MANAGING (IN)VISIBILITY BY A DOUBLE MINORITY: DISSIMULATION AND IDENTITY MAINTENANCE AMONG ALEVI BULGARIAN TURKS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focusses on invisibilities of ethno-religious minorities which face cycles of persecutions and severe discrimination in their larger societies. The literature portrays marginalized groups' visibility either as a requirement for their empowerment or a source of their surveillance. However, I argue that for such groups what matters is not their visibility or invisibility *per se* but rather their control over it, i.e. to what extent the community members are able to reveal or conceal information about themselves. For them, invisibility may be a tactical tool as well as a structural burden. My dissertation examines complicated (in)visibilities of a double minority, Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Specifically, I focus on a paradoxical configuration of Alevis' invisibilities: while the minority is marginalized and rendered invisible due to historical and structural conditions, they have not strived for increased visibility, but rather tried to decrease it. This configuration of self-imposed invisibility is captured by the term *takiye* (protective dissimulation), a Turkish variant of the Arabic *taqiyya*. In Islamic theology, the term refers to hiding one's religious identity or its components. My analysis of *takiye* enables me to develop the English concept of dissimulation to indicate the possibility for collective agency for marginalized minorities even when their

marginalizations persist, as I show by examining Alevi Bulgarian Turks' historical and present day dissimulations. The major theoretical contribution of the dissertation is development of this concept of dissimulation.

For a dissimulating minority, the group's identity remains robust even when its members publically claim membership in other groups, and group boundaries remain salient even when the members of the minority pretend to cross them. Therefore, dissimulation actually reinforces the distinction between the minority and other groups in the eyes of the minority's own members. I discuss cases in which Alevi Bulgarian Turks utilized dissimulation by means of simulating the varying, historically changing majorities in post-Ottoman Bulgaria, while still following Alevi ways in the privacy of their own group members. The data for my thesis was gathered during nine months of ethnographic fieldwork Bulgaria and nine months of fieldwork in Turkey.

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PREFACE

I am profoundly grateful to my advisor Professor Robert M. Hayden for his exceptional guidance over the past eight years. He has been a source of inspiration for me with his intellectual leadership and unwavering enthusiasm. His extraordinary support has always been present at the moments of success and maybe more importantly at the moments of crisis. I am particularly thankful to him for his guidance to me to wade in and successfully survive trying circumstances by enforcing clarity at the moments when everything looked blurry, confusing and wearisome to me as a graduate student. I deeply appreciate his precious efforts with me and my work at various stages of my academic life. He was always present and available even when he was at the other end of the world or at the airport to leave a city in fifteen minutes for an overseas conference.

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I am also thankful to those who left me behind and those whom I left behind throughout the process…for teaching me to sail in my own way...

1.0   A PARADOXICAL INVISIBILITY: FORTIFYING INVISIBILITY FOR EMPOWERMENT IN THE FACE OF DISEMPOWERING STRUCTURAL INVISIBILITIES

1.1   RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the social science literature, visibility is usually attributed with positive qualities. It is seen as desirable for the empowerment or recognition of marginalized communities. Several studies are built upon this assumption and frame invisibility as a problem for ethnic, religious or gendered groups (e.g. Blacks in the USA [McDonald and Wingfield 2009], lesbians in Thailand [Thongthiraj 1994], Arab-Americans in the USA [Naber 2010]). An alternative approach to visibility recognizes it as a conduit for control (Goffman 1971) and even as a means for surveillance of marginalized groups, much as the panopticon model for prisons shows how visibility of inmates before invisible guards helps control the inmates (Foucault1977). In addition to immediate control, hypervisibility may be a source of social stigmatization (McDonald and Wingfield 2009), such as the extreme visibility of Senegalese migrants in Italy which has produced negative stereotypes that circulate constantly (Carter 2010). Usually, anthropological studies are inclined to see visibility as these groups' empowerment (e.g. in so-called "advocacy anthropology") even if some anthropologists recognize that visibility may also serve purposes of social control (e.g. M. Strathern 2000, Carter 2010).

Accounts from both perspectives by non-members of marginalized groups (such as academics, policy makers and NGO workers) presume that making the invisible visible is an absolute act; one of benevolence if visibility is seen as recognition, and of malevolence if visibility is seen as a matter of social control. Such accounts, however, portray marginalized communities as weak, powerless, and deficient of will and agency. Yet as Brigenthi (2007) says, visibility is a double-edged sword: it may be a source of empowerment or disempowerment depending on the socio-political context. Following this point, I argue that for marginalized communities what matters is not visibility or invisibility per se, but rather controlling one's own visibility and invisibility: whether or not and to what extent, when and how, a community is willing to reveal or conceal information about itself.

My thesis focuses on the complicated invisibilities of Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey. The ethnic Turks of Bulgaria were transformed into "Bulgarian Turks" (*Bulgaristan Türkleri*) as a minority community in Bulgaria and an external kin-nation to Turks in Anatolia, following Bulgaria's de facto independence from Ottoman rule in 1878. Since then Bulgarian Turks have faced mass forced migrations in 1913, in the 1930s, in 1950-1, between 1968-78, in 1989 and in the 2000s. Some also returned, and some families are therefore currently living across the Bulgaria–Turkey border. The community has been homogenized and externalized in political, public and scholarly discourses as a disfavored minority in Bulgaria and a disliked migrant community in Turkey, while in fact, it is divided into followers of the Alevi and Sunni sects of Islam. Alevis have formed a demographic minority within the Bulgarian Turkish minority. Furthermore, Alevis have remained legally underrepresented, socially externalized and structurally invisible to most observers and to the Bulgarian and Turkish states, both of which favor Sunni Islam. Under these circumstances Alevi Bulgarian Turks have managed their

invisibilities, often by utilizing the collective strategy named *takiye* (prudential or prudential dissimulation)[1]. My thesis focuses on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations in relation to different national and local majorities, under varying minority-majority configurations and historically changing political and social circumstances in Bulgaria and Turkey.

1.2   WHY ALEVIS, ALEVI BULGARIAN TURKS AND THEIR INVISIBILITIES?

Alevis as a Muslim community stand outside the mainstream Sunni and Shia sects of Islam. Alevi and related communities currently live in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iran, Albania, Macedonia, Romania, Greece, Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria under different names, e.g. Alawite, Druze, Nusayri, Ismaili, Bektaşi, Kızılbaş; these differently-named communities differentiate among themselves but are all regarded with suspicion by Sunni and Shia religious establishments. In these societies, Alevis constitute a religiously marked minority group in relation to a group belonging to "mainstream" Islam (either Sunni or Shia) or to another majority religion. They have been seen at best as "heterodox" groups as opposed to the presumably "orthodox" Muslims, and even as "heretics" (see Karolewski 2008 for criticism of the view of Alevism as heterodoxy). Often they have faced discrimination, state-initiated persecutions or even societal violence; though a notable exception is present day Syria where Alevis are a demographic minority yet have formed the core of the administrative, political and military elite that has utilized severe violence against Sunni civilians and villages under the reign of the Assad

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1 The term *takiye* (in Turkish, literally means dissimulation) refers to concealment of one's religious identity and belief under threat and persecution. The term is used in the Islamic jurisprudence while Sunni and Shia scholars of Islamic Law have contradictory opinions on the concept (Kohlberg: 1974). In the rest of my thesis, I will use the Turkish transcription of the word given that my informants' native languages are Turkish.

family, most recently since the start of protests for governmental change in the summer of 2011. Given this near uniformity of hostility, it is unsurprising to note that Alevis have often lived as closed communities in isolated locations, relied on oral traditions and secret rituals, and often hiding their religious identity from non-Alevis (Melikoff 1994). In other words, visibility has not always been a desirable condition for Alevis, despite what a naïve would-be ethnographer might anticipate.

Notably, the term Alevi itself is relatively new, in many places dating only to the Twentieth Century. The term originated in Turkey, and arrived to Bulgaria only after the end of socialism in Bulgaria in 1989, due to the increased interaction between Alevis in Bulgaria and Turkey. Many Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey have reminded me that "Alevis" in Bulgaria used to be called "*Kızılbaş*." Given this, I could have used the term Kızılbaş for all Alevis in Bulgaria; yet it would be technically wrong to do so since *Kızılbaş* refers to a specific group of Alevis who are different in history, rituals and beliefs from other Alevis in Bulgaria, such as *Babai*s, *Derviş*hes and *Musahipli*s. Therefore, I utilize the term Alevi to include all sub-groups of Alevis, as all groups now see themselves as Alevis.

The term Alevi is useful in grouping communities sharing the following traits: they perceive Ali, the cousin and the son-in-law of Muhammed, as the bearer of divine knowledge; they attribute exceptional qualities to the members of Muhammed's family (*Ehl-i beyt*); they have mystic elements in the belief system such as that God is reflected in every human being and that the Quran has deeper meanings than are portrayed in the mainstream Islamic interpretations; they believe holy souls or saints have been seen in the form of local, historical characters believed to have caused miracles; and they conduct rituals distinct from those mentioned in the Five Pillars of Islam.

Even though Alevism has often been treated as a derivative of Shia belief due to Alevis' exceptional love for Ali and Ehli-Beyt, Alevism is a syncretic belief incorporating elements of Central Asian shamanism, mystical versions of Shia and Sunni Islam, Christianity and Zarathustra (Melikoff 1994). Despite their differences, Shia and Sunni communities see what is called the Five Pillars of Islam (in the Sunni version) or the Aspects of Islam (in the Shia version) as the main and nonnegotiable markers of being a Muslim, irrespective of varying degrees of actually following each of the pillars, namely the creed stating that God is one and only and Muhammed is his messenger, and the followers should practice daily prayers, fast during Ramadan, practice almsgiving and go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Alevis say that they follow these principles but with different practices. These will be explained in detail in what follows, but in brief, Alevis hold more of a mystical perception of God. They replace daily prayers with *cem* (literally "gathering") ceremonies, which have a completely different form and reasoning. They replace the Ramadan fast with the Muharram fast to commemorate the murder of Ali's son Huseyin by the Sunni rulers after Muhammed. Alevis have a differently structured system of almsgiving in the form of animal sacrifice during *cems* and at *türbe* (saint's tomb) visits and they follow the principle that there is no need to seek God in Mecca as it is enough to look at every human as the reflection of God.

My research trajectory moved through stages of my own ignorance, then naivety and then to a degree of informed awareness about Alevis invisibilities. In 2006 as a PhD student eager to study ethnic minorities and borders, I decided to focus on Bulgarian Turks, at least in part for family reasons: three of my Turkish grandparents had been born in Bulgaria. It took me two years to visit Bulgaria for the first time for a short term (NSF-REG) research project on "Muslim religious sites" in 2008. Having reviewed the core of the literature and contacted Bulgarian

Turks in Turkey, I designed the research to seek out mosques, as if Muslims in Bulgaria are only from Sunni sects. Yet my first experience in Bulgaria was dazing and confusing from the very start: my first Muslim site was an Alevi Muslim religious site (a *tekke*) and my first Bulgarian Turkish informant was an Alevi community leader! My embarrassment was infinite, since I had missed a crucial fact about Islam in Bulgaria: some Turks in Bulgaria are Alevis! During my visits to Alevi and Sunni Muslim sites in 14 cities, the question had bothered me: how could one who had established contacts with Bulgarian Turks and who had read the core literature on this group remain so completely ignorant of the fact that some Bulgarian Turks are Alevis?

Reviewing the literature and interviews again revealed surprising results: while Alevi Bulgarian Turks are mentioned in a few books, these can be found only if one uses the keyword "Bulgarian Alevis" instead of "Alevi Bulgarian Turks" or "Bulgarian Turks." Soon I realized that this situation hints at the externalization of Alevis from the Bulgarian Turkish community in the literature, as well as in institutional, organizational and social life in Bulgaria and Turkey. In fact, Alevis have been excluded by means of projecting the Bulgarian Turks' communal identity as predominantly Sunni, not merely by Sunni Bulgarian Turks but also by the Turkish and Bulgarian majorities, and by the governments of both states. I use the term "the Sunni assumption about Bulgarian Turkish identity," (or "the Sunni assumption," from now on) to discuss the structural conditions that make Alevi Bulgarian Turks invisible. This situation compromises inter-group relations in various local settings.

The Sunni assumption dominates literatures from both Bulgaria and Turkey, despite their conflicting nationalist presumptions on history as well as historiography. Both emphasize Islam as the communal marker of the Bulgarian Turks and consider Sunni Islam as the only form of Islam. The literature from Bulgaria has been hesitant to accept "Bulgarian Turks" as an ethnic

group and uses the term "Bulgarian Muslims" for Bulgarian Turks, and it has promoted the term "Bulgarian Alevis" over "Bulgarian Alevi Turks." Likewise, the literature from Turkey emphasizes the Sunni Muslim identity of Bulgarian Turks. According to this literature, Turks in Bulgaria have been oppressed as the Bulgarian state has interfered with Sunni Muslims' practices and sites (e.g. daily prayers, monthly fast, animal sacrifices, mosques), but no reference is made to Alevi practices and sites. Thereby the literature from Turkey silences the fact that some Bulgarian Turks are Alevis.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks' invisibilities in minority organizations in Bulgaria and migrant organizations in Turkey are striking. These organizations still operate on the principle of the Sunni assumption: any questions mentioning Alevis in the community may cause these organizations' members to feel threatened; Alevi is a taboo word. For instance, in Bursa in the largest migrant organization in Turkey, my questions about Alevi migrants caused shock, raised eyebrows and even accusations of an "attempt to separate the community" by some top level personnel. Yet, the same people had no problem inviting me to the organization's public feasts during Ramadan, the month of fasting for Sunni Muslims.

Historical macro-political and social configurations in Bulgaria and Turkey have fostered the invisibilities of Alevi Bulgarian Turks. In Bulgaria, Alevis have formed a disprivileged minority within the already disfavored Turkish minority, i.e. they are a doubly disfavored minority. The independence of Bulgaria led to transformation of the formerly dominant Turks into a disfavored minority. Since then, Islam has been recognized as an official religion by the Bulgarian state and Muslims are allowed to organize, but only under Sunni müftülüks and mosques. Thus, Alevis were underrepresented under socialism and even before. For example, my numerous elder Alevi informants recall that they had to attend primary education in their villages

before 1945 when Sunni imams were the teachers forcing them to do Sunni Friday prayers. Alevis have never been institutionally represented in Bulgaria; the first Alevi organizations were opened as regional organizations in early 2000s. Despite these developments, Alevis continue to be underrepresented in the academic literature after socialism. For instance, Kristen Ghodsee (2010) portrays Alevis as a Shia group as opposed to Sunnis; she divides Muslims in Bulgaria into Turkish, Roma and Bulgarian ethnic groups (14); and she clearly states her focus as the Pomaks who do not claim the Turkish identity but the Bulgarian ethnic identity or a separate identity of their own (14), ignoring Alevis entirely in a book entitled *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe* and focused almost exclusively on Bulgaria.

On the other hand, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' situation was not improved following the waves of migrations to Turkey. Historically, the secularism of Turkey was intended to control religion by rejecting "the ideology of Islamic polity" (Berkes 1964: 499). As early as 1924, the new regime replaced the caliphate system with the Department of Religious Affairs, but later introduced mandatory religious education in schools, which promoted only Sunni Islamic principles. Alevis in Turkey had supported the new regime with the hope of equal citizenship, following state-initiated persecutions and conversion attempts during the Ottoman Empire (Deringil 2000, Erdemir 2005, Özyürek 2009). In the Republic, they did not face state-initiated systematized violence, but there were instances of societal violence directed at local Alevis, in the 1940s in Turkish Trace; in 1978 in Kahramanmaraş; in 1980 in Çorum; in 1993 in Sivas, and in 1994 in Gazi Mahallesi (Jongerden 2003). By the late 1990s, political, administrative, economic and social life was subject to (Sunni) Islamization due to the success of the Islamist political parties in the local and national elections after 1994. The Welfare Party won the local elections and then the general elections in 1995, followed by the electoral victory of the Virtue

Party in 1998 which became the ruling Justice and Development Party in 2002 (White 2005, Özyürek 2009). At the same time, and perhaps in response, a counter-tendency was emerging: Alevis in Turkey and Europe gained visibility, Alevism became a "public religion" (Erman and Göker 2000) and Alevis formed organizations, a TV station, and even a political party, all part of what has been called an "Alevi Revival" (Bruinessen 1996; Çamuroğlu 1998), "Alevi Re-politicization" (Erman and Göker: 2000) or "Alevi Renaissance" (Neyzi 2003).

The turning point of my dissertation research was the realization that Alevi Bulgarian Turkish migrants are extremely invisible, unlike local Alevis in Turkey and Bulgaria who have started to gain public some forms of visibility in the last two decades. At first glance, Alevi migrants' invisibilities in Turkey are due to their status as migrants. That is, having status as migrants might become another burden on Alevis who were already a double minority in Bulgaria as Turks and Alevis, and then in Turkey as Alevis and "Bulgarians," as Bulgarian Turks are stigmatized by some local, Anatolian Turks. To a degree this is correct. However, as I noticed during my fieldwork in Bulgaria, dissimulation is not merely a migrant phenomenon. My non-migrant Alevi informants (in Bulgaria) also narrated how they had protected the community historically under the most trying circumstances. I noticed that all of these narratives related to Alevis' historically self-imposed invisibilities through dissimulation. Furthermore, I observed several cases of dissimulations by Alevis in the present day either against some segment of society or against me.

The complications in the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' invisibilities become visible to be at the very beginning of my fieldwork as the following excerpt from my fieldnotes displays in a nutshell:

> The beginning of my fieldwork in Turkey was very discouraging concerning
> several problems about access: The visibly Sunni orientation of Bursa was

sometimes overbearing for me as a secular researcher with Sunni heritage, a heritage which did not help at all in my attempts to reach both Sunni and Alevi Turkish migrants from Bulgaria. Strikingly, devoted Sunni Bulgarian Turks were not taking me seriously because of my visibly secular stance, marked by not wearing a hair scarf, a common marker in Bursa. Most of the Bulgarian Turks with Sunni heritage were questioning the point of studying religious sects among Bulgarian Turks since they see "Turkishness" as the prime marker. Alevi Bulgarian Turks were completely invisible.

Generations of migrants have been attracted to the city of Bursa from all over Bulgaria, but Alevi migrants were only a few individual families and not a community of believers organized around a religious leader. Besides, Alevi migrants were successfully hiding their Alevi heritage from not only local Sunnis but also local Alevis. Only Sunni migrants were aware that some migrants are Alevis; but, they were hesitant to introduce me to their Alevi migrant friends. As they put it, they were "cautious not to bring up Alevi-Sunni issues" considering that "[their] Alevi friends may be offended," as if Alevism is something inherently offending. In those days, Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bursa were "hidden people," at least, at that time, to me.

After several attempts through various channels I was still unsuccessful in reaching Alevi migrants in Bursa so I decided to check another setting in order to clarify the problem in Bursa: Was it about my skills as a researcher? Was it because I was not an Alevi? Was it a peculiarity, something unique to Bursa, or was this something characteristic of Alevi migrants in Turkey more generally? I located and went to a village that was five hours away. The village was formed by migrants in the 1930s and attracted later migrants as well. The villagers were from one of the few Alevi-only villages in Bulgaria, and they were practicing Alevis in their re-settlement location too. On my way, having changed two busses, the local minibus driver asked me with a curious and questioning face whether I "really" wanted to go to "that village," implying that I would have little to do at there. I confirmed the exact destination one more time and ignored the implied question. I first noticed a Sunni mosque in the middle of the Alevi village where I met with my Alevi informants. They were very kind, welcoming and supportive, and willing to talk as they are proud migrants who transformed this swamp-like territory into a modern agricultural center.

During an hours-long focus group interview no one ever mentioned or implied their Alevi roots. A few times they mentioned how residents of the neighboring villages resisted the migrants' settlement in the region; yet, anytime I asked them the reasons, they masterfully changed the subject. After maybe 3 hours, I showed them a new book about the villages of Bulgaria populated by Turks, knowing Bulgarian Turkish migrants' buzzing interest in any tiny bit of data on the history of migrations from Bulgaria. As I located their village of origin in the book, they requested I read it out loud. In the 100-line paragraph about the village history, economy, and culture there was one short sentence: "the residents of the village

are Alevis." When I finished reading, a long and deadly silence prevailed until the eldest among the group (who I later learned was a religious leader) broke the silence with the following sentence: "yes, we are Alevis."

This excerpt shows the complexity of the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' other- and self-imposed invisibilities. On the one hand it shows the structurally-imposed invisibilities that affect Alevi migrants as the Turkish state influences their settlement location but does not interfere when local Turkish Sunni villagers reject Alevi newcomers. Nor does the state seek the Alevi villagers' consent when it sponsors construction of a Sunni mosque. Yet it also shows their social exclusion due to hyper-visibility, as the Alevi village still seems to be stigmatized by the surrounding villagers, even the minibus drivers. On the other hand, it shows how invisibility is self-imposed, or at least attempted, by Alevis, who prefer to hide their Alevi identity from an "outsider" – in this case, from me, as a researcher who is neither an Alevi nor a migrant nor even from the region, so that I could be presumed not to know about Alevis in the village.

The later stages of my fieldwork revealed another striking aspect of Alevi Bulgarian Turks' self-imposed invisibilities: The local Alevis in Turkey might continue to enjoy the possibilities that exist for their visibility while Alevi Bulgarian Turkish migrants seem unwilling to utilize these possibilities. Instead, Alevi migrants pursue further invisibility by hiding under the generic blanket term "migrant identity," even though it is marked as Sunni, as seen in the following example:

> One settlement in Bursa is physically and demographically divided between Kurdish internal migrants and Bulgarian Turkish migrants. Both groups have Alevi and Sunnis, but while Kurds are mostly Alevis the Bulgarian Turks are mostly Sunnis. An Alevi organization together with a separate *Cemevi* is located on the Kurdish side. Struggling to make contact with Alevi Bulgarian Turks, I contacted the *Cemevi* in the Kurdish side. I still remember the surprised facial expression of the leader of the *Cemevi* because the first he heard about some of the Bulgarian Turks in the upper neighborhoods being Alevis was from me, since they have never visited the *Cemevi*. Later my Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants

explained the reasons: Some said that they do not attend local *cems* "since those Alevis are Kurds with questionable perceptions of the state," while Bulgarian Turks are those "who had been oppressed in Bulgaria just because they are Turks." Others underline the importance of the ritual and perceptional difference between local Alevis and Bulgarian Turkish Alevis. Thus, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have neither formed their own *cem* communities nor attended the local Alevis' *cemevis*. Instead they pretend to be Sunnis among other Bulgarian Turks, local Turks and Kurdish Alevi migrants.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks control their own visibilities and invisibilities in relation to differing majority-minority configurations and depending on the social setting and actors surrounding them at any given time. This situation also caused differentiated accessibility to the community by me as a researcher. In the isolated settings where Alevi heritage was well-known to both insiders and outsiders, such as villages in Turkish Thrace, Razgrad and Kardjali, Alevi Bulgarian Turks were relatively easy to access. However, in extremely Sunni dominant settings, such as in Bursa, Alevi Bulgarian Turks were "hidden communities," that is, "social groups that are difficult to access for the purpose of social research, where issues regarding access, emotions, power, and the politics of representation were particularly sharply posed" (Ashe, Frazer and Piacentini 2009:3).

1.3   INVISIBILITIES AND THE NOTION OF DISSIMULATION

My thesis examines complicated invisibilities of a marginalized community, specifically, Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey. I argue that their invisibility may be both self-voicing and being silenced; it may be a tactical tool and a structural burden; it may be self-chosen and also imposed by others; and finally their invisibility may be subversive as well as something that can be suppressing, depending on historical, political and social configurations on either side of

the two nation-states' border, depending on varying manifestations in the particular regional and local configurations, and the particular nature of the inter-group relations.

I particularly stress a paradoxical configuration: the community that has become invisible, disempowered and marginalized due to historical, structural, and social factors strives not for achieving visibility but for furthering existing invisibilities, as a form of collective empowerment: their self-imposed invisibility lets them hide their religious identity from "outsiders" or pretend to be members of the majority. In either case, they develop a notion of "outsiders," who are carefully defined and ranked, from the most outside to the relatively less so. This collective practice is referred to in Alevi terminology as "takiye" (and known as dissimulation in general) which forms the main focus of my thesis. This term, of course, has a much wider usage in Islam, which is also part of the story.

The term *takiye* refers to hiding one's religious identity and concealing information about one's religious group from outsiders, in the face of life-threatening contexts and severe discrimination, as is discussed in Sunni and Shia doctrines (see Kohlberg 1975, Sachedina 2010). These doctrines also recognize that dissimulation may require appearing to claim membership to the religious majority group. In the Islamic doctrine, *takiye* does not have negative connotations. On the contrary the notion of *takiye* is grounded in several Quranic verses (for examples, see R. Ibrahim 2010). Also the scholarly literature on Islamic doctrine (e.g. Kohlberg 1975, Sachedina 2010) and Islamic societies such as Iran (Gordon 1979), Afghanistan (Dupree 1979), India (Virani 2011) recognizes that taqiya is not merely acceptable but is a legitimate part of the religion.

Expanding my investigation from this specifically Islamic concept into an anthropological focus on dissimulation has several important advantages. First, some policy-

oriented works reduce "dissimulation" to its negative connotations in the colloquial usage, as faking and deception, and portray dissimulation as inherent to some religious groups, which are thereby "othered" negatively. For instance some works on Iran (e.g. Campbell 2005) and Afghanistan (e.g. Tribal Analysis Center 2010) portray dissimulation negatively and as a characteristically Islamic phenomenon. In contrast, an anthropological study shows that dissimulation is not about inherent qualities of particular religious systems. Historical cases show us that members of *any* religious group may dissimulate. They do so when they become a minority facing a severely oppressive religious majority, such as done historically by the crypto-Christians in Anatolia (Clark 2006), Crypto-Jews and crypto-Sunni Muslims in Inquisition Spain (Root 1988, Ward 2004, Ibrahim 2008, Rosa-Rodrigez 2010) and in post-1978 Iran (Nissimi 2004).

An anthropological analysis of dissimulation tells about more than the theme of religion or specific religions, and it captures a unique manifestation of hostile majority and minority relations. Any religious group may dissimulate and a dissimulating group may lessen its dissimulations in degrees, or even completely terminate them, in accordance with the changing circumstances. Dissimulation is context-dependent. For instance Geaves argues that Alevi migrants terminated their dissimulation against Sunnis following their migrations to Britain, where both Alevis and Sunnis become migrants (2000). My thesis also shows that Alevi Bulgarian Turks ended their protective dissimulations against socialists, who no longer pose a threat against the community.

Second, an anthropological perspective on dissimulation broadens our present knowledge about dissimulating religious minorities, which had been reduced by theologically-oriented approaches to the issue of legitimacy. Such approaches are concerned with dissimulation only in

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terms of to what extent, how and when the dissimulation of some groups is legitimate according to a particular religious doctrine (see Kohlberg 1975, Sachedina 2010). Yet here I argue that the legitimacy of dissimulation comes after the fact for minorities; some minorities dissimulate irrespective of whether it is legitimate doctrinally in their religious system. They do so as a strategy to survive.

Thirdly, I argue that dissimulation is a manifestation of the collective agency of minorities. This agency rests on group members' capacity to determine the form, degree, limits and the timing of their own visibilities and invisibilities. Further, all these factors are conditioned by the relations among varying social actors, specific majority-minority configurations in the larger society and changing macro-political and social configurations. I argue that dissimulation is the last resort for extremely marginalized communities that cannot utilize other collectives tactics such as "dissimilation" (as a minority's emphasis on their separate identity) indicating absolute visibility, or "assimilation" (as a minority's blending within the society at large) indicating absolute invisibility. Finally an anthropological study of dissimulation may broaden our understanding of religiously-marked minorities' situations in extremely divided societies. Historical cases show that dissimulation was utilized by minorities who faced extreme forms of violence such as persecutions, severe discrimination (e.g. Jews and Muslims in Inquisition Spain) or social, political and legal exclusion (e.g. Jews, Sunnis, Christians in contemporary Iran). My case study on Alevi Bulgarian Turks analyzes the dissimulation experiences of a religiously marked minority which had historically faced cycles of persecutions and severe discrimination dating back to Ottoman rule (see Hazerfen 2002, 2004), and still face legal exclusion and societal discrimination due to their religious identity in present-day Bulgaria and Turkey.

In the contemporary world, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' situation may not sound like an "extreme case," or at least not as much as it used to be; yet, they still face severe discrimination. For instance, the only Islam recognized in Bulgaria and Turkey is Sunni Islam, which leads to Alevis' underrepresentation in legal terms. Alevis do not get state support for conducting their religious affairs, for their religious ritual spaces and for their religious leaders while Sunni Islam is institutionalized under muftuluks, Sunni mosques are supported by the state, and Sunni religious leaders are trained, financially supported and appointed by these states. This also means that Alevi sites (such as Alevi saints' tombs) and their religious foundation (waqf) territories are under the control of Sunni authorities. While Alevi Bulgarian Turks have not been under the threat of persecution since 1878, it took as late as 1990s for Alevis to be able to conduct their rituals freely. Moreover, they remain as the targets for social discrimination: almost all of my Alevi informants told me how, at some points in their lives, they faced questions about whether Alevis practice incest and orgies during mixed-gender rituals, from people who were not always aware of my informants' Alevi identities. I was myself asked about "the truth behind" these slanders regarding Alevis during my fieldwork, given that I was a researcher! I was told about doubts about whether someone newly appointed to state service was picked for the job not by his or her merits, but because Alevi identity "which is supported by some party leaders to get their [Alevis] votes," as a Sunni informant put it. Several of my Alevi informants in Bursa mentioned that they need to present themselves as Sunni, such as by carefully placing Sunni markers (such as pictures of the Qabe) into their shops in the migrant settings, since "otherwise nobody would come to shop from [their] store." Furthermore, in July 2012 the Supreme Court of Turkey said that *cemevi*s are not religious structures because the religious structures of Muslims are mosques!

While such events may not sound sufficiently extreme for a groups' members to hide their identities or the components of this identity, we must recall that extremely divided societies may be prone to extreme cases, at least in the eyes of religious minorities. Especially this seems to be the case when these minorities' members still carry collective memories of cycles of historical persecution which were followed by discrimination and again by persecution. The members of such minorities may not be sure whether and when "mere discrimination" may transform into persecution. Therefore, they may continue to utilize precautionary dissimulation even in the absence at present of mass persecutions. Furthermore it is often unclear whether a threat is only perceived, or is real. For instance, in 1990s when Alevi Bulgarian Turks attempted to form an Alevi NGOs in a local setting in Bulgaria, some Turkish politicians in Bulgaria threatened to "burn that NGO" down, which recalls the infamous Sivas event in Turkey in 1993 when 37 Alevi intellectuals were burned alive in a hotel by a Sunni mob during a cultural event associated with Alevism.

My thesis contributes to the literature on dissimulation by analyzing its impact on intergroup distinctions and boundaries. In my case study, I argue that a dissimulating minority publicly claims the majority identity, and therefore it may create the impression that their differences from the rest of the society are overcome. Their public appearance is often interpreted by outsiders as fulfillment of the minority's assimilation into the surrounding society. Yet this public appearance aims to protect not only the minority members, but also the minority group itself and thus the minority's separate identity. Dissimulation helps minorities to reinforce to their own members the inter-group differences; it reflects and fortifies the salience of inter-group distinctions and boundaries in the eyes of minorities even while giving the appearance to outsiders of abandoning them.

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While I state that dissimulation shows the robustness of group identities on the part of minority members, I do not attribute essentialist traits or impose a false homogenization on internally heterogeneous minorities. On the contrary, in this specific case, I emphasize that the specific differences between Alevi and Sunni Muslims are not inherent but have been formed and deeply engrained due to the historical power relations within different Muslim communities. The point is that while differences between Alevis and Sunnis may have been initiated in particular moments in history, they have been solidified through time by inter-group interactions, and even become stronger through classifications that see the Alevis as Heterodox Muslims (if indeed Muslims at all, in some formalist interpretations), and Sunnis as bearers of Orthodox Islam.

Moreover, my thesis recognizes the inherent heterogeneity of Alevis and Sunnis by discussing Alevi Bulgarian Turks' subgroups, (*Bektaşi*, *Babai*, *Derviş* and *Musahipli*), along with these groups' differing religious beliefs, practices, and organizational forms, as due to Alevism's syncretic nature, uncodified character, and extremely localized and unorganized settlement patterns. Yet, I argue that these inherent heterogeneities do not invalidate the ultimate significance of the categorical "Alevi" and "Sunni" identities among Bulgarian Turks. On the contrary, I claim that in divided societies the historical processes that lead to constant inequalities may intensify group identities, often irreversibly, even though actual relations of the members of these communities have had alternating cycles of peaceful and conflictual relations.

My argument is thus that even though each group is internally heterogeneous, immediately after the categorical group identities are formed, named and hierarchically ranked, these group identities stop being only about religious identities and become social identities. In such cases, individuals are attributed to one group or the other irrespective of their religiosity, or

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whether their practices actually deviate from the assigned group's ideal norms. As my fieldwork

shows, a Sunni is a Sunni is a Sunni for an Alevi Bulgarian Turk, even though Alevi Bulgarian

Turks refer to Sunnis as "the others" in Turkey, "Turks" in Razgrad, and "Muslims" in Kardjali.

Furthermore, an Alevi is an Alevi is an Alevi for a Sunni Bulgarian Turk, even though Alevis are

divided into Babai, Bektaşi, Musahipli, and Derviş subgroups. They are also considered Alevis

even though some Alevis are not practicing Alevism or even attend the village mosque for

Friday Sunni prayers, a practice that should be antithetical to being Alevi.

At this point, the following is a valid question: what is the use of a minority's

dissimulation as a majority, if the majority and minority identities remain robust in the eyes of

both groups? Under these circumstances, would it even be possible to expect dissimulation to be

successful? I argue that dissimulation works because it is actually a collaborative performance,

between members of groups that ocntinue to recognize their differences even as they seem to

share practices. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes illustrates this phenomenon:

> In Bursa, in a migrant setting, nearly all of my informants have some idea
> about who is Alevi in the neighborhood. Even though they do not know every
> resident, they know the villages they come from and they can identify the
> Alevi, Sunni and mixed villages. Knowing who is an Alevi in the
> neighborhood or befriending them does not mean acknowledging Alevis. Some
> of my Sunni informants told me that they have migrant friends "from these
> villages with Alevis" and that "they may be Alevis" but then add the following;
> "we have never asked them directly whether they are Alevis or not, in order not
> to offend them," indicating that my Sunni informants think Alevism is
> shameful or a potentially shameful trait of their possibly Alevi migrant friends!
> When who is Alevi or Sunni is clear to members of both communities, an
> Alevi pretending to be a Sunni is not easily accepted as Sunni, neither by
> Sunnis nor by Alevis.

Dissimulation is a mutual performance- that is, dissimulation is a matter of not only why,

when and how some minorities may dissimulate but also how such actions are received. Just as

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the very secrecy of secret societies indicates a concession to larger society (Simmel 1950), Alevis' dissimulation is a concession, although their concession means not giving up, but rather maneuvering pragmatically within the existing social order. This possibility makes dissimulation a viable tactic for Alevis. Furthermore, just as majority groups in society "tolerate" secret societies, Alevis' dissimulations are "tolerated" in the larger society - "tolerate" in the negative sense of not interfering, rather than the positive sense of embracing the Other (see Hayden 2002). The secrecy of such groups serves the interests of the dominant groups by indicating that secret groups are kept under control and "in place" (George 1993). In the case under study, Alevis' secrecy by dissimulation serves the Sunni Bulgarian Turks' interests by signaling that Alevis are under control. Furthermore, by keeping the Alevis under control, Sunni Bulgarian Turks find a way to re-define "Bulgarian Turkish" identity exclusively in Sunni terms. In this regard, the silence of Alevis helps Sunnis to define Sunni identity as the primary identity for Bulgarian Turks.

1.4   FIELD SITES

To examine the complicated invisibilities of Alevi Bulgarian Turks, I decided to study Bulgarian Turks in both sides of the Bulgaria-Turkey border as they form a distinct minority community in Bulgaria and a distinct migrant community in Turkey. In both sides of the border, I examined at least two major areas of concentration of Bulgarian Turks with varying configurations of Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks in relation to majority groups, such as ethnic Bulgarians in Bulgaria and local Turks in Turkey. In Bulgaria, I focused on two sites (Figure 1-1): Razgrad in the Northeast where ethnic Bulgarians slightly outnumber Bulgarian Turks (Figure 1-2), and

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Kardjali in the South, where ethnic Bulgarians are significantly outnumbered by ethnic Turks (Figure 1-3). In both locations, Sunni Turks outnumber Alevis. In Turkey (Figure 1-5), I focused primarily on Bursa, a well-known migrant city that is known for the visible dominance of Sunni Islam (Figure 1-6), but I also studied a number of villages and towns in Turkish-Thrace and a migrant neighborhood in İstanbul and Yalova (Figure 1-7) where I could reach practicing Alevi migrant communities. This turned out to be an advantage in revealing various ways of interplays of migrant Alevis with the local Alevi groups, as well as their interactions with the majority populations surrounding them.
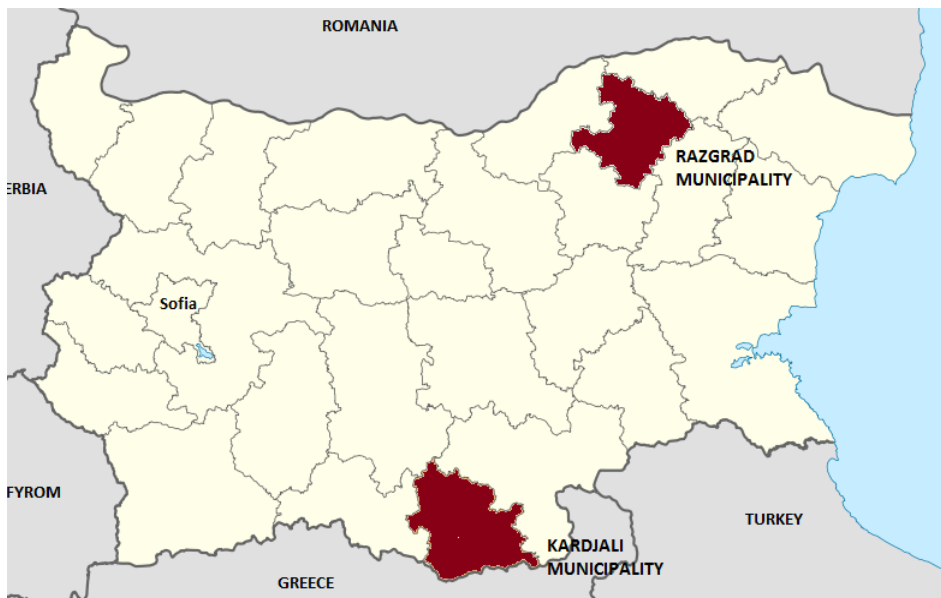
Figure 1-1 Kardjali and Razgrad Municipalities on the Bulgaria map (Modified template from wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bulgaria_Aministrative_Provinces.png)

Figure 1-2 Map of the Razgrad province and its Municipalities (Modified template from wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_Map_Razgrad_Province.png)

Figure 1-3 Kardjali Province and Its Municipalities (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_Map_Razgrad_Province.png)

**Figure 1-4 Field sites in Turkey
(http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dosya:Latrans-Turkey_location_Bursa.svg)**

Figure 1-5 Map of Bursa (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6a/Bursa_districts.png)
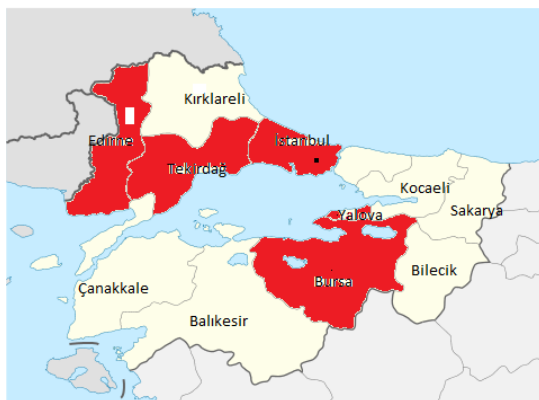
Figure 1-6 Map of Edirne, Tekirdağ, İstanbul and Bursa

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1.5   OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Research on a marginalized community which may utilize collective tactics such as dissimulation raises numerous potential methodological issues, concerns and problems. Therefore, I devote Chapter Two to methodology discussions on epistemology and research ethics, in addition to providing more detailed information about the research locations, specific sites, and informant profiles. I answer two sets of questions: First, how is it possible to gather reliable data about a community when its members are dissimulating? In other words, how did I know my informants were not dissimilating to me, too? Second, if dissimulation is a collective tactic of a marginalized community to cope with structural disadvantages, how might publishing about these tactics influence the community?

In the third chapter, I provide the theoretical framework to explain Alevi Bulgarian Turks' invisibilities, utilizing various literatures. I focus on the literature about ethno-national groups and their boundaries and argue that dissimulation as a collective tactic indicates the robustness of inter-group differences and rigidity of inter-group boundaries. I examine the literature on minority-majority configurations and utilize the notion of "a minority within a minority" to highlight the structurally disadvantaged conditions of Alevis within the Bulgarian Turks, in terms of their access to available resources and power. Yet, I also point out available forms of collective agency and their utilization by Alevis even though their disadvantageous status prevails. Specifically, I examine dissimulation as a collective tactic that causes Alevis to retain the minority identity while pretending to be a part of the majority.

The fourth chapter provides an account of the historical development of Alevi Bulgarian Turks' status in Bulgaria and Turkey to point out their structural invisibilities. I argue that despite their changing macro-political and economic circumstances, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have

remained a double minority since the formation of the Bulgaria-Turkey border in 1878. By examining the archival data and academic literature in both settings, I emphasize the different historical turning points when being an Alevi Bulgarian Turk meant specific opportunities and burdens. In the second part of this chapter, I review the core literature on Bulgarian Turks that has originated from Bulgaria and Turkey and that has operated on conflicting presumptions and competing projections on Bulgarian Turks, while concurrently silencing the Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

In Chapter Five, I examine the norms of being an Alevi, as defined by Alevi Bulgarian Turk religious leaders in Bulgaria and Turkey. These rules include the ideal-typical conditions of being an insider, being an insider banished from the community, and being an outsider. I utilize my interviews with the Alevi Babas who answered the following questions: Who is an Alevi? How does one become Alevi? May a person with Alevi heritage but who does not pledge be considered Alevi? To what extent and when might an Alevi become [or be considered?] Sunnified or assimilated? In this chapter, I show that there are variations in the ideal-type among Alevis, across the confessional groups (*Babai-Bektaşi* etc) and among regional practices (north and south). These variations might occur due to the lack of codification in Alevism and its reliance on oral traditions. For instance, a northern *Babai*'s norms and practices may resemble those of a Northern Bektaşi more than those of a Southern *Babai*. I argue that these religious norms are ideal-types; they are neither implemented exactly nor are they uniform. However, since the term "Alevi" signals not merely a religious identity but also communal identity with secular elements, they continue to claim the Alevi identity, and they recognize themselves and each other as Alevis despite the variations in religious beliefs and practices.

Chapter Six portrays dissimulation as Alevis' hiding their identity from outsiders, and Alevis' acting as if they are members of other groups by consciously exhibiting the other group's practices. The chapter argues that this has helped the Alevi retain identity and community in a hostile society. Considering that Alevi and Sunni group identities are not merely religiously but also socially marked, I focus on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' historical and present dissimulations on both religious and socio-political issues. The Alevi have experienced dissimulations as Sunnis in relation to Sunni Turks, as "converted Muslims" in relation to Bulgarian nationalists, as well as atheists to Turkish and Bulgarian socialists, and as secular (and sect-less), nationalist Turks to Sunni Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Chapter Seven portrays dissimilation as a collective tactic for the minorities who are able to openly emphasize their own distinct identity in their larger society. I consider this emphasis on distinctiveness not as a matter of strictly following the Alevi religious ideal types as defined by babas, but more broadly also forming a publicly visible, collective and distinct Alevi identity that is based on political, social as well as religious distinctions within society. I claim that both dissimilation and dissimulation function to fortify inter-communal boundaries, with the former seeking visibility of the difference and the latter seeking its invisibility. I examine cases of dissimilation in social and political relations that are often spatially marked, in addition to religious dissimilation by Alevi Bulgarian Turks who publicly discuss distinct features of Alevi belief and practices. In the same chapter I also discuss assimilation as a situation when some members of a minority may blend with the larger society while the generic minority identity remains categorically different. In other words, some Alevis may assimilate into Sunnism while the categories of Alevi and Sunni remain intact. An absolute assimilation seems to be a hypothetical condition even in purely religious terms. For instance, some Alevi religious leaders

think of assimilation as Sunnification (i.e. a person with Alevi heritage goes to mosques) while other Alevi Babas think of assimilation as leaving the Alevi ways (i.e. not coming to *cem*, not pledging). The former is treated as individual cases of specific people's misconduct (such as adultery or intermarriage), while the latter is seen as more common, neglect rather than misconduct. Yet, people in both types of cases are still seen as Alevis, due to their heritage. Assimilation in a secular sense is a non-phenomenon too, as long as both Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks share the idea that Aleviness is a condition defined at birth: an Alevi is an Alevi is an Alevi.

2.0 METHODOLOGY: OPEN METHODS FOR RESEARCHING HIDDEN POPULATIONS

Numerous methodological concerns intersect in research on dissimulation. Several psychologists (e.g. Rogers 1997) and security studies experts (e.g. Pope, Jøsang, McAnally 2006) have raised epistemological issues regarding dissimulation when that condition is clearly seen to be threatening, concentrating on how to identify dissimulation of individuals or groups in order to prevent it from happening. Also, sociologists have raised ethical issues regarding groups largely hidden from public view, when members of these groups are unwilling to be studied or pursue unpopular goals (e.g. Blee 2009, Cowley 2009). Studying people who are not willing to be studied violates ethics inquiring consent, which I followed as basic ethnical principle during my research, and not only because I was bound by the University of Pittsburgh's IRB to do so. Some earlier scholars seem to have followed a different ethics. For instance, sociologist Roger Homan confesses to utilizing "covert research methods" for his research among "old time Pentacostals" as groups unwilling to be studied, which he justifies on the grounds that "covert methods are in some cases favorable to and in the interests of subjects" (1980: 46). This research as conducted before IRB reviews were required, yet even Homan recognizes the detrimental effects of such methods on the researcher's personality during and after the fieldwork. Ethical issues concerning researcher and group relations are magnified when a researcher's political dispositions are opposed to those of the group (e.g. Socialists in Poland in Stoczowski 2008) or the group's moral

dispositions are disturbing to the researcher (e.g. female racists in the USA, in Blee 2009). Also

several ethical concerns may arise after research, such as whether to publish the findings if it is

possible that negative effects on vulnerable groups or society could arise. In this chapter, besides

detailed information about the design of my fieldwork, I will discuss the intricate

epistemological and ethical concerns which have marked my dissertation research on Alevi

Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey.

2.1   AN EMPIRICAL QUESTION: "HOW DO YOU KNOW YOUR INFORMANTS HAVE NOT DISSIMULATED TO YOU?"

"How did you know your informants had not dissimulated to you?" was the first question

addressed to me by a friend, after hours of talking about my fieldwork. The question is germane;

it nails the central paradox of the research regarding its empirical accuracy. I examine a

structurally invisible community whose segments could and have been able to dissimulate, and

they could have dissimulated to me during my fieldwork.

Concern about the accuracy of the data seems to be inherent in ethnographic methods

relying particularly on interviews. "There is nothing self-evident about why anyone would bother

talking to the would-be ethnographer —assuming they do— except perhaps for polite

platitudes," as Metcalf states (2002). As a would-be ethnographer, I faced empirical problems

like those of any other PhD student conducting fieldwork in a new surrounding: I encountered

problems in meeting Alevis in some settings where I had anticipated easier access (e.g. in Bursa,

assuming I would have easier access since I am a citizen of Turkey), while I did not face any

problems in places where I had anticipated difficulties before the research (i.e. Razgrad, due to

strong Alevi identity that might prevent access of a Sunni researcher). I was excluded from certain public rituals by not being told about them despite my manifest interest, such as several public ceremonies at the *türbe*s in Kardjali. Yet, I had been invited to strictly in-group rituals even though my outsider status was well-known, such as village *cem*s where non-Alevis or uninitiated Alevis are not allowed to participate. The moments I felt like an ultimate outsider were followed by the moments when the insider-outsider boundary became irrelevant. Often I found myself questioned and even challenged by informants as I was trying to find answers for my questions.

As a would-be ethnographer alone among many members of the group I was researching, I also had problems studying what may be called their tactical use of invisibility. I was forced into a constant state of alertness about my informants' re-calibration of their visibilities, and I needed to adjust my own visibility so that they would feel comfortable participating in interviews. I still cannot claim with certainty that my informants have never dissimulated to me; yet, I can claim that through my relatively long-term stay in multiple settings and interviews with Alevis and Sunnis from different backgrounds, I managed to identify certain patterns, shared perceptions, and practices, as well as divergences in the narratives and practices among my Alevi informants coming from different backgrounds and located at different settings. Also, I had a chance to better recognize the inconsistencies and discrepancies as well as the silenced parts in the narratives and practices.

By stating that my informants might have dissimulated to me I recognize the possibility that my Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants might hide certain components of Alevi belief and practices (such as the "Alevi secret") especially given my outsider status as a researcher with Sunni heritage. I do not mean that some Bulgarian Turkish informants hid their Alevi identity from me.

As a matter of fact, if some Bulgarian Turks hide their Alevi identity from me, I could not know then and I still do not know. All of my informants were self-identified Alevi or Sunni BulgarianTurks. To access my Alevi informants I utilized the snowball technique. I started by contacting people whose Alevi identity is publicly known, such as Alevi NGO members and residents of well-known Alevi villages and neighborhoods in Bulgaria. Then I asked them to put me in contact with Alevis in the Bulgarian city centers and with Alevis who migrated to Turkey. For instance, at the beginning of my fieldwork, when I was in Bursa, I could reach only a few Alevis who explicitly mentioned their Alevi identity to me. Following my fieldwork in Bulgaria I contacted much more easily Alevi migrants in Turkish Thrace and İstanbul, where they do not hide their Alevi identity. In the rest of this section, I elaborate on issues such as access, rapport, and my subject position as well as addressing sensitive issues during interviews.

2.1.1 Access hinting Alevis' visibilities and invisibilities

My fieldwork evolved as I faced problems accessing some Alevi groups and trying to identify, diagnose and find solutions for these problems. I often questioned to what extent, how and when my access to certain groups of Alevis became an issue. I constantly reflected on what these problems implied for the findings of the research: i.e. what does it mean if a particular Alevi community is inaccessible to a researcher and specifically to me?

During my fieldwork I realized that my patterns of access to different Alevi communities have often correlated with Alevis' general patterns of visibilities and invisibilities. Alevi Bulgarian Turks were more difficult to access compared to Sunni ones, due to the historical structural conditions forming Alevis as a minority within a minority, as I elaborate in Chapter Three. More importantly, some Alevi Bulgarian Turks were easier to access compared to others,

despite the common structural burdens they have been exposed to inside the borders of both Bulgaria and Turkey. Despite the fact that all of these groups are double minorities, different Alevi Bulgarian Turkish groups were utilizing varying tactics to handle this situation, and they have relied on differentiated degrees and forms of visibilities and invisibilities in particular settings.

Specifically in Turkey, I had difficulties in accessing Alevi migrants in Bursa. They were few in number, mainly individual migrants, and they did not have religious leaders as they had not approached local Alevis. More significantly, as I found out after my interviews with a few Alevi migrants in Bursa, my original access problem hints at a steady assimilation (if not dissimulation) among Alevis in Bursa in the strictly Sunni environment of Bursa. On the other hand, in Turkish Thrace and İstanbul, access to Alevi migrants was not a concern at all; they were migrant groups forming communities with religious leaders, and they had connections with the local Alevi organizations. As I figured out, my relatively easier access suggested that Alevi migrants manifest sporadic cases of dissimulation in the historically multi-ethnic context of Thrace and İstanbul.

Similarly, in Razgrad, Bulgaria, Alevis were easy to access; they had been actively pursuing an identity distinct from the rest of society. Also, they had formed an influential third group, as ethnic Bulgarians and Sunni Turks were in competition for power on the local level. Therefore, Alevis were able to *dissimilate*. Finally, in Kardjali, my access to Alevis had complications: even though Alevi villages were well-known, these Alevis hide their identity in public, emphasizing their Turkishness and trying to attach Alevi identity to a generic Bulgarian Turkish identity. This seems to hint at Alevi's *dissimulation* in secularized terms in Kardjali, as a known and powerful center of ethnic Turkish nationalism.

2.1.2   A complicated situation of rapport: "Interview as a form of *İbadet* (worshipping)"

"Rapport" is generally understood as a desirable emotional connection, similar to friendship, between the researcher and participants (see Harrington 2003). The concept has been criticized for legitimizing anthropologists' attempts to form an "instrumental relationship" with participants with "the predesigned purposes of the…inquiry in mind" and the recommendation made that it should be abandoned (Marcus 2001). My fieldwork experience shows that such straightforward notions of rapport do not work for studying hidden communities. Even so, for studying such communities, the notion of rapport provides almost the only empirical and ethnical ground on which to conduct research.

During my fieldwork, I met with Alevi religious leaders who were particularly frustrated by "scientific" works on the community, which they see as studies with hidden agendas. These leaders felt people who study the Alevi have various political and religious orientations and intend to harm the community. Specifically, they often reminded me that in the 1930s Bulgarian nationalists were involved in research in order to "prove" that Alevis were forced converts from Christianity to Islam under Ottoman rule. This story reemerged among Bulgarians, Sunni Turks and even Alevi Turks in the 1980s. Some also mentioned post-1989 visits paid by Sunni scholars from Turkey who were conducting research to list points in common between Alevi and Sunni Islam, in order "to create sympathy for Sunni Islam and inject Sunnism among Alevis in Bulgaria" as several of my informants stated.

In this regard, being a researcher was neither a source of legitimacy nor rapport, but rather caused doubts among my informants. It is the orientation and intentions of a researcher that matter; therefore, I often faced questions that tested my perspective on "Alevi issues." Aware of this, I often emphasized that the general framework of my research was how Alevi

Bulgarian Turks were a minority within a minority in Bulgaria and Turkey. My research was being done in order to understand how Alevis have dealt with this situation on the everyday level. I often emphasized that my research interest derives not from my identification with Alevis —despite my deep respect— but from my primarily intellectual concern with social, political and economic inequalities (cf. Springwood and King 2001).

Most of my informants valued the transparency of my intentions; they could have been more skeptical and seem my efforts as useless intellectualism or pure utilitarianism in order to receive a PhD. This reaction was not surprising given that Alevi Bulgarian Turks still have a tradition of thinking, interpreting and talking about religious texts, comments, and practices during *cem*s, as I also noticed as a participant observer. As a graduate student I had read widely and reflected extensively on the literature about the problems of ethnographic representation and truth claims by ethnographers. However, one finding struck me during my interviews: my Alevi informants treasure the notion of the truth and perceive any good intentioned attempt to seek the truth as a sacred act. For instance, several informants ended our interviews by reminding me of Ali's statement that seeking the Truth is *ibadet* [worshipping.] They added that they saw the interviews as a form of *ibadet*."

2.1.3   Not really a Native Ethnographer: "I am a Zahiri, not a Yezid"

Some scholars promote the role of "native ethnographer" and thereby complicate the researcher-informant hierarchy (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Others criticize the inherently positive qualities attributed to the "native ethnographer" in the supposed ability to figure out the local configurations better than outsiders (Narayan 1993), and still others analyze situations of complicated insider-outsider boundaries for the "native ethnographers" (Sherif 2001). During my

fieldwork, I have never seen myself as a "native ethnographer," given that I was neither a migrant nor an Alevi. Besides, my focus on the Alevi Bulgarian Turks was only coming from my intellectual interests with marginalized minorities, even though I had some distant heritage connection to Bulgarian Turks owing to my paternal grandmother who was originated from Suhindol, Bulgaria and who had illegally crossed from Bulgaria into Turkey when she was 5, in 1939. Before my research, I had never been to Bulgaria or for that matter to Bursa in Turkey, and while I grew up in Turkish Thrace cities, I had never heard of Alevi migrants in the villages. The only aspect that could be considered as native was my native language, Turkish.

It was unsettling for me, as a person who happily embraced a secular worldview, that people constantly asked the religious sect I belong to immediately after I introduced myself and my research: "Ok, but, you first tell me, are you an Alevi or Sunni?" I had never experienced that before. The concern with heritage is important for Bulgarian Turks, who claimed to trace their roots back seven generations. These genealogical claims were not necessarily true, given the perplexing historical population movements that have occurred, but the concern indicates an anxiety among the Bulgarian Turks with ethnic mixing with the other groups and a manifest intention of unmixing with those who are not Turkish. Furthermore, heritage is a gatekeeper among Alevi Bulgarian Turks; ideally an Alevi is one whose parents are Alevis (and then he or she is expected to take the Oath), as different from a Sunni whose parents are Sunnis. Therefore, it was no surprise that my heritage became a concern for many informants.

When someone asked me whether I was Sunni or Alevi, I immediately responded that I was from Sunni heritage. At times when my informants asked the question differently, for example asking which sect I belong to, I stated that "*Zahiriyim ama Yezid degilim*" which literally means "I am an Outsider but I am not Yezid." This statement indicates two perceptions

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of Sunnis by Alevis: "Zahiri" is a relatively value-free reference to those who are not Alevi, while Yezid is the name of the Umayyad Caliph who murdered Ali's son, Huseyin, in Karbala by surrounding him and his community in a desert and leaving them without water. His name has become a symbol referring to Sunnis known for cruelty against Alevis; many Alevi mystical poems use the word "Yezid" to refer to not merely the historical person but also to Sunnis discriminating against Alevis.

Unsurprisingly, my Sunni heritage brought limitations to the research. I noticed at the very beginning of my fieldwork that I was denied access to several important Alevi ceremonies. Only in the later stages of my research was I accepted at *cem* ceremonies, with the requirement not to record them and assurance I would leave at the parts of the ceremony that are only open to Alevis of Alevi heritage who had taken the Alevi Oath, i.e. the part when the religious leader states: "May all Zahiris leave." However, the effect of my heritage on the interviews was relatively minor: none of my Alevi informants denied me an interview. Several times, I was initially granted 15 minutes for an interview when I revealed my heritage, though the interviews lasted about 3 hours in the end. A few times, my Alevi religious leader informants showed their disappointment when they heard I was of Sunni heritage yet they kindly accepted the interview. After a relatively long interview, I was often sent off with good wishes and prayers.

2.1.4   Red Flags: The Secret, Slanders and Other Taboo Issues

Many Alevi informants anticipated taboo subjects to come up during the interviews because they have constantly received questions about them by their curious Sunni friends. I deliberately ignored these subjects if they were irrelevant to my research. For instance, my informants were used to receiving questions about alleged Alevis practices, such as structured adultery between

fictive kin, orgy rituals, and forcing newcomers to burn pages of the Quran, or spitting into Sunni guests' food etc. I rejected asking any questions about such matters so that my informants would not be in any doubt that I do not take these accounts seriously, which are in fact untruthful and deliberately malevolent accusations that stigmatize Alevis. Sometimes, however, my informants brought up these issues themselves.

More importantly, another question informants expected me to ask was about a particular Alevi belief: what is "the secret" that Alevis always mention but do not explain? I did not ask any questions about the secret, knowing the value of this notion for Alevis who are under an oath that they commit to in their formal entrance ceremony to the Alevi path, stating that "unveiling of the secret may lead to death." On the contrary, I stated that what "the secret" is to them, should remain a secret to me too; since I am an outsider and it is what makes them Alevi.

For a thesis on dissimulation, leaving the notion of the secret unquestioned may sound like a research fallacy. Yet, this did not prevent me from getting some sense about the notion of "the secret," in line with Kenneth George's statement on the notion of secrecy among Sulawesi:

> the problem… is not simply one of whether an ethnographer finds out about, introduces upon, or is let it on things secret or hidden. Rather the real problem, the real secret, begins with knowing what kinds of knowledge and what kinds of relationships are culturally (and historically) constructed, recognized, and read as "secret" (George1993: 231)

During my fieldwork, I found myself exploring the borders of "what is seen as secret" as I started noticing the point where an informant would stop discussing some belief or practice, and explain his or her silence in terms of "the secret." Interestingly, soon I noticed that the borders of what counts as secret seems to vary across different *cem* communities, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Six.

Finally, the term dissimulation (*takiye*) is not a taboo word among Alevis even though it has been used historically by some Sunni leaders to portray Alevis as hypocritical. During my interviews, I refrained from using the term and waited until my informants used it, given that I was known to be a Sunni and I did not want to be seen as being judgmental about Alevis' dissimulation. In many cases, the term was not used by either my informants or me; but my informants' answers still provided sets of cases and examples about dissimulation as well as dissimilation and assimilation, especially in regards to my questions about Alevis' historical and current survival strategies in Bulgaria and Turkey. Predictably, the historical cases have been relatively easier to discuss for many informants, such as dissimulations during socialism in Bulgaria. I had a chance, however, to witness and ask questions about current cases, such as the reaction of Alevi Turks in Bulgaria to the Müftülük Crisis in Bulgaria in 2010, when elected müftüs had been removed from their office due to a High Court ruling, and were replaced by appointed müftüs from the socialist period.

Overall, I deliberately avoided taboo subjects, and engaged with analytical questions on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' differences and similarities in belief and practices, their historical and current situation vis-à-vis other groups in Bulgaria and Turkey, and their ways to deal with these situations. Many informants were noticeably relieved and felt confident in talking without fear of disclosing what should be kept hidden.

2.1.5 Gender and Research

The Alevi Bulgarian Turkish community is marked by the relative equality of the status of males and females, compared to other religious groups found among Turkic speakers. Their religious rituals require the participation of both males and females. Females have been actively involved

in the social and political life in their communities. Alevi women have utilized opportunities for education. For instance, Alevi sides of the mixed villages had several Alevi females who had attended boarding schools and become teachers in Turkish Teacher schools in 1950s when socialists opened for schools for training Turkish teachers. In contrast, I have not met even one female teacher from this period on the Sunni side of the mixed villages. I was not faced with any problems as a female researcher during my fieldwork among Alevis, owing to the well-established egalitarian worldview among Alevi males and females.

On the other hand, all Alevi religious leaders are males as a rule. Alevi females are not allowed to become religious leaders (*baba*), though they may hold other religious positions in ritual settings. This situation influenced my research design, since all of my Alevi female and male informants politely directed me to their religious leaders by stating that the religious leaders are the only ones who should reveal information about Alevism. For this reason, my data on the religious issues is based on my interviews with Alevi leaders. Yet, I also conducted interviews with Alevi males who did not hold religious leader positions, and with Alevi females on issues such as everyday interactions between Alevis and non-Alevis.

2.2   AN ETHICAL QUESTION: "IF DISSIMULATION IS A SURVIVAL TACTIC FOR ALEVIS, HOW MIGHT PUBLISHING ABOUT THESE TACTICS INFLUENCE THE COMMUNITY?"

At a first glance, publishing research on a marginalized group tactically seeking invisibility may look ethically risky, because, such publication might lead to undesired visibility for the group. In particular, revealing their tactics for navigating structural burdens may put a researcher into a

dilemma, as the group has faced systematic discrimination and even persecution throughout history. Thus I took several recent developments into account before I started writing my thesis on Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

First, in the last 20 years Alevis in both Bulgaria and Turkey have chosen to become more and more visible. During my fieldwork, while a number of religious leaders were hesitant to make comments about their religious beliefs and practices on the grounds that they need to protect "the secret," many other religious leaders stressed that this notion of secrecy was originally intended to avoid persecution but has actually caused further stigmatization of the community. I was told that because Alevis did not talk about themselves, outsiders with dubious intentions have talked on their behalf. It was this latter group of religious leaders who had invited me to their religious ceremonies despite my being an outsider (*zahiri*), and I took these invitations as expressions of my informants' intention to talk on their own behalf. I often checked my interpretations of particular practices with my informants in these *cem*s. In this regard, my fieldwork data comes from my interviews and participant observations with Alevi Bulgarian Turks who were not merely content with my presence among them but also aware that the research findings will be published.

Second, the Alevi revival had already started in Europe with the formation of Alevi organizations by migrants from Turkey, and later this revival was carried to Turkey (Özyürek 2009). Alevi Bulgarian Turks have been affected inevitably by these processes beyond their control. As a response to these developments, since the early 2000s, Alevi Turks in Bulgaria have formed their own regional organizations. Since the 1990s another related development has been the increase in publications not merely focusing on Alevi social and political identity but also on Alevi beliefs and ritual. In addition to academics and researchers, well-respected Alevi

religious leaders have published detailed guidelines for the rules of conduct (*erkan*) for almost all Alevi rituals, such as a seven-volume set of Alevi guidelines by Bedri Noyan (1998). Furthermore, Alevi rituals literally gained visibility as they were broadcasted on Cem TV, a TV station established by one segment of Turkish Alevis in Turkey in 2005, and Alevis in Bulgaria have had widespread interest in watching Cem TV. During my fieldwork, I noticed that even the most conservative Alevi Bulgarian Turks are influenced by publications and TV programs from Turkey. During the interviews, they often emphasized the differences in the ritual order in Alevism in Bulgaria compared with those in Turkey, as shown on TV, while recognizing that the main ritual structure is the same. They recognized the utility of TV shows in showing outsiders that the slanderous misunderstandings about Alevis are wrong; yet they were skeptical about the extent to which outsiders really understand the deeper meaning in these rituals, as outsiders are presumed to be spiritually immature.

Third, dissimulation seems to be less needed as a tactic for Alevi Turks in Bulgaria at present. They have gained not only organizational and social visibility but also political visibility by holding significant political positions at the local and national levels. Alevis in both Razgrad and Kardjali had demanded representation in parliament and gained this from the Turkish party in the 2000s. Every year since 1990, the Turkish Party (The Movement of Rights and Freedoms) has organized commemoration ceremonies for the martyrs during the 1985-1989 forced name change process at a significant Alevi site, the Demir Baba Tekke, in Razgrad. Also, in September 2011 a very important tekke, the Elmali Baba Tekke in Kardjali, was opened following restoration, with the contribution of the Turkish party and both Sunni and Alevi authorities.

Lastly, I made myself visible as a researcher while among segments of Alevi Bulgarian Turks. Often I started by introducing myself as a graduate student, explaining my research topic

and how I reached the particular informant. I asked my informants for informed consent before the every interview I made. Often I brought a notebook with me to take notes during the interview and I asked their permission. I explained that the data would not be kept in a form where their identity may be revealed even in my notebooks, and that I preferred note-taking over tape-recording as a double measure to protect their anonymity. After getting their permission, I made certain that my informants could not only see that I was taking notes but invited them to check the notes that I took during the particular interview. Also, when they asked me to see the notes from other interviews, I declined on the grounds of protecting my informants' anonymity. Often my informants knew the identity of only one informant, the one who directed me to them; I did not reveal the identity of people I interviewed, unless they recommended I talk to someone whom I already interviewed.

In addition, while conducting participant observation, I attended public events with a camera, a notebook and a tape recorder, and I made myself visible to the people participating in the events, as a researcher. In private events, I asked for consent from the religious leaders and I guaranteed them I would leave the settingduring the parts of the ritual where they thought I should leave. I assured them I would not take notes or record the ceremony. As the *cem* communities are small and made up of people who know each other well, I was often introduced to the community by the leader of the ceremony.

During the ceremonies, I often found myself having to make a decision of whether just to go with the flow like any other participant, or of acting like a distant observer, given that I am not an Alevi and I am a researcher. Relying on people being aware of my identity as a non-Alevi researcher as announced by the community leader at the beginning of the ceremony, I often decided to go with the flow so as not to disturb or interrupt the ritual order. In addition, my

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presence was justified in advance because I had already answered questions about myself and my research. Often I picked a spot that would indicate my position at the end of the religious hierarchy, as the ceremony is highly spatialized and structured. Most of the time I stood at the end of the place devoted to the people who are more recently accepted to the community: i.e. the place most distant from the religious leaders, and among females, if there was a gender-segregated sitting plan. Often an elderly female approached me during the *cem* ceremony to show me the particular postures and practices. She would say "do like I do" and she corrected me and explained the particular gesture or action.

2.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

I conducted my dissertation fieldwork on a variety of segments of Bulgarian Turks, who were internally divided in terms of religious affiliations as Alevis and Sunnis, and regional affiliations, from Northeastern or Southern Bulgaria. Following the mass migrations, Bulgarian Turks were also divided along lines of citizenship (Bulgarian, Turkish or dual citizens) and residential status, as residents of Bulgaria or Turkey. As my fieldwork proceeded, I noticed Alevis' complicated invisibility patterns, and adapted my research design to focus more on Alevis.

The dissertation is based on my ethnographic fieldwork between June 2009 and December 2010 in Bulgaria and Turkey. I also conducted preliminary research during the summer of 2008 in Bulgaria. For my preliminary fieldwork, I visited Alevi and Sunni religious sites in 14 Bulgarian provinces, which helped me determine the dissertation fieldwork sites. For my dissertation research, I conducted 8 months of fieldwork in Bursa (Turkey), a 3.5-month period of fieldwork in Razgrad (Bulgaria), and a 4-month period of fieldwork in Kardjali

(Bulgaria). Later, I conducted one month of fieldwork in several Alevi migrant settlements in Turkish Thrace (Edirne and Çorlu), Yalova and İstanbul for better assessment of the situations of Alevi migrants in Turkey. Besides ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted one month of archival research in Sofia, Bulgaria in October 2008, and one month of archival research in Ankara, Turkey in November 2010.

2.3.1 Research Sites

My dissertation builds on a "multi-sited" fieldwork approach (Marcus 1989), an in-depth examination of several carefully selected sites, a selection made by focusing on the residents' symbolic, social, political, economic and spiritual connections, currently and in terms of their history.

I determined the major research sites based on the following grounds: In Bulgaria, Kardjali and Razgrad are the provinces with the largest concentration of Turks even after the waves of mass migrations to Turkey after 1878. Also, these provinces became the Turkish minority's cultural, religious and political centers, especially after Bulgaria's independence. Importantly, these provinces also have the largest concentration of Alevis from different subgroups, namely *Bektaşi*, *Babai* and *Derviş* in Razgrad, and *Bektaşi*, *Babai* and *Musahipli* in Kardjali.

I conducted fieldwork in both provinces instead of in only one since each province represents different but comparable majority-minority configurations in historical, social, political and demographic terms. **Razgrad** province is a microcosm of broader Bulgaria; the national (ethnic Bulgarian) majority also forms the demographic local majority and holds administrative control locally, while Turks form a minority. However, **Kardjali** province shows

the opposite configuration: the national minority (Turks) is the demographic local majority and the group holding administrative control in the local provincial government. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, these differences have led to two different senses of minority among Turks. While Alevi Bulgarian Turks constitute a double minority in both provinces, in each they have utilized different tactics in relating to local majorities.

Each of these provinces has seven municipalities. However, considering the changing demographic patterns in each municipality and the limited time period I had, I focused on Razgrad and Kardjali central municipalities as well as two other municipalities in each province.

In <u>Razgrad central municipality</u>, I contacted religious institutions, such as the Razgrad Regional *Müftülük* as the institution representing Sunnis, and the Razgrad Cem Association as the organization representing Alevis. In addition, I contacted religiously unmarked institutions and organizations commonly associated with Bulgarian Turks, such as Nazim Hikmet State Theater and the Deliorman Author's Association. Furthermore, I focused on Isperih and Kubrat municipalities, as the former is a Sunni-Turk dominant setting while the latter is a mixed Alevi-Sunni-Bulgarian setting. In Isperih, I made daily visits to 5 Turkish villages (with few if any Bulgarians) where I conducted in-depth individual and focus group interviews at their *citalishte* (state-run Community Centers in villages and towns) and mosques. In Kubrat, I focused on Alevi-Sunni mixed villages with varying configurations, such as one (*Babai*) Alevi-only village, one (*Babai* and *Bektaşi*) Alevi, Sunni and Roma mixed village, and one (*Bektaşi*) Alevi, Sunni, Christian-mixed village. In these villages, on the Sunni side, I interviewed the imams and parishioners of mosques. On the Alevi side, I interviewed religious leaders of the different sub-sects as well as Alevis gathering in the Pensioners' Clubs of these villages.

In Kardjali city center, I contacted religious institutions, namely the Kardjali Regional *Müftülük* and Krumovgrad Regional *Müftülük* as representatives of Sunnis. I also contacted the South Bulgaria *Cem* Association with Kardjali and Haskovo branches as the representative of regional Alevis. I approached organizations commonly associated with the minority, such as Kadriye Latifova State Theater, the Istikbal Association, the ALEV journal, and the Omer Lutfu Culture Association. Furthermore, I focused particularly on the villages and centers in three municipalities due to their particular Alevi-Sunni configurations. In Kardjali municipality, I conducted interviews at a *Bektaşi* Alevi-Sunni village, four *Babai* Alevi-Sunni villages, a *Babai* and *Bektaşi* Alevi-Sunni village, and a *Bektaşi*-only Alevi village. The Alevis in this area are mostly *Babais* and these territories are called "Otman Baba Soil," indicating the spiritual connection to the Otman Baba *Tekke* in Haskovo. In Momchilgrad municipality, I conducted interviews at the center as well as a *Bektaşi*-only Alevi village, and a *Bektaşi*-Alevi-Sunni mixed village. Alevis here are *Bektaşi*s and the area is known as "*Elmali Baba* Soil" due to the presence of the *Elmali* Baba *Tekke*. I conducted interviews in the Krumovgrad Municipality Center by contacting the Krumovgrad's Sunni institutional center. Also, I accessed the Musahipli-Alevi communities who are spiritually tied to Kızıldeli Sultan Tekke in Dimetoka. The area is called "Sultanyeri."

In Turkey, Bursa was my primary research site as the main city of arrival for generations of Bulgarian Turkish migrants from Kardjali and Razgrad. I contacted the following migrant organizations: BAL-GÖÇ Merkez, Osmangazi, Kestel, Karacabey, GÖÇ-TÜRK, Rodop-Tuna Association, Tuna Boylular Deliormanlılar Association, Kuzey Bulgaristan Kültür Associations, Kosukavaklılar Association, 93 War Migrants' Association, Cebelliler Associations, and Mestanlılar Association.

My primary research sites were migrant neighborhoods. Some were originally migrant-only neighborhoods built during 1950-1 which later attracted locals and migrants from other places (i.e. Hurriyet, Adalet, and İstiklal *Mahalle*s). Some were mixed neighborhoods with migrants from 1968-78 (i.e. Bahar, Kemerçeşme, Mehmet Akif, Yeşilyayla, Davutkadı, and Beşevler) while others were migrant-only areas where migrants from 1989 lived (i.e. Kestel, Gorükle). Also, I made daily visits to 5 villages made up of descendants from the migrants of 1878.

In terms of original location, 1878 and 1968-78 migrants were spatially segregated into Razgrad migrants' neighborhoods (e.g. Bahar, Kemerçeşme) and Kardjali migrants' neighborhoods (e.g. Mehmet Akif, Yeşilyayla, Davutkadı, Millet, Vatan). Yet, 1950-1 and 1989 migrants' neighborhoods do not display spatial segregation in terms of where they migrated from, i.e. Northeastern Bulgaria or Southern Bulgaria.

In regard to religious affiliations, the majority of my informants were Sunni Bulgarian Turks. I noticed that Alevi migrants in Bursa were almost unreachable, since they did not migrate as groups but as families. They did not form a separate religious community and they did not approach local Turkish and Kurdish Alevis. This finding was confirmed by Alevis in Bulgaria in later parts of my fieldwork. In Bursa, the few Alevi migrants were hiding themselves from society, as revealed during my interviews with Alevi migrants in Bursa. Seeing Bursa as one pattern, I decided to search for other patterns of Alevi migrants in Turkey and extended the research to a few sites in Turkish Thrace and İstanbul.

Other sites Turkish Thrace, Yalova and İstanbul: I made visits to the religious leaders who themselves were migrant Alevi Bulgarian Turks following the *Babai*, *Bektaşi*, and *Musahipli* paths from Razgrad and Kardjali. The settings they migrated to were one (*Babai*)

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Alevi-only village, one (*Babai-Bektaşi*) Alevi-Sunni village, and two Alevi-Sunni mixed cities in Turkish Thrace. In addition to these rural settings, I wanted to see an urban setting, so I visited one neighborhood in İstanbul where there are Sunni Bulgarian Turks, local Turkish and Kurdish Alevis and (*Bektaşi*, *Babai*, and *Musahipli*) Alevi Bulgarian Turks from both Razgrad and Kardjali.

2.3.2 Interviews and Informant Profiles

During my fieldwork I conducted semi-structured, unstructured and focus group interviews with both Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks to get a holistic picture of inter-group relations. In Razgrad I made 62 individual, semi-structured and unstructured interviews as well as 8 focus group interviews. In Kardjali, I conducted 38 interviews. In Turkey, I interviewed 99 individuals in Bursa, and 10 individuals in Turkish Thrace and a neighborhood in İstanbul.

In Bulgaria, my informants were primarily past and current religious leaders of the Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks in the city, towns and villages as well as the beneficiaries of the religious services in mosques or *Cemevi*s. I also interviewed Alevis and Sunnis holding secular social, political and economic positions in society, such as Sunni and Alevi local administrators in the city, towns and villages; Turkish teachers who had attended Razgrad or Kardjali Turkish Pedagogy Schools (the pedagogy high schools that were open during 1952-1957); Turkish amateur authors and poets who wrote histories of their villages or of their family; Alevi and Sunni Turks who were involved in high level positions during the socialist regime as members of the Bulgarian Communist Party as administrators, journalists, artists, poets, as well as Alevi and Sunni Turks who refused to be Party members and were forced into blue-collar jobs despite their white-collar job training.

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In Turkey, I interviewed migrants in Bursa in accordance with their regional affiliations, their migration experience, citizenship status and religious affiliations. My informants' distribution according to their regional orientations is as follows: 54 from Kardjali, 26 from Razgrad, 3 from Ruse, 9 from Shumen, 1 from Tirnavo, 1 from Kircim, 1 from Burgas, 1 from Slistre, 1 from Haskovo, and 2 from Plovdiv. Also, I conducted several focus group interviews in the mountain villages where descendants of 1878 migrants from Razgrad and Ruse reside, and in a village in Yalova.

My informants are divided into the following groups according to their migration experience: 8 migrants from 1950-1, 10 migrants from 1968-72, 16 from the 1977-8 migration, 52 from the 1989 migration, 5 migrants after the1990s, and the residents of 5 villages were descendants of 1878 war migrants. In terms of citizenship status, only 2 hold only Bulgarian citizenship and stay in Turkey with residential permits; 52 were dual citizens (all of them were 1989 migrants) and the rest of the informants were only Turkish citizens. 2 1989 migrants had the right to apply for dual citizenship but declined to do so, while 1 1978 migrant had not had the right to apply for but somehow still became a dual citizen.

My informants are divided into the following groups regarding their religious affiliations: Among all informants in Bursa, only 5 informants were self-defined Alevis by heritage, while I conducted a focus group interview in a (*Babai*) Alevi-only village in a town between Bursa and İstanbul where all 6 informants were actively following the Alevi path. In these sites, I conducted interviews with 10 Alevi Bulgarian Turk migrants, and religious leaders from *Babai*, Bektaş*Bektaşi* and *Musahipli* sub-groups.

2.3.3 Participant Observation, Venues and Events

I conducted participant observation in several venues to understand the relations between the Bulgarian majority and Turkish minority as well as relations between Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks.

On majority-minority relations, I did participant observation at the official public ceremonies organized by the majority, such as in Razgrad the *Treti Mart* ceremony on March 3, celebrating Bulgaria's independence from Ottoman rule, and in Kardjali the Unification Day of Bulgaria on September 6, marking the unification of Northern and Southern Bulgaria. Both ceremonies had Turks taking part. In the first one there were a few attendants and in the second one the Turks were the local administrators. Also, I attended public ceremonies organized by the minority, such as in Razgrad attending the premier of a Turkish play at the Nazim Hikmet Theater in February. In Kardjali I attended preparations for a Turkish play at the Kadriye Latifova State Theater in September. I attended two events: a performance by the Razgrad Nazim Hikmet State Theater when I was in Kardjali and a trip I took with the Kardjali Municipality's folk songs band to Razgrad, both of which exemplify the connections between Razgrad and Kardjali Turks.

My fieldwork focused on religious and secular ceremonies by Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks in both Razgrad and Kardjali. I attended a number of Sunni-only ceremonies at Sunni sites, such as burials and marriage ceremonies, daily prayers and Friday prayers, *mevluds* (i.e. the religious poem about the life story of Muhammed and respective ceremony where the poem is cited) in Razgrad and Kardjali mosques. Also, in Kardjali, I attended several village *mevlud*s, where villagers read the *mevlud* for the spirits of the all deceased from the village, such as the Balkan War Martyrs.

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I also attended numerous Alevi-only ceremonies at Alevi sites. I did participant observation in *gorgu cem*s led by *Babai*s in Razgrad and *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s, even though neither *Babai*s nor *Bektaşi*s normally allow Sunnis into their religious rituals. However, I was not allowed to attend *cem* ceremonies by *Musahipli* Alevis, who do not even let *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s into their ceremonies.

During my fieldwork, I conducted participant observation at region-specific ceremonies by Alevis, such as *Hıdrellez* in Razgrad and *mayes* in Kardjali. During *Hıdrellez*, on May 6, I attended two Alevi-populated villages. One is made up of *Babai*s and the other is made up of *Bektaşi*s. Also, in Kardjali, I attended several village *mayes,* around local *türbes*, including the biggest *mayes* at the Otman Baba Türbe and Elmalı Baba *Türbe* as well as the small, village *maye*s.

In addition to segregated ceremonies, I managed to attend mixed ceremonies, such as Sunni ceremonies or sites where both Sunnis and Alevis attend. For instance, in Razgrad, I attended the commemoration of the Holy Birth Day of Muhammed, which is organized by the Sunni *müftülük,* yet some Alevis were present too. Also in Kardjali, I visited a *türbe* in what is now a Sunni village, along with with some Alevi informants. Mirroring this, I conducted participant observation at Alevi ceremonies and sites with Sunnis present. Most strikingly, in Razgrad, I attended the traditional Annual Celebration at the Demir Baba Tekke as organized by the Turkish Rights and Freedoms' Political Party on May 29, 2010, when the ceremony started with the Sunni forms of prayer by imams from the region. Also, in Razgrad, I attended the Deniz Ali Baba Türbe celebrations in the North with a Sunni and Alevi mixed group from Kardjali, and in Kardjali, I attended the Elmalı Baba *maye* where Sunni and Alevi groups from the North and Turkey were present.

One event marked my fieldwork and turned into a venue for participant observation for me. In mid-May 2010, the Bulgarian High Court ruled to de-authorize the existing Grand *Müftü* of Bulgaria as well as the regional *müftüs*, which practically meant the return of the Grand *Müftü* of the socialist period, who, it was claimed, had supported the socialist regime as a former police officer. This situation became unsettled during my fieldwork in Razgrad and Kardjali. During this period, I managed to conduct interviews with existing Sunni *müftüs* as well as Alevi leaders on the issue. The event caused peaceful protests all over Bulgaria following Friday prayers. I conducted participant observation in these protests in Kardjali.

I also conducted participant observation in village cemeteries, where the interaction between communities became concrete and spatialized and where inter-group mixings or segregations became sealed. For instance, in Razgrad, a Bulgarian-Sunni-Alevi mixed village had three physically segregated neighborhoods with three separate cemeteries, while another Sunni-Alevi-Roma village had physically segregated neighborhoods, yet only one cemetery that was divided into an Alevi side and a Sunni side. On the other hand, in Kardjali, there was no such visible segregation. However, another pattern characterizes Kardjali cemeteries: presence of at least one *türbe* in almost all Sunni and Alevi villages. These *türbe*s are attributed sacredness by both Alevis and Sunnis, even though their approaches and practices at them are quite different.

In Bursa, I was the tenant of a migrant family from 1978 in a neighborhood formed by migrants from Kardjali during 1968-78. In this neighborhood, I did participant observation at events such as marriages, death ceremonies, and celebrations of religious events in individual families. In the other migrant neighborhoods, I did participant observation at markets, coffee houses and stores owned by migrants or where migrants were their customers. I also conducted

participant observation with migrant organizations by attending their activities addressing migrants, such as a conference on migration, a festival celebrating migration, and an annual feast during *Ramadan*.

2.4   CONCLUSION

To conclude, in this chapter I discussed various methodological concerns and problems I faced during my ethnographic fieldwork on Alevi Bulgarian Turks in two zones of territorial concentration of Bulgarian Turks in either side of the Bulgaria-Turkey border. First, I examined several empirical problems regarding the research, starting from the accuracy of data for a study on a dissimulating community, in addition to problems of access, rapport and my subject position as a researcher in such a context. Second, I addressed the ethical problems of researching and writing on a community that may sometimes make tactical use of invisibility as a survival strategy in hostile environments, by discussing the recent inclination among Alevi Bulgarian Turks towards public visibility. Finally, I provided detailed discussion about my field sites and my research methods in these sites.

3.0 DISSIMULATION: RETAINING MINORITY IDENTITY WHILE PRETENDING TO BE PART OF THE MAJORITY

The terms dissimilation and assimilation have been utilized in social science to explain relationships between two units, elements and groups. In historical linguistics, dissimilation occurs when two similar phonemes become less similar, while assimilation occurs when two dissimilar phonemes become alike (Kent 1936, Alderete 1997). In social psychology, dissimilation is the emphasis on distinctiveness from others when they threaten one's identity, and assimilation is the adaptation to others' ideas in the absence of such a threat (Lemaine 1975, 1981). Simply, the term assimilation refers to the processes of two entities becoming alike, while the term dissimilation refers to the opposite processes of resisting likeness.

Though assimilation is more often used in literature regarding minorities (see Alba and Nee 1977), several scholars have used dissimilation as the crux of their research. Yinger, for example, perceives assimilation as a "condition under which the cultural lines of divisions within a society are weakened," implying that minorities blend into the society. He defines dissimilation as a "condition under which [these divisions] are reinforced (sic)," implying the minorities' renewed attention to their own distinctiveness (Yinger 1994: 40). Bechir does not cite Yinger, yet utilizes the framework seeing assimilation and dissimilation as two possible conditions for minorities, and he compares Tatars in Romania as assimilating to Gagauz in Moldova as dissimilating populations (2008).

Such approaches to assimilation and dissimilation portray rather straightforward, either/or relations between minorities and majorities. They portray dissimilation as a minority's *ability* to keep its own distinct culture intact in the face of a dominant majority and they portray assimilation as the minority's *inability* to preserve its own distinct identity. My thesis argues that these perspectives ignore more subtle and indirect ways in which minorities relate to majorities, as shown by the concept of dissimulation.

The term *dissimulation* means one entity pretending to be like another, and I argue that it shows that a minority group may claim the majority's identity (appear to be assimilated), but does so in order to keep itself intact in the face of a threat, thus similar to dissimilation. In this sense, dissimulation has a paradoxical effect: even though minorities may act as if their differences from the society have been abandoned, they do so to reinforce these very differences. Therefore, the term dissimulation shows the robustness of inter-group differences, though the concept has often been rendered without considering its effects, or simply been reduced to negative connotations, such as faking, malingering and deception. .

The term dissimulation does denote deception and deceit in everyday English. However, only the psychology literature utilizes the term dissimulation to refer to individuals' deception and faking (e.g. Rogers 1997) during personality tests (e.g. Holden et.al 1992), after post-traumatic disorders (e.g. Gerardi et al. 1988) or after traumatic brain-injury (Slick et al. 1994). Some less than scholarly policy-oriented studies portray dissimulation negatively as an inherent quality of Islam, for instance in Afghanistan (Tribal Analysis Center 2010), in Iran (Campbell 2006) and other Islamic governments (Campbell 2005). Yet, the academic literature on minorities' dissimulations does not carry such value judgements, and recognizes dissimulation as a coping strategy which is utilized by various communities, such as by Alevis and Shias in

Afghanistan (Dupree 1979), Iran (Gordon 1977) and India (Virani 2011), by Jews and Sunni Muslims in Inquisition Spain (Root 1988, Ward 2004, Ibrahim 2008, Rosa-Rodrigez 2010), by Jews in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century (Neyzi 2002), by Jews, Christians and Sunnis in Iran (Nissimi 2004), and Christians in Turkey after 1923 (Clark 2006).

Studying dissimulation helps address basic issues of cultural analysis, such as the borders and identy markers of cultural and ethnic groups. In this study, I utilize the term dissimulation for the narratives and practices used by a marginalized group's members in order to obscure their identity and to pretend to be members of a majority group, for the immediate survival of individuals and the long term survival of the group as well as of the group's identity. I argue that the concept of dissimulation both reflects and fortifies the salience of inter-group distinctions and boundaries, precisely because a minority's members claim another group's identity and act like its members without intending to become part of that group.

My thesis is that dissimulation is a social mechanism involving similarity in opposition. Dissimulation has a simulation aspect: dissimulating religious minorities do not merely hide their own identity or certain components of their beliefs; they often simulate a majority's ways. Some scholars, such as Rosa-Rodrigez, portray simulation and dissimulation as a complementary pair in the case of Moriscos in Inquisition Spain (2010). This situation may give the impression that dissimulation is merely about minorities' imitating, copying or simulating the other groups' culture and practices. In fact, the success of dissimulation rests on a minority's mimicking aspects of the majority group identity without attracting the attention of that majority. For the same reason, acts of dissimulation may not be noticed and recognized by policy makers and academics, who may be ready to see a successfully dissimulating population as a 'perfectly assimilated' one. Yet simulation is only one aspect of the dissimulation process. I argue that

dissimulation is, at the last instance, oppositional: dissimulating minorities simulate the majority groups' beliefs and practices to in order to protect the group members, the group and the group identity against hostile majorities.

The social science literature recognizes the use of simulation for strategical purposes. Specifically, the literature on dissimulation as *takiye* clearly mentions strategic simulation within the context of dissimulation (e.g. Kohlberg 1975, Gordon 1977, Dupree 1979, Layish 1985, Emadi 1998 and 2000; Sachedina 2010). This means that such minorities' simulations are temporary since they serve for their dissimulation. As anthropologist Louis Dupree states explicitly, "…true taqiyya (however defined) can in no way be equated with apostasy, as is sometimes suggested" (Dupree 1979: 681). Furthermore, empirical evidence for the oppositionary nature of dissimulation is that successfully dissimulating minorities have actually preserved their group identity until the present. My case study exemplifies such a configuration: Alevi Bulgarian Turks have simulated various majority groups under changing political and social configurations when they faced persecutions and severe discrimination in Bulgaria and Turkey. In fact, I think that if there is still an Alevi population in Turkey and Bulgaria and if Alevi Bulgarian Turkish group identity has remained, their survival is due to their dissimulations. For instance, under the Ottoman rule, Alevis faced executions which were grounded on official orders (*fatwa*) by the state's religious authorities about the legitimacy of killing Alevis (Hazerfan: 2002). At those times, they probably appeared in public as if their identities had completely changed" and they had shifted to Sunnism. However, when the Ottoman Sultan changed and state policies become more tolerant, the Alevi group identity become revived.

Simulated identity markers may not become additional facets of a dissimulating minoriy's identity for several reasons. First, dissimulating minorities conduct their simulations only in the presence of "outsiders," while continuing to follow their own practices in the presence of in-group members. Second, the collective identities of the dissimulating and simulated groups are already marked antithetically to each other in the eyes of both. For instance, the conflictual and incommensurable premises of Alevism and Sunnism in belief, organization and practices have been actively utilized by members of both groups to mark their inter- and intra-group relations. Thus irreconcilable premises, such as the belief in reincarnation among Alevis and belief in the afterlife in Sunnis, have led to Sunni accusations of Alevis as heretics, while the same same premises have grounded Alevi claims for a group identity distinct from Sunnis, for a long time.

My research focusses on dissimulation within the context of sharply divided societies where ethnic groups' boundaries remain salient and apparently irreversible once they are formed: individuals are assigned to either one or the other birth group, and their group identities condition the life chances and burdens for them. Furthermore, in such societies, the majority-minority tension precludes recognition of heterogeneities *within* either group, even though some segments of a minority may become more disadvantaged than the other members of that minority, and thus form the most disadvantageous group in the society, i.e. a minority within a minority, or a double minority. For such double minorities, dissimulation may become a major tool to cope with their disadvantages. Generally they cannot freely emphasize their differences from the rest of the society (i.e. dissimilate) as this may mean extra constraints being put upon them. Nor are they allowed to blend in (i.e. assimilate), as their original difference may always be recalled.

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At first glance, my approach seems contrary to that of most writers in contemporary social science, because it sees cultural distinctions as often *not* being fluid. Of course, the perception of cultures as isolated, coherent, integrally homogenous and externally distinct unities has long been heavily criticized in anthropology. Earlier works underline the relations between interconnected cultures (e.g. Wolf 1982, Mintz 1985). Later authors argue that new forms of flow, interconnectedness, and flexible relations have challenged territorially bounded perceptions of cultures and led to concepts of "deterritorialization" (Hannerz 1996) and "reterritorialization" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Such works have proposed either replacing the culture concept with new analytical concepts (e.g. "ethnoscapes" by Appadurai and "discourse" by Gupta and Ferguson 1997) or "writing against culture" (Abu-Lughod 2006). Nevertheless, some anthropologists have defended the notion of culture by showing that only a few traditional anthropologies consider cultures as isolated units of analysis (Bashkow 2004, Sahlins 1999) and by asking why new global or transnational complexities should lead to an abandonment of cultural boundaries, especially when the problem is the superabundance, and not the absence, of claims of boundaries (Brightman 1995: 519).

Such criticisms of the notion of culture have carried into discussions of other units of analysis, such as ethno-national groups. Prominent works in the early 1980s opposed the idea that nations are extensions of groups' pre-modern distinctions (Smith 1987), and emphasized that nations are modern entities. For instance, Ernest Gellner states that nations were "made" following the emergence of nationalist elites with high culture (1983); Eric Hobsbawn claims that nations were "historical innovations" which emerged along with "invented traditions" such as national symbols and discourses (1983); and Benedict Anderson states that nations were "imagined" by the masses following the development of printing press and capitalism (1983).

Subsequent to these works, most writers have taken the statement "nations are invented" as self-evident.

In addition, many ethnographic studies have been conducted with the presumptions that ethno-national groups are *constantly* invented, made and unmade (e.g. Wimmer 2008); that they are *continuously* imagined and re-imagined by their members (e.g. Kong 1999); that their boundaries are flexible; and that their members have fluid ethnic identifications while ethnic groups' identities are contested (e.g. Lynch 2006). These perceptions have led to questioning analytical use of the concept "ethno-national group" to study ethnicity, such as Brubaker's criticism of "groupism" and suggestion of studying "ethnicity without groups" (2004).

These constructivist approaches reject the perception of ethno-national groups as bounded entities that are ultimately distinct from each other, and they do so in order to avoid essentialism—a "dirty word of anthropology" (Fischer 1999). For instance, Brubaker acknowledges the importance of ethno-national affiliations for ordinary people; yet he devalues this fact as commonsense reification that scholars should avoid re-producing (2006: 9). To avoid "essentialism," he recommends examining "how ethnicity 'happen[s]' in everyday" affairs rather than "presuming [that] everyday experience is pervasively organized by strong ethnic identities."

This approach rather bizarrely prioritizes the perceptions and indeed normative preferences of scholars over those of the people that these scholars study, perhaps the ultimate denial of agency to the subjects. Brubaker invites us to pretend that ethnic identities do not organize peoples' everyday experience. Yet, in reality, no matter how good scholars are at turning a self-blinded eye, ethnicity seems still to be used to organize the everyday lives of people. For instance, in Gil-White's examination of a Kazakh community's self-identified so-called "primordialist" ethnic acquisition and transmission rules in Mongolia, even if a child of a

Kazakh parent is adopted by a Mongolian family, does not know how to speak Kazakh or does not know anyone Kazakh, he or she is still seen as a Kazakh (1999). In fact, while Brubaker intends to show how everyday interaction makes Hungarian and Romanian ethnicities "happen" in Cluj, his field data show the opposite process: how being a Hungarian or Romanian determines the forms of everyday interactions there. Specifically, Hungarians continue to be seen as Hungarian even if they deemphasize their Hungarian identity, claim a broader Romanian citizenship or are involved in mixed marriages with Romanians (1995).

I argue that in divided societies where inter-group distinctions are already established and groups are "labeled" (Goodenough 1965, in Gil-White 1999), individuals are already placed into one or another group. Such group identities not only position individuals but also limit the range of available relations, affiliations, and life opportunities as well as burdens. In other words, once ethnic groups are "imagined," they stop being "imaginary" (cf. Anderson 1983, Jenkins 2002) and they have real effects on peoples' self- and other-perceptions, everyday decisions and interactions. Everyday practices of individuals are inevitably marked by already existing ethnic distinctions, not the other way around as Brubaker claims. As my fieldwork shows, Alevi Bulgarian Turks see themselves as Alevis even when they do not participate in a pledge ceremony and do not attend the periodic ceremonies that demonstrate allegiance to the community and are often seen as conditions for "becoming" an Alevi. Furthermore they are seen as Alevis by outsiders even though some may claim a Sunni identity, attend Sunni religious practices and are involved in mixed marriages with Sunnis. In other words, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' ethnic identities remain robust regardless of their varying degrees and forms of everyday religious practices.

The presumption that ethnicities may "happen" is not unique to Brubaker, of course, but has been used by others who are inspired by Frederik Barth's famous statement that it is the "*ethnic boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses" (1969: 15). Barth argues that an ethnic shift happens when a group stops claiming a distinct identity and claims membership to that of another group, and imitates the new group's organizational forms (Barth 1969: 25). Most scholars portray Barth's framework as a statement on the unstable, fluid and negotiable nature of ethnic groups. Accordingly, it is generally said that ethnic groups may be made, remade and even unmade while the ethnic boundaries emerge, shift and disappear. For instance, Andreas Wimmer introduces a model for shift in ethnic group boundaries via "expansion," which refers to an increase in the group in terms of the number of people; by "contraction," which refers to the exclusion of some individuals from the group; by "repositioning," which means individuals' change of their categorical group membership from one group to the other; by "inversion," which indicates a shift in the hierarchy among categories; and by "blurring," which means overcoming ethnicity as a criterion in social and political organization (Wimmer 2008). Yet, these configurations do not terminate the very existence of categorical ethnic group identities. Barth's argument was criticized by Gil-White on the grounds that even though an ethnic group may claim the identity of another group, the latter group will not be willing to accept the newcomers (1999). As Robert M. Hayden reminds us, Barth himself clearly states that movement of people across the ethnic boundaries does not lead to categorical changes (Barth 1969: 24), which Hayden sees as an indicator of the robustness of intergroup distinctions (2011).

Some explain ethnic boundary and identity shift as a matter of the cumulative effect of individuals' choices. For instance, Evergeti claims Pomaks may manipulate their ethnic identities

in relation to Turks and Greeks in Northern Greece (2005: 178).Similarly, Smith (2002) argues that Uyghur may strategically emphasize or de-emphasize certain religious markers to solidify their group boundaries as opposed to Han Chinese in Xinjiang. Other scholars suggest structural factors leading to ethnic identity shift, such as a state's creation of new ethnic categories with entitlements motivating an ethnic shift. For example, Gorenburg (1999) argues that changing state policies in Russia have led to shifts in both public and private identities of Tatars, who have oscilliated between Tatar and Bashir identities before, during and after socialism.

These studies on shifting ethnic boundaries and ethnic identities appear to rely on Barth, who discusses ethnic identity shift or "assimilation" among Pathans, in which Southern Pathans became Baluch while Northern Pathans remained as Pathan (1969: 25). While most subsequent authors who cite him miss this point, Barth explicitly states that while ethnic shift may lead to "categorical changes of the ethnic identity," they also "leav[e] dichotomized ethnic groups unaffected (other than numbers) by the interchange of personnel" (1969: 24). As Robert M. Hayden reminds us, such a Barthian ethnic shift argument points out that "boundaries could be crossed without challenging the system of distinctions itself" and it indicates the robustness of the inter-group "distinctions" (2011: 11) In other words, the Pathan and Baluch as categorical identities and their differences remain salient, even though some Pathans may "become" Baluch.

My thesis highlights a further complication regarding ethnic shift theory by focusing on situations similar to those of Pathans who are said to have "become" Baluch. First, I emphasize that even though an ethnic group's members may claim another group's identity, the latter group's members may not be willing to accept these newcomers as "real" members of the group. For instance, Gil-White doubts that South Pathans are seen as "real Baluch" by Baluch (1999). Second, this ethnic shift or assimilation perspective implies closure: minorities may be content

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with sacrificing their own differences in return for favors in the society. Yet, this assumption ignores the possibility that minorities may not *really* assimilate but only publicly pretend to do so (i.e. they dissimulate) while in private still following their distinct ways, as was done by many Jewish and Muslim converts in Spain (Ibrahim 2008, Rosa-Rodriguez 2010), Cyrpto-Christians in the Ottoman Empire (Skendi 1967) and crypto-Muslims in post-Ottoman Balkans (Idriz 2009). Furthermore, pretending to assimilate may be a tactical move not merely for short-term utilitarian agenda but for the long-term survival of the minority community and even of its identity. In this sense, pretending to assimilate, i.e. to dissimulate, does not cause a closure but rather fortifies the gap between the minority and the majority.

In the literature on ethnic groups, Barth's statement that it is the "*ethnic boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses" (1969: 15) led to a dichotomous perception of ethnic content and ethnic boundaries (Conversi 1999). The concept of dissimulation as I have developed it challenges such dichotomous perceptions of ethnic group content and ethnic boundaries, showing the continued relevance of groups, and the robust salience of group boundaries, for some ethno-religious double minorities in extremely divided societies.

Some studies have tried to transcend the dichotomy but have instead relativized both the ethnic content and the boundaries. For instance, William Fisher criticizes Barth's model on the grounds that it relegates the cultural content of groups to being a dependent variable while peoples' identifications to a group is contextual (1987:11). He argues that the term ethnic group implies a cultural coherence and historical endurance (2001: 192) while in reality ethnic groups are not heterogeneous and their identities emerge in action within their particular social contexts" (1987: 12). Therefore he calls for the need to examining group processes rather than group maintenance (1987: 13, 2001). His ethnographic evidence for this framework comes from

Tamhang Thakalis in central Nepal, whom he portrays as heterogeneous, since they are divided into three endogamous descent groups with their own political autonomy. Moreover he argues that Thakali identity has been an emerging one during processes of Sanskritization, de-Sanskritization, Westernization and revitalization of their indigenous practices, as well as migrations over about a century (2001: 193). Fisher argues for complexities in Thakalis identity while Thakali NGOs claim a unified heritage as the ground for the group identity. Ultimately he states that these emerging indigenous movements, while claiming to return to the tradition, need to first "create" or "re-create" it (1987: 300, 2001).

Fisher thus uses an anti-essentialist framework, yet at the cost of suppressing Thalikis' "self-imposed essentialism" (cf. Gil-White). In fact his anti-essentialism seems to lead him "[un-]imagining other's [already imagined] communities" (cf. Hayden 2007). My approach, in turn, reverses Fisher's question: how has a double minority managed to keep imagining itself as a distinct group even when it has been internally divided into subgroups and subsegments and has been exposed to various state-initiated and socially-circulating exclusions? I see Alevis' dissimulations as a collective strategy in maintaining their group identity, despite their internal heterogeneity and the external pressures on the community in the form of mass persecution, structural and social discrimination by the changing majorities in Bulgaria and Turkey.

The dissimulation concept also challenges some instrumentalist perceptions of ethnic group identities, since dissimulating double minorities strive for protecting and maintaining their group identity even at the cost of extreme marginalization. In the literature, the instrumentalist approach is exemplified by the work of Abner Cohen, who portrays an ethnic group as "an informal interest group whose members are distinct from members of other groups within the same society in that… they share a measure of what Smith calls 'compulsory institutions'

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kinship and religion, and can communicate among themselves relatively easily" (1969:4). He argues that members of ethnic groups articulate these "compulsory institutions" for their political and economic interests. Cohen's evidence comes from the Hausa in Nigeria, who are a Muslim community migrated from Northern to South Nigeria and who had developed intense trade networks in Nigeria. He argues that Hausa moved from being a Muslim community which did not have any remarkable difference from any other Nigerian tribe (49) to being a community increasingly emphasizing its Islamic identity and "customs." According to Cohen, ethno-religious group identity has strengthened for two reasons. First, Hausas intended to create a separate, distinct identity in order to maintain their monopoly over trade, which was challenged by Yoruba after the Indirect rule. Second, Hausas intended to preserve their political autonomy, which had been granted under the British Indirect Rule but eroded after Independence. Moreover, Hausa have not only emphasized their Muslim identity as an ethnic marker against the new political regime in Nigeria, but also further emphasized it after the Yorubas also claimed Islamic identity.

Cohen's approach to ethnic groups has been criticized on several grounds. First, Epstein argues that instrumentalism cannot explain all expressions of ethnic identity or ethnicity, especially the cases in which ethnicity is "active" yet does not have an aim (Epstein 1978: 96 in Banks: 36). I add to Epstein's criticism by showing another configuration: dissimulating Alevi Bulgarian Turks' ethnicity has been "active" in private (among the insiders) but has appeared "passive" in public, or in the presence of outsiders. Moreover they act in these ways not to maintain a powerful position in the society (which they do not have) but rather to avoid further marginalization due to persecution, as well as political and social discrimination.

A second criticism of Cohen comes from John Peel, who values Cohen's valuation of historical factors in explaining social change among Hausa during and after colonialism but criticizes the absence of pre-colonial cultural differences in his analysis. Peel argues that "ethnicities may appear as inventions; yet they are not arbitrary" (Peel 1989 in Eriksen 1993: 93). I consider that the distinction between Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks goes back to the Ottoman era. For instance, many Alevis in present day Bulgarian are descendants of Alevi tribes, which were seen as rebellious and subversive by the Ottoman state. A third criticism to Cohen's framework comes from Marcus Banks, who argues that Cohen excludes the narratives of Hausa themselves and that there may be "apparent distinctions between the analysts' and actors' behaviors and motivations" (Banks 1996). He adds that "a pious Hausa might be surprised or even offended to be told that his commitment to Tijanniya order (a Sufi Islamic order) was 'merely' a building block in the construction of his ethnic consciousness" (Banks 1996: 35).

During my research on dissimulation among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, I have been very aware of the possible distinctions between my perceptions and those of my informants as to what constitutes "dissimulation." The dissimulation concept came out organically as a theme during my interviews, when I was trying to find answers to my questions about survival strategies of a minority within a minority in a society. During the research, I noticed that informants were more comfortable in talking about dissimulation cases in the past, especially during their interactions with Communist Party Officials, given that communists no longer constitute a threat to Alevis or to any other community in Bulgaria. Understandably, my informants did not display the same level of comfort in talking about historical and present relations with the surrounding present-day majorities, such as Sunnis in Bulgaria or Turkey. Cautious of a possible variance between my analysis and my informants' perceptions of dissimulation, I always asked my informants for off-

the-record remarks on present day dissimulations, which helped me to get a broader picture of the events. However, I have not utilized these explanations in this study in order to honor my pledge, and to protect my informants and the community.

My analysis approaches the question of the relevance of culture and of ethnic boundaries by looking carefully at a disfavored minority group within a larger, also disfavored minority group – that is, this larger minority group is disfavored by the majority in the society while the smaller group is disfavored by the larger minority group, thus doubly disfavored. As I show in this work, in societies where power asymmetry prevails, group identities become much more salient, meaning that a minority within a minority may remain always as such even when both groups are encapsulated within several broader societies. Further, as a doubly underprivileged community, a double minority may still manifest a degree of agency even though the conditions that have caused its members' oppression persist. Such people develop collective dissimilation, assimilation or dissimulation as ways to cope with their situations of disadvantage, while maintaining their condition of "minority within a minority." They remain a minority within a minority regardless of their dissimilating (by asserting the distinct character of their own community), assimilating into a majority group (e.g. Turks in Turkey and Bulgarians in Bulgaria) or the larger part of the minority (e.g. Sunni Bulgarian Turks), or pretending to be members of a larger community (either the majority community or the larger part of the minority) by dissimulating.

In my analysis, I argue that dissimilation, assimilation, and dissimulation are not markers of absolute manifestation, final shift or constant volatility of the ethnic groups' affiliations but rather are collective practices by members of a double minority, in response to social settings in which they have differentiated degrees of availabilities and capacities to maneuver. These

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practices are important since they show that an oppressed community may develop and manifest a degree of agency even though the conditions that cause its members' oppression persist and they remain a double minority. In this sense, dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation are "tactics," as per DeCerteau: they are practices used to maneuver within pre-given spaces, in the domain created, demarcated and defined by powerful groups (1984) and in this sense these practices are used for coping with the existing conditions rather than trying to alter them.

In this chapter, I use literature on national minorities that stretch across the border between a residential state and an external homeland state in order to examine external and internal homogenizations of these minorities by nationalist projects (minority and majority), and also in the academic literature. I utilize the "minority within a minority" or "double minority" concept to point out patterned segmentations within larger minority communities, as opposed to their homogenization. I have observed specific criteria (religious and regional affiliations) being used to demarcate a structurally imposed hierarchy in terms of access to power, resources, prestige, and wealth. Finally, I use border-frontier literature to analyze how the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' varying collective "tactics" depend on the local, regional and national political, social and economic configurations at the frontiers of the residential state (Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria) and, following migrations, of their ethnic homeland state (Turkey).

3.1   DISSIMULATION IN-BETWEEN DISSIMILATION AND ASSIMILATION

I consider assimilation, dissimilation and dissimulation as collective practices to cope with the structural conditions that have constantly marginalized a double minority. Yet by seeing all three categories as "tactics," I do not conflate them. On the contrary, I underline that segments of the

same community may utilize varying practices as their marginalizations vary in degree and form, while they remain a double minority. I develop a model to understand such minority member's practices: what is seen as "assimilation" and "dissimilation" are in fact practices that are closer to emulations of "ideal-types" (Weber 1904), meaning norms and characteristics, in this case dictated by religious leaders representing communities. Accordingly, the practices of dissimulation indicate a location in between these "ideal-types," while a practice indicating closeness to one end means distancing from the other.

As my fieldwork shows, some Alevi everyday religious practices may look like "dissimilation" from Sunni practices, as they strictly follow principles set by the local Alevi leader in Alevi-dominant settings. Alternatively, some Alevi practices may look like "assimilation" as they seem to follow Sunni norms set by religious leaders in extremely Sunni-dominant settings. Often, since both Alevi and Sunni principles are ideal types, the majority of Alevis' everyday practices do not fully conform to either extreme but are somewhere in between them. Mostly these collective practices take the form of dissimulation, and they are conditioned by the demographic composition of local settings as well as local and national social, political and economic configurations.

The term dissimulation has not often been utilized with regards to minorities. One exception is in the work of James Scott, who sees dissimulation as a form of resistance by powerless groups (e.g. slaves, peasants, etc.) who pretend to be in conformity with the existing order, yet merely intend by so doing to avoid any explicit display of insubordination or open confrontation with authority (Scott 1990). In this reading, dissimulation is a concealment of discontent from outsiders and from the public discourses ("public scripts"), but is known by insiders. It may be detectable by examining the "hidden scripts", such as subordinates' speeches

behind the backs of the dominant (Scott 1990). This perspective is significant in illuminating the discrepancy between public and in-group discourses of the dissimulating populations, yet, it treats dissimulation as the *ad hoc*, arbitrary, and unstructured practices of individuals. Scott's framework does not explain the calculated, planned and structured collective dissimulation practices of Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

Dissimulations of religiously-marked minorities may show a degree of dynamism, which might make the "performance" concept seem an attractive theoretical tool for analysis. In my view, however, while the performance concept hints at the complexities of acts of dissimulation, it may also obscure the extremely patterned and structured nature of minorities' dissimulation practices. I argue that dissimulation is a very specific type of performance in terms of its nature, aims and methods. Dissimulation is the last resort of extremely marginalized communities when they cannot emphasize their separate identity in a society (i.e. dissimilate) and when they are not willing to blend into the larger society (i.e. assimilate). It is based upon a collective intent for the immediate protection of the minority members and the minority community, and for long-term protection of the minority identity. Dissimulation leads to a minority's public appearance being as if inter-communal differences are overcome, while this process actually produces the futher fortification of the inter-communal boundaries.

Judith Butler has introduced a more refined analysis of performance concepts regarding gender identities. She identifies a "regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized under constraint" (1993: 21) and argues that "the reiteration" of the gender norms inherent to this regime may "work, animate and constrain the gendered subjects" or may be "a source of resistance and subversion of [these very gender] norms" (1993:22). She defines the first type of reiterative acts as "performances" and the second type of reiterative acts

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as "performativity" (1993: 24). Both performance and performativity rely on "the force of authority through the repetition and citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices" (1993: 19). Yet they differ in terms of end-results: "performance" reproduces the regulatory regimes and their assumptions while "performativity" is subversive, since it leads to the "the unanticipated resignifiability" of gender norms in the "regulatory regime" (1993: 28). In this sense, Butler rejects seeing "performativity" as a matter of actors' "will," "choice" (24), "control" and "calculation" (29).

In my view, however, Butler's conceptualization of the terms "performance" and "performativity" is not useful for understanding dissimulation processes. Dissimulation can not be seen as a "performance" in the Butlerian sense, since dissimulating minorities do not affirm the existing regulatory regime that locates them at the lower rank in the inter-group hierarchy. On the contrary, dissimulation is a manifestation of their conditioned agency to protect their group identity for long term. Furthermore dissimulation also does not indicate "performativity" in the Butlerian sense, since dissimulating minorities conduct acts of dissimulation *intentionally* and *collectively* after *calculating* the circumstances and their possibilities given circumstances. It indicates a minority's collective will to survive hostile circumstances. My field data indicates that Alevis' have decided collectively, in the *cem* communities, about their dissimulations: that is, whether or not, how and when as well as in relation to which groups they should dissimulate or terminate dissimulation.

A collectivist account of dissimulation is found in Shia Islam theology, which extensively discusses a specific concept of dissimulation (*takiye)* or concealment of one's religious identity in the face of threat coming from hostile outsiders or even from some insiders who have not reached to the maturity to grasp the esoteric belief system. As explained more fully later in this

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chapter, dissimulating communities do not merely hide their identities but also pretend to be the members of another, mostly of the majority, religious community in the society. Shias thereby treat being dissimulation as itself a norm, and largely ignore the varying ways this norm is utilized. Contrary to such normative perceptions, my work examines dissimulation (together with assimilation and dissimilation) as minorities' ways of relocating themselves in power asymmetries in their larger societies. Further, I argue that religiously-marked minority communities involved in such realignment under changing political and social configurations, irrespective of whether religious doctrines (Sunni, Shia Islam, Christianity or Judaism) legitimize or prohibit varying dissimulations for their adherents.

Dissimulation is often presented as a phenomenon specific to certain religious doctrines; however, historical examples show that members of *any* religious group holding minority status may dissimulate as members of the majority. Furthermore, dissimulation is practiced by minorities adhering to varying religious doctrines. For instance, in post-Reconquest Spain, Jewish (Ward 2004, Ibrahim 2008) and Muslim (Root 1988, Rosa-Rodriguez 2010) religious minorities were forced to convert to Catholicism, yet they still maintained practices from their earlier religions – indeed, their doing so was the reason for creating the Inquisition. Likewise, Christians, Jews, and Bahais were dissimulating by not converting to Shia Islam but by hiding their real religious identity in Iran even during the reign of Shah and before the Islamic Revolution in 1978 (Gordon 1977). With such cases in mind, I stress that dissimulation crosscuts religious groups, irrespective of whether specific religious doctrines permits or prohibits it. More importantly, dissimulating minorities may carry their religious identity as a cultural marker. That is to say, dissimulation may be done by committed, secular and even atheist members of a religious minority, in the present case Alevis, even though the minority is marked in the society

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primarily in religious terms. Furthermore, my data show that members of religious minorities may dissimulate in regarding not only to religious issues but also to secular ones For instance, as my fieldwork found, Alevi Bulgarian Turks dissimulated not only by conducting some Sunni practices but also by pretending to occupy several secular subject-positions in relation to Bulgarian and Sunni Turk groups. Such subject positions included those of the socialist-atheist citizen, the converted Bulgarian, or the pure Turk (i.e. *samo Turk* in Bulgarian).

Dissimulation may also be utilized by the minority sect of a religious group against its majority sect. For instance, Sunni scholars of Islamic theology have often negatively associated dissimulation with Shia and Alevi Muslims. While Sunni theologians have portrayed dissimulation as internal to the Shia belief system, announced it as unacceptable for Muslims and criticized it as hypocrisy (see Kohlberg 1975), Shia theologians have pronounced it to be a legitimate practice and institutionalized it (see Sachedina 2010). However, Sunni scholars' refusal and Shia scholars' institutionalization of dissimulation are not about the inherent difference between the two religious doctrines, but rather reflect the historical asymmetry that has emerged within Islamic theology. The general superiority of power held by Sunnis over Shias has caused increasing marginalization of non-Sunni doctrines in what is generally seen as orthodox Islamic theology, at least in Sunni-dominant Islamic settings. Still, it should be noted that in Shia-dominant settings such as Iran (Gordon 1977) or present-day Syria, Sunnis have in fact themselves dissimulated. More interestingly, dissimulation is sometimes promoted by Sunni religious authorities. Historically, the Sunni Muftu of Oran released a *fatwa* recommending that Muslims simulate being Catholics in Inquisition-period Spain (Rosa-Rodriguez 2010).

In perceiving dissimulation as a manifestation and product of particular historical minority-majority conditions within a society, I assert that dissimulation is context dependent.

While persistent power inequalities may lead to institutionalization of dissimulation for some religious minorities, a change in these inequalities may lead to abolishment of dissimulation. For instance, Hafizullah Emadi (1998) argues that Ismaili Shia in the Badakhshan region of Afghanistan ended their dissimulations (*taqiyya* in Arabic) from oppressive Sunni groups by means of allying themselves with the government after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The more recent study of Ron Geaves argues that dissimulation may take "a modified form" and might terminate; for instance, Alevi and Sunni migrants from Turkey are equal in minority status in Britain, and Alevis have formed their own religious and secular organizations openly while abandoning their traditional ritual animal sacrifice ceremonies there, though they continue to attend such ceremonies during their visits to Turkey (Geaves 2003: 62). Strikingly, Alevi migrants from Turkey to Germany conduct the ritual animal sacrifice in Turkey in the *cemevi*s of the local Kurdish and Turkish Alevis.

Alevi Bulgarian Turkish migrants in Turkey exhibit a more complicated configuration. As with the Kurdish Alevi migrants migration caused little hostility between Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks from Turkey sharing the same social spaces (e.g. neighborhoods and support organizations), as well as "migrant" status). Questions I asked during my fieldwork about Alevi migrants raised the eyebrows of some Sunni migrants, who saw my injquiries as an attempt to create a division within the migrant community. Yet Alevi migrants had to dissimulate as Sunnis in local Sunni-dominant settings such as in Bursa, otherwise local Sunni Turks would call them *gavurlar* (infidels), not Alevis or even "Bulgarians," for not practicing Sunni Islam, as one informant stated. For instance, migrant Kurdish Alevis in Bursa had narrated to me the difficulties of living in "such a Sunni-hegemonic place." During the times of Ramadan fasting, not following the Sunni fasting would cause verbal harassments by the locals who call them

"Kızılbaş[2]," an insult implying "heresy." However, I did not experience hearing them placed into the category of "infidels."

Changes in power balances may cause other changes, such as a majority group being replaced by another one while the minority group remains the same. Even though its status does not change, the members of the minority still have to dissimulate, though perhaps as members of different majorities. In Bulgaria, majority groups have historically replaced each other: Sunni Ottomans, Sunni Bulgarian Turks, Bulgarian Christians, ethnic Bulgarian and Turkish socialist authorities, among others. It might be presumed that socialism terminated the dissimulation, but my fieldwork revealed that Alevi Bulgarian Turks had to dissimulate before socialist authorities as atheist citizens, similar to cases in the other parts of the world, such as Muslim Azeris who had dissimulated under Soviet Socialism (Swietochowski 2002). As different majorities have hold power in different historical periods in Bulgaria, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have been constantly marginalized, while they dissimulated against whatever group ruled.

In Islamic theology, dissimulation (*takiye*) has three specialized meanings. The first is prudential concealment, which stands for the concealment of one's religious identity in order to protect oneself or one's religious group in life-threatening contexts (Kohlberg 1975; Sachedina 2010). Second, *takiye* may mean protective concealment, pretending to be a member of the

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[2] Kızılbaş: The term literally refers to nomadic warriors who had placed a red cloth on their headgear representing the side of the Shia Safavid Empire of Persia against the side of the Sunni Ottoman Empire during the Chaldiran Battle in 1514. In 14th the century, the term Kızılbaş referred to Persian Safavids while by the 16th century meant for Anatolians supporting the Safavids' Twelver Shia belief. By the 18th century, the term referred to rural and semi-nomadic followers of the Twelver Shia belief, requiring Alevi parents for group membership. It was opposed to urban Bektaşis, who were followers of Haci Bektas Veli, not requiring Alevi parents for the group membership (Melikoff:1998). The difference matters; since Kızılbaş were seen as "heretics" and "rioters" in the Ottoman documents while Bektaşi were seen as the backbone of the Janissary Army (Melikoff: 1998). In present-day Turkey, the ters Kızılbaş carries a pejorative meaning (Melikoff: 1998) and has been replaced by the term "Alevi." On the other hand, in Bulgaria, Alevis historically identified themselves as "Kızılbaş" and the term Alevi did was not used until after 1989. Currently, the term Kızılbaş is still in use in Northern Bulgaria while in Southern Bulgaria it gained a pejorative meaning and has been replaced by the term Alevi.

hegemonic religious group to avoid discrimination and to have equal access to power and prestige (Kohlberg 1975, Sachedina 2010). Finally, *takiye* may mean secrecy, hiding the esoteric elements of the belief system from those unable to grasp the true meaning of them (Kohlberg 1975). These distinctions indicate varying contexts and different addressees of dissimulation. The first two forms are against outsiders, while the last is against potentially harmful insiders. Also, prudential concealment is a matter of life or death, while protective concealment is for minorities that are recognized yet disadvantaged, leaving their members to seek upward mobility by pretending to be the members of the majority.

The term itself, *takiye,* has been translated as "dissimulation" by sociologists (Neyzi 2002), anthropologists (Dupree 1979), historians (Pipes 1989, Firro 2001), religious studies scholars (Kohlberg 1975, Zeidan 1999, Sachedina 2010, Virani 2011) and literature scholars (Gordon 1977). Many of these scholars display discomfort with doing so due to the negative connotations of the term dissimulation in colloquial usage, and use qualifiers such as "religious dissimulation" (Ibrahim 2010), "precautionary dissimulation" (Kohlberg 1975), "protective dissimulation" (Dupree 1979), "precautionary dissimulation" and "prudential concealment" (Sachedina 2010) at the beginning of their works, though they then mainly continue to refer to *takiye* simply as dissimulation.

These studies on *takiye* recognize the function of dissimulation to be providing immediate protection for individual minority members and for the group (Kohlberg 1975, Gordon 1977, Dupree 1979, Layish 1985, Emadi 2000; Sachedina 2010). They emphasize the defensive aspect of dissimulation for religious minorities in the face of persecution (Kohlberg 1975) or discrimination (Dupree 1979), or both (Sachedina 2010). In this respect dissimulation is not about tricking or fooling a majority; it is a last resort for minorities to survive the most trying

circumstances. In fact, a few works point out the stereotypes about dissimulating minorities in their surrounding societies. For instance, Zenner examines the stereotypes of Israeli Arabs in Galilee and identifies Arab resentment of the Druze use of dissimulation and their perception of Druze dissimulation as opportunism (Zenner 1972: 412-413). In other words, the perception of dissimulating religious minorities as opportunists or tricksters may be a phenomenon by outsider majority communities, while the academic community recognizes dissimulation as an issue of minorities sheltering themselves in hostile circumstances.

Dissimulation as prudential concealment is a tactic for avoiding or surviving extreme violence, such as forced mass conversions, migrations and killings, without actually erasing but instead fortifying the sense of self-identity among minority group members. For instance, dissimulation allowed the survival of Jews and Muslims in Inquisition-period Spain, even though after conversions they faced surveillance as potential heretics (Root 1988). Despite their conversions, they were discriminated against for being "new Christians" as opposed to "old Christians" (Ibrahim 2008). More importantly, as Ibrahim's and Root's works on the converts' literary texts indicate, they continued to imagine their group through their heritage identity. In other words, conversion and dissimulation had not caused the erasure of the communal identity, but fortified it. Similarly, the rivalry between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shia Safavid Empire in the 15th century caused Shiafication in current day Iranian territories (Moreen 1981) by forced conversions (Abisaab 1994), and the Sunnification of Anatolia. Shia, *Kızılbaş* and Alevi populations there faced mass conversion, or being killed. Yet, despite the extreme violence, contemporary Iran has Sunni minorities and Turkey has Shia and Alevi minorities, indicating that survival under strictly oppressive regimes was possible through their prudential

concealment.[3] Likewise, segments of Jewish populations were forced into conversion in Ottoman Izmir, and followed the Sabetay Sevi, a rabbi who declared himself as the messiah, converted to Islam, and formed in the 17th century the secret society called Sabbateanists. The existence of this group disturbed the rabbis in Izmir, yet gained popularity among Jewish migrants from Salonika to Izmir in the Ottoman Empire in 19th century, as discussed by Leyla Neyzi (2002). Similar cases of Jewish dissimulation were seen in Masshad, Iran in the 19th century (Nissimi 2004), and among Christians on the North Sea shores of Turkey after the population exchange between Greece and Turkey of 1923 (Clark 2006). In all of these cases, those who survived oppression by dissimulation held on to their identities even tighter.

Dissimulation as protective concealment is a tactic to survive discrimination in contexts where minorities are recognized, but seen as inferior. It also fortifies the sense of self of minority members. For instance, in India between 1900 and the 1930s, Guptis were a minority within the Ismaili Shia Muslim minority and dissimulated as majority Hindus instead of minority Sunni Muslims (Virani 2011). Between 1930 and 1946 a segment of Southern Guptis excommunicated from their caste, which resulted in increased group coherence among Guptis and their efforts to reconcile of their religious identity with their caste. This process of reconciliation lead to abandonement of their dissimulation after 1930s and led to their dissimilation by publicly forming a separate housing society by Guptis (Virani 2011: 104)

Similar to the Guptis, Alevi Turks in Bulgaria interact with a majority, the Bulgarian Orthodox Christians, and with the dominant sect of the minority, the Sunni Turks. Alevi dissimulation, however, is more complicated than merely dissimulating as the majority, since

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[3] In the Turkish republic Turkey, the minority status is granted only to non-Muslim groups since the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. Therefore, Shia and Alevi groups have not been recognized as minorities but conflated under the Muslim category. In contemporary Iran, Armenians, Zoroastrians, Jews are recognized as the official minorities. Therefore, Sunnis are conflated under the category of Muslims (Sansarian 2000).

there has beeen more than one such majority group in Bulgaria, from Sunni Ottomans, to Orthodox Christian Bulgarians, to Socialist Bulgarians, and back to Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. Second, at any given time, varying majority-minority demographic configurations in Alevi residential areas have complicated Alevi dissimulations. For instance, as my fieldwork shows, in demographically mixed areas of socialist Bulgaria such as Razgrad, some Alevi Bulgarian Turks had to dissimulate before Bulgarian socialist officials as former-Christians-converted-to-Islam. In other times, they dissimulated as atheist socialist citizens before Turkish socialist officials, in Turkish-majority Kardjali. In both cases, they dissimulated in order to continue practicing Alevism.

Sometimes dissimulation involves pretending to be a member of a majority ethnic group without mentioning the sect, since the majority ethnic group is presumed in the society to be the majority sect of the same religion. In this way, the dissimulating community shelters its ethnic identity and does not need to claim directly the majority's religious identity or deny its own religious identity. For instance, in Afghanistan in the late 1970s, Sunni Islam was constitutionally declared to be the official state religion, but Shia Pashtun individuals could hold bureaucratic positions by dissimulating as Sunni Pashtuns (Dupree 1979). This allowed Shias to claim Sunni identity without denying Shia identity. This case gives insight about practices of Alevi Turks in Kardjali, where Sunni Turks form the demographic and administrative majority. Alevis in Kardjali dissimulate not by denying Alevi identity or declaring themselves to be Sunni, but by overemphasizing their Turkishness, which is presumed in the society to mark Sunni identity. This dissimulation helps maintain the Alevi identity without facing explicit discrimination.

In recent literature, dissimulation is claimed to create hybrid identities and to blur the symbolic borders between groups. Accordingly, long lasting dissimulation practices by groups are seen as causing not only a pause in their practices of their original religion, but also as establishing a complicated belief system made up of elements from the original and dissimulated religions. Virani's work (2011) states that Gupti dissimulation as Hindus is not "simply…syncretic" but signals hybridity, and Ibrahim's and Rose-Rodriguez's works on Jewish and Muslim converts in Inquisition Spain claims that hybrid identities resulted (Ibrahim 2008, Rose-Rodriguez 2010).

My work challenges such analyses, however. While the term "hybridity" may serve as a pseudo-explanation for the situation of minorities without actually really explaining it (Pieterse 1995), I argue that dissimulation is a collective and calculated practice primarily intended to keep the collectivity, as such, alive in hostile environments. Thus, even though long lasting dissimulation may lead to lessened information about the original belief. due to lessened transmission of knowledge across generations, or fewer religious rituals and practices due to surveillance, members of the dissimulating minorities continue to define themselves by the very heritage that their dissimulation is meant to hide. As observed during my fieldwork, an Alevi dissimulates in order to remain Alevi and, even after a long period of dissimulation, he or she does not forget that he or she is an Alevi, even if he or she does not practice Alevism. In this way, dissimulation does not blur but instead reinforces the boundaries separating communities; while the "cultural content" of being an Alevi changes, the boundaries of the Alevi community remain (Barth 1969, Hayden 2011).

Dissimulating groups may also have nested identities, such as Alevi Bulgarian Turks who are self-identified Alevi Muslims in confessional terms and Turkish in ethnic terms. It is possible

that some individual members of these minorities may prioritize the non-religious aspect of their identity, such as Alevi Bulgarian Turks who may identify themselves primarily as Turks, which I do not see as an example of dissimulation at all. There is, however, another configuration among minorities with nested identities: some segments of religiously-marked minorities may announce their religious identity as primary, while they use their self-identified secondary identities for strategic purposes, even as both primary and secondary identities are sincere parts of their personalities. They may utilize the secondary identity to blanket their primary identity when the latter is used for their oppression. I see such a configuraton as dissimulation. For instance, in Chapter Six I focus on the strategic utilizations of self-identified Turkishnessby Alevi Bulgarian Turks when their Alevi identity is used as a pretext for discrimination, or for denial to them of rights stemming from their Turkishness.

On the other hand, my work has revealed the possibility of another configuration of the religious minorities with nested identities: a religiously-marked minority's members may not recognize non-religious markers as central to their identity at all. For instance the residents of present-day Razgrad (and Kardjali in the past) used the following taxonomy about the neighborhoods in mixed settings: "Bulgarian," "Turkish" (meaning Sunni) and "*Kızılbaş*" (meaning Alevi) neighborhoods. I argue that in such a setting an Alevi groups' public utilization of Turkish identity exemplifies the strategic use of the secondary component of their nested identity.

Other literature on dissimulation prioritizes theological explanations by focusing on religious texts and Islamic scholars' interpretations, instead of actual practices of the religious communities. For instance, Sachedina locates dissimulation as a practical political strategy of quietism (and as an alternative to other strategies, such as activism or migration), adopted to

survive an oppressive regime until a theologically-projected "just order" will be established (2010). These perceptions are too doctrine oriented to recognize the various ways in which religious ideas, beliefs, or doctrines, such as dissimulation, are utilized on an everyday level. Contrary to such frameworks, my work prioritizes an empirically–oriented framework to examine dissimulation as one tactic for survival for all religious minorities, including but not limited to Alevi Bulgarian Turks, and that that does not necessarily depend on the establishment of a "just world order" that is projected by Islamic theology, but rather on mere survival in the society. I discuss how, when, and why dissimulation is utilized (or not) as alternative to other tactics, such as dissimilation or assimilation, by some Alevis and not others.

3.2   MINORITIES, AND MINORITIES WITHIN MINORITIES

The literature on minorities has evolved along several lines, reflecting differing conceptualizations of European and American minorities. Work on European minorities (i.e. "national minorities") examines ethnic groups that are marked by political agendas such as self-determination, while the literature on American minorities (i.e. "minority groups") focuses on cultural groups without political agendas subversive to the residential states (see Meyers 1984; Gleason 1991). The literature on European "national minorities" tends to portray them as either victims of the detrimental policies of discrimination in their host states (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Mann 2005), or as a "menace" (Miller 1934) for their host states due to their cross-border ties with an external homeland state. The literature on U.S. "minority groups" recognizes internal differences within them and even uses the term "a minority within a minority" for double-marginalized groups, such as groups falling into two designated minority statuses (e.g. Black

Jews in the US, Gold 2003), or into several demographic segments (e.g. age and gender groups) of one designated minority group (e.g. non-heterosexual Muslims in Britain, Yip 2004). My work draws upon and contributes to both literatures. It focuses on a "national minority" (Bulgarian Turks) by examining the internal segmentation within the minority and the effects of this on the members of certain segments. In this respect, my work differs from the "minority group" literature, since I examine both the categorical distinctions (e.g. regional affiliations and demographics) and substantive distinctions (e.g. religious affiliations) that imply a structural, patterned, and institutionalized hierarchy within the minority.

Many works have examined how nationalist projects pretend to homogenize the majority nations (e.g. Gellner 1983, Hobsbawn 1983, Anderson 1983), and a few academic works have focused on homogenizing representations of ethnic minorities by the majority nationalisms. Mary Neuburger states that Bulgarian majority nationalism has been formed through representations of Turkish Muslims as the ultimate outsiders, deemed the "Orient within" (2004). Minority nationalisms have also contributed to such homogenizations. For instance, Bulgarian Turks have often been portrayed as Sunnis, not Alevis, in Bulgarian Turk memoirs (e.g. Raci Efendi 2004, Akseki 2000, Topaloğlu 2006, Kurt 2006, Türker 2003, Gülmen 2006, Erdi 2009) and academic works (e.g. Memişoğlu 1992, Şimşir 2009). Some Bulgarian Turkish intellectuals mention Alevi Bulgarian Turks, but only to discuss the general minority-majority problems (e.g. Kılıç 1993). Alevi Bulgarian Turks have been mentioned in research on regional folklore (Taceman 1995) or Alevi ethnography (Georgieva 1998), but broader context is ignored. Grammatikova, an Alevi Bulgarian Turkish scholar, is an exception in recognizing the broader context by seeing the minority within a minority status of Alevi Turks in Bulgaria (2000). She

leaves this as an unexplained statement, however, neglecting to examine how Alevi communities have coped with this situation.

Marginalization of minority sects by a religious majority has been studied, such as Protestants in Catholic Europe (Coakley 2009), Catholics in Protestant Europe (Evans 1999), Sunnis in Shia Iran (Sanasarian 2000), and Kurdish Alevis in Sunni-dominant Turkey (Shankland 1999, 2003). These studies focus on majority-minority relations, while my work focuses on relations within a minority, between its two sects. Alevis in Bulgaria remain the most disfavored segment of a disfavored community: the state-recognized "traditional" religion is Orthodox Christianity, though Sunni Islam is also recognized, as is Judaism. For those Alevi Bulgarian Turks who migrated to Turkey the situation is not better, since Sunni Islam has been the only form institutionalized in Turkey even under the officially secular Republic, and even more so with the accession to power of the AKP since 2000 (Harmanşah, Tanyeri-Erdemir and Hayden 2010).

Some national minorities in the newly formed nation-states have remained in territories adjacent to the nation-state of their own group. Earlier literature has assumed an unproblematic relation between national minorities and their external homeland nations, since the former were seen as "fragments" of the latter (Broz 1927). Yet recent literature points out collective externalization of these groups following their migrations to homeland states. Greek migrants from Anatolia to Greece after 1922 were seen as "refugees," not Greeks (Karakasidou 1997) as the Turkish migrants from Greece were externalized in Turkey (Clark 2006); Armenian migrants from the Middle East to Soviet Armenia in 1946-47 were seen as "outsiders" (Pattie 2004); Turks migrating from Bulgaria to Turkey were seen as "kin-nationals" (Poulton 1997) or

"Bulgarians" (Vasileva 1992, Parla 2003). Alevi Bulgarian Turks are structurally and socially double marginalized in the external homeland state, Turkey.

Some scholars see such minorities with dual affiliations as instances of emergence of hyphenated identities in their residential states, such as Palestinian-Israelis (Hammack 2010); or in their external homeland states after migrations, such as Bulgarian Turks in Turkey (Parla 2006). Scholars valorized such conditions of hyphenated identities, since they presumably challenge the rigid distinctions between two communities. This approach risks seeing hybrid identities as themselves homogenous (Ewing 1998) and homogenizes the minority by presuming a single and shared trajectory for all of its members. This reduces the potential of recognizing more complicated experiences of a minority's varying segments, and refrains from explaining to what extent, how, and when such minorities' dual affiliations are experienced by its members. Yet, claims to be hybrid may be a strategy utilized to ground some communities' authenticity claims over others, as "autochthonous hybrids" (Ballinger 2003). With these issues in mind, my work emphasizes the differences between the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' experiences and those of their Sunni counterparts.

Other scholars have explained the complex situation of such minorities along structuralist models, such as the "trapped minorities" model of Rabinowitz (2001). These models recognize the predicaments of these minorities due to their potentially troubling dual affiliations in two nation-states. However, they do not take into account possible manifestations of agency by the members of such minorities even when their structural entrapment continues. Again in contrast, this work argues that even though the conditions of oppression persist, members of an oppressed community may show a degree of agency, as indicated by the experiences of Bulgarian Turkish minority and specifically Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

3.3 NATIONAL MINORITIES AND A NOTION OF COLLECTIVE AGENCY

Studies of social movements have examined collective actions of groups by focusing on actors and interest groups, their motivations and behaviors, their social agendas, and the structural availabilities for them (see Edelman 2001). Such perspectives reduce collective agency to the context of groups' formally organized movements. Other studies have considered the unorganized, everyday activities by the members of the oppressed groups as manifestations of agency, such as Scott's "weapons of the weak" model. This model considers Malaysian peasants' subtle acts of showing discontent as manifestations of agency and frames them as "everyday forms of resistance" (1985). Yet such approaches equate any manifestation of agency with resistance (Ahearn 2001) and reduce collective agency of groups into a sum of random, sporadic acts by individuals. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' experiences contradict both approaches because Alevis have displayed unorganized yet patterned collective actions and agency in pursuing the agenda of the community's survival.

In this study, I utilize the term agency as the capacity to act and pursue desired ends, as an alternative to a liberal individualist notion of agency, which portrays agency as an attribute of individuals (Ortner 1996), and I examine the minority members' collective capacity to act to pursue desired ends through organized or unorganized, but more or less patterned behaviors. I focus on agency as a "collective," "interactional," and "intersubjective" social action possibility (Bucholtz and Hall 2005).

This notion of agency emphasizes that minority members' collective capacity to act is not unconstrained but "socioculturally mediated" (Ahearn 2001). I examine to what extent, when and how double minorities may find spaces of maneuver to cope with their environment or even to achieve certain desired ends for collective betterment. On a broader level, I examine to what

extent, how and when a marginalized community may develop and manifest a degree of agency even though the conditions that caused its member's marginalization persist.

I employ the notion of "distributed agency" to acknowledge that agency may be distributed among several actors in the society (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). This helps me understand that Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks' and their different segments may have varying availabilities, and spaces to maneuver, in different locations in Bulgaria and Turkey. Furthermore, I discuss the patterns of the distributed agency within segments of Alevi Turks by answering to what extent, how, and when some segments of the minority may, or may not, have been granted space to maneuver as changes in macro political, social, and economic conditions may create new and different possibilities or burdens for segments of minorities.

Finally, I underline the scope of minorities' agency, meaning what this capacity to act may lead to when this capacity is fully realized, also conditioned by the structural factors that place minorities into disadvantageous positions in the larger society. To discuss all of this, I utilize Michel DeCertau's distinction of "tactics" from "strategies" in his examination of everyday level practices (1984). According to DeCerteau, "tactics" are the forms of "calculated [everyday level] actions" by the weaker segments of the society, who can only maneuver within already existing power relations that place them into marginal position, i.e. "within the enemy territory" (37), as opposed to "strategies" as "calculations (or manipulations) of power relationships that become possible [by] subjects with will and power," (35-36) i.e. the powerful segments of the populations who can change the rules of the game. I show that Alevi Bulgarian Turks' collective agency, as capacity to act, is "tactical" in two senses: first, their collective actions are limited to the existing forms of asymmetrical relations and second, these collective actions do not challenge existing power asymmetries in the society but only cope with the

burdens thus imposed on the community. My work considers agency as "socioculturally mediated acts" (Ahearn 2001) and considers Alevis' dissimulation as a tacticedintends for not changing the social structure that marginalize them, but provides venues to cope with this marginalization.

3.4 BORDERS AND FRONTIERS

The terms "frontier" and "border" are often used inconsistently. In international relations and international law, the term "frontier" generally means an internationally recognized state boundary, which is referred to as a "border" in sociology, anthropology and geography. In this study the term "border" refers to the demarcated boundaries of states, while the term "frontier" refers to cultural and territorial zones distinguished from other territories of the state but implying contact between different "cultures" (Bailey 1957), or between particular "relations, behaviors, and traits" (Alvarez and Collier 1994). Some scholars portray frontiers as states' peripheral zones, signifying physical margins as well as lack of incorporation to the state, as prone to lawless state-violence (Ron 2003) while others, such as Das and Poole, state that the margins of a state are sites where normal (not exceptional) modalities of state power are exercised, so that frontiers are sites of unpredictability of state behavior (Das and Poole 2004). This uses of the term "frontier" emphasizes the distinction of territorial zones from the larger wholes containing them and therefore assumes a degree of internal homogeneity within frontier zones and non-frontier zones in a state. For instance, *Deliorman* in Northeast Bulgaria and *Eastern Rodops* in South Bulgaria are frontier regions bordering Greece and they are distinct from the rest of Bulgaria in terms of high spatial concentration of the Turkish minority.

Furthermore, both frontier regions have a distinct history in relation to borders: Deliorman region become a part of Bulgaria in 1878 while Eastern Rodops was incorporated into the state in 1913.

My fieldwork data come from two provinces in these two frontiers: Razgrad in the Northeast and Kardjali in the South; and three frontiers in Turkey: Bursa, Turkish Thrace, and a neighborhood in İstanbul where Bulgarian Turkish migrants are concentrated (See Figure 3-1). These frontiers are also internally divided into sub-frontiers, of concentrations of minority sub-groups: Alevis and Sunnis. In Bulgaria's two frontiers, territorially-marked senses of the selves have developed among Bulgarian Turks. Alevis and Sunnis from the Northeast are considered *Deliormanli,* and those from the South are the *Rodoplu*. These regional affiliations are also shared by both Alevis and Sunnis at the same frontiers as opposed to Alevis and Sunnis at the other frontier, and they have continued to be valid in Turkey even decades after the last migrations.
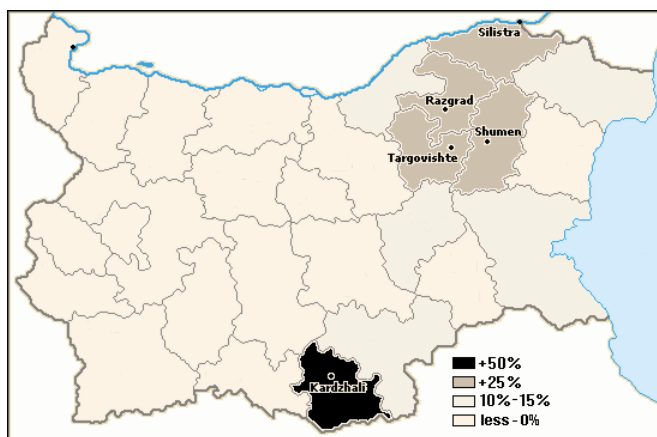
Figure 3-1 Distribution of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Turkoj_en_Bulgario.png)
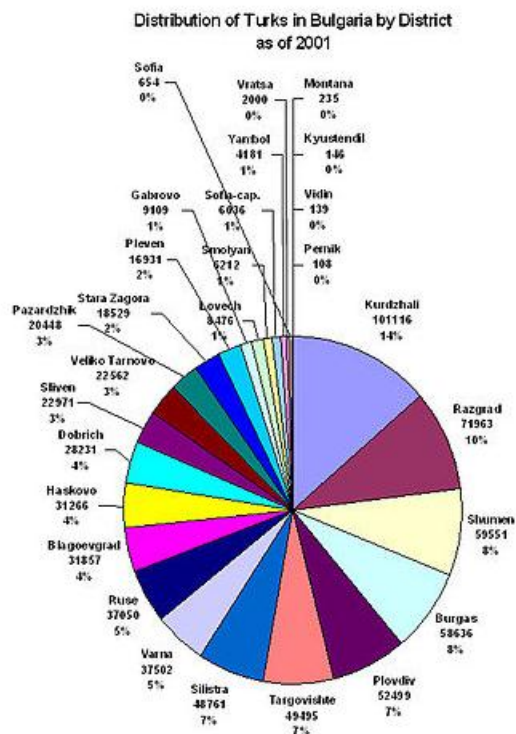
Figure 3-2 Distribution of Turks in Bulgaria according to the 2001 census (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:2001_Distribution_of_Turks_in_Bulgaria_by_District.jpg)

The regional identities of Bulgarian Turks have remained salient for several reasons. First, historical processes have kept Northeastern and Southern Bulgarian Turks apart. Under Ottoman rule, present-day Razgrad was politically, economically and socially affiliated to Vidin and Ruse while Kardjali was affiliated to Dimetoka and then Edirne. Even after the independence and unification of Bulgaria, these connections had continued, as stated by my informants. Under socialism, the Bulgarian state utilized diversified political, social, and economic policies in the two frontiers where Turks were concentrated, similar to Hetcher's (1975) "internal colonialism" framework, which discusses the British state's different policies in different regions with minorities. Thus, an economic discrepancy appeared between the Northeast and South. Also, socialist period policies, such as controlling and restricting migration and mobility, fortified the regional identities. For instance, even today it is impossible to find a

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public bus route directly connecting Razgrad and Kardjali. Also, in Turkey, many migrant organizations either prioritize regional identities explicitly (e.g. by using names referring to regions or provinces) or tacitly (e.g. by preferring certain regional NGOs).

The salience of the Bulgarian Turks' regional affiliations complicates, yet does not trivialize, the significance of the religious affiliations among the Bulgarian Turks. Alevis in Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria had remained disconnected from each other until very recently. Alevis in the North still see Demir Baba and Huseyin Baba as their major saints while Alevis in the South see Otman Baba and Elmali Baba as their major saints. Also, *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s in each frontier are differentiated in terms of their beliefs, rituals and symbols. Yet their common Alevi identity still prevails over the regional identities in Bulgaria; a Northern Alevi feels more affiliated with a Southern Alevi than with a Northern Sunni. These relations are also carried into the settlement zones in Turkey following migrations. My fieldwork shows that Alevi migrants from north and south form their own distinct religious communities even if they live in the same neighborhoods or villages in Turkey. Despite these differentiations, "the Alevi migrant" identity prevails over the generic migrant identity. An Alevi Bulgarian Turkish migrant generally does not intermarry with a Sunni Bulgarian Turkish migrant or even a local Alevi Turk in Turkey.

The specific demographic configurations in each frontier led to Alevi Bulgarian Turks' varying tactics in relating to other groups in the larger society. In Razgrad, Bulgarian Turks form a local administrative and demographic minority in relation to the Bulgarian majority, while in Kardjali Bulgarian Turks form the local demographic majority and hold power in the local government. These different majority-minority configurations in the two frontiers in Bulgaria have resulted in two different senses of "being a minority" for Bulgarian Turks. In Razgrad,

Bulgarian Turks are an anxious minority feeling threatened by aggressive Bulgarian nationalism, while in Kardjali, Bulgarian Turks form a confident minority aggressively seeking increased political and social rights. Under these circumstances, Alevis in Razgrad have become recognized as a community with a separate identity, the "*Kızılbaş,*" which is distinct from "Turkish" (meaning Sunni) and "Bulgarian" communities. Alevis in Razgrad, despite their small numbers, are thus the third element ("mediator") in a triad in which "it is important for [two antagonistic elements] to win over even the mediator" (Simmel 1950: 147). Yet Alevis in Kardjali cannot form a community with a strong and separate identity because there are not two antagonistic parties in the community like there are in Razgrad; Sunni Turks are both the demographic and local administrative majority. In this respect, Alevis in Razgrad have dissimilated their collective identity, while Alevis in Kardjali have often dissimulated as (Sunni) "Turks".

Even after the Bulgarian Turks' waves of migrations to Turkey, the mismatch between the political borders and the ethnic frontiers has not reached a closure. Those who remain in Bulgaria continue to be a disfavored minority, and those who migrated to Turkey are still regarded as outsiders there. My fieldwork shows that many Northeastern and Southern Bulgarian Turks met with Bulgarian Turks from the other frontier for the first time following their resettlement in "the migrant neighborhoods" of towns and cities in Turkey. Particularly in Bursa, migrants incipiently formed a Bulgarian Turkish community distinct from local Turks in Turkey and other migrants. Therefore, the distinctions between migrants from Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria are often invisible at first glance. In reality, members of each group have formed their own separate neighborhoods, unless they felt forced into settlement in hybrid migrant complexes constructed by the state and local administrations.

Migration and resettlement has caused further marginalization of Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Turkey. They have formed small Alevi migrant enclaves, which often are kept closed to local Alevis and which are further internally divided in terms of sub-groups (i.e. *Babai*, *Bektaşi* or *Musahipli*) and in terms of original locations (i.e. the Northeast or South). On the one hand, Alevi migrants who were settled in the migrant neighborhoods of the heavily Sunni dominant cities (e.g. Bursa) could not take on an Alevi collective identity, and have refused to connect with local Alevis. Instead, they have taken on the "migrant" identity in relation to Sunni migrants and "Turkish" identity in relation to local Turks. Thus, they dissolved as a community. Some few individuals have assimilated into Sunnism, while the majority continues defining themselves as Alevis in private, even though they cannot practice Alevism. On the other hand, Alevis who managed to form their own villages (e.g. Subasi in Yalova, Cesmeli in Corlu) or managed to resettle in Alevi safe-haven neighborhoods in cosmopolitan cities (e.g. Firuzkoy in İstanbul) have managed to keep the community alive and continued practicing Alevism, but dissimulate as Sunnis in public. Furthermore, my fieldwork shows that migrant Alevis who formed their own separate and active religious community do not conduct their religious ceremonies with local Alevis yet they form social connections with the local Alevis' organizations (e.g. in Turkish Thrace and İstanbul), while migrant Alevis who could not form their own religious community in Turkey (e.g. in Bursa).

3.5   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I elaborated on the concept of dissimulation in relation to the concepts of dissimilation and assimilation, as a form of collective agency utilized by religiously-marked

communities when they face persecutions or severe discrimination. I argued that dissimulation has often been ignored in the social science literature on minority-majority relations, although the concept reveals a specific configuration of this relation in sharply divided societies: a minority's members hide their identity and even pretend to be members of the majority group in order to ensure survival of their community. More importantly, dissimulation indicates the robustness of inter-communal differences and boundaries while it helps minorities to preserve their communal identity. Further, to introduce the specific minority-majority configuration in my research, I discussed the Bulgarian Turks' marginalization as a minority community in Bulgaria and migrant community in Turkey. I then utilized the concept of "a minority within a minority" to identify Alevi Bulgarian Turks' situation within the Bulgarian Turkish minority and in relation to the two majority nations in Bulgaria and Turkey. Finally, I argued that dissimulation is a viable collective tactic for Alevi Bulgaria Turks, as their double-marginalization prevails in both Bulgaria and Turkey. Alevi Bulgarian Turks have dissimulated to protect their group identity when they could not directly emphasize their distinctiveness (i.e. dissimilate) under the threat of persecution, and neither could they blend in (i.e. assimilate), even if they wanted to, as their original distinct identity may always be recalled by outsiders.

4.0   HISTORY, HISTORICITY, HISTORIOGRAPHY

This chapter shows the links between the current and historical invisibilities of the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' in both countries. The "History" section discusses the developments that mark the lives of all Bulgarian Turks but have led to different trajectories for Alevis and Sunnis. Historical configurations led to the common tendency to identify the Bulgarian Turkish group identity with Sunni Islam, rendering Alevi Bulgarian Turks structurally invisible. The "Historiography" section examines the representations of Bulgarian Turks in the Bulgarian and Turkish academic literatures, which often hold conflicting opinions on Bulgarian Turks, but coincide in actively excluding Alevis from the Bulgarian Turkish community. "Historicity" examines the historical consciousness of Bulgarian Turks by analyzing family histories, memoirs and village histories to argue that these accounts contributed to Alevi invisibility in different ways. Sunni authors refuse to associate Alevism with Bulgarian Turkish identity, even if they recognize the presence of Alevis in the community. Alevi authors, for their part, do not explicitly mention Alevis and Alevism when they hint at their Alevi identity to insiders, which is consistent with dissimulation practices.

4.1   HISTORY

Historical border formation processes between the Bulgarian state and the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic led to the transformation of ethnic Turks into a distinct community in both countries: the Bulgarian Turks. Bulgarian Turks remained a disfavored minority in Bulgaria as remnants from the Ottoman rule, and a distant "kin-nation" to Turkey (Poulton 1997). Following waves of mass migrations, the Bulgarian Turks were seen as "migrants" and even as "Bulgarians" in Turkey (Parla 2006). Despite these externally-defined homogenizations, Bulgarian Turks are divided into Alevis and Sunnis. This internal differentiation among Bulgarian Turks has been subsumed by larger majority-minority tensions, mainly those between Bulgarians and Turks in Bulgaria and between locals and migrants in Turkey. Alevi Bulgarian Turks thereby become doubly-marginalized and remain so today; they are a disadvantaged minority within a minority in Bulgaria, and an invisible segment of a migrant community in Turkey. In this section I examine five periods of major political change in Bulgaria and Turkey that have influenced policies and practices regarding Bulgarian Turks. I argue that these changes did not influence Bulgarian Turks uniformly, but created different experiences and differentiated status for Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

4.1.1   Principality in Bulgaria, Monarchy in the Ottoman Empire (1878-1908)

In 1878, the Ottoman-Russia War led to the formation of an autonomous Bulgarian Principality and a semi-autonomous Eastern Rumelian State. The political and economic power in these territories shifted suddenly from Muslims to Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. Initial changes were symbolic, such as destruction or transformation of Ottoman administrative buildings and Muslim

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religious sites, renaming the streets, villages, and towns, and annulling the legal significance of neighborhoods based on ethno-religious affiliation (Crampton 1990: 47-56). The Principality and the Empire's "conceptual and administrative entanglement" persisted due to the presence of a large number of Turks in the territory of the Principality (Neuburger 2004: 35). Turks for their part were still displaying loyalty to the Empire, by identifying themselves as "Ottoman citizens" in the 1880 census (Crampton 1990) resisting learning Bulgarian, and using the Turkish language in official documents (Şimşir 1986: 46). Only after 1885, with the unification of the Principality and Eastern Rumelia, were Bulgarian regulations to sever the ties between the Empire and Turks in Bulgaria enforced. Bulgarian Turks' rights were defined within the context of the tensions between the Bulgarian national state and the Ottoman Empire. The minority regime for Turks was dominated by Sunnis, as was the Empire, and led the affiliation of Bulgarian Turkish group identity with Sunni Islam. This led to the structural invisibility and exclusion of Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

In the meantime, the successful uprisings in the Balkans led to a shift in Ottoman state policy to Islamism (Karpat 2002: 140), meaning that Islamic identity was projected as the binding force for Muslims from Ottoman territories and territories that were formerly ruled by the Ottoman Empire (Karpat 2002: 133). Thus, all treaties with the new states included an article permitting Muslims in these states to praise the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph during Friday Prayers (Karpat 2002: 133). In addition, the fatwa of 1880 encouraged Muslims to migrate from territories that were no longer ruled by the Ottomans, to Ottoman territories (Karpat 2002: 137-8), triggering mass migrations from Bulgaria, among other places. From 1880-1884, the number of Turks in the Principality and Eastern Rumelia dropped from 802,597 to 601,999 (Turan 2000:

83). Sunni and Alevi migrants dealt diffently with the Ottoman policies of Islamism, as examined in the next section.

Minority in Bulgaria: The Turkish Muslims were legally recognized as a minority for the first time in 1878 at the Berlin Treaty, in return for the international recognition of the Principality (Dayıoğlu 2005: 88). The first constitution in 1879 declared Orthodox Christianity "the predominant faith" while guaranteeing "other believers' rights" (Zhelyazkova 2002: 12), defining for the first time Orthodox Christianity as the majority religion and Islam as a minority one. The laws on organizations for Turkish Muslims introduced the institutionalization of Sunni Islam as the only legally recognized Muslim sect in Bulgaria. Thus, the Principality period was the turning point in which Alevi Bulgarian Turks became a minority within a minority.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks also became invisible in the minority regime. For instance, the 1880 law only recognized organizations that were affiliated with Sunni religious sites (i.e. mosques commissions), and gave recognition to Sunni administrative leaders (*mufti*s) and the Sunni spiritual authority, the Seyhulislam in İstanbul. In contrast, traditional religious organizations for Alevis had been in *cem* communities under Alevi religious leaders (*baba*s) in relation to Alevi spiritual centers in Bulgaria, Greece, and Anatolia. Alevi social organizations thus became legally unrecognized. In addition, Alevis became subjected to Sunni institutions: *müftülük*s were granted administrative powers over not only mosques, but also Alevi *türbe*s, and waqfs, and over all Turkish schools.

Later regulations reflected struggles between the Bulgarian and the Ottoman states for influence over Bulgarian Turks. For instance, the 1880 law defines *müftü*s as Bulgarian state personnel appointed by the Ottoman Seyhulislam, while the 1889 law specified they were only to be appointed by the Bulgarian prince (Günay 2006: 10). In 1884, when Bulgarian schools were

made state schools, Turkish schools became private schools with compulsory Bulgarian language education and *müftülük*-controlled classes on Islam (Şimşir 1986:33). In 1908, changes were made to increase Bulgarian state control over the minority schools. However, the minority legal structure that prioritizes Sunni Islam has remained intact.

Migrants in the Ottoman Empire: In this period, the migrations of about one million Balkan Muslims (Şimşir 1986, Ekici 2004) caused a major demographic change towards religious homogenization in Ottoman society. The Muslim to non-Muslim ratio changed from 62% to 75% (Bali 1999). This change, together with the Ottoman state policy of Islamization, compelled migrants to identify with a politicized notion of Islam, while Islam had originally been a cultural identity marker for them in Balkan societies (Karpat 2002: 136). All Turkish migrants were negatively influenced, since they moved closer to the Ottoman center, which promoted a politicized form of Sunni Islam.

In the Ottoman Empire of the late 19th century, Sunni Islamist policies threatened local Alevis, who were no less invisible than in earlier periods when they had been classified under the "Muslim" millet. They remained so after the Tanzimat Edict, even though the edict recognized other groups in new millets (Poulton 1993). The Alevis faced systematized state policies prompting Sunnification, such as the construction of Sunni mosques and appointment of Sunni imams in Alevi villages, and were even subjected to attacks in the eastern provinces (Kehl-Bodrogi: 56). Scholars highlight the mass scale conversions that occurred among Alevis in this period (e.g. Çamuroğlu 1997, 1998), but have not considered the dissimulation of Alevis. For instance, the memoir of Fahrettin Erdoğan (1954) has a section explaining his escape from İstanbul to Bulgaria. He narrates an event from his childhood in İstanbul in the 1890s: a random stranger in the street threatened to report him to the local police for not fasting during Ramadan

(Erdoğan 1954: 9-11). The stranger turned out to be a "Ramadan detective acting according to the will of the Sultan-Caliph," yet the author managed to escape with the help of neighbors. The author never states his identity as being Alevi. After all he was then a parliamentarian from a Sunni city and does not refer to any sects throughout the book. Yet he also hints at his identity to insiders: his Alevi-only birth village and his family name recalling his Alevi lineage.

The burden was heavier on Alevi migrants to Turkey than on local Alevis. Migrants had been forced to migrate from Bulgaria because of their ethno-religious identity, but they found themselves marginalized by the increasingly conservative Sunni Muslim polity. Kemal Karpat cites an attempt by the *tariqa* leaders of Sunni and Alevi migrants to replace the existing Sultan with someone more religiously conservative (Karpat 2002: 703). Karpat explains this event as an example of politicization of immigrants' identities towards a "fundamentalist movement," as they were "traumatized by the refugee experience" and as they put the blame on "the incompetency of the leaders" in "fulfillment of Islamic ideals" (703). Yet he seems to assume an unproblematic adjustment of Alevi *tarikat* into the Islamic political consciousness. Even though there is insufficient evidence to examine the intentions of these Alevi migrants, they may well have beeen dissimulating as a way to reconcile their "traumatization as refugees" while interacting with Sunni authorities in the already extremely politicized Sunni environment of the resettlement locations.

4.1.2   Kingdom and Republic in Bulgaria, the Monarchy in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1923)

In 1908, Bulgaria declared full independence and established a monarchical regime, while the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed a constitutional monarchy. From 1908-1923 both states faced

major changes in demographics and political regimes because of major wars. The First Balkan War of 1912 led to military confrontations between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire, leading to the mass murder and migration of Bulgarian Turks. In 1913, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire signed the İstanbul Treaty, defining the border between them and establishing a treaty regarding a "population exchange" of Bulgarians and Turks between the two states. Both countries were allied with the Central Powers in 1914; and then, as among the defeated in World War I, were forced to sign treaties that led to massive territorial losses. In 1919, Bulgaria signed the Neuilly Treaty, which was the beginning of a period of severe domestic instability that ended in the military coup of 1923. In 1920, the Ottoman Empire signed the Sevres Treaty, which led to the occupation of some of its territories by European powers and initiated the Turkish Independence Movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. This movement was a political and military success, forming parliament in 1920, defeating the Greek invasion in 1922, and proclaiming a republican regime in 1923.

Minority in Bulgaria The independent Bulgarian state targeted all minorities except Bulgarian Turks, in the interest of ethnic and religious homogenization. In 1908-1914, Pomaks were denigrated for having converted to Christianity (Dayıoğlu 2005, 225), and after 1914, non-Bulgarian Orthodox Christians in newly-occupied Thrace, Macedonia, and Dobrudzha were targeted for Bulgarianization (Neuburger: 42-43). Bulgarian Turks were exempt owing to the minority rights regime defined in the international treaties, such as the 1910 İstanbul Protocol. Even so, the status of the Turkish minority deteriorated from 1909-1919 because of wars and general societal violence against the Turks. From 1919-23 their situation improved under the rule of the Agrarian Party, a Bulgarian party that took the ideological position of "the estatist organization of the peasants" (Daskalov 2011, 94) and therefore supported both Bulgarian and

Turkish peasants (Şimşir 1986: 55). This party also introduced social policies for Turks, by supporting Turkish schools, opening new high schools for Turkish teachers and for *müftü*s (*Nüvvab*) (Memişoğlu 1989: 119). Turkish sports clubs, unions, and newspapers were also allowed.

While there were minor differences between the minority regime of the independence period and that from the principality period, the independence period policies remained Sunni-biased and the structural invisibilities of Alevis were reinforced. One novel characteristic of the period concerned organizations for Muslim-Turks: the Chief *Müftü* position was initiated as an elected position for coordinating the regional *müftü*s and to mediate between Bulgarian authorities and the Seyhulislam in İstanbul. By 1913, with the İstanbul Peace Treaty, the Bulgarian authorities' control over the activities of the *müftülük*s increased (Dayıoğlu 2005: 248). This development is important since the Chief *Müftülük* position still exists, and since the rules for electing the Chief *Müftü* have often been violated by the Bulgarian state, even today. For instance, the Chief *Müftü* was elected in 1910 and yet appointed by the state only in 1914-1919; elected again in 1919-1928 (Dayıoğlu 2005: 250), yet appointed only after 1928. Some scholars see this as a major problem in representation, because the appointed muftis "could not be the leaders of the Muslim-Turkish minority in Bulgaria" (Dayıoğlu 2005: 250). Yet I would argue that the problem regarding representation for Turkish-Muslims in Bulgaria has been more acute: even if the Chief *Müftü*s have been elected, they cannot be seen as the leaders of the Muslim-Turks, since they were elected by the regional muftis who had been elected by the members of the Sunni Mosque commissions. Alevi Turks have been underrepresented in the existing legal organization system, not because Alevis were a minority in numerical sense among

Bulgarian Turks and a Sunni leader would thus always be elected, but because Alevis were from the beginning outside the election system, which was designed to include only Sunni institutions.

Migrants in the Ottoman Empire By 1908, Ottoman state policy took another turn after the announcement of a constitutional monarchy and the Committee for Union and Progress government (CUP). The ideology promoting the millet system as the cementing force in the empire, *Ottomanism,* had already lost its power due to the success of the independence movements in the Balkans. Also, *Islamism* had lost its power because of revolts by Muslim communities like the Albanians and Arabs. From 1908-1923, the CUP implemented policies for "keeping the unity of the empire under the domination of a Turkish national core," and for promoting "a mixture of Turkism and Ottomanism" (Űlker 2005). Turkish migrants were favored over other groups.

The CUP started instituting policies for the Turkification of Anatolia (Űngör 2008) following the consequences of the Balkan Wars, which had led to migrations of Bulgarian Turks and Turks in Ottoman Thrace to the Ottoman center (Halaçoğlu 1994). 115,883 Turks migrated to the Ottoman center at that time (Halaçoğlu 1994: 63). In 1913, a population exchange treaty between Bulgaria and the Empire displaced 48,750 Turks from Bulgaria and 46,764 Bulgarians from the Ottoman Empire (Özgür: 88, Űlker 2005). This treaty was a turning point as it was the first social engineering project initiated by the CUP, and the project continued into the era of Republican Turkey (Baer 2004: 690, Dündar 2001, 2010). It excluded certain groups in the territories of the empire while it included some migrants (Űlker 2005, Dündar 2001, 2010). For instance, non-Muslims in Anatolia, including Bulgarians, were either relocated or deported, while Muslim migrants were resettled to parts of Anatolia that were dominated by non-Muslims (Űlker: 625). It was intended that non-Turkish Muslim migrants (e.g. Pomaks) and local groups

(e.g. Kurds and Arabs) would assimilate to Turkish identity (Űlker 2005: 628). During WWI, Greeks and Armenians were "relocated" or deported as well (Dündar 2001, 2010, Űngör 2008), in some cases being also the victims of mass killings. Bulgarian Turkish migrants were welcomed as "Turks and Muslims" and settled into areas with low population density, such as war-ravaged Edirne (Halaçoğlu 1994: 117) or areas with a low Muslim to non-Muslim population ratio, such as Balikesir, Adana, Mersin, Konya and Izmir (Halaçoğlu 1994: 118).

Alevis in Anatolia were positively viewed by the CUP, which commissioned a report defining Alevis as "the true Turks." Yet Alevis' approach to the CUP government was not uniform. Some scholars see Alevis and the CUP as natural allies since Alevis had suffered under the Sunnification policies of Abdulhamid II, and the CUP advocated secular politics (Kehl-Bodrogi: 56-7, Çamuroğlu 1997). Others refrain from such generalizations, stating that the CUP appealed to Bektaşism but saw Alevism as a "sectarian dogma" (Bozarslan 2003: 5), which is strikingly similar to the Empire's earlier policies that supported *Bektaşi*sm among Janissaries but showed hostility to Alevi-*Kızılbaş*. Other writers point to the different experiences of Turkish and Kurdish Alevis. Kurdish Alevis were witness to the CUP-ordered deportations of their Armenian neighbors, while Kurdish Sunni tribes were also involved in the mass deportations of Armenians when the Kurdish Alevis were not directly involved in these acts. Turkish Alevis were not aware of these events (Keiser 2003). These differences persisted during the Turkish Independence War against Greek forces as well. Some writers emphasize Alevi support for the war, e.g. *Çelebi*s (Öz 1989), on the grounds that the leader of the movement, Mustafa Kemal, was seen as a successor of the CUP (Çamuroğlu 1991), while others underline the reaction from Kurdish Alevis (e.g. Koçkiri) who demanded autonomy (Kehl-Bodrogi: 59-60, Azak 2010: 146). Therefore, despite their positive perception by the CUP government, the migration and

resettlement experiences of Alevis depended on whether they resettled to Kurdish or Turkish Alevi-dominant zones, and whether they were *Bektaşi* or *Babai* Alevis.

4.1.3   Totalitarianism in Bulgaria and the Single-Party Republic in Turkey (1923-1944)

From 1923-1944, Bulgaria faced political instability domestically due to polarization between the agrarian-communist and anti-communist right-wing fronts, as well as the military coups in 1923 and 1934. Bulgaria also pursued a revisionist foreign policy, intending to re-establish the borders of the "Great Bulgaria" as drawn at the San Stefano Treaty of 1878 but rejected by the European Great Powers and replaced by the Berlin Treaty in that same year. This foreign policy led to Bulgaria's alliance with the Axis Powers in WWII. It granted passage through its territories to the German army, leading the Soviet Union to declare war and ultimately to occupy Bulgaria in September 1944. These developments triggered more mass migration of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey.

Meanwhile in Turkey, a republican regime was proclaimed and consolidated under the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (RPP), 1923-1945. The early republican period was marked by radical changes towards westernization and secularization through several policies: closure of religious schools, prohibition against displaying religious markers in public, closure of Sufi Orders and *tekkes,* abolishment of the caliphate, initiation of a new constitution in 1924, introduction of female suffrage, a law separating religious and political affairs, the introduction of secular civil and criminal codes in place of Sharia in 1926, and the implementation of the first modern census in 1927. the removal from the constitution of the clause stating that the "official religion in Turkey is Islam," the adaptation to a new alphabet based on the Latin script in 1928, a requirement that mosque prayers be said in Turkish rather

than Arabic in 1933 and the abolishment of religious titles in 1934. The new regime alienated the former elite, religious communities and non-Turkish ethnic groups. In the 1920s the RPP imprisoned or exiled 150 members of the former elite (*Yuzellilikler*), the participants of the Kurdish nationalist and Islamist Sheik Said Revolt, and those involved in a plot against Ataturk and the Menemen Incident, a violent and reactionary uprising instigated by the forbidden Naksibendi orders (Özoğlu 2011).

The RPP promoted a particular notion of secularism, which was not a mandate about the separation of state and religion, but rather enforced the state's strict control over religion (Shankland 1999, 2003). The state's control over religion was implemented by institutionalizing Sunni Islam as the only legally recognized Islamic confession and by abolishing the popular and "heterodox" Islamic organizations (Kehl-Bodgori: 64). Therefore, the RPP's control over Sunni Islam was detrimental to Alevism (Azak 2010: 144). First, the *Bektaşi* order was banned, though its leaders secretly continued *Bektaşi* rituals (Azak: 144); and then, in the 1930s and 1940s, the *Bektaşi* belief was declared superstitious (Kehl-Bodgori: 64). These developments caused the migration of *Bektaşi baba*s' to Balkan countries, especially Albania and Bulgaria. During my fieldwork, I visited the *türbe* of Haydar Baba, a *Bektaşi* Baba who migrated from Turkey to Svestari (Razgrad). Haydar Baba reinvigorated what had been a faded belief in the local *Derviş* during the forced-conversions by Nakshibendi orders under Ottoman rule. Local Alevis still refer him as "Kemal'in Kaçkini", literally "a runaway from [Mustafa] Kemal."

Despite these developments, Alevis supported the new Republican regime, at first because they believed that secular policies would grant them religious freedoms (Baer 2004: 702, Kehl-Bodrogi: 64), and later as they sought upward mobility and cultural acceptance (Neyzi: 113). Also, *Bektaşi*s attributed mystical qualities to Kemal Ataturk, some even seeing him as the

reincarnation of Ali, and accepted his policies despite their negative influences, such as the closure of the *tekke*s' (Öz 1990). In 1935, the Dersim Revolt led to the massacre of Kurdish Alevis, which estranged other Alevis. Western Alevis, however, accepted official portrayals of the Revolt as reactionary and an anti-republican mobilization.

Minority in Bulgaria: 1923-1944, the Bulgarian Turkish minority was adversely affected by the Great Depression, political polarization, and the military coups in Bulgaria of 1923 and 1934. Despite the existence of a legal minority rights framework, there was structural violation of the rights of the minority in the 1930s. Many minority schools were closed or transformed into Bulgarian schools; the graduates of Bulgarian and Turkish schools were assigned an unequal status; and Turkish teachers were accused of espionage (Memişoğlu 1989: 16-20). Minority organizations were shut down and the participants of the National Congress were tracked down, while the Turan organization, the umbrella organization for the local sports organizations by the Turkish minority, was closed for irredentism, since the name "Turan" stands for homeland of Turks and implies the unification of the lands inhabited by Turks in the world according to Pan-Turkist ideology. The Bulgarian Turks faced sporadic societal violence, with attacks by paramilitary organizations such as the *Rodna Zastita* (the Defence of the Fatherland)*,* Macedonia, and Thrace Committees (Memişoğlu 1989: 14-15) as well as beatings, attacks, arson, and torture (Dayıoğlu 2005: 258-9). In 1933 *Rodna Zashtita* members attacked to the Razgrad Turkish cemetery and destroyed the tombstones, disinterring dead bodies. The event received wide coverage in the media in Turkey, resulting in mass protests by student organizations where they left flowers at the Bulgarian Cemetery in İstanbul (Uzun 2009). The reactions increased the pressure on minority intellectuals in Bulgaria (Deliorman 1955).

The formation of a Turkish Republic resonated among Bulgarian Turks, who became divided along nationalist "Kemalists" and Islamist "old Turks" lines (Neuburger: 44). The Kemalists favored following Turkey as a model. For instance, the Kemalist Turkish Teachers Union decided to adapt Latin letters at their Annual Congress, following Turkey's move to do the same in 1928. The Nationalist Congress of Bulgarian Turks made a declaration for Turks' rights and problems in 1929, and Turkish sports organizations unified under the name "Turan" to pursue the Turkish nationalist cause in 1931. The Old-Turks saw Turkey's reforms as Bolshevism and promoted a global Muslim identity (*ummet*). The Bulgarian government supported the Old Turks and appointed a pro-state, pro-Muslim Chief *Müftü*, who was also overtly anti-Kemalist (Boyar and Fleet: 2008). Therefore, by the end of the 1920s, Bulgarian and Turkish official policies regarding Muslims were highly differentiated: Turkey had abolished Islamic Courts, confiscated the property of religious foundations, and replaced the Arabic script with the Latin script, while all of these practices were still effective in Bulgaria (Neuburger: 45, Boyar and Fleet 2008). In this period, heavy Sunni Islamic indoctrination in Bulgaria led to the oppression of Alevis there. This indoctrination was effective among some Sunni Bulgarian Turks who later had troubles in secular Turkey following migrations, as I discuss in the historicity section, below.

Migrants in Turkey: In 1925 the new Republic of Turkey signed a Friendship Treaty and a Resettlement Treaty with Bulgaria, which guaranteed protection of the rights of Bulgarians in Turkey and Turks in Bulgaria. The treaties recognized the right of minorities to migrate to their external homelands by granting migrants property rights in the host states (Dayıoğlu 2005: 118), but forbade dual citizenship for them by automatically ending their pre-migration citizenship (Şimşir 2003: 11-12). The treaty led to mass migrations by the Bulgarian Turks, who

had felt under pressure during the interwar years. Accordingly, 101,507 Bulgarian Turks migrated between1923-1933 and 90,000 Bulgarian Turks migrated from 1934-1940 (Turan 2005, 85).

In the 1930s, Bulgarian Turkish migrants were welcomed to Turkey where Turkish nationalism was on the rise, as reflected in the "Turkish History Thesis," "Sun Language Theory," and "Citizen Speak Turkish" Campaigns (Çağaptay 2004). This ideology informed naturalization policies: the 1928 Citizenship Law granted citizenship to "Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian Muslims" (Çağaptay 2004). Immigrants were referred to as "Muslims" in the 1920s, as "Turks" in 1930-1934 (Çağaptay 2004) and as "persons of Turkish origin" after 1934. They were settled first in Eastern Anatolia and Thrace, according to the 1934 Law on Settlement (Ülker 2008). In early 1935, the Inspectorate General of Thrace said as many as 100,000 immigrants could settle in the East as well as in Turkish Thrace because many Jews migrated out of the area after anti-Semitic mobilization in the Thrace Events of 1934 (Ülker 2008).

4.1.4   Socialist People's Republic in Bulgaria, Multi-Party Republic in Turkey (1944-1989)

From 1944-1989, Bulgaria initiated policies with decreased impartiality towards the Turkish minority. In the 1940s Bulgaria joined the Eastern Bloc and proclaimed a people's republic (Crampton 1990: 327), moved toward a strict Stalinist path (328-343) by promoting the cultural rights of ethnic minorities in order to create loyal socialist citizens. After 1954, Todor Zhivkov initiated de-Stalinization of Bulgaria in terms of challenging the "cult of personality" ideal of the Stalinist periodand, and emphasized "a greater need for national integration," starting from the April Plenum in 1954 (Eminov 1997). After this development the Bulgarian Communist Party's (BCP) policies displayed "constant repudiation of nationalism as ideology, but not at the expense

of the Bulgarian nation" (Neuburger2004: 62). Finally in 1971, the BCP introduced the "unified socialist society" ideal (Crampton 1990: 356-7), which caused official denial of the existence of Turks in Bulgaria and led to an assimilation project between 1985 and 1989. In 1986, the BCP shifted the state policy from bureaucratic planning to decentralization in order to increase economic productivity, but it faced mass protests from different segments of the society, which led to the regime change in 1989, which I discuss in the next section, on events since 1989.

For its part, from 1945-89, Turkey experienced a multi-party system, which had been characterized by periods of political polarization leading to military coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980. The political rivalry between the secular RPP and the newly formed Democrat Party (DP) led to the latter's victory in the 1950 election. Even though the DP did not explicitly promote political Islam (Poulton 1993: 172), a rise of Islamic groups led to a military coup in 1960 and to the 1961 Constitution, which prohibited the politicization of religion. The 1960s were characterized by the fragmentation of left and right wings into multiple parties which formed unstable coalition governments. The political polarization between the RPP and the moderate Justice Party government, as well as the rise of the overtly anti-secular National Order Party (NOP), led to the 1971 military coup. In the 1970s political instability escalated into societal violence between leftist and rightist groups and led to the 1980 military coup. From 1980-1983, the military regime implemented the "Turkish-Muslim synthesis" ideology, which was seen as a solution to both rightist and leftist radicalism as well as Islamism, and which led to state-sponsored policies for promoting Sunni Islam, such as by re-introducing compulsory religion classes in schools and increasing the budget for the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA). The 1983 election was won by the Motherland Party (MP), which combined the Turkish-Islam thesis

with economic liberalism by opening markets to Islamic capital, tolerating Sunni religious orders and encouraging the formation of an Anatolian bourgeois class.

Alevis were directly influenced by the increased visibility of political Islam in Turkey. In the 1950s, their political alliances shifted from the RPP to the DP. Yet they were disappointed by the latter party's policies, since the DP did not reform the Sunni-biased structure of the Department of Religious Affairs. It also allowed systemic policies to Sunnify Alevis, such as construction of mosques in Alevi villages and appointment of Sunni imams for Alevi services (Azak 2010: 152). In the 1960s, Alevis re-allied with Kemalist leftists (Azak: 154-5) as right-wing parties increasingly used Islam to attract the masses (Şahin 2005: 471) and Kemalist-leftists saw Alevis as secular and loyal Kemalists against "Sunni fanaticism". In the 1970s, Alevi identity became openly politicized for the first time with the formation of an Alevi political party; yet the party failed. Alevis could not generate a separate movement but were subsumed by stronger leftist movements (Şahin 2005: 471). In the 1980s, the state's policies "recenter[ed] on a Turkish-Sunni axis" as Bozdogan (2007: 14) puts it. By this statement he refers to the process of shift from increased popularization of the political parties with Islamic discourses to promotion of Sunni Islam as a state policy. This shift aggravated the problems for Alevis on issues such as compulsory Sunni religious classes, construction of mosques in Alevi villages and the DRA's strong position (Jongerden 2003: 80, Vorhoff 1998: 97-8).

Minority in Bulgaria Policies towards the Turkish minority during the Socialist period can be analyzed in three stages. First, from 1944-1956, socialists recognized the rights of the Turkish minority by introducing specific programs to transform the Turkish minority into loyal socialist citizens. The BCP's minority policy was intended to replace "backwards religious and traditional values" with "progressive socialist values;" therefore BCP supported education for the

minority and allowed cultural organizations, but strictly controlled religious organizations and discouraged religious practice. The BCP nationalized the private minority schools, abolished the Quranic schools and ended religious training in schools (Eminov 1997: 51, Şimşir 1997). These changes also meant an end to the Sunni *müftülük*s' control of Turkish schools. The BCP did not abolish the earlier Muslim organizational structure, but it replaced the former *müftülük*s with appointed ones (Dayıoğlu 2005: 326). Therefore, even under socialism, the legal Muslim organizations favored Sunnis. Also, both Alevi and Sunni religious practices were criticized in the party's newspaper for Turks, *Yeni Isik* (Eminov 1997: 53), which presented Sunnis' fasting during Ramadan as "reducing productivity," Alevis animal slaughter rituals as "unhygienic" and circumcision as "unhealthy."

From 1956-1980, Bulgarian socialism gained a nationalist character, and the rights formerly granted to the Turkish minority were increasingly undone. Turkish schools were closed and Turkish language training was terminated. Still, Turks were not as directly targeted as the Macedonians, Muslim Roma, and Pomaks were (Dayıoğlu 2005: 289). The 1971 Constitution did not make any reference to minorities in Bulgaria; all citizens were portrayed as members of a "unified Bulgarian socialist nation," indicating BCP's vision of a socialist state with one nation and one language (Dayıoğlu 2005: 290). Zhivkov declared that there was no "national problem in Bulgaria, as this problem was solved by the people" (291), implying that ethnic Turks voluntarily become a part of "the unified socialist nation."

In the early 1980s, the BCP initiated a "hard assimilation" policy (Dayıoğlu: 2005), which officially declared that there were no Turks in Bulgaria and that those who self-identified as Turks were actually "real Bulgarians" who had been forcefully Islamized under Ottoman rule. The BCP commissioned reports by both Bulgarian and Turkish scholars to prove this thesis (e.g.

SPA 1989, Gerasimov 1989 and Zagarov 1987). In 1984, the "Rebirth Process" began with forced name changes for the Tatars and Albanians, which was expanded to the Turks in Southern and Northeastern Bulgaria and finalized between December 1984 and March 1985. Resistance to the assimilation policies resulted in unemployment, torture and imprisonment. In 1985 the Bulgarian Turks' National Salvation Movement was founded as an underground organization that initiated passive resistance to the assimilation (Dayıoğlu 2005: 329-331). Its leaders were captured and sent to the infamous Belene prison, where Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks from Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria met. In 1989, mass protests and hunger strikes were often suppressed by the army at the villages where these protests and strikes happened. In addition to the Sunni Turkish villages, well-known Alevi villages in Yablonovo became sites for resistance and subsequently for state violence. This led to softening of the Sunnis' negative perceptions of Alevis. Sunni Turks had accepted the thesis that Alevis were converted Christian-Bulgarians, yet Alevi Turks also claimed themselves as Turkish-Muslims during the assimilation process.

From 1944-1989, the Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks adopted different coping strategies for the socialist policies towards religion. Sunni Muslims were hypervisible, because Sunni Islam was the only institutionalized form of Islam, with visible religious sites and state-appointed religious personnel. Alevi Muslims on the other hand were completely invisible, their social and religious organizations barely known to outsiders due to long term dissimulations. Therefore, the Sunni Bulgarian Turks faced extra pressure. Some muftis and imams partook in the Rebirth Process while others refused to do so. The mosques of the first group were called "official mosques" while the others were seen as "unofficial mosques" by the state (Dayıoğlu 2005: 352). In addition, Sunni believers' religious practices were under close scrutiny. Only Sunni elders were allowed to attend mosques, and only official mosques at that. The state

forbade other practices like going on pilgrimage, conducting circumcision, fasting, religious feasts, animal slaughter, and burial rituals (352-7).

This Bulgarian case was not unique among socialist systems, of course. A similar phenomenon has been analyzed by Sergei Poliakov, who distinguishes between "government Islam" and "everyday Islam" within the context of Central Asia (1993). The former refers to state-controlled Islam while the latter is "parallel Islam." My case study develops his framework by showing that in socialist Bulgaria there were not only one parallel Islam but actually parallel Islams, plural, as Jennifer Murtazashvili has pointed out to me in correspondence. In socialist Bulgaria, "government Islam" was Sunni Islam, but both Sunnis and Alevis developed "parallel Islams" in practice. Alevis actively dissimulated by framing their religious rituals in secular terms. The *cem* rituals were held in the homes of religious leaders so that they seemed on the surface to be evening visits among colleagues. Religious visits to far off *türbe*s were framed as excursions and religious visits to closer *türbe*s were framed as picnics. During my fieldwork, I was told several times that under socialism Alevism in Bulgaria was in better shape because there was strict state control over aggressive Sunnism. Because of their contribution to the protection of the Alevi community, Alevi leaders who supported the BCP are still respected by the Alevis, while Sunni religious leaders who supported the BCP administration are seen as betrayers.

Gendered effects of socialism on the Bulgarian Muslim populations were small. The socialist regime did not create a difference on Sunni and Alevi women's markers of visibility. Before socialism the Sunni Turkish, Alevi Turkish and Bulgarian women were not very different in terms of the degree of modesty in their clothing, though they had differences in clothing forms and accessoires. In some rural regions Sunni and Alevi females wore traditional (non-religious)

hairscarves and trousers (*salvar*) during farming activities, unlike their Bulgarian counterparts. In the socialist period these practices become limited to elder Sunni and Alevi women.

On the other hand Sunni and Alevi females utilized the opportunities granted by the socialist regime differently. For example, the socialist regime initiated boarding schools for training Turkish instructors in different parts of Bulgaria in 1950s. During my fieldwork in Sunni-Alevi mixed villages, I noticed that the women who graduated from these schools were all from the Alevi side of the villages. Alevi women seemed to be encouraged by their communities to actively participate in public life as instructors, while Sunni women seem to have been prevented from enrolling in these boarding schools.

Migrants in Turkey From 1944-1989, the Bulgaria-Turkey border was a symbol of Cold War tensions between the two states, and formed a segment of the Iron Curtain between the two blocks. Mass migrations during this period were strictly planned and defined by bilateral treaties and controlled by both states. The 1950-51 forced migration was orchestrated by the BCP, who were alarmed by Turkey's attempts to join NATO, and fears over the continuing loyalties of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey (Turan 2005: 86). 154,363 Turks migrated to Turkey at that time (Turan 2005: 83). Migrations from 1968-1978 were to unify families that were divided by the previous forced migrations, and 114,356 Bulgarian Turks migrated to Turkey (Eminov 1997). In December 1989, Bulgaria expelled Bulgarian Turks while the Turkish government welcomed all Bulgarian Turks to the "motherland;" 321, 800 Bulgarian Turks were forced to migrate (Eminov 1997).

Self-stereotypes are abundant among the generations of Bulgarian-Turkish migrants. These stereotypes are falsifiable, yet they reveal Bulgarian Turkish migrants' perceptions of the community and its history. For example, the migrants of 1950-51 are seen as pious, conservative,

uneducated peasants with a strong sense of Turkishness. This is explained on the grounds that they faced totalitarian pressures, yet they remained immune to socialism. The migrants of 1968-78 are seen as secularized, relatively educated specialists because they benefitted from early socialist policies regarding the Turkish minority and became accustomed to socialist education. The 1989 migrants are seen as secular and atheist. They are well-educated people who had assimilated almost voluntarily, so that they would not face "hard assimilation."

The changing political contexts in Turkey directly influenced migrants' conditions. The 1950-1951 migrants were supported by the DP government. The worldviews of Sunni migrants were not necessarily incompatible with the DP, and they were able to adapt to society. There were exceptional cases, such as that of Ahmet Davutoglu, which indicates the disappointment of an Islamist Old Turk migrant. Once imprisoned in Bulgaria for espionage, Ahmet Davutoglu migrated to Turkey in 1950 but was arrested there for anti-secular statements, as I discuss in more detail in the "historicity" section. Alevi migrants faced pressures to assimilate from the DRA and thus hid their identity, as also discussed below. The migrants of 1968-78 arrived during the period when there was political turmoil between leftist and right-wing groups. Some of my Sunni informants were harassed and threatened by local right-wing members in Bursa, because Bulgarian Turks were automatically assumed to be "socialists" since they were from Bulgaria. Alevi migrants were no better off, as became apparent during the mass violence against Alevis in the events in Sivas (1978), in Kahramanmaras (1978), and in Corum (1980).

4.1.5   Multi-party Republics in both Bulgaria and Turkey (1989-)

In 1989 the political regime changed in Bulgaria, as it did throughout what had until then been socialist Eastern Europe. The BCP initiated a multiparty system in 1990 but without effective

political infrastructure (Crampton 1990: 389). The first decade after communism was marked by political and economic crises, which proliferated due to the governmental changes between two political parties with contradictory programs. The BSP governments promoted a pro-Russian, anti-NATO foreign policy and a statist economy (Crampton 1990: 403) while the UDF governments promoted economic and political liberalism, liberal minority rights, and pro-West policies (Crampton 1990: 409). The MRF, the Turkish Party, become empowered as the party which maintained balance between the UDP and the BSP. The period after 2001 was marked by relative stability after the National Movement Simeon II (NMSS) and the MRF government in 2001; a coalition government by BSP, NMSS and MRF in 2005 (which led to EU membership in January 2007) and the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) government in 2009.

In Turkey, the same period was marked by unstable governments followed by the increased visibility of political Islam. In the 1996 elections, the pro-Islamist Welfare Party (WP) was victorious and initiated a political program openly promoting the politicization of Islam and overtly attacking the Kemalist organization of the state, society and economy. The WP also recruited Islamist civil servants to state offices, promoted relations with Iran, Libya and Egypt and developed a stance against the EU. In 1997, a local party meeting in Ankara was broadcast on TV, showing party members demanding Sharia Law, and this led to "28 February memorandum" in which the army declared its intention to defend secularism. The WP was disbanded but two parties were created in its place: the Islamist Virtue Party (VP) and the reformist Justice and Development Party (JDP). In 2001, the VP was banned by the Constitutional Court as a successor of the WP while the JDP gained great success in the 2002 elections. The JDP pursued a modest Islamist policy, promoting EU membership and rapid

economic growth and privatization. However, after 2004, JDP policies moved towards prioritizing Sunni Islamist "religious and moral standards" on issues such as the hair scarf ban, the autonomy of the MRA and limiting rights for Alevis.

In the 1990s, the rise of political Islam was paralleled by the "repoliticization of Alevism" (Erman and Göker 2000: 99). This time, Alevis emphasized religious and cultural elements rather than class identity and emerged as an independent movement with an elite and literature, associations, festivals, vakifs and networks in both Europe and Turkey (Şahin 2005: 472). Alevis gained public visibility after the publication of a manifesto demanding equal representation (Erman and Göker 2000: 102). Alevism was also publicly discussed after the Sivas Massacre at an Alevi ceremony in 1993. Alevis remained ideologically fragmented under different associations: the (Kemalist) *Cem* Association; (Marxist) Pir Sultan Cultural Associations, (Mystical) Hacı Bektaş Veli Associations, and (Shia) Ehl-i Beyt Association (Erman and Göker: 2000). The state's response to Alevism was to recognize it as a cultural group but not as a political group (Şahin 2005: 481). For instance, politicians started to attend the annual Hacı Bektaş Veli Ceremonies in 1994 and to allocate resources from the state budget to Alevi organizations in 1998 (Şahin 2005: 477). Yet the DRA declared Alevism a folk culture and not an Islamic sect (Şahin 2005: 481), and began to transform key Alevi sites, such as that of Hacı Bektaş into Sunni ones (Harmanşah, Tanyeri-Erdemir and Hayden 2010). In 2007, the JDP government initiated an "Alevi Opening," a set of workshops meant to bring about Sunni-Alevi rapprochement. Several sympathetic gestures on the part of politicians followed: Prime Minister Erdoğan attended some Alevi "breaking of the fast" (*iftar*) dinners during Ramadan in 2008-9. Alevis had three main demands: the recognition of Alevi Cemevis as places of worship; that changes would be made in the nature of compulsory religious education courses in public

schools; and that DRA would be restructured. Still, the Alevi Opening is now criticized by Alevis themselves on the grounds that it failed to accommodate Alevis' demands and that it was a covert attempt at the Sunnification of Alevis. In 2009 research by Strategic Researches Institute, about 60 percent of Alevi participants saw the Alevi Opening as being intended to effect Sunnification of Alevis, while 22 percent of them see it as being intended "to solve the problems of the people" (in Köse 2010: 9).

Minority in Bulgaria In Bulgaria, measures were taken to reverse the 1985-89 assimilation process following the regime change from communism. Migrants from 1989 gained the right to return and to get their Turkish names back. Mosques were re-opened and new ones constructed. In addition, Turkish NGOs and Turkish newspapers were allowed (Dayıoğlu 2005: 375).

Minority rights were defined in the 1990 Constitution without using the term "minority," but rather specifying "citizens of Bulgaria with different religious beliefs, mother languages" (Dayıoğlu 2005: 384-5). This period was dominated by a few major issues concerning the minority's rights, notably the Turkish political party's status and Grand Mufti elections. The MRF had great political success in the 1990 elections in constituencies with large Turkish populations. This led Bulgarian nationalists to make appeals to the Constitutional Court that the MRF be banned banned based on the Constitution, which forbids political parties that increase ethnic, religious, or national distinctions and create animosity. The Constitutional Court, however, ruled in favor of the MRF in 1992.

Sunni Bulgarian Turks were directly influenced by the regime change. The appointed Chief *Müftü* from the socialist period, Nedim Gencev, resigned. Chief *Müftü* elections were conducted at the Muslim Conference in 1992, following which there was struggle over the Chief

Müftülük position between various MRF-supported candidates and BSP-supported Nedim Gencev. From 1995-1997, Muslims were represented by two Chief *Müftülük*s and two sets of regional *müftülük*s, one elected and the other appointed. In December 2002 a new law on religions replaced the Religious Confessions Law of 1949. It granted a privileged position to the Bulgarian Orthodox church and required the registration of all other religious groups at the Sofia City Court (Dayıoğlu 2005: 402-3). This time, registration issues were the problem. For instance, after the 2008 elections the court did not register the result on time; yet Gencev applied to the High Administrative Court and was recognized as the Chief *Müftü*. When the offices of the elected muftis were taken over by Gencev's team, I observed mass scale protests by Muslims in Bulgaria. After the Muslim Congress in 2011 the elected Chief *Müftü* again was not registered by the Sofia Court, yet he applied to the High Appeals Court and returned to his position on 21 April 2011. This tension about the election of the Chief *Müftülük* is also significant for understanding Alevi-Sunni relations, since segments of Alevis reacted to the Sunni *müftülük*s' problems, as my fieldwork shows.

In the early 2000s Alevis started to point out their historical underrepresentation in Muslim institutions in Bulgaria (Dayıoğlu 2005: 76). In 2001 in Razgrad, tension between Sunni and Alevi Turks was reflected in the local elections and tainted the victory of the MRF (Dayıoğlu 2005: 76). As I was told during my interviews, the MRF lost the municipal administration to a Bulgarian candidate in the Kubrat (Razgrad) elections because of the Alevis' support for the Bulgarian. Only after this did recognition of Alevis begin in the MRF cadres. This recognition began as a top down process initiated by its leader, Ahmet Doğan. He implemented an informal commission to visit Alevi-populated regions, first Kadjali and then Razgrad. As a result, the MRF leadership recognized the demands of Alevis for representation in the party and granted

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them an informal quota, which allowed for the participation of one Alevi candidate from Kardjali in the parliamentary elections of 2001 and another Alevi candidate from Razgrad in the 2005 elections. Moreover, Alevis in Razgrad applied to the Razgrad City Court demanding organizational freedom and recognition of the "Cem Association" in 2002. Alevi rituals gained increased visibility in Bulgaria, such as the annual Demir Baba commemorations for "the martyrs of the assimilation process" in Razgrad and the annual *türbe* day celebrations in Kardjali.

Migrants in Turkey Local and national organizations for Bulgarian Turkish migrants flourished in the 1990s. Originally these organizations addressed problems that migrants faced in Turkey, such as getting identity cards and acquiring residential permits (Kirişçi 2009), as well as problems of the migrants that were related to Bulgaria, such as retirement payments, dual citizenship and visa related issues. They also addressed the problems of the non-migrant Bulgarian Turks, such as Turks' political representation in Bulgaria and the *müftülük*s crisis in 2011. Especially after the 2000s, the migrant organizations became interest groups and changed the course of local politics in places such as Bursa. Alevi Bulgarian Turks are still invisible in these migrant organizations, as I noted during my fieldwork.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks have remained underrepresented because they have not formed their own organizations and they are hesitant to work with the existing local Alevi organizations. For instance, Alevi migrants in Bulgaria do not attend any Alevi organizations even for religious rituals, while Alevi migrants in İstanbul attend the meetings and religious rituals of Cem Vakfı. At the same time, Alevi migrants in İstanbul keep their own religious communities and Alevi migrants in Thrace also form relations with the Cem Vakfı and Hacı Bektaş Veli Association.

To conclude this section, I have outlined the major historical developments on the two sides of the Bulgaria-Turkey border, which was at various times a divide between: an autonomous (Bulgarian) principality and the (Ottoman) empire, 1878-1907; an independent kingdom and an empire, 1908-1923; a kingdom and a republic, 1923-1943; a people's republic and a liberal republic, 1944-1989; and two liberal republics after 1990. By examining the influence of these changes on the minority and migrant regimes regarding Bulgarian Turks, I underlined that both states' policies contributed to the affiliation of the Bulgarian Turkish group identity with Sunni Islam, which resulted in Alevi Bulgarian Turks' structural exclusion. Specifically in Bulgaria, I argued that even under the most liberal regimes for the Bulgarian Turks (e.g. the Agrarian rule from 1919-1923, early stages of socialism from 1944-1955 and after 1989), the rights of Bulgarian Turks were developed within a Sunni-biased framework, making Alevis invisible. Also, I argued that Alevi Bulgarian Turks encountered institutionalized Sunnism in Turkey even under the most secular political governments (e.g. the CUP government and the early republican government) and they faced increased politicization of Islam after the 1950s.

4.2   HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Balkans have been Orientalized historically *vis-à-vis* Europe by being portrayed as neither East nor West, but rather an interstitial and ambiguous area between them (Todorova 1997), or neither Orient nor Occident but a combination of both and thus a boundary zone of "civilizations" (Wolf 1994), or as the shifty historical frontier caused by Habsburg- and Ottoman-occupations (Ingario 1996). While the Balkans are Orientalized *vis-à-vis* Europe, the

Balkanist discourses construct their own historical other as Ottoman Turks (Todorova 1997). "Nesting Orientalisms" create further gradations among communities within the Balkans, for instance Orthodox Christians *vis-à-vis* Roman Catholics (Bakic-Hayden 1995). The process of Orientalizing has happened not only between majority nations, but also between the majorities and minorities. Thus Bulgaria has been Orientalized *vis-à-vis* Europe and certain other Balkan states, while the Bulgarian official literature has portrayed the Muslims as the "Orient within" (Neuburger 2004). Addressing this literature, in this chapter I show a further hierarchy imposed within minorities themselves, in this case the Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria. By focusing on the academic literature on Bulgarian Turks, I argue that Sunni Islam is portrayed as emblematic of the Bulgarian Turkish community, from which Alevis are excluded.

4.2.1   Conflicting Historiographies on the Ottoman Rule in Bulgaria

Balkanists and Ottomanists specializing in Bulgaria have conflicting assumptions on two issues. While Ottoman rule in Bulgaria is seen as a period of violent political and economic colonization, namely "the Turkish Yoke," in the Bulgarian nationalist literature (e.g. Jirecek 1875 in Karpat; Vazov 2005), it is seen as a period of political stability and religious tolerance, namely "the Ottoman Peace," in the Ottomanist literature (e.g. Ortaylı 2004). Further, Islamization in Bulgaria under Ottoman rule (Todorova 2004) is seen as a mass, coercive process which has formed a central part of the "national myth of the abducted faith" in the Bulgarian literature (Aretov 2003: 103). Yet Islamization is not seen as a state policy (Inalcık 1954) but rather as a gradual, individual and voluntary process (Deringil 2000) in the Ottomanist literature.

In Bulgaria, the discipline of history had functioned as "an instrument to cultivate and increase national consciousness" in pre-Independence times (Mosely 1937: 348), as a "justifier

and legitimizer" subservient to the state's demands during socialism and as a "self-contained and parochial discipline" in post-socialism (Todorova 1992). Ottoman rule was considered destructive of the national culture because of forced conversions and mass violence (e.g. Hristov 1980 in Eminov 1997: 34) by the "catastrophe theories" (Kiel 1985: 33-35) from different periods, except the earlier years of socialism. The newly formed socialist regime was preoccupied not with Ottoman rule but the pre-socialist regime. The BCP's publications, such as *Yeni Isik*, avoided comments about the Ottoman period and targeted the "fascist" regime, specifically its policies towards Turks' language and religion. They also highlighted the achievements of Turks during socialism, such as political representation, economic advancement, and religious and social freedoms to pursue Turkish culture (Durmazov 1947: 10-16). Yet after the April Plenum, the literature resorted to the original "nationalist focus and bias" (Elenkov and Koleva 2003: 183). The Ottoman rule was portrayed not merely as the "national yoke" but also as a "feudal yoke" (Kossev 1976), and the Bulgarian nation was represented either as "martyred" under the "Islamicization and Turukicization [sic] (Dochev and Stoyanov 1987), or as heroic for acting with "prolonged and stubborn resistance" to foreign rule (Khristov 1985: 5). A balanced perspective developed only in post-socialism. Thus Maria Todorova (2004), Antonina Zhelyazkova (2002), and Anton Mikov (2004) problematize earlier works on the Ottoman period by showing their ideological character on issues such as conversions to Islam.

Strikingly, the Turkish nationalist literature had also developed a problematic relation with the Ottoman Empire. In the early republican period, the political elite were concerned to distance the Republic from the Ottoman past by utilizing several arguments, such as declaring the ancient Turks in the Central Asia to have been their ancestors, claiming the Ottomans' Turkic

origins, and discussing the Byzantine or Seljuk roots of the Ottoman administrative model. This literature emphasized only the foundation and rise of the Ottoman Empire and ignored the period of decline (Ersanli 2002). Only in the 2000s did the academic literature start to discuss the continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic (Zürcher 2008, Göcek 2011). Still, the Ottoman presence in the Balkans remained unproblematized; it was seen as a period of tolerance (*istimalet*) for gaining the hearts and minds of the local non-Muslims (Inalcık 1954), when the Empire protected the Orthodox Church and gained support from both the local peasants and the Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian and Albanian feudal lords (Doğru 2000).

4.2.2   Conflicting Historiographies on Bulgarian Turks

The Bulgarian and Turkish historiographies on Bulgarian Turks have developed around two competing theses: Bulgarian Turks are presented either as the descendants of the colonizers and migrants from Anatolia or as local populations forcefully converted into Islam (Marushiakova and Popov 2006). Bulgarian literature has promoted the thesis of forceful conversion by stressing that conversions were done on a mass scale and that they were state-imposed, systematized and planned. The Bulgarian literature has also relativized the scale of migrations from Anatolia. The Ottomanist literature, however, has promoted the migrations thesis by discussing the Balkan migrants as Anatolian nomads (Doğru 2000), revolutionary tribes and members of the Sufi orders who moved according to the Ottoman settlement policies (*iskan*) (Barkan 1942). The Ottomanist literature has relativized forced mass conversions (e.g. Inalcık 1954, Deringil 2000).

The discussion on Bulgarian Turks has been significant because it has informed both the Bulgarian and Turkish states' policies towards Bulgarian Turks. In Bulgaria, the migration thesis was utilized to justify the 'reverse' process, the forced migration of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey in

1950-1 and 1989, while the conversions thesis was utilized to justify "recovering" their identity, through forced assimilation such as in the Rebirth Process in 1985-89. These theses have also informed the migration regimes in Turkey. For instance, in the 19th century, migrants' Islamic identity was sufficient to welcome them to Anatolia. From 1908 to 1918 the migrations of ethnic Turks (based on the language criteria) were encouraged and the migrations of non-Turkish-speaking Muslims (e.g. Pomaks and Roma) were discouraged, according to the CUP's Turkism ideology. After 1923, the state pursued the notion of territorial citizenship and declared the Turks in formerly Ottoman areas, including Bulgarian Turks, as "kin-nationals" and other Turks, such as those of central Asia, as "Turkic" (Poulton 1997: 196-7). Even the kin-nationals did not automatically qualify for citizenship but required a visa from the embassy in Bulgaria, in 1950-1 and 1968-78.

The ethnogenesis of Bulgarian Turks' has been a great concern in Bulgaria, given that "the Bulgarian political nation" has been defined by "drawing and re-drawing the borders and ethno-cultural boundaries between Bulgarian and Turk" (Neuburger 1997). Yet it remained as a taboo subject until 1989, because the socialist period research results remained unpublished, "internal documents." After 1989, Bulgarian Turks received attention from academics (e.g. Maeva 2006) and NGOs such asthe works of the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations (IMIR) on Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria (Zhelyazkova, Nielsen and Kepel 1995) and Turkey (Zhelyazkova 1998).

Turkish academic publications on Bulgarian Turks also flourished after mass migrations, as early as the 1950s. These works have focused on migrants' adaptation to Turkey (Ari 1960, Parla 2003, 2006, 2007) and the social-cultural status of non-migrants in Bulgaria with studies concerning education, language (Memişoğlu 1992, Yenisoy 2007), religion (Hatiboğlu 2007,

Günay 2006), citizenship status and rights (Özgür-Baklacioğlu 2006) and international law and violations of their rights (eKarpat 1990, Şimşir 1986, 1989, Eminov 1997, Dayıoğlu 2005, Lütem 2003). Strikingly, none of these works devotes significant space to Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

4.2.3 Conflicting Historiographies on Alevis with their Harmonious Exclusion

Following independence, some Bulgarian writings did focus on Alevi Turks in Bulgaria. Historical studies had the agenda of proving that Alevis are descendants of the non-Muslims converted to Islam under Ottoman rule. Modern studies still have a tendency to present Alevis as a distinct community, separate from the Bulgarian Turks (i.e. *Bulgarski Aliyani* i.e. Bulgarian Alevis) and they overemphasize their "heterodox Muslim" identity in order to de-emphasize their ethnic Turkish identity, as native speakers of Turkish whose rituals are in the Turkish language.

Before 1989, historical works on Alevis in Bulgaria were ideologically parallel with the state's demands. The majority of scholars promoted the conversion thesis by portraying Alevis as the descendants of ethnic Bulgarian Bogomils, Turkic pagan Pechenegs from Central Asia, pre-Slavic and pagan Old Bulgarians, who had either converted to Islam after conversion to Christianity or directly converted from paganism into Alevi Islam (see Gramatikova 2001). Other scholars promoted the migration thesis, by portraying Alevis as migrants from Khorasan (Iran) to North Bulgaria from the north or south of the Black Sea, via Anatolia (see Gramatikova 2001). None of these theses could be supported empirically, however.

Ethnological studies were also under political pressure because ethnology functioned to identify the markers of Bulgarianness, often imposing these markers on other communities (Neuburger 2004). Bulgarian literature utilized the generic narratives of European travel writers, missionaries and foreign academics to prove the conversion thesis and "indigenize" the Pomaks,

by localizing these generic theories into the Bulgarian context (Stoyanov 2010). One version localizes the conversion thesis: the European narratives argue that "heterodox" Christians faced mass conversions into Islam under Ottoman rule and that they either become Crypto-Christians (Skendi 1967: 234) or converted to "heterodox" Islam (Babinger 1978, Hasluck 2007). This localization strategy was utilized by several Balkan states, including Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. The Bulgarian version of localization occurred when Bulgarian authors claimed that heterodox Muslims in Bulgaria were formerly heterodox Christians. For instance, Dimitar Marinov argued that contemporary Alevis in Deliorman are the descendants of Bogomils, since these Alevis have similar social and religious beliefs, rituals and festivals with the Bogomils. For example, Alevis in Sevar cook breads similar to Easter breads (Mikov 2008: 15).

The other version localizes the migration thesis: European authors examine the syncretism between local Christian and migrant Muslim beliefs and practices (Stoyanov 2010). Bulgarian literature utilizes this framework to emphasize the closeness of the migrant Muslims with local Christians, rather than with the local Muslims in Anatolia or Persia (Stoyanov 2010: 268). Thus Todorov sees Deliorman Alevis as a small settler group from Persia (i.e. migrants) infused with the Old Bulgar communities in such a way that they pursue a supposedly Thracian folk cult in the areas close to Demir Baba *türbe*, rather than Persian beliefs (in Grammatikova 2001: 582). It is not a surprise that such an oversimplified notion of syncretism served the ideological function of preparing Alevi assimilation projects like those from 1985-89.

Academic interest in Alevis flourished after the mid-1950s (e.g. Todorov, Boev, Vasilev, Iliev, Lipchev in Grammatikova 2001) with the political agenda of promoting "national integration" after 1954. This interest peaked from 1984-89, becoming more politicized as well (Dayıoğlu 2005). For instance, the most detailed ethnographic study on Alevi Bulgarian Turks is

Ivanicka Georgieva's edited volume (1998), which was commissioned by the BCP and carried out by graduate students in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, who were themselves Alevi Bulgarian Turks. The intent of the study was to examine the traditions and rituals in three Alevi-populated villages in Razgrad: Midrevo, Sevar and Bisertsi. However, the researcher on Sevar withdrew so as "not to reveal the secret," upon the request of Alevi leaders in the village, as I was told during my fieldwork in Razgrad. It is thought that the book was commissioned by the state in order to prepare Alevis for the upcoming name-change process. After 1989, the research conducted on Alevis became free from political pressures or ideological concerns. Also, earlier research was published by foreigners, such as Lubomir Mikov's studies on Alevi religious sites in Bulgaria (2008), Machiel Kiel's study on Muslim religious structures in Bulgaria (1990) and Irene Melikoff's studies on Deliorman Alevis (1994). However, some such studies contain superficial data on Alevis by defining them as a "modified versions of Shia" (e.g. Marushiakova and Popov 2006, 2) or merely Shia (e.g. Elchinova 2001, Eminov 2000, Evstatiev 2006, Ghodsee 2010). This parallels Bulgarian state policies: the 1992 census provided only two options to Muslims, as either "Sunni Muslim" or "Shia Muslim," when Alevis were either unfamiliar with the term "Shia" and reject the "Shia" identity.

Many works on Alevi Bulgarian Turks rely on the syncretism notion of Irene Melikoff, who sees Bulgarian Alevism as a combination of Shia, Sufi Gnostic, Platonic, Manichaeist and Buddhist elements in addition to Jewish and Christian influences (Melikoff 1994: 110-111). Antonina Zhelyazkova follows a more specific notion of syncretism: "heterodox" Muslims in Bulgaria had "co-opted individual features from preceding religions" such as shamanism, Christianity, Zoroastrian, and Judaism and "borrowed elements from local heresies" such as Manichaeism and Bogomilism, while their mysticism remains Islamic (Zhelyazkova 2001: 328).

Stoyanov emphasizes that there is a need to substantiate the syncretism notion with a discussion of what particular ideas and practices Alevi groups have or have not borrowed from other groups (2010). Nevena Grammatikova makes the point there is a need to understand the historical processes of the present syncretic forms used by Alevis. Grammatikova calls for reconsideration of several "frames of reference." Such frames of reference would include understanding the developments and schism of early Islam, examining the spread of Islam in Bulgaria via Turkmen tribes as well as analyzing what influences come from Shia Islam and Persian traditions (such as belief in imams), what influences come from the Sufi tradition (e.g. moral doctrine), and what influences come from Christianity's various sects (e.g. rituals) (Grammatikova 2000: 612-3).

The literature on Alevism, howver, has major flaws and gaps. First, existing works focus mainly on the Alevis in Northeastern Bulgaria and Gerlovo (Grammatikova), ignoring those in Southern Bulgaria, in the Haskovo-Kardjali area, as noted also by Beytullov (1999: 41). Second, even while examining the Northeastern Bulgarian Alevis, these works overlook the differences between Alevi communities, such as the differences in interactions, rituals and beliefs between *Bektaşi*, *Babai* and *Derviş*, as well as regional differentiations within these categories. Third, the existing scholarship reproduces the dichotomy of heterodox versus orthodox Islam. Fourth, the literature on Alevism overemphasizes the so-called "heterodox Muslim" identity of Alevis while it underemphasizes their self-identification as Turks. Considering these gaps, in Chapter Five I give a detailed account of how the practices, organizations and beliefs vary among different groups of Alevi Bulgarian Turks: namely the *Bektaşi*, *Babai* and Musahipli Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Razgrad and Kardjali region.

In the Turkish academic literature, even the most prominent studies on Bulgarian Turks have contributed to the invisibility of Alevi Bulgarian Turks by de-emphasizing the religious

identity of all Bulgarian Turks, or by discussing their religious identity only in Sunni terms, or by deliberately excluding Alevis from the Bulgarian Turkish identity. There are also scholars who pursue not an emic but an etic perspective on Alevi Bulgarian Turks by utilizing Alevi and Sunni Islam in Turkey as a frame of reference to explain the beliefs and practices of Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

Many Turkish scholars adopt a strictly secular approach to Bulgarian Turks by emphasizing the community's secular ethnic markers, like language, while de-emphasizing religious ones. Some writers focus on the minority status of Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria from a human rights perspective (Şimşir 1986, Turan 2005, Memişoğlu 1989, 1992, Eroğlu 1992). Others promote a secular approach by focusing only on the Bulgarian Turkish migrants and their "adaptation, acculturation, assimilation" into Turkish society (Ari 1960), or their experiences and affiliations (Toğrol 1991, Koçancı 2003, Kolukırık 2006, Kaderli-Yapıcı 2008, Çakar Mengu 2008, Şirin 2011). These studies have left the Bulgarian Turks' problems in utilizing their religious rights largely unadressed. If these works mention Bulgarian Turks' religious practices, they do so only to show that Bulgaria's policies violate Turks' human rights, and again, only in reference to Sunni Muslim practices. Such works constantly reiterate themes like the state's prevention of the *müftülük* elections, the closure of Sunni religious schools, and the lack of freedom in attending mosques under socialism. In failing to mention religion, or by superficially discussing Sunni Muslims' rights, these works contribute to the creation of the impression that all Bulgarian Turks are Sunnis, and thus to the exclusion of the Alevi Bulgarian Turks from the Bulgarian Turkish communal identity.

Some researchers do focus on the religious identity of the Bulgarian Turks, yet still define Bulgarian Turkish identity only in Sunni terms. For instance, Ibrahim Hatiboğlu examines

religious reform among the Bulgarian Turks from 1878-1944 by focusing on the competing religious reform ideas coming from Cairo and İstanbul. These ideas affected Bulgarian Turkish Muslim intellectuals and how they envisioned Islam in Bulgaria (Hatiboğlu 2007). Similarly, Mehmet Günay (2006) examines the example of the Islamic Sheria courts in Bulgaria, which had been the sole judicial authority for issues on marriage, divorce and inheritance among Muslims in Bulgaria from 1880-1944. In these works, religion is defined as the central identity of Bulgarian Turks; yet again the only reference is to Sunni Islam.

There are scholars who recognize the existence of Alevis among Bulgarian Turks but consider Alevis as unrepresentative of Turkish group identity. One version of this approach defines Alevis as essentially insiders, but not quite. Thus Zehra Kaderli provides elaborate ethnographic material about "the Turkish culture" in Deliorman by focusing on oral culture about rites of passage such as birth, naming and circumcision, pilgrimage, marriage and burial ceremonies, as well as rites related to sending men off to, and welcoming them back from, military service (2004). Kaderli recognizes that the category of Bulgarian Turks comprise both Alevi and Sunnis in the Deliorman region (82), and she discusses the historal settlement of Alevis in the region before the Ottoman conquest (25-38). Most importantly, Kaderli criticizes earlier ethnological works focusing on Bulgarian Turks in Deliorman, since these works represent only Alevis' beliefs and rituals, or "one religious segment," according to her (82-83). Yet Kaderli herself falls into the same fallacy by reversal: she conducts an ethnology ofBulgarian Turks by explaining only Sunni Turks beliefs and practices, thereby underrepresenting Alevis.

The other version of this camp identifies Alevis as essentially outsiders assimilated to Turkish identity. Ali Eminov (1997) examines existing academic sources on Alevis in Bulgaria, but concludes that Alevis were originally a Shia community which became a "synthetic

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population containing Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish and Bulgarian elements." According to Eminov, irrespective of their origin, today Alevis are "assimilated into the Turkish community…[as they] speak Turkish and identify themselves as Turks" (Eminov 1997: 72). Another scholar, Ali Dayıoğlu, also adopts this approach by promoting a taxonomy of Muslims in Bulgaria: Turks, Roma, Pomaks, and Others. Alevis are placed under the last category even though he notes that the Alevis speak Turkish, conduct their religious rituals in Turkish, and self-identify as Turks (Dayıoğlu 2005: 75).

Some academic studies focus particularly on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' religious beliefs and rituals in Bulgaria by utilizing frames of reference coming from either Sunnism or Alevism in Turkey. For example, two Sunni researchers from Islamic theology departments in Turkey use an etic perspective. Adil Seyman (2006) focusses on Alevism and Bektaşhism in the Balkans, showing the historical developments of the different branches of Balkan Alevism in comparison with Anatolian Alevism, and İlyas Űzüm (2006) has conducted a detailed examination of Alevi religious beliefs, practices and organizational structure in Bulgaria. Yet the analyses of both authors utilize a Sunni Islamic framework in analysizing Alevi beliefs, practices and organizations. For instance, both works have a clear concern to find out to what extent Alevi Bulgarian Turks' perceptions of God, Muhammed, Ali, and the Kuran are compatible with the Sunni Muslim doctrine in Turkey. They want to know whether or not they conduct Sunni rituals, including prayers, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving (2006: 105-134).

Strikingly, some Alevi researchers from Turkey use a frame of reference from Alevis in Turkey to analyze Alevi Bulgarian Turks' beliefs, practices and organization. This perspective sees Balkan Alevism as a derivative and a distorted version of Turkish Alevism. For instance, Refik Engin researched Alevi Balkan migrants in Turkish Thrace but he also draws conclusions

about non-migrant Alevis in Bulgaria. His argument seems primarily about terminology; he argues against calling Balkan Alevis "Alevis" or "*Bektaşi*s," saying they should instead be called "sürek *Bektaşi*si" (2000, 2008, 2009). The word "sürek" means "duration" or "continuation" and refers to a distinction between *Bektaşi*s in Bulgaria and *Bektaşi*s in Turkey over group membership, regarding whether one's parents must be Alevi. This is not merely a matter of terminology but highlights how different are the Balkan Alevis. Engin utilizes the taxonomy from Alevism in Turkey, which is quite different from that of Alevism in Bulgaria. For instance, in Turkey the term "Alevi" refers to groups following the heritage principle in religious leadership and community membership, in that Alevi leaders are expected to trace their heritage to Ali and Alevi members are supposed to have Alevi parents in Turkey. The term "Bektaşhi" refers to groups who do not require its members or leaders to have Alevi heritage, so that neither leaders nor members of the *Bektaşi* community need to have Alevi parents. Yet in Bulgaria, Alevis complicate the taxonomy used in Turkish Alevism, since they do not follow the heritage rules for the selection of religious leaders, while they do use heritage rules for membership in the community. This means that ordinary Alevis in Bulgaria are supposed to have Alevi parents while Alevi leaders do not need to trace their heritage to Ali, as I discuss in Chapter Five. By placing such focus on the heritage requirements for leadership and membership (a major issue in Alevism in Turkey and a minor issue in Alevism in Bulgaria) Engin ignores the most unique element of Alevism in Turkey: the spiritual connection to sacred sites, such as Kızıldeli Sultan in Dimetoka for *Musahiplis,* Hacı Bektaş Veli Sultan in Turkey for *Bektaşis* and Şücaaddin Veli Sultan for *Babais.* These authors do not promote an emic perspective on Alevism in Bulgaria, which is not merely ethnocentric but also prevents them from being able to explain why Alevi

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Bulgarian Turkish migrants to Turkey refuse to attend religious and social organizations of local Alevis in Turkey.

Coşkun Kökel's analysis (2007) has both an emic and etic character, but projects Alevism in Bulgaria as deteriorated versions of Turkish Alevism. Kökel identifies the self-identifications that different sub-segments of Alevis use in Bulgaria in terms of the centers they pledge to, ritual differences in structure and timing, and organizational differences between *Bektaşi*, *Babai* and Musahipli (Kökel 2007: 7). Kökel does not refrain from identifying the differences by utilizing critieria from Turkish Alevism, noting the absence of the heritage system in Bulgarian Alevism (3), the absence of certain ritual principles (12) and lack of musahiplik system among some sub-segments compared to Turkish Alevism (16). By explaining the differences between Bulgarian and Turkish Alevism in terms of the negative effects of historical migrations, as well as in terms of the impact of the socialist regime on Alevi belief and practices (3), Kökel's work implies that Alevism in Turkey has more authenticity, and Alevism in Bulgaria is portrayed as a deteriorated or derivative. This approach not only orientalizes Alevism in Bulgaria vis-à-vis Alevism in Turkey, but is probably also empirically incorrect, given that Alevism in Turkey has remained close to the oppressive Sunni centers historically and thus has potentially remained more supressed than Alevism in Bulgaria, which managed to make use of the tension between the Bulgarian Christian majority and Turkish Sunni minority.

In sum, in this section I have argued that Bulgarian and Turkish academic literature reveal different perspectives on Ottoman rule in Bulgaria and Bulgarian Turks in regard to migration and conversion. However, both literatures have been in perfect harmony in terms of excluding Alevis from the Bulgarian Turkish community, and Alevism from the Bulgarian Turkish group identity. Bulgarian academics have done so in two ways: they reformulated the

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conversion thesis and claimed that present-day Alevis are descendants of converted groups under Ottoman rule, or they revitalized the migration thesis and claimed that present-day Alevis are descendants of migrants who are closer to local Bulgarian populations than the local Turkish or Persian populations, due to their specificly syncretic beliefs and practices. On the other hand, the Turkish academics contributed to the invisibility of Alevi Bulgarian Turks by defining the Bulgarian Turkish group identity in Sunni terms, by openly denying Alevis' representativeness of the group, by misrepresenting them as heretics or Shia and by utilizing Sunni or Alevi frame of references from Turkey to understand Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

4.3   HISTORICITY

The historicial consciousness of Bulgarian Turks is revealed in amateur publications about the community's history, their family and village histories and individual memoirs, which form a strikingly large volume of literature following the migrations to Turkey. In general, these works by both Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks also do not mention Alevis, or underrepresent them. In this section, I discuss how Sunni authors have often excluded Alevism as a legitimate belief among Bulgarian Turks even if they recognize that some Bulgarian Turks are Alevis. Surprisingly, even Alevi authors have not mentioned Alevism or their Alevi heritage in order to dissimulate, or hide their Alevi identity when they resettled in Turkey.

4.3.1 Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks Narratives on the Closure of the Gap Between the Nation and the State

The most common trope in these works is how the migrations have closed the former gap between the ethnic identity and citizenship status/ residence status of Bulgarian Turks, which indicates the reaffirmation of the unity of the nation, state, and territory. The closure trope is particularly common among those who experienced the forced migrations in 1950-1 or in 1989, rather than the "voluntary" migrations with visas in 1968-78 (e.g. before 1989 Kılıç 1989, Gülmen 2006, Özrodoplu: 1976; and after 1989 Kocaoğlu 1998, Toğrol 1991, Topaloğlu 2006, Türker 2003, Tacemen 2003, Yeşilbahçe 2009). My interviews with some of these authors revealed that the prevalence of the closure trope does not mean it is shared by all Bulgarian Turkish migrants. The return-migrants to Bulgaria are those for whom there has been no closure, not because of their conflicting loyalties but because local Turks perceive of them as outsiders: "migrants" or "Bulgarians".

The religious affiliations of some migrants prevented such closure as well, as exemplified in Ahmed Davudoğlu's autobiographic book (1979). Davudoğlu is a devout Sunni who graduated from the famous *Nuvvab* school for training *müftü*s in Bulgaria. He attended the El-Ehzer University for further studies and returned to Bulgaria as an administrator of *Nuvvab* under socialism. He was accused of espionage for Turkey and imprisoned in Bulgaria, then migrated to Turkey in 1949. In Turkey, however, he was imprisoned for 4 months due to his speech in Friday Prayers about "the virtue of Islamic marriage," since the speech was seen as anti-secular and anti-republican during the single-party period in Turkey.

4.3.2   Sunni Bulgarian Turks' Narratives related to Alevi Bulgarian Turks:

In publications by Sunni Bulgarian Turks, the existence of Alevis among Bulgarian Turks is approached in three ways. One is to deny Alevi presence in the community by not mentioning them, even if the authors come from villages that neighbor Alevi villages. A second group misrepresents Alevis in the region by defining them as Shia or even heretics, while the third group recognizes them only superficially by utilizing an unsubstantiated tolerance narrative.

Denialist narratives**:** Some Bulgarian Turkish authors leave Alevis unmentioned. For instance, Recep Mehmet Arifoğlu wrote a book on his village Kadınka (Kardjali) which argues against a famous Bulgarian ethnographer from the socialist period, who had claimed the village has Bulgarian origins. In his book, Arifoğlu mentions rituals currently attributed to Alevis in his village, which is located next to Alevi villages, but he never mentions the existence of Alevis in the area (Arifoğlu 2009). A similar situation is found in a book on Podavya by Salih Sulusoglu, who does not mention anything about the Alevis in the area.

Narratives of Misrepresentation: Several authors misrepresent Alevis. For instance, Ömer Osman Erendoruk's book is about folk beliefs, customs, and religious practices in Krumovgrad, which is an Alevi-Sunni mixed town and the center of the Musahipli Alevis in Bulgaria. Yet, Erdoruk describes the region as "made up of Turks whose religion is Islam and who are followers of the Hanefi School of Law, while there are few followers of *bidat* [fabrication]" referring to Alevi ways in the region (Erendoruk 2007: 97). Also, Ahmet Tacemen's (1995) detailed ethnographic study in Kardjali and Haskovo examines folk and religious beliefs, practices, customs and superstitions. He misrepresents the rituals in the region that are primarily attributed to Alevis (e.g. the significance of *Üçler*, *Yediler*, *Kırklar*) and even presents a distorted representation of the practices that are unique to Alevis. For example, "*tekke* mayesi" is the

annual celebration and ritual carried out in every Alevi *tekke* in Southeastern Bulgaria, but Tacemen portrays them as ceremonies about goats ("*teke*" in Turkish) as if these ceremonies do not take place in the territories of Alevi *tekke*s (1995: 421)!

Unsubstantiated Tolerance Narratives: Some Bulgarian Turkish authors have a sympathetic approach to Alevi Bulgarian Turks and explicitly recognize Alevis in the community as Turkish Muslims. However, some of these authors do not recognize Alevi beliefs as legitimate and they subsume Alevis under the generic Bulgarian Turkish category. Thus Osman Kılıç (1989) mentions that some of the Deliorman Turks are Alevis. He does not stigmatize Alevis but sees them as "actually active, diligent people who are open to novelties in every aspect of life" (Kılıç 1989: 54-55). Yet his recognition of Alevi individuals does not mean recognition of their beliefs and practices, and he attributes Sunni character to explicitly Alevi sites and rituals. Specifically, he presents the Demir Baba *Tekke* from a Sunni point of view, by discussing the presence of the remains of a mosque as a manifestation of Demir Baba's involvement with Sunni daily prayers, even though the mosque was known to be a product of the Ottoman policies that brought about the Sunnification of Alevis in the 19th century. He de-emphasized the Alevi nature of the Demir Baba *Tekke* by defining "meydanevi" as a place of "gathering," since "meydan" means "public square," rather than a space for the *cem* rituals of Alevis. He discusses the ritual slaughter ,yet not its Alevi elements; and emphasizes the Sunni practices in *tekke*, citing the Quran, but not mentioning the Alevi visitors' practices, such as candle burning and Alevi ritual prayers.

Some authors recognize the existence of Alevis in the community, but subsume them under the generic category of Muslims. Osman Keskioğlu sees both "Alevis" and "Sunnis" as Muslim communities in Bulgaria (1985: 52) and notes several important Alevi *tekke*s, *türbe*s and

*Derviş*h lodges in Bulgaria (1985: 51-54). However, he defines these places not as Alevi but rather as Muslim sites under the administration of "*Cemaat-i Islamiye*." He underlines how he appreciates the *türbe*s in the region due to their function of "keeping the faith alive," while he sees common Alevi ways of engaging with *tekke*s as superstitious, such as making requests of the saint rather than to God (1985: 55).

Other authors manifest a secular version of the unsubstantied tolerance towards Alevis. For instance, Islam Beytullah Erdi examines the history of Bisertsi, a Bulgarian, Sunni and Alevi Turk mixed village in Razgrad. He discusses the history of their three neighborhoods, the major developments and famous people in the village history. Even though everyone in the village knows who has Alevi or Sunni heritage, Erdi refrains from making any reference that would indicate the presence of Alevis in the village. During my interview with him in Ankara, he answered my questions with pride: he "did not want to offend anyone." I had interpreted his response as an instance of his perception of Alevism as if it is inherently offensive. However, as Nicole Constable suggested to me, his response may instead be a reflection his respect for Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations and his hesitation to reveal the very Alevi identity his friends had been trying to conceal from outsiders. Alevi Bulgarian Turks'

4.3.3 Narratives indicating "Assimilation" and Dissimulation:

As I stated earlier, in Chapter Three, among Bulgarian Turks, Alevi and Sunni identities are heritage-based categorical group identities. Individuals are assigned to either one or the other category by birth, irrespective of their religious identifications or religiousity. They are also involved in social relations and networks that are informed by these categorical identities. To strenthen this point, in this section I examine the long-term family histories of two Bulgarian

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Turks who have Alevi heritage, based on their autobiographies. These men followed quite different individual trajectories. One, Halil Uzunoğlu, expressed a strictly Sunni Islamist point of view while the other, Salih Ersoy, seems to have dissimulated as Sunni and hints at his Alevi identity throughout the autobiography. Uzunoğlu's case exemplifies the option of "assimilation" for individuals with Alevi heritage, in which the categoric group identity of Alevi persists despite the assimilation of Alevi individuals, and Ersoy's case exemplifies the option of dissimulation of indviduals with Alevi heritage.

A narrative of individual assimilation: Halil Uzunoğlu

Halil Uzunoğlu is a famous person among Bulgarian Turks in Bursa, Turkey. He is the founder of the Tuna-Rodop Turks Solidarity Association, the first active and known migrant organization that carried out successful campaigns against the assimilation of Pomaks in Bulgaria in the 1970s, which even got the issue on the agenda of the International Islamic Conference. In fact, because of his activities, Uzunoğlu was invited to Bulgaria by his relatives there in early 1980. He narrates that he had not anticipated getting a visa from the Bulgarian state; yet he ultimately did so. However, in the second day of his visit he was arrested, was and then imprisoned for 40 months in Bulgaria. Uzunoğlu is a self-identified Muslim who migrated to Bursa in 1950, which became a major rupture for him:

> "We did not know at that time. Despite all the pressures in 1947-49 Bulgaria, the mosques were open, the calls to prayers were done from minarets and the Ottoman language was taught to school kids, while at that time in Turkey, Muslim people were suffering under the pressure of the atrocious government; people who conducted call to prayer from minarets were being shot to death" (Uzunoğlu: 45-48).

He is also a political Islamist. In the 1970s he was involved in local politics in Bursa as a prominent member of the Islamist National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*), which was

shut down during the 1980 coup due to the Konya meeting in which the crowd chanted slogans such as "the Sharia is Islam and the Constitution is the Quran."

The most striking fact about Uzunoğlu, however, is his Alevi-*Bektaşi* heritage. In his autobiography, he explains that his ancestors come from the nomadic tribes who were forced into settlement in Elmali, Antalya (a well-known Alevi village in Anatolia even now), then re-settled to Rodops, and formed the village "Ahatlar" under Ottoman rule (11). His book reveals a number of patterns indicating his *Bektaşi* heritage: most importantly, Uzunoğlu's great grandfather, Hasan, was a janissary in the Ottoman army "in the period when the Muslims were also allowed to become a member of the Janissary Order." He does not discuss it explicitly, but the Janissary Order was organized along *Bektaşi* principles until its closure in the 19th century. Also, another story concerns Omer, the son of Hasan the Janissary and the grandfather of Uzunoğlu, who became an Ottoman Army officer and served during the Ottoman-Russian War, and was forced by his relatives to stay in an Alevi *tekke* to recover from a nervous breakdown. The rupture in the family's religious affiliations seemed to start after the independence of Bulgaria. Omer settled in Asenovgrad, as a former Ottoman army officer in independent Bulgaria. Uzunoğlu's father and his sisters also remained in the Asenovgrad and Kardjali area. Uzunoğlu attended a religious school in Kardjali, served as an imam in a Smolyan village until socialism, and conducted military service in the socialist army as a worker-soldier, like other minority members. He migrated to Turkey in 1950.

During my personal interview with him, Uzunoğlu confirmed the *Bektaşi* origins of his great grandfather who had served in the Janissary Order. Despite his politicized Sunni Islamist worldview and affiliations, he does not despise his heritage but does not emphasize it, either. His situation seems to be best viewed as a case of individual assimilation, which began when the

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family settled in the Pomak-dominated Asenovgrad area and accelerated during the highly polarized political environment in Turkey in 1970, and the particularly Sunni-hegemonic context of Bursa.

A narrative of dissimulation: Salih Ersoy

Salih Ersoy is a Bulgarian Turk who migrated from the Alevi neighborhood of Bisertsi (Razgrad) to Turkey in 1950. In 2002 he published his autobiography, which never mentions his Alevi origin or the presence of Alevis in the village despite the fact that he is an Alevi. However, it is possible to ascertain that he is Alevi because he utilizes several codes that are characteristic of Alevi self-narratives. One is that he locates his ancestors as migrants from Khorasan (3), not Turkey. Another is his reference to a "sectarian difference" (29) in Bisertsi, where he states his group was seen negatively, though he does not mention either which sects he is talking about or which sect he belongs to. Third, he refers to the people of the other neighborhoods as "the others" and "the bigots" (*yobazlar*), a common code term that Alevis use to refer to Sunnis. He explains what he calls "the other's bigotry" (2002:8) by giving an example about different perceptions of the residents of the Sunni and Alevi neighborhoods in the interwar period. Ersoy's neighborhood initiated the opening of a modern Turkish school, while the Sunni neighborhood resisted it on the grounds that "education will be *conca (gavurca)* [in infidel language]" meaning it would be Turkish with the Latin alphabet rather than Ottoman Turkish (2002:8). Finally, the Alevis solved the issue by asking for help from the Bulgarian governor of the town, which was characteristic of a strategy that Northern Bulgarian Alevis used, dating back to the interwar period, by playing off the balance between the Bulgarian majority and Turkish minority. In the interwar period, Ersoy held prominent positions in the village's local administration and in 1950 he migrated to Turkey. He settled in Bandirma, where Alevi migrants were present and then

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moved to İstanbul. His book ends with a statement of his gratefulness "for being able to conduct prayers five times daily owing to the peace of not having a spiritual destruction and collapse or physical misery" (62); praying five times a day is a well-known Sunni marker which Alevis explicitly reject. Despite this final comment, Salih Ersoy's autobiography indicates not assimilation but dissimulation, as throughout the book he utilizes codes that indicate Alevi heritage to insiders while hiding it from outsiders.

In sum, in this section, I examined the place of Alevism and Alevis in the Bulgarian Turks' historical consciousness by examining Bulgarian Turks' family histories, village histories and memoirs. I argued that Sunni Bulgarian Turks contribute to Alevi invisibilities by overtly denying their existence, by misrepresenting them as heretics or Shia and in some cases, even if they recognize the Alevis in the community (along with the narratives of tolerance), by excluding Alevism from the group identity. Most strikingly, I argued that Alevi Bulgarian Turks also contribute to the invisibility of Alevis among Bulgarian Turks by showing two examples: a present-day Islamicist Bulgarian Turkish migrant with *Bektaşi* heritage and an Alevi Bulgarian Turkish migrant dissimulating as Sunni.

5.0   IDEAL-TYPES AMONG ALEVI BULGARIAN TURKS IN TURKEY AND

BULGARIA

This chapter describes Alevi Bulgarian Turks' typical narratives and practices about Alevism (*Alevilik*). I utilize Max Weber's concept "ideal type" for typical patterns reflecting the inner logic of particular meaning systems (1968: 19-22), in this case Alevism, and examine Alevism ideal-types among Alevi Bulgarian Turks. This focus is important for my thesis, since in my ethnographic analysis I operationalize the concepts dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation by examining Alevi Bulgarian Turks' narratives and practices in relation to such an Alevism ideal-type. Specifically I portray Alevis' dissimulations as their narratives and practices which *publicly* indicate their distancing themselves from an Alevism ideal-type while they *privately* continue adhering to it. On the other hand, I see dissimilation as Alevis' narratives and practices which publicly and privately indicate adherence to Alevism and assimilation as those which publicly and privately indicate adherence to ideal-types of the groups other than Alevis.

I should note that I use the terms "public" and "private" to refer to domains of collectivities. In this usage, the term "public" refers to mixed settings where Alevis and non-Alevis are present, and the term "private" refers to Alevi-only settings. "Public" and "private" are also self-identified distinctions made by Alevi Bulgarian Turks, manifested in Alevi terminology such as insider (*Can*) versus outsider (*Zahiri*), notions of secrecy (*Sır*) and enacted in rituals such as *cem*. In this sense, my usage of ,the terms "public" and "private" is not directly

linked to conceptualization of the "public sphere" and "private sphere" as oppositionary (e.g. Arendt 1958, Habermas 1989), or to the critiques of this conceptualization in feminist theory (e.g. Frazer 1991) and neo-Marxism (e.g. Negri 2003).

My analysis of the Alevism ideal-type prioritizes an emic perspective. I focus on the accounts of Alevi Bulgarian Turkish religious leaders (*baba*s) who are currently residing in Bulgaria and Turkey. It should be recalled that among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, *baba*s are elected male members of the *cem* community, based on the level of their spiritually maturity. During my fieldwork ,all of my Alevi female and male informants directed me towards their *baba*s to talk about "religious issues," as they see themselves unauthorized to talk about such things. Therefore, my discussions on religious issues regarding Alevism comes from Alevi *baba*s while those on other issues comes from them but also from regular Alevi male and female members of the community.

Alevi Bulgarian Turkish *baba*s describe the Alevi Path (*Alevi Yolu*) or the Path (*Yol*) as their understandings of what typical beliefs and practices are anticipated from Alevis. They describe this Alevi Path not only on its own terms but also by making comparisons with Sunni Islam, Shia Islam and Alevism in Turkey. They specifically emphasize the internal differentiation of the Alevi Bulgarian Turkish community into subgroups of *Bektaşi*, *Babai*, *Musahipli*, and *Derviş* based on differences in perceived origins, affiliated saints, ritual orders and membership requirements.

I also utilize an etic perspective, since the broad geographic range of my multi-sited fieldwork made it possible for me to recognize some distinctions that were unnoticed by Alevis themselves, due to the long-term isolation of Alevi groups from each other. I noticed another level of internal differentiation crosscutting the subgroups (*Babai, Bektaşi etc.*): Alevis are also

divided into regionally-marked subsegments, as Northeasterns and Southerners, depending on their location of origin or the "frontiers." I use the term "frontiers" as cultural and territorial zones distinguished from other territories, as discussed in Chapter Three. I argue that Alevis' regional differences have caused patterned differences in their religious practices. For instance, Alevis from Northeastern Bulgaria (Razgrad) value time-sensitive rituals such as *cem*s, while Alevis from Southern Bulgaria (Kardjali) conduct space-sensitive rituals such as *türbe* visits in Bulgaria and Turkey.

These multi-layered differences among Alevi Bulgarian Turks cause interesting configurations. The members of the same Alevi subgroups (*Bektaşi* or *Babai*) from the frontiers in Northeastern and Southern Bulgaria differ in terms of the most common ritual forms, ritual frequencies and ritual space. In other words, different subgroups from the same frontier resemble each other more than the same subgroup from the other frontier. In terms of predominant ritual forms, *Babais* from Razgrad are closer to *Bektaşis* from Razgrad, and *Babais* from Razgrad have less in common with *Babais* from Kardjali. Following the same pattern of influence from where they originated, *Bektaşis* from Kardjali are closer to *Babais* from Kardjali and have less in common with *Bektaşis* from Razgrad. This means complications during the encounters of these four Alevi communities: Alevis debate on which subgroup's and subsegment's ritual order regarding *cem*s and *türbe* visits should be followed. They deal with these complications in several ways. In the case of short term encounters they comply, with the visitors following the locals' ways, and in the case of permanent encounters they segregate, so that, for example, Razgrad and Kardjali *Babais*, or Razgrad and Kardjali *Bektaşis* in Turkey form separate *cem* communities.

A focus on these internal-differentiations among Alevi Bulgarian Turks is significant in two respects. First, the self-identified taxonomies of Alevi Bulgarian Turks' been ignored in the highly politicized, nationalist literatures of Bulgaria and Turkey, as I have argued in the previous chapter. Second, these differentiations have real effects on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' lives. Inter-subgroup marriages are discouraged, and members of the same Alevi subgroups from different frontiers keep their separate *cem* communities. Alevis migrants refuse to join local Turkish and Kurdish Alevis' *cem*s, even when they face dissolution of their *cem* community.

Strikingly, these differences may prevent the participation of Alevi subgroups and subsegments in the same *cem* rituals; yet they do not impinge on Alevi self-perceptions. *Babais* from Razgrad feel closer to *Babais* from Kardjali even though their ritual forms and ritual frequency resemble more that of *Bektaşis* from Razgrad. Furthermore, the members of various subgroups and subsegments from Razgrad or Kardjali still unite under the "Balkan Alevi" identity, sometimes in opposition to the "Anatolian Alevi" identity, and ultimately to Sunni identity. This situation reveals a significant point: "Alevi" group identity among Bulgarian Turks captures much more than religious identity defined by practices; it is a categorical identity which remains intact even in the face of varying religious practices and religious identifications.

It would be a fallacy to understand the differences in Alevis subgroups and subsegments as a lack of an ideal type for Alevism. These differences are not essential differences but variations of the same ideal-type, indicating Alevi adaptations to both local and broader political, social and economic developments. Alevis have modified the aspects of beliefs and practices that could be modified while protecting central elements. For instance, when the Cold War border regime prevented Alevi babas from visiting spiritual centers in Turkey and Greece, they re-oriented their visits to the major spiritual centers in Bulgaria. Yet, their prayers continued to

include major saints beyond the border, such as Şücaaddin Veli Sultan for *Babais* and Hacı Bektaş Veli Sultan for *Bektaşi*s.

As I discussed in chapter three, Alevism and Sunnism are categorical group identities which incorporate people with different degrees and levels of religiosity, practicing, pious and even atheist individuals. This is because individuals are assigned by both Alevis and Sunnis to these groups by birth, irrespective of their religious beliefs or practices. While there are differentiations in religious practices, they do not cause a change in the categorical "Alevi" identity, nor in the self-identification of individual Alevis with this identity. As a matter of fact, Alevi *baba*s often reiterated Alevi sayings that were common during my interviews: "the [Alevi] path is one, while [Alevi] practices are a thousand and one" (*Yol bir surek binbir*) or "*Yol farki yok; surek farki var*" (there is no difference in the Path, just in practices).

The first section of this chapter examines the ideal-type of Alevism, first on its own terms and then in comparison with Sunni and Shia Islam, as well as local forms of Alevism in Turkey. The second section examines Alevi Bulgarian Turks' differences with regards to the subgroups and subsegments, but points out the constancy of a shared sense of Alevism among nearly all Alevi Bulgarian Turks. This shared sense of Alevism came out in my interviews, and is manifested in the presence of common beliefs and practices, even though subsegments and subgroups may have minor variations (e.g. some believe in seven while others believe in twelve Holy Imams, some suggest slaughtering one and others suggest slaughtering two animals for initiation).

5.1 THE ALEVI PATH AS THE RELIGIOUS IDEAL TYPE ABOUT ALEVISM

Alevis form a community dispersed across the borders of multiple states in which they are also divided into subgroups. In Turkey, Alevis are divided into Kızılbaş, *Türkmen*, *Tahtacilar*, *Zaza* and *Bektaşis,* while in Bulgaria they are divided into *Bektaşi*, *Babai*, *Musahipli*, *Derviş*, *Gülşeni*, and *Ali Koçlu*s. These differences do not preclude the self-perceptions of Alevis as a group, as reflected in several Alevi sayings: "*Yol farki yok; surek farki var*" (there is no difference in the Path, just in practices) and "*Yol bir surek binbir*" (the Path is one; the form is a thousand and one). This section describes the Path (*Yol*) or the Alevi Path (*Alevi Yolu*) as a religious ideal-type, first on its own terms and then in relation to Sunnis and Shias.

5.1.1 The Alevi Path as a religious ideal-type

According to self-proclaimed Alevis, including those practicing and not practicing Alevism, and Sunnis, also including those practicing and unpracticing Sunnism, "Alevi" is a categorical group identity which includes all Bulgarian Turks having Alevi parents. Yet the Alevi ideal-type, as manifested in the term "the Alevi Path," is a religious trajectory. Entering into the Path (Yol'a girmek) typically requires a person with Alevi heritage to become a member of a cem community. In other words, Alevi heritage is suffice for membership to the "Alevi" social group, while religious initiation is a requirement for membership to the Alevi religious group.

5.1.1.1 Belief

The Perfect Human Being and the 4 Doors, 40 Levels

A religious initiation ceremony transforms a Bulgarian Turk with Alevi heritage into a follower of the Alevi Path (*talip*). New members of a *cem* community are seen as spiritually "raw" (*ham or cig*), and are expected to "mature" (*olgun*) towards the ideal, to become "the perfect human being" (*insan-ı kamil*) and thus get closer to God (*Hak*). To be a perfect human being requires following a set of ethical, moral, and religious principles. Following pronouncements about personal ethics, such as "control your hands, loins and tongue" (*eline, beline, diline sahip ol*) is central to becoming "the perfect human being."

Transformation into such a perfect human being is an idealized form that is structured precisely in accordance to the stages manifested in the principle "Four Doors and Forty Ranks (*Dort Kapi Kırk Makam*). The four doors are named as *Şeriat* (*Sharia* as religious law), *Tarikat* (*Tariqa* as religious brotherhood), *Marifet* (*Marifa* as spiritual knowledge) and *Hakikat* (*Haqiqa as* the Truth). The *Şeriat* door represents the ostensive (*zahiri*), formalist and legalistic elements of Islam. The *Tarikat* door represents the esoteric (*batini*) elements of Islam, which can be experienced only with the guidance of a spiritual leader (*mursit*) in a *cem* community. The *Marifet* door represents the passage from possessing spiritual knowledge, while the *Hakikat* door represents passage to the state of "being one with God" (*Hak ile yeksan olmak*). Alevi Bulgarian Turks recognize the typical trajectory for an Alevi individual as to pass the *Şeriat* and *Tarikat* doors, while the Marifet door may be passed only by some *baba*s, and passing the *Hakikat* door is equivalent to becoming a saint. Each door has ten levels, which are a combination of religious and ethical principles, and that should be passed by followers.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks' perception of the relation between *Tarikat* and *Şeriat* seems ambiguous at first glance. In Alevi theology, the *Şeriat* and *Tarikat* doors are stages that every Alevi should pass through, and passing the *Şeriat* door is a prerequisite for reaching the *Tarikat* door. Over time, however, these concepts have gained other meanings. The term *Şeriat* is used for those following the formalist side of the religion, while *Tarikat* is used for those seeking the esoteric meaning of religion, which implies that the two doors are exclusive categories. Furthermore, this usage has informed and clearly marked intergroup distinctions. The followers of *Şeriat* are taken as "Sunni" and the follower of *Tarikat* are taken as "Alevi," for Alevi Bulgarian Turks.

This ambiguity is important for the general argument of my thesis, because it helped Alevis to manipulate their relations with Sunni communities in two ways. As I discuss in the ethnographic analyses, sometimes Alevi Bulgarian Turks utilize these concepts to overemphasize the intergroup differences and broaden the gap between Sunni and Alevi Islam, and therefore Alevis dissimulate as a group. Sometimes Alevis utilize these concepts to publicly deny inter-group differences while privately continuing to believe in inter-group differences, thus to dissimulate as Sunnis while still following the Alevi Path.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks overemphasizing or denying intergroup differences is not a matter of their unconditioned individual choices, but of contextually-conditioned and well-calculated performances. My fieldwork shows that segments of Alevi Bulgarian Turks have denied the inter-group differences in the presence of outsiders (i.e. they dissimulate) due to the perceived or actual threat when they cannot freely emphasize their own communal identity in public (i.e. dissimilate), yet they resist dissolving within the surrounding society (i.e. assimilate). For this reason, I see Alevis' dissimulations as not an issue of collective and calculated dishonesty,

falseness or hypocracy, but a specific type of performance aimed at surviving the most trying conditions threatening the group members, the group and the group identity.

In defining dissimulation as performance I do not use Judith Butler's use of the latter term, since Butler identifies "performance" as acts of reiteration of the norms in "regulatory regimes" of group differences which cause the reproduction of the "regulatory regime" of group differences and hierarchy. Alevis' dissimulations may be their public reiterations of the Sunni norms, yet these reiterations do not reproduce the regulatory regime of Alevi-Sunni difference and hierarchy. On the other hand, Butler defines "performativity" as *subversive* acts of reiteration of the norms, not "intentionally" and "calculatably," but until these reiterations lead to an "unanticipated resignifiability" of the group identities (1993: 28). I do not see Alevis' dissimulation as "performativity" in the Butlerian sense. Alevi dissimulations as reiterations of the norms about Sunni identity are acts which are decided, planned, calculated and executed collectively. Alevis reiterate norms about Sunni identity only in public, switching to the Alevi ways immediately when they are in the privacy of their own group. Furthermore, Alevis' reiterations of norms about Sunni identity do not seem intend to, or to lead to, an "unanticipated resignifiability" of what Sunni and Alevi identity signifies for Alevis and Sunnis within "the "regulatory regime" of Alevi-Sunni differences.

Strikingly, dissimulation is marked by the mutuality of the performance between dissimulating minorities and simulated majorities. Dissimulation as a performance is a matter not only of what is intended or done by dissimulating actors, but also of how such actions are received. During my fieldwork I have noticed that in migrant neighborhoods of Bursa, where who is Alevi and who is Sunni is known to not outsiders, Sunni Bulgarian Turks do not reveal the Alevi identity of their friends to outsiders like me. In settings where who is Alevi and who is

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Sunni is well-known to outsiders, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations help Sunni Bulgarian Turks to define the Bulgarian Turkish group identity in Sunni terms. In other words, minorities' performances do not seem to actually mislead the majorities that the dissimulating minorities simulate. Dissimulation is a mutual and collaborative act, as Andrew Strathern has reminded me in our correspondence.

The Threes (Üçler): Hak-Muhammed-Ali

In Alevi cosmology, God is referred to as *Hak* or *Hakikat* (the Truth). The forms of Alevism which are less influenced by Sufism recognize the Islamic principle that asserts the unity of God (*tevhid*). Yet forms of Alevism which are closer to Sufism portray God as inherent in and manifested in every creation, including humankind, as captured in the statement "*En el Hak*" (*I am the Truth/ God*). This second perception also informs Alevi rituals. *Cem*s start with participants' supplication (*niyaz*) not only to people in positions of authority like the *baba* and the people holding religious functions, but also to all regular *cem* participants. Unsurprisingly the second perception is disliked by formalist Muslim groups and considered heretical.

Alevis' perception of divinity is summarized by the phrase "Hak-Muhammed-Ali," which is cited in all Alevi prayers and rituals. The phrase suggests a trinity (*üçleme*) and it often led to the association of Alevism with Christianity in Bulgaria. However, the Alevi trinity is marked by ambiguity. Alevi Bulgarian Turks explain the trinity in multiple terms. Some Alevis consider it a hierarchical ranking with a clear division of authority, according to which Hak represents the *ulviyet* (sublimity), Muhammed represents the *nübüvvet* (prophecy) and Ali represents the *velayet* (eparchy). However, many Alevi *baba*s place *Hak* at the highest rank, while Muhammed and Ali are claimed to be created by the same holy light (*nur*) and are equal in rank. In a third

variant, informed by Sufism's portrayal of divinity in all creations, some Alevis consider Hak, Muhammed and Ali to be completely equal and even the same.

The ambiguity in the meanings of the phrase "Hak-Muhammed-Ali" is significant in understanding not only Alevi cosmology, but also the relations between Alevi and non-Alevi groups. The last two explanations of the trinity have been considered heresy by so-called Orthodox Islam, and as grounds for the persecution of Alevis. The first explanation seems compliant with the putatively Orthodox interpretations; yet, it should be noted that even though Sunni Islam recognizes the importance of Ali in the development of Islam, he is not attributed a sacred place such as *vilayet* (eparchy). In fact, until the most recent Alevi revival in Turkey, Sunni Islam did not value Ali more than any of the other four Caliphs. Therefore, all three interpretations of the phrase mark Alevi religious identity as distinct from other Islamic religious group identities.

The ambiguity in the interpretation of the trinity has been attributed to a lack of coherence in the belief system, since Alevism developed as an oral tradition. This may be the true reason for the ambiguity. My thesis, however, is more concerned with its result: the ambiguity has provided space for Alevis to maneuver when dealing with potentially hostile majority communities in their surroundings. For instance, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have been known to use a number of the interpretations stated above, the first interpretation in dealing with Sunni Muslims and the last interpretation in dealing with Orthodox Christians, as I discuss in chapters six and seven.

Ehl-i Beyt *(Beşler) and Teberra and Tavella*

Alevis especially value the household of Muhammed (*ehl-i beyt*), composed of Muhammed, Fatma (Muhammed's daughter), Ali (Fatma's husband and Muhammed's son-in law), Hasan and

Huseyin (Muhammed's grandchildren). Alevis believe that Quran and Hadith clearly state the devolution to *ehl-i beyt.* This notion of *ehl-i beyt* is not just used frequently in prayers and rituals, it also determines inter-group relations through the concepts of *tavella and teberra. Tevella* means devotion to and love of the household of Muhammed, and t*eberra* means avoiding those who do not like *ehl-i beyt.*

There are several reasons why the concept *tavella* is important. One is that a large portion of Alevi prayers, rituals, celebrations and commemorations have references to devotion to the *ehl-i beyt*. A second is that *tavella* is used to justify the heritage principle among Alevis. For instance, in Anatolian Alevism, all Alevi members of the community should have Alevi parents, and all Alevi leaders should prove their lineage connection to Muhammed and *ehlibeyt,* as members of an *ocak* (hearth). Ordinary Alevi Bulgarian Turks follow the membership rule about having Alevi parents, but religious leaders do not have their heritage linked to the *ehlibeyt*. A third reason is that the *tavella* concept is used to legitimize the Alevi position regarding the Original Drift, i.e. the drift between Sunni and non-Sunni Muslims (Shia and Alevi). The Original Drift was caused by the Sunnis' support for the election of Caliphs after Muhammed, when non-Sunnis supported Ali as the legitimate Caliph due to his heritage connection with Muhammed.

Also important is the way the concept **teberra** regulates inter-group relations. It shows the dislike that Alevis hold for a number of historical Sunni leaders, who attacked and murdered members of the *ehl-i beyt* and also Alevis. For example, Alevis dislike Yezid as the Ummayid leader who murdered Ali's son Huseyin in Kerbala. Yet the concept has gained a secondary meaning: it refers to all Sunnis who exclude Alevis or who favor leaders who have historically oppressed Alevis in the present day. Many Alevi prayers and *nefes* include phrases that curse

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"Yezid," which refers to not only the Umayid leader but also all Yezid-like Sunnis. My Alevi informants are often curious about my opinion of this cursing of Yezid. Many seemed satisfied with my response that "I have Sunni heritage, I am not Yezid," indicating that I am aware they make a distinction between Sunnis and Yezid-like Sunnis. In this sense, the concept *teberra* fortifies Alevi ideas of caution and avoiding Sunnis, and therefore justifies practices of dissimulation as as hiding their identity from outsiders.

Holy Imams (Yediler or Onikiler)

Belief in the Holy Imams makes Alevism distinct from Sunnism and similar to Shiism. Sunni Islam does not attribute any exalted position to a human being other than prophets. In Sunni Islam the term "imam" refers to the clergy in the mosques. Shia Islam also values prophets, yet portrays the Holy Imams as exalted and infallible human beings. The first Imam was Muhammed, the second Imam was Ali. There are different beliefs about the number of imams across Shia subgroups: the Twelver Shia acknowledges 12 Holy Imams and the Sevener Shia acknowledge 7 Holy Imams. Both believe that the last Imam remains hidden and will return one day to bring peace and justice to the world.

Alevi belief resembles Shia belief in terms of the value placed on Imams. Imams are sacred, infallible and it is believed the last imam will one day return. Among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, *Bektaşi*s, *Musahipli*s, and *Derviş* believe in 12 Holy imams and *Babais* believe in 7 Holy Imams. The difference between Alevi and Shia rests on how the Holy Imam idea is translated into rituals. Alevis enact the Holy Imam idea in *cem*s; the Holy Imams are directly represented in *cem*s by people holding special religious functions and sitting on a specific sheepskin (*post*). Among Bulgarian Turks, *Bektaşi* and *Musahipli* have 12 *posts* and *Babais* have 7 *posts* in their

*cem*s. Unlike Alevis, Shias do not personify Holy Imams in rituals, and they only have rituals devoted to Holy Imams, such as Karbela Commemorations.

Saints

Alevis are also distinct from both Sunnis and Shias in the way they perceive Saints. In Sunni and Shia Islam, Saints are historical persona who served God. In Alevism Saints are holy souls which are reincarnated in the bodies of historical persons and who have performed miraculous deeds. These differences among Sunni, Shia and Alevis become visible in the rituals at tombs. Sunnis pray to God for the soul of the saint during the *türbe* visit, while Alevis pray to and demand blessings from the saints during visits to the *türbe.*

Alevi Bulgarian Turks respect all saints yet affiliate themselves with certain major Alevi saints (*Pir*), such as Hacı Bektaş Veli for *Bektaşis* and *Musahipli*s, and Şücaaddin Veli Sultan for *Babais*. Alevi Bulgarian Turks also pray to these saints and their major followers (*Kutub*), such as Demir Baba, Otman Baba and local saints who are considered to have brought about miracles.

5.1.1.2 Practices

Cem

Cem (literally congregation or assembly meeting) is the central ritual of worship in Alevism. *Cem*s are considered the re-enactment of the Alevi religious myth *Kırklar cem*i, which relates the narrative of Muhammed's visit to the congregation of Ali and the Forty Holy People (*Kırklar*). *Cem*s reflect the circular understanding of both time and space in Alevism. Alevis perform a ritual dance of turning and swirling (*semah*) to indicate the unity of god and follower, and *Cem*s periodically involve purification ceremonies which symbolize a renewal of the membership oath

(*tarik or bas okutma*) and represent ritual rebirth of Alevis in accordance with Alevi reincarnation beliefs (*don degistirme*).

*Cem*s vary according to the day and time they are held, as well as in terms of their order, participants, religious positions, specific ritual elements and purpose. Some *cem* ceremonies are valued as a rite of passage and commemorate birth, initiation (*ikrar*), marriage, spiritual brotherhood (*Musahiplik*), burials and periodic purification ceremonies (*tarik*). Other *cem* ceremonies are periodically conducted. Thus in Razgrad, *cem*s are conducted twice a week, by *Babais* on "Mondays" and "Fridays" and by *Bektaşi*s on "Wednesdays" and "Fridays;" while in Kardjali weekly *cem*s are not common. Alevi Bulgarian Turks conduct *cem*s on special days, such as on Nevruz Day (March 21), at the end of the Muharrem Fast. *Cem*s are also conducted on *Hıdrellez* (May 6) in Razgrad and at the end of harvest in Kardjali (*birlik*).

Conventional *cem*s (*ayn-ül cem*) are only open to Alevis who have been through the initiation ceremony for the Alevi path (*ikrar*), while conversation *cem*s (*muhabbet*) are open to Alevis who have not taken the oath, as well as non-Alevis. The conventional *cem*s follow the principles of *tasavvuf* and there is a hierarchy among the participants. Alevis who have taken the oath (*ikrarlı*) are not allowed to participate in the whole ceremony, while Alevis with both oath and spiritual brothers and sisters (*Musahipli*) are allowed to participate in the whole ceremony including the specific ritual called *çırak uyarma*. This is a ritual element central to the conventional *cem* (*ayn-ül cem,* i.e. *cem*s which are open to initiated Alevis) and absent in the conversation *cems* (*muhabbet cemi*, i.e. *cems* which may include uninitiated heritage Alevis and even non-Alevis). The ceremony involves lighting 2 or 3 holy candles accompanied by special prayers, which indicates invoking the Holy light representing Hak-Muhammed-Ali. During my fieldwork I was allowed to join both conventional and conversation *cem*s despite being an

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ultimate outsider, as a researcher with acknowledged Sunni heritage. Alevi Bulgarian Turks did not hesitate to invite me to the conversation *cem,* while at the conventional *cem*s it was requested that I leave at the *çırak uyarma,* like the younger Alevis without *ikrar.* I was re-invited after the *çırak* ceremony, indicating that this ritual is seen as a part of the Alevi Secret (*Alevi Sırrı*). Despite this secrecy, Alevi *baba*s did not hesitate to talk to me about the ritual. This may be because this part of the ceremony has been the subject of slander and groundless accusations that "Alevis put the lights off" ("*Aleviler mum söndü yapıyor*"), which implies Alevis partake in sexual orgies in *cem*s, and that the *çırak*s are used by outsiders to stigmatize Alevis. In fact, Alevis treat *çırak*s as sacred; the oath given in front of the *çırak* cannot be broken. Deliberately putting out the *çırak* light is a sin. Accidentally putting out the candle indicates there will be misfortune in the future. Therefore, after *cem*s the *çırak* light is not put out but left to burn (*çırak dinlendirmek*) with special prayers.

The ritual order of the *cem* ceremonies may change depending on the purpose and the subgroups that are performing them, but certain ritual components are the same. First, *cem*s reaffirm the spiritual hierarchies among followers with *ikrar* (*talips*). They reaffirm hierarchies between earlier members and later members; between those with *musahip*s and those without them; between followers and those with religious functions; and between those with religious functions (*post)* and the *cem* leader (*baba)*. Men and women followers are seen as equal. Females are not allowed to hold the *baba* position, but they are allowed to hold other positions. The *baba'*s wife (*ana*) has a powerful position in many *cem*s.

Second, all participants in *cem* become involved in ritual supplication (*niyaz*). The *baba* supplicates to his holy sheepskin, which symbolizes Ali's position. The holders of the other *post*s supplicate first to *baba*, to their *post*s (representing holy imams), and to each other. The

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participants supplicate to the *baba*, the holders of the post and then to the other participants. Sometimes this supplication stage is held collectively, all at once (*toplu niyaz* or *secde*) and it is a symbolic affirmation of the *tasavvuf* belief: God is not far away but is manifested in every human being. *Niyaz* is also made by touching one's lips and hearth when the names of sacred people are cited in *cem*s, and onto ritual objects (such as *cirak* candles*, tarik* stick*, dem* drink). The *niyaz* transforms a candle into *cirak* and an alcoholic beverage to *dem* (Piroğlu: 2003).

*Cem*s start with a people's court, when the *baba*'s invites followers to say if they are having trouble with any member of the community. The *baba* encourages reconciliation of differences, or he announces which party is at fault as *düşkün* (fallen), which means suspension of their participation in *cem*s and even social life with fellow Alevis. This happens for reasons such as murder, adultery, and theft. The conditions for reinstation of the *düşkün*s vary, depending on the case; but it requires a ceremony of removal of *düşkünlük* by ritual sacrifice of the follower after years multiple years of isolation from the religious community and social relations.

The *baba* begins prayers (*gülbenk*) and introduces religious topics related to the specific reason for the ceremony, initiating a discussion between followers. Thus, unlike the worship practices of other Islamic groups, Alevi worship is based on active interaction between *cem* participants. In addition to these discussions, prayers are conducted in the community's native language, meaning Turkish in this case. Prayers in all of these Bulgarian Turkish *cem*s are to *Üçler* (the Threes, i.e. Hak-Muhammed-Ali), *Beşler* (the Fives, i.e. Muhammed, Ali, Fatma, Hasan and Huseyin) and depending on the subgroup *Yediler* (the Sevens, i.e. the Seven Imam among *Babais*) or *Onikiler* (the Twelves, the Twelve Imam among *Bektaşi*s) and *Kırklar* (the Forties, i.e. Forty Holy Person). The community consumes small amounts of alcohol (*dem*) as part of rituals to re-enact the *Kırklar Cemi* where Muhammed joined the assembly of Ali and 40

Holy People and shared the drink made from one grape. The consumption of alcohol during worship is criticized by Sunnis but also by Alevis from Turkey. Alevi Bulgarian Turks, however, consume *dem* in a structured way, in an order that reflects the religious hierarchy, by utilizing several prayer sentences and with the consciousness of its historical and ritual significance.

The religious personnel who holds the *zakir* position then sings religious ballads (*deyiş and nefes*). *Nefes*es concern themes such as love of God and of humankind. They also follow themes of Holy Imams, both major and local saints, as well as following the path of Ali. There are also specific *nefese*s that narrate and commemorate events such as the murder of Ali's son in Kerbela (*mersiye*). The *nefes* among Bulgarian Alevis are structured in terms of their content, tune families, mode and meters, the instruments used and in terms of the responses of the *cem* participants (Markoff 2007). The followers perform the religious ritual dance *semah*, which is made up of localized ritual dances. The main pattern involves turning and swirling, which represents getting rid of one's self and uniting with God. Also, the community shares a meal (*lokma*) of sacrificial meat (*kurban*).

Tomb Visits

Muharram Fast is an Alevi ritual that commemorates the Kerbela Battle, in which a group of Ali supporters, including his son Huseyin, were besieged in the desert and either murdered or left to die by dehydration and starvation. Only Zeynel Abidin, the son of Huseyin, escaped from the siege, becoming the only person with connections to Muhammed and Ali by blood line to survive. This historical event is the basis of the *Muharram* Fast, during which Alevis do not drink water (but do drink other liquids) and refrain from display of joy and comfort. Among Anatolian Alevis, the Muharram Fast lasts 12 days, following the Kurban Bayram. The fast ends with the preparation of a meal called *aşure* that combines various nuts and grains. The meal

celebrates the salvation of Zeynel Abidin, from whom present day Alevis derive some of their heritage. Among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, the duration of the mourning period (in the form of fasting) and the exact timing of the end of mourning (*aşure*) are not uniform, which often causes difference among Alevi *baba*s as well as among visiting Alevis from Turkey. Some *baba*s are open to influence from Turkey and follow the 12 day rule, while others follow the traditional way, i.e. "*babamizdan gordugumuz gibi*" ("as we saw from our fathers"), which was to fast for 9 days.

The Muharrem Fast and *aşure* are important for my analysis as they show internal differentiations among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, as well as their differentiation from Anatolian Alevism. More importantly the Muharrem Fast and *aşure* reveal much about Alevi-Sunni relations. Sunnis also celebrate *aşure*, but they see it as a celebration of the survival of humankind following the apocalypse after Noah's Ark. Recently some Sunni communities have attempted to attract Alevis to celebrate *aşure* together in the mosques, as a way to appropriate the Alevi content of *aşure;* while sometimes Alevis in both Turkey and Bulgaria manipulate local Sunni imams to celebrate *aşure* in Alevi villages. The various Alevi Bulgarian Turkish groups showed diverse reactions to this, ranging from rejecting the commemorations in Sunni spaces (to dissimilate their Alevi identity), to participating in the commemorations in Sunni spaces (to dissimulate their Alevi identity) as I discuss in my ethnographic analysis.

Hıdrellez is the celebration of the meeting of Hızır, the savior of those on the land, and Ilyas, the savior of those on the sea, on the evening of May 6th. *Hıdrellez* is seen as an Alevi holiday in Razgrad and it is celebrated primarily by them. In Kardjali it is as a Roma holiday and is not celebrated by Alevis. In Razgrad, *Hıdrellez* is celebrated during the daytime, with various activities carried out by Alevi females in Alevi-only or mixed villages, while at night Alevis

perform *cem*. During my fieldwork, I had a chance to participate in one *Babai* and one *Bektaşi* celebration of *Hıdrellez,* which incorporated the following common folkloric elements: a trickster, soldiers and a lady who represents the Fatma Ana. I noticed that the celebrations incorporate local context of mixed and Alevi-only settings, in addition to *Babai* and *Bektaşi* beliefs, and therefore indicate inter- and intra-group relations in specific settings, as discussed in the ethnography.

Nevruz is the greatest Alevis celebration, on March 21st. It is believed to represent a number of significant events, such as the day of the birth of Ali, the marriage of Ali and Fatma, and the creation of earth, as well as the Forty's *Cem,* when Muhammed attended the *cem* community of Ali and Forty Holy Persons (*Kırklar*), as well as when Muhammed and Ali become *musahip*s. It is also the Persian New Year. Among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, *Nevruz* is celebrated with a *cem* which is called "The Forties' *Cem"* (*Kırklar Cemi*), recalling the meeting of Muhammed with Ali and the Forty Saints. *Nevruz cem*s are the only *cem* ceremonies in which *babas* perform *semah*, at the beginning of the *cem* in *Bektaşis* and at the end of the *cem* in *Babais*.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks also have unique celebration days when special *cem*s are conducted. In Razgrad, *Bektaşis* and *Babais* celebrate the beginning, the middle and the end of the harvest season by *Kasim* in November, *Harman Tavuğu, Kış Doksanı* (after 90 days) and *Yaz Doksanı* as the second *Harman Tavuğu,* in August (Aydın: 2001, 6-10; Georgieva: 1998). I noticed during my fieldwork that these days are celebrated also in Kardjali.

5.1.1.3 Religious Organization

Membership

To become a member of the religious community, an Alevi should go through an initiation ceremony, called *ikrar* (oath), pledging to follow the Path. This ceremony transforms an ordinary person with Alevi heritage into an Alevi follower (*talip*). *Bektaşis* accept *ikrar* before marriage, while *Babais* often unify the *ikrar* and marriage ceremonies for membership (Űzüm 2006: 148). Every follower (*talip*) should marry another Alevi. If the husband and wife are from different *cem* communities, the wife joins the husband's *cem* community. After the marriage, the Alevi couple is expected to form a spiritual brotherhood (*Musahiplik*) with another couple, through a special ceremony held in the *cem* community. The spiritual brothers and their wives are considered sisters and brothers in the Path (*Yol Kardeşi*). This is a form of fictive kinship, a bond seen as equal to and even prioritized over blood ties. Therefore, their children are seen as brothers and sisters and are not allowed to marry. A person is accountable for the mistakes his *musahip* has committed. In order to remain an Alevi, every male and female member of the *cem* community goes through periodic ritual purification ceremonies. In Razgrad, this ceremony is held weekly for regular followers and monthly for *baba*s and it is called "passing [under] *tarik*" (*tarikten gecmek*). In Razgrad this ceremony is performed irregularly and it is called *bas okutma* (having one's hat prayed) as it involves *baba*'s prayer upon every male and female followers' ritual hat, which was given to them at the day of their *ikrar*.

Leadership

The Alevism ideal-type requires following a religious hierarchy based on levels of maturity. An Alevi religious leader (*dede* or *baba*) is always a male, who is typically expected to have varied

experience of occupying different positions representing the 12 or 7 Imams. Females can hold a number of these positions; yet, they cannot become *baba*s. Among the Alevi females the wife of *baba* is particularly important in some subgroups of Alevi Bulgarian Turks regarding their active involvement in the ritual purification ceremonies.

Among the Anatolian Alevis, the legitimacy of religious leaders, called *dede*s, is grounded in their heritage, their connection to Muhammed and the Holy Imams. Among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, the legitimacy of *baba*s is based on their eligibility, since they are elected based on their spiritual maturity. *Baba*s provide services to the community such as directing the *cem* rituals for birth, marriage, and death, as well as the *cem* rituals for the periodic purification of followers.

Among Bulgarian Turks, a male follower may become the religious leader of the *cem* community (*baba* or *dede*) only after having performed functions in the *cem*.Among Bulgarian Turks, an elected religious leader (*baba*) is expected to be acknowledged by the regional religious *baba* or *koca baba*. *Kocababas* (Great *Baba*) or *Halifebaba* (Caliph *Baba*) have at least one *cem* community and also function as the leader among the regional *baba*s of *Babai*, *Bektaşi* and *Musahipli* subgroups. The regional *baba*s main function is to supervise other *baba*s and lead their purification rituals. *Kocababas* are granted this function following their election by the regional Alevis, as well as acknowledgement from a spiritual center affiliated with the subgroup. For instance, *Babais* Alevi Bulgarian Turks' *Halifebaba*s have served in the Şücaaddin Veli Sultan *Türbe* in Turkey and received authorization documents (*icazetname*). However *Bektaşi* Alevi Bulgarian Turks could not serve in the Hacı Bektaş Veli *Türbe* because it has been turned into a museum. Therefore, they served at the Demir Baba *Türbe* in Razgrad, Elmali Baba *Türbe* in Kardjali and Kızıldeli Sultan *Türbe* in Dimetoka. *Musahipli*s also served at the Kızıldeli

Sultan *Türbe* in Dimetoka or the Seyit Sultan *Türbe* in Kardjali. The term Halifebaba was dropped among Alevi Bulgarian Turks after their migrations in Turkey because the title "Caliphate" was constitutionally forbidden in 1924 in Turkey. Thus, Alevi migrants use the term *Kocababa*.

5.2   AN OUTLINE OF ALEVI IDEAL TYPE VERSUS SUNNI AND SHIA ISLAM

The Alevi perception of the Quran differs from the perceptions of Sunni and Shia Islam. Alevis acknowledge the Quran as the words that God revealed to Muhammed. However, they claim that the authentic version of the Quran was changed by Sunni leaders, by removing parts indicating the special place granted to Ali and *ehli beyt*. Alevis justify this claim by stating that there are 6236 verses in the present day Quran while it should be 6666. Alevi Bulgarian Turks share this belief. They utilize verses from the present day Quran; yet what they call the Quran are the sacred poems (*nefes*) sung during the *cem*s, because these *nefes* are seen as reflecting the spirit of the verses that have been removed.

The Alevi perception of the afterlife is different from Sunni and Shia Islamic perceptions as well. Sunni and Shia Islam follow the belief in *ahiret*, when all souls will rise again on doomsday to face divine interrogation and go to heaven for good deeds and hell for bad deeds. In contrast, Alevis follow a belief in *tenasuh* (reincarnation), which states that the soul of the dead reincarnates in the body of another human being (*don degistirme*). If a person was involved in bad deeds during his or her lifetime, he or she will come back to life in the body of an animal, such as a donkey or a dog. In this respect, Alevis do not believe in death of the soul but the

change of the body, and refer to death as *kalibini degistirmek* (*shifting one's mould*). They further claim that heaven and hell are in this life.

Alevis reject the Sunni "Five Pillars of Islam" or Shia "Aspects of Islam." Both Sunni and Shia Islam accept the principle of *sehadet*, which requires reciting the creed "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God." The Shia Muslims' creed has an additional element: "…Ali is the vicegerent of God." Alevi rituals utilize the Shia Muslim creed but also indicate the eparchy of Ali, as well as including statements about the "Hak-Muhammed-Ali" trinity.

Sunni and Shia Islam both follow the principle of *salat*, which requires performing daily prayers (*namaz*) at home or in mosques. Sunni Islam requires five daily prayers while Shia Islam requires 3 time daily prayers by combining two kept separate by the Sunnis. For their part, Alevis see daily prayers as formalities rather than a requirement, while *cem*s, as esoteric and highly symbolic interpretations of Islam, are the markers of Alevi religious identity. In Alevism *niyaz* (supplication) replaces the formalistic *namaz* (daily prayers).

Another difference is in the principle of *zekat*, which requires giving alms to the poor and is kept by both Sunnis ans Shias. The obligatory almsgiving is strictly structured in terms of when, how, by whom, and to whom alms should be given. In addition to the obligatory almsgiving, both groups accept voluntary giving, *sadaka*. While Alevis value almsgiving, it is requirement to be done at any specified time. In fact, almsgiving is seen as a form of sacrifice when they visit *türbe*s.

The principle of *oruc*, which requires fasting during the month Ramadan when the Quran was revealed to Muhammed, is accepted by Sunnis and Shias.. In both, believers are expected to fast for the whole month, with few exceptions such as when a person is sick or travelling. Fasting

is seen as a requirement to discipline one's self (*nefis*). Alevis do not follow Ramadan fasting, seeing it as another formalistic element of Islam. However, as stated earlier, they fast during the month of Muharram for 10 to 12 days to commemorate the martyrdom of Huseyin, the son of Ali, during the Kerbela battle. Sunni Ramadan fasting is different from the Alevi Muharram Fast; the former requires abstaining from any food or drink from sunrise to sunset throughout the month, while the latter requires abstaining from water and any activity of comfort and enjoyment for 10-12 days. The Sunni and Shia Ramadan fasting ends with Ramadan Bayram, when congregations of male believers attend mosques for Ramadan Bayram prayer, while the Alevi Muharram Fasting ends with *Aşure*, a pudding made up of various grains, nuts and fruits, to celebrate the escape of the son of Huseyin, Zeynel Abidin.

Finally, the principle of *hac* stands for the pilgrimage to Mecca, Pilgrimage is required for believers who can afford it in both Sunni and Shia Islam. It is believed to bring Muslims from different parts of the world to create a sense of unity and it is strictly structured in terms of a ritual order. Shia Islam also values visits to Holy Imams' tombs such as Necef in Iraq. Sufism in Alevi belief rejects the view that God resides in a distance place. Instead, God is seen in each and every creation. Therefore, Alevis see pilgrimage to Mecca as opposed to their belief, as captured in the Hacı Bektaş Veli's following saying: "Whatever you look for, look for it in yourself/ neither in Jerusalem, nor Mecca or Haj" (*Her ne ararsan kendinde ara/Kudus'te, Mekke'de, Hac'da degil.*")

5.3   ALEVISM AMONG BULGARIAN TURKS VERSUS ALEVISM IN TURKEY

Encounters via migrations and visits make the differences between Alevi Bulgarian Turks and Alevis from Turkey more visible. The two Alevi groups across the border differ in their taxonomy for self-identification, their leadership rules and several elements in *cem*s. These differences may result in misunderstandings as well as incompatibility in the religious rituals, but the Alevi ideal type, the Alevi Path and the "Alevi" categorical identity remains shared.

Strikingly, Alevis themselves have different interpretations of the differences between the communities. During my fieldwork in Bulgaria I met with several Alevi visitors from Turkey who promoted a highly ethnocentric approach. They presumed that Alevi ways in Turkey are the correct ones while portraying the practices of Alevi Bulgarian Turks as deteriorated, supposedly "due to long-term socialist rule". The Bulgarian *baba*s' response to this interpretation was quite polite in order to remain hospitable to their guests; yet, when I asked the *baba*s for their thoughts, many underlined how Alevi ways actually flourished in socialist Bulgaria because the external pressure united the community, and compelled them to frame religious practices as secular celebrations. In addition, many *baba*s emphasized that the Alevi practices they know were transmitted through the generations as practices.

It is clear that the formation of the Bulgaria-Turkey border resulted in differentiation between the two Alevi communities. Strict border regimes prevented connections between the two groups, and obstructed Alevi Bulgarian Turks' connections with the major spiritual centers in Turkey such as Hacı Bektaş Veli Tekke or Sucaadin Veli Sultan Tekke. Ivanka Georgieva claims that the Alevis in Bulgaria remained protected since they populated rural areas while Sunnis populated the cities (1998: 12). I argue, though, that it is not the urban-rural distinction, but rather border formation that granted Alevi Bulgarian Turks a degree of shelter from

aggressive Sunnism, as opposed to the situation for Alevis in Turkey. The latter have faced periods of intensive, state-initiated Sunnification policies, even when they were residing in rural areas.

The two communities certainly utilize different taxonomic systems of self-identification, and lack of awareness of these differences has caused great misunderstandings at moments of encounter between the two groups. Alevi Bulgarian Turks have used the term "*Kızılbaş*" for self-identification; the term "Alevi" is relatively new and a post-socialism phenomenon after the opening of the Bulgaria-Turkey border. Currently the term Kızıl*baş* is a neutral term that Alevis, Sunnis and Christians use to refer to Alevis in Razgrad, while in Kardjali as in Turkey, it is seen as derogatory. Moreover, Alevism in Turkey utilizes two main self-identification categories, Alevi or *Bektaşi*. The first term refers to members with Alevi parents, while *Bektaşi* refers to followers of the Alevi Path who have no heritage membership. In Bulgaria, Alevis are divided into subgroups of *Babai*, *Bektaşi*, *Musahipli*, *Derviş*, and *Ali Koçlu*. Only the *Derviş* are non-heritage groups.

This situation means that the category *Bektaşi*is not the same in Bulgaria and Turkey, while *Derviş* is the same. Also, there are no corresponding groups for *Musahipli* and *Ali Koçlu* in Turkey. These taxonomic differences have caused several misunderstandings and disappointments when Alevis from the two countries encounter one another. For instance, a group of *Bektaşi* from Turkey heard about the presence of *Bektaşi* in Bulgaria, visited Bulgaria and met with them; yet they were not allowed to enter the *Bektaşi cem*s in Bulgaria. This is because *Bektaşis* in Bulgaria require heritage membership, the oath and *musahip*s for participation in *cem*s, while *Bektaşis* in Turkey are not heritage members and do not need to marry to join to *cem*s. A similar historical example can be found in Haydar Baba, a Turkish

Bektaşi who migrated to Razgrad during the period of single party rule in Turkey, yet was not accepted into *Bektaşi cem*s in Razgrad and was even denied burial and a *Bektaşi* ceremony in Bulgaria.

Leadership organization and requirements also differ between Alevis in the two countries. In Turkey, Alevi leaders are *dede*s and *Bektaşi* leaders are *baba*, but in Bulgaria all leaders are called *baba*. *Dede*s in Turkey and *baba*s in Bulgaria are heritage members of the community while *Bektaşi baba*s in Turkey are not. In addition, *dede*s in Turkey trace their lineage to Ali, while *baba*s in Bulgaria are elected.

Several ritual elements practiced in Bulgarian *cem*s are absent in the local Alevi *cem*s in Turkey. For instance, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have kept the tradition of *dem*, while Alevis in Turkey either opt out of this or replace it with grapes. In fact, visitors to Bulgaria from Alevi organizations in Turkey criticize the use of *dem* in the Alevi *cem*s in Bulgaria. Yet, as already mentioned, Alevi Bulgarian Turks do not drink alcoholic beverages if they are not blessed, (*niyazlamak*) and following the *niyaz* the beverage becomes *dem*.

5.4   ALEVISM AMONG BULGARIAN TURKS ACCORDING TO THE SUBGROUPS

Alevi Bulgarian Turks are divided into the *Babai* and *Bektaşi* subgroups, as well as the nearly-extinct *Derviş*es in Razgrad and *Musahipli*s in Kardjali. These subgroup differences are mentioned by some authors who have been in Bulgaria, but works in this literature tend to be focused on only one region (e.g. Markoff 2007 on Kardjali *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s, Georgieva: 1998 on Razgrad *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s, Gramatikova 2001 on Deliorman Alevis) or are based on short term visits (Aydın 2001, Kökel 2007). Other works examine Alevi ways using either a

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Sunni Islamic perspective (Űzüm 2006) or Alevi taxonomies from Turkey (Engin 2000, 2008, 2009). Based on my fieldwork, I examine the subgroup divisions based on their various t claims of superiority, which are in turn based on historical precedence, claims of authenticity, or connections to spiritual centers, saints and ritual elements.

In both Kardjali and Razgrad, the main competition is between the majority *Babais* and *Bektaşi*s, each group claiming superiority over the other. *Babais* claim they are superior because of the historical precedence of *Babaism* over *Bektaşism*. In brief, *Bektaşism* was formed in the 16th century after the death of the spiritual leader Hacı Bektaş Veli by his follower Balım Sultan, while *Babaism* developed in the 13th century under the guidance of *Baba* Ilyas and *Baba* Ishak, who were connected with the Şücaeddin Veli Sultan Tekke and initiated major revolts in Anatolia. After these revolts, the majority of the *Babais* were exiled to the Balkans and unified around the Otman *Baba* Tekke (Bahadır2008), while *Babais* remaining in Anatolia had dissolved into the *Bektaşi* groups (Melikoff: 1994) or stayed close to Şücaeddin Veli Sultan Tekke in Turkey (Bahadır 2008).

On the other hand, *Bektaşi* Bulgarian Turks claim superiority based on the preservation of their authentic belief system due, to its relatively recent systematization. In addition, *Bektaşis* were supported by the Ottoman state until the 18th century, because *Bektaşis* belief was the backbone of the Janissary system. *Babais*, however, have often been identified with subversive activity against political authority. In addition, *Bektaşis* strictly follow religious rituals and are closed to outside groups. While *Babais* may permit *Bektaşis to* see their *cem*s, the latter do not let *Babais* see their *cem*s even as visitors, as many of my *Babai* and *Bektaşi* informants stated. Furthermore, it was relatively more difficult for me to convince my *Bektaşi* informants to talk about Alevism compared to my *Babai* informants.

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While both *Babais* and *Bektaşis* respect all Alevi saints, they differ in the major saints they acknowledge as their spiritual leaders. *Babai* Bulgarian Turks see Sucaaettin Veli Sultan in Turkey as the highest spiritual authority and Otman *Baba* in Haskovo as his follower. Therefore, even in the present day, *Babai* Koca *Baba*s should receive their authorization (*icazetname*) from Sucaettin Veli Sultan *Türbe* in Turkey. Howver, in the periods where there was a strict border regime, *Babai* Koca *Baba*s could not visit Turkey, and adopted the Otman *Baba* Tekke for the annual Koca *Baba* rituals of purification. It is also known that the Succaaeddin Veli Tekke's *postnisin* (the spiritual leader and the administrator of the Tekke) had visited Bulgaria, and tied the local *Babais* to SücaeddinVeli Tekke in 1910 (Aydın 2006).

For their part, *Bektaşi* Bulgarian Turks accept Hacı Bektaş Veli as their spiritual leader. *Kocababas* in particular used to visit and serve at his tomb in Turkey for authorization and purification; yet, the transformation of the *türbe* into a museum, as well as strict border regimes during socialism, resulted in adaptations in *Bektaşi* practices. In Razgrad, *Bektaşis* first started conducting services at the Demir Baba *Türbe*, which was also converted into a museum by the Bulgarian state. Then the *Bektaşis* oriented towards the Huseyin Baba *Türbe*. In Kardjali, *Bektaşis* recognize Kızıl Deli Sultan in Dimetoka as an earlier follower of Hacı Bektaş Veli. They used to visit his tomb when the Hacı Bektaş Veli *türbe* was transformed into a museum. However,, with the changing border regime, *Bektaşi Kocababas* in Kardjali have started to conduct services and get authorization from the Elmali Baba *Türbe* in Kardjali.

The religious symbolism and ritual elements that *Babai* and *Bektaşi* utilize are different as well. *Babais* recognize the number 7 as sacred; their saints' tombs have 7 cornered roofs and their *cem*s have 7 positions representing the 7 Imams, while *Bektaşis* recognize the number 12 as

sacred. In *cem*s *Babai* prayers are named *Birler*, *Üçler*, *Beşler*, *Yediler* and *Kırklar,* while *Bektaşi* prayers in *cem*s are for *Birler*, *Üçler*, *Beşler*, *Onikiler* and *Kırklar*.

Both *Babais* and *Bektaşis* follow the Hak-Muhammed-Ali trinity and light *çırak*s to represent this belief. However, the number of *çırak*s differs among *Babais* and *Bektaşis*, indicating different perceptions of the trinity. *Babais* use 3 *çırak*s as they attribute different authority positions to the Hak-Muhammed-Ali trinity: sublimity, prophecy and eparch. *Bektaşis* use 2 *çırak*s, as they see Muhammed and Ali as created from the same holy light (*nur*).

Finally, among both *Babais* and *Bektaşis*, to be a full member of the *cem, musahiplik* (fictive brotherhood) is required. *Bektaşis* accept those with *ikrar* to their *cem*s, though they ask them to leave during certain parts*,* while *Babais* require *ikrar* and *marriage* together to allow followers to the *cem*. Furthermore, the *Babai musahip* ceremony requires the sacrifice of two animals, one each for the husband and wife, while for *Bektaşi*, the sacrifice of one animal for a couple is sufficient. This causes *Babais* to devalue the *Bektaşi musahiplik* ceremony as a violation of the rules of the *cem* (*erkan*).

5.4.1   Alevism among Bulgarian Turks across the regional segments

Among the Alevi Bulgarian Turkish communities, for those originating from Northern Bulgaria, time-oriented rituals prevail, while for those originating from Southern Bulgaria, space-oriented rituals prevail. Alevis from Razgrad manifest their identity by conducting frequent *cem*s. While Kardjali Alevis also conduct *cem,* their primary rituals focus on *türbe*s.

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5.4.1.1 *Cem* Ceremonies as Time Bound Rituals

Time is the characteristic that marks *cem*s in Bulgaria. *Cem* ceremonies are often done at certain times: for individual rite of passages, such as birth, initiation (*ikrar*), fictive kinship (*Musahipli*k), death and after death. In addition, they periodically have *cem*s for collective worship (i.e. weekly or monthly *cem*s, purification *cem*s) and during specific yearly events (i.e. Nevruz, Muharrem, Birlik). Also, the ritual components of the *cem*s are expected to follow a certain coherent sequence.

In terms of frequency, *Babais* and *Bektaşis* in Razgrad conduct weekly *cem*s during the *cem* period, which is all year for *Bektaşis* and five months for *Babais*. *Babais* conduct weekly *cem*s on Monday and Friday evenings and call themselves "*Pazartesililer*" (Monday-ers), while *Bektaşi cem*s are on Wednesday and Friday evenings and they call themselves "*Carsambalilar*" (Wednesday-ers). Neither *Babais* nor *Bektaşis* in Kardaji conduct *cem*s on a weekly basis, only during rites of passage and on special days.

This difference between the same subgroups across two frontier zones is due to their adaptations to local conditions. Three factors are involved. First, differing majority-minority configurations in Razgrad and Kardjali have created differing possibilities for Alevis, but also burdens in pursuing their religious ceremonies. Razgrad Alevis have remained powerful because they were the determining third group in the competition between Sunni Turks and Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. On the other hand, Kardjali Alevis were subsumed under the generic Turkish identity due to the vast Sunni Turkish majority of the region. Second, both *Babai* and *Bektaşis* in Kardjali and Razgrad rely on agriculture; yet the agriculture in Razgrad is resource-intensive due to large parcels and fertile land, while the agriculture in Kardjali is labor-intensive, due to infertile and small-scale land holdings. Therefore, Kardjali Alevis have to spend more

time at agricultural production than Razgrad Alevis. Third, local organization of Alevism varies in both areas. In Razgrad, there are at least 5 *baba*s living in the Alevi populated villages while in Kardjali, many Alevi-populated villages do not have their own *baba*. Their religious services are conducted by inviting a *baba* from a distant village.

The impact of these differences is striking. The increased frequency of the *cem*s certainly helps a community becomw more closely knit (e.g. in Razgrad); however, the absence of weekly *cem*s does not necessary mean looser ties among Alevis. Kardjali Alevis also conduct *cem*s for important events, such as rite of passages or Alevi holidays. In Kardjali, the absence of the weekly *cem*s demonstrates the flexibility of Alevis to external circumstances, as many *baba*s from Kardjali cited the famous saying by Ali: "working is worshipping."

5.4.1.2 Türbe Ceremonies as Space-Bound Rituals

Visits to the saints' tombs (*türbe*s) are not a defining element of Alevism, unlike *cems*. Yet visiting saints' tombs is a common practice among Alevi Bulgarian Turks, while Sunni Turks and Orthodox Christian Bulgarians also visit Alevi *türbe*s.

Visits to *türbe*s are space-dependent rituals, given the spatiality of the *türbe* as well as their highly structured character in terms of the expected sequence of rituals involved, that I discussed in the previous section on ideal-types. The variations between Alevi Turks from Northeastern Bulgaria (Razgrad) and Southern Bulgaria (Kardjali) are related to the distribution of *türbes* in these regions and the significance attributed to *türbe* ceremonies.

In Razgrad, *türbe*s are large, architecturally ostentatious, and far from the settlement areas. Some of them are under state control as museums, such as Demir Baba Türbe. In Kardjali, every Alevi-populated village has at least one *türbe,* in addition to *türbe*s that remain in the territories of what at present are Sunni-only villages. Their physical proximity and accessibility

make *türbe*s a central area of activity in Alevi villages in Kardjali. People visit the *türbe*s to make wishes and demands, and in every village with *türbe,* there is at least one family responsible from keeping the *türbe* (*türbedar*). Every week, *türbe*dars light the *çırak* \s in the *türbe*s. A recent development is the construction of special *cem* rooms next to *türbe*s, although traditionally *cem*s are held in houses.

Certain ritual elements during *türbe* visits distinguish Razgrad and Kardjali Alevis, as I noticed during my participant observations in the *türbe* in both places. I alsonoticed how these differences caused conflicts when I travelled with Razgrad Alevis visiting the *türbe*s of Elmali Baba in Kardjali and Otman Baba in Haskovo, as well as with Kardjali Alevis visiting the *türbe*s of Demir Baba and Haydar Baba in Razgrad. For instance, Razgrad Alevis perform *niyaz* by walking around the *türbe* to make a full circle, similar to the full circle in their *cem*s; while Kardjali Alevis perform *niyaz* by making a walk resembling a horseshoe; they refuse to pass behind the headstone of the *türbe*, seeing it as disrespectful to the saint. During my visit to Demir Baba, I noticed that Kardjali Alevis were terrified by the local Alevis' full circle *niyaz* and tried to "teach" them the "proper" *niyaz*!

Most importantly, the annual rituals in *türbe*s, *maye* or *türbe maye*si, are unique to Kardjali Alevis and distinguish them from Alevis from Razgrad. Every *türbe* in Kardjali has a *maye* day during summer on the same day of the year, as the *türbe*s are under the control of either Sunnis or Alevis in Kardjali, while *türbe*s in Razgrad are mostly under the control of the state, like the Demir Baba *Türbe*.

Maye rituals combine secular and religious elements as highly spatialized ceremonies. The *maye*s start with the baba's prayer on the animals to be sacrificed (*kurban*). *Maye*s include slaughter of the animals, and combination and preparation of the meat together with other food

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(such as rice) to be shared by the participants. Another typical ritual element of Kardjali *maye*s is about gifts for the *türbe* collected for a year. During the annual *maye*s these gifts are auctioned (*tirk*) for participants. The auction generates income in order to support the *türbe* for the next year. This income is always recorded and monitored by the *maye* committee, under the rule of *maye babasi*. Often Sunnis attend the *maye*s at the larger *türbe*s. Sunnis participation in the ritual food consumption and *tirk* are seen as positive by Alevis. This is because when "eating Alevis food" has long been stigmatized by Sunnis, Sunnis cannot consume Alevi ritual food. Also Sunnis participation in the *tirk* auctions shows their financial contribution to the *türbe*. All these rituals are in the daytime and open to non-Alevis, while the evening *cem* is strictly restricted to Alevi followers.

Some *türbe*s' *maye*s remain extremely localized and attract only Alevis in the villages, while others are attened by Alevi and non-Alevi outsiders, from nearby villages, the city, from other parts of the country, and even from outside of Bulgaria. For instance, I observed many migrants from Turkey visit the Otman Baba Türbe's *maye* in Haskovo and Elmali Baba's *maye* in Kardjali.

*Maye*s are organized by the specific subgroups to which the saints are affiliated. For instance, Elmali Baba is seen as a *Bektaşi* saint, and therefore his *türbe*'s *maye* and the *cem* are organized following *Bektaşi* rules and by *Bektaşi baba*s, while the Otman Baba Türbe's *maye* is conducted by *Babais* and the Seyit Baba Türbe's *Maye* is conducted by *Musahipli*s. During my fieldwork I noticed only once exception. A major *maye* at the Otman Baba Türbe was conducted not by the *Halifebaba* of *Babais* but by the *Halifebaba*s of *Bektaşis* and *Musahipli*s. The participant *Halifebabas* explained this to me as a matter of convenience. The *Bektaşi* and *Musahipli halifebabas* were close to the *türbe* while the *Babai halifebabas* resided in another

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village. Yet, later on I had a chance to contact the *Babai Halifebaba* and asked about thesituation. His absence was in protest against the *halifebabas'* perception that the *maye*s were a source of income generation.

5.5   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have described the ideal-type of Alevism among Bulgarian Turks by focusing on the accounts of Alevi religious leaders (*baba*s), who are always males,since Alevi females may not become *baba*s, though they can hold other important ritual positions in religious ceremonies. I noted that these *baba*s define the ideal-type in terms of "the Alevi Path," which is a religious trajectory that begins with the oath (*ikrar*) and transforms a heritage member into a follower (*talip*) in the *cem* community. I explained the Alevi Path by outlining its central elements regarding the belief system, namely the commitments to become "the perfect human being," to follow the "four door, forty levels" ideal, to hold a characteristic perception of the Hak-Muhammed-Ali trinity, and to adhere to the Holy Imams and Saints. I also explained the typical religious practices that were related to the Alevi Path, the *cem* rituals and *türbe* visits as well as the celebration and commemoration of special days. I also noted that Alevi Bulgarian Turkish *baba*s' accounts of the Alevi ideal-type are highly structured in comparison to Sunnism, Shiism and Alevism in Turkey. I explained the differences as being grounded on the Alevis' *batini* (esoteric) versus *zahiri* (formalist) dichotomy in thinking about Islam. I also focused on Alevi *baba*s' self-perceptions, along with internal differences among Alevis in terms of subgroups (*Babai*, *Bektaşi* and *Musahipli*) and I discussed my observations about the differences of these

subgroups across the subsegments of Razgrad and Kardjali. I emphasized that these differences mark important variations in Alevis religious practices and they may even lead to incompatibility between the Alevi subgroups and subsegments. I argued, however, that these are not essential differences among Alevi communities, but rather are derived from the historical conditions in which these varieties of Alevism developed. More importantly, I argue that despite these variations and their significant effects, Alevi Bulgarian Turks continue to see themselves as a group, as the revealed by their universal accepgtance o the slogan that "the Path is one, while practices are a thousand and one."

6.0   DISSIMULATION

"When there is a trap, set up for you
In every corner of this town
And so you learn the only way to go is underground
When there's a trap set up for you
In every corner of your room
And so you learn the only way to go is through the roof

…Just like their meanings they lay between the lines
Between the borders their real countries hide
The strategigo's [sic] saw their advertise
Their strategy of being is one of in-your-face disguise
Ooohoohoooh, through the roof, underground!"
Through The Roof 'N' Underground
Gogol Bordello

A common configuration of dissimulating minorities is that a minority's members dissimulate against one single majority group, as was the case for Jews and Muslims in Inquisition Spain (Root 1988, Ibrahim 2008, Rose-Rodriguez 2010), and Christians in Anatolia (Clark 2006). I use the phrase "dissimulation against" in order to stress the oppositional nature of the process: dissimulating minorities simulate a majority's beliefs and practices in order to protect their members, their group and their group identity from the same majority. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations are more complicated than these other cases because Alevis have dissimulated against varying national majorities and political regimes as these have changed over time, throughout which the Alevis have constantly remained a double minority in both Bulgaria and Turkey. In this chapter I examine Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations by focusing on their

narratives and practices, which publicly indicate their distancing themselves from the Alevi ideal-type while they privately continue adhering to it. Sometimes Alevis disassociate from Alevi ways in the presence of Alevis who have not been initiated into the Alevi Path. More often, though, Alevis' dissimulations are intended to address the threat coming from non-Alevis. It is for this reason that their public disassociations from Alevi ways go together with their public simulations of the practices of the dominant majority.

My fieldwork data let me analyze the current patterns of dissimulations adopted by Alevis, depending on the political demography of their immediate surroundings. Kardjali Alevis often dissimulate not against the Bulgarian national majority but rather against local Sunni Turks, who now form the demographic and political majority at the local level. In contrast, Razgrad Alevis dissimulate against both Bulgarians and Sunni Turks, who compete with each other for demographic and political majority status, at the local level in Razgrad. Alevi migrants' dissimulations are also patterned by the dynamics of political demography affecting migrants in Turkey. The Alevi migrants in isolated villages of Turkish Thrace or cosmopolitan neighborhoods of İstanbul do not need to utilize dissimulation since they are already assured a degree of every-day level invisibility in the broader society. Temporary dissimulation becomes a viable option for Alevis migrants when they need to interact with outsiders, such as Turkish civil servants and even Kurdish Alevis. On the other hand, in Bursa, there are few Alevi migrants and only a handful of them may dissimulate, by trying to hide their Alevi heritage in the rigorously Sunni-dominant Bursa. The majority of migrant Alevis in Bursa seem to have voluntarily assimilated into Sunnism after migration.

I should note that my model is not grounded in geographical determinism but is meant to identify dissimulation patterns among Alevi Bulgarian Turks in relation to the *political*

demography of their surroundings. Of course, there are exceptions to these regional generalizations. For example, according to my model, Kardjali Alevis' dissimulations are directed towards Sunni Turks on the provincial level. Yet in the few isolated Alevi-only villages of Kardjali, as in the isolated villages of Turkish Thrace, there is no need to dissimulate unless there is interaction with non-Alevi outsiders. At first glance this exception seems to contradict the model but in fact it conforms to its logic, since I argue that invisibility is about the performance of identity as much as visibility is. We may compare dissiumlation to the veil, which is not merely a form of clothing but also an instrument of embodied performance of a gendered identity. Veiling literally masks visibility of the individual's features while simultaneously heightening her visibility as a member of a community that practices veiling. In the same vein, but in inverted fashion, dissimulating minorities' performances for invisibility are hypervisible within their own communities, which is how it is possible to study dissimulation as a performance of invisibility.

I begin this chapter by examining Alevi Bulgarian Turks' particular notions of secrecy and of the Secret, which I see as symptomatic of their dissimulations. I then analyze particular cases of dissimulation, examining first Alevi Bulgarian Turks' linguistic dissimulations by means of using specific words from the vocabulary pool of various majorities in order to hint at Alevi beliefs and practices to other minority members. I then analyze their dissimulations when Alevis publicly perform religious practices generally associated with Sunnis. Third, I investigate how Alevis' dissimulation is manifested in their use of spatial arrangements commonly associated with Sunnis, and their manipulation of pre-existing Sunni religious spaces. Finally, I examine the common sayings and slogans used by Alevi Bulgarian Turks' to explain their relations with religious and secular Turkish and Bulgarian majorities.

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6.1 DISSIMULATION, SECRECY AND THE ALEVI SECRET:

6.1.1 "In-your-face disguise:" Talking about the Secret without talking about what it is

The word 'secret [Sır]' is charged, as I discovered very early at my fieldwork. It is charged in the sense that it either initiates an amazingly honest conversation or sabotages the entire conversation irreversibly! Using the word `secret` yielded the most awkward moments during the already awkward pre-interview periods of my fieldwork. I was requesting interviews from hopefully soon-to-be informants by introducing myself and explaining the purpose of my visit, including mentioning my Sunni heritage. Their immediate response was one or the other version of the following: an often painfully straightforward and, at first, somehow discouraging statement: "Fine, I will talk with you. However, do not have hard feelings because I will not tell you my secret. I cannot tell it. I gave the oath not to reveal the Secret!"… Then, something amazing happened. A majority of them devoted one to four hours for interviews with me. In addition, they talked about almost anything regarding the Alevi Secret, such as the reason for it -- its function, meaning, history -- all except what it really is.

The above excerpt from my field notes dates back to a period in my fieldwork when I was puzzled by one question: Why would my potential informants need to state their reservations even before hearing my questions? After hearing a dozen variations of the statement "I will not tell you my secret," I realized that it concerned their own assumptions: the main interest of a non-Alevi researcher must be the Alevi Secret. Interestingly, I had not developed such an interest at all! Originally I designed my fieldwork to study the different impacts of borders on Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks, and the Alevi Secret was not central to my research. Ironically my informants taught me not only to refrain from mentioning the word "secret" unless and until they did, but also to be much more alert to any statement about the Secret.

Few potential informants declined my interview requests, and many devoted long hours to talking with me. During the interviews, informants observed the prohibition against disclosing what the Secret is, yet they did not refrain from speaking about themes related to the Secret. For

example, they discussed topics like why there is the Secret and what the function of the Secret is, as well as who has access to it. At the end of the interviews, I was always astonished by the experience of talking a lot about something, in this case the Secret, without ever talking about what it is.

After completing the fieldwork, I found that my informants' attitudes are not unique, but fit into the framework of "the paradox of secrecy" (Bellman 1981: 1). The paradox is that practicing secrecy requires a strict "do-not-talk-about-it proscription" (21) on the one hand, as in the case in my informants' overt reservations about revealing the content of the Alevi secret before accepting an interview with me. On the other hand, secrecy requires "a number of instructions" for "restricting information about information" (9). These instructions are about how to communicate secrets, and this makes secrecy a form of "metacommunication" (9). The very metacommunicative element of secrecy among my informants, surprisingly, made them willing to talk to me about other aspects of the Secret, such as its history, its function and meaning, without revealing its content.

Bellman's paradox of secrecy framework, which examines the linguistic aspects of secrecy on an inter-personal level, is useful to explain the unique interview context with my individual informants. Yet it ultimately falls into "the occasionalist trap" (Bourdieu and Waquant 1992, 144) because it portrays my interaction with informants as if they were occurring in a social vacuum and "on the spot" (Duranti 1997: 8), and "interpersonal' relations as only directly person-to-person relations" (Bourdieu 1990: 291). This ignores the broader context conditioning my Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants' contact with me as a researcher from Turkey who is of Sunni heritage.

My informants' pre-emptive refusals to reveal the Secret, as well as their observation of this prohibition while still discussing other aspects of it, is indicative of an exclusive characteristic of the notion of secrecy for Alevi Bulgarian Turks: it is an "in-your-face disguise," as per the Gogol Bordello song quoted at the beginning of this chapter. They do not hide the existence of an Alevi secret from outsiders. On the contrary, it was the Alevis themselves who introduced the theme of secrecy into the interviews. In addition, the majority of non-Alevis in my field sites are aware of the existence of an Alevi secret, even though they do not know exactly what it is. This reflects one important point: Alevis do not try to completely restrict information, but rather to control the revealed and disguised information about the Secret. This element of control in Alevis' secrecy is symptomatic of their dissimulations.

6.1.2 "In Your Face Disguise": Hiding a One's Well-known Alevi Heritage

> "You understood this issue of secrecy. Of course previously they were hiding it only due to fear offrom death. In the present day everyone from everywhere knows that we are Alevis but they look at us negatively [Kotu bakiyorlar iste]." Musahipli, migrant from Kardjali to a mixed city of Turkish Thrace
>
> "You will not believe me. We came here, [the town X], initiated various projects for the betterment of this place. Building a *cemevi* has not crossed our minds even once! Why? I do not know…There were Sunnis around and we did not want negative reactions, we did not want them to see us differently. Otherwise, they all know we are Alevis." Babai, migrant from Razgrad to an Alevi-only town in Turkey.

The quotes above are excerpts from my interviews with two prominent members of the Alevi migrant communities in Turkey. Both communities have been actively practicing Alevi ways since the arrival of the first generation of migrants to their settlement areas. Both groups observe the traditions they held pre-migration, such as conducting *cem*s in the houses of *baba*s, prohibiting members of the other subgroup from attending to their own *cems*, and observing the

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strict condition of *Musahiplik* for full-membership. My first informant resides in a rather cosmopolitan town where there are both migrant and local Alevis and Sunnis. The second resides in an Alevi-only town formed by first generation migrants to the area.

Both informants are aware that they are known to be Alevis in their surrounding communities, and both of them characterize non-Alevis' perception of Alevis as negative. There is thus a certain degree of clarity in the inter-communal role assumptions in their towns, since both Sunnis and Alevis know who is an Alevi and who is a Sunni locally. Yet this clarity does not liberate Alevis from the need to practice dissimulation. In fact, Alevi migrants prefer not to emphasize further the Alevi markers, seeking instead to diminish their existing visibility. They cannot hide their Alevi identity, since it is already known. However, they prefer to not emphasize Alevi beliefs and practices. For instance, the second informant's fellow Alevi migrant friends never think about building a *cemevi* in an Alevi-only town, while there is a state-built Sunni mosque in this town's center. In this respect, their secrecy is also an "in-your-face-disguise," which is not about hiding Alevi identity but rather making its contents invisible, by obscuring whether and to what extent they practice Alevism. Meanwhile, they continue practicing Alevi ways in the privacy of their religious communities.

The notion of secrecy for the Alevi migrants is a rather different form of dissimulation, which hides not the Alevi identity but its content. This is safe in the present day because being an Alevi is usually not now a matter of life or death. There is a shift in the kind of threats faced by Alevis, from persecution to discrimination, as both of my informants recognize. However, this shift in the nature of the threat has not occurred for some other Alevis, who continue to dissimulate by hiding their Alevi heritage, as the following excerpt from an Alevi migrant from Bursa shows:

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"We heard in Bulgaria before the migrations: they were referring to us as 'they are *Kızılbaş*.' There is no one call us '*Kızılbaş*' here, unless they want to insult someone. Who would like to have such a label? We already got this stigmatizing label when we were there, in Bulgaria. Therefore, Alevis do not want to disclose that they are Alevi here [Turkey]." (Alevi migrant from Kardjali to Bursa)

These examples show two patterns of Alevi dissimulations, as I discussed in Chapter Three. First, the conventional version of dissimulation requires Alevis to hide their identity in the face of a severe threat, such as persecution. This strategy can work only if the Alevis' identity is unnoticed by outsiders, as in the case of my informant after migration. This version of dissimulation seeks total invisibility to outsiders, due to the level of perceived threat. On the other hand, the second version of dissimulation, and the one now most often used, seeks not absolute *concealment* but rather *control* of the information disseminated about the community. This is why Alevis employing the second version of dissimulation still hide specific Alevi ways when their heritage is already well-known by outsiders, as in the case of my first two informants after migration and the third informant before migration.

6.1.2.1 The Alevi Secret as a Border Marker

[Note: Elmali Baba is the major saint for *Bektaşis*] In the 1990s a stranger visited the Elmali Baba *türbe* complex, saying he was an Alevi from far away. The Alevis at the site were preparing for a *cem*, and while they felt suspicious at first they trusted his word and allowed the man to attend the *cem*. At the beginning of the ceremony, the religious leader made the announ*cem*ent: "those who are not insiders should leave now." The stranger did not leave the ceremony. After the *cem* the stranger thanked the crowd and walked away. Two days later my Alevi informants were thrilled by the news: the man was a Sunni Imam from one village and had died the next day after his participation in the *cem*!

My informants learned the story of the stranger after the stranger's daughter's visit: The stranger had been stopped on his way from the *türbe* back to his own house by a wise old man in white clothes. "He must have been a saint," my informants paused and stated. The saint questioned the stranger: "Why did you claim you were an Alevi? Don't you know Alevis' ceremonies are secret? I will take your soul tomorrow morning. Now, go to your home and say farewell to your family." The stranger narrated the event to his family with regret and tears:

"I should not have tried to learn the Alevi secret. I asked for this end!" All night he recited the Kuran and his family found him dead in the morning.

The story of the Sunni Imam in Elmali Baba *Türbe* is iconic of the Alevi *türbe* narratives. It shows the border-making function of the Alevi Secret and the outcome of transgressing that border, in addition to Alevis' perceptions about the infallibility of the Secret. This means that despite the efforts of Alevis, there may be successful violations; yet those who transgress do not enjoy impunity. The story indicates the different feelings the secrecy has for outsiders and insiders: Alevis' secrecy makes outsiders anxious despite their dominance in society more widely, while it creates curiosity and interest among insiders towards knowing more about the Secret.

The border-making function of secrecy is well-established in the literature on secret societies. Simmel sees secrecy as first an "external relationship," which is between the person "who has the secret and who does not have it." Yet it "becomes internal… [and] determines the reciprocal relations of those who possess the secret in common" (Simmel1906: 470). Alevi secrecy fits into this framework, since knowledge of the Secret marks the border between insiders and outsiders. Moreover, such knowledge ranks the insiders in terms of their level of access to the Secret and highly formalized rituals, as I discuss at the end of this section. To Alevi Bulgarian Turks, the absolute outsiders are apparently non-Alevis, who neither have Alevi heritage nor have passed through initiation. The status of uninitiated heritage-Alevis is also interesting; they are equally treated as outsiders, since the Alevi Secret is primarily a religious concept, as one Alevi female informant explained:

 "I was surprised by my grandson's interest [in the Path], because my daughter is a college graduate and she had not had *ikrar*. Likewise my son is a college graduate and he had not had *ikrar*. They have never attended any *cem* since they have neither *ikrar* nor *musahip*. I could not let my own son and daughter in. I could not disclose any information. We hid the path even from our own sons and

daughters. Maybe because of this we lost our children. They lost interest and curiosity about the path." *Babai*, Kardjali

The function of secrecy among secret societies is well known. Georg Simmel, whose essays on secret societies and secrecy are canonical, claims that the external aspect of secrecy functions to protect the community against outsiders, while the internal aspect grants confidence-based unity to insiders. The example of Alevi Bulgarian Turks supports this argument. For instance, as I discussed in an earlier chapter, Alevis refer to outsiders by either the rather neutral term "*Zahir*" or the negative "*Yezid*," which implies usurper behavior. *Zahir* are outsiders who are forbidden access to the Secret, but *Yezid*s are also damned in religious rituals. In other words, different categories of outsiders pose different levels of threat to the Alevi community. The following excerpts reveal the Alevis' assessments of perceived threat from outsiders in relation to secrecy and dissimulation:

> "Once upon a time, during the time of Ali, the Alevi Path became so powerful…So powerful that the others [non-Alevis] wanted Ali to leave the Path… They kidnapped the brother of Ali and locked him in a castle. Then they found Ali and offered him his brother's release, if only he left the Path…What could Ali do? What would you do? To save his brother's life, Ali told them: 'All right, I left the Path.' Since then, our Path is kept a secret. This is why it is a secret…nothing else…"
>   "The secret is from Ottoman times…At that time it was forbidden to talk about Alevism. At the end, there is the risk of death. If you noticed, Alevi groups in Bulgaria are located in hidden places, at sheltered nooks, at dry areas and always under restrictions."
>   "[Question: Why are Alevi migrants in Bursa not visible?] They would disclose to you that they are *Bektaşi*s. I am sure they did not tell you about *Bektaşi*sm. Aren't you from Turkey? Yes. Also, you were enrolled in a college in Turkey? Yes. Then this means you are a Kemalist. During Kemalism lots of Alevis moved from Bulgaria to Turkey. They left for Turkey knowing the Kemalist regime was against tekkes. Despite this fact, they knowingly decided to move to Turkey, and just since the Bulgarians had started to bother Turks here (Bulgaria)."

These interview excerpts show, first, my informants' intentions in explaining the rationale of Alevis' secrecy to me. They explain Alevi Bulgarian Turks' secrecy in relation to

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various levels of perceived threat, which include different degrees of physical persecution and harm, isolation, and legal and social discrimination on the part of outsider groups and the religious regimes and secular political regimes under the control of these groups.

On a secondary level, these excerpts show Alevi Bulgarian Turks' sense of historicity regarding secrecy among Alevis; they perceive a historical continuity in the external threat. The threat began with Alevi-Sunni relations in the early days of Islam, and continued during Sunni-dominant Ottoman rule and the secular nature of early-Republican Turkey. Simmel states that "[the] secret encircles [secret societies] like a boundary…which…formally shuts up the society within itself as a complete unity" (Simmel 1906: 484). Simmel sees the secret as *a priori* to the unity and closure of secret societies to the outside. In contrast to Simmel, I see the Alevis engaged in the reverse process: the unity of the community and its closure to those outside is the result not of a secret essential and inherent to Alevism, but rather essential to a sense of historicity, which alerts Alevis to the constant threat from various historical outsiders. In other words, the conflictual historical relations between Alevis and non-Alevis, as well as the sense of constant threat result in the "shutting up of [Alevism] within itself as a complete unity;" leading to the essentialization of secrecy among Alevis and ultimately to *the calcification of the secret*. The following examples are illustrations of this:

> "The *Bektaşi* path is difficult; it cannot exist without hiding it. As the *nefes* says: Don't think of the *Bektaşi* way as an easy lover: it is the Order of the Delicate (*Tarikât-ı Nâzenin*), the Secret of the Truth (*Sır-ı Hakikât*)." *Derviş* from Razgrad

> "Earlier both *mayes* and the prayers were conducted in secrecy. Later everything has changed. Outsiders were allowed into these ceremonies. Yet, in principle they should not be allowed." *Bektaşi* from Kardjali

The first excerpt evokes well-known code names for *Bektaşi*sm, implying that secrecy is not an historical product but something internal to the *Bektaşi* belief system, which is why the

Bektaşi order is seen as the Order of the Delicate and the Secret of the Truth. The second excerpt also portrays secrecy as a principle inherent to Alevism, and not a product of historical insider-outsider tensions.

6.1.2.2 Secrecy as an Individualizing and Collectivizing Disciplinary Mechanism

The notion of secrecy among Alevi Bulgarian Turks functions to "shut up the society within itself as a complete unity" against designated outsiders, while it imposes a clear hierarchy and form of self-discipline for the individual members of the group. The category "insiders" is pretty straightforward for Alevi Bulgarian Turks: it constitutes only those who have already gone through the formal initiation process, the Oath (*ikrar*). The Alevi Secret is primarily a religious category.

The Alevi Secret is not distributed equally within the community. Ideally, Alevi *cem* groups' members' access to the Secret is conditioned by their position in the group. This position, in turn, is based on their spiritual maturity as well as their individual location on the Path towards the Perfect Human Being (*Insan-ı Kâmil*), as discussed in Chapter Five. Practically, one's rank in the *cem* community can be evaluated based on the time passed since initiation; whether one has fictive kin (*Musahiplik*) if the group requires it; and whether one holds a special position (*post*) in *cem*, such as the *baba postu*. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' secrecy is directly linked to their dissimulations, since dissimulation (*takiye)* is about the concealment of one's religious beliefs not only from hostile outsiders but also from some insiders who have not reached spiritual maturity, as discussed in Chapter Three.

Secrecy among Alevi Bulgarian Turks also has a disciplinary function, both individualizing each person and totalizing all of them. Each and every Alevi individual is responsible for the protection of the Secret and accountable for any disclosure of information.

The following excerpt exemplifies that even an Alevi religious leader (*baba*), the top rank in every *cem* community, may hesitate to reveal information about the group without the consent of those who stand at relatively lower ranks in the religious hierarchy:

> "*Baba*s may not talk with you [about Alevism]. This is because they would not like to talk to you without the permission of the Twelves [*Onikiler*, those who hold a special sacred function, i.e. *post*, in the *Bektaşi cem*s]" *Bektaşi* from Kardjali

The gate keepers of the Alevi Secret remain the Alevi *baba*s and elders, who displayed three different approaches regarding the Secret and secrecy during my fieldwork, as exemplified in the following excerpts from my interviews:

> "I thought about building a *cemevi* in the village. Under the influence of TV [the presence of TV programs on *cem*s in Turkey] I suggested to shift to "open *cem*." The elders said, "Don't do it! *Cem* should be hidden. It has come to this day this way; do not open it." *Bektaşi* from Razgrad

> "Let me tell you something: All these slanders are just because of keeping it [the Path] secret and following it secretly. They [Alevis in Turkey] already show Alevi ways on Turkish channels…even though they are slightly different from our ways." *Babai*, from Kardjali

> "I told you about the secrecy before. The Others [Sunnis] use it against us a lot. They say, 'All right. As you do your ways secretly, this means there is really something to hide, there is something you fear to be known.'" *Babai* from Kardjali

On the one hand, there are traditionalist Alevi *baba*s and elders who insist on protecting the "tradition" by strictly following the most formalist elements. They reject building a separate and visible *cemevi* instead of traditional *cem* rooms in the *baba*s' houses, having electricity in the *cem* rooms instead of traditional candles and *çırak*, having chairs instead of sitting on the floor and also reject the distortions of traditional *niyaz*. My first informant explained his interaction with *baba*s from such a group. The group observes the conventional dissimulation ideal by promoting absolute invisibility to outsiders and the absolute discipline of insiders. On the other

hand, more "liberal" Alevi *baba*s and elder males promote a perhaps more contemporary dissimulation ideal, which perceives secrecy as counter-productive for the community since it alienates younger, uninitiated Alevis. The proponents of this second ideal remain within the framework of dissimulation, since they still promote the concealment of Alevi identity from outsiders; yet they are more flexible in relation to uninitiated insiders, the heritage Alevis. The second informant exemplifies this position; he stressed the visibility of Alevi rituals on TV yet he was confident that this was not a disclosure of the secret, given the difference between the broadcasted Alevi rituals in Turkey and Alevi rituals among Bulgarian Turks. In addition, few Alevi *baba*s promote complete abandonment of dissimulation, since they support conducting Alevi ceremonies that are open to the public. The third informant exemplifies this position. Despite this openness, this third position still promotes some form of dissimulation against outsiders, because they believe an untrained eye and immature soul will not be able to decipher the symbolism of these ceremonies and the Secret will remain as a secret to the outsiders even if they watch the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' ceremonies.

6.1.2.3 The ritual formalism of secrecy: "Die; but don't break your oath"

The literature on secret societies recognizes the importance of ritual formalism or "technologies of secrecy" and how these technologies are informed by "a body of doctrine" to keep the secrets safe from public scrutiny (Simmel1906: 476). Often such formalisms help create a reality unique to the group and shared by the group members as an alternative to the reality of the surrounding society (Simmel: 476, Bellman1981, George 1993). Individual Alevi Bulgarian Turks enter into the world of this alternative reality by the initiation ritual *ikrar* (oath) during which they promise

not to "break the Oath," not even when facing death. The following is an excerpt from an *ikrar* ceremony from Turkish *Bektaşi*s, which is available online:[4]

> The guide on behalf of the Initiate: We came from the *Mağrifet* [door] and we are going to the *Hakikat* [door], my master.[5]
>
> *Baba*: You cannot go. It is winter; there are insurmountable mountains, unsurpassable rivers. You cannot pass these barriers, you cannot pass these floods. There are huge obstacles and a very harsh environment. It is a hard nut to crack; it cannot be eaten. It is a fiery trial; it cannot be handled. *Don't come in. If you come in, don't return (convert). Those who come in lose their property and those who return lose their life. Die; but do not pledge [the Alevi Oath]. Die; but do not break your oath.* The situation is like this. Let me tell and make you hear these situations, my child.
>
> The Initiate: My master, we came by believing in the community and the unity of God and by following the road of Muhammed Ali…We came by believing in and trusting those people we named. *We may die but we will not return….*

Alevi Bulgarian Turks keep the oath ceremony itself as a secret, which doubles the secrecy level. This is the reason why I use an online source rather than my field notes, even though I later received confirmation from Alevi Bulgarian Turks that this *ikrar* pledge was similar to their own *ikrar*. In addition, during interviews my informants uttered the phrase "Die; but not pledge. Die; but not break your oath" together with the phrase "Get beheaded but do not disclose your secret [*Ser ver ama sır verme*]."

The Oath is the seal on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' mouths when speaking not only to outsiders but also to insiders from different sub-groups of Alevism. Information about specific religious rituals is partially known yet mostly restricted across subgroups. For instance, *musahiplik*, the fictive kinship relation established between Alevi followers in a *cem* community,

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[4] http://www.aleviweb.com/forum/showthread.php?t=36145
5 As I discussed in Chapter Five the ultimate aim of initiated Alevi is to become "the perfect human being" (insan-ı kamil), which can be possible by passing the stages manifested in the principle "Four Doors and Forty Ranks (Dort Kapi Kirk Makam). The four doors are named as Şeriat (Sharia as religious law), Tarikat (Tariqa as religious brotherhood), Marifet (Marifa as spiritual knowledge) and Hakikat (Haqiqa as the Truth).

marks the differences among subgroups and subsegments of Alevi Bulgarian Turks, as I discussed in Chapter Five. These intra-group differences influence the distribution of the Secret among Alevi subgroups and subsegments. For instance, the groups with *Musahiplik* (Northeastern *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s as well as Southern *Musahipli*s) require *Musahiplik* in order for individual members to claim possession of the Alevi Secret, while the groups without *Musahiplik* (Southern *Babai*s, *Bektaşi*s and Northern *Derviş*es) allow members' access to the all parts of the ceremony only after the *ikrar*. Furthermore, crossing from a group requiring *musahip*s to a group without *Musahiplik* is almost unimaginable. The effect of these formalisms becomes visible when members of Alevi subgroups from different subsegments cross the border. A *Bektaşi* migrant may join a *Babai* migrant *cem* community but only after pledging before the *Babai baba*. A Northeastern *Babai* migrant may not join a Southern *Babai* migrant community's *cem* in the resettlement area.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks have institutionalized the formalism regarding secrecy into their religious rituals. For instance, every *cem* has two agents of control. The *Gözcü* (Watchman) keeps the *cem* orderly by controlling insiders while the *Pervane* (Doorman) keeps outsiders away from the *cem*. They maintain the secrecy of the community by policing insiders and outsiders, sometimes by force. The very existence of these positions indicates that there are external and internal aspects to the secrecy and that Alevis control dissemination of the secret from inside the group to outside the group. In addition, the religious poems (*nefes,* or *Kuran* as Alevi Bulgarian Turks call them) composed into religious songs constitute a central component of *cem*s. These songs are highly symbolic in terms of the metaphors utilized, and they are they are compact manifestations of Alevi cosmology, including the Secret. The high level of symbolism, however, often makes them inaccessible even to insiders. In this respect, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' *Kuran*s

help maintain the dissimulations of Alevi Bulgarian Turks even against insiders who have not reached a high level of spiritual maturity.

All in all, the secrecy regime among Alevi Bulgarian Turks helps them to identify the differences between and within outsiders. It both totalizes and individualizes the insiders. Secrecy is manifested in the embodied ritual performances, such as initiation ceremonies. It becomes a ground for Alevis' linguistic performances by means of hiding the contents of "the Secret" while revealing its function, use and forms as well as its very existence. Ultimately, the power of the secrecy is a curious power: the uncertainty about what constitutes the secret is a large part of what makes the secrecy powerful for both insiders and outsiders.

6.2   SPEAKING OTHERS' LANGUAGES: DISSIMULATION VIA CODE LANGUAGE

Alevis Bulgarian Turks practice linguistic dissimulation by using of a set of "code words" that subtly allude to particular Alevi beliefs and practices. These code words are drawn from the vocabulary pool in their surrounding society, but Alevi Bulgarian Turks attribute unique meanings to them. Their specific usage of ordinary words often remains unnoticed in the wider society. Even if Alevis notice some "strange" difference between these words' general use and their use by Alevis, they cannot truly explain it. Outsiders will neither associate the speaker with Alevism nor will they be able to decipher the specific meaning of the words. Only Alevis themselves can decipher the intended meanings of these words. In this way, Alevi Bulgarian Turks appear as a part of the majority in the presence of outsiders, while they reinforce their Alevi identity to insiders.

A small number of scholars (e.g. Günşen 2007, Sevinçli 2009) depict Alevis' code language as a boundary marker between insiders and outsiders, based on their studies of Alevis in Turkey. These accounts are right in pointing out that the primary function of the code word is to maintain an insider-outsider distinction between Alevis and non-Alevis. I think, however, that Alevi Bulgarian Turkish uses of a code language are also primarily about the insider-outsider distinction, yet hint at a more complicated system of classification of insiders and outsiders, due to their encounters with multiple outsiders groups and to regional and subgroup segmentation, as well as internal hierarchy within insider groups. Such use of code words in relation to multiple outsiders and varying insiders confirms that dissimulation is not an inherent element of religious belief, but a dynamic strategy that minorities use to protect themselves from potentially or actually hostile outsiders, and uninitiated and initiated yet spiritually immature insiders.

6.2.1 Use of Code Words in relation to Insiders

Alevi code language is transmitted in the ritual environment of *cem* ceremonies. A close examination of rules of participation in *cem*s reveals that insiders have graduated access to Alevi code words. First, uninitiated Alevi heritage members do not have access to the code language, since they are not allowed to attend *cem*s before the *ikrar* (oath). Furthermore, some Alevi Bulgarian Turkish subgroups and subsegments (Razgrad *Babai*s, Razgrad *Bektaşi*s and Kardjali *Musahipli*s) require *Musahiplik* for initiated Alevis to attend *all* parts of the *cem*.

Second, Alevi Bulgarian Turks' code words may show differences across subgroups and subsegments. Often the difference is due to the existence of variations in practices based on the same idea. For instance, *Musahiplik* exists in different forms among Alevi Bulgarian Turkish subgroups and is accordingly named differently in them. For example, Razgrad *Babai*s, Razgrad

*Bektaşi*s and Kardjali *Musahipli*s accept *Musahiplik* between two married couples that are equal in status and use the term *blazer* or *kafadar*. Kardjali *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s seem to reject the idea of *Musahiplik* on the grounds that it has caused groundless slander of Alevis slanders about Alevis for supposedly engaging in wife-exchange; yet these same groups actually emply a different form of fictive kinship relation between generations. Among them, a heritage Alevi should select an initiated Alevi male as Father to the Path (*Yol Babası*), who will instruct and protect the Son in the Path (*Yol Oğlu*). Because of these problems with Sunnis, Alevis refer to *musahiplik* relations by utilizing code words from colloquial local languages, such as *blazer* (brother), *kafadar* (buddy), and *yol oglu* (son in the path), which do not connote *musahiplik* relation to Turkish speaking outsiders.

It is important to note that these differences in code words within subgroups and subsegments are not an obstacle for interactions among their members. When they notice differences, they talk about it and see them as variations of the same ideas inherent to Alevi cosmology, as I noticed during my fieldwork during the meetings of members of various subgroups during *türbe* visits. Strikingly this seems to be the case even when Alevis speak different languages. For instance, Arab Alevis in Syria and in Hatay (Turkey) pray in Arabic and Bulgarian Turkish Alevis pray in Turkish. Their code words are also in these languages. However, the code word "Father in the Path" (*Yol Babası*) for Southern *Babai*s and *Bektaşi*s becomes "the Uncle for Religion" (*Em-i Seyid*) among Arab Alawis (Arayancan: 2010), denoting the same function in different terminology.

6.2.2   Use of Code Words in relation to Outsiders

Historically, many Alevi groups have resided in Sunni-dominant settings, so it is not surprising that many Alevi code words have developed in relation to Sunni Islam. Some researchers have identified a set of terms common in Sunni and Alevi Islam, yet the terms have quite different meanings. Dedekargınoğlu (2011) examines the different perceptions of these terms by Alevis and Sunnis in Turkey. For example, terms for places (e.g. *tekke*, *zaviye*, *dergah*, *cem*, *cemevi*), religious ideas (e.g. *tecella*, *temenna*, *tevella*,*teberra*), sacred characters (e.g. Ehl-i Beyt) as well as profane characters (e.g. Muaviye, Yezid) are perceived differently. I also identified several terms common to Sunni and Alevi Bulgarian Turks but with different meanings, with regards to rituals (e.g. *kurban*, *oruc*, *ziyaret*, *asure*), sacred texts (e.g. Quran), and specific relations between believers (e.g. *ahretlik*).

Some authors see this phenomenon as "shared" vocabulary and explain it as due to the Islamic nature of both Alevism and Sunnism (Dedekargınoğlu 2011), while Alevis' different meanings are due to the esoteric nature of their views (Türkdoğan 1994).I see these explanations as too doctrine-oriented. Considering the historical asymmetry of power between the Alevis and Sunnis, I see these commonly used words not as examples of a "shared vocabulary" by Alevis and Sunnis but rather as Alevis' strategic adoptions of the Sunni terms to code their esoteric views when these views were a cause for persecution. During my fieldwork I saw Alevis use so-called "shared" terms while referring to Alevi beliefs and practices, especially in settings where Sunni and Alevi were mixed. The Sunni vocabulary continues to be the main pool of reference for Alevis in Sunni-Alevi mixed settings, reflecting that the Sunnis were seen historically as a threat to the community. Thus, Alevis using terms to refer to Alevi religious rituals that insinuate Sunni belief is a product of their historical dissimulation. This strategy is still in use since it helps

Alevis to dissimulate by hiding their Alevi identity from Sunnis, while conveying their messages to Alevis present at the venue.

A more important yet largely unrecognized fact about Alevi use of code words in relation to non-Sunni groups is that Alevi Bulgarian Turks' utilizations of code languages are tailored differently in relation to different majorities. My Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants often narrated the historical strategy of referring to Alevi beliefs and practices by utilizing terms from the vocabularies of secular nationalists and socialist Turks and Bulgarians. This is an example of speaking to a dominant group in their own language, but in ways that obscure the Alevi beliefs and practices for the dominant groups' members while still hinting at them to Alevis. In the past they adopted secular terminology for Alevi religious rituals when political regimes in Bulgaria and Turkey discredited and even abandoned religious markers, but Alevis continued to perform Alevi religious rituals in the privacy of their own religious community. The rest of this section focuses on Alevis code words regarding *cem* ceremonies and *türbe* visits in relation to different majorities and political regimes.

6.2.2.1 *Cem*s as *Namaz* to Sunnis and *Banket* [*банкет*] to Socialists

Alevi Bulgarian Turks publicly refer to *cem* ceremonies by using code words depending on the immediate and historical majorities of their surroundings. The code words used in the Sunni Muslims' presence have gained permanence; Alevis often use them in private among group members, as I noted during my fieldwork. For instance, Alevi Bulgarian Turks sometimes refer to *cem*s as *halka namazı,* literally "circle prayer." To Sunnis, the term recalls Sunni daily prayer (*namaz*), because they do not know the nature of Alevi prayer. Yet, in fact, the phrase underlines the difference between Sunni and Alevi prayers. Sunni prayer is unidirectional. All worshippers pray and prostrate themselves in the direction of Mecca, while praying toward another direction

is void and considered a sin. Alevi prayer is circular; all worshippers form a circle according to their rank in relation to the *baba*, and they prostrate themselves to each other, indicating the belief that God is not in some distant place (such as Mecca) but in every human. As an Alevi *baba* put it during the interview: "We also have *namaz* [like Sunnis]; yet, it should be conducted not by turning our backs to each other but by turning our faces to each other."

Sometimes Alevi code words for *cem* have an emphasis on the time of the ritual. Some Alevi groups refer to *cem*s as *cuma kılmak* (literally meaning performing Friday prayer in Sunni Islam) or *aksam kılmak* (literally meaning performing evening prayer). Alevis use these Sunni terms to pretend to be Sunnis while interacting with Sunnis or at least to hide their Alevi identity since they use the term "*ayn-ül cem*" or "*cem*" among Alevis Yet again, this usage is understood only as indicating *cem*, since Alevis in Bulgaria conduct *cem*s on Fridays evenings. In this sense, even while pretending to appear as Sunni to Sunnis, Alevis signal Alevi identity to other Alevis. This usage has become engrained among Alevi Bulgarian Turks over time and it is possible to see their reference to *cem*s in such code words as the following excerpts from my interviews show:

> You cannot talk about a naming [ceremony for a newborn] without *aksam kılma*. And *aksam kilmak* is done only by the *baba*, that is, not by anyone else. C 86 Razgrad

Alevi Bulgarian Turks have historically utilized non-Sunni groups' words to refer to Alevi *cem*s. In socialist Bulgaria, where practicing religion was discredited and strictly monitored, Alevi Bulgarian Turks survived the state surveillance by relying on dissimulation. Among several ways of handling pressures coming from local authorities, one was to publicly present the *cem* ceremonies not as religious rituals but rather as secular banquets [*Banket*, банкет], dinners or harvest feastsIt is worth noting that in the present day Alevi Bulgarian Turks

seems to dropped to use the word "*banket*" to refer to the *cems*. Understandably Alevis' use of the term *banket* for *cems* was abandoned as socialists stopped to be the majority group threatening the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' religious identity or practices.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks used code words also in migrant settings in Turkey, when the local elite and administrators discredited displays of Alevism. While various Alevi migrants from different subgroups managed to form their own *cem* communities in Turkey, they concealed the *cem* ceremonies by portraying them as secular or culturally mainstream religious events. The following excerpt exemplifies Alevis' situation before and after migration, in relation to secular Bulgarian and Turkish authorities:

> "The *cemevi* does not bother anyone here [İstanbul]. We were doing *aşure* at the last *muharram*. It became crowded; thus, the police came. We said, "We made *aşure* and we are distributing it" and we handed one plate to them too. In the past they [the police] used to come and check us in Bulgaria too. Those were times when communism was very strict; it was forbidden for 4-5 people to gather. We used to gather [for *cem*] even under those conditions. Once they squealed on us; so police arrived. We said, "look, we come together three times every year. We hold a banquet; we eat and drink. The first one is during spring before seeding, the second one is before cultivating, and the last one is after the harvest. We combine whatever we have and we share whatever we combined." Then the *baba* offered them *dem* [a ritual drink with alcohol, e.g. raki]. That is to say, nothing really bad happened during the communist period."
> *Babai* religious leader from Kardjali, resettled in İstanbul

The quote clearly exemplifies Alevi Bulgarian Turks' portrayals of *cem*s in two settings. In socialist Bulgaria, *cem*s were described not as religious gatherings but as secular celebrations drawing upon ideals valued by socialism, such as the value of agricultural labor, a sense of collectivity, unity in production and consumption, and also on the presence of alcohol as a pseudo sign for detachment from traditional Muslim worldviews. Their situation becomes even more interesting in Turkey. The resettlement neighborhood was made up of local and migrant Sunnis and Alevis, including migrants from the three subgroups *Babai*, *Bektaşi* and *Musahipli*.

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Alevis migrants are known to attend local Alevi's *cemevi* in the next neighborhood. Unknown to outsiders, Alevi migrants also have their own private *cemevi*. These are rented places where each subgroup conducts Alevi Bulgarian Turks' traditional *ayn-ül cem*, which is quite different from local Alevis' *cem*s in the public *cemevi*. Simply put, Alevi migrants still hide their own *cem* ceremonies from both local Sunnis and local Alevis. The full meaning of the above excerpt becomes clear only within this context.

Alevi migrants strategically hide not only the *cem*s and their private *cemevi* but also other Alevi ceremonies. For instance, they strategically reduced the significance of all Muharram commemoration events (i.e. the *muharram* fast, ayn-ul *cem* and preparing *aşure*) into making and distributing *aşure* when confronted by an outside authority. The police tolerated the gathering since this iconic Alevi ritual was represented by Alevis as a common tradition among secular Sunnis in Turkey. The most important point, however, is that while both Sunnis and Alevis make and distribute *aşure*, they attribute a different meaning to it. In fact, as noted earlier, *aşure* is the food Sunnis use to celebrate the survival of Noah after the Flood, while it is the food used by Alevis to celebrate Salman-i Pak as the only Alevi who had survived the martyrdom of Huseyin and his followers by Sunni leaders in Kerbela.

6.2.2.2 *Türbe* visits as *Ziyaret* to Sunnis, *Ekskursiya [екскурзия] to* Bulgarians

*Türbe*s in Bulgaria are contact zones between Alevi and Sunni Turks, and also Orthodox Christian Bulgarians, who may all visit *türbe*s despite their different perceptions, beliefs and practices in them, as I explained in chapter five. However, these groups compete to control *türbe*s regarding issues such as the ownership, usage rights, maintenance and administration of the *türbe*s. For instance, the Alevi *türbe*s in Razgrad are few in number, large in size and scattered in faraway places. They are mostly under state control on the grounds that they are

"Cultural Monuments" (*Pametnik na Kulturata/ паметник на културата*). On the other hand, the *türbe*s in Kardjali, with the exception of a few monumental ones, are more numerous, usually small in size, and are located in almost in every village next to the central cemetery. They are usually under the legal control of Sunni *Müftülük*s, while Alevis take care of their maintenance. These differences have led to various different patterns of dissimulation with regards to *türbe*s for Alevis, including but not limited to linguistic dissimulations. In this section, I examine Alevi Bulgarian Turks' these linguistic dissimulations by discussing examples of their use of non-verbal as well as verbal language for controlling their visibilities and invisibilities in *türbe*s and in the presence of outsiders.

I devoted a great portion of my fieldwork to *türbe* visits in various configurations: by myself, with Alevi *baba*s and believers and even with Sunni imams from outside of the region. Only once did I make a visit with Alevis to a *türbe* in a Sunni-only village in Kardjali. The province is physically segregated; its western half consists of Sunni Bulgarians and Turks and its eastern half consists of Alevi subgroups in Alevi-only or mixed villages. Soon I noticed there was intense prejudice between Alevis and Sunnis due to intergroup contact in the eastern parts, although inter-group prejudice was no less in the western parts. After numerous visits to *türbe*s in eastern Kardjali, I decided to visit a *türbe* in a Sunni village in western Kardjali:

> The *türbe* site was rather difficult to reach via public transportation. An Alevi key informant kindly offered me a ride to visit it. We arrived and found villagers in the garden of the mosque next to the *türbe*. As they were waiting for the prayer, I introduced myself as a graduate student writing a thesis on Bulgarian Turks and religion and then I paused out of curiosity, wondering how my Alevi informants would introduce themselves. Would they reveal their Alevi identity or at least the name of their villages, which would indicate their Alevi identity? Unsurprisingly they did not reveal either; they presented themselves as visitors from the city who were helping me to see the site. Their self-portrayals were not actually untrue and were reasonably cautious for an unknown setting.

Surprisingly, our Sunni hosts were completely indifferent to our religious orientations. It was just the opposite of my experience in Alevi villages, where villagers had immediately questioned my orientation. Our Sunni hosts gave us information about the legends of the *türbe*. I was surprised once again by the resemblance between their narratives and those narratives of the *türbe*s for Alevis. Sunnis saw the *türbe*'s saint as the protector of the village, since when Bulgarian soldiers came to destroy the village, the mosque and the *türbe*, the soldiers were able to burn down the village and mosque but could not harm the *türbe*. For this reason, the *türbe* was seen as sacred and was well-maintained. In fact, it was so well-maintained that some visitors' donations go to the mosque's *wakf* for the mosque's maintenance! If I did not know the villagers were Sunnis, I might have mistaken them for Alevis. My Alevi informants were also surprised; they knew that "Sunnis, at least, fear damaging *türbe*s" but they had not seen this level of respect for *türbe*s from Sunnis.

At our entrance to the *türbe*, our Sunni hosts warned us not to step on the threshold or turn our backs to the saint! These were the exact same warnings to me by Alevis in my *türbe* visits! I was anticipating that my Alevi informants would reveal their identity at that point, given the friendly attitude of our Sunni hosts. They did not do so…at least, verbally. Yet they strictly followed Alevi rules for entering *türbe*s: They touched the bottom, top, right side and left side of the threshold (to indicate the *niyaz*); they jumped over the threshold; they walked around the tomb while touching its corners at seven spots (also an Alevi *niyaz* from *Babai* tradition); they avoided passing the headstone of the tomb, which is seen as very disrespectful by Kardjali Alevis; they left some money in a box in the *türbe*; this money is called "niyaz money" (*niyaz parasi*) and represents the "bloodless sacrifice"(*kansiz kurban*) into the "niyaz box" (*niyaz kutusu*), as there was no place for burning candles or other bloodless sacrifice; and they left the *türbe* without turning their backs to the tomb. Ultimately they did not reveal anything about their Alevi identity verbally; yet they gave a lot of non-verbal clues for those familiar with Alevi ways such as me. Still, our Sunni hosts could not (or did not appear to) identify their identity.

This visit to a *türbe* in a Sunni Village shows two forms of dissimulations by Alevis. First, during the introduction the Alevi informants did not volunteer information about their Alevi identity and village of origin. More importantly, they utilized linguistic dissimulation by non-verbal code language (by conducting the embodied acts of *niyaz* and *bloodless sacrifice*) and they observed *Babai* Alevi *türbe*-visit rules by the book, while uninformed outsiders were unable to identify this. Our Sunni hosts probably noticed a difference between Alevis and other visitors' performances in the *türbe*, yet, they did not feel compelled to ask further questions. I am not

certain about whether Sunnis know my Alevi friends were conducting Alevi prayers. The türbe is located in a Sunni-only zone, which might have deterred many Alevis, given that my Alevi informants are those who arrange türbe events in the whole region could not have visited the türbe before our visit. I knew the hosts were actually Sunnis since the site was a well-known Sunni-only village, one of the host was functioning as the *imam* and the other one came for noon prayer.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks' have utilized linguistic dissimulations also against non-Sunni outsiders, such as hostile political regimes in Bulgaria. During socialism especially, many major *türbe*s were closed to worship and transformed into museums (e.g. Akyazili Sultan near Balchik, Demir Baba near Razgrad); or their territories were confiscated and transformed into national parks and residences (e.g. Huseyin Baba Türbe near Razgrad). Other *türbe*s were either closed to worship or put under strict state surveillance, like the Sunni mosques. Only those *türbe*s next to the villages inhabited by Alevi were easier to visit, such as the village *türbe*s in Kardjali, but only if the Alevis were not denounced by their Sunni neighbors. Alevis still managed to visit *türbes* due to their linguistic dissimulations. They made visits to *türbe*s in distant regions of Bulgaria (traveling from Razgrad to Kardjali or vice-versa) despite the strict restrictions on mobility for citizens of socialist Bulgaria. They framed these visits to authorities as "excursions" (*ekskursiya/ екскурзия).* They also conducted regular local *türbe* visits by framing them as "picnics," just as they framed the ritual animal sacrifices (*kurban*) as picnic meals. I should note that under socialism picnics and excursions were not mundane events but social activities for political indoctrination of the the socialist citizens, especially the youth. In this respect Alevis' utilization of code words picnic for *türbe* visits and excursions for ritual sacrifice meals were not

random. By using these words, they appeared allied with socialist ideals even when they did not really feel so, as clearly stated by my Alevi informants in interviews.

Even the strict border during socialism, part of the "Iron Curtain," after all, did not prevent some Alevi *baba*s from annual visits to serve in major Alevi tekkes outside Bulgaria's borders. Some *baba*s successfully framed their visits as tourism and received tourist visas to Turkey (for Şücaeddin Veli Sultan for *Babais*) or Greece (for Kızıl Deli Sultan for *Bektaşi*s). This became possible even though during the socialist period Bulgarian authorities were not very willing to issue tourist visas to citizens of NATO member states. It is an instance of double dissimulation, as Robert M. Hayden noted in our correspondence, since while Alevis were using "tourism" as the subterfuge for their religious visits, Bulgarian authorities were pretending to accept this subterfuge, given that the socialist administration could not recognize religion but tourism as a valid ground for issuing visas to Turkey or Greece. There were, however, Alevi Bulgarian Turks who could not get legal visas. Their solution was crossing the border illegally. On the other side of the border, in Turkey, Alevi migrants also pursued tourist visas for visiting *türbe*s in Bulgaria. For instance, an Alevi informant had migrated from Ruse to Bursa in the 1970s after pledging the Alevi path (*ikrar*), and his pledge required his participation in *cem*s for the annual purification ceremonies. Unable to find a *cem* community in Bursa, my informant pursued another option, seeking tourist visas to participate in the *Nevruz* ceremony in Ruse, where he also made *türbe* visits. However, none of my Alevi informants now refer to *cem*s as *banket*s, *türbe* visits as excursions or ritual sacrifice meals as picnic meals. These words seem to lose their "code word" function with the end of socialism, which shows the temporary and strategic nature of Alevis' use of code works. Alevi Bulgarian Turks may thus abandon the code words for Alevi beliefs and practices from the vocabulary pool of the majorities which do not

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pose a threat to them any more. This also means that Alevis continue to use the code words from the vocabulary pool of the dominant majorities to refer to Alevi practices only if these majorities continue to pose a perceived or actual threat Alevis. For instance, Alevi Bulgarian Turks still use the code words from the vocabulary pool of Sunni Islam, *halka namazi*, *aksam kilmak* for *cem*, and *ziyaret* for *türbe* visits.

This situation had a great impact on my field research and research findings. During fieldwork I noticed that my informants were more comfortable in talking about dissimulation cases in the past, especially during their interactions with Communist Party Officials. Understandably, my informants did not display the same level of comfort in talking about historical and present relations with the surrounding present-day majorities, such as Sunnis in Bulgaria or Turkey. By considering their past dissimulations by using code words, I did not hesitate to utilize interview data, while regarding their ongoing dissimulations I purposefully relied on data not from interviews but from participant observation.

6.3   PRACTICING OTHERS' PRACTICES:

6.3.1   Performing Sunni religious practices

The central worshipping practices of Alevis and Sunnis are different, the former performing *cem*s the latter *namaz*. The difference is apparent in terms of rules regarding time, space, frequency, sequence and the structure of these practices. The social context of the two worshipping practices is also different: *namaz* is performed either individually or collectively, and can be done privately or in public, in mosques; while Alevi *cem*s are collective ceremonies

which are performed in *ad hoc cem* rooms or permanent *cemevi*s. Moreover, the two practices are informed by different approaches to Islam. Alevi *cem*s rests on the heavy symbolism of Alevis' esoteric interpretations of Islam while Sunni *namaz* rests on a rather formalist view. The theological distinction between Alevism and Sunnism is clearly and correctly noted in the literature an (e.g. Schüler 1999: 159, Çamuroğlu 1992: 67), yet it leaves some phenomena unexplained: some Alevi Bulgarian Turks are involved in Sunni rituals, especially Sunni *namaz* in local mosques.

In the literature, the phenomenon of Alevis performing Sunni *namaz* has been examined by several scholars. Türkdoğan (1995) finds this phenomenon unsurprising; since he emphasizes that both communities are ultimately Islamic. This view ignores the historical power asymmetry which has calcified inter-group differences, however. Ilyas Űzüm (2006) seems to presume Sunni Islam as the norm and thus finds nothing noteworthy in Alevis following Sunni rules. Some other scholars consider Alevi practice of Sunni prayers as an indicator of assimilation into the Sunni belief system (Zeidan 1999). However, I find this conclusion not to be well grounded in data, and actually contradicted by my field research experiences.

As an alternative to these approaches, I argue that at least some Alevi Bulgarian Turks practice Sunni religious rituals not because they trivialize the theological differences between Alevism and Sunnism, nor because they are assimilating into Sunnism. On the contrary, the majority of Alevis whom I observed performing Sunni prayers stated that they did so to protect the Alevis and Alevi ways against hostile outsiders, and many still do so in order to avoid discrimination. Further, some Alevis continue to perform Sunni prayers so they can seek certain advantages which are otherwise unavailable to them. Attending Sunni ceremonies has helped Alevis dissimulate against outsiders by publicly appearing as if they finally found the putatively

"true path" of Sunni Islam, while they pursue Alevi ways in the privacy of their own religious group.

My Alevi informants clearly link their practice of Sunni customs or rites like *namaz* on Fridays and the *Bayram*s within the broader history of Alevi-Sunni relations. An informant from Razgrad stated that Alevis' participation in Friday prayers dates back to "the Ottoman period" when "neighboring villages were prying about their practices and informing the authorities." Another informant from Razgrad emphasized that *namaz* was almost compulsory for him because of the "Sunni *hoca*s in the *mekteps*" (Turkish schools before socialism) who forced him to attend *namaz* when he was a child. They would "beat [the ones] who did not appear in the mosque during Friday prayers." Another Alevi informant was quite sarcastic and indifferent: "at least it [performing *namaz*] is not a sin."

Many Alevi Bulgarian Turks continue to perform public Sunni rituals today not because of the threat of persecution but to avoid discrimination, as the following excerpts show:

> "If you do not attend the Friday or *Bayram* prayers, they will call you *Kızılbaş*! That's all. Nothing more happens. We [Alevis] meet at houses, in the presence of a *baba*, who prays on the hosting house." *Bektaşi* from Kardjali

> "In Turkey they call you "infidel" [if one does not go to the mosques]. My brother in law felt forced to go to mosque just for this reason. Then, my sister started to save him from this problem by fabricating lies, such as 'he went to buy bread' [when his friends called him to attend Friday prayers]. Now his friends are calling him 'Alevi annex' ["Alevi yamamasi," which refers to one who is affiliated with Alevism in a rather derogatory way]." *Bektaşi* from Razgrad

> "I always perform Friday prayers. I do not miss the *Bayram* Prayers either. I perform only the "obligatory duty" [*farz*] sections, but I perform them. The rest of the people perform the *sunnah* section as well. The other day the headman of the town did not go to *Bayram* prayer in the town's mosque. Imam paid him a visit while the headman said 'I do not care; it is not my business.' I was there and I said 'Yet, you are an example [for the rest].' He became convinced and said all right. Of course it is a political issue. Then I added, "you should come without eating anything, drinking anything, or smoking cigarettes and after conducting the

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ritual cleaning [*abdest*].' He chuckled and added "no way, not that far." *Babai* from Razgrad in Turkey

As indicated in the above quotations, Alevi Bulgarian Turks preserve their sense of Alevi identity while practicing Sunni practices, even though their practices are not due to external oppression but because they become habits. The following excerpt from my migrant informant exemplifies this argument by stating that "*namaz* should be presided over by a real imam and the only real imams are the twelve imams":

> "Well, the *namaz* prayer is not an issue; Ali himself performed *namaz*. Therefore, Alevis go to mosques to perform Friday and *Bayram* prayers. They perform both Friday and *Bayram* prayers for 2 *rekats* each, both in Bulgaria and Turkey. Also, you should know, the *namaz* for Ramadan *Bayram* is not *namaz* for fasting. It is written in the Quran too. Also, I should add, even when sofuluk was the most powerful, those *sofus* [pious Sunnis] were waiting for my grandfather to perform Friday *namaz*. **In reality, this is the truth: *Namaz* should be performed in the presence of and just behind a real imam and the only real imams are the twelve imams [of Alevism]."** *Musahipli* from Kardjali in Turkey

Public performances of Sunni practices by Alevi Bulgarian Turks vary in terms of the type of practice (daily prayers, *Bayram* prayers or funerals), the degree of publicity and visibility (e.g. in the local mosque, city mosque, of the *müftülük*), the degree of Sunni awareness about Alevis' presence and the roles assumed by Alevis (leader, participant or mere observer). In the rest of this section I discuss two cases of Alevi performance of and attendance at Sunni practices, which ultimately reveal and reinforce their Alevi identities.

6.3.2 The Holy Birth Week

> The Holy Birth Week is a recently invented tradition among Sunnis to celebrate the birth of Muhammed. In Bulgaria the celebrations are organized by regional *müftülük*s who invite members of the mosque wakfs and the villagers to a theater to listen to presentations about Muhammed, hear religious songs and reciting of the Quran. I attended one of those ceremonies at one of my field sites. Apparently my

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Alevi informants attended the Holy Birth Week ceremony as representatives of their village's mosque commission, just like any other guest in the ceremony. They were known as Alevis by the events' organizers and were in fact individually welcomed. During the ceremony, I noticed a great many of my Alevi and Sunni informants from the villages, with the most surprising group being from an Alevi village. They kindly invited me to a local restaurant after the event. I was not hoping for anything more than a lunch event, which was partially true with a difference: The top-rank Alevi religious leader asked for a bottle of vodka and shot glasses from the waitress. Then all at the table were silent, and *baba* started to pray over the bottle stating that they are celebrating the "Holy Birth of Muhammed" and divided the bottle among people, performed another prayer over the glasses, and distributed the shot glasses to the people, in a way strikingly similarly to how it is done during the *cem* ceremonies. I was stunned by their transforming a potentially secular lunch into an Alevi religious ritual [and in a way that is antithetical to Sunni Islam yet draws on the latter's forms].

6.3.3   Friday Prayer on Hıdrellez

The most telling event for Alevi dissimulations is a Sunni prayer by Alevis at the mosque in an Alevi-only village. On an important Alevi holiday, I noticed Alevi males in the mosque garden. They saw me and invited me to the mosque room, which was decorated with Alevi markers, such as posters of Ali, his sons Huseyin and Hasan, the Holy Imams. After a long talk, the leader suggested performing Friday prayer, even though it was not the right time for it. For an untrained eye, the Alevis' Friday prayer resembles the Sunni prayer; it is in a mosque, with the imam and worshippers, with prayer postures and Quranic verses in Arabic. Yet, in fact, this was not a Sunni prayer, but its imitation. The Alevis' Friday prayer started with words praising God, Muhammed and Ali, indicating the idea of the Alevi trinity rather than Sunni unity. Then the "imam" recited the Quran in a melody resembling the melody used for Alevi religious poems. The most striking part was the incorporation of a Turkish prayer into the existing prayer, similar to Alevi ways as opposed to Sunni prayers, which are exclusively in Arabic. Moreover, the prayer in Turkish was responded to by the worshippers with the same word "Amen." In Sunni Friday prayer, worshippers do not vocalize. This is just the opposite of the Alevi tradition of prayers: the religious leader constantly engages with the worshippers and worshippers respond by chanting "Allah Allah." My Alevi informants were doing cross-cultural translation of Alevi "Allah Allah" into Sunni "Amen," when normally Sunnis were supposed to be silent. Yet, in fact, this was not a Sunni prayer; it was a prayer indicating what Alevis understand as Sunni Prayers. The several elements they did not pay attention to did not conceal but revealed the identity of the worshippers as Alevi.

If Alevis' Holy Week celebrations and their Friday prayers are taken as isolated events, they look like cases of Alevis performing Sunni ways with an Alevi interpretation. Therefore they might have been seen as instances of syncretism. Yet, these cases should be considered in relation to the other religious practices performed by the same Alevi communities. Simply put, the Alevi groups involved in the seemingly syncretic Sunni namaz or Sunni Holy Birth Week celebrations do so only in public. Furthermore, they explicitly define Alevi *cem*s as their central religious practice and t actively continue conducting weekly *cem*s, "even under communism". I see these cases as examples of dissimulation because I have noticed that their involvement of Sunni practices occurs only in public. That is to say the specified groups of Alevis do not conduct Sunni prayers in their homes and they clearly state that *cem*s are the central religious practices in their view.

Another feature that makes these cases examples of dissimulation is that they occur only in the presence of outsiders. Specifically, the first case indicates their dissimulations because they attended a public Sunni ritual, while immediately after it they re-created an alternative ceremony manifesting Alevi ways. The second case indicates their dissimulations by re-creating a Sunni ceremony in Alevi ways. Further, while both cases indicate how Alevi Bulgarian Turks perform seemingly Sunni ways, they do it either by emphasizing Alevi identity (in the parallel ceremony case) or by revealing Alevi identity (in their re-creation of the *namaz* case). In retrospect, I interpret both events as cases of dissimulation aimed at me, as the Sunni researcher present at the parallel celebration and re-created Sunni *namaz*.

6.4   MANIPULATING OTHERS' SPACES:

It is recognized in the literature that Alevis do not affiliate themselves with mosque, for a variety of reasons. Some Alevis believe that Ali was killed in a mosque during prayer while others see daily prayers as inventions to control the masses. To them the Quran does not state anything about the proper form, frequency of, or space and time for daily prayers (Türkdoğan 1995, Űzüm 2006). Strikingly, I noticed what may be a unique trend among Alevi Bulgarian Turks in post-socialist Bulgaria: Alevi Bulgarian Turks *voluntarily* built mosques in Alevi neighborhoods or villages, and *voluntarily* participate in mosque commissions in mixed settings.

Coming from Turkey, I read this as a sign of forced Sunnification, since construction of Sunni mosques in Alevi neighborhoods is a method used historically for the Sunnification of Alevis, as I discussed in Chapter Four. In fact, in Turkey, my Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants still experience this situation. There are state-initiated Sunni mosques with Diyanet-appointed imams in Alevi-only villages in Turkish Thrace and Yalova. In Bulgaria, Alevis also experienced the same pressure historically. Several elder Alevis mentioned how the only available education before socialism was the Quranic education in Sunni mosques, where prayers were forced, as I discussed in the previous section. Currently however, Alevis in Bulgaria do not feel forced to interact in Sunni spaces, but rather do so voluntarily. In building mosques in Alevi neighborhoods or actively participating in the commissions of existing Sunni mosques these Alevis are not manifesting their Sunnification, but rather are still practicing dissimulation. While not intended to provide immediate protection of the community, such practices provide access to advantages otherwise unavailable to the community.

6.4.1 Building Sunni Mosques

One form of manipulation of Sunni spaces by Alevi Bulgarian Turks is to build Sunni mosques in Alevi neighborhoods. Building mosques allows Alevis to (re)gain access to income from the pious foundations' territories, which had once belonged to Alevis but then became tied to Sunni *müftülük*s, and then were confiscated by the socialist state. In the 1990s a law was passed in Bulgaria which allowed religious communities to re-claim their territories and their properties through the court system. However, since only Sunni *Müftülük*s have the legal status of representing Islam in Bulgaria, Alevi Bulgarian Turks could not get these territories back without operating under the Sunni structures. The only solution left for Alevi Bulgarian Turks was to build mosques (see appendix for pictures), as they explain in the following words:

> "Originally the mosque was made by the Tatars in a closer village during Romanian rule. They forced our village to have a mosque; so we had a mosque built. The territories were tied to the mosque during the same period. Now we decided this [i.e. renovating the mosque in the village] because sometimes people come over, travel here to get some portion of the rent from the mosque territories. This is how and why they come. [Do you have to pray in the mosque?] No, not really, sometimes." Razgrad

> "The mosque in the village owned lands, yet these lands were confiscated and transformed into cooperatives in the 1950s. The cooperatives were ended; but no change happened in the status of these lands until 1992. In 1992 these lands were given to the mosque. We could not take the benefit from these territories on our own, since we have *müftülük*s [in Bulgaria] and mosque *waqf*s are tied to *müftülük*s." Razgrad

As I discussed in Chapter Four, the academic literature clearly considers formation of Sunni mosques in Alevi villages as instances of state-initiated Sunnification (e.g. Çamuroğlu 1991, 1997). A common strategy used by Alevis in Razgrad, however, building mosques in Alevi neighborhoods, clearly does not indicate the Sunnification of these Alevis., who use these mosques for their own prayer purposes and also continue to conduct *cem* ceremonies. Instead,

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these mosques indicate Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations by appearing to be Sunnified, manipulating Sunni spaces in order to access the resources that formerly belonged to their community.

6.4.2 Participating in Mosque Commissions

Another form of Alevi Bulgarian Turks' manipulation of Sunni spaces is participating in existing Sunni mosque commissions, as the following interview excerpts clearly show:

> "Lots of *baba*s are working in the mosque commissions in the region. Therefore, they feel forced to attend *namaz* prayers and Friday prayers. They actually go to mosques for prayers on the grounds that they "do not want to remain apart from Sunnis." Also, last time we collected donations around 300 levas for the mosque. Then, in the mosque commission meeting we said 'look, this *türbe* is at the *harem* of the mosque [the word *harem* here stands for the inner courtyard of the Ottoman mosques]." Due to this conversation we managed to channel 80 leva for the maintenance of the mosque.

> "Right, Alevis are in the mosque commissions but there is no one in the mosques! Sunnis could come to mosques too; therefore there will be unity. By being in the mosque commissions we [Alevis] get a chance to know about what is happening."

As a common strategy in Kardjali, the involvement of Alevis in mosque commissions is a strategy of manipulating the already existing Sunni spaces to access information about developments in their mixed Sunni-Alevi villages, as well as to channel resources for the Alevi *türbe*s. Otherwise, these Alevis continue to follow Alevi practices, and in fact most of them hold the position of *baba* in *cem*s.

6.5   SLOGANS FOR INTER-GROUP RELATIONS

My Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants often cited some dictums in explaining phenomena during the interviews. Some of these dictums are religious in character, while others encapsulate Alevis' accounts of their relations with the main majority groups. In this section, I examine frequently used sayings regarding Sunnis, Christians, socialist Bulgarians and secular Turks. I see these slogans as strategies that Alevi Bulgarian Turk use to emphasize certain rather superficial resemblances with various majorities, while hiding other aspects of their own beliefs. In this sense, they are examples of Alevis' dissimulations because they are instances of controlling their own visibilities and invisibilities for various reasons. I should note that historically Alevis have made the decisions about their desired degree of visibilities and invisibilities collectively and in the privacy of the *cem* communities. This allowed Alevis to escape from persecution, avoid discrimination and even seek advancements otherwise unavailable for them.

6.5.1   "Follow/watch out the *Şeriat*, Hide the *Tarikat*" in Relation to Sunnis

Alevi Bulgarian Turks often use the dictum *Seriati Izle, Tarikati Gizle* ("Follow/watch out for the *Şeriat*, Hide the *Tarikat*") to explain their relations with Sunnis and their practices in Sunni spaces, such as the cases of building mosques and attending Sunni rituals or spaces. The saying has double meaning, both appearing to follow and be alert to Sunnis while ultimately suggesting hiding Alevi identity. Therefore, it is a call for Alevis for dissimulation in relation to Sunnis.

6.5.1.1 Follow the Seriat…

This saying has two interpretations among Alevi Bulgarian Turks. On the one hand, some Alevi Bulgarian Turks see *Şeriat* as the first door necessary to reach the other doors: namely *Tarikat*, *Mağrifet*, *Şeriat* and *Hakikat*. To them, *Seriat* and *Tarikat* do not exclude each other. *Şeriat* is a step to be left behind to reach the *Tarikat* stage:

> "We enter into the Path thinking that *Şeriat* is also on our way. Yet, *it is not necessary to follow the ways of Şeriat*. The Prophet is also an Alevi; he has the blood link and we also have blood link. Yet, only a few people understand this and think deeper…*Both Şeriat and Tarikat are ours*. The reason why the Prophet put *Şeriat* at the forefront is to unite people in the belief in God." *Babai* from Razgrad (emphasis added)

> "Follow the *Şeriat*," as we say. This does not mean there is no *Şeriat*. That is to say, *namaz* is not against our path. *Yet, there is also Tarikat*." *Babai* from Kardjali in Turkey (emphasis added)

As is clear in these excerpts, my informants do not exclude *Şeriat,* but they subordinate it to the Tarikat stage. It is no surprise that they interpret the saying as "*Follow* the *Şeriat* and hide the *Tarikat*;" they do not hesitate to appear to follow *Şeriat* in public. For instance, the first informant initiated the building of an Alevi mosque in his neighborhood and the second informant apparently performs Sunni *namaz* if needed.

6.5.1.2 Be Wary of *Şeriat* ….

On the other hand, while other Alevi Bulgarian Turks do not deny the compatibility of the *Şeriat* and *Tarikat* doors in principle ("we should not separate them" as they say rather normatively), they note a rather antagonistic relationship between proponents of the Seriat and Tarikat doors (i.e. Sunnis and Alevis), as the following example shows:

> "We should not separate them [*Şeriat* and *Tarikat*]. Ah, but they [Sunnis] try to drag us towards Muhammed's side; it is given. They try to impose *Şeriat* so that one will go to mosques and cite *Şeriat* prayers." *Bektaşi*, Razgrad

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The *Şeriat* door ultimately gets reduced to its strategic meaning among some Alevi

Bulgarian Turks, as the following example shows:

> "We keep both *Şeriat* and *Tarikat* doors. *As a matter of fact, we unlock doors with*
> *the key of Seriat door.* Thus, supporting the *müftülük* is not a big problem for us"
> *Bektaşi*, Kardjali (emphasis added)

As a clear indicator of dissimulation, this informant was explaining to me why Alevi

organizations preferred to support the *müftülük* even when it represents only Sunni Islam and is

not particularly friendly towards the local Alevi organizations. My informant is deeply aware of

the power asymmetry between *müftülük*s and Alevi organizations in his region. In these

circumstances, Alevis do not seem to have any other option but to show support for Sunni

authorities for strategic purposes, with the hope these will open doors for various levels of

advancements otherwise impossible for local Alevis.

6.5.2   "Our Difference is thinner than an Onion Skin" in relation to Bulgarians

Alevi Bulgarian Turks use the saying "our difference is thinner than an onion skin" in referring

to Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. They draw upon several fields of resemblance, ranging from

their social life to religious practices. However, while they highlight certain resemblances

between Alevis and Bulgarians, they do so on a rather superficial level, adhering to stereotypes

about both groups. Ultimately they hide other aspects of Alevism which are incongruent with

Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. I see this situation as another manifestation of Alevis'

dissimulations, which are about the strategic concealments of Alevis and revelations about

themselves, often for protection not from the Bulgarian majority but from hostile Sunni

neighbors. Simply put, Alevis dissimulate towards Bulgarians for protection from Sunni Turks.

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Alevi Bulgarian Turks most often mention several specific practices in common with those of Orthodox Christian Bulgarians. For instance, an informant from Kardjali states that "Bulgarians see resemblance between themselves and us, since we both drank raki and light candles." Another one from Razgrad states that "we are very democratic. Women and men gather together. This is why Bulgarians see us as closer to themselves." Alevis particularly appreciate the Orthodox Christian religious leaders' recognition of Alevi ways:

> One day we gathered with [Christian] priests and [Sunni] imams. The priests told me that "you know it [we recognize Ali];" yet we could not convince the imams. Only Christians say Ilia [Bulgarian for the prophet Elija], recognizing Ali. They do not recognize Ebubekir, Omer or Osman! [Three Sunni caliphs held this position before Ali, wrongly according to Alevis].Kardjali

However, Alevi Bulgarian Turks approach outsiders' over-reading these resemblances sarcastically, since they clearly define themselves within Islam. They were targeted by Bulgarian authorities who had sought to find evidence to support the official thesis that Alevis were converted Bulgarians, which I discussed in Chapter Four. Examples of such sarcasm are as follows:

> "I visited the Demir *Baba* [*Türbe*] one day with foreigners. As you know, when you enter into the *türbe*, we should conduct *niyaz*. I did *niyaz* at the threshold, first to the ground, then to the top, right side and left side of the *türbe* door. Supposedly I was making the sign of Christian cross on myself! They interpreted it as such! Ha ha ha!" Kardjali to Firuzkoy

> "They say "Alevis are [separated] from us" while in reality Bulgarians are descended from Alevis. They are children of Khan Atilla…Bulgarians also conduct many of our ways. Except that they do not have *baba*s. Otherwise they have musahips; they celebrate *Hıdrellez*, *Kırklar*, *Kızıl Yumurta*; they also have Imam Ali." Razgrad

Alevis have drawn upon resemblances to Orthodox Christian Bulgarians in contrast to two groups: periodically hostile political regimes in Bulgaria and, more interestingly, against hostile Sunni Turks, as the following excerpts indicate:

During the socialist period, we Alevis did not suffer much. In fact I myself became a party officer. We managed to explain ourselves to socialists. *We took refuge under the roof of Bulgarians.* We said to them that "our difference from Bulgarians is as thin as an onion skin," and that "we celebrate the same religious days, for instance egg-day [Easter], Veliki Den" and that "we also light candles." This was on purpose. However, under socialism there were Alevis who surrendered to Bulgarians such as Karahasan. Corlu (emphasis added)

One night Sunnis in the village wanted to break into here [the *baba*'s house where Alevis conduct *cem* ceremonies at the evening]. They visited the Kmet [the Head of the Municipality] and said "we should make these *Kızılbaş* disappear, since they drink raki." It is said that the *Kmet*, who was a Bulgarian, smiled, turned around towards his closet and opened its door to show them various raki. He added, "I also have various raki." This is how they [Bulgarians] saved us; they treated us closer. In fact, they believe in us and our way [Alevism] Kardjali

The first excerpt clearly shows how Alevis had to emphasize resemblance relations with Orthodox Christians, as a form of dissimulation towards Bulgarians. They did this to protect themselves against local Sunnis. The second excerpt shows a successful result of such dissimulation.

6.5.3   Dissimulation of secular identity in relation to socialist Bulgarians

Alevi Bulgarian Turks had a complicated relationship with the socialist regime. As just noted, drawing superficial parallels between Orthodox Christianity and Alevism sometimes seems to have worked during socialism. Yet at other times, they drew resemblances between socialist and Alevi ideals. Many Alevi leaders worked as active members of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), which seemed to contribute to this vision of "the common ideals."

Some Alevi Bulgarian Turkish *baba*s in BCP truly believed in the "common ideals" argument, while others were almost forced into being members of the party.

I worked in BCP. Therefore, they [communists] did not put much pressure on us. How do I reconcile communism and Alevism? Well, both communism and

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*Bektaşi*sm defend the same ideal. First, the members of the society should be equal. Second, God is not in the sky. Also, in both communism and *Bektaşi*sm people are expected to work together and eat together.

They made me a secretary for the party [BCP]. Yet, I did not harm anyone. Once they confiscated the books for *mevlüt* [a poem about the birth of Muhammed, treated as sacred among Sunnis in Bulgaria] with the intention to burn them. I did not let them touch the books. During socialism I served at the *tekke* in Kardjali! At the same time socialists granted me medals for my services in the BCP.

Confirming these *baba*s' accounts, I found out that Alevi *baba*s in the BCP are still respected within their own communities, unlike the religious leaders of other groups who served in BCP.

Various Alevi groups experienced the socialist period differently, depending on particular political leaders' attitudes and on specific majority-minority configurations. In mixed settings where Alevis did not have any political power, they faced difficulties in pursuing some religious rituals:

 "During communism they interfered in the gathering of *cem*s. The Party would appoint prominent residents of the village into important positions. These people would reveal the Alevis practices to the party officials as they knew that we were Alevis and we conducted *cem*s. The interference was at this scale" Razgrad

"It was difficult to be in a mixed town. Still, even under communism we were not under great pressure. In the Alevi dominant neighborhoods, we remained unrecognized by outsiders. In the mixed neighborhoods, Sunnis knew who was Alevi and who was not; but they were clueless about what Alevis do. [Thus, they could not do much to influence Alevi rituals.] Sunnis were clueless but they had negative perceptions of Alevis. It is because they had been indoctrinated by their grandparents against Alevis. Today, Alevis still keep their ritual places hidden from their sight. For instance, in this town, they rent the place for *cem* after 10:00 pm. In this way, Sunnis do not know what Alevis are doing." Kardjali

Many other Alevis stress that the socialist period was good for Alevism in Bulgaria. Alevis were targeted by socialists but the pressures from the socialist regime tied the members of the Alevi community closer together:

"Whenever Alevism was under the strictest pressures, it turned out to be the best for Alevis. The youth were attending *cem*s, involved in the conversation *cem*s. The worst period of Alevism is, in fact, today. Whatever the pressures were during the communism period, there were no interruptions in the *cem*s. It was always crowded." Kardjali

Even under socialism the *cem*s were followed. In the mixed villages, the Sunnis complained about Alevis. The communists sent *Nacalnik* [local police] to *cem*s to double check. They came in and did not find anything wrong; candles were lighted, people were eating and drinking. We said it was a dinner, a banquet. *Baba* offered them food and drinks, they drank and ate and then left us alone.

There were troubles in the 1980s. In that period, even ritual sacrifices were prohibited. Still, people managed to gather in here secretly. We managed to continue the path. Alevis in Dulovo also did the same. We sometimes tricked them: we said the *cem* is at 7 pm when we actually performed it at 9 pm. It was very, very difficult for the Alevis living in mixed villages.

6.5.4 "We are all Turkish" to secular Turks.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks often utilize the slogan "we are all Turkish." At first glance the saying is

not surprising and even self-evident, given that their native language is Turkish, their prayers are

in Turkish, and they trace their own heritage to Turkish groups from Central Asia, from

Khurasan and Anatolia. As a matter of fact many Alevi informants state that both Alevis and

Sunnis have suffered in Bulgaria because they are Turkish, as the following excerpt shows:

"This village was once Bulgaria, then Romania and then Bulgaria. There is no difference for Alevis under Bulgaria or under Romania. Bulgarians put pressure on Alevis just because they are Turks. They look at your name when you petition for something [whether it is a Turkish name or not]. Otherwise, it is not related to religion anymore. You can go to mosque, you can go to *cem*. But if you are looking for a job, we have neither lawyers nor army officers. Turkishness is all the same. In Anatolia, all were migrants from Khurasan, all were one type. Later, with Yavuz Sultan Selim a separation occurred [within Turks]."

Alevi Turks claim of Turkish identity does not count as dissimulation *per se*. In fact

almost all of my Alevi Bulgarian Turkish informants identified themselves as both Alevi and

Turkish. It is possible to see individual Alevis who prioritize their own Turkish identity over their Alevi identity, as indicated by the above quotation from my interviews. Within the context of my analysis and this section I did not count this group of Alevis as dissimulating at all, since Surely some members of double minorities like Alevi Bulgarian Turks can be expected to have nested identities.

In my analysis, I focus on another configuration among minorities with nested identities: some Alevi Bulgarian Turks may announce their Alevi identity as primary and their Turkish identity as secondary, even though both are sincere felt as components of their identity. These Alevis may utilize their self-identified secondary identity, Turkish, to blanket their primary Alevi identity when the latter is used by outsiders to exclude and discriminate against Alevis. This configuration indicates some Alevis' strategic use of their Turkish identity when they identify with Turkishness, yet in secondary level, after the Alevi identity. In the rest of this section I discuss this configuraton as dissimulation.

Some Alevi Bulgarian Turks's strategic emphasize of their ethnic Turkish identity is similar to other cases of dissimulaton. They may publicly encourage a secular Turkish ethnic identity which causes a public disassociation from Alevism, while in fact they continue to follow Alevi ways privately. Concealing Alevism under a generic Turkish ethnic identity may grant them protection and even access to favors which are only available to Turkish Sunnis. In the rest of this section I examine specific cases of Alevis' dissimulations by emphasizing secular Turkish identity.

6.5.4.1 How many Bulgarian Turks are Alevis?

One question I was curious about is the number of Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey. Neither state has disclosed any statistical data about this population. Turkey does not seem to have such data, probably due to the only

very recent publicity about Alevism. The situation is the same for Bulgaria even though studies on Alevis date back to the interwar period. I could not find any explanation for the lack of such data until the very end of my fieldwork. The lack of data did not mean lack of interest on the part of the states. For instance, in the 1992 census, Bulgaria's attempt to know the number of Alevis had failed. This failure was due to the census categories on Islam: Muslim citizens were given the options of Sunni and Shia, but Shia was an alien category to many Alevi Bulgarian Turks. Even today many Alevis joke about how they did not know back then what Shia was. The census had some result; yet its accuracy was dubious, given that several "Shia" groups "emerged" in unexpected parts of Bulgaria.

Later on, during my fieldwork in Kardjali, things become much more transparent to me. In the 2000s the Bulgarian state had commissioned a census at the local municipality using the categories of "Sunni" and "Alevi." Municipality officials declined on the grounds that "such classification would lead to division within the Turkish community" as one of my informants states. The striking fact is that these municipal officials were not merely Sunnis but also Alevis!

Alevi Turks in the migrant and minority organization are often underrepresented. Mentioning the existence of Alevis Bulgarian Turks is seen as dividing the community. This policy led to the invisibility of Alevis and ultimately led to affiliation of the Bulgarian Turkish identity with Sunni Islam. In such circumstances it is surprising to see that Alevi municipality leaders refused to be classified as Alevis. Their rejection hints at their dissimulation under the generic Turkish identity in Kardjali, where Turkish identity is dominant.

The self-reinforced invisibility of Alevi Bulgarian Turks hints at another dissimulation strategy. The ambiguity surrounding the size of the Alevi population makes the situation unpredictable and causes anxiety for Sunni Turks. Some of my informants told me that Alevis uttered statements like "you know how many we are!" to deter Sunni Turks from supporting policies that were potentially in conflict with Alevis' interests. Alevis are thought to be around 10 percent of the Turkish population in Bulgaria, though the ambiguity about the exact number grants them some space to maneuver in their relationship to the Sunnis. Therefore Alevis have preferred to remain invisible under the Turkish minority in demographic terms.

6.5.4.2 Not an Alevi religious leader but a former Belene prisoner

In Bulgaria during the 1990s, Alevis become more visible following the emergence of Alevi NGOs such as the *Cem* Wakf in Razgrad, the Dulovo Association in Silistre and the Southern Bulgaria *Cem* Association in Kardjali. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' visibilities were not unproblematic in any of these places. In Kardjali, however, it was particularly tense for Alevi Bulgarian Turks. I was told that even a Turkish Sunni parliamentarian had said that he would be the first to burn down an Alevi NGO if it would be established in Kardjali. Yet Alevis managed to open the organization with support from the leader of the Turkish party. Therefore, interference from above resolved the immediate issue, although the tension seems to remain until the present day. In the present context, where Alevis in Kardjali are granted a degree of visibility, they dissimulate emphasizing their Turkishness as the common ground with Sunnis yet at the cost of silencing their Alevi identity. One instance of such dissimulation became explicit to me when I was conducting my fieldwork.

> In the summer of 2010 the *Müftülük* crisis reached its peak when the Sunni Grand *Müftü* of Bulgaria was removed from his position by a court decision. As a result, elected regional muftis were removed from their offices by force and replaced by a last-minute team from the infamous socialist period mufti. Sunni Muslims initiated peaceful protests all over Bulgaria, including Razgrad and Kardjali. Just a few weeks before the actual replacement of the *müftü* in Kardjali, the rumors started. At a local Turkish newspaper I noticed one interesting piece of news, concerning the visit of the members of the Southern Bulgarian Alevi organizations to the regional *müftülük* in support of the elected *müftü*.

I was surprised by the visit and the support the organization gave to the Sunni *müftülük*s. Alevis in Kardjali seemed to me to be the most abject group of Alevis in all Bulgaria. I visited the *müftü* as well as the visitors to understand their perceptions of the visit and the event. The regional *müftü* did not look pleased when I asked what he thought of the visit and support from Alevis. Instead he started to explain the historical roots of sectarianism in Islam, arguing that the

distinction between groups is groundless and that Alevism is based on a misunderstanding, since Ali and Muhammed were blood relatives and in-laws. He added that he particularly respected the persona of one of the visitors. This person was religious leader in Kardjali yet the regional *müftü* portrayed him as a former Belene prisoner[6] who resisted the name-change process and remained in the same prison cell with the current leader of the Turkish party. The regional *müftü* completely ignored the other visitor, who was the sole leader of the only Alevi organization in Kardjali. He also silenced the Alevi identity of the Alevi *Baba* by portraying him in terms of his secular Turkish ethnic identity.

Most strikingly, Alevi visitors were not interpreting their visit much differently from the regional *müftü*. When I had a chance to talk with Alevi visitors about their visit, they explained they went to "publicly support Turkishness in the region," even though the Alevi organization's leader was particularly disturbed by the *müftü*'s indifference to the organization and the Alevi community behind it. My Alevi informants were taking on the invisibility which the *müftülük* imposed upon Alevis.

6.5.4.3 Not an Alevi türbe but a monument of Turkishness

> One of the first findings during my preliminary research in Bulgaria for the NSF REG project was about the restoration of an old Alevi site in post-socialist Bulgaria. The site was located in an area between Sunni and Alevi populated villages in Kardjali. The site was a complex made up of *türbe*s, a *meydanevi*, an *asevi* and a mosque. The mosque was built to repress Alevis in the region during late Ottoman rule. Alevis trained in the *medrese* complex were replaced by Sunni scholars from the Ottoman center. The site was known as a very important center for *Bektaşism* in Southern Bulgaria; yet the *Bektaşi* and *Babai* communities did not have sufficient resources for restoring it. The process which

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[6] Belene is a small town in north Bulgaria and it known for an infamous prison for political prisoners during socialism. It holds an important symbolic significance among Bulgarian Turks; in 1985-1989 Bulgarian Turks who resisted to the name change process were not only imprisoned but also faced various forms of torture by the socialist officials in the Belene prison.

led to the restoration of the site was interesting. The funding was sought by an Alevi Bulgarian Turkish businessman with connections to Turkey, and he presented the site as a landmark of Turkishness in Kardjali to a local Sunni Turkish businessman who was from and resided in Turkey. The Sunni businessman from Turkey agreed to finance the site, but only on the condition that both the *türbe* and the mosque would be restored.

The portrayal of the site by Alevi Bulgarian Turks as a landmark of Turkishness helped the restoration of the place by utilizing the financial support of a local Sunni Turkish businessman. Needless to say, the restoration of the mosque was a condition for the restoration of the Alevi site. Also, a striking fact was that Alevi Bulgarian Turks did not reveal that the mosque was a later development on this site, just above the *çilehane* (an area for withdrawal, suffering and introspection for Alevi *Derviş*hes). The mosque was built for forced Sunnification of Alevis there and in the surrounding villages. They managed to portray it a landmark of Turkishness rather than a landmark of oppression by the strictly-Sunni regime. Overall, this case shows how Alevi Bulgarian Turks may dissimulate by emphasizing their Turkish ethnic identity. They do this not to avoid discrimination but to seek various advantages for the community in relation to local Turks from Turkey.

6.5.4.4 Emphasizing Turkishness in Resettlement Context

A town near Bursa is divided between a complex for recent Bulgarian Turkish migrants and a settlement of Alevi Kurds from Eastern Turkey. The town's lower part has an old mosque and a recently formed *cemevi* for the Kurdish Alevi migrants, while its higher part has a mosque. The recent history of the town clearly indicates tension between Kurdish and Bulgarian Turkish migrants, which caused intense polarization and politicization during the municipal elections and even violent fights.

The site was extremely accommodating to me at the very beginning of my fieldwork; however, it turned out to be the most difficult place to study the situation for Alevi migrants within the Bulgarian Turkish community. The migrant complex was directed towards people who migrated in 1989, a group of migrants made up of Sunni Bulgarian Turks and a few Alevi families. Alevi families were known to Sunni migrants who came from nearby villages; yet even

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though they know these families, they were not willing to put me into contact with them so as "not to offend them." When I convinced one of my Sunni informants to introduce me, he introduced me to an Alevi family who had a small shop in the migrant complex. We visited the shop together and I had promised not to mention Alevism to the family unless they mentioned it. We started talking about migration and the village they migrated to and at one point the conversation come to the famous Alevi *türbe* located next to their village in Razgrad. Suddenly the lady's face changed and expressed discomfort. She started to talk about the *türbe* as a site for very recent ceremonies for "1989 martyrs." She preferred to portray the Alevi *türbe* as a site for secular-political ceremonies rather than an Alevi *türbe*, indicating her dissimulation by prioritizing Turkish identity while talking to me.

This case shows the two different forms of dissimulations which I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. I argued that Alevi Bulgarian Turks may hide the components of their Alevi identity if they are already known as Alevis, and they may try hiding their Alevi identity completely if they are not known to the outsiders. The above case exemplifies both cases of dissimulation of my Alevi female informant. First, she was already well-known to my Sunni informant, though the latter was clueless about to what extent and how she practices Alevism. Second, she emphasized her Turkish identity to me to hide her Alevi identity *from me*, the Turkish researcher with Sunni heritage, from Turkey.

During my quest to reach a few Alevi Bulgarian Turkish families, I ended up connecting with the Kurdish Alevi migrants' *cemevi*s, hoping that they were being contacted by Alevi Bulgarian Turks. It was striking to me to note that the personnel from the *cemevi* including the administrator were unaware that some Bulgarian Turks may be Alevis. They knew a few Balkan Alevis who were attending to the *cemevi* from another neighborhood of Bursa, and I had a chance to contact them with the hope of reaching Alevi Bulgarian Turks. This attempt also failed when my contacts turned out to be Alevi Turks from Greece. Interestingly, I discovered that many Alevi Turkish migrants from Greece continue to follow their path as separate *cem* communities in their neighborhoods, or they attend existing *cemevi*s. On the other hand, Alevi

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Turks from Bulgaria were unable to form their own *cem*s due to lack both of *baba*s and of sufficient followers. Yet they also refused to attend the existing *cemevi*s of the local Alevis. Finally, I had a chance to reach a few Alevis in different neighborhoods. They gave some clear reasons for not attending the existing *cemevi*s in Bursa:

"Right, there are *cemevi*s in Bursa. Yet we do not go to them. There are Kurds in those *cemevi*s. The *cemevi*s here are sites where Kurds gather. I have not visited them even once. I have not even considered it as an option. Why? They are doing stuff wrong. We came here to defend our Turkishness; they are looking for something else.. Also their traditions are different, their worship is different. They also have musahips but they can change their musahips throughout their lifetime. We have musahips once and till we die." Ruse to Bursa

As this excerpt indicates, Alevi migrants from Bulgaria feel they are at a crossroads between choosing either Turkishness or Alevi identity, in migrant settings marked by political polarization. They voluntarily silence their Alevi identity to form an alliance with the Sunni Bulgarian Turkish migrants.

Alevi migrants in Bursa often prioritize their Turkish identity over their Alevi identity. In old migrant neighborhoods, where they face elder Sunni migrants and local Sunnis, Alevi migrants prioritize their Turkishness and thus resolve the "migrant versus local" tension, in a situation in which the local Turks mainly stigmatize the migrants by calling them "Bulgarians." In these places Alevi migrants manage to hide their Alevi identity from the local Sunnis. Sunni Bulgarian Turks support the Alevi Bulgarian Turks by hiding who is Alevi from the local Turks, thus bridging the division that exists among Turks within Bulgaria because in Turkey, both groups are stigmatized as Bulgarians rather than real Turks.

6.6   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I examined Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimulations by focusing on their narratives and practices, which *publicly* indicate their distancing themselves from the Alevi ideal-type while they *privately* continue adhering to it. I began by discussing Alevi Bulgarian Turks' notions of secrecy and of the Alevi secret. I argued that the Alevi secret is a component of dissimulation and that the Alevis' particular notion of secrecy is symptomatic of their dissimulations: Alevis do an "in-your-face-disguise" which emphasizes *control* over information about the group. It is a strategy based on ambiguity; Alevis disguise information by revealing a portion of it, and therefore control their visibilities and invisibilities. This ambiguity creates a space for maneuver for Alevis in their relations with local outsiders: they can to pretend to be a part of the majority if that is required, or they can manifest a distinct minority identity if that is possible.

The rest of the chapter analyzes cases of dissimulation. In the first section, I examined Alevis' linguistic dissimulations by using a set of code words for Alevi beliefs and practices in the presence of outsiders. I noted that their specific usage of the ordinary words often remains unnoticed by non-Alevis, while Alevis can themselves decipher their intended meanings. In this way, Alevis appear as a part of the majority in the presence of outsiders while they state their Alevi identity to insiders. I focused on Alevis' dissimulations in conducting Sunni religious practices with a focus on my Alevi informants' accounts of performing Sunni namaz, and then drew on on my participant observation of events, such as Alevis performing Sunni Friday prayer and Alevis attending *müftülük* -initiated Holy Birth Week. I claim that while they may be speaking a Sunni prayer, how they do so reveals their very Alevi identity. In the third section, I examined Alevis' spatial arrangements, such as creating Sunni mosques in Alevi neighborhoods

in order to gain access to *waqf* territories, and membership on Sunni mosque committees in mixed villages in order to have information about developments in the village and to support the Alevi *türbe*s next to the mosque.

Finally, I discussed some sayings common among Alevi Bulgarian Turks. I argued that these slogans encapsulate Alevis' accounts of their relations with the main majority groups. I argue that they acted like Sunnis with Sunnis while drawing on resemblances between Bulgarians and themselves in their interactions with the national majority in Bulgaria; however,, they prioritized Turkishness over religious identity in relation to secular Turks and drew upon the sense of equality that is present in both socialism and Alevism. They did all of this in various historical contexts, in order to survive persecution and to freely practice their religion, and to protecting their sites, among other reasons. I argue that this strategy of highlighting certain superficial resemblances with the majorities while hiding other aspects of their beliefs is dissimulation, since their historical survival has become possible by controlling the visibility of the community.

7.0   DISSIMILATION AND ASSIMILATION

Scholarly literature generally portrays dissimilation and assimilation as antithetical conditions for minority groups. Accordingly, dissimilation means that minority groups maintain their salience and assimilation means the dissolution of a minority's identity (Yinger 1981, Rumbout 2005). Several studies have also questioned the assumption that a lineal relation exists between dissimilation and assimilation, claiming that there are different trajectories and rhythms of assimilation (Banton 1983) and dissimilation (Brubaker 2001). These works are limited because they focus on social contexts in the USA, France and Germany and do not help explain the situation for minorities in divided societies, or those outside of western Europe or the USA, such as settlement areas of Alevi Bulgarian Turks in Bulgaria and Turkey.

In severely divided societies, I argue, dissimilation and assimilation are both antithetical *and* lineal conditions. In these societies a minority's dissimilation is often interpreted as their resistance to assimilating into "the nation." This situation may even provoke violent measures for their forced assimilation, such as the name change process that was implemented against Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria in 1984-89. Further, while the existing literature considers assimilation and dissimilation as static (though sometimes "reversible") conditions (Yinger 1981), assimilation and dissimilation may be strategic, collective and less than permanent ways of being for some groups. This is especially true for those double minorities which are endogamous in principle and which prioritize members' heritage identities over the individuals members' actual religious

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practices. Members of such double minorities might adjust to the prevailing circumstances by strategic dissimilation in an environment of broadened possibilities for expression, and by strategic assimilation one of increased constraints. This chapter focusses on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' strategic assimilations and dissimilations in Bulgaria and Turkey. By "strategic" I mean their conscious, calculated and collectively decided and executed plans. In the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' case, these plans are not to *obtain* something, such as a particular benefit, opportunistically or instrumentally, but rather to *avoid* negative actions such as persecution, social-political-legal exclusion and severe discrimination due to their Alevi identity.

It is necessary to emphasize that the terms dissimulation and assimilation ultimately are ways to name the conditions of a minority in relation to the wider society in which they live, and usually it is dominant actors in this wider societ as well as scholars, who label the actions of minorities as assimilation or dissimilation. In this respect, the terms dissimilation and assimilation are externally imposed upon minorities by outsiders and thus signal *how a minority group appears in the eyes of outsiders*. However, minority members may have self-perceptions about their group's situation that are different from the externally-imposed "dissimilation" or "assimilation" labels.

I see both dissimilation and assimilation as strategic collective acts, since they appear to be planned, calculated and decided collectively. Alevi Bulgarian Turks seem to decide whether they will follow the Alevi ways in public (i.e. dissimilate) or quit following Alevi ways by gathering in *cem*s collectively, under changing political and social circumstances such as after mass migrations. However, strategic dissimilation is more visible on the collective level while strategic assimilation can be identified mainly on the level of individuals. For this reason, my

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empirical evidence for strategic dissimilation comes from cases involving collectivities acting visibly as such, while those for strategic assimilation come from cases involving individuals.

As the situation of Alevi Bulgarian Turks reveals, a minority may develop one appearance in relating to outsiders in public, while pursuing another way of being within the privacy of their own group. This collective privacy among Alevis creates the same effect as "cultural intimacy" in terms of "assur[ing a] common sociality" as Michael Herzfeld (2005: 3) puts it; but the intimate aspect of the group is kept hidden from outsiders due to not "embarrassment" but rather for self-protection. In Chapter Six, I discussed Alevis' development of different public and private collectivities within the context of their dissimulations, but this is not the whole story. During my fieldwork, I was faced with the fact that even Alevis who appear to be assimilating defined themselves as heritage Alevis (*Alevi orandasi,* meaning one with Alevi parents), and are seen as such by other Alevis. This was true even for those not initiated into the Alevi Path, who do not attend any *cem* community and who practice Sunni Islam.

We thus need to consider a potential distinction between public and private in assessing minorities' dissimilations and assimilations, as well as dissimulations. I earlier saw dissimulation in the narratives and practices that Alevi Bulgarian Turks use to publicly distance themselves from an ideal-type Alevism and approximate another groups' ideal type,,while privately continuing to adhere to Alevi ways. In this chapter I focus instead on dissimilation and assimilation. I see dissimilation in those Alevi narratives and practices which *both publicly and privately* indicate adherence to Alevism. I see assimilation in Alevi narratives and *collective* practices which *both publicly and privately* indicate adherence to ideal-types of other groups. Yet we must recall that many of these same Alevis *individually* continue to define themselves as of Alevi heritage.

Moreover, I argue that Alevis' pursuit of any of these strategies is not random. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' collective strategies are conditioned by the varying forms of marginalization they experience, including the varied demographic compositions of their local settings as well as the different social, political and economic configurations that occur locally and at the national level. For instance, during my recent fieldwork I noticed examples of dissimilation (the public and private articulation and manifestation of Alevi ways) more frequently in Razgrad, where the competition between Sunni Turks and Orthodox Christian Bulgarians has created maneuvering space for Alevis. On the other hand, assimilation (where Alevis publically and privately display Sunni ways) was more frequent in Bursa, where there seems to be no other option for the few Alevis who live there, since there are few followers and no religious leader. Bursa was also visibly Sunni-dominant and a site where there was historically a lot of tension between migrants and the local population.   This chapter examines the narratives and practices that Alevi Bulgarian Turks use publicly as dissimilation and then those which appear to be examples of assimilation.

7.1   DISSIMILATION

Dissimilation is a strategy groups use to distinguish themselves from another group, or to emphasize their separate identity and increase their visibility.Some segments of Alevi Bulgarian Turks can dissimilate as a collective strategy by publicly promoting the distinct identity of their group when relating to outsiders. Alevi dissimilations are evident in attempts to make secular and even religious Alevi group identity visible, the recent formation of local Alevi NGOs in Razgrad and Kardjali being a case in point.

Absolute dissimilation has not been achieved, due to the persistence of the structural double minority status of Alevis within the Bulgarian Turkish community. Some Alevis' dissimilations have caused their public visibility, which helped them in maintaining inter-group borders and even pursuing for collective advancement as a recognized group in society. However, this is not an instrumentalist use of identity in the sense that Abner Cohen uses regarding Hausa in Yoruba. Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimilation means activation in public of their religious identity, which was already active in private (in the presence of insiders). Further, some Alevi Bulgarian Turks utilize dissimilation not to maintain a powerful position in the society (like the Hausa) but rather to avoid further marginalization, persecution and political and social discrimination.

Alevi Bulgarian Turks who can utilize dissimilation effectively are usually those with a degree of visibility already established, transforming and increasing their existing visibilities. In this respect they are different from dissimulating Alevis, who aim to transform existing visibilities into invisibility. For instance, both Razgrad and Kardjali Alevis have a certain amount of visibility on the local level, given that Alevi and Sunni villages are clearly known to residents of these areas. Yet, in the present day Alevis in Kardjali continue to seek invisibility by dissimulating under the generic Turkish identity, while some Alevis in Razgrad have started to seek visibility by dissimilating their separate identity. I explain the pursuit of different collective strategies as a matter of availabilities or constraints for Alevis on the local levels. Maintaining a separate identity by dissimilation is possible for Razgrad Alevis, who have managed to create a maneuvering space between competing Bulgarian and Sunni Turkish groups. Alevis in Kardjali could not do the same, as they are surrounded by the manifestations of a strong ethnic Turkish majority identity, defined in Sunni terms.

Dissimilation is motivated by various factors. For instance, Alevi Bulgarian Turks dissimilate by forming NGOs in Bulgaria, which increases their visibility in seeking social recognition in Bulgaria, and through these organizations they form ties with Alevis in different parts of the world. Alevis who are dissimilating in Razgrad's already strictly segregated villages seek further visibility, in order to protect communal boundaries. Alevi migrants in the isolated villages of Turkish Thrace and the cosmopolitan neighborhoods of İstanbul often publically dissimilate their Alevi identity even in Alevi-only settings, and especially when outsiders (e.g. appointed Sunni imams, teachers or other state officials) visit Alevi villages or neighborhoods, although they also utilize dissimulation strategies when they encounter outsiders, as I discussed in Chapter Six.

The next section focuses on dissimilation practices by examining the narratives and practices that Alevi Bulgarian Turks use to increase public visibility of the group. I focus on how they publicly separate themselves from other groups, on linguistic, physical, social-organizational and religious levels.

7.1.1   Separating the Greetings

A great majority of my informants in Razgrad city center were both Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks who had occupied important roles in the maintenance of Turkish identity. They were mostly artists, authors, poets, teachers, engineers as well as well-educated blue-collar workers with amazing intellectual backgrounds and with various degrees of religious orientations within their sects. They were all very accommodating and responsive, providing insights which helped me a lot in developing my research. Yet, after a while, I decided to move from the city center to the towns and villages. There was one issue I failed to notice during my interviews with individual Alevis in Bursa and Razgrad city center. This issue became clear to me after I started to meet with Alevis in groups in villages of Razgrad: In the city I had interviewed mostly males. These interviews often started in the city-style with the relatively formal greeting anticipated between Turkish males and females: hand shaking.

On my first village visit however, I found myself with a roomful of Alevi women, who were very kind in devoting their time to come to meet and talk with me. I verbally greeted them and we started talking. At the end of the day, before I left, I felt thankful and close to them and decided to say farewell by kissing the hands of the elders and kissing the cheeks of those who are one generation older than me, following the Turkish tradition in intergenerational interaction codes that I had grown up with. I was perplexed by one of their gestures: for every two kisses I put on each cheek, I received not just two kisses but three kisses in return. Considering it a local form of greeting, I thought I should adjust myself to my female informants' greeting by also giving them three kisses. I decided to follow these codes in future meetings with other local informants.

About two days later at my next meeting, I masterfully practiced the three kiss greeting…until I saw questioning and angry looks from my key informant, who helped me reach women in another village. He waited until we were alone and asked me pretty straightforwardly: "what do you think you are doing?" I was very surprised by his reaction given his otherwise very friendly approach to me. He understood my surprise and confusion and explained: "Don't you know that only Alevis put three kisses on the cheek while greeting each other!" I was infinitely embarrassed initially and then extremely disappointed in myself. I clearly introduced myself as a researcher with Sunni heritage but when I left I unintentionally conveyed another message, unknowingly "posing as an Alevi" to my second group of Alevi informants! From that moment forward I unlearned the local Alevi code of greeting between females; I put two kisses on my friends' cheeks and pause for their reply of two kisses, plus one.

The issue of the kiss in this excerpt from my field notes not only reveals a temporary lapse in my assessment of a very basic inter-personal greeting etiquette at the very beginning of my fieldwork, it also shows how broader inter-group relations may be encapsulated in the seemingly simplest level of interpersonal interaction. Alevis' greetings are not only interpersonal exchanges but are also of a collective kind, indicating the heritage identities of the different parties. The greeting formula among Alevis is straightforward: putting one kiss to the person's cheek indicates Christian heritage, two kisses indicate Sunni heritage and three kisses indicate Alevi heritage. On a symbolic level, the triple kiss is seen as recalling God, Muhammad, Ali as opposed to the double kiss, which means recalling God and Mohammed in Sunni Islam.

Existing literature on greetings does not explain the greeting formula in Razgrad that I experienced among, first, Alevis and then Sunnis and Christians. Linguistic studies of greetings focus extensively on verbal behavior while portraying the non-verbal elements as of secondary importance. Among Alevis in Razgrad, though, the non-verbal element is not ancillary to the words, but is actually the central component of the greeting. The verbal exchange is almost completely irrelevant. Sociolinguistic studies have also focused on greetings, in terms of their social function, for example in indicating the legitimacy of the encounter (Firth 1972), recognizing the presence and legitimacy of the interlocutor (Schiffrin 1977), or in regard to the social context of the greeting, such as the location of the interlocutors in social hierarchy (Goody 1972). However, Alevi greetings are not merely about *recognizing* the other party or the encounter as legitimate, but instead afford an opportunity to *question and determine* the legitimacy of the other party as an interlocutor. Linguistic anthropologists such as Alessandro Duranti (1972) have challenged universalist assumptions on greetings inherent in many sociolinguistic analysis and argued for examining greetings in terms of not only their social context, but also cultural context, such as that in Samoa (Duranti 1972, 1997). However, while Samoan society is hierarchical in terms of differentiation of power it is relatively homogeneous in ethnic terms, so Duranti's analyses do not help explain the forms of greeting in ethnically divided societies such as Bulgaria.A few works have focused on greetings within the context of divided societies. For instance, Germanos (2007) examined greetings in Beirut within the context of Maronite, Shiite, Sunni and Greek Orthodox communities' in "identity zones," where group members use either ethnically marked greetings. She adds that the greetings within each ethnic group are complicated by other factors such as gender, age and formal or informal context of the encounter (2007). Therefore, she identifies complicated patterns of "linguistic differentiation"

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not only among *but also* within ethnic groups. My experience in Razgrad also indicated linguistic differentiations on ethno-religious grounds, among and between Alevis, Sunnis and Christians. The greeting formulae is quite direct, precise and standard for each group's members: one kiss is for a Christian, two kisses for a Sunni and three kisses for an Alevi irrespective of their age, location or context of the conversation. Razgrad Alevis' clear-cut non-verbal greetings thus show the cultural function of the greetings in severely divided societies, maintaining and reinforcing intergroup differences. In this respect, I believe Alevi greetings in Razgrad are an instance of public dissimilation given that non-Alevis there also see it as such. The greeting distinguishes them as Alevis from other groups, in the very first moments of inter-group encounters.

7.1.2   Separating names and separating spaces: Kızılbaş versus Turkish Villages

At the beginning of my visits to the villages of Razgrad I knew of three villages where Alevi reside, owing to the academic work of Georgieva and her students (1998). Yet there were other villages where Alevis were present but not visible. In addition, I was planning to interview Sunni Turks in the villages. Several times I found myself in bus stations of distant towns with a map of Razgrad in my hand, trying to decide the next village I should go to. However, my map predictably showed the official names of the villages in Bulgarian, which would make it hard to detect the demographic make up of their residents. Often my solution was to point out the specific village on the map and ask random Turkish-speaking people present in bus stations about the village. The random Turkish-speakers would point to the villages on the map while classifying them not into two categories, of "a Bulgarian village" or "a Turkish village" but into three categories, i.e. "a Bulgarian village," "a Turkish village" and "a *Kızılbaş* village." I was very surprised by the categorization which excludes Alevis ("*Kızılbaş*") from the category of Turk, which I had initially thought as a marker of discrimination against Alevis by outsiders, especially given the negative connotations of the word *Kızılbaş* in the context of Turkey. Yet, soon I realized that the word "*Kızılbaş*" does not mean anything more than Alevi and is used also by Alevis themselves.

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My map-learning experiences recounted above point to the ingrained nature of intergroup distinctions that are expressed via the classification and naming systems in some societies. James Valentine portrays naming as a "contrastive identification" practice, which means that the naming constructs the identity of different groups in an interactional context (1998). Razgrad exemplifies such contrastive identification, in that the distinction between Sunnis and Alevis is translated to the corresponding identification: Turkish versus *Kızılbaş*. These identifications are not imposed on Alevis, yet Alevis also use them in ways similar to Sunnis and Orthodox Christians. This distinction seems to grant Alevis self-initiated autonomy from Bulgarian Turkish group identity, in a context in which Bulgarian Turkish group identity is equated with Sunnism. This autonomy is also accepted by Sunni Turks for the same reason, as defining the Bulgarian Turkish identity in Sunni terms, as I discussed in chapter 1 and 4. In this respect, contrastive identification of Sunnis as Turks and Alevis as *Kızılbaş* indicates both groups' dissimilation from each other.

It is worth noting that the *Kızılbaş* vs. Turk categorization is not made in Kardjali although it was expressed there in the past. It is not common among migrants in Bursa either. In Kardjali the term "Alevi" is more common and neutral, while the term *Kızılbaş* is negatively charged. In contrast, Bulgarian Turks often do not use a term marking Alevis in Bursa. In only a few cases did my informants whisper "we used to call Alevis Kızılbaş," lowering their voices further when uttering the word Alevi and even further with the word Kızılbaş. These differences among Razgrad, Kardjali and Bursa are not random but reflect the different political-demographic configurations of these places, which condition variations in the collective strategies used by Alevis.

The physical segregation of Alevis from Sunnis is manifested in the separation of the neighborhoods, and the separation of cemeteries in the mixed villages is another element of Alevis' dissimilations. I noticed relatively clear-cut segregation in the mixed villages of Razgrad where Alevis reside, for example, by a small pond in Sevar and by the main arterial road to the village in Bisertsi. In Sevar the administrative unit is on the Alevi side of this Sunni-Alevi-Roma mixed village, while in Bisertsi it is located in the center between one Bulgarian neighborhood, two Sunni Turkish neighborhoods and one Alevi neighborhood. In all three villages, Alevi neighborhoods have their own public space, a center, a small grocery store and a coffee house. In addition, the segregation in social life continues after death: both villages have at least two (one old and the other new) cemeteries which are also physically segregated into Alevi and Sunni sides. Again, this segregation is unique to Razgrad and lacking in Kardjali.

7.1.3   Separating families:

The principle of endogamy in Razgrad villages is very firm for both Alevis and Sunnis. In the words of one Sunni informant: "every rooster should paw the earth on its own patch; a Turk with a Turk, a *Kızılbaş* with a *Kızılbaş*." The principle is also strictly adhered to by Alevis. Until very recently they had not allowed marriages across different Alevi subgroups (e.g. *Babai* and *Bektaşi*).

In one of the heavily polarized Alevi-Sunni mixed villages of Razgrad, two marriage narratives were often brought to my attention during interviews. One is about the marriage of an Alevi girl to a Sunni from "the other side of the village" and the other is about the marriage of an Alevi boy to an Alevi girl from the "other side of the village." In both cases, the girls are the ones who moved to "the other side," which resulted in their facing physical violence from their own natal family members trying to force them to divorce. Both cases ended up with the couples moving abroad. Strikingly the villagers from both sides see the intermarried couples as "outsiders."

A third story is even more interesting. The tale explains how an Alevi man from the Alevi side of the neighborhood decided to have an arranged marriage. His mother found the proper Alevi girl, talked with her and the marriage was finalized.

On the wedding night the groom saw the bride and realized that she was bald. He did not say anything to the bride other than "it is not your fault; it is my family who decided it." The next day, he visited his own family to talk to his mother. Then, the newlywed couple moved from the Alevi side to the Sunni side of the village. It was said he told his bride`s mother the following: "if this is what you think is proper for me, then I will leave my religion but I will not leave my wife as she is innocent." He moved to the Sunni side, started a family and raised his children according to Sunni Islamic principles. In contrast to the first two stories, the Alevi groom is still not called "an outsider" but is still regarded as "kin" by the people living in the Alevi side. I was told this story by an Alevi who also understands (if not affirms) the Alevi groom's behavior as evidence that he is a a good Alevi because he was fair and just to his innocent wife, even at the cost of leaving his community and his religion.

The above excerpts from my field notes concern primarily the relationship between marriage patterns and group membership in a mixed village that is drastically polarized. The first two marriage narratives are significant because they are exemplary stories for acculturating young Alevis into the endogamy rule and didactic tales about the ultimate outcome of violating it: being disowned by the community. They also teach that group members will give inter-married Alevi the status of "*düşkün*," which is a status at least equal to (and sometimes worse than) the status of "outsider", as I discussed in Chapter Five. It is not merely the endogamy principle, but also the narratives about the violations of this principle, that help Alevis to publicly claim a distinct identity. Alevis secure and maintain inter-group differences and thereby dissimilate from outsiders in the village.

The endogamy principle has been very well-protected among Alevi Bulgarian Turks with the exception of permitting taking a Sunni bride, as the following excerpt from an interview shows:

"A child will follow his or her father's path. Only if the father is an Alevi will the child be an Alevi. Yet the residents of the opposite [Sunni] neighborhood want to receive brides and they do not want to give their daughters as brides to our children… In our case, if a [Sunni] girl loves one of our sons and decides to come here, she must become a follower [by pledging to the Path]. After she becomes a follower, if she divorces her [Alevi] husband, her recently gained Alevi status will

be lost. This is because she owes her Alevi identity to her husband and only to her husband. Otherwise she cannot re-enter the Path. Women receive their oath (*ikrar*) via men." *Babai*, Razgrad

It shoud be noted that this exception to the endogamy principle, where Alevi men are permitted to take brides from Sunnis, is seen in a particular way. The Sunni wife is a temporary insider, even if she converts to Alevi ways. Her status is strictly conditioned by her role as a wife and is in function of her bearing Alevi children. Therefore, if she denounces these roles, her status irreversibly changes back to her original heritage identity as a member of the Sunni group. In this severely divided mixed village, the only exception to the endogamy principle thus leads not to blurring intergroup borders but but to highlighting and maintaining them.

Similarly, the third story on marriage provided at the very beginning of this section, on the bald bride, is not about the violation of endogamy but rather the strict observation of the principle. A marriage between an Alevi bride and an Alevi groom serves to reproduce inter-group boundaries. The twist in this narrative is that the Alevi groom chooses to withdraw from Alevi ways and renounce his heritage identity by the very symbolic act of moving to the Sunni side of the village. The interesting part is the Alevi community's reaction to the groom's actions: Alevis in the village still consider him as kin and as an Alevi despite the groom's choice of Sunnism and to raise his children in Sunni ways. This example shows that in this extremely divided society, where dissimilation is a main strategy of maintaining group identity, the intergroup differences are so robust that heritage-based group identities are prioritized over individuals' choices or actual religious practices. In this respect the Alevi man claiming the Sunni identity resembles examples of individual members of the Fur claiming the nomadic Arabs or the South Pathans claiming Baluch identity in Barth (1969): individuals may move across the intergroup boundaries yet intergroup boundaries remain intact. The only difference is that the

Alevi man in the marriage narrative rejects Alevi identity but is still seen as Alevi by Alevis, while individual Pathans continue to see themselves as Pathans even after their political affiliation with Baluch (Barth 1969: 16).

I should note that these marriage stories are narratives that are close to the absolute dissimilation ideal in this divided and polarized context. In less polarized settings, Alevis' dissimilations via marriage patterns are more flexible, as the following accounts from my informants seem to show a degree of openness to both groom- and bride-taking from Sunni groups only recently:

> "We have not accepted any children whose parents are Sunnis. But, if he or she is interested, at the present time some may accept. Once a Sunni bride came to us and she was inquiring about the possibility to enter into our Path. I said, 'You may be accepted to our Path. Yet, if you later chose another path, it will be a huge mistake.' She replied the following: "I found such a Path that I will die on my way there." So, for an outsider to enter into our path, she should pledge (*ikrar*) before a *baba*, she should say 'this is a fiery trial [*atesten gomlek*], she will find a *musahip* [fictive kin]." *Babai*, Razgrad

> "We accept [Sunnis] in the case of marriage. For instance, they had brought us a groom from a Sunni village. We accepted him. In fact those who are convinced to marry with an Alevi come with the consent of entering into the [Alevi] Path; they do not have any objection to becoming an Alevi" *Babai*, Turkish Thrace

These narratives are my informants' self-representations about Alevi marriage norms with respect to inter-group marriages, and thus are about "representational kinship" or "official kinship" in Bourdieu's terms (1990: 169-170). They present endogamy as the rule, yet exogamy in the form of bride or groom-taking becomes acceptable as long as these outsiders assimilate to Alevi ways. In my view, these representational narratives are meant to control and police inter-group relations and highlight the inter-group borders. The narratives promoting strict endogamy as a norm do so straightforwardly. The narratives allowing exogamy by bride- or groom-taking are only allowing movement of individuals across the intergroup borders without challenging to

the salience of the inter-group borders (Barth 1969) as long as the movement is one directional, towards the Alevi side. In this sense, I see these normative narratives as examples of Alevis' understandings which highlight their separate communal identity, and are therefore strategic dissimilations on the level of narratives.

Of course, these normative narratives on intermarriages do not always reflect the reality about intermarriages. Historicaly, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have been involved in intermarriages despite their "official kinship" principles, but such intermarriage stories are largely silenced among them. My informants did not directly narrate these stories to me, and I learned about them as they were revealed as bits and pieces in other stories. For instance, while I noticed the existence of intermarriages dating back to the interwar period in one location, I received only one explanation from my informants: "outsiders kidnapped and forced our daughters to marry them." Whenever I wanted to contact an intermarried couple via my existing informants, somehow my informants "could not reach them," even though the same contacts had been the ones who revealed that there were intermarried couples in the first place. I heard about cases of inter-marriages which had been contractedby the couples against the will of their families. However, when these marriages were discovered, the newly-weds had been tracked down by their Sunni or Alevi family members, beaten by their brothers or fathers and forced into divorce, as well as marriage with a member of their own heritage community. These are examples of "practical kinship" (Bourdieu 1990: 170), in cases of violation of the "official kinship" rules, and which leads to that "the kinship norms [are] bent in several directions to absorb abducted [individual] within the normal structures of family and marriage" (Das 1995: 64).

7.1.4 Separations related to türbes:

During my fieldwork I was struck by the difference between Razgrad and Kardjali in terms of the distribution of the *türbe*s. In Razgrad there are large, historical *türbe*s at locations far away from the residential areas. In Kardjali, however, *türbe* buildings are relatively small, modest and recent-looking, built next to cemeteries in almost all villages. There are only a few major historical *türbe*s. I was aware that this regional difference was not due to the settlement of Alevis in these regions during different historical time frames, as many historical studies have shown (e.g. Inalcık: 1964, Doğru: 2000). It was not brought about by the different levels of mass destruction that occurred due to the terrifying effects of war in Razgrad during the Ottoman-Russian War in 1877-8 and in Kardjali during the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913. The main difference was the presence of small scale village *türbe*s in Kardjali, which made sense to me when an informant talked to me about *türbe* forms called *nazarlama*, are empty *türbe*s which do not have remnants of a saint in the tomb. It is because there is no saint buried in them! *Nazarlama türbe*s are as respected as the other türbes, given that they are devoted to saints who made himself or herself visible to people at that spot. That is to say, it is not a big deal if türbes have or have not been the sites where saints' bodies are buried.

*Türbe*s are not merely religious sites but also territory markers for Alevis. The very existence of major Alevi *türbe*s in Razgrad and Kardjali marks the historical presence of the Alevis in the region as a distinct group, just as mosques mark the presence of Sunnis (see Hayden 2002, Hayden, Sözer et al. 2011). Even though *türbe*s have historically been under the control of the other groups and vistors are not limited to Alevis, these *türbe*s are well known as Alevi sites. The presence of *nazarlama* in Kardjali is especially interesting given that Kardjali Alevis are vulnerable in manifesting their group identity in the face of an aggressive Sunni local majority. In Razgrad, Alevis have managed over time to create a space for promoting a separate group identity, despite competition with Orthodox Christian Bulgarians and Sunni Turks. The *nazarlama türbe*s of Kardjali can be seen as a response by local Alevis to the demographic configurations that mark regional territories as Alevi zones, and therefore functio as a source for their dissimilation from other groups on the local level.

In Bulgaria there is a common understanding about *türbe* affiliation with Alevis; yet, despite this, *türbe* sites have historically been sites of inter-group competition for control and ownership of territories. Originally Alevis had the control of the *türbe*s until the independence of Bulgaria. Starting from the 19th century, Christians also claimed access to *türbe*s. After the independence of Bulgaria, *türbe*s passed under the control of the Sunni *müftülük*s. The *türbe*s fell under state control during socialism when the state initiated efforts aimed at "proving" the Christian or Bulgarian roots of saints, such as at Demir Baba Türbe in Razgrad and Akyazili Baba Türbe. Many *türbe*s passed again to the *müftülük*s after socialism, though some were returned to Alevi communities' use following a special court procedure beginning in the early 1990s.

Currently the difference between Razgrad and Kardjali in regards to control of the *türbe*s is also striking. In Razgrad major *türbe*s are under state control as monuments of cultural heritage, and their lands were first confiscated by the state during socialism and then returned to regional *müftülük*, as the only legally recognized representative of Muslims. Razgrad Alevis come and visit these *türbe*s and perform their rituals in their complexes; yet it is almost impossible for them to make changes in order to maintain the *türbe* sites. On the other hand, the major *türbe*s in Kardjali were not deemed monuments of cultural heritage although their territories are registered under the Sunni *müftülük*s. Unlike *türbe*s in Razgrad, those in Kardjali have survived through the efforts of local Alevis to maintain them.

Prominent members of both Razgrad and Kardjali Alevis are dissatisfied with their respective situations. Razgrad Alevis want control of the *türbe*s, with the pertinent ownership rights and maintenance duties returned to the Alevis Community. Kardjali Alevis seek complete control of *türbe*s but also demand financial support from the state. I consider Alevis' demands on

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*türbe*s to be a sign of the emergence of a visible Alevi collective identity and therefore as an example of their dissimilation from other groups.

7.1.5 Forming separate organizations

Alevi Bulgarian Turks do not resemble any other religious group in Bulgaria in terms their well-knit social structure. Such social organization seems to be possible due to the organization of local *cem* communities, which has facilitated Alevis' frequent practices of quick organization with clear division of labor for social events or religious rituals. In other words, the social organization of Alevi Bulgarian Turks is informed by their religious organization. Yet the formation of formal and public social organizations for Alevis is very recent. It was only in the early 2000s that Alevis could form social organizations based on Alevi identity. As a result of a tedious process they managed to form three NGOs in different regions of Bulgaria, namely the Razgrad Cem Wakf, the Southeastern Bulgarian Cem Association in Kardjali and the Akkadinlar Association in Silistre.

The delay in the formation of Alevi NGOs could be explained easily by restrictions on the public sphere during the socialist period, when formation of organizations based on religious identity was unimaginable, and Islamic communities were under the control of the state-controlled *Müftülük*. However, it took almost a decade for Alevis to form NGOs after the end of socialism in Bulgaria, so, socialist rule cannot be the only reason for the delay in their creation. NGOs were seen in a positive light by a number of politically active and powerful Sunni Bulgarian Turks in Kardjali and Razgrad, as I was told during my fieldwork, But they reacted negatively to the possibility that Alevi organizations might emerge "in their region." For instance, a very important local political figure stated publicly that he would be the first one to set an Alevi NGOs building on fire if he were to see a signboard for one hanging in Kardjali. In Razgrad it was not the emergence of the NGO but its attempts to form a visible *cemevi* in the city center with the help of the Turkish Cem Waqf that caused a profound reaction in the local press.

The press presented the view that any visibility of Alevis among Bulgarian Turks would divide the community and be a threat to the unity of the Bulgarian Turks.

Especially because of such resistence, the emergence of NGOs which emphasize Alevi identity is a big step in seeking visibility of the structurally invisible Alevi Bulgarian Turks, and I see it as an example the dissimilation of Alevi Bulgarian Turks. It is worth noting that Razgrad and Kardjali Alevi NGOs are very local organizations even though they are in frequent interaction with each other. The two organizations pursue Alevis' visibility via different policies which are informed by the needs of local Alevis and conditioned by specific local circumstances. For instance, the NGO in Razgrad not only organizes social and religious activities in the region and in other regions in Bulgaria, it also develops connections and workshops with Alevi organizations and Alevi groups beyond Bulgaria's borders, such as in Greece, Turkey, Germany, Albania, and Romania. On the other hand, the NGO in Kardjali remains focused locally due to the constant struggles it faces at the local and regional levels, both inside and outside the group, which is to say between *Bektaşi*s and *Babai*s as well as with Sunni Turks. In addition to its interactions with other Alevi NGOs in Bulgaria, it organizes religious site visits beyond the borders of Bulgaria.

7.2   ASSIMILATION

I conceptualize assimilation as a condition whereby Alevi Bulgarian Turks both publicly and privately distance themselves from Alevi ways, *and* also adhere to the ideal types of other groups. It is possible to see this process in two forms. Absolute assimilation would require a complete abandonment of Alevi ways and absolute adherence to Sunni ways, together with the

denial of Alevi heritage. I could not identify any such Alevi Bulgarian Turks during my fieldwork, but logically, total assimilation would be almost undetectable. Strategic assimilation constitutes the main focus of my thesis, and requires strategic abandonment of Alevi ways and possible adherence to Sunni ways, without denying Alevi heritage. I have interviewed Alevis who are strategically assimilated, often in reaction to their environment. The following excerpt from one of my informants exemplifies the difference between what I call "absolute assimilation" and "strategic assimilation:"

> "…Lenin says that communism and worshipping cannot go together. Now communism is gone; yet worshipping is gone too. Our daughters only know that they are Alevis and that's it, that's all! We cannot explain it to our children [*oranda*]. Right, [overall] our children are getting Sunnified; but don't ever think that they are going to the mosque to become Sunnis. They become a street person [*sokak insanı*]… [On the other hand] for instance there is one Alevi girl [unmarried young women may often be referred to as "girl" in Turkish] who migrated to Ankara, where she presented herself as a Turk [i.e. Sunni], she recited the Quran as a whole, she is reciting the Quran now." *Bektaşi*, Razgrad

This shows that my informant identifies two forms of assimilation. The migrant woman in Ankara represents what I call absolute assimilation as she denies her Alevi heritage completely. On the other hand, my informant defines another form of assimilation, which is an in-between situation of neither following Sunni ways nor leaving behind Alevi heritage identity. In this way, it is a form of assimilation for strategic purposes, motivated mostly by the intention to adjust to circumstances.

My examples for Alevi Bulgarian Turks' strategic assimilation mostly come from migrant communities in Bursa, which are marked by their visibly Sunni-dominant character despite the presence of Kurdish migrant Alevis and Alevi migrants from Greece. In addition, immediately after migrating to Bursa, a few Alevi Bulgarian Turk families were faced with the double-edged situation of being seen as migrants by the locals and as Alevis by the migrants, as

my informants mentioned. Furthermore, Alevi Bulgarian Turks migrated to Bursa as only a few

families and without a religious leader, which made it difficult to form a *cem* community. The

following excerpt depicts this process very well:

> "After the migration we dissolved, we tore apart. Once we gathered as 5-6
> households of migrants to decide what to do. We gathered but not for worshipping;
> just for deciding a course of action. Before, at the places we come from we used to
> consult with the religious leader of the *cem*. Now we migrated to here and we
> cannot come together at all. What can we do? We mixed with Turks [i.e.
> Sunnis]."*Bektaşi* from Ruse to Bursa

It is not only in Bursa but also in Bulgaria where there is a risk of being assimilated,

especially when an Alevi group lives in a mixed setting and when it loses its religious leaders.

For instance, in one village of Razgrad, the only *baba* had passed away a few years ago. He was

not replaced by a new *baba* and the community does not accept a religious *baba* from other

villages. The Alevi rules in Razgrad are that *babas* live in the same village as their followers,

which is different from the rules in Kardjali where *babas* are responsible for multiple villages.

During my fieldwork, I did not notice any sign of assimilation in the Alevis in this village; yet

the absence of a *baba* is expected to influence the community's religious practices, beginning

with the entrance of new followers into the *cem* community via the *ikrar* ceremony and ending

with the need for burial rituals.

The rest of this section examines two forms of strategic assimilation among Alevi

Bulgarian Turks. The first one is "Sunnification," or "becoming bigoted" [*Yobazlasmak*] ,which

my informants identified and defined either as "not attending *cem* ceremonies" or as "going to

Sunni mosques while not attending *cem*s." The second is rootlessness, or as my informants' put

it, "To become wild" [*Yabanilesme*], which is defined as following neither Alevi nor Sunni

ways, but simply becoming a-religious.

7.2.1 Sunnification or "Becoming Bigoted" [*Yobazlasmak*]

7.2.1.1 Not Attending *Cems*

"If an Alevi does not attend *cems*, if he or she does not observe the rules of *cem* then Sunnification happens. Otherwise, an Alevi will not become a Sunni just because he goes to a mosque." *Bektaşi*, Razgrad

The above quote from an interview exemplifies a firm perception about Alevis assimilation. Not attending *cems* is a marker of Sunnification. Therefore, a heritage Alevi does not need to practice Sunni ways to be seen as Sunnified. In this perception, the category of the Sunnified Alevis consists of two groups. The group is made up of heritage Alevis who have not pledged to follow the Alevi Path (*ikrar*), as the following examples show:

"They [heritage Alevis] know that they are "Alevis;" yet, they do not join *cems*. How can I teach them the Path? How can I force them to join us if they do not want to join?" *Babai*, Kardjali

"They say the youth do not come to *cems*. You cannot pass this fire in their heart. It happens spontaneously. If they do not come to *cems*, that means they are able to understand that much. Don't they believe in [the Path]? Yes, they do but there is also a need for serving in *cems*. I have two sons and a daughter. They do not believe. They did not want to partake. They are like 'the Prophet Noah's infidel son/ he did not jump into the ship/he got drowned' [*Nuh Nebinin kafir oglu/Gemiye binmedi, boguldu*]." *Derviş*, Razgrad

"I was married in 1986. Until that period I had seen people attending *cems*. Then I have not seen anyone attending to *cems*. There is no more *ayn-ül cem*. If a hundred percent of my father's generation pledged the oath, in my generation this number dropped to fifty percent and in my children's generation it is about twenty percent. In my generation, Alevi men state that 'we are Alevis' when they face a mullah. When I ask them 'why don't you observe Alevi ways?' he replies 'I am an atheist.' This is just not acceptable." *Babai*, Razgrad to Turkey

These excerpts from my interviews were replies to questions about assimilation and Sunnification of Alevis. They clearly show my informants' association of assimilation with the unwillingness of Alevi youth to pledge the Alevi oath. The last excerpt shows that neither the

ikrar nor public announcement of Alevism to outsiders suffices for being seen as an unassimilated Alevi. In this view, one should also follow Alevi ways throughout his or her lifetime.

The second group of Alevis who are seen as assimilated by not attending *cems* are heritage Alevis who pledged the Alevi Path yet have been dismissed from the *cem* community (became *düşkün*) due to various transgressions, permanently (due to committing murder, theft or adultery) or temporarily (due to unresolved disputes with other *cem* members). Many of my informants see permanent *düşkün* status as being the same as outsider status; since it is irreversible. They add that *düşkünlük* may ultimately lead to the assimilation of Alevis into the other groups:

> "Among us, people who are involved in murder or adultery are not welcomed to *cems*. *Şeriat* [Sunnis] punishes someone who murders another by imprisonment. We [Alevis] see the situation [differently]: if one commits such a crime, this means he also uprooted the victim's family; and therefore he does not even deserve greeting. We do not even say "hi" to the murderer…Those may be the Alevis who start to go to mosques later." *Babai*, Razgrad

Similar to permanent *düşkünlük*, the temporary *düşkünlük* traditionally functions as a means of social control within the group. Yet in the present context, punishing the transgressions of Alevis by temporarily proclaiming them as *düşkün* after being interrogated in *cem* by the baba (*dara cekmek*) had unintended effects as the following examples show:

> "[Discipline] has become loose in the last 20 years. Previously it was strict. There was no possibility to object to the baba. He could prohibit you from *cems* for one or two years and you could not come to *cems*. Now they do not even attend *cems* without any punishment or prohibition [*cezalamadan da gelmiyorlar*]. They punished themselves already! The times have changed greatly…" *Babai*, Kardjali

> "Previously babas would punish; they would put them into the position of *dar* [*dara cekerdi*]. The ones with *dar* status could not be accepted by their neighborhoods for evening visits. Now you cannot punish anyone. That guy does not come to *cems* even without punishment! Who would come if I punish those who are attending *cems* now!" *Bektaşi*, Razgrad

These excerpts from my interviews reflect my informants' views on the dissolution of former social control mechanisms, e.g. *düşkünlük* or *dar*. In addition, they indicate the possible outcome of this dissolution as Alevi individuals distance themselves from Alevi ways rather than trying to re-gain their status in the *cem* community via a special ceremony.

It is noteworthy that not attending *cem* was portrayed as a sign of assimilation mostly by my informants in Razgrad. This pattern is related to the different significance of the *cem* ceremonies in the everyday lives of Alevis in Razgrad. As I discussed in Chapter Five, Razgrad Bektaşis conduct *cem* ceremonies twice a week throughout the year but Razgrad *Babai*s do so only in *cem* season. On the other hand, Kardjali *Bektaşi*s and *Babai*s conduct *cem*s during the *cem* season and when a *cem* is needed. Therefore, for the Razgrad Alevis, someone with Alevis heritage who does not attend *cem*s means they are severely distancing themselves from the local Alevi community. This is therefore seen as an example of assimilation.

7.2.1.2 Attending mosques while not attending *cems*

Another group of my informants equates the assimilation of Alevis with their Sunnification by attendance in mosques. They clearly distinguish between collective and individual assimilation, seeing the collective assimilation of Alevis by Sunnification as a phenomenon that occurred in the past, and something that is impossible to see in the present day, as the following excerpt shows:

> "It is impossible to think about [collective] Sunnification now; yet, previously this had happened. For instance, under the rule of Fatih [Mehmet II] the administrators in the state announced that anyone who would kill 1000 Alevis can become a statesman. Therefore, at that time you can see collective Sunnification. This also led to migrations; for instance in the [X] village of Kardjali you can see that everyone is a Bulgarian Muslim now. It was once an Alevi village." *Bektaşi*, Kardjali

"*Nakşibendi*[7] were brought here during the Ottoman period. Some converted but the Alevi Path continued to live." *Derviş*, Razgrad

Both of these excerpts from my interviews about collective assimilation of Alevis depict forms of assimilation as events that occurred in the past. In addition, my informants emphasized that Alevis had sought ways to resist forced assimilation, such as by migrating. Furthermore, even though groups of Alevis had actually assimilated, the Alevi Path was kept alive. This point indicates the possibility of assimilating strategically without forgetting the Alevi identity and ways. Ultimately it is owing to strategic assimilation that Alevism in Bulgaria has survived various oppressions and continues today.

My informants also discuss the assimilations of individual Alevis by following Sunni ways in the following ways:

"Sunnification means going to mosques with Turks [Sunnis]. If one does so, he will start swearing at Alevis like the other people in the mosques." Razgrad

"In our times in the past we did not go to mosques. It changed when we came here. I explained our situation and our *Bektaşi* identity. They said, 'OK;' yet they go to mosques for *namaz*… Well, what can I do? I will see it as 'worship is a worship, Islam is Islam." Ruse in Bursa

These informants indicate their reactions to the Sunnification of individual Alevis. Especially when this experience is close to one's home, as the case in my second informant,

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[7] The *Nakşibendi* Order is a Sufi order in Sunni Islam. In the late 17th century the Ottoman Emperor Mahmut II banished the Janissary Order, which had official ties to *Bektaşi* beliefs since its formation. The Sultan also initiated policies for conversion of *Bektaşis* into Sunni Islam by exiling or killing Bektaşi leaders, replacing them with *Nakşibendi* leaders and transferring the properties and religious sites of the *Bektaşi* order to the *Nakşibendi* and Mevlevis (Doja 2006:442). During my fieldwork, I reached two *Derviş* Alevis in Svestari, which had been a well-known *Derviş-Bektaşi* center. My informants also told me the history of their ancestors who "converted" to Nakşibendi in the 18th century and yet re-converted to *Derviş-Bektaşi* ways in the 1970s. Currently the village has two *Derviş-Bektaşi*s, who consider the similarities between *Nakşibendi* and *Derviş* ways (e.g. the Sufism principle and collective rituals) as the main reason for the Ottoman administrators' sending Nakşibendi to Bulgaria. Yet, they were clear on the differences between two groups, as the *Nakşibendi* recognize all Caliphs as legitimate while *Derviş -Bektaşi* sees Ali as legitimate.

Alevis try to make sense of the development. However, ultimately the individual Alevis' Sunnification does not cause dissolution of categorical group identities (see Barth: 1969). The following quote from one interview reveals the robustness of the Alevi and Sunni group identities irrespective of individual practices:

> "One's job is important in our path. The [importance of having a] job is different from [the importance of] the path. Ali has it in his will: you will adjust your children [*oranda*] in line with yourself. For instance, there are Alevi children who have gone to Europe for jobs. Yet, they did so with the permission from here [of the *baba*]. They are Alevi. They do not stop to be Alevis. It is because being an Alevi comes by birth. A Sunni cannot become an Alevi. *Also an Alevi kid cannot become Sunni*" *Babai*, Razgrad. (Emphasis are added)

7.2.2   Not Alevi But not Sunni Either: "Becoming Undomesticated" [*Yabanilesmek*]

"The situation is that our youth are becoming undomesticated, wild." When I heard this statement from an informant I did not quite get it at first. He was using a term "*yabani*," which is commonly used to qualify undomesticated animals and plants in Turkish. In its verb form, the term "becoming undomesticated" sounded a little strange, given that in the natural order of things we tend to see changes in from "the undomesticated" to the "domesticated stage." It later became clear to me that my informant was talking about the phenomenon that young Alevis do not recognize their heritage and its requirements. My informant was using the phrase "becoming undomesticated" because he sees Alevi youth as those who are potentially open to "domestication into the Alevi ways" due to their membership in the Alevi group by birth. Yet, some of them choose the path of "becoming undomesticated" by refusing to fully recognize their heritage and become Alevi by being initiated and following Alevi ways. Thus they actually moved from the "domesticated" stage to the undomesticated one," quite contrary to nature, as my informant portrays.

This excerpt from my fieldwork shows the disappointment felt by many Alevi religious leaders regarding the situation of young Alevis. These young Alevis are blamed for not following any religious ways even though they had been initiated into Alevism, as the following examples show:

> "Alevi children are becoming wild; that is to say their remaining as they are after pledging the Alevi Oath" *Babai*, Kardjali

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"Those who pledged yet who do not follow the path probably succumb to pressures. I do not know. Maybe his wife is a Sunni. Then, whether he pledged the Alevi Path or not does not make any difference." Kardjali

As my informants make clear, some Alevi youth actually pick the Alevi path by going through the initiation ceremony. Yet afterwards as they do not follow the Alevi ways, or they become involved in practices that prevent the full realization of their Alevi identity, such as intergroup marriages. Such individuals' are portrayed as "undomesticated" or "wild" by my informants. Another configuration of "being undomesticated" is when an Alevi does not go through initiation into Alevism, as the following excerpt shows:

> "Beware of one thing: those youngsters, who have not pledged and who have not converted to the Sunni way either. They pursue a life which is neither here nor there [neither Alevi nor Sunni]. The fight for bread is also another pressure on our youth. Don't think that they go to the mosques. Among us, those who go to mosque are the ones who are forbidden from the *cems* [as *düşkün*]. It [Alevis' going to mosques] would not happen among us. Kardjali

My informant is critical of the Alevi youth for not claiming their heritage. Yet, as the excerpt reveals, he is also relieved by the fact that such Alevis do not chose the path of Sunnism either. In other words, these young Alevis don.t pursue either path; they remain in-between Sunni and Alevi ways and ultimately choose to become a-religious people. Many of my informants from Sunni-Alevi mixed settings with polarized relations consider the a-religious status better than becoming Sunni.

7.3   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I focused on dissimilation and assimilation as collective strategies utilized by Alevi Bulgarian Turks in their relations with outsiders. These collective strategies depend on

their local, regional and national contexts. In the first section, I focused on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' dissimilations by examining their narratives and practices which publicly and privately indicate adherence to Alevism. Specifically, I focused on Alevis' collective practices related to strategies that they use to separate themselves from outsiders, such as greeting codes, naming activities, settlement patterns, use and control of religious sites as well as the formation of religiously marked NGOs. In the second section, I identified distinctions between regular assimilation and strategic assimilation, as well as between individual and collective assimilation. I then focused on Alevi Bulgarian Turks' individual and collective strategic assimilations by examining the narratives and practices that indicated their adherence to the ideal-types of other groups. Specifically, I utilized my informants' categorizations for strategic assimilation, which are identified as "not attending *cem*s," "attending to mosques while not attending *cem*s" and following an a-religious way of being, adhering neither to Alevi nor to Sunni ways. I concluded that in all three configurations of assimilation, my informants emphasized the significance of categorical group identities as Alevis and Sunnis, irrespective of individual cases of Alevis who assimilated.

8.0   CONCLUSION

My analysis has questioned two widespread assumptions about invisibility of ethno-religious minorities. Many academics, activists and policy-makers equate visibility with recognition and empowerment (e.g. McDonald and Wingfield 2009, Thongthiraj 1994, Naber 2010, Blasco 2002), although some others portray visibility as a source of control over and surveillance of marginalized groups (e.g. Foucault 1977, Carter 2010). I have argued that both approaches essentialize invisibility and tend to portray it as either a benevolent or a malevolent condition for minorities. Some scholars of media sociology state that visibility can be empowering and disempowering (Brighenti 2007) but they do not explain when, for whom, and under which conditions visibility is either. My thesis uses Brighenti's insight as a starting point to understand the complicated (in)visibilities of marginalized communities. I argue that for such communities what matters is not their visibility or invisibility *per se* but rather their control over it. Thus the key issue is to what extent the members of a community are willing to reveal or conceal, information about themselves. I argue that marginalized communities may display complicated invisibilities. For such communities, invisibility may be a tactical tool as well as a structural burden; self-chosen as well as externally-imposed; subversive as well as oppressive; depending on the wider political and social configurations.

To discuss complicated (in)visibilities of marginalized communities, I focused on what would seem to be a paradoxical configuration: a minority that is marginalized, disempowered

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and invisible due to historical and structural conditions and does not strive for increased visibility, but rather tries to decrease it. This configuration forms the group's active response to externally-imposed images of itself by pursuing self-imposed invisibility, and is captured by the term *takiye* (dissimulation), a Turkish variant of an Arabic word in Islamic theology. This term is used and discussed in Sunni and Shia doctrines and refers to hiding one's religious identity and concealing information about one's religious group from outsiders, in the face of life-threatening contexts and severe discrimination (see Kohlberg1975, Sachedina 2010). These doctrines also recognize that dissimulation may require appearing to claim membership in the religious majority group.

The dissimulation concept helps us see that while some minorities may publicly appear to be crossing ethnic boundaries by leaving their distinct identities behind and by assuming another group's identity, they may be doing so to protect their members, their group and most importantly, the very group identity that they appear to be renouncing. These minorities may appear to be simulating the majority group and assimilating into a majority while they are actually not doing so, but dissimulating. Thus, dissimulation actually reinforces the distinction between the minority and other groups in the eyes of the minority's members. For such minorities, the group identities remain robust even when they claim membership in other groups, and group boundaries remain salient even when they pretend to cross them.

The dissimulation concept may challenge the idea that ethnicity emerges in everyday practices of an ethnic group's individual members. To give a prominent example, Rogers Brubaker promotes studying "everyday ethnicity" to counter to the essentialism in "assuming

bounded groups as fundamental units of analysis" (i.e. "groupism") and to "clichéd constructivism" which is "too obviously right, too familiar, too readily taken for granted to generate friction" (2004: 2-3). He states that constructivism has become "the epitome of academic respectability, even orthodoxy" and intends to introduce "friction" by examining "ethnicity without groups," i.e. "how ethnicity 'happen[s]' in everyday" (2004: 6) affairs rather than "presuming [that] everyday experience is pervasively organized by strong ethnic identities" (2004: 11). He provides evidence for this framework by examining how everyday interaction makes Hungarian and Romanian ethnicities "happen" in Cluj/Napoca, Romania. Interestingly he acknowledges the importance of ethno-national affiliations for ordinary people; yet, he devalues this fact as a commonsense reification that scholars should avoid re-producing (2006: 9). Such avoidance of locals' commonsense by scholars studying social phenomena is criticized by Hayden (2007). In fact, Brubaker's field data actually shows the opposite process of his analytical framework, since being a Hungarian or Romanian determines *a priori* the forms of everyday interactions in Cluj. Specifically, Hungarians continue to be seen as Hungarian even if they deemphasize their Hungarian identity, claim broader Romanian citizenship or are involved in a mixed marriage with a Romanian.

The idea that ethnicity may emerge in everyday inter-group relations is not unique to Brubaker. Evergeti makes a similar argument in the context of everyday interactions between Roma, Pomak and Turkish Muslim minorities in Western Thrace in Greece (2005). She provides evidence for this claim by stating that these communities celebrate both Greek and Turkish holidays and are involved in intermarriages despite the endogamy principle being held in all three communities (2005: 184). Similarly Joanne Smith claims that ethnicity is emergent by examining how Uygurs' activate their differences against Han Chinese (cf. Abner Cohen) when

the tension between two groups are due to not religious or cultural differences but social or economic asymmetries (Smith 2002). She points out various zones, such as dance halls, in which the two groups self-segregate but concludes that there are venues which are not marked by ethnic differences such as workplace (2002: 164).

My work on dissimulation does not reject the possibility that there are some aspects of life where ethnic affiliations are not the primary determinant for some groups. Alevi Bulgarian Turks do not have any problem in shopping at Sunnis' stores, yet they reject being buried on the Sunni side of the village cemeteries. I argue that the existence of intermarriages in principally endogamous groups (as per Brubaker and in Evergeti) does not mean that these areas of life are de-ethnicized in general intergroup relations. Veena Das shows that in polarized societies when the "official kinship" rules are violated by intermarriages, these intermarriages are absorbed by interpreting the matter in a flexible way as the "practical kinship" notion suggests (Bourdieu 1990: 170, Das 1995: 64), or, more efficiently, by pretending that the transgression did not occur, inventing a new insider genealogy for the outsider. Similarly the presence of "ethnic differences" in dance halls but not workplaces in the case of Uygur- Han Chinese relations seems to me an example of public de-activation of the ethnic differences in the workplace, which does not mean absence of ethnic differences in peoples' minds. For instance, in socialist Bulgaria the workplaces seem to have been unmarked in terms of ethno-religious differences while the socialist state was actually relying heavily on nationalist ideology, which contributed to ethnic tensions among groups, similar to the situation in Romania analyzed by Verdery (1995). My interviews with Alevi Bulgarian Turkish *baba*s reveal that their de-activation of the ethno-religious identity as members of local Communist Party administrations did not prevent them from leading the *cem* ceremonies, but hiding these ceremonies from their superiors. I argue that

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dissimulating ethno-religious minorities may purposefully create the public impression that their ethno-religious identity is de-activated while they continue to think in ethnic terms, and act in accordance with them in the privacy of the group.

My research also shows that in ethno-religiously divided societies inter-group boundaries remain salient once they are historically formed (Barth 1969, Hayden 2011), and categorical group identities become robust once they are named and "labeled" (Goodenough 1964). The ethnic group labels may historically change in many contexts, for instance, from "colored" to "black" to "African-American" in the USA (Smith1992), or the differing labels assigned to the various peoples in Bosnia by since at least the middle of the 19th century, showing stable, robust divisions being labeled differently at different moments (Hayden 2000, 2007). Yet, these labels are relatively more stable in societies in which religion and ethno-national group are assumed to correspond, and they may be institutionalized such as under the historical *millet* system in the Ottoman Empire, or in marriage laws in present-day India, Lebanon and Israel.

Historically, under Ottoman rule Alevi Bulgarian Turks were conflated with Sunnis under the category of "Muslims", a practice which continued after the independence of Bulgaria. Yet Alevi and Sunni Bulgarian Turks have long formed distinct communities because the vast majority of Alevi individuals are born into endogamous marriages while the limited cases of intermarriages have been absorbed into one group or the other group along the principles of "practical kinship" (Bourdieu 1990, Das 1995). In this respect Alevi Bulgarian Turkish identity is not different from the identities of other locally-presumed ethno-national identities in the Balkans that are defined in terms of religious heritage, regardless of whether one practices the religion: Bosniaks (nee *Muslimani,* Muslim heritage speakers of Serbo-Croatian) in Bosnia, Pomaks (Muslim-heritage speakers of Bulgarian) in Bulgaria and Greece, Jews throughout the

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region, Serbs (nee *Pravoslavci* [Orthodox], Orthodox-Christian-heritage speakers of Serbo-Croatian) and Croats (nee Katolici [Catholics], Roman-Catholic-heritage speakers of Serbo-Croatian) (Hayden 2007). In these groups a religious heritage is a marker of national identity (ethnic identity in American terms) that is unrelated to religiosity, and group membership is assigned by birth not only irrespective of whether the individual practices the religion of the group in question, but even when she or he is practices another group's religion, whether through assimilation or dissimulation.[8]

Thus my informants firmly state the significance of birth-membership to the Alevi group as forming not only the ethnic content of the Alevi identity but also as marking the boundary of the inter-group identities between themselves and Sunnis or Orthodox Christians. Two striking quotes in my interviews show this point very clearly: several informants claim that "an Alevi's child cannot become a Sunni," while another said straightforwardly: "we [Alevis] are like a walnut; a bug may infiltrate through the shell and eat up the core. Yet, the shell will remain." Tellingly, this last informant did not himself practice the Alevi way.

Furthermore, in ethno-religiously divided societies, the categorical identities may remain robust in the eyes of minorities, who may display "self-imposed primordialism" (Gil-White 1995) despite deep internal heterogeneities within their group. For instance, throughout this thesis I discussed the internal heterogeneity within Alevi Bulgarian Turks in terms of sub-groups (*Babai*, *Bektaşi*, *Musahipli*, *Derviş*); sub-segments (Northeastern and Southern), and varying degrees of following Alevism (uninitiated, initiated with oath, initiated with *musahipli*, religious leader, atheist), and/ or observing other groups' religious practices (e.g. Sunni *namaz*). I argued that sometimes these differences prevent members of one Alevi subgroup from attending the

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[8] I should note that in reporting this Balkan system of linking ethno-national identity to religious heritage I am not claiming either the empirical truth of such associations nor endorsing the system I describe.

other group's religious ceremonies, or taking a marriage partner from another group. When I asked my informants about how they reconcile these differences, their answer was consistently the same statement: "the Path is one, the practices are a thousand and one." This shows that their internal heterogeneity does not really matter for either the Alevi or Sunni Bulgarian Turks; the categorical "Alevi" and "Sunni" identities remain robust in the eyes of Alevis in their everyday inter-group interactions despite the lack of consistency in defining what, exactly, is meant by them.

Many works have examined how nationalist projects have caused homogenization of majorities (Gellner 1983, Hobsbawn 1983, Anderson 1983). Some have noted that a majority's nationalist project can also homogenize excluded minorities as ultimate outsiders (e.g. Neuburger 2004). However, only a few authors have noted the internal differentiation within minorities and additional marginalization of segments within these minorities, such as Protestants in Catholic Europe (Coakley 2009) and Catholics in Protestant Europe (Evans1999), and even these who do so focus on majority-minority relations, ignoring those within the minorities. I focus on minorities that may be internally fragmented along criteria such as religion, language or regional identity, and in which some sub-groups may be even more disprivileged than the other segments of the minority. They form a minority within a minority, or a double minority.

My work thus contributes to the literature on minorities by examining the conditions and experiences of minorities within minorities. The double minority condition indicates structural and social exclusion and extreme invisibility of the most disfavored minority segment. Yet, my analysis shows that this invisibility does not only mean disempowerment for the members of the

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double minorities. I argue instead that that double minorities may utilize dissimulation as a viable collective tactic when they cannot directly emphasize their own identity (i.e. dissimilate) under the threat of persecution or severe discrimination, while still avoiding the option of actually giving up their own identity in order to blend in (i.e. assimilate). I portray dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation not as final conditions or as manifestations of devious affiliations of minorities. Instead, I argue that these are collective tactics utilized by minorities in response to their social and political settings, which are marked by diversified opportunities and obstacles for them. My analysis points out that a marginalized community may exert a degree of agency even though the conditions that cause its members' oppression persist, and even though they remain a double minority.

A discussion showing the possibility and excise of agency by double minorities is useful on several grounds. First, it problematizes structural-determinist models on marginalized groups. For instance, the "trapped minorities" model of Rabinowitz (2001) emphasizes the burdens of minorities with dual affiliations to an external homeland and residential state, while I show the possibility for such minorities to exercise agency even when their entrapment persists. Second, my argument questions sociological models of social movements, which reduce agency to formal, organized, systematic actions (see Edelman 2001). Moreover my work challenges the "weapons of the weak" model of Scott (1985), since while Scott examines agency based on ad hoc, unplanned, sporadic acts of sums of individuals, I show how Alevi Bulgarian Turks' may display collective, relatively organized and patterned forms of resistive agency by dissimulation.

My analysis points out that an examination of ethno-religious double minorities' identity and agency may require moving beyond the kind of ontological individualism which claims that social phenomena are made up of individuals and caused by individuals, and methodological

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individualism which claims that social phenomena can be explained in terms of individuals (Udehn 2002). Alevi Bulgarian Turks form an ethnic group which is strictly defined by religious identity, birth-membership and endogamous practices irrespective of individual members' actual religious practices. The collectivism of Alevi Bulgarian Turks became clear to me at the very beginning of my fieldwork: whenever I wanted to find an informant about Alevi beliefs and practices my individuals stated that they are not allowed to talk about Alevism and directed me to an Alevi religious leader. As a result I interviewed Alevi religious leaders who are males (as a rule without any exception) and who have a *corporate identity* in representing their specific community, for my data about the Alevi belief system, rituals and practices, while I interviewed regular, non-leadership male and female members of the society with regards to the inter-group relations on everyday level. By so doing, I both reflected and respected my informants' stated and enacted preferences about who could, and should, discuss Alevi beliefs, as, in fact, the ethics of informed consent require.

Furthermore, in arguing that Alevi Bulgarian Turks exercise collective agency via dissimulations and dissimilations and that in some cases assimilations are collective acts, I am consciously not adopting conceptual or methodological individualism, in a social and cultural setting which also rejects it. In other words, Alevis' collective agency is cannot be analyzed as just a total sum of individual Alevis' agencies. My fieldwork reveals that Alevi Bulgarian Turks have *collectively* discussed and decided their actions during political regime changes and local government transitions, as well as before and after migrations, in the *cem* communities under the leadership of Alevi *baba*s. Dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation are decided in the *cem* group. For instance, I was told several times that in the 1990s Alevi NGOs were proposed and these organizations intended to build public *cemevis*, but these proposals were reacted to

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negatively by the local Sunni Turks. The NGO leaders then gathered regional religious leaders to discuss and decide. This sense of collectivism became most evident to me during my interviews about Alevi migrations. For instance, in the 1930s, the Alevi-only Midrevo village was divided into two. One *cem* community decided to migrate under the leadership of their *baba* and formed the Subasi town in Yalova, Turkey, while other *cem* communities remained in Midrevo. On the other hand in 1989 when Bulgarian Turks were forced to migrate to Turkey, some Alevis had to separate from their *cem* communities and moved to Bursa. As I was told, five families came together in Bursa and considered their possibilities to follow Alevi ways without a religious leader and decided that they could not achieve it. Even though Alevi individuals' identities may be multi-dimensional and not limited to their Alevi aspect of identity, the decisions about dissimulation, dissimulation and assimilation seems to me to be collective actions, and the collective decision making it is patterned.

The idea that Alevi Bulgarian Turks have exerted collective agency does not exclude the possibility of Alevi individuals' agency, of course. The individual's agency becomes visible at moments of conflict of interest between the community and individual members. For instance, I spoke with a few heart-felt socialist Alevi informants who had worked in the Bulgarian Communist Party and who still adhere to socialist ideals, yet they still define themselves as Alevis even though they were not initiated in *cem*s.

Furthermore, I argue that Alevi Bulgarian Turks' exercises of collective agency via dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation are not random or unbounded but mediated by sociocultural settings (Ahearn 2001). They may be faced with different degrees and forms of marginalization due to varying local majority-minority configurations in their surrounding society. In the case of Alevi Bulgarian Turks, *all* subsegments and subgroups have historically

utilized all three collective tactics, i.e. dissimulation, dissimilation and assimilation, but at different times and facing different concrete situations. An analysis of Alevis' collective tactics in the present day reveals clear patterns. In Kardjali, where the ethnic Bulgarian national majority is the local minority and the Sunni Turkish national minority forms the local demographic and administrative majority, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have utilized dissimulation historically by claiming Sunni identity, and currently do so by hiding their Alevi identity under the generic ethnic Turkish one. On the other hand, in Razgrad, I noticed examples of dissimilation more frequently, because in Razgrad the competition between the minority Sunni Turks and majority Orthodox Christian Bulgarians has created maneuvering space for Alevis. Moreover, assimilation is most frequent across the Turkish border in Bursa, where there seems to be no other option for the few Alevis, as Bursa is a visibly Sunni-dominant city with a reputation for religious conservatism.

I have portrayed dissimulation as being visible in a minority's narratives and practices which *publicly* indicate their distancing themselves from the minority ideal-type while they *privately* continue to adhere to it. I see dissimilation as such narratives and practices which *publicly and privately* indicate adherence to minority ways, while I consider assimilation to be their narratives and practices which indicate, *publicly and privately*, adherence to the ideal-types of the other groups. This model enabled me to describe the Alevi Bulgarian Turks' ideal types by focusing on Alevi *baba*s' accounts of typical narratives and the practiceswhich they anticipate from Alevis. I described *baba*s' accounts regarding the elements of Alevi belief system, practices and organizational structure, perceptions about the internal differences within Alevi Bulgarian Turks across subgroups and subsegments and comparisons of the Alevi and Sunni ideal-types.

I have identified several specific forms of dissimulations by Alevi Bulgarian Turks. Sometimes they have dissimulated by hiding their Alevi identity completely. This form had historically been utilized in the face of persecutions, but can also be seen today in places where Alevis' identity may remain unnoticed by outsiders, such as cosmopolitan re-settlement zones after migrations, as seen in Bursa. Moreover, Alevis may dissimulate by seeking not absolute *concealment,* but rather *control* of the information disseminated about the community. Alevis utilize this form of dissimulation when their heritage identity is already well-known by outsiders. This is dissimulation in the form of an "in-your-face disguise," which relies on ambiguity: Alevis disguise information by revealing a portion of it. The ambiguity creates a space for maneuver for Alevis in their relations with local outsiders, in that they can to pretend to be a part of the majority if that is required, or they can at least attempt to manifest a distinct minority identity. For their part, majorities seem to "tolerate" this in-your-face-disguise. For instance, Sunni Turks pretend to accept Alevis' dissimulations, since it creates the impression that Alevis are "under control" (cf. George 1990).

Dissimulation is a collective relational tactic. Alevi Bulgarian Turks have readjusted in relation to various majority groups, including but not limited to Sunni Turks. Some common sayings among Alevi Bulgarian Turks capture the Alevis' accounts of their relations with various majorities. For instance, they use the slogan "Follow/watch out for the *Şeriat*, Hide the *Tarikat*"" to act like Sunnis with Sunnis. They use the saying "Our Difference is Thinner than an Onion Skin" to drew on resemblances between Bulgarians and themselves. They prioritized "Turkishness" over religious identity in relation to secular Turks, while under socialism in Bulgaria they drew upon the sense of equality that is present in both socialism and Alevism.

Dissimulation may be utilized for re-calibration of a group's visibility in order to find practical solutions to immediate problems. As I argued in Chapter Six, Alevi Bulgarian Turks have dissimulated by "speaking others' language," using code words for Alevi practices from vocabularies of the majority groups in order to hide their Alevi ways when outsiders are present in the setting. For instance, they referred to Alevi *cem* ceremonies as "*namaz*" in the presence of pious Sunnis and "banquet" in the presence of socialist Bulgarians. Moreover, they have dissimulated by "practicing others' practices" in public. During my fieldwork I conducted participant observations in Sunni spaces, where I encountered my Alevi informants. I noticed that Alevis may participate in Sunni rituals for reasons such as following the developments related to the *waqf* properties. Furthermore, they have dissimulated by manipulating others' spaces, for example, by voluntarily forming Sunni mosques in Alevi neighborhoods, or by joining already existing Sunni mosque commissions in mixed settings in Bulgaria. Both of these practices indicate not Sunnification of Alevis but their attempts to channel resources to the Alevi community by pretending to be Sunni. Access to such resources is otherwise impossible since Sunni Islam is the only recognized sect in Bulgaria.

In the literature on dissimilation and assimilation, some studies reject the lineal relation between these conditions by presuming different trajectories and rhythms of assimilation (Banton 1983) and dissimilation (Brubaker 2001). My research counters these approaches by showing that in severely divided societies dissimilation and assimilation are both antithetical *and* linear conditions. In these societies, a minority's dissimilation is often interpreted as their resistance to assimilating into "the nation" and may even provoke violent measures for their assimilation. However, minority members may have self-perceptions about their group's situation different than the externally-imposed "dissimilation" or "assimilation" labels.

Taking these points into account, I have utilized Alevis' own perceptions about their dissimilations and assimilations. Thus, regarding dissimilation, I focused on their collective practices to separate themselves from outsiders, such as through greetings, names, places, organizations and household. I argued that Alevis' collective dissimilations help them maintain their distinct group identity, publicly and privately. Regarding assimilation, I examined Alevis' self-identified categories of assimilating groups: those who are "not attending *cem*s," those who are attending mosque without attending to *cem*s" and those "attending neither *cem*s nor mosques." Strikingly I noticed that my informants present all of these groups as "assimilating," yet they still count the members of these groups as Alevis. This clearly shows that this double minority prioritizes members' heritage identities over the individuals members' actual religious practices.

The most striking aspect of such dissimulation is its paradoxical effect: while double minorities pretend to be members of the majority group and to cross the ethnic boundaries from their group towards the other groups, they actually do so in order to maintain their distinct group identity, their group's ethnic boundaries and the distinctions between the minority and the majority. My analysis points out that what appears to non-members to be an ethnic shift (cf. Barth 1969) may be a tool of ethnic identity maintenance in the eyes of insiders, and that what appears to be ethnic boundary crossing to outsiders may be ethnic boundary fortification in the eyes of insiders. For such communities, the heritage identity prevails, and it does so irrespective of whether individual members practice the minority ways, or claim publicly others' identities and practice others' ways.

During my fieldwork, I was often puzzled by the confidence of Alevi religious leaders in their community and its perpetuation even though they all mentioned the general decline in

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interest in religion among youngsters, and increased unwillingness of followers to become religious leaders. Some of these religious leaders no longer had any followers, while others had around 100 of them; yet, they all remained confident, concluding our conversations on the situation of the community by quoting Ali's famous saying: "Ali told once upon a time ago: 'One day at one point the Path may get thinner than hair; yet, it will not break…'" Dissimulation, it seems, is one way to keep the thinned path from breaking.

APPENDIX A

ABBREVIATIONS

BCP   Bulgarian Communist Party

BSP   Bulgarian Socialist Party

CUP   Committee for Union and Progress

DP   Democrat Party

DRA   Department of Religious Affairs

GERB   Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria

IMIR   International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations

JDP   Justice and Development Party

MP   Motherland Party

NMSS   National Movement of Simeon II

NOP   National Order Party

NSP   National Salvation Party

RPP   Republican People's Party

VP   Virtue Party

WP   Welfare Party

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY FOR TURKISH WORDS

Ayn-ül cem   *Cem*s which are open to initiated Alevis

Baba   Alevi Religious leader

Batini   Esoteric

Can   Initiated Alevi

Cem: Central religious ritual in Alevism

Cemevi: Places of worshipping for Alevis

Dort Kapı Kırk Makam: Four Doors and Forty Ranks. The stages an Alevi should pass for

Ehl-i Beyt   Household of Muhammed, also known as "*Beşler*"

Erkan   Code of conducts in the Alevi Path

Hakikat   *Haqiqa,* the Truth

Halifebaba or Kocababa: The superior religious leader elected among Alevi babas

Ikrar   *1. Oath 2. Initiation*

Insan-ı Kamil   The Perfect Human Being

Marifet   *Marifa,* spiritual knowledge

Maye   Annual ceremonies at the Southern Bulgarian Turbes

Muhabbet cemi	*Cems* that are open to uninitiated Alevis
Musahiplik	*Spritual brotherhood and sisterhood*
Namaz	Daily prayers in Sunni Islam
Niyaz	Supplication, it is a form of worshipping among Alevis
Onikiler	Twelves, Twevle Holy Imam among Bektasi, Musahipli and Dervis Alevis
Şeriat	*Sharia,* religious law. It also indicatesa Sunnism in the eyes of Alevis
Sır	Secret, the Alevi Secret
Taberra	Avoiding those who do not love the household of Muhammed
Talip	Follower
Tarikat	*Tariqa,* religious brotherhood It also indicates Alevism in the eyes of Alevis

Tarikten gecmek or baş okutmak: Going through purification ceremony

Tavella	Love and devolution to the household of Muhammed
Türbe	A saint's tomb
Üçler	God-Muhammed-Ali in Alevi belief
Yediler	Sevens, Seven Holy Imams among Babai Alevis
Yol	Path, the AleviPath
Zahiri	A person who is an outsider or a belief that is formalist

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