

ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY ★ GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

**INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION FROM ALEVISM TO SUNNISM:
RECONSIDERING IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF
URBANIZATION AND TURKISH POLITICS**

M.A. THESIS

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Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Political Studies M.A. Programme

MAY 2015

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**ALEVİLİKTEN SÜNNİLİĞE BİREYSEL DÖNME: KENTLEŞME VE
TÜRKİYE SİYASETİ BAĞLAMINDA KİMLİK DÖNÜŞÜMÜNÜ YENİDEN
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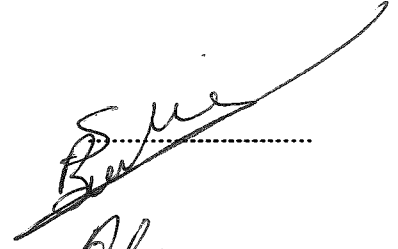
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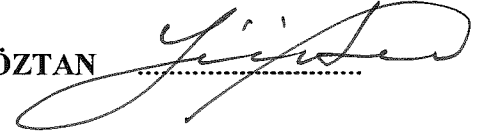
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ABBREVIATIONS

ABCFM	: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
DRA	: Directorate of Religious Affairs
EU	: European Union
JDP	: Justice and Development Party
JP	: Justice Party
RPP	: Republican People's Party

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INDIVIDUAL CONVERSION FROM ALEVISM TO SUNNISM: RECONSIDERING IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF URBANIZATION AND TURKISH POLITICS

SUMMARY

This thesis addresses some Alevis' estrangement from their traditional belief system and worship forms and their conversion into conservative Sunni Islam in relation to their experience of urbanization process and encounters with Sunnism i.e. Sunnification politics of the Turkish state, Sunni people's behaviors and interactions with Alevis. In this context, in-depth interviews were carried out by the thirteen informants who have been living in Istanbul (except one case) and identify their religious identity as Sunni or Muslim or both Alevi and Sunni. Based upon the aim of the thesis, Sunnification of the informants is basically examined in terms of factors, motivations and relationalities which lay behind the Sunnification process. Secondly, the thesis analyzes how those informants identify themselves with regard to religious, cultural and political sensitivities during their conversion process and its aftermath.

Based on the findings of the thesis, the relationship between urbanized Alevism and the state politics towards Alevis are scrutinized with regard to transformation of the 'identity'. Besides the thesis puts forward that the most important factor of Sunnification is that the accessibility to Alevi rituals has been hardly achieved and visibility of the Alevi faith has been gradually decreasing. In this context, this thesis investigates main socio-religious rituals of the Alevism with regard to insufficiency of urban conditions and how Alevis faced with social exclusions in the city due to their religious identity. The thesis analyzes the state politics towards Alevis from the Ottoman modernization up until today. It asserts that Alevism has been particularly problematized since the last decades of the Ottoman Empire up until today. It demonstrates how Alevism has been seen as an illegitimate (*meşru olmayan*) belief system by hegemonic powers for certain kind of interests. In this regard, the thesis states that traditional religious aspects of Alevism was gradually eliminated by the state both by preventing its visibility and accessibility and Islamization/Sunnification of Alevism or Alevis, while Sunni-Islam has been promoted as a legitimate (*meşru*) belief system. The thesis argues that both social and political exclusions of Alevis or Alevism prevented reconstruction of identity memory or cultural history of the community and it indicates how people without memory or history (i.e. Alevis) deeply felt about identity crisis and individuals reach to accessible and visible religious identity (i.e. Sunni-Islam) rather than suppressed one (i.e. Alevi identity) during this identity crisis. This means that the state intentionally paved the way for religious conversion by enacting Turkish and Islam synthesis in addition to the other factors that take place as a result of urbanization process.

ALEVİLİKTEN SÜNNİLİĞE BİREYSEL DÖNME: KENTLEŞME VE TÜRKİYE SİYASETİ BAĞLAMINDA KİMLİK DÖNÜŞÜMÜNÜ YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK

ÖZET

Bu tez, kentleşme sürecinin ve Sünnilik ile karşılaşmaların (devletin Sünnileştirme politikaları, Sünni insanların davranışları ve Alevilerin onlarla etkileşimleri) eşlik ettiği bazı Alevilerin geleneksel inanç ve ibadet biçimlerinden uzaklaşmasını ve muhafazakar Sünni-İslama dönmelerini ele almaktadır. Bu bağlamda, İstanbul ve çevresinde yaşayan, Alevi bir ailede doğmuş ve büyümüş ancak daha sonra kendi dini kimliğini Sünni, Müslüman ya da hem Alevi hem Sünni olarak tanımlayan 13 kişi ile derinlemesine mülakat gerçekleştirilmiştir. Tezin amacı doğrultusunda temel olarak Sünnileşmeye neden olan faktörler, motivasyonlar ve ilişkiselliklerin neler olduğu ele alınmaktadır. İkincil olarak, kişilerin kimlik dönüşümü süreci ve sonrasında kendilerini dinsel, kültürel ve siyasal olarak nasıl tanımladıkları analiz edilmektedir.

Tezin bulguları doğrultusunda kimliğin dönüşümü ile ilgili olarak kentleşme ile yüzleşen Alevilik ve Aleviler ile ilgili devlet politikaları incelenmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Sünnileşmenin en önemli faktörlerinden biri olarak, Alevi ritüellerine ulaşımın giderek güçleşmesi ve Alevilik inancının görünürlüğünün giderek azalması olduğu ileri sürülmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Aleviliğin başlıca sosyal ve dinsel ritüellerinin kentsel koşullar ile ilgili olarak yetersiz kaldığı açıklanmakta, ve şehirde bulunan Alevilerin, dinsel kimliğinden dolayı sosyal dışlanmaları ele alınmaktadır. Tarihsel olarak modernleşen Osmanlı Devleti'nden Cumhuriyet'e, oradan da günümüze Alevilere karşı uygulanan politikalar incelenmektedir. Bu tez, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son yıllarından itibaren Alevi kimliğinin sorunsallaştığı ve egemen iktidarlardan tarafından meşru olmayan (*illegitimate*) bir inanç sistemi olarak görüldüğünü öne sürmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Aleviliğin geleneksel dinsel kimliğinin devlet tarafından hem Alevi kimliğinin görünürlüğünün ve ulaşılabilirliğinin engellenerek hem de Aleviliğin İslamlaştırılması/ Sünnileştirilmesi ile elimine edildiği, bunun yanında Sünni-İslamın meşru (*legitimate*) bir inanç kimliği olarak yükseltildiği görülmektedir. Alevilerin/Aleviliğin kimlik belleği veya kültürel tarihinin sosyal ve politik dışlanmalar ile birlikte yeniden kurulmasının önlendiğini iddia etmekte ve tarihsiz/belleksiz halkların (Alevilerin) derinden hissettikleri kimlik bunalımını göstermekte ve bireylerin bastırılmış bir kimlikten (Alevi kimliği) ziyade görünür ve ulaşılabilir bir dinsel kimliğe (Sünni-İslam kimliği) ulaştığı ileri sürülmektedir. Bu durum, kentleşmenin sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan diğer faktörlere ek olarak; devletin kasıtlı bir şekilde Türk-İslam sentezini yasallaştırmasıyla birlikte din değiştirmenin zeminini hazırladığı anlamına gelmektedir.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 (In)visibility And (In)accessibility Of Alevism Within The Urban Context

The contemporary literature on Alevism asserts that religious visibility and accessibility of Alevism decreased within the urban areas especially until the 1990s. In 1987, Cemal Şener (1989) claimed that “Alevism was disappearing from history” as a result of his evaluation about the religious status of Alevis in the urban setting in *Nokta Journal* (p.177). Zelyut (1993) highlighted the problem of access to religious knowledge and stated that Alevis could not access to sufficient knowledge about Alevism in the city to the extent that they did not know how they could acquire it. Çamuroğlu (2008) added that Alevism was almost forgotten within the public consciousness in the early years of the 1980s (p.1). The disintegration of Alevism was also stressed by Kehl-Bodrogi who observed that Alevism seemed to lose its certain characteristics and it was melting in the social unity until the last years of 1980s (1996, p.52). Lastly, Vorhoff (1998) asserted that the existence of Alevi community was “carefully avoided in public discourse” for a long time (p.227). The (in)visibility and (in)accessibility of Alevism within the urban context have been analyzed by two main lines of perspectives: The first studies underline social, economic and cultural factors in order to explain religious dissolution of Alevism. The second group of studies highlights political agenda and factors which paved the way for the process of dissolution.

With regard to declining religious aspect of Alevism, some scholars point out the dissolution of traditional character of Alevism which started with the foundation of the Republic. The general transformation occurred during that time with the social, economic and technological developments. These developments included transportation and communication systems, market economy which dramatically changed internal structure and religious practices of the Alevi community within the rural context (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1988, p.53; Bozkurt, 1998, p.111). Social and economic changes especially led to the dissolution of traditional kinship and lineage system of

the community. As a result of this, social control mechanism was destroyed (Dressler, 2006, p.289). Since Alevi community used to have a closed based character, all these developments meant a process of opening to the wider society.

Nevertheless, most scholars agree that one of the most important transformations of Alevism emerged out by urbanization and migration processes. Bozkurt (1993) notes that the first Alevi neighborhoods started to emerge in big cities by the end of the 1950s. Raudvere (1998) states that “urban condition has had a profound impact on the conditions of the religious life, as regards both access and visibility” (p.236). This process is mostly evaluated in accordance with peculiar structure of the city: (City) “is a place of discoveries and surprises ... an environment where identities and histories are discovered and traditions are constructed...From individual level, many migrants express life in the city in negative terms as a radical uprooting. The outcome is both uncertainty and the opportunity for personal choices. From communal level... new institutions are needed to replace the support from the larger family, broken up in the context of the megacity, as is the mastering of new discourses and new sets of signs and symbols” (Raudvere, 1998, p.237).

The greater migration wave of the 1960s resulted in increased contact with the Sunni population, meanwhile they became segregated from other Alevi communities within the urban context. At this point, increasing engagement with Sunnis as neighbors, colleagues, classmates and so on has brought about significant changes on the reproduction of Alevi communities and restructuring of Alevi practices. Alevi people were no longer able to sustain their traditional social and religious organizations. This means that main institutions of Alevism including *ocak*, *dedelik*, *cem ceremony*, *musahiplik* got weakened; therefore, the transmission of religious knowledge to new generations declined (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1996, p.54). Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi (1988) asserts that with the dissolution of the socio-religious structures of the Alevi community, meaning and importance of religion dramatically decreased, religion was almost eliminated in the city (p.63)¹. Kehl-Bodrogi (1988) explains this dissolution process in which religious meetings were disregarded without replacement by any other religious activity (ibid., p.63). She observes disobedience to religious authorities including *dedes*, social practices including *musahiplik* (ritual kinship),

¹ Furthermore, Zelyut (1993) considers that religious practices of Alevis are not depended on dogmas therefore Alevis can easily give up socio-religious practices if they see them unnecessary (p.16).

endogamy, non-communication with strangers (i.e. outside of the community which means people who are not Alevi). According to her, the members of the community were no longer afraid of the social exclusion or excommunication (ibid, pp.62-63). Furthermore, she portrays that older generation compared themselves with other religions, for instance, they said Sunnis have Muhammad, Christians have Jesus and both of them have worship places including mosque and church. While doing this comparison, this older generation might have felt “identity gap” (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1988, pp.63-64). Kehl-Bodrogi (1996) explains the ‘identity gap’ issue in relation to thirty year hiatus due to the lack of transmission of socio-religious knowledge of Alevism in the urban setting. She argues that even for dedes it was hard to repair it. At this respect, (in)visibility and (in)accessibility of Alevism stand as an important issue which influenced negatively reproduction of Alevism and Alevis within the urban context.

From this point of view, the gap between different Alevi generations with regard to the knowledgeable and religious observance are underlined by some scholars who tend to argue that Alevism would likely to face a challenge based upon the current evidence. By the urbanization process, scholars point out that new generation of Alevis turned their faces to political activism. In the 1960s and 1970s leftist ideologies became prominent among younger generations. Most importantly, this generation re-identified Alevism with great emphasis to the leftist attitudes including equality, justice, freedom² hereafter religion was seen as reactionary. As a result of this attitude, they disregarded main religious institutions of Alevism including dedelik.³ Therefore, the dedes’ authority was further damaged and dedes were seen quite often “as charlatans exploiting ordinary people” from the Marxist standpoint (Dressler, 2008a, p.285). It is said that younger generations engaged with politics rather than religious affairs and did not much have knowledge about “the path” (yol) (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1988).

As a result of these transformations triggered by urbanization, Şener (1989) argues that Alevism could not renew itself, that is to say, custom, ritual practices of the community were rare and greatly weakened, and dedes (religious leader of Alevis)

² Bodrogi (1988) explains that this generation reidentified Alevism by using its main figures. For instance, according to this generation Ali, Hacı Bektaş and Pir Sultan represented solidarity and subordinated ones (p.60).

³ This generation thought that dedes were exploiters as they collect money from their talips (Zeidan, 1999, p.82). Besides Zelyut (1993) points out that erosion of dedelik had started in rural context rather than urban (p.16).

almost disappeared within the modern era. Şener (1989) claims that one of the main elements of this process was that Alevis⁴ inevitably began to negate Alevism in the urban setting (ibid, p.177).

Some core principles and practices of Alevism faced deep challenges in the urban context such as oral culture, principle of hereditary transfer of religious leadership, restrictions on the entry to cem rituals all of which were easier to conduct and control in smaller communities. It could be said that it is hard to achieve a face to face relationship with members of the community in the urban setting; therefore the relationship between dedes and talip got weakened, at the same time, dedes lost their traditional authority. Furthermore, Şener's view on two Alevi groups in urban setting; one of them acquired high education and the other group engaged with arabesque culture, both of groups were apathetic to Alevis' past which seems questionable regarding the increase education levels among Alevis. Knowledge of Dedes from whom Alevi youth desired to get knowledge about Alevism and/or make critique of it was questioned by the youth. Bozkurt (1998) says that dedes no more have sufficient knowledge "to be able to adapt themselves to changing circumstances; they are unable to respond to the demands of a new generation that has embarked on a process of urbanization" (p.101). Since the 1990s, it is argued that, although dede institution has gained its religious status again, dedes' authority is constrained to the ritual context (Dressler, 2006, p.270).

Urbanization also diminished the reach and practicality of oral tradition which used to be a vital element in Alevi religious practices. Oral culture was important for the transmission of religious knowledge in Alevism, as Olsson (1998) says: "The oral transmission of religion among the Ali-oriented communities has apparently constituted a vital element of a distinctive type of situated social practice, by which personal tuition has implemented deep socialization into a religious life-style that was gradually internalized over years" (p.242). However, it was hard for dedes to learn in-depth dimensions of Alevi culture with the urbanization process. For talips, it means broken bonds of socialization with its community. Hereditary principle regarding dedes was also challenged due to the fact that the urban context is characterized by

⁴ Şener (1989) explains these Alevis on the basis of urbanization process. According to him, two Alevi groups emerged out in the city in relation to their cultural orientations. One of them acquired high education. The other group engaged with arabesque culture. Şener argues that in spite of their different cultural attitudes both of groups were apathetic to Alevis' past (p.177).

heterogeneous relations of marriage and friendship (Bozkurt, 1998, p. 101). Besides, one of the main rituals of Alevi community is that ayin-i cem (cem ceremony), in particular “Görüm ceremony” is incompatible with the urban conditions since it requires that the people in the ceremony should not be guilty of anything and should also give account for what they have done in the past one year. However, juridical systems actually perform this duty for social order in the urban context (ibid, p.104). Another main institution of the community is ‘musahiplik’ which means “fraternity” that involves “brotherhood of two men, of two families; according to the principles of Alevi belief, brothers share their property and their lives in common” (ibid, p.103). Musahiplik was weakened as the requirements of this institution were hard to achieve within the urban context.

It could be said that all of this literature above makes focus on transformations in terms of the Alevism which was in a moment of crisis related with aforementioned social and cultural dimensions. It mainly refers due to the Alevi community’s migration from rural to urban areas Alevis became unable to maintain their traditional characteristics of Alevism. On the other hand, I suggest that it would be meaningful to look at literature which makes focus on political dimensions in terms of declining religious role of Alevism in addition to social and cultural dimensions. The important point here is that I would like to analyze if there is meaningful correlation between (in)visibility and (in)accessibility of Alevism and politics.

The literature on politics points out that Alevi identity was challenged in terms of citizenship status. Alevis have historically been in opposition to the centre. It could be claimed that since the Ottoman State up until today, central authorities embedded Sunni-Islam ideology into their policies, while Alevis remained at its margins (Şener, 1989, p.177). The state did not define Alevism as equally legitimate belief system like Sunnism. From this perspective it could be argued that “in secular Turkey orthodox Islam remained the only legally recognized Islamic confession” (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2003, p.64). Besides, each hegemonic power has insisted on its own politics on Alevis and its own definition of Alevism by disregarding its autonomous, self-ascribed socio-religious identity. It could be the elimination of public religious visibility and accessibility of Alevism.

There was an attempt to integrate Alevis to the centre since the last years of the Ottoman Empire. In the last decades of the Ottoman State, the policies of

Abdülhamit II aimed intentionally the Sunnification of Alevi villages including “programs for the training of Kızılbaş/Alevi imams, the distribution of Sunni Muslim catechisms, the building of schools, as well as the appointment of religious instructors and the construction of mosques in Kızılbaş/Alevi villages” (Dressler, 2013, p.69). Analyzing the last years of the Ottoman Empire is crucial, because it created an important momentum on Kızılbaş/Alevi with regard to becoming political subject of the state.

Such kind of analysis is important also in order to address continuities and transformations in the attitudes towards Kızılbaş/Alevi following the early years of the Republican period. The political agenda of the early republican period was to incorporate Kızılbaş/Alevi to the new nation-state body. During this period of time, even though Republic defined border between “public sphere” and “private sphere” in terms of separation of the state and religion, yet the foundation of Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) in 1924 legalized the belief system of Hanafi sect by the hands of the state (Ateş, 2011). Yet Alevism was not considered to be in a span of the official religion and Kızılbaş/Alevi had been re-identified with respect to their ethnic and religious differences (Dressler, 2013, p.112). Açıkel and Ateş state that “the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion judge the Alevi on the basis of their symbolic capability to be incorporated into an organically defined nation” (2011, p.714). Okan argues that during the single party period the profile of the citizen was represented “a modern, secular, patriotic, and nationalist individual who is adapted to a tamed version of Muslimhood” (2004, 87). Policies which were implemented during that time undermined the religious identity of Kızılbaş/Alevi to the cultural base. For instance, even Alevism was considered as an “empty faith”, “Kızılbaş/Alevi’ religious traditions were given significance as markers of authentic Turkish culture (Dressler, 2013, p.136-137).

Furthermore, new government also gave attention to Sunni-Islam considering the early years of multi-party period. Bilici (1998) argues that “no mention is made of Alevism in Koran Courses, the İmam-Hatip (religious vocational) schools in established in 1949 the later in Higher Islam Institutes or the Faculties of Theology. It would be no exaggeration to say that the curriculum is entirely directed towards the teachings of Sunnism.” (p.69). We could assert that this policy has markedly continued in 1980s. We see that “the public reintroduction and strengthening of

Islam in the 1980s” is obvious (Aringberg-Laanatza, 1998, p.191). The state attitude toward Islam since 1980 has actively fostered a Turkish-Islam synthesis (Türk-İslam sentezi). The enactment of compulsory religious education and building of mosques in Alevi villages are some indicators of this synthesis (Bruinessen, 1996, 8). Joost Jongerden (2003) states in his article *Violation of Human Rights and the Alevis in Turkey* that “after the 1980 coup, the military leaders adopted new policies directly inspired by the Turkish-Islam Synthesis, which aimed at switching Alevi identity to Sunni identity” (p.80). According to Jongerden, there emerged out two main problems for Alevis in this period in accordance with newly formed understanding of Alevi identity by the state and its policies to convert Alevis into Sunnis (2003, p.81). Furthermore, Fuat Bozkurt sheds light on state’s new perception of Alevism which saw it as a part of Islam. Bozkurt states that “at the root of this change in attitude lies a concealed process of erosion, an attempt at intellectual assimilation. Alevism is rapidly becoming absorbed within Sunni doctrine. This is being achieved not by methods such as exclusion or rejection of their beliefs, which can only give rise to hostility, but by methods of much greater circumspection and sophistication” (1998, p.111). Furthermore, policies of Justice and Development Party (JDP) have indicated disadvantaged citizenship status of Alevis and have developed strategies to melt Alevism within Sunni-Islam. This intention became obvious in Alevi initiative workshops and expressions of former Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during that time.

1.1.1 Question Of The Thesis: Individual Conversion From Alevism To Sunnism

This thesis problematizes the (in)visibility and (in)accessibility of religious identity of Alevism in the context of urbanization and state politics of Sunnism. It addresses Alevis who have experienced urbanization and modernization processes all of which have estranged Alevis from their traditional belief and worship forms by accompanying encounters with Sunnification politics of the nation-state.

The thesis aims to contribute literature on Alevism by scrutinizing individual cases who converted to Sunnism having been gone through self-estrangement. In this context, in-depth interviews were carried out by the thirteen informants who have been living in Istanbul (except one informant), and identify their religious identity as a Sunni or Muslim, and both Alevi-Sunni. Examining Sunnification of individual

cases would help us to shed light on how macro-level factors are absorbed, dealt with and reflected upon at the micro level. So far, several studies analyzed and explained the diffusion of Sunni practices into Alevism –through cemevis, or general discourse- however, cases at the scale of conversion is not fully explored. Such cases are critical in understanding the process of micro-level identity transformation in relation to the macro-level power structures.

This thesis would also contribute to the existing literature on Alevism for several reasons. First of all, it is the first attempt that analyzes some Alevis' socio-religious negation and conversion against their families' backgrounds.⁵ It could be claimed that fieldwork studies on Alevis is a more recent issue in the existing literature. In this regard, the thesis aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on the experiences of ordinary Alevis within urban setting by using the qualitative methodology and fieldwork analysis. In fact, conducting fieldwork on ordinary people is an important issue which gives more comprehensive opportunities to understand the relationship between macro and micro levels, this is to say, most studies on Alevis take the issue in relation to broad theological, political and social frameworks. Therefore, this thesis's attempt for analyzing the individual subjects will make a contribution to an important gap in the literature.

Furthermore, Vorhoff (1998) puts forward that "Alevism can no longer be classified as a purely rural phenomenon" due to the high social mobilization of Alevis from rural to urban setting, therefore "research in Alevism in a process of urbanization is a compelling task" (p.35). In this context, Vorhoff interrogates if Alevis in general are compatible with the urbanization process or if Shankland's generalization is true with respect to migrants' place of origin or late migration situation with reference to Shankland's claim⁶ (1998, p.35). Considering the fieldwork findings, this thesis challenges the widespread tendency of making strict separation between "traditional Alevism" and "urban Alevism". In contrast to the view that urbanization process has deeply impacted and transformed Alevi identity, this thesis claims that assuming a "traditional Alevism" as a homogeneous form which has always been independent from politics within the secrecy based community is highly problematic. Since the

⁵ Following part, it is to explain some scholars made observations about some Alevis' conversion to Sunni-Islam but this issue had not been researched in detail.

⁶ Shankland claims that both Alevis and Sunnis want to modernize but Alevilik is not compatible with the urbanization process due to population crisis in the rural setting, declining religious affiliation, uneasy relationship with central authority (1993, p.4).

last years of the Ottoman Empire, Alevis have become political subjects and the policies towards Alevis had already triggered dissolution of Alevi identity which only continued with the more recent urbanization process.

Within the social mobilization framework, the thesis problematizes general discourse in the literature on 1960s and 1980s Alevi youth politicized in relation to leftism in the urban setting. This thesis asserts that it would be misleading to consider that the experience of Alevi youth within the urban context was merely confined with the political movement in these periods. Instead, the thesis argues that during that time in question the Alevi youth in urban setting had experienced variable transformations seeking for religious affiliation. Therefore this thesis demonstrates these multiple negations of Alevi identity in urban setting. Besides, another common claim in the literature is that after the 1990s public visibility and accessibility of the Alevism has increased and Alevis have begun to declare their identities and to perform their religious practices. Based on the fieldwork research of the thesis, this claim is questioned and scrutinized.

1.2 Conversion Theory

Theories are valuable in the sense that they “guide research methods and goals, and provide explanations for phenomena” (Rambo, 1999, p.260) and “they should not be considered true or false, but rather adequate or inadequate” in the human sciences (ibid, p.261). There are different conversion theories which have been studied by various disciplines including mainly psychology, sociology and anthropology. “It is true that no single conversion type or conversion theory can describe or explain all the empirical findings...It is also true, however, that no researcher has investigated systematically within the same study all hypothesized factors involved in religious conversion or assessed each factor’s contribution, relative to other factors, to explaining conversion” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.14). Another fact is that conversion theory is the “choice of perspective by both the convert and the observer” (ibid, p.15) and “whether conversion is sudden or gradual, total or partial, active or passive, internal or external are useful only if we accept that conversion can occur anywhere between these poles which have been constructed both by scholars of conversion and converts themselves” (Rambo, 1993, p.7). In this regard, this thesis is

aware of the fact that the concept of conversion is a comprehensive and complicated issue, and is not any claim for discussing about those endeavors in detail.

This thesis addresses the conversion theories which they are related with the scope of the thesis for several reasons; a. appropriate for analyzing the samplings, b. giving more understanding about ‘the subject’ in terms of dealing psychological and social dimensions, besides, giving opportunity for discussion of micro and macro dimensions with regard to questioning of passive and active conversion paradigms, c. benefiting from the literature in terms of providing interdisciplinary perspective including psychology, sociology and politics, d. pointing out some earlier observations of scholars who researched on Alevis, identified religious changes of some Alevis’ to Sunnism as a conversion. Furthermore, the conversion theories shed light on certain questions: “How and why do people convert? What actually happens in the conversion processes? What behaviors are changed? What beliefs are changed? What sorts of experiences are elicited in the process?” (Rambo, 1993, p. 6)

Instead of seek for given, specific and reliable definition of the concept of conversion, one should focus on its various definitions. In this regard, initially, I will explain various definitions of the concept of conversion by comparing main English and Turkish dictionaries and then give references from the main literatures. I believe this comparison is essential with regard to be cautious concerning whether the western conceptualization of the term corresponds with the Turkish term and whether it fulfills the same meaning. It further provides general understanding about the concept of ‘conversion’. Secondly, I will briefly summarize main approaches to conversion which is necessary for analyzing the chapters on empirical findings.

In the prominent foreign dictionaries⁷, there are two main definitions of conversion. In its general meaning, conversion refers to change from one particular form, state, appearance, purpose etc. to another one. With regards to religion, it means one’s changing into a new religion or belief. In the Judeo-Christian scriptures, conversion is literally called with the words “*to turn or return*” (Rambo, 1993, p.3). Here those words mean “turning of sinners to God” by giving reference to Christian theology.⁸

⁷<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/turkish/conversion>, www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conversion, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conversion, www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/conversion

⁸www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/conversion

On the other hand, in Turkish dictionaries⁹, the ‘conversion’ has two translations to be named as ‘*iẖṯida*’ or ‘*ḏöṉme*’ by giving reference to Islam theology in particular. The concept of ‘*iẖṯida*’ which comes etymologically from the term ‘*ẖü̱da*’ (*heyd*, *hidayet*) generally means to ‘reaching to truth or finding to truth path’.¹⁰ In the Islamic theology, the *iẖṯida* refers to one, who is a believer of one religion except Islam or an unbeliever, acknowledges Islam or becomes Muslim. The one who does *iẖṯida* is called as *m̱ü̱hṯedi*. In the Islam encyclopedia of DRA, *iẖṯida* is regarded separately from the concept of conversion. According to the encyclopedia, *iẖṯida* refers only entering into Islam, but the concept of conversion (*ḏiṉ deę̱iṟ̌ṯirme*) is more comprehensive.

The encyclopedia defines conversion in various ways; a. the person who is not doing religious duties of his community’s religion begins approach to religion, b. the person who identifies himself/herself as an unbeliever begins to acknowledge religious rules of his community and to become a pious, c. the person who changes from one religion to another religion.¹¹ In the same encyclopedia, the concept of *ḏöṉme* is in general defined as the person who changes his/her religion, becomes Muslim, or makes *iẖṯida*. In another dictionary¹², by giving reference to dictionary of historical terms, *ḏöṉme* directly refers that one changes his religion to Islam, however, in the same site, by giving reference to sociological dictionary, the term is defined as embracing of a new idea (*ḵanı*) or new religious or political belief.

To sum up, it can be claimed that conceptualizations of the terms are “contextually determined” (Rambo, 1993, p.3) and normative or theological rather than descriptive. Similar to Christian theology, Islam theology also sees itself as only truth path and therefore embraces the term with regard to Islam.¹³ On the other hand, in the sociological dictionary, the concept of conversion is defined as “a radical change of beliefs, usually accompanied by a corresponding change in attitudes, action and personality” (Bruce, S. and Yearley, S., 2006, p.23). In the Turkish version of sociology dictionary, the term of subject matter is named as “*ḏöṉme*” (conversionism) and defined in a similar way in particular; in general, it also defines

⁹http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.552d3e55e85669.72635168, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/index.php?klme=iẖṯida>, <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=iẖṯida&lnk=1>

¹⁰<http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=iẖṯida&lnk=1>

¹¹<http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/index.php?klme=iẖṯida>, 2005, by Ali Köse, pp. 554-558.

¹²http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&guid=TDK.GTS.552d3e55e85669.72635168

¹³ See <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=iẖṯida&lnk=1>, Arslan, H. (2010). “Giriṟ̌”, *Tanzimat Ḏöṉeminde Din Deę̱iṟ̌ṯirme Hareketleri*. Ankara: Diyanet Yayınları Vakfı, pp.8-9.

the term as the person who adopts a new role or ideology (Marshall, 1999, pp.162-163). Considering all these difficulties with regard to conceptualization of the conversion in Turkish, I prefer to use the term “*dönme*” as mentioned within the sociological perspective. I will explain the process of conversion within the descriptive approach which “seeks to delineate the contours of the phenomenon with little concern for what the ideology of the group says is happening; observes the nature of the process and explores varieties of conversion.” (Rambo, 1993, p.6).

In the existing literature, the concept of conversion is defined by various scholars with different meanings. Earlier studies on conversion employ psychopathological explanation of religious change with passivist and deterministic terms (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.1). This old paradigm approach emphasizes on how conversion occurs as a sudden or intense development during distress or pre-dispositional individual factors which lead to self-surrender and it is highly self-transforming accompanied with an increase in well-being (Granqvist, 2003, pp.172-174). In this approach, potential converts are portrayed as having “religious melancholy, a discordant personality or divided self, a sense of lost meaning, dread, emotional alienation or negation of the old self, preoccupation with one’s own limitations and sinfulness and evil inherent in the world” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2; Granqvist, 2003, p.174). In this approach, conversion mostly occurs during the adolescence and “behavior change usually follows belief change” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2). The converts mostly comment on their religiosity as a “twice-born” matter. James and Starbuck assert that the description of twice-born religiosity rather than first-born religiosity indicates sick soul of the self (as cited in Granqvist, 2003, p.174).

Contrary to the old paradigm, adherents of the new paradigm, who are mostly humanist psychologists and sociologists, would favor in active agency whom has “self-directed behavior, personal choice, meaning and negotiation” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.1). Within this perspective, they criticize sick soul representation of the convert and assert that conversion occurs as a gradual process transforms less of the self accompanied with “healthy mind” (Granqvist, 2003, pp.172-175). The type of healthy-minded individual is characterized as taking “more active decisions than radical transformation of the soul” and conversion is “volitional whether or not they support or challenge the status quo” (Kilbourne and Richardson,

1989, pp.2-15; Granqvist, 2003, p.175). In this approach, “belief change follows behavior change” and “the individual learns the role of being a new convert” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2). The importance of this perspective is related with the explanation about conversion experience of the individual meaning being a part of new religion (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2). Furthermore, Kilbourne and Richardson (1989) suggest “sub-paradigmatic perspective” which characterizes “conversion as either intra-individual or inter-individual level of analysis” with including both active and passive levels of agency. Intra-individual level refers “conversion results from factors within the individual (personal constructs, predispositions, biology, internal states)” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2). Inter-individual level involves “factors according among individuals or between individuals and the social environment (e.g. group influences, social networks, societal stress, cultural milieu, organizational setting, social role, alienation, anomie) (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.3).

Combining both psychological and sociological perspective, the most prominent definition of the term is done by Lofland and Stark who define it “motivational model”. Lofland and Stark (1965) basically define the conversion as a process as a: “philosophy behind the way of life of every individual and of every relatively homogenous group at any given point in their histories...when a person gives up one such perspective or ordered view of the world for another we refer to this process as conversion” (p.862). According to Lofland and Stark (1965), an individual must follow of seven sequential stages for being a total convert. Those stages are:

“1.Experiencing enduring, acutely felt tensions; it can be characterized as a felt discrepancy between some imaginary, ideal state of affairs and the circumstances in which these people saw themselves caught up (p.864).

2.Within a religious problem solving perspective or rhetoric, defining the nature and sources of problems in living and offering some program for their resolution (p.867).

3.Defining himself as a religious seeker; their need for solutions persisted, and their problem-solving perspective was restricted to a religious outlook, but pre-converts found conventional religious institutions inadequate as a source of solutions. Subsequently, each came to define himself as a religious seeker, a person searching

for some satisfactory system of religious meaning to interpret and resolve his discontent and each had taken some action to achieve this end (p.868).

4. Encountering the Divine Precepts at a turning point in his life,

5. Wherein an affective bond is formed (or pre-exists) with one or more converts,

6. Where extra-cult attachments are absent or neutralized,

7. And, where, if he is exposed to intensive interaction” (p.874).

Similar to Lofland and Stark’s model, Batson offers a creative problem-solving analogy which is composed of four distinct stages: “a. existential crisis which involves seeking for meaning of life; b. self-surrender; current beliefs or worldview do not fulfill issues c. new vision; through new belief system, problems are resolved, d. new life; changing behavior which is compatible with the new life”. He states that religion includes a cognitive framework of myths, beliefs, rituals, a life perspective and a worldview (as cited in Awan, 1993, pp.46-47).

Furthermore, Rambo (1993) asserts that “conversion is a process, not specific event” and it is “actively constructed” through “wishes, expectations and aspirations of the convert or potential convert” which are products of interactions (p.7). From process perspective, Rambo suggests (1993) systematic stage model which identifies seven distinct stages within the process; varies between individuals and being dependent upon life stage. These seven distinct stages depend on the context including crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment and consequences. These stages have mutual interaction with each other.

In a nutshell, contemporary conversion theories have sought volitional model of religious conversion which characterizes conversion as a rational choice whom are active seekers weighing religious alternatives available to them and they rationally decide whether to convert or not (Richardson, 1985; Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989). The fact that based on the fieldwork findings I will assert that there are different factors including personality, social, institutional, cultural and contingency (Gooren, 2007, p.351) which cause the conversion. Here, my concern is to search on correlation between macro and micro contexts. Rambo (1993) sheds light on this issue with focus on macro and micro contexts. He refers macro context which has “such elements as political systems, religious organizations, relevant ecological considerations, transnational corporations, and economic systems”, in this regard, he

states that “this forces can either facilitate or obstruct conversion” (1993, pp.21-22). Besides, Rambo explains micro context “which is more immediate world of a person’s family, friends, ethnic group, religious community, and neighborhood” (1993, p.22). He scrutinizes the question “How do the macro and micro context interrelate? Do they facilitate or nurture one another? To what degree is there integration and coordination within these domains?” (1993, pp.22-23). In accordance with this question, Rambo asserts “we must examine specific aspects of the contours of the context... it is artificial to isolate rigidly culture, society, persons and religion from one another... these features of human existence are inextricably and intimately intertwined” (ibid, p.23). In this context, I would like to analyze conversion issue in the sense that how macro and micro processes contributed to conversion of the informants.

1.2.1 Literature On Individual Conversion From Alevism To Sunnism

This thesis is the first attempt to directly research on individual conversion experiences of some inborn Alevis. However, this does not mean that it is first discovery of such a kind of experience of Alevis. In the earlier literature, some scholars indirectly point out their observations about individual conversion cases of some Alevis.

Kehl-Bodrogi (1988) points out some individual cases of conversion in her book “*Kızılbaş/Alevis*”. She explains such cases with regard to demonstration of how Alevis give importance to group identity rather than religious identity, in which group identity depends on lineage. According to her, as giving more importance to group identity, individual conversion to Sunni-Islam is very rare within Alevis. However, in her observation, we see that there are some inborn Alevis who begin to practice five prayers of Sunni-Islam. Kehl-Bodrogi calls this experience as a denominational switching (mezhep değıştirme) (1988, p.64). From her analysis we could say that she considers those persons’ conversion within the social factors which is related to urbanization.

Shankland also deals with the conversion of Alevis in his books both within “*Alevi and Sunni in Rural Turkey; Diverse Paths of Change*” in 1993 and “*The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*” in 2003. Similar to Kehl-Bodrogi, Shankland (2003) claims Alevis’ conversion to Sunni-Islam is mainly not

collective (p.40). However, Shankland maintains that conversion of some Alevi communities to Sunni-Islam has been gradually appearing (ibid, p.40). Shankland (2003) indicates about individual conversion case of one inborn-Alevi person by telling this convert's story in detail. Shankland claims that as dedes are only religious figures and have authority to lead cem ceremony, the man "who is not a dede but who is interested in religion may choose to pursue the more orthodox career of mosque and prayer" (p.24). In this context, we see the social and personal factors that had influence on conversion process.

1.3 Methodology Of The Thesis And Describing Informants

In the social sciences there are epistemologically three main methodological techniques; qualitative, comparative and quantitative methods which "try to see how society works, to describe social reality and to answer specific questions about specific instances of social reality" (Becker, 2010, p.1). Nevertheless, which methodology is the best choice for the researcher is a contested issue. It can be said that one type of research is no better than the other; it means that "both types of research are important, although suitable for different types of inquiry" (Sarantakos, 1993, p.56).

There are two methods I used in this thesis. One of my method is the literature review. First of all, I generally looked at Alevi literature, here I focused on the decline of religious aspect of Alevism. In relation to the decline, I examined two perspectives in terms of invisibility and inaccessibility of Alevism; one is urbanization process, the other is state politics. After that, I focused on the Sunnification of Alevis in the literature, at first I reviewed the studies on individual conversion from Alevism to Sunnism, then I researched collective conversion cases, I thought to compare the collective cases with the individual cases. Unfortunately, I couldn't find detailed scientific information for both of those issues. Nevertheless, there were pretty sufficient discussions about Sunnification of Alevism which were mainly related with urbanization process and state politics. Also, I reviewed the literature about conversion theory. Conversion theory is a very broad literature so due to time constraint I focused on main points of certain individual conversion cases related with my subject.

Furthermore, within the scope of this thesis as aiming to research on persons, qualitative research method is used for its certain characteristics. The main characteristic of this method is interpretative, in which “social reality is constructed through interpretation of the actors; social relations are the result of a process of interaction based on interpretation, and theory building is a process of interpretation” (Sarantakos, 1993, p.50). Qualitative research has certain advantages; “researching people in natural settings; stressing interpretative and meanings; achieving a deeper understanding of the respondent world; humanizing research process by raising the role of the researched; allowing higher flexibility; presenting a more realistic view of the world” (ibid, 1993, p.52). Nevertheless, one should be aware of the limits of the qualitative research. Qualitative research includes a small number of cases and it is chosen by means of nonprobability sampling procedures. In this regard, qualitative research cannot produce findings that are valid enough to support the development of a theory. Therefore it should be noted that this research does not any claim for representative whole phenomena.

In fact, before entering the field my aim was to find persons who were born in Alevi family (not related with Sunni practices) and grow up in Istanbul, identified his/her religious identity only as a Sunni. But after having entered the field, I decided to broaden my sample according to informants’ religious identification. To broaden my samplings which would have been very small due to the insufficiency of accepting verbally his/her Sunni identity as only indicator of the conversion from Alevism to Sunnism (while the real indicators of the conversion is the related people’s certain practices, attitudes and behaviors), interestingly the informants who called themselves Muslim had narratives similar to Sunni converts, therefore I included them to my sampling. The informants whose religious identifications were both Alevism and Sunnism indicated two realities. First, they hesitated to call themselves merely as a Sunni due to their social environment pressure. Second, their numerous narratives resemble with the narratives of people identifying themselves as Sunni and Muslim, their certain narratives they have differed them from the narratives of the people due to low level of conversion. Hence, those cases were included too. Moreover, the remark about the degree of conversion provided the opportunity to analyze various degrees of conversion. So I made in-depth interviews with the

thirteen informants who have been living in Istanbul (except one case), express their religious identity as a Sunni, Muslim or both Alevi and Sunni.

In-dept interview technique was used for the qualitative data collection. The in-dept interviews were conducted with 13 persons in Istanbul, except one, in Tekirdağ. The reason of conducting my research in Istanbul, at first results from my living city therefore this makes easy to contact with people in Istanbul. Second, Istanbul is one of the big cities as Alevi had migrated. It has heterogeneous structure; it is good place for comparing traditional Alevism and urban Alevism; it is also good place for searching on individual cases.

Besides the questionnaire form¹⁴ was prepared according to a semi-structured and open-ended format. Almost all (except Saliha and Leman)¹⁵ interviews had done by type recorder. Even some of informants to allow me using of their real names I preferred to use pseudo names of them in this thesis. In order to conduct my research, initially I contacted with my grandmother who is able to know about many Alevi people in her environment. Thanks to her help and connections, I was able to get into contact with nine informants. Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Özlem and Saliha were among her neighbors and Erdal, Ayten, Semra and Sevgi were from her relatives. By the help of my aunt, I was then able to meet and do interview with Leman whom was known by my aunt from her social environment. Furthermore, I approximately have researched those people in the Sahkulu Sultan Dergahı for six months. During that time, I contacted with the persons and some other Alevi organizations, and asked them if they know people who are related to the scope of my research. Although some people told me that they know such persons from their environment, by their help I could reach only two informants (Ömer and Ahmet) in the end. I observed that even the people I knew were also hesitant about contacting with those people since they believe that this was a really taboo, and therefore, it was hard for these people to talk with anyone. Even though I wanted to talk directly with such people, and to tell them about my research objective, due to such kind of prejudgement, these individuals were not so willing to allow my direct contact. I could understand their

¹⁴ See Appendix A - Mülakat Formu (Interview Questionnaire Form)

¹⁵ Leman did not let me to make type recorder due to possibility of hearing of her voice by man which is sin according to her. I contacted with Saliha by using secondarily channels therefore due to her old age she was more suspicious about me. She did not accept my face to face interview and she only answered my questions on the phone.

anxieties, since they had converted into Sunnism, they did not anymore have close relations with their Alevi acquaintances. Nevertheless, by the help of Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı, I was able to contact with Ömer and Ahmet. During the interviews, I also tried to benefit from “snowball technique” which is one of the popular sample methodology in the social sciences. I asked to informants if they know any person who is related to my thesis’s objective. Osman, İbrahim, Ahmet, Vural, Sevgi, Özlem and Saliha had no knowledge about those persons. Even though İsmail, Erdal, Ömer, Semra, Leman and Ayten had known some people, they were not so willing to suggest me any names. İsmail, Ömer, Ayten and Leman hesitated about giving me names in the sense that they had no close interaction with those people. On the contrary, Erdal and Semra were more willing to offer names. By means of a kind of “snowball sampling” I only managed to reach Vural who was a friend of Semra in the workplace. However, I was not able to contact with Erdal’s suggestion due to limited time of the research. Furthermore, I had phone calls to İsmail, Ömer, Vural, Ahmet, Erdal, Leman, Ayten, Semra, Saliha, Sevgi and Özlem by aiming to explain the objective of my research and to arrange a date for interviewing. I told face to face to Osman and İbrahim my aim. After that we scheduled interviews. I can state that unless I had a close contact who introduced me some other names, it was really hard to get in to contact with these people and convince them to interview with. I observed that the informants were generally anxious to talk about this issue, but they emphasized names of my contacts. Hence, in my opinion, by the help of this acquaintance, they felt more confident to express themselves to the researcher. Besides some of them had tendency to behave as missionaries i.e. trying to learn my faith, to give a gift, Ouran, to me.

I interviewed with Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Ömer, Leman, Ayten, Semra, Sevgi and Özlem by visiting them in their houses. I reached to Ahmet through Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı, and interviewed with him at a suitable room of the foundation. I reached to Vural through snowball technique, and interviewed with him in his workplace. I also met with Erdal in outside and interviewed with him in a suitable place.

I would briefly explain socio-demographic characteristics of thirteen informants.¹⁶ Before talking about differences of the informants, it is necessary to note that they have similar family backgrounds. Parents of the informants have uneducated background, except the parents of Özlem. Besides these families either migrated to Istanbul from mostly Kurdish-Alevi areas. İsmail, Ahmet, Erdal, Ayten, Semra, Sevgi, Özlem and Saliha are originally from Sivas, Osman and İbrahim are from Erzincan (they are brothers), Ömer and Vural are from Tunceli, and Leman is from Elazığ. The informants all speak Turkish. Even though during the interviews ethnic identity was sometimes declared by some informants, some of them were not so willing to make emphasis on their Kurdish identity. For instance, İbrahim told me about his Kurdish identity when he was talking about how he faced challenges while he was dating with his expected wife. However, his old brother Osman did not talk about his ethnic identity, and instead he emphasized his Turkish identity.

Moreover, Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Ömer, Erdal, Leman, Ayten, Semra, Saliha and Sevgi are married, and Vural, Ahmet and Özlem are single. All of the couples have children. Saliha and Osman were born between 1935 and 1960; İsmail, Ömer, İbrahim, Ayten, Semra, Sevgi, Leman were born between 1960 and 1980; Erdal, Ahmet, Vural and Özlem were born after 1980. It can be said that most of informants emphasized their parents' lower level of socio-economic situation. On contrary to their parents' educational and socio-economic levels, most of the informants had higher education and good socio-economic conditions, except Ahmet, Saliha and Ayten who were primary school graduates; Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Leman and Sevgi were high school graduates; Erdal, Vural, Ömer, Özlem and Semra were university graduates. Leman noted that she did not prefer to go to university due to the headscarf issue. Besides all the male informants are occupied; Özlem, Ayten and Semra are employed, and Saliha, Sevgi and Leman are housewives.

Furthermore, at the beginning, my convert definition reduced the sample size dramatically, since generally converts (that is not only people who convert from Alevism to Sunnism also other converts in many fields) or different people don't express their conversion or their difference from the society directly and clearly, for instance many people don't know, didn't, don't read Quran, don't perform Islamic

¹⁶ See "Appendix B- Table B.1:Demographic Information Table Regarding The Informants" for socio-demographic information.

practices, but they say that we are Muslim, it's so contradictory logically but so relevant psychologically, they don't want to be isolated from and refused by the society. However, when I was completing the fieldwork, based on my observations in the field I realized that the real indicators of the conversion is the related people's certain practices, attitudes and behaviors as aforementioned (people other than the people who say that "we are Sunni" were included into the sample from the same fact as mentioned). While completing the last parts of the fieldwork, I have been aware of the fact that people who identify themselves as Alevi but perform Sunni practices and behave very similarly to the way by which Sunnis behave are obviously converts and they could be included into my convert sample. Besides, these converts could be compared with other converts in terms of the degree of the conversion. Since, the degree varies for each convert. These converts would provide diversity and opportunity to comprehend the conversion more deeply thanks to the comparison. It is actually easy to find them, since many people still identify themselves as Alevi when they live so similarly to Sunni due to the reason mentioned above (i.e. fear to be isolated from the society and to be refused by the society.). Moreover, due to try to find except identifying Alevi it was difficult fieldwork, it was hard for me to find these persons. This might resulted from limited time since I mostly found those persons very contingently but of course I had to stop my fieldwork research in the certain period of time. The second might be related to such individual conversions are not so common. The third might be related about to talk about such religious issues are still taboo as people are not so willing to talk about their conversion.

2. ALEVISM AND STATE POLITICS TOWARDS ALEVISM

2.1 Social And Religious Overview On Alevism

A strict separation of Alevis and Sunnis would be an error due to the essentialist perspective. Instead, in order to overview and compare these communities, we need substantial considerations on historical, political, social and cultural processes since the relationship between these communities depends on the historical context. Additionally, the discourses which have been aroused by the “Alevi revivalism” in the post-1990s have demonstrated the inconsistent character of Alevi identities. Thus it will be an error analyzing Alevism as a taken for granted category.¹⁷ Dressler points out this difficulty saying that “while there is a broad consensus on among Alevis that they are different from Sunnis, there is no agreement on the precise grounds of this difference” (2008b, p.117). Considering this fact, this part of the thesis tries to give a brief description of these communities’ approach to faith and the way they look at themselves within the society. In this context, this brief description sheds light on which religious rituals and practices of the community have been transformed or eliminated, in other words, which characteristics have become (in)visible and (in)accessible, in the Alevi community in the course of time. It also evaluates how to some degree, Alevism has become hybrid with Sunnism within the context of institutionalization and standardization.

In the existing literature on Alevism, there is a considerable consensus within scholars who consider that the main distinction illustrating the difference between Alevism and Sunnism is the heterodox and orthodox approach to Islam. Melikoff asserts that “Bektashism as well as Alevism are both, in their earlier stages, examples of religious syncretisms¹⁸” (1998, p.1).¹⁹ Alevism’s syncretistic character is

¹⁷ Within the field, I observed that there are many people who label themselves as Alevi but very close affiliation to Sunni-Islam practices. Cem Vakfi may be an example of this fact.

¹⁸ For a detailed information about criticism of syncretistic approach see Deniz, D. (2012). “Giriş”, *Yol/Rê:Dersim İnanç Sembolizmi Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım*. İletişim Publishing: İstanbul, pp.17, 28-30

summarized as consisting of different religions and cultures including Shamanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism and polytheist religions of Anatolia and it is said that it arrived its current form by Safavid Shiism (Ateş, 2011, p.235).

The most important event on Alevis was the victory of the Ottomans over Safavids, after which Ottoman Kızılbaş groups' military, political and religious interaction with Iran broke off. Hence, these communities developed isolated and closed communities in rural settings in which strict ethnic and socio-religious boundaries were constructed for survival. Additionally, with the mix of Bektashi sufi order they constructed their unique socio-religious characteristics by enclosing themselves to the all external religious forms (Zeidan, 1999, pp. 75-76).²⁰

In fact, Melikoff summarizes this process by saying that “turbulence has always been a characteristic of these socio-religious movements, their followers discredited and persecuted, they always remained marginal, for their safety, they had to resort the secrecy, as their belief condemned, they took agnostical forms: secret teachings revealed by esoteric interpretation of sacred texts, initiation of the profane, ceremonies held by night in hidden places, hermetical language by which adepts could express themselves” (1998, p. 8). This might in some extent answers Shankland's (2003) ethnographic fieldwork questions regarding observing in the villages: “What is about these people's lives which lead to such opposing directions of belief? Why should one group (Sunnis) be strong in religious conviction and anxious to expand their body of believers, while the other (Alevis) is introverted and, seemingly at least, uncertain?” (p.3).

To this extent, as it has been mentioned before, after the Safavid and Ottoman War and Kızılbaş' reaction to the Ottoman ideology, in Ottoman archival documents we see that these communities were stigmatized as rafizi, mülhid, zındık (heresy, atheist, pagan). Alevis began to cut off their relations with central authority as a result of this marginalization and had begun to construct their own structures and doctrines within

¹⁹ It is necessary to note that it would be wrong to make Alevilik identify with Bektashim. Melikoff points the difference. The most important difference might be “anyone can become a Bektashi if he wishes to and if he is found to be worthy but one cannot become an Alevi if one is not born an Alevi” (1998, p.7). For discussion of difference see also Ateş, K. (2011). *Yurttaşlığın Kıyısında Aleviler “Öz Türkler” ve “Heretik Ötekiler”*. Phoenix Publishing, p.236.

²⁰ Interestingly, Bodrogi points out that until 19th century Alevis were pretending to be Sunnis, using taqiya “religious dissimulation permitted by all Shi'a groups, to conceal their faith and survive into a hostile environment, like Druze, Shi'a and Alawis they practiced”. (as cited in Zeidan, 1999, p. 75-76)

their society. Besides due to the fear of any threat, these communities had begun to implement some prohibitions including using state courts, economic corporation and marriage with non-Alevis and proselytize²¹ (Zeidan, 1999, p.76).

Eickelman notes that what differs Alevis from Sunnis is that “the use of wine for religious ceremonial functions; non-observance of the five daily prayers and prostrations (they only twice in the presence of their spiritual leader), Ramadan and the Haj (they consider the pilgrimage to Mecca an external pretense, the real pilgrimage being internal in one’s heart) and non-attendance of mosques” (as cited in Zeidan, 1999, p. 76). Bruinessen adds that what distinguishes Alevis from Sunnis is that its adherence to inner (batin) meaning of religion rather than shari’a (zahir) (1996, p.7). This is to say, Alevis’ approach to God distinguishes them from Sunnis. In this context, Alevis’ perception of approach to God consists of four gates; first, “shariat”²² which is, according to Sunni orthodoxy, an ostensive way of worship, yet Alevis think that they have already passed this gate; second is that “tariqat” (the path) which is a basic worship of community, in this path outsiders are not welcomed; thirdly, “marifet” (knowledge) mystic knowledge of God; lastly, “haqiqat”²³ (ultimate truth) which is highest degree, becoming union with God. In each gate there are ten stations and for progress, in each of them one should be a master (Zeidan, 1999, p.79). Within this terminology Alevis emphasize their difference from Sunnis directly claiming that “Sunnism is nothing more than the ideological construct of a decadent, corrupt, and indeed a religious class of oppressors and exploiters propagated for the accomplishment for their selfish ends, Sunni Islam constitutes in fact a distorted, manipulated Islam, whereas Alevism appears as an Islam faithful to the original” (Vorhoff, 1998, 248). Indeed, Alevis characterize their way of worship in the extent of love of God, on the other hand, they claim that Sunnis’ worship is based on fear of God (Shankland, 1998, p.25). Such a kind of thought explains two main phenomena within rituals; on the one hand, it explains why in their ceremony they use Turkish rather than Arabic, since reading without understanding the text will be ostensive worship of shariat. Instead the

²¹This might be due to the possibility of harm by outsiders .Besides the most important aspect of those communities’ doctrines was that lineage. As it has been mentioned before Melikoff asserts that “one cannot become an Alevi if one is not born an Alevi” (1998, p.7).

²² Shankland claims that in practice in villages Alevis did not directly refuse sharia (1998, p.26).

²³ Shankland explains that at this state “physical properties of this world no longer become an impediment, dede lineages are ideally held to be at this last level” (1998, p.25).

important part of worship includes understanding and it is embedded into as a way of life. Secondly, it explains how man and woman are treated equally both in society and worship since they believe that in every soul there is a part of from God; therefore collective worship enables them to come through all these parts of the God (ibid, p.25). Furthermore it makes a reference to another important phenomenon within this community; edep (moral code) which refers to “be master of your hands, tongue and loins”²⁴ implying prohibitions of theft, lying and adultery (ibid, p.24).

Alevism is characterized by the lack of any central religious authority in which religious doctrines are transformed verbally from one generation to another.²⁵ The most important structure in these communities was “ocak” (heart) who were believed to be belonging to the descents of Ali²⁶, Hussein and the 12 Imams. In this system, there were important figures who are hierarchically classified as rehber (guides), pir (elder), dede (grandfather) and mursits (teacher) (Zeidan, 1999, p. 79). Every Alevi village was connected to “ocak”²⁷ but every village does not have dede, if it is the case dede is responsible for visiting his talips once a year.²⁸ The ocak was responsible for performing rituals, teaching knowledge to new generation, mediate in conflicts, this is to say, “they are the central authority for the survival of Alevi religious knowledge and identity” (Zeidan, 1999, p. 79). The dede must be responsible for performing ayin-i cem²⁹ (prayer which is held in private house or communal building). Dede is allowed to punish his talips if they do anything opposite to the norms of community (ibid, p.80). Before the ceremony everyone must be reconciled with each other. Shankland (1998) points out that Alevis mainly differ themselves from Sunnis in this sense, according to them “the greatest problem about praying in a mosque is that it is possible to be next to a murderer without realizing

²⁴ Turkish meaning; “Eline, beline, diline sahip ol”

²⁵ Alevis used some texts but these texts were mostly transmitted orally. Besides Alevis communities did not give much attention to the written texts and it was also only accessible for literate elite. On the other hand, the most well known texts of the Qızılbaş Alevis are the so called “buyruk” (orders) which dates back to reign of the Şafavid Shah Tahmasp. Şafavid Shah Tahmasp apparently sent his scripts propagandas to his Qızılbaş followers as a means of instruction and indoctrination. They were used and transmitted with the needs of a mainly oral culture. Historically, buyruk texts provide dedes (as the leaders of Qızılbaş Alevi communities) as sources for ritual and mythological knowledge. These texts there are detailed description and explanation of the Qızılbaş rituals. Until the first publication of buyruk texts in the mid-twentieth century, dede families kept these manuscripts to themselves; thus for outsiders it was difficult to access these texts. However, Buyruks recently regained importance in the context of Alevi endeavours to legitimize Alevism vis a vis Sunni mainstream discourse” (Dressler, 2008b, p.106).

²⁶ See Melikoff, 1998, p. 6.

²⁷ “Some 10 percent of Alevis are of ocak lineage” (Zeidan, 1999, p. 79).

²⁸ See also Melikoff, 1998, p.6.

²⁹ The main theme in cem ceremony is imitating assembly of forth and dedicated to Hz. Hussein as he was killed in Kerbela and twelve imams. It includes sacrificial meal (lokma), a drink and hymns (nefes) which is performed by “zakir” on the saz. While zakir is performing on the saz some talips are doing ritual dance (semah) as representing Muhammed’s legendary heavenly journey (mirac). Besides the worship held in night with ritual lighting and extinguishing candles (Zeidan, 1999, p.80).

it...and on all present being at peace³⁰ with each other before the ceremony begins precludes” (p.28). It can be stated that “edep” is a certain strategy of this community as it has been mentioned above.

Besides the religious worldview of Alevism is based on batini interpretation of Islam which stresses the inner meaning of religion. Instead of practicing of strict religious rules of Sunni Islam such as five times performing prayer in each day, pilgrimage and fasting for thirty days in Ramadan, Alevis manifest themselves in terms of their inner practices which sometimes results with a philosophical worldview. Thus Qur'an plays a secondary role in Alevi practice which is expressed in popular sayings such as “I am the speaking of Qur'an” (Dressler, 2008b, p.106). Nevertheless, some religious practices remain the same, for instance, Alevis do not fast during Ramadan, but traditionally for twelve days during the month of Muharrem they fast.

In addition, cem (ceremony of Alevism) ceremony is also traditionally held both religious and social functions. Cem ceremony is mostly conducted in Turkish while some of the Kurdish Alevis conduct the cem in their native Zazaki or Kurmanci languages. These cem ceremonies were performed in a cemevi (cem house) which has been designated as religious and cultural patterns by Alevis. The critical point here is that cem house practices have been changed in the course of time. In a traditional sense, cem house had been any location where a cem ceremony is organized and held once a year (Dressler, 2008b, p. 111-112). Akcan and Erkıılıç (2004) argue due to the necessity of keeping their rituals secretly, Alevis were never able to build an institutional symbolic expression. Despite the fact that building of a cem house was not easy for Alevis, there were some cem houses in Anatolia and they were later constructed in the urban areas from the early on 1990s.

Besides in traditional Alevism the practice of dedelik (elder) emerged with the fundamental social and religious practices. Not every village had its own dede, who would usually come at least once a year to perform the cem and collect his due (Dressler, 2008b). For today in urban areas, dedes still perform in cem houses in cem ceremonies and some dedes still continue to visit Alevis' homes and even if they do not perform any ceremony, Alevi people tend to give them money.

³⁰In Turkish, it refers “rıızalık almak” (giving consent).

It should be noted that especially since the 1990s, transition from oral culture to written culture has deeply changed the characteristics of the Alevism. Olsson (1998b) points out the importance of this transition issue in the urban context following as:

“The unstable, ambivalent conditions of the urban scene and its marked cultural differences, where old traditions and life-styles are now transplanted implies that no form of existence is any more its own d'être. Each ambiguous case has to be identified and argued for, or argued away, and chosen or rejected. Here, the illocutionary force specific of the printed word comes into play with its double-dealing ability to change the form of a religious tradition” (p.244).

With the Alevi revival that has been observed since the 1990s an increase on theological definitions (Bilici, 1998, p.59) against the Sunni mainstream, but this also caused various dilemmas among themselves. Some groups consider Alevism as “real Islam” by arguing that “since Ali, son-in law of the Prophet and the central figure of Alevi religious teaching, had also fulfilled the five farz laid down by Islam, the Alevi should do this in the same way” (Çamuroğlu, 1998, p.96). The second description of Alevism is “secular belief” by emphasizing folkloristic characteristics and while doing this they eliminate main doctrine of traditional Alevism including “Allah-Mohammed-Ali” and “superstitions” (ibid, p.96). The third description is including “coalition of the so-called modern and traditional circles inside Alevism” by considering authentic structure of it (ibid, p.96). Çamuroğlu (1998) claims that adherence of first description of Alevism is likely to integrate it into Sunni or Shi'a community, on the other hand, adherences of later descriptions may create new Alevism (ibid, 96). Furthermore, the crucial point here is that in line with all these descriptions, the standardization of religious beliefs and rituals has increased. Especially, we witness the standardization of the Alevi Dedes, who are important religious transmitters in Alevism (Dressler, 2006, p.292).

In a nutshell, today there are various standpoints regarding both Alevi and Sunni religiosity. I claim that both Alevism and Sunnism are constructed within a broader historical context. In this regard, instead of expressing an essentialist standpoint, I consider both of those communities' religiosity as a belief peculiar to itself. This means that considering the historical context, in general, certain religious rituals and practices differ themselves from each other. When analyzing comparison of informants in terms of conversion, I regard main rituals of background of informants' parents which distinguish from Sunni rituals.

2.2 Problematization And Islamization/Sunnification Of Alevism By The State

In addition to urbanization process, Turkish state politics towards Alevis enables us to grasp how “the subject is socially constructed” (Layder, 1994, p.96) and influenced by historical and social-structural factors and to indicate “how individuals in particular social settings and contexts are affected by power relations in terms of their self-identities, attitudes and their (psychological) predispositions” (ibid., p.101).

Although there is not an exact data that indicates the exact Alevi population in Turkey, it is estimate that Alevis compose approximately 15 to 30 percent of the total population (Vorhoff, 1998, p.228).³¹ However, it must be noted that “Alevi” or “Alevism” (Alevilik) is an umbrella term which includes a variety of heterogeneous³² groups “Whose beliefs and ritual practices differ significantly” (Bruinessen, 1996, p.7). Those groups are labeled as “Tahtaci, Çepni, Amucalı, Koçgirili, Zaza, Abdal, Bektaşî, Bedreddini and Babai” (Dressler, 2008b, p.94). Additionally, Gezik (2015) states that what the terms “Alevis” and “Alevism” (Alevilik) refers need clarification. For instance, within the contemporary Turkey Alevism includes Bektashis, Kızılbaş, Tahtaci, Nusayri, Çepni and ocak and talips in Dersim center³³; within Ottoman Empire period it included Dürzis, Kakais, Şabak, Ehli Hak. Within long historical period there are also some other groups which melted in the course of time (p.23). Therefore, it can be claimed that the term “Alevi” and “Alevism” (Alevilik) are not homogenous since it includes a variety of ethnic and religious communities. Nevertheless, defining Alevism has been a major concern of the state that reflects the unequal relationship between the state authority and power and Alevi population.

According to Dressler, as a result of the urbanization process, the terms “Alevi” and “Alevism” have become more prominent (2008b, p.97). Furthermore, dependent on

³¹ There is not any official population data of Alevi population (Açikel and Ateş, 2011, p.714). A survey which was conducted for the daily *Milliyet* in 2007 claimed that the proportion of those who concealed themselves as Alevis is just at 5.7 percent (4.5 million). But this survey was criticized by some Alevi organizations. For instance, The Alevi Bektaşî Federation claims that there are 25 million Alevis in Turkey who constitute 33 percent of the population (Kurban, 2007, p.12). Additionally, Çamuroğlu claims that 10 to 20 percent of Alevis are Kurds (1998, p.80).

³² Bruinessen refers “heterodox communities” while I prefer to use the term “heterogeneous” instead of the “heterodoxy”, see Dressler, M. (2008b). *Alevis. Encyclopedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill, p.93). Dressler points out that within the Turkish episteme politics Alevis have been marginalized with the term heterodoxy since the classification as heterodoxy makes the term “Alevi” lose its religious character, and embeds it into the folk Islam such as Sufi and Shia (see Dressler, M. (2015). *Türk Doksa Siyaseti: Alevilerin Heterodoks Olarak Ötekileştirilmesi*. Birikim Dergisi, 309-310, pp.15-20).

³³ “Dersim has been known as partly Tunceli. It includes Eastern Anatolia in the area of upward of Fırat River... There is Bingöl in the East, Malatya in the West, Erzincan in the North, Erzurum in the North East, Elazığ in South. In earlier times,, it was broader then as some districts of Elazığ, Bingöl, Sivas, Erzincan was part of it” (Deniz, 2012, p.43).

the Dilşa Deniz's ethnographic fieldwork it can be argued that this change is not limited to the urban setting; there has also been changed within rural settings. Deniz (2012) claims that in the Dersim area there is triangle belief system; nature oriented worship, ancestor/ocak cult and in recent years Alevism. According to her, archaic belief system of those communities has been gradually disappearing. Moreover a cumulative belief system has been developing including given, calculated and clarified symbols, rituals, and ritualistic discourses (2012, pp. 23-24). At first glance, this might demonstrate that both in rural and urban settings Alevis have been gradually becoming more open to wider society. In line with these social changes, the term Alevism has become more prominent.

Even though at first glance, changing scope of the term of Alevi or Alevism can be interpreted as an outcome of the modernization and urbanization processes, the genealogy of the term Alevism (Alevilik) which primarily emerged out in the nineteenth century and more deeply continued with up until today indicates that Alevism has been politically problematized by the state in each period for certain ideologies, interests and anxieties. The problematization of Alevism is important in the sense that it sheds a light on Islamization/Sunnification of Alevism by the state. This means that Alevism is not defined as a legitimate belief system but on the contrary, Sunni-Islam is defined as a legitimate belief system by the state. In each period, Alevism has been seen as a threat by the state, therefore it has been problematized by determining which belief system is 'normal' (legitimate) and which is 'abnormal' (illegitimate). In this context, it can be claimed that Alevism is problematized as an abnormal belief system while Sunnism is seen as the normal one. Religious (in)visibility and (in)accessibility of Alevism issue should be considered within this problematization perspective. It can be claimed that since the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the state has intentionally supported the conversion of Alevis to Sunni-Islam. In order to understand this issue more properly, we should briefly analyze each historical period by considering their particular social and political circumstances.

As it has been indicated in the previous part, following the war between Safavids and the Ottoman Empire, Anatolia's Kızılbaş/Alevis relation with Safavids were broken, after which Kızılbaş/Alevis strictly began to isolate themselves from the outside world and the central authority for their survival. In line with the isolation they

maintained strict endogamy during the period from sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries and did not mainly challenge with the authority. On the other hand, this situation began to change with the new political agenda of the Ottoman Empire in its last decades. In the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire represented its ideologies within two main discourses; modernization and civilization. This was the period that was characterized by efforts of constructing a definite centralization and institutionalization politics with the reidentification of the new citizenship model. With the Tanzimat reform (1839) the integration of various ethnic and religious communities to the Empire within the discourse of equality was proposed. In the Islahat reform (1856), the discourse of equality was emphasized. Accordingly all religious belief and rituals' practices were guaranteed by the state and regardless of any race, religion or language no one were allowed to accuse or humiliate any other. As this categorization was made of in terms of the non-Muslim and Muslim groups the categorization of so-called heterodox Muslim groups remained in suspicion. For instance, Bektashi order was banned and abolished in 1826 and Kızılbaş/Alevis were still humiliated by sayings of heresy (Ateş, 2011, p.176). Ateş (2011) points out that abolishment of the Janissaries (Ottoman army corps which were connected to the Bektashi Order of dervishes³⁴) was one of the modernization steps of the Ottoman Empire. Most importantly the order was replaced with Nakşibendi Order which explicitly demonstrated the Islamization/Sunnification politics of the Ottoman Empire that had been then incorporated into a pan-Islamist policy during the reign of Abdülhamit II (Ateş, 2011, p.178).

The fact is that there are several reasons of Islamization/Sunnification politics of Abdülhamit II towards Kızılbaş/Alevis in the nineteenth century. The first important development was the emergence of a nationalist movement among Armenians in Anatolia who were living close to Kızılbaş population. The report of Ahmet Şakir Paşa (1838-1899), Ottoman general inspector, claimed that Kızılbaş/Alevis had "good relations with Armenians and Protestants" (Dressler, 2013, p.69). Kieser (2005) points out that Armenian, Kurd and Alevi issues had similar dynamics especially in terms of the "conflict situation with center, being ethnic groups and having potentiality of causing conflicts between religions" since Tanzimat era until

³⁴ See Melikoff for a detailed information about the relationship between Ottoman State and Bektashi Dervishes. Melikoff, I. (1998). "Bektashi/Kızılbaş: Historical Bipartition and Its Consequences", in *Alevi Identity*. Eds. T. Olsson, C. Raudvere. Richmond: Curzon, pp. 1-9.

the foundation of the Turkish Republic (p.750). Moreover, during that time, missionary activities were seen as a fundamental problem by the state with regard to their connection with those communities. Especially the Ottoman state gave attention to one of prominent missionary cooperation ABCFM³⁵ (The American Board of Commissioners For Foreign Missions) which had begun to have good relation with Anatolian Alevis during 1850s (ibid., p.751). These good relations might be related to marginal situation of Alevis in the Ottoman society, as “marginality included lower social status, poverty and being exclusion from part of religion (ümme) and state affairs” (ibid., p.103). During that time, there were Alevis who began to convert to Protestantism before missionary activities. One of famous example of was Ali Gako a tribe leader who was developed got close relation with missionaries after having converted. However, conversion was not extensively collective. It was probably related to Alevis’ close connection with Armenians in Anatolia and missionary activities. Interestingly, based on missionary reports it was observed that some persons did not fulfill their spirituality within Alevism due to the lack of religious sources and having conflict with Alevi dedes (ibid., pp.107-112). ABCFM Yozgat Station annual report stated that “most of Alevis anymore did not believe in their traditional belief system and they were searching for better faith” (ibid., p.112). Moreover missionary reports expressed that similar to Armenians, Alevis were forced with double taxation both by local tribe leaders and state officers since the Tanzimat era, so they probably benefited conversion to Protestantism (Kieser, 2005, p.108). Also, ABCFM provided education and health systems to Alevis, on the other hand, missionary cooperation aimed radical social and political changes at that time including citizenship rights, liberal federalism, education of women and built close connections with villages and tribes out of vilayets centers. Due to those ideals, even the number of ABCFM members were low, the administration of Abdülhamid II regarded them as a potential threat (ibid., p.743). With regard to ABCFM’s relation with Alevis, “the state got anxious about strength of communication of Alevis with Christians and Armenians and increase in Alevis’ political consciousness” (ibid., p.751). Deringil (2012) states that until the nineteenth century when the Ottoman

³⁵ ABCFM was founded in 1810 in Boston (Dressler, 2013, p.34).

Empire was relatively more powerful, conversion was seen as a “symbolic victory” (p.8).

In fact, Islamization and Turkification of Anatolia has been a long term process and it can be said that it particularly intensified after the fifteenth century. For instance, Trabzon was invaded in 1461 by Fatih Sultan Mehmet, following this the Christian population in the town decreased by the state politics. The state forced a settlement project. 800 men were sent to Istanbul to be recruited by Janissary corps, some women and men were employed to service for the sultan (Lowry, 2010, p.20). According to Lowry especially in the sixteenth century a significant part of Trabzon’s Greek-Orthodox population were gradually converted into Sunni Islam. Shankland asserts that the population of Alevis gradually decreased due to the conversion of some Alevi villages to Sunni-Islam during the Ottoman Empire period until the foundation of the Republic (1993, p.7; 2003, p.40). According to Shankland collective conversions were mostly emerged out during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim in the sixteenth century due to pressure and persecution over Alevis by the Ottoman State (2003, p.40). Moreover, by the Ottoman conquest of Crete in 1669 some Greeks converted to Islam and joined Janissary corps (Deringil, 2012, pp.8-9). Mixed marriages were also commonly observed during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Crete. However, when the Ottoman Empire got relatively weaker “conversion and/or apostasy were seen as particularly dangerous in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire because they perceived it as de-nationalization...which means the loss of a soul and a body from an increasingly nationally imagined community” (ibid., p.3). In other words, it seems that “religious identity (Sünni-Islam) is important for national identity” (ibid., p.4), on the other hand, conversion and/or apostasy were “undesirable acts” which was likely to cause social and political conflicts related with imperial powers (ibid., p.7). In this sense, Ottoman Empire gave attention to Kızılbaş/Alevis people as a threat against the survival of the state. In line with these developments, Sunnification practices of the Empire over Alevi community accelerated.

It can be claimed that the causes of problematization of Alevism by the Ottoman State was deeply connected to the “issue of political loyalty and hegemony” (Dressler, 2013, p. 63). Rather than religious difference, the problematization of Alevism occurred with a justification on the basis of increasing political insecurity

that was stemmed from Christian missionary activities over Kızılbaş/Alevis, imperialism and separatism anxieties. Problematization of Kızılbaş/Alevis community took place by demarcating abnormal signification from normal signification within the discourse of Islam by the state. Ottomans had “become increasingly interested in the Kızılbaş/Alevis and began to encourage their assimilation to Sunnism” (ibid, p.39) which started in 1890s.

With regard to Islamization/Sunnification politics by the Ottoman state there were certain implications; “programs for the training of Kızılbaş imams; the distribution of Sunni Muslim catechisms; the building of religious instructors; construction of mosques in Kızılbaş villages” (ibid, p.69). At the end of the nineteenth century, some inspectors’ reports also indicated that especially the state’s Sunnification program aimed to reach Kızılbaş/Alevi children instead of the adults (ibid, p.69), for instance, some officials were ordered “to prevent Alevi children to visit local Catholic schools in Malatya” (ibid, p.3) for aiming to prevent proselytizing which might pose a threat for social order (ibid, p.36). Moreover, it is the fact that during the reign of Abdülhamit, there were various ethnic/religious communities which were forced to convert to Islam, i.e. several Armenians who converted to Islam during the Hamidian massacres (Deringil, 2012, pp.213-219).

Furthermore, it can be claimed that the problematization of Kızılbaş/Alevis of the Ottoman state had continued with the foundation of the Republic but with its own political circumstances. The republican politics towards Alevis was characterized by the priority given to the nation-building process. Anderson states that definition of nation “is an imagined political community...it is imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members” (2006, p. 6). This is to say, nation and national identity are not given but they are ideologically constructed (Bora, 1998, p.14). Furthermore, Koçan and Öncü state “the nation state is more of a political construct than social one” (2004, p. 466). In fact, creating such an imagined community was also aimed during the formation of Turkish Republic. Koçan and Öncü state that Mustafa Kemal “drew on the Republican philosophy and sought to form a secular political community” (ibid, p. 466). This political community can be defined in the extent of political relationships which includes “being part of common political body with shared rights and duties and common good differ from particular interests of individuals” (ibid, pp. 466-477).

In this regard, while examining the nation building process of Turkey it can be argued that the concepts that Kemalist ideology preferred to highlight included modern, western, secular, and its six arrows did not provide enough ground for understanding the society itself (Parla and Davison, 2004). Parla and Davison claims that “Kemalism is specific variant of rightist, corporatist³⁶ ideology³⁷ committed to a view of society, reason and action that bears only slight resemblance to its rationalist and pragmatic reputation” (2004, p.9). According to Kadioğlu, “during the same period, the new regime’s attitude toward the religious and primordial groups and group ties had almost settled. Thus, the period of a more militant secularism had started and accompanied the further process of social engineering. It was mainly ethnicity, and secondly language that constituted a ground for the basis of the new national identity” (1996, p.187). In other words, the idea of nation building with the target of modernization aimed to create historical, political, fiscal, social and cultural unification. For achieving the formation of the nation state, radical changes had been implemented within the political and social landscapes with primarily implying secularization and modernization components.

In line with these elements, some transformations were targeted by the new state. Those transformations were basically emerged out in the extent of ethnicity and culture including language, religion and a way of living. Question of civilization and backwardness came to forward as central issue and pre-republican attitudes were seen as uncivilized. Furthermore, with regard to relation between religion and politics, Mustafa Kemal explains the reason for the abolition of the Caliphate, following as in his speech in 1927 “the faith of Islam should be purified and raised from the political situation in which it has been put for centuries” (as cited in Parla and Davison, 2004, p. 108). Considering the historical facts, this speech can be interpreted several ways. At first it refers subordinating religion to state control rather than removing from politics. Secondly, the emphasis on “the faith of Islam should be purified” represents to enlighten the society with respect to “true version of Sunni Islam” (Koçan and Öncü, 2004, p.471) which means that “Kemalist secularism controlling the conservative, backward Islam, but also encouraging a new nationalist,

³⁶The term corporatism can be described as “system of thought and action which includes ideology about model of society and economy, set of economic and class policies, political representation and authoritative decision making” (Parla and Davison, 2004, p.28).

³⁷Parla and Davison define ideology as “set of beliefs about social life in general and about politics in particular” (2004, p.21).

modernized version of Sunni Islam” (Açikel and Ateş, 2011, p.722). Foundation of Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) in 1924 might be seemed an important attempt for this purpose. In this sense, it can be argued that during the early Republican period, even though in 1925 the law 677 was accepted that banned the sufi lodges and all tarikats (Dressler, 2008a, p.284), there was not clear-cut separation between state and religion instead the state gave more attention to national religious policy.

Politics of early Republic towards Alevis during the nation-state building process could be understood with Foucauldian perspective. As Foucault argues that since the nineteenth century power (as a state) began to control over lives and not only ensured and disciplined them but also regularized the bodies by making a distinction between abnormal and normal (2003, p.245). Looking at the background of the early Republic, it can be asserted that within the nation-state ideology, Kızılbaş/Alevis might had been seen as an abnormal bodies by the state for several reasons. Kadioğlu gives us understanding about why Alevi community might be seen as abnormals in this nation building and modernization process. She says:

“Within the Republic of Turkey, most of the aforementioned components of the national identity (like common culture and common language) did not seem to overlap with those of the large Alevi community, which could not be conceived as one homogenous group. Second, the Alevi group, mostly consisted of nomadic or newly settling tribes. As the Law on Settlement shows, the nomadic tribes were considered as insecure elements. Third, certain bonds, other than –or in addition to– the national one were present among the different Alevi communities. At least the religious-communal bonds were very much alive and valid for all of the Alevi communities.” (1996, p.187).

Furthermore, it could be said the new nation-state attempted to form normalization strategies towards Alevis. In my opinion, Foucault’s analysis of biopower is useful in terms of comprehending normalization strategies on Alevis. Foucault asserts that “we see the emergence of the idea of an internal war that defends society against threats born of its own body. The idea of social war makes, if you like a great retreat from the historical to the biological, from the constituent to the medical” (Foucault, 2003, p.216). This is to say, before the late sixteenth century, there were disciplinary techniques of power such as “separation, alignment, serialization, visibility, surveillance, inspections, bookkeeping, reports and also organization which were centered on the individual bodies” (ibid, p.242). This was related to sovereign’s

right. On the other hand, with the second half of the eighteenth century Foucault asserts that there is new form of power which is centered on the mass rather than the individual. Foucault calls this power as biopolitics which refers that “it has objects of knowledge and seeks to control it” and it is “not disciplinary” anymore but “regularized” (ibid, p.243). Foucault’s analysis on this overlaps new Republic’s relation with Alevis in terms of integration them to national body by defining it within its own purpose, for instance, religious aspect of Alevism had been re-identified by the state in terms of making focus on its Turkish origins and to facilitate integration. It should be noted that the Ottoman state considered by Alevis as a threat against its hegemony, early Republic also considered Kızılbaş/Alevis as a threat against national unification. Therefore integration of Alevism to the new nation state became crucial problem by the state. In this regard, the problematization of Alevism was implemented both in ethnic and religious aspects. The new nation-state implemented its strategy and ideology on Alevis by using “knowledge” of Alevism.

Dressler (2013) points out that in the early years of the Republic both Fuad Köprülü and Baha Said’s writings played the most important role on the resignification of “Alevi” and “Alevilik” (Alevism). Dressler argues that they both contributed to the creation of a “new ethno-religious category” with the ideal of implementation of “national project” (ibid, p.239). With the rise of the modern Turkish state the term “Kızılbaş” has begun to be named as “Alevi” and “Alevilik” (Alevism) by emphasizing its “heterodox” character. It demonstrates a new “meta-narrative on Alevism” since it makes emphasis on “commonality, and deemphasizing regional, ritual and sociocultural differences” meanwhile correlates Alevism with Islam (Dressler, 2013, p.286). The aim of this resignification was to facilitate the integration of those socio-religious communities to the nation state (ibid, p.286).

Secularism principle of Kemalism has been appealing to Alevis as “they were in the hope that with the new state would come new acceptance of the Alevis and greater roles for them in society” (Poyraz, 2005, p.503). There is a widespread belief that Alevis have been in favor of Kemalist ideology giving reference to Alevis’ support for the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Poyraz points out “when the Turkish Republic replaced the Ottoman Empire, the Bektashis embraced Atatürk’s cause and supported his efforts to create a secular state, the Alevis went even further and

compared Atatürk with Hz. Ali”³⁸ (2005, p.504). On the other hand, in some extent there was a conflict between Alevis and Turkish Republic in the first decades. The Dersim uprising³⁹ could be seen as an outcome of this conflict (Kieser, 2005).

Furthermore, Islam was seen as an “internationalist religion” during the early Republic. Therefore, it conflicts with the ideology of nationalism. On the other hand, Mustafa Kemal’s emphasis on “Islam as a rational religion and elimination of politics regarding superstition” (Köker, 1994, pp.54-55) led to deprivation of Alevis in terms of conducting their religious rituals, traditions since as it has been mentioned above, the religious leaders as dedes’ activities and the ocak system were banned by the new regime. Considering the conditions of 1930s and 1940s, Kehl-Bodrogi explains that “Alevi dedes, easily identifiable by their long beards and untrimmed moustaches were often arrested because of illegal religious and superstitious activities” (2003, p.64). Besides with the foundation of DRA Sunni Islam has been promoted as a religious identity within the society. Therefore it can be asserted that Alevis’ religious identity was disregarded by the new Republic.

Problematization of Alevism was not directly defined by the state from the onset of Multi-Party period until 1980. This might be related to the late urbanization and migration process of Alevis to big cities and young generation’s engagement with left politics by disregarding their Alevi identity. However, during that time, we see that there was an increase in normalization of Sunni-Islam as a legitimate and visible faith in the society. Especially in 1947 with the power of Democratic Party and re-foundation of Turkish Hearts (Ocaklar) nationalist conservative Muslims increased their activities and between the period 1950 and 1970 these Muslim intellectuals began to integrate with the state (Bora, 1998, p.125). Karasipahi (2009) adds that “alienation of the neglected rural people, their exclusion from the benefits of rapid capitalistic development, and the inability of the secular westernization project to accommodate local religious and cultural structures with the values of the West engendered and facilitated the emergence of Muslim intellectuals” (pp.191-192). The emergence of new Islamic movement was not a coincidence. Since the beginning of

³⁸ During the Independence War Atatürk’s communication with Bektashis might served to build an alliance between Atatürk and Alevis. Besides Kehl, Bodrogi states that “even in Dersim, the traumatic experience was met by the creation of new myths which relieved Atatürk of every responsibility of the operation” (2003, p.66). She adds this good reputation lasted at least until 1960s when a new generation integrated into Marxism.

³⁹ Dersim uprising occurred in October 1938 (in 1935, there is a law of Tunceli). This was the area of Alevi Kurds. In response to the uprising Ankara government severely suppressed.

the Democrat Party (DP) rule in 1950 some changes were enacted; call for prayer (ezan) was returned to Arabic from Turkish which was used during the Republican People's Party (RPP) period; reading of Quran in radio was to set free by abrogating ban of religious broadcast; religious instruction in schools was made compulsory⁴⁰ (Ateş, 2011, p.159); the construction of 5000 mosques were financed (McDowall, 1996, p.396). It can be claimed that these transformations paved the way for the politicization of Islam, in other words, Islam has begun to be more spectacle in the public sphere. Besides Democrat party got support from most prominent religious communities including Said Nursi, Mevlana Halid Naqshibandis, Kadiris (McDowall, 1996, p.396). Interestingly, as Ateş (2011) points out at that time Democrat Party got vote from other groups including Communist Party of Turkey, non-Muslims and Alevis. This election can be evaluated as a sign of opposite reaction to Kemalist ideology from Republican People's Party and outside of it. The oppositions arose on two dynamics including economic and religious ones. Democrat Party developed its political discourse on inclusion and promoted liberal-populism (Ateş, 2011, p.214). Considering this policy, in particular at the beginning of DP rule, Alevis were in favor of Democrat Party by hoping to gain equal opportunity (Massicard, 2007). During the one party period Kemalist ideology disregarded ethno-religious identities, instead it promoted ethno centrism and Kemalist version of orthodox Sunni-Islam. Therefore both orientations in particular made partially negative impact on Alevi Kurds (Ateş, 2011, p.202). Nevertheless, as mentioned before, all the transformations made by DP government resulted with the increasing hegemony of Sunni-Islam and thereupon Alevis' vote for Democrat Party had gradually decreased in the following elections (Ateş, 2011, p.202).⁴¹ In contrast to RPP, Democrat Party promoted the idea that Islam can be compatible with modernization therefore Islamic way of life became more prominent in the public sphere (Zürcher, 2004, p.234). During the DP period, mosques were built in Alevi villages and some Alevi villages' names were changed. Furthermore, when President Cemal Gürsel in the 1960s suggested establishing a department of sects within the

⁴⁰ Even though religious instruction in school was optional the procedure required parents to fulfill written application indicating that they do not prefer their children to religious class. Thus this makes practically the religious instruction almost compulsory. With the military coup religious instruction in school became directly compulsory (Ateş, 2011, p.159). Its name was changed as "Religious Culture and Ethics".

⁴¹For instance, in 1950 in Tunceli where mostly Alevi Kurds inhabits RPP got vote %41.3, DP got %58.7. On the other hand, in 1954 elections while RPP got %48.8, DP got %42.5. In 1957 elections, DP got %34.8 and RPP got %53.5 (Ateş, 2011, p.202). Besides

DRA, some media channels reacted against it on the grounds that it would define Alevism as a separate religion (Massicard, 2007). In order to overcome these claims, for the first time Alevi students released some publications and meanwhile some associations were established. For instance, Hacı Bektaş Turizm ve Tanıtma Derneği was established in Ankara in 1963.

Following the DP, Justice Party (JP) embraced integration of Islam into politics. The JP leader Demirel stated that “the Turkish electorate was uneasy about the use of secularist pre-text as a means of restricting religious freedom” (Toprak, 1981, p.93). With the aim of pragmatism Republican People’s Party under the Bülent Ecevit has gradually begun to adopt a new political orientation by declaring that religion was not obstacle for development. The fact is that even though the 1961 constitution declared that the parties were not allowed to engage with ethnicity and religiosity particularly religion became an instrument for getting vote from masses. It is obvious that after 1950s the parties directly promoted the role of Islam within the political and social spheres. In 1973 when National Salvation Party gained power it continued to invest in this premise (Ateş, 2011).

It seems that at that time problematization of Alevism partly emerged out by Alevis who underlined their status of citizenship. Yet this would be a very limited attempt. “Turkey Union Party” (Türkiye Birlik Partisi) was established in 1966 which aimed to promote integration of Alevism to national politics. This party became first political experience for Alevis. Its policies were partly based on policies of Kemalism and some members of this party defined themselves as Kemalist, Turkish and emphasized their belongings to democracy and social liberal state. In the first sense, this party policies were not mainly aimed to struggle for demands of Alevis since the members of this party would not demand the construction of society and the State based on the Alevi identities and their hierarchies. At this respect, the most important thing is, as Güler (2008) points out, at that time political parties were not allowed to establish the party within the framework of religiosity and ethnicity. Therefore there was conflict between the party if it was an Alevi party or it was a party in general. In the end the party was closed down in 1977.

Furthermore, with the rise of leftist movement within Alevis, the difference between Alevis and Sunnis became more visible. Especially young generation of Alevis declared their political and economically disadvantaged positions in the society.

Most of young Alevis had begun to identify themselves with Marxism. In this period, Alevism was re-identified within the leftist, socialist framework especially by the young generation. Clark asserts that “in the 1970s as Alevi youth became involved in Marxist ideologies, the dedes and babas took political action in their own way. From the introduction of Multi-Party politics in 1950 until the military intervention of 1980, on the political and religious extremes, the far left was supported by some Alevi-Bektashis, while some Sunnis supported the far right” (1999, pp.80-81). The crucial point is that Alevis’ engagement with the left led certain claims to emerge that represented Alevis as if they were posing a communist threat. The view on communist threat was mainly emphasized by Turk-Islam nationalists (Ateş, 2011, p.206). As a consequence, some violent attacks towards Alevis took place; for instance, in 1978 in Malatya and Kahramanmaraş and in 1980 in Çorum, there were serious attacks which were organized by right-wing nationalists groups. Many people were killed in these attacks and as a consequence of the chaos coup d’état happened (Aringberg-Laanatza, 1998, p.189). In my opinion, the changing ways of problematization of Alevism by the state was once again shaped by political elements; this time it was the coup process in 1980.

The general characteristics of the 1980s is based on “Turkish and Sunni-Islam Synthesis” designed by the military coup of 12 September 1980. This means that religion was explicitly politicized by the state in addition to emphasis on Turkishness (Ateş, 2011, p.208). The documentary “Ordinary States-12 September Dersim Belief Assimilation” (Olağan Haller- 12 Eylül Dersim İnanç Asimilasyonu)⁴², which was directed by Özgür Fındık, explicitly indicates Turkish and Islamist nationalism of the state at that time, it’s mentioned that approximately 3000 Alevi Kurd children who belonged to lower-class were sent to Imam-Hatip Schools in order to teach them Sunni-Islam doctrines according to the documentary. It could also be interpreted as a measure to prevent young generation’s engagement with communist movements. Furthermore, a question was asked to Cemal Şener in Yeni Gündem Journal (1987) for investigating whether there was discrimination to Alevis in 1980s or not. Şener (1989) answers that there were various forms of discrimination. He explains that especially in National Education system there was high oppression over Alevi students, he says that if someone says that he was an Alevi s/he might be punished

⁴²<http://www.haberturk.com/kultur-sanat/haber/831725-dersim-asimilasyonu-belgeseli>

(p.175). Furthermore, Zelyut (1993) asserts that thanks to the 1980 military coup the state implemented religious compulsory education merely injecting Sunni-Islam. Zelyut argues that in the name of Islam they taught Sunni-Islam to Alevi students. Zelyut points out since the last years of 1970s many Quran courses, Imam Hatip schools, religious foundations and organizations were established (1993, p.14). During that time, political policies promoted the role of Sunni-Islam as a constitutive part of Turkish national identity. From this perspective, one can understand that how there has been a need for problematization of Alevism and trying to integrate it into normal apparatus of the state.

When Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power in 2002, Turkey had already been accepted as an official candidate for membership to the European Union in 1999. The JDP enacted significant legal reforms in the direction of accession to European Union (EU) and significant progress has been made regarding the recognition of the rights to ethnic and linguistic minorities (Kurban, 2007). At this respect, “the issue of Alevism” also came to the forefront of European Union. A report was released about the Alevi problem by the EU questioning the position of Alevis. Hereafter, JDP attempted to “Alevi question” (mostly labeled as “Alevi Opening”) in terms of “recognition of the Alevis by the state” (Dressler, 2013, p.xii). Main demands of Alevis were discussed. These demands are listed as in the following in Dressler’s analysis

“The state’s complete retraction from the organization of now vested in the powerful state bureaucracy of the DİTİP; the abolishment of the mandatory school classes on “Religious Culture and Ethics” or alternatively, adequate and positive representation of Alevism therein; the recognition of cemevis (“Houses of Communion”), where the Alevis celebrate their communal rituals, as “houses worship”, a status that is granted to mosques, churches and synagogues; some form of state recognition and material support for the Alevi ritual leaders, the dedes; and finally conversion of the Madımak Otel in Sivas, where 37 people of mostly Alevi background died after an agitated mob shouting Islamic slogans had set fire to it during an Alevi festival in 1993, into a museum commemorating the horrific event.” (ibid, p.xii-xiii).

Dressler points out that the final report of “Alevi Opening” indicates the state’s intention on regarding Alevism within Islam by defining its heterodox Islamic character (ibid., p.xiv), in which “heterodoxy needs to be understood and explained in relation to the Sunni Islamic mainstream- the later thus being normalized as orthodox” (ibid., p.xv). Former Prime Minister (Current President of the Republic)

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's words made this intention clear as he said "Alevi means "those who belong to Ali" and "I, myself, try to live same as Hz. Ali. Then I am more Alevi than they are" (Hurriyet August 6, 2012). This expression justifies his negation of cem houses as independent worship places, for instance, he said the Karacahmet Cem House is a freak in one of his interviews (ibid.). All of those expressions indicate the Sunni policies of the state which have been deeply maintained by JDP government in which Alevism was reduced merely to the love of Ali and Alevis were forced to live with reference to Ali in Islam. It could be stated that Alevism was problematized by the JDP with regard to melt it within Sunni-Islam. This problematization is obvious in terms of its definition on Alevism with Ali (acceptable Alevis) (Öğüt, 2015) and Alevism without Ali (atheist Alevis) (Korkmaz, 2014).

In a nutshell, the state has two main apparatuses for taming of Alevism especially following the multi-party period up until today. These state apparatuses are education systems and DRA. As it has been mentioned before, compulsory religious education course has only promoted Sunni-Islam. Moreover, DRA is not anymore rejecting the existence of Alevism "as a representative of state ideology and defender of unity and fraternity" (Bilici, 1998, p.71) but it continues to problematize Alevism as an abnormal sect and then try to integrate it to the "normal" one. Bilici (1998) asserts DRA has three attitudes for taming of Alevism:

"One method is regard to Alevism as a type of folklore or subculture within the synthesis formed by God, the Book, the Prophet, the Nation, the State, the Fatherland and the Flag, thus denying the any significance on the theological level; As opposed to those who say that the Alevi should be represented in the DRA they prefer to regard Alevism as a mere sect or religious order, and oppose its representation on the grounds that DRA is superior to all the various sects and religious orders; Finally, they assume the position of a referee sifting the good Alevi from the bad on the grounds that Alevism is being used as a tool by atheists, materialists, Marxists, Christians or Jews" (p.72).

It is the fact that the system of DRA directly serves to the Sunnification policies of the state. From its foundation, it has promoted Sunni-Islam as a legitimate faith and in line with this thought it has been a place for Sunni community. Significantly, the statistical data giving by Aringberg-Laanatza (1998) demonstrates how the state promoted Sunni-Islam by the DRA. In 1982, we see that following the enactment of compulsory religious education in primary and secondary schools, the number of

students in Koran courses “increased from 68.500 to over 155.000 during the decade which is organized and financed by the DRA”; since 1980 to end of it, the number of DRA’s officials in abroad were also increased from 20 to 628. During that time, “1500 mosques were built in each year”; and “the staff in the Directorate increased from some 50.000 to almost 85.000”; “mosque building also continued to be a mixture of public and private enterprise” in the late 1980s (Aringberg-Laanaatza, 1998, p.191). Today, the DRA has great budget by serving only to the members of Hanefi sect.

In fact, the political background would provide us for understanding about the relationship between Sunnification politics of the state and Sunnification process of the informants. We see that historically since the last years of the Ottoman Empire up until today each period brought distinct sets of preventive measures concerning the adaptation of Alevis’ compatible with their political agendas. In this regard, the visibility and accessibility of religious identity of Alevism have been intentionally hindered until the 1990s. Here, it is observed that political and social mechanisms have been developed by the authorities with regard to prevention of Alevi religious identity. The thesis discusses how such kind of political atmosphere on Alevis might have influenced informants by analyzing the fieldwork findings.

3. CONVERSION PROCESS

In this chapter I will argue that the conversion process that is observed among some Alevis can be understood by examining the relationship between urbanization, modernization experiences since the 1950s and the politics towards Alevis. Urban conditions paved the way for the transformation of traditional Alevism as it had been experienced in the rural context. Therefore the way Alevism is experienced in the urban setting has different dynamics than the rural context. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, with the urbanization and modernization processes the Alevis have entered into new political, economical, social and cultural circumstances. In this context, based on the field findings, this thesis questions how those circumstances have impacted on Alevism within the urban setting and examines what kinds of factors, motivations lay behind the conversion process of the informants.

Snow and Machalek (1983) assert that “our observations raise serious questions about much of the research concerned with the causes of conversion...Far from being trusted sources of information, converts are uniquely denied impartial knowledge about the factors that might have precipitated conversion” (p.280). In this context, Staples and Mauss (1987) explain that “from Snow and Machalek’s point of view, the researcher or analyst is better qualified to determine who is or not a convert than are the subjects themselves” (p.138).

In fact, during the in-depth interviews, I never directly asked the question “are you a convert?”. However, before starting to the interview I gave information about my research concern and I asked about their religious identification. It should be noted that my conversion criteria at first is defined as their discourse on not identifying themselves (merely) an Alevi. I observed that when most of the informants were telling me about their religious identification they were quite relax, but during the interview when I interrupted like “so those are reasons you embraced Sunni-Islam or Muslimhood” most of them hesitated to tell me about certain reasons. Therefore rather than claim-making of one variable as the cause of conversion, I decided to

focus on the process itself when I analyzed my fieldwork data. I consider that “conversion is a process over time, not a single event... it is a process of religious change that takes place over time and consists of various elements including field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations and orientations that are dynamic and synergistic” (Rambo, 1993a, p.5; Rambo, 1999b, p.267). It should also be noted that variables that determine conversion process are not universal but depend on the societal, political context and they are not sequential; instead they should be considered within the process all together.

By evaluating the narratives of the informants, the thesis puts forward that there are four main causes of conversion of the informants within the urban context. The first causes of conversion is related to “social encounters with Sunnism” including established neighborhood, workplace, school and marriage relations in the urban setting. Here, we see that all of those relations vary in accordance with the story of each informant within varying degrees and contexts. The thesis points out the effect of “socialization” in the urban context as one of four factors in the process of conversion. I could assert that the notion of identity is a “crucial concern for converts given the pace of urbanization, modernization, secularization and the resulting pluralization of self and community understanding” (Rambo, 1999, p.265). Socialization process has triggered such kind of notion of identity and as a result of it this influenced religious seekership of the informants (Gooren, 2007, p.339). This religious seekership process gave motivation for conversion (ibid, p.341).

The second determinant of the conversion process is the feeling of religious inadequacy about Alevism which results from the concealment of Alevi identity and the lack of main religious rituals and institutions of Alevism in the urban setting. When I asked informants the question “what do you know about Alevism?” most of the informants depressively told me about their concealment process and lack of religious rituals. Here I consider that this factor is important enables us to understand the effects of prior socialization on informants. In this regard, at first, I could assert that the concealment of the identity is one of the important indicators of the conversion process in the sense that it may have contributed on psychological dispositions of the informants. Secondly, with regard to the lack of knowledge about Alevism it can be stated that Alevism lacks religious and social capital comparing to Sunnism. I consider those deprivations which refer “to any and all of the ways that

an individual or group may be feel, disadvantaged in comparison either to other individuals or groups or to an internalized set of standards... include economic, social, organismic, ethical and psychic to which individuals or groups may be subject relative to others in society” (Glock, 1964, p.27) all which facilitate one’s integration to conversion. Furthermore, this does not mean to claim that this sense of deprivation is a deterministic character in conversion process but it could be claimed that it “may force a person to seek out religious or other experiences to compensate for life’s shortcomings... forced conversion implies that if enough information is available about a person’s psychological and social background, then one predict whether or not that person will be converted” (Richardson, 1985, p.166). However, it should be kept in mind that deprivation in itself is not a sufficient determinant factor for conversion, in other words, we may say that many Alevis are likely to suffer from a sense of deprivation due to the concealment of Alevi identity or lack of access to rituals , however we cannot say that for all this lead to the process of conversion.

The third factor that affects the conversion process is defining and interpreting Alevism as a belief within the circle of Islam while melting it with the Sunni-Islam. We see that boundaries within Alevism and Sunnism become blurred in the eyes of the informants. Interpreting Alevism as Islam can be understood by applying the framework offered by Öğüt (2015). The informants tend to underline the importance of Ali from the lenses of Sunni Islam. (Öğüt, 2015, p.74). Most informants regarded Ali with his relation to the Prophet. I consider that this perception does not surprise us since the informants’ assertions overlap with the discourse according to which Alevis’ unique Anatolian existence has become debatable by the ulama who recreated an acceptable Alevism. The Ulema test Alevis’ Muslimhood through various forms of exams and measures and transform Alevis into absolute Sunnis in time by making them proto-Sunnis. Proto-Sunnism is the phase before the completion of a full-fledged assimilation process. According to Öğüt, the Ulema –the dominant religious Sunni hegemony makes a difference between acceptable Alevism (Alevism with Ali) and unacceptable Alevism (Alevism without Ali) that is those Alevis who reject the acceptable Alevism defined by the Ulema. “Acceptable Alevis” might had experienced “cognitive crises” during this process but while they were attempting to be rewarded as Muslim by the ulema through the their adoption of Sunnism to make an idealised Alevism, Alevism loses its meaning. In the end those

persons are expected to abandon their Alevi identity and enter into a transition period. (Öğüt, 2015, pp.74-75).

The last and the fourth factor that affects the conversion process is defining Alevism political sectarianism. This factor is a particular form of the two elements explained above. The first is that seeing Alevism within Islam makes informants to categorize themselves within Sunni-Islam. This also makes them regard Alevism not as a faith-religion but as a political-ideological deviation from the first true faith of Islam. Secondly, they legitimize their negation of Alevism also with religious inadequacy. Due to urbanization, modernization processes their dissatisfaction with Alevism lead them to distance themselves from the political matters and express their transformation by solely individual choice. In short, not seeing Alevism as a faith but a politically derived deviation from Islam is utilized in the conversion process.

In a nutshell, I embrace the Lofland and Stark's "Motivational model" which argues that to fulfill a conversion process a person must: "experience enduring, acutely felt tensions; within a religious problem solving perspective; which leads him to define himself as a religious seeker; encountering the D.P. (the cult) at a turning point in his life; wherein an affective bond is formed (or pre-exists) with one or more converts; where extra-cult attachments are absent or neutralized; and where if s/he is to become a deployable agent, he is exposed to intensive interaction" (1965, p.874).

3.1 Social Encounters With Sunnism

As it has been mentioned in the first chapter, Gooren's (2007) analysis indicates five main groups of factors including personality, social, institutional, cultural factors and contingency that influence individual level of religious activity. Rambo's (1993) process oriented evaluation, on the other hand, includes context and interaction analysis. Some non-pathological studies within the passivist perspective demonstrate that normal psychological and social processes e.g. emotional attachments and social networks impact on new religious affiliation (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.2) which are all compatible with my fieldwork findings. All those studies point out the "influence of family or relatives, friends or acquaintances, neighborhood, situational events, random meetings, institutions being member through socialization and role teaching" (Rambo, 1993, p.22; Gooren, 2007, p.351) and "internal motivations, experiences and aspirations" (Rambo, 1993, p.20). A change in worldview

distinguishes conversion from socialization as converts “redefine a socialization experience, acquisition of a new social or group identity, as a conversion experience” (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.15).

Alevi migration to cities increased frequency of their interaction with the Sunni population. The general picture of the informants demonstrates their direct, face to face relations with Sunnis during the conversion process. The relations that were established in the urban areas including neighborhood, workplace, school and marriage relations are the main factors on conversion, but those factors can vary for each informant. From my fieldwork sampling, even though the informants have different conversion experiences we see that most of them had lived in conservative neighborhoods with highest Sunni population. Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Saliha and Özlem had lived in Fikirtepe. Leman had lived in Tuzla until her marriage. Ömer had lived in Uskudar and after his marriage he started to live in Umraniye. Ayten and Semra had lived in Gaziosmanpaşa and after their marriages they continued to live in the conservative places too. For instance, Ayten had begun to live in Sultangazi. Besides Semra says that due to her settlement in a conservative area, after her marriage, almost all of her friends had become Sunni. Erdal who had lived in Sahrayıcedid until he left the city for university education states that Sahrayıcedid was a conservative educated middle class area.

Moreover, Ahmet and Sevgi had only lived in the neighborhoods in which Alevis mostly reside. Ahmet had lived in Kayışdağı neighborhood. Sevgi had lived in Mustafa Kemal neighborhood until her marriage after which she had begun to live in the conservative areas such as Fikirtepe and Yeni Sahra.

It should be noted that I cannot make generalization whether there is a meaningful relationship between settlement in a conservative neighborhood and their conversion. However, considering all of the informants’ experiences, I could assert that for some cases, direct influence of Sunni neighbors on the informants with varying degrees and contexts is obvious. The conversion experiences of Ömer, Leman, Ayten and Saliha demonstrate the influence of their neighbors on conversion process.

Saliha’s experience, who lived and worked as a grocer in Fikirtepe neighborhood, can be an exact example of this relationship. Saliha had experienced difficulties with establishing relations with her Sunni neighbors during her work life. For instance,

she said that she had been unable to sell any bread if she would have said she was an Alevi. From her narrative, we understand that she considered on pros and cons of imitating Sunnis and following this consideration she might have adopted herself to Sunnism. Here, we see that in addition to the possible impact of conservative neighborhood, there is a meaningful relationship between rational cost benefit analysis and conversion process, in which “potential converts as weighing the expected utility of converting against that of not converting” with desiring social and economic utilities (Gartrell and Shannon, 1985, p.34). In addition to her work experience narrative, Saliha also described positive relation with her Sunni acquaintances during her first migration to the area. From her narrative, it seems that both high degree of social pressure that she felt from her neighbors and the intensification of communication with the Sunni population influenced the conversion process.

Ayten also described how before getting married, her family had good relations with Sunni neighbors and their impact on themselves. Following one of their Sunni neighbor’s advise about teaching Quran, when she was in the primary school, her parents sent both her and her sister to this Sunni neighbor’s house for learning Quran. They thought that it would be good, as reading Quran in funeral ceremony was necessary.

From her experience we see that some Alevis were not able to fulfill one of their main needs in the urban context. Besides, it seems that, to some extent, they embraced Islamic funeral rites by observing their Sunni neighbors. Bozkurt (1998) points out the matter of Alevis funerals in the urban context. He states that “Islamic funeral rites are alien to Alevi tradition” since in the rural areas the burial of the dead would be carried out by the Alevi dedes. However, within the urban areas, the lack of dedes and cem houses until certain period of time led to urgent problem of funeral ceremonies (1998, p.106). Bozkurt explains that “in many cases either they are not allowed in mosques or imams regard conducting the funeral rites of an Alevi as a sin” (ibid, p.106).

Even though Ayten permanently wore headscarf after getting married she said that this was not related with her husband’s influence on her, but more to do with the Quran courses that she attended when she was young. During the interview her sister also joined us. Her sister also added that after attending to the Quran courses and

performing prayers she oscillated between Alevism and Sunnism. Besides, they also agreed that due to living in a conservative area atmosphere, they became careful on their wearing. Similar to their expression, Semra who lived in the same place also mentioned about this conservative atmosphere and its impact on herself as being careful on her wearing. Based on the narratives of these informants, it seems that some Alevis have adopted Sunni practices due to the pressure they felt in their social environment. I can say that to some degree such kind of social pressure influenced Ayten and Semra's conversion processes which I consider to be stemmed from the role-learning.

Furthermore, experiences of Ömer, İsmail, Leman and Özlem demonstrate that in addition to the impact of neighbors and social environment, compulsory religious education classes is important.⁴³ With regard to my question about from whom they learned about religious rituals of Islam, they answered that they learned from their social environment including friends or acquaintances in the neighborhood and also religious courses in the school. İsmail said that as he witnessed his Sunni friends' prayers both in the neighborhood and at the school he began to search about Islam and performed prayer when he was studying in the high school. Özlem and Leman emphasized the impact of religious classes when they were in the primary and secondary schools and we see that under its effect they had begun to contact with the Sunni neighbors. Özlem told about her religious course's teacher who was so warm that she influenced her beliefs. In the high school for the first time Özlem performed prayer. After studying in the university she decided to wear headscarf and she got more detailed knowledge about Islam from one of her Sunni neighbors. Similar to Özlem, following influence of the religious course Leman began to contact with Sunni neighbours and when she was young she began to perform the rituals of Sunni Islam. She was so enthusiastic about her class that she got the highest score among her classmates. Nevertheless she still could not help herself to feel embarrassed when she found out that she did not know much about religion, for which she put the blame on her parents. She said:

"I was the only one in the family thinking like this. I was the number one in the class at religious course. I did not use to know about prayer. The religious classteacher told me to

⁴³ Except Ömer, the rest of informants(İsmail, Leman and Özlem) attended compulsory Religious Culture and Ethics course which was made compulsory with the Article 24 of the Constitution in 1982 (Ateş, 2011).

explain it, I said “I do not know”. He thought that I had grown up in a Muslim family. He had given the word to a male student previously. The practices of males and females are different, but I imitated him for I did not know how to do it.”(See Appendix-C/No:1)

Even though Leman’s interest in Sunnism was increased after she lost his brother when she was 22 years old, compulsory religious classes seem to have played a role in her conversion. Semra and Sevgi told me a bit about effect of religious courses. I can state that considering informants’ narratives, Alevis’ struggle for changing “the status and content of the compulsory religious courses in public schools for being biased and discriminatory in which teaching Sunni beliefs and religious practices” appear as a strategy that is fully aware of the ongoing role of the courses on Alevi’s subordination to Sunni practices (Köse, 2010, p.16). Bilici (1998) mentions about this issue as “religious culture instruction introduced by the 1982 Constitution (Article 24) that reinforced the dominance not only of the Sunni but also of the Hanafi order”. The text books for the class in high school only mentions about Ehl-i Beyt (Ahl al-bayt) for once (the family of the Prophet) which refers to “great love that the Turkish people feel for the family of the Prophet, the frequent repetition of the names of the members of that family (Fatma, Hasan, Hüseyin) and the avowal that Ali was accepted by all as the Lion of God... excessive love of Ali may lead to the same sort of excess displayed in the Christian deification of Christ” (p.68). Bilici also asserts that employing graduates from the Faculty of Theology as teachers of religious instruction inculcate traditional, official Islamic doctrines that has incited Alevi children to embark on a search for their own identity and encouraged them to seek out written works on the subject of Alevism” (1998, pp.68-69). These assertions are compatible with my findings. When I ask the informants if they heard and learned anything about Alevism in the religious classes at school, all informants told me that they did not but to some extent, they have a bit knowledge on Ali as from the family of Prophet. Besides the teachers’ influence on the informants are obvious and the informants mostly emphasized lack of written sources within Alevism.

Friendship at school and university is another theme that can be connected with the role of socialization. Vural and Erdal’s cases indicate the influence of Sunni friends at university education. Vural explicitly explained about his Sunni friends affected him while was studying in the university in Istanbul by the following words:

“What led me (to Sunnism) was of course the university environment, when I first started. Like what you said before, firstly you start meeting with people who know about Islam. Then what was happening among friends is that they started knowing me better and I started knowing them in return. You start questioning things. I mean, where does it come from, I mean where this religion comes from, what is the belief mechanism, what it wants from you... Then these kinds of talks take place. And these lead you further ahead. Of course talks with friends and things like that take you to different things... Let me say this; before then I had not read anything about religion, I was not a person thinking much about religion. However, these kinds of environments lead you slowly. I mean, there has to be some kind of logic. For years or centuries people preoccupied with this issue. Not only us, many people others have done so. So we also have to benefit from this accumulation that comes from the past... Then you see, you choose and make your decision. Well I had such a conversion.”(See Appendix-C/No:2)

Erdal’s experience is similar with Vural. In the second year of the university education in Manisa, Erdal had intensified his relations with Sunni friends having participated in the Gülen Movement. In this case, we see that in addition to Sunni friends, Gülen movement had deep impact on Erdal’s conversion process during his university studies. Except Erdal, from my sampling I cannot find correlation between being part of any religious community and being converted. However, I should add that Erdal also told me that currently he knows many Alevis in the Gülen Movement. With regards to the narrative of Erdal, on the one hand, I can state that moderate attitude of members of the movement to Alevis emphasizing brotherhood and not forcing them to perform religious rituals of Sunni-Islam seem to have facilitated the participation of Alevis. Erdal’s expression makes this issue clear as he said:

“So I learned that people easily said they were Alevis. If I got reactions, I would quit being a member of the community. Gülen community is sincere against the Alevi people. Besides if they said “let’s affect the Alevis, let them pray like us”, it would be insincere. We, as Alevis, do not know Gülen Hodja. Until this day we thought like he will bring sharia, he is reactionist, religionist, etc. All imams are not the same, all rightists are not the same, all conservatives are not the same. A person may be religious, what we have to be afraid of are the religionist ones, the ones who take advantage of religion, the ones who gain unearned income via religion. I do not believe that Gülen is a religionist, but a religious person.”(See Appendix-C/No:3)

On the other hand, what we see is that the movement provided a director title to Erdal in one of its houses which might have also contributed to his deepening relations with the movement and facilitated his conversion process. Gartrell and Shannon “view recruits to religious movements acting as if they weigh rewards and

sanctions from affiliation with members and nonmembers in addition to weighing the attractiveness of movements' beliefs and ideas" (1985, pp.32-33). With regarding to expected reward they mention about social outcomes "on the degree to which NRMs provide social rewards as part of a conversion strategy" (ibid, p.34). Here, to some extent, it seems to me that social (status) and economic rewards are obvious as given by Gülen movement to Erdal.

Employment and work relations and colleagues are also indicated as the sources of Sunni influence. Ahmet told about how one of his Sunni friends in his workplace influenced him as his friend took him to a mosque in order to cure his headache. After feeling better, he said he began to attend to mosque when he was sixteen years old. Semra also expressed that she learned about rituals of Sunni-Islam during her conversations with a Sunni customer in her workplace.

Considering of those cases at first glance, it seems that conversion process starts with very contingently. However, there could be other variables which triggered the contingent process. For instance, as mentioned before in the case of Semra we see also the influence of the neighborhood. Besides Osman and İbrahim directly had been influenced by their workplace socialization. As they were working in the same place they stated that their workplace was very conservative and before working there they had to go to its school which was conservative too. Osman explained that during his studies in the school of work place, he began to attend to mosque on Fridays. After he started working in that workplace, he permanently continued to perform five prayers. İbrahim started to work in the age of fifteen in the same place with her brother Osman and approximately after two years he began to perform prayer. İbrahim explicitly explained influence of Sunni friends in the workplace environment by following words:

"Right after my brother, I started working in this workplace, then I looked and saw that, I do not know if it is because of the government of that time or the policies of thestate – everybody was practicing prayer. Like 60%-70% of my friends around me were practicing prayer and so you become a member of that community inevitably."(See Appendix-C/No:4)

Marriage seems to play a role in some of informants' conversion process. This correlation is obvious in the case of Sevgi, and to some degree, of Ayten who were married with Sunnis. Even though Sevgi noted that when she was young she had interested in religious course but from her narrative we understand that until her

marriage she had not perform any rituals of Sunni-Islam but following her marriage she wore headscarf and beginning to perform those rituals. In the case of Ayten, the situation is to some extent similar. Even though Ayten stated that before her marriage she had begun to perform main rituals of Sunni-Islam, following her marriage she permanently wore headscarf and performing its rituals. Similar to experiences of Sevgi and Ayten, in the cases of Saliha and Semra the impact of marriage partly exists on their conversion, but interestingly, their spouses who were inborn Alevis were converted to Sunni-Islam before their marriages. Furthermore, we see that some informants also converted their spouses. İsmail and Leman are examples of it. Before they married with inborn Alevis they had converted to Sunni-Islam, and during their marriages their spouses converted to Sunni-Islam too.

It seems that family structure is one of the important factors for reproduction of conversion to Sunnism. To make why conversion to Sunnism is common, giving reference to W. Seward Salisbury's (1969) analysis on "mixed marriage and conversion" in terms of the conversion from Protestantism to Catholicism becomes meaningful. Salisbury points out to factors including "religious identification, sex role and social status" (1969, p.126). The research presents that with regarding to 'religious identification' factor "Protestant women convert at a higher rate than Catholic women" (ibid, p.126). The reason is that "the Catholic religious system is a tighter and more closely integrated system than the Protestant religious system" (ibid, p.126). The Catholic religious system has "powerful sanctions operate to hold the Catholic to her religious affiliation i.e. Ante-Nuptial Agreement", on the other hand, "Protestants are less constrained than Catholics from religious conversion since Protestantism has no comparable rule or binding sanction" (ibid, pp.126-128). Regarding to 'religious identification' factor's relation with my samplings it seems to me that in contrast to Protestantism, considering marriage system, Alevism comes close to Catholicism. Based on the narratives of informants' regarding how their families reacted to when they marry with Sunnis or how they contributed to their spouses conversion from Alevism to Sunnism, I can say that even though parents do not show pretty much reaction to their children's conversion, they considerably react to intermarriage or such endogamous marriage conversion process. For instance, Ayten explained that she faced with difficulty by her parents before getting married with a Sunni man. She tells that for convincing her father she had to wait for two

years. Therefore, depending on my fieldwork findings I could say that to some extent “marriage is still regarded as a sacred institution” by some Alevis (Bozkurt, 1998, p.105). However, it should be questioned that why conversion occurs even Alevis’ bear such Catholic-like tendency. I consider that while marriage is still important especially in the reproduction of Alevism, in the urban context since 1960s the new generation has lower degree of social integration with Alevism which leads to “less probability of being able to be constraint” (ibid, p.125), therefore this process facilitates conversion process in the marriage.

The experiences of my sample indicate that ‘sex role’ factor plays a role. Accordingly, “women convert at a higher rate than men” (ibid, p.127) due to “traditionally subordinate family role...and socio-emotional socialization... so the sex role of women in the family constraints them to adopt the husband’s faith” (ibid, pp.126-129). This argument is compatible with my findings. For instance, except Leman’s husband, no male informant has had conversion experience with the influence of marriage. Besides ‘social status’ includes status of the husband that affects her wife’s constraint as “conversion will be in the direction of the spouse bringing the highest social status to the marriage” (ibid, p.127). Except İpek who had good social status, the rest of female informants had lower socio-economic level and therefore they were more dependent on their spouses. Therefore this may have influenced on their conversion.

In a nutshell, considering of all those cases on the one hand as mentioned before it seems that to some extent “socialization is the focal emphasis on self-change” which caused a conversion experience (Kilbourne and Richardson, 1989, p.15). Based upon the fieldwork findings, I could say according to Gooren’s (2007: 351) classification there are several different models of individual conversion experiences. Accordingly personality factors which is relating to self and personal traits... one can think of a religious worldview or an inner need to become religiously involved (prior socialization)” (Gooren, 2007, p.338-339) (highest in Leman and Özlem); social factors which include “the influence of social networks of relatives, friends, or acquaintances on changes in religious activity... through socialization and role teaching” (highest in Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Erdal, Vural, Ömer, Ahmet, Saliha, Sevgi, Semra and Ayten); institutional factors involves effect of organizations (highest in Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Ömer, Leman and Özlem); cultural factors which

“describe the influence on changes in individual religious activity of culture in a broad sense (i.e. political and economic factors” (highest in Saliha); contingency factors which relating to “situational events, random meetings with representatives of a certain religious group, an acutely felt crisis, stressful situations” (highest in Ahmet and Semra) (Gooren, 2007, p.351) are compatible with my informants..

At this point, as mentioned in the first chapter Lofland and Stark’s (1965) motivational model is useful to explain the conversion process. They say for conversion to take place a person must; have “felt tensions; religious problem-solving perspective; define himself as a religious seeker; encountering the D.P. (the cult) at a turning point in his life” (p.874). This would provide a better understanding of this process. I could assert that to some degree tension feelings of the informants are obvious within variable degrees due to being an Alevi in several social encounters. Goffman’s answer to “how do people become religious seekers?” is that “identities become spoiled under the influence of significant others (via social networks) or when that perspective is perceived as not dealing with the problems that the individual encounters in everyday life... leads to dissatisfaction... seekers who search for a perspective to restore meaning”. This perspective sheds light on how tension and religious seeker perspective which are predisposing conditions of conversion occur within the issue of Alevism (Gooren, 2007, p.339).

Inability of religious fulfillment out of Alevism stems from feeling inadequate with regards to religious learning and knowledge. That is a commonly addressed element by informants when they compare themselves with Sunni acquaintances. By comparing their degree of piety with their Sunni acquaintances they might have experienced deprivation which is one of the reasons of tension. In this regard, we see that inadequate knowledge on Alevism that is stemming from concealing Alevism and lack of religious rituals in the urban setting play a role in their conversion to Sunnism. Hence, by converting into Sunnism, they could perform more openly and fully their religious practices which seem to help to fulfill their search for devoutness. In the next section, the question of religious inadequacy will be addressed concerning its potential impact on the conversion process.

3.2 Religious Inadequacy Of Alevism: The Issue Of Concealment And Lack of Rituals

As mentioned in the previous part, after felt tensions the person defines himself as a religious seeker. In this regard, through my samplings I could assert that following the interactions with Sunnis within different areas, the informants' reevaluated their own devoutness as well as the adequacy of their own religious knowledge regarding their faith. In this regard, one of the visible features of the most informants is their emphasis on the importance of faith in the fulfillment of their lives by performing pillars of the Quran and teachings of the Muhammad (Sunna). They had tendency to search for ultimate meaning through addressing ultimate questions on nature, meaning of life and the nature of human importance assumed as unique creatures of God. In terms of the ultimate meaning of the life, those informants mainly emphasized afterlife, heaven, hell, angel and demon and by doing so they embraced main Islamic rules of the Sunni-Islam such as pilgrimage, prayer, fasting and zakah. The informants believed that by performing these religious duties their lives became meaningful and as a human being religious performance differentiated them from animals. At this respect, it could be said that "man is a meaning seeking animal who cannot endure the sense of being bereft of a viable world view" (Gooren, 2007, p.339) and "the universal human need to find meaning in life is the basis for attribution" (Rambo, 1999, p.267). This view is compatible with the attribution theory which "may be seen not only major motivation for the adoption of a new religious perspective in order to make sense of life and to have a sense of purpose, but also as a major mechanism within the conversion process... and God is a significant aspect of what happens for many converts" (Rambo, 1999, p. 267). The critical point here is that most of the informants emphasized that they were not able to fulfill their spiritualities within Alevism. In other words, it seems that Alevism was inadequate in the fulfillment of spiritual necessities of the informants. In fact, this situation is compatible with the Lofland and Stark's (1965) motivational model analysis in terms of the person "defining himself as a religious seeker; their need for solutions persisted, and their problem-solving perspective was restricted to a religious outlook, but pre-converts found conventional religious institutions inadequate as a source of solutions. Subsequently, each came to define himself as a religious seeker, a person searching for some satisfactory system of religious

meaning to interpret and resolve his discontent and each had taken some action to achieve this end” (p.868).

İsmail clearly stated his feelings in relation to the importance of the faith in his life by accompanying critique of Alevism. He said:

“Why did the God create us? We have wisdom which distinguishes us from animals. Unfortunately, today we are like plants. There is nothing in our lives. Why we came to this world, why do we live, who created us? Today when you ask those questions to Alevis they would tell that nature created us, if you ask my father he would say that the nature created us. But how the nature can create everything so perfectly? The main point is Allah. What is Allah, Who is Allah. After that the rest will come easily. That is Quran. Our references are life of the Muhammad, the book and the Sunna.”(See Appendix-C/No:5)

Furthermore, Ömer stressed the importance of the faith in his life during the interview. While doing so he implicitly criticized Alevis with regard to lack of religious sentiment. On the basis of the importance of the faith he explicitly said:

“I ask my relatives, which book they believe in. Okay, let’s say you do not accept Sunnism, so which one is your book? There is no book. Who is your prophet? There is no prophet. So do you have anything that you promise me about the afterlife? Search about all the names and you will see that they have no notions about the afterlife. There is only the earth. So it is necessary to see what it is for them. Because when there is no faith, when you live only for earth, we live, die and disappear off. There is an understanding in this line. However in Islam, there is a book which tells that the earthly life is temporary and eternal life is long, deathless, benedictions are permanent. I mean I am not talking about something imaginary. Why, because at least I have a book. What am I doing? I am reading to you from my book. But you are speaking about something imaginary. In Alevi society such things are spoken as well.”(See Appendix-C/No:6)

Osman also explained importance of the faith in his life with regard to afterlife and rewarding with heaven. He said:

“In Islam, it is even not enough if we prostrate and never stand up anymore. Why, because we are living in a Muslim country, we are born from Muslim mothers and fathers. Alhamdulillah (Praise to God) we are Muslims. That is priceless. Its value is like, you go to heaven because you are like this. Maybe if you have sins, you burn in hell for many years, but in the end, it is not eternal, you shall go to heaven anyway... That’s okay if you do not pray, you would be a sinner. But at least say that you believe. Do not say that there are three gods, say there is one Allah. Or whatever you worship, idols, cows, the sun, the stars, whatever who worships what... I mean it says do not do this, believe. If you die as a believer, you do not stay in hell eternally.”(See Appendix-C/No:7)

Furthermore, the experience of Leman indicated how the faith turned into a therapy for her when she lost her brother. She explained the importance of the faith during this process by following as:

“My brother died when he was 22. I had been regularly practicing prayer 2 years before then. I got married when I was 23 years old. I was uncovered then, I only used to cover when I was praying. It was kind of heavy when my friend first told me to “cover your head” after my brother died. My brother was very precious for me. I was deeply affected by his loss. I started asking questions to myself. They buried him under soil, left him there hurriedly. We did not have financial problems. I started asking questions like what is death, what is to perish... This time I started to get stuck on whomever I found in the name of religion. I used to get stuck when I saw the imams of the mosque. They said it would supply merits for my brother’s soul. So I started reading Quran so that my brother’s soul relieves. Like I was gifting to him. I started fasting for him.” (See Appendix-C/No:8)

Regarding this emphasis on the importance of faith by the informants it should be noted that conversion is also defined “as a change in one’s universe of discourse” (Snow and Machalek, 1984, p.170) and “grammar (socially constructed) for conversion could be characterized as transparency which means that converts have to explain their spiritual evolution and explain their feelings as justification... i.e. learn how to speak like a religious person... and must find legitimate motivations” (Pape, 2013, pp.100-103). We could assert that this spiritual discourse is an important element for converts that demonstrates his/her sincerity to both his/her ascribed community and a new group. Therefore, we should also evaluate expressions of ‘the importance of faith’ with regard to post-conversion process that legitimizes the conversion.

Despite this fact, I believe that this spiritual quest process is a factor which facilitates conversion process of most informants. The informants’ expressions on the importance of faith need consideration in the sense that why they were not able to fulfill their religious capitals within Alevism.

In this regard, I point out one of main factors of conversion process which involves feelings of inadequacy in terms of religious knowledge about Alevism. I directly asked the question “what do you know about Alevism?” to informants. When answering of this question most of informants felt stressed and told me about their inadequate knowledge of Alevism. Based on my fieldwork findings, I could assert

that there are two variables which cause religious inadequacy factor. These variables are concealment of Alevi identity and the lack of rituals in the urban context.

Considering the concealment of Alevi identity, the general discourse in literature claims that concealment strategy had been prominent until the 1990s. Since the 1990s Alevis have started to appear in the public sphere more openly and a certain extent to declare their identities, in other words, leaving their strategy of *taqiya* (Kehl-Bodrogi, 1996, pp.54-56; Zeidan, 1999, p.76). Yılmaz states that certain prejudices of Sunnis towards Alevis made some Alevis conceal their Alevi identity in the urban context (2005, p.183). My findings are partly compatible with the general literature on this issue, however, in contrast to assertion of Kehl-Bodrogi concerning the fieldwork findings of my thesis (considering of experiences of Erdal, Ahmet, Vural, Özlem and Sevgi who are approximately born after 1980s) I could assert that the concealing Alevi identity continued after 1990s for certain period of time.

Experiences of the some informants demonstrated that Alevism was not only something that should be concealed from the outsiders but also from their own children by their parents in the urban context. Leman, Sevgi, Ayten and Ömer stated that when they were young, their parents advised them not to talk about their Alevi identities to strangers (Sunnis), additionally Alevism was not spoken of in their households. Ayten found out for the first time her Alevi identity in her workplace when she was in the age of thirteen. She specified her feeling by following words:

“I was curious about what Alevism was, as the girls were talking about it in the workplace. Then I told this to my sister and when she said we were Alevi I was shocked since the people were saying bad things about it, you know, mum söndü story...in one sense I was shamed by to be an Alevi since it was seen as a bad thing.”(See Appendix-C/No:9)

Ömer’s wife Gül told that her husband was brought up by concealing their identity in Istanbul. She specified that her husband’s parents advised their child not to tell about he was from Tunceli as it means both being Kurdish and Alevi, instead he was told to tell people that they were from Elazığ. Similar to experience of Ömer, Özlem also mentioned about her tension with regarding to being both Alevi and Kurd. She said:

“You know the events in Turkey in the past. Çorum, Sivas, etc. First of all, you are minority somehow. There is one problem. I mean, even if nothing bad happens with you, somebody may say anything anytime. I mean one cannot express that he/she is Alevi everywhere

around. We have grown up with one fact like this. Many Alevi have grown up like this already. Maybe it is necessary to be over-isolated. Alevi for me is being minority, I mean prior to what is believed in, the first thing that comes to mind is that... I almost never expressed this in elementary school maybe... Least probably I could have said when I was in the first or second grade. I remember saying that in the last grade of high school, and it was accidentally said. I expressed in university. I am used to saying that I am a Kurd. But now, actually after covering my head, I am not hiding it, but since it is something that draws attention, I do not prefer to say. Well, now I will be a little like; I actually expressed that I was an Alevi easier than I was a Kurd. In my opinion, the Kurdish question is a little harder, I mean I thought about that the other day. Well since I have known myself, I was insulted mostly because of being a Kurd I guess. I cannot even say it everywhere and actually I do not want to say. I mean I do not find it necessary, however I do not hide it either.”(See Appendix-C/No:10)

Furthermore, the experience of Vural indicated that concealment of Alevism was not only limited to the urban setting but also existed in the rural setting due to both ethnic and religious identities. Vural narrated how he felt under pressure in the school while he was studying in the village of Tunceli. He said:

“I have both Kurdish and Alevi identities and it was hard to say I am Kurd. I don’t know, in such a way that when I was studying in the primary school if someone spoke Kurdish it was written on the class board, it was absurd and if you speak Kurdish you were likely to be punished by the teacher. Therefore it was hard to talk about that I was an Alevi in the sense of having belief.” (See Appendix-C/No:11)

It can be said that this forced concealment process seems to have adversely affected Alevi way of life with its main rituals and institutions. It can be asserted that there is a meaningful correlation between concealment and lack of rituals. Kehl-Bodrogi (1988) asserts that with the dissolution of the socio-religious structures of the Alevi community, meaning and importance of religion dramatically decreased, religion was almost eliminated in the city (p.63). She explains this dissolution process in which religious meetings were disregarded without replacement by any other religious activity (ibid, p.63). This assertion as a result of this we see that some Alevis had estranged from their ascribed faith.

It is clear that all informants felt inadequate about Alevism accompanied by the lack of rituals. The lack of religious rituals in the urban setting is also emphasized by most of the informants. İsmail criticized Alevis’ lack of religious knowledge including Ehli Beyt, Ali, Fatima, Hassan, Hussein, Twelve Imams, Hacı Bektaş Veli.

Similar to İsmail, Leman stated that her parents knew nothing about what Alevism was, as she explained that they merely enjoyed with Hz. Ali, Ehl-i Beyt and the Twelve Imams. She gave an example from her mother's speech "you could even marry with dustman if he is an Alevi" (See Appendix-C/No:12). She evaluates her parent's attitude as a fanaticism. She said "they do not know anything but they support it." (See Appendix-C/No:13) Osman and İbrahim also openly criticized about their parents' lack of religious knowledge about Alevism with regard to performing its rituals. Osman stated that his father was an Alevi only on the surface. Besides, İbrahim told about his negative feelings in terms of not having knowledge about rituals of Alevism from his parents. He said:

"They tell you, they commit you, they take care of you, they tell about what they are doing and how they are able to do. Shortly, you do not get knowledge from your parent about Alevism. When you ask something they say you cannot understand. Well dad I am a child but if you do not tell about it will disappear. If you go cem house let's take your kids, in Sunday once a month or four times a month taking them away and to say this is our worship and we are Alevi, to teach and to show it. If you do not show it while the other show the prayer and to tell about Allah you will see that you did not learn anything from your parent. But here there are things which acquired by teachings then you feel close. Therefore I gradually gave up Alevism. If you call it Sunnism yes we converted to Sunnism." (See Appendix-C/No:14)

Similar to İbrahim, Vural explicitly criticized the lack of religious training by his parents. His account is useful to understand how conversion process worked out for the informant:

"Probably the most important thing in life for a parent is the child. I mean, a person must transfer the logic of what he/she lives on, very well to the child if he/she wants the child to live the way the parent does. I mean, have I received many things related to this? No I have not. I think, the thing that my mother and father lived – let me say that their education levels are low, they cannot read and write – is that they do not feed from a source, they live on things that they have got from their mothers and fathers and traditions, there is a state of surrender. However, can they transfer this state of surrender to me? They could not transfer and could not give me its logic. So there would certainly be a splitting, and it happened... Nowadays in Alevism, people do many different things than the person they chose as the idol, both for their way of praying or lifestyles or rules, etc. I mean, that is why you have to close the page automatically, I mean you cannot go in too deep either. I mean, what is Alevism, what is the background of being a Dede? You come to points very very deep. Here it is, it is transferred from father to son, constituted on the system called Dede, passes from father to son. I mean it is a little like, it means that you are lucky from birth. I mean these kinds of things, you cannot combine, and then it starts to split up. Let me say, splitting up

starts in Alevism this way. I think that is why religious people do not grow in Alevism. I mean, considering the fact that the youth tends towards communism or socialism or they are driven away somewhere else. Because there is really no foundation in Alevism. Yeah, it does not have a foundation that can gather people within itself.”(See Appendix-C/No:15)

Erdal’s account also indicated that his parent’s lack of knowledge about Alevism and non-performance of Alevi rituals were instrumental in his negation to Alevism. In this regard, Erdal compared himself with Sunnis and he mainly criticized his parent by following the words:

“Look, at this point the responsibility is on Alevi mothers and fathers actually. Let me reproach here. For example, if I had learned well enough about Alevism from my family until 2003, I would not have to live these troubles. When I went to the community house I did not say anything bad about Alevism but there was an emptiness inside me that was the fact. The guys have a living, they base their lives on something particular and they have solid arguments, they have information, they have an accumulation. What do we have? Nothing! When they say something, you have to stay silent. Like naked, because you have not been granted anything until that day. Our families migrated from Sivas, Erzincan, Tokat, Elazığ or other cities, all having the aim of having jobs, having lives, that is what I mean.” (See Appendix-C/No:16)

Saliha also explained the lack of religious knowledge and rituals of Alevism in the urban area. She said:

“We have not felt that emotion, we have contented ourselves with information we got from the environment. In the old times we used to go to Yalıncağ Baba and sacrifice animals. Now there is nothing... We used to have Cem Dedes. Dedes are not there anymore. They put us in emptiness.” (See Appendix-C/No:17)

Based on the field findings, it can be said that almost all informants felt inadequate about Alevism before conversion accompanied by the lack of rituals within the urban setting. With regard to the lack of rituals I asked informants’ about their knowledge on ocak system, Alevi dedes and cem ceremonies which can be regarded as one of main institutions and rituals of Alevism. I could say that most of the informants did not have any knowledge on ocak system, except Ömer who belongs “Babamansur” and Vural who belongs “Kudan” trade. Regarding communication with Alevi Dedes, to some extent they had experiences with dedes only for once or twice. Furthermore, through their narratives I could assert that interruption of religious knowledge and status is relevant for Alevi dedes. Vural, İsmail and Leman explicitly mentioned about this issue. Vural compared rural with the urban life regarding religious

practices of Alevi dedes. In this regard, he said that in the urban context Dedes are invisible; they do not have power as a religious leader, religious knowledge and morality. According to him, due to the inborn lineage system it is normal that dedes lost their religious authority and morality, the influence that they used to enjoy among Alevis; therefore transmission of knowledge was interrupted. Leman also told me about her negative view on his father who is an Alevi dede and Alevi dedes in general on the basis of not having knowledge and morality. She said:

“My father says he knows but there is nothing. Woman and man are separated! He worships the book which is written without any evidence... The only thing of dede is that visiting of houses and getting of money. It is like excommunication in the Christianity. The people think that they give the money then their sin is forgiven... My father does not know any pray. He says he will go to his talips since he needs money. He has not any background. The other person doesn't know too. S/he sees him as a saint. It is like sultanate. The service you do what you get. He treats according to money he gets. It comes from shamanism. Visiting and getting money.” (See Appendix-C/No:18)

Furthermore, in order to evaluate religious practices of Alevis in the urban context, I asked questions if the informants have had any cem ceremony experience. Most of the informants indicated that they have almost had no experience with the cem ceremony, and those who have experiences had done it very rarely. Most of them had been to Cem houses merely in relation to funerals. On the lack of cem ceremonies in the urban setting, Saliha who is from Sivas and Vural who is from Tunceli said that they witnessed the cem ceremony in their villages. However in the urban setting, they stated that they have no idea about the cem ceremony and cem house. Some of the informants' experiences demonstrated that during their childhood, their parents did not force them to go to cem houses. Semra stated that she went to cem house only once out of curiosity. She added during her youth her parents were going to cem house only for funeral services and meanwhile they were keeping the children in the house.

It can be concluded that most of the informants tend to put blame on their parents not paying attention to religious education of their children (Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Ahmet, Erdal, Vural, Leman and Ayten), not motivating them to do religious rituals or not explaining differences between Alevism and Sunnism.

3.3 Regarding Alevism Within Islam

Negating boundaries between Alevism and Sunnism and existence of sects within Islam are two main attitudes that are commonly expressed by informants. I interpret this form of negation as “regarding Alevism within Islam” and define it one of the main factors of conversion process. In reply to my question about what they had thought Tayyip Erdoğan’s statement: “If being Alevi means loving Ali, I am more Alevi” similar to Erdoğan, all of the informants agreed upon that Alevism should be regarded within Islam. According to them, both Alevis and Sunnis love God, Prophet and Hz. Ali who is the son-in-law and cousin of the prophet Muhammed; as Ali accepted Islam therefore he performed the five pillars of it, such as performing prayer and fasting. They thought that in spite of this fact, Alevis do not live like Ali. It seems that Erdoğan’s speech on Alevism by which he reduced Alevism to love of Ali is addressed as a legitimizing discourse by informants.

Leman expressed clear example of this kind of thought:

“My uncle’s daughter started to seek. She says that she is an Alevi but they love Hazrat Ali. I ask what it is that makes Hazrat Ali the Hazrat Ali? There is no answer. To announce jihad in Allah’s path, to grow up with Allah, to have said “Do not take it off” when he was stroke by a sword during practice prayer ... How can you remove practice prayer for he was killed in a mosque? I ask why Hasan and Hussain maintained namaz, there is no answer. They still used to say that there is no practice of namaz among them. I was asking who the Twelve Imams were. Their only case was the religion. Cafer-i Sadık had a mark on his forehead because of practice prayer too much. None of them practices prayer. I try to explain this to my environment. They used to say that they do not love Yazid. They do not know what happened in Karbala. Ehl-i Beyt means family. They came for terminating the caliphate of Yazid. Yazid did not use to recognize the haram or halal, did not recognize women, booze, the Islam. All he knows is property, money, prostitution. Hazrat Hussain stood against him and fell martyr. Your life is so as well. So I ask why they are enemy to him while they live like him. You are speaking about Hazrat Ali, Quran, so why they are against frocks, beard, Quran, I ask. Even the heathens do not deny that; however you are the number one enemy of your case that you sacrifice your life. The Christians show respect while Alevis damage to religion.”(See Appendix-C/No:19)

Besides, Osman referred to Erdoğan’s statement believed that the love of Ehl-i Beyt contains Ali, Fatima, Hussein and Hassan. He first criticized ideological use of this concept by Alevis and then he said “Love should be inside in the one’s heart, it is not related to the government or the state. I like Hz. Ali, Hz. Hussein if you do not love

them this means you do not love the prophet.”(See Appendix-C/No:20) Osman then underlined that “In the course of time Alevis have degenerated, if this kind of living style had existed in the period of Hz. Ali then Hz. Ali would cut off their head first.”(See Appendix-C/No:21). İbrahim also pointed out the myth within known by both Alevis and Sunnis as addressing due to Hazrat Ali’s killing in the mosque Alevis stopped to go mosque. He said “Do you know where Hz. Ömer was killed, he was killed in the mosque too, even killed by a non-believer. The killing issue is related neither Alevis nor Sunni” (See Appendix-C/No:22). Also, Saliha criticized urban condition of Alevism within the Islamic perspective. She told that there was nothing from past such as remembering Twelve Imams actually things Alevis had and Alevis should have followed about this path. She said “It is shame that I am this, if they are Alevi then I can kiss their feet but they are apathy towards Alevism.” (See Appendix-C/No:23). The narrative of Ayten made clear that how boundaries between Alevism and Sunnism became blurred. She explained that there was not any difference between Alevism and Sunni-Islam by her exact words “We are born Muslim and we will die as a Muslim” (See Appendix-C/No:24). She added that some Alevis have gradually begun to read Quran today and this made her happy.

Furthermore, it should be noted that Vural and Özlem stated that they have regarded Alevism as a social tradition. Vural said “In my geographical area I think Alevism is a culture. It might have religious rituals. But it is more like as a way of life or culture. Because it does not provide any religious rituals and rules to its members. There are certain traditions. It has no certain resource. It is the tradition which includes transmission from father to son.” (See Appendix-C/No:25). Also, Özlem clearly explained about her thought on social tradition by following words:

“Actually I do not very much, I see it more like a tradition. I mean, because I know what my people believes in, how they act like. Of course, one other thing, there are complicated things to ruin the faith in these Sunni families; such as tying clothes on trees. For example, not eating rabbit meat. Actually there is no such thing in Islam as rabbit meat is forbidden. That is an old belief. Or for example “hızır fasting”. Once I talked with an Armenian man from Dersim region, he said that they also fast the same way. For example, they light candles in Şah Kulu Sultan, that is something practiced in churches. I mean that is such a complex culture, thus, for me there is one thing too for sure; one of the single binds I have with Islam, at least one of the few things there are, Karbala Hazrat Hussain, Hazrat Ali. And it is the part of the thing, there is not much of it in Turkey, there is in Shiite. The subject of the Hazrat Ali, discussions, etc. That matters do not exist much in Turkey I suppose. I think it is a question belonging to Iran; I

may be mistaken of course. I mean a little tradition is not much of a thing, in the end, it is an ideological controversy. I mean this happened, that.” (See Appendix-C/No:26)

However, even though they considered Alevism as a social tradition or culture, to some degree they have a tendency to think that Alevism belongs some part of Islam. In a nutshell, I can state that all of informants’ attitudes indicate that borderline between Alevism and Sunnism becomes blurred to facilitate both conversion and justification of it. Regarding Alevism within Islamic context, most informants typically emphasized the role of politics which they believe that the political issues prevent Alevis from learning of their true religious identity as an Islam.

3.4 Regarding Alevism As A Political Deviation

It can be stated that Alevism is seen as a political subject by most of the informants and as an outcome of it, the informants negate Alevism as a faith in itself. Although Sunni-Islam is also embedded into politics informants do not see it that way. Regarding Alevism as a political deviation from Islam –Sunni Islam- that is apolitical in their opinion can be understood as the long-term systematic hegemonic discourse of the power structure and political elements. This influences their mode of defining which group is a marginal and which group is not, in which some members of Alevism are seen as belonging to mere marginal political activity. Defining Alevism as a political, ideological sectarian position cannot be understood without long term impact of dominant religious power mechanisms.

Defining Alevism as a left-leaning politicization or being victim at the hands of external powers are commonly attributed by the informants. Osman, İbrahim, Ömer, Ahmet, Erdal, Vural and Leman explicitly stated that Alevis are being exploited by the left and external forces such as United States, Germany and England (the informants call as “dış mihrak” in Turkish version). These informants are mainly critical of the view described as “Alevism without Ali” and the Kurdish politics. Vural, Ahmet and Erdal stated that Alevism in Europe is related to socialism, communism or left movements rather than true Alevism as part of Islam. When I asked about politics Ahmet became stressful but he said he does not approve left organizations. He added that “Conflict between Alevis and Sunnis is intentionally incited by Jews.”(See Appendix-C/No:27) With regard to Alevi approach in Europe, Erdal also expressed that Alevis are exploited by certain interest groups. He called

these groups as “marginal and atheist Alevis”. Regarding to the exploitation of Alevis by those groups he said:

“These people have been using Alevis for many years rather than supporting of Alevism. And they are “deep Alevis” for me, they are the Alevis of the deep forces, Alevis of the deep powers... When you look at today Turgut Öker who is in Germany. Many branches of Pir Sultan Abdal are similar to this. I generally support Hacı Bektaş Veli Association, Cem Organization. I do not support Pir Sultan Abdal Foundation and Federation of European Alevi Associations since they only want to exploit Alevi society. They do not have any promises with regard to Alevism. They use them and they seek their own interest. These are people who seek something by getting from political parties. As I said these are deep powers.”(See Appendix-C/No:28)

Ömer, İbrahim and Osman explained their negative feelings about both PKK issue and external focuses. With regarding to use of Alevis by certain groups they address PKK terror issue and they believe that Kurdish interest groups prevent Alevis’ learning of Alevism. Ömer who is originally from Tunceli states that residents in Tunceli are not happy with terrorism. I observed that he felt tension about this issue. In Ömer’s, Osman’s narratives a conspiracy-minded tendency can be observed regarding the origins of the Kurdish problem likewise Alevi demands all of which are triggered and incited by external forces.

Furthermore, what is critical is that some informants explicitly refer to the origins of Alevism as a purely political matter not as a separation of faith. İsmail and Vural gave example of myth about caliphate struggle during the emergence of sects in Islam. They said that Islamic sects emerged due to political conflict, not to religious (i.e. Islamic) comprehension. Those informants underlined that Alevis’ attitudes originate from political perspective rather than distinct religious approach or sect. By the time I started to interview, İsmail firstly told me about the story of struggle for caliphate after the prophet Muhammad in detail for explaining theological origin of Alevism. Vural also clearly stated “These are related to egos of someone...we should look these events in that sense...the period of Hazrat Ali, Ebubekir, Ömer and Osman and in later period Muaviyye, Emevi, Abbasi. We should look them such as political events. This cannot be our perception on religion.” (See Appendix-C/No:29)

It can be concluded that historical and ethnic, religious and political dimensions of Alevism create tension over most of the informants. The informants consider that especially young Alevis’ have unfortunate interaction with marginal political

activities. Here, to some extent Alevism is seen as a deviant community and gradually losing its religious characteristic. I can assert that inadequate religious knowledge level on Alevism and blurred boundaries between Alevism and Sunnism facilitate consideration on marginal political activity which has influence on the negation of Alevism by the informants. On the one hand, it is also obvious that since 1960s Alevis' interaction with politics rather than religion may have contributed to this negation process. On the other hand, we see that articulation to hegemonic power with conversion decreases such kind of tension.

4. POST-CONVERSION PROCESS: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

In the religious conversion literature, most scholars assert that conversion involves a radical change including identity, beliefs, values, behavior, one's universe of discourse. Lofland and Stark (1965) explain conversion which refers "when person gives up one perspective or ordered view of the world for another" (p.862). Here, it is essential to ask "how much change is enough to constitute a conversion? What is it that undergoes radical change?" (Gooren, 2007, p.343).

Considering of those questions in mind, this chapter consists of three parts; each part would provide analysis of informants' conversion situations by evaluating their thought on different subjects related to Alevis and Alevism. In the first part, I focus on how we can evaluate conversion process in terms of the social subjectivity including family relationships, perception on Alevi-Sunni Inter-marriage and the impact of religious affiliation on child-rearing. In the second part, I explain about informants' perception on Alevi religious institutions and ritual practices including Alevi Dedes and Cem Ceremony/House. Here the important point is that to see how "converts tend to exaggerate their preconversion sinfulness to increase the power and value of their current conversions" (Gooren, 2007, p.340). Besides, I ask about mosque and cem house project to the informants in order to get knowledge about their thoughts on Alevi and Sunni relations and their certain religious practices. In the last and third part, I evaluate about their political subjectivity including perception on politics towards Alevis in the last decade and partisan tendencies. In general, it could be asserted that most informants have conservative tendencies.

4.1 Social Subjectivity: Social Capital And Reproduction

4.1.1 Family Relationships

This part is to explain if conversion process of the informants has influenced on their family relationships and if it has so how specifically this relationship has been affected by the conversion process. It can be claimed that the general attitude of the informants' families is that on the one hand, they oppose to their children's

conversion, on the other hand, in the course of time they are getting soft to their children. Bodrogi claims that group identity is more important than religious identity therefore the people did not exclude the converts within the community, for instance, the people said “if you are born as an Kızılbaş you will stay Kızılbaş forever” (Bodrogi, 1988, p.64). It seems that this analysis is compatible with my findings. However, generally speaking, informants have different relationships with their parents.

Two brothers Osman and İbrahim said that while their parents did not show opposition to them on their conversion to Sünnism, when they decided to marry with Sunnis they faced with real opposition. Older brother Osman told “I have a beard since the age of 22, my father didn’t like it, but he didn’t prevent it.” (See Appendix-C/No:30). However, he said that when he married with a Sunni woman his parent ostracized them as kicking out by the parents’ house. He added that with the pressure of the neighborhood he moved into his parent’s house again and in the course of time his parents became softer. The younger brother İbrahim faced similar sorts of problem when he got married with a Sunni woman. He exemplified his parent’s judgement to Sunni person in his words:

“My wife is Sunni as I mentioned, they found it odd, they casted her out, my wife suffered a lot. So now, I am telling my mother. Her son came from the USA. He married a Christian. So, I am saying, what now? You were talking bad about my wife, although she lived in this country, although she lived on this land. They love our Lord Prophet, you love Prophet Ali (May Allah bless him). At least has a major religion. I said she is a Christian, what happened, how could you accept her in the house? How can you accept her to marry your son? Soon they will have a child, the child will have no faith, faithless, he is my son, my little son... My brother also had some problems with that subject. Me too. But thank God, now the best caregiver is my wife. Besides, my mother does not want to leave her.” (See Appendix-C/No:31)

Ömer’s wife Gül (inborn Sunni) told me about her husband’s conversion story regarding his parents’ reaction to him. She said:

“The first impact happens to mother (They are in İstanbul). The only son of the mother. The picture changes too. Mother shuts down the switch so that he cannot pray. Those times Sunni-Alevi youngsters become Muslims altogether (he is still friends with them). His mother gets angry at them and says that they are leading him in the wrong way... When he converts to İslam, his mother poured dirty water down his head. But there is no such thing as that person treated me bad and I should do the same back. There is the struggle going on for about two

months. His mother had a heart attack. His father used to come from Germany once in a year. When he converted into İslam, he settled completely but they did not talk for 8 years (he moved to a separate house). They did not think he would marry a religious woman.” (See Appendix-C/No:32)

Furthermore she said her husband’s parents did not come to their wedding. However, the couples state that in the course of time, the parents became soft especially after having grandchildren. Three informants indicate that their parents’ reaction and opposition were initially very negative when they began to perform Sunni rituals.

İsmail's account is an example of the problems with family that a converted went through during his process of transformation. İsmail said that his parents beat him when he began to practice Sunni rituals such as performing prayer at home and going mosque. He added that when his wife Necla who is born into Alevi family and a close relative to him began to practice Sunni-Islam rituals, his parent’s reaction got worse. He explained that his parent’s attitude with the following words: “From my mother and father seriously reacted it. They were saying “Why you are embarrassing us, why you are doing this’? And my wife started wearing headscarf, as she was an Alevi.” (See Appendix-C/No:33).

Vural and Erdal also expressed that due to studying in the university far from home their parents were not so much aware of their conversion, but when they increased their ritual performances their parent’s showed more reactions.

Besides, it can be said that during the conversion process, women informants have partly similar experiences with the men informants. The women informants faced with difficulties especially when they wore headscarf. Leman who is a daughter of Alevi dede told me about facing difficulties when she decided to wear chador especially after death of her brother by encouragement of her Sunni friends as they mentioned about she would acquire merit for her brother. She said “I said “What a nice religion it is”. I decided to wear a chador (çarşaf). My mother said she would disinherit me. My husband said “You may not go out with me like this”. My wearing çarşaf took many bad reactions. Once the prophet was like this. I did not see my mother for a while. When I was visiting my mother I did not use to wear çarşaf, but once I did and it was a disaster. My husband was also scorning me, saying “How can I go out with you.”(See Appendix-C/No:34).

She told that in the course of time both her mother and husband embraced her. She also explained that she went to her village. While at first she was opposed in the course of time, they embraced her too even they led her to read Quran for them.

Ayten, Semra and Sevgi also told about how they got reaction from their social environment as if because of their husbands they began to wear headscarf. All of the women informants stated that it was their own decisions to wear headscarf.

The interesting point here is that while evaluating the accounts of Osman, İsmail, Ömer, Vural and Leman I observe that conversion process does not remain static; indeed what is witnessed is that conversion process continues within families by the efforts of the converts. This means that a cycle of conversion starts and other family members develop tendencies to convert.

4.1.2 Perception On Alevi-Sunni Intermarriage

Fieldwork findings indicate that almost all informants (Osman, İbrahim, Ömer, Vural, Erdal, İsmail, Leman, Semra and Özlem) are in favor of getting married with men or women who belong to Sunni-Islam like them. They point out that sharing same worldview is important in the sense that it would enable living peacefully and obeying the Islamic law. At this respect, even though they would be a bit in favor Alevi-Sunni intermarriage, an Alevi who lives according to Islam is only acceptable for them. In other words, they have positive feelings about Alevis who got a hybrid culture embracing both Alevism and Sunnism.

Regarding the emphasis on the importance of religion in marriage, Osman clearly stated one can marry with an Alevi if s/he lives according to Islam. He said:

“Whether a woman or a man, if there is not a profanity in Alevism such as endangering the human’s faith, there is no problem then... I mean there is no such rule like this is Alevi that is Sunni, there is nothing in its conditions for example. For instance, when marrying a girl, you know the book of religion writes as; either for her beauty, or properties, or novelty, or religion. It says selecting is for these four matters. It recommends you to marry the religious one. It does not say she is from this religious sect or that.”(See Appendix-C/No:35)

In a similar way to Osman, Ömer told that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage has increased by breaking prejudgements of parents and increasing social interaction. He stated that one should marry with the woman who has the same ideal:

“Slowly by slowly amalgamation started in society. For example, in the past an Alevi girl would not marry a Sunni boy or a Sunni girl would not marry an Alevi boy. This course ended slowly by slowly. Because they get education in the same environment and if necessary they work together in the same workplace. In the end, they are aware as well that it is nonsense. Actually, this is not a matter that separates the society, it is just among the families, they make pressure on their children for some imaginations... In Islam, this has no value. Because that girl or boy, that part’s Islamic structure and this part’s Islamic structure are already the same. They can get along because they have the same understanding in the end. Now for example a girl who does not have many Islamic thoughts, can she marry a very religious boy? Everybody has a faith if they want... They live in line with that faith and marry in line with that faith and establish a life in line with that faith. If there is no such mutual faith, then those marriages cannot be. That would not be a marriage in real terms, the marriage may decompose, the smallest issue may be exaggerated and they may divorce because of this. For this reason, what holds the people together is faith in real terms.”(See Appendix-C/No:36)

İbrahim stated that his children can marry with Alevis as long as s/he embrace Islamic perspective. He stated:

“If my son says that he will marry an Alevi girl. I would say that it could be, may be an Alevi. Now I do not embrace Alevi because they do not pray. Okay, she may embrace Alevism but better she would start praying. Like they say very good to be true. I mean it would be even better.” (See Appendix-C/No:37)

Vural who is single emphasized that he would like to marry with a woman who has similar religious identity. He stated that this makes living together easier since according to him, Islam lead you to obey some rules and if your partner does not embrace those rules then it will be hard to compromise.

Furthermore some informants told me about why Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is difficult. Ahmet stressed that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is difficult in the sense that parents have prejudgments against it. On the other hand, Erdal who married with Sunni woman said that Alevi-Sunni intermarriage is difficult in the sense that if the couples have different standpoints. He states that even though he converted to Sunni-Islam in some cases he still faces with difficulty with his wife. He gave example of handshaking with woman. He said that when he shakes hands with women who are relatives of him then his wife reacts him, in the sense that in Islam it is a sinful behavior.

Sevgi stated that it does not matter for her if her children marry with an Alevi but she added that her husband who is Sunni might demonstrate reaction especially if her

daughter marries with an Alevi. Besides she faced with some difficulties with her husband's close relatives due to her inborn Alevi identity. On the other hand, Semra specified that she would not be willingly to let her daughters marry with Alevis as they lack religious knowledge. She also added that even though her husband had converted to Sunni-Islam too, she still faced with some difficulties with her husband's parents. She told this difficulty in relation to cultural conflict.

4.1.3 Impact Of Religious Affiliation On Child-Rearing

I asked all the informants about how they would bring up their children according to religion. Nine of the informants (Osman, İbrahim, İsmail, Ömer, Vural, Erdal, Leman, Semra and Özlem) specified that they would bring up their children according to religious identity of Sunni-Islam. Ahmet, Ayten and Sevgi directly stated that they would in favor of both presenting practices of Sunni-Islam and Alevism to their children.

Osman, İsmail and Erdal who expressed childrearing with Sunni-Islam mainly told that even though they were brought up without religious knowledge they have tried to teach Islam to their children. Osman compared himself with his father in the sense of emphasizing his father's ignorance, when he told about teaching Islam to his children. Also, İsmail said that he told his children about himself how he was brought up without religious knowledge, by giving examples from himself he tries to encourage his children to search about Islam.

Furthermore, İbrahim, Ömer, Leman and Sevgi applied the Islamic discipline to their children about Sunni practices. İbrahim and Sevgi sent their children to Quran courses when their children were young. By being proud of herself, Ömer's wife Gül explained that they sent their all children to Imam Hatip school; the children started prayer when they were in the age of seven; the children know what is halal and haram. Leman also stated that she sent her children to religious schools too and similar to Gül being proud of herself, she put emphasis on that fact that one of her daughter will be a 'hafız'. Vural, Saliha, Semra, and Özlem also told me about their favorite of bringing up their children according to their own religious identities including Sunni-Islam.

We observe that most of the informants who would like to bring up their child according to Sunni-Islam has a tendency of feeling proud of themselves with regard

to giving knowledge about religion. Accordingly, it should be noted that they do not have a tendency to provide similar sort of knowledge about Alevism since those informants have truly converted to Sunni-Islam and give importance to its religious practices. Besides it can be claimed that the informants' religious identities have impact on their children. We observe that all children perform prayer and all daughters wear headscarf when they become mature according to the rule of Islam.

The informants (Ahmet and Sevgi) who explain that they would like to give knowledge about both Sunnism and Alevism have different standpoints. Ahmet emphasized that he would in favor of providing his child about all religions in order to make him capable of defending his religious identity. Sevgi and Erdal who are favor of giving Sunni-Islam doctrines to their children also have moderate characters as stressing respect to Alevism.

4.2 Perception On Alevi Religious Institutions/Practices

4.2.1 Alevi Dedes

I could assert that while some informants (Osman, İbrahim, Ahmet, Saliha, Semra, Ayten and Sevgi) have no certain knowledge on Alevi dedes, the rest of informants (Ömer, Erdal, Vural, İsmail, Leman and Özlem) have, to some extent, negative feelings about them. The main critiques to Alevi dedes are related to such as their lack of knowledge, morality, as part of being feudal system, supporting of "Alevism without Ali".

Özlem and Leman explained to me their negative feelings about the fact that dedes are paid for their service and dede's lack of religious knowledge. Özlem said "In the past, there was a three story house, they used to gather Cem in there. Once a Dede came to our house. It was very funny. He did not use to eat anything but only asked for money. This job is a little like, how to say, something that inherits with feudal bounds, that part I mean. Actually about Dedes, I do not know...Once a Dede had come, I did not know how he had come there. My grandfather asked him questions, he could not reply for example. My grandfather knows more about religion." (she smiled)" (See Appendix-C/No:38). Leman who is a daughter of an Alevi dede has a very negative view of his father and dedes in general on the basis of not having knowledge and taking money. She told:

“He says he knows but there is nothing. Woman and man are separated! He worships the book which is written without any evidence... The only thing of dede is that visiting of house and getting of money. It is like excommunication in the Christianity. The people think that they give the money then their sin is forgiven... My father does not know any pray. He says he will go to his talips since he needs money. He does not has any background. The other person doesn't know too. S/he sees him as a saint. It is like sultanate. The service you do what you get. He treats according to money he gets. It comes from shamanism. Visiting and getting money.”(See Appendix-C/No:39)

With regard to the lack of morality Leman added Alevi dedes are arrogant behavior and drink alcohol. She tells one her story with one dede “One day I went to the wedding of my friend. They said dede had come. They served a table with rakı to dede. He got drunk. My Sunni friend got shocked. They weren't doing such a thing” (See Appendix-C/No:40). Ömer who is a son of dede has partly similar expression with Leman who tells that “The people see them as a saint” (See Appendix-C/No:41) in this regard, Ömer also criticized such a thought and he explained this following as:

“We are coming from Baba Mansur family. It is called dede family. They have followers who belongs to them. This means it is like the relationship between sheikh and followers in the Sunni society. It is not different. But in the Sunni society at least there is Islam but Alevis don't have Islam. They accept only what dede says but dede is after all a human being. Therefore he can make mistakes and commit sin. In the Sunni side, as they regard that sheikh does not commit sin, in the Alevi side it is the same. However, what the Quran and the Sunnı teaches us that no one exists in the world without mistakes except Allah and the prophet. Everyone can make mistakes... As they see the people without mistakes what it happened is that they let them to sit in the place of the prophet and in some extent to let them sitting in the place of God.”(See Appendix-C/No:42)

Vural who is grandchild of an Alevi dede also criticized Alevi dedes' lack of knowledge, morality and being part of feudal lineage system. He said:

“I think it is very normal that they lose it. Because in a system which passes from father to son, when someone comes and tells you nothing, or for example, when people see several filths on them, they start stepping back of course. Because you put a holy meaning on them. You do not mind to that I mean, to Dede. In the end, what is the belief of İmam in İslam? Transferring information to us, feeding us, or I do not have to do whatever the Imam does, or I am not kind of... I choose what he gives to me, I choose from among the things he tells me, I receive what is right for me. But, I mean, the title of Dede is something that passes from father to son, it is a birth right. It is transferred to someone just random. I do not know, I think that he must be a true person, morally clean or must be educative. I think they lose for the lack of such fact.”(See Appendix-C/No:43)

Furthermore, İsmail and Erdal actually criticized Alevi dedes who support “Alevism without Islam”. İsmail told me about one of his negative experiences with an Alevi dede regarding his lack of knowledge and his thought on “Alevism without Islam”. İsmail told:

“Dedes are really so far from religion. Well, really if you take Alevism and put a meaning in it, there is no such men. There is not anyone to tell about it. So, you go now... I remember from my childhood, I am saying it. You are asking a question and he replies: “They brainwashed you”. If you will not answer to me, then who will?... For you to duly reply me, I have to accept you too. Well you almost insult me, swear at me, say that I am brainwashed, so you reply to me. Who is Ali? Who are the 12 Imams? What is the book? What is the Prophet? Fill the inside of these aspects and let us see. Then you will see, they will all happen like chain reaction. I mean, a person who does not comprehend its own identity, I mean, I don’t know...”(See Appendix-C/No:44)

With regard to critique on Alevi dedes who support “Alevism without Islam” Erdal mentioned about his negative feeling by following as:

“When I listen to Dedes’ speeches, I agree with them in general means, except of the political demands. I mean, since they speak about religion, Prophet Ali, the 12 Imams, etc. they do not speak peculiar things. However, for example, if I do not remember wrong, there was an interview with a Dede in the newspaper named Güneş. He said we do not perform pray, also that he does not believe that the Prophet Ali used to pray either. Listen, if a Dede speaks like this, even if I am the only one among one million, I would object for he speaks incorrectly... The Prophet Ali also used to pray. If you talk about a man who was killed during praying, they laugh at you. There are also such Dedes who speak utterly nonsense, but they are not many. I have not heard much nonsense from Dedes who talk about things except of political demands, as a matter of fact.”(See Appendix-C/No:45)

With regard to the perception on Alevi dedes, we see that dedes are accused of not having knowledge, morality, being part of feudal system and supporting “Alevism without Ali”. I could assert that the interesting point is that children or grandchildren of Alevi dedes have negative feelings about their fathers/grandfather. I observed that they had no good interaction with their fathers. For instance, Ömer told me that when his father heard about his conversion he came from Germany to Istanbul and asked about it. Ömer told me sentimentality that his father told him “my son” after a long period of time. Leman expressed about his father’s arrogant behavior. Besides, Vural explained about his uneasiness with remembering as a grandchildren of Alevi dede during his lifetime (including both pre-conversion and conversion process). However, we should be careful about converts’ accounts since it is the fact that

converts has biographical construction as “one’s biography is reconstructed in accordance with the new or ascendant universe of discourse” (Snow and Machalek, 1984, p.173).

4.2.2 Cem Ceremony/House

In terms of the perception on religious practices in the cem house some informants have mostly negative feelings. Semra said that she does not embrace those rituals as worship therefore she does not prefer to go cem house. After conversion process she only prefers to go cem house if there is a funeral. Besides she criticized certain rituals in the cem ceremony such as performing saz, semah, in this regard, she explicitly said “But when they do semah everyone can join it, isn’t it? They can. I don’t know in the weddings everyone can join and dancing too”(See Appendix-C/No:46). She also criticized reading Quran in the funeral according to her, there are many mistakes in reading it in there. Osman had similar thought with Semra regarding not as a religious place. Osman said:

“In the cem house they are dancing, playing music if they can play from Tarkan then we can watch. There is no such thing in the religion that men and women are together; but in the course of time it has been degenerated... Are we going to mosque and dancing there? We begin with Subhaneke and we worship for Allah.”(See Appendix-C/No:47)

Leman viewed cem house as place where young people imitate behaviors of infidels: “There is a cem house nearby, young people go there with their guitars. They do the things of infidel and enemy.”(See Appendix-C/No:48). She emphasized she does not regard the cem house as a worship place. After noting this she also criticized funeral practices in the cem houses in the sense that some women have no headscarf and the people seek for food. İbrahim likewise criticized giving importance to food service in the Alevis’ funeral with comparison to Sunnis. He explicitly says: “Let’s talk about funerals. Duly they receive the body, they wash, they pray, make it wait in the mosque. After the funeral, everybody is sad, no one laughs and eats and feasts.”(See Appendix-C/No:49). We could assert both of those informants (Leman and İbrahim) who criticized food style of Alevis in funeral ceremonies have subjective perceptions in the sense that even Sunnis have such food services in funeral they do not feel negative about them but they have tendency to judge Alevis. This indicates one of the effect of conversion over them, it means how they see their background as sinfully. Furthermore, with regard to comparison to cem house with mosque similar

to Osman, Semra and Leman, İbrahim criticized that men and women worship together and religious rituals of cem ceremony such as saz, semah. He clearly said that such worship seems to him unacceptable; therefore he does not prefer to go cem house. İbrahim also mentioned about his negative feeling as some Alevi's prevention of reading of Quran in the funerals. On the other hand, regarding reading Quran in the funeral İsmail stated that if they do not internalize the Quran in their daily lives then it will be meaningless to read them merely in the funeral.

It is the fact that perception on cem ceremony/house is a good indicator for understanding post-conversion process of the informants. Here we see that how converts distanced themselves from Alevi rituals and practices, in other words, this also refers to the distance to their parents' ritual background. In this regard, I could assert that most of the informants do not prefer to go cem house due to not considering it as a worship place anymore and defining their piety in terms of the practices of Sunni-Islam.

4.2.3 Mosque And Cem House Project

This part deals with informants' thoughts on mosque-cem house project. With regard to question on mosque and cem house project, the informants have different standpoints. Erdal, İbrahim, Vural and Semra have positive feelings about the project in terms of integration of Alevi and Sunnis. Erdal who belongs to Gülen movement explicitly explained about why this project is necessary. In this regard he said:

“This is project of Fethullah Gülen and İzzettin Doğan. Gülen said this in 1993. After twenty years it was put into practice. Gülen was telling to Tansu Çiller about this mosque and cem house project. Look at sincerity it has been started twenty years before. It is not oneyear or two years. The man does not recognize him and he does not recognize the man. He throws a bomb into his coffee. We experienced this in Gazi event. He was invading his village. Thought of Fethullah Gülen is that getting acquainted. It is nothing. This means you are not different...The aim was that we should do something at least thepeople can sit in the courtyard. The hadgi who goes out of mosque can sit there, the dede who is there can sit too and they can talk, meet, sharing something since there is also eating house in the middle.”(See Appendix-C/No:50)

With regard to protest against the project, Erdal told me that the protest has been triggered by the marginal groups such as Dhkp-c, Tikko, Halkevleri, Pir Sultan Abdal Organization which supports the thought of “Alevism without Ali”. On the base of assimilation tendency of the project he stated that not only Alevi but also

some Sunnis protested the project. In this regard, he added that if someone is sincere in his/her religious affiliation then it would be hard to change one's identity and this project has no aim to change the people's religious identity. İbrahim had similar expression with Erdal. İbrahim explained that there is not any conflict between the people about the project but some interest groups do not alone to carry out the project due to material and moral interests. Furthermore, Semra explained that the project is important on the base of acquaintance. She said:

“It can be...for aiming acquaintance. If intention is good why not, this means if it is done by good intention then it can be. Eventually we live in Turkey in the same environment, we breathe same atmosphere. I am not in favor of any distinctions such as Alevi, Sunni, Turk and Kurd. On each side there good and bad ones that is there are good and bad ones in Sivas. There are good Alevis and bad Alevis. There are clean Alevis and dirty Alevis. So I am in favor of everything with regard to aiming unity. So it can be why not. We can live in the same environment with fraternity.”(See Appendix-C/No:51)

Similar to Semra, Vural also has positive feeling about the project as if intention is good. This means according to Vural the project should be carried out by the discussions between Alevi organizations. On the other hand, Ayten added that even she is in favor of the project according to her due to political conflicts between two groups it is hard to carry out it. Ahmet has negative feeling about the project in the sense that it is carried out by the Fethullah Gülen. He told that the project will be carried out with the Haram money of the Gülen.

In a nutshell, general feelings of the informants about mosque and cem house project seem positive. The reason might be related to most of informants' giving importance to acquaintance between Alevis and Sunnis. They mostly think that the acquaintance would decrease prejudgements of those two communities.

4.3 Political Subjectivity

4.3.1 Perception On Politics Towards Alevis In The Last Decade

This part focuses on attitudes of informants with regard to the Alevi reform initiative known as “Alevi Opening” including recognition of the cem houses and compulsory religious education. Based on the fieldwork findings it can be argued that while most of the informants appreciated that initiative called “Alevi Opening” that attempts to solve problems they have different standpoints. First of all in relation to recognition

of cem houses Vural, Erdal and Özlem welcomed in the sense that citizenship right of Alevis. In this sense, Vural said:

“There should not be any oppression. Alevis have demands and I think it be fulfilled since they pay tax in this country. If the other people pay tax and their demands are fulfilled by the DRA then Alevis demands should be fulfilled too. I think it should be allowed that they identify themselves according to their wishes. Sunni ulema should not identify them...I believe in this, I am like that,... I do not know, they should let them free.”(See Appendix-C/No:52)

Erdal has partly similar thought like Vural on the base of citizenship status of Alevis. In this regard, he explicitly said:

“As an Alevi community I do not want to be secondary citizenship in this country. There are taxes that I pay, you tax me and I pay you. Those taxes are deducted from my salaries. So if you are building a mosque on top of Çamlıca hill, if you are building a mosque named Mimar Sinan Cami in Ataşehir, then if you are a man, if you have the courage, if you are sincere, then build a Cem House. For example let it have a capacity of 100.000 people. Do that! You are not aiming to give, but to claim what we already have and putting sets. Considering today’s situation, there are problems in AKP’s municipalities about Cem Houses. There are mosques on every corner in Turkey, so even if not so many, there must be Cem Houses as well. Who finances this? For example Cem Foundation’s, our donations, funds. However the Ministry of Religious Affairs budget finances the foundations of mosques.”(See Appendix-C/No:53)

Furthermore Semra appreciated the recognition of cem houses in terms of individual liberty. She said “If someone embraces like that then s/he can live this. Rigidity is not necessary” (See Appendix-C/No:54). Also, Ahmet supported it with regard to a better acquaintance between Alevis and Sunnis. He said “If one goes to mosque s/he should also goes to cem house and if one goes to cem house then s/he should goes to mosque...Actually two of them are coming from same part of worship...their worship complement each other.”(See Appendix-C/No:55). On the other hand, Ömer did not support the recognition of cem houses. According to him, cem houses should be like mosque with regard to religious rules and if it does so then cem house will be unnecessary.

On the compulsory religious education, almost all informants have a tendency that religious education is necessary. Ayten said “It should not be compulsory since it depend on thought of child. If s/he wants to take the course but if s/he does not you cannot do anything with force.”(See Appendix-C/No:56). On the other hand, Ayten further told that religious education is necessary for the child who knows nothing. Semra added that religious education should be selective in the sense that if it is

compulsory then it will be antipathetic for children but she said if a child intentionally wants to select it then it will be more permanent. Ahmet and Erdal supported the view that there is need for religious education but they added that there should be information about Alevism in the syllabus in the school.

Osman, İbrahim and İsmail explicitly criticized Alevis who do not favor in religious education. Osman said “Actually I do not understand why Alevis opposite it. Why they are afraid of learning their religion such as Allah, the prophet. They should learn.”(See Appendix-C/No:57). İbrahim and İsmail explained in the past there was not such a conflict. On the other hand, İbrahim added religious education would be better if selective as he said “Alevi child should not be enforced to take Sunni education and Sunnis child should not be enforced to take Alevism course.”(See Appendix-C/No:58). Nevertheless İbrahim told me that the conflict on compulsory religious education was ideological in the sense that according to him some interest groups aim to leave people uneducated.

It could be concluded that on the one hand, general feelings of the informants’ about recognition of cem houses is mostly positive with regard to citizenship right, individual liberty and acquaintance of Alevis and Sunnis. On the other hand, most of the informants dislike about change on compulsory religious course since they consider it is necessary for providing Islamic knowledge to new generation.

4.3.2 Partisan Tendencies

As mentioned in the section “Regarding Alevism as political deviation”, we see that most of the informants are critical of Alevis’ interaction with politics. In this regard, for weighing their relationship with politics I asked question about their partisan tendencies. In fact, most of the informants did not feel themselves confident when I asked this question. I observed that women are especially apathetic to politics. Furthermore, with regard to answers of this question, it could be asserted that most of the informants first emphasized they are interested in religion rather than politics but encouraged by me, following such expression, they began to talk about political parties including Justice and Development Party (JDP) and Republican People’s Party (RPP) (I mainly encouraged them to talk about JDP and RPP for weighing their separation from their parents’ political attitudes). It could be stated that most of the informants have rightist political party tendency. They assume a benefit in doing so

for sustaining religious (i.e. Islamic) and socio-economic development. In this regard, they are mostly in favor of Justice and Development Party (JDP) in terms of the sustaining religious and public services. Besides they are mainly critical of Kemalism and Republican People's Party (RPP) regarding to Dersim event, insufficiency of providing religious and public services.

With regard to sympathy to JDP, Osman, Leman and Ömer emphasized its ability to provide religious (i.e. Islamic) and public services. At this respect, they made comparison between JDP and RPP by emphasizing insufficiency of RPP. Leman has positive feeling about JDP's solving of headscarf issue. She said "We were seen as terrorist, but now we are studying, we are wearing *çarşaf*. This is democracy... RPP hides itself under the fallacious discourse such as freedom, democracy, laicism. There is no respect to Islam, there is no respect to religion... Atatürk was a politician and he had come and gone off. He is not a prophet so why should I respect him? Tayyip is a politician too" (See Appendix-C/No:59). Osman also appreciated JDP in the last decades in the sense that it solved the headscarf issue and developed public services. Here, he legitimated his expression rby comparing RPP's insufficiency. Osman stated "Whether RPP should give more attention to religion, for development that is what I will do in the future, I will do that, if the bridge is third one, then he should say he will do fourth one. But he says Atatürk, why compulsory service, compulsory religious education, I do not know what. They deal with nonsense, wasting time on nothing." (See Appendix-C/No:60). Similar to Osman, Ömer explicitly told me about how JDP is a good party as providing public services, in this regard, he gave example of Tunceli for indicating insufficiency of RPP.

Vural also stated about his sympathy to JDP in the sense that some important issues such as Kurdish issue and Alevi issue have been addressed in the public agenda. Even he was skeptical about if JDP is really successful on those issues, he gave importance it with regard to as a step. Furthermore, İbrahim, Erdal and Semra who voted for JDP in its early years criticized its last year's policies. Erdal and Semra stated that they voted for JDP but in last years they voted for RPP. Those informants mostly criticized Erdoğan's policies according to them, which are most vengeful and separated. Erdal clearly told me about his negative feeling on JDP's last policies. He said:

“Unfortunately now we are a one man country... One single man for 10 years. I do not know what will happen... In the beginning, when they appeared on the scene, they said that they relined, they changed the suits of “national vision”, and people were affected of what they said. Because they thought that they were a party which appeals all sections, embracing all sections. When we consider today, they wore the national vision suits again. It is since two – three years from now, it is clear and obvious. In a manner of speaking, JDP (Justice and Development Party) started to use the language of Necmettin Erbakan today. I am a person who thinks that Erbakan harmed religion and religious notions in Turkey... National visionists do not accept this but when he became the Prime Minister, people with frocks, imamah came, for example he hosted iftar meals for them. Turkey’s conjuncture then did not allow him. In a manner of saying, he injected the syringe in a sudden. The event of 28th of February happened, generals and the powers of the day intervened and they took away the guy immediately. And the harm was left for the people who wanted to live in a religious concept. Like their sayings about İmam Hatip schools (Islamic Divinity High Schools) was like “Will there be blood or not?” What did this man do? He spoke softly in the beginning but later became even sharper.” (See Appendix-C/No:61)

It should be noted that Erdal and Semra’s critiques on last year’s policies of JDP may have related to their sympathy to Gülen movement. Here we see that the example of “temporal variability of converts’ accounts” which refers “temporal correspondence between conversion accounts and changes in the character of the movement... features of conversion experience have varied with the movement’s ideology” (Snow and Machalek, 1984, p.177). But İbrahim who voted for JDP and still member of it added that even he voted for it, he criticized last policies of Erdoğan with regard to his authoritarian tendencies. He explained his feelings by following words “This has become the ultimate man. I have not seen any Presidents of the Republic who show up around this much.”(See Appendix-C/No:62). He stated that Erdoğan should bring close together Alevis and Sunnis but he said he have not seen this. I could state that from narratives of those informants (Erdal, İbrahim and Semra) we understand that they have moderate characteristics with regard to having intention which aim to take close of Alevis and Sunnis.

Regarding the critique on Kemalism, İsmail, Ömer and Erdal mentioned about Dersim event to highlights its negative outcomes on Alevis. İsmail said “During the period of Republican People’s Party, they were not successful but Alevis still support RPP. Bombing of Sabiha Gökçen in Dersim... You talk about Dersim event but you love your enemy. Now, JDP might have mistakes but why you are so against the JDP? Did it kill you, what did it?” (See Appendix-C/No:63). Ömer added that

Dersim event was a massacre but Alevis still support Kemalism and the left. In this regard, similar to İsmail, Ömer compared RPP with the JDP government. He said “Why Kılıçdaroğlu could not say RPP persecuted and slayed Alevis. Why he could not? But a man who you beware, be angry at, saying that he is a Sunni said that Alevis were tortured, they were slaughtered.”(See Appendix-C/No:64). Erdal also criticized RPP in the sense that being harmful for Alevis with regard to Dersim event and political events such as Maraş, Sivas. He thought that RPP sees Alevis as “They see it as already earned instant votes.” (See Appendix-C/No:65). Similar to İsmail and Ömer, Erdal said despite the fact that chairperson of RPP (Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu) is an Alevi he is not able to use his Alevi identity. Erdal stated that even though RPP is a left party it is not so embracing towards Alevis. He gave an example from leading persons in the RPP in the sense that they are not Alevi such as Deniz Baykal, Emine Ülker Tarhan and Önder Sav. Besides Erdal told me about Alevis have not alternative party except RPP since there are two sections in Turkey; the people who pray and the people who do not pray therefore considering as a way of living style and as a non-conservative party characteristic Alevis vote for RPP. Nevertheless according to him, in the last years Alevis have begun to vote for HDP since “In RPP (Republican People’s Party), there is no action, no opposition.”(See Appendix-C/No:66). Erdal said that even though he appreciated Selahattin Demirtaş as a charismatic leader he does not vote for HDP due to their support of PKK. Erdal evaluation is meaningful in the cases of Ahmet, Ayten and Özlem. We see that even though Ahmet and Ayten who defined their religious identity both Alevi and Sunni voted for RPP as an Alevi party they are not satisfied with RPP’s policies. Ayten explained that “I do not believe that RPP carry out any policies... Still, since they stand the closest to us, we vote for them.”(See Appendix-C/No:67). On the other hand, Özlem who defined her religious identity as a Sunni changed her vote from RPP to HDP in last mayor elections.

It could be stated that except Semra and Özlem, the informants (Erdal, Ahmet and Ayten) who identified themselves both Alevi and Sunni have moderate partisan tendencies and they continue to vote for RPP. This indicates that they have not totally broken off their ascribed member of community. On the other hand, we see that the informants (Osman, İbrahim and Leman) who defined themselves as a Sunni and the informants (İsmail, Ömer, and Vural) who identified themselves as a Muslim

have tendency to vote for right-wing political parties. This analysis is meaningful indicating Sunni and Muslim religious identifications have distanced themselves more from their parents' political attitudes. In this regard, it could be questioned the reasons of difference between those two groups (the first group is Alevi-Sunni religious signifiers; the second group is Sunni and Muslim signifiers). I consider that their religious affiliation defines their attitudes and second group has strict conversion character and religious affiliation rather than first group. We also see that being long-term convert who "affected by changes in his/her spiritual and religious life" (Snow and Machalek, 1984, p.176) might have contributed to define political attitudes of informants (Osman, İbrahim, Ömer and Leman) which are in contrast to their parents.

5. CONCLUSION

The main findings of the thesis consisted of two parts; conversion and post-conversion processes. First, the analysis of conversion process explained why and how inborn Alevi persons converted to Sunni-Islam. There were four main factors which contributed to the conversion. The first factor was “social encounters with Sunnism” within the urban context. This factor indicated that Alevis’ migration to big cities increased frequency of their interaction with Sunni people. The general picture of the informants demonstrated the role of their direct, face to face relations with Sunnis established in the city including the various experiences of conservative neighborhoods, workplace, school and marriage relations. This factor varied according to the story of each informant and in general it has very high correlation with their conversion. The important point here is that the informants reevaluated their own devoutness as well as the adequacy of their own religious knowledge regarding their faith following the interactions with Sunnis within different areas. Here, we see that informants felt tensions and they defined themselves as a religious seeker during this reevaluation process. The general discourse of informants is that they were not able to fulfill their spiritualities within Alevism.

When we analyze why the informants did not able to fulfill their spirituality within Alevism, we get closer to second factor which is religious inadequacy of Alevism which includes the issue of concealment and lack of religious rituals or any resource within urban context. Due to Sunni-hegemonic political, economic and social structures, Alevism was not something that was only concealed from the outsiders in the city but also it was hidden from their own children by their parents in some cases. Some of the informants had also tendency to hide their ethnic identity. This might be related to protection of self, achieving equal opportunity in the society or to Alevi Kurds’ embracement of secular Turkish identity. In a nutshell, Alevis turned into a closed and secrecy-based community within rural setting due to political and religious conflicts with the center historically. We could assert that the secrecy-based community character dramatically continued in the city after the migration. However, the lack of access to Alevi rituals or any resource prevented the

reconstruction of Alevi identity at ease in the urban setting in addition to concealment of their religious identity. In this regard, most of the informants tend to put blame on their parents for not paying attention to religious education of their children, not motivating them to do religious rituals or not explaining differences between Alevism and Sunnism.

The third factor is “regarding Alevism within Islam”. It could be stated that most informants’ attitudes indicates that boundaries between Alevism and Sunnism became blurred. Most of the informants embraced Shia version of Alevism based on Ahl al-bayt (ehl-i beyt) perception. They believe that as true Ali in Islam was very close to prophet Muhammad and performed Islamic rituals, then they should do the same. This facilitated both conversion process and justification of Sunnism.

The last and fourth factor is “regarding Alevism as a political deviation”. Here, the informants considered that especially young Alevis have unfortunate interaction with marginal political activities. Also, some believe that the origin of Alevism is related to political division that has nothing to do with religious faith. Therefore, to some extent Alevism is seen as a deviant community and is gradually losing its religious characteristic. It could be asserted that inadequate religious knowledge level on Alevism and blurred boundaries between Alevism and Sunnism facilitated Alevism to be considered as marginal political activity which influences its negation by the informants. On the one hand, Alevis’ interaction with politics rather than religion since 1960s up until 1990s may have contributed to this negation process. On the other hand, we see that articulation to hegemonic power with the conversion decreases such kind of tension which results from politics.

Furthermore, it has been indicated that religion influenced both as a way of living, values, attitudes and behaviors of the subject and his/her interaction with the others. Even the thesis is not able to answer certain degree of conversion, it could be asserted that most of informants’ general characteristics with regard to piety shows their certain tensions which includes “the tension between sacred and material world; the tension between public and private spheres; the tension between religious and scientific knowledge; and the tension between tradition and modern” (Akşit, Şentürk, Küçükkural and Cengiz, 2012, p.519). The thesis indicates that how most of informants (especially conservative converts who identify them as Sunni and Muslim) express this tension by comparing their piety with Alevism. In addition,

sexual identity is another important indicator in terms of demonstrating such kind of tensions. Women informants especially experienced sacred&material, public&private sphere distinctions and tradition&modern tensions in terms of wearing headscarf (or örtünme) which “is most visible symbol of Islamization” (Göle, 1998, p.76). Some men informants also adopted Islamic form on their physical bodies with wearing style, beard style. Those people position themselves against the secularist bodies (i.e. secularist Alevi bodies within the context.).

In the rest of the concluding chapter, I will discuss about the potential relations between the findings of the thesis and the existing relevant literature in detail. To begin with the findings of the thesis, it's indicated that identity crisis has deep impact on individual conversion. As a social being, every individual becomes part of a group identity. In particular to Alevi identity, “when comes to Sunni world, employing an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ approach and its opposition as a marginalized religious/ethnic identities” were more common (Zeidan, 1999, p.74). It seems that traditional form of Alevism was more compatible for developing such kind of group identity, since individual identities are mostly constructed by local customs and traditions (Güvenç, 1996, p.5). However, identity issue becomes apparent with the transformation or declining visibility and accessibility of customs and traditions, this means that identity issue is a cultural issue which mainly results from being “without history” (*tarihsizlik*) (ibid., p.9). Güvenç (1996) asserts that “the cultural history is necessary for the development of identity and ontological consciousness”. He also says that “the cultural history should be readable, comprehensible and convincable. If cultural history of the community is not written yet, identity crisis or seeking is inevitable.” (ibid., p.10). In fact, this argument on “people without history” corresponds to informants’ religious seeking positions which were exposed to social and psychological predispositions. Here, we see the importance of “generation identity which refers to sharing of a common historical experience” (Neyzi, 2013, p.109) and generation identity is embedded into social and national identity to some extent (ibid., p.170).

In the post-migration urban context, education, work and changing collective solidarity among Alevi community seem to play a role in the conversion process of the informants. The narratives of the informants indicate that Alevi parents who migrated to big city gave importance to their children's education and tried to

increase their chances in work life and for better careers. Even though I am not able to explain the degree of both informants' and their parents' relations with their Alevi acquaintances, it could be said that migration process led to the decline of social ties within the community based on the fieldwork findings. On the one hand, difficulties of living with the neighbourhood of high Sunni population caused such kind of decline, on the other hand, some of informants' negative feelings for their community demonstrated interestingly dissolution of social ties and solidarity in the city. Furthermore, education and work experiences of most informants influenced their relation with members of Alevi community in my opinion and here they preferred individualization rather than seeking to take part in Alevi community with those experiences since they socialized outside of the Alevi community. Besides, most informants criticize their parents due to their ignorance as those informants increased their educational level.

Based on the narratives of the informants, I could state that the tension which results from national identity crisis is a quite common experience and problem. We see that informants were brought up by concealing their Alevi identity as it had been dictated by their parents. I could state that the tension was doubled by ethnic identity crisis in addition to religious identity. In my cases, I observed that most of the informants' parents partly voluntarily integrated to the Turkish national identity rather than conflicting with it. For instance, it's highly probably occurred that the parents speak gradually in Turkish rather than in Kurdish both at home and outside after the migration process, since most of the informants speak Turkish very fluently and don't have fluency in Kurdish. Also, the parents preferred to give Turkish names to their children. However, we understand that their parents did not totally break their ties with their ethnic/religious Alevi community based on narratives of informants since the tension of informants resulted partly from the difference of private and public sphere in the context of ethnic and religious origins. While ethnic/religious identity might be mentioned more confidentially in the private sphere, their parents' concealment attitudes of their identities in the public sphere created such kind of tension, in my opinion, this causes identity crisis over individuals. It could be added that most of informants was beginning to convert to Sunni-Islam in their early ages. They mentioned that they were not much more aware of their ethnic/religious identity before the conversion process. However, the interesting point that should be

underlined here is that how the actual discourses they have shape the memory of subjects. Discourses of the informants about their inborn community are shaped by reference to current arguments and discourses. For instance, “Alevism without Alevi”, “atheist Alevis” and even to talk about “Dersim event” are discourses which are mainly used by Justice and Development Party in the last decade. Even though such themes are also dealt within Alevi community, informants’ lack of connection with the community indicates how cultural history and memory of the subjects are shaped by the current politics. It could be asserted that most of informants mentioned those discourses for the justification of their conversion from Alevism to Sunnism/Islam. It seems that JDP’s last agendas on Alevis tried to melt Alevism into Sunni-Islam and it has been positively responded by some Alevis.

In a nutshell, the main point on Islamization/Sunnification is the lack of accessibility to Alevi rituals after the urbanization process. In this thesis, I tried to indicate that existing literature on state politics on Alevism shows that there has been a long-term relationship between Alevi conversion and state politics. In other words, decreasing access to Alevism in the urban context was not limited to the impact of urbanization and modernization. The state politics allow us to understand dynamics of religious change. Since the fifteenth century Islamization of Anatolia accompanied with the conversion of different ethnic/religious communities’ to Islam. In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire new Islamization politics of the state was implemented by Abdülhamit II who more persistently emphasized the role of Islam. Furthermore, since the foundation of the Republic, identity tensions of various ethnic/religious communities in the Turkish society which results from implementation of national identity policies have taken place (Neyzi, 2013, p.8). The construction of national identity was embedded into “order and progress” understanding, which would strengthen national unity in the society while ethnic, ideological, religious or economical differences were seen as threat for unity and progress” (Göle, 1998, p.73) since the early years of the republic. The nation-state ideology forced its citizens to be integrated with national identity (Güvenç, 1996, p.7) is more continued with 1980s in the extent of Turk-Islam nationalism. In this regard, it was aimed that “institutions, belief and behaviors which were compatible with modernity would be transmitted to people in Turkey” (Keyder, 1998, p.31).

It could be asserted that this national identity politics which included Muslims and Turks led other communities (i.e. crypto-Christians, Nusayris, Anatolian Alevi) in Turkey to conceal their ethnic, religious and linguistic differences (Neyzi, 2013, pp.8-9). This process influenced cultural history of each community and prevented the reconstruction of subjective identities within their own communities. This thesis investigated some individuals without history through their narratives. Findings of the thesis indicated social and political exclusions of Alevi created tension over informants. Those exclusions of Alevi or Alevism prevented reconstruction of identity, memory or cultural history of the community and it indicates how people without memory or history (i.e. Alevi) are likely to feel identity crisis. Religion is an important part of life in Turkish society for many people due to various factors and individuals reach to accessible and visible religious identity (i.e. Sunni-Islam) rather than suppressed one (i.e. Alevi identity) to overcome this identity crisis. This means that the state policies intentionally paved the way for religious conversion by enacting Turkish and Islam synthesis in addition to the factors that take place as a result of urbanization and modernization processes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview Questionnaire Form (In Turkish)

APPENDIX B: Socio-Demographic Information Table Regarding The Informants

APPENDIX C: Informants' Quotation Table (The Quotations are used in the 3rd and 4th Part of the Thesis)

Note: The appendix includes the original Turkish Quotations and their translations into English for research purposes.

APPENDIX A

MÜLAKAT FORMU (INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FORM)

“Bu mülakat, Alevi bir ailede doğmuş, büyümüş daha sonra sünni mezhebinin inanç ve ritüellerini benimsemiş kişilerin, bu dönüşümünü anlamayı amaçlayan, bu iki mezhep hakkındaki görüş ve düşüncelerini içeren birtakım sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Bu konudaki duygu ve düşüncelerinizi açıkça ifade etmeniz araştırmanın kapsamı açısından önem taşımaktadır. Fakat tüm sorulara cevap vermek gibi bir yükümlülüğünüz bulunmamaktadır. Duygu ve düşüncelerinizi aktarmak istediğiniz doğrultuda aktarabilirsiniz. Görüşlerinizi sağlıklı bir şekilde not ettiğimden emin olmak amacıyla izninizle ses kayıt cihazı kullanacağım ve görüşme sırasında not alacağım. Ses kayıt cihazı kullanmam sizin için rahatsızlık yaratacaksa mülakat süresince yalnızca not alacağım. Kişisel bilgileriniz gizli kalacak (Ad-Soyad) ve mülakatta paylaştığınız bilgiler yalnızca araştırma için kullanılacaktır.”

I. ÇOCUKLUK ve GENÇLİK YILLARI

- Çocukluğunuzdan başlayarak bugüne kadar biraz kendinizden bahsedebilir misiniz?
- Gençlik yıllarınıza dönersek ailenizle ilişkiniz hakkında biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz?
- Akrabalarınızla, arkadaşlarınızla, komşularınızla ilişkileriniz hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz? (Geçmişe dair ve güncel olarak)

II. EĞİTİM HAYATI

- Eğitim hayatınız hakkında kısaca bilgi verebilir misiniz? (Eğitim hayatınız boyunca çeşitli gruplar içerisinde aktif olarak faaliyet gösterdiniz mi, gösterdiyseniz bu gruplar hakkında kısaca bilgi verebilir misiniz?)

III. EVLİLİK YAŞAMI

- Eşinizle nasıl tanıştınız?
- Evlendikten sonra hayatınızda değişim/değişimler oldu mu? (Değişim/değişimler gerçekleştiyse nasıl olduğuna ve bu durumu çevrenizin ve kendinizin nasıl karşıladığına dair biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz?)
- Eşinizin ve ailesinin / sizin ve ailenizin karşılıklı ilişkileri hakkında biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz?
- Çocuklarınızla ilişkiniz hakkında biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz?

IV. İŞ HAYATI

- Çalışma hayatınız hakkında kısaca bilgi verebilir misiniz? (İş bulma süreciniz, iş arkadaşlarınızla ilişkileriniz vb.)

V. DİNİ YAŞAM

- İnandığınız din ve mezhep hakkında biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz? (İnanç, ritüeller, ahlak, sevap ve günah kavramları, gelenekler, sizin için ne ifade ettiği, en önemli İslam âlimlerinin size göre kim olduğu vb.)
- "Din", "inançlı biri olmak" sizin için neyi ifade ediyor? Din hayatınızda önemli bir yer taşıyor mu? (Taşıyorsa hangi açılardan taşıyor? Taşımıyorsa, neden taşıtmıyor? Dinin emirlerini ne kadar uygulayabildiğinizi düşünüyorsunuz? Dininiz hangi açılardan hayatınızın diğer yönlerini etkiliyor? Dini inancınızdan dolayı hiç ayrımcılığa uğradınız mı? (Uğradıysanız buna nasıl tepki verdiniz? Dini inancınızla bağlı herhangi bir kuruma gitmeniz gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Yoksa bireysel olarak mı dini inancınızı gerçekleştirmeyi düşünüyorsunuz?)
- İnandığınız dini/mezhebi edinmenizde ne gibi faktörler etkili oldu? İnandığınız dine/mezhebe göre yetiştirildiğinizi düşünüyor musunuz? (Yetiştirildiyse inancınızı sürdürme nedenlerini kısaca açıklayabilirsiniz, hayatınızda nasıl bir öneme sahip olduğunu belirtir misiniz? - İnandığınız dini/mezhebi sonradan edindiyseniz neden o dine/mezhebe inanmaya başladığınız ve ne gibi faktörlerin etkili olduğu hakkında kısaca bilgi verebilir misiniz ? (Bu durumda ailenizden ve/veya çevrenizden tepki aldınız mı?)

- Çocuklarınızı inandığınız dine göre mi yetiştirmek istersiniz, yoksa bu konuda onların serbest olması gerektiğini mi düşünüyorsunuz? (Şayet inandığınız inanca göre yetiştirmek istiyorsanız nedenleri hakkında bilgi verebilir misiniz?)
- Siyaset hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Din ile siyaset ilişkisini nasıl görüyorsunuz?

VI. ALEVİLİK

- Aleviliğin sizin için ne ifade ettiğini açıklayabilir misiniz? (Aleviliği nasıl tanımlarsınız; Alevilik hakkında bilgi düzeyiniz)
- Ailenizin sizi Alevilik inancına göre yetiştirdiğini düşünüyor musunuz?
- Alevilik inancının temel ritüelleri hakkında bir bilginiz var mıdır? (Alevi dedeleri, cem ayinleri, hangi ocağa bağlı olduğunuz vb.; varsa görüşlerinizi paylaşabilir misiniz?)
- Çocukluğunuzdan itibaren düşünürseniz ailenizin Aleviliğin ritüellerini yerine getirdiğini düşünüyor musunuz?
- Alevi-Sünni evlilikleri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Çocuğunuzu yetiştirirken Alevilik hakkında bilgi verir misiniz?
- Alevi açılımı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? (Cem evlerinin ibadet yeri olması, zorunlu din eğitimi derslerinin kaldırılması)
- Cami-Cem evi projesi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- Genel olarak hangi partiyi/partileri destekliyorsunuz?
- Toplumdan genel olarak beklentilerinizin ne olduğuna dair biraz bilgi verebilir misiniz? (Muhafazakar, laik vb.)
- Eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mıdır?
- Son olarak, araştırmanın kapsamı dâhilinde önerebileceğiniz, tanıdığınız kişiler var mıdır?

IMPORTANT NOTE: This interview is a semi-structured. Preferred interview questions were asked to each informant. Sometimes, follow-up question(s) was/were asked in order to take more information in accordance with the given information.

APPENDIX B

Table B.1: Socio-Demographic Information Table Regarding The Informants

INFORMANT NO (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER W.R.T. INTERVIEW DATE)	INFORMANT'S CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATIONS	
1	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Osman
	HOMETOWN	Erzincan
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1956
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (3 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Technical High School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi
	INTERVIEW DATE	02.11.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	1h 35min 48sec
2	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	İbrahim
	HOMETOWN	Erzincan
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1965
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (2 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Secondary School (Art School) Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi
	INTERVIEW DATE	03.11.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	02h 39min 50sec
3	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	İsmail
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1970
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (3 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	High School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Muslim (He specifies that there is no denomination. In Islam)
	INTERVIEW DATE	14.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 43min 38sec

4	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Leman
	HOMETOWN	Elazığ
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1972
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (2 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	High School Graduate (She specifies that she deserved to attend a university, but she couldn't attend the university due to the headscarf. Now, she wears chador)
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi
	INTERVIEW DATE	17.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 30min 00sec
5	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Ömer
	HOMETOWN	Tunceli
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1965
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (4 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Open Education University (Anadolu University) Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Muslim (He specifies that there is no denomination in Islam)
	INTERVIEW DATE	23.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 48min 58sec
6	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Saliha
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1936
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (4 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Primary School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi (She wears chador)
	INTERVIEW DATE	25.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	00h 30min 00sec

7	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Ayten
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1970
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (1 Child)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Primary School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Both Sunni and Alevi (according to her, there is no separation between them in Islam); (She wears headscarf.)
	INTERVIEW DATE	27.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 08min 59sec
8	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Semra
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1975
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (3 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Vocational School of Higher Education Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi (She wears headscarf.)
	INTERVIEW DATE	28.12.2014
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	00h 55min 50sec
9	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Vural
	HOMETOWN	Tunceli
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1982
	MARITAL STATUS	Single
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	University Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Muslim (He specifies that there is no denomination in Islam)
	INTERVIEW DATE	16.01.2015
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	00h 58min 59sec
10	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Ahmet
	HOMETOWN	Sivas

	YEAR OF BIRTH	1985
	MARITAL STATUS	Single
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	Primary School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Both Sunni and Alevi (Although, at first he declares that he is an Alevi, yet he then tells about why he gave up Alevism)
	INTERVIEW DATE	18.01.2015
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 10min 28sec
11	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Sevgi
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1979
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (2 Children)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	High School Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi (She wears headscarf)
	INTERVIEW DATE	20.01.2015
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	00h 31min 55sec
12	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Erdal
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1986
	MARITAL STATUS	Married (1 Child)
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	University Graduate
	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Both Sunni and Alevi
	INTERVIEW DATE	29.01.2015
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 54min 58sec
13	INFORMANT'S	
	PSEUDONAME	Özlem
	HOMETOWN	Sivas
	YEAR OF BIRTH	1989
	MARITAL STATUS	Single
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	University Graduate

	RELIGION/DENOMINATION	Islam/Sunni-Hanafi (She wears headscarf.)
	INTERVIEW DATE	03.02.2015
	INTERVIEW LENGTH	01h 21min 54sec

APPENDIX C

Table C.1: Informants' Quotation Table (The Quotations are used in the 3rd and 4th Part of the Thesis)

QUOTATION NO (Order in the Thesis)	INFORMANT PSEUDONAME	QUOTATION	
1	Leman	IN TURKISH	Ailede bir bendim böyle. Din de sınıf birincisiydim. Namazı bilmiyordum. Din öğretmeni anlat dedi "ben bilmiyorum" dedim. O da zannediyor müslüman ailede yetişmişim. Benden önce bir erkeği kaldırmıştı, erkeklerle kadınların kılışları farklı, ben de bilmediğimden onu taklit ettim.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I was the only one in the family thinking like this. I was the number one in the class at religious course. I did not use to know about prayer. The religion teacher told me to explain it, I said "I do not know". He thought that I had grown up in a Muslim family. He had given the word to a male student previously. The practices of males and females are different, but I imitated him for I did not know how to do it.
2	Vural	IN TURKISH	Beni yönlendiren tabii ki üniversite ortamı, geldiğim zaman sonuçta az önce dediğiniz şey İslam'ı yaşayan kişilerle tanışmaya başlıyorsun. Şöyle bir şey oluşmaya başlıyor artık, arkadaşlar arasında sonuçta o beni tanımaya çalışıyor, ben onu tanımaya çalışıyorum. Hep sorgulama başlıyor. Yani, nerden geliyor ya da sonuçta bu din nerden geliyor, yani inanç mekanizması nedir, senden ne istiyor gibi şeyler üzerinde mesela konuşulmaya başlıyor bu sefer. Ya bu yönlendiriyor insanı sonrasına, e tabii ki bu muhabbet ortamları falan yavaş yavaş sizi farklı şeylere veya... Şunu söylüyim mesela daha önceden ben dinle ilgili pek bi şey okumamıştım, hiç bişey okumadım hatta din üzerine çok düşünen bi insan değilim. Ama, bu tür ortamlar sizi yavaş yavaş yönlendiriyor. Yani, sonuçta bi mantığının olması lazım veya yıllardır ya da yüzyıllardır bilmiyorum artık insanlar hep bunun üzerine kafa yormuşlar. Sadece biz değil, birçok kişi kafa yormuş. E, bizimden bence birden yani o birikimden geçmişten gelen

			birikimden faydalanması gerekiyor...Bakıyorsun sonra, seçiyorsun karar veriyorsun, ya böyle bir değişim yaşadım.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	What lead me (to Sunnism) was of course the university environment, when I first started. Like what you said before, firstly you start meeting with people who know about Islam. Then what was happening among friends is that they started knowing me better and I started knowing them in return. You start questioning things. I mean, where does it come from, I mean where this religion comes from, what is the belief mechanism, what it wants from you... Then these kinds of talks take place. And these lead you further ahead. Of course talks with friends and things like that take you to different things... Let me say this; before then I had not read anything about religion, I was not a person thinking much about religion. However, these kinds of environments lead you slowly. I mean, there has to be some kind of logic. For years or centuries people preoccupied with this issue. Not only us, many people other have done so. So we also have to benefit from this accumulation that comes from the past... Then you see, you choose and make your decision. Well I had such a conversion.
3	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Alevi olduklarını rahat bir şekilde söylüyorlarmış zaten tepki alsam bırakırım cemaati. Gülen cemaati alevi insanlarına karşı samimi. Alevileri etkileyelim, Alevilerde bizim gibi namaz kılsın derse zaten samimiyetsizliğini gösterir. Biz aleviler olarak gülen hocayı tanımıyoruz. Bugüne kadar hep demişiz ki şeriatı getirecek, işte geri kafalı dinci falan. Her imam bir değildir, her sağcı bir değildir, her muhafazakar insan bir değildir. Bir insan dindar olabilir bizim korkmamız gereken dincilerdir, dini kullananlardır, din üzerinden rant elde edenlerdir. Ben Gülen'in dinci bir insan olduğuna inanmıyorum dindar bir insan olduğuna inanıyorum.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	So I learned that people easily said they were Alevis. If I got reactions, I would quit being a member of the community. Gülen community is

			sincere against the Alevi people. Besides if they said “let’s affect the Alevis, let them pray like us”, it would be insincere. We, as Alevis, do not recognize Gülen Hodja. Until this day we thought like he will bring sharia, he is reactionist, religionist, etc. All imams are not the same, all rightists are not the same, all conservatives are not the same. A person may be religious, what we have to be afraid of are the religionist ones, the ones who take advantage of religion, the ones who gain unearned income via religion. I do not believe that Gülen is a religionist, but a religious person.
4	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Abim öyle başlayınca ben de bu iş yerine girdiğim zaman baktım iş yerinde o zamanki zamane yönetimine göre mi, devletin şekline göre mi diyicem, bir şey diyemeyeceğim orası tam olarak. Etrafımızdaki bütün arkadaşlarımız atıyorum %60’ı, %70’i hepsi namaz kılanlardan oluştuğu için sen de ister istemez o toplumda oluyorsun.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Right after my brother, I started working in this workplace, then I looked and saw that, I do not know if it is because of the government of that time or the policies of the state – everybody was practicing prayer. Like 60%-70% of my friends around me were practicing prayer and so you become a member of that community inevitably.
5	İsmail	IN TURKISH	Allah bizi niye yarattı, hayvandan ayırt edici aklımız var. Ne yazık ki bugün ot olmuştuk. Bir şey yok hayatımızda... Niye geldik bu dünyaya, niçin yaşıyoruz. Kim yarattı bizi. Bugün Alevilere sorarsan tabiat yarattı, babama sorarsan tabiat yarattı. Yaa bu kadar tabiat her şeyi dört dörtlük yaratır mı..İşin en temel noktası Allah. Allah nedir, kimdir, ondan sonra zaten gerisi çorap söküğü gibi geliyor. Kuran-ı Kerim yani. Referansımız peygamber efendimizin hayatı, kitap, sünnet.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Why did the God create us? We have wisdom which distinguishes us from animals. Unfortunately, today we are like plants. There is nothing in our lives. Why we came to this world, why do we live, who created us? Today when you ask those questions to Alevis they would tell that nature

			created us, if you ask my father he says nature created us. But how nature can create everything so perfectly? The main point is Allah. What is Allah, Who is Allah. After that the rest will come easily. That is Quran. Our references are life of the Muhammad, the book and the Sunna.
6	Ömer	IN TURKISH	Akrabalarım ‘kitabın ne diyorum? Hadi diyelim sünniligi sen kabul etmiyorsun, peki kitabın nedir? Kitap yok. Peygamberin kim? Peygamber yok. Peki ahiretle ilgili bana vadettiğin bir şey var mı? Bütün isimlerin hepsini inceleyin ahiretle ilgili bir kavramları yoktur. Sadece dünya vardır. Onun için nedir, bunu böyle görmek lazım. Çünkü sizi gerçekten inanç olmayınca sadece dünyalık yaşadığı zaman sadece biz yaşarız, ölürüz ve yok olup gideriz. Bu mantıktaki bir anlayış var. Ama İslam sizi gerçekten dünya hayatının geçici ve ebedi hayatın ise uzun, hiç orada ölüm olmayan, nimetlerin sürekli olduğunu anlatan bir kitap var. Yani ben hayali bir şey konuşmuyorum. Niye benim hiç olmazsa bir kitabım var. Ben kitabımdan size ne yapıyorum okuyorum. Ama siz hayali olan bir şeyler anlatıyorsunuz. Alevi kesiminde de böyle hayali şeyler söyleniyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I ask my relatives, which book they believe in. Okay, let's say you do not accept Sunnism, so which one is your book? There is no book. Who is your prophet? There is no prophet. So do you have anything that you promise me about the afterlife? Search about all the names and you will see that they have no notions about the afterlife. There is only the earth. So it is necessary to see what it is for them. Because when there is no faith, when you live only for earth, we live, die and disappear off. There is an understanding in this line. However in Islam, there is a book which tells that the earthly life is temporary and eternal life is long, deathless, benedictions are permanent. I mean I am not talking about something imaginary. Why, because at least I have a book. What am I doing, I am reading to you from my book. But you are speaking about something imaginary. In Alevi society such things are spoken as

			well.
7	Osman	IN TURKISH	İslamiyette başımızı secdeye koyup bir daha da kaldırmamak azdır bile niye biz müslüman bir memleketteyiz, müslüman anadan, babadan doğduk, elhamdülillah müslümanız. İnşallah müslüman olarak da ölürüz. Bunun değerini bilemezsin. Bunun değeri şöyle yani; böyle olduğun için cennete gidersin. Belki günahın var diye senelerce yansan da sonunda müebbet değil yani, çıkıp cennete gideceksin... Tamam kılmıyorsan gene kılma, günahkar olursun. Ama hiç olmazsa inanıyorum de. Üç Allah var deme, bir Allah var de. Veya bir puta, ineğe, ne bilim güneşe, varsa yıldıza, kim neye taparsa... Yani böyle yapma da inan diyor. İnandığın zaman öyle ölürsen ilelebet cehennemde kalmıyorsun yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In Islam, it is even not enough if we prostrate and never stand up anymore. Why, because we are living in a Muslim country, we are born from Muslim mothers and fathers. Alhamdulillah (Praise to God) we are Muslims. That is priceless. Its value is like, you go to heaven because you are like this. Maybe if you have sins, you burn in hell for many years, but in the end, it is not eternal, you shall go to heaven anyway... That's okay if you do not pray, you would be a sinner. But at least say that you believe. Do not say that there are three gods, say there is one Allah. Or whatever you worship, idols, cows, the sun, the stars, whatever who worships what... I mean it says do not do this, believe. If you die as a believer, you do not stay in hell eternally.
8	Leman	IN TURKISH	22 yaşında erkek kardeşim vefat etti. İki sene öncesinde de namazımı düzenli kılıyordum. 23 yaşında evlendim. O zamanlar açtım, sadece namaz kılınca kapanıyordum. Kardeşim ölünce bir arkadaşım "kapan" deyince ilk önce kapanmak ağır geldi. Ama kardeşim çok değerliydi. Çok etkilendim ölünce. Kendime sorular sormaya başladım. Toprağa koydular, alel acele insanlar çıktı. Maddi yönden sıkıntımız yoktu. Ölüm ne, yok olmak ne gibi sorular sormaya başladım. Bu sefer din adına kimi bulduysam

			yapışıyordum. Caminin hocalarını gördüğümde yapışıyordum. Kuran-ı okudum. Kardeşine sevabı var dediler. Ben de kardeşim ferahlasın diye Kuran okumaya başladım. Ona hediye ediyorum gibi. Oruç tutuyorum onun için.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	My brother died when he was 22. I had been regularly practicing prayer 2 years before then. I got married when I was 23 years old. I was uncovered then, I only used to cover when I was praying. It was kind of heavy when my friend first told me to “cover your head” after my brother died. My brother was very precious for me. I was deeply affected by his loss. I started asking questions to myself. They buried him under soil, left him here hurriedly. We did not have financial problems. I started asking questions like what is death, what is to perish... This time I started to get stuck on whomever I found in the name of religion. I used to get stuck when I saw the imams of the mosque. They said it would supply merits for my brother’s soul. So I started reading Quran so that my brother’s soul relieves. Like I was gifting to him. I fasted for him.
9	Ayten	IN TURKISH	İş yerinde artık kızlar vasıtasıyla, Aleviliğin ne olduğunu merak ettim. Ondan sonra, ablama söyledim. O dedi, biz Aleviyiz diyince şok oldum. Çünkü Alevilik hakkında çok kötü konuşuluyordu. Hani mum yakma, mum söndü olayı... Hani, bir yandan utanç bile duymuştum Alevilikten. Alevilik kötü bir şey diye anlatıyorlar ya.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I was curious about what Alevism was, as the girls were talking about it in the workplace. Then I told this to my sister and when she said we were Alevi I was shocked since the people were saying bad things about it, you know, mum söndü story...in one sense I was shamed by to be an Alevi since it was seen as a bad thing.
10	Özlem	IN TURKISH	Geçmişte biliyorsun Türkiye’de olan olayları işte, Çorum, Sivas falan. Bir kere bir şekilde azınlıksın. Bir sıkıntı var orada. Yani başına hiç bir şey de gelmese her an biri bir şey diyebilir. Yani her yerde çok rahat söyleyemez insan alevi olduğunu. Böyle bir şey

		ile büyüdük bir kere. Birçok alevi böyle büyüdü zaten. Belki çok yalıtılmış falan olmak gerekiyor. Biraz Alevilik benim için azınlık olmak demek yani neye inanıldığından önce o geliyor ilk kulağa aslında...İlkokulda hiç söylemedim nerdeyse, belki... Çok daha bir ikiye giderken felan söylemişimdir, o da bilmeden Lise sonda söyledim bi tek. Üniversitede söyledim.Kürt olduğumu söylüyorum. Ama,Şimdi Alevi olduğumu, ya başımı örttükten sonra, aslında saklamıyorum ama dikkat çeken bişey olduğu için de söylemek istemiyorum. Hani, bu sefer biraz şey olucam, Alevi olduğumu açıkçası daha rahat söyledim kürt olduğumdan. Bence, zaten Kürt sorunu daha büyük geliyor açıkçası, yani ben geçen gün onu düşündüm. Ya ben kendimi bildim bileli, ben en çok hakareti Kürtlükten yedim galiba diye. Ya her yerde rahat söyleyemem, bi de açıkçası herkeze de söylemek istemiyorum.
	ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	You know the events in Turkey in the past. Çorum, Sivas, etc. First of all, you are minority someway. There is one problem. I mean, even if nothing bad happens with you, somebody may say anything anytime. I mean one cannot express that he/she is Alevi everywhere around. We have grown up with one fact like this. Many Alevi have grown up like this already. Maybe it is necessary to be over-isolated. Alevi for me is being minority, I mean prior to what is believed in, the first thing that comes to mind is that... I almost never expressed this in elementary school maybe... Least probably I could have said when I was in the first or second grade. I remember saying that in the last grade of high school, and it was accidentally said. I expressed in university. I am used to saying that I am a Kurd. But now, actually after covering my head, I am not hiding it, but since it is something that draws attention, I do not prefer to say. Well, now I will be a little like; I actually expressed that I was an Alevi easier than I was a Kurd. In my opinion, the Kurdish question is

			a little harder, I mean I thought about that the other day. Well since I have known myself, I was insulted mostly because of being a Kurd I guess. I cannot even say it everywhere and actually I do not want to say. I mean I do not find it necessary, however I do not hide it either.
11	Vural	IN TURKISH	Hem Kürt Kimliğim var hem Alevi kimliğim var, yani Kürt demek te çok zor.Bilmiyorum yani, şöyle bi şey, ben ilkokuldayken yani tahtaya Kürtçe konuşanlar diye saçma bişey yazılırdı yani, ki bu okuldayken, yani Kürtçe konuştu işte, tahtaya yazıyosun, hoca seni cezalandırıyor gibi. Yani, inanç olarak da her yerde ben çıkıp Aleviyim demek zordu.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I have both Kurdish and Alevi identities and it was hard to say I am Kurd. I don't know, in such a way that when I was studying in the primary school if someone spoke Kurdish it was written on the class board, it was absurd and if you speak Kurdish you were likely to be punished by the teacher. Therefore it was hard to talk about that I was an Alevi in the sense of having belief .
12	Leman	IN TURKISH	Evlendiğiniz kişi çöpçü olsun ama Alevi olsun.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	You could even marry with dustman if he is an Alevi.
13	Leman	IN TURKISH	Bilmeseler de onu tutuyorlardı.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	They do not know anything but they support it.
14	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Bir de anlatıyorlar, seni işliyorlar, ilgileniyorlar, sana yaptıkları konuları anlatıyorlar. Kısacası, ailenizden Alevilik konusunda bir şey bilmiyorsunuz. ‘Sorduğunuz zaman baba bu nasıl olacak’, ‘ee sen anlamazsın, sen küçüksün’. Ee baba ben anlamam küçüğüm ama sen anlatmazsan bu ölür, biter. Sen nereye gidiyorsun, cemevine mi o zaman çocuklarını da topla, Pazar günü ayda bir kere, iki kere veya ayda dört kere gidiyorsan götür oğlum bak bizim ibadetimiz bu, biz Aleviyiz de. Öğret, göster. Sen göstermezsen başkası, namazı, niyazı, Allah’ı sana anlatırsa siz de bakacaksınız orada bir şey öğretilmemiş, burada öğretilen bir şeyler var. Kafana yatıyor, o zaman

			biz de Alevilikten diyelim artık, madem öğrenmek istediğiniz konu oysa, Alevilikten yavaş yavaş vazgeçtik. Sünni diyorsanız Sünni olduk.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	They tell you, they commit you, they take care of you, they tell about what they are doing and how they are able to do. Shortly, you do not get knowledge from your parent about Alevism. When you ask something they say you cannot understand. Well dad I am a child but if you do not tell about it will disappear. If you go cem house let's take your kids, in Sunday once a month or four times a month taking them away and to say this is our worship and we are Alevi, to teach and to show it. If you do not show it while the other show the prayer and to tell about Allah you will see that you did not learn anything from your parent. But here there are things which acquired by teachings then you feel close. Therefore I gradually gave up Alevism. If you call it Sunnism yes we converted to Sunnism.
15	Vural	IN TURKISH	Bir ebeveyn için herhalde en önemli şey, kendi evladıdır, yani kendi evladının kendisi gibi yaşamasını istiyorsa, bence bir insanın yani yaşadığı şeyin mantığını çok iyi aktarması lazım. Yani, bununla ilgili çok şey aldım mı? Almadım. Bence, benim annemin babamın yaşadığı şey, hani şunu söyliyim eğitim seviyeleri tabii ki okuma yazmaları yok, bir kaynaktan beslenmiyorlar, anne babadan veya gelenekten gördüğü şeylerle yaşıyorlar, bir teslim olma durumu var. Ama, bu teslim olma durumunun bir şeyini bana aktarabilirler mi? Aktaramadılar veya mantığını bana anlatamadılar, e kopma kesinlikle olacaktır, oldu da yani...Alevilikte şu an yaşanan ibadetin olsun veya yaşam tarzının olsun veya kuralların olsun, yani idol olarak seçtikleri kişiyle çok çok farklı şeyler yapılıyor, yani o yüzden otomatikman sayfayı kapatmak zorunda kalıyorsun, yani çok derin... derine de inemiyorsun, yani Alevilik nedir, işte dedelik nereden geliyor, çok çok daha şeye derin şeylere geliyorsun. İşte, babadan oğula, dedelik denen sistem üzerine kurulmuş, babadan oğula geçiyor.

			Yani, bu biraz da şey yani, sen doğuştan şanslısın demek gibi bir şey. Yani, bu tür şeyler ya açıkçası birleştiremiyorsun, yani bu sefer kopmalar başlıyor, ya ben şunu söyliyim yani, kopmalar Alevilikte böyle başlıyor, bence Alevilikte dindar Alevi kesimi o yüzden yetişmiyor. Yani, bakarsan gençlik komünizm veya sosyalizm üzerine gidiyor veya farklı yerlere savruluyor. Çünkü, bir temeli yok gerçekten Aleviliğin. Ya, kendinde insanları tutabilecek bir temeli yok.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Probably the most important thing in life for a parent is the child. I mean, a person must transfer the logic of what he/she lives on, very well to the child if he/she wants the child to live the way the parent does. I mean, have I received many things related to this? No I have not. I think, the thing that my mother and father lived – let me say that their education levels are low, they cannot read and write – is that they do not feed from a source, they live on things that they have got from their mothers and fathers and traditions, there is a state of surrender. However, can they transfer this state of surrender to me? They could not transfer and could not give me its logic. So there would certainly be a splitting, and it happened... Nowadays in Alevism, people do many different things than the person they chose as the idol, both for their way of praying or lifestyles or rules, etc. I mean, that is why you have to close the page automatically, I mean you cannot go in too deep either. I mean, what is Alevism, what is the background of being a Dede? You come to points very deep. Here it is, it is transferred from father to son, constituted on the system called Dede, passes from father to son. I mean it is a little like, it means that you are lucky from birth. I mean these kinds of things, you cannot combine, and then it starts to split up. Let me say, splitting up starts in Alevism this way. I think that is why religious people do not grow in Alevism. I mean, considering the fact that the youth tends towards communism or socialism or they are driven away somewhere else. Because there is really no foundation in Alevism.

			Yeah, it does not have a foundation that can gather people within itself.
16	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Bakın burada alevi insanlara, alevi anne babalara aslında iş düşünüyor, burada birazcık sitem edeyim. Mesela ben 2003 yılına kadar Aleviliği ailemden doğru dürüst bir şekilde öğrenseydim belki bunlar gelmeyecekti başıma hane en azından cemaat evine gittiğimde hane Alevilikle alakalı kötü bir şey demedim ama bir boşlukta vardı, bir boşlukta söz konusuydu. Adamların bir yaşantısı var, bu yaşantısında bir şeylere dayanıyorlar ve ellerinde sağlam tezleri var ve bilgileri var, birikimleri var. Biz de ne var hiçbirsey yok, adamlar bir şey söylüyor kalıyorsun. Böyle dımdızlak, çünkü sana hiçbirsey verilmemiş o güne kadar ailelerimiz göç etmişler Sivas'tan, Erzincan'dan, Tokat'tan, Elazığ'dan veya başka yerlerden göç etmişler hepsi iş güç derdinde, hepsi yaşam derdinde yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Look, at this point the responsibility is on Alevi mothers and fathers actually. Let me reproach here. For example, if I had learned well enough about Alevism from my family until 2003, I would not have to live these troubles. When I went to the community house I did not say anything bad about Alevism but there was an emptiness inside me that was the fact. The guys have a living, they base their lives on something particular and they have solid arguments, they have information, they have an accumulation. What do we have? Nothing! When they say something, you have to stay silent. Like naked, because you have not been granted anything until that day. Our families migrated from Sivas, Erzincan, Tokat, Elazığ or other cities, all having the aim of having jobs, having lives, that is what I mean.
17	Saliha	IN TURKISH	O duyguyu tatmadık, çevreden edindiğimiz bilgilerle yetindik...Eskiden Yalıncağ Babaya gider kurban keserdik şimdi hiçbir şey yok...Cem, dedelerimiz vardı...Dedeler ortada yok. Onlar bizi boşlukta koydu.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	We have not felt that emotion, we have contented ourselves with information we got from the environment. In the old times we

			used to go to Yalıncağ Baba and sacrifice animals. Now there is nothing... We used to have Cem Dedes. Dedes are not there anymore. They put us in emptiness.
18	Leman	IN TURKISH	Biliyorum diyor ama ortada bir şey yok. Kadın erkek ayrılır mı, hiç bir delile dayanmadan yazılmış kitaba tapıyor. Dedenin tek yaptığı ev ev dolaşıp para almak. Hristiyanlık gibi aforoz etme gibi. Bunlar da para verdik günahattan çıktık gibi düşünüyorlar. Babamın duadan haberi yok. Taliplere gideceğim diyor. Paraya sıkışmış. Hiç bir alt yapı yok. Karşıdakinin de bilgisi yok, evliya gibi görüyor. Padişahlık gibi bir şey yani. Hizmet yaparsın karşılığını alırsın. Paraya göre muamele ediyor. Dede olayı da şamanizmden gelme. Gezip gezip para toplama rükü.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	My father says he knows but there is nothing. Woman and man are separated! He worships the book which is written without any evidence... The only thing of dede is that visiting of houses and getting of money. It is like excommunication in the Christianity. The people think that they give the money then their sin is forgiven... My father does not know any pray. He says he will go to his talips since he needs money. He does not has any background. The other person doesn't know too. S/he sees him as a saint. It is like sultanate. The service you do what you get. He treats according to money he gets. It comes from shamanism. Visiting and getting money.
19	Leman	IN TURKISH	Amcamın kızı sorgulamaya başladı. Biz aleviyiz diyor ama Hz. Ali'yi seviyoruz diyor. Hz. Ali'yi Hz. Ali yapan kim diyorum cevap yok. Allah yolunda cihat etmesi, onunla büyümesi, kılıç vurulduğu zaman ben namazdayken çıkarmayın demiştir. Camide öldürülmüştür diye nasıl namazı kaldırılıyorsunuz. Hasan, Hüseyin niye namazı sürdürdü diyorum cevap yok. Hala biz de namaz yok diyorlardı. On iki imamlar kim diyordum. Hepsinin tek davaları dindi. Çok namaz kılmaktan Cafer-i Sadık'ın alnında iz varmış. Hiç biri namaz kılmıyor..Ben bunu çevreme anlatmaya çalışıyorum. Yezidi sevmiyoruz diyorlardı.

			Kerbelada ne oldu bilmiyorlar. Ehl-i Beyt aile demek. Yezidin halifeliğini devirmek için geldiler. Yezid haram, helal tanımaz, karı-kız, içki, islamiyeti tanımaz, derdi mal, mülk, zina. Hz. Hüseyin bunun karşısında durdu ve şehit oldu. Sizin yaşantınızda öyle. Neden düşmansınız o zaman sen de öylesin o zaman diyorum...Hz. Ali, Kuran diyorsun; o zaman niye sarık, sakal, Kuran'a karşısın. Bunu kafir bile inkar etmiyor ama sen hala canını feda ettiğin davanın bir numaralı düşmanısın. Hristiyan saygı duyuyor ama Alevi dine zarar veriyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	My uncle's daughter started to seek. She says that she is an Alevi but they love Hazrat Ali. I ask what it is that makes Hazrat Ali the Hazrat Ali? There is no answer. To announce jihad in Allah's path, to grow up with Allah, to have said "Do not take it off" when he was stroke by a sword during practice prayer ... How can you remove practice prayer for he was killed in a mosque? I ask why Hasan and Hussain maintained namaz, there is no answer. They still used to say that there is no practice of namaz among them. I was asking who the Twelve Imams were. Their only case was the religion. Cafer-i Sadık had a mark on his forehead because of practice prayer too much. None of them practices prayer. I try to explain this to my environment. They used to say that they do not love Yazid. They do not know what happened in Karbala. Ehl-i Beyt means family. They came for terminating the caliphate of Yazid. Yazid did not use to recognize the haram or halal, did not recognize women, booze, the Islam. All he knows is property, money, prostitution. Hazrat Hussain stood against him and fell martyr. Your life is so as well. So I ask why they are enemy to him while they live like him. You are speaking about Hazrat Ali, Quran, so why they are against frocks, beard, Quran, I ask. Even the heathens do not deny that; however you are the number one enemy of your case that you sacrifice your life. The Christians show respect while Alevis damage to religion.
20	Osman	IN TURKISH	Sevgi kalpte olan bir şey yani bunun hükümetle, devletle ne alakası var

			yani. Ben de seviyorum Hz. Ali, Hz. Hüseyin'i. Zaten onları sevmesen peygamberi sevmezsin yani...
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Love should be inside in the one's heart, it is not related to the government or the state. I like Hz. Ali, Hz. Hussein if you do not love them this means you do not love the prophet.
21	Osman	IN TURKISH	Ama işte zamanla dejenere ola ola o hale gelmiş yani. Yoksa hakiki Hz. Ali'nin yaşadığı gibi şeyde olsa mübarek gelse önce onların kellesini keser.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In the course of time Alevis have degenerated, if this kind of living style had existed in the period of Hz. Ali then Hz. Ali would cut off their head first.
22	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Ömer nerede öldürüldü onu biliyor musunuz. O da camide öldürüldü. O da hatta inançsız biri tarafından galiba yanılmıyorsa öldürüldü. Kesinlikle bu olayın, öldürülme olaylarının ne Alevilerle alakası var, ne de Sünnilerle.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Do you know where Hz. Ömer was killed, he was killed in the mosque too, even killed by a non-believer. The killing issue is related neither Alevis nor Sunni.
23	Saliha	IN TURKISH	Ben şuyum demek ayıp Alevi olsalar ayaklarının diplerini öperim. Alakaları yok.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	It is shame that I am this, if they are Alevi then I can kiss their feet but they are apathy towards Alevism.
24	Ayten	IN TURKISH	Müslüman doğduk, Müslüman öleceğiz.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	We are born Muslim and we will die as a Muslim
25	Vural	IN TURKISH	Benim yaşadığım coğrafya için bence Alevilik bi kültür. Ya be... belki inanç ritüelleri de var. Eee ama daha çok bi yaşam tarzı bi kültür. Çünkü, ee birçok ferdine inanç ritüelleri olarak kurallar olarak çok şey vermiyo. Eee belli gelenekler var. Eee net bi kaynağı yok. Eee yani öyle yaşanan babadan oğula geçerek devam eden bi gelenek.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In my geographical area I think Alevism is a culture. It might have religious rituals. But it is more like as a way of life or culture. Because it does not provide any religious rituals and rules to its members. There are certain traditions. It has no certain resource. It is the tradition which

			includes transmission from father to son.
26	Özlem	IN TURKISH	Aslında pek görmüyorum, daha çok böyle bir gelenek olarak görüyorum. Yani, çünkü bizimkilerin neye inandıklarını, nasıl davrandıklarını bildiğim için. Tabii ki de, bu Sünni ailelerde de karışık şeyler var işte çaput bağlayanlar falan, aslında itikadı bozacak şeyler. Mesela, tavşan yememeleri, aslında islamda böyle bişey yok, tavşan etinin haram olduğuna dair, bu eski bi inanış. Ya da mesela, hızır orucu tutuyolar, ben de hani Dersim bölgesinden Ermeni bi adamla konuşmuştum, onlar da aynı orucu tutuyorlarmış. Mesela, Şah Kulu Sultan'da mum yakarlar falan, kiliselerde yapılan şey. Ya böyle karışık bir kültür, dolayısıyla benim için bir de şey var tabii İslam'la açıkçası bağ kurduğum tek yerlerden ya birkaç yerden en azından en önemlisi, Kerbela hazreti Hüseyin, hazreti Ali'nin hilafeti. Ki bence o işin şey kısmı, Türkiye'de fazla yok, o daha çok Şia'da var, hazreti Ali'nin hilafeti konusu, tartışmalar falan, bizde aslında o kadar yok bence. O, İran'ın biraz meselesi gibime geliyor, tabi yanılıyor da olabilirim. Yani, biraz gelenek çok şey değil, fikirsel bir ayrılık bir yerde hani olmuş da oradan bir şey dolmuş gibi değil bence, bir yerden bir şeyler alınmış gibi, ya orda karışık toplumsal. Toplum bu hale gelmiş gibi hani gibi bir şey.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Actually I do not very much, I see it more like a tradition. I mean, because I know what my people believes in, how they act like. Of course, one other thing, there are complicated things to ruin the faith in these Sunni families; such as tying clothes on trees. For example, not eating rabbit meat. Actually there is no such thing in Islam as rabbit meat is forbidden. That is an old belief. Or for example "hızır fasting". Once I talked with an Armenian man from Dersim region, he said that they also fast the same way. For example, they light candles in Şah Kulu Sultan, that is something practiced in churches. I mean that is such a complex culture, thus, for me there is one thing too for sure; one of the single binds I have with Islam, at least one of the few

			things there are, Karbala Hazrat Hussain, Hazrat Ali. And it is the part of the thing, there is not much of it in Turkey, there is in Shiite. The subject of the Hazrat Ali, discussions, etc. That matters do not exist much in Turkey I suppose. I think it is a question belonging to Iran; I may be mistaken of course. I mean a little tradition is not much of a thing, in the end, it is an ideological controversy. I mean this happened, that.
27	Leman	IN TURKISH	Alevileri birbirine bu Sünnileri birbirine düşürmek, bu hepsi Yahudinin işi.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Conflict between Alevis and Sunnis is intentionally incited by Jews.
28	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Onlar bence Alevilikten ziyade Aleviliği savunmaktan ziyade Aleviliği malzeme yapmaya çalışan insanlar senelerce. Ve derin Alevilerdir bana göre, derinlerin Alevileridir, derin güçlerin Alevileri. Bugün baktığımız zaman Almanya’da Turgut Öker var. Pir Sultan Abdal derneklerinin çoğu öyle. Ben Alevilikte açıkcası Hacı Bektaş Veli Derneğini, federasyonunu, Cem Vakfını. Bu vakıfları savunuyorum genelde. Pir Sultan Abdal Vakfı, işte o Turgut Öker’lerin Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu, Bektaşî Federasyonu onları çok savunmuyorum, onlar çünkü alevi toplumunu sadece ve sadece kullanmak istiyorlar. Alevilik adına bir şey verelim demiyorlar. Biz bunları kullanalım, rant elde edelim. Siyasi partilerden bir şey koparalım diyen insanlar. Dediğim gibi derin güçlerin Alevileri.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	These people have been using Alevis for many years rather than supporting of Alevism. And they are “deep Alevis” for me, they are the Alevis of the deep forces, Alevis of the deep powers... When you look at today Turgut Öker who is in Germany. Many branches of Pir Sultan Abdal are similar to this. I generally support Hacı Bektaş Veli Association, Cem Organization. I do not support Pir Sultan Abdal Foundation and Federation of European Alevi Associations since they only want to exploit Alevi society. They do not have any promises with regard to Alevism.

			They use them and they seek their own interest. These are people who seek something by getting from political parties. As I said these are deep powers.
29	Vural	IN TURKISH	İnsan, bence egoları ile ilgili şeylerdir yani. O yüzden, bunun buna böyle bakmak lazım yani, hazreti Ali dönemine, hazreti Ebubekir, Ömer veya Osman dönemine veya sonrasına Muaviye, Emeviler, Abbasiler. Yani, siyasi olaylar olarak bakmak lazım yani bu bizim din anlayışımız olamaz yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	These are related to egos of someone...we should look these events in that sense...the period of Hazrat Ali, Ebubekir, Ömer and Osman and in later period Muaviyye, Emevi, Abbasi. We should look them such as political events. This cannot be our perception on religion.
30	Osman	IN TURKISH	22 yaşından beri sakal var mesela istemezdi, engel olmazdı yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I have a beard since the age of 22, my father didn't like it, but he didn't prevent it.
31	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Eşim sünni ya, baya bi yadırgadılar baya bi dışladılar, baya çekti benim eşim. E şimdi, anneme diyorum, oğlu geldi geçenlerde Amerika'dan, Hristiyan'la evlendi, ee diyorum hadi, benim eşime laf söylediniz bak, bu ülkede yaşadığı halde, bu topraklarda yaşadığı halde ve olsun peygamber efendimizi seviyorlar, siz hazreti Ali radiyallahı seviyorsunuz, en azından bir eee dini büyük, hadi dedim, hristiyan dedim, noldu niye evinize aldınız, niye kabul ediyorsunuz oğlunuzla evlenmesini, yakında çocuğu olacak, hiç inancı yok, inançsız, o benim oğlum, o benim küçük oğlum... Abim de o konuda biraz sıkıntı çekti, ben de çektim, ama allaha şükür şimdi en iyi bakan benim eşim. Zaten...annem ayrılmak bile istemiyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	My wife is Sunni as I mentioned, they found it odd, they casted her out, my wife suffered a lot. So now, I am telling my mother. Her son came from the USA. He married a Christian. So, I am saying, what now? You were talking bad about my wife, although she lived in this country, although she lived on this land. They love our Lord Prophet, you love Hazrat Ali (May Allah bless him). At least has a major

			religion. I said she is a Christian, what happened, how could you accept her in the house? How can you accept her to marry your son? Soon they will have a child, the child will have no faith, faithless, he is my son, my little son... My brother also had some problems with that subject. Me too. But thank God, now the best caregiver is my wife. Besides, my mother does not want to leave her.
32	Ömer's Wife Gül	IN TURKISH	İlk darbe anneye oluyor (İstanbul'dalar). Annenin tek oğlu. Görüntü de değişiyor. Annesi namaz kılmasın diye şalterleri indiriyor. O zamanlar Sünni-Alevi gençler hepsi birden müslüman oluyor (bu arkadaşlarıyla hala arkadaşlar). Annesi de bu arkadaşlarına kızıp, siz yoldan çıkarttınız diyormuş... İslam'a girince annesi kafasından pis su döküyormuş ama bu bana kötü davrandı ben de kötü davranayım diye bir şey yok... İki ay kadar mücadelesi oluyor. Annesi kalp krizi geçirmiş. Babası Almanya'da yılda bir kere gelir gidermiş. İslam'a döndüğünde tamamen gelmiş, ama 8 yıl boyunca konuşmamışlar (ayrı bir eve taşınmış). Onlar dindar bir kadınla evleneceğini düşünmemiş.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	The first impact happens to mother (They are in İstanbul). The only son of the mother. The picture changes too. Mother shuts down the switch so that he cannot pray. Those times Sunni-Alevi youngsters become Muslims altogether (he is still friends with them). His mother gets angry at them and says that they are leading him in the wrong way... When he converts to İslam, his mother poured dirty water down his head. But there is no such thing as that person treated me bad and I should do the same back. There is the struggle going on for about two months. His mother had a heart attack. His father used to come from Germany once in a year. When he converted into İslam, he settled completely but they did not talk for 8 years (he moved to a separate house). They did not think he would marry a religious woman.
33	İsmail	IN TURKISH	Anne babadan baya tepki doğdu. Neden bizim yüzümüzü kızartıyosun, neden böyle yapıyosun? İşte, hanımın da kapandı, o da Aleviydi.

		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	My mother and father seriously reacted me. They were saying ‘why you are embarrassing us, why you are doing this’? And my wife started wearing headscarf, as she was an Alevi.
34	Leman	IN TURKISH	Ne güzel bir din dedim. Çarşaf giymeye karar verdim. Annem "evlatlıktan reddederim" dedi. Eşim "benimle böyle gezemezsin" dedi. Çarşaf giymem çok tepki aldı. Peygamber zamanında böyleymiş. Bir zaman annemle görüşmedim. Anneme giderken çarşaf giymiyordum ama bir kere giydim kıyamet koptu. Eşim de küçümsüyordu "seninle toplum içine nasıl çıkabilirim" diye.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I said “What a nice religion it is”. I decided to wear a chador (çarşaf). My mother said she would disinherit me. My husband said “You may not go out with me like this”. My wearing çarşaf took many bad reactions. Once the prophet was like this. I did not see my mother for a while. When I was visiting my mother I did not use to wear çarşaf, but once I did and it was a disaster. My husband was also scorning me, saying “How can I go out with you
35	Osman	IN TURKISH	Kız olsun erkek olsun Alevilik de dinin itikadını insanı küfre sokacak kadar bir küfür yoksa mahsuru yok yani... Aleviymiş, Sünniymiş filan öyle bir madde yok yani dinde, dinin şartlarında da yok mesela. Mesela bir kız alırken din kitabı yazar ya güzelliği için, ya malı için, ya asaleti için ya dini için. Bu dört şey için alınır diyor. Sen diyor dini güzel olanı al diyor. Hiç demiyor mezhebin şu, bu demiyor yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Whether a woman or a man, if there is not a profanity in Alevism such as endangering the human’s faith, there is no problem then... I mean there is no such rule like this is Alevi that is Sunni, there is nothing in its conditions for example. For instance, when marrying a girl, you know the book of religion writes as; either for her beauty, or properties, or novelty, or religion. It says selecting is for these four matters. It recommends you to marry the religious one. It does not say she is from this religious sect or that.
36	Ömer	IN TURKISH	Toplumda yavaş yavaş kaynaşma başladı. Mesela eskiden alevi kız

			asla sünni bir çocukla evlenmezdi veya sünni bir kız ailevi çocuğu almazdı. Bu neden yavaş yavaş bitti. Çünkü aynı ortamda okuyor, aynı ortamda icabında çalışıyor. Sonuçta bunun anlamsız olduğunun onlar da zaten farkındalar. Bu aslında insanları çok ayrıştıran bir olay değil, sadece ailelerin kendi arasında, bazı kuruntularla, çocuklarına baskı yaptıkları... İslamda hiç bir değeri yok bunun. Çünkü o kız, çocuk erkek veya kız, onun islami tarafıyla bu tarafın islami yapısı aynı zaten. Çünkü aynanlayışta oldukları için anlaşabiliyorlar. Şimdi çok böyle islami şeyleri olmayan bir kız çok dindar bir erkekle evlenebilir mi, evlenmez ki zaten. Isterseniz herkesin bir inancı vardır...Ve o inancı doğrultusunda yaşar ve o inancı doğrultusunda evlenir ve o inanç doğrultusunda bir hayat kurar. Eğer bu karşılıklı inanç olmazsa o zaman evlilikler de olmaz, gerçek manada bir yani uzun süreli evlilik olmaz, en ufak şeyde ne olur, evlilikleri dağılabilir, en ufak şey büyütölüp birbirinden ayrılabilirler. Onun için insanı bir arada tutan gerçek manada inançtır.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Slowly by slowly amalgamation started in society. For example, in the past an Alevi girl would not marry a Sunni boy or a Sunni girl would not marry an Alevi boy. This course ended slowly by slowly. Because they get education in the same environment and if necessary they work together in the same workplace. In the end, they are aware as well that it is nonsense. Actually, this is not a matter that separates the society, it is just among the families, they make pressure on their children for some imaginations... This has no value in Islam. Because that girl or boy, that part's İslamic structure and this part's İslamic structure are already the same. They can get along because they have the same understanding in the end. Now for example a girl who does not have many İslamic thoughts, can she marry a very religious boy? Everybody has a faith if they want... They live in line with that faith and marry in line with that faith and

			establish a life in line with that faith. If there is no such mutual faith, then those marriages cannot be. That would not be a marriage in real terms, the marriage may decompose, the smallest issue may be exaggerated and they may divorce because of this. For this reason, what holds the people together is faith in real terms.
37	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Dese ki, şimdi oğlum benim evlencem Alevi kız, olabilir oğlum, Alevi olabilir. Ama,şimdi Aleviler namaz kılmıyor diye ben onları benimsemiyorum, tamam Aleviliği benimseyebilir ama namazını kılarırsa daha da güzel. Hani, yeme de yanında yat gibi derler ya. Daha da güzel olur yani
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	If my son says that he will marry an Alevi girl. I would say that it could be, may be an Alevi. Now I do not embrace Alevi because they do not pray. Okay, she may embrace Alevism but better she would start praying. Like they say very good to be true. I mean it would be even better.
38	Özlem	IN TURKISH	Burası üç katlı bi evmiş, mesela cem yaparlarmış felan. Şey bi kere bize bi dede gelmişti ama çok komikti, o birşey yemiyor sadece para istiyordu. Bu iş biraz şey, yani nasıl desem, feodal bağlarla devam eden bişey, o kısmı... Bi tane dede geldi, nasıl gelmiş bilmiyorum. Dedem, ona sorular sordu, adam cevap veremedi felan. Benim dedem daha çok şey biliyor (Gülüyor)
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In the past, there was a three story house, they used to gather Cem in there. Once a Dede came to our house. It was very funny. He did not use to eat anything but only asked for money. This job is a little like, how to say, something that inherits with feudal bounds, that part I mean. Actually about Dedes, I do not know...Once a Dede had come, I did not know how he had come there. My grandfather asked him questions, he could not reply for example. My grandfather knows more about religion.(Laughing)
39	Leman	IN TURKISH	Biliyorum diyor ama ortada bir şey yok. Kadın erkek ayrılır mı, hiç bir delile dayanmadan yazılmış kitaba tapıyor. Dedenin tek yaptığı ev ev dolaşıp para almak. Hristiyanlık gibi aforoz etme gibi. Bunlar da para

			verdik gūnahtan ıktık gibi dūşūnūyorlar. Babamın duadan haberi yok. Taliplere gideceğim diyor. Paraya sıkışmış. Hi bir alt yapı yok. Karşidakinin de bilgisi yok, evliya gibi görüyor. Padişahlık gibi bir şey yani. Hizmet yaparsın karşılığını alırsın. Paraya göre muamele ediyor. Dede olayı da şamanizmden gelme. Gezip gezip para toplama rükū.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	He says he knows but there is nothing. Woman and man are separated! He worships the book which is written without any evidence... The only thing of dede is that visiting of house and getting of money. It is like excommunication in the Christianity. The people think that they give the money then their sin is forgiven... My father does not know any pray. He says he will go to his talips since he needs money. He does not has any background. The other person doesn't know too. S/he sees him as a saint. It is like sultanate. The service you do what you get. He treats according to money he gets. It comes from shamanism. Visiting and getting money.
40	Leman	IN TURKISH	Bir gün arkadaşımın düğünü "dede geldi" dediler. Dedenin önüne rakı sofrası kurdular. Sarhoş oldu. Sünni arkadaşlarım şok oldu. Onların ki böyle bir şey yapmıyordu.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	One day I went to the wedding of my friend. They said dede had come. They served a table with rakı (alcohol drink) to dede. He got drunk. My Sunni friend got shocked. They weren't doing such a thing
41	Ömer	IN TURKISH	İnsanlar aziz gibi görüyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	The people see them as a saint.
42	Ömer	IN TURKISH	Babamansur dedikleri o aileden, dede ailesi deniliyor. Ve onlar nedir kendi müridleri olan ve onlara bağı bir mürid şeyi var. Yani bu Sünni toplumundaki şeyh mürid ilişkisi gibidir, farklı değildir. Fakat Sünni toplumunda sonuçta bir İslam var, ama alevi kesiminde İslam yok. Sadece dedenin söylediğı kabul ediliyor fakat dede sonunda bir insandır, hata edebilir, günah işleyebilir. Sünni kesiminde nasıl bir şeyh asla günah işlemez, asla hata

			yapmaz diye bakılıyorsa alevi kesiminde de aynı şey vardır. Ama kuran ve sünnetin bize öğrettiği Allah ve resullerinden başka yeryüzünde hatasız kimse yoktur. Herkes hata yapabilir. Bu hata yapmayı, insanları hatasız gördükleri için ne oldu bu sefer o insanları getirdiler peygamberin yerine oturtular, belli noktalarda da Allah'ın yerine oturtular.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	We are coming from Baba Mansur family. It is called dede family. They have followers who belongs to them. This means it is like the relationship between sheikh and followers in the Sunni society. It is not different. But in the Sunni society at least there is Islam but Alevis do not have Islam. They accept only what dede says but dede is after all a human being. Therefore he can make mistakes and commit sin. In the Sunni side, as they regard that sheikh does not commit sin, in the Alevi side it is the same. However, what the Quran and the Sunna teaches us that no one exists in the world without mistakes except Allah and the prophet. Everyone can make mistakes... As they see the people without mistakes what it happened is that they let them to sit in the place of the prophet and in some extent to let them sitting in the place of God.
43	Vural	IN TURKISH	Kaybetmeleri çok normal bence, çünkü,babadan oğula geçen bi sistemde biri geldiğinde sana bişey anlatmıyosa veya eee her türlü farklı kirlilikleri insanlar onlarda da görmeye başlayınca, geri adım atmaya başlıyolar tabi. Çünkü, bi kutsal bi şey yükleniyo yani, çünkü şeye de bakılmıyor mesela dedeye, sonuçta İslamdaki imam anlayışı nedir? Bize bilgi aktarması, bizi doyurması veya illa ben imamın yaptığını yapmak zorunda değilim veya şey değilim, bana verdiği şeyleri seçiyorum, anlattığı şeylerin içinden seçiyorum, bana doğru geleni alıyorum, ama eee dede sonuçta babadan oğula geçen yani doğuştan gelen bişey farklı bi şeye veriliyo ve bilmiyorum onun temiz davranması, ahlaklı olması veya bilgi vermesi gerekirdi diye düşünüyorum. Öyle bi şey olmadığı için kaybediyolar bence.

		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I think it is very normal that they lose it. Because in a system which passes from father to son, when someone comes and tells you nothing, or for example, when people see several filths on them, they start stepping back of course. Because you put a holy meaning on them. You do not mind to that I mean, to Dede. In the end, what is the belief of İmam in İslam? Transferring information to us, feeding us, or I do not have to do whatever the Imam does, or I am not kind of... I choose what he gives to me, I choose from among the things he tells me, I receive what is right for me. But, I mean, the title of Dede is something that passes from father to son, it is a birth right. It is transferred to someone just random. I do not know, I think that he must be a true person, morally clean or must be educative. I think they lose for the lack of such fact.
44	İsmail	IN TURKISH	Dedelerin bir gerçekten dinden çok uzaklar. Ya gerçekten yani bugün Alevilik deyip te içini dolduracak böyle baba yiğit adamlar yok. kendisini anlatacak insanlar yok. E, şimdik gidiyosun... Ben çocukluğumdan hatırlıyorum işte. Adama soru soruyosun, adam diyo ki: Senin beynini yıkamışlar. Eğer sen bana cevap veremezsen, kim verecek cevap?... doğru dürüst cevap verebilmen için, ben de seni kabul etmem lazım. E, sen bana tabiri caizse hakaret et, küfret, e ondan sonra senin beynini yıkamışlar e sen bana cevap ver bi bana. Ali kimdir? Oniki imam kimdir? Kitap nedir? Peygamber nedir? Bunların içini doldur bakalım. Aa ondan sonra, zaten bunların hepsi çorap söküğü gibi gelecek, yani kendi kimliğini aramayan bir insan, bilmiyom yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Dedes are really so far from religion. Well, really if you take Alevism and put a meaning in it, there is no such men. There is not anyone to tell about it. So, you go now... I remember from my childhood, I am saying it. You are asking a question and he replies: "They brainwashed you". If you will not answer to me, then who will?... For you to duly reply me, I have to accept you too. Well you almost insult me, swear at

			me, say that I am brainwashed, so you reply to me. Who is Ali? Who are the 12 Imams? What is the book? What is the Prophet? Fill the inside of these aspects and let us see. Then you will see, they will all happen like chain reaction. I mean, a person who does not comprehend its own identity, I mean, I don't know...
45	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Dedelerin konuşmalarını dinlediğim zaman siyasi talepler dışındaki söyledikleri şeylere de katılıyorum yani genel anlamda. Yani dinden hz. Aliden, 12 imamlardan bahsettikleri için çok abest bir şey söylemiyorlar. Ama mesela yanlış hatırlamıyorsam 11 sene önce güneş gazetesinde bir dedenin röportajı vardı mesela diyor ki biz aleviler olarak namaz kılmıyoruz diyor, hz. Alinin de namaz kıldığını düşünmüyorum. Bak bunu derse bi dede nerde olursa olsun, ister ben bir milyon alevinin içinde tek başıma olim yine söylerim yanlış konuşuyorsun dede diye... Hz. Alide namaz kılmış. Namaz kılarken öldürülmüş bir insana namaz kılmıyor dersin gülerler adama. O yüzden bu tarz saçma sapan konuşan dedeler de maalesef oluyor ama çok fazla değil çünkü insanlar artık bilinçli daha şuurlu, ben siyasi taleplerin dışında konuşan dedelerden çok fazla abest bir şey duymadım açıkcası.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	When I listen to Dedes' speeches, I agree with them in general means, except of the political demands. I mean, since they speak about religion, Prophet Ali, the 12 Imams, etc. they do not speak peculiar things. However, for example, if I do not remember wrong, there was an interview with a Dede in the newspaper named Güneş. He said we do not perform pray, also that he does not believe that the Prophet Ali used to pray either. Listen, if a Dede speaks like this, even if I am the only one among one million , I would object for he speaks incorrectly... The Prophet Ali also used to pray. If you talk about a man who was killed during praying, they laugh at you. There are also such Dedes who speak utterly nonsense, but they are not many. I have not heard much nonsense from Dedes who talk about things except of political demands, as a matter of fact.

46	Semra	IN TURKISH	Ama sonradan senah yapılırken herkes giriyor değil mi? Ne bilim düğünlerde de herkes girip oynuyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	But when they do semah everyone can join it, isn't it? They can. I don't know in the weddings everyone can join and dancing too.
47	Osman	IN TURKISH	Cem evlerinde beraber oynama, müzik çalma (Tarkan'dan çalsalar da biz de seyretsek). Öyle bir şey yok yani dinde kadın erkek bir arada ama işte zamanla dejenere ola ola o hale gelmiş yani. Sübhaneleden başlıyoruz hep Allah'a ibadet yapıyoruz. Kadınlar da mesela kılıyorsa arkada camide o da o şekilde ibadetini yapıyor. Gidip şarkı söylemiyor, bağırıp çağırıp oyun oynamıyor yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In the cem house they are dancing, playing music if they can play from Tarkan then we can watch. There is no such thing in the religion that men and women are together; but in the course of time it has been degenerated... Are we going to mosque and dancing there? We begin with Subhaneke and we worship for Allah.
48	Leman	IN TURKISH	Bizim evin yakınında bir cemevi var gençleri görüyorum gitarla giriyorlar. Kâfirin, düşmanlarının yaptığı şeyleri yapıyorsun.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	There is a cem house nearby, young people go there with their guitars. They do the things of infidel and enemy.
49	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Diğer cenazelere geelim, gayet güzel cenazelerini alıyorlar, yıkıyorlar, namaz kılıyorlar, camide beklettiriyorlar. Arkasından herkes üzgün, kimse gülüp de yemek yemiyor, ağzını doldurmuyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Let's talk about funerals. Duly they receive the body, they wash, they pray, make it wait in the mosque. After the funeral, everybody is sad, no one laughs and eats and feasts.
50	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Bu fethullah gülen hocanın izzettin doğan ile projesidir. Bunu 1993 te demiş. 20 sene sonra hayata geçmiş. Tansu çiller e gülen caminin yanına cemevi yapalım diyormuş. Bak samimiyet 20 sene öncesinden gelmeye başlıyor, öyle bir senelik iki senelik bir şey değil. Adam onu tanımıyor, o adamı tanımıyor, o onun kahvesine bomba atıyor, gazi mahallesinde bunlar yaşandı yani. O onun köyünü basıyor falan filan.

			Bunlar hep fethullah glen aklı fikri zikri řu; tanışın. Başka bir řey deęil. Yani farklı insan deęilsiniz... Orada amaç řuydu; biz bir řey yapalım en azından avlusunda otururlar, camiden çıkan hacı amcamda oturur, oradaki alevi dedem de oturur en azından konuşurlar, tanışırlar, bir řeyleri paylaşırlar, çünkü bir de aşevi var ortada.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	This is project of Fethullah Glen and İzzettin Doęan. Glen said this in 1993. After twenty years it was put into practice. Glen was telling to Tansu Çiller about this mosque and cem house project. Look at sincerity it has been started twenty years before. It is not oneyear or two years. The man does not recognize him and he does not recognize the man. He throws a bomb into his coffee. We experienced this in Gazi event. He was invading his village. Thought of Fethullah Glen is that getting acquainted. It is nothing. This means you are not different...The aim was that we should do something at least thepeople can sit in the courtyard. The hadgi who goes out of mosque can sit there, the dede who is there can sit too and they can talk, meet, sharing something since there is also eating house in the middle.
51	Semra	IN TURKISH	Olabilir yani...kaynařtırmak amaçlı. Yani niyet iyiye niye olmasın ki. İyi niyetle yapılmıř bir řey olabilir yani. Yani neticede Trkiye’de yařayan, aynı havayı soluyan insanlarız yani. Alevi, Snni, Trk, Krt ben bu tr ayrımların yapılması taraftarı asla deęilim. Yani her tarafta iyisi de vardır kts de. Yani Sivas’ın iyisi de vardır, kts de. Alevinin iyisi de vardır, kts de. Temizi de vardır, pisi de. Ne diyeyim. Yani birleřtirmek amaçlı yapılan her řeyin taraftarıyım. Yani olabilir niye olmasın ki. Yani kardeřce biz aynı ortamda yařayabiliriz.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	It can be...for aiming acquaintance. If intention is good why not, this means if it is done by good intention then it can be. Eventually we live in Turkey in the same environment, we breathe same atmosphere. I am not in favor of any distinctions such as Alevi, Sunni, Turk and Kurd. On each side there good and bad ones that is there are good and bad ones in

			Sivas. There are good Alevis and bad Alevis. There are clean Alevis and dirty Alevis. So I am in favor of everything with regard to aiming unity. So it can be why not. We can live in the same environment with fraternity.
52	Vural	IN TURKISH	Herhangi bi baskı şeyi olmamalı veya talepleri var Alevilerin, bence karşılanmalı yani sonuçta bu memleketin, bu memlekette vergi veriyorsa, e bu memleketin ya da bi kısmı vergi veriyorsa diye, ne biliyim belli ihtiyaçları karşılanıyorsa diyanet işleri tarafından onların da karşılanmalı talepleri neyse veya kendilerini nasıl tanımlamak istiyorsa bence eee izin verilmeli gerçekten, kendilerini yani onlar tanımlamalı. Yani, sunni ulema onları tanımlamamalı, yani ne düşünüyorlarsa onu, öyle olmalı. yani ben şuyum buna inanıyorum gibi, ben böyleyim şuna inanıyorum gibi bilmiyorum yani, daha özgür bırakılmalılar yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	There should not be any oppression. Alevis have demands and I think it be fulfilled since they pay tax in this country. If the other people pay tax and their demands are fulfilled by the DRA then Alevis demands should be fulfilled too. I think it should be allowed that they identify themselves according to their wishes. Sunni ulema should not identify them...I believe in this, I am like that,...I do not know, they should let them free.
53	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Ben alevi toplumu olarak bir kesinlikle ve kesinlikle bu ülkede ikinci sınıf bir insan muamelesi görmek istemiyorum. Benim ödediğim vergiler var sen benden de kesiyorsun vergiyi benden de alıyorsun vergiyi. Benim maaşımdan da vergi gidiyor o zaman Çamlıca'nın tepesine cami yapıyorsan Ataşehir'de mimar Sinan camini yapıyorsan kardeşim delikanlıysan, yüreğin yetiyorsa samimiysen kocaman da bir cem evi yap. Ne bilim 100.000 kişilik atıyorum. Yap bunu! Sen yapmayı değil elimizde olanları almaya çalışıyorsun veya önüne engeller koyuyorsun. Bugün baktığın zaman ak parti belediyelerinde cem evleriyle ilgili sıkıntı. Türkiye'de mahalle başı cami varsa belki

			mahalle başı kadar olmasa da cem evlerinin de olması lazım. Bunu kim yapıyor Cem vakfı mesela sen benin verdiği paralarla, bağışlarla yapılıyor, cami diyanet bütçesiyle yapılıyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	As an Alevi community I do not want to be secondary citizenship in this country. There are taxes that I pay, you tax me and I pay you. Those taxes are deducted from my salaries. So if you are building a mosque on top of Çamlıca hill, if you are building a mosque named Mimar Sinan Cami in Ataşehir, then if you are a man, if you have the courage, if you are sincere, then build a Cem House. For example let it have a capacity of 100.000 people. Do that! You are not aiming to give, but to claim what we already have and putting sets. Considering today's situation, there are problems in AKP's municipalities about Cem Houses. There are mosques on every corner in Turkey, so even if not so many, there must be Cem Houses as well. Who finances this? For example Cem Foundation's, our donations, funds. However the Ministry of Religious Affairs budget finances the foundations of mosques.
54	Semra	IN TURKISH	O şekilde benimsemek istiyorsa yaşasın yani. Hane katılığa gerek yok.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	If someone embraces like that then s/he can live this. Rigidity is not necessary
55	Ahmet	IN TURKISH	Bi camiden geçen aslında bi cemevinden de geçmesi lazım. Bi cemevinden geçen camiden de geçmesi lazım. birbirini tamamlayan bi ibadet.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	If one goes to mosque s/he should also goes to cem house and if one goes to cem house then s/he should goes to mosque...Actually two of them are coming from same part of worship...their worship complement each other.
56	Ayten	IN TURKISH	Zorunlu olmamalı çünkü çocuğun düşüncesine göre yani. Almak istiyorsa o dersi. Ama kendi istemiyorsa zorla zaten hiçbir şey yaptıramazsın.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	It should not be compulsory since it depend on thought of child. If s/he wants to take the course but if s/he does not you cannot do anything

			with force.
57	Osman	IN TURKISH	Valla Alevilerin neden buna karşı çıktığını ben bilmiyorum. Öğrensinler dinlerini ne var yani bunda korkuyorlar ki, Allah'ı, peygamberi, öğrensinler yani.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Actually I do not understand why Alevis opposite it. Why they are afraid of learning their religion such as Allah, the prophet. They should learn.
58	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Ne Alevi çocuk sünni eğitim almaya, ne sünni çocuk Alevilik dersi almaya zorlanmamalı.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Alevi child should not be enforced to take Sunni education and Sunnis child should not be enforced to take Alevism course.
59	Leman	IN TURKISH	Terrörist gibi görülüyoruz. Ama şimdi okuyoruz, çarşaf giyiyoruz. İşte demokrasi bu. Atatürkçü demokrasi bizim gibi olacak diyor. Siz bizi açmadınız mı. Erkek ve kız bir arada olmamalı. Özgürlük, demokrasi, laiklik safsata altına saklanmış. İslama saygı, dine saygı yok.. Atatürk siyaset adamı geldi geçti, peygamber değil ki saygı duyayım. Tayyip de aynı siyaset adamı.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	We were seen as terrorist, but now we are studying, we are wearing çarşaf. This is democracy... RPP hides itself under the fallacious discourse such as freedom, democracy, laicism. There is no respect to Islam, there is no respect to religion...Atatürk was a politician and he had come and gone off. He is not a prophet so why should I respect him? Tayyip is a politician too
60	Osman	IN TURKISH	Daha çok dine ağırlık vereceğine kalkınmak için yani gelecekte ne yapacağım ben de bunu yapacağım, o üçüncüyse ben dördüncü köprüyü yapacağım demen lazımken yok Atatürk, yok din, yok niye mecburi hizmet, mecburi din eğitimi, yok bilmem ne, böyle şeyler uğraşiyor havada su dövüyor.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Whether RPP should give more attention to religion, for development that is what I will do in the future, I will do that, if the bridge is third one, then he should say he will do fourth one. But he says Atatürk, why compulsory service, compulsory religious education, I do not know what. They deal with nonsense,

			wasting time on nothing.
61	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Şu an tek adam ülkesindeyiz maalesef...10 senedir tek adam. Nolucak bilemiyorum...İlk başta çıktıklarında gömlek değiştirdik biz, milli gömleği çıkardık demişlerdi insanlar da milli görüş gömleğini çıkardık demesinden etkilendi. Çünkü her kesime hitap eden, her kesimi kucaklayıcı bir iktidar gibi düşünüldüler, baktığımızda bugün gene milli görüş gömleğini giydiler. İki, üç senedir giydiler, çok açık net belli oluyor...ak parti bugün tabiri yerindeyse Necmettin Erbakan dilini kullanmaya başladı. Ben Erbakan'ın Türkiye'de din, diyanete çok zarar verdiğini düşünen biriyim... Bunu milli görüşlüler kabul etmez ama başbakan olduğu zaman sarıklı, cübbeli çarşaflılar geldi mesela iftar verdi mesela. O anki Türkiye konjektörü onu kabul etmiyordu. Şıngayı tabiri caizse bir anda bastırdı, 28 Şubat oldu, paşalar veya o dönemin derin güçleri diyim bir el attılar, adamı bir anda tepe taklak götürdüler. Ve olan da dini çerçevede yaşamaya çalışan insanlara oldu. İşte imam hatiplerle ilgili söylemleri kanlı olacak, kansız mı olacak gibi söylemler bitirdi. Bu ne yaptı ilk başta böyle güzel güzel konuştu şimdi bu da ondan hatta daha sivri olmaya başladı.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Unfortunately now we are a one man country... One single man for 10 years. I do not know what will happen... In the beginning, when they appeared on the scene, they said that they relined, they changed the suits of "national vision", and people were affected of what they said. Because they thought that they were a party which appeals all sections, embracing all sections. When we consider today, they wore the national vision suits again. It is since two – three years from now, it is clear and obvious. In a manner of speaking, JDP (Justice and Development Party) started to use the language of Necmettin Erbakan today. I am a person who thinks that Erbakan harmed religion and religious notions in Turkey... National visionists do not accept this but when he became the Prime Minister, people with frocks,

			imamah came, for example he hosted iftar meals for them. Turkey's conjuncture then did not allow him. In a manner of saying, he injected the syringe in a sudden. The event of 28th of February happened, generals and the powers of the day intervened and they took away the guy immediately. And the harm was left for the people who wanted to live in a religious concept. Like their sayings about İmam Hatip schools (Islamic Divinity High Schools) was like "Will there be blood or not?" What did this man do? He spoke softly in the beginning but later became even sharper.
62	İbrahim	IN TURKISH	Bu en son adam oldu, şimdiye kadar gelen cumhurbaşkanlarının ben çıkıp da ortalıkta bu kadar görüldüğünü görmedim.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	This has become the ultimate man. I have not seen any Presidents of the Republic who show up around this much.
63	İsmail	IN TURKISH	İşte Dersim olayı nedir..Dersim'de Sabiha Gökçen çıkıyor. Sabiha Gökçen niye bombalamış, niye insanları öldürmüş. Dersim olayı diyorsun..Cumhuriyet döneminde her kesime dokunulmuş ama bizim aleviler hala sahip çıkıyor...ee şimdi Dersim olayı diyorsun sen sana şey yapana aşık oluyorsun yani...Şimdi o zaman tamam AKP'nin de yanlışları olabilir ama AK partiye niye o zaman bu kadar şey çıkıyorsun. Seni öldürdü mü ne yaptı?
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	During the period of Republican People's Party, they were not successful but Alevis still support RPP. Bombing of Sabiha Gökçen in Dersim... You talk about Dersim event but you love your enemy. Now, JDP might have mistakes but why you are so against the JDP? Did it kill you, what did it?
64	Ömer	IN TURKISH	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi zulmetti, katletti Alevileri, niye diyemedi? Ama senin çekindiğin, kızdığın sünni dediğin bir adam dedi ki alevilere zulüm yapılmıştır, katledilmişlerdir.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	Why Kılıçdaroğlu could not say RPP persecuted and slayed Alevis. Why he could not? But a man who you beware, be angry at, saying that he is a Sunni said that Alevis were tortured, they were slaughtered.

65	Erdal	IN TURKISH	Hazır oy olarak görüyorlar.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	They see it as already earned instant votes.
66	Erdal	IN TURKISH	CHP’de hiçbir icraat yok, muhalefet yok.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	In RPP (Republican People’s Party), there is no action, no opposition.
67	Ayten	IN TURKISH	Şu anda hiçbir politika yürüttüklerini sanmıyorum. Gene de bize en yakın olduğu için ona veriyoruz.
		ITS TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH	I do not believe that RPP carry out any policies... Still, since they stand the closest to us, we vote for them.



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