşulları altında, cemevleri, siyasal ve toplumsal şiddetin odak noktalarından biriyken, *Cemevi* üretimi faydadan çok emek ve zarar getiriyorken, ortada gözle görünen ve mobilize edilebilecek yoğun bir kaynak yokken hala ısrarlı bir şekilde devam ediyorsa, eyleyen kişilerin müşterekler teorisinin homo economicus anlayışının karşısına bir diğer olası insan olarak koyduğu, dayanışmacı insan da olabileceğini de düşünebiliriz. Fakat bunu söylerken bu eylemin gerçekleştiği alanın, devlet-piyananın dominasyonundaki bir alan olduğunun ve bu toplumsal inisiyatif alıcıların, sürekli farklı bir ekonomik, siyasal ve toplumsal eyleyişe davet edileceklerinin, mecbur bırakacaklarının da altını çizmek gerekiyor. Bu da müşterekler teorisinin üzerine düşünmesi gereken ilk sorunsalı ortaya çıkarıyor.

Hakim ekonomik-siyasal yapının bu yapısal davetini bağış ekonomisi üzerinden tartışabiliriz. Cemevleri, kurulmak, ayakta kalmak ve faaliyetlerini sürdürebilmek için bağış ekonomisine dayanıyorlar. Burada bağış ekonomisinin en büyük rakibi, değişim ekonomisi. İkisi arasındaki fark, farklı sosyalleşme ve öznelleşme süreçleri doğuruyor iddiasındayım. Bağış ekonomisi, bağış yapan ile bağış yapılanın sunduğu hizmet arasında bir değer ilişkisi, bir zorunluluk ve eş zamanlılık ilişkisi kurmaz. Bağış yapan, bağış yapmamakta, yapacağı bağış miktarı ve biçimi konusunda özgürdür. Bunu mutlak suretle para ya da bir madde karşılığında da yapmaz, Cemevlerinin çok ihtiyacı olan insan sermayesi, emek de bağış yöntemlerinden biridir örneğin. Bağış yapılanın sunduğu hizmet ise bağışa bağlı değildir, o hizmeti sunar, bağış gelir ya da gelmez. Dolayısıyla aralarında oluşan ilişkinin sembolik gücü duygulanım üzerine işler, rasyonalite ya yok ya da çok geri plandadır.

Değişim ekonomisinde ise satan ve satın alan arasındaki bir maddi ilişkiden bahsederiz. Satan, ürününe bir değer biçmek, vereceği ürün ya da hizmetin sınırlılıklarını belirlemekle yükümlüdür. Satın alan, ürünü satın aldıktan sonra aralarındaki gizli kontrat gereği bir hak sahibi olur ve ürünü satandan alacağı hizmet ya da ürünü tam ve eksiksiz bekler. Burada ise rasyonalitenin ön planda olduğunu söyleyebiliriz.

Bu iki ilişki biçimi arasında bir diğer önemli fark da bağış yapma-bağış alma ilişkisinin sınırlarının muğlak oluşudur. Şöyle ki bağış alan kişi, bağış yapanın sunduğu hizmetin gönüllü bir parçası olabilir, servis sunma tarafına rahatlıkla geçebilir. Oysa satın alanın, satan tarafına geçişi için satanın ürettiği sınırlı ürün ve hizmeti üretebilecek güce sahip olması gerekir. Bağış ilişkisinde üretilen ürün ve hizmet doğrudan bir sınırlılık vadedmediğinden ve buna belirli bir fiyat biçmediğinden, üretimi, katılıma müsaittir. Bir *Cemvine* cemde dağıtılmak üzere getirilen bir börek, bir bağıştır, fakat böreği yapan kişinin sunduğu bir servistir de. *Cemevinin* böreği parayla satın alıp gelenlere dağıtması, bağışın içinde var olan özneliği (böreği üreten kişinin emeğini) belirsizleştirir, yok eder ve çok daha önemlisi ona bir değer biçer, bir elmaya verilen değer ile böreğe verilen değer emekleri ve ücretleri bağlamında bir kıyaslamaya maruz kalır.

Bu açıklamaları yaptıktan sonra, aynı resmin iki yönünü gösterdikten sonra, cemevleri pratiğine bakabiliriz. Cemevleri temelde bağış ekonomisine dayanıyor olsalar da bu bağış etkin ve etkisiz işleyebilir. İki *Cemevinin* bağış toplamakta sıkıntılar yaşadığını, düzenli bağış

toplama mekanizmalarını kuramadığını, bu nedenle genel giderlerini karşılamakta zorlandığını, neticesinde *Cemevine* verdikleri insan sermayesi ile gündelik olarak destek veren yaklaşık 10 kişilik bir grubun cebinden çıkan parayla varlıklarını sürdürdüğünü söyleyebiliriz. Bir diğer *Cemevinde* ise etkin işleyen bir bağış sistemi görebiliyoruz. Bu etkinliğin sebebini, *Cemevinin* inisiyatif alıcılarının *Cemevini* kurarken temele aldıkları toplumsal sermayelerinin daha çok yakın akrabalık ve hemşehrilik bağlarına dayanmasıyla açıklıyorum. Diğer iki *Cemevinde* de aynı bağların varlığından bahsedebilirsek de bu *Cemevi* kadar yoğun olmadıklarını, daha çok komşuluk ve arkadaşlık bağına dayandıklarını söyleyebiliriz. Durum böyle olunca akrabalık ve hemşehrilik bağlarının güven ve müeyyide mekanizmalarının görece daha güçlü olduğu tespitiyle bu *Cemevinde* bağışın daha etkin toplanabildiğini söyleyebiliriz.

Genel beklenti, bağış ekonomisi konusunda başarısız olanların, değişim ekonomisine yöneleceği yönünde olabilir, fakat durum bunun zıttıdır. Her ne kadar her *Cemevinde* değişim stratejilerine dair birtakım pratikler görsek de bunu esas yöntem olarak kullanan, bağış konusunda diğerleri gibi sorun yaşamayan *Cemevidir*. Bu da bizi müşterekler siyaseti ve teorisi bağlamında yeni bir sorunsal kurmaya itiyor. Bağış ekonomisi her ne kadar ideal bir müşterek siyasetinin temeli olarak kurgulansa da bu ekonomik model bir süreklilik arz etmeyebilir, hatta değişim ekonomisine geçişin bir basamağı olarak kalabilir. Bu da karşımıza, ekonomik-siyasal yapının ve hakim ideolojinin sürekli işin içine dahil olacağına dair çıkarımı çıkarıyor.

Üçüncü analitik araca geldiğimizde ise, ikinci araçtaki çatışmaların yön verdiği bir meseleye değineceğiz. *Cemevlerinin* temel kuruluş amaçları, kentsel ortamda geleneksel bağlamdaki gibi yaşanmıyor olsa da en azından biçimsel olarak ritüelleri yeniden canlandırmak olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. Bu noktada müşterek oluşumun pratikleri, çoğunlukla belirli bir yol haritasına sahip olmadan yola çıkıldığı için, ne yapılacağına süreç içinde deneme yanılmayla, farklı fikirlerin bir araya gelmesiyle, tartışmalarla, çatışmalarla ve uzlaşıyla karar verilen pratiklerdir. Bu da pratiklere bakmamıza yol açıyor.

Alevi ritüelinin toplumsal, siyasal ve ekonomik bağlamından kopmasına iki ana tepki verildiği söylenebilir. İki *Cemevi*, ki bağış konusunda zorlanan cemevleri ile aynı iki *Cemevinden* bahsediyorum, bağış gelme olasılığını arttırabilmek için, katılımcı sayısının artmasına ihtiyaç duyuyorlar, bu da daha katılımcı bir *Cem* ritüelini ya da alternatif bir pratiği mecbur kılıyor.

Bu bağlamda bir *Cemevi*, *Cem* ritüelini üretmeye devam etse de biçimselliği konusunda çok başarılı olamadığı ve olsalar bile cemlerin çok rağbet görmediği fikriyle, *Cem* ritüeline alternatif farklı bir organizasyon yapıyor. Burada alternatifi doğru anlamak önemli. *Cem* ritüelinin yerine geçen, ya da onun sembolizmini değersizleştiren bir alternatiften bahsetmiyoruz, aksine *Cem* ritüelini yapmaya devam ediyorlar. Fakat esas emek ve kaynak bu alternatif ritüele, Ozanlar Günü'ne veriliyor, çünkü daha fazla ve çeşitli katılımcıyı burada görebiliyoruz. Bu organizasyon bir yandan Alevi dinsel ve ritüel pratiği ile ilgili şeyler de üretiyor, bu bağlamda buna aç olan bir kitleyi de çekerken, diğer tarafta Alevilik'in daha çok siyasal boyutuyla ilgilenen ve bu nedenle ritüelden uzak kalmayı tercih eden bir kitleyi de etkinliğe çekiyor. Bu da müşterekler pratiği bağlamında genişleme, ortaklaşma, yardımlaşma ve paylaşma gibi olanakları arttıran katılımcı bir heterodoks pratiğin zeminini oluşturuyor diyebiliriz.

Benzer bir katılımcı çekme motivasyonu ile hareket eden bir diğer *Cemevi* ise, *Cem* ritüelinin maliyetinin çok olması ve her hafta düzenlendiği takdirde katılımcı sayısının çok olmayacağı düşüncesiyle *Cem* ritüelini her Perşembe düzenlemek yerine, ayda hatta iki ayda bir düzenliyor. Burada söz konusu *Cemevine* diğer *Cemevlerine* göre avantaj sağlayan durum, *Cemevinin Dede* seçimi konusunda esnek olabilmesidir. Diğer iki *Cemevi* her hafta *Cem* ritüeli düzenlemek zorunda olduğundan sabit bir *Dedeye*, yani her hafta orada olabilecek, çoğunlukla mahalleden bir *Dedeye* muhtaç oluyorlar. Bu *Cemevi* ise bu esneklik sayesinde Ankara'nın çeşitli yerlerinden hatta Türkiye'den istediği, ayarlayabildiği bir *Dedeyi Cem* ritüeli için çağırabiliyor. Durum böyle olunca bir yandan maliyetleri azaltıyor, bir yandan da farklı bir *Dede* görebilmek için ceme rağbet gösteren katılımcı sayısı artıyor. Bu da potansiyel olarak bağış olasılığını arttırıyor. Bu pratiğin de görece daha fazla ve çeşitli yerden katılımcıya açık olmasından hareket ederek, karşılaşmalara, yardımlaşma ve dayanışma olasılıklarının yayılmasına imkan vermesi bakımından müşterekler siyasetinin ideallerine yakınsadığını söyleyebiliriz.

Bağış konusunda sorun yaşamadığını ve hatta birazdan değineceğim değişim ekonomisi stratejilerini kullanan *Cemevine* geldiğimizde ise, çok daha biçimsel bir *Cem* ritüeli uygulandığını söyleyebiliriz. Temel olarak bu amaç üzerine kurulduğunu söyleyen *Cemevinin* katılımcıları, yine bağış meselesinde olduğu gibi, akrabalık ve hemşehrlik bağlarına

yaslandıklarından, bu yapıları sayesinde belirli bir biçimselliği öğrenme, tekrar etme, uygulama ve belirli bir sapma olduğu taktirde bunu cezalandırma mekanizmalarına sahipler. Bu da diğerlerine kıyasla katı bir biçimsellik ve ritüel esnasındaki daha aşkın-adanmış ritüel pratiklerine neden oluyor. Bu yapı sayesinde kendi içindeki topluluğu yeniden üretmek konusunda başarılı olsa da bunun dışarıdan gelen bir katılımcı için, eğer katılımcının bilhassa aradığı bu değilse, dışlayıcı bir yönü olduğunu, bunun da temel siyasal çeşitlilik idealimizle örtüşmediğini belirtmek gerekiyor.

Kendi içine kapanan bu *Cemevinin*, kendisini bütünüyle dışarıya kapattığını da iddia edemeyiz. Bu noktada da değişim ekonomisine dayalı hizmet satma stratejileri devreye giriyor. Bu anlamda üç servisin ön plana çıktığını söyleyebiliriz. *Cemevi* dairesinin köy ya da cenaze yemekleri benzeri etkinlikler için kiraya verilmesi, evlere mevlüt ya da cenaze işleri için dua ya da deyiş okuyacak birilerinin gitmesi, son olarak da bir üyesi otobüs sahibi olan ve turistik turlar düzenleyen *Cemevinin*, kutsal mekanlara turistik-dinsel turlar yapması. Bu *Cemevinin* dışarıdaki görünürlüğünü ve etki alanını arttırsa da bunun başta yukarıda değindiğim değişim ilişkilerinin doğası gereği, katılımcı ve dayanışmacı bir ilişkinin temelini attığını söylemek zordur.

Ritüel bağlamında yapılması gereken bir diğer tartışma da biçimsellik olgusu üzerinedir. Bunun için öncelikle ideal *Cem* ritüelinin teolojik-felsefi altyapısına bakmamız gerekiyor. Bu, yazının başında belirttiğim, Müşterekler ile Alevi siyaseti arasındaki ilişkinin zeminini kurmaya yönelik çabanın ikinci ayağını oluşturuyor. Şu ana kadar daha çok modern cemevleri pratiğinin müşterekler siyasetiyle ilişkilenişi üzerine yazmışken, bu aşamada, geleneksel, teolojik-felsefi zemine değinmek gerekiyor.

İslam'ın ritüel pratiklerinin yorumlanışında çok kabaca kategorize edecek olursak iki bakış açısı vardır. Zahiri ve Batını bakış açıları. Zahiri, görünür olanı ve yüzeyde olanı işaret ederken, Batını yön ise, görünmeyen derin anlamı ifade eder. Alevilik bu noktada kendi ritüel pratiğini Batını olarak değerlendiren gelenek içinde kurar. Şöyle ki, namaza yöneltilen felsefi-teolojik eleştirilerin temelinde esasında zahiri bir ibadet olması, ya da en azından zahiri yönü ortaya çıkarılan bir ibadet olması yatar.

Burada bir nüansa dikkat çekmek istiyorum. Birçok farklı İslam yorumu namazın da batını bir yönü olduğunu belirtmiştir, fakat namazın pratiklerinin derin bir anlamı olduğu fikrini redDeden bakış açısının daha hakim olduğunu ifade edebiliriz. Burada yorumlama devreye girdiğinde, ilahi olanın alanının 'akıl alanına' açılacağını teolojik açıdan problemlili gören bakış açıları, namazın ve diğer ibadetlerin anlamlarının sorgulanmaması gerektiği, sadece bir farz olarak yapılması emredildiği şekilde pratiğe dökülmesi gerektiği fikrini ön plana çıkarmışlardır. Burada temelde, namazın derin anlamı bir kez sorgulanmaya başlandığında, namazın sembolünün belirttiği ahlak, toplum yapısı, ekonomi, siyaset veya her ne şekilde yorumlanıyorsa bunlar hayata geçirildiğinde, namaz pratiğinin bir anlamı kalmayacağına dair bir tespit vardır. Bu nedenle ki, bu bakış açıları böyle bir yorumlamayı kabul etmez ve sorgusuz sualsiz pratiğin tüm biçimselliğiyle uygulanmasının esas gereklilik olduğunu söylerler.

Alevilik'in namaz yönelik eleştirisi, ritüelin, tam da böyle bir biçimselliğe izin veriyor oluşudur. Her şeyden önce derin bir anlamı olsun ya da olmasın, bir şekilde bireysel bir biçimsellik yaratmaktadır. Daha açık ifade edecek olursak, sıklıkla tekrar edilen, namazın özellikle cemaat ile kılındığında, tüm toplumsal farklılıkların ve eşitsizliklerin ortadan kalktığı bir anı sembolize ettiği, herkesin Allah'ın önünde eğildiği bir eşitlik anı yarattığı iddia edilir. İşte Alevilik, bu eşitlik anını biçimsel an olarak değerlendirir. Bu eşitlik yalnızca caminin içinde vardır ve cemaat dağıldığında eşitlik ortadan kaybolacaktır. Ritüelin biçimi, ritüelin ima ettiği anlamı garantilemez.

Bu eleştiriyi yapan Alevi teolojisi ve felsefesi, *Cem* ibadetini tam olarak bu eleştiriden doğan bir anti-tez ile kurgular. Fakat bu kurguya geçmeden önce şunu da belirtmek gerekiyor. Bu reddedişin altında sadece teolojik ve felsefi bir reddediş olduğunu söylemek hatalı olacaktır, bunun bilindik tarihsel sebepleri de vardır, fakat ben bunun teolojik ve felsefi sebeplerden ayrıştırılabileceğini düşünmüyorum. Şöyle ki, Alevilik'i oluşturacak cemaatlerin ve hatta Sünni İslam içinde kendilerine yer bulan birçok cemaatin de Safevi etkileşiminden çok daha öncesinde Anadolu ve Mezopotamya'da çok yaygın olan Hz.Ali ve Ehl-i Beyt sevgisini yaşatan cemaatler oldukları biliniyor. Bu nedenledir ki, Hz.Ali'nin ve Ehl-i Beyt'in katledilişleri ve bu katledilişlerin yüzyıllarca bir devlet propagandası olarak camilerde hakaretlerle savunulmuş olması, bu sevgiyi içinde yaşatan bir cemaatin namaz ve camiden

uzaklaşmasına neden olmuştur. Fakat bu, söylediğim gibi, teolojik ve felsefi yorumla da bağlantılıdır. Zira, İslam'ın devletleşme süreci esasında bilindik anlamdaki caminin ortaya çıkış sürecidir de. Cemaatle, cemaat yöneticisinin, peygamber ya da halifenin namaz kılması yeni değildir. Fakat bu cemaat yöneticisinin devlet yöneticisine dönüşmesi ve merkez camilerin devlet siyasetiyle iç içe girmesi, hatta bu merkez camilerin mimari olarak yöneticinin eviyle ve idare merkeziyle yan yana yapılmaya başlaması, camiye eşitsizliğin merkezi haline getirmiştir. Cami, devletleşme ile birlikte gitgide sınıfsal ve statüsel ayrımlara tabi olmaya başlayan cemaatin yapısal eşitsizliğinin yeniden üretildiği bir yer haline dönüşmüştür. Bu noktada da aslında eşitsizliklerin ortadan kalkacağı bir yer olarak idealize edilen mekan, aslında eşitsizliklerin yeniden üretildiği bir yer olmuştur. En sık dile getirilen Alevilerin cami ve namazdan uzaklaşma sebebinin yüzeydeki anlamı, caminin Hz. Ali ve Ehl-i Beyt'e hakaret makamı olarak kurgulanması olarak ortaya çıkar, fakat bu caminin ve namazının biçiminin tam da bu eşitsizliklere müsaade eden bir yapıya göre kurgulanabileceği iddiasıyla beraber düşünülmelidir.

Teolojik-felsefi sebepler üzerinden ilerleyecek ve bir anti-tez olarak kurgulanan *Cem* ibadetine bakacak olursak biçimselliğin içeriği engellemeye yönelik değil aksine yeniden üreten bir olgu olarak kurgulandığını görürüz. Öncelikle, ritüelin başlamadan önce cemaat, bir cemaat olduğunu garantilemek zorundadır. Yani eşitlik, farklılıkların birliği ve dayanışmanın gerçekleştiğinden emin olunmadan ritüel başlamaz. Bunun için herkes ritüele gelmeden önce, ritüele katılacak olan ocak talipleri, birbirlerinden rızalık alırlar ve birbirlerine borcu, hakkı olup olmadıklarını sorarlar. Eğer bu anlamda bir sorun varsa, ritüele gelmeden önce çözmek zorundadırlar. Eğer çözemelerse, *Cem* ibadetine dar meydanında herkesin karşısında *Dedenin* yargıçlığında bir sorgulama başlar. Bu noktada *Dedenin* konumuna da değinecek olursak *Dede* de bir rızalık alma işleminden geçmelidir. Bir kere gerekli ahlaki ve akli yeteneklere sahip olduğuna dair rızayı Hacı Bektaş-i Veli dergahından ya da Mürşid Ocağı'ndan aldıktan sonra, her sene kendisi de Pir'i olan başka bir *Dede* tarafından sorgulanır. O sorgunun ardından en son aşamada bir de taliplerden rızalık alır. Bir talip *Dedenin* pirlüğünü kabul etmiyorsa, *Dede* sorgulamaya başlayamaz. Tüm bunlar gerçekleştikten sonra, toplum karşısındaki sorgulama işlemi yapılır, sorun çözülür, talipler barıştırılır ve birbirlerine rıza vermeleri sağlanır. Burada bir sorun çıkarsa anlaşmazlık içindeki talipler ritüele alınmazlar,

sorunları çözülmek üzere *Dede* tarafından *Dedenin* pirine götürülür, sorun orada çözülmeye çalışılır.

Ritüel herkesin birbirinden razı olmasıyla başlar, fakat bu rızalık, toplumsal eşitsizliklerin yeniden üretildiği bir rızalık değildir, zira Alevi cemaatlerinin ideal toplumsal-ekonomik ve siyasal örgütlenmesi, sınıfsız ve eşitliğe dayanan bir örgütlenmedir. Burada en büyük soru işareti *Dedelerin* konumudur. *Dedelerin* aristokratik-feodal bir sistemin parçası olup olmadıkları sıklıkla sorgulanır. Böyle bir potansiyel elbette vardır fakat bu potansiyelin gerçekleşmesini engelleyen materyal ve düşünsel engeller mevcuttur. Birincisi *Dedeler* arasındaki kontrol mekanizması her ne kadar bir hiyerarşiyi çağrıştırıyorsa da dikey ilerleyen değil, yatay zemine yayılmış bir hiyerarşiden bahsetmek daha doğru olacaktır. Alevilik'te bu El Ele, El Hakk'a sistemi ile garanti altına alınır. Basitçe özetleyelim. *Dedelik* üç makama sahiptir, Mürşid, Pir ve Rehber. Her *Dede*, peygamber soyundan gelenlerden seçilir ki bu makamın taliplerin rekabetine açılması engellenir, bunun sembolik değerinin yanında siyasal-toplumsal bir sebebi de vardır, taliplerin burayı ulaşılabilecek bir makam olarak düşünmelerinin önüne geçilmiş olur. Taliplerin pirleri vardır, bu pirlere aynı zamanda ritüeldeki *Dedelerdir*. Fakat her *Dedenin* ve soyunun üstünde bir başka *Dede* o *Dedenin* piri ve her *Dede* bir başka *Dedeye* pirlük yapar, yani her *Dedenin* bir rehberi de vardır. Böylelikle yukarı doğru ilerleyen bir kontrol mekanizmasından ziyade, yana doğru genişleyen halkalar halindeki kontrol mekanizmasından bahsedebiliriz. Burada hassas noktalardan biri, bir *Dedenin* başka bir *Dedenin* piri olmasının talipler üzerinde hiçbir etkisinin olmamasıdır. Bir ocak *Dedesinin* başka bir ocak *Dedesinin* piri olması, o ocakların talipleri arasında bir ilişkiyi mecbur kılmaz. Öte yandan, bir *Dedenin* (*Dede A*) piri olan bir başka *Dedenin* (*Dede B*) de bir piri (*Dede C*) vardır. Fakat bu bağlantı *Dede A* ile *Dede C* arasında bir hiyerarşik ilişki kurmaz. Klasik modern hiyerarşik örgütlenme terimleriyle konuşacak olursak *Dede A*'nın üstünün B, B'nin üstünün C olması C'yi A'nın üstü yapmaz. Aralarında herhangi bir ilişki yoktur. Yatay hiyerarşik düzenleme bu anlama gelir.

Dedelerin siyasal otoritelerinin çok sınırlandırılmış olduğu tespitinin ardından, ekonomik bir sorgulama da yapmak gerekir. Öncelikle *Dedeler*, *Dedelik* hizmetleri için başıyla para alırlar, bu bir vergi sistemi değildir. Herkes gönlünden koparı hizmetleri karşılığında *Dedeye* verir. *Dedenin* ailesi, diğer talipler gibi tarım ve hayvancılık gibi kendi dar topraklarında yaşamlarını

sürerler. Toplanan bağışın anlamı şudur. *Dedeler*, özellikle kapalı ve dışarıyla etkileşimi kesik olan bu cemaatlerin, habercisi, eğitimcisi, sağlıkçısı, ziraatçisidir. *Dede* yıl boyunca Anadolu'da gezer, başka *Dedeleri* görür, başka ocaklarla etkileşime girer, bilgi ve enformasyon toplar. Bu gezici görev süresince tarlada çalışamayan *Dedenin* yaşayacağı ekonomik güçlük, taliplerin bağışlarıyla telafi edilmeye çalışılır.

Neticede siyasal ve ekonomik açıdan eşitsizliklere izin vermeyen Alevilik'in bu ideal sistemi, tarihsel pratikler içinde bozulmaya elbette uğramıştır, fakat burada mühim olan şudur. Teoloji ve felsefi altyapının ışığında idealize edilen bu toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal sistem sürekli bir sorgulamaya ve yeniden üretilmeye mecbur bırakılmıştır. Bununla birlikte Alevi toplulukların merkez siyasal-ekonomik bürokrasi ve toprak ilişkilerinden görece uzak kalabilmeleri, her şeyden önce yoğun bir üretim aracı sahipliğini ve sermaye birikimini mümkün kılamamıştır. Çok dar ve verimsiz topraklarda, geçimlik yapılan bir üretimden, feodal bir ekonomi çıkması zordur, çıktığı oranda da sistemin kendisi yoğun yargılama mekanizmaları ile bunu sorgulayabilmiş ve nihayetinde günümüze ulaşan teoloji-felsefesindeki eşitlikçi, sınıfsız yapı çağrısını kaybetmesini büyük oranda engellemiştir.

Tüm bu detaylı incelemeden sonra ritüelin kendisine geri dönecek olursak, ortaya biçimselliği ile, bu toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal örgütlenmeyi kutsayan, bunun Allah için olduğunu söyleyen, aslında toplumu birleştirmenin, kendini insan suretinde parçalayan Allah'ı birleştirmek olduğunu iddia eden bir ritüele ulaşırız.

Modern anlamda ritüelin neden ancak biçimsel bir şekilde yeniden üretilebileceği bu açıklamalardan sonra anlaşılmalıdır diye düşünüyorum. Zira, içinde yaşanan ekonomik-politik yapı, modern kentsel kapitalist yaşam, sınıflıdır, eşitsizdir, farklılıklara ve bireyciliğe dayanır. Ritüel bir kez zeminini böyle bir yapı üzerine kurarsa, cemaat olamayan bir topluluğu bir araya getirir, cemaatmiş gibi yapar, bu anlamda da eleştirilen namazdan bir farkı kalmaz.

Fakat bu, özellikle yetmişlerde yaygın olan sosyalist indirgemeci çağrının bir tekrarı değildir. Alevilerin Alevilik'ten kaynaklı üretimlerini terk edip, sınıfsal bir mücadeleye girişmeleri çağrısını yinelemiyorum. Aksine, sınıfsal mücadeleyi vermenin tek yolunun, zaten bu tarz kimliklerin içine gömülü olan sınıfsallıkların keşfiyle mümkün olacağını iddia ediyorum. Yani Alevilik üzerine verilecek bir mücadelenin, ismini hiç anmasak dahi, yapısı gereği sınıfsal

olma potansiyelini taşıdığını söylüyorum. Başından itibaren yaptığım tartışmanın da arka planına ulaşmış oluyorum. Aleviler aslında Cemevleri üzerinde bir mücadele verirken siyasal-ekonomik bir mücadele de veriyorlar. Müşterekler siyaseti de bunu tartışmamızı sağlıyor.

Neticesinde bu teorik yaklaşım, ikili bir tablo sunuyor bizlere. *Cemevi*-üretimi, müşterekler siyasetinin idealleri bağlamında incelendiğinde, yukarıda tüm detaylarıyla değindiğim üzere, bir yandan devlet-piyasa düzenine eklenmenin bir aracı olabilme potansiyelini de taşıyor, her ne kadar müşterekler siyaseti kendisini bu amacın tam tersi olarak kurgulasa da pratikteki işleyiş, bunu zorluyor. Bir müşterek pratiğiyle, devlet-piyasa sisteminin tüm silahlarına karşı ayakta durma çabası, bu yapının zor ve rıza aygıtları nedeniyle, zayıf kalıyor ve sürekli onun manyetik alanı tarafından çekiliyor. Fakat müşterekler siyaseti yine de bu manyetik alandan kurtulmanın yolunu açıyor, ama onunla sınırlı kaldığı ölçüde, yani devlet-piyasa sistemine karşıt başka bir manyetik alan tarafından çekilmediği sürece, güçlü olanın tarafına kayacağını düşünüyorum. O nedenle müşterekler siyasetinin, tüm merkezileşmeme, öz-yönetim ve denetim, dayanışma, yardımlaşma ve katılımcılık ilkelerine zarar vermeden (zira bu ilkeler bir yandan da devlet-piyasa sistemin alternatifini şimdi ve burada yaratarak alternatif bir pratiğin dünyasını da yaratıyor) birleşebilmeleri, yoğunlaşma ve merkezileşme anları kurmaları gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Bu da hem kimlik siyasetini hem de sınıf siyasetini bir arada düşünmenin mümkünatını ortaya koyuyor ve bizi yeni bir teorik-pratik açılıma davet ediyor.

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Soyadı / Surname : Konaşlu

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Bölümü / Department : Political Science and Public Administration

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce / English**) : Making the Cemevis
Of Tuzluca: The Possibilities Of And Limits To Politics Of Commons

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: **Yüksek Lisans / Master** **Doktora / PhD**

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