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**PETER LANG**

Johannes Zimmermann / Janina Karolewski / Robert Langer (eds.)

**Transmission Processes of Religious  
Knowledge and Ritual Practice in  
Alevism between Innovation and  
Reconstruction**



**PETER LANG**

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Béatrice Hendrich (Köln)

## Location(s) of Memory and Commemoration in Alevi Culture: Incorporation and Storage

**Abstract:** The paper analyses the paradigmatic change in forms of cultural expression in contemporary Alevi-Bektaşî communities and associations in Turkey and the German diaspora—namely a turn towards the use of physical memorial sites and the storage of cultural knowledge in (mass-)media instead of oral transmission, body memory and the performance-based actualization of collective memory. First, the paper presents the historical roots of performative and material culture in different Kızılbaş and Bektaşî groups, and second, it presents recent developments in an Alevi ‘culture of memory’. The work is based on fieldwork (2002–2008) and on text sources published not later than 2009.

### 1. The Setting: Alevis, Space(s) and Memory

Much of the modern scholarship on memory has focused on the creation of unified social memories of the past, and the role of those memories in the successful nation-building project<sup>1</sup>. The current research on Alevi memory is still located within this dominant master-narrative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nation as the final stage of a teleologically conceived history. As a religious and social community, the Alevi-Bektaşî community was not necessarily restricted to the terrain of a particular state. Networking across state borders has been one of the community’s continuous features throughout its history, despite the influence of both international and domestic politics on the development of its different branches.

The abolishment of the Caliphate and the creation of a secular nationalist Turkish state in 1923 did little to improve the difficult living conditions of the so-called heterodox Alevis<sup>2</sup>. They remained a marginalised community which sought, but

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1 Cf. Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Andreas Dörner, *Politischer Mythos und symbolische Politik: Sinnstiftung durch symbolische Formen am Beispiel des Hermannsmythos*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995; and Pierre Nora (ed.), *La république*, (Les lieux de mémoire; 1), Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

2 For an exposition of the myth of the ‘glorious’ Alevi-Kemalist relationship, cf. Hamit Bozarslan, “Araştırmamın Mitosları ya da Aleviliğin Tarihsel ve Sosyal Bir Olgu Olarak Değerlendirmesinin Zorunluluğu Üzerine”, İsmail Engin & Erhard Franz (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten*, vol. 1: *Kimlik ve Tarih / Identität und Geschichte*, (Mitteilungen / Deutsches Orient-Institut; 59), Hamburg: Dt. Orient-Inst., 2000, 23–38.

was denied, the chance to create an independent identity for itself within the Turkish nation. Nonetheless, the labour migration of recent decades has led to the growth in strength and vitality of transnational Alevi networks and diaspora activities, and Alevism in diaspora has begun to exert a remarkable influence on the Alevi community in Turkey.

The Alevi example reflects something of a general change in patterns of political activism, movement and migration in Turkey. Until the political coup of 1980, almost every association in Turkey (be it a trade union or an armed terrorist organization), whilst identifying its affiliation as either left or right wing, fought fundamentally for a Turkish rather than a universal, humanist cause. The period since 1980, however, has seen the emergence of cultural and ecologist grassroots movements and religious ideologies whose cause is not primarily the nation, or the defence of a nationalist creed. These movements have made themselves open to international co-operation, and for this they have been perceived in enduring nationalist circles as something of a threat.

Today, the Alevis and Alevism are an integral part of the public domain, be it in Turkey itself or in countries, such as Germany, which has played host to large numbers of Turkish labour migrants. The Alevis have become a visible part of mainstream society thanks to the accessibility afforded by mass media productions, as well as the establishment of Alevi associations, organisation of cultural events and construction of 'gathering houses' (*cemevi*) and commemoration sites. Yet what we understand today as being usual means of socio-cultural expression (for example: the giving of public concerts; the performance of scenes from religious ritual to acquaint the public with the Alevi tradition; the construction of centres for Alevi culture) are, in the Alevi case, more than just a natural development of cultural expression in line with the performativity of other religious communities at present. This is particularly true of the Kızılbaş and rural Bektaşî traditions within the Alevi-Bektaşî community, and can be said to represent a fundamental change in Alevi cultural expression, and a turning point in Alevi history. The same can be said of the function, usage and value ascribed to written materials, such as school books prepared for classes in Alevi religion, booklets for worship, ritual and religious service, and popular as well as academic publications on Alevi history and culture.

In the case of the Kızılbaş tradition particularly, the modes of transmission of cultural and religious knowledge have changed tremendously. It was once the case that the 'safety' of the knowledge being transmitted was of utmost importance, and so the *incorporation* of that knowledge into the memory of individuals descended from holy lineages seemed to be the most reliable way of ensuring its preservation

and transmission to following generations. In the contemporary context, however, *material storage* and *public display* have become the accepted vehicles for the maintenance of cultural knowledge, as well as collective identity. By contrast, in the Bektaşî tradition, material culture and convents (*tekke*) have played a different role since the early days of the order. Yet it will become apparent that here, also, the tradition of incorporation of historical and religious knowledge has, of late, found expression in modern channels of communication, including the visual media.

This paradigm shift is evidence of a correlation between the positioning of a minority community amidst the majority society, and that minority's use of mnemonic devices and a *media of commemoration*. The later term is inspired by what Astrid Erll calls "media of cultural memory", "meaning media which create and mold collective images of the past"<sup>3</sup>. The substitution of *cultural memory* by *commemoration*, however, emphatically points to the *performative aspect* of remembrance. I will elaborate on this aspect below.

Marginalised communities are restricted to movement and expression within *minority media* which do not interfere with the media of the majority. Yet the Alevi community today uses—and insists on using—the same communication channels and material devices that the majority does. Architecture, mass media and educational institutions are instruments of social and political empowerment and positioning, controlled by the hegemonic majority. The degree of participation of a given group within this milieu reveals much about its socio-political position.

### 1.1 The Historical Setting

At this juncture we consider some of the finer points of Alevi history, for contemporary Alevism and the paradigmatic shifts visible within it are not just the product of current circumstances. Rather, it reflects the development over many centuries of different cultural and religious sub-systems, all of which fall within the broad category of *Alevilik*. What we conceive today as current *Alevilik* owes much to the activities of the Alevi associations and their members. These associations, as part of a modern, urban and transnational religious community, have had to meet the expectations of Alevis from all over Turkey, whilst at the same time handling and synthesizing their cultural heritage(s) into one organisational unit. The major sources of contemporary Alevism are the Bektaşî order on the one hand, and the Kızılbaş communities on the other, and all kinds of variations are

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3 Astrid Erll, "Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory", Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Berlin & New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2008, 389–98: 390.

incorporated between the two. Even individuals of Nusayri descent have become members of Alevi associations, despite there being no historical link between these two traditions.

The bifurcation of Islam into the *scholarly* (dependent on literacy and institutionalisation) and the *folk* (vivid, dynamic, orally transmitted and elusive of state control) has been an ever-present characteristic of that religion throughout its history in Anatolia.

The Islam of the Rum-Seljuk Dynasty, (1071–1310) was largely orthodox, and had many sophisticated religious teachers within its ranks; yet the princedoms (*beylik*) that followed were influenced by their shamanistic heritage, as well as by the independent, peripatetic dervishes from Central Asia and Khorasan who taught a mystical version of Islam. Under both the Seljuk rulers and the early Ottomans, the most significant political uprisings were led by these so-called “wicked dervishes”<sup>4</sup>. The dynastic rulers crushed these uprisings mercilessly, thus preparing the ground for the later veneration of their leaders in collective Anatolian memory<sup>5</sup>.

Over time, the mystical Islam of Anatolia developed into a complex network of peripatetic individuals or small groups, both venerated and cursed by the people, and of various kinds of mystical orders (*tarikāt*). Some of these orders, such as the *Mevlevi*, or Whirling Dervishes, were learned and orthodox, whilst others were antinomian in behaviour and appearance, and rejected the law of the *šarī‘a*. The consolidation of Ottoman rule and empire during the 15<sup>th</sup> century had two main consequences for the mystics: primarily, they were forced to either submit to the state, or to perish; furthermore, they were obliged to propagate an orthodox, Sunni expression of Islam and to maintain (at least superficially) a distance from Shi‘ism, on account of the recent appropriation of a Shi‘i identity by the Persian Safavid enemy to the east.

The veneration, even deification, of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib in Anatolian (mystical) popular belief has its roots in the end of the 15<sup>th</sup>, and the early decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Safavids consolidated their rule of Persia and implemented a change in the religious affiliation of their state from Sunni to Shi‘i. During this period, the nomadic and semi-nomadic Anatolian Turkmen tribes, who had suffered material hardships under the Ottomans, lent their political and religious

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4 Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.

5 A famous example of such a figure is Şeyh Bedrettin, who was hanged at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, he became the hero of Nazım Hikmet’s *Simavne Kadısı Oğlu Şeyh Bedrettin Destanı* (1937).

allegiance to the Safavids. Because of their adoption at this time of the distinctive, red Safavid headgear (a cloth with twelve corners symbolizing the twelve imams of Shi'ism), they were henceforth derogatorily labelled *Kızılbaş* ('redheads') by the Ottomans. The *Kızılbaş* living in Ottoman territory were forced to flee to remote regions of Anatolia in order to escape persecution, and it was here that they developed their own particular belief-systems, rituals and social rules that were significantly different from Shi'ism, and that became a major element in the formulation of Alevism as we know it today<sup>6</sup>.

The mystical Bektaşî order managed to survive, as a part of the Ottoman state and society, the upheaval in the religious orientation of the state by refraining from uprisings, and by incorporating influential groups of mystics into the order. It became a neatly structured institution with its main convent in the village of Hacıbektaş, in central Anatolia<sup>7</sup>. The Bektaşîs managed to survive by inhabiting a position that fell *between* several different socio-religious categories. They developed a complex mystical theology, were creative architecturally, produced books and works of calligraphy, and gained significant influence amongst the Ottoman soldiers when the Janissery corps adopted Hacı Bektaş as its patron saint<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, though, the Bektaşî *tekkes* were often located in small towns and rural areas, rather than in urban centres. Moreover, they kept their confessional affiliation intentionally ambiguous. The veneration of 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib and the subsequent imams of Shi'i Islam are of central importance to their beliefs and rituals, yet a Sunni-born Muslim can become a Bektaşî dervish without officially removing himself from. Consequently, it is erroneous to consider the Bektaşîs either fully Shi'i or fully Sunni. Their religious practice does not conform to the standards of the *şarî'a*, and neither Shi'i nor Sunni religious authorities are of any serious consequence for the Bektaşîs.

6 Cf. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Babailer İsyânından Kızılbaşlığa: Anadolu'da İslam Heterodoksisinin Doğuş ve Gelişim Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış", İsmail Engin & Erhard Franz (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten*, vol. 1: *Kimlik ve Tarih / Identität und Geschichte*, (Mitteilungen / Deutsches Orient-Institut; 59), Hamburg: Dt. Orient-Inst., 2000, 209–34: 222–7.

7 Martin van Bruinessen, "Hacı Bektash, Sultan Sahak, Shah Mina Sahib and Various Avatars of a Running Wall", *Turcica* 21–23 (1991), 177–84.

8 The relationship between the Bektaşîs and the state, encapsulated in the Bektaşî affiliation of the Janissaries, has long been problematic in that it contradicts the popular image of the Alevi-Bektaşîs as the 'eternal victims of power'. Cf. Suraiya Faroqhi, "Einflußkämpfe, Strukturfragen und die stets problematische Rolle der Janitscharen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Bektaschis vor 1826", *TUBA Journal of Turkish Studies* 26.1 (2002), 215–27.

The order was officially disbanded, along with the Janissery corps, in 1826, only to flourish again over the course of the next hundred years. In 1925, all religious orders in Turkey were banned in accordance with the Kemalist Revolutionary Decisions (*Atatürk İlkeleri*). The main building in Hacıbektaş fell into disuse, only to be revived again in 1964 with the dawn of a new era of Alevi-Bektaşî culture (which will be explained in detail below). Through clandestine networking, gatherings and support of Bektaşî convents in other countries, the Bektaşîs have never ceased to exist, even if their structure and position in society today is different from that of the pre-1925 era. At present, in Turkey, the Bektaşî Order is active in a discreet way<sup>9</sup>, and is even somewhat neglected by academic researchers. Yet a new dynamic seems to have opened up within Alevi-Bektaşîsm, whereby diasporic Alevi communities who find themselves at odds with the Unified Federation of Alevi in Germany (the *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu*, or AABF) invite a Bektaşî *baba* ('spiritual leader') in order to achieve spiritual endorsement. Some may even become fully initiated members of the Bektaşî order<sup>10</sup>.

My intention in giving an overview of the history of both the Kızılbaş phenomenon and the Bektaşî order is to shed light on the diverse cultural foundations of the so-called *Alevi Revival*, which started in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is my contention that *re-vival* is a misleading and inappropriate term for what took place over this period, for there are many diverse composite elements to what has since become known as one Alevi tradition. Kızılbaşism and Bektaşîsm are just two of the large number of sub-groups which share common ground with the other sub-groups<sup>11</sup> in the broad category of 'Alevism', yet in the early days of their formation each tradition—rather than being part of a homogenous Alevi tradition—displayed distinctive features of its own. The name *Alevi* was apparently coined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to replace the pejoratively used term *Kızılbaş*<sup>12</sup>,

9 Cf. Hege Irene Markussen, *Alevilik ve Bektaşilik: Religion and Identity Formation in Contemporary Turkey*, unpubl. thesis, Hóst: University of Bergen, 2000, 88.

10 Cf. Robert Langer, "Alevitische Rituale", Martin Sökefeld (ed.), *Aleviten in Deutschland: Identitätsprozesse einer Religionsgemeinschaft in der Diaspora*, Bielefeld: transcript, 2008, 65–108: 85.

11 These other sub-groups include the Tahtacıs, as well as the Bektaşîs from the Balkan region. It is regrettable that no comprehensive work has been done to date on the areas of commonality and divergence which are visible amongst these groups, all of which have fallen into the broad category of 'Alevi' since the so-called revival movement.

12 Cf. Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş / Aleviten: Untersuchungen über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft*, (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen; 126), Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1988, 48–55.

and is currently used as a convenient umbrella term<sup>13</sup>. Thus, when we look at the Alevi-Bektaşî community of today, we find under the same roof a number of different groups, which are quite clearly distinctive from each other in their forms of cultural expression. Whilst the Bektaşî *tarikât* has always possessed a material culture which includes written texts and documents, special clothing, ritual objects and religious architecture, the Kızılbaş have been known for a predominantly performance-based culture. Between these two ‘extremes’, the rural, oral Kızılbaş, and the urban, literate Bektaşî order, we may find several groups which are linguistically, historically and ethnically different.

A case in point, and worthy of mention, is the group we will refer to as the *born Bektaşîs*, amongst which two sub-groups are evident: the first is the Çelebi branch of Bektaşîs, who believe that Hacı Bektaş had physical progenies, and thus surmise that leadership of the order, and spiritual guidance, are a hereditary matter (today, the Ulusoy family residing in Hacıbektaş claim to be the real heirs of Hacı Bektaş and his authority). The second sub-group of born Bektaşîs are families or inhabitants of villages close to a *tekke*, who consider themselves Bektaşîs, as they venerate Hacı Bektaş and recognise the head of their *tekke* as their spiritual leader. This is a long-standing tradition, and the group hands down its Bektaşî affiliation from generation to generation, without being themselves member of the Bektaşî order. Referring to my own interviews with these Bektaşîs, I can state that the Çelebiyan-Babagan-dispute<sup>14</sup> is of little or no importance to them<sup>15</sup>. The born Bektaşîs, be they Çelebiyan or rural adherents, believe in the importance of an embodied memory or historical chain, whilst at the same time ascribing a certain importance to stable material locations of memory such as the convents. Included in this are material culture, and especially the convent and graves at the site in Hacıbektaş village.

In many ways, it seems that the born Bektaşîs are the missing link between the Babagan Bektaşî dervishes, who believe in an obtainable and learnable spiritual-

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13 Cf. Irène Mélikoff, “Le Problème Bektaşî-Alevi: Quelques Dernières Considérations”, *Turcica* 31 (1999), 7–34.

14 The historical dispute between the Babagan and the Çelebi Bektaşîs, including the story of the alleged removal of “the tombstones of the genealogical descendants buried next to the tomb of Hacı Bektaş” (Zeynep Yürekli, *Legends and Architecture in the Ottoman Empire: The Shrines of Seyyid Gazi and Hacı Bektaş*, unpubl. diss., Boston: Harvard University, 2005, 170) in order to strengthen Babagan power, has been described in detail by Zeynep Yürekli (cf. *ibid.*, 168–72).

15 Neither of these models is to be confused with those Alevi *ocaks* which accept Hacı Bektaş and his followers as their *pîr*.

ity, and the Kızılbaş villagers, for whom genealogical descent determines (or determined) every area of social and religious life.

## 1.2 Mnemonic Devices and Modes of Commemoration

Human communities make use of mnemonic devices and commemorative media in order to transmit cultural knowledge from generation to generation and, at the same time, to underscore the existence of a common past. The common past serves to legitimize the notion of collective identity. Collective identity, in return, is legitimized by the mnemonic devices themselves, whilst the content is both produced by these devices and stored within them. The storage aspect is of much less importance than the production aspect, as we will show in concrete examples below. The principle idea concerning commemorative media is analogous to the function of a storage box: the box and its content are two separate entities, and whatever is put in the box will be exactly the same when it is taken out again. Thus the *storage box* can be used as a metaphor for *location of memory*.

Alevi cultural knowledge and historical memory seem to be located in certain objects and places, and are activated by means of particular techniques. For example, the story of the pious and bright Hüsniye is written down (or *stored*) in the book entitled *Hüsniye*<sup>16</sup>. Whenever anyone reads from or listens to stories from the book, he or she is reminded of an important cornerstone in Alevi history, ensuring that Hüsniye and her fate will not be forgotten for they are re-activated at that moment. A closer examination of this practice will show that content, media and the activating process itself are all closely intertwined, and that they are all mutually reflexive elements within the practice of commemoration.

Whereas scientific research analyses *processes of production, dissemination and change* in cultural memory and memory cultures, for collectives like religious communities or nations, the *belief* in the existence of a commemorative media, which is full of eternal common past (or *cultural heritage*), is usually an essential component of the collective identity<sup>17</sup>. In what follows, I will present two different types of metaphorical storage boxes (human bodies, and material objects), and

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16 Hüsniye is the heroine of a didactic religious story, well known in both Shi'ism and Alevism. One of the several editions of the story which are available is Hasan Ayyıldız (ed.), *Tam Hakiki Hüsniye*, Istanbul: Ayyıldız, 1970.

17 The acceptance of uncertainties or voids in shared history is still the exception rather than the rule. In present-day Alevism, however, there is evidence of tentative first steps towards the construction of a collective identity in spite, or even because of, the lack of a uniform 'historical truth'.



two modes of commemoration, (performance-based, and material-symbolic). While *performative* refers to the notion that a person or an object gains its particular nature through a spoken act, ascription, and performance, *material-symbolic* represents the idea (from the view point of the user) that a material object is produced in order to tell a particular story, which will subsequently be understood by everyone in precisely the same way. This story is located, or incorporated, in a particular object. A performative act would render this object holy, but it would be (and remain) holy in and of itself, regardless of the performative act. The storage and activation of cultural memory in certain Bektaşî and Kızılbaş communities can be understood as incorporating both of these two modes of commemoration, and can be illustrated thus:

	<b>Performative commemoration</b>	<b>Material-symbolic commemoration</b>
<b>Human bodies</b>	<i>Zakir</i> singing in a <i>cem</i>	Adoration at a holy shrine
<b>Material objects</b>	Plain broom used in one of the twelve services of the <i>cem</i>	Lighting of the <i>Kırk Budak</i> candelabra

The case studies which follow will reveal the tendency in Kızılbaş culture to favour the use of human bodies in performative rituals, and, contrastingly, the prevalence in the (Babagan) Bektaşî order of using particular material Bektaşî objects in commemorative rituals, where the pre-existing message seems to be received from the objects.

## 2. Performative Culture

### Objects from Everyday Life

The performative culture of the Kızılbaş is largely a result of the political and historical constraints of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>18</sup>. That is, over time the Kızılbaş communities have refrained from producing, circulating or engaging with a material culture which would be recognizable as Alevi by outsiders such as the state and its servants, or by local Sunni neighbours. Until today, objects used during religious gatherings have been objects from everyday life, such as brooms, pots and towels; that is, objects that do not differ in appearance from usual brooms, pots and towels. They become ritual objects only through means of performance. The broom, for example, is used to clean the floor of the place where the ceremony

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18 Cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş / Aleviten*, 34.

is held, and at the same time it also symbolically cleanses the community's spiritual and moral space. The water in the pot reminds the participants of the pivotal Shi'i tragedy in the desert town of Kerbela, where the prophet's grandson Hüseyin and his family perished. The musical instrument used in the ceremony, the long-necked Anatolian lute called *saz*, looks identical to the lute used in any Anatolian folk music, yet during the ceremony it becomes a significant tool of remembrance and communication<sup>19</sup>. The use of a musical instrument during the service has further significance, in that it draws a historical, ritual and religious line between a hegemonic and logocentric Islam (be it either Sunni or Shi'i) on the one hand, and bodycentric forms like mystical and folk expressions of Islam on the other. Both *tasavvuf* (mysticism) and folk Islam have left their imprints on Alevism. It is, then, no wonder that a folk musical instrument such as the *saz* has become the symbolic instrument of current Alevism<sup>20</sup> and a "narrative abbreviation"<sup>21</sup> of Alevi identity and memory. The anthropomorphic body of the *saz* is a reminder (to those who already know) of secret mystical knowledge (the *saz*'s belly), Ali's sword, Zülfikar (the *saz*'s neck), and the Twelve Imams (the twelve strings, in the case of the great *saz*, the *çöğür*)<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, the voice of the *zakir* (mystical performer) and the sound of the *saz* work together in the *cem*, to produce the *mood congruency* that supports learning and remembrance of Alevi identity and history. The *saz* may even become the subject of a song itself, as in the case of the poem made famous by Feyzullah Çınar, "Muharrem'de ağlar sazım":

In the month of mourning, Muharrem, my lute cries.  
O, what weeping and mourning strings do I have. [...]  
The sand of my desert in Kerbela burns and smells like blood.

19 Cf. Béatrice Hendrich, "Im Monat Muharrem weint meine Laute: Die alevitische Langhalslaute als Medium der Erinnerung", Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 159–76.

20 Today, the tradition of using other instruments popular in a particular region or ethnic group (such as the flute, violin, or traditional *rebab*) is almost, but not completely, forgotten.

21 Jörn Rüsen, *Historische Orientierung: Über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbewußtseins, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden*, Köln: Böhlau, 1994, 11.

22 Ayten Kaplan, "Tahtacılar da Etnomüzikolojik Bir İnceleme", İsmail Engin & Erhard Franz (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten*, vol. 2: *İnanç ve Gelenekler / Glaube und Traditionen*, (Mitteilungen / Deutsches Orient-Institut; 60), Hamburg: Dt. Orient-Inst., 2001, 221–33: 230.

The *saz* is ceremonially praised and kissed at the beginning of (and during) the ceremony, and it is this act, as well as its embedded place within the ceremony itself, which turns it into a sacred instrument that is mnemonic device, location of shared memory, and subject of remembrance all at the same time. The anthropomorphic quality of the *saz* is of no small importance; I will come back to this point below.

### Physical Sites

Historically, the Kızılbaş have never developed a particular religious architecture or *intentional memorials*. They have simply conducted their religious events (which have also had a social function) in the most appropriate house—that is, the largest or most lavish—in the village. This house would subsequently become a ritual and sacred space through the attendance of a religious leader and of the other villagers, and through the correct performance therein of ritual duties. Similarly, sacred sites such as the tombs of saints, or even natural sites of spiritual significance (such as rocks, trees or springs), are to be found everywhere in popular Islam. These sacred spaces have an enduring separate physical existence, but again ascription, appropriation and ritual performances are required in order to turn them into sacred sites. Natural sites, and even many of the saints' tombs, do not (in themselves) represent *intentional* religious architecture or memorials. In light of the recent tendency to stress the existence of historical *cemevis*, an understanding of the phenomenon of *intentional memorials* is called for here. According to Ali Yaman, for example, in Malatya and Pülümür certain *cemevis* have served the Alevi community “for hundreds of years”<sup>23</sup>. But the question at stake here is not the existence of a physical building which has maintained its material integrity over the course of however many years, but rather the intention behind its construction when the building first appeared:

Intentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations and therefore to remain alive and present in perpetuity. [...] Intentional commemorative value simply makes a claim to immortality, to an internal present and an unceasing state of becoming<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, the *traditional use* of a building does not, in itself, give a commemorative value to that building in the Rieglian sense. The above-mentioned houses

23 Ali Yaman “Alevilik Gerçeğini Bilmemek Türkiye’de Yaygın Bir Fenomen”, [http://www.aleviakademisi.de/dosyalar/Ahmet%20Hakan\\_yeni.pdf](http://www.aleviakademisi.de/dosyalar/Ahmet%20Hakan_yeni.pdf) (24<sup>th</sup> August 2008), 5 f.

24 Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin”, Kurt W. Forster & Diane Ghirardo (trans.), *Oppositions* 25 (1982), 21–51: 38.

in Malatya or Pülümür may now be read as clues to the Alevism of eastern Anatolia in days gone by, and in that sense they are a media of commemoration. Furthermore, the place where the house is located may become the location of Alevi memory, if it is identified as such by relevant signage. Thus the quality of commemoration possessed of the *cemevis* differs from that of the *dergah* or *tekke*, which rely for their commemorative value on the saints' shrines (and other monuments to particular individuals and events of the past) which are located there.

In the literature on Alevism, we find different possible explanations for this lack of intentional religious buildings. For instance, according to Müller, Alevi culture was influenced by the traditions of Oriental Christians who customarily celebrated church services in private houses<sup>25</sup>. Moreover, Kehl-Bodrogi argues that the Alevis felt no need to construct particular sacred buildings, because their religious services were held only once or twice a year. She goes on to explain that the nomadic heritage of the Kızılbaş made it unnatural for them to engage in the construction of major buildings<sup>26</sup>. These approaches may explain the ease with which the Kızılbaş live without creating enduring artifacts, such as buildings made of stone. But still other aspects of their religious culture, such as the religious duty of the sentinel (*pervane*)<sup>27</sup>, remains unexplained by these approaches alone. I will come back to this point later. From a sociological point of view, the Alevi religious service did not need a physical place of its own, because it relied on a social-religious network; the complex hereditary system of religious leaders and holy lineages on the one hand, and the subordinated families that were taught and guided by their *pîr*, on the other<sup>28</sup>. We will keep this sociological approach in mind as we go on to address the growing popularity of particular physical locations and storage media in current Alevi cultural practice.

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25 Cf. Klaus E. Müller, *Kulturhistorische Studien zur Genese pseudo-islamischer Sektengestalten in Vorderasien*, (Studien zur Kulturkunde; 22), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1967, 28.

26 Cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş / Aleviten*, 34.

27 Twelve ritual services are carried out during the *cem* ceremony. One of them is that performed by the *pervane*, whose job it is to protect the worshippers from the intrusion of non-Alevi enemies.

28 Martin Sökefeld, "Cem in Deutschland: Transformation eines Rituals im Kontext der alevitischen Bewegung", Robert Langer, Raoul Motika & Michael Ursinus (eds.), *Migration und Ritualtransfer: Religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem Orient und Westeuropa*, (Heidelberger Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Vorderen Orients; 33), Frankfurt / M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2005, 203–26: 211.

### Books and *Pîrs*

Historical constraints are a major factor in the process of developing and changing the basic paradigms of cultural expression. Alevi culture is usually considered to be founded on an oral tradition and the use of written texts in Alevism is widely considered to be little but a (fairly recent) cultural deterioration. Nonetheless, scholars who have studied the use of written texts in Alevi culture have found concrete evidence explaining their place within, and disappearance from, the early tradition. We know from Ottoman documents that during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Kızılbaş nomads still carried holy books about with them, and local authorities were instructed to confiscate these books<sup>29</sup>. From the oral narratives on the Dersim massacre of 1938, we know that the Alevi population tried either to hide their holy books in burrows, or to burn them in order to keep the content secret and to conceal their own religious affiliation. Similarly, recent scholarly works have shown the historical existence of diverse written material in the possession of rural Alevi communities. The types of text span a broad range of genres: family trees (*seyitlik şeceresi*) and travel documents (*ziyaretname*) related to pilgrimages made by Alevi leaders to Bektaşî convents (*tekkes*) in Iraq<sup>30</sup>, as well as informal compilations belonging to contemporary Alevi families, including *Buyruks*, prayer and service compendiums and, again, family trees. Another significant event which has prompted a relatively recent move towards oralization in Alevism is mentioned by Robert Langer: the alphabet reform implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1928 rendered the rescued texts useless when the last generation of *dedes* who were literate in Ottoman Turkish passed away, in and around the 1950's<sup>31</sup>.

The writing of *ritual guides* is a recent development within Alevism, and Refika Sariönder<sup>32</sup> has shown that this new kind of Alevi literature is not only the product of changing circumstances (the need felt by heterogeneous communities to unify their rituals) but is also a move towards dynamic changes in ritual and

29 Cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş / Aleviten*, 33.

30 Cf. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "Irak'taki Bektaşî Tekkeleri", *Bellekten* 71/261 (2007), 689–720.

31 Cf. Langer, "Alevitische Rituale", 194.

32 Cf. Refika Sariönder, "Transformationsprozesse des alevitischen *Cem*: Die Öffentlichkeit ritueller Praktiken und Ritualhandbücher", Robert Langer, Raoul Motika & Michael Ursinus (eds.), *Migration und Ritualtransfer: Religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem Orient und Westeuropa*, (Heidelberger Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Vorderen Orients; 33), Frankfurt / M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2005, 163–73.

practice. Obviously, the authors of these booklets must recognise that their aim to re-establish the oral and mimetic transfer of cultural knowledge may only be realized through the medium of written texts<sup>33</sup>. Because of the prevailing social and cultural circumstances, the re-establishment of “brain memory” is dependent on the establishment of “script memory”<sup>34</sup>.

In conclusion, then, it seems that the system of oral transmission and the *incorporation* of religious knowledge by members of the holy lineages (rather than in the body of a written text) is neither just a consequence of illiteracy nor a rejection of written texts on ideological grounds. Rather, it is a system generated by the historical context. The existing documents are *written* texts, but the content is (very often) *oral* literature or instruction. A comparison with the sacred status afforded to the Holy Quran by exoteric Muslim communities makes the distinction clear: even if the historical documents are held in high regard by their Alevi owners, they are never considered *sacred* equally to any physical copy of the Quran. The texts do not even feature as a part of the religious service where the *saz* of the *zakir* would, by comparison, be ritually kissed. In this context, the saying of the Alevis that “the human being is the living Quran” assumes a new meaning, and we will discuss this further below.

If political and historical factors necessitate the *storage* of knowledge in the memory of individuals (and its actualization through speech and other performative acts), then a change in this *storage paradigm* should be anticipated, as and when external circumstances change. On the other hand, the persistency of habits, Pierre Bourdieu’s “hysteresis”, causes the above mentioned conflicting evaluation of brain memory and script memory. According to Albert Doja, even the literate Bektaşî *babas* attach much importance to oral instruction:

Even though the Bektaşî masters appear regularly to possess some kind of manual, they never bring it into religious ceremonies. They rather absorb aspects of Bektaşî religious philosophy that they find interesting in their own time and recount them in the course of commentaries, as they do with song, poetry, and narrative in the mode of parable<sup>35</sup>.

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33 Cf. *ibid.*, 172.

34 Horst Wenzel, “Boten und Briefe: Zum Verhältnis körperlicher und nichtkörperlicher Nachrichtenträger”, Horst Wenzel & Peter Göhler (eds.), *Gespräche – Boten – Briefe: Körpergedächtnis und Schriftgedächtnis im Mittelalter*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1997, 86–105: 89.

35 Albert Doja, “Spiritual Surrender: From Companionship to Hierarchy in the History of Bektashism”, *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 53.4 (2006), 448–510: 475.

### Bodies and Memories

In oral and performative cultures, corporate memory is often thought to be stored and protected in certain human, or at least anthropomorphic, bodies. Knowledge stored in brain memory is externalized and repeated by means of sound and language, produced by a religious specialist, a story-teller or wandering bard. The reproduction of cultural knowledge using rhythm instruments attached directly to the performer's body, so that sound emerges in exact parallel to his movements, is an example of the perfect unity of media and message. Over the course of time, different channels of communication such as letters, books and the more complex music instruments start to emerge, and their emergence can diminish the central status of the performer. But the memory of the very first media (of commemoration) remains: parts of the instruments are referred to as their "neck" or "belly"; a book possesses "headers" and "footers" or a "back".

In Alevi-Bektaşî culture, we find different remnants of this trust in, and use of, embodied memory. The best known example is of course the religious specialist of the Kızılbaş tradition, the *dede* (or *pir*, *rehber* / *rayber*, *mürşit*). These religious leaders, members of the holy lineages (*ocak*), "are believed to share the spiritual light and power of the Imam Ali"<sup>36</sup>. This "ideal *dede*" (Sökefeld) no longer exists in reality but still remains a constant subject of Alevi discussions:

[He may] [...] refer to written sources, the most important being the *Buyruk*, but literacy is not a requirement in order to become a *dede*. On the contrary, in some cases illiterate *dedes* are especially praised because they are said to know all the necessary texts, songs and teachings by heart<sup>37</sup>.

The (Kızılbaş) Alevi religious leader does not wear any particular ritual garment or outward sign of his rank; again, this only becomes evident implicitly, from the position and actions of the *dede* within the community or during the *cem*. The opposite is true for the "ideal Bektaşî". Frederick de Jong has documented the multitude of symbols and signs in Bektaşî material culture, including the symbolic details of the Bektaşî garb<sup>38</sup>, which includes the headgear of twelve segments, the *Hüseyini tac* (crown of Hüseyin), symbolizing the Twelve Imams, and

36 Martin Sökefeld, "Alevi Dedes in the German Diaspora: The Transformation of a Religious Institution", *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 127 (2002), 163–86, 165.

37 Ibid., 167.

38 Cf. Frederick de Jong, "The Iconography of Bektashism: A Survey of Themes and Symbols in Clerical Costume, Liturgical Objects and Pictorial", *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4 (1989), 7–29.

the girdle, encircling the waist seven times and symbolizing “the Seven”. De Jong explains that

Dervishes as well as *babas* also wear a sort of sleeveless vest, a *haydariye*, with the arm-holes shaped like the letter ‘ayn (for ‘Ali). Only *babas*, however, wear two strings of seven crystal beads along the fronts of their *haydariye*. These beads, which symbolize the *ondört ma’sumu pâk*<sup>39</sup>, are made of transparent *necefi taş*<sup>40 41</sup>.

So, a Bektaşî *baba* in full regalia carries the cultural memory *on* his body. The knowledge is externalized, but is still not completely separate from the *baba*’s body. All the described are recognizable as Bektaşî; they are more specific in their visual message than the above mentioned *saz*, but still they have to be worn, to be close to the human body in order to convey their full meaning. Anthropomorphic symbolism is of particular importance in Bektaşî art and ritual because the Divine becomes visible in the human being:

In fact, each human being is a mosque and each human face is a *mihrap*<sup>42</sup>, while the *mihrap* is the face (the *vech-i kamâl*, the face of perfection) of one’s *mürşit*<sup>43</sup>. In him the outer signs of perfection are matched by inner perfection<sup>44</sup>.

Picture-like calligraphies (e.g. the famous *insan-ı kamil*) and architectural symbolism represent the third level of mnemonic devices. Detached from the human body, these items repeat parts of the orally transferred knowledge, or the symbols seen in the ritual adornment. They are a remnant of a particular *baba* from past history, but their interpretation and use, the memory they will evoke, will depend on the specific circumstances of the present time.

Another aspect of the enactment of incorporated memory is the act of eating, or swallowing, items somehow connected to a venerated elder. Very often, these items are human secretions such as saliva, blood or vomit. Anthropological studies have shown that the consumption of saliva is used in some cultures to strengthen the relationship between a grandmother and grandchild, but in this case, *spiritual* relations are established by drinking the master’s blood or eating his vomit. I will cite more examples below of earth and dust being eaten as a form of archaic incorporation of cultural memory. At this point it is sufficient to men-

39 The fourteen innocents (children) descended from the family of the Prophet.

40 Quartz.

41 De Jong, “The Iconography of Bektashism”, 10.

42 The niche in a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca.

43 Mystical guide or mentor.

44 De Jong, “The Iconography of Bektashism”, 9.



tion the famous legend of Kadıncık Ana, who allegedly became pregnant after swallowing a drop of blood from the water which Hacı Bektaş had used for his ritual ablutions; also the story of Barak Baba, who is reputed to have eaten the vomit of Hacı Bektaş<sup>45</sup>.

This kind of embodied memory is made up of two dimensions, one of which is the physical inscription of the cultural heritage in the brain of the individual and the other the continuous enactment and appropriation of this heritage by others (the adherents), thus creating the so-called collective memory. The ideal *dede* acquires his knowledge during the years of training when he accompanies his father and attends *cems*, in order to mimetically learn the ritual, music and text. During this period, cultural knowledge is inscribed on his brain and on his body. However, a *dede* to whom nobody listens is like a book without any reader, and in order to function successfully he needs a believing community that accepts him as the vessel of cultural memory. Several studies on the changing position and function of Alevi *dedes* have been produced<sup>46</sup>, and we will discuss this change below in conjunction with the notion of “ossification”.

### 3. (The Move Towards) Material Culture

Only a generation ago ethnological researchers, as well as parts of the Alevi community itself, were predicting the imminent demise of Alevi culture and religion<sup>47</sup>. Today, however, not just in Turkey, but also in some European countries—Germany in particular—Alevism is an established part of public life. A significant factor behind the resurgence of Alevism in the modern day is the physical definition of sacred sites and the construction of buildings and statues. I turn at this point from focusing on *performative culture* to examining some of the issues surrounding *material culture*, in order to evaluate the societal significance of these new locations, buildings, and sites.

45 Cf. Aydın Ayhan, “Balıkesir Yöresinde Sağaltma İşlevli Bazı Bektaşî Ocakları ve Bazı Alevi Köylerinde Yatırlar, Kutsal Ağaçlar ve Sağaltma Ocakları”, İsmail Engin & Erhard Franz (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten*, vol. 2: *İnanç ve Gelenekler / Glaube und Traditionen*, (Mitteilungen / Deutsches Orient-Institut; 60), Hamburg: Dt. Orient-Inst., 2001, 127–36; 127 f.

46 Cf. e.g. Markus Dreßler, “Der Moderne Dede: Religiöse Autorität im Wandel”, Gudrun Krämer & Sabine Schmidtke (eds.), *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authority in Muslim Societies*, (Social, Economic, and Political Studies of the Middle East and Asia; 100), Leiden & Boston: E. J. Brill, 2006, 269–94.

47 Cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş / Aleviten*, 242.

One key concept here is *public domain*, and the demand for participation in this domain. Martin Baumann<sup>48</sup>, referring to the works of John Rex and Talal Asad, explains the expanded nature of the public domain in multicultural societies. (Turkey is undeniably a multicultural society and the Alevi community one of its minorities.) The public domain can be said to cover the political, economic, juridical, and educational realms and their proper institutions, such as councils, banks, law courts and schools. According to the public domain theory, every member of society participates in these spheres, regardless of their origin or ethnicity. But—and it is at this juncture that Baumann goes beyond the previous theories—the public domain is under constant pressure. The frontiers between the public and private domains are fluid, there being no clear and fixed dichotomy between the two. The public domain is dominated and controlled, in Baumann's words, "standardized and defended", by the social majority<sup>49</sup>. That majority controls access to public space, and tends to confine cultural expressions of migrant (or any other) minorities to the private domain. From time to time, the majority paternalistically offers minority groups certain niches as places for public cultural expression. The demands of minority groups to be able to construct buildings (be they religious or cultural) with proper architectural aesthetics constitutes, in the eyes of the majority society, an assault on its cultural and spatial hegemony. This discomfort is what fuels the heated disputes concerning the construction of mosques or other 'foreign' buildings in Europe. The minority which demands equal and unrestricted participation in the public domain has to negotiate the terms of this participation by publicly accepted means (public relations, or legal action in the British case), whereas the majority societies of today have to be aware that they are no longer in complete control of the public domain. Leaders of marginalized communities, as they must, learn to copy the strategies of the majority society in order to succeed themselves<sup>50</sup>. If we apply Goffman's approach to the Alevi case, it becomes clear why the leaders of the contemporary Alevi community in Germany (the elected presidents and chairpersons of the Alevi associations) have been more successful in co-operating with the German majority than their Sunni neighbours. They have learned how to dialogue with

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48 Cf. Martin Baumann, "Religion und umstrittener öffentlicher Raum: Gesellschaftspolitische Konflikte um religiöse Symbole und Stätten im gegenwärtigen Europa", *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 7 (1999), 187–204.

49 Cf. *ibid.*, 193.

50 Cf. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

German officials, how to present themselves to outsiders, and they have, in this sense, mastered the German public discourse<sup>51</sup>.

Both majority Islam (Sunni and Shi'i) and Christianity demonstrate their identity and their demand for (cultural and / or political) hegemony through spatial means: splendid buildings, the appropriation of geographical landscapes (Jerusalem), memorials and the definition of their significance. Benno Werlen coined an important term in his statement that "[t]he most important forms of *authoritative resources* that exist in every kind of society and culture are connected to the temporal-spatial organization of a society"<sup>52</sup>. The power of spatiality (*Räumlichkeit*), says Werlen, is founded in its potential for transformation; it is a medium through which to control the individual by controlling the body. The *sine qua non* of nationalism, furthermore, is architecture<sup>53</sup>. The Alevi of today have to compete with majority societies which are influenced strongly by Muslim and Christian, as well as secular, nationalist cultural expressions. For a dynamic minority it appears logical to make use of the same strategies which have proven to be successful when appropriated by the mainstream. At the same time, the Alevi community, too, is influenced by the current general popularity of *space*, be it as scientific *turn*<sup>54</sup> or as a mode of conceiving the world.

Eventually, the use of memorial architecture (physical and virtual, intentional and unintentional / historic) in the political public domain is potentially instructive in our attempts to understand the significance of memorial architecture in Alevism<sup>55</sup>. Why do human beings build (intentional) or appropriate (historic)

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51 Cf. Béatrice Hendrich, "Alevis in Germany after the 11<sup>th</sup> of September – Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place", Hege Irene Markussen (ed.), *Alevis and Alevism: Transformed Identities*, Istanbul: İsis, 2005, 137–54.

52 Benno Werlen, "Kulturelle Räumlichkeit: Bedingung, Element und Medium der Praxis", Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin & Michael Dickhardt (eds.), *Kulturelle Räume – räumliche Kultur*, Münster et al.: Lit, 2003, 1–11: 10 [translation of the quote and italics mine].

53 Cf. Dörner, *Politischer Mythos*; and Benjamin Burkhart, "Der Trifels und die nationalsozialistische Erinnerungskultur: Architektur als Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisses", Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 237–54.

54 As one of the many turns in Cultural Studies, cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 3<sup>rd</sup> revised ed., Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009.

55 The distinction between intentional and historical monuments, and those containing 'age-value', was first made by Alois Riegl in 1929 (cf. Alois Riegl, "Der moderne Denkmalkultus, sein Wesen, seine Entstehung (1903)", id., *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Augsburg: Filser, 1929, 144–93.

sites of commemorative value? Benjamin Burkhardt reads Nazi architecture as a medium of collective memory<sup>56</sup>. To him, architecture is “a bond made of stone between the past, the present, and the future”<sup>57</sup>. Architecture is by nature Janus-faced; it is apt to incorporate, epitomize (*verkörpern*), and stabilize a collective memory in the execution of its function to conserve. On the other hand, though, the reception of the monument may change, and sometimes drastically. The architecture of Berlin is full of impressive examples for this change, such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s masterpiece *Neue Wache* (New Guard-House), which served once to glorify Prussia, then the Nazis, and later became a monument of anti-fascist commemoration. Today it stands as an “all-in-one” monument to a united Germany. In other examples, the physical monument is destroyed and the connected narrative falls into oblivion; alternatively, both the monument and its narrative are replaced by a counter-structure<sup>58</sup>.

Furthermore, the recent advent of *virtual memory sites* has complemented the already existing physical landscape of commemoration. They may be complex and highly-developed, like the virtual version of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the *Virtual Wall*<sup>59</sup>, or—still at its interactive beginnings—the virtual site of the Anne Frank House in the Netherlands. These virtual spaces function within the frame of a pre-existing physical site, offer new possibilities for disseminating materials amongst a wider audience, and incorporate individual memories and remembrance into the collective memory. Some internet sites only present pictures and texts which are no different from those already available in print, without making use of new technological possibilities. Others, like the *Virtual Wall*, respond to the changing expectations of media users and to the individualisation of collective memory<sup>60</sup>.

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56 Cf. Burkhardt, “Der Trifels”.

57 Ibid., 240.

58 For more on this in the field of Soviet architecture, cf. Klaus Gestwa, “Technologische Kolonisation und die Konstruktion des Sowjetvolkes”, Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf, Angelika Hartmann & Béatrice Hendrich (eds.), *Mental Maps, Raum, Erinnerung: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zugänge zum Verhältnis von Raum und Erinnerung*, Münster et al.: Lit, 2005, 73–116.

59 Cf. Angela M. Sumner, “Kollektives Gedenken individualisiert: Die Hypermedia-Anwendung *The Virtual Wall*”, Astrid Erl & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 255–76.

60 Cf. Sumner, “Kollektives Gedenken”, 276.

#### 4. Contemporary Developments – Gathering Houses, Museums and Statues

Commemoration is one of the key topics in contemporary Alevism. The nomenclatures currently in use, “Alevism” and “Bektaşism”, refer to the alleged founders and saints of Alevism, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Hacı Bektaş Veli, and the remembrance and commemoration of their lives (and fates) are a part of every religious ceremony. The hymns called *düvezdeh* remind the audience of the Twelve Imams (of Shi’ism and Alevism) and their tragic fate. For the Alevi movement, the modern Alevi-Bektaş associations and their secular leaders, the struggle for societal acceptance requires the definition of a particular fixed identity, and this identity is (partly) founded on historical as well as current, and imagined as well as physical landscapes and places. I turn now to three repositories of memory that are of major significance in the Alevi debate: the *cemevis*, the Sivas Museum, and the commemorative ensemble of Hacıbektaş.

As has already been indicated, there are various different historical traditions of material culture within the current Alevi-Bektaş movement. At the dawn of the Ottoman Empire, the Sufi orders put down their roots in Anatolia and built the first Anatolian convents<sup>61</sup>. From then on, the accepted mystical orders, such as the Bektaşis, took ownership of, and enlarged, particular architectural sites. These included several sacred and commemorative spaces, incorporating graveyards and tombstones, drawings and statues, and, uniquely, Hacı Bektaş Veli’s mulberry tree in the garden of the convent<sup>62</sup>. Today, the entire Alevi-Bektaş movement profits from the popularity of Bektaş architecture.

##### 4.1 The Commemorative Ensemble of Hacıbektaş

Every year in August, several thousand people (some years as many as hundreds of thousands) gather in the Anatolian village of Hacıbektaş, south-east of Ankara. The *Hacı Bektaş Veli Commemoration Festival* was first celebrated in 1964 and has been flourishing since then<sup>63</sup>. The participants are Alevi, Bektaş, and Sun-

61 Cf. Godfrey Goodwin, “The Dervish Architecture of Anatolia”, Raymond Lifchez (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and the Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992, 57–69: 57.

62 Whilst libraries and archives also function as memorial locations, this article focuses on real or imagined *physical* sites.

63 Cf. Béatrice Hendrich, “Erfundene Feste, falsche Rituale? Die Gedenkfeier von Hacıbektaş”, Robert Langer, Raoul Motika & Michael Ursinus (eds.), *Migration und Ritualtransfer: Religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem*

nis from the rural neighborhood, as well as some politicians, intellectuals, and artists. Undoubtedly, the veneration of Hacı Bektaş Veli in all branches of the Alevi community is a major reason for the success of the festival, but without the village's diverse sacred topography, the festival would have had an entirely different character. Hacıbektaş is a village with prehistoric roots. The little-researched prehistoric city mound (Kara Öyük / Suluca Karahöyük) is situated on one side of a small valley, whilst the historic village developed on the opposite side. The centre of the historic village is the Bektaşî convent, which is a compound constituting several buildings, three courtyards and a graveyard<sup>64</sup>. The (alleged) tombs of Hacı Bektaş Veli and Balım Sultan are a most important factor contributing to the spiritual importance and enduring attraction of this site. The convent was built and restored between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but closed down in 1925 according to the law that banned all religious orders and sects. In 1958 restoration was begun, with the aim of opening the convent to the public, and emphasizing its cultural rather than religious importance. The opening of the convent in 1964 marked, simultaneously, the opening of the first Hacı Bektaş Veli Commemoration Festival. In spite of its designation by the state as primarily a *cultural* event, however, the festival served the Alevis very much as a *religious* gathering from the outset, and soon became the central event in the Alevi calendar.

At present, the village offers several cultural and sacred sites to visitors and pilgrims. Beyond the convent, there are a multitude of holy rocks and trees, two *türbes*, several graveyards, a cultural centre and, more importantly, the house where Atatürk spent a night in 1919, during his visit to the Bektaşî convent looking for grassroot political support. The attraction of the whole area is a synthesis of two mutually complementary features: on the one hand, it is a living site, not fully canonized or codified; an emerging open-air museum that bequeaths some agency to its user, while in a constant process of complementation, addition, and change as new features are added and rituals reformulated. On the other hand, the simultaneous existence and agency of all these sites results in a *chronotopical* ensemble<sup>65</sup>, a network of *topoi* that belong to the visitor, and are a reminder of

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*Orient und Westeuropa*, (Heidelberger Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Vorderen Orients; 33), Frankfurt / M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2005, 227–46.

64 One of the few thorough studies to have been made of this site is by Zeynep Yürekli (cf. Yürekli, *Legends and Architecture*).

65 For the concept of 'chronotopos' in literature cf. Michail Bachtin [Mikhail Bakhtin], "Formen der Zeit und des Chronotopos im Roman: Untersuchungen zur historischen Poetik" [1938], id., *Untersuchungen zur Poetik und Theorie des Romans*, Edward Kowalski & Michael Wegner (eds.). Berlin & Weimar: Aufbau, 1986, 262–464; in ethnol-

different eras in past history. But the *chronoi* evoked by the reading of the sites are not only historic (linear, and respecting a clear boundary between past and present), but also mythical (circular and everlasting). The visitor is free to experience the diversity of spatial and temporal concepts, or to maintain a distance and gaze at everything from afar.

There are places—like the oven in Kadıncık Ana’s house—where the historical memory (as narrated in the tales of tourist guides) encounters and conflicts with a mystical understanding of place and time. Kadıncık Ana was among the first followers of Hacı Bektaş Veli, and his spiritual beloved. Even today, believers eat the dust from her oven, “the ashes from Kadıncık Ana’s last bread”. They incorporate, and literally embody the mystical memory, and attract severe criticism from ‘enlightened’ visitors and the servants of the state, the tourist guides.

Over the years, the Hacı Bektaş Festival has metamorphosed from a small-scale local event into an international festival, attracting Alevi labour migrants from Europe, as well as members of the Balkan Bektaşî order and Nusayris from Syria. Markussen comments on the sense of shared marginality which is fostered by the festival:

The Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies are crucial for the preservation of religious and social identities within the Alevi-Bektaşî community. Both Alevis and Bektaşîs gather to embrace selected episodes of the past in communion with commemoration of Hacı Bektaş Veli. Past and present mutually guide each other towards the common feeling of marginality<sup>66</sup>.

Whilst the spatial content of the commemorative sites has developed, this change may be traced back to a pre-existing narrative based on the transgression of physical boundaries. The foundation myth of Hacıbektaş tells the story of how Hacı Bektaş Veli once wanted to travel from Mecca to Anatolia, but how his path there was blocked by his enemies. The story relates how he ascended into the highest heaven, where he was greeted by angels, and subsequently took the form of a dove and flew to Anatolia. He is believed to have left a footprint in the rock on which he landed, and so Hacıbektaş became directly connected to the holy site of Mecca, the proof of which is enshrined (until the present day) in a rock. Indeed, the current mental map of Hacıbektaş evokes many Meccan associations: a source of water known as *Zemzem Suyu* is a clear parallel to the *Zamzam* well, 20 meters east of the Ka’ba; the rite of stoning the devil that is conducted during the pilgrimage at

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ogy cf. Klaus E. Müller, *Die fünfte Dimension: Soziale Raumzeit und Geschichtsverständnis in primordialen Kulturen*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 1999.

66 Markussen, *Alevilik ve Bektaşîlik*, 63.

Mecca is also practiced at the top of the Anatolian Mount Arafat, a hilltop just outside Hacibektaş.

But there are additions to the map as well, such as Kerbela and Sivas. One of the modern sites is the mausoleum of Didar Ana, a pious woman from eastern Anatolia, which was built in the 1960's on the slopes of Mount Arafat. The tomb there gathers red dust on its surface that is said to come from Kerbela. The pilgrims of today surround the grave and eat, that is, they 'incorporate' this dust. This practice stresses a shift in the focus of the mental map of the believers away from Mecca and towards Kerbela, a site of paramount importance to Shi'is and Alevis alike.

The massacre which took place at Kerbela is not the only such tragedy to be commemorated on the mental map of Hacibektaş. The statue called "*Ozanlar*" ('minstrels'), on Mount Arafat refers to the anti-Alevi arson which took place in 1993 in Sivas and resulted in 37 deaths. This tragedy was to become a crucial turning point in the history of the Alevi movement. In Germany, for example, more than a hundred Alevi associations were founded shortly after the Sivas massacre.

Several institutions, including the National Ministry of Culture, the municipality of Hacibektaş, and the Alevi-Bektaşî associations, are acutely aware of the potential of this area to generate an encompassing Alevi identity. Thus it has become important for them to exert control over the sites, or to build up new sites in order to change the character of the whole. Tensions between the associations and the Hacibektaş municipality reached a climax in 2005, when the municipality decided not only to organize the festival without the traditional co-operation of the Alevi associations, but also to erect a fence around parts of Mount Arafat, and to charge an entrance fee for the main pilgrim attractions. In the years previous to this, the Alevi associations had fought for the abolition of the entrance fee at the Bektaşî convent. In their view, the convent is a religious site, comparable to a mosque, and no believer should have to pay to enter God's house. In 2005 then, some of the associations decided to break away and in the years immediately following, to organize their own event. However, as a result of these deteriorating relations between the two sides, the festival of 2007 witnessed (according to the journal of the AABF) the lowest number of participants since its foundation<sup>67</sup>. As I will go on to demonstrate, the existence of physical sites (such as those in Hacibektaş village) and the commemorative chronotopical net that ties the sites together affords marginalized groups like the Alevi the chance to enact political resistance of high symbolic value, without violating any legal boundaries or using any physical aggression.

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67 Cf. AS 09/2007, 10.



## 4.2 Action Map

The article “Hacıbektaş İzlenimleri” (“Observations from Hacıbektaş”)<sup>68</sup>, describes the opening of the Hacı Bektaş Commemoration Festival of 2005 from the viewpoint of a group of Alevi participants from Germany and Turkey which had protested the undemocratic methods of controlling the festival used by both the national government and the local municipality. As has already been mentioned, 2005 was the year which saw the conflict reach a climax and rendered a shared opening ceremony impossible. Instead, the protesters celebrated their own opening event by organizing a protest march through Hacıbektaş, on which they wore yellow vests with inscriptions such as “Gathering houses are the centres of Alevi belief”, and “Accept Alevi identity”. What most concerns the present study, though, is the precise itinerary that the march took and, furthermore, the level of detail provided by the author of the article as to the exact path (incorporating various stations of pilgrimage) taken by the marchers. The protesters gathered at eight o’clock in the morning in front of Aşık Mahzuni’s grave. From there, they walked to the main square in Hacıbektaş where “the crowd” (*halk*) was waiting and applauding with “great excitement”. When their main adversary, the mayor, started to talk they turned their backs on him, and walked on to the statue of Hacı Bektaş. Criticizing the mayor’s undemocratic actions, the author repeatedly states that, “The mayor (a retired general) thinks himself to be a *paşa*, the village of Hacıbektaş to be his military base, and the inhabitants of Hacıbektaş his soldiers”<sup>69</sup>.

“Hacıbektaş İzlenimleri” offers several vivid examples of the social functions of particular sites, and the routes incorporated into group movements amongst them. The grave of Aşık Mahzuni (d. 2002) is located on the hilltop of Mount Arafat, three kilometers away from the main square of Hacıbektaş. Aşık Mahzuni was a highly-esteemed and beloved folk poet and singer, a symbol for the peaceful resistance of Alevis and other intellectuals (*aydın*) against injustice in Turkey. His grave very soon became a place of pilgrimage, a station on the pilgrims’ route to Mount Arafat. The commemoration of Aşık Mahzuni at his grave in this way has rendered him immortal and ensures that his leftist protest is kept alive. In turn, his symbolic authority strengthens that of the protesters. The fact that the protesters marched into the main square of Hacıbektaş had not only practical implications (it is large enough to hold several hundred people) but also symbolic ones. The square is located between the municipality and the convent complex, and is the place where the opening ceremony usually takes place. So in gathering here, the

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68 AS 09/2005, 17.

69 Ibid.

protestors were gathering *in public*, controlling the *public domain* of Hacibektaş, and claiming the *power of interpretation* concerning the domain of the Turkish Republic—represented here architecturally by the municipality—on the one hand, and the Alevi-Bektaş domain on the other<sup>70</sup>. When the protesters turned their back on the mayor while he was talking on the podium, they were “performing with their bodies”<sup>71</sup>. They were boycotting the forced hierarchical communication, because the loss of an audience rendered the speaker powerless. With their bodily protest, they generated a change in the spatial structure of the square, taking the speaker from his position as the focus of the scene and putting him instead *outside* of it. An Alevi spokesperson described the event thus:

Alevi society is not apt to turn its back on anyone without reason. If it does turn its back on someone, this person should take the message seriously<sup>72</sup>.

The march ended at the statue of Hacı Bektaş, the only logical place for it to do so because his ‘presence’ there legitimized the protesters’ demands. It is important to recognize that a public march is not only a form of political expression, but can also hold a very important place in many religions as a sacred *procession*. Although there is no tradition of procession in Alevism, in the present example we find all the constituent elements of one, including a disciplined behavior of the participants and the incorporation of visits to graves and statues of saints. The use of this form is consistent with the process of “going public” chosen by the Alevi community, a process which encompasses both secular and religious values. It is, in turn, a powerful claim to participation in public space and for the permissibility of public expression in a particular kind of religious tradition.

### 4.3 *Cemevis* (Gathering Houses)

A *cemevi* is not in the first instance an intentional memorial, but it is an important part of the whole process of paradigmatic change in Alevi commemorative culture. At the time of writing (2009), the “*cemevi* movement” has already achieved a remarkable level of success in moving towards the public and legal recognition of Alevi gathering houses as religious establishments. The following examples reflect some aspects of the complex developments in this area.

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70 I deliberately avoid the terms ‘secular’ and ‘religious’ for both concepts may be found in both domains; the boundaries are more blurred than the polarized labelling suggests.

71 Sybille Krämer, “Sprache, Stimme, Schrift: Sieben Gedanken über Performativität als Medialität”, Uwe Wirth (ed.), *Performanz: Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaft*, Frankfurt / M.: Suhrkamp, 2002, 323–46: 331.

72 AS 09/2005, 17.

When the Alevis migrated to the Turkish metropolises in the 1950's and 1960's, they founded associations which reflected either their geographical roots, or their affiliation to the mausoleum of an (Anatolian) saint<sup>73</sup>. This organizing principle has remained valid until today: one of the first modern (and still flourishing) Alevi associations was the *Karacaahmet Sultan Türbesi'ni Onarma-Koruma-Tanıtmaya-Güzelleştirme ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*, (The Charitable Association for the Restoration, Preservation, Adornment and Public Representation of the Karaca Ahmet Sultan Mausoleum)<sup>74</sup> founded in 1969 in Istanbul. The grave of Karaca Ahmet attracts Alevis and Sunnis alike, but it also attracts the suspicion of the state. In 1994, the local municipality, under the Islamist Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as mayor, decided to tear down the mausoleum. When the Alevis, with public support and backed by the popular media, managed to regain control over the site, the conflict became a catalyst for a new wave of *cemevi* construction all over Turkey. In contrast to Karacaahmet, the impressive *Okmeydanı Cemevi*<sup>75</sup> construction in Istanbul is a completely new building with no historical ties to its location; the rituals which are practiced there follow the Tokat regional tradition<sup>76</sup>. The building is only used by the Alevis; the only Sunnis likely to enter the complex are local children taking lessons in playing the *saz*, although the gallery constructed high above the actual meeting room allows outside observers to follow the ceremony without disturbing the congregation. In 1996, the CEM Vakfı organized an architectural contest in order to develop a prototypical gathering house<sup>77</sup>. At that time, the project still had to hide behind the ambiguous appellation, *Cem Kültürevleri* (Cem Houses of Culture), "CEM" being the association's acronymic shortening of *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi* (Republican Centre for Education and

73 Cf. Ali Yaman, "Cemevleri Tartışmaları Ekseninde Günümüz Aleviliğine Bakışlar", [http://www.alevibektasi.org/ali\\_yaman13.htm](http://www.alevibektasi.org/ali_yaman13.htm) (28<sup>th</sup> December 2005).

74 For political and legal reasons, labels such as 'Alevi' or 'Bektaşî' were avoided. Karaca Ahmet Sultan is a 13<sup>th</sup> century saint to whom healing miracles are attributed.

75 *Okmeydanı Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı İstanbul Merkez Şubesi*.

76 Cf. Raoul Motika & Robert Langer, "Alevitische Kongregationsrituale: Transfer und Re-Invention im transnationalen Kontext", Robert Langer, Raoul Motika & Michael Ursinus (eds.), *Migration und Ritualtransfer: Religiöse Praxis der Aleviten, Jesiden und Nusairier zwischen Vorderem Orient und Westeuropa*, (Heidelberger Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Vorderen Orients; 33), Frankfurt / M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2005, 73–108: 82.

77 Cf. Selim Velioğlu, "Cem Kültürevi Tasarımı", İsmail Engin & Erhard Franz (eds.), *Aleviler / Alewiten*, vol. 2: *İnanç ve Gelenekler / Glaube und Traditionen*, (Mitteilungen / Deutsches Orient-Institut; 60), Hamburg: Dt. Orient-Inst., 2001, 299–302.

Culture). At the time of writing, the association's website is no longer using this term, but has changed it to *cemevi* as well.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were approximately twenty Alevi cultural centres and *cemevis* in Istanbul alone<sup>78</sup>. The Alevi associations fought for public and legal acceptance of the *cemevis* in Turkey as “buildings for worship” (*ibadet evi*) which would put them on an equal footing with the status afforded to mosques. The question whether traditionally, there existed *cemevis* in the Alevi villages or not has proved to be of high political significance in the course of this conflict. Yaman argues that in Alevi villages, religious services were not only held in ordinary rooms which could serve the purpose on an *ad hoc* basis, but also in specially-designated buildings called *cemevi* or *cemdami* (gathering place)<sup>79</sup>. Because of the complexities of Alevi-Bektaşî history mentioned above, we find Alevi communities occupying various positions on the sliding scale of cultural expression: some use highly distinctive Bektaşî ritual objects and architecture, whereas others lack any decipherable material objects at all, especially Alevi minority communities that have lived under the close scrutiny of the Sunni majority<sup>80</sup>. Therefore, the question of the pre-existence of exclusive Alevi gathering places, like so many questions about dynamic Alevi culture, cannot be clearly or definitively answered. But this debate shows that the struggle for, and the construction and use of *cemevis* that have from the very beginning been conceived as such serves at least two kinds of memory. The first of these is collective religious memory: during the rituals, religious knowledge is actualized, and its historic origins re-enacted. In the cities, a spacious central place for common worship is a practical need, and without such a place it would be hard, if not impossible, to keep religious knowledge alive. The second kind of memory is the memory that serves the collective identity: the recourse to history occurs in order to prove the reality and historical continuity of the collective existence of the Alevis and to make claims to societal and political acceptance and participation. If it becomes an accepted fact that *cemevis* are a religious necessity for the observance of appropriate ritual practice, and that Alevis cannot be forced to gather in mosques because they are historically and religiously different from (but equal to) Sunni Muslims,

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78 Cf. Yaman, “Cemevleri Tartışmaları”.

79 Cf. *ibid.*

80 From the scant historical and ethnological information which is available, it is obvious that living conditions and freedom surrounding religious expression depended on the location of the Alevi community. Where the Alevis constituted a majority, as they did in the province of Dersim, the situation was quite different from that in Sunni-dominated areas like the Black Sea provinces.

then the *cemevis* will have performed their most important task. The successes achieved to date include the decisions of some municipalities to categorise *cemevis* as “religious buildings” equal to mosques or churches, so that they will be charged less for their electricity supply<sup>81</sup>. Meanwhile, the new Alevi buildings are also developing a particular quality of commemoration: besides providing space for collective remembrance, the political, societal (and financial) struggle for the buildings (and their maintainance) constitutes a significant part of the recent Alevi discourse on commemoration and identity. The struggle for the legal recognition of *cemevis* has been neatly summed up by a well-known Alevi *dede*, Dertli Divani:

The ‘opening-policy’ [*açılım*, B. H.] towards the Alevis is just another form of assimilation. We have a prime minister who only recently said “*Cemevis* are places of enjoyment and razzle-dazzle houses”. The same person who tried to tear down Karacaahmet when he was the head of the municipality, supports those who defend the people who burnt our friends to death in Sivas. [...] If the state wants to gain respectability, it should modify the legislation concerning *tekkes* and *zaviyes*<sup>82</sup>. [...] The gathering houses should gain a legal status<sup>83</sup>.

#### 4.4 The Sivas Museum

The struggle for the establishment of a museum in Sivas is a relatively recent addition to the Alevi agenda. In 1993, an Alevi Cultural Festival<sup>84</sup> was celebrated in Sivas’s Madımak Hotel. The hotel was set on fire on July 2<sup>nd</sup> by an Islamist crowd, and the fire department and police “hesitated” to interfere, with the result that thirty-seven people died. Some time later, the hotel was restored and a kebab house opened on the first floor. To date, there is no plaque, picture, or any other kind of reminder to the visitor of the arson attack or its victims. The incident has since become the topic of numerous books, articles, websites, blogs and theater

81 For example, the municipality of Kuşadası. Cf. “Kuşadası Belediyesi’nden Tarihi Cem-evi Kararı”, *AS* 09/2008, 6 f.

82 Note: a *zaviye* is a small dervish lodge.

83 Dertli Divani, “Asimile Etmek İstiyorlar”, *Tüm gazeteler*, <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2416888> (15<sup>th</sup> January 2010). “Alevi ‘açılım politikası’ asimilasyon politikasının bir başka biçimi. Düne kadar, ‘cemevleri eğlence yerleridir, cümbüş evleridir’ diyen bir başbakanımız vardı, düne kadar bunu söylüyordu. Karacaahmet Dergahı’ndaki cemevini belediye başkanlığı döneminde yıktırmaya gelen aynı insan, Sivas’ta sanatçı dostlarımızı yakan insanların avukatlığını yapan onların yandaşları. [...] Eğer devlet, adam gibi devlet olmak istiyorsa tekke ve zaviyeler yarasını düzenlesinler yeniden. [...] Cemevlerinin yasal bir statüye kavuşmalıdır”.

84 *4’üncü Pir Sultan Abdal Etkinlikleri*.

plays<sup>85</sup>. The aspect of special interest to the present study is the campaign to create a museum inside the building.

For many years now, the Alevi associations have been campaigning for the closure of the kebab house and the conversion of the hotel into a site of remembrance and a museum of shame (*Utanç Müzesi*). The first step towards achieving a specifically Alevi commemoration site was the triggering of a public discussion, which erupted in response to the idea. According to some articles in the Alevi journal *Alevilerin Sesi* (The Alevi Voice) in 2005, the justification for building a museum in the Madımak Hotel are as follows: firstly, the museum would have an appropriate hortative and pedagogical function; furthermore, it would restore the spiritual peace and integrity of both the Alevi and Sunni community in Turkey; it would follow a German example in which the house of the Solingen arson (in which five members of a migrant family from Turkey died in 1993) was converted into a memorial, and thus it would be a model of modern and enlightened European behaviour; it would encourage the development of an Alevi identity; it would prevent the general public from forgetting the massacre; and it would be a demonstration of citizens' rights (in this case the right to build a public memorial) in Turkey. In 2006, the AABF mounted a petition declaring that,

[I]n the twelfth year since the Sivas massacre, we desire that the massacre should be condemned, that the Madımak Hotel currently used as a kebab house should be closed, and the Culture and Art Museum of 2 July should be opened, with a monument in front of it that commemorates those burned to death, in the name of peace and brotherhood<sup>86</sup>.

After many years at an impasse, at the end of 2008 the AKP government presented the Alevi associations with an initiative of its own. According to news reports, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism aims to open a shop in the building, selling books and flowers. Minister Ertuğrul Günay is quoted as having said the following:

We will inscribe the names of all [the deceased] and the date that is to be remembered on a wall. Those who wish to do so may leave a carnation, or add his / her signature to a book of remembrance. In the other parts [of the building], we will prepare an exposition and [offer] books. This will serve as a kind of admonition<sup>87</sup>.

85 A few examples are: Attila Aşut (ed.), *Sivas Kitabı*, Ankara: Kurtuluş Kitabevi, 1994; [kurdmania.com/News-sid-Mad-305-mak-Hotel-in-sivas-2-Juli-1993-2-Juli-2008-874.html](http://kurdmania.com/News-sid-Mad-305-mak-Hotel-in-sivas-2-Juli-1993-2-Juli-2008-874.html); "Sivas 93" (cf. also [http://www.melez.de/fileadmin/melez/downloads/Einleitungstext\\_Sivas93.pdf](http://www.melez.de/fileadmin/melez/downloads/Einleitungstext_Sivas93.pdf)).

86 [http://www.alevi.com/madimak\\_giris.html](http://www.alevi.com/madimak_giris.html) (28<sup>th</sup> December 2008).

87 "Hepsinin adını, unutulmaması gereken tarihleri yazarız bir duvara, dileyen önüne bir karanfil bırakır, dileyen anı defterine imza atar ama diğer bölümlerde de kitap, sergi gibi düzenlemeler yaparız. Bu bir ibret vesilesi olur." ("Müze Yapsalar Spekülasyon

The Alevi associations' intention had obviously been to make use of globally-accepted political discourses of memory and identity, and to build an intentional monument (in the sense of Riegl's intentional monument, s.a.). The further negotiations inside the Alevi community on the design, function, and message of the museum would without doubt have advanced the cause of constructing an Alevi identity. The government's intervention at this juncture is part of a familiar political pattern to exert control over a threatening idea or location which cannot be completely destroyed, and so the actions of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism are highly significant in this respect. The term *cultural* (or *multi-cultural*) has become the (positive) opposite of *political*, and does not contain the same connotations (which *political* is apt to) of potential endangerment to the public peace. In this way, the Ministry controls the politically 'dangerous' places by openly claiming them and rendering them *cultural* sites<sup>88</sup>. Remarkably, with their campaign for a "museum of culture and art", the Alevi activists have been taking part in the same discourse.

For the purposes of the present study—the evidence of change from performative to material culture—the Madımak campaign marks a new feature in Alevi places of commemoration. A museum inside the former hotel would be an intentional monument, a material pre-defined space of commemoration with displayed objects, realized not at a place of spiritual importance on the mental map (like the Zemzem Fountain in Hacibektaş for example), but at the particular place where events 'really' took place. It is self-evident that such a kind of memorial implicates a further canonization of Alevi historical identity and diminishes the dynamic reading of Alevi mental maps<sup>89</sup>. "Musealization" often means "stabilization" and strengthening of a certain version because it is impossible to *display* an event in all its facets<sup>90</sup>. This preclusion of further readings (or hitherto undiscussed aspects) of the 1993 arson might not be such a positive result, as there is still much to clarify

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Olacakmış", [http://www.alevihaberajansi.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=6535&Itemid=51](http://www.alevihaberajansi.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6535&Itemid=51) (15<sup>th</sup> January 2010)).

88 The same is true for the restoration of Mevlevi *tekkes*, or the support given to certain Turkish publishers and authors.

89 For the substitution of Karbala with Auschwitz on the mental map of Alevis in Germany, cf. Béatrice Hendrich, "Holocaust Alevi Söylemine Nasıl Girdi? Yeni Heimat'da Tarihsel Bilinç Dinamikleri", Gönül Pultar (ed.), *Yüce Dağdan Aşan Yollar Bizimdir: Yirmi Birinci Yüzyıl Başında Türkiye'de İç ve Dış Göçün Kültürel Boyutları*, Istanbul: Kültür Araştırmaları Derneği, 2016 (forthcoming), 431–77.

90 Cf. Monika Flacke, "Geschichtsausstellungen: Zum 'Elend der Illustration'", Philine Helas et al. (eds.), *BILD / GESCHICHTE: Festschrift für Horst Bredekamp*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2007, 481–90: 482.

concerning the circumstances which led to the deaths of thirty-seven people, and the appropriation of legal and political responsibility for the arson. Furthermore, a physical memorial—once built and inaugurated—will always face the danger of falling derelict. From this point of view, it is the dispute itself, provoked by the government's recent initiative that has the guise of a compromise, which might inadvertently serve the memory of Sivas 1993 better than a static site.

### 5. The Threat of Ossification Versus the Victory of Public Acceptance

The discussion thus far might leave the reader with the impression that the pursuit of an identity policy through a distinctly “architectural discourse” is the undisputed Alevi way at present. Indeed, some Alevi spokespersons have openly supported this idea:

Whoever does not attend to the *cemevis*, whoever remains passive against the danger of assimilation of their children by coercive religious instruction [at school], is not able to attend to the Alevi saints and centres of Alevi belief<sup>91</sup>.

But others have criticized this attitude as somewhat excessive, and have focused instead on the pursuit of societal and legal action. In a book by Lütfi Kaleli, we read the reaction of an unnamed Alevi individual to the legal efforts of Alevi organisations in the 1990's to obtain official acceptance as Alevi associations, rather than hiding behind labels like “Anatolian culture” or “tourist” associations:

By gaining the victory in this legal case and from the benefits of this victory, your foundation has served this society better than if it had constructed ten *cemevis*<sup>92</sup>.

At the beginning in this article, I mentioned Martin Sökefeld's sociological approach, which emphasizes that Alevi religious rituals have no need of designated physical places, because they centre on a *symbolic* social-religious network<sup>93</sup>. It seems valid, however, to question whether the material turn in Alevi culture might completely replace the traditional system of incorporated memory; furthermore, whether it might even lead to the canonization and ossification of belief and ritual, and eventually to the demise of the dynamics that helped Alevi culture to survive and flourish in even the most challenging historical circumstances. From the examples we have seen, it seems that if it were true that in the (Kızılbaş) past, a *cemevi* was the place wherever a *dede* sat down on his fleece, today it is the static

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91 AS 09/2005, 13.

92 Lütfi Kaleli, *Alevi Kimliği ve Alevi Örgütlenmeleri*, Istanbul: Can, 2000, 9.

93 Cf. Sökefeld, “*Cem in Deutschland*”, 211.



building of the *cemevi* that obliges the *dede* to come to it, and sit down<sup>94</sup>. Furthermore, the expectations made of the *dede* are in a state of flux: formal requirements like higher education, and mastery of both social and religious questions in the modern world, have joined the requirements of birth, social prestige and spiritual qualification<sup>95</sup>. It has thus been argued that the *dede*'s influence and power should be restricted to purely *religious* tasks and questions<sup>96</sup>. From all this we can conclude that the cultural memory of the Alevis has moved from its reliance on holy lineages to rely instead on books and other modern media forms. The memorial function of religious leaders has been reduced to the relatively limited concept of the above-mentioned ideal *dede*. *Cem* ceremonies are held in designated chambers and halls, equipped with chimneys, pictures of saints and other revered personages, carpets, broom and water-jug. Most of these items are no longer in daily use but are rather *folkloric*, and have to be purchased in specialist stores<sup>97</sup>.

Andreas Huyssen has stated that:

The more Diaspora and nation share the perception of loss, the more they both will insist on safeguarding identity and fortifying their borders, thus ossifying the past and closing themselves off to alternative futures<sup>98</sup>.

In a similar way, Aleida Assmann<sup>99</sup> and Pierre Nora<sup>100</sup> have expressed a fear (*Kulturpessimismus*, or a sense of cultural pessimism), that a culture that creates countless monuments and commemorative places can well be on the verge of losing its *real* past, its cultural memory. Yet it would be naive, in light of the above mentioned cultural diversity within the Alevi-Bektaşî community, to expect the current Alevis

94 As a *cemevi* is the physical property of an association, it is also true that the modern association and its board are what compel a *dede* to come and lead the *cem* (cf. Ali Yaman, "Anadolu Alevileri'nde Otoritenin El Değiştirmesi: Dedelik Kurumlarından Kültürel Organizasyonlara", <http://www.pirsultan.net/kategori.asp?KID=20&ID=127&aID=336> (8<sup>th</sup> November 2008)).

95 Cf. Dreßler, "Der moderne Dede", 280.

96 Cf. *ibid.*, 290.

97 Cf. Langer, "Alevitische Rituale", 80.

98 Andreas Huyssen, "Diaspora and Nation: Migration into other Pasts", *New German Critique* 88 (2003), 147–64: 154.

99 Cf. Aleida Assmann & Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999.

100 Cf. Nora, *La république*; and also Patrick Schmidt, "Zwischen Medien und Topoi: Die Lieux de mémoire und die Medialität des kulturellen Gedächtnisses", Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Medien des kollektiven Gedächtnisses: Konstruktivität, Historizität, Kulturspezifität*, Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004, 25–43.

and Alevi associations to content themselves with pre-modern techniques of cultural transmission, to remain an *exclusively* oral and performative society (which, in any case, it seems never to have been). The process of this paradigmatic change in forms of cultural expression began a long time ago. Here, *Kulturpessimismus* is a position far from the Alevis' continuous struggle for societal and political acceptance and participation. This sometimes fierce struggle relies on the creation of new, functional and appropriate, cultural forms, and this *material turn* precipitates changes in the social network, evokes internal conflicts in the Alevi community about the form and content of these new ways of expression, and reveals the historic tensions and frictions inherent in different understandings of Alevi ritual, belief, and historical consciousness. But the political, social, and economic changes that the Alevi community had to cope with during the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not concerned with the specifics of Alevi cultural heritage, and ultimately, there was no other option open to it but to pragmatically create appropriate new cultural forms to fit the new circumstances of the day. Furthermore, the construction of intentional monuments and *cemevis* may be one way of refreshing the oral cultural memory of the younger generation, which was otherwise on the verge of growing up in a void of Alevi cultural memory and commemorative practice.

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