

# Alevism and Alawism at the Center of the Debates on Definition, Denial and Recognition

**Didem Dođanyılmaz Duman.** Political Science and Public Administration Department, Izmir Democracy University

The Mediterranean Basin possesses significant diversity both in ethnic and religious aspects, and Alevi identity is one of the many components of this diverse cultural heritage. Türkiye has been the homeland of Alevis; however, the most heated debates regarding a definition have also taken place in Türkiye. This study aims to provide introductory information on Alawism and to present Alevism with its syncretic and genuine characteristics, focusing on the debates regarding not only definition from both objective and subjective identity perspectives but also social and legal status. In its conclusion, the author leads us to argue that Alevi identity should be recognized both on social and official levels and that, in this respect, it is important to remember that Alevism with its diverse structure is a component of diversity that the Mediterranean possesses in terms of both cultural and religious aspects.

## Introduction

Culture has been a very complex concept that has been fed and enriched with multiple components. Within the broadest approach, it can be defined as a way of life composed by systematically accumulated knowledge and experience, transferred from one generation to another not through biological inheritance but learning. As Kongar<sup>1</sup> states, it consists of the sum of all assets that humankind has added to nature, and it includes both material and spiritual entities. Within this framework, the rela-

tion between culture and belief systems has significant importance.

The relation between culture and religion has been a strongly debated topic amongst academic circles and mostly focuses on how deep the impacts of religion on culture are with the acknowledgement of a consolidated correlation. According to some scholars, culture is a phenomenon that is entirely related to religion; but others find that very reductionist as it devalues diverse components of culture, and propose instead that religion must be considered as one of the most salient determinants of culture. The latter is more appropriate since

---

1. Emre Kongar, *Demokrasi ve Laiklik*, Istanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 2012, p. 13.

culture cannot be reduced to a single component set apart from others, such as values, norms, symbols, language, and geography.

The Mediterranean Basin offers a significantly enriched cultural diversity, not only in ethnic but also religious aspects. In addition to the three Abrahamic religions, inner diversity plays a significant role within the cultural richness of the Mediterranean. This chapter focuses on Alevi, a religious group that significantly contributes to the cultural diversity of the Basin. The homeland of Alevism is Anatolia; however, it is not possible to identify a specific homogeneously-Alevi-populated geography in Türkiye or give an exact number of the population. Since religious identity records have been kept in accordance with Muslimness and non-Muslimness in Türkiye with respect to the Treaty of Lausanne, Alevi identity is not a component of official records. According to different sources, the Alevi population in Türkiye ranges from 5 to 20 million, and a significant number of Alevi lives abroad, where scholarly work and declarations of Alevi institutions provide estimated numbers. For instance, the British Alevi Federation states that there are approximately 300,000 Alevi living in the United Kingdom,<sup>2</sup> and the Alevi Federation Germany states the number of its members – which can be considered as an approximate number

of the Alevi population in Germany – as 700,000.<sup>3</sup> Estimations suggest that 200,000 Alevi reside in France, 80,000 in Austria, 70,000 in Switzerland, 200,000 in the Netherlands,<sup>4</sup> and 35,000-40,000 in Belgium.<sup>5</sup> Beyond Europe, even though there are no official numbers, the existence of Alevi cultural centers and/or federations should be considered as proof of their presence. For instance, the Alevi Federation of Australia works to promote Alevi interests in Australia,<sup>6</sup> and the Midwest Alevi Cultural Center aims to bring together Alevi people residing in the Midwest region of the United States.<sup>7</sup>

*According to different sources, the Alevi population in Türkiye ranges from 5 to 20 million, and a significant number of Alevi lives abroad*

The given numbers alongside the cultural centers and federations abroad represent Alevi identity. However, the Alevi population in Türkiye consists of two main groups: Alevi and Alawi, with different ethnic origins. In the Turkish language they are pronounced the same, and both contain certain Shiite elements within their belief systems such as a strong belief in Imam Ali and the Twelve Imams but none can be claimed as entirely Shiite since it is just one of the many components that affect the syncretic characteristics

2. "Alevism", Britain Alevi Federation, 2016, accessed September 24, 2023, [http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App\\_Data/alevinet\\_org/Alevism-Resorces\\_en-GB/\\_Documents\\_2015-16/151854076\\_109173189\\_ALEVISIM.pdf](http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App_Data/alevinet_org/Alevism-Resorces_en-GB/_Documents_2015-16/151854076_109173189_ALEVISIM.pdf)

3. "Home", Alevi Federation Germany, (n.d.), accessed September 24, 2023, <https://alevi.com/en/home/>

4. Erdoğan Gedik, Hande Birkalan-Gedik, and Adelaide Madera, "Alevism in Turkey and in Transnational Space: Negotiated Identities between Religion, Culture and Law", *Stato, Chiesa e Pluralismo Confessionale*, no. 17, 2020, pp. 55-56.

5. Alain Servantie, "Les Alévis en Belgique. En quête d'une reconnaissance au-delà de l'islam", *Anatoli - De l'Adriatique à la Caspienne. Territoires, Politique, Sociétés*, no. 6, 2015, p. 200.

6. "Home", Alevi Federation of Australia, (n.d.), accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.alevi.org.au/eng/#aus>

7. "Home", Midwest Alevi Cultural Center, (n.d.), accessed September 25, 2023, <http://midwestalevi.org/en/home/>

of Alevi and Alawi beliefs. The main determining point regarding their differences start with their ethnic identities. While Alevis are geographically from Anatolia with Turkish or Kurdish ethnicities, Alawis/Alawites/Nusayris with Arab ethnicity mainly live in three southern cities – Hatay, Mersin, and Adana – in Türkiye, and the majority of the Alawi population reside in Syria and Lebanon. Since ethnicity varies from one group to another, there are certain differences between them both in historical aspects and practices. This article aims to focus on Alevi identity within the framework of its syncretic and genuine characteristics with introductory information regarding Alawi identity as they are both at the center of the debates within the framework of their differences in Türkiye.

### In-Group Diversity of Alevism

Apart from Alevi – Alawi homophony in Turkish, the designation of Alevi is also a collective term in use for diverse groups in Türkiye. Alevis consist of *Tahtacı Alevileri* (Takhtadji Alevis), *Bektaşiler* (Bektashis) and *Kızılbaş* (Kizilbash – Red Head). *Tahtacı Alevileri* maintain certain Shamanic traditions, which already form one of the components of the syncretic characteristic of Alevism, with their pure Turcoman origin. They have settled in the southern and western coasts of Anatolia in forested regions. *Bektaşiler* form a significant proportion of the entire Alevi population. Sufi tradition is more visible in Bektashism and the doctrine achieved its definitive form under Ottoman rule by the end of the 15th and very early 16th centuries. The name *Bektaşî* comes from

Hadji Bektaş Veli, an Islamic scholar from Khorasan who played a significant role in the Islamization of Anatolia and the Balkans in accordance with his own interpretation. *Kızılbaş* as a name comes from the red turbans of the army of Ismail I, the Safavid Sultan of the 16th-century, since there was a significant interaction between Turcoman followers of the Safavid Sufi order and Anatolian Alevis. Since then, the name has been used to refer to Alevis of Anatolia.

*Alawi people originate from Arab ethnicity and their path differs significantly from Alevis of Anatolia, both historically and religiously*

Other than Alevis, the Alawi population should also be highlighted within the diversity of the Mediterranean Basin. Alawi people originate from Arab ethnicity and their path differs significantly from Alevis of Anatolia, both historically and religiously. First, the Alawi population in Türkiye has not spread to the entire country since they mostly remain on the southeastern coast of the Mediterranean. It would be reasonable to argue that they remained close to their historical origins as the eastern coast of the Mediterranean has been their homeland. The territories start in Hatay in Türkiye, go south along the coast, and border northern Lebanon in the south. It is important to note that the historical and terminological reference regarding the Alawite Territory that existed between 1920 and 1922 was more limited than the aforementioned geography. The Alawite Territory became the Alawite State between 1922 and 1936 in accordance with the French Mandate, and even it was dissolved and incorporated into the Syrian Republic; the coast between

Hatay and Lebanon is still mostly populated by Alawis.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of religious aspects, Alawi belief has similarities with Shiite Islam as they both contain a significant belief in Imam Ali alongside Twelve Imams.<sup>9</sup> However, Shiite Islam is referred to as one of the components that affect the syncretic structure of Alawism alongside Paganism and Christianity.<sup>10</sup> Within this syncretic structure, Alawis believe in reincarnation and do not avoid alcoholic drinks in contrast to mainstream Islam. On the other hand, Alawis believe in five pillars of Islam but differ in practices. For instance, prayers are unlike the mainstream Sunni Islamic prayers.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there is evidence that Alawis in Türkiye do prayers and need mosques for their religious practices, as stated by Ahmet Özüğür, a representative of the Alawi community, during our interview conducted on April 18, 2011 in Mersin. Hence, inner diversity also plays a significant role in Alawi belief.

## Alevism and Its Definitions

It is important to highlight from the outset that a definition has been one of the long-lasting debates between Alevis and the State. In addition to various self-definitions

that focus on and prioritize different components of the syncretic essence of Alevism itself, identity has often been instrumentalized for political interests by majority groups. Consequently, the definition of Alevism varies not only between self- and other definitions but also in accordance with the origin of the identity holder.

*Shiite Islam is referred to as one of the components that affect the syncretic structure of Alawism alongside Paganism and Christianity*

The main argument regarding definition is Alevism's relationship with Islam. There are two main arguments at this point; first Alevism is referred to within Islam, and second Alevism is an independent faith, and Islam is one of the many components that have affected its syncretic structure. The former is still controversial in accordance with recognition or denial of Alevism's genuine characteristics. On the one hand, Alevism is not recognized at official level in its homeland, Türkiye, and is considered to be the same as Islam, which constitutes 99% of the religion of the population, and within that percentage Sunni Islam is the major sectarian identity component. Since Sunni Islam has been prioritized and provided with certain privileges within a legal framework and differences between

8. The history of the Alawis is that of mountaineers linked to their faith. At the beginning of the French mandate, they were a poor and despised population because they were considered heretics by both Sunnis and Shiites. They did not welcome the French any better than the Ottomans, but the establishment of an Alawi State – within which they were the majority – greatly strengthened their position, as well as being part of the special troops, which opened new horizons for them. The end of confessionalism in Syria deprived the Alawis of their autonomous status. On the other hand, the secularization of society, of which they were ardent defenders, led them to a marginal situation. However, Alawi solidarity did not disappear, especially when, in 1970, Hafez al-Assad took power in the Baath Arab Socialism Party.

9. Yvette Talhamy, "The Alevīs and 'Alawīs", in Muhammad Afzal Upal Carole M. Cusack (eds.), *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, p. 279.

10. Mahmud A. Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria", *op. cit.*, p. 135.

11. Halil İbrahim Bulut, "Tarih, İnanç, Kültür ve Dini Ritüelleriyle Nusayrılık", in Kemal İnat et. al. (eds.), *Ortadoğu Yıllığı*, Sakarya, Açılım Kitap, 2012, p. 596.

Alevism and Sunni Islam are neglected, Alevism have experienced discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, various states have recognized Alevism within Islamic references. For instance, Alevism were recognized as a religious community by Austria in 2013, and most notably Alevism was identified as “Islamic Alevi”.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Alevism – in relation to Islam – was recognized as a religious community in 2012 and provided with the right to design their own syllabus for Alevi classes in Basel, Switzerland.<sup>14</sup> There are also examples for the latter definition, which was the recognition of Alevism as an independent faith. For instance, it is recognized alongside Islam – together and equal – and was provided with certain rights regarding education and religious holidays in Hamburg, Germany.<sup>15</sup> Recognition in Denmark is another example in this regard.<sup>16</sup>

*In addition to various self-definitions that focus on and prioritize different components of the syncretic essence of Alevism itself, identity has often been instrumentalized for political interests by majority groups*

An identity is double-sided in accordance with the party making the definition, and

recognition is not related to self-definition but is constructed through the other’s definition. If recognition refers to an official process, the party that gets to make the definition becomes the state authorities. Hence, even though the component to be identified remains the same, various outcomes occur as exemplified above. Different definitions have also been made in scholarly works. For instance, Melikoff claims that Alevism is true humanism that dates back to ancient Turks.<sup>17</sup> As another example, it is defined as a collective activism, an ethnic identity, and a transnational social movement by Borovali and Boyraz.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, in terms of self-definition, it is also possible to come up with certain differences. Ali Balkız, ex-chairperson of the Alevi-Bektashi Federation and author, pointed out four different definitions that sum up various explanations during our interview conducted on April 12, 2011 in Ankara. First, it is the core of Islam including Allah, Quran and Ehl-i Beyt. Second, it is the Anatolian comment on Islam. Third, it is a belief itself affected by Islam. And, last, it is a culture and a philosophy, an approach that originated in Anatolia and was affected by Shamanism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. They have been blended together

12. For more information: Didem Doğanıylmaz Duman, “Religion in Laic Turkey: The Case of Alevism,” *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, no.18, June 2013, pp. 191-202.

13. “Bundesgesetzblatt”, Rechtsinformationssystem des Bundes, 2013, accessed October 1, 2023, [https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGBLA\\_2013\\_II\\_133](https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGBLA_2013_II_133)

14. “Un courant issu de l’islam déjà reconnu à Bâle-Ville”, *Le Temps*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/un-courant-issu-islam-deja-reconnu-baleville>

15. “Hamburg unterzeichnet Staatsvertrag mit Muslimen und Aleviten”, *Spiegel Politics*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/hamburg-unterzeichnet-staatsvertrag-mit-muslimen-und-aleviten-a-867032.html>.

16. “Denmark Recognizes Alevi Movement as an Independent Faith Community”, Center for Islamic Pluralism, 2007, accessed October 1, 2023, <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/389/denmark-recognizes-alevi-movement-as-an-independent-faith>

17. Irène Melikoff, *Uyur idik Uyardılar: Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, İstanbul, Demos Yayınları, 2021.

18. Murat Borovali and Cemil Boyraz, “Turkish Secularism and Islam: A Difficult Dialogue with the Alevism”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 40, no. 4-5, February 2014, pp. 479-488.

with the pre-Turkish-Anatolian culture and emerged in Anatolia against Arab pressure in the region.

## Practices and Doctrines of Alevism

As noted, Alevism differs from mainstream Sunni Islam not only in terms of religious practices but also the philosophical approach. The most notable difference can be claimed to be the strong belief in Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. *Hak-Muhammed-Ali*<sup>19</sup> is a trinity and/or unity in which Alevis believe. Alongside strong references to Twelve Imams, some scholars claim that Alevism – within the perspective of the history of religion – could be assigned to Shiite Islam<sup>20</sup> or might be referred to as “Anatolian Shiite”.<sup>21</sup>

In comparison with Sunni Islam, the perception of God differs. Alevis believe in the philosophy of *En-el Hak*, which means “I am God”. It was developed during the late 9th and 10th centuries by Mansur Al-Hallaj, a Persian born to a Zoroastrian father. He was a teacher of Sufism and doctrine, and he claimed that every individual is a part of God. The philosophy was adopted by Alevis,<sup>22</sup> and – as stated by Ercan Geçmez, the Chairman of the Hadji Bektaş Veli Anatolian Cultural Foundation, during the interview personally conducted on April 12, 2011

in Ankara – the boundaries between creator and creature have become vague. Instead of a belief that consists of heaven and hell as a consequence of reward and punishment, Alevis consider them as components of human nature. Hence, a person may choose to abide by either of them during his/her life in accordance with personal attitudes and choices. Thus, people act according to a self-control mechanism and they have their own responsibilities.

*Alevism differs from mainstream Sunni Islam not only in terms of religious practices but also the philosophical approach. The most notable difference can be claimed to be the strong belief in Imam Ali*

The philosophy of *En-el Hak* also suggests another form of end of life. A human consists of two components, which are skin and soul (*ten* and *can* in Turkish, respectively). They believe in rounds of life, as the *can* passes from one *ten* to another, as in reincarnation, and they do not use the word “death” and do not say “he/she died” after someone passes away. Instead, they say “walking towards Hak” (*Hakka yürümek*) to reach Hak.<sup>23</sup> The subsequent *ten* is not supposed to be a human once again, since it might be any creature in the world; and that takes Alevism beyond an anthropocentric level while adding ecocentric components.

19. Alevis mostly refer to God as *Hak*.

20. Gedik *et al.*, “Alevism in Turkey and in Transnational Space”, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

21. Zeynep Arslan, “The Alevi Diaspora: Its Emergence as a Political Actor and Its Impact on the Homeland,” *Border Crossing* 6, no. 2, December 2016, p. 345.

22. İsmail Kaplan, “Alevi Törenleri ve Karışık İnançlı Kent Yaşamındaki Pratikler ve Sorunlar”, in Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (ed.), *Alevi Tören ve Ritüelleri Cem Cenaze Kurban*, Ankara, İmece Kültür Sanatevi, 2005, p. 31.

23. Ali Kenanoğlu, “Alevism in Turkey: Problem and Solutions; Seven Demands, Seven Proposals”, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, April 18, 2016, accessed October 1, 2023, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2016/04/18/alevism-turkey-problem-and-solutions-seven-demands-seven-proposals>

Alevi practices differ from mainstream Islamic practices. There is a form of fasting, but it is not related to Ramadan. They practice Muharram and Hızır fasts for 12 and 3 days, respectively. They do not perform congregational prayers as Friday prayers, instead they perform *cem*, which is one of the best-known Alevi practices. This has been a gathering that meets the requirements of both religious and social and judgmental needs. Society demonstrates its importance at that point since members of a *cem* should be known to each other as they give consent (*rızalık*) individually. The ceremony is led by a *dede*, who is the religious leader of that community. During the ceremony, disputes amongst the community are focused on and resolved by the *dede*. Last of all, *semah*, which is a mystical dance, is performed. Dancers perform symbolic body movements that form a connection between the individual and the divine, and the music is performed by *zakirs*, who play a special instrument called the *saz*.<sup>24</sup> The most important part of this ritual is gender equality with equal participation. Women and men both participate in the ceremony with equal responsibility, including leading the ceremony. Moreover, wisdom is also possessed by women – in contrast to historical debates regarding the relationship between woman, the individual and rationality<sup>25</sup> – since they can lead the community with the title of *ana*. Belief in equality between man and woman

has significant importance and is highlighted as one of the main differences from the patriarchy of mainstream Islamic culture.

*Belief in equality between man and woman has significant importance and is highlighted as one of the main differences from the patriarchy of mainstream Islamic culture*

As mentioned, Alevism has its own doctrines, and Alevis acknowledge them as part of their daily lives. The doctrine of *Dört Kapı Kırk Makam* (Four Gates, Forty Stations), which was developed by Hadji Bektaş Veli, consists of certain moral codes and rituals and is referred to as an ethic for a human to be a *human*.<sup>26</sup> The *human* is the one who achieves perfection and becomes *İnsan-ı Kamil* (Perfect Human Being). In order to achieve this level, intelligence should be accompanied by the consciousness and responsibility of the whole of humankind. It is accepted as the highest level that any individual may achieve, and the path is the doctrine. There are four levels and within every single one of them individuals get closer to perfecting themselves. The levels are the gates, and they are *Şeriat Kapısı* (Sharia – as the rules of religion), *Tarikat Kapısı* (Tariqa – as the Sufi path), *Marifet Kapısı* (Marifa – as divine knowledge), and *Hakikat Kapısı* (Haqiqa – as the manifestation of divine truth).<sup>27</sup> Geçmez defined the doctrine as follows: “The first gate is Sharia.

24. *Saz* plays a significant role in Turkish folk music, to which many Alevi singers contribute. Aşık Veysel, Kaygusuz Abdal, Mahsuni Şerif, Arif Sağ, Neşet Ertaş, Musa Eroğlu, Nesimi Çimen, Belkıs Akkale and Sabahat Akkiraz are the first ones that would come to mind.

25. Cansel Uslu and Didem Doğanıılmaz Duman, “John Locke’ün Toplumsal Sözleşme Teorisine Carole Pateman Perspektifinden Feminist Bir Eleştiri”, in Bedriye Tunçsiper (ed.), *Sosyal Bilimlerde Seçme Alan Araştırmaları: Teori, Uygulama ve Politika*, Bursa, Ekin, 2022, p. 70.

26. Kaplan, “Alevi Törenleri”, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

27. Irène Mélikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, İstanbul, Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2009.

It is important to mention that there is no relation between Sharia the Islamic Law and the Sharia Gate. A person who arrives at this gate realizes that s/he is nothing but a speaking living being. The second gate is Tariqa. Anyone who reaches it develops consciousness of himself/herself and of the ability to think individually. When an individual arrives at the third gate, Marifa, individualism vanishes, and consciousness of community occurs. And someone who reaches the last gate, Haqiqa, develops full awareness of the unity of all nature and humankind.”

The aforementioned doctrines shape attitudes so they cannot be threatened by geographic changes. However, practices were affected by emigration from isolated Alevi settlements towards heterogeneously populated urban areas. Conditions shifted dramatically and as stated by Mustafa Şen, faculty member at the Middle East Technical University, Department of Sociology, during our interview which took place in Ankara on April 14, 2011, the “system collapsed”. Balkız stated that the collapse of the traditional system was linked to the lack of community. He claimed that the punishment system was abolished. To be punished as a *düşkün* (shunned, excluded from the community) was not functional anymore since predominance of community had vanished. Tamer Kaya, the representative of Mersin Cemevi, highlighted the same fact within the framework of decreased interdependence among

Alevis, during our interview conducted on April 19, 2011 in Mersin. He argued that the need to address the lack of vanished traditional communities brought about another need to establish modern organizations. That was the time that Alevis gained consciousness regarding their identity as a result of migration,<sup>28</sup> in other words interaction with an “other”.

*Practices were affected by emigration from isolated Alevi settlements towards heterogeneously populated urban areas*

The necessity was fulfilled by institutions under the name of cultural centers and/or associations since the Alevi identity has no official status within the Republic of Türkiye. The process functioned as a feedback mechanism since institutions raised consciousness, and with increased consciousness more institutions were established. As noted, this process was referred to as a social movement<sup>29</sup> and, in accordance with the socio-political structure of the time, Alevi identity was seen as a representative of the democratic social movement.<sup>30</sup> However, the most notable contribution of the institutions can be claimed as the institutionalization of the Alevi identity. As mentioned, Alevis had been transferred to younger generations through oral history; nevertheless, the institutions provided a systematic transfer of knowledge since cultural centers were used for courses to become a *dede* or *zakir* and

28. Özlem Göner, “The Transformation of the Alevi Collective Identity”, *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 2, 2005, p. 120.

29. *Ibid.*, 108.

30. Martin Bruinessen, *Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri*, İstanbul, İletişim, 2000.

In fact, Alevi identity has always been linked to progressivist politics. For instance, some actors of the modernization period of the late Ottoman Period and the foundation process of the Republic of Türkiye (Ziya Gökalp, Fuat Köprülü, Namık Kemal and Abdülhak Hamit) were counted as Bektashis by Irène Mélikoff. For more information, see Mélikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar*, 2006.

even as facilitators to “document the legends, stories and books as heritages to codify the culture and religion”<sup>31</sup> to provide community security.<sup>32</sup> It would not be wrong to say that even though there are no concrete outcomes regarding recognition of Alevi identity in Türkiye, the institutionalization process has paved the way for making themselves heard by the state authorities at institutional level.

## Concluding Remarks

The keen relationship between religion and culture is of salient importance and the question as to which affects which the most is one of the main problematics of scholarly work. Answers vary significantly; however, for certain topics a clear answer cannot be provided in terms of the Alevi identity.

Alevism had been an identity that was consciously hidden throughout history in order to self-protect from an unfriendly approach of state authorities towards identity holders in accordance with their differences from the mainstream Sunni branch of Islam. They had practiced dissimulation even after they settled in heterogeneously populated areas as a result of domestic or transnational emigration. Through the last decade of the millennium, Alevis started to reveal their identity and to carry out a process of adaptation to urban conditions. Dissimulation under urban conditions threatened the continuity of Alevism but

they formed their community through institutions and performed their *cems* together while they consolidated solidarity. These institutions facilitated the process not only in mobilizing Alevis, but also to transfer knowledge systematically regarding the identity and practices to younger generations as a process of community security. Hence, the Alevi institutions brought about institutionalization of the belief and that paved the way for making themselves heard through legal entities. It can be argued that all the rights that they have gained abroad so far were outcomes of negotiations between the institutions and state authorities.

*Through the last decade of the millennium, Alevis started to reveal their identity and to carry out a process of adaptation to urban conditions*

Alevis, individually and most specifically through institutions, rightfully insist on their demands regarding recognition by the authorities both in their homeland and abroad. Freedom of religion and conscience is a fundamental right, hence religious identity cannot be a subject to hide. In accordance with that universal right, Alevi identity should be recognized both on a social and official levels. It is important to remember that Alevism with its diverse structure is a component of diversity that the Mediterranean Basin possesses in terms of both cultural and religious aspects.

31. Özlem Göner, “The Transformation of the Alevi Collective Identity”, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-129.

32. Gökhan Duman, “Salgın Hastalık Esnasında İnsani Güvenliği Yeniden Düşünmek”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Vizyoner Dergisi* 12, no. 29, February 2021, pp. 118-130.

## Bibliography

- ALEVI FEDERATION GERMANY, “Home”, (n.d.), accessed September 24, 2023. <https://alevi.com/en/home/>
- ALEVI FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA, “Home.”, (n.d.), accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.alevi.org.au/eng/#aus>
- ARSLAN, Z., “The Alevi Diaspora: Its Emergence as a Political Actor and Its Impact on the Homeland”, *Border Crossing*, 6, no. 2, December 2016, pp. 342-353.
- BALKIZ, A., Personal Interview, April 12, 2011, Ankara.
- BRITAIN ALEVI FEDERATION, “Alevism”, 2016, accessed September 24, 2023, [http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App\\_Data/alevinet\\_org/Alevism-Resorces\\_en-GB/\\_Documents\\_2015-16/151854076\\_109173189\\_ALEVISIM.pdf](http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App_Data/alevinet_org/Alevism-Resorces_en-GB/_Documents_2015-16/151854076_109173189_ALEVISIM.pdf)
- BOROVALI, M. and C. BOYRAZ, “Turkish Secularism and Islam: A Difficult Dialogue with the Alevis”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 40, no. 4-5, February 2014, pp. 479-488.
- BRUINSEN, M., *Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri*. İstanbul, İletişim, 2000.
- BULUT, H. İ., “Tarih, İnanç, Kültür ve Dini Ritüelleriyle Nusayrilik”, in Kemal İnat et al., *Ortaoğu Yılığ*, Sakarya, Açılım Kitap, 2012, pp. 579-614.
- CENTER FOR ISLAMIC PLURALISM, “Denmark Recognizes Alevi Movement as an Independent Faith Community”, 2007, accessed October 1, 2023. <http://www.islamicpluralism.org/389/denmark-recognizes-alevi-movement-as-an-independent-faith>
- DOĞANYILMAZ, D., “Religion in Laic Turkey: The Case of Alevis”, *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, no.18, June 2013, pp. 191–202.
- DUMAN, G., “Salgın Hastalık Etnasında İnsani Güvenliği Yeniden Düşünmek”, *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Vizyoner Dergisi*, 12, no. 29, February 2021, pp. 118-130.
- FAKSH, M. A., “The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 20, no. 2, 1984, pp. 133-153.
- GEÇMEZ, E., Personal Interview, April 12, 2011, Ankara.
- GEDİK, ERDOĞAN, HANDE BIRKALAN-GEDİK and ADELAIDE MADERA, “Alevism in Turkey and in Transnational Space: Negotiated Identities between Religion, Culture and Law”, *Stato, Chiese e Pluralismo Confessionale*, no. 17, 2020, pp. 51-113.
- GÖNER, Ö., “The Transformation of the Alevi Collective Identity”, *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 2, 2005, pp. 107-134.
- “Hamburg unterzeichnet Staatsvertrag mit Muslimen und Aleviten”, *Spiegel Politics*, November 13, 2012, <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/hamburg-unterzeichnet-staatsvertrag-mit-muslimen-und-aleviten-a-867032.html>
- KAPLAN, İ., “Alevi Törenleri ve Karışık İnançlı Kent Yaşamındaki Pratikler ve Sorunlar”, Alevi Tören ve Ritüelleri Cem Cenaze Kurban. Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı, Ankara, İmece Kültür Sanatevi, 2005, pp. 28-41.
- KAYA, T., Personal Interview, April 19, 2011, Mersin.
- KENANOĞLU, A., “Alevism in Turkey: Problem and Solutions; Seven Demands, Seven Proposals”, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, April 18, 2016, accessed October 1, 2023, <https://tr.boell.org/en/2016/04/18/alevism-turkey-problem-and-solutions-seven-demands-seven-proposals>
- KONGAR, E., *Demokrasi ve Laiklik*, İstanbul, Remzi Kitabevi, 2012.
- MÉLIKOFF, I., *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, İstanbul, Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2009.
- MÉLIKOFF, I., *Uyur idik Uyardılar: Alevilik-Bektaşılık Araştırmaları*, İstanbul, Demos Yayınları, 2021.
- MIDWEST ALEVI CULTURAL CENTER, “Home”, (n.d.), accessed September 25, 2023, <http://midwestalevi.org/en/home/>
- ÖZÜĞURLU, A., Personal Interview, April 18, 2011, Mersin.

- RECHTSINFORMATIONSSYSTEM DES BUNDES, “Bundesgesetzblatt”, 2013, accessed October 1, 2023, [https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGB-LA\\_2013\\_II\\_133](https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=BgblAuth&Dokumentnummer=BGB-LA_2013_II_133)
- SERVANTIE, A., “Les Alévīs en Belgique. En quête d’une reconnaissance au-delà de l’islam”, *Anatoli - De l’Adriatique à la Caspienne. Territoires, Politique*, Sociétés no. 6, 2015, pp. 191-211.
- ŞEN, M., Personal Interview, April 14, 2011, Ankara.
- TALHAMY, Y., “The Alevīs and ‘Alawīs”, in Muhammad Afzal Upal and Carole M. Cusack (eds.), *Handbook of Islamic Sects and Movements*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, pp. 279-304.
- TALHAMY, Y., “Un courant issu de l’islam déjà reconnu à Bâle-Ville”, *Le Temps*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/un-courant-issu-lislam-de-ja-reconnu-baleville>
- USLU, C. and D. DOĞANYILMAZ DUMAN, “John Locke’un Toplumsal Sözleşme Teorisine Carole Pateman Perspektifinden Feminist Bir Eleştiri”, in Bedriye Tunçsiper (ed.), *Sosyal Bilimlerde Seçme Alan Araştırmaları: Teori, Uygulama ve Politika*, Bursa, Ekin, 2022, pp. 66-74.