

**CLASSIFICATORY STRUGGLES AND ALLIANCE FORMATION
IN ALEVI POLITICS**

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ABSTRACT

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The state creates classification systems and draws the boundaries of political, legal, bureaucratic, religious, and social fields. The criteria of classification are translated into laws and lays the ground for state and government policies. Social groups who are adversely classified tend to challenge the boundaries, definitions, categories, and status forced on them by the state. However, the amount of power that the state holds allows it not only to decide what is legal or legitimate but also to influence the redistribution of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals which are much needed by the dissidents. Thus, the classification struggle between the state and social groups is also class struggle for resources. This thesis investigates the classification struggle in the political and religious field between the Alevi community and the Turkish state. Alevis have been categorized as a heterodox religious group, but they are not legally recognized by the state, which limits their access to resources. The analysis draws attention to the state's symbolic violence and ethnocidal policies and Alevis' strategies of resistance. Following Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, this thesis employs a dynamic and relational perspective while examining the religious and political field and the Alevi – state relations.

ÖZET

ALEVI SİYASETİNDE İTTİFAK VE SINIFLANDIRMA MÜCADELELERİ

SEHERGÜL ÇALIŞ

SİYASET BİLİMİ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, EYLÜL 2021

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Anahtar Kelimeler: dini azınlıklar, Alevi, sınıflandırma mücadelesi, alan teorisi, kavımkırım

Devlet sınıflandırma sistemleri yaratır ve siyasal, yasal, bürokratik, dini ve sosyal olanın sınırlarını belirler. Sınıflandırmanın kriterleri yasalarla sabitlenir, devlet ve hükümet politikalarının temelini oluşturur. Devletin sosyal gruplara dayattığı sınırlar, tanımlar, sınıflamalar ve statüler çoğunlukla bu gruplarca sorgulanır, değiştirilmeye uğraşılır. Fakat devlet, elinde tuttuğu güçle yasal ve meşru olan tepkiyi belirlediği gibi, mücadeleye kalkışan grupların ihtiyaç duyduğu ekonomik, kültürel, sosyal ve sembolik sermayenin dağıtımında da en büyük söz sahibidir. Haliyle, devlet ve sosyal gruplar arasında cereyan eden sınıflandırma mücadeleleri, kaynaklar için verilen bir sınıf mücadelesidir de aynı zamanda. Bu tez, devlet ve Alevilerin dini ve politik alanda verdiği sınıflandırma mücadelesine bu açıdan yaklaşıyor. Aleviler devlet tarafından heterodoks bir grup olarak tanımlanıyor, fakat yasal olarak tanınmıyor olmaları onların kaynaklara erişimini kısıtlıyor. Bu tezde yalnızca devletin sembolik şiddetine ve kavımkırım politikalarına değil, aynı zamanda Alevilerin direniş stratejilerine de yer veren bir analiz yapıldı. Bourdieu'nün ilişkiel sosyolojisini izlek edinen bu tez, Aleviler ve devlet arasındaki ilişki ile dini ve siyasal alanlara dinamik bir perspektifle yaklaşıyor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRMK Culture of Religion and Moral Knowledge.....	50
ECHR European Court of Human Rights.....	1
EU European Union.....	1
FAA Federation of Alevi Associations.....	51
FAF Federation of Alevi Foundations.....	52
FREC Foundation of Republican Education Center.....	52
HBVACA Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Cultural Association.....	51
HDP Peoples' Democratic Party.....	61
HRW Human Rights Watch.....	1
JDP Justice and Development Party.....	2
KWP Kurdistan Workers' Party.....	46
PDP Peace and Democracy Party.....	53
RPP Republican People's Party.....	55
UP Unity Party.....	36
VP Virtue Party.....	39
WPT Workers' Party of Turkey.....	36

1. INTRODUCTION

Alevism has been intriguing for scholars and politicians as its practices, representations, and alliances shed light to wide-ranging issues of modern Turkey. Secularization, politicization, modernization, urbanization, and migration studies thoroughly investigated Alevism and its interaction in the political and religious field to varying extent. The debate surrounding Alevism mostly revolves around theological speculations and commentary regarding the religiosity and Muslimhood of Alevi, which constructs the popular narrative that Alevi belief is too incoherent to handle.¹

On the other hand, the Alevi movement has redefined its role as an international player thanks to the growing body of diaspora and several lawsuits filed against Turkey in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). This new role has brought Alevi a considerable relief within Turkey as the involvement of various supranational institutions, such as the European Union (EU) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), with the legal proceedings and monitoring activities meant sufficient leverage to negotiate its status with the state (Akan 2018, 340).

However, legal struggle, national or international, has brought more and more pressure for Alevi to define and classify their culture. Now, Alevism is contested both legally and culturally, is forced to reorganize itself as a political movement and re-categorize itself due to changing religious performances and is subjected to diverse classificatory criteria by courts, states, allies, and believers.

Alevi are the second largest religious group and the largest ethno-religious group in Turkey. Thus, the politicization and public presence of Alevi are important and appealing matters that has been widely debated in academic and public spheres. Since the 1950's, Alevism has been considerably influenced by modernization processes in many ways. First, the migration from rural to urban areas induced Alevi to politicize due to the increase in education level and the accelerated familiarity with socialist movements. Alevi politicization occurred in a way that the ideological orientations had not prioritized ethnic or religious background (Massicard 2010).

¹All translations, including transcriptions, are mine unless stated otherwise.

Moreover, the experience of ‘otherness’ was felt on a daily basis due to the urbanization process in 1960’s. Alevis began residing and working side-by-side with Sunnis in the big cities, which affected the dynamics of Alevi identity. Then came the migration wave to Europe, and Alevis started forming diasporas which later evolved into the prime mover of the Alevi Revival in 1990’s. After the military coup of 1980 became the undoing of the leftist movement in Turkey, Alevis, who chiefly organized within socialist politics, were strewn around different political, religious, and ethnic organizations.

Having survived traumatic incidents and several massacres, Alevis decided to organize as an identity movement under the influence of the international political context, as well as the political environment in Turkey in the 1990’s. The Alevi diaspora and Alevi institutions in Europe contributed remarkably to the Alevi Revival, providing the economic and social capital they held to the equal citizenship cause of Alevis in Turkey. Alevi movement’s recognition in the international civil society resulted in crucial developments in terms of religious rights and freedoms (such as Alevism classes) in Europe, which forced Turkey’s hand during the accession negotiations with the EU.

In 2000’s, Turkey had undergone an ideological transformation since an Islamic party seized power and immediately started challenging the Kemalist ideology. The challenge included the fierce criticisms of the constitutional secularism, which alerted Alevis who considered secularism as the guarantee of their religious freedom and survival. From then on, Alevis’ already arduous relationship with the state turned into a more challenging struggle against the classification efforts of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, JDP).

1.1 Hypotheses, Theory, Methodology

In this thesis, I provide a close look into the nature of Alevi – state relationship with a specific focus on the JDP era. I argue that Alevis have been subjected to ethnocide since the Ottoman Empire, and that the very classification system which has been instrumental in legitimizing the state violence is still being implemented. Moreover, I demonstrate that the ethnocidal paradigm and the classification criteria of the Ottoman Empire – CUP – The Republic of Turkey continuum have been inherited by the JDP through my textual analysis of The Alevi Workshops.

Apart from the transcripts of said workshops, I look into the speeches of the JDP and DRA officials in order to point out the similarities and differences in both mentality and practice in terms of their approach to Alevi and Alevism. Lastly, I remark on the parallelism between pre- and post-Alevi Opening period to investigate whether the variance in the positions of Alevi in the political and religious field has an effect on state's policies regarding Alevi.

Theoretically speaking, I analyze Alevi – state relations with the lenses of Bourdieu's field theory, as I believe reflexive sociology helps the researcher to remain safe from substantialist and essentialist ways of thinking in analyzing social groups. Also, field theory provided me with the proper analytical tools that fit the diversity of the Alevi community and Alevi and dynamics of Alevi – state relationship. Bourdieu suggests that actors compete in structured spaces called fields, where they produce and exchange goods, services, information, or status. Actors act in accordance with their habitus, that is the physical and mental schemes of behavior and mentality.

Habitus is the attitude, taste or tendencies that actors acquire through belonging to a certain social class, such as bourgeois or Shia. Habitus induces specific subjective dispositions for when actors strategize in the field to grasp more economic, cultural, symbolic or social capital. The state is the transcending actor that monopolizes the social field, it also competes for the total monopoly of every field and for accumulation all types of capitals.

In context of the Alevi politics, the state's position as the regulator of the religious and political fields limits Alevi's possession of capitals, thus leading to further struggle. The state has enough power and capital to prevent Alevi from circulating, acquiring, or accumulating more capital through the classification system it imposes. Alevi struggle against the classification efforts of the state because they want to improve their position to access more resources. The state dissipated Alevi's social capital through forced migration and mass killings, economic capital through dispossession and confiscation, cultural capital through indoctrination, assimilation, secularization, and urbanization, and symbolic capital through defamation, non-recognition, and coercive classification.

Additionally, the state has been implementing military, economic, ecological, and cultural policies that resulted in serious decrease in Alevi population, increase in hate crimes, loss of worshipping places such as lodges and jiares (otherwise known as ziyaret), impoverishment of Alevi communities, deforestation of Alevi settlements, privatization of sacred places, and so on.

That is why I use the term “ethnocide” to encompass all strategies to reconstruct

Alevi identity. Borrowing from Yalçınkaya, my definition of ethnocide not only includes the assimilationist practices that aims to culturally transform Alevism but also the practices, performances, and strategies to politically transform Alevism. The state uses its capital and position to construct an Alevism that is indistinguishable from Sunnism and a Kurdishness that is no different than Turkishness. Ethnocidal practices ensure that identities are included in a way that they are continuously externalized, so that they solidify the position of the state or the dominant actor in the field.

Alevis strategize, too, and use tactics to struggle against the classificatory practices of the state. They form alliances with actors that hold similar or better positions, compromise in return for capital, force the state into embracing their goals, and so on. For instance, some Alevi actors are allies of the state due to common ethnicity, which allows them accumulate capital to further their agenda, some others prefer cooperating with the international actors to level down the position of the state, or another group acts together with several marginalized communities for the sake of self-preservation.

In reviewing the literature on Alevi – state relations and The Alevi Workshops, three key themes appeared. First, it is apparent that the majority of the researchers has reached a consensus over the ambivalence, syncretism, enigma, or vagueness of Alevi identity. Some studies state that Alevism is essentially ambiguous and syncretic, while others argue that the reason behind the ambivalence should be sought in modernization, secularization, or urbanization processes. It is often concluded that Alevism as a religious or ethno-religious identity which was absorbed or dissipated by leftist ideology or Kurdish movement.

Second, Alevism was defined or discussed within the borders of Sunni Islam. The publications overwhelmingly investigate Alevis who consider themselves within Turkish Alevism and refer to other Alevisms as heterodox, Anatolian Shia, Kızılbaz, or deviant groups (especially in theology). The term ‘traditional Alevism’ is generated within such literature, and the most common argument is that the non-traditional Alevism, especially Kurdish or Dersim Alevism, is a series of corrupt politico-religious performances or simply atheism. The debate on ‘Alevism without Ali’ is a prime example to this group of research.

And third, state is mostly treated as the center of the politics and the political. Therefore, the state (or government) was expected or confronted to provide certain definitions, categories, rights, freedoms, or solution as if the political has to be related with and adjusting its position according to the state. This approach can be observed in studies which endorse the view that Alevis have always been loyal to

the state, that Alevi (-Bektaşis) have supported the Kemalist regime and the RPP, that Alevis are the gatekeepers and guarantee of secularism, and that Alevism is the utmost Turkish – Islam.

It is also worth carefully noted that the literature on Alevism increasingly produces knowledge which is in congruence with Turkish – Islam synthesis, putting the state and state ideology at the center of the academic field (Deniz 2019). What is more, the effects of the transition of Turkey into an authoritarian and Islamic regime can already be observed in Alevi studies, as some erroneous empirical and ethnographic data is still circulated due to their political value. A similar approach is to present the Alevi community as a rootless and divergent group of individuals or political units based on said fallacious and biased data.

Also, Alevism is investigated through Sunni theology and its analytical tools, which causes the eradication of Alevism as an in-itself identity. The very categorization of Alevism as a heterodox form of Sunni Islam is an example for how academia plays its role in ethnocidal politics.

Having said that, I avoid defining, categorizing, explaining, or detailing Alevism and Alevi ritual throughout this thesis. I also did not refer to the studies that include incorrect data as I do not want to contribute to the reproduction of such knowledge. Also, I chose not to use the data I collected through participant observation and interviews because of the political setting in academia and Turkey. I excluded or refrained from a meticulous analysis of certain incidents and actors in the last decade for the same reason.

Another point should be made about my position regarding Alevi Studies: I am an Alevi Zaza-Kurdish researcher, first generation university graduate, and born and raised in a highly securitized Alevi – socialist neighborhood in Istanbul. I actively work for the promotion of freedom of religion and belief, monitor hate speech and crime for various organizations, and have been doing fieldwork in Alevi communities for the last seven years for several projects. My understanding of objectivity bears no relevance with the reductionist ways of doing science which require researchers to deny or pretend to put aside their ‘subjective positionality’ (Haraway 1988). Rather, I benefited greatly from the intuition and knowledge that my identity provides, although I had to auto-censor myself for the reasons I mentioned above. Considering my position regarding Alevism and politics, this thesis must read as an analysis from my situated point of view.

Researching Alevism for both academic and political reasons made me eager to have a close look at some of the claims in the available literature, such as ambivalence

and loyalty of Alevism. I conjectured that the nature of the Alevism as a unity transcending the political perspective of difference or categories was controversially translated into the academic classification as syncretic and ambivalent. In addition, my initial research led me argue that the loyalty of Alevis to the state or certain ideologies might have been worth another look with a different perspective.

The classificatory struggle is at the heart of understanding the relations between Alevis and the state. This thesis investigates how Alevis and the state contest each other in the political and religious field by employing qualitative methods of inquiry. I integrate discourse analysis to examine the news, speeches, state documents, reports of the Alevi Workshops. This study provides an exciting opportunity to approach Alevi Studies with the analytical toolbox of reflexive sociology, and it makes an original contribution to the investigation of state – Alevi relations in terms of its relational theoretical and methodological approach. Due to practical constraints, this thesis cannot provide a comprehensive review of all the related actors, positions, and incidents. Also, a full discussion of the politics of Alevism and state is beyond the scope of this thesis, hence the limited references to the secularism debate within the state and Alevi community.

Therefore, I offer a textual analysis of the verbatim records of The Alevi Workshops and the Final Report of The Alevi Workshops, because these texts bring together participants who have been involved in Alevi politics for decades as state officials, politicians, journalists, academics, religious leaders, and so on. I also evaluated the aftermath of the Alevi Opening to establish whether the workshops have influenced the state policy and to determine whether there was a continuity of state policy regarding Alevis. I benefit from the media coverage and state records of parliamentary motions, reports, and policy documents for investigating post-Opening process.

1.2 Limitations, Opportunities, Conclusions

I draw the following conclusions from my study: First, it is possible to suggest that the state maintained its approach towards Alevism, which is to include the community within the Turkish Sunni nation. The practices to achieve a homogeneous nation varied in accordance with the political contexts throughout centuries, and included the following: armed violence, forced migration, demographic engineering, and symbolic violence in form of coercive classification, legal erasure, juridical nor-

malization, assimilation, normalization of hate speech and crime, criminalization and securitization, ecological and spatial violence, encouragement of social hostility. Second, the state policies listed above have been imposed by the JDP government, though the magnitude and implementation styles slightly differ.

It can be said that the JDP aims to construct an Alevi identity which is politically irrelevant and externalized, but culturally assimilated into Sunni Islam – a mentality I describe as ethnocidal. Third, Alevis have been pressured to strengthen the state’s arguments about their identity, to reconstruct their culture in a way that serves the monopoly of the state over the religious and political field.

Fourth, the most distinctive characteristics of the post-Opening policies of the JDP regime is that it legitimizes its means with references to the fact that the JDP indeed organized an Alevi Opening and the arguments, concerns and suggestions of the Sunni participants of the workshops, rather than of Alevis. And lastly, the classification struggle between Alevis and the state has been used in Sunnification of not just the religious field, but the political field and every segment of social life, too. To put it differently, the JDP government utilized the classification system for both monopolizing the political field and the transcendent social field.

One of the more significant conclusions to emerge from this study is that a large number of the policy preferences in aftermath of the Alevi Opening were suggested by the theologians and Sunni participants during the workshops. For instance, Alevi research centers and institutions were founded in theology and related faculties, educational material about Alevism was written by theology faculties, Alevi *dedes* who support Turkish–Islam synthesis were employed and trained in DRA for a while, and so on.

Moreover, the concerns about the lack of religion in social life and excess of secularism in state affairs were heard, and later expressed by the JDP government in the parliament. In a way, the discussions over Alevism and its positionality in relation with the state legitimized and paved the way for the anti-secular authoritarian regime the JDP has created, let alone promoting religious freedom and equal citizenship. Turkish secularism used to be complicated due to the presence of the DRA, but now it is approached with caution as its removal from the constitution was publicly discussed by DRA officials and parliamentarians.

On the other hand, the extent to which Turkish secularism granted rights and freedom to Alevism is controversial. As Alevi institutions repeatedly urged the government and the public, Turkey has a state issue, rather than Alevism, religiosity, or secularism. The power and the capitals which the state hold is the underlying

reason why the state aims to convince the public that there is an Alevi, sharia, Kurdish, terror, and so on. The state needs enemies to remain as the dominant actor, to monopolize all the fields, to accumulate more capital than other actors, to circulate the knowledge that serves its aims. Therefore, the state will continue to antagonize certain identities until all actors in the field assume the positions it sees appropriate, and all actors lose their characteristics as in-itself identities and turn into state-structured inauthentic cultural entities.

This research also suggests that Alevi institutions can be evaluated in two major groups: organizations which pursue identity politics only and organizations which combine identity politics with class politics. The first group, otherwise referred to as the right-wing Alevis before, advocates for the recognition of Alevis by the state. The latter is more engaged with the leftist ideology since Alevis have economic, cultural, political problems, as well as religion-related problems. Unlike the first group, the latter pursues class struggle along with recognition politics through challenging the state monopoly over resources, be it symbolic or material. The left-wing Alevi organizations problematize the state and its monopoly over the redistribution of resources in the field, whereas right-wing Alevi organizations demand their share to be increased without challenging the power that rests in the state. The state has almost always criminalized the Alevi groups which are associated with leftist politics and other social movements, demonstrating how class remains as a burning issue for the dominant.

Taken together, it can also be concluded that the field theory has several advantages in analyzing the political movements. Starting with the actors, the non-determinist but skeptical approach towards the agency enhances the understanding of Alevis as agents who has power and capital to make changes in the field, not as just victims of the acts of others. It also allows us to avoid the reductionism of causality while evaluating the historical incidents, as the strategies, positions, and actions are discussed with a reference to socialization processes. This circular method helps us understand how actors construct the field and the field constructs them. In case of Alevism, the state uses its symbolic capital to draw boundaries of the Alevi identity and reshapes it to manipulate the political and religious fields. Alevis, too, use their resources to reproduce their identity within the changing boundaries while struggling for more power to better their position.

Although reflexive sociology provides a theoretical framework through which the limitations of epistemology can be overcome, my choice of material and case has several disadvantages. Focusing specifically on the Alevi Workshops restricted me from deeply investigating all the actors in the Alevi movement while it offered a

closer look into the practices of the JDP government. Also, due to time limits and choice of material, I refrained from analyzing other actors which acted as allies of JDP, such as the Gülen Movement and nationalists. A whole chapter could be dedicated to the dynamics between Alevi and Kurdish movement in context of the policy choices of the JDP government, but again, it remains to be addressed further.

1.3 Organization

The overall structure of this study takes the form of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. The remaining part of the introductory paper gives a brief summary of the state – Alevi relations until the end of the single party regime in Turkey, which will provide the reader with enough historical knowledge to make sense of the religious and political field. Chapter Two begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions and methodological approach of the research, and looks at how classificatory struggles take place among various actors in the context of Alevi identity.

Chapter Three is concerned with the political and religious fields within which the actors and identities are reshaped and reconstructed, meanings are created and attributed, alliances are formed and dissolved, knowledge is generated and circulated, and lastly, strategies and boundaries are contested. This chapter includes the case study of the Alevi Workshops. Chapter Four examines the aftermath of the Alevi Workshops to investigate the continuity of strategies and alliances. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary and draws upon the entire thesis, tying up the various theoretical and empirical strands, and identifying areas for further research.

The next chapter moves on to describe the theory and methods used in the investigation of classificatory struggles in the political field and explains the concepts and keywords used in this study in greater detail.

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE ALEVI STUDIES

In this chapter, I explain the concepts and theories I employ in my analysis, namely ethnocide, classification, field, habitus, and symbolic capital in the following pages. I first discuss the studies that focus on the categorization of Alevism in general and during The Alevi Workshops, as the related debates in academia directly translated into the discussions in the Alevi Workshops.

Then, I inform the debate with Bourdieu's reflexive theory and methodology on classification struggles and symbolic capital. I argue that the state monopoly over classification system and symbolic capital (especially in the form of symbolic violence) is how the state legitimizes and legalizes the ethnocide of Alevis. Lastly, I invite the studies conducted with the similar theoretical framework to show how the classification has been used as a strategy to assimilate or depoliticize religious or ethnic minority groups.

As Ecevitoglu poetically puts it, there is an "unbearable attraction of defining Aleviness", one may observe by quickly browsing bookstores or reviewing the available literature (Ecevitoglu 2011). The majority of the publication seeks to answer the same two questions: What is Alevism? Who are Alevis? It is quite a valid curiosity, given that Alevis have been a secretive community in order to survive centuries of political and religious violence. This very curiosity objectifies Alevis and Alevism as the object of identification, discussion, and classification. The theologically valid and practical question of the identity or nature of Alevism, however, has been echoed distortedly in the political field. As stated in the first chapter, the research on Alevism aims to discover or assign a 'core' to Alevism.

According to Livni, most of the studies in Alevi literature is not as successful at analyzing historical records or sources and borrowed the concept and definition sets which were produced and approved by the state, without properly filtering them through critical perspectives. Consequently, the essentialist concepts and definitions that were created with a state-centered approach and the postulates shadowed by the wishful thinking of researchers has become dominant in the literature (Livni

2002, 15). That Alevis are democrats, Alevism is egalitarian, Alevi people are loyal to the state and the republic, Alevism is the gatekeeper of laicism are examples of such postulates. Frequently, these postulates turn into phrases to perform victim-blaming: ‘falling in love with their executioner’ in the context of Dersim Massacre and Alevi’s voting for the RPP, for instance.

2.1 Postulates And Dichotomies

Another set of postulates concern the religious nature of Alevism: It is ambivalent, ambiguous, enigmatic, and surely syncretic, the overwhelming majority of the literature argues. The commonsensical view of Alevism seems to reflect perspective of such research: “Alevism must declare whether they are Muslim or a separate religion first”(Erdemir 2005). Another question the both the academia and the public raise is whether Alevism is the truest form of Islam or not, a claim uttered increasingly in parallel with the rise of critical Muslimhood and far-right political orientations that seek to lessen the effect of Arabic culture in Turkish Islam (Deniz 2012; Küçükahmet 2007; Sezgin 1996).

What is more, the ambivalence or so-called syncretism of Alevism was argued to be the reason behind why Alevi politicization was less capable of organizing as an identity movement (Ertan 2017, 19). Massicard goes further as to describe Alevism as an “identity movement without an identity”, reasoning that it must be so because of the disputes over ethnic and religious roots of Alevism (2007, 18). The positions of state and DRA officials seems to be aligning with these analyses as both defines Alevism as a heterodox interpretation of Islam and is too ambivalent and fragmented to exist on its own terms. During The Alevi Workshops, this commonality in perspective became an issue, because most of the participants were Sunni state and DRA officials.

These postulates and researchers’ consciousness of them are important as they are indeed embedded in both public conversation and the academic literature on Alevism. It must be carefully observed that the category and definition of Alevism (or any other research object, in that manner) chosen by every actor determines the analysis of and the approach towards the demands, positions, relations or processes through which Alevis relate themselves to the state, or vice versa. The very curiosity regarding Alevism has been political and purposefully politicized by the state

(Yalçınkaya 2014). Having acknowledged that, as a researcher and as an Alevi, I try to avoid the attraction of defining and categorizing Alevism throughout my analysis.

Apart from the postulates, there are several dichotomies through which Alevism has been predominantly discussed: Turkish – Kurdish, Islamic – non-Islamic, traditional – modern, rural – urban, leftist – statist, and orthodox – heterodox. I will discuss these dichotomies in two groups I think are more encompassing: traditional - modern Alevism and Islamic or non-Islamic Alevism (also known as heterodox or orthodox Islam). The literature on modernization of Alevism discusses the rural-to-urban migration, the influence of urbanization on religion and places of worship, the change in the language and performance of religious music, prayers, or rituals, and the authenticity of religion.

The interaction between Islam and Alevism is overwhelmingly a theological discussion: Is Alevism a sect of Islam or a separate religion? Is it heterodox? How is it different from Sunni Islam? The discussion surrounding the position of Alevism within religious field has been more interesting for the state, rather than political field, as the religion of Alevi has also been directly related to continuous re-making of the ideal Sunni Turkish nation.

The analyses on Alevism through the traditional – modern dichotomy argue that the Alevism which has been reproduced under the influence of modernization processes is a corrupt version of the traditional, pure, rural Alevism. The tradition has been lost because of the migration and urbanization (also socialism and other leftist ideas), leaving Alevism a broken, lost, fragmented belief system that fell far from its roots.

The moderator of the Alevi Workshops, Necdet Subaşı, corroborates this account and argues that modern Alevism did in fact rejected its traditions and drifted away from its origins, making it finally possible for Alevi to live in harmony within Sunni Turkish society (Subaşı 2001, 147-148). The praise of what is pure, what is authentic leads to biased analyses. Alevism, not different from other religions, has gone through various transformations over time, especially after the community had to and was forced to migrate. However, boiling down the explanation for these changes to the dichotomy of traditional and modern causes the misinterpretation of historical continuity as well as the reproduction of social interactions, symbols, practices, and rituals.

2.2 Authenticity, Objectivity, and Anachronism

As Theodossopoulos puts it, the criteria of authenticity are political. The authenticity debate introduces the past and the connection with it in a way to “legitimize claims, establish relationships, and set the boundaries of identities” and the process of doing so is often politically charged (Theodossopoulos 2013, 15). The criteria of authentic/traditional Alevism is also quite essentialist. The spatial criterion suggests that Alevism is a belief system or religion practiced in rural areas. It is isolated from the outer world, in other words, the practices have remained the same for hundreds of years.

Believers still preserve their connection with the hearth system and perform the necessary rituals to show their obedience to the sacred order. The legal, religious, political, economic, and social affairs revolve around the hearth and related institutions such as *musahiplik* (sacred fraternity) and *dedelik* (spiritual leadership). Those communities who follow this essentialist criteria are regarded as traditional Alevi.

Among the flagbearers of this is Yıldırım whose Traditional Alevism has sparked many criticisms that were previously directed to the scholars who corroborate the Turkish-Islam synthesis of the state (Ocak 1998; Subaşı 2010; Yılmaz 2021; Zelyut 2009). Here is an excerpt from the book to illustrate the argument that modern Alevism is a corrupt and porous version of what was once traditional and ‘real’:

“The second half of the 20th century constitutes the most critical breaking points of Alevi history. Having faced modernization in this period, Alevi identity has entered a crisis and transformation process, similar to other traditional isolated social identities. In the face of impositions of modernism, it has been challenging for Alevi to protect and to adapt their traditional belief and culture to modern life, so, they went on to abandoning their religious and cultural attachments. This first generation that can be described as the first causality of the unprepared encounter with the modernization has tried to fill the gaps in their identities which was left from their Alevi values with ideologies such as Kemalism and Leftism. Hence the birth of a syncretic identity” (Yıldırım 2018, 23).

Social and historical dynamics change, so does religions. Some of the issues emerging from the debate on authenticity and modernization relate specifically to “further peripheralization, social exclusion, denial of indigenous rights, or the denigration of cultural expressions that are deemed not authentic enough” (Theodossopoulos 2013, 355) Alevi who are no longer connected with the hearth (*ocak*) may be left without a saying in discussions directly affect their everyday lives, Alevi neighborhoods may hesitate to give their opinion about *cemevis* (places of worship for Alevi) – the

fear of getting labeled as inauthentic or ‘polluted’ can be traced in the apologetic and defensive language in manifests and publications of Alevi movements (Dressler 2013, 203; Yalçınkaya 2019, 110-111). There are multiple authenticities, multiple definitions based on many ‘traditional Alevisms’, multiple arguments, and also multiple political positions in Alevism debates.

“In many respects, authenticity encodes the expectation of truthful representation. It is concerned with the identity of persons and groups, the authorship of products, producers, and cultural practices, the categorical boundaries of society: “who” or “what” is “who” or “what” claims to be”(Theodossopoulos 2013, 339).

In addition to the authenticity bias, scholars who study Alevism within the modernization paradigm may fall into another trap: anachronism. The insistence to grasp an Alevism which is frozen in collective memory in the pre-modern, pre-urbanization, pre-secular era does not comply with the sociological imagination. However, these studies serve the political need for determining the ethnicity of Alevism. As mentioned before, the ethnic roots of Alevi rituals have been fiercely contested in order to associate it with different political movements.

The DRA and theology faculties produced a vast literature on Alevism within Turkish-Islam synthesis. These two institutions built up the existing investigations which extensively studied Alevism as heterodox Islam with an emphasis on Turkishness. Starting from late 19th century, many CUP members and prominent intellectuals of the early Republican era (Köprülü, Baha Said, Hasan Reşit Tankut, to name a few) supported the argument that Alevism is a syncretic religion of assimilated Turks (Bora 2013).

In the late 20th century, a century later, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak used the term ‘halk İslamı’ (popular Islam) to suggest that Alevism is a heterodox interpretation of Islam, a syncretic religious belief (Ocak 1996). To name a few scholars from theological standpoint who represents the views of the DRA, Fıçlalı and Onat conclude that Alevism is indeed an Islamic order and the distinction between Sunni or Shia Islam and Alevism stems from political conflicts (Fıçlalı 1990; Onat 2009). Moreover, they argue that Alevi are Turks who had an antagonistic relationship with the Ottoman Empire, and the ethnicity ‘crises’ arise from the propaganda of non-Islamic and anti-Turk political groups (Kutlu 2003, 45).

The DRA and the state are not the only actors referring to the paganistic or shaman roots of Alevism to make their case about Alevi’s ethnicity. Similar scholarship on behalf of Kurdish Alevism is quite rich and not exempt from committing anachro-

nism. Kurdish scholar Etem Xemgîn discusses Kurdish Alevism in context of Mazda and Zoroastrian religion by comparing selective rituals that are stripped of historical context (Xemgîn 1995). The most famous example would be Erdoğan Çınar who claims that Alevis are the descendants of the Luwians, Hittites, Mayans, and the people of the lost Atlantis continent (Çınar 2007). Even though his research has been met with harsh criticism and referred to as ‘scandal’, his claims remain phenomenally popular among Alevi circles (Ünsal Öztürk and Harmancı 2010). Apart from methodological issues, it is anachronistic to categorize Alevism as a shamanic religion due to practices (such as greeting the sunrise or fear of eclipses) that are so common that they were and have been performed across time and space (Markussen 2010, 72-73).

2.3 The Research on the Alevi Workshops

These discussions on the religious and historical background of Alevism in academia and civil society played an important role during the discussions in the Alevi Workshops for two reasons: First, the state did not invite representatives who embraced any interpretation that cut or weakened the ties with Turkishness and Muslimhood to the workshops. Second, the Sunni and Alevi participants, especially in the first meeting which had the highest rate of Alevi participants, discussed serious issues with completely different historical references and narratives in their minds, which created communicational tensions. The need for Alevis to define themselves has been the major demand of Sunni participants as they uttered repeatedly during the workshops.

In his analysis of the relationship between Alevism, state, and scholarship, Gültekin helps us understand why there is such need for a homogenous, frozen, encompassing Alevism from the state’s perspective (2020, 32-33). The state expects a clear-cut and inflexible definition from Alevis, thus “there is a need for producing written resources to serve as reference to dynamics of identity-making and historical continuity”. Due to theological nature of the Alevism and legitimacy debate, scholars producing knowledge within the modernization paradigm must categorize, homogenize, systematize and standardize Alevi rituals and theological framework in a way that is parallel to Turkey’s politics, sociology, and history-writing. According to Karamanoğlu (2013, 13), the Alevi Workshops are a milestone as the state not only demanded an essentialist definition from Alevis, but also tried to impose one.

DRA representatives were persistent that the lack of coherence in Alevi theology necessitated Alevism to be disciplined via Sunni Islam lenses.

Ecevitoğlu and Yalçinkaya argue that such demands and impositions were stemmed from the nature of the organization itself (Ecevitoğlu and Yalçinkaya 2013). The democratic opening process of the JDP in late 2000s that encompasses The Alevi Workshops was introduced as an invitation to initiate a dialogue with all marginalized groups in Turkey. The choice of word, dialogue, creates the illusion of an egalitarian relationship, however, one side of the interaction has the total power of inviting the other(s) and excluding some actors in accordance with its agenda.

Moreover, the selection criteria of the JDP government put a great emphasis on finding the common ground with moderate actors from both sides, which resulted in the depoliticization of the highly political matter at hand (71). Besides, the diversity of the Alevi community has been ignored because of the state's exclusion of those who practice Alevism differently:

What has been overlooked is that the ways of defining and knowing [Alevism] has nothing to do with the state, rather, it concerns the Alevi community itself. Meanwhile, it has been disguised that the reason behind this neglect is the attempt of imposing state's relationship with Sunnism as a reference to the state – Alevi relationship. The state wants to relate itself to an acceptable Alevism - this time constructed by the hands of Alevis themselves, exactly as it relates itself to a Sunnism which is constructed by excluding diversity and differences among Sunnis and within Sunnism ”(Ecevitoğlu and Yalçinkaya 2013, 35).

Majority of the scholarship produced on The Alevi Workshops shares the view that The Alevi Workshops indeed opened Alevism to the public discussion. The disagreement is mostly about the extent to which this opening has been successful or beneficial to various actors. Köse believes that the problems that concern Alevis and the multiple definitions of Alevism are indeed the issues of the public and the state, given that the problems are caused by misinterpretation of secularism during the early Republican era (Köse 2010). Köse also positions Alevis as the loyal supporters of the RPP and left-wing politics, claiming that the embedded nonconformity of Alevis sets an obstacle against the constructive dialogue and their harsh criticism against the JDP only exacerbates the polarization and mutual antagonism (162).

Another point of discussion was whether The Alevi Workshops had changed the political participation or visibility of Alevis. Arkılıç and Gürcan (2020) point out that the demands of Alevis were not met, even though the opening and official gestures

provided Alevis with more media coverage. In their interviews with representatives from Alevi institutions, they observed that the opening process had collapsed because of the attitude of DRA officials and Sunni scholars, as well as continuing discriminatory acts of the state under the rule of the JDP government. Özkul emphasizes that there were Alevi institutions ready to accept the solution leading to partial representation in DRA, yet the government insisted on ‘too diverse to manage’ argument and ignored Alevis with more pro-DRA views (2015).

According to Borovalı and Boyraz 2015, the government’s ‘all or nothing’ attitude resulted in a graver mistrust between Alevis and the JDP and worsened the relationship between Alevis and the state as they were disillusioned by the statements of the DRA and the JDP leaders. In his extensive analysis on Turkish secularism, Akan reflects on the Alevi Workshop, arguing that the workshops and the simultaneous parliamentary is illuminating in terms of the JDP’s attitude towards secularism.

The incidents that took place in the aftermath of The Alevi Workshops further deteriorated the Alevi – state relations. The DRA embraced a narrative that Alevis would remain as dissidents regardless of their demands being met. Alevis has been increasingly positioned as internal threats especially after the start of Syrian Civil War because of the JDP’s approach to stigmatize Alevis as supporters of the Syrian regime based on religious similarities (Yılmaz and Barry 2020). Gezi Riots in 2013 led to the securitization of Alevis and Alevi neighborhoods, as well as labeling Alevi youth as homebred terrorists (Mutluer 2016). Overall, there is a near consensus in the literature that The Alevi Workshops has been limited in guaranteeing Alevis more political participation, more religious freedom, more rights to grant them equal citizenship, and more positive public image to end social hostility.

2.4 Classification Struggles in Alevi Politics

In the end, Alevis are still where they have been, if not worse, standing over the last few decades. The take-away from the Workshops is that, in order for maintaining and having a chance to strengthen their position in the political field, Alevis must remain within legitimate boundaries. Legitimacy is determined by the state actors in the form of ideal and/or proper categories and definitions. Yet, Alevis have been rejecting the definitions and categories that were imposed at them. As Karaosmanoğlu puts it, Alevis follow a political (and I think, existentialist) strategy

to “counteract Sunni efforts to establish an essential link between Sunni Islam and Alevi Islam” through “counterbalancing the Sunni obsession with origins, rituals, history, and written tradition” (2013, 14). Thus, what seems as ambivalent to the state and Sunni Islam is simply living together as a diverse community for Alevis.

A community without concise definitions, distinctive and homogeneous practices, and strict organization: a perfect storm for promoting interests. The question is, what happens if a vaguely categorized phenomenon becomes a classificatory tool itself? What are the dynamics and mechanisms behind the self-evident categories that are produced and legitimized by the state? According to Bourdieu, state should not be described by its functions, rather, it should be characterized through investigation of the mechanisms that lay its foundations (2014, 10). Surely, the economic or ideological functions may be stressed when research calls for it, but the emphasis should be on the structure of mechanisms.

With this in mind, I am focusing on state as a field of power through which social order is imposed. I disagree with theory of state as the provider of common good or an organization that maintains social order for the pursuit of the well-being of the people. Rather, state is a set of hidden principles that dominates the social order using both physical (law enforcement, counter-guerrilla, militia) and symbolic violence (classification, ethnocide, institutionalized racism) (Bourdieu, 2014, 5-9).

Since the principles are invisible, how do we relate ourselves to them? Borrowing from Elias, Bourdieu argues that state monopolization over violence centralizes power, and the centrality of state makes it a “legitimate racket”, but it remains obscure (129). As the central position regulates the criteria for deciding who are enemies or allies, opponents or friends, and legitimate or illegitimate, its occupant is in a “meta-social position, it is in relation to [the occupant] that others have to measure and situate themselves, these others all being themselves situated in relation to one another in relations of alliance or competition on which he can play” (131).

However, the centrality and concentration of power do not necessarily mean that other actors in the field of power lack agency. On the contrary, “the centralized and monopolized resources tend to gradually pass from the hands of a few individuals to the hands of an increasing number of individuals”, thus creating an interdependent network. And each actor possesses religious, legal, economic, and bureaucratic power in varying complexity (130-131). The complexity of power, also of relations, generates practices and representations within “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures”, or simply habitus (Bourdieu 2013, 72).

Habitus operates as a cognitive mechanism that guides and is produced by the social actors through internalized objective and mental structures. It is the “practical mastery” that provides the actors with a set of strategies or heuristic cues to adopt their goals as the capitals they hold, the centrality of the positions they occupy, the ambiguous boundaries of field they watch change (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 122). Still and all, actors reproduce their practices and representations and co-structure their habitus knowing well that the state is meta-field or meta-social, thus it holds the monopoly of concentrating culture, homogenizing culture and mental structures, and producing a unified habitus (Bourdieu 2014, 216).

”The construction of the state is accompanied by the construction of a sort of common historical transcendental, immanent to all its "subjects." Through the framing it imposes upon practices, the state establishes and inculcates common forms and categories of perception and appreciation, social frameworks of perceptions, of understanding or of memory, in short state forms of classification. It thereby creates the conditions for a kind of immediate orchestration of habituses which is itself the foundation of a consensus over this set of shared evidences constitutive of (national) common sense ”(Steinmetz 1999, 68).

The state dominates all four disciplines of power (legal, economic, bureaucratic, and religious) to “mold mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division” and enforces “a dominant culture thus constituted as legitimate national culture” through classification systems (Steinmetz 1999, 61-62). Even though state is the most powerful actor, the efforts to impose a legitimate social identity is still challenged by those who do not wish to neither put up with nor internalize top-down definitions and categorizations. Therefore, definitions and categories, actors, legitimacy, and the interdependence within fields itself are politically charged.

Similarly, Barth argues that ethnic categories are “situationally defined, produced and reproduced in the course of interactions that occur at or across -and in the process help to constitute- the ethnic boundary in question” (Jenkins 2008, 54). They are political, hence critical in the field of power. Jenkins investigates how ethnic categories construct the social field in terms of power and control in both informal and formal contexts. He concludes that the ethnically constituted categories create hierarchy in various domains such as market relationships, employment, administrative allocation or bureaucracy, institutionalized social control (law enforcement, judiciary), and political system (66-72). Categories impose a certain ‘appropriate’ behavior, proper relations in public and with state, ideal terms of mobilization in case of dissidence. Acting otherwise may limit the accessibility of goods and ser-

vices that the political authority offers, as in the example of state not compensating Alevis' religious education.

What is more, ethnic groups may face ethnically biased perversion of justice in their encounters with social control institutions, such as judiciary or security forces. For instance, most laws and court decrees that favor the religious freedom of Alevis are interpreted restrictively to avoid granting equal rights with the non-Muslim minority groups and the Sunni majority. As per the delicate nature of the categorization of Alevism, courts infamously tend to adjourn decisions, omit hearings, or enact the statute of limitations. Categorization is impossible to evade, however ethnic categorization is more likely to bear negative consequences.

”Classifying the most diverse historical forms of social identity as ‘ethnic’ creates the scientifically questionable but politically useful impression that all ethnicities are basically the same and that ethnic identity is a natural trait of persons and social groups... This is not an argument which bears up to historical scrutiny. Rather, it is a nominalist operation intended to provide scholarly legitimation for ethnonationalist ideologies” (Jenkins, 2008, 74-78; Lentz 1995, 305).

As I discussed earlier, the category of Alevism has been created and operationalized in such general manner that it became an instrument for legitimizing state's ideology and reproducing Sunni hegemony in the religious field. Consequently, Alevism is stripped of its uniqueness, its distinctiveness. Alevism was intended to be reconstructed into an ambiguous enough concept through which people (often forcibly) signal their positions in the political field and relate themselves to the state and other identities.

On the other hand, when categorizations are externally created and imposed on identity groups, the danger of symbolic and physical violence weighs on people's preferences and coerces people to take the positions the state deems legitimate. State speaks to our reason, our rationality, our pressing need for order. It does so by offering shortcuts in this chaotic physical and mental universe through establishing and gatekeeping the fields that produce knowledge.

The creation of orthodoxy – the state-promoted Sunni Islam in the Alevi case - is central to the classification system as it betokens the ideology and gaze of the state: the rightful. In other words, “the perfect agreement between mental structures and objective structures” is made possible through manufacturing social proof thanks to the state intervention to education, organized politics, law-making, and so on. State brings the gratuitousness to a minimum while instituting rightful mental forms

(Steinmetz 1999, 54-55). The political success of the state, however, translates into the accumulation of symbolic capital and ignites societal change and reproduction processes based on preference falsification or rupture from their habitus or internal dynamics (Bourdieu 1994, 8).

The struggle for symbolic capital and political power, therefore, not only construct a religious or ethnic orthodoxy or a rightful classification system but also constitute reality (Bourdieu 2018, 74). The orthodoxy is achieved through and leads to physical and symbolic power which is often practiced in forms of state violence ranging from curriculum design to hateful political discourse, denial of fundamental rights to systematic incarceration, ethnocide to genocide.

Social agents whose groups are classified as illegitimate or misrecognized may resist to the state. They revolt against the state through challenging the category they are offered and resist the representation and practices said category produces (Wacquant 2013, 276). In addition to confrontation and contestation, social agents form alliances with other political and social institutions. Yet again, the mode of resistance is often shaped on the basis of the practical mastery and knowledge, as well as the capitals that the social agents have.

From the state's perspective, the Alevis are an ambiguous, heterogeneous, discontinued, and impotent identity. This is the narrative that permeates bureaucratic, legal, administrative, political, and religious fields through which, as citizens, Alevis see themselves in the oppressor's eyes. Therefore, the claim of Alevi's being too diverse to act together becomes self-evidently correct, and as Gamson argues "since the participants do not define themselves in terms of their common social location in a class or ethnic group, the question of who 'we' are is intrinsically problematic" (Gawerc 2020, 7). The course of action has to take the state's strategy and gaze into consideration for seizing much needed constitutive power and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 2018, 74). Thus, Alevi movements (religious or political) tend to form alliances with the state and its institutions, as well as other actors in political and religious field.

The Alevi Workshops had presented itself as a great way of forming alliances thanks to the JDP's willingness to start a public discussion and open channels for dialogue. Some actors within the Alevi political and religious field were eager to compromise in their anti-essentialist strategy. However, the state can only form alliance with Alevis if it can absorb Alevism within Sunni interpretation of politics and religion. Turkish secularism has been grounded on Sunni ideology and, more importantly, exclusion of any different approach on religion.

Furthermore, the state monopoly over the political and religious field is standing on this very ground: challenges to Sunni ideology are danger to the Turkish secularism, thus, danger to the core of state monopoly over religion. In other words, Alevi anti-essentialism clashes with state's mandatory Sunni essentialism, making alliance formation even more complicated. The efforts to find the common ground through ethnicity also fails due to the different positions and relations of Alevi, Sunni, Kurdish, Turkish, Arab, and other actors in the religious and political fields.

2.5 Symbolic Capital in the Religious Field

Given that interfering with and controlling the religious field is indeed a question of existence and perpetuity for the state, the persistence of the JDP (and other state actors) in classifying Alevis is expected to last. As I will discuss in length in Chapter 3, The Alevi Workshops has provided the state with the evidence that Alevis will resist to categorization efforts and form alliances with other political actors in order to advocate for equal citizenship. Also, the sharp change in acts and narrative of the JDP towards Alevis is consistent with the Final Report of The Alevi Workshops (2010): the diversity of Alevism is impossible to negotiate, therefore, it must be positioned either in Islam or as internal threat that needs to be managed by further securitization (169-170).

The classification efforts of the state rarely go on without resistance from those groups that are subjected to state's symbolic or substantial violence. The religious field, even in secular modern states that claim to provide free markets for religions, is where concepts such as moral and traditional are contested. (Saeed 2021) identifies three strategies the state uses to manage the resistance from minority groups: coercive classification, juridical normalization, and lastly, legal erasure. Coercive classification is state's categorizing or naming a deviant group in a way that is rejected by that group. Juridical normalization refers to the legal practices that state uses to discipline deviant or heterodox groups. Legitimization is only possible through endorsing state's norms and classification system (263). Finally, the state may choose to deprive deviant groups from legal recognition, rendering minorities a group of marginalized citizens or individuals (264).

In the case of Alevis, all three strategies have been used to complement each other, though legal erasure is currently accompanied with cultural and ecological erasure. I

would like to proceed by comparing the Alevi case with other case studies. First, the debate over Alevis' relation to Sunni Islam and continuous efforts to replace mosques with *cemevi* as place of worship is a profound example for coercive classification.

According to Fox, states label some religious groups as cults or sects in order to create a distinction favoring legitimate religions (Fox and Tabory 2008). Some states embrace a more violent form of this strategy. For instance, China banned a certain research society after altering its status to a heretic belief, despite the group's declaration contrariwise (Saeed, 266). The issue with this strategy is, it might only work if the group which is being pushed into an undesired category does not hold social or economic capital to challenge the coercive classification. Alevis, on the other hand, organized under associations and formed alliances with domestic and international actors to reject the impositions of the state.

The second strategy Saeed identifies is juridical normalization which aims to forcefully convince the heterodox group to step into the framework through which the state determines what is appropriate and what is not (263). In a Foucauldian sense, the symbolic power is used to create docile citizens who are ready to accept the category they are assigned by the state. The most common practice is to outlaw certain religious practices or traditions that the state deems to be clashing with the state's monopoly over political field. The abolition of religious titles and lodges in 1925 was a call for Alevis, along with other heterodox Muslim groups, to consider relating themselves to the Sunni Islam, preferably within its ideology.

Declaring that the only official religion to be recognized is Islam by founding the DRA, Alevis were forced to abandon their time-tested legal and political customs, given that *dede* and *cem* (the sacred meeting) were the major elements of Alevism's autonomous legal system. Furthermore, the criminalization of *cem* ritual for decades has forced Alevis to modify their religious ritual to become more "aesthetic" for the state's and Sunnis' gaze, eventually granting them relative freedom in practicing *cem* in still not legally recognized *cemevis* (Tambar 2010). Depending on the political orientation of the *dede* or the association, it is highly possible to witness a *cem* ritual in a room with walls on which Atatürk's and Ali's (the son in law of Muhammet) portraits and a Turkish flag, symbolizing the tacit agreement for Alevis to esteem the Republic and its laws.

Thirdly, the legal erasure strategy is the silent treatment towards heterodox groups or denial of their demands to be legally recognized (Saeed, 264). The policy is to avoid taking an official position even when issues are publicly discussed by state officials. Similar to Alevi case, not granting minority or official religion status, excluding from census data, or criminalize on the basis of an irrelevant issue are

frequently used tactics. In most extreme cases, states may corner the believers into a position where the abandonment of their religion remains as the only option to survive.

In Egypt, Baha'i faith was subjected to such treatment, but the believers resisted to quit their belief system. Egyptian government pushed a political agenda for criminalizing the Baha'i community through claims of allying with Israel, the historical adversary of Islamic world. Also, Baha'i believers were not allowed to register their religion as to not accidentally give them legitimacy (274).

In parallel, Alevis have been struggling for legal recognition of their belief, registering their children as Alevis, benefiting from equal opportunities as Sunni Muslims, and so on. Alevis, too, have been criminalized and subjected to state-level hate speech due to their alleged alliance with Syria or Iran (and with communist countries when the conjuncture calls for it), or Kurdish Freedom Movement which is the other burning issue of Turkey.

These three strategies do complement each other, however, is short of explaining the extent of symbolic violence the state exercises on Alevi communities. That is why I turn to the term "ethnocide". Ethnocide is a term oftentimes used to refer to the "cultural supremacy in practice", destruction of cultures of minorities, or cultural genocide (Clavero 2008, 108; Clarke 2001, 424). Following the conceptualization of Yalçınkaya and Clastres, I use it in a way to refer to the policies of cultural, lingual, religious, ethnic, political, legal, and ecological erasure (2014, 23).

The ultimate goal of the politics of ethnocide is to recreate an identity that is no longer inferior to the dominant identity in a society. However it may sound positive due to its seemingly egalitarian promise, the embedded idea is that the 'other' is indeed inferior, different in a non-agreeable way, non-civilized, anarchic, and so on (24 - 27). Assimilation is the strategy to *culturally* transform and absorb a social group into the dominant culture, and this strategy has been employed since the Ottoman era, along with state-sponsored mass-killings and pogroms. Ethnocide, on the other hand, is more appropriate in describing the political axis on which ethnic and religious minorities were molded into the desired nation through coercive classification strategies, discipline via juridical normalization, non-recognition as state policy, symbolic violence and cultural assimilation in different forms, and state violence.

The distinction between assimilation and ethnocide also has to do with the state's altering its strategy from ignoring Alevis to communicating with them under certain conditions, again, determined by the state. The assimilationist policies of the

Republic until the mid-1960s have not been as successful, provided that Alevis still perform their religion and culture and resisted the legal and political erasure through reproducing certain aspects of their cultures (Gültekin 67-68). Alevis have acquired a growing amount of social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital in the last decades, partly thanks to the very assimilationist policies which forcefully and unintentionally helped them hone necessary skills to survive the challenging periods. Therefore, the state has turned to another strategy: positioning Alevis as agreeable citizens as long as they comply with the state's Sunni ideology and interpretation of secularism.

In other words, the state aims to maintain its central position in the social field, to remain as the sole authority in political and religious fields, and this can only be achieved through minimizing the differences within the society. Thus, the "otherized" or different communities must fit into the categories that are considered to be ideal by the state, and the ethnocide will continue until distinctions cease to exist (Yalçınkaya, 2014, 24-25). As Clastres argues, ethnocidal policies of the state serves the purpose of realizing the hierarchy of cultures: Alevis and other minorities must accept that they are the inferior culture and surrender to the superior Turkish-Islamic culture (1994, 65).

Citizenship, therefore, plays a crucial role in Alevi politics for several reasons: First, the ideal citizenship requires Alevis to strip their culture and politics of Aleviness and accept Turkishness and Muslimhood culturally and politically (at least do not challenge the centrality of the superior culture and allow it to remain as the main axis through which state acts). Second, Alevis require the state to change the definition of citizenship and transform the political and politics in a way to grant equal rights. Third, Alevi associations and groups challenge each other based on how one another perceives the boundaries of the ideal citizenship. This is how the state establishes a "relationship of negation" with and among the Alevi community (65).

In this sense, I argue that The Alevi Workshops are the continuation of the ethnocidal policies of the state by the JDP government. Centuries of classification struggle and state violence towards Alevis took a different form under the JDP regime, and the Workshops remain as quite instrumental in understanding the continuation of and divergences from the strategies of the Republic. During the Workshops, the government demanded Alevis to come up with a unitary religious ritual, a unitary and exclusionary definition of Alevism, and a unitary political position which is in accordance with state's expectation. the JDP requested a public debate about Alevism itself while disguising it as a democratic initiative, whereas Alevis mostly remained within the boundaries of a political debate while having to hold theological

discussions.

The repeated invitation extended to Alevi who define themselves as Muslims by the Sunni participants (the DRA, theologians, and later, the government) to the mosque shows that the unity in religion is the end goal, and multiculturalism or equal citizenship is on the table only as a disciplinary tool. Those Alevi who perform their rituals within acceptable boundaries of Sunni Islam may be granted certain political rights and desirable political positions, whereas Alevi who insist on the anti-essentialist strategy and reject the classification system itself are stigmatized as troublemakers. The latter is openly and publicly condemned in the Final Report (2010) because of their political views and efforts to bring the political into the discussion (30-31, 49, 172-173).

The next chapter investigates the Workshops through the theoretical framework I introduced here and provides a textual analysis of the transcripts of The Alevi Workshops and media coverage in the aftermath of the Alevi Opening of the JDP.

3. CLASSIFICATION STRUGGLES IN ALEVI POLITICS:

THE CASE OF THE ALEVI WORKSHOPS

Alevis, the second largest religious community in Turkey, have long fought for their political and social status. After tumultuous decades that marked multiple military coups, civil unrest, massacres and pogroms, unstable political power, extremely volatile economy, and legal battles, a single-party government was established by the JDP in 2002. Despite their distant and conflictual relationship with the JDP between 2002 and 2007, the Alevi community found itself at the top of the political agenda thanks to the Alevi Opening process in 2009.

This chapter is dedicated to the investigation of the Alevi Workshops and proceeds as follows: First, I evaluate the political field with references to the historical breakthroughs in Alevi – state relations. Then, I explain the positions and goals of Alevi institutions, as well as their individual relations with the state regarding further issues. The information section about actors is followed by the case study. My main source for the textual analysis in this chapter is the transcripts of the Workshops published by the Office the Prime Minister in 2009 and 2010, though I occasionally refer to the other publications of the participants for further information.

3.1 The Political Participation Of Alevis

To understand the positions of certain actors within the Alevi politics and to reconsider Alevis' relation to the state, it is necessary to look into the historical process leading to the Alevi Revival. It must also be noted that Alevi politics has been organized mainly around the demand for equal citizenship, though Alevi politicization is fragmented due to its alliances with and participation in left-wing politics, socialist militia groups, Kurdish Movement, Turkish nationalism, and so on. Also, the proximity to the state in issues unrelated to religion and politics is an impor-

tant distinction through which Alevi institutions relate themselves with each other. Lastly, the religion itself is a crucial determinant in Alevi politics, provided that the camps of Alevi-within-Islam and others contest one another on the basis of religious performances and references.

3.1.1 Alevi politics in the early era of the Republic

Alevi, along with Kurds, have remained a major ‘trouble-maker’ of politics in Turkey, even before its establishment as a Republic. The diverse population of Turkey has required the state to maintain its constant vigilance towards many cultures, ethnicities, religions that divert in one way or another from the official and constitutionally defined model citizen. Apart from the security concerns, the diversity of its population caused a series of legal dispute and struggles as dissidence occurred whenever the constitutional principle of equality was violated in the name of unitarist state and secularism or laicite. The non-compliance of non-Turks and non-Muslims to constitutional citizenship have been posing a danger to the very definition of the model citizen and the official history of Turkey. That anyone who holds a Turkish identity card is Turkish is the law, hence the expression of a different identity than Turkish Sunni brings about questions directed to the core of the regime.

Having anticipated this particular challenge, the founding fathers of the Republic conducted meticulous negotiations with the leaders of different ethnic, political, and religious groups. Some part of the population lived under the reign of the Ottoman Empire were no longer able to create a problem, such as Armenians who were subjected to a massive program of genocide in 1915. Some others, non-Muslim religious and ethnic groups, were defined and accepted as legal minorities in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923.

The same treaty changed the status of the Kurds who enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy under the Ottoman Empire, thus recognizing Kurds as a part of the Turkish nation as ordinary citizens. Alevi, too, lost the semi-autonomy they had in Dersim region, and were not granted minority rights. The rationale for this decision was the Islamic nature of Alevi belief, which was fiercely advocated by the Turkish delegation.

It must be noted that the leaders of the National Struggle (Milli Mücadele) and Alevi (also Kızılbaş and Bektaşî) communities did have an understanding, so to

speak, during the War of Liberation. When Mustafa Kemal started the Struggle in 1919, the leader of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli order, Cemalettin Çelebi, showed great hospitality to him, which later gained him a seat in the first parliament. This was the first alliance Alevis formed with the Republic and the secular wing of Turkish politics. Many others followed due to mutual respect and trust, Turkish Alevi orders, Bektaşî order, and Kızılbaş tribes soon joined the Struggle, with the expectation that a secular state would guarantee religious freedom and autonomy. this new regime did offer a ray of light, namely secularism. The early era of Turkish Republic marks a period where Alevi tribes and the state entered into a strategic alliance to fend off common threats.

However, the new regime did not follow up the agreements both parties negotiated. First, Cemalettin Çelebi, who was then the parliamentary deputy speaker, was prevented from participating in the discussions in the Parliament by the government in Ankara (Aslan 2015*b*). Second, the demands of Alevis were disregarded in the 1924 Constitution thanks to the Lausanne Treaty that recognized Alevis as Muslims. Neither in the abolition of caliphate nor in the founding of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Reisliği) were Alevis mentioned. Lastly, the Law of Villages in 1924 defined villages as settlements with a mosque and enforced villagers to build masjid. This law is still being implemented and provides the state with the legal excuse to impose assimilationist policies on Alevis.

In 1925, Alevi lodges and orders were marked as illegal with the law of the closure of dervish lodges and shrines. Furthermore, the titles that constitutes the hierarchy within religious communities were banned. Not only the titles such as Dervish, *baba* (father), *dede* (grandfather), or *çelebi* (a sacred, adoption-base bloodline) were forbidden, people who used these titles and dressed accordingly were persecuted by the government, causing the loss of a generation of Alevi religious leadership as well as the administrative cadres within the orders. What is more, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Lodge (*dergah*) was also closed and repurposed as an agricultural institute and barrack after hundreds of years of serving as Alevi religious center. This lodge is not the only one that has been closed, but in time, its legal status became symbolic in the Alevi movement for various reasons.

Other developments leading to anti-religious reaction of the new regime are also worth mentioning in the context of Alevi politics, as they still shape current politics and law-making in Turkey. Before giving a brief synopsis of the incidents took place in the early era of the Republic, I find it important to discuss the relationship between Alevism and ethnicity.

3.1.2 Ethnicity as a distinctive element in Alevi Politics

Even though Alevism has been declared as primary identity by a group of Alevis in several studies, whether Alevism is an ethnic, religious, ethno-religious, or political-religious identity cannot be concluded without further controversy. Yet, there are several groups that define themselves as Alevi Turk, Zaza, Kurd, Roma, Dom, Abdal, Arab, and so on. Each ethno-religious group has a nationalist wing, too. The most prominent being the Alevi Kurds within the Kurdish Movement, organized Zaza Alevis campaign to clarify their distinction from both Turks and Kurds through media and academic sectors.

Similarly, Alevi Roma people struggle against hate speech and acts because of them being the other of other. Arab Alevis in Anatolia differ significantly from Alawites or Nusayris, yet this distinction did not stop the Turkish government from targeting Alevi population in Turkey with the unsubstantiated claims of supporting the Syrian regime, whose leader and political elite are predominantly Nusayri.

Overall, it can be safely said that Alevis are not a homogeneous community in terms of ethnicity. On the contrary, the very contestation among the ethnic groups under the umbrella of Alevism leads to the structuring of respective identities and the distinctive politicization processes of each ethnic movement. The analysis of these dynamics provides us with a deeper understanding of the nation-state, too. In the case of Turkey, for instance, the approach of the state, or of the dominant political group, regarding the ethnicity of Alevis is among the elements of Ottoman Empire – Committee of Unity and Progress (CUP) – the Republic of Turkey political continuum. Alevis has always occupied the ‘internal enemy and often the ‘ideal and real Turk’ position when required.

Up until the late 19th century, the crises between Alevis (Kızılbaş and Bektaşî) and the Ottoman Empire was strictly religious. Then happened the French Revolution, and the wave of nationalism it created materialized as Young Turks in Europe, later as CUP. The claim of the CUP was that Alevism was the truest form of Islam. Even though the researchers assigned by the Committee had observed rituals and performances that could not be related to Islam in any way, these differences were rationalized through another theory that Alevis continued the practices of ancient Turkic beliefs and Shamanism (Sevli 2019, 125). This Turkish nationalist perspective in history-writing was endorsed by the Republic, not surprisingly so, since the new regime inherited both the ideology and the ideologue-researchers from the CUP.

One of the major debates still continues and circles around the root and the motherland of Alevi. Some researchers and Turkish nationalists insist on Alevi being the Turkomans migrating to Anatolia from Horasan, a region in today's Iran which is argued to be populated by Turks since the 8th century (Ocak 2011). This theory has been officially endorsed by the Republic and taught in schools in the wider context of the Turkish History Thesis (Bulut 2011).

The importance of the ethnicity of Alevi for the state (and the nationalists) is not limited to re-discovering and promoting Turkishness. Turkifying Alevi means a more easily governable population as it helps omitting Alevi Kurds. There are two main orders through which Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms were contested: Bektaşî and Kızılbaş, respectively. The Bektaşî order follows Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli and was institutionalized by Balım Sultan in the late 15th century, while Kızılbaş groups were influenced by the Erdebil Convent (tekke) during the rise of the Safavid Empire. The Bektaşî order was in a very powerful position as it trained Janissaries until its abolition by Ottoman Empire in 1826.

This close alliance with the Empire made it possible for the Bektaşî order to establish their centers in town and city centers, hence its classification as urban Alevi. The Turkification of Balkans were achieved with the help of Bektaşî groups settled in newly conquered regions in Eastern Europe (Melikoff 2010). Bektaşî order enjoyed many privileges for centuries as the lodge of military and religious leaders, accumulating educational, economic, and symbolic resources. Today, Bektaşî order is associated with Turkish Alevism and its members (*talip*) are overwhelmingly Turks. The order maintains its close relationship with the Republic, despite issues and legal disputes over the publicization of its lodges and other properties since 1925.

Kızılbaş groups, however, has had a hostile and conflictual relationship with both the Empire and the Republic. They differ from the Bektaşî order in political, administrative, and religious aspects, though they redeem Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli as their pir (spiritual leader, the elder). Kızılbaş groups have been settled in rural areas and mountains in Eastern Anatolia, which was necessary for them to survive the riots against the Empire, battles between Safavid and Ottoman Empire, then again, rebellions against the Republic. These groups lack the discipline of an order, organize through ocak (hearth) system which consists of a network of families that are descendants of Prophet Muhammed and his nephew and son-in-law Ali, and inherit their identity by kinship as opposed to the Bektaşî order (only those who are born to a Kızılbaş parent may be Kızılbaş Alevi, whereas anyone who commit the path of the Bektaşî lodge may be Bektaşî) (Timuroğlu 2004, 83-84). Kızılbaş groups had retracted to mountains after the Battle of Çaldıran in 1514 and under the reign

of Selim I (known as Selim the Grim by Alevis) because of their alliance with the Safavid Empire.

The choice to fight the war on the side of Shah Ismail, Safavid Empire, gave Ottomans enough reasons to start a hunt for Kızılbaş Alevis that lasted for centuries. Still, the name Kızılbaş is pejoratively used to mean rebellious, deviant Alevis and Alevi Kurds, even though Alevis did recently reclaim the word to define their ethnicity and religious orientation (Yalçınkaya 1996, 12-13; Bayrak 1990, 20). After the massacres in the 16th century, the relationship between the Bektaşî and Kızılbaş orders and religious leaders has increasingly weakened.

Today's Bektaşî order has more Turkish characteristics and homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, while Kızılbaş groups are geographically dispersed through the Kurdistan region (Eastern Anatolia, Northern Syria, Western Iran, and Northern Iraq) as diverse ethnic groups differ in religious rituals and practices. Politically speaking, Bektaşî and Kızılbaş orders tend not to organize under the same organizations in the civil society, they usually support different political parties and embrace slightly different views about Sunni Islam due to the former being classified as friend while the latter as fiend.

Having introduced the major ethno-political and religio-political cleavage within the Alevi politics, I am going back to 1921, the year when the ethnicity of Alevis become a vital issue for the young regime. After the Treaty of Sevres signed between the Allied Powers and the Ottoman Empire in 1920, Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (*Kürt Teali Cemiyeti*) and tribe leaders in Dersim acted on the promise of an autonomous region through arming their people and notifying the Ankara government that they request Kurdistan to be recognized. Meanwhile, the armed groups and the locals had rebelled in Koçgiri, securing multiple towns. Mustafa Kemal, yet again, offered four seats to Dersim Kızılbaş Alevis and succeeded in breaking off the Kurdish – Kızılbaş Alevi alliance (Kieser 2005, 569).

In 1925, another rebellion erupted near Erzurum-Muş, organized by the Azadi Organization and led by Sheikh Said (Said-i Kürdi). Sheikh Said was a member of the Sunni Naqshbandi order, thus, Kızılbaş Alevi tribes decided against joining forces with his troops. Not only Alevi tribes did not ally with Sheikh Said (with the only exception of Abdalan tribe from Varto), one Alevi tribe (Hormekan from Varto) did openly support the Ankara government (Gezik 2014, 82-85). After the government violently suppressed the rebellion, all Western Dersim tribes, except for Seyit Rıza of Abbasan tribe, pledged allegiance to Ankara (95).

Perhaps the most crucial incident in shaping the relationship between the Republic

and Alevi, especially Alevi Kurds, took place in Dersim in 1938. The Dersim Report prepared by the Gendarmerie General Command in the early 1930s described Dersim people as ignorant, rebellious, ‘wild and wooly’, and thieves, and suggested immediate assimilation policies along with military intervention (JGK 2010). The Report found the destruction of the armed people appropriate (251). The state started with assimilation through a series of laws enforcing forced migration, change of settlement names (Dersim to Tunceli, and many others), extreme securitization of the region, and so on. Alevi tribes also prepared for responding the military forces under the leadership of Seyit Rıza, but they could not gather enough forces and resources. Eventually, thousands of people, including children and unarmed people, had been massacred by the Turkish forces in an operation lasted more than a year (Gezik 2014, 114-118).

3.1.3 Alevi as the religious other

According to the state and some Alevi Turkish groups, what happened in Dersim was the necessary suppression of a rebellion, whereas Alevi Kızılbaş groups and some researchers describe Dersim Massacres as ethnocide or genocide (Bayrak 2012; İsmail Beşikçi 1990). Dersim Massacre still hints the political position of Alevi groups. Debates over the nature of the massacre aside, the target of the state was not just to annihilate and assimilate Kurdish people, but to Islamize Alevi Kızılbaş people.

The Dersim Report repeatedly praises Selim I, thanking him for his “wrath” in mass killings of Alevi and for securing the Sunni presence in Turkey (JGK 2010, 50). The report states that Alevi antagonizes Turks by naming them as “Yezid” (the murderer of Ali, also a cursive word Alevi use for cruel people), and gives reasons why a strong military intervention is required: “The worst aspect of Alevi that requires a special attention is the deep gap between them and Turkishness. This gap is the Kızılbaş belief itself. Kızılbaş do not like Sunni Muslims, bear a grudge against them, feud with them since the beginning of the time. This went to the extremes to the extent that Kızılbaş regard Turkishness as Sunni and Kurdishness” (53). The lack of support from Alevi in Kocgiri and Sheikh Said Rebellions was met by silence from Kurds during the Dersim Massacre, resulting in the bifurcation of Alevi and Kurdish movements, which is still crucial in political arena of Turkey.

While the massacres and cultural erasure had been ongoing, Alevism has been instrumental in creating a Sunni Turkish identity for the state. A cleaned and polished

Alevism has been suggested as the alternative for Sunni Islam that was seen to be consisting of Arab traditions and too conservative for the ideal Turkish nation. Yet Alevism could not be visible in public space up until the 1960s (Dressler 2013, 17). This invisibility was mostly caused by the restrictive interpretation of secularism that seeks remedy for the difficult relationship between state and religion in eliminating ‘dangerous’ political, ethnic, and religious identities. Up until 1965, Alevism was not among the five religious orientations (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, irreligious, and a vague ‘others’) the state included in its census. This position is the continuation of creating a homogeneous Muslimhood, as publicly expressed by the head of the State Statistics Office who ordered against registering sects or orders (Massicard 2007, 17).

Another institution that was designed for the same purpose was the Presidency of Religious Affairs (later and henceforth the Directorate of Religious Affairs, DRA). It was established the very same day the caliphate was abolished in 1924. State-salaried imams were authorized with familiarizing the people with a rational, state-approved Sunni Islam. According to the political elite, the people of the new Republic were misinformed in terms of religion, had a belief system based on superstitions, or trapped by dangerous and deviant religions (Akan 2018, 284-285). With the closure of the dervish lodges and convents, the state established its monopoly over the religious field. The deviance in religious field, similar to the ethnic field, would not be tolerated.

Alevis, referred to as deviant religion, was under close watch and multiple reports submitted to the state (and Republican People’s Party, RPP hereafter) shows that Alevis were considered as an internal threat (Massicard 2007, 47-48). Among the responsibilities of the DRA was to assimilate Alevis into Sunni Islam. For that purpose, DRA’s official standing has been classifying Alevism as a heterodox version of Islam.

3.2 Alevis’ Politics And Alevi Revival

During the single party era, the main issue of Alevis was their positioning as a tool to confirm and re-construct the Turkish nation. While their presence as a political or religious community was ignored and suppressed, their Turkishness was used as an example to create an Islam without Arabic or Persian influences and re-introduce

certain Turkish customs such as gender equality. On the other hand, non-Turkish Alevis remained as the prior national security issue due to their active participation in pro-autonomy riots (Gezik 2004). The tension between the state and Alevis eased in the 1950s, as Turkey underwent a huge transformation process and the political conjuncture had changed accordingly. The urbanization and liberalization processes led to the emergence of an Alevi bourgeoisie, as well as the reproduction of Alevism in the urban areas.

There are conflicting views as to where Alevis' loyalty lies in the 1950s. Some researchers argue that Alevis have always been loyal supporters of the RPP and Atatürk (Kehl-Bodrogi 2012; Çarkoğlu 2005). Some others agree on Alevis switching their preference to right-wing Democrat Party (DP), but a consensus on why and when they did return to the RPP has not been reached (Yümlü 2009, 57-65). According to Öktem (2015), a consolidated Alevi electorate supporting certain parties or ideologies did not exist, given that Alevi votes were geographically dispersed (10). However, Alevis did tend to vote for the party that nominated their religious leaders, showing the political influence of Alevi leaders and the strength of the ties among the community.

In 1960, the political conjuncture changed again, this time through an anti-democratic intervention by the military. The constitution of 1961 provided enough political freedom for the emergence of new political movements and the shift from urban-versus-rural to left-right politics. This new, more liberal political context made the first public discussion of the Alevi issue possible (Ertan 2017, 34-35). Alevis started publishing journals and books about their culture. In 1963, President Gürsel suggested a Chamber of Sects under the administration of DRA, however, the right-wing politicians and DRA officials found the suggestion offensive to Sunni Islam (Çalışlar 2008). In response, Alevi university students, defining themselves as Alevi Turks, released a manifest defending the Chamber of Sects and the inclusion of Alevis within the state administration. This manifest was followed by the first public cem ritual in Ankara, quite symbolically (Ertan 2017, 35; Yalçınkaya 2019, 115-121)

The first attempt of the state being foiled by the Sunni politicians, despite the joint power of the military and the state, pushed Alevis to organize as a political party. While the discussions on whether an Alevi party would be violating the laicism principle was ongoing, the incidents took place in Ortaca, Muğla had altered the reasons why the party was necessary. In 1966, the state decided to give lands of an Alevi village to a Naqshbandi Sunni village, which ignited the violence between two villages that lasted for days and resulted in several casualties.

The RPP and Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, WPT) prevented the public from considering the incident as a religious conflict (İzmir 2016, 51-52). Within three months after the Ortaca experience, Unity Party (Birlik Partisi, UP hereafter) was established in 1966 as a political organization whose symbols, narrative and all-Alevi founders gave the impression of a religious party. Ertan argues that the UP resided at the center of the political spectrum with a special sensitivity towards Alevis' issues.

As Ata argues, the establishment of the UP made Alevism susceptible to state intervention, as well as ignited a public debate on Alevism and Sunnism while political violence was still erupting on the streets (Ata 2007). Meanwhile, the UP was a success story. It combined the low-key leftist politics associated with Alevi religiosity during the first electoral campaign and managed to have eight members in the Parliament in 1969 elections. However, the marked secular – religious cleavage in the party resulted in a crisis which ended with the excommunication (*düşkünlük*) and expulsion of religious leaders in 1972. The UP underwent a series of ideological reform processes, but the activities of the party, along with all other political parties, was terminated after the 1980 military coup (Ertan, 2017, 46-48).

The military coup of 1980 has started a new period in state's approach towards religion. The developments that the 1961 constitution brought were long gone after the 1971 military intervention, but the regime established by the military after the 1980 coup completely reversed the positive influences of the relatively liberal political arena. Alevis were targeted by the new regime firstly because of their involvement in Marxist/leftist politics, then because of their religious identity. Socialist movement and its dynamics had substituted the traditional solidarity networks Alevis depended on in rural areas before migrating to the cities, therefore, the suppression of their political and religious support system made Alevis organize as an identity movement after 1980 (Aslan 2015a). The religious and political violence in late 1970s, too, contributed to this change in Alevi politics.

The late-1970s marks the period where hundreds of Alevis were murdered in political and religious clashes in Turkey. Malatya and Maraş Massacres in 1978 and Çorum Massacre in 1980 were the most violent attacks to the Alevi community. The social hostility towards Alevis was translated into discriminatory practices, assaults, looting, and segregation. After the 1980 military coup, the distance between Alevis and the state, not to mention Sunni ideology, became more difficult to bridge. The state started imposing its ethno-religious political agenda, namely Turkish-Islam synthesis, through the education system and spatial transformation (Jongerden 2003). Mandatory religion classes and forcibly built mosques in Alevi villages made as-

simulation policies more visible in Alevis' everyday life, altogether leading Alevis to contemplate various defense mechanisms and organizational dynamics, also referred to as the Alevi Revival (Çamuroğlu 2005).

Alevis have always been political actors, rather than a religious community seeking solutions from or within the political field. They demanded equal rights and citizenship, freedom of religion for all, and the divorce of religion from the state for decades. What is more, the army and the state considered Alevis as a catalyzer political actor that encourages other social groups to revolt against the state: "Alevis, a closed community, are involved in some political activities that aims to penetrate into the state units with the help of the external forces (*dış güçler*). When this is not possible, they manipulate local state organizations to serve their purposes. They try to remove state officers, officials, and citizens from the regions they intensively populate, and form alliances with those who are involved in Kurdishness cause" (Pehlivan 1993, 188).

After 1980, the call for a non-religious political field was associated with communism, hence the further criminalization and alienation of Alevis by the state in the face of the Cold War. The DRA became more powerful as the religion was operationalized in the securitization policy of the state. The rise of the Kurdish nationalism and the emergence of an armed movement in late 1980s increased the pressure on both Kurds and Alevis in this period.

3.3 The Emergence of the New Political Actors After the Alevi Revival

Despite their concerns regarding the rise of the religious discourse in the political arena, Alevis continued to organize festivals and cultural activities as part of the identity politics they then pursued in 1990s (Çamuroğlu 1992, 97). However, the rise of organized Islamism and the danger it poses to Alevis became a vital issue for Alevis, the concern and need for organized reaction peaked in the aftermath of Sivas Massacre in 1993. Thousands of people protested the massacre in Istanbul during the funerals of the victims.

Two years later, the violence broke out again in Gazi Neighbourhood in 1995 and the dwellers of Gazi were attacked by civil armed groups and then the law enforcement. Hundreds of people started rallying and attacking the law enforcement, which then turned into a riot that lasted for days. Soon after, Alevi groups protesting the police

violence were attacked by the police, resulting in four deaths (Massicard 2007, 84-88). Experienced Alevi politicians and business people, then, came together to establish new institutions to advocate for Alevi's rights.

The major and most influential Alevi institutions were established in mid-1990s in order to create a defence mechanism against state's physical and symbolic violence. It did not take long before the state devised ethnocidal strategies to politically transform Alevism through these institutions. The political orientations of the associations, the alliances they formed with other political movements and each other, and their willingness to comply with the state's demands provided the state with enough reasons to legitimize its approach towards Alevi. The most important determinant was the relation to Sunni Islam and the state monopoly over Islam.

In other words, Alevi institutions which placed themselves within Islam and opt for a slightly reformed DRA were favored by the state, occasionally provoked to strengthen the ambiguous Alevism argument which helps the state to legitimize its non-recognition policy and its classification system. The participant list of The Alevi Workshops prepared by the JDP government follows a similar approach and excludes the non-conforming Alevi groups from the Opening process.

Since the 1990s, Alevi have been revisiting their rituals and beliefs in order to create a political guide for Alevi politics. The references for the political actions were stemming from Alevism itself and considering Alevism within Islam. Similar to the 'Alevi Turks' signature in the first Alevi manifest in early 1960s, another manifest published in 1990 steered the Alevi movement to its future politico-religious position as a branch of Islam. The Alevi Manifest of 1990 was declaring Alevi movement's loyalty to the Republic and Atatürk, and its importance as the gatekeeping mechanism of laicism in Turkey. The Manifest also reads as a public plea for acquittal from the state's claims of Alevi being the internal threat and acting on behalf of Shia states. The Manifest was written by Alevi and non-Alevi academics, activists, and artists, and was heavily criticized because of its exclusionary language towards Kurdish Alevi. Moreover, the Manifest made all the accusations and definitions of the state relevant and legitimate (Yalçinkaya 2019, 185-186; Sevli 2019, 223).

Nevertheless, the discussions on the Manifest and further political developments gave birth to various Alevi institutions. Those with state-critical approach mostly organized around class and religious struggles while the circles approving the Manifest formed alliances with the state, pursuing the recognition of Alevism within the Turkish-Sunni state.

One of the oldest Alevi organizations is Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Dernekleri (Pir

Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations, PSACA), which was established in 1988. Alevi Kültür Dernekleri (Alevi Cultural Associations, ACA) was established in 1992. Both associations are members of the Alevi Bektaşî Federation (ABF) which was founded in 2000. The struggle of ABF goes back to 1994, when it was first conceptualized as the Chamber of Alevi Bektaşî Representatives. As the constitution dictates, ABF was not permitted to include 'Alevi' in its name. The legal battle ended in favour of ABF due to the decision of the Supreme Court of Appeal in 2004, and now ABF is an umbrella organization for more than a hundred associations and approximately 130.000 members.

ABF is a left-wing organization with socialist tendencies and highly critical of the state and the JDP government. Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (Hacı Bektaş Veli Anatolian Cultural Association, HBVACA), another left-wing Alevi organization established in 1994, shares ABF's political ideology and its description of Alevism as an Anatolian belief system. Both institutions attract Alevi Kurds thanks to their inclusive and anti-essentialist views. ABF and HBVACA do not share an organic tie, however they act as a united front, as they did in The Alevi Workshops.

The right-wing organizations in Alevi politics are CEM Vakfı (Foundation of Republican Education Center, FREC) and Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı (Foundation of Ahl al-Bayt [the family of prophet Muhammet]). FREC was established by Alevi scholar and businessperson İzzettin Doğan in 1995. The political ideology of the FREC can be described as right-wing Republican or conservative social democrat. Similar to the Alevi Foundations Federation (Alevi Vakıflar Federasyonu, AFF), FREC argues that Alevism is the Turkish interpretation of Islam, which attracts Turkish nationalists who are sympathetic of state's approach to religion. Despite having close ties with the governments and the state, it has been mostly associated with the RPP and occasionally with Nationalist Movement Party (NMP). Based on the narrative of the foundation and its founder, it can be said that FREC's understanding of Alevism and Alevis' issues are usually in congruence with that of state (Okan 2004, 193).

Contrary to FREC, the Foundation of Ahl al-Bayt (FAB) puts a stronger emphasis on the Muslimhood of Alevis and Alevism's relation to Sunni Islam, even though its name resonates with Shia Islam. The founder of the FAB, Fermani Altun, was nominated as a candidate for the parliament by the Islamist Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, VP) in 1999. Both FREC and FAB were invited to The Alevi Workshops.

The major difference between these two groups, FREC – FAB and ABF – HBVACA, is their relationship with the state in terms of its redistribution politics and secularism (Göker 1999, 136-137; Ertan 2017, 204-206). The former argues that the problems that Alevis face is *the Alevi issue* that needs to be solved by the state

through integration. The state – Alevi conflict can be resolved if the state legally recognizes Alevi - Turkish Islam, along with psychological and symbolic gestures to dignify Alevis. The latter states that the problems Alevis experience is *the state issue* from which all citizens suffer. ABF and HBVACA advocates for secularism and democratization, a new formula of laicism, self-financing religions to minimize the state’s control over the religious field, and a new understanding of citizenship. During the Workshops, the demands of the state-critical institutions were met with minor protests by right-wing Alevis and huge backlash by theologians and Sunni participants, whereas Alevi-critical or pro-Alevi Islam institutions were found more agreeable and rational.

The political disagreement among Alevi institutions became more irreconcilable than they were during the Workshops, as the JDP government strayed away from its democratization premises and transformed into an authoritarian regime.

3.4 Alevi Politics Under the JDP Governments

In 2002, the JDP, a self-declared conservative democratic party, came to power with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as its leader. Erdoğan was a controversial political figure for Alevis, because he gave the order to demolish the Karacaahmet Cemevi during his mayorship in Istanbul. Also, some of the founders of the JDP were the perpetrators or lawyers of the perpetrators of Alevi Massacres. Having had a turbulent relationship with Islamists, Alevis did not place the JDP in a position of trust. On the other hand, Alevis were more confident and had more symbolic and political capital than ever, thanks to their successful organizations and the rise of Alevi awareness in diaspora.

In early 2000s, the legal disputes between Alevis and the state were sorted in international courts. FERC sued Turkey on the basis of violating the freedom of worship by rejecting cemevis legal status, then appealing to the ECHR and winning the case. ECHR also ruled in favour of Alevis in another case regarding Alevis’ right to religious education. On top of that, European Union’s Progress Report stated the urgency of solving the issues of Alevis, providing Alevis with great leverage for their political demands in Turkey. This was the context into which the JDP presented itself as the flag-bearer of the democratization and freedoms. However, the JDP did not offer Alevis much space in the political arena during its first term between 2002

and 2007. Instead, the government focused its energy and credibility on healing the economy from the 2002 crisis and conducting a public campaign against the political sins of the Republic and the military.

3.4.1 The Alevi opening

After the 2007 General Elections, the JDP preserved its position as the sole incumbent and then started a series of Democratic Opening Processes (*demokratik açılım süreçleri*). The goal was to familiarize the public with the problems of the marginalized groups within the society. The JDP presented the openings as a chance to mend differences and a novel opportunity for the Kurdish, Alevi, and Roma people to convey their issues directly with the state. As a sign of goodwill, the JDP offered a seat to Alevi scholar Reha Çamuroğlu in the parliament, then appointing him to oversee the Alevi Opening in 2007 elections. However, the co-coordinator of the Opening was Sait Yazıcıoğlu, who was a former president of the DRA.

Despite harsh criticisms and the excommunication of Çamuroğlu by some Alevi institutions, the government organized an official dinner infamously known as “*Muharrem İftarı*” (fastbreaking) in January 2008. Alevis fast during the Islamic Moharram month, but they avoid festive organizations during the two-week ritual. Therefore, ABF and its member organizations, the RPP, Alevi research institutions and individuals released statement criticizing the dinner and did not attend it (Haber 2008). FERC, FAB and other right-wing Alevi organizations also did not attend the event, reasoning that the demands must be met before symbolic gestures (Milliyet 2008).

Out of 279 Alevi associations, only 6 of them accepted the invitation, and Bektaşî order which does not organize in civil society was represented by a religious leader, Kurtcebe Noyan. The dinner was served in a venue where Atatürk and Ali posters and the Turkish flag were hanged. Erdoğan gave a speech about the importance of unity in religion and religious freedom, while referring to the political disputes as the reason behind the issues of Alevis (Türk 2008b).

3.4.2 The Alevi Workshops

In 2009, Çamuroğlu was no longer the coordinator of the Alevi Opening, having lost the trust of the Alevis. He was replaced with Necdet Subaşı, an academic who published studies on Alevi Islam and the head strategist of DRA. Again, the choice of the moderator for the Alevi Workshops was met with harsh criticism by Alevi institutions, but the Workshops were attended by relatively more Alevi actors when compared to the Moharram dinner in 2008. Still, more than half of the participants were Sunnis. The representatives of Alevi diaspora, Roma Alevis, and Arab Alevis were not invited by the government, as the moderator was worried about “mixing things up” (1st Workshop 2009, 25). Apart from the participant list, Alevis were not informed on the method of the workshops, resulting in less-than-ideal preparation by the Alevi side as understood by the participants’ complaints throughout the first workshop in June 2009 (32, 43). The organization of the discussion did not allow participants to convey their thoughts in a timely and organized manner.

According to the moderator, the discussion was well-structured, however Alevis could not make their minds about common demands and problems. Consequently, the Alevis did not consider the workshops to be efficient after the first meeting, and the Sunni participants became the majority except for the first and the seventh workshops.

3.4.3 Defining Alevism at the expense of Alevis

The overall structure of the Workshops hints the masked strategy of the JDP government to make the public discuss Alevism, not discuss the issues of Alevis publicly. Some participants urged the moderator to avoid such strategy from the very beginning of the First Workshop, after he gave the first speech and started off with repeating the argument concerning ambiguity and unbridgeable differences among Alevis (22). In response, the first speaker emphasized the fact that Alevis did agree on several demands and even organized political rallies in 2008 to declare them to the public and the state (34). The participant summarized the Alevis’ position in relation with the classification system of the state as follows:

”The differences exists and it is only natural. The former incumbents did this often, ‘go agree on something and then we will take you seriously’. ... We kindly request you to avoid doing so. Please do not define Alevism for us. Leave it to us to define where Alevism stands in terms of Islam. The state must stay away from such definitions. It must not define us. We know what we are, who we are” (35).

The tension among the participants had arisen when some participants defined Alevism, however, the six demands that were agreed on 2002 remained as the main focus of all participants (37). The legal status of cemevis and the transformation of Madımak Hotel (where the Sivas Massacre took place in 1993) into a museum are among the demands all institutions agree both in principle and practice (92). The representative of the Bektaşî order made suggestions to expand the scope of the demands so that their legal issues would also resolve (103 - 106). The other four demands were equal citizenship and equal distribution of state resources, religious education for Alevi, more media coverage of Alevism in the state television, and the employment and education of the Alevi religious leaders. It must be remembered that these demands were agreed upon in a 2002 meeting organized by FERC and attended by Alevi religious leaders.

Therefore, the Alevi institutions such as ABF and HBVACA formulate these demands in different ways, despite endorsing the list of demands. For instance, the original demand requests the Alevi representation under DRA as equal citizenship dictates. However, some participants think that DRA has no place in a secular state and that DRA is the issue itself as it was given the authority to define Alevism:

”We believe that DRA should be considered as an element, a tool that organized the state’s preferences and mentality. It is not a religious institution working in terms of philosophy, it is in fact the largest and cruellest missionary institution in the world, which is organized to push the society into the darkness” (48).

As the discussion continues, participants eventually warmed up to the idea of drawing the boundaries of Alevism with the encouragement of the moderator: "... Alevism is Muslimhood itself, it is the essence of Islam. If we do not express this clearly, if we do not clarify what Alevism is, it will resemble a secret organization. It will resemble underground organizations,” stated a participant (131). Another participant warned the rest of the audience, reminding them that the very discussion of Alevism and Islam were created by the state through DRA theologians in order to legitimize the presence of DRA to regulate the religious field (135). Interestingly, the Alevi theologians share the views of the DRA and the state on the necessity of definition and classification, presenting examples from the Workshop to justify the need for categories and boundaries (144).

In the Final Report, the moderator, too, offered his own definition of Alevism, stating that it is the path of non-Sunni Anatolian Muslims who have an exceptional love and respect for the family of Mohammad the prophet. According to Subaşı,

Alevism may be studied under Sunni Islam, though Alevi are neither Shia nor Sunni. The report discards the social hostility between Alevi and Sunni, claiming that there is no empirical data or real-life evidence to suggest such tension. Sometimes the tension rises due to the provocative elements, so claiming that there is a conflict between Alevi and Sunni is simply a political effort to promote such provocations (Final Report 2010, 39-41).

3.4.4 The problematization of Alevism

The government organized six more workshops and changed the participant list to include more Sunni. Academics, religious leaders and officials, civil society representatives and labor organizations, media representatives, and a diverse group of related actors were invited to discuss Alevism. The very reason for the organization of the Workshops, listening to Alevi's problems, thus was abandoned after the first workshop. The second workshop conducted in July 2009 was everything against which the Alevi institutions warned the moderator and the state.

The meeting aimed to evaluate the academic literature on Alevism, but the concluding idea was that more research was needed for a clear definition of Alevism. What is more, academics pointed out the habit of associating Alevism with securitization, and suggested that this approach has been preventing the solution of Alevi's issues (2nd Workshop 2009, 27,35).

The third workshop was the continuation of the second meeting as the participants were members of theology faculties. The moderator explained the reason why theologians were gathered in a separate meeting from the rest of the academia by stating that the roots of the Alevi prejudice towards Sunni begged for a detailed discussion (3rd Workshop 2009, 19-20). The contrast between the first and third meeting is remarkable. First of all, the demand of Alevi for the reformation or abolition of the DRA was met with such reaction that the moderator felt the need to remind the participants that the problems related to Alevism should not be formulated as a security issue (25).

A participant elaborated on the securitization or criminalization of Alevi studies, saying that theologians who conduct research on Alevism are accused of committing separationist activities (27). Another participant argued that Alevi were excluded from the religious field as well as from theology faculties as a state policy, thus preventing them from researching Alevism with the tools and categories of theology

(29-30).

Overall, theologians share the idea that there is a religiosity and religion crisis which also affects Sunni Islam and that the root of the problem is misinformation and ignorance on both Alevism and religion. The last point of consensus is that the state should not worsen Sunnis' position in the political or religious field while granting Alevis more rights and freedom (103-104). Though most participants do not believe that the demands can be granted due to practical and logistical reasons, they reject the possible solutions that may require Sunnis to compromise or result in direct intervention to the essence of Islam (143).

Similar to theologians, civil society organizations side with the political solution on the basis of equal citizenship. The fourth Alevi workshop hosted the representatives of the civil society and nongovernmental organizations and the discussions revolved around identity politics and human rights. As Alevis are predominantly working class, the participation from labor organization was expected to provide different point of views. One of the representatives advocated for the expansion of the role of religion in education, given that the belated and limited religious training leads the youth into atheism and certain political orientations (4th Workshop 2009, 63-64).

The most distinctive characteristics of the fourth meeting is the outright denying of some Alevi groups, Alevi demands, and the ethnocidal policies of the state by the civil society members. For example, a former president of DRA, Tayyar Altıkulaç, claims that no Alevis forced to build mosques in their villages, despite the moderators repeated corrections (86-87). Later, the moderator attempted to question whether Alevis can pray in the mosque or perform the cem ritual there (128).

The themes of alienation, securitization, classification, and democratic citizenship are repeated in the fifth and sixth meetings. At this point, Alevi actors who attended the first Workshop had withdrawn their endorsement and declaration of trust. Despite the consensus over the demands, the JDP government did not take any steps to realize them. Meanwhile, the state intervention to the nature of Alevi settlements through deforestation and the endangerment of the sacred river in Der-sim region was shown as a strong evidence for the government's insincerity. What precipitated another acute crisis was the invitation of one of the perpetrators of the Maraş Massacre to the sixth workshop (NTV 2009).

The crisis was averted, but the meetings were not as efficient as the almost non-existence of Alevi institutions in the Workshops had damaged the legitimacy of the process. The president of PSACA declared that the Alevi Workshops came to an end:

”In the context of human rights and democracy, the demands of the Alevi society do not require bargaining or discussions. The problems of Alevis must be solved [together] with Alevis. The policies that the JDP government implemented in the last year opens up a discussion on our culture and belief. This is insincere, disrespectful politics” (Cumhuriyet 2009).

Finally, the last meeting was held in January 2010 with a slightly increased participation by Alevi political actors. The seventh workshop demonstrated a will from both Sunnis and Alevis to extend the boundaries of the religion. After months of in-group discussions, the only example of a dialogue between all actors in the religious field took place during this meeting. However, the circumstances to even consider compromise or negotiation for both sides were not achieved, and the reason was the structure of the Alevi Opening itself. The government did not conduct the meetings to promote solution, the moderator and the discussion questions were leading the participants to focus on the history of the issues at hand, thus deepening the concerns and anxiety.

The securitization of Alevism and association of Alevis with “terrorist groups” have been underlined in every workshop, and the participants suggested a change in such narrative. Yet, the legal status of cemevis was discussed with multiple references to alleged criminal activities, such as the funerals of insurgents in cemevis. The funerals of Alevis (and atheists or non-Sunni) who are the members of militant political movements, mostly Kurdistan Worker’s Party (Partîya Karkerên Kurdistanê, KWP), are organized in cemevis. Some participants, the AFF and FERC circle, object to these incidents and argue that “those who did not visit cemevis alive, should not do so when dead” (1st Workshop 2009, 221).

The left-leaning organizations refer to the Alevi belief that God is within every soul, thus, the body brought to cemevis for funerals “are no longer terrorist, to speak your language, they do not pursue terrorist activities. Rather, they are dead bodies saying their last farewell to whatever they left behind” (219). Minister Faruk Çelik, on the contrary, endorsed the view that insurgents’ funerals in cemevis create sensitivities and offends the public (220).

Similarly, upon presenting their thoughts on cemevi as a place of worship, the members of theology faculties identified the recognition of Alevi temples as a political mistake that would lead to Alevis’ becoming legal minorities, which provides the foreign countries to impose their own political agenda to Turkish society (3rd Workshop 2009, 23,104,145,186,188).

In the Final Report, the moderator furthers this argument by questioning the cem

ritual's purity in terms of religious performance and the credibility and authenticity of religious leaders who govern cemevis. He concluded that some interpretations of Alevism pose the danger of turning into a new religion completely outside of Islam, thus the recognition of cemevis would only exacerbate the situation (Final Report 2010, 170-172). Here, the major concern is the position of Sunni Islam in the religious field, rather than the issues of Alevis and their religious freedoms.

The following chapter examines the aftermath of the Alevi Workshops and investigates how the public discussion of Alevism was used to gain more control over the religious and political field.

4. THE AFTERMATH OF THE ALEVI WORKSHOPS

This chapter identifies the strategies and symbolic capital utilized in the reconstruction of boundaries of / between political and religious fields. The Final Report of Alevi Workshops, news coverage, and state documents are analyzed to examine the strategies, distribution of symbolic capital, alliance formation, and positions in the political field after the Alevi Opening.

The state, as reflected in the official reports on the Alevi Opening, describes Alevis as a group of people who gathered around certain “emotional references” and heightened sensitivities because of survival instincts. These sensitivities are translated into the ways they participate in politics, so Alevism has not been discussed in theological terms. The moderator discards the multiple accounts from Alevi institutions that Alevi religiosity transcends theological discussions by objecting to the act of defining itself and claims that theological investigation of Alevism is the responsibility of all segments of the society.

4.1 Alevi Demands in the Final Report

The state needs the classification system that Alevis reject and accuses Alevis of misunderstanding the ever-lasting policy to define their culture: “The more the state put effort to understand and know Alevism, the more Alevis insisted on perceiving such efforts as the instrument of control and pressure” and “even Alevi participants who try to set Alevism over their radical mentality are convinced of how unnecessary such sensitivities are” (Final Report 2010, 90). The denigrating tone of the report was inconsistent with the tone used during the meetings. The moderator perceived Alevis’ experiences with the discriminatory politics as their attempt to rationalize their lack of success and suggested that their experiences must be validated by reason and science (Akan 2018, 346; 2nd Workshop 2009, 100).

The need for empirical data and more research was put forward as a means of denying the importance of the Alevi demands, religion, and overall experiences. For example, *cemevis* were defined as the “product of [Alevi’s] emotional world”, and there is not a remarkable excitement among the public for *cemevis* to become legal places of worship. The demand is created by the organizations and imposed on Alevi, but the empirical data that the moderator have suggest otherwise (5th Workshop 2009, 37,78,117,134).

4.1.1 The Madımak museum

Perhaps the most burning issue Alevi’s raised was the establishment of a museum in commemoration of the victims of Sivas Massacre. In 1993, 35 people attending an Alevi festival were burned to death by Islamic groups in Madımak Hotel, and Alevi institutions have long campaigned for a museum of shame to be built in place of the hotel. From the state’s point of view, the “incident” was a provocation towards the Alevi – Sunni brotherhood. Moreover, Madımak Massacre has always been memorized with a reference to Başbağlar Massacre that unfolded three days later. In response to violence towards Alevi, the KWP attacked Sunni Başbağlar village and killed 31 civilians.

Although Alevi organizations were not linked to this attack and Alevi movement had weak ties with the Kurdish Freedom Movement, the state linked the two massacres for the sake of the continuation of securitization policies. In addition, the Başbağlar Massacre served the purpose of supporting state’s claims that Alevi – Sunni unity, rather than Alevi, were targeted in Sivas. The Final Reports follows the same reasoning and adds:

”The incidents unfolded in Sivas and the consequences of it, must be condemned and rejected without any reason or excuse. Having said that, one must keep in mind that the stories that were fabricated around this incident are leading to a point where stories cloud the real extent of it and sabotage the social unity” (Final Report 2010, 180)

Despite its different perception of the massacre, the state started the legal procedure to publicize the building, but the report argues that the real solution lays in fixing the “system of nurturing people” in a way to teach people to respect human rights. The museum of shame would only create discomfort and tension among Ale-

vis and Sunnis, as the annual commemoration events would create chaos in traffic and increase the population of the city, disturbing the citizens in Sivas (183).

Eventually, the state organized another meeting in Sivas to discuss the future of Madımak Hotel, where non-Alevi participants' suggestion to use the building for public service, such as library. The main argument was, again, the security and peace in the city, and a commemorative plaque on the ground floor was deemed respectful enough to those who lost their lives (185). In 2011, the Madımak Center for Science and Culture was opened in spite of Alevi institutions reactions and protests. As suggested, a corner was dedicated to the memory of those who were victims of “the lack of love and common sense”, without any reference to Alevis' trauma (Milliyet 2011).

4.1.2 Religious education and places of worship

Both the Final Report and the developments following the workshops confirmed the concerns of Alevi institutions. Especially left-wing organizations were suspicious of the government's intentions and desisted from participating the meetings after the first one. Ercan Geçmez, the president of HBVACA, explains why the workshops lost its legitimacy:

”We did not pander to prejudices even though we knew JDP's shirt [the true character]. We were hesitant on some issues, but we reckoned that it was a first in the history of the Republic, we actually made their job easy. We attended the first workshop with a comprehensive report, but we understood at the very beginning that the workshop was precisely a deception, a political show, an act of looking cute in the eyes of EU and the USA. As if the issue was Alevis and Alevism, they felt no shame in defining Alevism, offering money to Alevi *dedes*, and they ignored the decision of the ECHR regarding mandatory religion classes” (Evrensel 2011).

The ECHR decisions on religion classes were concrete victories for the Alevi institutions. In Turkey, the religious education was regulated by law after the 1980 military coup. The mandatory class, namely the culture of religion and moral knowledge (CRMK), is taught at grade and high school level. According to the constitution, only the state can authorize and establish religious education institutions. Thus, Alevis (also Baha'i and non-Muslim individuals) cannot train their religious officials

and community in the way they see fit. ECHR ruled against Turkey in two cases in 2007 and 2014 (Yıldırım 2014, 49). The first case was about the materials and subjects of the CRMK, which were prepared in accordance with Sunni Islam, and the court fined Turkey for violating religious freedoms of Alevis. As the 2007 decision was before the workshops, Alevis requested the government to change or terminate CRMK, whereas theology faculties insisted on simply updating the material.

The second case was about the exemption from religious classes, which was only permitted upon the declaration of religion. Though the 2014 decision was after the workshops, the declaration of religion was already an issue, provided that keeping their religious identity was a challenge for Alevi children because of the material that often defame their culture and the in-class interaction with the Sunni teachers (Girişimi 2011, 111).

The religion classes became another disappointment for Alevis, because the state not only ignored Alevi demands but also introduced new elective courses, such as The Life of His Holiness Mohammad, Basic Religious Knowledge (Islam), and Qur'an in 2012. However, these courses are indirectly mandatory, according to the Initiative of Religious Freedom. Imam-Hatip schools (vocational religious schools) were also central to the issue of religious freedom, as Alevi and non-Muslim students were placed to Imam-Hatip schools through the national selection system without their permission (Hürriyet 2012). The state did not take any steps to correct the exemption mechanism to grant non-Sunni population more religious freedom and fairer religious education (HBVACA 2009).¹

The Sunnification of education is becoming a greater issue for Turkey as the religious education scattered across the national curriculum. For example, CRMK teachers are assigned to teach philosophy and sociology classes, the theory of evolution is removed from the biology and science lessons, students are forced to perform the Sunni ritual of alms (*zakah*), mosques are built in campuses in Alevi cities like Dersim, and so on (Emiroğlu 2014).

4.1.3 The financing of *dedes* and *cemevis*

The only demand that was partly taken seriously by the state was the financing of Alevi *dedes* under the DRA. As discussed before, state-critical organizations objected

¹This report was published by HBVACA and FAA and known as *Kırmızı Kitap*.

any initiative for state-sponsored Alevism, yet FERC and FAF circle was determined in creating funding for Alevi *dedes*. The majority of theologians supported FERC and FAF on the necessity of training Alevi *dedes* in theology faculties and by DRA (Akan 2018, 324). In 2008, 800 Alevi religious leader gathered to protest the salaried-*dede* institution the JDP and FERC circle suggested.

Some *dedes* wanted the budget of the DRA to be transferred to the Ministry of Education for brighter generations (Türk 2008a). The largest grassroots organization, ABF, has been in opposition to any sort of control over Alevi religiosity and culture, so their reaction to the financing of *dedes* by the state was unsurprisingly strong:

”The most fundamental and explicit danger in the JDP’s Alevi trap can be observed in the reports published after the series of workshops and the language that the JDP spokespeople use. [That danger] is to homogenize Alevi belief in state Sunnism by nationalizing (*devletleştirmek*), confiscating, registering and controlling our faith, and turning our *dedes* into imams, and transforming our *cemevis* into mosques” (Eser 2010).

4.2 State-Alevi Relations After the Workshops

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may draw two major conclusions: First, Alevis have fewer common objectives and demands they did before the workshops. The mutual agreement on the six demands presented in the first workshops no longer exists, as the dispute over the praxis and application among Alevi institutions deepened the political disagreements. The three demands all Alevis embrace are as follows: the recognition of legal status of *cemevis*, the cancellation of mandatory status of religion classes, and the establishment of the Madımak museum of shame.

Second, the Alevi Workshops provided the state with a stronger yet pejorative argument on the ambivalence of Alevism. The structure of The Alevi Workshops – a moderator asking questions about Alevism to the representatives of the society – allowed the state to question Alevis and Alevism in front of the public while positioning itself as the constructive actor within Alevi politics. Furthermore, its role as the constructive actor is a demonstration of how much symbolic capital the state holds and to what extent the classification system benefits the state’s monopoly

position in the religious and political field.

The developments took place after the Alevi Workshops are also illuminating in terms of new ethnocidal strategies the state employed. In 2010, the JDP government passed the Law of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The hope was that the law draft would include at least some reform suggestions of Alevis that were discussed in the Workshops. However, the JDP chose to strengthen the position of DRA by increasing its budget and expanding its authority. In the parliamentary discussions the RPP and Peace and Democracy Party (PDP) representatives pointed out the ineffectiveness of the Alevi opening. In response, the JDP spokesperson argued that DRA was crucial for the betterment of the society more than it was credited for:

”The religion of Islam cannot be confined and practiced within the four walls of the mosque, because the religion of Islam puts rules on the whole life of the believer. . . . Therefore the DRA has to diagnose all kinds of problems of our people and find solutions. . . . Lack of authority in religious life will produce religious anarchy” (Akan 2018, 350).

This speech demonstrates that the JDP, the most anti-Kemalist incumbent party that based its entire democratization initiative on reversing the influence of the early Republican era, does endorse the Kemalist understanding and practices of state monopoly over religious field.

Moreover, he suggested that DRA’s activities is what prevents people from getting involved in militant organization:

”The religion of Islam is the most perfect religion because it is the last religion. . . . If the divisive terror organization spilling blood for thirty years has not reached its goal, in that our exalted religion’s unmatched boundless values strengthening unity, togetherness and brotherhood have played a big role. . . . Can somebody who enlightens his reason and conscience with the light of Islam pick up a gun and climb mountains?” (351).

Here, I will revisit the first Alevi workshop, as the comments of Yalçın Özdemir (the owner of SU TV) corresponds to this account. Özdemir argued that the emergence of *cemevis* were encouraged in 1990s, because the state wanted to make sure that Alevi movement would not form an alliance with the Kurdish Movement (1st Workshop 2009, 351). In short, the state positioned religion against nationalism in order to preserve the religion-based differences among Kurds, and possibly the socialist Alevis.

İzzettin Doğan gives a different account while partly confirming Özdemir. He accepts that the prime ministers did promote *cemevis*, but for “rescuing Alevi children from the streets”, not for slowing down the influence of the Kurdish movement among Alevis (213). Collectively, these accounts and the formulation of the DRA as a firewall against the Kurdish Movement show that the state operationalizes the religious institutions to manipulate the political field and uses its central position in the religious field to deepen or abate differences among certain social groups.

4.2.1 The constitutional referendum of 2010

In less than a year after the law of the DRA had passed, the JDP government continued its anti-Kemalist and anti-military campaign for the 2010 Referendum for major amendments in the constitution of 1980. The three major Alevi institutions, namely ABF, HBVACA, and European Confederation of Alevi Associations (ECAA), declared that they would vote “no”:

”the JDP did the opposite of what we asked for. . . . The campaign must return to the field of rights and freedoms, rule of law, constitutional literacy, and equality. Only then we can judge the fascism of September 12th (1980), only then we can know who the victim of September 12th is and who was nurtured by it. . . . A new constitution is a must. But neither the text nor the preparation process is appropriate. The new constitution is only possible with the struggle of the oppressed” (Bianet 2010).

The 2010 Referendum was so critical that the coordinator of the Alevi Opening Minister Çelik changed his calm attitude toward Alevis and targeted the “fake *dedes*” among Alevis who express their dissidence and objections to the Opening in August 2010: “It was wrong to declare their “no” vote in the name of Alevis. The Association of Grocers may express their views, but [Alevis] cannot” (Hürriyet 2010) The tension peaked when Erdoğan claimed that he was imprisoned in 1999 because of the sectarianism of Alevi judges who oversaw his case (T24 2011). The campaign of the JDP was successful thanks to the support of left-liberals, allowing the government to make controversial amendments in the constitution.

4.2.2 Defining Alevisms, becoming Alevis

The 2010 Referendum was a milestone for the RPP as well. The campaign was led by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, who is the first Alevi leader of the RPP. Despite the traumatic experiences, Alevis tend to vote for the RPP. This voting behavior was explained as “Stockholm Syndrome” or falling in love with the executioner (Solgun 2008). However, it can be argued that the dynamics of the RPP or Kemalist ideology – Alevi relation was based on the strategy of self-preservation, provided that the RPP and Alevis share a common goal: Turkey remaining as a secular state. Therefore, Kılıçdaroğlu’s assumption of the leadership of the RPP was good news for both Alevis and the RPP. the RPP became more confident in securing Alevi votes and Alevis had one of their own at the top of the Main Opposition to voice their issues.

Erdoğan, on the other hand, took steps to attract Alevis again after the unsuccessful Alevi Opening, realizing that he was no longer the sole voice of Alevi demands for democratization. Hence, the JDP decided to apologize for the Dersim Massacre in 1938 in order to force the RPP’s hand and remind Alevis the true colors of their ally. Erdoğan used his apology to the victims of Dersim Massacre to further antagonize the opposition leader who is from Dersim and whose family members survived the Massacre) (Ayata and Hakyemez 2015). Moreover, Erdoğan attacked Kılıçdaroğlu and his Alevism at every public gathering, which was met with anger among Alevis.

The president of FERC criticized Erdoğan’s hate speech and attacks, pointing out his latent intention: “Apparently the Prime Minister is persistently announcing that Kılıçdaroğlu is an Alevi in order to alert Sunnis to the possibility of an Alevi coming to power. Therefore, he locates the politics over the Alevi – Sunni axis” (Ergin 2011). It would not be wrong to argue that Erdoğan was taking a calculated risk at alienating Alevis, given that he was fully aware of Alevis’ expectation from a democratic state.

Meanwhile, the JDP and its ally Gülen movement, with the support of FERC, were working on their “*cemevi* – mosque project” and building religious complexes to accommodate Alevi and Sunni believers in socialist Alevi neighborhoods of Dersim and Ankara (Türkçe 2013b). This project was only supported by the FERC and Izzettin Doğan, whose alliance with the JDP and Gülen movement was widely criticized by Alevis, while it led to a storm of protests and created huge backlash from Alevi civil society. After the failed coup in 2016, Gülen movement was presented as the sole architect of the *cemevi*-mosque project and the related actors were incarcerated, except for the JDP members and Doğan.

Since 2012, the JDP has been antagonizing and ignoring the Alevi community. Having been controlling the symbolic capital of the state for a decade, the government remained loyal to the centuries-old classification system through which it marginalized Alevism. However, the JDP had the means of pursuing further policies of ethnocide. Alevis have always been excluded from the public sphere, but the strategy of exclusion is different: the JDP excluded Alevis through inclusive practices.

In other words, the JDP invited Alevis into the political and religious field, but under its terms. As Murtaza Demir puts it, the motto of this era in Alevi – state relationship is “I am all for religious freedom, as long as you believe the way I do” 2010. This new strategy of externalizing Alevism, rather than recognizing that it is already not internal, needs Alevis to declare their Aleviness constantly, so that the state can filter it through its classification system to construct an ideal Alevism – until it is no longer different than Sunnism.

It is this strategy that makes it vital that Kılıçdaroğlu publicly declares his Aleviness (he never did) and says that he is from Dersim (he says he is from Tunceli, the name the Republic invented in 1935 to Turkify the region): “With Alevis, with Sunnis, we, 77 million [people] will form a unity. Together, we will be Turkey,” says Erdoğan during his presidential campaign in 2014, and continues: “Kılıçdaroğlu, you may be Alevi. I respect that. Don’t be afraid, don’t hesitate. I am Sunni. I say it openly. There is no need to deceive the people” (Cumhuriyet 2014) Kılıçdaroğlu has been struggling with the same thing what Alevi institutions did during the Alevi Workshops, which is the pressure to remain unidentified and unclassified.

However, Turkish Sunnism are the dominant group and, for them to maintain their central position in the political field, Alevism must be reconstructed as heterodox, deviant or externalized actors. In other words, the JDP and the state needs Kılıçdaroğlu to confess and Alevis to define their Aleviness, so that the authenticity and monopoly of Turkish-Sunnism may be validated and solidified through the acknowledgement of non-Sunnism of Alevism.

Erdoğan’s claims to being an Alevi under certain conditions can be viewed in this perspective: “If loving His Holiness Ali is Alevism, I am a perfect Alevi”. This statement is not only assimilationist, it also implies that Erdoğan himself is externalized as he has a different understanding of Alevism (Ateş 2015). This is how ethnocidal politics work – including others to an extent that the state sets a perfect example of the otherized subject and eventually wiping out all the differences between the otherized and the state.

The Alevi Opening that started in 2007 with the candidacy of two Alevis to the

parliament in the JDP list, continued with Moharram iftar, and ended with the Alevi Workshops. The process marked the first official visit to a *cemevi* by the president of Turkey. As I discussed above, none of these developments lack the subtle practices of symbolic and political violence. However, the subtlety was put aside just a few months after the last workshop.

The transformation of Madımak Hotel into a science center to obscure the traumatic experience and memory of Alevis, hate speech towards Alevis and the highest-ranking Alevi politician, increased discriminatory policies imposed on Alevi students and believers, enforcing of *cemevi*-mosques or mosques as ideal places of worship, associating Alevis with sectarian conflicts in Syria, the purposeful deceleration of the implementation of court decisions, and negligence of Alevi demands caused the loss of the already questionable legitimacy and sincerity of the JDP's Alevi Opening.

In 2012, the Sivas Massacre case was dismissed due to statute of limitation, as per the demand of the prosecutor. The lawyers of the deceased insisted that the case could not be dismissed because the defendants act with prejudice and hate towards a religious group, which means that the massacre was a crime against humanity (Türkçe 2013a). The demonstrators protesting the court decision were teargassed and beaten by the police officers in front of the courthouse, and Erdoğan celebrated the decision (T24 2013a).

Most of the defendants of the case were fugitives actively searched by the law enforcement, but it was discovered that some of them were working as state officials, while some others have been living in Sivas. One perpetrator was serving life sentence, but he was pardoned by Erdoğan in 2020 (BirGün 2020). Moreover, the lawyers of the Sivas Massacre case have been important political actors in Turkey's political arena. Almost all lawyers were members of the JDP and served as mayors, ministers, parliamentarians, or chairs of state companies. Temel Karamollağlu, the mayor of Sivas in time of the massacre, was in the suspect list and he is now the leader of Felicity Party. The legal debate still continues, but the case might be dismissed again due to statute of limitations in 2023.

4.2.3 Securitizing Alevism

The JDP government's transition into an authoritarian regime have been accelerated after Gezi Riots in 2013. The neoliberal policies of the JDP were exclusively targeting poor neighborhoods, violating people's right to city. Given that Alevis

mostly reside in poor and peripheral neighborhoods, they were also affected by the urban transformation and gentrification projects. Alevi neighborhoods in big cities have been subjected to securitization strategies for decades, which further politicized the Alevi youth in leftist organizations.

Therefore, when Gezi Riots started in May 2013 to defend people's right to city and protest the JDP governments authoritarian practices, Alevis were among the demonstrators both in Taksim Gezi Park and in their own neighborhoods. Approximately 3 million people in 79 cities protested the government, thousands of people were wounded due to excessive police force in two months (Türkçe 2017). 8 people, one of them a child, lost their lives to the state violence and all of them were Alevis. Meanwhile, Alevi institutions were protesting the offensive choice of name for the third bridge of Istanbul during which the police used anti-terror level force against civilians (İnsan Hakları Derneği 2013).

Furthermore, Security General Directorate released a report about the ongoing protests and claimed that 78 percent of the suspects were Alevis. The Directorate did not reveal the method used in identifying the religious orientation of the suspects and stated that the data are from the "demographic analysis" of the suspects (T24 2013b).

In Turkey, the state does not officially collect data on its citizens' faith, which makes one question whether the state profiles Alevis or not. the RPP parliamentarian Sezgin Tanrıkulu submitted a parliamentary motion to Prime Minister Erdoğan asking if the state assigns "lineage codes" (soy kodu) to citizens (Tanrıkulu 2013). Erdoğan did not reply to the motion, but the Security Directorate later declared that the statement of "78 percent of the suspects being Alevis" in the report was misinterpreted by journalists (Türk 2013).

The murder of an Alevi child, Berkin Elvan, by a police officer during Gezi Riots strengthened the JDP narrative on intrinsic support of Alevis to terrorist organizations. The funeral of Berkin Elvan organized in Okmeydanı *cemevi* was attended by hundreds of thousands in Istanbul, while thousands of demonstrators protested police violence in other cities (Türkçe 2014). In response, Erdoğan made criminalizing statements during his presidential campaign:

"A funeral took place in Istanbul few days ago. Unfortunately, a kid wearing a poşu [a traditional Kurdish clothing item which is popular among leftists] who was recruited by terrorist organizations, holding a slingshot, iron balls in his pockets, he unfortunately dealt with teargas. How could the police figure out who threw the iron balls, wearing a poşu, holding a slingshot? . . . How interesting, "the murderer of my son is the

prime minister” says his mom. I know the love for one’s children, but I did not understand why you put iron balls and gillyflowers in your son’s grave. What is the message you are sending?”(NTV 2014)

To this day, the state and the pro-government media presents Alevis as the major actor in Gezi Riots, emphasizing their association with ‘terrorism’ and violence. It must be also noted that a second Alevi Opening was commenced while Gezi Riots were ongoing. This simultaneity of state violence and inclusion policies is a profound example for ethnocidal characteristics of the JDP’s approach to Alevis.

While Alevis were criminalized and subjected to symbolic violence, they were also promised with the following: two universities to be named after historical personalities for Alevis, preparations for subsidizing *cemevis*, financial support for *dedes*, and more material on Alevism in religion classes.

The last attempt to another Alevi Opening was in 2016 and it was, too, unsuccessful for usual reasons. The Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited a *cemevi* in Erzincan and gave a speech about Alevism. Putting the issue of another state official talking about Alevism aside, the speech itself demonstrated that classification was indeed a state strategy and that the state insists on creating an Alevism within Islam. Davutoğlu referred to many elements of Alevi faith in his speech and used words that are distinctively common among Alevis, but also defined an ideal Alevism:

” Alevis and Sunnis has fought shoulder-by-shoulder, hand-by-hand, so that the path of His Holiness and 12 Imams could not disappear on these lands. . . . Your grandfathers combatted just as Sunnis’ grandfather did. . . .

Whoever disavows Hak (Haqq, the truth; Allah in Sunni theology -sç), Sunni or Alevi, will deviate. Whoever disavows His Holiness Mohammad will have his ikrah (God’s displeasure of his subjects in Sunni theology -sç) lengthen. Whoever leaves the path of His Holiness Ali will go astray, will leave the path [of Alevism]. Those who try to separate us as Alevi – Sunni must know these paths, these rules, so that the division cannot be made. There are some people who deviate from His Holiness Ali and create such things like Ali’siz Alevilik (Alevism without Ali). They are out of the path of Hak and tevhid. May God bless them with salvation” (Ajansı 2016).

Later, the news surfaced that Davutoğlu went to Erzincan HBVACA *cemevi* without notifying the Association or *dede* in charge, he led the prayer in presence of an

Alevi *dede* during the cem ritual and sat where *dede* was supposed to sit traditionally (Kenanoğlu 2016). Yet, the offensive acts were less worrying than the sectarian politics Davutoğlu pursued while the civil war in Syria turned into a Shia – Sunni war (Özkan 2009). Together with Erdoğan’s statements on alleged support of Kılıçdaroğlu’s the RPP to Syria’s Alawite leader Bashar al-Assad, Davutoğlu’s placing Alevis into a sectarian context was in congruence with the criminalization policy.

4.2.4 Reconstructing ethnic boundaries

This time, Alevis, especially the Arab Alevi community, were forced to declare their views on the ongoing civil war in Syria in order to acquit themselves from the accusations of the JDP. Moreover, Alevis were expected to draw the distinctions between their religion and Nusayrism / Alawite faith, which again started a public discussion thanks to the encouragement of state media and the JDP government (Taştekin 2014). Davutoğlu denied that he had a sectarian agenda and said he could not have any bias against Alevis, provided that he is “the most real Alevi if Alevism is mourning during Moharram” (Cumhuriyet 2011).

Meanwhile, Erdoğan mobilized his base against the Alevi community with his narrative built around distorted facts, such as Syria being an Alevi state, Alevis massacring Sunnis, or Turkey rescuing Muslims from deviant Nusayris (BirGün 2011). On the other hand, the JDP government was supporting jihadist groups which were responsible for mass killings in Alevi villages in Syria (Can, Mertcan, and Sivri 2014). Consequently, Alevis were assigned another identity by the JDP: supporters of a regime who murders its Sunni citizens.

The organizational and performative differences among Turkish, Bektaşî, and Kızılbaş Alevis have proved useful in ethnocidal strategy of classification. Bektaşî order and Turkish Alevism are organized around lodges and hearths, and their position as historical alliance or close ties with the state or tendency to position their culture within Islam helped them preserve the chain of religious hierarchy unlike Kızılbaş Alevis. Kızılbaş Alevis are more scattered in terms of geography and faith. Also, Kızılbaş groups lack the ethnicity-based commonality that partly protected Turkish Alevis from the state’s externalizing approach, provided that they are mostly Zaza and Kurdish.

Therefore, a unique opportunity appeared when some part of Kurdish Movement in Turkey transitioned into a mass party as Peoples’ Democratic Party (Halkların

Demokratik Partisi, HDP) with the support of civil rights organizations, unions, women's rights movement, LGBTI+ groups, non-Muslim organizations, Kurdish political entities and parties, socialist parties, and Alevi organizations. The constituents list of the HDP was containing the same actors that the JDP otherizes through a combination of Kemalist ideology and their unique ethnocidal and classificatory strategies. The HDP attracts leftist and Kurdish Alevi votes, so the government had an evidence to justify the alleged terrorist tendencies of Alevis.

Moreover, 'Alevism without Ali', an invented and pejorative category, was used to describe Alevis who politically organize around the HDP. Alevism without Ali implies the deviant Alevis who cannot be included in the authentic, agreeable, and ideal Alevi category by the FERC circle and the government. Erdoğan commented on the relationship between Alevis and the HDP before the 2015 elections:

" Their affection is fake, do not believe [HDP]. They cannot love. How can people who kill can love? How can people who murder love? ... Now, there is this new thing occurred in Europe, here and there, called Alevism without Ali. Now one of them is a candidate [of HDP]. ... If Alevism is to love His Holiness Radiyallahu Anhu Ali, nobody can be more Alevi than I am. But no, if Alevism is a religion, Tayyip Erdoğan will not be there. ... I believe you will give them the answer they need on June 7th" (Akit 2015).

In one speech, one may observe almost all categorizations with which the state associates especially with Kurdish Alevis: internal threat with foreign support, deviants, separationists, supporters of violence, and incapable of defining their own faith. the JDP government (along with Kemalists of the RPP) also underscored the fact that Dersim Alevis are important figures in the KWP as generals and founding ideologues (Çandar 2011).

Since 2015, the state continued its symbolic violence through an offensive naming policy in cities populated by Alevi Kurds and popularized historical figures who were responsible for Alevi Massacres committed both by the state and Kurdish-Ottoman alliance, such as Abdul Hamid II and İdris-i Bitlisi (Saraç 2017). Such efforts aim the prevention of Alevi-Kurdish alliance on the grounds of left-wing politics, securitization of Kurdish Alevis, and formation of an Alevi identity which excludes Kurdishness and Alevism.

The creation of a Turkish Sunni nation depends on the success of the ethnocidal strategies towards Alevis and Kurds as these two groups are immediate dangers towards the legitimacy of the state and its classification system. The relationality

and positions of ethnic and religious identities indicate the perception of the state, too. When forming alliances or opting for hostility, Alevis and Kurds revisit the history and identities and reconstruct them if necessary. The extent to which either group relate themselves to the state indirectly alters the dynamics between Alevis and the state.

Considering what was discussed so far, it can be said that Alevis show a willingness to engage with the state. Although a consensus has not been reached yet, there are Alevi groups which demand representation in the DRA, religious classes, salaried *dedes*, and so on (Ömer Tekdemir 2018, 32). The JDP government has not taken the steps to accommodate the demands of Alevis who consider themselves within the boundaries of Turkish Islam, let alone ceasing the hate speech towards Alevis as a symbolic gesture.

On the contrary, Alevism was subjected to ethnocidal policies through state violence, legal erasure, judicial normalization, and coercive classification. The presence of an Alevi identity to reconstruct within and exclude from the national unity, now, is indispensable to the JDP government because it is in increasing need of the legitimization of its authoritarian regime. The controversy around the religiosity and ethnicity of Alevis is used as a means to position Sunni and Turkish identities at the core of the JDP-state monopoly in the political field.

5. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the thesis, I will provide a critical overview of the Alevi studies and the literature on state-religion relations in light of my choice of methodology and theoretical framework. Then, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of my research. I will conclude the thesis with my suggestions for future studies.

The academic literature on Alevism tends to refer to grand theories and narratives, such as modernization or center-periphery relations. The arguments and knowledge generated in the academia lead to the production or popularization of contexts in the social field, on which politics and the political is structured. The discussion on Alevism in the academia, regardless of its problems or quality, finds its course in the political arena.

It would not be wrong to say that this is a two-way relationship, given that the dominant political ideology may also determine the content and methodology of the studies on Alevis and Alevism. As I discussed throughout this thesis, the state notion of Turkish-Islam synthesis is highly influential among academic circles which researches sociology of religion, politics of religion, religious education, theology, and so on.

5.1 Why Alevi Workshops?

I believe that the scholars are responsible for their objectification and research and how it reverberates. Thus, my choice of method, theory, and analyses are affected by my ethical and political concerns. Yet, it also provided me with a more critical approach towards the content and resources I used, especially towards the ethnographic studies which were mostly conducted poorly, methodologically speaking. My identity has also been helpful since I, an Alevi, know what might damage the

community I objectify.

In addition to my responsibility as a researcher, the political circumstances in Turkey under the JDP regime also limit what can be publicized or argued about some ‘sensitive’ issues if they do not openly favor the government policies. However, I tried to overcome this obstacle through both my choice of material and method.

That is why I gave up on using the interviews I conducted and the data I gathered as a participant observer, and turned to the transcripts of the Alevi Workshops. The participants knew that the meetings would be recorded, and these records would be open to the public with their real names. They already consented to share information with the state for political purposes. In fact, they did want a public dialogue and an open confrontation with the people and the state. So, I am merely analyzing what the state already knows about Alevis and what Alevis know about the state.

Another limitation I foresaw during the initial data collection was about practical concerns. There is more to Alevi politics than the associations and foundations, yet it would not be possible to include the extensive range of the movements in which Alevis engage. The relationship between the class movement and Alevis or gender and Alevi movement would itself be a new thesis, hence I chose to narrow down the scope of my research to the Alevi political leaders and mass organizations.

5.2 Why Field Theory?

The field theory, in general Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology, has rarely been applied to the case of Alevis. But I think it offers three crucial opportunities: First, it gives us a chance to evaluate actors with a non-deterministic and non-reductionist approach. The knowledge production and theory do have political and social repercussions, and field theory ensures that the researcher reflects to every stage and aspect of their investigation.

Second, field theory and its analytical toolbox frees the researcher from the objectivity-subjectivity debate. Researchers’ situated knowledge and reflections may enrich sociological theory, let alone individual research projects. Moreover, it allows for the generation of better questions and data, as researchers investigate their community with a familiar and critical gaze.

And third, Bourdieu's conceptualization of agency and structure was my way of preventing the Sünni academia and state from intervening my research and my own agency. Alevism has been studied mostly by Sünni Turks with a statist approach and Alevi researchers were expected to confirm their findings. The field theory do not take the centrality of any agent for granted. Thus, I was freed from the center-periphery or heterodoxy debates, which I find restrictive and not-so-explanatory.

The major issue with the literature on Alevi movement is that it assumes that Alevis are in opposition, completely oppressed, and incapable of strategizing. Even when they strategize, they only demand their issues to be solved by the state and within the state-determined boundaries. There is not enough data and research to understand why Alevis act the way they do. The go-to answer is that Alevis form alliance with the state because of the mutual principle of secularism; however, the overgeneralized arguments fail to explain the positions of Alevis who are opposed to the state or the definition of the state itself. Also, there is a need for asking more questions about and apply different theoretical approaches to the Alevi-state relations and Alevis' involvement in classification and class struggles.

The field theory and reflexive sociology makes it possible to question the agency and the structure simultaneously, which provides a invigorating theoretical framework for the Alevi studies. The concepts of capital and field offers a perspective through which we can think about why and how Alevis act and are made to act in certain ways. Ideally, any research combining ethnographic data and discourse analyses with the field theory would contribute greatly to the available research.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Turning now to the several questions that remain unasked or unanswered at present, I must start with stating that further work is required to analyze the state – academia relations in context of Alevi politics. As discussed before, the academia itself should be an object of research to establish to which extent the state constructs the academic and knowledge production mechanisms with a specific focus to the literature on Alevi studies.

Similarly, there is abundant room for further progress in investigating the use of symbolic capital to produce or construct meaning and perception? For instance, how does the state manipulate the field(s) to circulate certain information (heterodoxy

of Alevism), construct associations (deviant behavior and ethnic belongingness), or encourage alliances (Kemalists and conservatives). Alliance formation or networks should be further analyzed to observe how Alevis organize in social and political life and whether their religiosity or faith influence such decisions. In addition, more research on the association of *cemevis*, *jiares*, and other sacred places with the Alevi politicization needs to be undertaken.

A relevant question would be how ethnicity is perceived. Does ethnicity lead to a differentiation in terms of political goals? Does it affect the relationship with the Alevi communities of a different background? Do different ethnic backgrounds result in alienation towards specific historical incidents? Based on my fieldwork, I may suggest that Dersim Massacre is perceived differently by Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, and data gathered via more sophisticated methods would contribute greatly to the literature.

Moreover, some questions may benefit from being reversed. How did Alevis alter the state's goals? Did Alevism dissipate or change some characteristics of the leftist politics, given that Alevi and socialist movements have been closely tied for decades? How did the KWP preserved its Kurdishness even though a significant number of its founders and base are Alevis, while some other militant organizations could not do so? For instance, the Workers' and Villager's Salvation Army of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu*, TIKKO) merged its Marxist-Leninist ideology with some rituals and beliefs of Alevism. More research on such topics needs to be undertaken with ethnographic data.

Lastly, the positionality of Alevis in relation to Alevism and the Alevi movement should be investigated through fieldwork and other means of data collection. Regardless of the research question, studies may benefit from reflexive sociology and the theoretical framework it contributes, as Alevi studies require a critical perspective which protects the researcher and the research subjects from the mechanisms through which the state control the knowledge production.

The parallelism between the inquiries of the academia and the state must be cautiously observed, because the state has a tendency of asking questions that serves to the construction of positions, identities, perceptions, and most importantly, the political.

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