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Understanding urban Alevism through its socio-spatial manifestations: cemevis in İzmir

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It is difficult to give a short and comprehensive definition for Alevism. In each attempt, a different criterion has been highlighted such as ethnicity, religion, culture, political stance and so on.[1] The situation is the same among the Alevi communities on the issue of self-perception and definition. There is less disagreement about what they are not (conservative Muslims)[2] rather than what they are.[3] Therefore, the term of ambivalence or ambiguity is frequently used to describe different aspects of the issue regarding Alevi's self-description,[4] identity,[5] their relation with modernity and tradition,[6] or status given to Alevis in the construction process of national identity and citizenship in Turkey.[7] Beyond doubt, this complexity can, on the one hand, be attributed to diversity within the Alevis due to the fact that they have displayed heterogeneous characteristics in many aspects as such ethnic composition, religious beliefs or political stances with different interpretations of Alevism. To this complexity, on the other hand, multiple inner actors among Alevis as well as many external actors like state, media, academics, intellectuals and various sociocultural institutions have also contributed by producing and spreading influential views on Alevism.[8] Consequently, it can be said that on the issue of what Alevism means or what the claims of Alevis are, we see diverse approaches and categorizations which are constantly negotiated by diverse actors.[9]

It is argued that what makes this controversial situation more complicated is the essentialist approaches towards Alevism that brings closed and fixed definitions to such a heterogeneous society mainly on the basis of certain dualisms.[10] Rather than searching for origin, essences or principles of it, Bozaslan suggests to develop an analysis beyond simplistic dichotomies considering changing intercommunity relations including the ones between different Alevi groups and the state and other social groups.[11] Within this context, Alevism as well as other related actors (such as state, Sunni Islam and Turkish or Kurdish people) are regarded as socio-historical and community-based political formations continuously reconstructed through complex processes of competition, negotiation, integration or exclusion.[12] Assuming an identity as a fixed and closed one leads to simplistic and generally dichotomous explanations which usually contradict each other. Two well-known questions that reproduce such an essentialist approach in a dualist formulation in recent discussions are whether Alevism is a religion or a culture and whether Alevism is within or outside Islam.[13] The Turkish state's categorization of Alevis as a

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cultural group but not a religious one aggravates the opposition and leads to a search for a fixed, inflexible definition on the axe of culture–religion.[14] As will be discussed below, the state's rejection of recognizing Alevis as a distinct religious group having a place of worship separate from that of Sunnis, for example, forces Alevis to prove the 'religious nature' of these places.

The claim for recognition on the level of state, and the state's response to this claim as recognition, misrecognition or non-recognition emerges as an important factor in the negotiation process of meaning production and identity formation. For instance, Massicard and Sökefeld point out the increasing emphasis on religion in the self-definition of Alevism in Germany due to its sociopolitical context that enables religious communities to be recognized by the state more easily than cultural or ethnic groups.[15] In both contexts of Germany and Turkey, adopting the language of religion seems as an important means of empowerment vis-à-vis the state.[16] However, reducing Alevism to a mere religious belief helps to reproduce another essentialist approach that ignores the multiplicity of actors and diverse interpretations within Alevism. The diversity, heterogeneity and ambivalence are sometimes seen as evidence to the absence of a unified, powerful group as a political agent by Alevis themselves or by other actors. The Turkish state, for example, has employed this situation as an excuse to explain the lack of dialogue between Alevis and the state. On the other hand, the same situation can also be evaluated as the main basis of an anti-essentialist position,[17] or of 'productive misunderstanding'.[18] Diverse positions on Alevi culture and religion are a kind of resistance to different forms of essentialism including the religious one.[19] As Karaosmanoğlu underlines, for the urban Alevis, ambiguity related with the multiple discourses has undermined the monopoly of any religious essence and contributed to the 'formation of a flexible attitude that enables them to question everything about the Alevi traditions, belief system and folklore and has led to a constant reformulation of identity'.[20] Therefore, any study on Alevi issue should specifically consider this diversity and heterogeneity within the discussion.

This article asserts that cemevis have played a leading role in 'reformulating' Alevi identity and practices. Cemevis, as institutions particular to urban Alevis, have been both an outcome and medium of urbanization process. In other words, what the study claims is that cemevis, developed as a consequence of urbanization, have been transforming traditional Alevi collective organizations and practices, and eventually constructing an urban type of Alevism. By focusing on the activities taking place around cemevis in İzmir, this article tries to account for the reason why cemevis appeared as part of urbanization and to understand the new ways which traditional practices of Alevism have been gaining in cemevis. In relation to this, we will draw attention to the transforming impact of cemevi experiences on traditional Alevi practices as such *cems* (core traditional ceremony), the roles and position of *dedes*, *dede-talip* (followers of a *dede*) relations, and the imagination of the community. Next, so as to delineate that cemevis have multiple meanings and functions for different groups, the study will discuss the extensive use of cemevis where people are provided with 'sociocultural' as well as 'religious' services. Lastly, we will try to grasp the meaning Alevis attach to cemevis, especially in relation to the question of legal recognition in order to explain why cemevis have taken such a central place in Turkey's social and political agenda.

To do this, we conducted in-depth interviews with the governors of 9 out of 11 cemevis constructed in İzmir by the late 1990s. Since the cemevi process has taken place under the leadership of different Alevi associations, and in general governed by them, the interviewees were at the same time active members of the same associations. Although Alevi associations are mostly governed by the community's non-religious leaders, *dedes* were also present when some interviews were being conducted and they also made contributions. Nonetheless, the study tries to understand cemevis from the view of their active governors, rather than of their users, who decide on and organize services and activities at cemevis. The interviews were designed to draw out information regarding the construction process, the type of services and activities provided, and the impact of cemevis on Alevi practices, rituals and Alevi collective identity in an urban space.

Alevi community has diverse political attitudes about relations with the state,[21] which has led to the emergence of different associations within the community. To cover this diversity, we tried to reach almost all the associations and cemevis affiliated to the *Alevi-Bektashi Federation* (Narlıdere, Buca, Gürçeşme-Mehtap, Yamanlar, Menemen), *Ehl-i Beyt Foundation* (Limontepe, Küçük Çiğli) and *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Anatolian Culture Foundation* (Uzundere). In addition to these Alevi associations, the study included a cemevi constructed and governed directly by the İzmir metropolitan municipality (Evka 2) and another cemevi belonging to the foundation of a local Alevi community, *Eskişehirliler Anatolian Culture Arts Education Research and Solidarity Foundation* (Örnekköy). The associational profile here is in line with the organizational diversity displayed by Alevi groupings in Turkey. The only nationwide association without a cemevi in İzmir is the *Cem Foundation*, which is considered to be closer to right-wing statist concerns. Although we were not able to get into contact with two cemevis, we think that this does not affect the overall conclusions in terms of associational variation because cemevis included in the study represent the missing two cemevis in terms of associational affiliations and organizational structures.

Inhabiting remote areas of Anatolia away from political centres, Alevism has been the belief system of rural communities who have preserved and transmitted their beliefs and practices mostly within the confines of an oral tradition.[22] In the early twentieth century, rural Alevism operated through the structural institutions of *ocaks* (hearths) as inward-closed socio-religious communities, organized under the social and religious authority of *dedes*, who were members of a hereditary religious caste.[23] However, the massive rural−urban migration of Alevis since the mid-1950s has affected both their community structures and ritual practices. One of the immediate impacts of urbanization was on the *ocak*-based community structures which have gradually dissolved with its dede-talip linkages.[24] Despite efforts to maintain the same institutional organization and ritual practices in the early decades, it has become apparent in time that urban conditions necessitated new ways of collectivity and a new type of Alevism regarding community structures, organization and ritual practices. In this vein, while the emergence and spread of cemevis in the 1990s is closely associated with urban conditions, the rise of Alevi identity was first accompanied in urban areas by the rise of Alevi associations,[25] which then initiated the construction of cemevis, especially in Turkish metropolitan cities.[26] This marked a deep transformation in Alevism because cemevis appeared as an urban community institution different from rural ones; with the activities taking place there representing a differentiation from rural practices.[27]In this process, standardization and rationalization of Alevi beliefs and practices are described among major transformations occurring parallel to the rise of cemevis. [28] Consequently, it can be asserted that '*cemevi* is clearly not a thing of the past and symbolises less a return to tradition than a distance from it'.[29]

Parallel to developments taking place in the rest of Turkey's major cities,[30] the construction process of cemevis started in İzmir in the early 1990s and continued more intensively in the 2000s. As narrated by the interviewees, cemevi construction was the Alevi response to the requirements of urban life. The major motivation behind their construction was to find a place to practice the Alevi faith, to keep social connections among the members of a community dissolving in city life, and to protect and promote Alevi identity in general. Although cemevis originated from that common impetus, each cemevi retains its peculiar story with regard to the actors involved in construction and the relations they held with local authorities in the construction process, particularly with the metropolitan municipality. Community associations and the municipality, sometimes in cooperation with each other, sometimes independent of each other, have determined the construction process. According to the roles played by actors in the process, cemevis in İzmir have been constructed in five different ways: (1) by a community association with their own resources; (2) by the municipality but left to the use of the community for a term of 49 years; (3) by a community association with the partial support of the municipality; (4) constructed and operated by the municipality; (5) rented and operated by a community association without ownership. Truly, the diversity can also be observed in the architecture, design and operations of cemevis,[31] but specifically the variation in terms of ownership, construction and actors seems to be more related to the continued lack of legal status which has left Alevi associations without a formal ground to follow in carrying out the construction. Under these circumstances, rather than architectural plans as to developing internal and external designs on the basis of Alevi tradition, the associations have invested their full efforts in having a place of worship in one way or another through informal processes and with the involvement of various actors that resulted in the rise of cemevis in different architectural styles and ownership models.

While talking about the emergence of cemevis, interviewees explained that Cemevis originated from the beginning to meet the 'religious needs' of urban Alevis. In the early stages of urbanization, as it was told, Alevi traditional practices, such as *cems*, sacred meals or funerals, were held in the largest rooms of houses or apartments as in rural life. However, due to the increasing rate of urbanization, Alevis needed larger spaces able to accommodate larger numbers of people that would have provided services to scattered groups of people in urban areas. Cemevis included in the study have, therefore, primarily aimed at performing all of the core practices and rituals constituting Alevism as a belief system including *cem* ceremonies, sacrifices, sacred meals, funerals and visits to Alevi sacred sites. Since services related to funerals need special places and equipment, such as a morgue and *gasılhane,*[32] only cemevis with these facilities offered funeral services. What is more is that in addition to the practices demanding sacredness,[33] many new, predominantly educational, services have also become incorporated into activities performed by and around these Alevi institutions in the process of urbanization. Because of these new practices, it seems reasonable to suggest that cemevis have turned into larger complexes not limited to merely sacred or religious activities. In fact, our observations and the declaration of the interviewees affirm that some of the activities are organized with a clear separation of religious and sociocultural ones by a division of labour between dedes and directors of the cemevi with the rule of not intervening into each other's domains. This situation confirms Dressler's explanation of the compartmentalization of authority that 'establishes and normalizes boundaries between religious and secular spaces and practices' in this process.[34] It is yet quite related again with the heterogeneity of Alevis that still there is a negotiation process between different individuals and groups on the issue of attributing different meanings to the same practices.[35]

However, what is apparent in the language of the interviewees is that locating and naming the new activities raise certain questions: are they new parts of the Alevi belief system or are they completely temporal activities having no relationship with the spiritual principles of Alevism? In a similar way, while discussing the meaning of the Hacibektas Festival, Messicard points out to the indeterminacy of the situation as semi-religious, semi-cultural festival which reflects the diversity of actors, activities and logics co-existing during this event.[36] Our interviews show that the answer to this question again depends on how you define Alevism. When you define it, as some of our interviewees did, as a belief system with well-defined practices and doctrines, these new practices may be called 'non-religious', 'secular', 'social' or 'cultural'. However, if you see Alevism in a broader sense as a way of life or philosophy, then all aspects of life, including new practices, can be considered integral parts of Alevism and even not so 'new'. Some of our interviewees indeed pointed out that Alevism covers everything about humanity. Keeping this difficulty of making a clear-cut categorization in mind, and borrowing from our informants, in the remaining part of the study we will use the concept of 'sociocultural' for the new activities to differentiate them from the traditional ones.

While sociocultural activities were incorporated into the scope of cemevi services, traditional Alevi religious practices have been transforming as they become organized by and around cemevis. Concerning one of Alevism's core religious activities, *cem* ceremonies, the place, time schedule, attendants and spiritual leadership have all been transforming.[37] *Cem* ceremonies are now organized according to the rhythms of city life rather than the seasonal rural routines, which had confined *cems* predominantly to winter, when the workload is less. In cemevis, *cems* have either concentrated on the sacred days of Alevism (*muharrem*) or been organized whenever a demand comes from a segment of the Alevi community. Due to the heterogeneous and anonymous character of urban life and the irregularity of the ceremonies, to inform the community about *cems*, cemevis have widely employed contemporary communication technologies, especially SMS messages sent to registered members. Alevi people also call cemevis to learn about the dates and times of future *cems*. In so doing, cemevis have come to play the leading role in organizing *cems* in urban life. This is especially so in the case of cemevis directly governed by Izmir's metropolitan municipality. Having been assigned for the use of different Alevi associations on their application, the administration of these cemevis coordinates the whole process of organizing *cems*, as the governor of this cemevi makes clear:

> People call me to learn if a *cem* is going to be held on the coming Thursday. They used to ask me which dede will be present or which association will be organizing the *cem*.

In addition to changes in its schedule and organizational networks, the profile of potential attendants in a *cem* has also been altered by urban conditions. Rural *cems* were held by a *dede* for his *talips*, who were the inhabitants of a village with an ethnolinguistic homogeneity as part of one *ocak* community. Since urbanization has dissolved these *ocaks* and loosened, if not completely broken, the ties with traditional *dedes*, cemevis have organized 'general *cems*', as they call them, for a heterogeneous Alevi community of various rural and ethnolinguistic backgrounds.[38] In other words, cemevis, today, do not seek to maintain a *dede-talip* bond when organizing general *cems*, but aim instead to gather urban Alevis for any one of the various *cem* ceremonies performed under the leadership of different associations. To do this, the associations or leading cadres of cemevis maintain contact with several *dedes*, the majority of whom live in İzmir, and invite them to lead the *cem* whenever it is organized. Thus, it appears that associations or cemevis in general have taken over the position and functions traditionally performed by the institutions of an *ocak*. One of the interviewees puts it clearly:

> We no longer have our ocaks. Our ocaks and dergahs (lodges) have disappeared. We today have cemevis… This place operates like a dergah and arranges a dede for Alevis who would like to practice their faith. Under the roof of the cemevi, we bring together dede and 'talip'. In a sense, we arrange dedes for 'talips' and 'talips' for dedes. (28 Jan. 2013)

Although general *cems* have dominated Alevi practices in cemevis, it seems incorrect to claim that traditional *cems* have completely disappeared in urban life. What we found from our interviewees is that traditional *cems* have also persisted in İzmir in two forms. First, when the dede of an *ocak* visits his *talips* living in İzmir, they hold traditional *cems* in houses, in which only *talips* of that dede are allowed to participate. Second, especially when the number of *talips* is greater than the capacity of a house, they ask cemevis to hold the same *cems* in their *cem* halls, but closed to general participation.[39] Even if a non-*talip* is allowed into the hall, he/she is not permitted to take part in the ceremony since *ocak* membership and the associated spiritual ties with the acting dede are required. An interviewee explains this continuity:

> [Shortly], an ocak community from Yozgat is going to hold their own *cems* with their own dede in our cemevi. This place is always open to *cem* gatherings which take place between talips and dedes. However, *cems* organized by our association are totally different because they are open to the Alevi community in general without regarding peoples' local backgrounds. (28 Jan. 2013)

This traditional continuity should not be perceived as a challenge to cemevis though they are trying to develop practices able to deal with urban heterogeneity. Instead, such traditional practices are highly respected and promoted with the intention of keeping alive the authentic characteristics of Alevism as long as possible. Although they are still considered highly valuable in a spiritual sense, we have to note here that traditional *cems* seem to be more common among first-generation immigrants who still maintain ties with their *ocak*-based communities and rural *dedes*. Given the transformative power of urban conditions and the associated expansion of cemevis in number, we can argue that traditional *cems*, once one of the core religious rituals of Alevism, will gradually wither away as the rate of urbanization among Alevi communities increases, and as cemevis come to dominate Alevi faith and practices.

Urbanization has led to the widespread replacement of *ocak*-based traditional *cems* by general *cems* because Alevis have developed community organizations around cemevis that go beyond *ocak* membership or *hemşerilik* (migrants having the same rural or urban origin) networks. In fact, *hemşerilik* has played a very significant role in the history of Turkey's urbanization, especially in the survival strategies of first-generation immigrants.[40] However, although the function of *hemşerilik* networks for Alevi immigrants can hardly be underestimated, the ties organized around the Alevi associations have been replacing it,[41] and groupings based upon *hemşerilik* ties came to be regarded as an undesirable collective basis for cemevi administrations. While *hemşerilik* networks can operate in the context of traditional *cems*, the urban Alevism of cemevis has rested more on a community identity going beyond *hemşerilik* ties. Accordingly, the heads of cemevi administrations have, in general, been strongly committed to representing and envisioning a collective Alevi identity over *hemşerilik* or *ocak* belongings.[42] The latter are considered as a threat to the unity of the Alevi community in the cities. To the cemevi administration, a supreme Alevi identity should replace *hemşerilik* and form the common ground of the Alevi movement in general, and community organizations in particular. The following interviewee makes it quite clear how strong this concern to supersede local divisions is among leading members of urban Alevis:

> The only identity here [cemevi] is being Alevi, which is the main identity for us. I am Alevi. I do not identify myself as being from Erzincan, Tunceli or Maraş. We do not care here where you are from, from which city or ethnic origins. The main identity will eventually come into being when all think in this way. Otherwise, if we divide the community according to city/rural origin, this place will turn into a kind of hemşeri association. (5 Feb. 2013)

The statement clearly indicates that cemevis define themselves as inclusive places for the benefit of all urban Alevis and operating in the interests of the same is urban collectivity. Because of this, the heads of cemevi associations strongly reject, and try very hard to prevent the domination of local networks in the administration of cemevis and their activities. Otherwise, they believe that they will not be able to maintain unity within the Alevi community though it is vital at a time in striving for the solution of their social and political problems. Given the divisive effects of *hemşerilik* networks in a few cases in İzmir, the interviewees placed special emphasis on preserving Alevism as the single identity reference in organizing cemevi administration and activities. As noted by one interviewee, to the Alevism which has been constructed in the cities by cemevis, 'hemşerilik means nothing but belonging to the Alevi community'. In short, from the perspective of cemevis, Alevi identity is, or should be, the only bond between members of the community.

Another impact of urbanization on traditional Alevism can be observed in the changing position and roles of *dedes*.[43] Different from traditional *cems*, as discussed above, due to the dissolution of *dede-talip* ties, cemevis no longer seek *ocak* membership for their general *cems*. As *cems* become open to the participation of a heterogeneous Alevi community, it is no longer seen as a problem to organize *cems* under the leadership of different *dedes*. In other words, while *dedes* were expected to lead religious services of a specific *ocak* community in rural life, they have gained the potential in urban areas to provide religious services for the Alevi community in general. As it cut sacred bonds between dede and attendants in a *cem*, the same transformation has also made the cemevi administration able to invite different *dedes* for their scheduled ceremonies. In addition to the dissolution of *dede-talip* ties and *ocak* communities, as well as changes in the profile of potential attendants, the urbanization of *dedes* has allowed religious services to be conducted by different *dedes*.

Consequently, a kind of cooperation has appeared between cemevis in arranging *dedes*. For example, two cemevis in İzmir are currently attempting to establish a council of *dedes* (*Dedeler Kurulu*) to meet regularly, decide on the content of scheduled services and arrange for a *dede* whenever one is requested by a cemevi. As stated by the interviewees, the council is also expected to clarify Alevi rituals in the context of Alevi history and to educate the community on the grounds of the knowledge originating from the works of the council. While explaining the need for such a council, interviewees underlined that, although Alevism has the same essence, it has developed diverse forms in practice in terms of rituals unrelated to the doctrines of Alevism. The reason behind these slight differences is the historical conditions of Alevism which, under political and social pressures, had retreated into isolated localities where they lived for centuries as dispersed, inward-closed communities.[44] Against this state of affairs, the council is expected to develop a common language regarding Alevi rituals and practices. In other words, the council retains the potential to develop a kind of standardization in Alevism as it becomes the faith of an urban community. It must be added here that the need for a standardized Alevism in terms of rituals is associated with the need to organize *cems* for a larger, heterogeneous urban community rather than with a distaste with historically constituted diversity.

On the other hand, while we observed a nostalgic view of the traditional authority of *dedes*, at the same time urban life has paved the way to question *dede* authority.[45] One reason of this situation is the changing sociocultural characteristics of the Alevi community that has been apparent in the process of urbanization. There has been, for example, an increase in the level of education among the members of the community, which has on certain occasions questioned the intellectual capacities of the *dedes*. Whereas they were the major teachers in rural Alevism, the leading members of some cemevis today suggest that not all *dedes* can satisfy the curiosities of the new generation. Because of this, instead of *dedes*, some of the cemevis covered in this study intended to leave educational services concerning issues of Alevism to secular intellectuals or professional teachers who mastered ‘pedagogy’. Taking advantage of working with different *dedes*, when education is going to be entrusted to a *dede*, they prefer to invite one who is educated, who can give convincing answers to the questions of urbanite Alevis. As an interviewee, the son of a *dede* and so a candidate to become a *dede*, says:

> Since we do not have our own educational institutions, it is difficult to talk about an institutionally educated dede. It is possible to talk about self-educated dedes. We prefer those dedes who would effectively inform and guide the society in the best way. We support well-informed, sophisticated and scholarly dedes. (22 Feb. 2013)

Moreover, the increasing engagement with Sunnis in urban area has created a social setting in which Alevis came to be preoccupied more with the question of how to represent Alevism under the gaze of Sunnis as their faith is compared to Sunnism.[46] Because of this, in addition to increasing education levels, as cemevis have opened Alevi rituals to the participation of all segments of society, including Sunnis, the qualifications of a *dede* have become rather significant for Alevis because they are now expected to effectively represent Alevi beliefs and practices, particularly against Sunnis. Accordingly, a *dede* is now required to embody Alevi faith and practices but also advanced speaking skills, as well as an accumulation of knowledge. An interviewee states:

> A dede should be able to give satisfying responses to society in general. Let’s assume that a *cem* is held for about five hundred people, four of whom are Sunni friends. If they [Sunni friends] ask a question, the dede should be able to answer it in the best way. (22 Feb. 2013)

Thus, unlike the homogeneity of rural life, Alevis now live side by side with Sunnis in urban spaces where they seek to gain social acceptance and recognition against long-established sectarian cleavages and Sunni prejudices. It seems to be that these prejudices drive Alevis into a defensive position in which *dedes* are given an active role to represent Alevism and positively contribute to the social status of Alevis and Alevism as a belief system. In other words, *dedes* have found themselves in need of proving their capacities to both Alevis and Sunnies. One can, therefore, argue that a *dede*'s inherited lineage is still necessary but it is no longer sufficient to enforce religious authority unless it is sustained through the intellectual qualities of self-achievement.

Although cemevis have been discussed in Turkish social and political agenda as to whether they are places of worship or not, they have operated as centres of both religious and sociocultural activities. Indeed, when the interviewees were asked how they would define a cemevi, by giving reference to the state's denial immediately, they defined it as a place of worship, while adding that its meaning and functions go beyond being a conventional place of worship.[47] In explaining the existence of a rich variety of sociocultural activities, some of which are believed by some interviewees to form part of the Alevi belief system, some interviewees emphasized that cemevis cannot be considered merely as places of worship confined to religious activities. The same interviewees expressed concerns about keeping a reasonable balance between the two categories of activities, insisting that cemevis should not be turned into conventional places of worship where activities are usually limited by traditional religious practices and services. However, at the same time, the interviewees thought that cemevis should not be perceived merely as cultural centres, as would be the case if cultural activities outweighed religious services. Behind this emphasis, we can also see the anxiety of being officially labelled as cultural centres rather than a place of worship by the policies of the state.

Concerning the 'sociocultural' aspect in cemevi services, educational services are the most important sociocultural activity. However, unlike what one might expect at first sight, religious education about Alevi beliefs and practices takes a very small part in cemevi activities. The interviewees report that the new generations learn Alevism indirectly that is either through conversations taking place between *dedes* and the Alevi youth after *cems*, or by observing practices during the *cems*. In criticizing Sunni religious educational practices, Alevis consider it wrong to give a religious teaching to young children. In place of religious education, cemevis tend to prefer to organize seminars and conferences on the issues of Turkey's Alevi question or other issues related to Alevi history and identity. However, it must be noted that the number of conferences and seminars varies depending on the size and capacity of each cemevi as well as the level of politicization on the side of the heads of cemevi associations. What we have observed is that political stance works as a driving factor for the heads of associations in organizing conferences and seminars, which are seen very effective for enlightening and guiding people to protect and promote Alevi identity.

Although teaching Alevi doctrines is not prioritized in cemevis, they try to give regular courses, especially on two practical rituals of Alevism, saz and semah. These activities directly reflect the diversity of meaning attached to the same practices mentioned above. They in fact take place at the core of Alevi religious rituals but have also gained a folkloric meaning in popular culture as part of urbanization.[48] Associated with both the religious and cultural aspects of Alevism, saz and semah courses have been among the major educational services provided by cemevis. Because of high demand by Alevi youth, saz courses can be counted as an activity common to all cemevis. In addition, some cemevis open courses on *semah*, which forms part of the rituals performed during *cem* ceremonies. Yet, it is important to note here that some interviewees stood critical of semah courses because they thought that it entailed a danger of standardization and uniformity, as was stated by one of our interviewees:

> We formed a semah group and designed the costumes they were to wear while performing semah. However, semah is a ritual part of *cem* performed by individuals in the clothes they wear to the *cem*. In our tradition, there is no specific description about the color and style of clothes for semah rituals. We, the associations, made them all up, invented costumes for semah groups which made them look like folkloric dance groups. After a while, what we have realized is that we might distort our own beliefs and hence immediately renounced it. We should teach *semah* to our children along with the awareness that there is no uniform style or costume for *semah*. (28 Jan. 2013)

Beyond doubt, cemevis initiate a process of standardization. However, at the same time we can see the concern of preserving existing diversity among Alevis as it can be drawn from the words of our interviewee. While transforming traditions within certain limits, what makes cemevis innovative places is that they also incorporate many new activities. Among these, we can count vocational training courses, such as needlework, sewing, woodwork, computer programming and culinary courses. In addition, cemevis opened other courses on the request of their users that included courses supporting high school education, such as courses on university entrance examination, literacy, foreign languages (English, French and German) and diction. The courses are thus designed to meet the needs of both first-generation immigrants and those born in the city but lacking the necessary qualifications to participate in the urban labour market. Since internal migration still continues in Turkey, first-generation immigrants include many younger migrants from rural areas. Because of this, some courses specifically address the needs and demands of these younger immigrants living in cemevis' neighbourhood. A salient example of this is the diction courses aimed at improving the Turkish speaking skills of immigrants. Since many immigrants arrive with a rural accent, they wish to adopt an accent closer to that of the 'urban majority'. Concerning this issue, one interviewee stated:

> It was a demand which reflected the characteristics of our district, which is largely populated by newly-arrived rural immigrants. Although they speak Turkish very well, they naturally come with their own rural accents and want to improve them in line with mainstream Turkish. Because of this, most course attendants are from the younger generations of these squatter settlements. (12 Feb. 2013)

The intention behind this and other sociocultural services is to contribute to the survival strategies of low-income groups in urban areas. To this end, cemevis organize their courses in collaboration with People's Education Centres (*Halk Eğitim Merkezi*) affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. This collaboration, on the one hand, makes them able to at least partly meet teaching expenses. On the other hand, the graduates are provided with official certificates which they believe will help them find an urban job. Since most of İzmir's cemevis are located in the city's lower income districts, vocational training seems to be the most demanded and common service provided by cemevis. We observed throughout the field study that cemevis have organized diverse courses and offered services without the intention of disseminating the Alevi faith in the sense of missionary activity. What drives them more is to develop a response to the problems and needs of an urban community, including Alevis and non-Alevis (Sunnis), such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and isolation. This situation also points out to the class inequalities and redistribution problems in urban areas beyond the recognition of Alevi identity. Although the political agenda – limiting the issue on the axes of religion and culture – compels one to ignore it, as Erman and Göker assert class dimension should not be forgotten in the discussions of Alevi identity.[49] In addition to their religious roles, cemevis have become an important element of the survival strategy for lower income groups. Because of this fact, cemevis today have gained significance, chiefly for urban Alevis especially those living in squatter settlements that goes beyond their religious concerns. Complementing this aspect, activities like seminars on healthcare, theatre and guitar courses, and solidarity activities like finding clothes, furniture or other household equipment for those in need make these places act as community centres fulfilling the functions of a welfare state. Moreover, as Alevis participate in the activities of cemevis, they are offered a place for socialization especially for the youth and unemployed women, who are otherwise isolated from each other in city life.

Urbanization has increased encounters between Alevis and Sunnis, but cemevis have allowed wider interactions as they open up to non-Alevi communities, including Sunnis. That is, cemevis are expected to foster mutual understandings between the two religious groups as emphasized by interviewees. Despite this, we have to point out that social encounters in urban areas do not only create channels for mutual understanding, they also lay the ground for assimilation, which usually works to the disadvantage of minority cultures due to the domination of the majority. The power asymmetry between Alevis and Sunnis creates a strong anxiety on Alevis to stress the similarities between Alevis and Sunnis.[50] Consequently, although it is possible to talk about interactions between two different cultural groups in the city, prevailing structural inequalities and the resistance of the Sunni majority to recognize the Alevis are likely to operate as mechanisms of assimilation for the Alevi minority. We found that, on certain occasions, this can be prompted by members of the minority themselves as they are still obligated to gain social acceptance in the eyes of the majority. The reasoning behind Qur'an courses offered in Arabic in two of the cemevis covered in this study presents one of the notable examples to this situation. The courses have been taught by Sunni teachers assigned at the request of the cemevi administration by local branches of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA). Qur'an courses have been known to be a Sunni practice for socializing young children into Sunni Islam by teaching them during the summer holiday to read the Qur'an in Arabic. Given this context, it is remarkable to see the same practice among some Alevi groups, since praying in Turkish/Kurdish rather than in Arabic is one of the defining characteristics of Alevism. When we ask the interviewees why they preferred to give such a Sunni-laden education, the heads of cemevis replied that, though they would not have preferred it, they had to open Qur'an courses in order to meet the demand of the community, who wanted to follow the example of their Sunni neighbours. This situation can also be interpreted an intentional or unintentional need to justify the 'religious nature' of the cemevis in the eyes of the Sunnis which is rather complicated by the lack of official recognition as it keeps feelings of insecurity alive among Alevis.

Cemevis have been high on Turkey's social and political agenda for decades in relation to the issue of legal status, which has not yet been officially granted in Turkey. Though they acknowledged them cultural as well as religious centres, it is this lack of legal status that has encouraged the Alevi community in general, and the interviewees in particular, to legitimize cemevis as places of worship specific to the Alevi faith. In doing so, their arguments have focused on the problems of citizenship equality and the Sunni-based understanding and practice of Turkish secularism, which has defined mosques as the single place of worship for Muslims, both Sunnis and Alevis. It was on several occasions clearly noted that, whenever a conflict appears between cemevis and official bodies concerning the issue of legal status, governments have passed the issue over to the DRA, which has firmly resisted defining cemevis as places of worship. Taking the opinion about the status of cemevis from a Sunni-based state institution is considered incompatible at least with the premises of citizenship equality and secularism. Against such state-centred impositions, the interviewees insist that there should be no authority in a secular state other than that of the believers themselves to define a place as a place of worship or not. As one of the interviewees puts it:

> Before everything else, we demand citizenship equality. A secular and democratic state should allow everyone to believe in anything. This is a choice which should be left to individuals. If Alevis want to perform their religion in cemevis, they must be able to do so. When you [state] say that the mosque is the place of worship, then it means that you totally deny me. It means I don't exist. (5 Feb. 2013)

The legal position of cemevis, for the interviewees, is the most visible aspect of sociopolitical and legal exclusion in Turkey, which has left Alevis without an officially recognized place of worship, the locus of their collective identity. It should be acknowledged that despite the lack of legal recognition as a place of worship, when we consider their activities and their appropriation by their users, including both Alevis and Sunnis, cemevis have gained legitimacy as Alevi places of worship in the eyes of the general society in İzmir. Because of this, although they receive construction licenses as cultural centres due to legal restrictions banning cemevi construction, it does not prevent them from being known by their users and the people of the district as cemevis. A good example to this is that while trying to reach locations for the interviews, people living in the neighbourhood guided us to 'cemevis' rather than to cultural centres. The following observations of an interviewee manifest the same recognition at societal level:

> In order to hear the society's views about the cemevi, I used to sit in the front seats on the way to work. As they get on the bus, passengers ask the driver 'Where is the cemevi?' not 'Where is the cultural center? Whenever we make announcements about our courses and activities, or when I talk to people in neighborhood markets, nobody identifies it as a cultural center but cemevi… Local or national authorities may use different names; what is significant for us is how the society identifies and appropriates it. (12 Feb. 2013)[51]

It seems to be that the increasing number of cemevis and their users, and the form and nature of their services, have helped to establish these centres as places of worship in the perception of society. Although it by no means solves the problem of citizenship equality, social recognition enhances operational capacity of cemevis in both religious and sociocultural terms in the sense that they can perform religious and sociocultural functions. More specifically, despite legal restrictions, they can use the name 'cemevi' on their signboards, for public meetings and in corresponding with the local authorities responsible for associations. One interviewee states:

> Despite the fact that cemevis have not yet been granted legal status, we use cemevis as cemevis. We take part in public meetings with a garland on which we write the name cemevi. And we have faced no negative reaction to such practices. (28 Jan. 2013)[52]

The absence of legal status has not prevented even the official authorities from recognizing cemevis unofficially by visiting them, especially during election campaigns. It was, however, noted on many occasions that although social recognition is significant and should be appreciated, it does not mean that cemevis do not need official legal–political recognition. Besides the fact that the legal status of cemevis has become closely associated with the status of Alevis in Turkey as equal citizens, the lack of legal status also creates problems for Alevis at both personal and associational levels. Thus, the interviewees reported that as cemevis are urged to perform services as *de facto* places of worship without having legal–political recognition, Alevi people and cemevi associations are relegated to a position of illegality. That is, notwithstanding social acceptance and unofficial recognition, as long as cemevis are not provided with official recognition, it is apparent that their activities and services will remain illegal. One interviewee draws the prevailing picture when he affirms:

> What we do here, everything we do in an illegal way. The political authorities do not grant the right to open and operate a cemevi, but they just choose to remain silent and ignore us. We do not accept such treatment, but just campaign to get our rights. (5 Feb. 2013).

Several interviewees similarly mentioned that, by attending cemevis and taking part in their services and activities, Alevis would in fact be considered as committing a 'crime'. In other words, practicing their faith turns into a criminal activity, which Alevis regard as a humiliating condition. Ironically, as already noted, political authorities, while not granting them legal rights, do not refrain from visiting cemevis or attending their activities; thus they become part of this illegality.

The lack of legal status also deprives cemevis of several advantages granted to places of worship in Turkey. The interviewees reported various problems related to the operation of cemevis in İzmir that represent some of the concrete outcomes of this unequal treatment. Despite the Turkish Zoning Law exempts places of worship from charges for electricity, water and land use, cemevis, for example, are charged for all of these expenses at commercial rates, so they have to pay more than the charge for residential properties. Bearing in mind that the financial resources of cemevis come from donations and dues collected from their members, it is not surprising that the lack of legal status causes financial troubles, especially for those cemevis with fewer members or with members from lower income groups. The next concerns the construction of new cemevis, which has to conform to the prevailing legal framework which has forced Alevis to employ several tactics to overcome state strategies set by legal barriers. Although it is known from the beginning that what is being constructed is a cemevi, the license has to be taken for a cultural centre. It also means that the interior spaces need to be designed according to the plans of a cultural centre rather than a place of worship where the *cem* hall is licensed as the conference hall, and the morgue and sacrifice room as garage and storage, respectively. It is, therefore, believed that the legal status would further enhance the sphere of freedom for the associations in governing the construction process, cemevi activities and in developing better financial resources. Most significantly, legal status is expected to make the survival of cemevis as cemevis more secure. It is particularly important for those cemevis constructed by municipalities and let for just 49 years for the use of Alevi associations because their current rental status places them at risk, making it uncertain what would happen given a change in the political preferences of the municipality or at the end of the lease. To put it differently, as stated by various interviewees, their lack of legal status leaves Alevis vulnerable to political volatilities at both national and local levels. Alevis, therefore, believe that gaining legal status would provide a safeguard against possible arbitrary treatments by national and local political authorities.

It is reasonable to conclude that though cemevis have gained social recognition, at least, in Izmir, the lack of official recognition locates cemevis at the centre of debates for Alevis in assessing their communal and national positions in Turkey. This situation, first, reproduces existing power asymmetries between Alevis and Sunnis in the country. Second, as the communal efforts to emancipate Alevis from social and legal–political disabilities concentrate on the legal status, it once again drives Alevis to discuss the issue of cemevis within the confines of religion. And, hence the ongoing discussions on cemevis help to keep intellectual and communal attention away from the extensive use of these places and the diversity and heterogeneity of meanings attached to them.

Cemevis have chiefly been discussed in Turkey's social and political circles whether they are places of worship or not. They are actually an urban innovation constructed and operated in response to the problems created by urbanization. The case of İzmir shows us, although cemevis were primarily intended to meet the religious needs of Turkey's migrant Alevi community, urban conditions have also ascribed new functions to cemevis. As well as creating a space for practicing Alevi beliefs, they have also given new shapes to traditional forms of Alevi practices and community institutions, including *cem* ceremonies, *dede-talip* ties, the roles and status of *dedes*, and Alevi collective imagination. Given the changed needs of a migrant community, the sociocultural services and activities incorporated into cemevis have supported the survival strategies of urbanized Alevi community and even low-income Sunni groups. Because of this, while evaluating cemevis, if the discussion is limited to whether they are religious or cultural centres, it bears an over simplification against their significance and multiple meanings for the contemporary Alevi community in the urban area.

The interviewees in this study regard the cemevis' lack of legal status as the major problem facing Alevis to the extent that they have come to associate this lack with the overall legal–political position of Alevis in Turkey. It does not seem to be an exaggeration to claim that, for the interviewees, the Turkish state's denial of legal recognition to cemevis equates to the denial of the Alevi collective identity itself. For this reason, as long as cemevis are denied legal status, it will be harder to convince Alevis that they have equal citizenship status in Turkey.

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Disclosure statement

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Notes

1. E. Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya Alevi Hareketinin Siyasallaşması* [The Politisation of Alevi Movement from Turkey to Europe] (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007); K. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism:Negotiating Alevi Identity in Urban Turkey', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol.20, No.5, (2013), pp.580–97.
2. One of the few commonly shared characteristics attributed to Alevis is heterodoxy. See Ş. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism as a Public Religion', *Current Sociology*, Vol.53, No. 3 (2005), pp.465–85, p.466; M. Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik* [Alevism in Turkey] (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2004), pp.36–9. For the critique of the term, see also M. Dressler, 'Turkish Poltics of Doxa: Otherizing the Alevis as Heterodox', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 41, No.4–5 (2015), pp.445–51.
3. F. Açıkel and K. Ateş, 'Ambivalent Citizens: The Alevi as the "Authentic Self" and the "Stigmatized Other" of Turkish Nationalism', *European Societies*, Vol.13, No.5 (2011), pp.713–33, p.719.
4. A. Erdemir, 'Tradition and Modernity: Alevis' Ambiguous Terms and Turkey's Ambivalent Subjects', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.41, No.6 (2005), pp.937–51; T. Köse, 'Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism: The Ambivalent Place of Alevi Identities', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.49, No.4 (2013), pp.590–607.
5. T. Köse, 'Ideological or Religious? Contending visions on the Future of Alevi Identity', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol.19, No.5 (2012), pp.576–96.
6. Erdemir, 'Tradition and Modernity', pp.590–607.
7. Açıkel and Ateş, 'Ambivalent Citizens…' p.719; Köse, 'Between Nationalism, Modernism', pp.590–607.
8. E. Massicard, 'Alevist Movement at Home and Abroad: Mobilization Spaces and Distinction', *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol.28–9, No.3 (2003) pp.163–87; Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya*; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.466.
9. T. Erman, and E. Göker, 'Alevi Politics in Contemporary Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.36, No.4 (2000), pp.99–118; Köse, 'Ideological or Religious?',pp.579; Massicard, 'Alevist Movement', p.163.
10. H. Bozaslan, 'Aleviness and the Myths of Research: The Need for a New Research Agenda', in P.J. White and J. Jongerden, *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, (Leiden: Bril, 2003), pp.3–16; Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism', pp.580–1.
11. Bozaslan, 'Aleviness and the Myths', pp.12–15
12. Bozaslan adds that 'Those competitions are about the access to the economic resources as well as the negotiations of a group's specific political and symbolic resources as legitimate resources' 'Aleviness and the Myths', p.13.
13. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.479.
14. Ibid., p.481.
15. Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya*, pp.332–6; Massicard, 'Alevist Movement', pp.163–87; M. Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture? Concepts of Identity in the Alevi Diaspora', in C. Alfanso, W. Kokot, and K. Tölölyan (eds.), *Diaspora, Identity and Religion: New Directions in Theory and Research*, (London: Routledge: 2004), p.148.
16. M. Dressler, 'Religio-secular Metamorphoses: The Re-making of Turkish Alevism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol.76, No.2 (2008) pp.280–311.
17. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism', pp.580–4. Karaosmanoğlu discusses three basic areas that we can grasp the roots of Alevism's anti-essentialist position. These are (1) 'The deep impact of migration and urbanisation; (2) lack of an intellectual consensus on the origins of Alevism and ambivalence surrounding the term 'Alevi'; (3) the co-existence of a multiplicity of discourses that actively contribute to the meaning-making process in the absence of religious, cultural and political orthodoxies. Ibid., p.584.

18. E. Massicard, 'Aleviness as a Productive Misunderstanding: the Hacıbektaş Festival, in Turkey's Alevi Enigma', in P.J. White and J. Jongerden, (eds.), *Turkey's Alevi Enigma*, (Leiden: Bril, 2003b), pp.125–40, p.139.
19. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism', p.593.
20. Ibid., p.582.
21. R. Çamuroğlu, 'Some Notes on the Contemporary Process of Restructuring Alevilik in Turkey', in K. Kehl-Bedrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele, and A. Otter-Beaujean, (eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp.25–33.
22. Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture?', p.134; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.474. Because of the persecution of the Ottoman state in the sixteenth century, Alevi tradition had only been transmitted orally. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.465. However, Karakaya–Stump underlines the importance of newly available Alevi documents and manuscripts for different aspects of Alevi–Bektashi history. See A. Karakaya-Stump, 'Documnets and Buyruk Manuscripts in the Private Archives of Alevi Dede Families: An Overview', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.37, No.3 (2010), pp.273–86.
23. K. Kehl-Bodrogi, 'Introduction', in *Syncretistic Religious* in K. Kehl-Bedrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele, and A. Otter-Beaujean, (eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp.11–7, p.12.
24. Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture?', p.137; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.471.
25. Before the rise of Alevism as a collective identity with its institutions in the 1990s, Alevis (especially alevi youth) were thought to have associated themselves with leftist movemets and sociopolitical organizations and abodoned their formerly religious identities through the 1960s and 1970s. 'Coincident with this shift to the left was both a rejection of all kinds of religion in general, and heavy criticism of Alevi dedes in particular.' See Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture?', p.137. They came to redefine themselves with Alevism and embrace it as a distinct belief system in the 1980s in response to the fall of socialist regimes and the rise of political Islam. Alevi associations and cemevis have become institutional manifestations of this collective Alevi revival. See Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.471; and R. Çamuroğlu, 'Alevi Revivalism in Turkey', in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, and C.Raudvere, (eds.), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, (İstanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005), pp.79–84.
26. It is reported that, as of March 2013, the total number of cemevis in Turkey counted 937. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/81_ilin_31inde_cemevi_yok-1125396
27. A. Balkız, *Kent Koşullarında Sosyolojik Olgu Olarak Alevilik* [Alevism as a Sociological Issue in Urban Conditions] (İstanbul: Alev Yayınları, 2007), pp.40–2; R. Çamuroğlu, *Değişen Koşullarda Alevilik*, (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2008), pp.64–9; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.472: Karakaya-Stump mentions about the existence of special places of cem in Anatolia and Balkans in Alevi tradition. See A. Karakaya-Stump, 'Diyanetin Alevilik Söylemi' [Diyanet's Discourse of Alevism] *Express*, No.130, (2012). These special buildings for cem – in other words cemevi – exist generally in special places such as pilgrimage centres. See Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture?', p.135.
28. Dressler, 'Religio-secular Metamorphoses'; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism'; Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.37.
29. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism', p.588.
30. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevines'; Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya*; Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis'.
31. Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.28.
32. It is a kind of bath where a corpse is washed and prepared for burial.
33. Cem ceremonies all with their rituals and time-space organizations create a sacred space and time, and its sacredness is acknowledged by participants. See Sökefeld, 'Religion or Culture?…', p.136. And a typical *cemevi* is expected to have a 'religious' feeling. See Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya,* p.173. However, at the same time, it is asserted *'cemevi* functions less strictly as the religious space in which to perform Alevi beliefs and sacred rituals (Tambar 2010, p.674)' Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism', p.588.
34. Dressler, 'Religio-secular Metamorphoses', p.298. Es interprets it as 'secular/ized formation of religion as a formula: script-based beliefs, religious personnel with codified knowledge, and

standardized forms of worship neatly confined to distinct places of worship'. Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.39.

35. In urban areas, there is a continuous interplay of religious and non-religious meanings regarding activities and spaces in the organization of a religion. See C. Brace, A.R. Bailey and D.C. Harvey, 'Religion, Place and Space: A Framework for Investigating Historical Geographies of Religious Identities and Communities', *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol.30, No.1 (2006), pp.28–43, pp.29–30. In addition, it is difficult to view religious communities as purely and solely religious. See C. Raudvere, 'Urban Visions and Religious Communities: Access and Visibility', in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, and C.Raudvere (eds.), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, (İstanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005) pp.185–98.
36. 'Is it a religious event, a touristic one, a political one, or a folkloric one?'. See 'Aleviness as a Productive Misunderstanding', pp.128–9.
37. Erdemir, 'Tradition and Modernity', p.945; Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', pp.479–80, Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.34.
38. Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya*, p.171; Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik*, p.161.
39. *Cems* in cemevis have been held using totally different procedures that do not need to provide conditions of privacy, which was one of the constitutive characteristics of traditional *cems*. However, informants told us that when a cemevi was assigned to a particular *ocak* community on the request of a *dede*, even the cem hall was arranged according to the procedures of the rural *cems*. In order to provide the privacy highly valued in rural *cems*, the microphone system is switched off and curtains closed.
40. S. Erder, 'Yeni kentliler ve kentin yeni yoksulları', *Toplum ve Bilim*, Vol.66, No.2 (1995), pp.106–19; S. Erder, 'Kentlerdeki Enformel Örgütlenmeler, Yeni Eğilimler ve Kent Yoksulları ya da Eski Hamamdaki Yeni Taslar', in Y. Sey (ed.), *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık* [75 Years of Changing City and Architecture] (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), pp.107–14; A. Güneş-Ayata, 'Gecekondularda Kimlik Sorunu, Dayanışma Örüntüleri ve Hemşerilik' [Identity Question, Solidarity Networks and Hemşerilik in Gecekondu Areas], *Toplum ve Bilim*, Vol.51, No.2 (1991), pp.89–101.
41. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.471
42. The Alevi community in Turkey is ethnically diverse. Although the majority is Turkish, Kurdish and Arab Alevis form a considerable portion within the community. See M. van Bruinessen, 'Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey', *Middle East Report*, Vol.26, July/Sep. (1996), pp.7–10.
43. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism'; D. Shakland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2003)*;* Massicard, *Turkiye'den Avrupa'ya; Es,* 'Alevis in Cemevis'.
44. I. Melikoff, 'Bektashi/Kızılbaş: Historical Bipartition and Its Consequences', in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga, and C.Raudvere (eds.), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, (İstanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005), pp.1–9.
45. Karaosmanoğlu, 'Beyond Essentialism'; Shakland, *The Alevis in Turkey*.
46. Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.31.
47. Although, some interviewees justified this multifunctional usage of cemevis by referring to the *masjids* of earlier Islamic times and the *dervish* houses of the *Bektashi* tradition, which are believed to be the origins of the Alevism by some groups, it would be an anachronistic approach to equate dervish houses of rural society to cemevis of urban society. See Okan, *Türkiye'de Alevilik*, p.162.
48. Şahin, 'The Rise of Alevism', p.480.
49. Erman, and Göker, 'Alevi Politics in Contemporary Turkey'.
50. Es, 'Alevis in Cemevis', p.33.
51. This cemevi governor having such a concern is also a striking example in itself showing the need of the recognition for cemevis.
52. The same interviewee also noted that using 'cemevi' or 'Alevi' in official correspondence does not cause trouble in İzmir or other major cities. However, since it is believed that it would create problems with bureaucratic procedures in the rest of Turkey, rather than using the name Alevi, many associations opted for using the name *Hadji Bektash*, who is accepted as one of the sources of Turkish national identity.