

THE AMBIVALENCE OF ALEVI POLITIC(S):  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
*CEM VAKFI AND PİR SULTAN ABDAL KÜLTÜR DERNEĞİ*

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## Thesis Abstract

Seçil Aslan, "The Ambivalence of Alevi Politic(s): A Comparative Analysis of *Cem Vakfı* and *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği*"

By the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s, after centuries of repression, "suddenly" Alevism/Aleviness became visible in the public sphere. Yet, this visibility was not limited to the borders of the Alevi community. Since Alevis have been a "religious minority" within the larger society of Sunni population and within the state's "secularist" aura, they have been demanding their religious rights from the state and this time they have emerged political actors within the "secular" borders of the state. Therefore, how Alevis respond to "existing" power balances, how they constitute domination and which discourses they apply are the questions, which must be debated, and Alevism must be analyzed not only as a religious identity, but also as a political identity in relation to the state.

In this sense, by focusing on the relationship between the state and religion, this thesis aims to analyze Alevism politically and to underline how it was constructed as an identity in the post 1980. Hence, unlike former postulates about Alevism, it emphasizes the process of identification, the determinative role of different actors in defining Alevism, and Alevis' self-perception/ self-definition such as practices of domination, representation, and struggle over the definition of Alevism. This thesis more specifically focuses on variation in the discourses of two Alevi institutions –*PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfı*- based on the textual analysis of periodicals of these institutions under the basic topics of Alevi institutionalization, Alevi politics, Alevi identity, and the EU. In this way, it shows that different actors have different areas of hegemony over Alevism, there are breakages in the identity politics of Alevis and finally Alevi politics is ambivalent.

Within the state's formal ideology of Kemalism and secularist aura, the discourse(s) of these two institutions show that based upon the determinative role of the relation with the state there is Alevi politics which has two extreme tendencies as integration to the system and as marginalization. Yet, these two extremes must be taken within limitations of Kemalist aura in that borders of being "oppositional" are drawn from the axis of "loyal citizenship." Besides, Alevism has emerged as "signifier" term, which homogenizes Alevis by eliminating differences among them. Hence, there is a process of standardization and construction of Alevism as a religion and in this process; Alevis emerge as a religious community who demand their religious rights from the state. However, in the case of Alevi politics, there is not "always" direct relationship between the identity politics and challenges to the state policies, and identity politics does not "always" have a necessarily libertarian nature. Finally, this study, by analyzing Alevism in relation to power, gives an idea about Alevi politics, political dynamics in Turkey and secular practices of the state.

Key Words: Alevism, Alevi Politics, *Cem Vakfı*, *Cem Dergisi*, *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği*, *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi*, Secularism, Kemalism, Religion, National Identity

## Tez Özeti

Seçil Aslan, “Alevi Siyasetinin Müphemliği:  
*Cem Vakfı ve Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneğinin Karşılaştırmalı Analizi*”

Alevilik, 1980lerin sonu ve özellikle 90’ların başında yüzyıllar süren gizlilik ve baskının ardından bir dini kimlik olarak “bir anda” kamusal alanda görünürlük kazandı. Ancak bu görünürlük sadece topluluğun kendi sınırlarına ilişkin değildi, zira Aleviler devletin “sekülerist” aurası ve genel Sünni toplum yapısı ekseninde “dini azınlık” olmaları nedeniyle özellikle devletten dini haklarını talep ettikleri için hem devlet, hem de onun seküler sınırları içinde politik aktör olarak yerlerini alıyorlardı. Bu bağlamda Alevilerin “mevcut” güç dengelerine nasıl karşılık verdikleri, egemenliği nasıl tesis ettikleri ve hangi söylemlere başvurdukları tartışılmalı ve Alevilik salt bir dini kimlik olarak değil devletle/iktidarla ilişkileri nazarında politik olarak analiz edilmelidir.

Bu tez, din ve siyaset arasındaki ilişkinin üzerinde durarak 80 sonrası dönemde Aleviliği politik olarak analiz etmeyi ve bir kimlik olarak Aleviliğin nasıl kurgulandığını göstermeyi amaçlamakta ve Aleviliğe dair postulatların aksine; kimikleşme süreci, bu süreçte farklı aktörlerin belirleyiciliği ve Alevilerin kendilerini nasıl algıladıkları/tanımladıkları - iktidar pratikleri, temsiliyet iddiası ve Aleviliği tanımlayışları - üzerinde durmaktadır. Özelde ise iki Alevi derneğinin – PSAKD ve Cem Vakfı- süreli yayınlarının Alevi kurumlaşması, Alevi siyaseti, Alevi kimliği ve AB şeklinde dört başlık altında detaylı metin analizine dayanmaktadır. Böylece farklı gruplarca farklı iktidar alanları yaratıldığını, kimlik siyaseti ekseninde kırılmalar yaşandığını ve son olarak Alevi siyasetinin müphem olduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu iki derneğin devletin resmi ideolojisi olan Kemalizm ve sekülerist aurasının sınırları içinde ürettikleri söylem(ler) gösteriyor ki, devletle ilişkilerinin belirleyiciliğinden kaynaklanarak sisteme entegre olma ve marjinalleşme olmak üzere iki farklı uca savrulmalar gösteren bir Alevi siyaseti vardır. Ancak bu savrulmalar Kemalist auranın sınırları içinde kalmakta ve “muhalif” olmanın sınırları “sadık vatandaşlık” ekseninde çizilmektedir. Ayrıca “Alevilik,” terim olarak Aleviler arasında tüm farklılıkları aşan ve bir grup olarak onun homojenliğine vurgu yapan bir “imleyen” olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Aleviliğin bir din olarak kurgulandığı/ standardize edildiği ve böylece Alevilerin dini bir grup olarak devletten dini haklarını talep ettikleri bir süreç yaşanmaktadır. Ancak kimlik siyaseti ve devlete muhalif olma arasında “her zaman” doğrudan bir ilişki olmayıp Alevilik özelinde kimlik siyaseti “her zaman” özgürleştirici/ dönüştürücü dinamikler üzerinde oturmamaktadır. Sonuç olarak Aleviliğin iktidarla ilişkisi üzerinden inceleyen bu tez hem Alevi (kimlik) siyasetine, hem Türkiye’deki politik dinamiklere ve özellikle devletin ‘seküler’ pratiklerine dair fikir vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Alevi Siyaseti, Cem Vakfı, Cem Dergisi, Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği, Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi, Sekülerleşme, Kemalizm, Din, Ulusal Kimlik

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*When we first moved to Kocaeli from Gaziantep (from eastern region); my “new” friends asked me whether I had “another” language different from Turkish. At that time, I did not understand the meaning of this question. Now when I think about it, I can easily see that this question’s aim was to learn whether I was Kurdish or not. I also experienced the same thing last autumn when I asked for Mehmet Uzun’s (a Kurdish writer) novel in a bookshop. The owner of the bookshop told me that if I wanted, he would give me a Kurdish version. He asked me “Are you not Kurdish?” when I said I did not know Kurdish. I am not Kurdish; but if I had been, I would have been forced to recognize this identity.*

*In Turkey, your identity comes before you. It is not necessary for you to recognize that identity. This is the case for all (subaltern) ethnic and religious identities. Hence, we may easily see this concern also in Alevism in that you may be asked the question of “Are you Alevi?” anywhere and at any time. People asking “you” about Alevism and then labeling / categorizing / perceiving you as the “other” follow this. For “them”, as an Alevi, “you” have to know everything about Alevism. As a part of this perception, if you are accepted as an Alevi, it is not important whether you define yourself as an Alevi or not. When we think about the issue just the opposite way, nobody asks a Sunnite about Sunnism because there is a strong possibility for a Sunnite not defining herself/himself as a Sunni.*

*As a student of political science, when I think about this issue, I see that we have a tendency to perceive (minority) groups within larger society as homogenous unique entities in which community members behave in similar ways and have similar understandings. This perception covers up all the differences among them and their life stories. In addition, identity is considered as something that everybody has in terms of “attributed identity.” In this respect, we classify people concerning only one “identity”, which defines the group. However, in recent years, there is a shift from the understanding of static identity to the term ‘identification’, which involves transitions, changes, reconstructions and so on. All these identify the “agency” of people.<sup>1</sup>*

In December 2007, Reha Çamuroğlu (an Alevi historian and deputy of AKP) invited the Prime Minister R.Tayyip Erdoğan to the dinner of breaking fast (*iftar*) of Muharrem- a religious practice of Alevis- in *Abdal Musa Sultan Vakfı*. When the fasting started in January 2008, some Alevi institutions announced that they would not attend this dinner. In a meeting of *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği (PSAKD)* in Ankara on 11.01.2008 12 *dedes* also declared that the organizers of this dinner were

*yol düşkünü* (converted from the Alevi way) since they thought that organizing such a dinner and inviting the Prime Minister to this dinner was contrary to the secular and democratic structure of Alevism.<sup>2</sup> In this case, some Alevis by inviting the prime minister to their religious practice were trying to integrate government policies, whereas the others were preserving their opposition by defining this incident as part of the assimilation of Alevis into Sunni Islam.

The discussions about Alevis<sup>3</sup> and Alevism/Aleviness<sup>4</sup> after this incident brought Alevism into light and Alevis become a publicly visible as political and social agents. First, some asked the questions of “why some Alevi institutions call them *düşkün?*” and “can’t they attend this dinner and say their demands to governors?” These people were questioning the transformation of a theological tool of declaring *düşkün* to a political one. In fact, one who studies Alevi institutions, associations, and foundations will see that rival groups sometimes call each other *düşkün* when they criticize the other one’s policies. Yet, this incident showed that “all” Alevis, at least Alevi institutions, do not have the same political project and they behave differently as political agents.<sup>5</sup>

The second point is more crucial in that people started to question images of

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<sup>1</sup> Seçil Aslan

<sup>2</sup> “Bu iftara giden düşkündür,” 11.January.2008. Available [online]: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=244136&tarih=11/01/2008> [11 January 2008].

<sup>3</sup> In this study, I use the term Alevis in general as an umbrella term. I have to emphasize that in case of specific groups and people there can be different practices and beliefs in different times and places.

<sup>4</sup> Hamit Bozarslan differentiates Alevism from Aleviness. Different from Aleviness, Alevism is defined as a community-based on political formation, which is product of everyday webs crossing centuries. Hamit Bozarslan, “Alevism and the Myth of Research: The Need for a New Research Agenda.” In *Turkey’s Alevi Enigma. A Comprehensive Overview*, edited by Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 13. Here, I will use the term Alevism, rather than the term Aleviness.

<sup>5</sup> Seçil Aslan, 12 February 2008. “Alevilik Üzerine Hegemonik Tasavvurlar...” Available [online]: <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=376> [12 February 2008]

Alevis. There had been characteristics “attributed” to Alevis by “outsiders” such as being democrat, secular, and modern; but in this case, unexpectedly Alevis behaved like “a typical religious community.” Most people said, “We regarded Alevis as democrat and secular. Yet, they are conservative and religious people since they are trying to exclude some Alevis from Alevism, like the curse in Christianity. They are applying a theological tool –*düşkün*- like every religious community do and in this way they do not act like a secular community.” Indeed, based on the example of *düşkünlük*, now these people were applying “another” attribution over Alevis by saying that “all Alevis are conservative” and trying to “redefine” Alevism based on these new attributions.’<sup>6</sup>

Keeping the issue of *düşkünlük* in mind,<sup>7</sup> why was the attendance of the prime minister to a ceremony of the citizens of that country (Alevis) seen as “extraordinary”? Why did some of the Alevi institutions oppose this invitation by declaring those who organized this fasting as *düşkün*? Why was it perceived as strange for a religious group to use a theological tool? Why are Alevis perceived as a homogenous unique entity and are supposed to behave in similar ways?<sup>8</sup> Why is this not concerned for Sunnism? Let me tackle the issue just the opposite way by asking some questions about Sunnism rather than about Alevism. In this country, why is the question of “what is Sunnism” not asked, why are the characteristics of Sunnism not debated, why is the question of “which party will the Sunnis vote for in this

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<sup>6</sup> Aslan, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=376>

<sup>7</sup> I had started to work on Alevism concerning the relation between religion and politics before the incident of *düşkünlük* occurred in January 2008. However, this incident crystallized my aim, so I preferred focusing on this incident in the beginning this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> Like every religious and ethnic group, Alevis are also a heterogeneous group in different aspects: gender, ethnicity, class, education, and region (city/rural and east/west). Secondly, members of the group give different reactions to similar events. Thirdly, even in terms of institutions, they are scattered.

election?” not asked, why do academicians not do research on the culture and life style of Sunnis? Why do not Sunni claim that they are democrats and loyal citizens of this country and that they have a beautiful culture whereas Alevi have always claimed this?<sup>9</sup> Is there a generalized reflex of Alevi towards incidents? Is there a common political project among them? What is their relation to power/ or the state? What are demands of this newly political actor in the public sphere? In terms of their relation with the state, how oppositional are they and do they challenge the state policies? Which discourses are apparent in the process of reconstruction of Alevi identity? What are their strategies at the level of discourse? How does their identity, whose genetic code has been repression, exist in the public sphere?

The answers to these questions are closely related to the relationship between religion and politics. First, “being political” is immanent to Alevism like all religions and the case of *düşkünlük* shows us this immanency. In this incident, Alevi who were a religious community -even though they were perceived as secular- were adopting a theological tool in order to struggle in the realm of politics and to reach a powerful position among different Alevi groups. In other words, nobody was excluded from Alevism because the tool of *düşkünlük* was operationalized as a political tool, rather than as a theological one. Moreover, we must talk about “Alevi politics” in the public sphere, since Alevi are effective social agents of change who may influence politics. Now, as a religious community, they try to get their (religious) rights from the state as well as pose a challenge to state policies in terms of secularization and democracy. For instance, the recent issue in which the court accepted the demand of an Alevi who wanted to be exempted from obligatory religious instruction may lead the state to enhance its policies for democratization.

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<sup>9</sup> Aslan, <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=376> .

Hence, this thesis aims to underline Alevi politics in the post-1980 period in which Alevism has become more visible as an identity by looking at the self-perception/ definition of Alevi in terms of their representation within themselves, their struggle over defining Alevism, their struggle for recognition of Alevi identity, re-discovery of Alevi culture/ cultural practices and identity formation. Based on a textual analysis of the periodicals of two ‘different’ Alevi institutions - *Cem Vakfı*<sup>10</sup> and *PSAKD*<sup>11</sup>, it focuses on their political standing in terms of Alevi politics and their ethno-religious and cultural standings in terms of the (re)construction of Alevism.

However, the difference between these two institutions cannot be understood without looking at their relation to the state as well as the state’s nation-building strategy since nation-state plays a determinative role in ‘defining’ Alevism as an identity. Hence, this study analyzes the issue of Alevism in the realm of politics in relation to power and takes Alevism not “just” as a religion or a social and cultural phenomenon, but also as a political one, seeing its political implications. By focusing on the difference between these institutions’ standing in politics, their relations with the state, hegemonic practices of the state, and construction of the Alevi opposition/ resistance to the state and/or existing power balances within the limitations of loyal

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<sup>10</sup> Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. İzzettin Doğan, 48 people founded *Cem Vakfı* on 25 March 1995. Since to use the terms *cem* and Alevi was forbidden, *Cem Vakfı* preferred to use the term *Cem* as an abbreviation for *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi Vakfı* and rather than using the term Alevi in its founding act, it declared its aim as spreading *Tasavvufî İslam*. Murat Küçük, “İkinci Sınıf Vatandaşlıktan Eşit Yurttaşlığa: Cemaat, Yurttaş ve Sivil Toplum Meseleleri Işığında Aleviler ve Cem Vakfı.” In *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*, edited by Stefanos Yerasimos et al (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 189. It has offices also in Europe as European Coordination in Essen (later Bochum). They later founded *Cem Avrupa Alevi Cemaati* in Germany. With this office, it has 30 offices.

<sup>11</sup> *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği (PSAKD)*, whose name comes from Pir Sultan Abdal who revolted against the central authority during Ottoman Empire, was first founded in 1988 in Banaz-the village of Pir Sultan. In 1991, they opened an office in Ankara and after the Madımak incident in Sivas (1993) they felt the need to spread throughout the country and founded 35 offices. Now it has 46 offices in different parts of Turkey and 10 of them are in Istanbul.

citizenship, I come up with the fact that we have to talk about the ambivalence of Alevi politic(s). In this vein, we cannot claim that all Alevi groups have a common political project and common Alevi identity “against” state policies towards Alevis. This means that there are contradictory tendencies among Alevis especially vis-à-vis the state and its hegemonic practices, but this tendency must be taken within the borders of Kemalist aura and loyal citizenship. More importantly, there is a process of constituting domination among themselves as we may name this struggle over representing Alevis and behaving on behalf of “all” Alevis.

Secondly, based on the tendency to constitute “power” among themselves and to have a claim of representing “all” Alevis, they define as well as reconstruct Alevism and Alevi identity in different ways. Indeed, Alevism is in the process of reconstruction as an identity and it has “recently” gained visibility in the public sphere. For this reason, it is important to underline how these institutions are effective in reconstructing Alevi collective identity, how they construct/ define Alevism as well as the political implications of this construction. Hence, based on different definitions of Alevism in terms of religion, ethnicity, and culture, I will try to show that Alevi identity/identities are constructed historically and dynamically as responses to hegemonic practices.<sup>12</sup>

In that sense, we cannot talk about homogenous Alevi politics but the ambivalence of it. Resulting from variations in the hegemonic practices of power/ the

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<sup>12</sup> Let me clarify that I am aware that my study is also based upon a construction. I want to say there is relation between the academia and ordinary people who are researched. Therefore, at the same time, I am just trying to underline that all of these debates about Alevism are just a construction and in this way I am trying to criticize academia of which I am a part. As David Shankland asks “We are academics gathered together to discuss and publish an account of Alevi society. What we publish will also be taken up by the people for whom revitalisation and recreation of their culture is a vital issue. How are we to evaluate our place in this cultural process of uncertain outcome? Should we not publish at all?” David Shankland, “Anthropology and Ethnicity: The Place of Ethnography in the New Alevi Movement.” In *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), p.16.

state/ organs within the state over identity formation and definitions of Alevism, there are variations in the discourses/ publications of these two Alevi institutions. In searching for the “true essence” of Alevism as well as “real definition” of it, these two institutions have different political projects. The *PSAKD* is trying to activate the political potential of the Alevi population based on their leftist and democratic character. It defines Alevism as a religion itself and in this way, it challenges state’s tendency to define Alevism as a culture or a sect of Islam. On the other hand, *Cem Vakfi* has a wish of integrating the nation-state and its secularism through its institutions. Hence, it defines Alevism as “real Islam” and “Alevi-Islam” in order to legitimate its position vis-à-vis the state.<sup>13</sup>

However, is there a direct correlation between identity politics and the Alevi opposition to the state concerning their religious rights? Concerning the policies of these institutions in terms of Alevi identity and their demands from the state, interestingly there is not “always” direct correlation between identity politics and opposition to the state. This means that *Cem Vakfi* defines itself “only” as an Alevi institution, which works for Alevism. It mostly applies identity politics by taking always the religious side of Alevism and by trying to obtain religious rights of Alevis. Hence, it comes up with a concrete term, Alevi-Islam, in order to define Alevism and tries to standardize/ systematize it under this definition. In contrast, *PSAKD* defines itself not only as an Alevi institution, but also as a Democratic Institution for the Masses (*Demokratik Kitle Örgütü*). It takes a universalistic position, which asks for secularization and democracy not only for Alevis, but also for all religious and ethnic groups in Turkey by claiming that only in a real

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<sup>13</sup> Murat Okan, *Türkiye’de Alevilik. Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım*. (İstanbul: İmge Yayınevi, 2004), p.196 and Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç “Development and Reformulation of a Returnee Identity as Alevi.” In *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elizabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (İstanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), pp.75–76.

democratic and secular country can the Alevi problem be solved. However, when we look at their position vis-à-vis the state, *Cem Vakfi*, which applies identity politics, is trying to integrate to the state and its secularization whereas *PSAKD*, which applies universalism, poses a challenge against state policies. This means that an ethnic or religious group may challenge state policies by taking universalist standing rather than by applying identity politics.

Moreover, this study indicates there are limitations of civil society regarding challenges against state policies in Turkey, which will also tell us about Turkish politics. Based on differentiation between political and apolitical positions, *PSAKD* takes a political position whereas *Cem Vakfi* takes an apolitical one. In Turkey, “being political” is mostly perceived as being a leftist and in this way it is taken as a threat against society and the state. Both of these two institutions also define being political as being leftist and Marxist. Hence, *Cem Vakfi*’s apolitical or supra-political position is just an illusion because even announcing Alevi identity in this country must be taken as a political standing. In addition, we see that *Cem Vakfi* has a pragmatical approach towards political parties in that it has close relations with especially rightist parties, which it thinks can solve the Alevi problem. Furthermore, these institutions’ position towards the state must be taken within the aura of Kemalism in that both of them have Kemalist tendencies. Even *PSAKD*, which challenges the state by its definition of Alevism and its efforts to activate the political potential of Alevis, has Kemalist tendencies such as defining Alevis as loyal citizens of the Republic and the guarantee of secularism.

In this general context, by reviewing the existing literature on Alevism, the second chapter argues that Alevism as a religion must be analyzed politically since any religious practices or policies must be analyzed in relation to power. Hence, the

uncompanionable relation of Alevis with the state and the attitude of the state towards Alevis are determinative in Alevi politics, especially these two institutions' positions vis-à-vis the state lead them to come up with different political projects. For this reason, I will discuss Alevis and the state in this chapter by arguing that the state and its 'so-called' secularization created the Alevi problem. In this sense, this study has a contribution to the debates on Turkish secularization and secularism in general. This chapter is also important in underlining the discourses of these two institutions in terms of the position of the state, whether they are questioning the policies of the state and whether their demands can solve this problem.

Secondly, related to the hegemonic position of power as well as power's attempts to define and construct Alevism, defining Alevism has turned into an arena of struggle in the realm of politics. Based on the relation with power there are two bidirectional constructions over Alevism resulting from religions' constructed nature and hegemonized position of Alevis by the state. Hence, Alevism has become an object of inquiry for both Alevis and non-Alevis who try to hegemonize it and the third chapter tries to show how both Alevis and non-Alevis construct Alevism. By focusing on how the term Alevism is used within ideological positions and how different actors manipulate it, I argue that this process has political implications in that different definitions of Alevism indicate different political projects. This will also help us to understand the difference between definitions of Alevism set by these two institutions concerning their political project. Indeed, I will discuss this issue in details in the last chapter,

The following chapters include discourses of these two Alevi institutions based on a textual analysis of their periodicals. Hence, the fifth chapter is about the visibility of Alevis as public actors and focuses on Alevi institutionalization from the

point of these two institutions. The sixth chapter will deal with the political standings of these two institutions as whether they challenge the existing system or try to integrate to the state. The seventh chapter consists of debates on Alevi identity and cultural, religious and ethnic definitions of Alevism. This chapter does not take Alevism simply as an “identity,” but it analyzes the process of reconstruction of this identity in relation to power. Lastly, the eighth chapter discusses the issue of the EU in terms of the reflections of these two institutions towards policies of the EU. In this context, the recent interest of the EU in Alevism and the change in the policies of the state towards Alevism in the accession process will increase the visibility of Alevis in the public sphere and make them a crucial point in Turkish politics as social and political actors.

## CHAPTER II

### POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF ALEVISM: THE STATE AND ALEVIS

By the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s, “suddenly” Alevism gained publicity as a religion.<sup>14</sup> Especially with institutionalization in different parts of the country under different type of organizations, Alevis themselves began to express their collective identity and raise their voices in the public sphere. We may call this as emergence of “the Alevi public sphere.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Alevis are the second largest religious group<sup>16</sup> in Turkey, so their existence is not limited to the borders of Alevi

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<sup>14</sup> This was not the case just for Alevism in that the end of the Cold War led to religious revival all over the world, which was attached to fundamentalism and identity politics. Jose Casanova uses the term “deprivatization of religion” for this process, by which he means, “Religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them. Social movements have appeared which either are religious in nature or are challenging in the name of religion the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, the state and market economy. Similarly, religious institutions and organizations refuse to restrict themselves to the pastoral care of individual souls and continue to raise questions about the interconnections of private and public morality and to challenge the claims of the subsystems, particularly states, and markets, to be exempt from extraneous normative considerations. One of the results of this ongoing contestation is dual, interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religions and moral spheres and renormativization of the public economic and political spheres.” José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp.5–6, pp. 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> The debates on the public sphere started in the 1980s and Jürgen Habermas indeed first used the term “public sphere,” in 1962. Public sphere is defined as the realm of social life in which “all” citizens are trying to solve their problems with “equal” and “free” participation in debates on common interests. Every person has the right to access knowledge, to join debates on common interests, and shortly to speak with their own “voices”. Jürgen Habermas, ‘Kamusal Alan.’ In *Kamusal Alan*, trans. Meral Özbek, edited by Meral Özbek (İstanbul: Hil Yayıncılık, December 2004), pp. 95-102. Criticizing Habermas’s ideal public sphere, Fraser argues that there are competing “counter public spheres” (multiplicity of publics) such as the publics of women, radical bourgeoisie intellectuals, peasants, and workers. In Fraser’s terms, “these *subaltern counter publics* are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups circulate counter-discourses about their identities, interests, and needs.” Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere.” In *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During (London: Routledge Publishing, 1999), p.527.

<sup>16</sup> We cannot know the exact number of Alevis since state does not formally recognize Alevis and in census, the sect of people is not asked. However, position of Alevism concerning Islam is also debatable. “The number of Alevis” has turned to a political arena among different groups, so the number of Alevis changes from 10 million to 25 million based on the ideological position of people. In terms of Alevi institutions, this number is important in order to show the strength of Alevis and to legitimize their struggle against state policies. For instance, in public announcement for *Alevi Kurultayı*, it is told that the number of Alevis in Turkey is more than 20 million. Cited in *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi (PSAKSD)*, 4 (December 1992). In *Cem*, İzzettin Doğan always focuses

community. Hence, there is a growing awareness about Alevis and Alevism among “outsiders.”<sup>17</sup> For instance, the state and *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directory of Religious Affairs-DRA) are taking an effort to define and draw borders of Alevism. The EU recently focuses on the rights of Alevis as a religious community. In addition, there is an interest of the media<sup>18</sup> in Alevis especially by focusing on potentiality of Alevi votes in election times. Furthermore, there is an increasing literature on Alevism in the academia. In short, based on this visibility with the increase in publications, in television programs, in Alevi cultural associations, and in discussion groups the “Alevi issue” and the nature of “Aleviness” in terms of society, history, relations with the state, rituals, and beliefs were opened to debates by both Alevis and non-Alevis. Besides, Alevism is in the process of construction as a “religion” and unlike the isolated community of the past, social ties are now spread across the country and even internationally.<sup>19</sup> As Şehriban Şahin focuses today, the process of re-constructing of Alevism led by different actors is still going on, not only at a local and national level, but also transnationally.<sup>20</sup>

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on the number of Alevis as 20–25 million and asks why the state does not give the religious rights of such a big community. Although the number changes for different groups, everyone agrees that Alevis are the second largest religious group in Turkey. Keiser also emphasizes that Alevis were the largest religious minority living within Sunnis who were regarded as non-Sunni Muslim during Ottoman era. Hans Lucas Keiser, “Türkiye’de İslam, Reformlar ve Etnik Siyasalar.” Available [online]: <http://www.aleviforum.com/archieve/index.php/t-3584.html>. [April 2006].

<sup>17</sup> Although there are Alevis in the state, in the media and in the academia, I am using the term “outsiders” in order to underline that the outsider’s reference to Alevism is different from the announcement of collective identity by Alevis themselves.

<sup>18</sup> Media groups draw attention the Alevi way of life, Alevi rituals, Alevi traditions and their problems have been discussed on TV programs and in newspapers. TV series and movies cite Alevis and their culture. Especially *Seher Vakti* consists of the story of two families who are of different sects, Alevis and Sunnites. With *Seher Vakti*, for the first time, in a TV serie, *cems* were shown. Another movie *O da Beni Seviyor* was the story of two lovers who are from different religious groups: Sunni and Alevi. Battal Odabaş, “Alevi Sineması.” In *Alevilik*, edited by İsmail Engin and Havva Engin (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2000), p.557.

<sup>19</sup> Shankland, 1998, p. 15, p.17.

<sup>20</sup> Cited in Nejdet Subaşı, “Kültürel Kimliğin Melezleşmesi ve Alevi Modernleşmesi.” In *Türk(iye)*

Based on this discussion on Alevism, both academic and popular, there is a huge literature which analyze Bektasi and Alevi history, the lives of Alevi communities, their beliefs and practices; aiming to reveal their religious and social reality. “Traditions, histories and more importantly the experiences of Alevi individuals have been put into record, conspicuously observed and ‘scientifically studied.’”<sup>21</sup> Yet, the existing literature on Alevism mostly de-historicizes and de-politicizes Alevis as well as re-producing power-centric postulates on Alevis. However, there is a recently growing literature, which focuses on the political process of defining the group itself and criticizes former publications, which only take Alevism as a cultural and social phenomenon. Hence, the first part of this chapter will show the weaknesses of existing literature by benefiting from the recently emerging literature on Alevism. By arguing that “defining” Alevism must be considered as a political effort, the second part will try to analyze Alevism politically, in relation with the power and to underline how Alevism is constructed vis-à-vis power relations.

#### Review of Literature on Alevism

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak argues that the date of the first researches on Alevism can be traced back to the early republic -even to the era of *İttihat ve Terakki* (Committee of

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*Kültürleri*, edited by Gönül Pultar and Tahire Erman (Istanbul: Tetragon İletişim Hizmetleri, 2005), pp.309–31. For instance, they recently institutionalize in Europe, in North America, in Canada, and in Australia under federations or under the organization of *Alevi Kültür Merkezi*. It has also gained transnational identity especially concerning Turkey’s access to the EU.

<sup>21</sup> Murat Es, “Alevist Politics of Place and the Construction of Cemevis in Turkey.” (MA thesis, Bogazici University, 2006), p. 31. For detailed analysis of academic work see Karin Vorhoff, “Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey.” In *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute 1998a), pp. 23–50. She mentions works of David Shankland, Kriztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Irene Melikoff, Frances Trix, Anke Otter-Beaujean, Martin van Bruinessen, Peter J. Bumke, Hans Lukas Keiser, Irene Markoff, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, Fuad Bozkurt, Reha Çamuroğlu, an so on.

Union and Progress). Especially with the influence of Ziya Gökalp sociology, Islam was analyzed from nationalist perspective with a focus on its Turkish character. Although they only mentioned “Turkish style Islam,” this was supposed to be Alevi-Bektasism. However, publications on Alevism more specifically started in the 1930s and increased after the 1950s. Serious attempts to publish Alevi books first emerged in the 1960s, but in the 1980s, this number grew with effects of political Islam and identity politics.<sup>22</sup>

When we look at the basic weaknesses of the existing literature, Karin Vorhoff argues that these texts are far from being scientific. Naturally, social science consists of subjectivity, political prejudices, and scientific fashions; yet these recent works are more directly part of a social and political process.<sup>23</sup> First, like contemporary politics, most of the literature on Alevism is based upon “identity” which is seeking an answer for the questions of “what is Alevism?” and “who are Alevis?” David Shankland argues, “Periodically, even since the founding years of the Turkish Republic, there have been attempts to discover the Alevi.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, since Alevism is considered as something over, there that is ready to be discovered; in these studies, there is a tendency to “discover” the “true essence” of Alevi identity. For instance, some scholars show Alevism as a Secular Islamic tradition,<sup>25</sup> some represent it as a “real Islam” and “real Turkishness” and some others present it a

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<sup>22</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, “Türkiye’de Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmalarında Tarihi Bozma, Yaklaşım ve Tarihsel Perspektif Yanlışları.” *PSAKSD*, 32 (May 1999), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Vorhoff, 1998a, p.31.

<sup>24</sup> Shankland, 1998, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> For instance David Shankland defines Alevis “as a heterodox Islamic group in Turkey” and argues that in his book he addresses how this community has become secular. David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey The Emergence Of A Secular Islamic Tradition* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p.1.

religion itself.<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, as Eran Livni points out, the study of Alevism has not been based on critically identified and well-analyzed historical sources. For this reason, scholars mostly use the concepts developed by early twentieth century Turkish nationalists and attribute certain qualities to Alevis and Alevi identity such as their being a rural society, an oppressed class, secular, national (as loyal supporters of the Republic), democratic, humanist, and a revolutionary movement in terms of their collaboration with the Left.<sup>27</sup> Hamit Bozarslan also argues for three “postulates” concerning the current research on Alevism:

Alevis were repressed by the despotic Sunni Ottoman state for centuries and were opposed to it. Later on, they contracted an alliance with the ‘secular’ Kemalist regime against Sunni domination and theocracy. In the post-Kemalist period, they become, once again, opponents of the ‘anti-secularist’ and ‘reactionary’ state. This changing attitude is to be explained by the democratic and secularist nature of Alevism, which ‘naturally’ contracted an alliance with the left-wing opposition in Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Faik Bulut in his book “*Âli’siz Alevilik*” discusses that Alevism is not a sect of Islam by claiming that the term Alevi comes from *alev* (fire). Faik Bulut, *Alisiz Alevilik* (Ankara: Doruk Yayınları, 1997). Erdoğan Çınar also writes on the roots of Alevism, claiming that Alevism had emerged in Byzantium before Turks came to Anatolia and accepted Islam. For this reason, he argues that Alevism has Christian roots. Erdoğan Çınar, *Aleviliğin Kayıp Bin Yılı (325-1325) Yolcu Ateşte Yanmak İle Yolcu Yanmaz* (İstanbul: Chivi Yayınevi, 2006) Yasin Aktay argues there are three basic appearing of Alevism: Turkish Islam presented by the formal discourse, re-constructed Alevism by themselves and lastly Alevism itself. In this way, Aktay argues that Alevism has an essence and “some groups” try to move Alevism away from its essence. Yasin Aktay, *Türk Dininin Sosyolojik İnkâmı İslam Protestanlığı ve Alevilik* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), p.24.

<sup>27</sup> Eran Livni, “Alevi Identity in Turkish Historiography.” Paper presented Seventeenth Middle East History and Theory Conference, (2002), p.1 and Shankland, 1998, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Bozarslan, p.3 However, he argues that this postulate about the natural alliance between Alevis and the Kemalist Republic does not go back to the Kemalist period, it is rather a product of the 1960s and 1970s in which Kemalism was re-interpreted by the Turkish intelligentsia. (pp.6–7) For instance, Kehl-Bodrogi uses the term “the Holy Alliance” for the relationship between the state and Alevis. Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, “Atatürk and the Alevis: A Holy Alliance?” In *Turkey’s Alevi Enigma. A Comprehensive Overview*, edited by Paul J. White-Joost Jondergen (Brill: Leiden-Boston, 2003). Most of Alevis, by focusing Alevis role in the National Struggle, have tendency to accept this characterization and define themselves as loyal citizens. For instance, Karin Vorhoff argues that today Alevis are proud of their alliance with Atatürk and see themselves as protectors of Kemalism and secularization. In addition, the early Kemalist republic is regarded as the ideal state in which Alevis were represented in the National Assembly. Cited in David Zeidan, “The Alevi of Anatolia.” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 3, no. 4 (December 1999), p.76.

Based on essentialist views and attributions, Alevis are regarded as non-historical groups and are dislocated from time and space. In that sense, the third missing point in most of the studies on Alevism is “agency:” the questions of how they define/ represent themselves, what they think of themselves, and what their political deeds.

In fact, Alevism is mostly studied sociologically and anthropologically, which emphasize their daily experiences. However, these anthropological studies<sup>29</sup> focus on the Alevi belief, rituals, and practices in their own right. First, the issue is not analyzed in a comparative sense in that these works do not consist of views of the Sunni population. In addition, since their basic concern is Alevi rituals and belief system, they disregard the socio-political and economic system/ or culture in which Alevism has been living.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, as Livni argues, scholars who are doing ethnographic research regardless of its political connotations are “de-politicizing” Alevism by looking for its true essence.<sup>31</sup>

However, religion and politics are not unconnected areas. Hence, the discussions about Alevism, the process of defining it and codifications of its characterization must be analyzed in the realm of politics. In the following part, I will discuss this issue in detail.

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<sup>29</sup> The basic anthropological literature on Alevis focuses on identity politics. In his article Aykan Erdemir lists these works as ethnomusicology: Gloria Lucielle Clarke (1998, 2001), Melih Duygulu (1997), Leyla Neyzi (2002), Irene Markoff (1986, 1995); legal anthropology: İsmail Metin (1994, 1995), institutional anthropology: Harald Schüler (1998, 1999, 2000), Zeynel Gül (1999), Şehriban Şahin (2000); media studies: Hakan Yavuz (1999a, 1999b); an Alevism in transnational and global studies: Ayhan Kaya (1998, 2000) on Berlin Diaspora, Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç (1998) on Alevis returning to Turkey from Germany, Günter Seufert (1997) on Kurdish-Alevi tribe-Koçgiri in Istanbul. Aykan Erdemir, “A Critical Reassessment of Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Alevis.” Paper presentation to conference of MESIP, 23–26 Nov. 2002. Available [online]: <http://www.metu.edu.tr/~aerdemir/data/doc/erdemir%20mesa2002%20paper.doc> 13.10.2006, pp.1–2.

<sup>30</sup> Ocak, May 1999, p.3.

<sup>31</sup> Livni, p.15.

## Religion and Politics: Analyzing Alevism Politically

Talal Asad asserts that the categories of politics and religion are deeply connected as well as dependent on each other<sup>32</sup> and religion and religious identities are constructed within power relations. Since religion cannot be analyzed through meanings, one must consider the crucial dimension of power and social conditions, which constructs religion and religious ideology. In other words, power establishes the preconditions for distinctive kinds of religious personality and produces religiously defined knowledge by interpreting true meanings and religious discourses, authorizing specific religious practices and utterances and forbidding others.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, we should discuss religions, religious movements, and religious symbols not just by taking into account religious areas, but also in their historical relations with non-religious areas such as politics, society, economics, culture, and sex or in their positions in social life where power is essential.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, “religious” and “secular” are not rigid, fixed, constant, and universal categories in that there may be breaks, rearrangements, replacements of new words, productions, reproductions, and transformations in terms of changes in power relations. For this reason, rather than fixed “social structure”, we should be

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<sup>32</sup> Asad, Talal, “Secularism, Nation State, Religion.” In *Nation and Religion Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, edited by P.L. Van der Veer (Hartmut. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p.200.

<sup>33</sup> Talal Asad. “Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz.” *Man*, New Series, 18, no.2 (June 1983), p.237, p.246, p. 252 and Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), p.44.

<sup>34</sup> Asad argues, “Religious symbols are closely related to social life (and change with it) and they usually support dominant political power (and occasionally oppose it). Different kinds of practice and discourse are essential to the field in which religious representations attain their identity and truthfulness. From this it does not follow that the meanings of religious practices and speeches are to be sought in social phenomena, but only that their possibility and their authoritative status are to be explained as products historically distinctive disciplines and forces.” Asad, 1983, p.251 and Asad, 1993, pp.53–54.

historically specific in order to understand specific discursive traditions and their transformations in institutional relations and conditions throughout time and space. In addition, rather than de-historicizing actions of actors, we have to take into consideration heterogeneous activities and historical discourses of culturally distinctive actors within the context of expectations, experiences, practices and their relations to traditions in a complex space and time and their responses to the “others.”<sup>35</sup> In short, “there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes.”<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, identity is also constructed, so it is not fixed, static, and homogenous. Hence, as Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue, one may analyze “identity talk” and “identity politics” without using identity<sup>37</sup> as a category of analysis because identity is conceptualized as something that all people have, seek, construct, and negotiate. Brubaker and Cooper offer to use the term “identification” and “self-understanding,” which specifies “the agents that do the identifying.” In this way, one may avoid assuming that “such identifying (even powerful agents) will necessarily result in the internal sameness, the distinctiveness,

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<sup>35</sup> Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam” Occasional Papers Series, Center For Contemporary Area Studies, Georgetown University, (March 1986), p.7, p. 11, p.16 and Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity. Cultural Memory in the Present Series.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp.23–26, p. 179.

<sup>36</sup> Asad, 1993, p. 29.

<sup>37</sup> In fact, the concept of identity is mostly debated in the literature and scholars do not agree on an exact definition. Gleason argues that the term identity has become popular since the 1950s and it comes from the Latin root *idem*, meaning “the same.” Oxford English Dictionary defines it as the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances. Philip Gleason, “Identifying Identity: A Semantic History.” *Journal of American History*, 69, no.4 (March 1983), pp.910-911, p. 926. Erik H. Erikson, however, argues that it was not just self-conception or self-image, and it was not simply an answer to the faddish question, “Who am I?” Erikson argues, “Identity is located in the deep psychic structure of the individual. Identity is shaped and modified by interaction between the individual and the surrounding social milieu, but, change and crisis notwithstanding, it is at bottom an accrued confidence in the inner sameness and continuity of one’s own being” Cited in Gleason, p.915, p.918.

the bounded groupness that political entrepreneurs may seek to achieve.” Secondly, one can underline that identification is contextual, situational, and relational because unlike “identity” (or its meanings), “identification” includes transformations, constructions and reconstructions in both different times and spaces.<sup>38</sup> In addition, as Georg Elwert focuses the concept of ‘polytaxis,’ groups and individuals may belong to different reference groups simultaneously (several modes of belonging or identities) and they may choose one of these identities in different situations. As the term, “switching” shows based on the relation with power “a class movement may become a nationalist one, a nationalist movement may transform itself into a religious movement, or religious network may redefine itself as a class movement.”<sup>39</sup>

In this theoretical context, Alevism both as a religion and as an identity is constructed within the context of different times and spaces. As Es argues, what “Alevi” means, how and by whom it is set up, the ways of expressing social and political indications of difference are contingently and historically determined. Hence, the term Alevism is not given, fixed, static; but it is historically and discursively constructed resulting from changes in circumstances and contestations implicated in asymmetrical power relations.<sup>40</sup> There has always been uncompanionable and a hegemonic relationship between power and Alevis. This means that based on the relation with power, the conditions of Alevism does not resemble those of Sunnism because the state defined Sunnism- the religion of the

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<sup>38</sup> Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond “Identity.”” *Theory and Society*, 29, no.1 (February 2000), p.2 p.5, p.14.

<sup>39</sup> Georg Elwert, “Switching between we group identities: The Alevis As A Case Among Many Others” In *Syncretistic Religious Communities In The Near East, Collected Papers of the International Symposium*, edited by Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Anke Otter-Beaujean (Brill: Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997), pp. 67, pp.71-72.

<sup>40</sup> Es, pp.27–28. Therefore, to define Alevism is not necessary for this study since this definition would be a reflection of my ideology as well as my construction.

majority- as its formal religion and repressed Alevism for centuries within the larger society of Sunni population.

In terms of the hegemony of majority over minority, now Alevis are people who are discussed, used as an object of politics, defined, constructed, supposed to behave based upon these definitions and perceived as a homogenous unique entity. Since Alevism is a “secret” and “closed” “minority” group, they also seem to accept these attributions and even create their identity by interiorizing these attributions. For this reason, the question of “what is Alevism” is political and will always be political as there is no question of “what is Sunnism.”<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, Alevi identity is the by-product of the emerging Turkish national identity and as Livni argues; research on Alevism should be connected to the study of Turkish history, modern Turkish politics, and the socio-political context of Turkey as a nation-state.<sup>42</sup> Bozarslan also points out, “As with Sunni Islam, Turkishness or Kurdishness, Aleviness has its roots in the pre-republican period. But as *political* Islam, *radical* Sunni right or Kurdish *nationalism*, *Alevism*, as political issue, emerges only after the Republic.” (Emphasis in Original)<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, since Alevism is a religion, state discourse towards Alevis as well as Alevis’ relation with the state must be analyzed more specifically by focusing on Turkish secularization within the context of the relation between the “secular” Turkish state and Alevis as a religious community.

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<sup>41</sup> Ayhan Yalçınkaya also argues that different actors in Turkey talk on Alevism “itself” and ask the question of what Alevism is. However, if the subject was Sunnism, these actors would not ask the question of what Sunnism is. Hence, talking on Sunnism means mentioning its problems and its reflections towards an incident whereas talking Alevism means discussing Alevism itself. Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Pas: Foucault’dan Agamben’e Sivilleşmiş İktidar ve Gelenek* (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2005), p.16.

<sup>42</sup> Livni, pp.1-2, p.15.

<sup>43</sup> Bozarslan, p.12.

Hence, in the following pages, I will discuss the issue of Alevism in relation with the nation state of the Turkish Republic and its national identity. More specifically, I will discuss the real borders of the “secular state” as well as the source of the Alevi problem in Turkey in that Alevism was not formally recognized by the state since Sunni Islam is the binding component of Turkish national identity. This part will also help us grasp how these postulates about Alevis have emerged, how Alevism has been constructed as an *Asl-i Unsur* (original constituent) or *Kurucu Unsur* (founding constituent) and the effects of socio-political dynamics on Alevism since the early republic.<sup>44</sup>

#### Alevis, the State and Turkish Secularization

The relationship of Alevis with central authority/ state has always been problematic and the early republic was not an exception though today most Alevis argue otherwise. For instance, most neo-Kemalist Alevis such as Cemal Şener and Baki Öz focus on Atatürk’s alliance with Alevis by giving his visit to Cemalettin Çelebi-the Alevi religious leader- in Hacı Bektaş Shrine on 26 June 1919 as an example, concluding that Mustafa Kemal himself was Bektashi.<sup>45</sup> In this way, this visit has become a myth of “Holy Alliance” between the state and Alevis. As you will see in the part which I analyze discourses of *Cem Vakfı* and *PSAKD*, they do not understand why the state does not recognize Alevis’ religious rights although Alevis supported the National Struggle, pay their taxes, do military service and more importantly they are loyal citizens of this country. “Early republicanism in fact made a positive impact

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<sup>44</sup> I am aware that state policies change throughout time, so we cannot claim Turkish state remained unchanged since the early Republic.

<sup>45</sup> İbrahim Bahadır, *Cumhuriyetin Kuruluş Sürecinde Atatürk ve Aleviler* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, May 2002), p.11.

on many Alevis -but not so much retrospectively neo-Kemalist Alevis liked to believe.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, in order to underline the “real” characteristics of relationship between the state and Alevis, we have to analyze the state’s approach towards religion -more specifically (Sunni) Islam- and secular borders of the state.

First, the state has always had pragmatic approach towards religion since the early republic, even before the Independence War. Before the War, in the period of 1919-1924, the masses had lacked the sense of “nation” and “homeland” as well as national consciousness. In that period there had not been a special concept of Turk and for “all” the main base which united Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Lazs, and so on had been religion (Islam). Hence, the dominant understanding had been accepting “all” Muslims in Anatolia and Thrace as Turks and specified the subjects of the National Struggle as Ottoman or Muslim. In order to win the Independence War as well as to instill national consciousness, Mustafa Kemal had been careful enough to use traditional religious language. This means that he tried to use the term “national” (*milli*) in double sense: as “national (*ulusal*)” and “religious”. In short, religion (Islam) was used as a political tool and the term Turk was transformed from its ethnic-linguistic meaning to a common identity based on Islamic loyalty.<sup>47</sup>

In that period, the speeches of Mustafa Kemal were full of religious terms, for the first time non-Muslims were not represented in the parliament and any text against Islam did not become law. For instance, he did not attack religious symbols

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<sup>46</sup> Hans-Lucas Keiser, “The Alevis’ Ambivalent Encounter with Modernity. Islam, Reform and Ethnopolitics in Turkey (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> cc.)” Paper read at the conference “Anthropology, Archaeology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia or The Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck (1878-1920)”, University of Wales, 3-6 November 2001, p.13.

<sup>47</sup> In fact, this tactic has double meanings for different times of period. During the National Struggle, he was aiming at using religion as a tool to gain the support of the masses. Yet, for the long term, this must be seen as base of upcoming reforms for adopting national identity. In other words, the term *milli* means religious during the National Struggle and national after the struggle. Ahmet Yıldız, “*Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene*” *Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etnik ve Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), pp. 87-101, p. 128-129.

such as the caliphate and the bases for the population exchange of Greeks and Turks in 1923 and the minority definition in Lausanne Treaty were based on religion.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, Mustafa Kemal had close relations with all ethnic and religious groups in order to gain their support in the National Struggle, so his visit to Hacı Bektaş Shrine was not a special treatment for only Alevis.<sup>49</sup> However, after that, Alevis supported the National Struggle and starting with the republican period they became loyal republicans in that they gave away the role of *dedes* (holy men) and *buyruk* (the holy text).<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, the real characteristics of this relationship between the state and Alevis emerged after the Independence War in the founding years. This process had two paradoxical results for Alevis because in this period the Kemalist state changed its attitude towards religion and adopted an inconsistent policy concerning religion. Hence, the approach of the state towards religion (Islam) must be analyzed from two perspectives. The first one is position of religion in the legal sphere and the second one is the role of religion in the creation of national identity (ideological aspect) and its position in the political sphere.

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<sup>48</sup> Yıldız, p.101, pp.132-137.

<sup>49</sup> Bahadır, pp.20–23. As Ali Murat İrat points out, for instance, a few days after this visit M. Kemal made a speech in favor of the sultan and caliph in Hacı Bayram Veli mosque in Ankara. This means that most Alevis' tendency to attribute a special meaning to M. Kemal's sympathy towards the Bektasi tariqat must be questioned. Cited in Ali Murat İrat, *Devletin Bektaşî Hırkası. Devlet, Aleviler ve Ötekiler* (İstanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 2006), p. 80.

<sup>50</sup> However, criticizing the general thought that Bektasis supported the National Struggle, Hülya Küçük mentions some Bektasi members of *Tarikat-i Salahhiye* (an organization against the National Struggle) and Bektasi collaboration with the Sheikh Said Rebellion in order to show that not "all" Bektasis supported the new regime. Hülya Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Bektaşiler*. (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, June 2003). On the other hand, Bruinessen mentions that Kurdish Alevi tribes fought against the rebels in the rebellion of 1925. Moreover, although Kurdish Alevi tribes also rebelled in 1920 and 1937–38 against the Kemalist movement and the Republic, they never joined in significant forces compared to Sunni Kurds. Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey," *Middle East Report*, no.200 Minorities in the Middle East: Power and the Politics of Difference. (July-September 1996) p.8. For Turkish see Martin van Bruinessen, *Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleri*, trans. Hakan Yurdakul, 5th Edition, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004).

On the one hand, concerning the legal aspect, after the Independence War was won, political borders were defined, the Republic was declared in 1923, political leadership was institutionalized; the state's strategic use of religion based upon the coalition of Muslims was ended. After that, the leaders who had used Islam as a tool during the National Struggle chose westernization and the west's secular world as "a dream" which they wished to achieve. By choosing the French type laicism, they tried to limit the influence of Islam on political, social and cultural spheres. In order to create nation-state, they also aimed to secularize society by transforming religious society into a national one.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, Yıldız argues that the state tried to create a secular "past" in order to create a secular "present."<sup>52</sup> It adopted a series of reforms in order to decrease the power of religious institutions: such as the abolition of sultanate in 1922, the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, prohibition of the Arabic call to prayer (*ezan*) and the Arabic alphabet, ban on higher religious education and the adoption of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu* (unification of the educational system), limitation of lower-level religious education, replacement of Sheri'a with Swiss Civil Code, and discouraging of veiling.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the policy of secularization was also a struggle against religious symbols and centers since for Kemalists all Islamic symbols were ruins of the old regime of Ottomans. In this sense, *tarikats* (tariqats) which had been relatively independent religious centers in terms of their closed culture and internal relations, were not appropriate for Kemalist modernity, so *tekkes* and tariqats were

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<sup>51</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp. 104-109 and Küçük, June 2003, p.184 and Yıldız, pp. 115–118.

<sup>52</sup> Yıldız, p. 119.

<sup>53</sup> Nikki R. Keddie "Secularism and The State: Towards Clarity and Global Comparison." *New Left Review*, 226 (1997), p.31, Ocak, 1999, pp. 104-109 and Küçük, 2003, p.184.

closed in 1925. Among these tariqats, there were also Bektasi tariqats.<sup>54</sup> Lastly, on 10 April 1928, the sentence “the official religion of the state is Islam” was removed from the first constitution and in 1937, together with the six principles of Kemalism the principle of laicism was put in the constitution.

In short, by these reforms, motivated by modernizing elite<sup>55</sup>, the new regime tried to control the domination of (Sunni) Islam in the public sphere by turning it into a private issue and secularizing the public domain of personal law. In addition, religious life was transformed from an uncontrolled area -like in the Ottoman period in which several tariqats had different orthodox and heterodox sources and different interpretations of religion- into a controlled area by the state. For this reason, the foundation of the “secular” Turkish republic in 1923 led to a sense of emancipation among Alevis because they thought that they would not face discrimination any more because of their religion.<sup>56</sup>

However, as Asad points out, religion should not be just considered within the context of law (legal rational base) in that the modern state, rather than being secular, pretends to be secular because it depends on myth and violence. When we remove the rational-legal mask of the state, we will see that the modern state is far from being secular.<sup>57</sup> In that context, although legally the Turkish state accepted secularization in its constitution, Turkish secularization has been problematic from the beginning. This means that the state has always involved in religious affairs

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<sup>54</sup> Küçük, 2003, pp.188–192.

<sup>55</sup> In Turkey, the government rather than autonomous societal changes has motivated secularization and the state had to take power from those (strong) religious institutions in order to modernize. In that sense, Keddie defines Turkish type secularization as government-sponsored secularism. Keddie, pp.22–23, p.25, p.31.

<sup>56</sup> Küçük, 2001, p.187.

<sup>57</sup> Asad, 2003, pp.22–23.

either by controlling / removing its power base in the public sphere or by using it pragmatically as an ideological tool. Hence, as Bakır Çağlar defines, the Turkish type of laicism is “militant laicism”: it is not humanitarian and tends to close political parties, which have sectarian and religious effects.<sup>58</sup>

In this sense, Turkish secularization has been problematic concerning the three principles<sup>59</sup> of secularization. In terms of liberty, the state, rather than leaving religious affairs to the religious domination itself, it intervenes in religious affairs in order to reform, to limit, to control and to use religion as a political tool.<sup>60</sup> This means that state tries to limit religion to the private sphere and subordinate it to the state through institutional and constitutional ways. Hence, the new Republic with its so-called secular policies just replaced the religious institutions of the Ottomans with new ones. For instance, although it abolished the Caliphate and *Şer’iye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* (financer of Islamic organizations), it founded the Directorate of Religious

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with Bakır Çağlar, *Cem Aylık Siyasi Kültürel Dergi (Cem)*, Year 7, 63 (February 1997), pp. 6-7.

<sup>59</sup> The first principle is *liberty* in which state permits practice of any religion within certain limitations such as protection of basic human rights (rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), protection of the state and public order. This gives every citizen not only the equal right to freedom of conscience but also specifically the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. In that sense, state neither encourages, nor fights against particular religious beliefs and refrains from interfering in the internal affairs of religious institutions. Second principle is *equality*, which requires that the state not give preference to one religion over another in that there should be equality between believers of all faiths. In other words, it prohibits the state from discriminating against any citizen on the basis only of religion. This principle is beyond the libertarian principle because a state can allow unlimited religious freedom and still treat some religious groups preferentially. Third principle is *neutrality*, which requires that the state does not give preference to religion, to religious institutions and religious people, and religious over the non-religious as it must be agnostic/neutral by ignorance in that it does not involve itself with religious affairs. This also means separation of state and religion. Moreover, governmental preference for religious is also unequal treatment of the religious and nonreligious. In that sense, the neutrality principle guarantees protection against government’s preferential treatment of the religious over the nonreligious. Partha Chatterjee, “Secularism and Tolerance.” In *Secularism and Its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava ( Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 358-359, Robert Audi, “The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 18, no.3 (Summer 1989), pp. 262–267, Cecile Laborde, “Secular Philosophy and Muslim Headscarves in Schhold.” *Journal of Philosophy*, 13, no.3, (2005), pp.308–314.

<sup>60</sup> Chatterjee, p. 365.

Affairs (*Umum-i Diniye Riyaseti -Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) in 1924. It also gave the Prime Minister the duty of appointing all religious employees in the country.<sup>61</sup>

As Alfred Stepan and Nikki Keddie argue that although Turkish secularism was influenced by French type laicism, in France there was not such a degree of state management of religion as in Turkey. In Turkey, there is state control over religion and religious classes. Otherwise, 50,000 servants were not staffed in the DRA to run religious schooling through controlling teachers, textbooks, curriculum, and mosque services.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of equality, the state intervenes only in the affairs of one religious community (Sunni Islam) by accepting “informally” Sunni Islam as the official religion and strengthening its the dominant position through state practices. In this regard, the state finances only Sunni Islam through DRA and the Ministry of Education has the duty of raising staff for only one religion (Sunni Islam).<sup>63</sup> For this reason, as Keiser argues, Sunni Muslims continues to dominate national and regional power relations and public resources.<sup>64</sup>

The basic contradiction emerges in terms of neutrality in that the state has become entangled in the affairs of religion. It finances a religion (Islam) and a sect

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<sup>61</sup> Ocak, 1999, pp. 104-109, Bahadır, pp.72–73 and Küçük, 2003, p.184. The same process occurred for the religious schools (for Sunni Islam) as madrasas were replaced with Faculty of Theology. The first religious schools were opened in 1924 with the law of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* (Law on Unification of Education), but they were closed in 1930. The only Faculty of Theology (*İlahiyat*) was closed in 1932. However, in 1948 *İmam Hatip* courses were opened and in 1951, they were changed to *İmam Hatip* Schools (*IHLs*). In 1949, Faculty of Theology was opened within Ankara University and in 1959, *Yüksek İslam Enstitüleri* (High Islam Institution) was opened. These institutions were changed to faculties in 1982. Niyazi Altunya, “Cumhuriyet Eğitiminin Kuruluş İlkeleri.” *PSAKSD*, 54 (July-August-September 2003), p.41.

<sup>62</sup> Alfred Stepan, “The World’s Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the Twin Tolerations.” In *Arguing Comparative Politics*, edited by Alfred Stepan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.245 and Keddie, pp.31-32.

<sup>63</sup> Altunya, p.41. Between 1928 and 1939, religious instruction was forbidden in all schools. Yet, first, it was introduced in schools in 1948 and then in 1982 it became obligatory.

<sup>64</sup> Keiser, November 2001, p.1 and Chatterjee, p. 365.

(Sunnism) through DRA, opens schools for this religion/ sect and has obligatory religious (Sunni Islam) instruction in state schools.<sup>65</sup> Based on these anomalies from Western liberal-democratic doctrine, the system in Turkey can be considered as Turkish type secularization because as Chatterjee points out, cultural and historical realities of all countries require different relationship between state and civil society. For instance, we may regard the existence of DRA legitimate as a guarantee of the regime. However, as Chatterjee asks for India, if we claim that the state must involve in the affairs of religion because conditions of India (as well as Turkey) requires it, how can we defend selective intervention of the state in one religion?<sup>66</sup>

In order to answer Chatterjee's question, we must underline that the issue of democracy in Turkey and the state's approach towards religion from an ideological standpoint. As I discussed before, during the Independence War, the state pragmatically used religion as a catalyzer in order to canalize masses. After the War, religion/ Islam continued to be the main standing/ a binding identity for the creation of the nation-state and Turkish national identity because this identity had to be based on not only one language, one culture but also one religion. Hence, the state promoted Sunni Islam as the base of the unitary "national culture."<sup>67</sup>

In this vein, by adopting Turkish nationalization, the early Republic tried to form a nation state and Turkish national identity. However, Stepan points out that secularism and the nation-state are not intrinsic and necessary parts of the path to modernity and democratization. In other words, "secularism" and the "separation of church and state" are not defining characteristics of a democracy vis-à-vis religion.

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<sup>65</sup> Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, "Laiklik, Dinin Siyasallaşması ve Şiddet." Available [online]: [www.tihak.org.tr/merdest1.html](http://www.tihak.org.tr/merdest1.html) [April 2006]

<sup>66</sup> Chatterjee, p. 365.

<sup>67</sup> Yıldız, p.141 and Keiser, November 2001, p. 1.

He states that the lesson that we must learn from Western Europe is not separation of church and state, but construction and reconstruction of “twin tolerations”. In Western European democracy in fact there is not a rigid and hostile separation of church and state and the state democratically negotiates freedom of religion and allows religious groups not only private worship, but also to organize as religious groups in civil society and political society.<sup>68</sup>

Hence, we cannot talk about twin tolerations in Turkey because of its non-democratic practices. First, neither of six arrows of Kemalism was principles of democratization. Secondly, Atatürk was in effort of nation-state building strategy. In a mononational state, the nation-building process can be considered complementary to democracy building whereas in multinational states they are conflicting.<sup>69</sup> In that sense, Turkey is a sociologically multinational state in cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic terms. However, Kemalist nationalism deals with this diversity in an undemocratic way and it is discriminative towards people who want to stay different culturally, ethnically, politically, and religiously.

More specifically; since Islam is the binding identity, the notion of Turkishness has religious bases in that Muslim meant Turk as well as non-Muslim meant non-Turk.<sup>70</sup> However, since national identity requires a unique and homogeneous understanding/ structure of religion, this Unitarian-nation building puts limitations on not only non-Turkish and but also non-Sunni (Alevi) identities. In

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<sup>68</sup> Stepan, pp.222-223.

<sup>69</sup> Stepan, p.243.

<sup>70</sup> Yıldız argues that legally one who is tied to the Turkish state through citizenship and who interiorizes Turkish language, culture and national ideal is accepted as a Turk and Turkish citizen. However, for Kemalist practice, the political definition of “Turkishness” was dominant over the legal base and this means that the legal definition of Turkish citizenship was not sufficient for being a Turk. Yıldız, p.137, p.141.

other words, for Turkish nationalists the prerequisite of being Turk was to be Sunni. Hence, the Turkish state tried *de facto* to maintain the domination of ethnically Turkish, religiously Muslim and sectarian Sunni identity in society through institutions, laws and personal networks by repressing, denying and discriminating non-Turks, non-Muslims and non-Sunnis who disrupted the unity of national society, as well as by assimilating them into Turkishness.<sup>71</sup>

In this sense, the heterodox characters of Alevism and Alevis as a religious group have never been recognized by the state. The state founded DRA and Alevis were not represented in this foundation, so Alevis have continued their existence as a secret religious group (*cemaat*) and could not gain legitimacy for their belief under the republic.<sup>72</sup> As Özlem Göner claims, Alevis do not simply suffer from non-representation, but the state in most cases question and deny legitimacy of Alevism. She also defines state policies towards Alevis as difference-repression rather than difference-blindness. For instance, the state's refusal of provision of religious service to all religious groups including Alevis would be difference-blindness policy whereas its recognition of Sunnism as legitimate belief and efforts to promote Sunnism must be regarded as difference-repression.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, Alevis were tried to be assimilated into Sunni Islam which Ayhan Yalçinkaya defines as ethnocide. He argues that Ottomans did not practice ethnocide, but the Turkish state does because it does not have borders and tries to create "good

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<sup>71</sup> Fazıl Hüsnü Erdem, "Alevi Sorunu Üzerine Bazı Düşünce ve Öneriler." *Toplum ve Bilim*, 90 (Autumn 2001), pp.189-190, and Keiser, November 2001, p.3.

<sup>72</sup> Okan, p.192 and Küçük, 2001, pp.187-188.

<sup>73</sup> Özlem Göner, "The Transformation of The Alevi Collective Identity." *Cultural Dynamics*, 17, no. 2 (2005), pp.118-119.

citizens.”<sup>74</sup> Yüksel Işık also argues that the Turkish Republic could not save itself from the theocratic structure of the Ottoman State. In Ottoman State, which was governed by Islamic law, it was fair to execute Alevis. Although Turkish Republic adopted principle of secularization, killing Alevis is still fair.<sup>75</sup> This assimilation policy of the state over Alevis has been more noticeable after the 12 September Coup when the state adopted Turkish Islam synthesis as semi-formal ideology. Since this synthesis defines the core identity of society as Sunni Turks, non-Sunnis (Alevis) and non-Turks (Kurds) were excluded from this core identity.<sup>76</sup> In this period, numerous

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<sup>74</sup> His speech in Conference on Alevis and Politics on 19 May 2007 in Ankara.

<sup>75</sup> Yüksel Işık, “Pir Sultan... Madımak... Alevilik... Diyanet... Ali İnsandır, “ *PSAKSD*, 44 (May-June 2001), pp. 58–62. As Meral Salman focuses on Alevi *dedes* were arrested during the 1930s and 1940s. However, the significant incident in the process of assimilation as well as repression of Alevis was the 1937-38 Dersim revolt. After the state had repressed this revolt in a bloody way, most people were sent to exile and the state adopted repressive policies in the region. Meral Salman, *Müze Duvarlarına Sağmayan Dergah: Alevi Bektaşî Kimliğinin Kuruluş Sürecinde Hacı Bektaş Veli Anma Törenleri* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, August 2006), p.59.

<sup>76</sup> After this coup, the official state ideology was reformulated and a nationalist-religious Turkish-Islam synthesis which articulates two discriminative streams of religion and nationalism became the semi formal ideology of the state. This synthesis defines Turkishness and Islam as the core identity of the state, claiming that Islam and Turkishness make up a harmonious and inseparable whole in that without Islam we could not protect Turkishness and without Turks Islam could not live. Therefore, “A good Turk is at the same time a good Muslim.” Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931–1993) Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, March 2000), pp. 56–59 and Egemen Sınıfların Halkı Aldatma Araçlarından Biri Türk-İslam Sentezi. Available [online]: <http://www.kurtulus-online.com/www/kurtulus200004/167.html> [April 2006]. Based on this synthesis, the territory of the state was started to be used for religious purposes, the society and public order were reconstructed; and cultural, educational, political, and social life were re-shaped and socio-cultural diversity was denied in the name of nationalist unitarianism. In that sense, Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu defines the ideology of 12 September as nationalist-Islamic-Secularistic in which the state adopted policies of Islamic identity. Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, 31.08.2005. “12 Eylül’ün “Anti” Gündeminde Toplum.” Available [online]: <http://www.tarihvakfi.org.tr/haberayrinti.asp?ID=380>, [31.08.2005]. Therefore; religious instruction, which discriminates other religions by focusing on the fraternity of Muslims, explains rituals of Sunni Islam in detail and encouraging Sunni Islam, was made obligatory. The schoolbooks of history, literature, and geography were re-written in order to create nationalist-religious collective memory among students. The number of religious schools (*İmam Hatip* Schools, Faculty of Theology, and Koran Courses) increased and people who graduated from these schools were not only staffed in religious service, but mostly in politics and bureaucracy. Lastly, the structure of DRA, which was founded in order to control religion, was strengthened by increasing its budget and the huge number of staff. As the number of mosques increased and masjids were founded in public institutions. And *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı* which was founded to finance DRA became a strong holding company. Burak Gümüş, “12 Eylül’den Bugüne Değin Aleviler.” Available [online]: <http://alewiten.com/onikieylul.htm>. [April 2006]. For full discussions see Nazan Kuloğlu, *2000’e Doğru Şeriat’a Adım Adım* (Ankara: Pir Sultan Kültür Deneği Yayınları, October 1997) and Nazan Kuloğlu, *Dinsel Eğitim Allah’a Emanet* (Ankara: Ardiç Yayınevi, 1998).

new mosques, even in Alevi villages, were built and *imams* were appointed- not only in Sunni towns and villages, but also in Alevi communities. Moreover, religious instruction which teaches only Sunni Islam and includes information which insult Alevis was made obligatory also for Alevis.<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, most Alevis did not question this “problematic” relation of Alevis with the state because of their loyalty to the Republican regime and they supported the state policies even in case of the abolition of *Bektasi Tekkes* in 1925. Today, most Alevis define themselves as Kemalist supporters of the Turkish state and its secularization. How can we explain this loyalty of Alevis towards the state? As Etienne Balibar argues, the ruling ideas are precisely not directly the ideas of those who rule, but vice versa, they incorporate “a series of crucial motifs and aspirations of the oppressed” and rearticulate “them in such a way that they became compatible with existing relations of domination.”<sup>78</sup> In this sense, the state’s so-called secular policies during the early Republic created a sense of emancipation among Alevis and they started to become loyal citizens of Turkish secularization. Moreover, although the state does not recognize existence of Alevis based on their “religious” identity, it has always focused on Alevis’ ethnic origin of Turkishness. Hence, by focusing on Alevis’ Turkishness and by presenting Alevis as supporters of

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<sup>77</sup> Bruinessen, 1996, p. 8, Fahriye Altın, “Okullarda Din Dersi Sorunu Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme.” Available [online]: <http://www.alevibektasi.org/fahriye.htm> [April 2006] and Murat Küçük, “Türkiye’de Din Dersi ve Aleviler.” Available [online]: [http://www.alevibektasi.org/murat\\_kucuk.htm](http://www.alevibektasi.org/murat_kucuk.htm). [April 2006]. However, resulting from the increasing Sunnification of the state and strengthening of political Sunni Islam, Alevis felt the threat of discrimination and especially after the Madımak massacre in 1993, they tried to institutionalize in order not to lose their values.

<sup>78</sup> In this way, he reversed the Marxist formula which argues that “ruling ideology has to incorporate a series of features in which exploited majority will be able to recognize its authentic longings. In other words, each hegemonic universality has to incorporate *at least two* particular contents, the authentic popular content as well as its distortion by the relations of domination and exploitation.” Cited Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism.” *New Left Review*, 225 (1997), pp.29-30.

secularization the state incorporated motifs of Alevi and re-articulated them with the existing relations of domination. In this way, although they are not formally recognized Alevi started to define themselves as loyal citizens of the Turkish state.

However, by the late 1980s and especially in the early 1990s, Alevism was approved by the state. We see that the representatives of the state and political parties attended Alevi ceremonies, gave speeches about Alevism, and so on. For instance, for the first time in 1989, the Özal government decided to accept Hacı Bektaş ceremonies as public festival. By 1990, the Ministry of Culture started to organize and sponsor this ceremony and this increased the political influence of the state on this ceremony. In the ceremony of 1990, a president (Turgut Özal) also sent a message of celebration.<sup>79</sup> For the first time in 1994 and 1995, a president (Süleyman Demirel) attended this ceremony. In 1998, the president Süleyman Demirel and Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz also attended the ceremony as representatives of the state.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, for the first time on 5 April 1997, Süleyman Demirel, when he was president, invited İzzettin Doğan and some other Alevi religious leaders to Çankaya. The following year, in 1998, for the first time ANAP-DSP coalition allocated 425 billion Turkish liras of the budget to *Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür Vakfı* and

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<sup>79</sup> Salman, pp. 89–90. Salman's work is significant for showing that how the state has been using Hacı Bektaş ceremonies as a political tool since the 1980 coup and especially in the beginning of the 1990s. Moreover, Bedriye Poyraz's work on newspapers -*Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, and *Tercüman*- during three different periods 1975–80, 1985–90 and 1995–2000 also showed the changes in the policies the state in Hacı Bektaş ceremonies. She argues that in 1975–80 both the state and society ignored the existence of Alevi whereas in 1985–1990 politicians became more interested in the Hacı Bektaş ceremonies. In 1995–2000, the state was represented at the highest level and Alevi were acclaimed by both society and the state as an important treasure in the Turkish Republic. Bedriye Poyraz, "The Turkish State and Alevi: Changing Parameters of an Uneasy Relationship." *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41, no.4 (July 2005), pp. 507–508.

<sup>80</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), pp 2–3 and year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.4.

some Alevi associations.<sup>81</sup> In the same year, the state financed the building of *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Merkezi* in Dikmen (Ankara). Indeed, the center was built with the money taken from Alevi themselves as well as from the state. This center was opened on 19 May 1998 with a ceremony and public demonstration by both the state and by Alevi themselves.<sup>82</sup>

Nevertheless, by looking at the recent approval of Alevi by the state, we cannot say the state formally recognized Alevism with its religious identity. It only tried to present Alevism as an essence of Turkishness and as protector of Turkish secularization against the Sheri'a. In this way, it started to use Alevism as a buffer zone in order to control political Islam by presenting Alevism as the antithesis of political Islam and by focusing on secular character of Alevi. Secondly, because of the growing influence of *PKK* in those years, state authorities stimulated the development of Alevism as an alternative to Kurdish nationalism by presenting Alevism as a Turkish form of Islam and Kurdish Alevi or Zazas as essentially Turkish.<sup>83</sup> It is clear that "the state wants only to emphasize the Alevi's similarities with the Sunni community rather than their different identity."<sup>84</sup> For instance, in mid-February 2002, the court decided the closing down of *Alevi-Bektasi Kuruluşları Birliği Kültür Derneği* (founded on 7 May 2001) by claiming that this institution

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<sup>81</sup> Şehriban Şahin, "The Rise of Alevism as A Public Religion." *Current Sociology*, 53, no.3 (May 2005), p. 477.

<sup>82</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), pp 2–3 and no.3 (July 1998), p.4.

<sup>83</sup> Bruinessen, 1996, pp.8–9, Keiser, <http://www.aleviforum.com/archieve/index.php/t-3584.html> and Murat Küçük, "Mezhepten Millete: Aleviler ve Türk Milliyetçiliği." In *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce. Milliyetçilik*, 4. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2002), pp. 904–905.

<sup>84</sup> Poyraz, p.512. For instance, in Süleyman Demirel and Mesut Yılmaz's speeches in the Hacı Bektaş ceremony of 1998 this understanding was noticable. In these ceremonies, Yılmaz said, "If our God, or prophet, our book, ... are the same, we should not propagate dissension among us." Demirel also said, "In this country there is no difference between Alevi and Sunni." And he went on by advising Alevi to forget the past and get rid of their hatred." Cited in *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), pp 2–3 and no.3 (July 1998), p.4.

used the term Alevi in its name and in this way it practice separatism.<sup>85</sup>

In short; although by incorporating local motifs of Alevis the state created Alevi loyalty to the state, there has always been a hegemonic and assymetrical relationship between the state and Alevis. In this sense, Alevism as a religion has turned to be an object of inquiry in which state can define and determine “borders” of Alevism. However, power is not constituted only by the state, there are also other actors which try to hegemonize power on Alevism by constructing and defining it. By coming up with different definitions of Alevism, also Alevis themselves become involved this process in order to take a stand vis-a-vis the state. In the following chapter, I will discuss how Alevism is constructed by different actors.

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<sup>85</sup> Cited in *PSAKSD*, 48 (March 2002). Interestingly, in the same year, in his interview in *Milliyet* (18 August 2001), Abdulkadir Sezgin (the ex-inspector of DRA) argued that Alevis are second separatist threat after PKK since there are Alevis who want to divide Turkey by founding a state under the name of Alevistan. Indeed the term Alevistan was used by the periodical of *Kızıl Yol* which was published for the first time in 1983 in France. This periodical argued that rather than being a religion, Alevism is a nation in Anatolia. Cited in İrat, p. 114.

### CHAPTER III

#### ALEVISM AS THE OBJECT OF INQUIRY

Alevism is the object of inquiry of different actors and this is at the same time a process construction. Thus, the multiplicity of actors leads to a multiplicity of definition(s) of Alevism and this process has legal/ political implications concerning different political projects for both Alevis and non-Alevis.<sup>86</sup> As Şehriban Şahin states, because of ethnic, linguistic, local and political differences of Alevism,<sup>87</sup> different actors such as the Turkish state, German state, the EU, secular and non-secular media, Kurds, Sunni population and Alevis themselves have taken part in the process of redefinition of Alevism, reconstruction of it as a public religion as well as creation of different Alevisms. This means that everyone “speaks” with their own words, attributing codifications on Alevism and defining/ creating different Alevisms based on their search for the “essence” of it. In addition, Alevism has provided this possibility because of its syncretic<sup>88</sup> structure in that there are elements from

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<sup>86</sup> Berna Ekal, “Through Differences and Commonalities: Women’s Experience or Being Alevi” (MA thesis, Bogazici University, 2006), p.3.

<sup>87</sup> Bruinessen mentions four basic Alevi groups in Turkey: Azerbaijani Turkish Alevis in Kars, the Arabic speaking communities in southern Turkey (part of Nusayris), Turkish Alevis concentrated in central Anatolia, the Aegean and the Mediterranean coastal regions and Kurdish Alevis who were affiliated with the Safavids. Bruinessen, 1996, p. 7. In addition, Ömer Çaha argues that the Anatolian Alevis (or Alevism) is different from Alawites living in Syria and Morocco. Most of the Anatolian Alevis are Turks, but there are also Kurdish Alevis. Ömer Çaha, “The role of the media in the revival of Alevi identity in Turkey.” *Social Identities*, 10, No.3 (May 2004), p. 327. Karin Vorhoff also points out that according to unofficial estimates, one third of Alevis are of Kurdish origin. However, all of them use Turkish in their religious ceremonies. Karin Vorhoff, “Let’s Reclaim Our History And Culture / Imagining Alevi Community In Contemporary Turkey.” *Die Welt Des Islams*, 38, Issue 2, (July 1998b), p. 232.

<sup>88</sup> A unique structure, which gathers elements from contradictory and /or at least different societies and preserves existence of these these elements in itself. (Okan, p. 34). In this sense, Alevism has a heterogeneous structure, involving elements from different religions of Islam, Zoroastrianism (Iranian), Shamanism, Maniheism, Christianity; from Iranian affected Sufi tariqats of Kalenderism, Haydarism, and Yesevism; from Shii affected Vefai, Edhemi, Cami tariqats, and from Anatolian culture. Atilla Özkırmı, *Toplumsal Bir Başkaldırının İdeolojisi. Alevilik-Bektaşılık*. (İstanbul: Doğan Ofset, 1990), pp.83-88 and Okan, p.37, p.47.

different religions, beliefs, or tariqats. However, these actors are trying to create ‘one homogenous Alevism’ by defining it. For this reason, there are different discourses about Alevism such as “Alevism is not religion”, “Alevism is a way of life,” “Alevism is the real essence of Islam,” “Alevism is a Turkish Islam,” “Alevism is the essence of Turkishness”, “Alevism has Kurdish origin” or “Alevism has Persian roots.”<sup>89</sup>

### Construction of Alevism by “Outsiders”

The first actor in this defining process of Alevism is the EU. The EU Regular Reports on Turkey’s Progress toward Accession from November to 2001 to 2007 focus on Alevis’ problems. In 2004, the EU defined Alevis as “non-Sunni Muslim minority” and in 2005, it changed this term to “non-Sunni Muslim Alevi Community.” In contrast, the last two reports do not use the term “non-Sunni” for Alevis any more, just the term Alevi. However, they still mention the problems of Alevis under the topic of “human rights” and “protection of minorities” and more specifically under “the freedom of religion.” The EU’s insistence on mentioning Alevis in the last years shows that the state may have to change its policies towards Alevis and recognize their minority rights in the accession process of the EU. In other words, as Göner argues, “Alevism, historically a non-represented collective identity in the exclusionary discourse of the state now has to be recognized and represented by the state in response to demands from the EU.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cited in Subaşı, pp.309–311 See detailed analysis for definition(s) of Alevism Gloria L. Clarke, *The World of The Alevis. Issues of Culture and Identity*. (New York/Istanbul: AVC Publications, 1999), pp.9–36.

<sup>90</sup> Göner, p.109. For year 2004 report, Available [online]: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key\\_documents/2004/rr\\_tr\\_2004\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2004/rr_tr_2004_en.pdf), pp.44–45 [November 2006]. For year 2005 report, Available [online]:

However, the most significant actor in the process of “defining” Alevism is the Turkish state in that the state is recently taking an effort with its organs to participate in the institutional production of knowledge on Alevi communities in order to promote an official version of Alevism.<sup>91</sup> Hence, as I explained in the former chapter, its approach must be taken in terms of political “choice,” especially concerning recent threats such as the Sheri’a and Kurdish question. In that sense, secularist segments of the country started to seek an alliance with the emerging Alevist movement against the increasing Sunnification of the state. In this alliance, Alevism was formulated either as the “humanist” face of Islam or as “Turkish Islam” in order to balance the increasing power of the groups that conceived (Sunni) Islam as a resource for political mobilization.<sup>92</sup> Secondly, Alevism was presented “as the culture of the Turkish nomads, who once came from Central Asia to Islamize and Turkify Anatolia.” Within this presentation, Alevis were introduced as good Turkish

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[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key\\_documents/2005/package/sec\\_1426\\_final\\_progress\\_report\\_tr\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/pdf/key_documents/2005/package/sec_1426_final_progress_report_tr_en.pdf), pp. 29–30 [November 2006]. For year 2006 report Available [online]: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key\\_documents/reports\\_nov\\_2006\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key_documents/reports_nov_2006_en.htm) pp.16–17 [November 2006]. For year 2007 report, Available [online]: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2007/nov/turkey\\_progress\\_reports\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/turkey_progress_reports_en.pdf) , p.17. [May 2008].

<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the state’s efforts to do research on Alevism as well as to define it are not new. With the influence of Turkish nationalism and the threat of the partition of the empire, *İttihat ve Terakki* tried to prove that Anatolia had been the national territory of Turks. On the other hand, between the 1850s and 1920s, Anatolia College, compiled by Protestant missionaries, was also trying to prove that Alevis had Christian origins as offsprings of Lycians. For this reason, it appointed formal workers to conduct investigations in Anatolia. When Esat Uras was assigned to collect information about Armenians, Baha Said was the person who was assigned to do research on Alevis. Said’s research presented Alevis as “real” old Turks who preserve pre-Islamic Turkish traditions since their ritual language was Turkish. The aim of the party was not accepting Alevism as a national religion, but the opposite, to integrate/ assimilate Alevism into the national religion (Islam) based on their Turkish identity. However, Alevis were able to learn the findings of Baha Said’s research during early republic. In that period, the notion of Turkishness of Alevis, which kept Turkish culture alive, became popular discourse among Alevis in order to gain legitimacy. Küçük, 2002, pp. 901–902.

<sup>92</sup> Es, p.151 As Poyraz cited, for instance, in the Hacı Bektaş ceremony of 1999, Bülent Ecevit said “Alevi-Bektashi culture and their perception of this Islamic culture is one of the most important forms of insurance we hold for the safety of our secularism and democracy. Secularism is also insurance for the Alevi-Bektashi people.” Cited in Poyraz, p.513.

Muslims as well as defenders against the Kurdish movement.<sup>93</sup>

In this vein, in 1987, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Merkezi* (Research Center for Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş) was established in Gazi University in Ankara. This center's publications as well as its periodical *Hacı Bektaş Dergisi* focus on Turkishness of Alevis and the Turkish-Islamic elements in Alevism. On purposely, it does not focus on Kızılbaş (redhead) elements in Alevism by codifying Alevism only as Bektasism. Indeed, this center's choice of Hacı Bektaş Veli for its name is not a coincidence in that Hacı Bektaş is the historical figure who is mostly approved by the state.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, DRA is also organizing meetings with Alevi *dedes* and activists and panels on Alevism in order to define the borders of official Alevism within Islam. In its reports and publications on Alevism, DRA defines it as a tariqat of the Sunni Hanefi sect or culture. For instance, DRA organized a meeting in 1991 with Alevi politicians, academicians and religious leaders. In this meeting Alevism was defined as a sect within Islam, arguing that in essence there is no difference between Alevism and Sunnism. This meeting was criticized by other Alevis, especially *Cem* argued that the people who attended this meeting were not Alevis and DRA was trying to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam.<sup>95</sup>

However, the dispute over defining Alevism is apparent in the case of

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<sup>93</sup> Vorhoff, 1998a, p.33. In that sense, as Salman argues, when he was the Minister of Culture, Namık Kemal Zeybek's speech in the Hacı Bektaş ceremonies in 1989 was significant in showing the change in state policies towards Alevis as he presented Hacı Bektaş and Ahmet Yesevi as Turkish figures by whom Turkish culture preserve itself. Salman, pp. 86–87, p.133.

<sup>94</sup> Es, p.37, Vorhoff, 1998a, p. 39 and İrat, 2006, p. 139. For publications of this center check: Available [online]: <http://www.hbektas.gazi.edu.tr/portal/html/index.php>.

<sup>95</sup> Cited in İrat, 2006, p.107.

*cemevis*<sup>96</sup> in that DRA representatives do not define *cemevis* as places of worship, but as culture centers. They argue that in the history of Alevism there is not such a worship place as *cemevi* and the common worship place is mosque. Hence, accepting *cemevis* as places of worship like mosques may disrupt unity in the society. Moreover, they criticize the usage of *cemevis* by some (illegal) leftist organizations for their militants' funerals.<sup>97</sup> In that point, DRA is against the representation of Alevism in DRA and the recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship. As İsmail Kaygusuz argues that in this way DRA tries to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam.<sup>98</sup>

The basic discussion about Alevism emerged when he was lord mayor of Istanbul; Tayyip Erdoğan announced that "if Alevism means a love of Ali then I, too, am an Alevi."<sup>99</sup> He also repeated this position after he became the prime minister. In this way, the term Alevi is used to refer to "the followers of Ali". Indeed, the position of Tayyip Erdoğan has political implications that he does not recognize the

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<sup>96</sup> The places in which Alevism perform their rituals: houses for *cem*. *Cem* is the Alevi religious ceremony, which is led by a *dede*. During these ceremonies, they sing religious poems in Turkish and men and women perform ritual dances (*semah*). In *cems*, participants do not only pray and worship, but also solve conflicts among community members.

<sup>97</sup> For example, the ex-president of DRA Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz, rather than as a religion, defines Alevism as temperament (*meşrep*) and a culture with its folksongs, folk dances, *sazs*. He criticizes Alevism who demand recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship by claiming that the places of worship of Alevism are mosques. Yet, *cemevis* are not like mosques, they are places of festivity of saints. His speech in the research series of Ruşen Çakır-İhsan Yılmaz, "Yolunu Arayan Alevilik" in *Milliyet* in August 2001. (Cited in İrat 2006, p. 130) Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan also defines *cemevis* as cultural centers, rather than as places of worship. However, based on Erdoğan's comments on Alevism, İbrahim Kaboğlu argues that it is not the right of the state to define a religion. In this sense, the even prime minister cannot say that *cemevis* are not places of worship. Just the opposite, a prime minister has a duty to avoid defining. Only people who belong to that religion can have the right to define their rituals and their places of worship. İbrahim Kaboğlu, "Avrupa Birliği ve İnanç Özgürlüğü." *PSAKSD*, 57 (June 2004), p.81.

<sup>98</sup> İsmail Kaygusuz, "Diyabet'e Yanıt: Diyanet'in Gizli Alevilik Raporu Saçmalığı Alevilik Sünni Hanefi Mezhebine Bağlı Bir Tarikat Değildir." Available [online]: <http://www.t-k-p.org/yazarlar/kaygusuz/diyanet.htm>. [April 2006]:

<sup>99</sup> Ruşen Çakır argues that this statement is a outright denial of Alevism which reduces Alevism to a devotion to Ali as well as insults faith of Alevism. Ruşen Çakır, "Political Alevism versus Political Sunnism: Convergences and Divergences." In *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elizabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), p. 64.

difference of Alevism, including it within Islam and inviting Alevi to mosques. However, unlike Sunnite Islam, “Alevi do not fast during the months of Ramadan, nor do they practice daily prayer five times a day. They do not make pilgrimage to Mecca. Instead of a mosque, Alevi have a jam house, a place used for worship as well as maintaining solidarity.”<sup>100</sup>

Based on statement of Tayyip Erdoğan about Alevism, we may look at how Alevism is defined and constructed in academic literature. Atilla Özkırımlı defines Alevism within the context of “followers of Ali”, arguing that Alevism first emerged as a political movement among those who wanted Ali to be the caliphate. After the eighth century, when it melted non-Sunni and non-Islamic elements in itself, it has become the name of heterodox<sup>101</sup> movements.<sup>102</sup> However, Ayhan Yalçınkaya points out that although the term Alevi is used for the “followers of Ali”, Alevism cannot be considered as simply “lovers of Ali”. Yalçınkaya argues that Ali is important not only for Alevi, but also for all Muslims. Different from other groups, the position of Ali has a symbolic meaning in Alevi thought.<sup>103</sup> Irene Melikoff also argues that heterodox groups are ethnologically misnamed as Alevi.<sup>104</sup> Ahmet Yaşar Ocak accepts Melikoff’s position in that he argues that although the term Alevi comes

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<sup>100</sup> Çaha, p. 326

<sup>101</sup> A religion or interpretation which emerged against the dominant religious understanding (orthodox)

<sup>102</sup> Özkırımlı, pp.10-11

<sup>103</sup> Ayhan Yalçınkaya, *Küf Dede Korkut, Said Nursi ve Hz. Ali Üzerine Bir Yorumlama* (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, March 2003), pp.137-139

<sup>104</sup> Irene Melikoff, “Alevi-Bektaşiliğin Tarihi Kökenleri Bektaşî-Kızılbaş (Alevi) Bölünmesi ve Neticeleri.” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), pp.12–14. She argues that the term Alevi first used in ninth century when the term Kızılbaş was creating a threat for the Alevi under the repression of central authority. Ömer Çaha also accepts this position. Çaha, p.327. On the other hand, both Kaygusuz and Onarlı argue that first Abu Dulaf used the term in tenth century. İsmail Kaygusuz, Available [online]: <http://www.t-k-p.org/yazarlar/kaygusuz/diyanet.htm> and İsmail Onarlı, “Türk Müslümanlığı Tartışmaları Üzerine.” Available [online]: [http://www.alevibektasi.org/ismail\\_onarli1.htm](http://www.alevibektasi.org/ismail_onarli1.htm) [April 2006].

from “followers of Ali”, the first separation in Islam and the appearance of political movement among people who wanted Ali to be the caliph led to emergence of Shiism, not Alevism. In this sense, Alevism and Ali’s struggle for the caliphate in the early Islamic era are not related. Alevism emerged in the tenth century in Anatolia after the Turk’s acceptance of Islam. Later in the sixteenth century, influenced by the propaganda of Safavids and took the cults of Ali and Twelve Imams from Shiism.<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, Alevism is mostly discussed and defined as Turkish Islam since there is a pre-Islamic Turkish culture in Alevism.<sup>106</sup> For instance, Ali Murat İrat mentions some Sunni scholars such as Orhan Türkdoğan, Zekeriya Beyaz, Saim Savaş, Ethem Ruhi Fıglalı, İlyas Üzüm, Abdulkadir Sezgin, Mustafa Ekinci, Hüseyin Bal and Muzaffer Özdağ who define Alevism as Turkish Islam by focusing on Islamic and Turkish elements. İrat asks the question of “if Alevism is Turkish Islam, what about

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<sup>105</sup> Ocak, May 1999, pp. 3–4. The decisive factor for the rise of Alevism in its specific Anatolian form seems to be the socioeconomic conflict between the rural population and central power that intensified toward the end of the fifteenth century. Combined with poverty and the heterodox character of rural Anatolia Kızılbas rebellions emerged. In the same period, the threat of Safavids emerged and Safavids mostly supported Kızılbas rebellions against Ottoman authority by taking advantage of this discontent. Alevis also mostly collaborated with the Safavid dynasty under Shah İsmail who was seen as the “survivor” (*mehdi*) by Alevis. Yavuz Sultan Selim won the war which he had with Shah İsmail. From that period, when Shah İsmail left Anatolia, the life and culture of Kızılbas changed. The combination of the heterodox Muslim milieu and Iranian Safavids created a specific Anatolian Alevism and the term Alevi was started to be used in order to rescue them from the image of Kızılbas threat. Vorhorff, 1998b, p. 229 and Seufert, p. 161. Hence, based on this influence of Shiism, Alevism is sometimes regarded as Anatolian Shiism. Yet, Bruinessen argues that although Iranian Safavids have an influence on the creation of Anatolian Alevism. For instance, like Shiism, in Alevism there is the trinity of Allah-Mohammad-Ali, claim of the inner (*batın*) meaning of religion rather than its external demands (*zahir*) and also “Ali and the Safavid Shah İsmail are defied, or at least idolized”. However, it is different from Iranian Shiism in that they do not participate in the Shiite version of Islamic law. Bruinessen, 1996, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> For instance, Melikoff focuses on the continuity of the idea of a *Gök Tanrı* (Celestial God) in Alevism from pre-Islamic Turkish culture. She argues that Alevism has emerged as Turkish folk religion, but throughout the time it included non-Turkish beliefs. She prefers to use the term Bektasi for Turkish Islam, claiming that Alevism and Bektasism have the same origin in that at the beginning they were both folk religion. Yet, especially after the conflict between Safavids and Ottomans in the sixteenth century Bektasi and Kızılbas (later Alevi) were separated into two different communities: Bektasis institutionalized in *tekkes* and Kızılbas in rural areas. Irene Melikoff, pp.12–14. Nejat Birdoğan also accepts same classification with Melikoff. Nejat Birdoğan, “Bektaşılık Kavramı Üzerine Görüşler.” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), pp. 28–30.

Sunnism?”<sup>107</sup> The answer for this question comes from Ahmet Yaşar Ocak who also defines Alevism as Turkish Muslimness by differentiating Islam and Muslimness. Ocak argues that Islam as a religion has a abstract meaning as it is written in the holy book. On the other hand, Muslimness must be taken in a practical and culturalized sense of Islam as Muslims interpret that religion (Islam) through historical processes. Hence, in a sociological sense, there are “Muslimnesses” such as Arab Muslimness, Turkish Muslimness, and Persian Muslimness and so on and Alevism is a kind of Turkish Muslimness (the other kind is Sunnism).<sup>108</sup>

In order to point out the ideological position of academicians, I want to focus on the discussion of Yasin Aktay, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak and Ayhan Yalçınkaya very briefly. Yasin Aktay argues that the state’s preference of the orthodox communities in the separation of heterodox and orthodox religions does not have historical roots. Just the opposite, central authority promoted heterodox groups. Therefore, Alevism is “constructed”, “mystified” and “idealized” as heterodoxy in that the term itself began to mean freedom, humanitarianism, equality, and peace whereas orthodoxy is regarded as consisting of repression, authority, and centrality.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak also claims that Sunnism is mostly presented as the religion of dominant powers (as the state) whereas Alevism is the religion of the repressed. He criticizes the idea, which relates the execution of Alevis throughout history with Sunnism and argues that we have to explain these executions as “pure politics”. In other words, he argues that not only non-Sunnis but also Sunnis faced the repression of the Ottoman state. Then he tries to legitimize Alevi massacres in the

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<sup>107</sup> For detailed discussion on works of these scholars see İrat 2006, p. 14, pp. 142–145.

<sup>108</sup> Ruşen Çakır, “Alevi-Sünni Sentezi Olamaz.” Interview with Ahmet Yaşar Ocak in *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 27 March 2001.

<sup>109</sup> Aktay, pp. 19–22, p.50.

Yavuz era by explaining them as “pure politics.” He claims that Yavuz did not systematically try to execute Alevis; he just tried to punish those who were involved in these revolts. He supports his argument by saying that Shah Ismail also killed many Sunnis in order to found Shii Iran.<sup>110</sup>

However, according to Yalçinkaya, Ocak regards as if the difference between Alevism and Sunnite Islam stayed in history without any reference to today. Ocak argues that the difference between Sunnite Islam and Alevism is resulted from the difference between nomadic and endemic structure in that endemic and nomadic structures are different from each other in their accepting a new religion. However, Ocak does not say anything about whether this endemic structure is related to the state or not. In other words, Ocak ignores the heterodoxy of Alevism and the determinant position of the state in the relationship between Sunnite Islam and Alevism. In addition, by presenting execution of Alevism as pure politics, he cannot explain why Alevis have been discriminated and repressed if Alevism is Turkish Islam. Therefore, Yalçinkaya points out that the real difference emerges when the king/government/ power has the same religion with the masses.<sup>111</sup>

Yalçinkaya also argues that every belief system includes both an orthodoxy and heterodoxy and can adhere to society through heterodox channels. A heterodox belief may evolve into orthodoxy by having private property. In addition, heterodox

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<sup>110</sup> Ocak, May 1999, pp. 6–8.

<sup>111</sup> Yalçinkaya, 2003, pp.156-157, p.162. The era of Yavuz Sultan Selim was a turning point for Alevis in that the term Kızılbaş was used for them. From this period, Kızılbaş were judged and persecuted for heresy, rebellion, and treason. Most Alevi literature defines this process as massacre/genocide. For this reason, Alevism stayed as a secret belief around the control of the holy men and Alevis maintained themselves as endogamous, secret and isolated local communities. They mostly lived in rural mountainous regions in which they could secure themselves from the political forces. With the help of distance from Sunni communities and conceal (*takiyya*), they managed for centuries to hide their religious teaching and practices from the outside world. See Çaha, p.327. Combined with enmity to Yavuz Sultan Selim, this perception has a significant role in the feeling of oppression. This feeling is still salient in Alevi discourse.

beliefs refuse the monolithic orthodox structure of power and have centrifugal tendencies. By seeing all heterodox religions as a threat, the central authority increases its control and repression towards these centrifugal powers. Since central authority officially accepted Sunni Islam, the religion of the center /or repressive power has become Sunnite Islam whereas it adopted repressive policies towards centrifugal tendencies of the heterodox Alevis. For instance, *şeyhülislam* –the religious leader of Sunnites- announced *fetvas*, which asserted that killing Alevis is suitable in terms of religion.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, the process of defining as well as constructing Alevism is also apparent among Alevis themselves, especially when they are announcing their collective identity and taking position vis-à-vis the state.

#### Construction of Alevism by Alevis

Since the 1980s, Alevis are trying to re-create their own system of meaning and to expose their demands from the state and Sunni groups through Alevi voluntary associations, periodicals and books, festivals, radios (and recently TV channels) and websites. First, in the process of rediscovery of Alevi identity, the role of media<sup>113</sup> is very important.<sup>114</sup> Thus, Alevis themselves founded radios and TV stations such as *Cem TV/Radyo*, *Su TV*, *Yol TV*, *Düzgün TV*, *Radyo Barış*, *Yön Fm*, *Dem TV*, and established websites to publicize their way of life.

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<sup>112</sup> Yalçinkaya, 2003, p.160, p. 163.

<sup>113</sup> For details, see article of Ömer Çaha. The 1980s faced transformations in that different social and political identities such as feminists, Islamists, ethnic and religious groups took place in the public sphere. The media is the most important tool for these groups to claim their identities.

<sup>114</sup> For instance, Nejat Birdoğan focuses on the importance of publications and TV channels for Alevis. Nejat Birdoğan, “O Dost Beni İsmarlamış Gel Deyi, Gideceğim Ama Yol Bozuk Bozuk...” *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.5. At that time, there were no Alevi channels on televisions. Now there are more than ten.

Moreover, until recently, Alevism had been based on an oral tradition, folklore, *saz* -the traditional music instrument of Alevism-, songs, *semahs*, and so on. However, now, we may easily recognize the growing amount of written documents about Alevism, as countless books and periodicals, either academic or popular, have been published on Alevi history and belief. We may count these periodicals as *Kervan, Nefes, Pir Sultan Abdal, Zülfikar, Pir, Cem, Gönüllerin Sesi, Alev, Çağdaş Zülfikar, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Genç Erenler, Ehl-i Beyt Dünyası, Alevilerin Sesi* and so on.<sup>115</sup>

Furthermore, with relaxation of the ban on associations in 1989, Alevis also started to institutionalize under different types of organizations: *derneks*, *vakıfs*, and recently federations.<sup>116</sup> In fact, during the 1960s and 70s there were Alevi institutions and most of them used the name Hacı Bektaş Veli. However, these institutions were closed after the 1980 coup. The first institution which used “Alevi” in its name was *Hamburg Alevi Kültür Grubu* (1989), founded in Germany.<sup>117</sup> Besides, there is a transnational Alevi movement formed in Turkey, Germany, and West Europe under the umbrella organization of *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu*<sup>118</sup> and *Avrupa*

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<sup>115</sup> Küçük, 2001, p.189, Burak Gümüş, <http://alewiten.com/onikieylül.htm>, and Burak Gümüş, “Alevi Hareketleri ve Değişen Alevilik Üzerine.” In *Alevilik*, edited by İsmail Engin and Havva Engin (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, September 2004), p.510. However, Mesut Özcan (Publisher-Editor of Periodical of *Kırkbudak*) argues that there are a lot of books on Alevis, yet the number of these books has decreased in recent years. However, the number of people who read these books is low. For instance, in most conferences Alevis still ask questions about Alevi rituals. (Semi-structured interview with him during Conference on Alevis and Politics on 20 May 2007) For instance, in this conference, they asked questions to Erdoğan Aydın (speaker) about rituals and he said it was written in his books.

<sup>116</sup> Alevi movement as well as institutionalization have reflexive character in that the number of Alevi institutions increased after the Sivas incident. Alevis started to become members of Alevi institutions with the thought that if they cooperated, they would not experience such incidents any more.

<sup>117</sup> In fact, association activities as well as publications started earlier in Alevi Diaspora than in Turkey. This may lead us to question whether migrants in Europe stimulated the Alevi awakening in Turkey. Vorhoff, 1998a, p.39.

<sup>118</sup> It was first founded in 1991 as *Almanya Alevi Cemaatleri Federasyonu* and in 1994 it took the name *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* which combined 140 Alevi institutions from Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, and so on. Later it changed its name to *Almanya Alevi Cemaati* (Alevi

*Alevi Bektaşi Konfederasyonu*. In addition, Gümüş mentions Alevi-Kurdish institutions-*FEK/FEDA*-, which have organic ties with *PKK*.<sup>119</sup>

In this context, the Alevi movement started to institutionalize or institutionalized Alevism led Alevis to announce their collective identities and made Alevism more visible in the public sphere. In fact, which one is the reason and which one is the consequence is not clear. The first development in this visibility was publication of the book of Cemal Şener in 1988 -*Alevilik Olayı: Toplumsal Bir Başkaldırının Kısa Tarihiçesi*. Yet, the first development concerning political demands was the *Alevilik Bildirgesi* (The Manifesto of Alevism)<sup>120</sup> which was declared by Alevi and non-Alevi intellectuals (not institutions) in late 1989 and was published in May 1990. However, before that manifesto there had been Alevi institutions, for instance *PSAKD* was founded in 1988.<sup>121</sup>

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Community) in order to be recognized by the German state because in Germany the government gives religious rights to institutionalized religions as “communities.”

<sup>119</sup> Gümüş, September 2004, pp. 522-523. However, I have not seen the name of these institutions anywhere else.

<sup>120</sup> In the late 1989 and early 1990 Alevi intellectuals, secularist Sunni journalists, intellectuals and artists such as Yaşar Kemal, İlhan Seçuk, Rıza Zelyut, Aziz Nesin, Nejat Birdoğan, Cemal Özbey, Ataol Behramoğlu, Musa Ağacık and so on prepared *Alevilik Bildirgesi* and a revised version of it was published in *Cumhuriyet* on 15 May 1990. For the first time in history, unlike assertions in 1960s, they came up with political demands such as official recognition of Alevism as a “religious community”. In this manifesto, they demanded Sunnis to end their prejudices against Alevis, to focus more on Alevi culture in the media, and asked the state to represent Alevis in DRA, to stop construction of mosques in Alevi villages, to put Alevism in religious instruction and in state TV programs, and so on. Harald Schüler, “Aleviler ve Sosyal Demokratların İttifak Arayışı: Dinsel ve Dinsel Olarak Tanımlanmış Grupların Sosyal Demokrat-Laik Ortam ve Partilerdeki Rolü.” In *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*, edited by Stefanos Yerasimos et al (İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, 2001), pp.142–143, Harald Schüler, *Türkiye’de Sosyal Demokrasi: Particilik, Hemşehrilik, Alevilik.*, edited by Tanıl Bora, translated by Yılmaz Tombul (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), pp.169–170 and Vorhoff, 1998b, p.31. For whole text, see Ekal, pp. 145–156.

<sup>121</sup> Günter Seufert evaluates the issue of institutions in terms of two levels: religious discourse and social actors. In terms of discourse, “religious knowledge collected by the youth through practice (the performance of *cems*) and theory (the study of Alevi literature) does not lead them to traditional piety and traditional forms of togetherness.” Seufert uses the term “religious life without strong piety” for this. Therefore, revival of religious life is not the revival of the traditional social structures such as tribe, clan, or village community. In terms of social actors, now all of the Alevi’s activities are carried on by new social organizations because the younger generation founded village clubs and institutions and this created a new form of sociality among them. Unlike closed units in the past, these institutions serve as a bridge to the outside world. Today there are about 120 associations in Istanbul alone.

In fact, visibility of Alevis in the public sphere did not occur “suddenly” after the 1980s as the roots of this process could be traced back to the mid 1950s to Alevis’ domestic migration to the big cities. Resulting from this migration, two paradoxical processes occurred. On the one hand, people who had come from the same rural areas came together in big cities and strengthened their community ties in terms of religion and culture. In addition, they stayed away from “the other” communities as secret and isolated groups in big cities.<sup>122</sup> On the other hand, as Alevis became visible in big cities, they began to loose traditional ties. Indeed, traditional Alevism was centered on Holy men and regulated by unwritten traditions within closed communities. For this reason, it could not maintain its traditional structure in big cities and this process led to the breakdown of the traditional social-religious structure. Hence, today, Alevism is mostly debated in terms of its urban base: *kentsel Alevilik*.<sup>123</sup>

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Günter Seufert, “Between religion and ethnicity: a Kurdish-Alevi tribe in globalizing Istanbul.” In *Space, Culture and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*, edited by Ayşe Öncü and Petra Weyland (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 167-170 and Vorhoff, 1998b, p.248. Let me remind that the date of Seufert’s article was written in 1997.

<sup>122</sup> Ayhan Yalçinkaya argues that most sociological explanations about Alevis, as in the case of Yasin Aktay and Nejdet Subaşı, point out that Alevis stayed in isolated, oppressed, closed groups and lived in ghettos/ diasporas/ peripheries in urban areas. For instance, Aktay argues that “Just as we cannot think Judaism without Diaspora, we cannot think Alevism without its repressed character.” For Yalçinkaya, Aktay is generalizing all Alevis and ignoring the existence of different Alevisms. Subaşı uses the term ghetto for places of Alevis in big cities, However, Yalçinkaya argues that it was not the choice of Alevis to live in ghettos, yet it was a reflection of their historical heritage of being repressed by the (Sunni) authorities. Therefore, both Aktay and Subaşı ignore hegemonic role of power in this process and “normalize” this diasporic structure as the nature of Alevis. In that sense, where we use the terms ghetto and Diaspora we have to focus on the role of the state. Yalçinkaya, 2005, pp.45–66.

<sup>123</sup> Bruinessen, 1996, p.8, Tahire Erman “Mahalledeki Öteki: Gecekondu Ortamında Alevi-Sünni İlişkileri.” In *Türk(iye) Kültürleri*, edited by Gönül Pultar and Tahire Erman (Istanbul: Tetragon İletişim Hizmetleri, 2005), p.319. In addition, Seufert explains this transformation with the term of “self-awareness.” He argues that two social spheres create self-awareness of people: in the world outside the community and in the community itself. In this sense, resulting from domestic migration to big cities, beliefs of the Alevis were confronted by an outside world. This world outside the Alevi community required a different symbolic system from their traditional structure and religious parameters. For this reason, they were trying to restore their cultural heritage and to present their Alevi identity in order to differentiate themselves from the outside community. On the other hand, the knowledge of the individual is the source of symbolic material for personal awareness and at the level of the individual, the world inside and the world outside the community must be integrated. For Alevis, this knowledge had been embedded in their traditional religious culture. In that sense, in big

Moreover, with the effect of the relative freedom of 1961 Constitution, Alevis started to create cultural products such as books, concerts, festivals and became politically active especially in leftist parties. In 1963, about 50 Alevi students at university who acted in response to an incident<sup>124</sup> prepared an assertion. This assertion, which used the name Alevi, was published in *Akşam* and in other newspapers. In 1966, there were two other assertions against the speeches of president of DRA İbrahim Elmalı who ignored the existence of Alevis.<sup>125</sup> Based on reaction to the speeches of Elmalı, in the same year the periodical *Cem*, which presented Alevis “as real Turkish child of the country” started to be published by İzzettin Doğan, Abidin Özgünay and Sadık Göksu.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, in 1966, Cemal Özbey founded the first Alevi party Unity Party (*Birlik Partisi*- renamed as Turkey Unity Party/*Türkiye Birlik Partisi* in 1969).<sup>127</sup> The first Alevi institutions such as *Hacı Bektaş Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği* (1963) in Ankara, *Hacı Bektaş Kültür Kalkınma ve Yardım Derneği* (1963) and *Ozanlar Derneği* (1963) were founded in those years. The Shrine of Hacı Bektaş was re-opened on 16 August 1964 and *Hacı*

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cities individuals’ specific use of traditional symbolic material had to reshape it to new requirements of the city. Since this outside world is regarded as “modern,” the traditional culture and religion were re-interpreted according to modern values. Hence, the cultural revival of Alevism resulted from Alevis’ confrontation with modernity in terms of construction of modern identities with traditional religious symbolical material. Seufert, pp.166–170.

<sup>124</sup> In 1963, İnönü government decided to adopt a law, which aimed to create an Officiate for Sects within DRA. Yet, the government had to back out this law upon the rightist media’s criticism of the law and Alevis.

<sup>125</sup> In 1966, a dispute over land resulted with attacks against Alevis in Ortaca (Muğla). After this incident İbrahim Elmalı made a statement “Rather than being a religion, Alevism is a political view. Its roots go back to the question of Şah İsmail in history. The question of Alevism has already come to end, in our institution there is nobody who wants Alevism to be recognized.” Cited in Küçük, 2001, p.189.

<sup>126</sup> Salman, pp.60-62.

<sup>127</sup> Kelime Ata, “Türkiye Birlik Partisi,” *Kırkbudak*, year 2, 5 (Winter 2006), p. 45. This party had Kemalist tendencies. However, this party was not successful in that most young Alevis were defining themselves as leftist and socialist rather than as Alevi and it was closed in 1980 with the coup.

*Bektaş Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği* started to organize ceremonies of commemoration of Hacı Bektaş in the same year. These ceremonies were the first signs of joining.<sup>128</sup>

However, although Alevis had been active before the 1980s especially in Hacı Bektaş ceremonies, they were not comfortable in using their name “Alevi” and in performing their cultural/ religious practices and rituals. Kelime Ata points out that in those ceremonies *semah* was first performed in 1975 under the name of *sema*, it took its real name *semah* in 1976. On the other hand, they could not organize *cem*s in Hacı Bektaş ceremonies, and even drama on *cem* was forbidden.<sup>129</sup> In fact, the 1970s must be considered in terms of Alevis’ involvement in the leftist movement. In those years most of young Alevis were completely rejecting religion and their self-definition of was socialist, Marxist, leftist rather than Alevi.<sup>130</sup> As Seufert argues, instead of being concerned with their tradition, the Alevi youth joined with the left in political struggles and tended to see themselves as part of the national and international working class.<sup>131</sup>

When the coup happened in 1980, with the combination of socialism/

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<sup>128</sup> Salman, p. 61.

<sup>129</sup> Kelime Ata, “Semadan Semaha.” *PSAKSD*, .50 (September 2002), pp. 22-30.

<sup>130</sup> In the 1950s, with the effect of populist policies and urbanization, Alevis supported the Democratic Party for “more freedom” and “guarantee for non-discrimination.” However, these efforts just caused disappointment for them. First, the Democratic Party adopted policies, which flourished Islamism. Secondly, this “relative” integration to Alevis to cities (and wider society) did not end Sunni prejudices against Alevis. Their closer contact with Sunnis in cities and sometimes direct competition led to tensions between these two communities. During the 1960s and 1970s, this tension continued with political polarization because Alevis, disappointed with the policies of the Democratic Party, started to question the positivist values of the republic. On the other hand, the state and conservative-nationalist people saw Alevis as a threat both as the extension of the perception about Alevis during the Ottoman period as *Rafizi* and as part of anti-communist policies since most young Alevis defined themselves as Marxist. This led to violence against Alevis in Sivas (1978), Malatya, (1978), Maraş (1978) and Çorum (1980). Bruinessen, 1996, p.8 and Erman, p.319.

<sup>131</sup> Seufert, p. 164. Seufert specifically focuses on the Koçgiri tribe and their non-development of religious culture during the 1970s. Yet, this was also the case for most Alevis in cities.

Marxism and secular understanding, Alevism was about to lose its former relevance and was nearly completely neglected by the following generations.<sup>132</sup> However, Karin Vorhoff argues that this was just the “perception” of even those who were familiar with Alevi society such as Kehl Bodrogi and “they expected that the community would dissolve in secularized Turkish society and no longer persist as a segregated confessional community.”<sup>133</sup> Ayhan Yalçinkaya asks how the Alevi movement, which went through a crisis in the 1980s, was revived in the 1990s.<sup>134</sup> As an answer for this question, he argues that socialist movements had a vital role in Alevism during 1970s in that socialism was a tool for solidarity and togetherness among Alevis in the period in which they started to loose their solidarity ties.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, “The Significance of *Musahiplik* Among The Alevis.” In *Syncretistic Religious Communities In The Near East*, edited by Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Anke Otter-Beaujean (Brill: Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997), pp.119–120 and Küçük, 2001, p. 188.

<sup>133</sup> Vorhoff, 1998a, p.31.

<sup>134</sup> In fact, there are different reasons for the re-discovery of Alevism in the 1990s. Most scholars assert that it is a reaction against the rise of political Islam in the 1980s. For instance, Gümüş argues that Alevis felt that their sectarian security was under the threat of radical Islam, so they started to reclaim their identity. They wanted to balance possibility of recation since they were aware that they would never be members of a Muslim and Turkish nation. Gümüş, <http://alewiten.com/onikieylül.htm>. Nevertheless, Harald Schüler points out that the rise of political Islam (Welfare party) emerged in 1992 whereas the first Alevi institutions opened in the late 1980s and *Alevilik Bildirgesi* was declared in 1990. During the elections of 1991, the problem of reaction was not on the agenda in that nobody had guessed the success of the Welfare Party. Therefore, Schüler combines the rise of Alevism in the public sphere with the collapse of socialist regimes and marginalization of the socialists in Turkey by the state in that Alevis were not seen as “red threat” any more. Schüler, 2001, pp. 161–163. Karin Vorhoff also argues that the collapse of socialist regimes and emergence of many ethnic and nationalist movements affected Alevis in that they started to assert their (traditional) identity in the public sphere. Vorhoff, 1998b, pp.231–232. Moreover, Reha Çamuroğlu underlines the reasons for the rediscovery of Alevism as social and political factors. In terms of social factors, he focuses on the emergence of a new Alevi bourgeois with the money came from Alevis who live abroad and the increase in the number of educated Alevi. In terms of political factors, he emphasizes the collapse of the socialist block, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and the Kurdish problem. Reha Çamuroğlu, “Alevi Revivalism in Turkey.” In *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, edited by Tord Olsson, Elizabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), pp.79–80. In addition, Esin Bozkurt’s work on the Alevi movement underlines the role of transnational (Diaspora) Alevi movement on the revival of Alevism in Turkey. She argues that the construction of Alevism as a Diasporic identity as well as Alevi institutionalization abroad had positive effects on the Alevi movement in Turkey. Esin Bozkurt, “Türkiye’de Ulus-Aşırı Alanda Alevilik” (MA thesis, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi, 2005).

<sup>135</sup> Yalçinkaya, 2005, pp. 148–149.

Furthermore, although most Alevis were involved in the Leftist movement and stayed away from Alevism as a religion, right/ leftist polarization had been articulated concerning sectarian cleavages. In those years, the motto of 3K (Communist, Kurdish, Kızılbaş) was used to point out the basic threats against the state. Hence, the incidents of Maraş, Sivas, and Çorum occurred against Alevis' sectarian nature rather than targeting their leftist character.

In this context, Alevism did not appear in the public sphere for “the first time” and it was not “sudden” in the 1980s. What is remarkable about the 1980s is that Alevism is now articulated as “a particular identity” and mobilization within identity politics concerning (religious) identity<sup>136</sup> whereas in the 1960s and 1970s the debates on Alevism revolved around the concept of Alevism as sect. In other words, as part of the “re-discovery of Alevism” in the public sphere in the 1980s, culture and religion gained new importance among Alevis and religious traditions and

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<sup>136</sup> Ekal, pp.30-31. This was not the case for only Alevis in that the 1980s faced identity politics in the world in general. Žižek focuses on the concept of “typical” which transforms an empty “universal” concept into a notion which directly relates and applies to “actual” experience”. In that sense, “universal which results from a constitutive split in which the negation of a particular identity transforms this identity in the symbol of identity and fullness as such: the Universal acquires concrete existence when some particular content starts to function as its stand-in.” In the modern world, the Nation-state is the predominant social form of concrete universal as the medium of particular social identities and the determine form of social life is the specific mode of participation in the universal life of Nation State. Here he uses the Hegelian distinction of primary identification which underlines subject's immersion in particular life form as family and local community and secondary identification which is universal, artificial, and no longer spontaneous: nation versus local community, a profession versus personalized, knowledge versus traditional wisdom. This universal secondary identification is in fact abstract since it is directly opposed to the particular forms primary identification and it compels the subject to renounce his primary identifications, but becomes concrete when it reintegrates primary identifications, transforming them into modes of appearance of the secondary identification. However, in the postmodern world, abstract institution of secondary identification is experienced so externally that people start to look for smaller (ethnic, religious) forms of identification. In that sense, today rather than nationalization of ethnic as in nation-state, we face ethnicization of nation through search for reconstitution of ethnic roots. Žižek, pp. 41-42. On the other hand, Hobsbawm asserts that, nation-states have been weakened because of transformations of human society as “cultural revolution” and “extraordinary dissolution of traditional social norms, textures and values.” This led people to seek an identity group in which they can belong in such a moving, shifting and uncertain world. Quoting from Orlando Patterson, he argues that people choose to belong to an identity group. Eric Hobsbawm, “Identity Politics and the Left,” *New Right Review*, 217, e-journal, (1996), p.40.

interest in Alevism as a religion were revived.<sup>137</sup> For instance, Ömer Çaha defines this process as “the construction of the ethno-religious identity of Alevi.”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, the sense of “being marginalized” among Alevi also changed in this process of gaining publicity with their religious identity and in this way “a new social setting” was reconstructed.

Now Alevi try to return to the origins of Alevism and to build collective identity and community anew. In this process, they reclaim old religious folklore, copy religious books, and invent forgotten beliefs. Vorhoff identifies this process of re-interpretation of culture/ history/ tradition based on Hobsbawm’s concept of “invention of tradition,” Rager’s concept of “imagination” and Anderson’s “imagined communities.”<sup>139</sup>

First, Alevi rituals (*cem*), which had been banned since 1925, are now publicly performed and *cemevis* were opened.<sup>140</sup> In fact, in rural setting there were no *cemevis* in that they had been performing *cems* in houses. However, in the cities they articulated new spaces for their rituals and started to found *cemevis* and to search for legal status for them as places of worship.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, the number of *cems* increased though in the past they were formed only twice a year. For instance,

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<sup>137</sup> Shankland, 1998, p.17.

<sup>138</sup> Çaha, p. 325.

<sup>139</sup> In terms of “imagination,” there is a supposed common history in process of ethnicization and this claims that bonds of blood may unite the members of the community. In this sense, the position of *dedes* and their families become important. In terms of imagined communities, the community is so large in they do not have face-to-face relations. However, they mostly share the consciousness of being Alevi and see themselves as having much in common. By invention of tradition, Alevism aims to identify, unite, and sustain Alevi socio-religious group and by rooting Alevi culture in history, it aims to legitimate its religious, socio-cultural and philosophical system and gain equal position with Sunnis. Vorhoff, 1998b, pp. 235–246, p. 251.

<sup>140</sup> Bruineesen, 1996, p.8.

<sup>141</sup> Şahin, p. 472. İlyas Üzümlü asserts that the abolition of the socialist block is the crucial factor in establishing *cemevis*. Most young Alevi had gathered in the Turkish socialist leftist groups in the 1970s, but now they are gathering in *cemevis*. Cited in Çaha, p.333.

now there are *cems* in every weekend in *Şahkulu Sultan Vakfi* and every Thursday in *Cem Vakfi* and *Cem TV* broadcasts these *cems* every Thursday.<sup>142</sup> However, *cemevis* are not seen as just places of worship used for religious ceremonies and funeral services, but also they are for cultural and charity activities. Therefore, *cemevis* reconstruct Alevi collective identity. For instance, Ali Yıldırım asserts that Alevis must open *cemevis* “in order to resist assimilation, to live cultural, folkloric, philosophical, religious values and Alevism in cities ... namely for sociality and common soul”<sup>143</sup> in order to present their identity.<sup>144</sup>

In addition, *tekkes* and graves (*turbes*) of Alevi and Bektasi holy men are being restored and visiting the *turbe* of Hacı Bektaş is now considered as the pilgrimage of Alevis. For instance, two traditional Bektashi religious centers in İstanbul, Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine and Şahkulu Shrine were restored.<sup>145</sup> They also started to redefine (and politicize) the historical figures such as Ali, Hasan, Hüseyin, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Pir Sultan Abdal, and Karacaoğlan through publications, meetings,

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<sup>142</sup> Gümüş, September 2004, p. 523–524. One Saturday when I went to Şahkulu, there was *cem*. Although it was rainy, it was very crowded. People were listening to *cem*, eating, and visiting the sacred places. I learned that most Alevis give meals here when they have funerals. While I was waiting there, a woman came and paid 300 YTL for her order for such a meal.

<sup>143</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Neden cemevleri açmalıyız?” *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p. 9.

<sup>144</sup> Therefore, as Murat Es argues, “The emergence of and rising number of *cemevis* in public space point to an attempt on the side of Alevi communities to inscribe their identity in urban space. In this regard, *cemevis* complement the visibility of Alevis/m in public sphere with the visibility in public sphere. This situation serves rendering Alevi presense in urban public sphere. The institutionalized presence of Alevi communities in the urban public space poses a claim of recognition directed at the Sunni majority and the state, hence a will to integrate into the larger society.” Es, 2007, p.151 Es’s work consists of detailed analysis of the role of *cemevis* in recent Alevi movement.

<sup>145</sup> Seufert, p. 165 and Gümüş, September 2004, p. 524, Vorhoff, 1998a, p.36. Hacı Bektaş is accepted as the founder of Bektashism and the unofficial head of the Anatolian Alevism. Through his efforts, Anatolian Alevism can be distinguished from Syrina Alawism and Iranian Shi’ism. Now his lodge has been turned into a museum. However, Alevi institutions such as *PSAKD* demand the state to recognize this lodge as a place of worship which Alevis can visit anytime they want. Now since it is a museum, as a public place it is closed during formal holidays.

festivals, and institutions.<sup>146</sup> Besides, they started to come together in festivals, concerts, ceremonies.<sup>147</sup> For instance, in October 2002, most Alevi foundations organized *Bin Yılın Türküüsü*. Alternatively, on 29-30 October 2005, *Karacaahmet Dergahı* organized *I. Dedeler Kurultayı* in which Alevi religious leaders from different parts of Anatolia came together.<sup>148</sup>

In addition, written texts about Alevism do not only try to explain/ analyze/ give information about Alevi rituals, but also at the same time reformulate and reshape Alevi culture and Alevi identity in relation to Sunni Islam. Seufert defines this process of scripturalization of primarily orally transmitted traditions as the shift from the illiterate version of religious belief to a more literate one because in this way they systematize Alevi thought.<sup>149</sup> Hence, Alevism has been switching from “a secret, initiatory, locally anchored and orally transmitted religion to a public religion with formalized or at least written, doctrine and ritual.”<sup>150</sup> For example, Alevi religious texts such as *buyruk* were re-written and a group of *dedes* edited an Alevi Koran (*Kur'an-ı Hakim ve Öz Türkçe Meali Ehlibeyt Muhiblerine Kelam-i Kadim*) in 1995.<sup>151</sup> As part of this standardization of Alevi thought, AABF founded *Dedeler Kurulu* (Council of *Dedes*) which determines the exact dates of Alevi religious

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<sup>146</sup> Çaha, p. 332.

<sup>147</sup> However, this was not the case just for the 1990s. There have been Hacı Bektaş ceremonies since 1964. Also, the first Pir Sultan ceremony was organized in Banaz in 1980 in which Pir sultan sculpture was opened. These ceremonies continued until coup detat. In 1992, ceremonies re-started and the sculpture of Pir Sultan was restored. The following year (1993) the place of ceremonies changed from Banaz to Sivas. However, in the ceremonies of 1993 Madımak Massacre occurred and in this incident 37 people were killed in a hotel fire. *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2, (June 1998), p.11.

<sup>148</sup> A. Yılmaz Soyzer, “Bir Türkçe Kültür Çevresi: Bektaşî Aleviliği.” *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, 2, no. 2 (2005), p.5.

<sup>149</sup> Seufert, p.165.

<sup>150</sup> Bruinessen, 1996, p.8.

<sup>151</sup> Vorhoff, 1998a, p.36.

festivals and controls diversity in practices of individuals, *ocaks*, and institutions.<sup>152</sup>

For instance, in Germany there is an Islamic curriculum and for the first time Alevism can be taught in a systematic, written, and unique way in schools.<sup>153</sup>

In short, publicity of rituals, the emphasis on symbols and politicization of identity should be considered as part of the reconstruction of Alevi identity in that the new conjuncture of religious symbols and boundary definitions of community have encouraged Alevis to reconstruct a religious identity. Especially with the opening of *cemevis* under the supervision of Alevi institutions Alevis have begun to announce their religious identity. Hence, as Schöler points out, there is “an Alevi movement,”<sup>154</sup> which is led by a heterogeneous religious group. This group has a feeling of “us” and “togetherness” and tries to challenge the existing legal structure in order to be recognized. In the narrow sense, it is a social movement, which consists of different associations, foundations, magazines, and “ordinary” Alevis. In a broader sense, it is a religious group whose members share a common religious and

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<sup>152</sup> In terms of suggestions, its role resembles the role of *Şeyhülislam* or *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* in Sunnite Islam.

<sup>153</sup> Gümüő, September 2004, pp.510–511. Ayhan Yalçınkaya argues that the process of teaching Alevism at schools can not be taken as just inscription of Alevism as religion. Yet, people who write books about Alevi culture and rituals are also moving in the area of political struggle. For this reason, we must take into consideration their relations with the state, their political mission, and their perception of politics. Moreover, this process will lead to the limitation of Alevism within an education system and its being used as a tool by the state in order to reconstruct Alevism or Alevisms. Furthermore, if secularization is taken as the freedom of non-believers; to struggle for religious education of Alevis by claiming it is the requirement of freedom of religion may ignore the rights of non-believers and this contributes to the orthodoxy. Ayhan Yalçınkaya, “Alevilik ve Dinsel Eğitim.” *PSAKD*, 60 (June 2005), pp. 66–71.

<sup>154</sup> For him, the Alevi movement can be considered as a social movement in three senses: sustainability and mobilization, the feeling of “us”, and an aim of change. In terms of mobilization, although well-organized institutionalization is lacking, we may say that there is sustainability in the Alevi movement. In terms of the feeling of togetherness, there is an Alevi cultural sphere in which people may have different roles as a reader of a Alevi magazine, a regular visitor of an Alevi cafe or a consumer of Alevi symbols (picture, necklace and so on). Thirdly in terms of aiming for change, Alevis are challenging the existing Kemalist system which promotes a homogenous population and national citizenship in terms of Sunni and Turk. However, it does not aim at radical and total change or power, therefore it is reformist. Schöler, 2001, pp. 137–138.

cultural identity.<sup>155</sup>

The Alevi movement, attempts to unite Alevism around one belief and one moral system. After 1980, the term “Alevi” started to be used as a unitary category and “Alevism” as a homogenizing signifier. This must be considered as the hegemonic use, which undermines the linguistic, ethnic, and regional differences between diverse groups. In other words, defining a number of Alevi groups/communities as “Alevis” points to a project to create “a homogeneous Alevi society” in which internal unity is reached by eliminating the differences.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the Alevi movement, by imaginations and the representation of the past and traditions, constructs new socio-religious and political arrangements. In this construction, Alevis are mostly presented as supporters of democracy, laicism, education, freedom, social justice, progress and Alevism is portrayed as a tolerant, peaceful, Universalist worldview, which respects people regardless of their sex, age, faith, nation, and race.<sup>157</sup>

However, in order to shape and control symbolic minds of the broader Alevi society, different institutions and Alevi intellectualism come up with different interpretation / recreation of the history and with different definitions of the Alevi thought. Hence, Alevism is presented differently according to the ideological orientations of Alevi intellectuals as Kemalist, Turkist, traditionalist, modernist, Anatolian patriot, Marxist, religionist, atheist, and so on.<sup>158</sup>

The first group takes the religious side of Alevism, defining it as an Islamic

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<sup>155</sup> Schüler, 2001, pp. 135-136.

<sup>156</sup> Es, p.29.

<sup>157</sup> Vorhoff, 1998b, pp. 235–246, p. 251.

<sup>158</sup> Okan, p.195.

sect or an original interpretation of Islam. This group may sometimes have tendencies to define Alevism as Turkish Islam or real Turkishness by taking nationalist standing. *Cem Vakfı*, which uses the term “Alevi Islam” and represents Alevism as the essence of Islam is within this first group. The second group directs Alevi to abandon their religious identity. It emphasizes sources other than Islamic, Iranian, or Turkish ones, claiming that the name Alevi comes from “the flame (*alev*).”. The debates on “Alevism without Ali” (*Ali’siz Alevilik*) originate here. The third group tries to fight against nationalist tendencies, stating that Alevism must be understood as a culture and faith that flourished in Anatolia. They argue that Alevism is an original belief, which was influenced by other religions and cultures.<sup>159</sup> *Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu (ABF)*, *Avrupa Alevi Bektaşî Konfederasyonu (AABK)* and *PSAKD* accept this attitude. Indeed, these second and third groups focus on the syncretism of Alevism, yet their position is not apparent vis-à-vis Islamic elements in Alevism. The fourth group especially in the Diaspora tries to connect Alevism to Kurdish identity by pointing out the Zaza culture and the region of Zazazistan in Tunceli (Dersim). Another group ignores religious culture completely in terms of extreme left and argues that Alevism is primitive socialism. In addition, the sixth group defines Alevism as a branch of Shiite Islam. Lastly, there are people who claim that Alevism is a religion itself rather than an Islamic sect.<sup>160</sup>

Each definition of Alevism is central to the formulations of each group’s political project.<sup>161</sup> For this reason, definitions of Alevism have an important role in

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<sup>159</sup> For instance, Hacı Bektaş is represented as a master of synthesis who created Alevism by selecting best elements of each of these cultures and by melting them into a deeply humanitarian peace-loving and egalitarian faith and ethic. Nedim Gürses (The *Semah* teacher in *PSAKD*), semi-structured interview by the author, Ankara, 19 May 2007.

<sup>160</sup> Çaha, p. 334, Yalçınkaya, 2005, pp. 230–231.

<sup>161</sup> Ekal, p.1.

Alevis' relations with the state, with the Sunni population and among themselves. In that sense, defining Alevism as an interpretation or the essence of Islam is an attempt to stand for the roles of Sunni Islam and to reconcile with the state's Islamic policy.<sup>162</sup> For instance, *Cem Vakfi* uses the term Alevi Islam so that it can integrate to the state and gain legitimacy by Sunni population and the state. In contrast, *PSAKD* criticizes Turkish secularization and the state's attempts to define Alevism by arguing that it is a process of assimilation of Alevis into Sunni Islam. Hence, it tries to distance itself from the state and state discourse. In the following chapters, I will discuss the discourses of these two institutions in detail.

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<sup>162</sup> Yalçınkaya, 2005, pp. 232-237.

CHAPTER IV  
METHODOLOGY: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS, PARTICIPANT  
OBSERVATION AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

There has been a debate on Alevism in the public sphere and as I discussed in the former chapter different actors such as governors, representatives of DRA, the EU, academia, the media, and more importantly different Alevi institutions have become involved in this process. These groups are talking on behalf of Alevism is defined and constructed differently by these actors. Alevism as an object of inquiry has turned into a political tool by which they can constitute their domination. For this reason, when I first started to study Alevism as a political issue, I was planning to study the daily lives of Alevis within a specific time and space from a socio-political perspective to reveal how Alevis represent their identity in the public sphere. Rather than focusing on a static Alevi identity, my aim was analyzing the processes of “identification” and “identity formation” in order to underline transformations, changes and the relationship between individual, community, and the state.

However, for a master’s thesis I had to limit my scope of research to Alevi institutions<sup>163</sup> because of two basic reasons. First, it is practical and useful to analyze Alevism in terms of institutions since most Alevis are still not comfortable in declaring their identity. Secondly, the institutionalization has led Alevis to announce their collective identity. These institutions; local, national or international develop

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<sup>163</sup> Since there are many Alevis who are not members of any institution, there is always the problem of “representation.” In fact, Alevi institutions have not been studied in such detail yet. Of course, most studies which focus on the rediscovery of Alevism in the public sphere emphasize Alevi institutionalization and their differences. Yet, institutions are just a small part of their work. More specifically Erseven’s (Winter 2006), Gümüş’s (September 2004) and Küçük ‘s (2001) works focus on institutions.

solidarity among Alevis by their cultural activities such as *semah*, *bağlama*, computer, foreign language courses; panels, exhibitions, concerts, *cem* and so on. Moreover, based on the revival of Alevism, they tend to re-invent and standardize Alevi practices, traditions, local motifs, and religious institutions in order to create an Alevi identity.<sup>164</sup> In addition, people are politically more active in these institutions, so their activities are more systematic and politicized. For instance, these institutions demand some religious and democratic rights from the state such as the right of free worship, legal institutionalization as a religious group and equal rights with Sunnites.<sup>165</sup>

Nevertheless, we cannot regard this as a “homogeneous political movement” with a common political project in which “all” institutions behave in similar ways. Although there is sometimes cooperation between Alevi institutions, they have different political standings, they all claim to “represent” Alevis and take part in the process of constructing Alevism. For this reason, in order to base my work on “ambivalence” of Alevi politics both among different Alevi institutions and within the discourse of an institution itself, I decided to choose two different Alevi institutions and to focus on their discourses.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Okan, p.196 and Rittersberger-Tılıç, pp.75–76, Gümüş, <http://alewiten.com/onikieylül.htm>.

<sup>165</sup> For instance, as Schöler points out, in 1998, 18 Alevi institutions both in Turkey and in Europe announced a declaration concerning “Alevi identity” in order to be recognized: “We are Alevis. We want to be recognized by the law. We want our names.” Schöler, 2001, p.133, pp.144–145.

<sup>166</sup> The choice of two institutions also stems from a practical reason, since there are a lot of Alevi Institutions. In the official web site for institutions, the number of Alevi institutions is regarded as 279. The number of Village Institutions (*Köy Dernekleri*) is excluded from this number. The most well-known institutions are *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi Vakfı (Cem Vakfı–25 March 1995)*, *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği (PSAKD) (1988)*, *Pir Sultan Abdal 2 Temmuz Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı*, *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Kültür ve Tanıtma Derneği (1991)*, *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (1994)*, *Hübyar Sultan Alevi Kültür Derneği*, *Karacaahmet Cem ve Kültür Derneği*, *Şahkulu Sultan Vakfı*, *Dünya Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı (1996)*, *Hüseyin Gazi Derneği*, *Garip Musa Kültür Derneği* and so on. Furthermore, most Alevi institutions in Turkey started to come together and centralize Alevism under two basic federations: *Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu (ABF) (first Alevi Bektaşî Kuruluşları Birliği -There are organic ties between Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu, Avrupa Alevi Bektaşî Konfederasyonu and Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu) and Alevi Vakıfları Federasyonu*

Therefore, I decided to choose *Cem Vakfi* and *PSAKD* which seem at first glance to be different from each other in their understanding of Alevism, in their class structure (at least in terms of leaders), in their demands from the state (their political project), in their perception of secularism and so on. When I searched through institutions, I saw that according to public opinion, *Cem Vakfi* was the “only” representator of Alevis. In this perception, the charismatic/ popular leadership of İzzettin Doğan and his “moderate” understanding of politics/ Islam have an important role. *PSAKD*, which combines Kemalism, Marxism, and counter-reaction elements in itself, seems to be the basic institution that rivals *Cem Vakfi*. Moreover, they are members of different federations.<sup>167</sup> I did not choose these two federations because *Cem Vakfi* and *PSAKD* are the most well known Alevi institutions<sup>168</sup>

In this sense, *Cem Vakfi* seems to be close the state and it is trying to integrate to the system by demanding the state to represent Alevis in DRA. On the other hand, *PSAKD* defines itself in terms of the left and democratic movement, which challenges the state policies based on secularism and democracy. In addition, *Cem Vakfi* seems to be the richest institution since most of its founders are businesspersons.<sup>169</sup> It has a radio channel (*Cem Radyo*), a TV channel (*Cem TV*), a

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(AVF). There are also two upcoming two federations: *Alevi Dernekleri Federasyonu* and *Cemvleri Birliđi Federasyonu*. Available [online]: [http://www.dernekler.gov.tr/\\_Dernekler/Web/Gozlem2.aspx?sayfaNo=1152](http://www.dernekler.gov.tr/_Dernekler/Web/Gozlem2.aspx?sayfaNo=1152)

<sup>167</sup> *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneđi* is the founding member of *Alevi-Bektaşı Federasyonu (ABF)* and *Cem Vakfi* is the founding member of *Alevi Vakıfları Federasyonu (AVF)*.

<sup>168</sup> I also conducted a small questionnaire among people who are around me, both Alevis and non-Alevis. I asked them to tell me the name of two Alevi institutions, most of them first told me the names of these two institutions.

<sup>169</sup> The number of the founders are now 140, but it was first founded by 48 people and most of them were businesspersons such as Ali Tanrıverdi (businessperson in textile sector), Bayram Kaya (purveyor), Y. Yesari Gökçe (tradesman), Hüseyin Erdoğan (business manager), İbrahim Polat (industrialist), M. Mustafa Ütebay (purveyor), M. Turgut Özcan (business manager in tourism sector), M. Zeki Polat (purveyor) and so on. *Cem Dergisi*, 47, p.28.

periodical (*Cem Dergisi* –but not published any more since 2003) and a website (www.cemvakfi.org).<sup>170</sup> Maybe based on this economic power *Cem Vakfi* (as well as İzzettin Doğan) defines itself as an interest group, which is working for the problems of Alevis. In this sense, the *Vakıf* gives scholarships to students and finds them jobs.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, *PSAKD* seems to be founded by intellectuals or middle-class Alevis.<sup>172</sup> It also has a website (<http://pirsultan.net>).

Furthermore, in order to understand the position of these two institutions we have to underline their difference in organizational structure. The General Directorate for Foundations (*Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*) controls *Cem Vakfi*, since it is a *vakıf*, whereas *PSAKD*, since it is a *dernek*, is subject to Law on Institutions (*Dernekler Kanunu*). This difference in their organizational structure leads to different results in that *Cem Vakfi* does not pay taxes to the state whereas *PSAKD* does. Moreover, *PSAKD* can “easily” found offices in different cities, can register members whereas *Cem Vakfi* is under the strict control of the *Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü*, and can only have voluntary members or workers. Furthermore, *vakıfs* receive the financial support from the state since they are founded on public benefit.

Both of these two institutions have two units- central office and offices in different parts of the country. However, *Cem Vakfi* has a more centralized organizational structure in that offices are under the strict control of the central office. Indeed, *Cem Vakfi*'s organization is based on the personality of İzzettin

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<sup>170</sup> TV and radio channels do not (and cannot) legally belong to the *Vakıf*, but organically they—as renters- are in charge of them.

<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the news in *Cem* which focuses on efforts of some Alevi businesspersons (with the calling of Prof. Dr. İbrahim Doğan) to found *CUSİAD* (*Cumhuriyetçi Sanayici İşadamları Derneği*- Association of Republican Industrialists and Businessmen November 27, 1999) is meaningful.

<sup>172</sup> This is my perception as the people who speak for *PSAKD* are writers, lawyers and so on. Yet, I have to emphasize that it was first founded as an institution of the village of Banaz.

Doğan who is an international law professor and a *dede* and is accepted as “only” leader of Alevis. Although they perform elections in every two year, İzzettin Doğan has always been “suggested” and elected. When I went to *Cem Vakfi*, I saw big photographs of İzzettin Doğan on the wall and his photographs are hung on the wall during *cem* ceremonies near those of Atatürk, Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli. Ayhan Aydın whom I interviewed always referred to him as *hoca*, focusing on his charismatic leadership. Interestingly, this static structure does not bother *vakıf* workers. Hıdır Akbayır, for instance, suggested that I put İzzettin Doğan in a central position in order to analyze *Cem Vakfi*.<sup>173</sup> Even today, the well-known person concerning Alevis is İzzettin Doğan in that he, rather than *Cem Vakfi* as an institution, has central a position in Alevism. For instance, Murat Okan also emphasizes the position of İzzettin Doğan as the “one man” in *Cem Vakfi*, and sees it as a problem for the success of the *Vakıf*.<sup>174</sup>

However, *PSAKD*’s institutional base is more salient in that the executive community and president can change in every election. During interviews, it was often repeated that “everyone can be elected to the executive committee or be president.” Moreover, offices are also represented at the central office (one delegation in the central office for every 50 persons other offices.)<sup>175</sup> However, when I analyzed their publications two basic problems became apparent. First, the position of youth is debatable in that young members cannot actively take part in decision-

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<sup>173</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (General Manager of *Cem Vakfi*), interview by the author, Central Office of *Cem Vakfi*, İstanbul, 24.12.2007. Ayhan Aydın (the ex-editor of *Cem*, the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfi*), interview by the author, Central Office of *Cem Vakfi*, İstanbul, 09.02.2007. He told me that “there are 140 founders and whoever wants can be candidate, nobody prevents them.”

<sup>174</sup> Okan, pp.194-195.

<sup>175</sup> For instance, while I was writing my thesis *PSAKD* organized its Tenth General Council on 12–13 April 2008 in Ankara. In this council, Kazım Genç did not stand for elections and Fevzi Gümüş was elected as new president.

making mechanisms. It is claimed that the youth are not ready for the democratic Alevi movement in terms of knowledge and systematized education. Hence, they try to “create” Pir Sultan Youth who can deal with problems within society and among Alevis themselves.<sup>176</sup> The position of women in *PSAKD*’s discourse is also interesting. As everybody knows, the most discussed issue about Alevism is their views about women in that Alevis mostly emphasize that in Alevism women and men are equal.<sup>177</sup> Maybe as part of this concern, in most of *PSAKD*’s offices there are women’s commissions. However, we do not see so many names of women in the decision-making mechanisms.

Moreover, in their publications, they claim that *PSAKD* has problems with its inner mechanisms such as insufficient institutionalization, insufficient number of professional or semi-professional active staff. They say that they need not only religious and sincere people, but also literate ones. Hence, they want intellectuals, democratic and conscious people to take part in executive committees.<sup>178</sup> In this sense, in my opinion, they perform some kind of intellectual elitism, which separates ordinary Alevis/ the managers, illiterate/ literate and young/experienced.

In addition, the understanding of centralization is problematic. Ali Balkız defines *PSAKD* as a democratic-centralized institution. This means that all decisions are taken by debates starting from the base. The managers are elected and they must

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<sup>176</sup> Central Office, Commission of Youth , *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p. 9

<sup>177</sup> Berna Ekal in her thesis discusses the position of woman as a symbol of group identity. This symbol is articulated in order to differentiate Alevis from Sunnis based on dichotomies of enlightened (*aydın*) and forward-looking (*ilerici*) versus backward-looking (*gerici*) and bigot (*yobaz*).Ekal, p.5.

<sup>178</sup> Feti Bölükçü (president of Kadıköy office), *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p.16. Turan Eser also argues that illiteracy of leaders leads problems in institutionalization. Turan Eser, “Yol Ayrımındaki Alevi Örgütlenmeleri ve Gerçekleri Kabul Edelim,” *PSAKSD*, 56 (March 2004), p.68. Accepting that Alevi society is not homogeneous, Ali Balkız mentions that they try to “educate” and “make Alevi masses conscious in terms of demands.” Ali Balkız, “Alevi Örgütlenmesinin Geldiği Son Nokta: ABTM,” *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), p.22.

obey the rules of institutions.<sup>179</sup> For instance, in volume 17, they discuss on what a democratic institution is and they assert that decisions must be implementing in a centralized way. Otherwise, powers can disintegrate and this may leads to a decrease in activities. They also claim that when organizing activities Opposition and administration must act in a unique way in that critics must be done after activities are holded in order to improve and enrich rules.<sup>180</sup> In other words, they give importance to institutional homogeneity. In this sense, there is a shaky line between opposition/ criticism and cliquism in that they may define criticism as cliquism.

In this general context, in order to understand *Cem Vakfi's* and *PSAKD's* position concerning Alevism and Alevi politics; I was planning to do an ethnographic analysis of these two Alevi institutions, so I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with members (active or passive, leader or ordinary member) based on four axes: ethnicity, gender, class, and education. In terms of these axes, I was also planning to search for people who are not represented in these institutions, i.e. if there is a case of “minority of minority.” I kept in mind that there might be distinctions between Alevi foundations and “ordinary people” who are not members.

Therefore, I conducted two in-depth interviews in *Cem Vakfi's* central office and four in *PSAKD* Central Office (Ankara), *PSAKD* Kadıköy Office, and *PSAKD* GOP office during February, March, May, and December 2007. I also attended the Education Seminars in the GOP office of *PSAKD* on 12 May 2007 and the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara on 19-20 May 2007. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 people in these meetings.

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<sup>179</sup> Ali Balkız, his speech in the opening of *Danışma Kurulu* as president of *PSAKD* in Ankara on 3 September 2000, cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.4

<sup>180</sup> “Demokratik Kitle Örgütlerine Genel Bakışımız,” *PSAKSD* 17, (March-April 1996), p.9 and Emel Sungur (Secretary for Education and Institutionalism), “Başarının Ön Koşulu Değişimin Savunucusu Olmaktan Geçer,” *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p. 11

When I first went to *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi*, I was the person who was questioned because they were all curious and suspicious about me though they tried to help me and to explain what Alevism was. The first question in *PSAKD* was whether I was an Alevi or not. On my third visit, I understood why this question was asked: as part of the perception that Alevism is always studied by Sunni so that the state can easily manipulate the issue. Yet, on my third visit, I was left alone in the office because they trusted me. However, whether I was Alevi or not was not important in *Cem Vakfi* since in my opinion they are accustomed to have relations with the Sunni population and Sunni researchers. In *Cem Vakfi*, their basic concern was to prove that they had nothing to do any relations with politics (especially “rightist” political parties). Hence, the first thing that I was told was: “we have no connections concerning politics.” However, on my second visit, they also asked me whether I was Alevi or not.

However, during these interviews, they were not comfortable and self-confident enough to talk to me about Alevism, so they either asked me for time in order to read about the issue or did not want to talk at all. Yet, my aim was to analyze their self-definition and discourses, so I stopped the interviews. Then, I started to analyze the monthly periodical of *Cem Vakfi*, *Cem Aylık Siyasi Kültürel Dergi (Cem)*,<sup>181</sup> *Cem Vakfi*'s other publications that mention the thoughts of İzzettin Doğan (president of *Cem Vakfi*), *PSAKD*'s Monthly newspaper and *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi (PSAKSD)*. This also led me to analyze the changes in their policies in different times. Yet, I also used interview notes as a contribution to my textual analysis.

There are 62 Volumes of *PSAKSD*, which was published between June 1992

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<sup>181</sup> In fact this periodical was first published in 1966 by Abidin Özgünay, Sadık Gökso and İzzettin Doğan. Here, I will just use the name *Cem*.

and June 2006. Since I did not find the second volume, I analyzed 61. I also analyzed eight monthly newspapers. There are 127 volumes of *Cem Dergisi*, which were published between June 1991 and March 2003. Yet actually, there are 126 volumes because they did not publish volume 74. I analyzed 125 out of 126, as I did not find volume 95. When *Cem Dergisi* was first published (1991), *Cem Vakfı* had not been founded, but I analyzed all the volumes because there is an organic relation between *Cem Dergisi* and *Cem Vakfı*. After *Cem Vakfı* was founded in March 1995, İzzettin Doğan became president of *Cem Vakfı* and editorial writer of *Cem*<sup>182</sup>. Before that, the most efficient figure was Abidin Özgünay as editor of *Cem*, but in 1996, Rıza Zelyut became editor and Abidin Özgünay became the president of *Tasavvufi İslam Enstitüsü* founded within *Cem Vakfı*.<sup>183</sup>

In both of these periodicals, there are also articles from people who are not members of *PSAKD* or *Cem Vakfı*. For instance, there are articles of academicians, journalists, and writers in *Cem* such as Afşar Timuçin, Cahit Tanyol, Toktamış Ateş, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, Niyazi Öktem, Hıfzı Topuz, Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, İrene Melikoff, and Etyen Mahçupyan. Moreover, we may see the writings of Afşar Timuçin, Aziz Nesin, Gülağ Öz, Lütfi Kaleli, Ömer Uluçay, Metin Turan, İsmail Elçioğlu, İsmail Engin, Hıfzı Topuz, Cemal Şener, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, Hüseyin Bal, Adil Ali Atalay, Ali Sümer in both of these periodicals. These articles may

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<sup>182</sup> I have to state that in the first volumes of *Cem*, before *Cem Vakfı* was founded, İzzettin Doğan was an “ordinary” writer of periodicals. For instance, in volume 33, Sadık Göksu asserts that although İzzettin Doğan is a writer for *Cem*, *Cem* does not share sin and/or merit of Doğan. He says this based upon İzzettin Doğan’s approval of Erbakan’s (President of the Welfare Party) suggestion for the cooperation of Alevis-Sunnis in local elections. *Cem* strongly criticizes Erbakan’s offer, claiming that Alevis will not go even to heaven with the Welfare Party.

<sup>183</sup> The process of reaching these periodicals tells a lot about the difference between these two institutions concerning institutionalization. In this respect, it was easy for me to reach *Cem Dergisi* since *Cem Vakfı* has a library and they store all periodicals in their archives. However, I had to collect the periodicals of *PSAKD* from the Kadıköy Office, Central Office (Ankara), the GOP Office, Library of Istanbul University (Beyazıt), and National Library (Ankara).

sometimes be about Alevism, but they are mostly about democracy, secularization, peace, human rights and so on.

Both of institutions state that they do not accept any responsibility for all the articles they publish. When I asked Neşe Ceyhan (Secretary of Institutionalization of *PSAKD*) whether these articles reflect their opinion, she told me that they were trying to include different points of views in their periodicals. Yet, she warned me that they could not publish articles, which totally contradicted *PSAKD*'s policies. For instance, in volume 41, they published an article of Hakan Yavuz. However, in volume 42, they apologized for this article since they did not regard it even as a different point of view.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, *Cem* says that only the editor's article and the part of *Ayın Görünümü* reflect the position of *Cem*. However, in volume 12 they published an article of Süleyman Ateş. We may say it is normal since they announce that they include different views in their periodicals. However, they presented this article under the title of "Another View". In short, they are careful about to publish articles, which are parallel to their opinions. Hence, I codified these articles in the thematic chart whereas in the analysis part I exclude.

In addition, there is no feedback about how many people read these periodicals. For instance, by complaining about indifference of Alevis in volume 38, editor (Enver Cemal Şahin) announced that they decreased the number of periodical from 4000 to 2000. On the other hand, *Cem Dergisi* has parts of readers in which they answer for questions of readers. They also distribute *Cem* through subscriptions, but they do not mention the number of the periodicals they sell. For this reason, we must take analysis of these periodicals just a way of understanding their ideas.

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<sup>184</sup> This article is about what Alevism. By focusing on its syncretism, Yavuz defines Alevism as an interpretation or localization of Islam by people in Anatolia. He also criticizes the leftist groups who use Alevism as a political tool regardless of its cultural richness. Hakan M. Yavuz, "Anadolu Tasavvufunun Yetimleri Aleviler," *PSAKSD*, 41 (December 2000), pp.5-7.

In order to show how these two institutions' ideas have changed or not changed through different processes, I prepared two thematic charts in which I used the same concepts for both of these two institutions (See in Appendices part). I arranged this thematic chart under four basic parts as Alevi institutionalization, Alevi politics, Alevi Identity, and the EU. I am aware that these concepts are closely related with each other in that one concept may be codified under more than one part. The first part is Alevi institutionalization, which points out how they view visibility of Alevis in the public sphere in terms of Alevis' claim of their identity and rediscovery of Alevi identity. In this part, I also codified their claim of representation, their criticism towards other Alevi institutions, their desire for solidarity, dialogue and cooperation and lastly the process of unification.

In the second part, I tried to underline Alevi politics, which consists of two tendencies: being marginalized or integration to the system. This part starts with an analysis of their position in general towards "politics" and tries to underline how they view being political as an Alevi institution. In the 1970s, most Alevi youth were involved in the leftist politics and they took oppositional position. This created the perception that Alevis are the Leftist, so today how Alevis see themselves concerning politics is important. For this reason, I codified their criticism of depoliticization and/or politicization (as well as their focuses on it the leftist essence) of Alevism.

After that, concerning politics, when I analyzed these periodicals, I see that they mostly use the concepts of secularism and democracy in order to underline the sources of Alevi problem. In secularization part, without taking into consideration how they define secularism, I codified secularism in general (pro-secularization), pro-Turkish secularization, and criticism of Turkish secularization especially in terms of position of DRA. I separated pro-secularization and pro-Turkish

secularization in different parts in order to point out that there are weaknesses of Turkish secularization. I sometimes codified pro-Turkish secularization, criticism of Turkish secularization and criticism of governments together because they sometimes differentiate Ataturk's period and today by arguing that Turkish secularization has been degenerated by the following governments. I also codified democracy in three parts as democracy in general (pro-democracy), focus on Turkey's lack of democracy, and cooperation with other NGOs. This part is crucial to show that they take the Alevi problem as a problem democracy. Hence, they claim that not only weaknesses of Turkish secularization, but also the lack of democracy in Turkey created the Alevi problem.

As I discussed earlier, the sources of the Alevi problem is closely related to the state practices and this lead us to think about the relationship between Alevis and the state. In other words, how do they view policies of the state towards Alevis? First, I differentiated the state and governments (as well as politicians and political parties) in order to point out that the state and governments are different from each other. These two Alevi institutions also make a distinction between the state and governments. The one is claiming that the state and state policies towards Alevis are the real sources of the Alevi problem whereas the other one is arguing that the temporal policies of governments have created the Alevi problem. Moreover, just criticizing the governments means ignoring the role of the state and this is the indication of the statist understanding. Yet, I have to emphasize that I also codified the discourse of "Alevis supported the War of Independence", "Alevis are loyal citizens", "they are guarantee of Secular Republic", "Alevis are the real owner of this country" under statist understanding. This part is important in order to underline their political standings vis-à-vis the (Kemalist) state.

I also separated the criticism of the state in two: criticism of the state policies in general terms and criticism of Alevi policy of the state. This is because one takes the Alevi problem as a problem of democracy and defines itself not only an Alevi institution, but also an institution, which struggles for real democracy. Therefore, their criticism towards the state must be understood in general terms without any focus on the Alevi problem. Moreover, I also I codified criticism towards the state in two bases: state policies such as 12 September, Turkish-Islam synthesis, 1982 Constitution and state institutions such as *MIT*, *DGM*, *YÖK*, *MGK*, Police, *TRT* and so on. Although DRA is also a state institution, I analyzed position of DRA under the criticism of Turkish-Secularization because position of DRA and its policies must be analyzed within the issue of secularism.

Furthermore, regardless of other manners of the state, they sometimes specifically criticize the Alevi policy of the state such as founding mosques in Alevi villages, ignoring Alevis and the Alevi rights, biased policies and execution of Alevis. This also brings us to the second part: the sources of the Alevi problem. However, I analyzed the Alevi policy of the state and the sources of Alevi problem in different parts because sometimes they criticize the policy of the state towards Alevis in general terms and sometimes they are more specific in underlining lack of secularization and democracy in Turkey which have created the Alevi problem. In that sense, if they just focus on the Alevi policy of the state, I codified this under state criticism. If they are more specific as focusing secularization and democracy, I codified it under the topic of the source of Alevi problem. This also helped me to underline whether they criticize the state and whether they are aware about the role of the state.

Lastly, after underlining the sources of the problem, I codified their demands

“the state” solve this problem. They have different suggestions concerning DRA, religious instruction, religious schools, and Koran courses and so on. I have to state that if they just criticize religious instruction, religious schools, and so on without mentioning their demands; I codified this under the criticism of Turkish secularization.

In terms of demands, on the one hand, there are demands such as the abolishment of DRA, the abolishment of obligatory religious instruction, the abolishment of religious schools and removing of entry on religion from identity cards. In this way, they aim at the total change of existing system in terms of real secularization and democracy. On the other hand, there are demands in terms of the rights of equality and the freedom of religion (10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> articles of existing constitution). Based on these two rights, they want the state to enlarge existing system in which they can benefit from state services. These demands are the recognition of Alevi identity, the recognition of legal status of *cemevis*, the reorganization of DRA in order to represent Alevis, including Alevism in optional religious instruction, having radio and TV programs about Alevism on state channels. This issue is also related with demanding funding from the state. Should Alevis receive funding from the state in order to keep Alevism alive? This leads to the discussion of whether Alevism should be financed as a culture or as a religion. Although giving rights of Alevis in terms of equality and freedom of religion means a change in existing system since the rights of Alevis are banned based on the “existing” constitution, I did not codified these two rights under the part of a change in existing system. This is because their criticism is not towards existing system, just the opposite towards Alevis’ inability to benefit facilities provided by the state. Moreover, if they just focus on discrimination towards Alevis, I took it under the

topic of discourse of trauma. Yet, if they come up a demand of stopping this discrimination, I codified this suggestion under the right of equality.

In the third part, I set Alevi identity and Alevism since the basic differentiation among Alevi institutions is based on their definitions of Alevism. This part is also important in order to highlight that how these two institutions construct Alevi identity and whether there is ethno-religious process in the Alevi movement or not. First, I started with a codification of differentiations in defining Alevism such as heterodox and syncretic belief, an interpretation of Islam (Alevi-Islam), and a religion itself. After that, I codified the construction of Alevism as a religion in terms of their focus on the Alevi thought, (traditions, rituals, and traditional figures), their discontent with the construction of different Alevisms and degeneration, and the process of systematization and standardization of Alevism.

In this part, I also focused on the construction of Alevism as a cultural identity. First, I codified affirmation of Alevi identity in terms of its humanity, peace-loving structure, equality, and so on. I also take position of women in Alevi thought under affirmation of Alevi identity since there is a discourse of Alevism that there is equality between women and men in Alevi society. Another issue is whether Alevism are minority or not. I discussed this issue under two parts: defining Alevism as minority or as *Asl-i Unsur* of the state. However, I have to state that I codified the discourses of “we are real owners of this country”, “we are basic elements of this culture” under the statist understanding although these discourses are closely related to the term *Asl-i Unsur*. In this part, I only codified articles, which specifically used this term.

In addition, I situated the discourse of trauma concerning repression, unjust treatment, discrimination, aspersions, and executions. In this part, I codified Sivas-

Maraş-Çorum-Gazi as case incidents, which had traumatic effects on Alevis. This is because they sometimes use the discourse of trauma as a political tool in order to mobilize masses. Yet, they sometimes put emphasis on the fraternity of Alevi and Sunni communities in order to gain legitimacy in larger society of Sunni population, so I also codified their focus on fraternity. However, Sivas incident is not just taken as an incident of repression, but also analyzed within the threat of Sheri'a and Sunnification (by either the state or DRA). This threat leads to the fear of assimilation into Sunni Islam among Alevis, so I also gave part the fear of assimilation.

Lastly, I mentioned the EU in order to show that how these institutions see Turkey's candidacy to the EU and more specifically the EU's recent interest on Alevis. This is important for Alevis in that the EU has become an important actor, which was involved in the process of defining Alevism and asked the Turkish state to solve Alevi problem in terms of democratization and freedom of religion.

CHAPTER V  
ALEVI INSTITUTIONALIZATION:  
VISIBILITY IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

When we talk, mention or think about Alevism and Alevi institutions; the most apparent issue is after centuries of secrecy, their visibility in the public sphere. In other words, since the beginning of the 1990s Alevism has become the subject of debates in the public sphere in which political parties, governments and the state had to develop policies. For this reason, this chapter tries to narrate recent Alevi institutionalization from the eye of Alevi institutions themselves.

In fact, Alevi institutionalization accelerated after the Madımak incident because most Alevis thought that if they institutionalized they would not experience such an incident any more. Now, this incident has become a myth of the common memory of Alevi society just as Kerbala, Maraş, and Çorum have been. For instance, Feti Bölükgiray (president of the Kadıköy office of *PSAKD*) argues,

We want everybody to institutionalize and to express their opinions in the way they want. There have always been attacks against this society (Alevi), who founded the Republic and never betrayed this country. The cruelty of Ottomans is still going on. We did not forget Maraş, Çorum, Gazi, 1 May 1977, and the massacre of 16 March. We will go on commemorating the Sivas (2 July) as the week of Democracy and Secularism. After the Sivas, we had two choices: either renouncing or keep going. As *PSAKD*, we chose the second way and strengthened our institutionalization. (My emphasis)<sup>185</sup>

By focusing on how Alevis are being discriminated, Bayram Kaya (founding member of *Cem Vakfi*) also states,

What a shame and what a big aspersion! ... Yet we, Alevis, try not to hear these in order not to disrupt unity. If we found Television channels and publish newspapers, we can highlight these lies and aspersions. People, who

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<sup>185</sup> Cited in Atilla Taş from Feti Bölükgiray, his speech in Karacaahmet for the fifth anniversary of the Sivas, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.8.

see our *cem*, can understand us. In only this way, Alevi will relax. If it happens, there will be a real unity. Look, even today there is not any Alevi governor of province (*vali*). Alevi cannot be the chief of police. There is not any Alevi commander in the army. The state sees us as the second-class citizen. We founded *vakıf* so that we can show and say these are misbehaving. At the same time, we can enlighten Sunni citizens.<sup>186</sup>

In this context, both *Cem Vakfı* and *PSAKD* are aware of the importance of Alevi institutionalization to be more powerful in the struggle of Alevi to get their rights from the state as well as to claim their collective identity. In *PSAKSD*, 119 articles out of 1037 (11.48%) and in *Cem* 194 articles out of 3344 (5.80%) focus on the rediscovery of Alevi identity, the Alevi's claim of their collective identity in the public sphere and the necessity of institutionalization.

Ali Balkız (from *PSAKD*) argues that Alevi institutionalization has a positive influence on “ordinary” Alevi in order to claim their identity and to protect their Aleviness.<sup>187</sup> Süleyman Cem (from *Cem*) also claims that institutionalized society is the necessity of the modern democracy, so institutionalized groups cannot be ignored.<sup>188</sup> Hence, in the first volumes of *Cem*, we see that there was the news about other Alevi institutions such as *PSAKD*, *Şahkulu*, *Karacaahmet*, *Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür ve Tanıtma Derneği*, *Almanya Alevi Cemaatleri Federasyonu*, and so on. Besides, almost in every volume, they inform people about the opening of new Alevi institutions throughout the country. This news included pleasure and felicitation in order to show that how institutionalized Alevi are, how they come together, how they behave in a unity for Alevism and Alevi culture.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Interview with Bayram Kaya (businessman, founder member of *Cem Vakfı* and the vice-president of *Cem Vakfı*), *Cem*, year 5, 58 (September 1996), p. 39.

<sup>187</sup> His speech in the Conference on Alevi and Politics in Ankara on 19 May 2007.

<sup>188</sup> Süleyman Cem, “1992 Hacıbektaş Kültür, Tören, Şenlik ve Etkinliklerinin Düşündürdükleri,” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p. 27.

<sup>189</sup> For instance, in volume 14, they publish an article of Murtaza Demir when he was the president of

Institutionalization is mostly related to the visibility of Alevi in the public sphere (in terms of their own Alevi public sphere) since they attracted the attention of the media and other “outsider” groups. For instance, Murtaza Demir mentions that while in the past press did not mention activities of Alevi institutions; now they absolutely want to be informed about these activities. He thinks that the public opinion, the political parties, and the media now take *PSAKD* seriously. He then goes on, “even in the last period of the 1980s there was the name of Alevi. Yet, s/he was not recognized, just the opposite s/he was ignored and even humiliated.”<sup>190</sup> *Cem* is also contented with the attention of the media on Alevism such as the news in *Cumhuriyet* and *Nokta* in 1991.<sup>191</sup> For instance, attendance of İzzettin Doğan to a TV programme, *Kırmızı Koltuk*, in 1992 was faced with gladness in volume 8 by arguing that with this programme, for the first time Alevism was talked on TV.<sup>192</sup>

Therefore, both of these two institutions try to take concrete steps to be more powerful in the public sphere. For instance, *PSAKD* tried to found a TV channel and an Institution for Alevi Culture and more importantly become involved in the process

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*PSAKD*. Murtaza Demir, “Alevileri İmama Uydurmak,” *Cem*, year 2, 14 (July 1992). Alternatively, in volume 81, it presents *Alibeyköy Cem ve Kültürevi*, which was founded by the Alibeyköy Office of *PSAKD*, as the proud of Alibeyköy. “Alibeyköy’ün Gurur Abidesi,” *Cem*, year 30, 82 (September 1998), p.12.

<sup>190</sup> Murtaza Demir, “Demokratik Alevi Kurumlarında, Yöneticilik Görevi Yapan Arkadaşlarıma Notlar,” *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p.5 and same concern in Ali Balkız, his speech in the opening of the *Danışma Kurulu* as the president of *PSAKD* in Ankara on 3 September 2000. Cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.9.

<sup>191</sup> “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.26.

<sup>192</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Ayağa Kalkan Kültür: Alevilik Ülke Gündeminde,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.3. Ayhan Aydın argues that with İzzettin Doğan’s negotiations with the political party leaders and with the representatives of the state in order to demand land for *cemevis* and with *Cem Vakfı*’s activities such as seminars, panels, *cems*, and so on, Alevism have become more visible in the public sphere. In the past, Sunnis did not know what *cemevis* are, but now they know very well. Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

of unification of Alevi institutions under an umbrella organization.<sup>193</sup> *Cem Vakfı* also wants to utilize the recent dynamism of Alevism in order to struggle for Alevis' rights.<sup>194</sup> For instance, Yaşar Uçar (from *Cem*) asserts that the strength of Sunni institutionalization stems from the efficiency of newspapers and televisions, so Alevis must found a television channel, a radio channel, and a newspaper.<sup>195</sup> Hence, in February 1994 they started campaigns in order to found *Cem TV*/radio. After that first, they founded *Cem Vakfı* (1995), then *Cem* radio (1998) and lastly *Cem TV*.<sup>196</sup> In this sense, *Cem Vakfı* seems to be more systematic and powerful since it has radio and TV channels. However, although *PSAKD* tried to found a radio channel such as *Mozaik Radyo* in 1994, it did not succeed enough.

Nevertheless, both of them are aware of the insufficiency of the recent Alevi institutionalization because there are divergences between institutions and “ordinary” Alevis are not conscious about the things going around. For instance, Turan Eser (from *PSAKD*) explains recent institutionalism with a reflective character of Alevis that emerged spontaneously after the Madımak massacre. After this incident, people started to be a member of Alevi institution, which were the closest to their houses. For them, the characteristic of these institutions was not important, being of these institutions as an Alevi institution was sufficient for them. This process slowed down

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<sup>193</sup> Murtaza Demir, “Umuta Bir adım Daha!... Mozaik Radyo Deneme Yayınında Hedef Mozaik Televizyon... Lütfen İkinci Adım!...,” *PSAKSD*, 12 (June 1994), pp.26-27 and Ali Balkız “Hacca Gitmek Dünyayı Gezmektir, Bir Gönül Ele Geçir Ki İş Odur,” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.1.

<sup>194</sup> Süleyman Cem, “Örgütlü Devlet, Örgütsüz Halk,” *Cem*, Year 1, 7 (December 1991), p.15. For instance, İ. Kemal Aydemir comes up with suggestions for the ways Alevis can come together such as the founding of the Alevi Congress or the Association or Alevi/Bektasi Education Association. İ. Kemal Aydemir, “Öneriler: Alevi/Bektasi Eğitim Vakfı (ALBEV) Kurulmalıdır,” *Cem*, year 2, 13 (June 1992), p.11.

<sup>195</sup> Yaşar Uçar, “Alevi Birliği İçin Öneriler,” *Cem*, Year 3, 31 (December 1993), p. 29.

<sup>196</sup> Abidin Özgünay pointed out that a monthly periodical (*Cem*) was not sufficient in order to meet Alevi dynamism, so they preferred to a more institutionalization and founded *Cem Vakfı*. Abidin Özgünay, “Cem'imizden,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), pp. 2-3.

at the end of 1990s and the first divergences emerged between these institutions.<sup>197</sup>

On the other hand, Ayhan Aydın (from *Cem*) also asserts that the issue of Alevi institutionalization is complex in that every institution creates its own Alevism(s). For this reason, in the past fifteen years, Alevis have become more visible in the public sphere. Yet, the following decade is critical for the Alevi movement whether Alevi institutions will come together or disintegrate. Hence, Alevis have not been institutionalized yet; they are still in the process of institutionalization.<sup>198</sup> Now, either individually or within institutions, Alevis want to raise their voices for their democratic freedom against pressures in the public sphere. Yet, there is a possibility of the emergence of confusion and chaos within Alevis themselves because “some groups” want to prevent Alevis to get their rights.<sup>199</sup> Hence, in the second part, I will discuss how they view these divergences.

#### Divergences in Institutionalization

Alevis institutionalized under the different type of organizations because there were differences among them concerning definitions of Alevism and political projects. However, the basic criticism against Alevis is made on the scattered nature of Alevi institutions. Especially the state uses this differentiation by arguing that “first come to an agreement among you.” For instance, Kazım Genç asserts that there are also divergences among Sunnis, but nobody mentions this issue. He also goes on by

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<sup>197</sup> Turan Eser, “Yol Ayrımındaki Alevi Örgütlenmeleri ve Gerçekleri Kabul Edelim,” *PSAKSD*, 56 (March 2004), pp. 62-63.

<sup>198</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>199</sup> Süleyman Cem, “Aleviler Örgütlenirken,” *Cem*, year 2, 13 (June 1992), pp. 9-10. For instance, Sinan Giray (the president of the Yalova Office) points out that people are still uncomfortable in announcing their identities and they secretly buy the tickets for activities of *Cem Vakfı*. Sinan Giray, cited in *Cem*, 30, 82 (September 1998), p.13.

saying that since these institutions have different political projects, it is expected to have this number of Alevi institutions.<sup>200</sup>

When I asked Erdal Yıldırım (*PSAKD*), why there are so many Alevi institutions. He answered to this question as

For us, it is few. There are different kinds of institutions such as *Hacı Bektaş Dernekleri*, which are guided by the thought of Hacı Bektaş and the Bektasi Order; *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Dernekleri*, which is different from other Alevi institutions with its claim of Alevi problem, is the problem of democracy. It is impossible to unite them under one organization or decrease the number. ... The umbrella organization of Alevi foundations is *ABF*. There are 190 institutions under this organization, so it addresses the 90% of Alevi population. In that sense, the existence of *Cem Vakfı*, which addresses the 10% of population, is not noteworthy.<sup>201</sup>

Therefore, although *Cem Vakfı* and *PSAKD* are in favor of the visibility of Alevism in recent years, they are uncomfortable with this process because different institutions reconstruct different Alevism(s) and use Alevism for their political aims. Thus, 71 articles out of 1037 (6.85%) in *PSAKSD* and 119 out of 3344 in *Cem* (3.56%) criticize the other Alevi institutions. I have to emphasize that for *PSAKD* this “other institution” is mostly *Cem Vakfı* and vice versa.

In this sense, as İbrahim Karakaya argues, today there are three basic lines in Alevi institutionalization: *PSAKD*, which respects traditional Alevi thought and tries to adapt to modern conditions; *Cem Vakfı/Hacı Bektaş Vakfı*, which define Alevism as “real Islam”; and lastly *Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı*, which is close to Iranian Shiism. Hence, there are two types of assimilation over Alevism such as assimilation led by the system and assimilation led by the Alevi institutions themselves. Karakaya concludes that rather than the struggling against the system, *PSAKD* spends its energy in

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<sup>200</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office İstanbul, 12.05.2007 and Ankara, 21.05.2007.

<sup>201</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Art and Culture-and member of executive committee of Kadıköy Office in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office, İstanbul, March 2007.

struggling against this second type of assimilation.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, Ali Balkız also claims that Alevi institutions define Alevism differently such as the essence of Islam, the Anatolian type of Islam, a religion itself and a culture/ life style/ philosophy. He then accuses *Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı* of contesting with reactionists to be “a better Muslim” and *Cem Vakfı* of having close relations with Fettullah Gülen. Both of these two institutions are trying to integrate the state and want to take share in the budget of DRA. There can be the possibility of cooperation between Alevi institutions except *Cem Vakfı* and *Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı* since they betrayed Alevism.<sup>203</sup>

Alternatively, *Cem* also claims that there is a political struggle among different groups and these groups are creating different Alevisms.<sup>204</sup> For instance, Reha Çamuroğlu argues that Alevi institutionalization is beneficial for Alevis. Yet, since these institutions are founded by law, they may not base on the Alevi thought.<sup>205</sup> The differences among Alevi institutions are resulted from the difference in their definition of Alevism and in their relations with the state. They do not agree on whether Alevism is inside Islam, whether Alevism is the leftist movement, whether Alevis should receive money from the state and whether Alevis should be represented in DRA.<sup>206</sup>

In that standpoint, although they are aware of differences among Alevi institutions, we cannot say that they have pluralistic view. For instance, Genç argues,

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<sup>202</sup> İbrahim Karakaya (the ex-general secretary of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, Ankara, 21.05.2007.

<sup>203</sup> Ali Balkız, *PSAKSD*, 35, p.20.

<sup>204</sup> “I. Alevi Kurultayı,” *Cem*, year 2, 19 (December 1992), pp.32–33.

<sup>205</sup> Reha Çamuroğlu, “Çağdaş Aleviliğin Sorunları 1,” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), p.36.

<sup>206</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

there is a shaky line between the naturalness of the existence of differences among Alevi institutions and the possibility of degeneration of Alevism led by these differences and he says, “If thinking differently (as in case of *Cem Vakfi*) in terms of Alevi politics turns to an assimilation policy, automatically we react this.”<sup>207</sup> This is also case for *Cem Vakfi*. Both of them accuse each other of trying to move away Alevism from its essence and they declare each other as *düşkün*. For the sake of this study, I want to focus on the claim of playing leading role in the process of revival of Alevism and the claim of representation of Alevis in detail. This also means specifying the relationship between *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi*.

#### Claim of representation

Both of these two institutions claim that they are the “only” institutions who represent “all” Alevis and the revival of Alevism is led by their activities. In fact, when we check from the thematic charts, it is not an important issue for both of these two institutions in that only 18 articles out of 1037 (1.74%) in *PSAKSD* and 51 articles out of 3344 (1.53%) in *Cem* mention the issue of representation. However, we can say that they “generally” focus on this issue in different time of periods in order to criticize each other. Hence, the issue of representation must be read with their criticism towards “other” Alevi institutions.

First, they argue that they have a leading role in the recent process of the rediscovery of Alevi identity. For instance, *PSAKD* presents itself as the leader in the Alevi movement, asserting that the visibility of Alevi identity in the public sphere is led by the endeavor of *PSAKD*. As Erdal Yıldırım says, “Before *PSAKD* was

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<sup>207</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office İstanbul, 12.05.2007 and Ankara, 21.05.2007.

founded in 1988, there had also been Alevi institutions. These were superficial in that they did not consciously present Alevism by categorizing it.”<sup>208</sup> Murtaza Demir also states that before *PSAKD*, there had been Alevi institutions. Yet, these were not as efficient as *PSAKD* in challenging the state policies and in making Alevi demands debated. Hence, *PSAKD* is a school.<sup>209</sup>

On the contrary, *Cem* claims that it has the most important role in the rediscovery of Alevism and Alevi society.<sup>210</sup> For instance, Y. Yesari Gökçe points out that since *Cem* was first published in June 1991, there have not been changes in unequal and unjust practices of the state. Alevi have not taken a share from the budget of DRA and religious instruction and radio/ TV programmes have not included Alevism yet. However, Alevi now speak up their identities and they are more comfortable in demanding their rights.<sup>211</sup> In this sense, as Sadık Göksu (from *Cem*) states, “*Cem* since it was first published, has been overseen the duty of warning Alevi by contributing its maturity and power. It keeps on its duty of being the eye, the ear, and the voice of Alevi with its activities.”<sup>212</sup>

Moreover, when *Cem Vakfı* was founded in 1995, *Cem* presented it as the first serious Alevi institution, which aims to introduce Alevi culture, religion, and

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<sup>208</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02. 2007.

<sup>209</sup> Murtaza Demir, “Anadolu Aleviliği ve Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneğinin Konumu,” *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), pp.29-30. For same concern see Ali Balkız’ speech in the opening of *Danışma Kurulu* as the president of *PSAKD* on 3 September 2000. Cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 August 2000, p.5.

<sup>210</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Ayağa Kalkan Kültür: Alevilik Ülke Gündeminde,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.3.

<sup>211</sup> Y. Yesari Gökçe, “Yedinci Yıla Girerken,” *Cem*, year 7, 67 (June 1997), p.4.

<sup>212</sup> Sadık Göksu, “Güçlü Toplumsal Partinin Siyasal Varlığı Güçsüz, Dağınık, Etkisiz Olamaz; Olmamalıdır,” *Cem*, year, 3, 31 (December 1993), p.13.

philosophy to the Turkish society.<sup>213</sup> In this sense, İzzettin Doğan asserts that since they present themselves as an Alevi institution, they have a right to talk about Alevism. Yet, some Alevi institutions that are not knowledgeable about Alevism create different definitions of Alevism. When we educate *dedes* in a centralized way and define Alevism correctly, these institutions will have to close their offices.<sup>214</sup>

Aydın argues that *Cem Vakfı* has deficiencies, i.e., it does not have any activity for Bektasi shrines and it does not have any contribution to the Alevi movement in terms of law as *cemevis* do not have gained legal status yet. However, he again prefers *Cem Vakfı* since he personally knows the administrators of other Alevi Institutions such as those of *PSAKD*, *Şahkulu*, *Karacaahmet*, *Erikli Baba*, *Garip Baba*. He goes on by saying that with the endeavors of *Cem Vakfı*, now Alevi identity is recognized in the public sphere and *cemevis* can be founded: “When we said *cemevis* are the places of Alevi worship, other institutions criticized us by saying that *cemevis* did not have priority for them.”<sup>215</sup>

Secondly, they try to legitimate their position by arguing that they represent “all” Alevis. *PSAKD* seems to be more widespread than *Cem Vakfı* because it claims that the number of its members is more than 25000.<sup>216</sup> Moreover, in *PSAKD*, it was

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<sup>213</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), pp. 2-3. For instance, *Cem* presented the panel on “Din-Devlet İlişkileri ve Türkiye’de Din Hizmetlerinin Yeniden Yapılanması” as the first biggest symposium which is organized by a NGO and in this symposium for the first time *Cem Vakfı* started debates on position of DRA. “Uluslar Arası Platformda Din-Devlet İlişkileri İncelendi,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 10. Alternatively, the news about “Aleviler ve Anayasa Paneli” discusses this panel as an example of how Alevis come together in a democratic platform in order to reach common attitude, to institutionalize and to give messages to public. Süleyman Cem, “1992 Hacıbektaş Kültür, Tören, Şenlik ve Etkinliklerinin Düşündürdükleri,” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.22.

<sup>214</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 33, 101 (May 2000), p.10.

<sup>215</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>216</sup> While Kazım Genç claims this number is more than 25000, Erdal Yıldırım asserts that *PSAKD* has 32000 members. Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, GOP Office İstanbul, 12.05.2007, Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by

told to me that *Alevi Bektaşî Federasyonu*, which has about 190 member institutions in itself, represents 90% of Alevi population and *PSAKD* is the leading institution in this federation. In this vein, for them, *Cem Vakfı* that is centralized, elitist, integrated to the state and that is trying to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam does not represent Alevi masses.<sup>217</sup> On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* cannot give the precise number of its members because legally it cannot accept members since it is *vakıf*. However, Ayhan Aydın argues that *Cem Vakfı* reflects the views of one third of Alevi population.<sup>218</sup> Sinan Giray also claims that since Alevis see İzzettin Doğan as representator of Alevis, they have participated *Cem Vakfı* in high numbers. The anti-propaganda against *Cem Vakfı* as being the Club of The Rich does not influence the attitudes of people towards *Cem Vakfı*.<sup>219</sup>

Moreover, in order to prove the popularity of *PSAKD* or *Cem Vakfı* among Alevis, they claim that a huge number of people take part in their activities. We may meet these sentences in publications of *PSAKD* as follows, “our activity was hold in a sincere way with an intense attention of our populace and political leaders,”<sup>220</sup>

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the author, Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02. 2007.

<sup>217</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02. 2007.

<sup>218</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>219</sup> Sinan Giray *Cem*, Year 30, 82 (September 1998), p.13. Ayhan Aydın, for instance, argues that farmers, peasants, civil servants are interested in the activities of *Cem Vakfı*. In that sense, it is unfairness to define *Cem Vakfı* as a bourgeois institution -The Club of the Rich. “It was prejudged propaganda: They are seen on TVs, organize meetings in luxurious restaurants... Where did this image emerge? İzzettin Doğan is blond and well dressed and he is speaking well. ... Other (Alevi) institutions are not less bourgeois. Is organizing meetings in hotels bourgeois character? Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>220</sup> News about *Dilden Dile Türkü Şöleni* organized by the Buca office in March 2004, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p.3.

“Aşağıkızılca lived a traffic and park problem because of the crowd”<sup>221</sup>, “shocked number of people attended,”<sup>222</sup> “despite rain, the attendance was high.”<sup>223</sup>

We see the same statements in *Cem* as follows, “extraordinary enthusiasm in İzmit”<sup>224</sup>, “flood of love towards *Cem Vakfı* in Sivas and Kayseri”<sup>225</sup> “a historic day in Çorlu,”<sup>226</sup> “*Cem Gecesi* in October 1993 came true with a high interest and an enthusiasm.”<sup>227</sup> Moreover, they argue that with the activities of *Cem Vakfı* Alevism is now more well known in the society, so the state and representatives of foreign countries accepted *Cem Vakfı* as the interlocutor.<sup>228</sup> For instance, in the second anniversary of *Cem Vakfı*, İzzettin Doğan asserts that nowhere in the world any association is met such a love and attention like *Cem Vakfı*. In the past, Alevis were subject to the aspersions such as *mum söndü*, but now with *Cem Vakfı* people learned what Alevism was and they started to love and respect it.<sup>229</sup>

Nevertheless, there is not an exact separation at public base in that both of these two institutions also are aware of this. Indeed, both of them are complaining

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<sup>221</sup> News about the ninth *Aşure Günü* in the Aşağıkızılca Office, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p.2.

<sup>222</sup> News about the First *Aşure Günü* in the Çeşme Office, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p.3.

<sup>223</sup> News about the picnic of the Buca office, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004).

<sup>224</sup> For the opening ceremony of the Kocaeli Office in 1998, *Cem*, year 8, 73 (January 1998), p.5.

<sup>225</sup> “Sivas ve Kayseri’de Cem Vakfı’na Sevgi Seli... Sivas’ta Birlik ve Dirlik İçin Dostluk Temeli Atıldı,” *Cem*, year 34, 110 (June 2001), p.4,

<sup>226</sup> For the opening ceremony of a culture center and *cemevi* in Çorlu (2001), *Cem*, year 34, 111 (July 2001), p.19.

<sup>227</sup> Süleyman Cem, “Cem Gecesi Büyük İlgi ve Çoşku İle Yapıldı,” *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), p.39.

<sup>228</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, Year 33, 101 (May 2000), p.10.

<sup>229</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “Cem Vakfı İki Yaşında,” *Cem*, Year 7, 65 (April 1997), p. 5. See same concern İzzettin Doğan “İnanç ve Birlik Yolunda... Cem Vakfı Üç Yaşında,” *Cem*, year 30, 80 (July 1998), p. 32.

about the unconsciousness and the indifference of Alevis. For instance, Ayhan Aydın asserts that Alevis live their identity, but they do not have any idea about the debates about Alevism in the public sphere. They even do not care about these institutions.<sup>230</sup> Administrations of *PSAKD* also argue that they cannot legitimize the necessity of the Democratic Alevi institutions to even the Alevi society. For instance, Ali Balkız complains about the reflexive character of Alevis in that they raise their voices in the public sphere only when they live traumatic incidents such as Sivas, Maraş, Gazi, and the gaffe of Güner Ümit. After the Sivas massacre, Alevis have become more institutionalized and become aware of things going around; but many Alevis are still not familiar with the debates among Alevi institutions.<sup>231</sup>

Yet, we may say that since *Cem Vakfı* founds *cemevis*, it is more popular than *PSAKD*. In that sense, for “ordinary” Alevis, the characteristics of administration of these *cemevis* are not important. However, Ayhan Aydın points out that are prejudices against *Cem Vakfı* since İzzettin Doğan has close relations with the rightist parties because the leftist and social democrat base of Alevis does not welcome his relations with the rightist parties. Indeed, most Alevis share the same ideas with *Cem Vakfı* and “Interestingly, *Cem Vakfı* addresses the classical Alevi base that is the leftist, social democrat, modernist, Kemalist, and pro-CHP.”<sup>232</sup> Erdal Yıldırım from *PSAKD* also says Alevis had not been practicing their worships for centuries, so they

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<sup>230</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>231</sup> Ali Balkız (as editor), “Hacca Gitmek Dünyayı Gezmektir, Bir Gönül Ele Geçir Ki İş Odur,” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.1. For instance, he notifies that Alevis clapped for both representatives of Alevi organizations and the representatives of the state in Pir Sultan Abdal ceremonies of 1998 with the same enthusiasm. He narrates this incident in order to show that Alevis are not conscious enough in order to question the state. In another article he complains at the number of members of Alevi institutions is still low and they are indifferent to activities. Ali Balkız, “Alevi Örgütlenmesinin Geldiği Son Nokta: ABTM,” *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), p.20.

<sup>232</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

started to attend *cemevis*, which are founded in their local places. Hence, they did not care about whether directors of these institutions represented Alevis, whether they researched on Alevism and whether they taught Alevism to the following generations. Their aim was only to practice their worship. “At least now,” Alevi population is not aware of this.<sup>233</sup>

Furthermore, the state accepts *Cem Vakfi* as the only representator of Alevis. For instance, Niyazi Öktem (from *Cem*) claims that with the efforts of *Cem Vakfi* and its president İzzettin Doğan, the state begun to recognize the existence of Alevis as an interest group.<sup>234</sup> İzzettin Doğan also says that Alevis are not alone anymore because *Cem Vakfi* will be working as an interest group to force governors to solve the Alevi problem.<sup>235</sup> *PSAKD* is also aware of the strength of *Cem Vakfi* in that an interviewer in *PSAKD* told that the state accepts *Alevi Vakıfları Federasyonu* as the representator of Alevis.<sup>236</sup> This is case because first *AVF* is economically stronger in that businesspersons support it. Secondly, as you will see in the following chapter, their definition of Alevism as Turkish Islam coincides with the state’s definition.

Most important comment comes from Ayhan Aydın as he asserts that we may have misapprehensions about the Alevi. There is a general judgment about Alevis such as being social democrat, Kemalist and voting for CHP. If they are all same, how can “different” Alevi institutions have such efficient activities?<sup>237</sup> The answer to

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<sup>233</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007.

<sup>234</sup> Niyazi Öktem, “Büyük Fırtına,” *Cem*, Year 5, 55 (December 1995), p.3.

<sup>235</sup> İzzetin Doğan, “Cem Yeniden Cem Olurken,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 5.

<sup>236</sup> Ersin Gedik, (president of Council of Youth in *PSAKD-Gençlik Kolu*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.03.2007.

<sup>237</sup> Ayhan Aydın, (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfi* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfi*, Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

this question is important in order to understand the recent process in the Alevi movement. We may answer it in two ways: “all” Alevis do not have same characteristics or differences among Alevi institutions are not important for them since the identity of “being Alevi” covers up these differences.

Nevertheless, although both of these institutions have a claim of representation, they are always careful about the activities of other Alevi institutions. They either try to cooperate with other institutions in order to create a unique Alevi discourse or criticize them. Therefore, we have to look at their relation with other institutions and more specifically the relationship between each other.

#### The Conflict between *Cem Vakfı* and *PSAKD*

After the 1980s, when Alevi institutions first emerged, *PSAKD* and *Cem* (not *Cem Vakfı*) were acting together. For instance, the representatives of *Cem Vakfı* signed two public announcements (on 15 August 1992 in Hacı Bektaş and on 30-31 January 1993 in Mersin<sup>238</sup>) with Alevi Bektasi institutions.<sup>239</sup> Alternatively, they came together in different organizations such as *Birlik Aşuresi* on 17 May 1998<sup>240</sup> However, the differences in policies concerning Alevi culture and identity led a clash among them. For instance, every year Abdal Musa ceremonies are organized in Antalya. However, in 2004, local government cooperated with *Cem Vakfı* when discriminating *Alevi Bektaşî Federasyonu*. For this reason, *PSAKD* did not attend

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<sup>238</sup> In this announcement, they demand the abolishment of DRA and obligatory religious instruction. Also, they criticized 10th and 24th articles of the constitution, publications of the state on Alevis and the broadcast of *TRT*.

<sup>239</sup> Ali Balkız, “Bütün Yollar Diyanete Çıkar,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), p.2.

<sup>240</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p.7.

Abdal Musa ceremonies of 2004 and visited Abdal Musa in a different date.<sup>241</sup>

The first discussion between these two sides emerged in 1993 when *Cem* decided to hold *Alevi Kurultayı*. *PSAKD* claims that since the Alevi problem is the problem of democracy Alevis must to hold *Demokrasi ve Laiklik Kurultayı* (Council for Democracy and Secularization). In order to criticize *Cem*, in volume 5 it published a public announcement of *Ankara Platform* and an article of Ali Balkız. Balkız asserted, “We do not have the Alevi problem both in urgent and specific terms. The problem is about the character and the identity, about DRA, religious instruction, the state, repression, denial of the state, state-promoted reactionists. ....”<sup>242</sup> After that, in volume 22 of *Cem*, Abidin Özgünay mentioned “a group”, which asserted that they did not have a problem like Alevism and he claimed this attitude is the denial of Alevism.<sup>243</sup> Özgünay does not give the name of this group whereas in the same volume Sadık Göksu announced that this group was *PSAKD*.<sup>244</sup> However, in volume 6 of *PSAKSD*, Ali Balkız responded this criticism as, “we say we do not have problem of Alevism both in urgent and specific terms. ... The problem of Alevis does not emerge from their Alevism, but from this state.” He also criticized *Cem Dergisi* and İzzettin Doğan because they wanted the reorganization of DRA in order to create *Alevi Diyaneti* (Diyanet of Alevis).<sup>245</sup>

In that context, *Cem Vakfı* criticizes other institutions, more specifically,

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<sup>241</sup> Kazım Genç, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.14 (July 2004), p.2.

<sup>242</sup> Ali Balkız, “Beş Milyon Yıllık İnsanlığın Onuru İle Yaşıyoruz,” *PSAKSD*, 5 (February 1993), pp.13-14.

<sup>243</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden...” *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), p.3.

<sup>244</sup> Sadık Göksu “Alevi Kurultayı Yolunda Arındırmalar,” *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), pp. 32-43. Göksu’s article is about the criticism of *PSAKD*.

<sup>245</sup> Ali Balkız, “Bütün Yollar Diyanete Çıkar,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), pp.1-5. For same focus see the public announcement of 19.12.1995. Cited in *PSAKSD*, 17 (March-April 1996), p. 36.

*PSAKD* circle, by arguing that they are using Alevism for their pragmatic aims although they are atheist. In this way, they present Alevism as atheism. For instance, Hasan Gülşan focuses on existence of “some” groups (he means *PSAKD* circle) who are founding institutions not for Alevi religion, but for their political interests.<sup>246</sup> We see this debate in Hacı Bektaş Veli ceremonies of 1992 in which Nejat Birdoğan and Vecihi Timuroğlu gave speeches. *Cem* quoted their speeches with criticism and argued, “If Timuroğlu is trying to equating Alevism with socialism and atheism, we also have something to say.”<sup>247</sup> Interestingly in the same volume, Abidin Özgünay’s article discusses that Alevism is not atheism. Furthermore, in volume 30, Atilla Fırat also points out that the basic problem of Alevism does not emerge from non-institutionalization. There are “some” Alevis who behave on behalf of Alevism. Since they are “indeed” atheist, try to use Alevism for their interest. This damages Alevism because Alevism is supposed to be atheism.<sup>248</sup>

On the other hand, for *PSAKD*, *Cem Vakfı* is the comprador of the state in order to create *TC Aleviliği* (Official Alevism) by assimilating Alevism into Sunni Islam.<sup>249</sup> For instance, Emel Sungur argues that the president of *Cem Vakfı*, İzzettin Doğan, says that they will support the political party, which gives Alevis a share in DRA. However, the demanding a share in DRA means assimilation of Alevi society by the reactionist and racist parties.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, Kazım Engin says, “there is an

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<sup>246</sup> Hasan Gülşan, “Sivil Örgütlenme Mi, Partileşme Mi?” *Cem*, year 5, 55 (December 1995), p.36.

<sup>247</sup> Cemal Şener, “Aleviler Hacıbektaş,ta,” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.18.

<sup>248</sup> Atilla Fırat, “Alevi Sorunlarının Çözümü Sadece Birleşme veya Siyasi Örgütlenmeden mi?” *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), p.28.

<sup>249</sup> Because of his close relations with the state and Sunnites population, İzzettin Doğan is known as “*Kemalist laikçi*.” I think rather than using the term *laik* (secular), the term *laikçi* (secularist) is used on purposely. Gümüş, September 2004, p.516, p.518

<sup>250</sup> Emel Sungur (the ex-General Secretary of *PSAKD*), the public announcement of 28.10.1995. Cited in *PSAKSD*, 17 (March-April 1996), p.37.

assimilation of Alevis by DRA, by Fethullah Gülen and by İzzettin Doğan. In the month of *Muharrem*, *Samanyolu TV* was broadcasting from *Galipdede Tomb* and the *dedes* of *Galipdede Tomb* sit near with the followers of Fethullah. This is the annihilation of Alevism.”<sup>251</sup> Turan Eser also accuses *Cem Vakfi* and İzzettin Doğan of trying to integrate Alevis to formal ideology and in this way, they contribute the assimilation of Alevis. İzzettin Doğan do not oppose Sunnification of Alevis by the state under the name of “social consensus”, “dialog among religions” and “religious consensus.” However, *Cem Vakfi*, as the Club of the Rich, cannot share the common values with Alevis who live in rural areas or subalterns of cities.<sup>252</sup>

#### “Desire” for Cooperation and Unification

We cannot ignore that these institutions tend to cooperate and have a desire for unification. 40 articles out of 1037 (3.86%) in *PSAKSD* and 51 articles out of 3344 (1.53%) in *Cem* focus on solidarity, dialogue, and cooperation among Alevis and Alevi institutions. For instance, Hasan Gülşan (from *Cem*) suggests that Alevis must come together under one umbrella organization.<sup>253</sup> In this regard, complaining about divergences among Alevi institutions, İzzettin Doğan claims that “when we ask for money as an Alevi institution, the state says us that there are too many Alevi institutions, which of you we can help. If we were in integration and cooperation, the state would not say like this.”<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Kazım Engin (*dede* of *PSAKD*), his speech in third of the Education Series in the GOP office on 12 May 2007.

<sup>252</sup> Turan Eser, “Hacı Bektaş Veli ve Anadolu Aleviliği,” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.31.

<sup>253</sup> Hasan Gülşan, “Sivil Örgütlenme Mi, Partileşme Mi?” *Cem*, year 5, 55 (December 1995), p.36.

<sup>254</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 33, 101, (May 2000), p.10.

For this reason, it is beneficial for (Alevi institutions) to come together and to cooperate. Else, Alevism is a religious movement. There is not a particularly need of centralization in a religious movement. People already live their religion in their daily life. Yet, we need institutions, which provide them these religious services. Alevis are disintegrated through different institutions. These institutions must be re-founded. Otherwise, it is not necessary for an Alevi institution to cooperate with other institutions because it is neither a political party, nor a political movement. It is a religious institution. It is necessary to found this religion's institutions, to integrate them to the state, to receive protection from the state and in this way to accomplish neutrality of the state. There is an important difference. The reason for other institutions' desire for unification is gaining weight in politics. However, the reason for us is to force the state to be neutral towards all beliefs and to enable Alevis to benefit from facilities provided by the state for other religious groups. Here, there is a desire for Alevis's share and for standing of Alevis on their foot with this share, for *cemevis*, for educating *dedes*, for opening schools for Alevis and giving salaries of staff who deals with these issues. There is an institutionalization. It is wrong to use it as a tool of politics. In order to neutralize politics, they have to play the game of democracy within democratic rules. They have to haggle with political parties, which have possibility to be in power.<sup>255</sup>

However, this process of unification is not very concrete for *Cem Vakfı* in that only 4 articles out of 3344 (0.12%) mentions the process of unification.<sup>256</sup> For instance, Yaşar Uçar defines the attempt of *Cem* to arrange an Alevi Council at the end of 1992 and in the beginning of 1993 as an important step for Alevi union, which unites all Alevi institutions.<sup>257</sup> Yet, the first sings of dialogue between *Cem Vakfı* and other Alevi institutions in order to found a federation emerged at the end of 1997. The representatives of different Alevi institution came together in the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*: the president of *PSAKD* Murtaza Dinçer, the president of *HBV Anadolu Kültür Vakfı* Ali Doğan, the president of *HBV Kültür Derneği* Erol Şencan,

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<sup>255</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, in *Prof. Dr. İzzettin Doğan'ın Alevi İslam İnancı, Kültürü İle İlgili Görüşü Ve Düşünceleri*, İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, p.105.

<sup>256</sup> However, in 2005, the unification process emerged among nine Alevi *vakıfs* such as *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi Vakfı (Cem Vakfı)*, *Anadolu Bilim Kültür ve Cem Vakfı*, *Gazi Kültür Vakfı*, *Haydar Eren Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı*, *Kartal Cemevi Kültür Eğitim ve Sosyal Dayanışma Vakfı*, *Erenler Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı*, *Adalar Cem Vakfı*, *Hüseyin Gazi Kültür Sanat Vakfı* and *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı*. In the same year they founded *Alevi Vakıfları Federasyonu* under the leadership of *Cem Vakfı* and İzzettin Doğan has become the honorary president of this federation.

<sup>257</sup> Yaşar Uçar, "Alevi Birliği İçin Öneriler" in *Cem*, year 3, 31 (December 1993), pp. 28-29.

the president of *Semah Kültür Vakfı* Lütfü Kaleli, the second president of *Karacaahmet Sultan Shrine* Hıdır Uluer, the member of executive committee *Şahkulu Sultan Shrine* Makbule Nergis and so on. The reason they came together was to form a common attitude in a TV programme “Onda On” on HBB.

In addition, in the end of 1999, Ayhan Aydın called all Alevi institutions to act together and in this way, he aimed at creating a dialogue between these institutions. He met with *Anadolu Erenleri Vakfı (ERVAK)*, *Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (AKKAV)*, *Ankara Cem Kültür Evleri Yaptırma Derneği*, *Garip Musa Kültür Derneği*, *Halk Ozanları Kültür Vakfı* and *Hüseyin Gazi Kültür Derneği Gümüşhane-Şiran Kırıntı ve Yeniköy Derneği*.<sup>258</sup> The following year (30.09.2000) some Alevi-Bektasi-Mevlevi institutions such as *Şahkulu*, *Gazi Cemevi*, *Garip Dede Türbesi Derneği*, *Şah-Vak*, *Erikli Baba Türbesi Derneği*, *Sarıgazi Cemevi Başkanı*, *Hacı Bektaş Veli Derneği Beyoğlu Office*, *Galata Mevlevihanesi*, *Tunceli Eğitim Vakfı* came together in the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* in order to force *MGK* to take Alevi problem on its agenda and to make “recommendations” to the political parties.<sup>259</sup> They demanded the political parties the share from the budget for Alevi-Bektasi-Mevlevi belief, including Alevism in religious instruction, having TV programs about Alevi rituals in state radio and TV channels, accommodating *cemevis*, founding schools in order to educate the religious leaders of and suggesting *saz* as a musical instrument in schools.<sup>260</sup>

On the other hand, *PSAKD* has always common activities with other Alevi institutions such as *Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültür Dernekleri*, *Divriği Kültür Vakfı*, *Pir*

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<sup>258</sup> “Ankara’da Birlik Çağrısı... Ortak Hareket Etmek Şart!” *Cem*, year 32, 96, p.27–28.

<sup>259</sup> “Siyasilerden Alevilere Destek Sözü,” *Cem*, Year 33, 106 (November 2000), pp. 10-12.

<sup>260</sup> “Siyasi Parti Liderlerinden Taleplerimiz,” *Cem*, Year 33, 106 (November 2000), p.12.

*Sultan Abdal 2 Temmuz Eğitim Kültür Vakfı*, with other NGOs such as *TMMOB*, *TBB*, *Mülkiyeliler Birliği*, *İHD*, *Altı Nokta Körler Derneği*, with labor unions such as *Eğitim-sen*, *KESK*, *Disk*, *Maden-sen* and with political parties such as *EMEP*, *SDP*, *ÖDP*, *ESP*, *TKP*, and *CHP*.<sup>261</sup> For this reason, in *PSAKSD* they publish the articles written by the representatives of different NGOs and labor unions.

Concerning *PSAKD*'s position, 29 articles out of 1037 (2.80%) focus on the process of unification. In the 1990s, the representatives of *PSAKD* stated their wish of unification in their speeches.<sup>262</sup> The first sign of the cooperation and unification emerged in 1994 and in 1996 and some Alevi institutions founded *Alevi Temsilciler Meclisi Girişimi (Yeni Birlik Girişimi)*.<sup>263</sup> In 1999, 33 Alevi-Bektasi institutions founded *Alevi Bektasi Temsilciler Meclisi (ABTM)*.<sup>264</sup> In its act, this association has a claim of representing Alevi-Bektasi community.<sup>265</sup> Lastly, on 14-15 August 2000, 163 Alevi-Bektasi Institutions came together in Hacıbektaş and decided to found an organization. This organization gained its legality on 07 May 2001 under the name of *Alevi Bektaşî Kuruluşları Birliği Kültür Derneği (ABKB)*<sup>266</sup> and on 15 August 2002, this institution turned to *Alevi Bektaşî Kuruluşları Federasyonu*.

However, despite these attempts to cooperate among Alevi-Bektasi

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<sup>261</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 13 (May 2004). It is debatable how democratic these institutions as well as whether there is the left in Turkey. However, cooperation of *PSAKD* with these organizations is important to show that position *PSAKD* in Turkish politics.

<sup>262</sup> Speeches in Abdal Musa ceremonies, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.5.

<sup>263</sup> Murtaza Demir, "Demokratik Alevi Birliğinin Doğum Sancısı Alevi Temsilciler Birliği Girişimi (ATMG)," *PSAKSD*, 18 (May-June 1996), pp. 9-11.

<sup>264</sup> They came together on 30 May 1999 in Ankara and on 12-13 August 1999 in Hacıbektaş.

<sup>265</sup> It aim was to protect Alevi rights, freedom, and Alevi culture; to solve the Alevis' problems; to work for recognition of Alevi identity by the state, for co-existence of differences in Turkish society in peaceful way, and for democratic and secular state, for abolishment of DRA and obligatory religious instruction. ... The act of ABTM, *PSAKSD*, 34 (October 1999), p.3-4.

<sup>266</sup> Cited in *PSAKSD*, 43 (March-April 2001) .

institutions, we cannot say that they are successful in taking common action. Just the opposite, sometimes *PSAKD* complains about other member institutions of *ABF*. For instance, Emel Sungur says that other institutions do not take any responsibility in the activities they organize.<sup>267</sup> Moreover, they may live new separations within an institution. For example, Murtaza Demir (ex-president of *PSAKD*) founded a new institution under the name of *Pir Sultan Abdal 2 Temmuz Kültür ve Eğitim Vakfı*. This separation was apparent in Banaz ceremonies of 2000 in that *PSAKD* did not attend ceremonies because of *2 Temmuz Vakfı*. In volume 39, editor (İlhan Cem Arseven) argues that this *vakıf* does not possess Alevi values.<sup>268</sup>

In short, both of these two institutions are aware that Alevis have to institutionalize in order to take rights from the state and to become more visible in the public sphere. However, based on divergences among them, they have a claim of representation and of leading role in the process of revival of Alevism. Hence; they argue that they are the representator of “real” Alevism whereas “others” are trying to move away Alevism from its essence. When *Cem Vakfı* accuses other Alevi institutions (more specifically *PSAKD*) of presenting Alevism as atheism, *PSAKD* criticizes *Cem Vakfı* for its efforts to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam and in this way, to create official Alevism. Based on this differentiation among them, we have to underline Alevi politic(s) in detail. Therefore, the following chapter will discuss Alevi politics in terms of the issue of secularization, democracy, and the demands from the state.

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<sup>267</sup> Emel Sungur (Secretary for Education and Institutionalism), “Başarının Ön Koşulu Değişimin Savunucu Olmaktan Geçer,” *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p. 13.

<sup>268</sup> Editor, *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.1.

CHAPTER VI  
ALEVI POLITICS:  
BEING MARGINALIZED VERSUS BEING PART OF THE SYSTEM

This study's basic aim was to underline Alevi politics by taking these two institutions as case study since their different positions concerning the state, different understandings of common Alevi problem and their definitions of Alevism are corresponding to their approach to Turkish politics. In fact, as I discussed in the former chapters, there is a close relationship between power and religion and the problem of Alevis is resulted from how the state defines Alevis. Here, I will discuss the issue just the opposite way, from the eye of Alevis. Starting with their approach to (Turkish) Politics and their relationship with political parties, I will discuss this issue in four parts: the issue of secularization, the issue of democracy, their state discourse, and their demands from the state in order to solve the Alevi problem.

Non-Political Standing: Is it an Illusion?

In Turkey, "being political" has bad reputation even in the realm of politics and it is generally used in order to underline challenges against the state policies within the leftist movement. This is case because of the state's attempts to depoliticize in order to create apolitical generation in the 1980s. This tendency is also apparent in the conflict between these institutions in that they have opposite standings.

On the one hand, *PSAKD* argues that Alevi identity has always been a political identity and the state is now trying to move away it from this political essence. 55 articles out of 1037 (5.30%) criticize the state's efforts to de-politicize

Alevism and Alevi identity.<sup>269</sup> For instance, as Mesut Gerçek points out, the state tries to spread the thought of “we had nothing to do with politics” among Alevi.<sup>270</sup> In this sense, by claiming that being oppositional to exploitation, injustice, and poverty is immanent to Alevism, Ali Balkız asserts that Alevi institutions must not only be culture centers in which there are *semah*, *saz* courses, and *cems*; but also be the political centers in which there are panels, seminars. They must be a school for Alevi in which they cooperate and struggle against the injustice.<sup>271</sup> Hence, the Alevi figures such as Pir Sultan, Hallacı Mansur, Sheikh Edebali, and so on appears as political figures who struggled against injustice.

Although *PSAKD* is an Alevi institution, it does not take the Alevi issue just within the belief, it also focuses on social, cultural, economical, and political bases of Alevism. Thus, it announces that it wants to be influential in political life with other democracy powers.<sup>272</sup> As they publish in their founding act, it has two basic aims: to spread and explain Alevism and to be the part of the democracy front. At this point, on the one hand, *PSAKD* seems to be an Alevi institution whose aim is keeping Anatolian culture alive by struggling against Sunnification and assimilation. On the other hand, it defines itself as a Democratic Institution for Masses (*Demokratik Kitle Örgütü*)<sup>273</sup> which wants to be the part of Democratic Alevi Movement (*Demokratik*

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<sup>269</sup> Let me emphasize that only 3 articles criticize politicization of Alevi identity. However, this can be omitted because these articles' criticism is towards founding Alevi party or having partisanship in *PSAKD*.

<sup>270</sup> Mesut Gerçek, “Alevilik İlericiliktir!,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), p. 34.

<sup>271</sup> Ali Balkız, his speech in opening of *Danışma Kurulu* as president of *PSAKD* in Ankara on 3 September 2000, cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), pp.6-7 and Ali Balkız, “Alevi Örgütlenmesinin Geldiği Son Nokta: ABTM,” *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), p.23.

<sup>272</sup> Murtaza Demir, 12 (June 1994), p. 26.

<sup>273</sup> They define it as an institution, which struggles both in economic, democratic, and academical terms. It has two basic aims: to improve social and economical life of its members and to improve those of whole society. It is in favor of labor, human rights, freedom of speech, freedom of religion,

*Alevi Hareketi- DAH*).<sup>274</sup>

Hence, it argues that *PSAKD* attaches importance to the co-existence different languages, religions, and traditions. It is also responsive to democracy, secularism, human rights, and freedom. Within its collaboration with the leftist parties and democracy forces, it tries to prove that Alevi movement is in fact a leftist movement. In this regard, it takes the issue of Alevi problem as the problem of democracy problem, which can be solved only within a democratic and secular state. In order to reach this aim, *PSAKD* tries to have common activities with other NGOs; such as *DİSK*, *KESK*, *İHD*, and so on. For example, they took part in the demonstrations against George Bush (the president of the USA) and NATO when the NATO Summit held in Istanbul in June 2004. Briefly, as Yıldırım summarizes, its aim is the creation of a society in which all ethnic and religious groups can have possibility to announce their identity.<sup>275</sup>

However, as Hobsbawm argues

The political project of the Left is Universalist: it is for all human beings. ... On the other hand, identity politics is essentially not for everybody but for the members of a specific group. ... This is why the Left cannot base itself on identity politics. It has a wider agenda. ... Now the wider agenda of the Left does, of course, mean it supports many identity groups, as least some of the time, and they, in turn look to the Lefts.<sup>276</sup>

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scientific and democratic education, and it is against imperialism, fascism, and anti-democratic practices of political powers. Cited in “Demokratik Kitle Örgütlerine Genel Bakışımız,” *PSAKSD*, 17 (March-April 1996), pp. 8-10.

<sup>274</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007. For the separation of general and specific aims, see Erdal Yıldırım, “Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği Bir Demokratik Kitle Örgütüdür,” *PSAKSD*, 56 (March 2004), p.77–80.

<sup>275</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007.

<sup>276</sup> Hobsbawm, p.43. He then finds dangerous the coalition of the Left with minority groups and interests. First identity groups are about themselves and for themselves in that they are not committed to the Left, but get support for their aims. Secondly, movements and organizations of identity politics mobilize only minorities. Moreover, Hobsbawm points out two pragmatic reasons to be against identity politics: under normal conditions, it is hard to mobilize a minority and it forces people to take only one identity, which divides people and therefore isolates them. (p.44).

Hobsbawm's point is important in order to underline *PSAKD*'s standing. *PSAKD* claims that their movement is rather being a movement of identity politics, is a leftist movement. Yet, it situates Alevi identity in the center of its policies since it is also an Alevi institution. In that sense, *PSAKD*'s discourse is not perceptible about what they will do after they will get their rights from the state since the correlation between the left and identity politics (here religious identity) is for some of time.

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfi* tries to prove that they had nothing to do with politics and as I said before, the first thing, which I was told in *Cem Vakfi*, was about this issue." 33 articles out of 3344 (0.99%) criticize the politicization of Alevi identity by "some" groups, arguing that Alevis must not be involved in politics. Only two articles in the fourth volume point out the politicized standing, but these articles can be omitted since in the first years *Cem* seems to be more political especially concerning Süleyman Cem's attempts to have close relations with other Alevi institutions. Indeed the discourse of "being apolitical" became apparent after *Cem Vakfi* was founded in 1995 in that according to İzzettin Doğan, the aim of *Cem Vakfi* is first defining Alevism and then introducing/spreading Alevi-Islam to Turkish society and to all humanity by staying out of the politics.<sup>277</sup>

In this context, like *PSAKD*, it is equating "being political" with being the leftist and tries to free itself from the image Alevis are the leftist and Marxist. For instance, İzzettin Doğan's narration of his life story becomes essential in order show his political views. His father was deputy of CHP and then became the deputy DP in the 1950s. He argues that his father left CHP because there were discriminations against Alevi deputies in this party and joined DP upon Menderes's promise that DP

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<sup>277</sup> İzzettin Doğan, "Merhaba," *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.8. For the first time, he used the term Alevi-Islam in 1995. İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 33, 101 (May 2000), p.10.

would not discriminate Alevis. He then names the period of 1950-58 as the relaxation of Alevis, i.e., they got permanent offices in the state. However, despite his family's involvement in political parties, he is always careful to point out they have always stayed outside of politics. For instance, he says,

I was a student at university. A president of DRA, İbrahim Elmalı made a statement that the meat, which is cut by an Alevi, should not be eaten. Therefore, we, about 600 Alevi university students, came together in Yenikapı and protested him. Of course *peacefully*... ... With a thought that real secularization was not practiced, *Diyanet İşleri* must have been neutral, and Alevis were ignored, we had to explain all these to public and decided to publish a periodical. (*Cem Dergisi*) (My emphasis)<sup>278</sup>

However, being apolitical and/ or supra political is just an illusion. İzzettin Doğan announces the demands of Alevis in many times as a political actor and he has clientalist relations with political party leaders. For instance, he had close relations with DYP when Tansu Çiller was the prime minister. With his close connections with the governments, *Vakıf* succeeded in the creation of “formal” and open relationship between Alevis and political parties. In this way, it provided the conditions in which Alevi identity could be announced easily. Hence, Murat Küçük defines *Vakıf*'s this position as *de facto*.<sup>279</sup>

Besides, although these two institutions “seem” to take opposite political positions, they have always been involved in politics and they are mostly interested in elections in that they try to have common attitude towards political parties. This is case because resulting from their immigration to big cities; Alevis have become

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<sup>278</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 7, 70 (September 1997), pp.32–34.

<sup>279</sup> Küçük, 2001, pp.191–19. However, since *Aydınlik ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP -The Party for Enlightenment and Progress) has become government, the relation of *Cem Vakfı* with the governments has become marginalized. Hıdır Akbayır argues that while previous governments were in dialogue with *Cem Vakfı*, *AKP* does not accept *Cem Vakfı* as collocator and does not debate the demands of Alevis with *Cem Vakfı*. Hıdır Akbayır (the manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

efficient in elections<sup>280</sup> and political parties see Alevis as the potentiality of votes as if all Alevis vote or must vote for same political parties. Therefore, in every election the question “For whom will Alevis vote?” is asked in the media.

Until recent years, as Schüler’s detailed analysis of voting tendencies of Alevis shows, Alevis tend to vote for “social democrat parties” such as SHP and CHP. However, especially after the Sivas massacre this perception has changed because when this incident occurred in 1993, SHP was in the government. Alevis were disappointed for SHP’s inefficiency to stop this incident. Moreover, divergences among themselves also reflect their political attitudes in that they may vote different political parties. For instance, some Alevis became the candidates for the rightist parties, i.e., Reha Çamuroğlu became the parliamentary of AKP in 22 July elections of 2007.

The change in the attitudes of Alevis, at least in the perception that Alevis always vote for social democrat parties, has also affected these two institutions. In that sense, *Cem Vakfı* points out that Alevis must vote carefully although voting is a personal decision and a duty of a citizen. For instance, Sadık Göksu asserts that Alevis must think about their Aleviness, their country, and laicism.<sup>281</sup> Hence, it has a pragmatist approach in declaring that Alevis must vote for the political parties, which have concrete policies concerning the Alevi problem, so it tries to have good relations with political parties, which may lead Alevis to take their rights.<sup>282</sup>

On the other hand, *PSAKD* asks the question to the political parties “will you

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<sup>280</sup> Göksu, 31 (december 1993), p.13.

<sup>281</sup>Göksu, 31 (December 1993), pp.15–16.

<sup>282</sup> “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.7, Abidin Özgünay, “Aleviler RP ile Cennete Bile Girmez!,” *Cem*, year 3, 33 (February 1994), p.5. *Cem* demands political parties carry out freedom of religion, equal allocation of state budget, stuff Alevi *dedes* in DRA, included Alevism in course books. İzzettin Doğan, “Yeni Bir Türkiye Mi?” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), p.6.

solve the problems of Alevi?” and points out that “if you want Alevi votes you must take the issue of Alevism seriously.” Yet, this does not mean that it has a pragmatic approach like *Cem Vakfi* because their calling is just towards the leftist parties since they define Alevism with its leftist essence.<sup>283</sup>

Another issue concerning political parties is “Alevi candidates” and “Alevi Party.” Ali Yıldırım asks whether being of Alevi candidate is necessary/ and sufficient to vote for him/ her.<sup>284</sup> Ali Balkız indirectly answers this question by pointing out that Alevi do not permit political parties to use Alevi symbols. However, he is careful enough to say that Alevi must vote for the political parties, which solve the Alevi problem.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, Erdal Yıldırım argues,

*Barış Partisi* (Peace Party)<sup>286</sup> was financed and supported by the state. We do not find it correct, because it is the political party of Alevi. It is condemned to be unsuccessful. .... We, as *DAH*, do not situate Alevism in the center of our policies. Our utopia is the collaboration of the leftist parties. Otherwise, we may have independent or the socialist candidates in the following election. However, existing parties do not care about the lack of democracy in Turkey. For instance, CHP- a social democrat party- may try to guide the army in order to enter the North Iraq or its leader (Deniz Baykal) may not attend the funeral of Hrant Dink.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> For instance, *PSAKD* hold the Conference on Alevi and Politics in May 2007 in Ankara in order to have common attitude in 22 July elections of 2007. However, they invited only the leftist parties to this conference, but DSP and CHP did not attend. Kazım Genç, (the ex-president of *PSAKD*) interview by the author, Ankara, 21.05.2007. For instance, in terms of news about some Alevi are voting for MHP or have tendency of Sunnification, Erdal Yıldırım warns that this news can not be attached all Alevi in that we must not generalize all Alevi. Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office, İstanbul, 02.02.2007.

<sup>284</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Türkiye, Aleviler ve Seçimler...” *PSAKSD*, 32 (May 1999), p. 13.

<sup>285</sup> Ali Balkız, “Aleviler Kime Oy Verecek?” *PSAKSD*, 50 (July-August-September 2002), p.69.

<sup>286</sup> *Demokratik Barış Hareketi* (Democratic Peace Movement) was founded on 25 November 1995 under the leadership of Ali Haydar Veziroğlu (the ex-deputy of CHP). This party was an Alevi Party since it used the Alevi symbols such as *Zülfikar*. It demanded the abolishment of DRA in its founding act, so it was closed with the court decision. Before the court announced its decision, it turned to *Barış Partisi* (Peace Party) under the leadership of Mehmet Eti on 10 December 1996. İlhan Cem Erseven, “Alevi Örgütlenmesine Bakış,” *Kırkbudak*, Year 2, 5 (Winter 2006), p. 26.

<sup>287</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, Kadıköy Office İstanbul, March 2007.

*Cem* is also discussing the issue of Alevi party. For instance, Hasan Gülşan is against for the Alevi party by claiming that *Birlik Partisi* (Union Party) has damaged the Alevi movement.<sup>288</sup> However, interestingly, Abidin Özgünay was involved in the process of founding of the *Barış Partisi* and then became the president of it. Özgünay points out that this party has a liberal and the leftist programme, yet they do not want to save the party from the image of being Alevi party since Alevis are the real owners of the country. He then says, “We are a party of Alevis as well as Sunnis. We are a party of not only Turks, but also Kurds, Lazs, and Circassians. Our names are different, but our surnames are Turkey.”<sup>289</sup> However, İzzettin Doğan announces that he neither opposes nor supports *Barış Partisi*. If other political parties such as CHP, DYP, ANAP, and DSP give the rights of Alevis, there will not be any function of *Barış Partisi*. Yet, if these parties go on misleading Alevis, we will not oppose Alevis’ support for this party.<sup>290</sup>

In short, *PSAKD* complains about the state’s attempts to depoliticize Alevism whereas *Cem Vakfı* blames “some” Alevis in politicizing Alevism. By standing on an apolitical position, *Cem Vakfı* asserts that Alevis must be considered beyond the left and the right. It does not need political arguments because it tries to focus on the problems of Alevis emerged from their Aleviness. However, the difference between these two institutions stems not from the differentiation of political/ apolitical, but from whether being involved in the leftist movement or not. Indeed, in Turkey, any issue related to “identity” as well as religion must be considered in terms of political affairs. This means that just talking on behalf of Alevism is the move in political

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<sup>288</sup> Hasan Gülşan, “Sivil Örgütlenme Mi, Partileşme Mi?” *Cem*, year 5, 55 (December 1995), pp.36-37.

<sup>289</sup> Abidin Özgünay, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 7, 68 (July 1997), p.34.

<sup>290</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 7, 71 (October 1997), p.33.

realm, yet why does *Cem Vakfi* prefer an apolitical position? In this vein, both of them define politicization as being the leftist and being oppositional to the state. Hence, by taking apolitical position, *Cem Vakfi* tries to free itself from the image of Alevis are the leftist and questions the Marxist tradition of Alevism of the 1970s. In contrast, *PSAKD* claims that Alevis are the leftist and oppositional by nature. This difference also leads them to take opposite positions vis-à-vis the state and its policies. This will be discussed in the following parts of this chapter in terms of secularization, democracy and their demands from the state.

#### Underlining the Source of the Alevi problem

In the second chapter, I discussed Turkish secularization in order to show that problems of Alevis emerge from the weakness of Turkish secularization. The Turkish state “formally” accepted the principle of secularization and tried to limit the influence of religion in the public sphere. However, as we remember Stepan’s argument, there can be democratic and non-democratic secularisms. This means that the strict separation of religion and the state does not make that country secular. Hence, Turkish state, by applying non-democratic policies, uses religion (Sunni Islam) as a political tool and as a binding component of Turkish national identity. In this way, it flourishes Sunni Islam as well as discriminates other ethnic and religious groups, which may disrupt the unity of the society. For this reason, not only secularization, but also democracy is needed in order to solve the problem of Alevis. In the following part, I will discuss the issue of Alevi problem based on secularization and democracy in detail.

## The Issue of Secularization

The 1980s was also the period in which Alevis became a visible religious group in the public sphere. On the one hand, they were demanding their religious rights from the state. On the other hand, by adopting Turkish-Islam synthesis as a semi-formal ideology, state flourished the political Islam. Yet, the political Islam became so powerful that the state could not control it. Hence, Alevis were presented as the guarantee of the secularization against the threat of Islamic regime although state and its “non-secular” policies of the state created Alevi problem. The most laicist elite felt themselves under the threat of reaction and whether Sheri’a would be founded in Turkey was opened to debate. These discussions lead us to question the practice of Turkish secularization. Therefore, in this part, I will discuss based on the threat of reaction, how these institutions see the principle/ and the problem of secularization.

First, 202 articles out of 1037 (19.48%) in *PSAKSD* and 111 out of 3344 (3.32%) in *Cem* focus on threat of reaction / Sheri’a in Turkey and announce that they must struggle against this threat. In addition, 190 articles out of 1037 (18.32%) in *PSAKSD* and 180 articles out of 3344 (5.38%) in *Cem* focus on pro-secularization and pro-secular character of Alevis.<sup>291</sup> When we read these two percentages of pro-secularization and threat of Sheri’a together, we see that both of these two institutions take the issue of reaction related with the secularization because they think that (Turkish) secularization is under the threat of Islamic regime and only the principle of secularization may prevent this threat. For instance, in public announcement of *PSAKD* it was told,

Islamic regime, which darkens the future of our country, is/ has been one of the threats. We want secularism. ... We see our differences (here religion) as

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<sup>291</sup> I codified these two terms pro-secularization and being secular together since they (especially *Cem Vakfi*) use these terms interchangeably.

the wealth of the Anatolian mosaic and reject to be the target of denial policy (of the state) because of our thought, identity, and culture. We want peace for the fraternity of the humanity.<sup>292</sup> (My emphasis)

*Cem* also argues that secularism, which means the equal standing of the state from all citizens whatever their religion is, is the precondition of democracy. Thus, in secular and democrat countries, the state cannot have official religion and cannot support any religion.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, *Cem* points out that they are trying to struggle against the anti-secular movement/ Sheri'a such as the process of strengthening religious schools (*IHLs*) which are against *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*.<sup>294</sup>

In that standpoint, as a discourse level, they use the same term for solution of the threat of reaction: secularization. Yet, what does this term really consist of for each institution? As Faik Bulut argues that just struggle against reaction / Sheri'a does not automatically make people the secular.<sup>295</sup> Are these institutions are aware of there is not a "really" secular state, which is under the threat of Sheri'a?

In fact, both *Cem Vakfi* and *PSAKD* are criticizing Turkish secularization based on activities DRA, religious schools, and obligatory religious instruction. 162 articles out of 1037 (15.62%) in *PSAKSD* and 250 articles out of 3344 (7.48%) in *Cem* criticize Turkish secularization and see it as the basic source of the Alevi problem. Hence, since the state denies the existence of Alevis, it does not give their (religious) rights. Yet, as the percentages show, *PSAKD*'s focus on the issue of secularization is higher than that of *Cem Vakfi*. The difference does not emerge just

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<sup>292</sup> Common public announcement in the fifth anniversary of the Sivas, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, No.3. (July 1998), p.6. See for same concern Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*). "Alevi Kimliğinin Tanınması İçin Örgütlü Güç Şarttır," *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), p.4, Ali Yıldırım, "Türkiye, Aleviler ve Seçimler...", *PSAKSD*, 32 (May 1999), p. 9.

<sup>293</sup> "Yeni Cem," *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 3.

<sup>294</sup> "Olaylar-Yorumlar," *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), pp.4-5.

<sup>295</sup> His speech in the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara on 19.05.2007.

from the number, but also in their criticisms. As you see in thematic chart, 28 articles out of 1037 (%2.70) in *PSAKSD* and 88 articles out of 3344 (2.63%) in *Cem* are in favor of Turkish secularization. Although this percentage is higher for *PSAKD*, when we analyze it with percentage of criticism of Turkish secularization (%15.62 for *PSAKD* and 7.48% for *Cem*) *Cem Vakfi* seems to be supportive of Turkish secularization than *PSAKD*. In fact, I codified these articles on purposely in order to underline the difference in their attitudes towards the early Republic and today and to differentiate the state and governments. This means that although they criticize Turkish secularization, their criticism is not towards Ataturk period, but towards the policies of the state (in fact governments) after Ataturk's death. They argue that the following governments after Ataturk period disrupted the principle of secularization.

First, *PSAKD* emphasizes the role of the state in flourishing the threat of Sheri'a in the 1980s under the Turkish-Islam synthesis. In this period, the regime of 12 September adopted an anti-secular system based on an increase in the number of *IHLs* and in the number of Koran courses. The state also built mosques in Alevi villages. In this sense, the state took unequal standing by discriminating other religions and by flourishing Sunnification.<sup>296</sup> Thus, Rıza Aydoğmuş says that

The state is flourishing the Islamic regime. Unless obligatory religious instruction is removed from the constitution, DRA is removed from the state institutionalization, Koran courses are closed, the number of *IHLs* is decreased ..., we will go on living another Sivases, Madımaks.<sup>297</sup>

In this context, *PSAKD* is aware that Turkey is not actually a secular country in which the state is not in equal standing to all religions and it finances one religion. For instance, Turan Eser, from *PSAKD*, argues that in Turkey, religion has been a

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<sup>296</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.5.

<sup>297</sup> Rıza Aydoğmuş (the ex-general secretary of *PSAKD*), his speech in the activity for the week of Democracy and Secularism. Cited in *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p. 16.

crucial part of nationalization process (national identity) and the state tried to assimilate differences into Sunni Turk identity. Therefore, the system in Turkey must be regarded as the transformation of *şeyhülislam* to DRA. In addition, the state itself is the basic obstacle for real secularization because it tries to protect Sunni Islam as an “official” religion and especially starting with the 1960s uses it pragmatically against communism and the left under the name of “moderate Islam.”<sup>298</sup> Thus, in Turkey, Sunnite Islam has been imposed as the official religion of the state through practices DRA and through obligatory religious instructions. In this way, the state tries to be involved in the relationship between citizens and ignores religious, cultural, and philosophic differences of Alevis.<sup>299</sup> In that sense,

DRA is making the propaganda of only Sunnite Islam with its 88516 staff, with 75283 workers, its *müftüs*; with 3420 formal Koran courses, with 259 *lojmans*<sup>300</sup>, with thousands of vehicles, and with hundreds of associations, foundations, publications. ... How can the budget, which is indeed equal to those of eight ministries, be increased 39% although this institution ignores Alevis and other religious groups? ... Today Alevis, Christians, Jews and members of other religions do not get share in this one quadrillion budget.<sup>301</sup>

As you see above, they do not take analyze the weakness of Turkish secularization only in terms of Alevis. However, as an Alevi institution, they emphasize more specifically the religious rights of Alevis. For this reason, Haydar Aslan’s speech reflects *PSAKD*’s ideas about state’s discrimination towards Alevis:

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<sup>298</sup> Turan Eser, “Devlet, Laiklik, Din İlişkileri ve Sorunları” *PSAKSD*, 58 (July-August-September 2004), pp.27–28.

<sup>299</sup> Turan Eser, “Memleketimde bir şeyhler artıyor!” *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), pp. 8–10, same concern in Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), “Türkiye’de Eğitim ve Laiklik Üzerine Bir Kaç Söz,” *PSAKSD*, 54 (July-August-September 2003), pp.15–16.

<sup>300</sup> Apartment or house provided to an employee.

<sup>301</sup> Eser, “Memleketimde bir şeyhler artıyor!”, pp. 8–10 Therefore, Aziz Nesin who was also against DRA and obligatory religious instruction is presented as honor of Turkish intellectuals. In addition, they quoted his speech on TV in bold letters as that for Nesin, “existing of DRA in government is mistake. Indeed DRA does not actually exist. In the country many Alevis live, do they have rights? At schools, there is religious instruction; it is lie. Rather than religious instruction, it is Sunnite Islam Education. Aziz Nesin, Cited in *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), p.8.

All politicians start their speeches with a sentence “99% of population of this country is Muslim.” Do all people have the same religion? Even entry of religion in identity cards is contrary to secularization. Except Christians, Jews, Yezidis, or atheists, do all people, who say I am Muslim, have the same belief? By which understanding different beliefs are melted in one pot. In which secular country, there is an institution like DRA which is financed by the state and services for the only one sect? In which secular state, one sect is made dominant or one sect is not recognized? In which secular state, there is obligatory religious instruction and in this classes only state-supported sect is taught?<sup>302</sup>

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* also points out non-secular policies of the state.

In the first volume of *Cem*, Aysel Çelikel claims that existence of the principle of laicism in the constitution does not make that country automatically secular.

Therefore, the state’s pragmatism of the religion as an education policy, the existence of religious schools under the supervision of the state, and obligatory religious instruction that teaches only one sect are contrary to the principle of laicism.<sup>303</sup>

Moreover, they also take the issue more specifically in terms of Alevis by arguing that the state is denying Alevi identity and its rights. In volume 57, it focuses that being Turkish citizen is common identity of “all,” yet these citizens have also different “cultural” identities.<sup>304</sup> For instance, Abidin Özgünay points out that the state must be equal towards different religions if it has a claim of being secular.

“However, our state is making sectarianism. While it is spending billions of liras for Sunnism, it turns its back on Alevi belief and rituals.”<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Haydar Aslan (president of İzmir Office), “Demokrasi ve Laiklik Mücadelesi,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), pp.23–24.

<sup>303</sup> Aysel Çelikel, “İslamcı Siyasi Akımlar ve Devletin Din Politikası,” *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.22. In that respect, in volume 93 they publish the speech of Sami Selçuk (the ex-president of Supreme Court) who claims that religion of the state is Islam and its sect is Sunnism in order to point out that Turkish Republic has become a religious state.

<sup>304</sup> “Yeni Cem,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 3.

<sup>305</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden,” *Cem*, year 3, 26 (March 1993), p. 2.

Nevertheless, *Cem Vakfi*'s main criticism is towards government policies. We see this tendency in their attitudes concerning the threat of reaction. *Cem* assumes that this threat emerged "independent" from the regime. For instance, İzzettin Doğan claims that civilian powers (governments/ politicians/ deputies) must protect the Republic against the threat of Sheri'a. By ignoring that DRA is a state institution, he argues that DRA is governing this country in that even the Prime Minister (Bülent Ecevit) accepts that they cannot control DRA. The army sees this threat, so the army and governors come across each other. If governors do not carry out their duty, the army can interfere in order to protect the regime.<sup>306</sup>

Moreover, related with Sheri'a, *Cem Vakfi* thinks that it is Mustafa Kemal's state and İnönü's Lausanne, which are under the threat of Sheri'a.<sup>307</sup> Alternatively, Abidin Özgünay argues that there are people who want to disrupt the secular republican state and Kemalist thought and try to found the state of Sheri'a.<sup>308</sup> By focusing on "Mustafa Kemal's state" and "the secular republican state," they assume the Turkish state has been secular from the beginning and now this secular state is under the threat. In addition, Abidin Özgünay says,

The threat to *our* state, *our* society, and our modern life will come from the fundamentalist and conservative representatives of orthodox Islam They support the religious state, the caliphate, and the Sheri' a and see Kemalism, laicism, modernity, and Alevism as the basic obstacle. ... On the other hand, heterodox Alevism is the real representative of secular state and modern social life. Not Alevism, it is Sunnism which has a problem with the state.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Interview with İzzettin Doğan in *Cem*, year 35, 113 (September 2001), p.11.

<sup>307</sup> Cahit Tanyol, "Tehlikede Olan Miras," *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.28, Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden," *Cem*, year 5, 52 (September 1995), pp.2-3.

<sup>308</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden," *Cem*, year 5, 52 (September 1995), pp.2-3.

<sup>309</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "21 Ekim İktidarına ve Alevi'lere Çağrı," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.3. For same concern see Abidin Özgünay, "Alevilik, Şekle Değil Öze Yöneliktir," *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p.3, Abidin Özgünay, "Aleviler RP ile Cennete Bile Girmez!" in *Cem*, year 3, 33 (February 1994), p. 4.

In this way, Özgünay argues that the supporters of the official religion (Orthodox Islam) naturally cannot be secular in that official religion aims to create a religious society.<sup>310</sup> In contrast, Alevi are the guarantee (or protector) of (Turkish) secularization and Kemalist state since (Alevi) are democrat and secular by nature. Laicism in Alevism takes the sovereignty from the sky (God) and gives it to human reason and will.<sup>311</sup> For instance, Hıdır Akbayır points out, “If we (Alevi) did not exist, there would not be secularization and the republic. There would be not the secular republic, but vice versa it would be the Republic of Islam.”<sup>312</sup>

Shortly, both of these institutions feel uncomfortable with the threat of reaction and they try to use secularization as a tool to struggle against this threat. In fact, this debate may show the weakness of Turkish secularization. *PSAKD* is aware of the state’s role in this process with its practices, which flourish Sunni Islam. In contrast, *Cem Vakfı* just criticizes the practices of governments and DRA although it is uncomfortable with state’s policies towards Alevi. Hence, it presents itself (as well as Alevi) as the protector of Turkish secularization arguing that Kemalist state and its secularization is under the threat of reaction.

### The Issue of Democracy

The second point, which I have to underline, is the issue of democracy concerning the focus of these institutions on the issue of democratization and pro-democratic

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<sup>310</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “İslamın Özünün Kimliği, Fark Meselesi ve İslamın Siyasal ve Sosyal Alanda Etkin Olduğu Bir Yapıya Aleviliğin Bakışı,” *Cem*, year 5, 51 (August 1995), p. 4.

<sup>311</sup> “Yeni Cem,” *Cem*, Year 5, 57, (August 1996), p. 3 Abidin Özgünay, “Şeriat, Diyanet, Şura ve Alevilik...” *Cem*, year 3, 31 (December 1993), p. 5.

<sup>312</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

character of Alevis. 184 articles out of 1037 (17.74%) and 161 out of 3344 (4.81%) focus on pro-democracy in general terms. As you see, *PSAKD* emphasizes the issue of democracy more than *Cem Vakfi* and when we read this with its focus on secularization (18.32%), it concentrates on both secularization and democracy equally.

Furthermore, 65 articles out of 1037 (6.27%) in *PSAKSD* focuses on lack of democracy in Turkey and takes the Alevi problem as the problem of democracy, 53 articles out of 3344 (1.58%) in *Cem* points out the same issue. In that sense, they agree on the reality that Turkey lacks of democracy, but they take this issue from the opposite ways. *PSAKD* argues that the democratization of Turkey can solve the Alevi problem. In contrast, *Cem Vakfi* claims that only by solving the Alevi problem, Turkey can be a real democratic country.

When we look at discourse of *PSAKD*, it argues that the problems of Alevis emerge from the lack of democracy, so only democracy can solve this problem:

“Democracy is necessary for every one in this country, especially for Alevis and for Kurds.”<sup>313</sup> “We are stating that the problem of Kurdish-Turkish, Alevi-Sunni, and Laz-Circassian is economical, social, and political. It is the problem of administration.”<sup>314</sup> “The problem of an Alevi is also the problem of a Sunni, the problem of a Kurd is also the problem of a Turk. For this reason, it is the problem of society as a whole.”<sup>315</sup> “Our magazine says, first Democracy! Democracy, for everyone! Democracy for whoever needs: workers, unemployed, youth, peasants,

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<sup>313</sup> Preface, editor, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p. 2.

<sup>314</sup> Murtaza Demir, “Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği ve Örgütlenmemiz,” *PSAKSD*, 14 (April 1995), p.1.

<sup>315</sup> Demir, p.3.

civil servants, Alevis, Sunnis, Kurds, Turks.”<sup>316</sup> “ Our attempts ... to be part of the struggle of working class and other democracy powers for democracy, secularization, human rights, peace, and freedom; to support brotherhood of communities, uniqueness and freedom of cultures ...”<sup>317</sup> “ Our basic effort is democracy. To transform this effort is only possible by institutionalization of society with civil and democratic qualities. ... In this sense, we are stating that our country does not have the problem of Kurds-Turks, Alevi-Sunnite, Laz-Chechen; political powers consciously define these problems in narrow sense.”<sup>318</sup> “ We are here because we are opposing of green contras, murder networks that want to destroy the co-existence of Anatolian people in peace. They want us to move away from our democratic Alevi institutionalization.”<sup>319</sup> “ Our policy is apparent; we are involved in democratic struggle.”<sup>320</sup>

In this context, *PSAKD* takes the Sivas incident not just as a trauma and pain, but also an issue of democracy and secularism. It claims that although the Islamic, reactionist, and fascist revolt emerged in the Pir Sultan activities, the aim of this riot was to destroy democracy, peace, freedom, and human rights and to strengthen domination of antidemocratic tendencies.<sup>321</sup> As Murtaza Demir asserts,

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<sup>316</sup> Ali Balkız (as editor), “Nerede Bir Hızır Paşa Varsa Orada Bir Pir Sultan Mutlaka Vardır,” *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), p.1.

<sup>317</sup> Ali Balkız, “Vaiz’i Boşverin Devlete Bakın,” *PSAKSD*, 7 (June 1993), p.1.

<sup>318</sup> Murtaza Demir, his speech in Fifth. Congress of *PSAKD*, cited in *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.6 and same concern in Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*). “Alevi Kimliğinin Tanınması İçin Örgütlü Güç Şarttır,” *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), p. 3.

<sup>319</sup> Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), his speech in Banaz Ceremonies in 1998, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p. 3.

<sup>320</sup> Feti Aydın (president Esenler Office), his speech in forum in the Conference on Alevis and Politics on 20 May 2007.

<sup>321</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.14 (July 2004), the same concern in *PSAKSD*, 12 (June 1994), p.8, p. 46

To say that the government and reactionists consciously and systematically are trying to create “an Alevi problem” or to execute Alevis means taking into account only one tree in a big forest. The target of racist/ reactionist threat was our modernity and all society. To take the problem just as the Alevi problem is narrow and superficial and this brings us new pains.<sup>322</sup>

For this reason, in 1994 *PSAKD* started to commemorate 2 July as the day of “Struggle for Democracy and Secularization.”<sup>323</sup> In 2004 the name of the week of Democracy and Secularism (for the Sivas Massacre) has changed to the week of “Independence, Democracy, Peace, Human Rights, Labor, Freedoms and Secularism.”<sup>324</sup>

*Cem Vakfı* also focuses on the issue of democracy in terms of the importance of democratic struggle. Süleyman Cem defines democracy as the infrastructure of cultural diversity, vividness, and pluralism. Without this infrastructure, we cannot create a civilized country and a public sphere. Therefore, the problem of Turkey is to get rid of its disable democracy and to reach a real democracy.<sup>325</sup> In addition, Süleyman Cem asserts that the Alevi problem is not just the problem of Alevis; it is the problem of democratization, modernization, and freedom. Therefore, different sections such as governments, the media, *TRT*, NGOs and so on must contribute in order to solve this problem. Here the winner or the loser would be the country.<sup>326</sup>

However, after *Cem Vakfı* was founded, their attitude towards the relationship

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<sup>322</sup> Murtaza Demir, *PSAKSD*, 14 (April 1995), p. 3.

<sup>323</sup> *PSAKSD*, 12 (June 1994), p. 7.

<sup>324</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.14 (July 2004), p.3.

<sup>325</sup> Süleyman Cem, “Yurttaşlık Sınavı,” *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.20. Relation with the term of democracy, in the first volume they focused the massacre of Kurds (in Iraq) by Saddam Hüseyin and they wished for them to reach a circumstance in which they were not discriminated for their differences in terms of religion, language, and political views. This example is important in order to show that they are in favor of multiculturalism at least in Iraq. “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.26.

<sup>326</sup> Süleyman Cem “Alevi Sorununun Barış ve Demokrasi İçerisinde Çözümüne İnaniyoruz,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.18.

between democracy and Alevi problem has changed. Doğan defines democracy, as “the regime of responsibility,” so it is not the name of total freedom because where there is freedom there must be responsibility. Freedom necessitates order in which people have responsibilities within the limitation of rules. He then says where everyone has freedom; there nobody has freedom since there is anarchy.<sup>327</sup> Moreover, he defines the freedom of religion as the basic right, which must be the starting point in order to found democracy.<sup>328</sup> This is important in order to show that İzzettin Doğan takes the Alevi problem as the starting point for democracy.

In addition, their debate with *PSAKD* about Alevi problem is reflecting their understanding of democracy. For instance, Niyazi Öktem (from *Cem*) asserts that the attitude of *PSAKD*, which suggests the founding real democracy first in order to solve Alevi problem, is an understanding outside of Alevism. He says,

The issue of democracy is different from the problem of Alevis. Of course, the freedom of religion can only be possible in a democratic structure. ... Not only Alevis, but also all modern and wise people ... are for the foundation of democracy. Yet, do other religious groups take the issue as “first we democratize and then we solve problems related to church?”<sup>329</sup>

He also goes on by stating that in Turkey, everyone’s problem is democracy, yet it is duty of NGOs and the political parties to struggle for democracy. If one wants to solve the Alevi problem, his/ her priority must be Alevism. This does not mean that we are not interested in democracy.<sup>330</sup>

In that standpoint, *PSAKD* takes Alevi issue within a general context, arguing that only within a real democracy in which religious and ethnic identities coexistence

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<sup>327</sup> Interview with İzzettin Doğan, *Cem*, year 35, 113 (September 2001), p.9.

<sup>328</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “Siyasi Parti Liderlerine ve Aydın Vatandaşlara Açık Çağrı,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.2.

<sup>329</sup> Niyazi Öktem, “Büyük Fırtına,” *Cem*, year 5, 55 (December 1995), p.4.

<sup>330</sup> Niyazi Öktem, “Aleviliğe Bakış Açımız,” *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), p. 46.

in peace, this problem can be solved. In contrast, *Cem Vakfi* thinks that by only solving Alevi problem Turkey can be a democratic country. *Cem Vakfi*, as a typical Alevi institution, puts priority to Alevi issue and in this way behaves as if Alevi problem is the only problem in Turkey concerning democracy. We may say *Cem Vakfi* apply the identity politics whereas *PSAKD* has Universalist understanding. However, is there “always” a direct correlation between identity politics and a pose a challenge the state? The answer to this question lies in their approach concerning the demands from the state and I will discuss this issue in the conclusion part of this chapter.

#### Alevis State Discourse: Within the Borders of Loyal Citizenship

The relation of Alevis with power has always been problematic in that the history (even in the early Republic) is full of stories in which Alevis are executed. Thus, Alevis stayed away from power and lived as closed and secret communities. Although they supported the republican regime, the state did not recognize their identity and discriminated them through the activities of DRA and obligatory religious instructions. In this vein, Alevis strongly criticize the obligatory religious instruction, *IHLs*, faculty of theology, and the activities of the DRA.

In fact, in Turkey, the role of the state and its Kemalist aura are so broad to influence civil society, which must be indeed a control mechanism against state policies. In this sense, in Turkey even the revolutionist and the leftist groups whose starting point is challenging policies of the state; again try to get their rights from the state. In other words, opposition, which flourishes in civil society, is still centralized and statist. This tendency is also apparent in the Alevi movement in that when they challenge the existing system in favor of Alevis they demand the rights again from

the state. This means that their criticism must be taken within the limitation of civil society and Kemalist aura. Murat Okan, for instance, defines *PSAKD* as an institution, which combined Kemalism, Marxism, and counter-reactionist movement in itself. The other one, *Cem Vakfi*, is more statist in that it wants to integrate the state.<sup>331</sup> Therefore, in this part, I will discuss Alevi state discourse in detail and try to show that the borders of Alevi politics are drawn within the borders of loyal citizenship.

First, *PSAKD* criticizes state policies in general in that 143 articles out of 1037 (13.79%) criticize state policies concerning 12 September, 1982 constitution and state institutions such as *MIT*, *DGM*, *YÖK*, and so on. It also focuses on Alevi policy of the state and 142 articles out of 1037 (13.69%) focus on the state repression and discrimination towards Alevi. For instance, Murtaza Demir complains about the exclusion of Alevi from the bureaucracy and state's efforts to found mosques in Alevi villages.<sup>332</sup> In addition, İbrahim Aydoğan (the president of Samsun office) mentions how they faced security controls when they went to the Banaz ceremonies from Samsun in 1998 and asks the state, "When will you see us (Anatolian Alevi) as real children? ... If you behave like this, we come closer."<sup>333</sup>

Moreover, their criticism is sometimes towards Atatürk period especially in terms of Turkish secularization. For instance, Kendal Doğan says that Republican era continued the policies of Ottoman State and replaced Ottoman institution with new ones such as DRA, religious schools, obligatory religious instruction, and so on.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Okan, pp.193–194.

<sup>332</sup> Murtaza Demir, "Demokratik Alevi Kurumlarında, Yöneticilik Görevi Yapan Arkadaşlarıma Notlar," *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p.6.

<sup>333</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p. 4.

<sup>334</sup> Kendal Doğan, "Cumhuriyet Sürecinde Alevi Hak İhlalleri İncelemesi," *PSAKSD*, 30 (January

However, Ali Yıldırım focuses on the difference between the Ottoman period and the Republic. The Ottomans accepted the existence of Alevi and tried to execute them. In contrast, the Republic did not recognize Alevi and just the opposite it focused on the ethnic origin of Alevi as Turk and tried to assimilate into the national citizenship.<sup>335</sup> Hence, İshak Kocabıyık complains about existence of the portrait of Atatürk in *cemevis*. In the 1930s, after the revolt the plane used by Sabiha Gökçen bombed Dersim and Kızılırmak has turned to red because of blood.<sup>336</sup>

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* has also challenging tendencies against the state policies both in general and specific terms. Hence, 63 articles out of 3344 (1.88%) criticize state policies in general and 142 articles out of 3344 (4.25%) criticize Alevi policy of the state. For example, Süleyman Cem argues that the state is for to serve for its citizens. In that sense, “citizens have the rights and the duties to know the aim of TRT and how it is working, for whom DRA is serving and for whom it must serve, whether it is discriminating citizens ... and whether it stays in equal standing for all citizens.”<sup>337</sup>

Nevertheless, are these institutions “completely” challenging the state policies or is there limitation of this challenge as in the case of civil society? To answer to this question, we say that in both of these institutions -even in *PSAKD*, which always focuses on unequal practices of the state-, the Kemalist and statist understanding is apparent. In that sense, *PSAKD* mostly argue that Alevi are the secular and

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1999), p. 60-62.

<sup>335</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Aleviliğin Adı Yok,” *PSAKSD*, 30 (January 1999), pp.68-71.

<sup>336</sup> İshak Kocabıyık (the ex-member of executive committee of *PSAKD*), semi-structured interview by the author in the Conference on Alevi and Politics Ankara, 19 May 2007.

<sup>337</sup> Süleyman Cem, “Yurtaşlık Sınavı,” *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.20.

republican citizens who are loyal to the principles of Ataturk<sup>338</sup> and 88 articles out of 1037 (8.49%) focus on this loyalty.

Therefore, we may not say that *PSAKD*'s position in terms of Kemalism is noticeable because there is directly or indirectly reference to Ataturk's period by glorifying "holy alliance" between Ataturk and Alevi. For instance, Yusuf Güneş points out that Ataturk gained the support of Alevi before the Independence War and it was Cemalettin Çelebi, an Alevi leader, who named the regime as "Republic."<sup>339</sup> However, the Kemalist discourse as well as the loyalty is obvious in this passage, written by Murtaza Demir:

We are the citizen of Turkish Republic. We do not have the aim of border and flag. We are devoted to principles of the republic, which were defined as secular, democratic, and modern civilization. ... We can achieve the wish of modern Turkey, put by the Great Leader, with cadres who believe these principles. Here, we are these cadres.<sup>340</sup>

Consequently, they do not understand the state policies towards Alevi why the state does not recognize Alevi identity while Alevi do military services, pay their taxes, and love their country like everyone. As Necati Yılmaz focuses on, despite this disappointment with policies of the Republic, most Alevi still are in favor of the Republic, the state and Ataturk. Hence, Alevi has always protected the Republic against reactionist.<sup>341</sup> Yusuf Güneş also states,

There is not any logical and scientific explanation for the repression of Alevi, massacres, sending them to exile, preventing them to live their

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<sup>338</sup> Ali Balkız, "Dede, Baba, Çelebi, Seyit, Nakıp ve Cumhuriyet," *PSAKSD*, 30 (January 1999), p.42 and Yusuf Güneş, "Cumhuriyet ve Aleviler," *PSAKSD*, 30 (January 1999), p. 52.

<sup>339</sup> Quoted by Yusuf Güneş from Baki Öz, "Cumhuriyet ve Aleviler," *PSAKSD*, 30 (January 1999), p. 50. Alternatively, Muharrem Erkal (president of Tokat office) mentions Ataturk's name with Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli as "when Ali says, send women to the school, I can be slave for 40 years of whom teach me one letter, Hacı Bektaş Veli says, the end of road which is not from science is darkness, and Ataturk says the real guide in life is science. *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p. 4.

<sup>340</sup> Murtaza Demir, *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p.2.

<sup>341</sup> Necati Yılmaz, "Adı Konulmadık 75 Yıl," *PSAKSD*, 30 (January 1999), pp. 23-27.

religion and culture. There is only one explanation: political interest. Otherwise, when we think in a realistic way, what is the guilt of Alevis? Why are they subject to unjust treatment? ... Alevis are the community who love their country like every secular, socialist, intellectual, democratic and modern people do. They do not have the aim territory and flag. They have problems with the undemocratic practices in Turkey.<sup>342</sup>

*Cem Vakfi* is also significant in its Kemalist position and 281 articles out of 3344 (8.40%) focus on loyal citizenship of Alevis and the pro-Kemalist understanding. They mostly point out that Alevis supported the Independence War and Mustafa Kemal. For instance, Cemal Şener, Celalettin Ulusoy, and Bedri Noyan write on Atatürk's visit Cemalettin Çelebi in Hacı Bektasi Shrine and they even assert that Çelebi is the first person who used the term of Republic in this visit.<sup>343</sup> Furthermore, İsmail Elçioğlu and Baki Öz focus on Alevis advocate to the new regime (the Republic) and to principles of Atatürk and claim that with efforts of Alevis, Kemalism is protected from sectarian and conservative people.<sup>344</sup>

Moreover, they give Atatürk a special part in Alevi thought, seeing him as “*mehdi*” and vice versa focusing on Atatürk's love of Bektasism. For example, Abidin Özgünay equates Atatürk with Ali, calling him as another Ali and arguing that all Alevis are Kemalist. Hence, Özgünay identifies Atatürk's opposition against the caliphate, the sultanate, Sheri'a, and imperialism with the oppositional character of Anatolian Alevism.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Güneş, p. 57.

<sup>343</sup> Celalettin Ulusoy, “Cemalettin Çelebi-Veliyettin Çelebi ve Kurtuluş Savaşı,” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), pp.9-12, Bedri Noyan, “Atatürk ve Bektaşilik-İstiklal Savaşında Bektaşiler,” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), pp.13-14, Cemal Şener, “Atatürk ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), pp.15-20. In volume 84, Murat Küçük also focuses on Atatürk's visit to Hacı Bektaş and Alevis loyalty to the Republic. Murat Küçük, “Yetmişbeşinci Yılda Cumhuriyet ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 30, 84 (November 1998), pp.32-35. In addition, in some volumes such as 6, 18, 30, 34, 53, and 60 they use photograph of Atatürk in cover.

<sup>344</sup> İsmail Elçioğlu, “Demokrasi ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p. 31, Baki Öz, “Resmi Tarih Savı ve Arkasındaki Gerçek,” *Cem*, Year 1, 7 (December 1991), pp.46–47.

<sup>345</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Alevi Düşüncesinde Bir Başka Ali; Atatürk,” *Cem*, Year 1, 6 (November 1991),

In addition, they call Alevis to claim their rights from the state and from the political parties. Alevis, who are about 20 million, cannot use their religious rights although they pay taxes and do military services. For this reason, the state has to solve the problem of Alevis. Moreover, they legitimize the rights of Alevis by asserting that Alevis are also the children of this country.<sup>346</sup> Abidin Özgünay also states that an Alevi must have his/her religious rights at least what a Sunni has. Indeed, the historical mission of Alevis and the cost they paid make them the owner of this country.<sup>347</sup> He also goes on by arguing that

We (he means Alevis) are the real owners of this country. Our ancestors died for this country and made this country homeland. Furthermore, we are the real stand of the Republican Turkey. We are the base of secular, democrat, and modern principles. Lastly, we are the original interpretation of Islam. ... Therefore, why are this torture, denigration, and oppression? ... The existence of Alevis, their culture and philosophy, *Cemevis* and their belief cannot be ignored and denied. With taxes of Alevis, the enemies of laicism, modernity, democracy, and Atatürk cannot be flourished. Alevis cannot assent to this.<sup>348</sup>

In fact, like *PSAKD*, *Cem Vakfi* also does not understand the state policies towards Alevis although they are the loyal citizens of this country. For instance, Murat Küçük argues that although Alevis supported the Republic in order to get the freedom of religion, they did not achieve it. The Republic founded DRA in order to control Sunni Islam, yet the following governments compensated Sunni Islam and

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pp.4-5, Abidin Özgünay, "Atatürk Ebedi Rehberimiz," *Cem*, year 3, 34 (March 1994), p.4. For example, at the end of 1998, *Cem Vakfi* and *Evrensel Mevlana Aşıkları Vakfi* organized a *cem* ceremony for Atatürk under the name of "Atatürk ve Silah Arkadaşları Anısına Sema ve Semah Ayini." Presentation of this ceremony in *Cem* also focuses on Alevis' contribution to the Republic and Atatürk's attention on Alevis and Alevism both before the War of Independence and in the first years of the Republic by encouraging scientific researches on Alevism.

<sup>346</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "21 Ekim İktidarına ve Alevi'lere Çağrı," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.4. For same concern, see "Prof. İzzettin Doğan ile Milliyet'te Söyleşi...", *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.35, Y. Yesari Gökçe, "Hiç Düşünmez Misiniz?" *Cem*, year 7, 65 (April 1997), p.4.

<sup>347</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden...", *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), p.2.

<sup>348</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Başbakana Açık Mektup," *Cem*, year 2, 13 (June 1992), pp. 2-3.

Alevism remained a secret belief.<sup>349</sup> Moreover, Hasan Gülşan (from *Cem*), after mentioning the principle of laicism and related articles in the constitution (2, 10, 14, 24), in the penal code (163 and then Law on Struggle against Terrorism) and Law on Political parties; asks whether the rights of Alevis can be forbidden based on these articles or not? Since Alevis are secular and democrat and want to preserve unity of the republican structure; there is no reason to ban the religious rights of Alevis.<sup>350</sup> Abidin Özgünay also emphasizes on the paradoxical relationship between Alevis and the state. Alevis produce for this country, pay taxes, do military services, and die when it is necessary; but their rights are ignored just because they are Alevi.<sup>351</sup> He also goes on saying that

While our DRA raises enemies against the Republic and Ataturk even by financing, Alevis have always been the protector of Ataturk and Secular Republic. What a pity, it is our state, which is not willing to give Alevis' rights in terms of religion, worship, and philosophy.<sup>352</sup>

Indeed, they have an answer to question of why the state denies Alevis: the policies of government. As I discussed earlier, Turkey is not a secular country from the beginning. However, this issue is mostly discussed for the following governments starting with era of the Democratic Party by which there was a deviation from the Ataturk's Republic.<sup>353</sup> Hence, among these institutions although there is a criticism

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<sup>349</sup> Murat Küçük, "Yetmişbeşinci Yılda Cumhuriyet ve Aleviler," *Cem*, year 30, 84 (November 1998), p.35. Rather than the existence of DRA in a secular country, he criticizes its unjust practices such as serving just for Sunni Islam while ignoring Alevism.

<sup>350</sup> Hasan Gülşan "Laiklik, Yasalar ve Alevilik," *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), pp. 41-42. For same concern, see İ. Kemal Aydemir, "Dede ve Babalarımızı Aklama Zamanı Gelmiştir," *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), p.25.

<sup>351</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Ayağa Kalkan Kültür: Alevilik Ülke Gündeminde," *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), pp-3-6.

<sup>352</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden" *Cem*, year 2, 19 (December 1992), p.2.

<sup>353</sup> After 1950, when DP came to power, it reversed the policies of one-party rule with its religious propaganda and used religion as a tool of populism. For instance, it changed the language of call to prayer from Turkish to Arabic. Gümüş, <http://alewiten.com/onikieylül.htm>.

of Turkish secularism, this criticism is not always towards whole Republic era, but sometimes towards just the governments, which have come to power since the era of Democrat Party. In this regard, 137 articles out of 1037 (13.21%) in *PSAKSD* focus criticize governments.<sup>354</sup> For instance, it is claimed that starting with 1939 and especially with era of Democrat Party, governors have moved away Ataturk's reforms from its essence, i.e., *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* was disrupted with religious schools, Koran courses, and obligatory religious instruction.<sup>355</sup> Moreover, Murtaza Demir, forgetting the Dersim issue, claims that except for Ataturk period the execution of Alevi has been going on since Ottoman period.<sup>356</sup>

In addition, *Cem*'s criticism is also not towards the state, but instead the governments. 210 articles out of 3344 (6.28%) in *Cem* criticize governments. This percentage is higher than percentage for the criticism of anti-Alevi policy of the state (4.25%). For instance, Rıza Zelyut argues that we have to separate governments and the state. Although Turkish Republic was founded on the principles of secularization, modernity, and rationality; the following political staff (governments) destroyed this base. Therefore, he suggests that Alevi have to struggle against governments rather than the state.<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Let me emphasize that I did not codified the criticism of governments not only in terms of their anti-secular policies. They may sometimes criticize government policies regardless of the Alevi issue such as inflation. Even this percentage is still lower than the percentage for state criticism (13.79%) in general and criticism of Alevi policy of the state (13.69%).

<sup>355</sup> *PSAKSD*, 12 (June 1994), pp.1-2. See same concern for the abolishment of DRA in Hasan Basri Özbey (the ex-*PSAKD* general accountant), "Cumhuriyet Devrimi ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Din Polisi," *PSAKSD*, 25 (January-February 1998), p.17.

<sup>356</sup> Murtaza Demir, "Anadolu Aleviliği ve Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneğinin Konumu," *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), p.25.

<sup>357</sup> Rıza Zelyut, "Alevi Gençliği ve Sorunları," *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p.32. See for same concern İzzettin Doğan, "Demokrasinin Yeniden Yapılanması," *Cem*, year 5, 58 (September 1996), p.3. For instance, in volume 63 and 64, there are critics of *Refahyol* government, claiming that there is a threat of Sheri'a.

Based on the differentiation of the state and the government, İzzettin Doğan always focuses on the inadequate administration of governments, criticizing political party leaders and governors who do not behave according to Atatürk's state. "The state is nation's and nations'. It is yours and ours. Therefore, people who perform state service by attorney must respect the society and realities and necessities of this society."<sup>358</sup>

In that sense, Doğan argues that Alevis supported Mustafa Kemal and with their support everyone in this country came together around Mustafa Kemal and the War of Independence was succeeded. However, after Turkey adopted the multiparty system (pluralist democracy), the following governments starting with Democrat Party and especially after 1960, disrupted the secular system of Atatürk, which was not indeed discriminative towards citizens. These governors tried to Sunnify the state as well as discriminating Alevis by not giving permanent offices in the state. Atatürk was trying to adopt Turkish culture whereas the following governments adopted Arab culture.<sup>359</sup> Ali Sevioğlu also argues,

Alevis do not and should not have problems with the Turkish state, secularization, and democracy. ... Opposition to state regardless of the prime minister, the ministers, the political parties, shortly the governors is a comedy. If Alevis oppose, this oppositions must be towards the biased policies of the political powers (governments). By raising their voices, Alevis must say "this country, this state, and this flag are ours; the one who tries to destroy the Kemalist Turkish Republic finds us against him/her."<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden," *Cem*, year 2, 15 (August 1992), p. 2. We see that *Cem Vakfı* has always been in contact with the ministers, the deputies, the governors, and the leaders of political parties. For example, volume 69 and 70 focus on what these governors and political leaders think about the Alevi problem.

<sup>359</sup> İzzettin Doğan, his speech in celebration for the 2nd Anniversary of *Cem Vakfı*, cited in *Cem*, year 7, 65 (April 1997), pp.8–9, "Lütfi Kırdar' da Birlik Cemi Atatürk Anısına Sema ve Semah," *Cem*, Year 30, 85 (December 1998), pp.32–37, İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 32, 93 (September 1999), pp.17–18, İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın. In *Prof.Dr. İzzettin Doğan'ın Alevi İslam İnancı, Kültürü İle İlgili Görüş ve Düşünceleri*, Third Edition (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, 2003), p.104.

<sup>360</sup> Ali Sevioğlu, "Aleviler ve Devlet," *Cem*, year 7, 66 (May 1997), p.63.

In addition, because of his close relations with the state representatives, İzzettin Doğan is called as “the man of the state” (*devletin adamı*) and is mainly criticized because of it. He answers this criticism as that

Alevis are conditioned as being opponent and distant to state. Of course, in this point the real responsibility belongs to the governors. Yet, we have to get rid of this oppression. This state is my state. Since we, as Alevis, are discriminated by the state, we do not have a claim of the state. ... As every Alevi, I am supporting the Republic, which was founded by Atatürk; yet I see faults and unequal attitudes of governors. At this point, I say that I am thinking differently from the governors. They administrate this country inadequately. In terms of accepted as collocutor, the governors know that I behave based on good will, so they do not hesitate. In this sense, to see İzzettin Doğan as the man of the state is not defect. The thing we do is to remind governors the rights and the demands of Alevis and to search for a dialogue.<sup>361</sup>

In short, in terms of their discourses towards the state, *Cem Vakfı* seems to be closer to the state than *PSAKD*. However, it still feels uncomfortable about existing situation concerning the Alevi problem. When we combine this with their standing in politics, it tries to avoid criticizing the state, so its criticism is towards governments. Moreover, it tries to legitimate the demands of Alevis by stating that Alevis are the real owners of this country. On the other hand, *PSAKD* challenges the existing system by criticizing the state policies both in general terms and in specific terms as the Alevi policy of the state. In this way, we may say it functions as an NGO like the way it defines itself as a Democratic Institution for Masses. However, this opposition has limitations, as Okan focuses; it sometimes has Kemalist tendencies, i.e. it defines Alevis as loyal citizens. This position is also clear in their demands from the state. Hence, the following part will analyze Alevi demands from the state.

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<sup>361</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 7, 71 (October 1997), pp.30-31.

## Demands: Total Change of the System versus Being Part of It

Positions of these two institutions vis-à-vis the state also change their demands from the state. Hence, they do not come up with the same demands. Yüksel Işık importantly focuses on the fact that there are two aspects of the demands of Alevis regarding the co-existence of the differences: to provide conditions for Alevis to live their differences and to provide conditions for “everybody.” Hence, the recognition of Alevism by power does not mean a guarantee for coexistence of all differences.<sup>362</sup>

In this regard, we may separate demands of Alevis in two parts: demands for the total change of existing system for a more secular and democratic state such as the abolishment of DRA, the abolishment of obligatory religious instruction, the abolishment/ reorganization of religious schools, and removing religion entry in identity cards. There are other demands, which aim to integrate to the system or to be the part of it in terms of the equality (10<sup>th</sup> article) and the freedom of religion (24<sup>th</sup> article).<sup>363</sup> These are the recognition of Alevi identity, the reorganization of DRA in order to represent Alevis, including Alevism in (optional) religious instruction, the recognition of legal status of *cemevis* as places of worship, having radio and TV programs about Alevism and funding by the state. Hence, by focusing on Turkey’s lack of democracy and anti-secular policies of the state, *PSAKD* argues that only really secular and democratic state can solve the Alevi problem; so it demands the total change of existing system in favor of not only Alevis, but also of all ethnic and religious identities. On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* focuses on the freedom of religion

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<sup>362</sup> Işık, pp.58–61.

<sup>363</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> article focuses on the equality of all citizens regardless of religion, language, race, and sect and the 24<sup>th</sup> article systematizes the freedom of religion and says, “Everybody has the right of freedom of religion and thought. Nobody can be forced to attend religious ceremonies and to manifest her/ his religious belief and can be blamed because of her/his religion.”

and the equality, arguing that if Alevis benefit from facilities provided by the state, the Alevi problem is solved.

First, both of them agree upon that the basic problem of Alevis is non-recognition of Alevis's religious identity by the state.<sup>364</sup> 160 articles out of 3344 (4.78%) in *Cem* and 96 articles out of 1037 (9.26%) in *PSAKSD* focus on the state's denial policy of Alevi identity and a demand for recognition. Therefore, the state must recognize the Alevi identity and provide conditions in which Alevis can live their Aleviness just as Sunnis live their Sunnism. Hence, the problem is not related to the difference between Alevis and Sunnis, but it is about the issue of secularization.<sup>365</sup> For instance, Ali Balkız says Alevis are beautiful people who do not and will not have any demands such as flag, territory, autonomy, and self-government. They just want to live their other sub-identities.<sup>366</sup> In that context, Turan Eser from *PSAKD* summarizes what Alevis want

We want to be the significant with our own color as Anatolian Alevis in the multicultural, multi linguistic, and multi religious mosaic of Turkey. This identity cannot be manipulated by the color of power because this color does

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<sup>364</sup> Tahire Erman's research shows that the efforts of intellectuals and politicians to make Alevis more visible in the public sphere or organization of institutions such as visit to *turbes* do not succeed among ordinary Alevis. In this sense, the reconstruction of Alevi culture is limited with practices and Alevis do not want to underline their difference from Sunnis. This shows that "recognition policy" is imposed from the above rather than emerges from Alevi community itself. Erman, p. 333, pp. 335–337. Moreover, these two institutions present non-recognition of Alevis as the basic common problem of Alevis, but they are not concrete about what they mean by recognition.

<sup>365</sup> Alevi Bektaşî Federasyonu, "Çağdaş, Bilimsel ve Laik Bir Eğitim İçin Zorunlu Din Derslerine Hayır," *PSAKSD*, 60 (June 2005), pp. 78–79. For instance, *PSAKD* sent a petition to the European Court of Human Rights and in this petition; they argued that the right of defining Alevi culture, thought and belief is Alevis' themselves. The petition sent to the European Court of Human Rights, *PSAKSD*, 60 (June 2005), p. 40.

<sup>366</sup> Ali Balkız, "Aleviler Nasıl Bir Türkiye'de Yaşamak İstiyorlar?" *PSAKSD*, 34 (September 1999), p. 10. He then goes on with summarizing the demands of Alevis as follows: the recognition of Alevi identity by the state, secular state; the abolishment of DRA; abolishment of religious instruction; stopping building mosques in Alevi villages; stopping one dimensional broadcast of *TRT* (especially concerning *Muharrem* fasting); removing prejudices against Alevis in school books and dictionaries; the change in 442 law of village (*Köy Kanunu*) dated 1924 (according to 24th article of this law a village without mosque is not accepted as village); recognition of legal status of *cemevis* as places of worship and the re-opening of Alevi-Bektaşî *tekkes*, pp. 10–14.

not define us.<sup>367</sup>

According to *Cem Vakfı*, the common and basic problem of Alevi is also the recognition of Alevism by the state. They argue that *Cem* tries to keep Alevism alive and demands the help of the state in order to reach this aim. Since Alevi pay taxes, the state must recognize the Alevi identity as a religion, a thought, and a culture.<sup>368</sup> Ayhan Aydın argues that the state and Sunni population must accept Alevi identity and the state must redistribute its sources in respect to Alevi so that Alevi can equally participate in the system.<sup>369</sup> Süleyman Cem also states,

The state is secular, but Sunnism is dominant in the state. Alevi have rights to vote and to stand for elections. The real problem is not that. The state does not recognize the existence of Alevi. DRA, which takes share from the state budget, serves for only Sunnis and does not recognize any sect apart from Sunnism.<sup>370</sup>

Moreover, the legal status of *cemevis* as places of worship is also closely related with the recognition of Alevi identity because *cemevis* are seen as places where Alevi come together in order to practice their worship and to claim their religious identity. Hence, since the state as well as DRA defines Alevism as either a culture or a sect of Islam, it does not recognize *cemevis* as places of worship. 47 articles out of 1037 (4.53%) in *PSAKSD* and 118 articles out of 3344 (3.53%) focus on this issue and demand the recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship in order to receive funding from the state or to benefit some facilities provided by the state.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Turan Eser, "Hacı Bektaşî Veli ve Anadolu Aleviliği," *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.35.

<sup>368</sup> "Aydın Görünümü," *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.15.

<sup>369</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>370</sup> Süleyman Cem, "Var mıyız?" *Cem*, year 2, 15 (August 1992), p.18.

<sup>371</sup> 193 *Gelir Vergisi Kanunu* and 5422 *Kurumlar Vergisi Kanunu* arrange some facilities for schools, mosques, and municipalities such as exemption from electricity and water invoices and assignment lands.

Therefore, *Cem* repeats the demand of the recognition of legal status of *cemevis* for many times by focusing on the necessity of *cemevis* for Alevi identity. For instance, İzzettin Doğan argues that the number of *cemevis* is not sufficient when we compare to those of mosques. Hence, the state must fund *cemevis* and provide some facilities.<sup>372</sup> *Cem* tries to legitimize this demand based on the 10<sup>th</sup> article. For instance, in volume 78, *Cem Vakfı* published a public announcement, which was addressed to deputies. In this announcement, they demanded the equal treatment based on 10<sup>th</sup> article and one of these demands was the recognition of the legal status of *cemevis*.<sup>373</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (from *Cem*) also states that their demands from the state are the recognition of legal status of *cemevis* as places of worship and get share from the budget of DRA since the budget of DRA consists of taxes paid also by Alevis. Besides, based on 10<sup>th</sup> article, the state must act equally not only Alevis, but also Christians and Jewish citizens.<sup>374</sup>

On the other hand, Erdal Yıldırım says that *PSAKD* does not have a specific aim of founding *cemevis*.<sup>375</sup> Yet, they see *cemevis* as places in which they can transform Alevi values, culture, and rituals to the following generations. For this reason, they also ask the state the recognition of the legal status of *cemevis*. Hence, Yıldırım points out that if the state accepts *cemevis* as places of worship, Alevi community can found their *cemevis* and finance them and Alevi problem will be mostly solved. Moreover, in the constitution, the state may adopt an article “the right

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<sup>372</sup> His speech in the fourth Congress of *Cem Vakfı* (1998), *Cem*, year 30, 81 (August 1998), p.16.

<sup>373</sup> “Milletvekillerine Çağrı,” *Cem*, year 30, 78 (May 1998), p.48.

<sup>374</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (the manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

<sup>375</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007.

of all religious groups in order to announce their religious identity and to worship wherever and whenever they want is guaranteed by law.”<sup>376</sup> They argue that in 3194 Law on Public Work and 442 Law of Village the term mosque must be replaced with the term places of worship and *cemevis* must be recognized as the places of worship. This will solve the problem of Alevis concerning their religious practice. Otherwise, they will sue Turkey in ECHR for the legal status of *cemevis*.<sup>377</sup>

As I discussed earlier the status of *cemevis* is used as a political tool by DRA since it denies the status of *cemevis* as the places of worship. In this way, it tries to control Alevi demands as well as to protect the privileged position Sunnis. The founding *cemevis* has also become a tool of political struggle for Alevi institutions. For this reason, *Cem Vakfi* organized an architectural contest of founding *cemevis*. Besides, when I went to *PSAKD*'s Kadıköy office in order to conduct interviews, founding a *cemevi* near their office was on their agenda. They were monitorizing the news about this *cemevi* and they were very glad about the criticism of *Vakit* (a conservative-Islamic newspaper) as if they won a struggle against Sunni authorities by founding such a big *cemevi*.

However, although they agree upon the basic demands of the recognition of Alevi identity and the legal status of *cemevis*, as I discussed earlier, since their

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<sup>376</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary For Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007.

<sup>377</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007. 13<sup>th</sup> Article of 3194 Law on Public Work, dated 1985, starts with the sentence “if there are public buildings and schools, mosques, roads, otoparks, and so on which are used for public services ...” Hence, it uses the term mosque, rather than the places of worship. However, this article nullified because of another reason. Available [online]: <http://www.hukuki.net/forum/showthread.php?p=107970> [09 June 2008]. Moreover, the second article of *Köy Kanunu* argues “mosque, school, pasturage, pasture, and forestry coppice together constitute a village.” Available [online]: <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/442.13.text.asp#link0> [9 June 2008] Therefore, a village without a mosque is not accepted as village. Since in most Alevi villages there are not mosques, they are not legally recognized as village and can not benefit from state services. Hence, *PSAKD* argues that if the term mosque in these laws is replaced with the term places of worship and *cemevis* are recognized as places of worship, Alevis may benefit from these facilities provided by the state for those of mosques.

positions in terms of politics are different from each other, they come up with different demands from the state. *Cem Vakfi* mostly had policies in order to benefit state services based on the rights of equality and freedom of religion, therefore it asks the state to carry out 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> articles of the constitution so that all citizens can equally and freely worship. In that sense, out of 3344, 114 (3.41%) articles focus on the freedom of religion and 177 (5.29%) articles focus on the equality. Especially İzzettin Doğan by focusing on inequality between Alevi and Sunni says that the first precondition of social peace and justice is the equality.<sup>378</sup> He also argues that in Turkey the constitutional facilities are sufficient, but the problem emerges in carrying out laws in unequal and biased way. In other words, Turkish society does not have a problem with the constitution, but they have with the politicians. For this reason, governors commit a constitutional crime since they do not carry out 10<sup>th</sup> article.<sup>379</sup> The denial of Alevism by DRA is contrary to the principle of equality defined in the constitution, so this institution must be reorganized.<sup>380</sup> In that standpoint, İzzettin Doğan says, “Like Sunni Alevi must also be equal and free ... The state and DRA must be neutral to all religions.”<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> İzzettin Doğan, his speech in celebration for the Second Anniversary of *Cem Vakfi*, *Cem*, year 7, 65 (April 1997), p. 7, p.9. See for same concern, the speech of İzzettin Doğan in the opening ceremony of the Kadıköy Office of *Cem Vakfi*, *Cem*, year 7, 66 (May 1997), p. 12. Hasan Hüseyin Erkan (the president of Sanyer Office), his speech in the panel of “Alevilik, Mevlevilik, İnanç Özgürlüğü ve Anayasal Eşitlik” on 13.04.1997, *Cem*, year 7, 66 (May 1997), p. 16. İzzettin Doğan, his speech in the opening ceremonies of the Ankara Office, *Cem*, year 7, 67 (June 1997), pp.7–8, p.11. İzzettin Doğan, his speech in the panel which was organized by the *Gazi Cemevi*, *Cem*, year 30, 82 (September 1998), p.10.

<sup>379</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, 2003, p.43. See for same concern, İzzettin Doğan’s speech in the meeting before the negotiations for the 2000 budget cited in Soner Erdoğan, “İnanç Hizmetinde Haksızlık Sürüyor... Devlet Üzerine Düşeni Yapsın,” *Cem*, year 32, 96 (December 1999), pp. 6-7. He also argues that by ignoring Alevi-Bektasi-Mevlevi citizens who are more than 25 million, governors are making “separatism” among society. The speech of İzzettin Doğan in an organization of the Hannover office, cited in Zülfiyar Yalçınkaya, “Hannover’de Şenlik Eşitlik İstiyoruz,” *Cem*, year 32, 96 ( December 1999), p.16.

<sup>380</sup> His speech in Fourth Congress of *Cem Vakfi* (1998), cited in *Cem*, year 30, 81 (August 1998), p.17.

<sup>381</sup> “Alevilik Kırmızı Koltuk’ta, İzzettin Doğan ile Söyleşi,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.34. See

*PSAKD* also focus on the issue of freedom of religion and equality in that out of 1037, 36 articles (3.47%) focus on the equality and 38 articles (3.66%) emphasize the freedom of religion. However, they do not take the issue as *Cem Vakfi* does in that *PSAKD*'s demands for equality and freedom of religion not only for Alevi, but also for all ethnic and religious identities. They argue that the state must be in equal standing for all religions and must not finance any religion. Hence, the basic contradiction between these two institutions in terms of demands emerges based on the principle of secularism. As I discussed earlier, *PSAKD* asserts that

If the state adopts the laws based on secularism, the problem of Alevi will automatically end. A secular state should not have a religion. However, in the constitution, which was created after 12 September, article 24 focuses on the definition of religion. Today the budget of DRA is much more than 5-6 ministers.<sup>382</sup>

On the other hand, although *Cem Vakfi* criticizes Turkish secularization, this is because Alevi do not benefit from the state service in terms of freedom of religion. In other words, if Alevi benefit from facilities provided by the state like Sunni population does, the issue of Alevi problem will be solved. In this standpoint, it believes that the state can solve the Alevi problem by its institutions.

The state has *TRT*, mosques and so on. If it wants, it can demolish the separation between Alevi and Sunni. As a start, Alevism can be thought at primary schools. As a modern person, I am against obligatory religious instruction. Yet; if it is maintained, it may include Alevism, too.<sup>383</sup>

For *Cem Vakfi*, the state must provide correct knowledge about Alevism in order to the create the co-existence of different groups in peace. Hence, it demands state channels special TV programmes about Alevism, Alevi-Islam thought and

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for same concern, İzzettin Doğan, "Yeni Anayasa Hazırlanırken," *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), p.6.

<sup>382</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007.

<sup>383</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-manager of *Cem Vakfi* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfi* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

Alevi culture in month *Muharrem* like the one they do for Sunnis in Month Ramadan.<sup>384</sup> 34 articles out of 3344 (1.02%) articles in *Cem* focus on this issue.<sup>385</sup> In volume 61, it is asking that why *TRT* is ignoring Alevis although according to law (31<sup>st</sup> article of constitution, which defines the rights of corporate to benefit from the tools of communication) it is *TRT*'s duty to prepare programs about Alevi culture in order to introduce what Alevism is and to say all aspersions about Alevis are lie.<sup>386</sup>

Another issue is the receiving funding from the state. In that context, three articles (0.09%) in *Cem* focus on receiving financial support from the state for “Alevism as a culture” and 102 (3.05%) articles demand money from the budget for “Alevism as a religion.” According to Y. Yesari Gökçe, it is the requirement of the principle of equality in the constitution to give share Alevis for their religious services.<sup>387</sup> For instance, volume 60 focuses on the contacts of İzzettin Doğan with the political party leaders in order to take share from the budget. Therefore, *Cem* mostly criticizes governors and the political party leaders since they do not keep their promises about giving share Alevis from the budget.<sup>388</sup>

However, the debate whether Alevis can receive money from the state emerged among Alevis especially when the government allocated money to *Cem Vakfı* from the 2000 budget. Most Alevi institutions criticized *Cem Vakfı* because it received money from the state. However, *Cem* argues that İzzettin Doğan wants this

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<sup>384</sup> “Alevilik’le İlgili TV Programları” *Cem*, year 30, 80 (July 1998), p. 40.

<sup>385</sup> The percentage for *PSAKD* is 0.68 % in that only seven articles demands radio and TV programs about Alevism especially in the month of *Muharrem*. For instance, in the report, which they sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2000, Alevi-Bektasi Institutions mentions this demand. (Cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.17.

<sup>386</sup> “Aleviliğe Bilinmeyen Sansür,” *Cem*, year 6, 61 (December 1996), pp.18-25 and “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.6.

<sup>387</sup> Y. Yesari Gökçe, 65 (April 1997), p.4.

<sup>388</sup> “Siyasiler Yine Yan Çizdiler,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 7.

money not for himself or for *Vakıf*, but for Alevis and Alevism. For instance, Niyazi Öktem claims that receiving money from the state is normal if *Cem Vakfı* is defined as an interest group. He then goes on by saying that Alevis need this money in order to found *cemevis*, to found TV and radio channels, to educate *dedes*, and so on. In only this way, Alevis can be powerful. Hence, the criticism against *Cem Vakfı* as being the Club of the Rich is just a reflection of jealousy in that these people do not want Alevis to be powerful.<sup>389</sup> Moreover, *Cem Vakfı* argues that this money is not sufficient for *Vakıf*'s needs. Since *Cem Vakfı* financed itself by contributions of Alevi businesspersons and donations, it sometimes does not finish its projects on time. It also points out that according to 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> articles Alevis must take share one third of the budget of DRA. Since the state defines the religious service as a public service, Alevis want to benefit from this service of the state.<sup>390</sup>

On the other hand, *PSAKD* argues the state must not finance any religion because in a secular state cannot finance any religion or a religious group. For this reason, it criticizes *Cem Vakfı* since it receives funding from the state.<sup>391</sup>

The state must not pay salary to our Hanefi brothers' *imams*, our Christian brothers' priests, and Alevis' *dedes*. The state does not have a duty and a luxury of founding mosques, churches, *cemevis*, and so on. It must withdraw from the religious sphere and must stay equal distance from both religious and irreligious citizens.<sup>392</sup>

However, interestingly in *PSAKSD* 4 articles (0.39%) argues that Alevis can

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<sup>389</sup> Niyazi Öktem, "Büyük Fırtına," *Cem*, Year 5, 55 (December 1995), p.4. He does not specifically name these groups. However, when we analyze text carefully, we will see that he means *PSAKD*. As he argues, these groups are saying, "First we must form real democracy so that the Alevi problem can be solved" and *PSAKSD* is full of this understanding.

<sup>390</sup> The public announcemet of *Cem Vakfı*, cited in Soner Erdoğan, "İnanç Hizmetinde Haksızlık Sürüyor... Devlet Üzerine Düşeni Yapsın," *Cem*, year 32, 96 (December 1999), pp.6-7.

<sup>391</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007.

<sup>392</sup> Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), "Alevi Kimliğinin Tanınması İçin Örgütlü Güç Şarttır," *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), p.4.

receive financial support for “Alevism as a culture” and two articles (0.19%) claims that “Alevism as a religion” must be financed by the state. For instance, Murtaza Demir discussed “should they receive money from the state?” and said that “our institution may say “yes” to economical support from the state for our culture, but say “no” for our religion, sect and belief.” He claims that Alevism as a culture is the wealth of this country, so the state must create facilities in order to protect this culture.<sup>393</sup> How can we analyze this contradiction? In fact, there is a simple explanation: pragmatism. These articles were written in 1998 when the government allocated money to Alevi *Vakıfs*. For the first time, the state allocated 425 milliard from the 1998 budget of DRA, which was spent for religious service.

In fact, the issue of receiving money is closely related to the position of DRA, which is the basic issue in terms of (Turkish) secularization. However, there are two controversial ideas about this institution. On the one hand, the existence of DRA from the beginning when it was first founded is criticized totally, claiming that it is contrary to secularization. On the other hand, there is an opposing idea, which sees DRA as a guarantee of Turkish secularization, which protects the country from the threat of reaction. Yet, today it is so powerful even the state cannot control it, so it must be reorganized.

Hence, *PSAKD* shares the first view whereas *Cem Vakfı* the second one. First, *PSAKD* always announces that the position of DRA is related to secularism. For this reason it must be abolished and every religious group should finance itself. It announces, “Let’s struggle for the abolishment of DRA and for transferring its budget for education, health, and investments.”<sup>394</sup> 79 articles out of 1037 (7.62%) in

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<sup>393</sup> Murtaza Demir, 25 (January-February 1998), p. 8.

<sup>394</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 13 (May 2004). For same views about the abolishment of DRA see Hasan Basri Özbey, 25 (January-February 1998), pp.16-17, Necati Yılmaz, 26 (May 1998), p. 3,

*PSAKSD* demand the abolishment of DRA.<sup>395</sup>

However, although *PSAKD* supports the abolishment of the DRA, interestingly, in 2004, administrators were giving different speeches. For instance, Selfet Yıldız was saying, “obligatory religious instruction must be abolished. The state must give a share to other religions in the budget of DRA.” On the other hand, Kazım Genç said, “Nobody can be free without struggling for democracy and labor. The 2% share is given to DRA. We do not want obligatory religious instruction. There is no support of other religions. We have to struggle for this.”<sup>396</sup>

In this context, Turan Eser asserts that the existence of DRA is contradictory for different aspects in that Turkish Republic has a claim of being equal as a secular social-law state, but it services just Sunni Islam although there are different religious groups who pay taxes to the state.<sup>397</sup> At first glance, Turan Eser’s statement is true, yet in terms of demands, there can be different conclusions: either the abolishment of DRA or representation of other religious groups. Eser’s position is not clear about this issue, whether he is criticizing the existence of DRA or non-representation of Alevi in this institution. In the following pages, he says that the state must stop presenting religion as public service and making propaganda of Sunni Islam.<sup>398</sup>

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* mostly demands the re-organization of DRA in

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Kazım Genç, 54 (July-August-September 2003), p. 16. Necati Yılmaz also adds the abolishment of obligatory religious instruction and stopping founding mosques in Alevi villages.

<sup>395</sup> On the other hand, only one article (0.10%) in *PSAKSD* demands the re-organization of DRA, yet this article (vol. 45) belongs to İsmail Engin who is indeed writer of *Cem*. İsmail Engin, “Türkiye İçin Yeni Bir Olanak ve Aleviler İçin Yeni Bir Şans Olarak Avrupa Birliği: Tren Kaçıyor mu?” *PSAKSD*, 45 (July-August 2001).

<sup>396</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 13 (May 2004). Their speeches in the day of *Aşure* on 2 May 2004, p. 4.

<sup>397</sup> Turan Eser, 58, July-August-September 2004, pp.32–38.

<sup>398</sup> Turan Eser, 58, July-August-September 2004, p.41.

order to represent all religious groups so that Alevis should be represented in DRA. 81 articles out of 3344 (2.42%) focus on this issue. In terms of the difference of *Cem Vakfi* with other Alevi institutions, İzzettin Doğan summarizes what *Cem Vakfi* and other institutions demand and in this way, he narrates what they think about the position of DRA.

*Cem Vakfi* thinks that Alevis, who are one third of the population, do not benefit from religious service, which is defined as a public service in the constitution, and demand stopping this stance. On the other hand, other Alevi institutions are against the existence of DRA, supporting the belief that the state must leave religious service to society, namely the community itself. We say if it is to be abolished, abolish it. Yet; if not, it must be more independent and more democratic. We say if DRA aims to give religious service to the public, it must give a share from the budget to all religious groups regarding their proportion in the population.<sup>399</sup>

Indeed, in the beginning, before *Cem Vakfi* was founded *Cem*'s position in terms of DRA was controversial. A total of 20 articles out of 3344 (0.60%) in *Cem* demanded the abolishment of DRA. 11 of those articles were written before *Cem Vakfi* was founded. The other 9 argue that ideally DRA must be abolished, but in terms of conditions (the threat of Sheri'a) in Turkey this is impossible. In this vein, on the one hand, in the first volumes, İzzettin Doğan criticized the non-representation of Alevis in this institution.<sup>400</sup> In addition, *Cem* was demanding a share from the budget of DRA in order to develop the Alevi culture, to found *cemevis*, to educate *dedes*.<sup>401</sup> On the other hand, in the same volume, Niyazi Öktem argues that existence of DRA in the state institutionalism is contrary to the principle of secularization.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 7, 71 (October 1997), p.31. See for same concern Murat Küçük "Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye'nin Alevi Yurttaşları," *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February 2000), p.30.

<sup>400</sup> İzzettin Doğan, "Siyasi Parti Liderlerine ve Aydın Vatandaşlara Açık Çağrı," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.2.

<sup>401</sup> "Ayın Görünümü," *Cem*, year 1, 5, (October 1991), p.6.

<sup>402</sup> Niyazi Öktem, "Devlet ve Din," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.16.

Moreover, in an announcement of *Cem* about DRA in the eighth volume, *Cem* asserts that the *structure* (not existence) of DRA is contrary to secular state as well as Alevi thought. (My emphasis)<sup>403</sup> In volume.31, Yaşar Uçar also states that the representation of Alevis in DRA is contrary to the history of Alevism, which is the story of Alevi opposition to destruction, because it will lead to the total destruction of Alevism. The state must either abolish DRA, which must not be in a secular state or fund Alevis in order to found their autonomous organization.<sup>404</sup>

However, their disagreement about position of the DRA may sometimes be apparent even in the ideas of one person. For instance, Abidin Özgünay says,

There is no place for DRA in a secular state. If there are valid reasons, for instance, if bigotry and enmity against the secular republic are controlled, it can exist. ... This institution must be reorganized in order to respect all religious groups in this country. The language of religion must be changed to the language in which we talk (Turkish); Koran courses, Koran education centers, and obligatory religious instruction must be abolished.<sup>405</sup>

Furthermore, Cemal Şener correctly points out that DRA was founded in order to control religion (Sunni Islam) as a Turkish type of laicism. However, this institution turned from an institution, which controls religion to an institution, which flourishes and institutionalizes Sunni Islam. Nevertheless, there are other religious groups in Turkey such as Christians, Jews, Shiites, Alevis, and Shafis and these groups are not represented in DRA. Yet, he argues that Alevis were the most victimized.<sup>406</sup> This position criticizes DRA, but just its “today” position in the

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<sup>403</sup> “Cem’in Diyanet Bildirisi,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.10 and “Ayn Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.14.

<sup>404</sup> Yaşar Uçar, “Alevi Birliği İçin Öneriler,” *Cem*, year 3, 31 (December 1993), p. 29.

<sup>405</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Başbakana Açık Mektup,” *Cem*, year 2, 13 (June 1992), p.3.

<sup>406</sup> Cemal Şener, “Diyanet, Bütçe, Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), pp. 32–33. On the other hand, unlike Cemal Şener who claims that Alevis are the most victimized, they sometimes argue that Alevis are not represented in this institution because they are not seen as a threat against the state due to their democratic, secular and republican character. For instance, Cahit Tanyol, “Atatürk’ün Ölümünden 53 Yıl Sonra Şeyhülislamlık ve Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı,” *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November

country, seeing it a threat because now it is a strong state institution with a huge number of staff and a budget.

I want to focus especially on the writing of İ. Kemal Aydemir in order to show how he stands in a paradoxical position. On the one hand, he tries to stay away from the state in order not to be assimilated to Sunnism by saying that Alevis do not want to be represented in DRA. Alevis ask the state for equal standing for all religious groups so that these groups can finance themselves. This is a case for real democracy. On the other hand, he demands aid of the state such as a share from the budget of DRA, funding *cemevis*, and permitting Alevi High Schools and Institutions to open. He argues that if this institution existed despite its contradiction to laicism, *Cem* will start a legal struggle in order to get this share, which is used for opening *cemevis* and meeting the needs of *dedes* and *babas*.<sup>407</sup>

However, especially after the founding of *Cem Vakfı* their demands related to position of the DRA became clear. First, it argues that the state is administrating religious affairs through DRA and at first glance, the existence of DRA within institutionalization of the state may be found strange in terms of understanding of a democratic state and civil society. When we look at the issue in terms of institutionalization, this judgment may be true. Yet, every country has peculiar institutions. The existence of DRA is arranged by the constitution, so it is difficult to remove it from state institutionalization. Legal difficulties and the socio-political position of Turkey necessitate this institution within the existing system.<sup>408</sup>

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1991), pp.7-8.

<sup>407</sup> İ. Kemal Aydemir, "Davamıza Çözüm Önerileri," *Cem*, year 1, 11 (April 1992), p. 33, p.35.

<sup>408</sup> *Cem Vakfı Çalışmaları ve Vakıf Genel Başkanı Prof. Dr. İzzettin Doğan'ın Görüş ve Düşünceleri*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul 1998), pp.21-22. Abidin Özgünay also shares the same view in that he argues that the state must control religion and religious activities. Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden," *Cem*, year 5, 52 (September 1995), p.3.

Second, it started to demand the representation of Alevis in DRA more determinately based on article 10, which focuses on equality. In other words, İzzettin Doğan always points out unequal treatment of governors and politicians by arguing that trillions is spent for Sunnism whereas Alevis do not get any money from the budget although in terms of equality the constitution requires it.<sup>409</sup> In that context, he addresses governors (not the state) saying, “You do not have authority to take 21 trillion and to spend it for the needs of just certain religious groups. If you supply funds for religion, you have to give a share in budget of DRA to non-Sunni or non-Muslim citizens based on their portion of population.”<sup>410</sup> Moreover, Hıdır Akbayır focuses that Alevi *dedes* do not benefit from personal rights provided by the state such as social security. For this reason, if the state deploys *dedes* as staff of DRA, they can also benefit from the rights of those of *imams*.<sup>411</sup>

Nevertheless, they do not want representation of Alevis in this “existing” institution but vice versa, they want a new independent institution to be founded in order to represent all religious groups.<sup>412</sup> For instance, İzzettin Doğan argues that by the re-organization of DRA in order to represent all religious groups based on the

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<sup>409</sup> See for same concern İzzettin Doğan’s speeches in TV programme “Onda On” on HBB in January 1998, cited in *Cem*, year 8, 73 (January 1998, p.9), in an organization for solidarity between *Cem Vakfı* and *Hacı Bektaş Veli Dergahı Vakfı*, *Cem*, year 30, 77 (April 1998), p.8, in the opening ceremony of the Hannover Office, cited in Murat Küçük, “Cem Vakfı Hannover’da,” *Cem*, year 30, 78 (May 1998), p.8, in an organization of Hannover, cited in Zülfikar Yalçınkaya, “Hannover’de Şenlik Eşitlik İstiyoruz!,” *Cem*, year 32, 96 (December 1999), p.19 and Halis Özkan (The Coordinator of *Cem Vakfı* Europe), his speech in the cultural seminars in Oer-Erkenschwick, *Cem*, year 30, 83 (October 1998), p.17.

<sup>410</sup> İzzettin Doğan, his speech in a meeting in *Cem Vakfı*, “Cem Vakfı’nda Tarihi Toplantı,” *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), p. 5. See for same concern İzzettin Doğan, “Devlet Adamlığı,” *Cem*, year 6, 61 (December 1996), p. 5, İzzettin Doğan, “Demokrasi ve Zavallı Siyasetçiler,” *Cem*, year 7, 62 (January 1997), p. 5.

<sup>411</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

<sup>412</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden,” *Cem*, Year 5, 52 (September 1995), p.3.

proportion in the population will solve the problem of discrimination.<sup>413</sup> In addition, İzzettin Doğan suggests that the state can assist *Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri Başkanlığı* so that Alevi may benefit from religious service.<sup>414</sup>

Furthermore, the issue is analyzed based on the national unity by arguing that adopting equality is the basic step for democracy. If Alevi, Jews, Christians, and so on are represented in DRA, this state will be the state of “all” and this will foster national integrity and strengthen fraternity of Alevi-Sunni communities.<sup>415</sup> For instance, in October 1993, *Cem* applied DRA to attend the Meeting of Religion (*Din Şurası*), yet DRA refused this application. Sadık Göksu asserted that *Cem* was for a dialogue between Alevi and DRA.<sup>416</sup>

In short, these lines are noticeable in order show the position of *Cem Vakfı*:

DRA was there. Maybe theoretically, it was correct to demand the state leave religion to its owner, namely religious community. Yet, the “threat” against the secular republic was presenting inconvenience. Therefore, it was correct to demand democratization of DRA. ... Since it was founded, *Cem Vakfı* have expressed that it is necessary to represent Alevi, Sunnis, Christians, and Jews in DRA without any superiority to each other. ... It is necessary to give a share from the budget to all religious groups in respect to their portion in population.<sup>417</sup>

In this context, *Cem Vakfı* has a pragmatist approach in that it wants to integrate to state and get a share from the budget of DRA. In addition, it believes that

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<sup>413</sup> His speech in the first organization of *Cem Vakfı*, cited in “Olaylar-Yorumlar,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.7.

<sup>414</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, Ayhan Aydın ed. *Günümüz Alevi, Bektaşî, Mevlevî, Nusayrî İnanç ve Toplum Önderlerinin Görüş ve Düşünceleri*, İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, 2006, p.88.

<sup>415</sup> Interview with İzzettin Doğan in *Cem*, year 35, 113 (September 2001), p.11.

<sup>416</sup> Sadık Göksu, “Takke Düştü, Diyanet’in Keli Göründü,” *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), pp. 34-35.

<sup>417</sup> “Alevilere 1997 Yılı Bütçesinden Pay Gündemde, Sabır Taşı Çatlamasın,” *Cem*, year 6, 60 (November 1996), p. 17. For same concern see Murat Küçük, “Yetmişbeşinci Yılda Cumhuriyet ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 30, 84 (November 1998), p.35.

the state can solve the issue of Alevism by including Alevi in existing institutions.

As Ayhan Aydın unintentionally points out

*Cem Vakfı* has not serious policies about the position of DRA. There is an idea about to get a share from the budget of DRA. Yet, I do not want to make comment on this. Once I told that “If *Cem Vakfı* is bounded to DRA, I will walk naked.” Here, the personnel silenced me.<sup>418</sup>

However, Yüksel Işık argues that Alevi’s insistence on the Turkish type secularism or a demand for the representation in DRA is meaningless. The representation of Alevism in DRA does not just create the problem of freedom of religion, but also leads Alevism to lose its essence under the control of the state.<sup>419</sup> Moreover, Okan also points out that the representation of Alevi in DRA would lead to codification of the Alevi thought as a literate religion like Sunni Islam. This will also bring us the question whether Alevism will lose its heterodox structure and turn to orthodoxy.<sup>420</sup>

Secondly, concerning secularization, both of these two institutions mainly criticize obligatory religious instruction because in those classes only Sunni Islam is thought. However, their demands concerning this problem are different from each other. 91 articles out of 1037 (8.78%) in *PSAKSD* whereas only 46 articles out of 3344 (1.38%) in *Cem* demand the abolishment of obligatory religious instruction. However, 59 articles in *Cem* (1.76%) demand including Alevism in either optional or obligatory instruction. This percentage is higher than that of percentage, which demands the abolishment of obligatory religious instruction. On the other hand, only five articles in *PSAKSD* (0.48%) demand including Alevism in religious instruction.

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<sup>418</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>419</sup> Işık, pp.62–63.

<sup>420</sup> Okan, p.195.

This issue is also closely related to the position of religious schools in that another tool for the state in order to foster Sunni Islam is religious schools: *IHLs* and faculty of theology. 27 articles out of 1037 (2.60%) in *PSAKSD* and 10 articles out of 3344 (0.30%) in *Cem* argues for either the abolishment of religious schools, decrease in number of them or leaving them religious groups themselves.

In this contest, *PSAKD* claims that obligatory religious instruction and entry on religion in identity cards are contrary to article 9/1<sup>421</sup> of European Convention on Human Rights. Hence, *PSAKD* sued Turkey in European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) by claiming that obligatory religious instruction and entry on religion in identity cards are contradictory to the act of EHCR. It argues that the state, which takes taxes from Alevis, creates coercion on Alevi children especially through obligatory religious instruction and entry on religion in identity cards.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: “1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.” Available [online]: <http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/D5CC24A7-DC13-4318-B457-5C9014916D7A/0/EnglishAnglais.pdf> [12 May 2008].

<sup>422</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007. After that “the ECtHR held unanimously, in October 2007, decided that there had been a violation of Article 2 of Protocol No.1 (right to education) to the ECHR. The Court took note of the Government’s acknowledgement that these classes do not take into account the religious diversity which prevails in Turkish society; it further considered that the religious instruction syllabus in Turkey could not be considered to meet the criteria of objectivity and pluralism necessary in a democratic society, and that there is no appropriate method to ensure respect for parents’ convictions. Consequently, the Court held that Turkey should bring its educational system and domestic legislation into conformity with the ECHR.” Available [online]: [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2007/nov/turkey\\_progress\\_reports\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/turkey_progress_reports_en.pdf) Moreover, in the beginning of March 2008, Eighth Office of *Danıştay* (Council of State) declared illegality of obligatory religious instruction based on Ninth article of act of the ECHR. *Danıştay*: Zorunlu Din Dersi Hukuksuz, 04 March 2008. Available [online]: <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/437852.asp> [04 March 2008]. However, after this decision of *Danıştay*, the president of DRA (Ali Bardakoğlu) declares that this decision is taken under the influence of the ECHR. However, obligatory religious instruction is necessity for Turkey. He argues that giving information about any religion does not mean th educating students based on that religion, so this instruction must not be seen as the education of only one sect. *Diyanet: Din Dersi AİHM Gölgesinde*, 06 March 2008. Available [online]: <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/438210.asp> [06 March.2008].

In fact, the entry of religion in identity cards is related with the issue of the recognition of Alevism. Since Alevis are not formally recognized, in their identity cards their religion is written as Islam. If we take the position of *Cem Vakfi*, which define Alevism as an interpretation of Islam, this cannot be problem for Alevis. However, this is problem for *PSAKD*, which argues Alevism is outside of Islam. The basic issue related with entry on religion is anti-secular character of this practice since people are forced to manifest their religion. 13 articles out of 1037 (1.25%) articles in *PSAKSD* and only 2 articles out of 3344 (0.06%) articles in *Cem* demand remove of entry on religion from identity cards.

When we turn back to obligatory religious instruction, *PSAKD* also asserts that the 24<sup>th</sup> article<sup>423</sup> of the constitution is contradictory with article 2 and 4 in 1982 constitution, which systematize principle of secularization, because a secular state cannot have religion and cannot put obligatory religious instruction at schools. In this sense, rather than including Alevism in those classes, *PSAKD* demands the abolishment of religious instruction completely. At least, it may be optional.<sup>424</sup> Hence, by criticizing AKP's project on *YÖK*, *PSAKD* presents its ideas about religious education and secularization. In this sense, it condemns AKP in fostering Sunni Islam identity and in assimilating Alevism into Sunni Islam by religious education.

However, the state must be in equal distance for all citizens. ... The state must be irreligious in that rather than the states, citizens may have religion. This *YÖK* project will reinforce the existing system in which the state makes propaganda of Sunni Islam by obligatory religious instruction, by *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (with its 80 thousand staff and budget), by Koran courses, by *İHLs* and so on. ... The Sunni Islamic thought is protected by the state.

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<sup>423</sup> In the last part of this article, it systematizes religious instruction at schools as obligatory: "Education and institution in religion and ethics shall be under the state supervision and control."

<sup>424</sup> Kazım Genç 54 (July-August-September 2003), p. 13, Kazım Genç, "Tüm Canlara Merhaba," *PSAKSD*, 56 (March 2004), pp.1-2, Kazım Genç "Zorunlu Din Dersleri," *PSAKSD*, 60 (June 2005).

Religious instruction must not be practiced by the state, but must be practiced by religious groups themselves. In Turkey, secularism is under the monopoly of the state. However, in democratic societies secularism must be socialized. It is not the system in which religion is politicized, just the opposite religion is the issue of individuals. Religion must be socialized and freed. ... For the enlightened future of the Turkey, religion and religious instruction must be taken from the monopoly of the state and must be given to religious groups themselves. Like in contemporary societies, every religious group can live its religion freely and when they demand they may have their religious instruction in their mosques, in *cemevis*, in churches, in synagogues or may have in their schools. This is the prerequisite of the equal opportunity and freedom of religion. Alevis do not demand religious instruction from the state. The state, as an arranger, must recognize the freedom of religious groups with their *names* and leave religious instruction to these religious groups themselves. ... Secular system is possible by taking religion and religious instruction from the monopoly of the state. This step is obligatory for the multi religious, multicultural and multi linguistic Turkey. (My emphasis)<sup>425</sup>

On the other hand, *Cem* also mostly criticizes obligatory religious instruction, which was put in the constitution after 12 September.<sup>426</sup> Cahit Tanyol points out that the existence of obligatory religious instruction and this high number of religious schools is contrary to the principle of secularization.<sup>427</sup> Hasan Gülşan also asserts that obligatory religious instruction is contrary to articles of 2, 10, 14, 24/4 of the constitution and International Declaration of Human Rights. He points out that since the content of these lessons is based on Sunni-Hanefi Islam, it contradicts with its name *Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Dersi*. While non-Muslims are exempted, Alevis are subject to these lessons and this assimilates them into Sunni Islam.<sup>428</sup>

Unlike *PSAKD*, which demands abolishment of these lessons completely,

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<sup>425</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 13 (May 2004) p. 5 and *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.14 (July 2004) p.1. Both in number 13 and in 14, not only obligatory religious instruction, but also optional religious instruction is criticized. They claim that in that way assimilation of Alevism will speed up.

<sup>426</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “Siyasi Parti Liderlerine ve Aydın Vatandaşlara Açık Çağrı,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.2.

<sup>427</sup> Cahit Tanyol, “Din Eğitimi ve Anayasa,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.12.

<sup>428</sup> Hasan Gülşan, “Zorunlu Din Dersi Anayasaya Aykırı Mıdır?” *Cem*, year 3, 26 (March 1993), p. 35.

*Cem Vakfı* demands to make obligatory religious instruction optional and to include Alevism in these optional classes.<sup>429</sup> Hence, İzzettin Doğan argues that Alevis are still subject of aspersions such as *mumsöndü*, which is disgrace for Turkish democracy. “If we teach this culture and religion (Alevism) sufficiently at schools and went on scientific researches like Fuad Köprülü did in order to understand Alevism, Turkish democracy would not live the problems which it lives now.”<sup>430</sup> By including Alevism in the course books and in TV programs, he argues that, people will be more free and democratic and they live in peace since they know each other.<sup>431</sup> For instance, in *Cem* it is argued that

We have to say that national integrity is first possible with a democratic culture and the democracy cannot come true with ignoring the basic human rights and freedom. For this reason, content of religious instruction must be reorganized due to the secular perspective. Pluralist attitude, which does not insult and judge any religion, will teach children from different religion and sect who are in the same class, the coexistence of their identity. Not to live Maraş, Çorum, and Sivas incidents any more depends on the efficiency of this new attitude on our life and traditional behaviors.<sup>432</sup>

In short, *PSAKD* –as being part of *ABF*- demands the abolition of DRA, recognition of legal status of *cemevis*, the abolition of obligatory religious instruction, completely removing of entry on religion from identity cards, destruction/ or changing of mosques in Alevi villages and presents the denial/ discrimination/ assimilation of Alevi identity by the state as the common Alevi

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<sup>429</sup> “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.6. See for same concern Niyazi Öktem, “Devlet ve Din,” *Cem*, year 1, 5, (October 1991), p.16, Cemal Şener, “Seçim ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.32, “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, year 1, 7 (December 1991), “Zorunlu Din Derslerine Hayır,” *Cem*, year 30, 80, (July 1998), p. 40, İzzettin Doğan, his speech in the Third Meeting of *Cem Vakfı Anadolu İnanç Önderleri*, cited in Aydın, 2006, p.288.

<sup>430</sup> His speech in the opening ceremony of the Antalya Office (1998), *Cem*, year 30, 81 (August 1998), p.10.

<sup>431</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “Merhaba,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.8.

<sup>432</sup> “Din Dersi Müfredatı Yeniden Belirlenmeli,” *Cem*, year 33, 100 (April 2000), p.33.

problem.<sup>433</sup> In other words, the problem of Alevi emerges from the state rather than their Aleviness. The problem is DRA, religious instruction, *TRT*, the state and its formal ideology, pressure of conservatives and reactionists.<sup>434</sup> For instance, Ali Balkız asks representatives of the state “Will you promise to abolish of DRA, to save Alevi children from obligatory religious instruction, and stop the policy of building mosques in Alevi villages?”<sup>435</sup>

Furthermore, *PSAKD* asserts that the problem of Alevi must be considered in respect to the problem of democracy and secularization by arguing, “Turkish state is not secular, but it will be.”<sup>436</sup> In this way, it criticizes the practices of the state based on the point that the state should not have a religion and should not finance any religion.<sup>437</sup> In other words, in a democratic and secular state, there will not be an Alevi problem any more. For instance, Erdal Yıldırım points out

Our understanding of democracy is not just related to Alevism. If the state carries out the rules of real secularization, there will be no problem left. A secular state cannot have a religion. Yet, in constitution of 12 September, there is a definition of religion (24<sup>th</sup> article). In a secular state, the state cannot finance any religion. If DRA is removed from constitution or is abolished and religious group start to finance themselves, there will not be problem left for us.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>433</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007.

<sup>434</sup> Ali Balkız, 6 (April 1993). p. 3–4. Same concern is also apparent in Murtaza Demir, “Basından Çeşitlemeler ve Yorumlar,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), pp. 10–11, Murtaza Demir, 25 (January-February 1998), p.3.

<sup>435</sup> Ali Balkız’s (the ex-president and the ex-secretary of media) speech in Abdal Musa ceremonies in June 1998, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.5.

<sup>436</sup> Kazım Engin, (*Dede* of *PSAKD*), his speech in forum in the Conference on Alevi and Politics on 20 May 2007.

<sup>437</sup> The report which was sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Alevi-Bektasi Institutions, cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.17.

<sup>438</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007.

On the other hand, İzzettin Doğan lines up the demands of *Cem Vakfı* as follows: the reorganization of DRA to be *again* democratic and independent, removing aspersions about Alevism from lesson books and including real and satisfactory information about Alevism, having TV programmes about Alevi-Islam thought on state televisions, receive funding from the state to found *cemevis*. (My emphasis)<sup>439</sup> It also wants the recognition of Alevi identity by the state as well as stopping discrimination against Alevis based upon the terms of equality and freedom of religion.

Based on the differences in their demands, we may argue that *PSAKD* is trying to struggle for real secularism and democracy in which there is the co-existence of different religions and irreligious people. However, rather than criticizing Turkish secularization which is indeed the source of Alevi problem, *Cem Vakfı* tries to integrate to the state. In this way, it demands not only the recognition of Alevi identity by the state, but also the enlargement of existing “religious” system in favor of Alevis in which Alevis can receive funding and benefit facilities provided by the state.

However, although they come up with opposite demands in order to solve Alevi problem, they are also targeting at “again” the state. Küçük argues that this means rather than being resulted from deep analysis, Alevi demands can be considered as pragmatic.<sup>440</sup> For instance, *PSAKD* criticizes the financial support of the state towards mosques in terms of secularization, but it also demands the recognition of legal status of the *cemevis* by the state in order to benefit facilities.

Moreover, interestingly, although their criticism towards the state’s attitude is

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<sup>439</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “İnanç ve Birlik Yolunda... Cem Vakfı Üç Yaşında,” *Cem*, year 30, 80 (July 1998), p.32.

<sup>440</sup> Küçük, 2001, p.190.

based on secularism; they do not any activity with other religious groups or they do not come up with any demands on the behalf of them. In my opinion, for this reason, their understanding of secularism and democracy stays superficial. This is also case even for *PSAKD*, which argues for democracy and secularization for not only Alevis but also for all ethnic and religious identities. For this reason, this would be the enlargement of the aura of the state in favor of Alevis.

In short, starting with their position in terms of politics, as I discussed in the first part of this chapter, their attitudes towards the source of Alevi problem as well as their demands change. On the one hand, *PSAKD* is aware that the issue of Alevism must be dealt with the politics. This is also parallel with Asad's position who argues that religion and politics as well as religious and secular are closely related to each other. In that sense, *PSAKD* defines the Alevi movement as the leftist movement and itself as a *Demokratik Kitle Örgütü*, which tries to struggle for a "real" democratic and secular state. It applies Universalist discourse and in this way, it challenges the Turkish state and its policies.

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* seems to be in just the opposite position. It announces that they have nothing to do politics and Alevis must come to terms with its Marxist and the leftist past. Its criticism towards state policies -or we must say governments- based on the two basic rights defined in the constitution: equality and freedom of religion. By focusing on these two rights, it tries to legitimize Alevi demands in order to benefit state services and facilities provided for Sunni population. In that sense, it defines itself as "only" Alevi institution and puts Alevism and (religious) rights of Alevis in the center of their policies. In this way, it applies identity politics. However, by taking a pragmatismal position, it tries to integrate the state.

At that point, the unanswered question of whether there is “always” direct correlation between identity politics and a pose a challenge against the state can be answered as “no”. This means that although *Cem Vakfi* applies identity politics, it does not challenge the state, but just the opposite it tries to integrate to the state. In fact, *Cem Vakfi*'s pragmatic position can be seen in its definition of Alevism. As you see in the following chapter, it defines Alevism as Turkish Islam by focusing on the ethnic origin of Alevis as Turk. Therefore, for it, the real threat comes from Emevi (Arab) Islam. Moreover, it also uses the term Alevi-Islam in order to legitimize its position on the eye of the state, but at the same time can underline difference of Alevism from Sunni Islam. This position leads them to apply a pragmatic approach such as collaborating with all political parties.<sup>441</sup>

On the other hand, *PSAKD* tries to stay away from identity politics by arguing that *PSAKD* is involved in democracy front within the leftist movement. It has a Universalistic discourse, which has a claim of democracy and secularization not only for Alevis, but also for all ethnic and religious groups. Hence, with this Universalistic discourse, it challenges the state policies. In short, there is not “always” direct correlation between identity politics and the challenging the state. As the case of *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi* shows sometimes Universalistic discourse may pose a challenge against the state policies whereas groups, which apply identity politics, may sometimes try to integrate the state.

However, this challenge must be analyzed within Kemalist aura, within limitations of civil society in Turkey and within loyal citizenship of Alevis. As I discussed in this chapter, especially based on Okan's observation about civil society, both of these institutions have Kemalist tendencies. This is also case even for

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<sup>441</sup> Ali Murat İrat, “Modern/Reel Siyasal Bir Olgu, Cencilik,” unpublished text, p. 1.

*PSAKD*, which seems to have “political” standing and to challenge the state in terms of democracy and secularization. Hence, it sometimes declares that Alevis are the loyal citizens who supported the Independence War, Alevis do not have aim of flag or territory, and Alevis are the guarantee of (Turkish) secularization. Therefore, it combines Kemalism, the Left and counter-hegemonic tendencies in itself. On the other hand, *Cem Vakfi* has already declared its Kemalist position and has parallel policies with this declaration. Hence, it holds Atatürk era and its major criticism is towards governments, which moves away the state from its Kemalist character. Even it declares that Alevis are the “real” owners of this country. Indeed, its attempts to declare of being “apolitical” is also closely related to its Kemalist standing because it tries to free itself the images of Alevis are the leftist, Marxist, and Socialist (so political!).

Although they seem to be in opposite positions, both of these two institutions ask the question why the state does not recognize Alevi identity although Alevis carry out all obligations such as paying taxes, having military service, and participating in the political process for the pursuit of the common good. Besides, both of them want to keep their differences from Sunni Islam and to be recognized with their identity of Alevi. However, we must take this tendency in order to underline the difference of Alevis within the limitations of loyal citizenship. This loyalty as well as Kemalist aura prevents them to demand self-government from the state and they feel responsible to “re-declare” loyalty of Alevis.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Gülcan Koçan and Ahmet Öncü focus on four basic trends of Alevis for model of citizenship. The first three trends evoke Aristotelian notions of citizenship as recognition of Alevis by the state as a constitutional political community. The first one is based on self-government. The second defines the citizen as a legal member of a state who accepts obligations that arise from this membership. The third visualizes the citizen as a member of a political community who actively participate in the political process as part of the pursuit of the common good. The fourth sees the citizen as someone embedded in difference and unity, integration and resistance, and the particular and universal. Therefore revised citizenship model seeks to assure the condition of neutrality of the state vis-à-vis culturally diverse citizens. Based on these trends, citizenship is defined as a common identity shared by all members in a

Furthermore, in terms of demanding the recognition of Alevi identity, “Alevi who have constructed their social identity around oppression by state power in the form of rule by force—from the Ottoman Empire onwards—are now beginning to consent to the power of the state as it recognizes”<sup>443</sup> Alevi identity. Especially the demand for recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship must be analyzed as the Alevi search for the consent of the state. Indeed, *Cem Vakfı*’s basic aim is to integrate the state. Yet, this is an unasked question for *PSAKD* since they both use the term “recognition” in “discourse” level because they do not fill the term.

Therefore, their political standing is closely related to Alevi identity especially concerning the recognition of Alevi by the state because as I discussed in the second chapter (religious) identity is constructed in relation with power. Moreover, Alevi institutions are essential in re-construction of Alevi identity. In other words, since they try to mobilize masses about these political demands, they also emphasize identity aspect of Alevism and come up with a definition of Alevism. In this sense, *Cem Vakfı* mainly defines itself an Alevi Institution and mostly focuses on Alevism in religious terms. In contrast, *PSAKD* underlines a “politicized” version of Alevism. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will discuss this issue in detail.

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political community. Such a view of identity involves reciprocity, creating a sense of obligation towards that community. Gürcan Koçan and Ahmet Öncü, “Citizen Alevi in Turkey: Beyond Confirmation and Denial,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 17, no. 4 (December 2004), pp.483–484.

<sup>443</sup> Göner, p.109.

## CHAPTER VII

### ALEVI IDENTITY: IN THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION

The definition(s) of Alevism as well as its collective identity has faced transformation since the beginning of the 1980s in that there is a shift of Alevi identity from a culture to a religion. Therefore, rather than focusing on static and fixed Alevi identity, we have to underline the process of “identification” in which how Alevis reveal their identity and define themselves. At that point, Alevism has also been constructed by heterogeneous activities of individuals as well as Alevi institutions within the context of Turkish politics. Hence, institutionalization, which has been a modern phenomenon for the Alevi movement, is important not only for demands for Alevis, but also for their role in the recreation of collective identity by organizing *cem* ceremonies, *saz* and *semah* courses, lectures on Alevi values, ceremonies on *Aşure* and Fasting of Muharrem, concerts, panels, and so on.<sup>444</sup> Therefore, in this chapter, I will discuss the discourses of these two Alevi institutions by focusing on how these two Alevi institutions define and construct Alevism religiously, culturally, and ethnically.

#### Defining and Constructing Alevism as an Ethno-Religious Identity

I had not been constructing myself as an Alevi before I started to work here. People had not been very comfortable in declaring their Alevi identity. Before we founded institutions after the 93 Madımak massacre, we had been “ordinary” people who had not been aware of our religion. After the massacre, we felt the responsibility of searching for Alevism and teaching it to next generations.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Gümüş, <http://alewiten.com/onikieylül.htm>.

<sup>445</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-Secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the

Ersin Gedik is also pointing out that he has learnt Alevism in *PSAKD*. He also goes on by saying that when he was at primary school, he was unconscious about his Alevi identity. He had rightist friends, so he did not announce his identity. Yet, at high school, when he met *PSAKD*, he started to live his Alevi culture and to feel himself comfortable in declaring his identity<sup>446</sup> In that sense, as Genç puts, the institutions have an influence on people in that they become more conscious about Alevism. He also argues ordinary Alevi do not know the problem of Alevism whereas when they are involved in institutions they see that there is an assimilation policy on Alevism.<sup>447</sup>

Based on these comments on Alevi institutionalization, both *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi* focus on the religious aspect of Alevism and organize seminars and panels on Alevism in order to teach it to younger generations. Since cultural practices have flourishing effects on identity transformation as well as formation of identity, we can consider that institutionalization of Alevism contribute to collective identity. Just being part of these institutions may be sufficient.

First, I want to focus on the activities of these two institutions very briefly. Hence, *PSAKD* defines itself not only an Alevi institution, but also a democratic institution for masses; so there are activities related to NGOs in general terms such as celebration of Mother's Day, panels on family planning and cancer; sewing courses, or political activities such as commemoration of 1 May, 6 May, and 8 March. They

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Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007.

<sup>446</sup> Ersin Gedik (the president of Youth's Commission in Kadıköy Office of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.03.2007.

<sup>447</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007.

have also social activities, which focus on the political issues.<sup>448</sup> On the other hand, like most of Alevi institutions, there are activities based on Alevi culture and Alevi identity such as *cems*, the day of *Aşure*<sup>449</sup> so that they can teach Alevism to the following generations and flourish Alevism and Alevi culture. Hence, *PSAKD* is also organizing *cems* “in order to teach Alevi traditions, worship, and rituals to masses.”<sup>450</sup> For instance, in 1998 the *Pir Sultan Newspaper* announced their upcoming projects as seminars, symposiums, and documentaries about Alevism.<sup>451</sup> In March 2000 the Izmir Office organized the contest of Pir Sultan sculpture.<sup>452</sup> In 2000, *PSAKD*, for the first time, had *cem* in Ankara even taking permission from the government of province (*valilik*).<sup>453</sup> In 2004 Youth’s Commission in the Kartal office organized a series of panels about Alevism and Alevi culture.<sup>454</sup>

When we look at the activities of *Cem Vakfı*, there are activities both about Alevi beliefs and rituals and about politics and law. For instance, in *Cem*, there are news about Alevi ceremonies organized for the traditional figures such as Hacı Bektaş Veli, Abdal Musa, Keçeci Baba, Hamza Baba ceremonies; about panels such as “Dünya Hoşgörü Günü ve Hz. Zeynep’in Doğum Günü (16.11.1997),” “Alevilikte

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<sup>448</sup> For example, the drama of *Kadının Sesi* organized by the Çerkezköy office for 8 March 2004, the drama of *Sheikh Bedrettin* organized by the Yenimahalle Office in February 2004 and the ceremony of *Savaş Semah* organized by the Yenimahalle office.

<sup>449</sup> See the news about activities of the offices *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 13 (May 2004), pp.3-4. For instance, the Aşağıkızılca office was organizing “Ninth” *Aşure günü* in 2004. Cited in *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p. 2.

<sup>450</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 7 (May 2000).

<sup>451</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.5.

<sup>452</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 7 (May 2000), p.2.

<sup>453</sup> Ali Balkız (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 7 (May 2000), p. 1. They define this as the *de facto* recognition of Alevis by the state.

<sup>454</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004) p. 6–7.

Dedeler ve Ocaklar (2.11.1997)” “Aleviler’de Semah (18.01.1998),” “Abdal Musa Cemi in Essen (January 1998),” “Hz. Ali’nin Doğum Günü Münasebetiyle Sema ve Cem Töreni.” (A common ceremony with *Galata Mevlevihanesi*- 21 March 1998).<sup>455</sup> Moreover, it also founded the school of Alevism in *Yenibosna Ahmet Yesevi Cem Kültür Evi* (the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*) in April 1999 in order to teach Alevism.<sup>456</sup> All these can be considered as efforts in order to keep Alevi traditions and Alevi figures alive and to teach these to masses.

Based on these activities related to Alevi culture and traditions, both of these periodicals mostly focus on the life stories of traditional figures such as Yunus Emre, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Pir Sultan Abdal, Şah İsmail; Alevi rituals such as *cem*, Muharrem fasting, the day of *Aşure*; news about organizations in their offices related to Alevism, and introducing traditional places such as *turbes*. In that sense, 113 articles out of 1037 (10.90%) in *PSAKSD* and 726 articles out of 3344 (21.71%) in *Cem* focus on Alevi thought, traditions, rituals and traditional figures. As you see in percentages, *Cem Vakfı* takes the religious or ritual side of Alevism more seriously than *PSAKD* in that *Cem* mostly consists of articles about Alevi traditions, traditional figures, lives of *dedes* and news about the opening of *cemevis* and ceremonies of *cem* hold in different places. Vorhoff also focuses that *Cem* is primarily interested in spreading historical and religious information about Alevism since it presents its subtitle as *Alevi inanç ve düşünce yayın organı* (Publication organ of Alevi faith and thought).<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> “Taksimden Türkiye’ye Taşan Çoşku,” *Cem*, year 30, 77 (April 1998), pp.32-33. After this ceremony, İzzettin Doğan started to use the term Alevi-Bektasi-Mevlevi for specifying the subjects of their policies.

<sup>456</sup> “Yenibosna’da Alevilik Okulu,” *Cem*, year 31, 89 (April 1999), p.6.

<sup>457</sup> Vorhoff, 1998a, p.38.

Nevertheless, these periodicals do not only focus on Alevi rituals, culture and beliefs, but also have a claim of degeneration and the threat of assimilation. Hence, they offer educating younger generations and the standardization of Alevism in order not to lose its traditional roots. In that sense, 65 articles out of 1037 (6.27%) in *PSAKSD* and 166 articles out of 3344 (4.96%) focus on degeneration and necessity for standardization and educating Alevism in order to prevent this degeneration.

Interestingly this percentage is higher for *PSAKSD* although *Cem* is significant with its focus on religious side of Alevism. This is case because related to fear of assimilation, *PSAKD* mostly focus on the necessity of protecting Alevi traditions. For instance, a member from Kartal Office of *PSAKD* asserts that there is degeneration because the institution of *dedelik* is not working anymore. He also asks the question of “why are not there police, gendarme (*kolluk kuvvet*) in our village” and answers this question because in Alevi villages there is *dedelik*,”<sup>458</sup> Zeynep Yıldırım also argues that they are solving problems in their neighborhood by adopting the institution of *dedelik*.<sup>459</sup> In this standpoint, *PSAKD* has *Bilim Kurulu* and *Dedeler Kurulu*, which consist of people who are knowledgeable about Alevism. However, they are careful about the written sources about Alevi culture since there is question mark about objectivity (as much as possible) of these sources. For this reason, they want to eliminate these books in terms of “reality” of Alevism.<sup>460</sup>

Then again, İzzettin Doğan also focuses on drug addiction of Alevi children in Germany and asserts that unless Alevi have claim of their religion, their children

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<sup>458</sup> Unknown, semi-structured interview by the author, after the Education series in the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007. (I could not learn his name).

<sup>459</sup> Zeynep Yıldırım, (member of Executive Committee of the Sarıyer Office), semi-structured interview by the author, after the Education series in the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007.

<sup>460</sup> Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), “Alevi Kimliğinin Tanınması İçin Örgütlü Güç Şarttır,” *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), pp. 2-3.

will be fragile to such social threats. Then, he narrates his observation that both Alevi who live their Alevi-Islam religion and Sunnis who turn towards religious education are less caught in drug problem.<sup>461</sup>

However, concerning activities, *Cem* is more determined and professional in standardization and systematization of Alevi religion. Indeed, as İzzettin Doğan focuses, *Cem Vakfı* is “only” an Alevi institution, which is supra political and its aim is to work for just cultural and religious institutionalization of society<sup>462</sup> and to try to keep Alevi rituals and traditions alive. Hence, its aim is told in the third article of its Founding Act,

to research on, to improve and protect our unique and extensive cultural heritage, ... ; to organize seminars, briefings, conferences, meetings of debates and talks, researches, courses and similar meetings, to have cultural organizations, to assist real and corporate people who work for the same aims with us, regardless of religion, language, kind, color, and race, to help poor but successful students ... introduce Alevi Islam not only in Turkey, but also in the world, challenge the perception of the West about Islam based on fundamentalist movements by introducing Anatolian Alevism as an human, love and dialogue based interpretation of Islam.<sup>463</sup>

In this context, *Cem Vakfı* argues that since Alevism is based on oral tradition and knowledge of *dedes*, there is a necessity of schools in order to educate *dedes* both in theological terms because knowledge of *dedes* are wearing away and in modern terms in order to adopt conditions of today’s world. For instance, Ali Rıza Uğurlu asserts that Alevi must institutionalize, found their schools, found their *cemevis*, and have building for their funerals. Hence, he suggests the founding of Institution of Alevism and education of *dedes* in order to systematize Alevi rituals

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<sup>461</sup> İzzettin Doğan, “Cem Vakfı Ne Yapmak İstiyor?” *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), p. 3.

<sup>462</sup> İzzettin Doğan, *Cem*, 59, p. 3.

<sup>463</sup> *Cem Vakfı Çalışmaları ve Vakıf Genel Başkanı Prof. Dr. İzzettin Doğan’ın Görüş ve Düşünceleri*, p. 19, p.21.

and to hold the “same” *cems* in different parts of the country.<sup>464</sup> Moreover, Yaşar Uçar suggests that Alevis must have claims of their historical heritage as well as Alevi-Bektasi philosophy by founding a committee in order to research Alevi-Bektasi philosophy.<sup>465</sup> Furthermore, İ. Kemal Aydemir suggests determine real *dedes* and register them in a central institution (which must be recognized by the DRA). Hence, these *dedes* must act according the principles of this institution and have to be educated in order to keep up developments. In this way, *dedes* should regain their religious powers.<sup>466</sup>

Since *Cem Vakfı* mainly focuses on Alevism as a religion, it aims to “rediscover” Alevism with documents and scientific researches and to institutionalize Alevism and Alevi rituals. The basic step in this process is trying to inscribe sources of Alevi culture and to store them in a center of documentation. This is important because Alevis are not a closed group anymore in which they can transmit their culture and belief orally through *dedes* to succeeding generations. In this sense, they are trying to renew Alevi culture by scientific and technologic tools. For instance, *Cem Vakfı* held an architectural contest on *cemevis* in that it argues that Alevis can perform their *cem* ceremonies in modern buildings.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Ali Rıza Uğurlu (the president of *Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri*), interview by Ayhan Aydın, 2006, p.97.

<sup>465</sup> He suggests researching on Alevism and publishing a book, founding Alevi Institution to research Alevism, founding Alevi Bektasi Intellectuals Club (*Alevi-Bektaşî Aydınlar Kulübü-ABAK*) in which Alevi intellectuals and democrats who sympathize with Alevism come together and debate on Alevism, publishing weekly newspapers since periodicals are insufficient, founding radio and television channels, founding a publishing house, inscription of all Alevi books, translation of foreign books on Alevism into Turkish, founding library which includes works on Alevism, founding a committee in order to research Alevi folklore and demography of Alevis, and founding a committee in order to collect donation to finance all these services. Yaşar Uçar, “Alevi Birliği İçin Öneriler,” *Cem*, Year 3, 31 (December 1993), pp. 28-30 and Yaşar Uçar, “Şimdi Ne Yapmalıyız?” *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), pp.56–57.

<sup>466</sup> İ. Kemal Aydemir, “Dede ve Babalarımızı Aklama Zamanı Gelmiştir,” *Cem*, year 2, 22 (March 1993), pp.23–26.

<sup>467</sup> Its publications are also about Alevi rituals such as Ahmet Hezerfan, *Tarihi Belgeler Işığında*

Furthermore, on 16-19 October 1998 *Cem Vakfı* organized the First Meeting of “*Anadolu İnanç Önderleri*” which gathered 700 religious leaders (*dedes*, *babas*, *zakirs*, and *ozans*) of Alevism. İbrahim Kaygusuz argues that in organizing such a meeting they have two basic aims: first to show republican, secular, democratic, and Kemalist character of Alevis to the public and the state, demanding the state permanent offices for *dedes*, second to supply the need of knowledgeable people in *cemevis*.<sup>468</sup> Ayhan Aydın also claims that Turkish society, Alevi-Bektasi-Mevlevi institutions and the state must recognize the existence of *dedes* and help them economically. Therefore, the aim of this organization was to figure out how *dedes* see the society and what they want.<sup>469</sup> On 12-15 May 2000, it organized the Second Meeting of *Alevi-Bektaşî-Mevlevî İnanç Önderleri* and more than one thousand religious leaders attended it. After this meeting, *dedes* and *babas* founded *Alevî Bektaşî İnanç Önderleri Birliđi* and they came together in Eskişehir (*Alevî Önderleri Üst Kurulu*) under the leadership *Cem Vakfı*. Lastly, it organized the Third Meeting of *Anadolu İnanç Önderleri* on 29 October 2001 in order to found *Alevî Bektaşî Mevlevî İnanç Önderleri Meclisi*. Then after these meetings in December 2003, *Vakıf* founded *Alevî İslam Din Hizmetleri Başkanlığı* that aims “to work like DRA and to serve Alevis in their religious affairs.”<sup>470</sup>

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*Kızıldeli Sultan Dergâhı*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, 2006) which focuses on the founding of Kızıldeli Sultan Shrine. Didem Edman and Ahmet Levent Dinçer ed. *Hasan Dede'den Mevlana Sohbetleri*, İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, March 2006 which is about Mevlevî thought. Şevki Koca, *Bektaşîlik ve Bektaşî Dergâhları*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, December 2005) which focuses on Bektasism and Bektasi Shrines. Hüseyin Bal, *Alevî İslam Yolu*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, 2004). Hakkı Saygı, *Soru ve Cevaplarla Alevî- Bektaşî İnanıcı*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, November 2005) which are about what Alevism is. Ayhan Aydın, *Günümüz Alevî Ozanları*, (İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları, 2004) which mentions thoughts of contemporary Alevî *Ozans*.

<sup>468</sup> İbrahim Kaygusuz (the ex-General Manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by Ayhan Aydın, cited in “Somut Çözüm Arayışı,” *Cem*, year 30, 83 (October 1998), p.35.

<sup>469</sup> Ayhan Aydın “Herkes Davetli,” *Cem*, year 30, 83 (October 1998), p.36.

<sup>470</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author,

Besides, it founded *Tasavvufi İslam Enstitüsü* in 1996 and Abidin Özgünay became the president of this institution.<sup>471</sup> In addition, in 1998 it tried to found Alevi-Bektasi Institution under the director of Baki Öz. Aims of this institution were presented as to find original sources of Alevism and translate them to Turkish; to make scientific researches and publish books on Alevism-Bektasism; to determine Alevi rituals and worship; to teach Alevism to Alevi youth through panels, courses, seminars, conferences, and so on; and to found library.<sup>472</sup> In following volume (84), *Cem* announced the opening of *Cem Vakfı* Pir Ahi Evran Library. In April 2000, *Cem Vakfı* published *Cem Ali Çocuk* and *Cem Çocuk Dergisi* for children in order to teach Alevi culture and history to children.<sup>473</sup>

In short, these two institutions are in the effort of standardizing, introducing, and defining Alevism. *PSAKD*'s efforts are for the aim of adopting Alevi traditions to contemporary world such as the creation of *Alevi Balesi* with cooperation with *Devlet Opera ve Balesi*. For instance, Ali Balkız is challenging the rural character of Alevi identity; saying that town is regression and totally surrendering to nature and God. Therefore, he is calling Alevis to be socially, culturally and mentally urban community. To live in cities –in small communities, in ghettos- is not sufficient; Alevis must also adopt the city conditions.<sup>474</sup> On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* seems to

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the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 09.02.2007. In contrast, Kazım Genç points out that *Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri Başkanlığı* is DRA of Alevis, so “it is our worm.” Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007. Here, the worm is used like in this idiom: “every tree’s worm is born in itself” (*Her ağacın kurdu kendinden olur*). It is the most used idiom among Alevi institutions especially in *PSAKD* in order to point out that the real threat comes from Alevis themselves because they are creating Alevi Sheri’a.

<sup>471</sup> İzzetin Doğan, “Cem Yeniden Cem Olurken,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 5.

<sup>472</sup> Interview with Baki Öz, “Alevilik Bektaşilik Enstitüsü Kuruluyor,” *Cem*, year 30, 83 (October 1998), pp. 39-41.

<sup>473</sup> Kıymet Dünder, “Cem Ali Çocuk Kapış Kapış,” *Cem*, year 33, 100 (April 2000), p.9.

<sup>474</sup> The Committee of Publication, “Köylü Diyanet,” *PSAKSD*, 59 (March 2005), pp.1-2 and *Pir Sultan*

be more conservative and traditionalist in terms of Alevism. In addition, it always focuses on Alevism in religious terms, so its activities and demands are related to religious side of Alevism such as educating *dedes* in order to adopt modern developments, professionally supervision of *cemevis*, and founding an Alevi Institution.<sup>475</sup>

In this context, there are two basic aspects of this process. First, by either taking traditional side of Alevism or modernizing it, both of them tend to open their community borders to “foreigners” in order to explain themselves. Ali Balkız argues that Alevis must adopt city conditions and its combination of differences. Since Alevis have something to learn from Sunnis, Turks from Kurds, the rich from the poor, in cities Alevis cannot live in closed communities any more.<sup>476</sup> On the other hand, by focusing on the fraternity of Sunni and Alevis and arguing that aspersions about Alevis emerges because these two communities do not know each other, *Cem Vakfi* has more concrete attempts to “introduce” Alevism. For instance, anyone who wants can attend *cem* ceremonies or *Cem TV* broadcasts these ceremonies on every Thursdays.

Secondly, based on the fear of degeneration and assimilation, they try to renew Alevi traditions and introduce Alevism to younger generation because most young Alevis do not know their culture than the fact of their being Alevi. For instance, *PSAKD* claims they are trying to create Pir Sultan youth and/ or contemporary Pir Sultans.<sup>477</sup> Hence, I want to define this process as

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*Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.5.

<sup>475</sup> “Cem Vakfi’nda Tarihi Toplantı,” *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), p. 5.

<sup>476</sup> The Committee of Publication, (March 2005), pp.1–2.

<sup>477</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 7, (May 2000), p. 2.

“enculturalization” by which they try to develop collective identity among younger generations.

In this context, Çaha points out that there are two basic shifts among Alevis: the replacement of the traditional institutions with the modern ones and the attempts of Alevis to develop a collective identity. For instance, in terms of first transition rather than *dedes*, intellectuals become politically important figures among Alevis.<sup>478</sup> However, Vorhoff warns us that Alevis are careful to avoid throwing away traditional culture. Like in every nation-ethnic group formation, the historical past and cultural traditions have always been politicized in the recent discourses on Alevism in order to create a collective identity. The present Alevi movement has a modern nature while at the same time it celebrates tradition.<sup>479</sup> Based on these observations of Çaha and Vorhoff, we may say that both of these two institutions contribute Alevi collective identity with their efforts in introducing and standardization of Alevism. Yet, unlike Çaha argues, both of them staff *dedes* in order to organize *cems*, so these institutions try to re-give *dedes* their former position in Alevism. Hence, as Vorhoff points out, they adopt and renew Alevi traditions, rituals, and beliefs in modern conditions.

However, based on these efforts defining, introducing as well as standardizing Alevism, are these two institutions filling the term Alevism and Alevi identity with the same content? Therefore, in following parts, I want to discuss this issue.

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<sup>478</sup> Çaha, pp. 334-335.

<sup>479</sup> Vorhorff, 1998b, pp. 236–250.

## Alevism: Culture versus Religion

Before the 1980s, Alevism was accepted as a culture rather than as a religion among young Alevi. In those years, Alevi youth was active in the Leftist and Marxist groups. Since they were against any religion, they approved Alevism only as a cultural identity. For instance, İbrahim Karakaya argues, “in those years we were against any religion and stayed away from Alevism. We were supporting Marx’s popular motto of religion is opium of masses.”<sup>480</sup>

However, today Alevism is reconstructing itself as “religion” and most young people approve Alevism as a religion. In this sense, the attempts to define Alevism as religion also means a process of emergence of a more codified, formal and legalistic Alevism as a “public religion.”<sup>481</sup> However, we cannot say that this process is ended in that there are different commitments in Alevi community, which define Alevism as a culture/ a belief/ a life-style or a religion. This is also apparent in the discourses of these two institutions in that the basic differentiation between *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi* stems from their definition of Alevism: as a religion or a culture. 44 articles out

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<sup>480</sup> İbrahim Karakaya (the ex-General Secretary of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, Ankara, 21.05.2007. According to Seufert, Alevism was very singular, isolated and restricted to small region in that it did not meet theoretical and philosophical needs of politicized youth, a youth who had to work out for an international and valid identity. For this reason, the Alevi youth used religious doctrine for sanctification of secular ideologies such as socialism and nationalism rather than to understand the secular world in religious terms like Sunni Islam does. For this reason, Alevism for most of Kurdish Alevi is not religion but a life-style because, as Lukacs points out, in this world the only working religion is nationalism. However, Turkish-speaking Alevi tend to see Alevism as pure Turkishness. Seufert, pp.171–173.

<sup>481</sup> Gloria Clarke argues for three levels of religious involvement/belief. The first level is religion, which refers to the more codified, formal, legalistic, and sometimes fundamental aspects of belief and practice, involving hierarchical structure. The second level is faith that is less codified and formal, focusing on a relationship with God and personal involvement and responsibility. The third one refers to moral community in which members share common beliefs, symbols, practices and experiences. Clarke, p.8. Ashis Nandy also differentiates religion as faith and ideology. Religion as faith is defined “as a way of life, a tradition that is definitionally non-monolithic and operationally plural”. Religion as ideology, he means that “religion as a sunnational, national or cross national identifier of populations contesting for or protecting non-religious, usually political or socio-economic interests.” Ashis Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration” In *Secularism and Its Critics* edited by Rajeev Bhargava ( Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.322

of 3344 (1.32%) in *Cem* and only nine articles out of 1037 (0.87%) in *PSAKSD* define Alevism as a religion. On the other hand, 29 articles in *PSAKSD* (2.80%) define it as a culture, belief, or life-style whereas 10 articles in (0.30%) in *Cem* define it as a culture.

In fact, these percentages are low because they do not more specifically focus on this issue; they just reflectively emphasize when there is a debate on whether Alevism is a religion or a culture. Especially, *PSAKD* does not have a noticeable attitude in this issue in that sometimes it defines it as a culture and belief system, arguing that Alevism cannot be limited within the borders of one religion. Yet, related to debates about Islam, it defines Alevism as “religion” itself or it focuses on “freedom of religion” in order to get the rights of Alevis. In this way, it takes the religious side of Alevism. This contradiction is also apparent in position for funding from the state. As I discussed earlier they support funding for Alevism as culture rather than as a religion.

However, *Cem Vakfi* argues that Alevism is a religion and announces that it works for the recognition of this religion by the state and society. For instance, Ayhan Aydın asks that if the Alevism were not a religion, why we took Sunnism as “the other” of Alevism.<sup>482</sup> Yaşar Uçar also asks if Alevism were not a religion, how we could define Alevi rituals, *cems*, the ideas of Hacı Bektaş Veli and so on.<sup>483</sup>

Therefore, *Cem* mostly criticizes *PSAKD*'s as well as DRA's efforts to define Alevism as a culture/ faith rather than a religion. In this way, especially DRA avoids giving the “religious” rights of Alevis. For instance, Abidin Özgünay asserts that the attempt of DRA to define Alevism is contrary to the constitution because it denies

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<sup>482</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfi* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfi* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>483</sup> Yaşar Uçar, 31, December 1993, p. 28.

the existence of a religion. Besides, according to constitution, DRA does not have a right to recognize/ or not to recognize any religion.<sup>484</sup> Furthermore, he goes on by saying that unlike *şeyhülislam*, DRA is just an institution of the state, which is responsible for carrying out religious functions and for controlling religious activities. Besides, since our state is secular, it must not be involved in just the affairs of Islam.<sup>485</sup> In addition, *Cem* also criticizes *PSAKD*, which defines Alevism as a culture, and presents it as being collaborator with DRA in assimilating Alevism.

In short, there is debate on whether Alevism is a religion or a culture. Especially DRA's position is essential in that by defining Alevism as a culture or a sect of within Islam, the state approves Alevism within the borders it limits. Moreover, these two institutions also cannot come to an agreement on this issue. Yet, we may say that unlike in the 1970s, today Alevism is mostly defined as a religion. In that sense, the attempts of these two institutions to "define" Alevism as a religion vis-à-vis Islam have become significant, so in the second part I will focus on this issue.

#### Religious Definition(s) of Alevism

As I discussed in the third chapter, there are different definitions of Alevism and this process has political implications for both Alevis and non-Alevis. *Cem Vakfı* and *PSAKD* are also aware of the process of definition of Alevism by different groups. Abidin Özgünay asserts those different groups, who aim to revitalize, to utilize, or to assimilate; are now creating different Alevisms. However, to be Alevi and live

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<sup>484</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Temel Haklar, Diyanet'in Yetkisi ve Alevilik," *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), pp. 4-5.

<sup>485</sup> Abidin Özgünay, 30 (November 1993), pp. 4-5.

Alevism is different from to define it.<sup>486</sup> Yaşar Uçar focuses on an interesting point by saying that

There is no end in removing specific elements from philosophy. If one removes whatever does not suit his/her purpose, Alevi philosophy will turn into a plucked chicken (*yolunmuş tavuk*). People who takes just Shamanist elements arrives at fascism, who takes just revolutionist elements arrives at communism and who takes just religious elements arrives at theocratic line. We can compensate neither supporters of theocracy nor those of communism.<sup>487</sup>

However, they are also in attempt to “define” and to “standardize” Alevism in order to take position vis-à-vis each other. Yet, as I discussed in the former part, *PSAKD* does not have priority of defining Alevism, it is *Cem Vakfi*, which takes the religious side and has more determined efforts to define it. First, they agree upon the heterodox character and syncretism of Alevism in that 38 articles out of 1037 (3.66%) in *PSAKSD* and 40 articles out of 3344 (1.20%) in *Cem* focus on heterodoxy and syncretism of Alevism. For instance, *PSAKD* defines Anatolian Alevism concerning love of *Ehl-i Beyt* (relatives of prophet) as well as the way (*yol*) of Pir Sultan, Hacı Bektaş Veli, and Yunus Emre. One the hand, combining the roots of Alevism with migration of Oguz Turks to Anatolia from Central Asia, they define it as a combination of criticism of Orthodox Sunni Islam, local Christian culture of Anatolia and *batini* (esoteric) belief of supporters of Ali. On the other hand, it focuses that the root of Alevism is traced back to 1400 past -to pre Islamic times in Anatolia.<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Alevilik Nedir? Ne Değildir?” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.3.

<sup>487</sup> Yaşar Uçar, “Alevi Birliği İçin Öneriler,” *Cem*, year 3, 31 (December 1993), p. 28.

<sup>488</sup> In Anatolia, Islam enhanced in two channels as public/ heterodox Islam (in *batini* channel) and as formal/ orthodox Islam (*zahiri* channel). When public Islam could not be religion of the state, it stayed in closed groups (in homogenous villages) and grewed in public culture. On the other hand, Orthodox Islam was formalized, becoming the religion of Seljuks and then Ottomans. For this reason, Alevism as a heterodox public Islam combined all social opposition against domination of the state and quarrel between public and state was specifically the convergence of Sunni Orthodox Islam and heterodox Islam. “Pir Sultan Abdal’ı Anlamak,” *PSAKSD*, 17 (March-April 1996), pp.5-6.

*Cem* is also defining Alevism<sup>489</sup> as a religion, which involves various religious-Sufistic elements in itself. In this way, it accepts that Alevism has been affected from non-Islamic elements and this leads us to think about the difference of Alevism from Shiism in that Anatolian Alevism is close to Bektasism.<sup>490</sup> In that sense, Baki Öz defines three main elements of Alevism such as Islam, Central Asia (Turkishness-Shamanism) and Middle East (Iranian-Mazdaism), and Anatolian and Balkan Cultures (old Anatolian cultures, Greek culture, Christianity).<sup>491</sup> Moreover, Reha Çamuroğlu also focuses on the heterodox character of Alevism and juxtaposes differences between official Islam and heterodox Islam (Alevism).<sup>492</sup>

Therefore, Yunus Emre (as well as Ahmet Yesevi) has crucial role in debates between Alevi and Sunnis in that both *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfı* assert he was Alevi whereas Sunnis claim just the reverse. For instance, Abidin Özgünay defines Yunus Emre as an Alevi intellectual who was discriminated from Sheri'a in Ottoman Period.<sup>493</sup> Moreover, İzzettin Doğan sees Ahmet Yesevi as one of the sources of Alevism, which has come today through Hacı Bektaş Veli, Mevlana, Nesimi, and Pir Sultan.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> The process how *Cem Vakfı* specified the subjects of their policies is also interesting. In the early years, *Cem* was using just the term Alevism, but with foundation of *Cem Vakfı* they started to use the term Alevi-Islam. Moreover, when they focus on the rights of Alevi they prefer to using Alevi-Bektasism-Mevlevism. Lastly, in 2003, İzzettin Doğan argues that the term Alevi-Islam consists of Alevi, Bektasism, Mevlevi and Nusayri. İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, 2006, p.262.

<sup>490</sup> Abidin Nesimi Fatinoğlu, "Cem..." *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p. 27.

<sup>491</sup> Baki Öz, "Alevilik Üzerine Bir Çözümleme," *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), pp.46-47.

<sup>492</sup> Reha Çamuroğlu, "Yunus Emre Heterodoks Bir Derviştir," *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), pp. 39-40. He points out that Alevism and Sunnism are different from each other in three basic senses: *vahdet-i vücud* (unity of entity-God) in official Islam and *vahdet-i mevcud* (unity of entities) in heterodox Islam; love of God in heterodox Islam and fear of God in official Islam; *zahiri* meaning of Koran in official Islam and *batini* meaning of Koran in heterodox Islam.

<sup>493</sup> Abidin Özgünay (editor of *Cem*), his speech in an organization of "İnsan ve Sevgide Çoğalan Ozan Yunus Emre" on 27 April 1991, cited in *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.13.

<sup>494</sup> His speech in the first organization of *Cem Vakfı*, "Olaylar-Yorumlar," *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July

Based on this focus on heterodoxy and syncretism, the basic question is about the position of Alevism vis-à-vis Islam: whether it is within Islam or not. The answer to this question indeed depends on the ideological position of each group and these two institutions give different answers. For *PSAKD*, Alevism is different from Islam and is religion in itself. However, even in *PSAKD* itself, there is not consensus on what Alevism is.<sup>495</sup> 15 articles (1.45%) define Alevism a religion itself whereas there are four articles (0.39%) which define it an interpretation of Islam.

*PSAKD* claims, “Alevism cannot be limited within Islam which is based on the fear,”<sup>496</sup> so “resembling Islamic regime or Shiism is slavery and denial of Alevism.”<sup>497</sup> In this sense, *PSAKD* distillates Fuat Bozkurt, Nurettin Karsu, Attila Erden who reject the relationship of Alevism with Shiism and Islamic regime and define Alevism in terms of its unique culture, belief, philosophy, life style and combine it to international humanity.<sup>498</sup> For instance, Ali Balkız asserts that Alevism involves elements from Christianity, Manizm, Judaism, and Islam and so on. This does not mean that it is Christianity or Islam. It is religion itself.<sup>499</sup> Hence, İshak Kocabıyık asserts that Alevis are still applying *takiyya* in that they ignore the reality

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1995), p.6. For same concern see the speech of İzzettin Doğan in the opening ceremony of the Antalya Office (1998), cited in *Cem*, year 30, 81 (August 1998), p.9.

<sup>495</sup> Once when I went to *PSAKD*, members were discussing on what Alevism is. One side was claiming that Alevism was the part of Islam but Islam has been moved away its essence throughtout time. Other side asserted that we have to define Alevism as a separate religion itself, which consists of different cultures and religions such as Islam, Christianity, Shamanism, and Maniheizm and so on.

<sup>496</sup> Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*) his speech in panel of “2000li Yıllarda Alevilik” organized by *Duisburg Alevi Kültür Merkezi*, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, p. 2.

<sup>497</sup> Ali Yıldırım, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.9.

<sup>498</sup> The News center, the comment on TV programmes on *Kanal 6*, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.10.

<sup>499</sup> Ali Balkız, his speech in the opening of *Danışma Kurulu* in Ankara on 3 September 2000, *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.5.

of Alevism is outside of Islam.<sup>500</sup>

Indeed, *PSAKD* is careful about defining Alevism a separate religion by focusing on its relation with Sunni Islam. For instance, Turan Eser asserts that

Alevism, which is an umbrella identity of all Alevis in Anatolia, involves all sub-cultures in itself. Although it is culturally and historically in relation with Sunni Islam, the difference in our thought is peculiar to Anatolia. Alevism is not a belief, which is based on cohesion and outward appearance. Anatolian Alevism must be accepted as a universal thought which is beyond definitions as “Alevism is inside of Islam” or “Alevism is outside of Islam.” Anatolian Alevism is neither inside nor outside of Islam because Anatolian Alevism is neither narrow nor orthodox, which can be limited within a belief or discriminative to stay outside of it.<sup>501</sup>

However, whether *PSAKD* defines Alevism as a religion itself or heterodox Islam, it sees Sunnis as “the other” for the Alevi identity. Although there are elements from other religion, they do not take these religions as ‘the others.’ Of course, this is because the debates on Alevism mostly is related to Islam. However, they take the “Sunni Islam” as the other, not Islam as a whole.

Indeed, *PSAKD* does not have noticeable position concerning the definition of Alevism. On the one hand, it defines Alevism as heterodox public Islam, on the other hand as a religion itself. Yet, presenting Alevism a religion itself, even in undertone as *PSAKD* does, is the issue of bravery if we take the issue vis-à-vis the state, DRA and other Alevi institutions.

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfı* mainly defines Alevism as an original part/ the essence of Islam. When only four articles in *Cem* define Alevism as a religion itself (0.12%), 333 articles (9.96%) define it as an interpretation of Alevism. For instance, Ayhan Aydın differentiates *Cem Vakfı* from other Alevi institutions with its

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<sup>500</sup> İshak Kocabıyık (the ex-member of executive committee in *PSAKD*), semi-structured interview by the author during the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara, 19 May 2007.

<sup>501</sup> Turan Eser, “Yol Ayrımındaki Alevi Örgütlenmeleri ve Gerçekleri Kabul Edelim,” *PSAKSD*, 56 (March 2004), p.67.

definition of Alevism. He argues that unlike *PSAKD* and *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı*, which define Alevis as a culture and a life style without any focus on its relation with Islam; *Cem Vakfı* announces that Alevism is a religion, which is inside Islam.<sup>502</sup> In that sense, it argues that Alevism has emerged from love of Ali when the struggle for the caliphate emerged after the death of Mohammed.<sup>503</sup> “Ali is both an inspiration, the builder of Alevism and the source of Alevi belief and rituals. ... Alevism comes into being with Ali and God.”<sup>504</sup> Rıza Zelyut also argues that in classical terms, there is love of Ali in Alevism and the name of Ali is sacred as in *Allah* (God)-Muhammad-Ali trinity.<sup>505</sup>

Moreover, *Cem Vakfı* tries to prove that “in its essence, Alevis are Muslim at least like Sunnis”<sup>506</sup> since “Sunnism is not identical with Islam. One of components of Islam is Alevism, too.”<sup>507</sup> In other words, Alevism is not Sunnism, but Islamism.<sup>508</sup> Hence, *Cem Vakfı* argues that Koran is also the sacred book of Alevism and Alevis are performing in accordance with the essence of Koran and Islam. For this reason, as Abidin Özgünay asserts, Alevism is the original part of

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<sup>502</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>503</sup> Füzuran Husrev Tökin, “Alevilik,” *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.27.

<sup>504</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Alevilik Nedir? Ne Değildir?” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.5.

<sup>505</sup> Rıza Zelyut, “Alevilik Nedir?/I- Aleviliğin Temel Kaynağı” in *Cem*, year 5, 58 (September 1996), p.12.

<sup>506</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Ayağa Kalkan Kültür: Alevilik Ülke Gündeminde,” *Cem*, year 1, 8 (January 1992), p.3. For same concern see Abidin Özgünay, “İslamın Özünün Kimliği, Fark Meselesi ve İslamın Siyasal ve Sosyal Alanda Etkin Olduğu Bir Yapıya Aleviliğin Bakışı,” *Cem*, year 5, 51, (August 1995), p. 3, interview with Ali Rıza Uğurlu, 2006, p.88, interview with İzzettin Doğan 2003, p.111.

<sup>507</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Sünnilik ve Reform,” *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), p.4. For same concern see “Prof. İzzettin Doğan ile Milliyet’te Söyleşi...,” *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.34.

<sup>508</sup> “Alevi Kurultay’ı İle İlgili Zorunlu Bir Açıklama,” *Cem*, year 2, 18 (November 1992), p.36.

Muhammadism and/ or an interpretation of the essence of Islam<sup>509</sup> and it is not easy to know Alevism and to deserve it. When Islamic doctrinal formula (*Kelime-i Şahadet*) is sufficient to be Muslim, it is not sufficient to be Alevi.<sup>510</sup> Alevism

Rather than appearance, is directed to essence of this appearance. ... It lives by knowing that religion is not the label of reality, truth, and love; by grasping that rather than “other things”, the real temple is human and humanity; and by believing by heart that the rights of man is more sacred than the rights of God.”<sup>511</sup>

The most obvious discussion related to defining Alevism is the issue of atheism in that this is the basic criticism of *Cem Vakfı* towards *PSAKD*. Abidin Özgünay says that Alevism is neither atheism nor irreligious. For this reason, they strongly criticize some Alevis (especially Nejat Birdoğan) who assert that Alevism is outside of Islam.<sup>512</sup>

When Faik Bulut published a book with the debate “Alevism without Ali;” the name of Alevism, its content and position of Ali in Alevism started to be questioned. In volume 75 of *Cem*, Cemal Şener criticizes him for creating enmity of Alevism. He argues that Faik Bulut disconnects the relationship between Alevism and Islam by claiming that Ali was a Sunni, not an Alevi.<sup>513</sup> Baki Öz also argues that Alevism cannot be without Ali, *Ehl-i Beyt* and Twelve Imams in that Alevism is the name of the separation in the line of Ali emerged in Islam, not Sunnism. The central position of Ali in Islam does not change the emergence of this line -the emergence of

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<sup>509</sup> Abidin Özgünay, *Cem*, year 2, 16 (September 1992), p.5. Similarly Cemal Kaya asserts that Alevism is the essence of Islamism. “Alevilik İslamiyetin Özüdür,” *Cem*, year 3, 26 (March 1993), p.45.

<sup>510</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden,” *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), p. 2.

<sup>511</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Alevilik, Şekle Değil Öze Yöneliktir,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p.3.

<sup>512</sup> “Aydın Sorusu,” *Cem*, year 5, 58 (September 1996), p. 73.

<sup>513</sup> Cemal Şener, “Faik Bulut Ne Yapmak İstiyor?” *Cem*, year 8, 75 (February 1998), pp.40–42.

Alevism/ Shiism throughout the time. Therefore, he argues that Bulut tries to disconnect religious roots of Alevis because he arouses hatred among Alevis against Ali by presenting him as a Sunni figure.<sup>514</sup>

The similar debate also emerged when Fuat Bozkurt, Nurettin Karsu, and Attila Erden attended a TV programme, *Ceviz Kabuğu*, on Channel 6 on 4 June 1998. In volume 80, the ex-vice president of *Cem Vakfı* Cemal Canpolat argues that these people are atheist and first Alevis, not atheists, must speak for Alevism. Naci Orhan Dede also argues that Alevism is based Koran and these people who cast aspersions on Ali must be declared as *düşkün*.<sup>515</sup>

Furthermore, *Cem Vakfı* defines Alevism as a Turkish Islam by arguing that there is an old Turkish culture in Alevism whereas Sunni Islam stayed as an Arabic Islam.<sup>516</sup> Indeed, *Cem Vakfı* uses the term Alevi-Islam in order to point out that Alevism is the part of Islam, which has come to Anatolia from Arabia through Turkish immigrants. In that sense, when Turks accepted Islam, they interpreted it with their local culture, traditions, and life style.<sup>517</sup> Ali Murat İrat argues that defining Alevism as an Alevi Islam provides a definite Alevi identity. It theologially, sociologically, and psychologically narrows Alevism as well as assimilates elements outside of Islam.<sup>518</sup> Moreover, as Gümüş argues, İzzettin

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<sup>514</sup> Baki Öz, "Hz. Ali'yi Yanlış Tanımak," *Cem*, year 30, 77 (April 1998), pp. 29-30.

<sup>515</sup> "Kanal 6'ya Tepkiler Sürüyor. Aleviliği Alevilere Sorun!" *Cem*, year 30, 80 (July 1998), pp. 20–21.

<sup>516</sup> However, Ayhan Aydın's personal point of view is that Alevism has been affected not only from old Turkish belief, but also from Mesopotamian culture, Anatolian cultures, Balkan cultures, and Islam. Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>517</sup> İzzettin Doğan, his speech in celebration for the 2nd Anniversary of *Cem Vakfı*, cited in *Cem*, year 7, 65 (April 1997), pp.8–9.

<sup>518</sup> İrat, pp.1–2.

Doğan's use of the term Alevi-Islam underlines the difference of Alevism from Islam, but at the same time includes it still within Islam. In this way, Alevis can see themselves as Muslim although they are different and can gain legitimacy on the eye of the state and Sunni population.<sup>519</sup>

In short, based on the difference in their definitions of Alevism, they have different political positions. When *PSAKD* challenges the state's definition of Alevism, *Cem Vakfi* has a parallel understanding with the state and in this way it finds possibility to integrate to the state. However, defining Alevism as a religion is not sufficient in that in recent years there is a tendency to focus on the ethnic origin of Alevism especially by presenting it as a Turkish Islam. For this reason, in this part, I want to focus on also this discussion.

#### Ethnic Definition of Alevism

We are also living in this geography and are influenced from the recent process. Fascism has been becoming the part of our genetic code: some Alevis have nationalist perspective by claiming that they are real Turks or they are real Muslims.<sup>520</sup>

Another aspect of Alevi identity, which is discussed by these institutions, is the ethnic origin of Alevism. Vorhoff argues that Alevis oppose the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and official ideology of the state, which tried to assimilate Alevism for the project of nationalist unification. However, despite communitarian solidarity of the 1970s, nationalism and ethnicity made serious roads in social structuring of Alevism. For instance, some Kurdish Alevis focuses on Kurdish element Alevism, applying a secular Kurdish religion. In this sense, there is an apparent discourse of Alevism

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<sup>519</sup> Gümüş, p.515.

<sup>520</sup> İshak Kocabıyık (the ex-member of executive committee of *PSAKD*), semi-structured interview, in the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara on 19 May 2007.

based on ethnic and nationalist rhetoric in that Vorhoff identifies this as “ethnicity process.”<sup>521</sup>

Therefore, affected from the state’s efforts to represent Alevis as real Turks since the language of their worship is Turkish; especially *Cem Vakfi* represents Alevism as a religion of Turks and argues that Sunni Islam is Arab Islam. In that context, 59 articles out of 3344 (1.76%) in *Cem* focus the ethnic origin of Alevism and define it as Turkish Islam whereas only three articles in *PSAKSD* (0.29%) focus on the ethnic origin of Alevis either as Turk or Kurd. In fact, *PSAKD* criticizes the emphasis on ethnic origin of Alevis arguing that Alevism is beyond races in that 16 articles (1.54%) focus on this issue. On the other hand, four articles in *Cem* (0.12%) also argue that focusing on the ethnic origin of Alevis is pointless.

In this context, *PSAKD* criticizes the focus on the ethnic origin of Alevism and more specifically emphasis on the Turkishness of Alevis by claiming that Alevism is beyond all nations and cannot be limited within an ethnicity. Hence, İbrahim Karakaya warns Alevi institutions not to define Alevism in accordance to system (the state).<sup>522</sup> For instance, Necati Yılmaz asserts that related to debates about Alevi identity two basic discussions are apparent: assimilation of Alevism into Sunni Islam or Shiism and debates on the ethnic origin of Alevism as Kurds or Turks. About the first issue, Alevism is such a powerful belief and the system of values in which Islam has been melted. About the second issue, to present Alevism just a religion of Kurds or just that of Turks is an effort to decrease the value of Alevism. However, these efforts will not succeed and Alevis will come together under the

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<sup>521</sup> Vorhoff, 1998b, pp. 240–243.

<sup>522</sup> İbrahim Karakaya, “Alevi Kürtler ve Dersim Aleviliği,” *PSAKSD*, 42 (February 2001), pp.62–74.

name of Alevi identity.<sup>523</sup>

Indeed, the focus on Turkishness of Alevi is resulted from the state's attempt to use Alevism against Kurdish question. Kurdish issue has always problematic in Turkey since the state does not recognize Kurds as ethnic group different from Turks. During my interviews and analysis of periodicals, I see that *PSAKD* is careful about Kurdish issue in that it criticizes *Cem Vakfi*, which presents Alevism as the religion of Turks and points out that there are also Alevi Kurds. Yet, in the conference on Alevi and Politics, they criticized also Kurds because they applied identity politics, trying to solve Kurdish issue based on Kurdish identity. However, for *PSAKD* like Alevi question Kurdish question must be also solved with democracy.

On the other hand, *Cem Vakfi* mostly focuses on the Turkishness of Alevi identity, defining Alevism as Turkish Islam. Abo İlhan states that Alevism is way, which is appropriate for Turks in term of spirit, sense, and life style. It emerged from Turkishness and it belongs to philosophy, literature, and rituals of Turks.<sup>524</sup> Cahit Tanyol and Sadık Göksu also define Alevism as a Turkish Muslimness, arguing that Alevism is the essence of Turkishness.<sup>525</sup>

Moreover, Hasan Gülşah asks the question of “Are Alevi Turks?” and answers to this question as although most Alevi are in Turkish origin, in east and southeast part of Turkey there are Alevi in Kurdish origin.<sup>526</sup> In this context, Hıdır

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<sup>523</sup> Necati Yılmaz (the ex-president of *PSAKD*). “Alevi Kimliğinin Tanınması İçin Örgütlü Güç Şarttır,” *PSAKSD*, 26 (May 1998), p.3.

<sup>524</sup> Abo İlhan, “Alevilik,” *Cem*, Year 1, 1 (June 1991), p. 23.

<sup>525</sup> Sadık Göksu, *Cem*, year, 3, 31 (December 1993), p.12 and Cahit Tanyol, “Tehlikede Olan Miras,” *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.28.

<sup>526</sup> Hasan Gülşah, “Kürtler Ve Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), pp.43–44.

Akbayır argues that there are three basic interpretations of Islam: Arabic, Shiism, and Turkish. Alevism is this Turkish interpretation of Islam whereas in Turkey the state is trying to adopt the Arabic version.<sup>527</sup> When he defines Alevism as a Turkish interpretation of Islam, the basic question about Kurdish Alevism comes to mind. He answers for this question as

We are trying to focus that Islam came to Anatolia through Turks. Otherwise, I mean Anatolia and Alevism include everybody in this mosaic of Anatolia. When we define Alevism as the Turkish interpretation of Islam, it seems that we are focusing on race-based definition of Alevism. However, there is not race of religion. Religion is always over race.<sup>528</sup>

Therefore, they are careful about defining Alevism as an ethnic group. For instance, although Baki Öz asserts that the public base of Alevism is Oguz Turkmens who led to spread of Alevism in Anatolia, but he warns that Alevism cannot be limited within one nation and it is supra national and supra religious.<sup>529</sup> İzzettin Doğan also argues that Alevism reject all kind of racist discrimination in that Alevism may be Turkish, Kurdish, Laz, and so on. In Alevism, unlike races such as Turk or Kurd, there is human. Therefore, there is not superiority of a Turk over a Kurd.<sup>530</sup> Cemal Şener, rather than as an ethnic minority, defines Alevism as a religious minority because we cannot reduce Alevism into one nation. In that sense, Şener is not in favor of the use of Alevism against the Kurdish question by focusing on the Turkish origin of Alevism in that supporting dominant nation (here Turkish) and

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<sup>527</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

<sup>528</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfı*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

<sup>529</sup> Baki Öz, "Alevilik Üzerine Çözümleme," *Cem*, year 1, 6 (November 1991), p.47.

<sup>530</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, 2003, p.101.

nationalism is contrary to Alevi thought.<sup>531</sup>

In short, as Ali Murat İrat argues, Alevis can be nationalist who focus on the ethnic origin of Alevis in that they may give vote MHP. This is case, as I discussed earlier, unlike in the 1970s, the basic perception of threat is Sheri'a and/ or Islamic regime. Since the basic threat is related to religious aspect, they may cooperate with the nationalist forces against this threat.<sup>532</sup> Hence, the debates on *düşkünlük*, which I discussed in the beginning of thesis, become meaningful in order to show that how they react any relationship with Islam since AKP is seen as Islamic party. On the other hand, they -especially *Cem Vakfı*- prefer focusing on the religious side of Alevism rather than its ethnic origin because emphasizing ethnic origin means underlining the differences among Alevis as Kurds and Turks. In my opinion, this understanding is a typical identity politics, which eliminates the ethnic and cultural differences among Alevis and puts them together under the name of Alevi identity as a religion. This tendency can be taken as an effort to create an "Alevi society" and to use Alevism as "signifier" term.

### Defining and Constructing Alevism as a Cultural Identity

After discussing Alevism in terms of ethno-religious identity, we have to underline its cultural aspect. Therefore, in this part, I will discuss Alevism as a cultural identity based on the affirmation of Alevi identity, the discourse of trauma, the issue of minority, and the fear of assimilation.

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<sup>531</sup> Cemal Şener, "Alevilik ve Milliyetçilik," *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p. 30 and Cemal Şener, "Alevilik ve Milliyetçilik," *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p. 31.

<sup>532</sup> Conversation with Ali Murat İrat in Ankara on 23.11.2007.

## Affirmation of Alevi Identity

In every cultural entity, there is a boundary those who are “in” and who are “out”. In order to regain its self-image of dominant community as “we”, every social unity necessitates a “definite other” who represents “opposite” concerning values and morality for its stability. In other words, as Stuart Hall points out “Identity is always ... a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself.”<sup>533</sup> This is also case for Alevis in that there is a permanent separation of the “other” in the debate of Sunni-Alevi.<sup>534</sup> In this way, Alevis describe their way of life in contrast to Sunni communities. “We-Them” dichotomy in terms of “our culture”, “our values”, “our ancestors” and “our tradition” is apparent in recent texts on Alevism: “we are opposed to them, the Sunnis who are the people of Ebu Bekir, Omar and Osman” or “to them, the followers of Yezit.”<sup>535</sup> Moreover, most of Alevis focus on the depth of Alevism by claiming that Sunnism is considered as superficial. Besides Sunnism is based on fear whereas Alevis base their faith on love rooted within the hearts of people.<sup>536</sup>

We also see the same understanding in both of these two periodicals in that

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<sup>533</sup> Cited in Seufert, 1997, p. 163.

<sup>534</sup> In the construction of Alevi identity, the term “foreigner” is very important. Here foreigner is used for Sunnites. For full discussion of the term “foreigner” see Murat Okan.

<sup>535</sup> Therefore, there is specific narration of history from the days of Prophet Muhammad to contemporary Turkish society in that Alevis present history in terms of the relationship of the good, the virtuous, the innocent and victims with the evil, cruel, and the worthless. In this sense, past era has produced its heroes and anti-heroes, each representing the opposing principles of Good and Evil. On the one hand, there are Alevis as true believers, oppressed and victims and on the other hand, there are Sunnis as the make-believers and charlatans, who use religion as a tool to foster and perpetuate their domination. Therefore, Sunnism is nothing more than the ideological construct of a decadent, corrupt, and areligious class oppressors. This results in the position that contemporary Sunnis Islam constitutes a distorted and manipulated Islam whereas Alevism appears as an Islam faithful to the original message of God. Vorhoff, 1998b, pp. 245–246, p.248.

<sup>536</sup> Shankland, 1998, p.20

they put on positive characteristics on Alevi identity against their “other” Sunni identity. In fact, their definition of Alevi identity is closely related to their definition of Alevism as a religion. As I discussed earlier, for instance, *Cem Vakfı* defines Alevism as real Islam and argues that to be Alevi is more difficult than to be Sunni. In that standpoint, 127 articles out of 1037 (12.25%) articles in *PSAKSD* and 270 articles out 3344 (8.07%) articles in *Cem* focus on the positive characters of Alevism.

By presenting Alevism as a political system, *PSAKD* argues that the Universalist values such as democracy, secularism, social law, love of human, fraternity, solidarity, freedom, peace, being scientific and so on are in the essence of Alevism.<sup>537</sup> Hence, since Alevism is “international religion of love,”<sup>538</sup> “If Alevism was the common culture of the world, there would be neither border, nor war, nor exploitation, nor armies. The world would be the heaven.”<sup>539</sup>

Furthermore, Ali Yıldırım summarizes the characteristics of Alevism as 1. Alevism are in favor of democracy. 2. Alevism is not dogmatic and it is rational. 3. Alevism are modern and in favor of change and progress. 4. Alevi thought is international, based on tolerance 5. Alevism supports the principle of secular society and secular state. 6. Alevism is friend of nature. 7. There is equality of women-men in Alevism. 8. Art is existential element of Alevism.<sup>540</sup> Based on these characteristics of Alevism, Veli Ateş argues,

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<sup>537</sup> We may give several examples, which focus on these positive characteristics of Alevism. Muharrem Erkal, his speech in “Canlar Gecesi” on 23 April 2000, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no. 7 (May 2000), p. 3, Mesut Gerçek, “Alevilik İlericiliktir!” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), p.34, “Pir Sultan Abdal’ı Anlamak,” *PSAKSD*, 17 (March-April 1996), p. 7, Battal Pehlivan, “Alevilik Bilimsellikdir,” *PSAKSD*, 7 (June 1993), p.8, Ali Yıldırım, “Türkiye, Aleviler ve Seçimler...” *PSAKSD*, 32 (May 1999), pp.10-11.

<sup>538</sup> Murtaza Demir, “Anadolu Aleviliği ve Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneğinin Konumu,” *PSAKSD*, 35 (December 1999), p.26.

<sup>539</sup> Ali Balkız, his speech in the opening of *Danışma Kurulu*, cited in *PSAKSD*, 39 (August 2000), p.6.

<sup>540</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Günümüzün Aleviliğinin Evrensel Değerleri,” *PSAKSD*, 33 (July 1999), pp. 69-72.

There is the responsibility of being an Alevi. First, an Alevi must be intellectual and democrat and must resist against injustice when it is necessary. In history, Alevis appreciated labor and resisted exploitation of people by others. Their ideal has always been peace and freedom.<sup>541</sup>

When we take the issue from the opposite side, they criticize Sunnite Islam because it is based on “fear” and “obedience.” For instance, Ali Yıldırım argues that unlike Islam (not Sunnism), there is a focus on human in the essence of Alevism. It is *sui generis* belief of Anatolia. (My emphasis)<sup>542</sup> In this regard, Alevis are “opposite of crude, near the oppressed, the modern, secular, and supporter of democratic values. Alevism is not Shiism, rather it is a lofty thought which sees Kabe in human and approach 72 nations, namely all humanity, fraternally.”<sup>543</sup> On the other hand, from the beginning, Islam’s hands have been bloody because atheists, Alevis, idolaters and so on have been executed under the name of Islam.<sup>544</sup> Hence, Ali Yıldırım argues,

Alevis should not fear from looking into mirror. In the mirror of Alevis, there is no repression, no cruelty, no taking the rights of the poor, no hurting others because of their religion, no behaving women as the second class, and no curse to poem-*saz-semah*. There is love, value of people more than everything and non-discrimination, which approaches 72 nations in the same way.<sup>545</sup>

However, as a political aspect, their criticism is towards the state, not Sunni population by arguing that inequality is in the system, not in the lives of populations.

Besides, it says that Alevis look all religions with same tolerance and Islam is

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<sup>541</sup> Veli Ateş (the president of İzmir office), his speech in the fifth anniversary of Sivas, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p.13.

<sup>542</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Günümüzün Aleviliğin Evrensel Değerleri,” *PSAKSD*, 33 (July 1999), p.68.

<sup>543</sup> The Public announcement, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p.6.

<sup>544</sup> Haldun Çubukçu “Turan Dursun’un Anısına: Din Ya da Zihnin Köleliği,” *PSAKSD*, 6 (April 1993), p. 14.

<sup>545</sup> Ali Yıldırım, “Aleviler Aynaya Bakmaktan Korkmamalı,” *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p. 9.

beautiful in itself. Yet, this does not change the fact that by focusing on positive characteristics of Alevi culture and by negative codification of Sunni Islam, *PSAKD* tries to exalt Alevi culture, which is defined as the wealth of Anatolia. In this sense, although it claims that it takes the Alevi issue within the context of democracy, *PSAKD* sometimes applies identity politics by taking Alevism and its wealth as a centralistic position in its political struggle.

*Cem* also focuses on the positive characters of Alevism such as its humanitarian structure, pertaining conscience, fraternity, equality, and real democracy.<sup>546</sup> Niyazi Öktem, for example, asserts that Anatolian Alevism is democratic, secular, and republican. It is in peace with every one and is aware of that Anatolia is a mosaic of races, cultures, and religions.<sup>547</sup> Moreover, Baki Öz argues that if Turkey looks for a modern democracy, the preconditions of this democracy exist in the structure of Alevism/ Bektasism because Alevism involves humanity and characteristics of democracy.<sup>548</sup> These lines are noticeable for exalting Alevism:

Anatolian Alevism is at the side of good and is a belief system, which supports principles of the Secular Republic. It wants the abolishment of exploitation of human by other people and is against discrimination of humans based on language, religion, race, and sect. It wants political democratic system works properly and leaves relationship between human and God to their own religion. Anatolian Alevism is against theocratic sectarian thought and is the supporter of morality, which means respecting the values of societies and nations, keeping up technological developments and giving priority to equality of women and men in society.<sup>549</sup>

Therefore, like *PSAKD*, *Cem Vakfı* also presents Alevism a political system by arguing that

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<sup>546</sup> Abo İlhan, "Alevilik," *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p. 23.

<sup>547</sup> Niyazi Öktem, "Aleviliğe Bakış Açımız," *Cem*, year 6, 59 (October 1996), p. 44.

<sup>548</sup> Baki Öz, "Alevilik ve Demokrasi," *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), p.16.

<sup>549</sup> İsmail Elçioğlu, "Demokrasi ve Aleviler," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.30.

Alevis and Alevism are reliable supporters and influential guarantees of democratic, secular, modern society and state understanding. Where there is Alevism; freedom, justice, and love will come out there. Modern society and modern state will be the creation of people who live and think in terms of Alevism and they will be eternal with the Alevi thought.<sup>550</sup>

As well, both of these two institutions give part women in their discourses just as the same way in nationalist discourses and a symbol for proving their modernism against Sunnis. Hence, the construction of the “other” is based on the women.<sup>551</sup> For instance, Neşe Ceyhan says that there is a special position of women in Alevi thought because there is not discrimination against women in Alevi thought. In *cems*, women and men stay together and they worship face to face. Women may also sit in post of *dedelik*, i.e. *Kadıncık Ana*, *Sultan Ana* sit in this post. However, in Sunni society, you cannot talk with all women and women and men are not together except in some villages.<sup>552</sup> Gülizar Kılıç also says that Anatolian women chose darkness, illiteracy, and reaction as an enemy for them and they paved the road for today’s light. For this reason, people who try to destroy our culture are targeting women because in a society women are in darkness cannot give birth of light.<sup>553</sup>

*Cem* also has the same idea with *PSAKD* in that there is discourse of equality of all human beings in Alevi thought regardless of their religion, language, race, and sex. In that sense, women have in equal rights with men in divorcing, in heritage, in working, in production and in social life.<sup>554</sup> Cahit Tanyol argues that the only tariqat

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<sup>550</sup> “Olaylar-Yorumlar,” *Cem*, Year 3, 26 (March 1993), p. 33. For same concern, see interview with İzzettin Doğan by Ayhan Aydın, 2003, p.107.

<sup>551</sup> For full discussion see MA thesis of Berna Ekal.

<sup>552</sup> Neşe Ceyhan, (*PSAKD*-the secretary of Democratic Institutions for Masses), her speech in the third of Education series in GOP on 12 May 2007.

<sup>553</sup> Gülizar Kılıç, “Alevilik ve Kadın Sorunu,” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.48.

<sup>554</sup> Atilla Fırat, “Anadolu Aleviliğinde Kadın Hakları,” *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February 2000), p.54.

and sect, which does not see woman a good, a commodity, or a mean of sex, but just the opposite which gives equal rights like in old Turkish traditions is Alevism/ Bektasism. Since in their thought woman is just “female,” Sunni sect blames Alevism. However, among Alevis and Bektasis, a woman is the base of society.<sup>555</sup> Burhan Kocadağ also says that in Alevism the position of woman is honorable. Before Islam, there had been equality of women and men whereas with Islam woman was confined to home. According to Sheri’a, there is not a place of women in society. Therefore, in Turkey only in an Alevi community there is equality of women and men.<sup>556</sup>

However, in those statements, we see there are references for gender issue rather than accepting women’s subjectivity. Just using women as a symbol for their discourse against Sunnism objectifies women. Besides, they tend to see women close to the nature. For instance, Adil Ali Atalay argues that women are like nature, they are the source of production as soil.<sup>557</sup> Moreover, contrary to Alevi thought, Neşe Ceyhan accepts that *PSAKD* do not have very much women member and women are not actively take part activities. They usually stay at home and are called for activities if their husbands do not attend. Hence, “living Alevism” is contrary to Alevi thought and Alevis are affected from the aura of larger society in which there is a hegemony of men over women. For instance, unlike in older times, no women sit *dedelik* post anymore or in *Kırklar Cemi*, women take the lowest service:

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<sup>555</sup> Cahit Tanyol, “Tarikat ve Kadın,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p.7.

<sup>556</sup> Burhan Kocadağ, “Kara Kitaba Ak Yanıt,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p. 31. For same concern see Gülay Gün, “Laisizm, Alevilik ve Kadın Tarihte Paralellikler,” *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), pp. 11-13.

<sup>557</sup> Adil Ali Atalay, “Alevilikte Kadın,” *Cem*, year 32, 96 (December 1999), p.56.

*süpürgecilik*.<sup>558</sup> Ayhan Aydın also claims that Alevis are as patriarchal as Sunnis since they live in the same geography.<sup>559</sup>

In short, both of these two institutions focus on the positive characters of Alevis especially as being democratic, secular, and republican. In this way, they try to justify their positions and to prove that Alevis are not the threat for this country. Just the opposite they are the owners of a belief, which provide democracy, freedom and peace to humanity. In that sense, as Vorhoff argues, Alevi intellectuals try to maintain traditional culture by arguing that this culture has always practiced Universalist concerns, movements such as humanism, enlightenments, modernism and so on. Therefore, they are trying to reintroduce customs and usages in terms of modern values such as secularization, urbanization, and globalization.<sup>560</sup>

#### Discourse of Trauma and Perception of Threat

I was discriminated in a Turkmen village because of my Kurdish identity and in a Sunni village because of my Alevi identity. For years, I could not say I was from Arguvan (Malatya). I always said I was from Pötürge because there is not any Alevi in Pötürge.<sup>561</sup>

I felt repression of Sunni Islam on me throughout my life.<sup>562</sup>

I was fired from my job twice because I debated on my Alevi identity. I also faced assimilation and aggressions.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Neşe Ceyhan, (PSAKD-secretary of Democratic Institutions for Masses), her speech in third of Education series in the GOP Office on 12 May 2007.

<sup>559</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, Central Office of *Cem Vakfı* Istanbul, 09.02.2007.

<sup>560</sup> Vorhoff, 1998b, pp.236–250.

<sup>561</sup> Kemal Bülbül, (secretary of Education and institutionalization-Kurd), his speech in the third of Education Seminars in the GOP Office on 12 May 2007.

<sup>562</sup> Mehmet Yorulmaz (the founding member of Pendik Office), “Bir Cemevi’nin Öyküsü,” *PSAKSD*, 43 (March-April 2001), p. 81.

<sup>563</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary For Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the

I have learnt I was Alevi when I was at eighteen. Can there be unjust treatment more severe than this?<sup>564</sup>

“Trauma”, “repression”, and “discrimination” are basic components of Alevi discourse; they even have become the parts of Alevi identity. On the one hand, resulted from discrimination, fear, hesitance, pain (trauma effect) Alevism has created a monolithic (and integrated) structure regardless of differences among itself. On the other hand, Alevis define and empower themselves based on the historical pain, turmoil and psychology of oppression.<sup>565</sup> The feeling of repression has been passed to the following generations and been reconstructed repeatedly in social memories. Hence, Alevism, like most identities, (re)emerge as an outcome of counter-production (or reaction to dominant group). Indeed, Alevis have also been seen as the “other” among Sunni groups just because they happened to be there and they have always been attributed as Alevis from outsiders and were forced to continue endogamy.<sup>566</sup>

However, although Alevis are now more comfortable in declaring their identity and in practicing their rituals, we cannot say that they completely get rid of traumatic affect of discrimination. They still keep their fear of discrimination, prejudice, aspersions, and even executions in case of their declaration of identity.<sup>567</sup> In that sense, 109 articles out of 1037 (10.51%) in *PSAKSD* and 192 articles out of

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Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007.

<sup>564</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007.

<sup>565</sup> Subaşı, p.311.

<sup>566</sup> Elwert, pp.67-68.

<sup>567</sup> Erman, p. 331.

3344 (5.74%) in *Cem* emphasize on repression, discrimination, unjust treatment, aspersions, and recently blames. They argue that starting from Kerbela and went on Ottoman Period (especially in Yavuz era); Alevi has always been executed and repressed. However, we cannot say these executions stayed in the history in that massacres of Çorum, Maraş happened in near history. The people who were killed in those incidents were guilty just because they were Alevi.<sup>568</sup> They also focus on that Alevi are subject to humiliation and aspersion in the media.<sup>569</sup>

When we remember Yalçinkaya's criticism about Aktay and Subaşı's arguments for Diasporic and ghetto structure of Alevi, Yalçinkaya claims that it was not choice of Alevi to live closed groups in big cities because they felt themselves under the threat of being executed. For this reason, "the repression" must be taken in terms of their position with the power. However, as a further step, I am arguing that "discourse of trauma" is also related to their position vis-à-vis the state. Hence, as you see in percentages, *PSAKD*, which has been in a challenger position towards the state, may use the trauma as a tool for its policies by focusing on the story of repression in Alevi's life.<sup>570</sup> On the other hand, *Cem Vakfi*, which tries to integrate the state, avoids focusing on repression and puts emphasis on the fraternity of Alevi and Sunni.

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<sup>568</sup> İsmail Elçioğlu, "Demokrasi ve Aleviler," *Cem*, year 1, 5 (October 1991), pp. 30-31.

<sup>569</sup> Fethi Demirel, "Cumhurbaşkanı S. Demirel'e Açık Mektup," *Cem*, year 3, 31 (December 1993), p.47. For examples see Ali Yaman- Sadık Güner, "Medya'da Alevilik," *Cem*, year 3, 32 (January 1994), pp.44-45. Indeed, these aspersions about Alevi are so common as they may emerge anywhere and at any time. The gaffe of Güner Ümit was the most well known. For instance, on 12 May 1993, in a TV programme (*Yüksek Tansiyon*) on HBB TV Hasan Ali Buldan (the ex- preacher) and Cemal Şener (an Alevi writer) were discussing on Alevi. In this program, Buldan repeated these aspersions, by arguing that Alevism was *sapkın*, incestuous belief. Both of these institutions focused this incident in their periodicals (volume 7 in *PSAKSD* and volume 25 in *Cem*) and condemned Buldan.

<sup>570</sup> For instance, they published a book which involves life stories of Alevi who face discrimination: Uğraş Ulaş Tol ed. *Alevi Olmak Alevilerin Dilinden Ayrımcılık Hikâyeleri*, Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği, *Gelin Canlar Bir Olalım Projesi*, Ankara, Özdoğan Matbaa, June 2000.

This also led the difference in their constructing Alevi identity and their usage of symbols. Hence, identity necessitates symbols and is discriminative to history/historical processes, giving importance to some historical experiences whereas erasing some others. In this sense, the traumatic effect of incidents as well as the feel of pain and the fear of the repressing are mobilizing and canalizing huge masses to take part in politics actively. For this reason, the Sivas incident as well as Çorum, Gazi, Maraş have become a symbol of repression in the discourse of *PSAKD* and *Cem*. 240 articles out of 1037 (23.14%) in *PSAKSD* and 130 articles out of 3344 (3.89%) in *Cem* focus on the incidents of Sivas, Çorum, Maraş, Malatya, Gazi and Ümraniye as examples of Alevi repression.

By combining it with Maraş and Çorum, the Sivas Incident has become a myth especially in the discourse of *PSAKD*. For me, this is case for two basic reasons: *PSAKD* was the institution, which organized Pir Sultan Abdal Ceremonies in which Sivas incident occurred. Secondly, they use the Sivas incident as a political tool for both mobilizing masses and underlining the threat of Sheri'a. In this way, as *PSAKD* claims that, Alevis will not face such events any more if they raise their voices. For instance, the mother of Nurcan Şahin (one of victims of the Madımak), Fidan Şahin says, "We started to march with the support of public. All masses were in enthusiasm. Our march transformed to be against DRA. We have understood that our children would not return. Our marches are now for preventing Islamic regime."<sup>571</sup> Metin Çelik also says, "The politics based on fear brings us to slavery. The threat of reaction freezes us. We must not be the watcher; vice versa we must also interfere"<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Hasan Şahin, "33'ten Biri: Nurcan Şahin, Annesi Fidan Şahin Anlatıyor," *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, Special Volume for the Week of Democracy and Secularization, 2 July 1998, p.2.

<sup>572</sup> Metin Çelik (member of General Executive Committee in *PSAKD*), his speech in forum in the

In most of their speeches, administrators focus on these incidents. Kazım Genç “like we did not forget the Sivas Massacre, we did not forget Maraş, Çorum, Malatya and Gazi either. If we forget, they remind us.”<sup>573</sup> For instance, Necati Yılmaz spoke like this, “we didn’t forget Sivas. To forget means forgetting Gazi, Çorum, Maraş, unknown perpetrator murders, tortures, disappearances, privatizations, firings, and poverty. To forget is not to struggle against these.”<sup>574</sup> For this reason, they struggle for opening of Madımak hotel as a museum, for a building monumental tomb for victims of the Sivas incident, and building a museum (there is a museum for victims of Sivas incident in Central office of *PSAKD*), and for winning the Sivas Massacre suit.<sup>575</sup>

*Cem* also points out the incident of Sivas, but not as demagogical as *PSAKD* does. It just presents the Sivas issue as an appearing/ repetition of massacres in Ottoman period and just gives the news about trial and publishes news about anniversaries of the incident. First, *Cem* claims that Alevis must embrace laicism, democracy and law more than usual and the state must protect Alevis. Therefore, their criticism is not toward the state, but towards local authorities, which helped fundamentalists who were against laicism.<sup>576</sup> However, there are also articles which criticize the double standard policies of the state since it did not interfere the groups

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Conference on Alevis and Politics on 20 May 2007.

<sup>573</sup> Quoted by Neşe Ceyhan from Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.14 (July 2004), p. 3.

<sup>574</sup> Necati Yılmaz, his speech in fifth anniversary of 2 July, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.3 (July 1998), p. 6 and Ali Balkız also defines ‘2 July as the day of struggle of workers, labors, civil servants, youth, and intellectuals for independent, secular, and democratic Turkey. Ali Balkız (as editor), “Her Yer Madımak Her Gün 2 Temmuz,” *PSAKSD*, 33 (July 1999), p. 1.

<sup>575</sup> Murtaza Demir, 25 (January-February 1998), p.1. We may increase these examples as Ali Balkız, “Örgütlü Olursak Eğer”, his speech as a president of *PSAKD* in a meeting for Democracy and Secularism in Ankara on 2 July 2001, *PSAKSD*, 44 (June 2001), p.7.

<sup>576</sup> “Aynın İçinden,” *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), pp.36–37.

which started this incident.<sup>577</sup>

In addition, *Cem* blames Aziz Nesin for the provocation with his attitude and his speech whereas *PSAKD* protects him. Doğan claims that *PSAKD* prepared the conditions for the Sivas incident especially by inviting Aziz Nesin. Inviting Aziz Nesin, who is known as an atheist, was an invitation for this incident since it was clear that Aziz Nesin would criticize God, Koran and Sunnism. He goes on by saying that people who uses the name of Pir Sultan Abdal and announces, “We do not have the problem of Alevism” (he means *PSAKD*) are trying to insert Alevism in their individual channels.<sup>578</sup>

Therefore, *Cem Vakfi* avoids using Sivas incident as a tool of enmity and offers to declare 2 July as “National Lament” in order to build bridge of peace among these communities, by claiming that “all” people and governors share this pain.<sup>579</sup> In fact, *Cem Vakfi* has always been in favor of fraternity of two communities and argues that there is not enmity towards Alevis in Sunni population.<sup>580</sup> When 17 articles in *PSAKSD* (1.64%) focus on fraternity of these two communities, 111 articles in *Cem* (3.32%) emphasize the same issue. In this sense, the dispute between these two communities emerges because Sunnis do not know very much about Alevism. If Alevis and Sunnis know each other, they will overcome separations between each

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<sup>577</sup> Sabri Yücel “Sivas Toplukuyumunun İkinci Yıl Dönümünde Bazı Düşünceler,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.33.

<sup>578</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 33, 100 (April 2000), p.26 and “Olaylar-Yorumlar,” *Cem*, year 3, 27 (August 1993), p. 3, p.7.

<sup>579</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “Cem’imizden,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.3 and “Cem Vakfi’ndan Kamuoyuna Duyuru,” *Cem*, year 5, 50 (July 1995), p.4.

<sup>580</sup> “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, Year 1, 5 (October 1991), p.7. Interestingly, *Cem* sees the president of DRA’s speech in opening of a symposium on “Din-Devlet İlişkileri ve Türkiye’de Din Hizmetlerinin Yapılanması” as indicator of peace and dialogue.

other.<sup>581</sup> However, on the base, there is a life of togetherness, which compensates differences between two communities.<sup>582</sup>

İzzettin Doğan claims that the separation of Alevi-Sunni traced back to the Yavuz era, to struggle between Ottomans and Savafids, and after that period Ottoman accepted Sunni Islam as an official religion.<sup>583</sup> Ayhan Aydın also points out that before the Yavuz era there had not been differentiation between these two communities. With emergence of Shah İsmail, the Shii effect became apparent on Alevism and Alevis were declared as *Rafizi*, heretics. For this reason, these two communities have become estranged. Today, state can solve this problem, but it maybe wants this separation.<sup>584</sup>

Moreover, İzzettin Doğan argues that there are people who are trying to divide citizens by creating Alevi-Sunni separation. Indeed, today there are Sunnis who respect Alevi religion.<sup>585</sup> For instance, he considers that Şevket Kazan's (Minister of Justice in Refahiyol Government) statement "they are playing *mum söndü*" is beyond hurting Alevis and claims that his statement may increase tension in society. Kazan said this for the action of "For continuous bright one minute darkness!" after the Accident of Susurluk.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Haşim Kaya (president of Aydın Office), his speech in the opening ceremony of the Aydın Office, *Cem*, year 7, 71 (October 1997), p.3.

<sup>582</sup> "Olayların Ardından," *Cem*, year 3, 26 (March 1993), p. 32 and interview with İzzettin Doğan, *Cem*, year 32, 93 (September 1999), p.18.

<sup>583</sup> His speech in the opening ceremony of the Antalya Office (1998), *Cem*, year 30, 81 (August 1998), p.9.

<sup>584</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, 09.02.2007.

<sup>585</sup> İzzettin Doğan, his speech in a panel in Lübec, cited in *Cem*, "Almanya'da Güller Açtı," *Cem*, year 6, 60 (November 1996), p. 9.

<sup>586</sup> İzzettin Doğan's public announcement upon Şevket Kazan's statement, cited in *Cem*, year 7, 64 (March 1997), pp. 8-9.

In that context, Doğan criticizes governments which came to power after 1960 in that the state has been separated as the right and the left, which created anarchism. Benefiting from this anarchic situation, Political Islam has become a threat for the Republican state. Especially after 1980, with projects of Green Line of America, the state flourished political Islam by opening Koran courses and religious schools and financing Sunni Islam. For this reason, Sivas incident is not accidental. If it had not emerged in Sivas, it would happen in Malatya, in Amasya, or in any city.<sup>587</sup> He claims that Sivas is a test of demolishing secular Republic. Yet, there is an international extension of the Sivas issue in that Turkey is considered a threat for all Islamic powers in the world with its secular structure.<sup>588</sup>

Align with repression, aspersions, unjust treatment; as I discussed earlier, recent years there are also blames against Alevism. After the rediscovery of Alevism in the 1980s, not only Alevis but also outsider groups (the state, the media, and Sunni population) started to debate on Alevi issue. There are groups which support Alevi rights whereas some others who blame them for separatism. For instance, *Akit* (Islamic newspaper) criticized the ceremonies for the opening of *Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Merkezi* in Dikmen (Ankara) on 19 May 1998 as “while there is debate about what will replace *Imam Hatip* Schools and Koran courses closed after 28 February, so called Alevi institutions are grown by the state.”<sup>589</sup>

The basic blame against Alevis is “separatism” by arguing that some “inner and outsider groups” artificially create the Alevi problem or Alevis cooperate with “outsiders” to divide Turkish state. For instance, as I discussed earlier, in 2001

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<sup>587</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Ayhan Aydın, *Cem*, year 33, 100 (April 2000), p.27.

<sup>588</sup> İzzettin Doğan, *Cem*, Year 34, 110 (June 2001), p. 7.

<sup>589</sup> Cited in *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p. 4.

Abdülkadir Sezgin (the ex-head inspector of DRA) pointed out the existence of some Alevis who were trying to found Alevistan. Yalçinkaya asserts that Sezgin's blame combined Alevi institutions and they re-declared their loyalty the state. Hence, the possibility to be blamed for separatism prevents them to question the state and its practices and this freezes the oppositional character of Alevis.<sup>590</sup> For instance, *PSAKD* started to use the term *Asl-i Unsur* in order to focus that Alevis were loyal citizens of this country when the court sued *Alevi-Bektasi Kuruluşları Birliği Kültür Derneği* in 2001. The court asserted that this federation made separatism since it used the term Alevi in its name.

*Cem* also criticizes the speeches of the representatives of DRA who were saying that "some inner and outsider groups" are trying to create Alevi problem artificially. Hence, it argues that not only Alevis, but also the president (Turgut Özal), the Prime Minister (Süleyman Demirel) and some rightist writers such as Ethem Ruhi Fırlalı, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, and Abdulkadir Sezgin (paradoxically he is also one of the owners of these blames) focus on Alevi problem. Are these people are trying to divide the country by creating artificial Alevi problem? Like *PSAKD*; *Cem Vakfı* also re-declares its loyalty upon these blames by arguing that *Cem Vakfı* does not doing Alevi missionary.<sup>591</sup> When Cemal Canpolat claims that Alevis are the base of this country and the principle of Atatürk who will protect this country against reaction,<sup>592</sup> İzzettin Doğan says Alevis are the essential for the national security as the guarantee of Kemalist Republic. He goes on by expressing that

In the army, nobody sees Alevis as a threat against national security.

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<sup>590</sup> Yalçinkaya, 2005, pp.112-113.

<sup>591</sup> Abidin Özgünay, "Cem'imizden" *Cem*, year 3, 30 (November 1993), p. 2.

<sup>592</sup> Cemal Canpolat (the vice president of *Cem Vakfı*), his speech in the organization of the İkitelli Office of *Cem Vakfı* on 22.01.2000, *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February 2000), p.19.

However, Sezgin argues that some Alevis are trying to create Alevistan. He has this claim because giving rights of Alevis necessitates the reorganization of existing system (DRA) in favor of Alevis, which will disrupt the privileged position of Sunnis.<sup>593</sup>

In this context, both *Cem Vakfi* and *PSAKD* are careful in applying international organs in order to get Alevis' religious rights because they may face blames as "collaborating with outsiders" in order to divide Turkey. In the beginning of 2000, *Cem Vakfi* argued that Alevi problem was international since it is based on the freedom of religion. For instance, Hıdır Akbayır asserts that Alevis pay taxes, but they do not benefit religious rights. Hence, *Cem Vakfi* may bring institutional Alevi problem to courts based on 10<sup>th</sup> article of constitution, which arranges the equality of citizens. This is legitimate based on the international documents such as 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> articles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>594</sup>

However, Akbayır points out that *Cem Vakfi* is careful about not applying international organs and it is trying to solve Alevi problem within inner mechanisms. This is case because when Alevis are applying to ECHR or interviewing with representators of the EU, they are considered as they are collaborating with

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<sup>593</sup> Interview with İzzettin Doğan *Cem*, year 35, 113 (September 2001), p.11.

<sup>594</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfi*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfi* Istanbul, 24.12.2007. Although he mentions the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, when I search through Internet these articles are included in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council Of Europe). Article 9 – Freedom of thought, conscience and religion: 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Article 11 – Freedom of assembly and association: 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. 2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State. Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Available [online]: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm>.

“enemies.” Akbayır, in this sense, focuses that Alevis love this country.<sup>595</sup> Moreover, both İzzettin Doğan and Murat Küçük also indicate that Turkey must solve this problem with its inner dynamics with a dialogue with the political leaders before international institutions such as the ECHR or the EU force Turkey.<sup>596</sup> *PSAKD* also wants to solve Alevi problem within inner mechanisms. For instance, Erdal Yıldırım says, “we cannot solve the Alevi problem with ECHR in that its decisions will not be carried out because it does not have sanctions. Therefore, he asserts that Alevis must be in the front of democracy.”<sup>597</sup>

In this sense, the interview between Karen Fogg (ex-Ankara Ambassador of the EU) and the managers of *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi* in June 2000 was presented in the media as “Secret Meeting of Alevism” and based on the interview these two institutions were blamed for reporting Turkey to the EU. Both of these institutions focus that this interview is not secret and must be taken within the regular meetings of the EU in the accession process of Turkey because the EU is preparing reports on Turkey by interviewing with representatives of both the state and NGOs. Moreover, this is not the reporting inner issues of Turkey to the EU since freedom of religion is not just the inner issue of Turkey. Some groups, especially DRA, are presenting this interview as scandal in order to prevent Turkey’s accession to the EU as well as its democratization.<sup>598</sup>

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<sup>595</sup> Hıdır Akbayır (The manager of *Cem Vakfi*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfi* Istanbul, 24.12.2007.

<sup>596</sup> Murat Küçük “Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye’nin Alevi Yurttaşları,” *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February 2000), pp.30-34.

<sup>597</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary For Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007. Indeed, *PSAKD* brought the issue of obligatory religious instruction to the court of ECHR and ECHR held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 2 (right to education) and Turkey should bring its educational system and domestic legislation into conformity with the ECHR. However, Turkish governments has not carry out this decision yet.

<sup>598</sup> Murat Küçük “İnanç Hürriyeti, Aleviler ve Kopenhag Kriterleri,” *Cem*, year 33, 13 (July 2000),

In short, Alevis are not still comfortable in declaring their identity as well as in demanding their religious rights. Indeed, the Sivas Massacre occurred in the near history and it is still alive in the memories of Alevis. Especially *PSAKD* uses this incident as a political tool to mobilize masses whereas *Cem Vakfı* mostly focuses on the fraternity of two communities in the process of its efforts to integrate the state. On the other hand, the threat of execution was replaced with the blames of separatism against Alevis. This tactic of the state and state representatives lead Alevis to re-declare their loyalty to the state in that they argue that Alevis are *Asl-i Unsur* of this country. This prevents Alevis to question the state policies, to get their rights and to work as NGO in a flourishing civil society.

#### The Issue of Minority

Another salient issue about Alevis is whether they are minority or not. Fatma Göcek points out that Turkish secularization which tries to control religion in the public sphere; rather than equally allocating its support towards all religions, leaves this in the monopoly of Sunnism. Since Alevis does not benefit from state support in order to protect their religion and social system is based on Sunni principles, they can be regarded as minority.<sup>599</sup> In this regard, as İrat claims, Alevis are not minority by law, yet they are physiologically and sociologically minority because they do not use their religious rights.<sup>600</sup>

The minority issue emerged especially in 2004 when the EU report defined

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pp.12–15 and Doğan Bermek (the founder member of *Cem Vakfı*), “İnanç Hürriyeti Türkiye’nin İç İşleri Değil,” *Cem*, year 33, 13(July 2000), pp.14–15.

<sup>599</sup> Fatma Müge Göcek, “Türkiye’de Çoğunluk, Azınlık ve Kimlik Anlayışı.” Available [online]: <http://www.cagridogan.com/fatmagocek.htm> [April 2006]

<sup>600</sup> His speech in the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara on 19.05.2007.

Alevis as non-Sunni Muslim minority. However, the basic criticism came from Alevis themselves against the EU' definition of Alevis as minority. Baskin Oran argues that due to negative connotations of minority status, Alevis and Kurds, who in fact are not represented in the state as well as face repression in society, avoid calling themselves as minority.<sup>601</sup> Hence, only two articles from *Cem* (0.06%) focus on Alevis as minority whereas in *PSAKSD* there is not any article, which has same the concern.<sup>602</sup>

In this sense, the young and confused Alevi, Ersin Gedik, argues that Alevis are not minority; but if Lazs, Kurds are accepted as minority, Alevis are also minority. Yet, Alevis must be able to claim their identity and they must be represented. "In fact accepting Alevis as minority is not problem for me if I claim my identity and protect my ideas."<sup>603</sup> However, Erdal Yıldırım asserts that they were the first institution, which opposed the EU's definition of minority. When Alevis do not define Alevism as a sect of Islam, the EU defines them as "non-Sunni Muslim" minority because they are trying to have good relations with Sunni power in Turkey. He also argues,

Yes, we are less than Sunni population and we are not in power. Nevertheless, we are not minority. We do not accept the definition of non-Sunni Muslim group. We see Alevism as *Asl-i Unsur*. Being minority means having limited rights. Being minority is something like being farmhand (*yanaşma*).<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>601</sup> Cited in Göner, p. 112.

<sup>602</sup> These articles in *Cem* do not use the term minority in legal base, but just focusing that Alevis do not use their rights related to freedom. For instance, in the first volume of *Cem*, Süleyman Cem defines the Alevi problem as a minority problem since Alevis have not performed their rituals and organized their *cem* in secrecy. Süleyman Cem, "Yurttaşlık Sınavı," *Cem*, year 1, 1 (June 1991), p.20

<sup>603</sup> Ersin Gedik (the ex-president of Youth Commission in Kadıköy Office of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.03.2007.

<sup>604</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary for Culture and Art in *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007. Indeed, there is a contradiction in understanding of *PSAKD*. It defines Alevism as a "separate religion" and criticizes the EU's definition of Alevis as non-Sunni Muslim group since this definition includes Alevis within Islam. Besides, Lausanne Treaty's

Hence, *PSAKD* applies just the opposite policy as arguing that Alevis are *Asl-i Unsur* of the Turkish state. In that context, 7 articles from *PSAKSD* (0.68%)<sup>605</sup> and 7 articles from *Cem* (0.21 %) define Alevis as *Asl-i Unsur*. Ali Murat İrat claims that there had been a debate between Kurds and the state on being *Asl-i Unsur*. Alevis has also joined this debate by expressing that they were also *Asl-i Unsur*. In fact, Alevis always have problematic relation with the formal ideology and Kemalism. Yet, now, they are using it as a reserved tool by saying that they are real Muslims and the protector of Turkish secularization against the threat of reaction and real Turks against the Kurdish question. The tension, emerged on minority issue as well as on the threat of reaction, led to the dance of Alevis with the system. However, they must debate their rights based on the issue of *Türkiyelilik*- citizenship.<sup>606</sup>

In fact, as I discussed in the former chapter, both of these two institutions claims that Alevis are the loyal citizens and even the real owners of this country who pay their taxes and do military services. Therefore, although the usage of the term *Asl-i Unsur* is new, the understanding behind this term has always been immanent for the discourses of these two institutions. For instance, in *Cem*, İ. Kemal Aydemir asks that “why do not we worship freely as Alevis who are about 20 million, full-blooded (*özbeöz*) Turks and one of sects of Islam? Why are we still trying to worship

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definition of minority is also based on religion, as non-Muslims are minority. For this reason, for *PSAKD*, if Alevism is a religion itself, Alevis are non-Muslims and they must be accepted as minority.

<sup>605</sup> As I discussed earlier, in fact, *PSAKD* first used the term *Asl-i Unsur* in volume 47, when the court sued *Alevi-Bektasi Kuruluşları Birliği Kültür Derneği*. Since this institution used the term Alevi in its name, the court regarded this as making separatism. In order to defend itself as they did not make separatism, *PSAKD* used this term. Before that, Abdükdir Sezgin had been accusing Alevis of making seperatism and trying to found Alevistan. Based on these blames, Alevis felt themselves responsible to re-claim their loyaty to the state and declared themselves as *Asl-i Unsur*.

<sup>606</sup> His speech in the Conference on Alevis and Politics in Ankara on 19.05.2007.

in *cemevis* in a fear of being raided by the police or gendarme?”<sup>607</sup> Moreover, in *Cem*'s volume 66, Y. Yesari Gökçe also defines Alevis as *Asl-i Unsur* and the real owners of this country. He then complains that the state; for which they work, cry, die, and pay tax; does not recognize Alevis whereas Germany (a foreign state) takes account of Alevis and including Alevism in lessons.<sup>608</sup>

However, Kazım Genç, by accepting the standing of Ali Murat İrat, argues that not only Alevis, but also Kurds are sociologically and legally minorities since they do not use their rights based on their identity. Yet, there is a difference between the EU's definition of minority and Turkish society's. The EU defines people who face unjust treatment as minority whereas in Turkish society with the efforts of the state in order not to give “minority rights” of Alevis and Kurds, the term minority has bad meanings. In that sense, in Lausanne treaty there is a differentiation between people who fight against enemies (invaders) and minorities in that minority is defined a person who fight “with” enemies (invaders) in the Independence War. Since Alevis and Kurds fought with Turks, as a reflex, they define themselves as *Asl-i Unsur* rather than as a minority. This means that Alevis uses the term *Asl-i Unsur* in order to focus that they also fought against enemies in the Independence War. However, when we use the term *Asl-i Unsur*, this term consists of “othering” people who are not *Asl-i Unsur* of this country. Yet, everybody in this country must be considered as who fought against enemies in the Independence War. “We regard equal citizenship for people from Edirne to Hakkari in that in Alevism there is an understanding of equality of all nations.”<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> İ. Kemal Aydemir, “Öneriler,” *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), p.31.

<sup>608</sup> Y. Yesari Gökçe, “Bir Hadisenin Düşündürdükleri,” *Cem*, year 7, 66 (May 1997), p. 4.

<sup>609</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007 and Ankara, 21.05.2007.

### The fear of assimilation

Alevi have always been seen –even today- as *sapkın*, incestuous unbelievers by most Sunni population, by non-governmental religious authorities and by the state. In the past, the central authority was dealing with this heretic belief by executing Alevi. However, as I discussed earlier, state has changed its attitude towards Alevi by presenting them as Turkish Islam. In other words, now it tries to produce knowledge about Alevism and by “defining” to try limit it within the borders in which it can control. The state’s attempt to define Alevism is at the same time the creation of official Alevism and the assimilation of Alevism into Islam. The state builds mosques in Alevi villages and staffs them with Sunni *imams* under the name of the Turkish-Islam synthesis. Based on this process, Alevi also has changed their discourses in that the “fear” of being executed is replaced by the “fear” of being assimilated into Sunnite Islam. Today most of Alevi feel themselves under the threat of degeneration of Alevism or assimilation into Shiism and Sunnite Islam. 116 articles out of 1037 (11.19%) in *PSAKSD* and 85 articles out of 3344 (2.54%) in *Cem* focus on the efforts of state-especially DRA- to assimilate Alevi into Sunni Islam and criticize this Sunnification.

In this context, *PSAKD* takes the issue of assimilation into Sunni Islam in two aspects: assimilation by the state through DRA and through national education system and assimilation by Alevi themselves.

On the one hand, there is process assimilation and the threat of reaction. On the other hand, there are debates among Alevi themselves concerning the content of Alevism: the approach of Alevi-Islam, which see Alevism within Islam and the approach, which focuses on Alevism its historicism and identity. In such a situation, the managers of offices and young should come together, debate about the projects of institutions and so on in order to deal

with these problems.<sup>610</sup>

First, it criticizes the state's approach towards Alevi and sees it a tool of assimilating Alevi into Sunni Islam. It argues that representatives of the state ask Alevi "Why do you feel foreigner? You are also Muslims. Our holy book, our prophet, our god, and our flag are same."<sup>611</sup> In this way, rather than living under the umbrella identity of Turkey (*Türkiyelilik*) which focuses on multi cultural, multi linguistic and multi religious structure, power tried to create one identity based on the Turkish-Islam synthesis.<sup>612</sup>

*PSAKD* focuses on two basic reports, which show the state's position. Çiller Report<sup>613</sup> has a claim that Sunnis and Alevi are the same as Alevi are indeed Sunnites. In addition, *cemevis* are places in which Alevi come together, realizing their identities, demanding rights, and taking political position and they cannot integrate to larger society. For this reason, Alevi must be assimilated to Sunni Islam by DRA, through mosques and *imams*.<sup>614</sup> Alternatively, Ministry of Education<sup>615</sup> wrote a report in which the state had a claim that Alevism was not a religion different from the Sunnite, or a sect; but it was a temperament (*meşrep*). According to *PSAKD*, this approach is assimilationist, anti-democratic and anti-secular because political powers reject and deny the existence Anatolian Alevism as a separate

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<sup>610</sup> Youth's Commission in the Central Office, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p. 9.

<sup>611</sup> Preface, editor, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p.2.

<sup>612</sup> Turan Eser, 58 (July-August-September 2004), pp.26–27.

<sup>613</sup> In fact, I did not find any source, which focused this report. Even existence of this report is not true, at least this is important to show the perception of *PSAKD* towards the state (here government).

<sup>614</sup> "Çiller' in Gizli Alevilik Raporu. Alevilere Ne yapmalı?" *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), pp.8-9.

<sup>615</sup> The report written by Hüseyin Tuğcu who was assigned by the Ministry of Education upon request of *Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu* when Aziz Yalçın and Şakir Keçeli wrote a book under the name of *Alevilik Bektaşilik Açısından Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi*. And this council rejected this book.

religion itself and regard it the same with Sunnite Islam. It is crucial that the Ministry of Education put this approach in a formal document.<sup>616</sup>

Moreover, the position of DRA is not only taken in terms of secularization, but also in terms of assimilation. Erdal Yıldırım argues, “PSAKD is trying to make masses conscious about the threat of assimilation and degeneration. The state as well as DRA is trying to systematically assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam.”<sup>617</sup> Hence, *PSAKD* is criticizing publications of DRA in which Alevism is defined as a tariqat of Hanefi Islam, so Alevi have to worship in accordance with Hanefi Islam.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, as Selfet Yıldız points out, in the publications of DRA Alevi are regarded as “threat.” For instance, in the book *Günümüz Aleviliği* published by DRA Alevism is presented as an ideology and *cemevis* as the places of leftist organizations.<sup>619</sup>

In this standpoint, the term Alevism has also become essential in these debates. As I discussed earlier, Alevism is mostly defined as “followers of Ali” or “lovers of Ali.” For instance, Yıldırım claims that the prime minister and president of DRA are as tactless as announcing, “If Alevism means a love of Ali then I, too, am an Alevi.”<sup>620</sup> Kazım Genç also argues that the state defines Alevism as “followers of Ali” and combines the emergence of Alevism with the first separation in Islam for the Caliphate. Yet, it is Shiism, which can be defined as “followers of Ali.” In fact, the term Alevism is relatively new term, which was started to be used in ninth

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<sup>616</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no. 1 (May 1998), p. 9.

<sup>617</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary For Culture and Art in PSAKD), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, 02.02.2007. For example, he showed me the news in *Milliyet* which pointed out that Alevi wanted *imams* in order to learn Islam.

<sup>618</sup> “Diyânet Alevileri (Nasıl) Tanıldı?” *PSAKSD*, 42 (February 2001), pp.2-4.

<sup>619</sup> Selfet Yıldız, (the president of Yenimahalle office), his speech in the Activities of “6 May *Denizleri Anma*” in 2004, *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, no.12 (July 2004), p.2.

<sup>620</sup> Erdal Yıldırım (the ex-secretary For Culture and Art in PSAKD), interview by the author, the Kadıköy Office Istanbul, March 2007.

century. However, Alevism was there before and after Islam.<sup>621</sup>

Secondly, *PSAKD*, which prefers using the term Alevi-(Bektasism), criticizes the usage of the terms Alevi-Islam and *Ehl-i Beyt* by some Alevi institutions and claims that in this way there is a process of assimilation from Alevism themselves. In this sense, as Kazım Genç argues, since the state does not want to recognize Alevism with their own names, with these two terms it is trying to create its Alevism which is inside Islam: moderate Islam. Therefore, it finances or founds some Alevi institutions such as *Şahkulu*, *Karacaahmet*, *Cem Vakfı*, *Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı* and so on in order to reach this aim.<sup>622</sup> Since *PSAKD* is trying to distant itself from state, it criticizes these “state-supported” Alevi institutions, asserting that they are trying to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam or into Shii Islam.<sup>623</sup>

First, *PSAKD* is criticizing *Dünya Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı*, which is well known with its close relations with Shii Islam. *PSAKD* asserts that Iran and the Turkish state support this institution in order to assimilate Alevism into Shiism. For instance, it tries to disrupt cooperation of Alevism based on organizing Ehl-i Beyt Congress.<sup>624</sup>

Furthermore, as I discussed earlier, *PSAKD* mainly criticizes the *AVF* (and *Cem Vakfı*) in terms of the position of *Alevi İslam Din Hizmetleri Başkanlığı*. *AVF* demands from DRA *Alevi Masası*, gray passport (for special staff of the state) and some other facilities for *dedes*. This is the process of assimilation of Alevism into Sunnism under the name of “*birlik ve beraberlik*” (fraternity and togetherness). In addition, they try to persuade that *Cem Vakfı* and *AVF* do not represent Alevism, yet

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<sup>621</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, Ankara, 21.05.2007.

<sup>622</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, Ankara, 21.05.2007.

<sup>623</sup> Murtaza Demir, 25 (January-February 1998), p. 8.

<sup>624</sup> *Pir Sultan Aylık Gazete*, year 1, no.2 (June 1998), p.6.

the media presents them as representator of Alevis in order to manipulate Alevis rather than focusing on the real problems of Alevis. Turan Eser also points out that one the one hand, *Cem Vakfı* is trying to create “Turkish origin Alevi Sheri’a” against “Arab origin Sunni Islam Sheri’a”, and on the other hand, *Demokratik Dayanışma Vakfı* is trying to create “Shii Alevism” against Anatolian Alevi-Bektasi Identity. If these processes really come true, there will be a political Alevi Islam against political Islam.<sup>625</sup>

On the other hand, assimilation is an important problem for also *Cem Vakfı*. Hence, Rıza Zelyut points out two kinds of assimilation on Alevism. The first one is related to relationship between the left and Alevis. In Turkey, the left/ socialism is equated with atheism. Young Alevis think that being irreligious is being the modern, so they break traditional linkages especially with *dedes*. This criticism is also towards some Alevi institutions which propagating atheism. The second type of assimilation is formal sunnification policy of the state by founding mosques in Alevi villages after 1980.<sup>626</sup> For instance, Ayhan Aydın focuses that Alevis are under the threat of being assimilating in that some Alevis have been Sunnified as they fast in Ramadan and practice *namaz*.<sup>627</sup>

Like *PSAKD*, *Cem* also expresses that in the past the official religion was trying to suppress Alevism completely and could not succeed, but now it is trying to assimilate it into Sunni Islam. For instance, as Abidin Özgünay points out, it is claimed that there is no difference between Alevis and Sunnis, so Alevis must

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<sup>625</sup> Turan Eser, “Hacı Bektaşî Veli ve Anadolu Aleviliği,” *PSAKSD*, 27 (July 1998), p.32.

<sup>626</sup> Rıza Zelyut, “Alevi Gençliği ve Sorunları,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p.29.

<sup>627</sup> Ayhan Aydın (the ex-Manager of *Cem Vakfı* and the ex-editor of *Cem*), interview by the author, the Central Office of *Cem Vakfı*, 09.02.2007.

practice Sunni worship. In this way, they are creating “*Ehli-sünnet Aleviliği*”<sup>628</sup>

Özgünay also goes on by expressing that

DRA, with the anger of “why do not you think and behave like me?” is trying to form new games in order to chasten Alevi. Taking the risk of ignoring history, it attempts to patch our elements to Sunnism, to prune Alevism and to take remained elements in Alevism with a slogan “this is not Alevism, it is Sunnism”. By breaking its linkage with Alevi thought and philosophy, with the help of Sunnified stuff, with comments and definitions that are poor enough to lament and funny enough to laugh, distorts, divides, and denies Alevism.<sup>629</sup>

In this point, *Cem* also focuses on the efforts of DRA in order to assimilate Alevism into Sunni Islam, which led to, just the reverse consequence in that Alevi started to claim their identities. In that way, Alevism stays in the agenda.<sup>630</sup> In this context, a meeting (in 1991) in DRA between some Alevi<sup>631</sup> and representatives (Hamdi Mert and Abdulkadir Sezgin) of DRA was criticized in 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> volumes of *Cem*, claiming that it is just a trick in order to assimilate Alevi. Cemal Şener then points out that Alevi do not say that DRA is not interested in us, but vice versa, it is interested in Alevi not in the same way Alevi want. In other words, rather than mosques, *namaz*, being invited to DRA as Sunni; Alevi want *cemevis*, *niyaz* and to be recognized with their identity.<sup>632</sup>

To sum up, by “defining” Alevism as sect of Islam or a culture the state and

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<sup>628</sup> Özgünay, 8 (January 1992), p.3.

<sup>629</sup> Abidin Özgünay, 10 (March 1992), p.3. For same concern see “Aydın Görünümü,” *Cem*, Year 1, 10 (March 1992), pp.4–5, Süleyman Cem, “Diyabet ve Biz,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p. 14–15, Rıza Zelyut, “Yayın Yönetmeninden,” *Cem*, year 5, 57 (August 1996), p. 6.

<sup>630</sup> Abidin Özgünay, “*Cem*’imizden,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), p.2.

<sup>631</sup> They do not name who these people are, but they argue that these people can not be considered as Alevi. I focused on this meeting when I discussed the state’s recent involvement in producing institutional knowledge about Alevi.

<sup>632</sup> Cemal Şener, “Diyabet, Bütçe, Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 1, 10 (March 1992), pp.33-34. For same concern see Hasan Kasakolu - Cemal Kaya, “Aleviliğin Asimilasyonu, Dedelik Kurumu ve G.Antep’te Merhaba Dostlar Gecesi,” *Cem*, year 1, 12 (May 1992), p. 52.

DRA try to create an official Alevism and these two institutions regard this process as an assimilation. When we think it with the fear of degeneration, both of them try to “redefine” and “standardize” Alevism in order to keep it alive. However, they do not take the issue of assimilation just as a policy of the state, but also they criticize other Alevi institutions in their efforts to assimilate Alevis. As I discussed earlier when *Cem Vakfi* criticizes *PSAKD* in using Alevism pragmatically and presenting it as atheism, *PSAKD* claims that by using the term Alevi-Islam, *Cem Vakfi* tries to integrate the state and its official definition of Alevism. Therefore, both of these two institutions move from an “essence” of Alevism and discriminating “others” who do not behave based on this essence under the name of assimilation.

In this context, in this chapter, I discussed Alevism in two aspects: Alevism as a religion and Alevism as a cultural identity, which are indeed closely related to each other. I underlined that there is a tendency to define and standardize Alevism as a (codified public) religion rather than a culture. This tendency has two paradoxical results in terms of ethnicity. On the one hand, Alevism appears as Turkish Islam or the essence of Turkishness. On the other hand, both of these two institutions argue that Alevism is beyond the race, which cannot be limited within one ethnicity. Hence, Alevism as a religion is used as a signifier term, which eliminates all differences among Alevis.

Yet, these two institutions do not agree upon definition of Alevism and this issue has become as political -rather than a theological one- rivalry among them since as I discussed earlier every definition of Alevism has a political implications. In this sense, *Cem Vakfi*, which uses the term Alevi Islam, has a parallel understanding with state’s definition and tries to integrate the state. In contrast, *PSAKD* defines Alevism as a religion itself and in this way it challenges not only the

aura of Sunni Islam, but also Islam totally. However, I have to remind that religious side of Alevism is crucial for *Cem Vakfi*, not for *PSAKD*, which mostly focuses on its cultural, political, and oppositional sides.

In addition, in the part of Alevism as a cultural identity I discussed affirmation of Alevi identity by these two institutions, the discourse of trauma, the debates on being minority, and the assimilation. By focusing on positive character of Alevis as being humanist, peaceful, democrat, secular, and republican, they apply Universalistic concepts in order to define Alevism. In this way, they try to prove that Alevis are not threat, but vice versa they are the wealth of this country. Therefore, unlike the execution of the past in order to control Alevi identity, today the state either blames Alevis in collaborating with “outsiders” in order to divide Turkey or tries to assimilate them into Sunni Islam by creating a controllable official Alevism. These two paradoxical tendencies of the state also creates contradictions in the policies of these institutions. On the one hand, they are re-declaring their loyalty to the state by focusing on that Alevis are *Asl-i Unsur* rather than minority because being minority means “being outsider” as well as “betrayer.” On the other hand, they try to stay away from the state’s assimilationist policies. In this paradoxical situation, another actor becomes essential: the EU, which recently has been involved in the relationship between the state and Alevis. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will discuss its role very briefly just as a beginning step for the future researches.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE EU: WHAT IS ITS ROLE?

In 1993, The EU adopted Copenhagen criteria for the candidate countries in order to be member of the EU. These criteria were democracy, human rights, law, respect for minority rights, and freedom of religion. Since Turkey wants to be member of the EU, it has to act upon these criteria.<sup>633</sup> For this reason, the process of Turkey's EU access destroyed the taboos in Turkey in that Kurdish and Alevi issues have become more debated in the public sphere. Whatever the case may be, in the last decade the EU mentioned the situation of Alevis in its recent reports and asked Turkish state to improve conditions of Alevis especially based on the freedom of religion. In this way, for the first time the Alevi problem took place in an international document. Therefore, for the following researches, I want to focus on the issue of the EU very briefly and to underline how these two institutions view Turkey's EU access.

In this context, both *PSAKD* and *Cem Vakfi* are in favor of the EU's attention on Alevis' rights in that they see it as a chance for Alevis to get their rights from the state. 17 articles out of 1037 (1.64%) in *PSAKSD* and 28 articles out of 3344 (0.84%) in *Cem* support Turkey's membership to the EU as well as its attention on Alevis.

First, they are both in favor of Turkey's membership to the EU. For instance, İzzettin Doğan argues that although there are debates on identity issue concerning the differences between East/ West, Muslim/ Christian, and so on as well as the possibility for Turkey to loose its identity, Turkey will not live such an identity problem in that it will protect its cultural identity when it becomes the member of the

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<sup>633</sup> İsmail Engin, 45 (July-August 2001), pp.12-13.

EU.<sup>634</sup> Yüksel Işık also asserts that since Alevism is not involved in nationalism and the homogenous structure of the nation-state in itself, it is in favor of such an institution like the EU, which accepts the co-existence of different nations as a principle.<sup>635</sup>

Secondly, they take Turkey's accession process more specifically for Alevis. When we take the issue for Alevis, we have to discuss it in terms of freedom of religion and democracy. When we return to former chapters in which I discussed the relationship between democracy and secularization, the EU's position becomes essential. Turkey must be a democratic country if it wants to be a member of the EU. In that sense, both of these institutions argue that Alevi problem is closely related not only the issue of secularization, but also democracy.

Parallel with its understanding of relationship between democracy and Alevi problem, *PSAKD* claims that the EU's democratic values can solve Alevi problem. First, Yüksel Işık mentions the correspondence of European values and Copenhagen criteria, which focus on democracy, human rights, and law with Alevi demands from the state such as the recognition of their identity, the abolishment of DRA, annihilation of hegemonic discourse over freedom of religion and adopting principle of international laicism in law system.<sup>636</sup> Hence, EU's attention on Alevis will have positive impact on Alevis as their identity can be recognized and this may contribute to the pluralism of Turkey.<sup>637</sup> From now on, the state cannot ignore this problem and

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<sup>634</sup> İzzettin Doğan, interview by Murat Küçük, *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February 2000), pp.27–28.

<sup>635</sup> Yüksel Işık, "Alevilik ve Avrupa Birliği," *PSAKSD*, 45 (July-August 2001), pp. 28-29.

<sup>636</sup> Işık, 45 (July-August 2001), p. 25.

<sup>637</sup> Murtaza Demir, "AB Türkiye Raporu ve Aleviler," *PSAKSD*, 58 (July-August-September 2004), p.59.

cannot say, “If Alevism is love of Ali, we are also Alevis.”<sup>638</sup>

However, this is not case for only Alevis, but also for other religious and ethnic groups. Therefore, Turan Eser, from *PSAKD*, argues that in order to have multicultural country they do not take the issue just for Alevis, but also all the repressed and/ or subculture groups who do not use their rights.<sup>639</sup> In other words, with EU, Turkey will be more a democratic and secular country in which freedom of religion is adopted and this will solve the Alevi problem as well as other ethnic and religious issues.

*Cem Vakfi* also sees the EU membership as a prospect for Alevis. For instance, İsmail Engin, from *Cem*, argues that since Turkey must adopt Copenhagen Criteria in order to be member of the EU and demands of Alevis overlap Copenhagen Criteria in terms of equality and freedom of religion, the EU can be considered as a chance for Alevis in order to have their rights.<sup>640</sup>

*Cem Vakfi* also relates the solution of Alevi problem with democratization of Turkey in the accession process. As Murat Küçük points out, the system in Turkey ignores differences, limits freedom of speech, and imposes one type of citizenship to the society. For instance, DRA which services only for Sunni Islam must be debated and reorganized based on the principle of “equality in public service.” Therefore, in the process of membership of Turkey to the EU, the position of DRA and the rights of Alevis will become essential.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> Ali Balkız “Avrupa Birliği Temsilcileriyle İlk Görüşme ve Sonuçları,” *PSAKSD*, 57 (June 2004), pp.54–63.

<sup>639</sup> Turan Eser, “Avrupa Birliği Tuzak mı, Yoksa Yeni Bir Fırsat Mı?” *PSAKSD*, 57 (June 2004), p.3 and Yüksel Işık, 45 (July-August 2001), p. 27.

<sup>640</sup> İsmail Engin, “Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye,” *Cem*, year 34, 111 (July 2001), pp.9–12 and İsmail Engin, “Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye: Türkiye’de Demokratikleşmenin Önemli Bir Unsuru Olarak Aleviler,” *Cem*, year 34, 108 (April 2001), pp. 17-18.

<sup>641</sup> Murat Küçük “Avrupa Birliği ve Türkiye’nin Alevi Yurttaşları,” *Cem*, year 33, 98 (February

In this point, in order to be member of the EU, Turkey must adopt a political system based on the basic rights and freedom such as the supremacy of law on politicians, respect to minority rights, free market economy, and democracy. For instance, İzzettin Doğan mentions that there cannot be democracy without laicism and Turkish laicism is suitable for democracy. However, there are some contradictory practices of Turkish secularization to the principle of laicism such as the state makes choice among religions of its citizens, finances Sunni Islam, and ignores Alevis who consist of one third of population. Yet, the state cannot take side in terms of religion, so its attitude must be equal and just to its all citizens. Therefore, in order to embrace the system in the EU, it must either abolish DRA or reorganize in order to found a democratic institution in which all religious groups are represented. The reorganization of DRA is not the problem of just Alevis, but also it is important for democracy and laicism in which everyone can use the right of freedom of religion equally. Hence, Turkey must solve this problem of freedom of religion without any force of the EU. Since demands of Alevis are closely related with democratization; unless the state solves Alevi problem, Turkey cannot democratize.<sup>642</sup>

However, İsmail Engin focuses that Turkey does not mention Alevis and Alevis religious rights based on freedom of religion, position of DRA, obligatory religious instruction and the issue of *cemevis* in National Program of 2000. He then claims that giving religious rights is not a threat against national integrity and unitary state.<sup>643</sup>

Nevertheless, there is an important question how Alevis take place in the

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2000), pp.30-34.

<sup>642</sup> Murat Küçük's reportage with İzzettin Doğan in *Cem*, Year 33, 98 (February 2000), pp. 27-28.

<sup>643</sup> İsmail Engin, 111 (July 2001), pp.9-12 and İsmail Engin, 108 (April 2001), pp. 17-18.

EU's reports and whether these institutions completely support the EU. In fact, *Cem Vakfi* seems to be more sympathetic to the EU in that only two articles (0.06%) criticize the EU. These criticisms are not related to Alevis, but towards the EU in general terms as being the Christian Club, which does not want Muslims in itself. On the other hand, seven articles in *PSAKSD* (0.68%) criticize the EU because of its definition of Alevis as non-Muslim minority.

Indeed, I discussed earlier how Alevis took place in the EU reports. The EU first mentioned Alevis in the report of 1999 without using their name but just focusing as "other religious groups." In reports of 2000 and 2002, it used the term Alevi whereas in 2001 and 2003 preferred the term non-Sunni Muslim groups. For the first time, in 2004 report, it defined Alevis as non-Sunni Muslim "minority." In 2005, it changed this term to non-Sunni Muslim Alevi community. However, the last two reports (2006 and 2007) do not use the term "non-Sunni" for Alevis any more, it just use the term Alevi.

*PSAKD* argues that this tendency of the EU to define Alevis as non-Sunni Muslims must be taken as part of creating moderate Islam and assimilation of Alevis into (Sunni) Islam. In this sense, the EU thinks that problems of Alevis can be solved if Alevis are represented in DRA, if *dedes* receive salaries as state stuff, or if Alevism is thought in (obligatory) religious instruction. However, since *PSAKD* thinks that DRA is a tool of the state to hegemonize Sunni Islam in the society, it does not want to be the part of this non-secular system. Just the opposite it wants total change of the existing system in terms of a democratic and secular one. In short, by defining Alevis as non-Sunni Muslims (seeing it within Islam) and by not criticizing non-secular system in Turkey, the EU does not support freedom of

religion of Alevis as it supports for non-Muslims in terms of Copenhagen Criteria.<sup>644</sup>

Another important matter for the EU's focus on Alevis is the issue of "being minority." As I discussed earlier most Alevis rejected the EU's attempt to define Alevis as minority. Indeed, *PSAKD* is aware that Alevis are sociologically and legally minorities, since they do not use their rights based on their identity.<sup>645</sup> However, as a policy they prefer to use *Asl-i Unsur* pragmatically. For instance, Murtaza Demir is careful about the EU's definition of minority in that groups who cannot use their rights are defined as minority. Therefore, he asserts that we can use the term minority until we find a better term. Yet, he mentions that the problem of Alevis cannot be considered as the problem of minority. The problem is inequality between Sunnis and Alevis as well as between Sunni state and individual. For this reason, the constitutional citizenship and main human right law can only solve this problem.<sup>646</sup>

In short, although they are in favor of Turkey's accession the EU and see this a good chance for Alevis to get their rights from the state, especially *PSAKD* is suspicious about this process. Indeed, we cannot read *Cem Vakfi's* position vis-à-vis the minority issue that emerged in 2004, since it ended publication of *Cem* in 2003. Yet, based on its view on being minority in general and *Asl-i Unsur*, it might also be critical for the EU's definition of Alevis as minority. Whatever the case, the EU's

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<sup>644</sup> Turan Eser's comments on the EU reports of 8 November 2000 and 13 November 2001, *PSAKSD*, 57 (June 2004), pp.6–11 and Ali Balkız, 57 (June 2004), pp.62–63.

<sup>645</sup> Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007 and Ankara, 21.05.2007.

<sup>646</sup> Demir, 58 (July-August-September 2004), p.59. As Kazım Genç argues that there is difference between the EU's definition of minority and Turkish society's. The EU defines people who face unjust treatment, as minority whereas in Turkish society minorities are perceived as people who fought with enemies (invaders). Since Alevis and Kurds fought with Turks, as a reflex, they define themselves as *Asl-i Unsur*. With using the term in such meaning, the state prevents Alevis and Kurds to struggle for their "minority" rights. In that sense, Kazım Genç (the ex-president of *PSAKD*), interview by the author, the GOP Office Istanbul, 12.05.2007 and Ankara, 21.05.2007.

involvement in this process by focusing on Alevi issue in every report since 1999 and its attempts to negotiate Alevi institutions like in 2000, we may say that Alevi problem will stay an important part of Turkey's EU accession like Kurdish issue. Moreover, Turkey will have to solve this problem in order to be the member of the EU.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

By the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s, Alevism has gained visibility in the public sphere as a culture and a religion. With institutionalization in different parts of the country under the different type of organizations, Alevis started to raise their voices and to claim their identity. Yet, this visibility was not limited to the borders of the Alevi community because they have been “a minority” group within the larger society of Sunni population and within the state’s “secularist” aura. They were demanding their religious rights from the state and challenging the state policies in terms of secularization. Hence, now we may talk about existence of Alevi politics and the agency of Alevis as political actors.

This new system of Alevi world indeed is not unique and homogeneous in which “all” Alevis have same demands, same critics, and most importantly same definitions of Alevism. Just the opposite, they are so divergent and scattered especially under the different Alevi institutions. Moreover, there were several actors, such as the state, the EU, Sunni and Alevi writers, the media, who attempt to be involved in the process of constructing Alevism. In that sense, by focusing on different characteristics of Alevism, these actors try to come up with “a definition” of Alevism and every definition has political implications for both Alevis and non-Alevis.

Therefore, as a significant actor, since the period of *İttihat ve Terakki*, the state attempts to “define” Alevism and produce institutional knowledge about it. In this way, it tries to draw official borders of Alevism so that it can use it as a political tool for the sake of state’s “holy” aims and unity. In fact, following Asad’s position

we have to underline that religion and politics are deeply connected each other and mostly power creates religion or at least uses it for its political aims. Besides, rather than being secular, “modern” state is pretending to be secular. This is case for also Turkish state, which indeed adopted so-called secularization. This means that the position of Alevis and Alevism must be analyzed politically by taking into account the position of power because the hegemonic position of the state is determinant in Alevi politics.

In this context, this thesis first aimed to deconstruct existing literature on Alevism, arguing that position of power is mostly ignored in most Alevi literature. Rather than being aware of hegemonic relationship between the state and Alevis and “the immanence of being political” in Alevism, these works re-produce state-centric postulates such as being loyal citizens, secular, democratic, humanist and so on. Moreover, in these works, the “agency” of Alevis and their daily experiences, expectations, lives, political deeds and so on are ignored. By saying that, I do not take into account sociological and anthropological works on Alevism since these works disregard socio-political, cultural, and economic basis of Alevi issue and especially the significant role of the state. This means that since the Turkish state defines “national identity” ethnically Turkish, religiously Muslim, and sectarian Sunni and represses, denies, discriminates, and assimilates non-Turks, non-Muslims, and non-Sunnis who disrupt unity of this national society. For this reason, Alevism as a non-Sunni religious identity has never been recognized by the state and Alevis have not gained legitimacy on the eye of the state and Sunni population.

Furthermore, this thesis took two different Alevi institutions such as *Cem Vakfi* and *PSAKD* as case study and analyzed their position vis-à-vis power. In this way, I tried to underline that these two institutions have different political projects

concerning the Alevi issue based on their definition of Alevism as well as their relation with the state. There may also be contradictory tendencies within an institution itself. Hence, an analysis of Alevism in relation to power shows that there is the ambivalence of Alevi politics.

Thus, *Cem Vakfi* defines itself an “only Alevi institution” which tries to introduce and spread Alevism and to work for the religious rights of Alevis. On the other hand, *PSAKD* introduces itself “not only Alevi institution,” which works for Alevi identity, but also “Democratic Institution for Masses,” which tries to force the state to adopt democratic reforms. In this regard, *Cem Vakfi* puts Alevism and Alevi identity in the center of its policies, arguing that unless the state solves the Alevi problem, Turkey cannot be a democratic country. However, *PSAKD* takes the issue just the opposite way, claiming that only when Turkey will be “really” a democratic and secular country, the Alevi problem can be solved.

This difference between these two institutions is closely related to their view of politics in general. For *Cem Vakfi*, being political means being the leftist and Marxist. For this reason, it argues that Alevis as well as *Cem Vakfi* itself must stay in equal standing vis-à-vis all political parties and Alevis may collaborate with any of these parties, which can solve the Alevi problem. Indeed, based on such a pragmatist approach, it has clientalist relations especially with rightist parties. In this way, unlike *Cem Vakfi* “assumes,” it moves in the realm of politics. On the other hand, *PSAKD* is aware of immanence of being political in Alevism, but it also combines politics with the leftist movement. By arguing that being the leftist is the essence of Alevism, it criticizes de-politicization of Alevism by the state policies, which move Alevism away its leftist essence.

By underlining their positions vis-à-vis the politics, we can argue that *PSAKD*

takes the political side of Alevism whereas *Cem Vakfi* mostly focuses on Alevism as a religious identity. In this context, in the process of reconstruction of Alevism, *Cem Vakfi* uses a concrete term Alevi-Islam in order to define Alevism and tries to renew and standardize Alevi rituals. Therefore, by putting Alevism in the center of its policies, it exists in the public sphere and in the realm of politics as an Alevi institution, which works for Alevism as a religious identity and for the religious rights of Alevi. On the other hand, *PSAKD* reflexively defines Alevism in that it has not a noticeable position concerning religious side of Alevism. It tries to avoid defining itself only an Alevi institution. For this reason, it is *Cem Vakfi*, which acts based upon Alevi identity, and applies identity politics in order to take position vis-à-vis the state.

However, is there always a correlation between identity politics and a pose a challenge to the state? Generally, it is argued that the ethnic and religious groups within larger society, which apply the identity politics, challenge the state. However, my study shows that there is not “always” direct correlation between these two tendencies and identity politics may not “always” have transformative and libertarian nature. Therefore, *Cem Vakfi*, which applies identity politics, tries to integrate the state in order to benefit from state facilities provided for religious groups. For instance, it demands representation of Alevi in DRA, including Alevism in religious instruction, having TV and radio programs about Alevism, the recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship, and so on. It legitimizes these demands with the two basic rights defined in the constitution: the right of equality and the freedom of religion. Even its use of Alevi-Islam in order to define Alevism is a practical tool by which it can both underline the difference of Alevism from Sunni Islam and at the same time gain legitimacy on the eye of the state and Sunni population by including Alevism

inside Islam. In that sense, Doğan's suggestion, which asserts that Alevis must leave their uncompanionable relation with the state and must try to be in power, becomes essential in order to underline the position of *Cem Vakfi* concerning power.

On the other hand, *PSAKD* demands the total change of existing system to the system of "real" secularism and "real" democracy for in favor of all religious and ethnic groups. Therefore, it wants adoption of real democracy in Turkey not only for Alevis, but also for all ethnic and religious groups. Moreover, by arguing that the state must not finance any religion, it demands the abolishment of DRA, the abolishment obligatory religious instruction, the re-organization and/ or the decrease in the number of religious schools, and so on the removal of entry of religion from identity cards. With these demands, it challenges the "secularist" system of the state and/ or its so-called secularism, which ignore religious differences among population and flourishes Sunni Islam. In other words, my study showed that sometimes, rather than identity politics, the groups who apply universalist approach might challenge the state in order to get their religious and ethnic rights. Here, *PSAKD* tries to get the rights of Alevis from the state by using universal concepts such as democracy and secularism.

Indeed, this difference in their positions in relation to the state emerges from their organizational structure. As I discussed earlier, *Cem Vakfi* is *vakıf* whereas *PSAKD* is *dernek* and they are subject to different laws. This means that *derneks* are more flexible institutions whereas *vakıfs* are under the strict control of *Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü* (the state). Moreover, *vakıfs* are founded for public benefit in that they receive funding and do not pay taxes. However, *derneks* pay taxes and must finance themselves by their own. Based on the difference in their organizational structure, *Cem Vakfi* has close relations with the state and benefits from the state facilities. For

this reason, it may avoid criticizing the state policies in order not to lose these facilities.

However, the policies of two these institutions must be analyzed in their relation vis-à-vis Kemalism and its aura in civil society. In that sense, *Cem Vakfi*, as its name shows, defines itself a Kemalist and republican institution and holds the republican principles especially its laicism. For this reason, while it is demanding the religious rights of Alevi from the state; its criticism is not towards the state. I argue that it is governments, which has disrupted Atatürk's secular system after one-party rule and has created the Alevi problem. Moreover, in discourse level, it mostly focuses on the loyal citizenship of Alevi, claiming that even Alevi are the real owners of this country. Indeed, its hesitation to be named as "being political" also emerges from its Kemalist characteristics. In other words, in Turkey as a perception, being political means being the leftist and being the leftist means being against the Kemalist state. Therefore, by claiming that Alevi have always been loyal to the state, it tries to prove *Cem Vakfi* "just" works for Alevi and demands the "religious" rights of them by staying out of the politics.

In contrast, *PSAKD* is aware of the state's role in the creation of Alevi problem and it canalizes its criticism towards the state. However, this challenge against the state must be read within aura of Kemalism in civil society. Hence, like *Cem Vakfi*, it also focuses on the loyalty of Alevi and Alevi support in the National Struggle. As well, it argues that Alevi are not minority, just the opposite they are *Asl-i Unsur* of this country. In this regard, like *Cem Vakfi*, it does not understand why the state does not recognize the Alevi identity although Alevi pay taxes and do military services like all citizens in this country. Hence, my thesis shows that the aura of Kemalism is so influential in civil society as well as on these institutions in

that even *PSAKD*, which seems to be challenger to the state, sometimes applies the Kemalist discourse and feels itself responsible to “re-declare” its loyalty to the state.

I did not analyze discourses of these two institutions only in terms of their position in politics, but also tried to underline how they define and construct Alevism and Alevi identity. Indeed, as I discussed for many times, the definitions of Alevism has political implications, for this reason the struggle among these two institutions to define and present “real” Alevism must be analyzed within the realm of politics. Therefore, the differences among them in the political realm on the one hand, are eliminated under the “signifier” of Alevi identity. This means that whatever the their political position is, both of them focus on Alevi identity in an affirmative way as being secular, democratic, humanist, peaceful, and so on. They also underline the assimilation and the degeneration of Alevi identity as the basic threats against Alevism, so both of them try to standardize, to introduce, to teach, and to keep Alevism alive.

On the one hand, the difference in their political standing is reproduced when they define Alevism as well as construct Alevi identity. At this point, discourse of trauma and assimilation are noticeable in both of these periodicals, especially the Sivas incident has become a symbol and a political tool in this issue. Nevertheless, their different political positions also influence their attitudes towards this incident. Although both of them focus on repression and recently assimilation as basic threats against Alevism, *Cem Vakfi* avoids using the Sivas incident as a political tool, just the opposite it focuses on the fraternity of Alevis. In this way, it tries to integrate to the state and the larger Sunni society. On the other hand, *PSAKD* uses this incident to mobilize Alevi masses in order to struggle against anti secular and assimilationist policies of the state. In that sense, *Cem Vakfi* tries to integrate the state, to share

privilege position of Sunni Islam and be in power whereas *PSAKD* tries to preserve its oppositional character by focusing on repression and assimilation on Alevism. By the way, their position concerning the assimilation is also different. Both of them criticize DRA and its efforts to assimilate Alevism. Yet, *PSAKD* focuses on DRA's attempts to define Alevism within (Sunni) Islam whereas *Cem Vakfi* criticizes DRA because it defines Alevism as "a culture" regardless of its religious aspects. This difference is noticeable in their definitions of Alevism.

Indeed, *Cem Vakfi* has more a determined position in declaring Alevi identity and in drawing the borders of Alevi community both in ethnic and religious terms. First, it uses a concrete term -Alevi Islam- in order to define Alevism. In this way, it both underlines the difference of Alevism and at the same time determines the position of Alevism within Islam. After that, it emphasizes the ethnic origin of Alevi, by arguing that Alevism is Turkish Islam. In fact, it points out that religion is beyond all races, so being Alevi is sufficient for an identity. However, *PSAKD* is confused about the religious side of Alevism. It sometimes defines it as a religion itself, sometimes as a heterodox belief, and as a culture and life style beyond limitations of a religion. Indeed, its universalist approach is also apparent here in that it argues that Alevism is a universal belief, which is beyond ethnicity and religion. At first glance, they seem to be different vis-à-vis defining Alevism as a religion. Yet, here, both of them use the term Alevism as a common signifier" so that it can create Alevi society as a unique entity in which all "ethnic" and "religious" differences.

Lastly, Alevism is not discussed within the borders of Turkey because with the EU and ECHR international documents also focus on the Alevi issue. Especially the EU recently mentions the situations of Alevi in its regular reports on Turkey's progress towards accession. In that sense, the issue of Alevism has become essential

for Turkey's accession to the EU like Kurdish issue happened to be. These two institutions are in favor of the EU's focus on Alevi problems and see it as a good chance for Alevi to be recognized by the state. However, *PSAKD* argues that the EU has double standards, as it does not claim Alevi rights as it does for non-Muslims. In fact, they are dignified with their relations with international organs since they sometimes are accused of being collaborators of "outsiders" who try to divide Turkey. In this case, as in discussions on being minority and Alevistan show, they feel responsible to "re-declare their loyalty" to the state and this freezes their potential of challenge to the state in order to enhance its policies. Yet, we may say that position of Alevi vis-à-vis the EU will continue to be significant.

In short, this thesis tried to underline Alevi politics and the process of reconstruction of Alevi identity in the post-1980 period, taking two different Alevi institutions as a case study. These two institutions have different political position in relation to the state as well as there may be contradictory tendencies within one institution itself. Hence, we may talk about the ambivalence of Alevi politics. Yet, the basic difference emerges in their construction of Alevism and Alevi identity. This means that on the one hand, there is *PSAKD*, which tries to come up a political Alevi identity and opposes practices of the state in terms of democracy and secularism. On the other hand, there is *Cem Vakfi*, which focuses on Alevism as a religion and tries to create Alevi religious community. This difference is beyond the popular discussion about these two institutions as one is trying to integrate the state and the other one is oppositional. This is about politics, a politics of a "religious community," which uses the term Alevi as signifier for its identity and tries to exist in the public sphere with its demands for the religious rights.

Because of the limitation of this thesis, there are related issues untouched in

order not to be out scope of this research. For that reason, for further researches, I can suggest that it could be examined such as publications of DRA and *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Merkezi* in order to underline state's efforts to produce institutional knowledge on Alevism, the relationship between the EU and Alevis in detail, the relationship between the left and Alevis, an analysis of the media's attitudes towards Alevis, and an analysis of bourgeois character of Alevi groups especially in terms of *Cem Vakfı* and *CUSIAD*.

# APPENDICES

A. Thematic Chart for *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Sanat Dergisi*

Article No.	Publication Date	ALEVI INSTITUTIONALIZATION										ALEVI POLITIC(S)										ALEVI IDENTITY										THE EU																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																							
		Public Sphere		Representation		Institutions		Cooperation		Process		Politics		Secularization		Democracy		State and Governments		Demands For Changing Existing System		Demands For Alevi Rights		Construction of Alevism		Religious Aspect of Alevism		Cultural Aspect of Alevism		The Issue of Minority			Trauma and Perception of Threat		Ethnic Definition of Alevism																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																				
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1037	119	18	71	40	29	55	3	190	162	28	184	65	45	143	142	88	137	79	91	13	27	36	38	96	1	5	47	7	4	2	113	65	9	38	4	15	20	127	7	0	17	109	240	116	202	16	3	17	7																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						





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