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MATERIALIZATION OF RITUAL: THE EXAMPLE OF ALEVI BELIEF SYSTEM*

Ritüelin Materyalleşmesi: Alevi İnanç Sistemi Örneği

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ABSTRACT

Rituals are symbolic and physical elements of beliefs and experiences. Individuals' and societies' relationships with nature and struggle for survival within nature have led to the creation of various practices. All these practices, when manifested symbolically within the context of belief systems, are called rituals. Therefore, every change in the relationship between the individual, society, and nature results in a change in rituals. Migration, urbanization, technological advancement, and globalization cause many elements concerning individuals and society to change. Changes that affect societies' social, cultural, economic, and religious lives have led to functional and structural changes in rituals performed within the traditional context. Thus, rituals passed down in traditional societies with their traditional and symbolic structures have undergone semantic and formal changes in rapidly changing modern societies. At the core of these changes lies the necessity for individuals to adapt to contemporary socio-economic conditions. Rituals has a power that shapes community in many ways with their mythic and theological backgrounds. Rituals determine the doctrinal and social structure of Alevi belief system. For the Alevi community, rituals hold the power to transmit cultural and social values, as well as to define the belief system with its mythic and theological background. Traditional Alevi rituals shape the entire lives of their followers. Members of the faith learn and transmit all components of their socio-cultural and economic environment through ritual-centered practices. Despite all political and social events, Alevi communities managed to sustain their ritual-centered traditional belief systems and lifestyles until the 1960s. However, migration after this period rapidly led to the transformation and alteration of ritual-centered life. Alevi communities experienced a culture shock due to their rituals not being accepted by the "other"s. This situation compelled them to conceal their beliefs and remain invisible. The process experienced after migration and urbanization has resulted in the weakening of traditional belief systems among Alevi individuals. During this period where non-governmental organizations are increasingly dominant and influential, the social and cultural demands of Alevi communities who come together under the leadership of non-governmental organizations in the city have led to the transformation and reconstruction of traditional Alevi rituals. Therefore, the traditional structure and rituals of the Alevi belief system have undergone a transition from their traditional context to a new world influenced by factors such as migration, urbanization, modern life, and the rejection of dominant authority. This article discusses the change and re-creation of rituals away from the traditional context in urban life following social and economic demands in the context of fieldwork conducted in Türkiye, Germany, and Austria.

Keywords

Alevism, ritual, urbanization, migration, ritual transformation.

ÖZ

Ritüeller bireysel ve toplumsal inanma, algı ve tecrübelerin sembolik ve somut göstergeleridir. Bireylerin ve toplumların doğa ile ilişkileri, doğa içindeki yaşam mücadelesi, doğadaki düzen ve kuralları; insanların çeşitli uygulamalar yaratmasına neden olmuştur. Tüm bu uygulamaların inanç sistemi bağlamında sembolik bir şekilde eyleme dökülmüş halleri ritüel adını alır. Dolayısıyla birey, toplum ve doğa ilişkisi düzlemindeki her değişim, geleneksel ritüel evrenindeki değişimi beraberinde getirir. Göç, kentleşme, teknolojinin gelişmesi, küreselleşme bireye ve topluma dair birçok unsurun değişmesine neden olmaktadır. Toplumların sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve dinî hayatlarında etkili olan değişimler; geleneksel bağlamda icra edilen ritüellerde de işlevsel ve yapısal değişikliklere yol açmıştır. Dolayısıyla toplumlarda geleneksel ve sembolik yapısı muhafaza edilerek aktarılan ritüeller; sürekli ve hızla değişen modern toplumlarda anlamsal ve biçimsel değişikliğe uğramıştır. Bu değişikliklerin temelinde bireyin günümüz sosyoekonomik koşullarına uyum mecburiyeti yer alır. Ritüeller, mitik ve teolojik arka planları ile mensuplarını birçok yönden

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şekillendiren bir güce sahiptirler. Geleneksel bağlamlı ritüeller özellikle Alevi inanç sisteminin inançsal ve sosyal yapısını belirlemektedir. Alevi toplumu için ritüeller; kültürel ve sosyal değerleri aktaran, mitik ve teolojik arka plan ile inanç sistemini belirleyen bir güce sahiptir. İnanç mensupları, dâhil oldukları sosyokültürel ve ekonomik ortamın tüm bileşenlerini ritüel merkezli öğrenir ve aktarırlar. 1960'lı yıllara kadar Alevi topluluklar bütün siyasi ve sosyal hadiselere rağmen ritüel merkezli geleneksel inanç sistemlerini ve yaşam tarzlarını sürdürmeyi başarmıştır. Ancak bu tarihten sonraki göç hareketliliği, ritüel merkezli yaşamın hızlı bir şekilde değişmesine ve dönüşmesine neden olmuştur. Göç ile yeni bir yaşam tarzını benimseyen Alevi topluluklar; ritüellerinin öteki tarafından kabul görmemesiyle kültür şoku yaşamıştır. Bu durum onları inançlarını saklamaya ve sosyal yapı içerisinde görünür olmamaya itmiştir. Göç sonrası kentleşmenin etkisiyle yaşanan bu süreç Alevi bireylerin geleneksel inanç sistemlerinin zayıflamasına neden olmuştur. Sivil toplum örgütlerinin gittikçe baskın ve belirleyici olduğu bu dönemde, kentte sivil toplum örgütleri öncülüğünde bir araya gelen Alevilerin yeni hayatlarına dair sosyal ve kültürel talepleri, geleneksel Alevi ritüellerinin değişmesine ve yeniden inşasına neden olmuştur. Bu makalede ritüellerin kent yaşamındaki sosyal ve ekonomik talepler doğrultusunda geleneksel bağlamdan uzaklaşarak değişimi ve yeniden yaratımı Türkiye, Almanya ve Avusturya'da yapılan saha çalışmaları bağlamında tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler
Alevilik, ritüel, kentleşme, göç, ritüel değişimi.

Introduction

The academic and scientific interest in rituals has been steadily increasing since the 19th and 20th centuries. The functions of rituals were first addressed in the context of debates about the origins of religion, then examined with a social aspect in the 19th century. In ritual studies, different perspectives that regard rituals as social and cultural phenomena have emerged as alternatives to each other. Rituals have been approached within concepts such as religion, culture, society, and individual, and evaluated through sociological, psychoanalytic, anthropological, and phenomenological perspectives. The majority of these studies have been conducted within the framework of societies that are often characterized as primitive and esoteric. Rituals' characteristics, functions, emergence conditions, origins, and relationship/interaction with concepts such as tradition/religion/magic/myth have been discussed based on rituals collected from these traditional societies.

The diversity, continuity, and transmission of rituals in traditional societies where oral culture persists intensively are generally greater compared to modern societies. Wach states that myths and rituals reflect the social structure in primitive societies (Wach 1987: 7). The greater observability of rituals in traditional societies has resulted in comparatively fewer studies on ritual practices within contemporary modern societies. Migration, urbanization, technological developments, globalization, and the rapid changes affecting both individuals and societies have altered the semantic and structural forms of rituals. Thus, rituals in traditional societies, which are preserved and transmitted as retaining their symbolic meanings and traditional structure, commonly experience semantic and formal changes in rapidly changing modern societies. The compulsory process of adaptation of individuals within today's socio-economic conditions constitutes the underlying reasons for these changes. Rituals are the most physical manifestation of the mutual interaction between individuals and society, as each experience serves collective knowledge. Rituals are symbolic and tangible manifestations of individual and social beliefs, perceptions, and experiences. The relationship individuals and communities establish with nature, their modes of perceiving reality within nature, defense mechanisms against nature, observations about nature, and the rules they create to survive in nature bring about various practices. The practices symbolically enacted following sacred narratives are referred to as rituals.[1] Therefore, every change in the realm of the relationship between the individual, society,

and nature brings about a change in the ritual performances. Dartiguenave does not consider the ritual as a narrative form that has completed its meaning and structure; on the contrary, he argues that it can sustain its existence by being updated (Kasap 2021: 127). Thus, rituals, which can be characterized as the process of interpreting nature and the natural within a cultural framework change as conditions are updated. The article examines the changes in rituals, which wield a determining and guiding influence on the religious, social, cultural, and economic contexts within the Alevi belief system. The analysis will specifically focus on the changes induced by non-governmental organizations, particularly in urban environments. The article also will discuss that the fundamental components of rituals have been redefined primarily in response to economic concerns rather than theological and belief anxieties, as a consequence of modern urban living conditions.

Rituals possess a power that shapes their participants in many ways through their mythical and theological backgrounds. They particularly determine the belief and social structure of the Alevi faith system. In Alevi society, rituals transmit cultural and social values, designate the belief system with their mythical and theological background, and provide social self-regulation. It can easily be said that Alevi rituals shape the entire life of the individual who is a member of the belief community. The fundamental factor that further solidifies the power of rituals in the Alevi community is the traditional and closed social structure. The boundaries with the "other" are determined by the traditional social structure for an Alevi who is part of the social and belief order shaped by rituals. Hence, believers learn and transmit all cultural elements of the sociocultural and economic environment they are part of through a ritual-centered approach.

Alevi communities maintained their ritual-centered belief systems until the 1960s. From this point onwards, the migration movements have significantly impacted Alevi communities, resulting in rapid changes and transformations in the traditional and ritual-centered belief system. Alevi communities, encountering a new world through migration, experienced a cultural shock due to their rituals not being accepted by the "other" and they attempted to overcome this by concealing their religious beliefs. The process experienced by Alevis after migration has led to a weakening of their bond with the rituals and traditional structure. Alevi communities, striving to preserve their beliefs through urbanization, have been unable to transmit the traditional ritual-centered Alevi belief system for nearly three decades. The relationship between *dede* (spiritual leader) and *talip* (follower), the relationship between sacred space and individual, and the stages of *ikrar* (initiation) and *müsahiplik* (spiritual brotherhood) that enable participation in the belief environment have rapidly begun to disappear. Thus, Alevism has begun to evolve from a belief-based structure to an organized urban life centered around identity, ideology, and ethnicity. Alevis have experienced cultural or political conflicts with other communities (such as Sunni, Shafi'i, Shia, and other beliefs encountered abroad). This situation has led to the emergence of cultural, political, and ethnic divisions. This period has also ushered in a new era where Alevis engage in discussions about their internal differences while maintaining their religious existence. The Alevism that the Alevi community is trying to construct in the new world has diverged from its traditional context. In other words, Alevism has transformed from a traditional belief system based on ocaks and rituals to a structure shaped by Alevi non-governmental organizations and prominent figures.[2] In the traditional context, the emphasis was on the religious order, whereas in this new formation, economic and social needs take precedence. In the urban environment, the traditional structure of the

belief system has not been preserved, and the economic resources previously allocated to rituals are now being allocated to meet the different requirements of modern life. Most rituals do not require significant economic resources for their implementation; however, some comprehensive and complex rituals may occasionally require substantial financial support. Especially in urban environments, it is observed that the benefits of ritual participants are prioritized over the traditional context of the performance in such cases. Metcalf states that "ritual must then come to terms with economic" (Metcalf 1981: 563). The tendency of rituals to compromise with the economy has led to a reconstruction of rituals away from their traditional contexts, driven by economic concerns in urban Alevism. In this context, ritual changes can be explained as functional and structural alterations in sacred spaces, changes in the economic functions and uses of texts performed in rituals, and ritual constructions created in response to socio-economic needs, estranged from traditional contexts.

Clifford Geertz's fieldwork on the changes in the structure and meaning of rituals provides significant findings for the underlying reasons for ritual change. Geertz (1957) researches the social, cultural, and ritualistic changes by examining ritual change through the Javanese people, a Southeast Asian tribe. Geertz's study is based on a funeral ceremony following the sudden death of a ten-year-old child. In his article, Geertz focuses on the failure of the customary rituals of the Javanese people to produce the expected processes and outcomes in this event. He attempted to analyze the underlying reasons for this observed phenomenon within social and cultural contexts. Geertz states that in order to search for the reasons behind the failure of the ritual, it is essential to know and comprehend all the socio-cultural changes in the last century of the Javanese community (1957: 35). He criticizes functionalism using the support from E. R. Leach's statement "We functionalists are not really 'anti-historical' by principle; it is simply that fit historical materials into our framework of concepts." According to him, the way to evaluate historical material more efficiently also involves treating cultural and social aspects of human life as independently variable yet mutually interdependent factors (1957: 33). Geertz argues that the fundamental driving force behind ritual changes lies in these "radical discontinuities" among the social and cultural structures in question. Geertz explains these discontinuities with the observation that the "Javanese kampong represents a transitional sort of society that its members stand 'in between' the more or less full urbanized elite and the more or less traditionally organized peasantry" (1957: 49). In other words, the social structure in which Javanese people participate is urbanized; nonetheless, on the cultural level, the patterns of belief, expressions, and values to which Javanese people are committed differ from those of the urban elite. According to him, the conflict between fully urbanized elites and still traditionally minded peasants, whom he describes as a transitional society, is the primary cause of ritual change among the Javanese people. This conflict results in semantic ambiguity during the performance of rituals. Hence, the religious, political, and secular attributes of the symbols of the rituals lead participants to fail to comprehend the fundamental meaning at the origin of the rituals and consequently, to fail to recreate it. In other words, the forgetting or lack of remembrance of the myth underlying ritual leads participants to ambiguity about the true meaning of the ritual. The rituals of Alevis living in urban environments today, which are moving away from their traditional context can also be explained by similar reasons. Rituals, which traditionally held the authority to regulate daily life, have not been able to transition to urban settings due to various reasons such as the creation of a new world through

migration and social self-control. More precisely, rituals symbolizing the rural aspect of Alevism, which is defined with the role of preserving and transmitting modern, secular, and contemporary life in cities, have begun to be marginalized. Rituals performed on mythic and theological grounds have not been updated to the new world by incorporating secular life and the construct of modern society. Rituals performed on mythic and theological grounds have not been updated and could not be adapted to the world of secular and modern society. The characteristics of this new world involve the breakdown of connection with the traditional environment, the inability to position hierarchical religious statuses (such as *dede-talip*, etc.) in the new world, and the dominant belief system in the new context, which is under the control of state authority over social and cultural environments. All these characteristics have led to a detachment from the traditional context for Alevis and to their inability to visibly express their religious aspects within society. Alevi communities coming together under the leadership of non-governmental organizations have strongly manifested debates stemming from their internal differences (such as ritual diversity, ethnicity, language, and cultural distinctions), as well as their involvement in current political and ideological discussions. During this period, there has been a noticeable increase in the creation of rituals suitable and feasible for urban environments, characterized by the rejection of both the traditional rituals of the belief system and rituals and commonalities resembling the other (Sunnite) tradition. Therefore, this period, which we can describe as a transitional phase for Alevism, also symbolizes a break from the traditional aspect. This period can be defined as a phase of constructing a new Alevism institutionalizing in the urban setting, in contrast to the traditional structure continuing in rural areas. Shankland (2006) addressed the social changes and power conflicts within Alevi communities in Anatolia resulting from processes termed "modernization" and "development," based on fieldwork conducted in Anatolia. He discussed these changes in his article titled "Social Change and Culture: Responses to Modernization in an Alevi Village in Anatolia," examining them in light of their economic, political, and demographic causes. Shankland emphasizes that for Alevis, who traditionally maintain their belief systems in rural and closed-off communities, becoming a part of modern society is a new situation. He underscores the necessity for them to be outward rather than inward-looking in order to become modern citizens (2006: 87). The contradiction experienced by Alevi individuals leads to a tendency to reconcile their traditional belief systems with the ideology of the modern Turkish state. However, the ethical view of the state regarding Alevi communities, not being in line with the villagers' own ethical views (Shankland, 2006: 83), which can be considered another reason that necessitates the change of Alevi communities in the modern context.

The Reconstruction of Traditional Alevi Rituals Based on Economic and Social Demands

Sacred spaces have always been an integral part of individuals and societies in every era. Despite all the changes in belief systems and lifestyles from ancient times to the present day, they have maintained their significance in human life. Due to the vulnerability of humans to potential dangers posed by nature, the inclination towards contact with the sacred has led to the belief that the sacred manifests in space, resulting in the “sacralization of space”. Assman (2015: 68) pointed out "spatialization" as the primary tool of memory and emphasized the significant role of space in reinforcing social and cultural memory in the culture of remembrance. Rituals performed as a result of the desire to approach or interact with the sacred are carried out in spaces delineated

by the requirements of belief systems and traditional contexts, and they are performed in spaces regarded as special by the believers.

The institutional structure of the Alevi belief system has determined its sacred aspects based on rituals and fundamental dynamics. The sacred belief leader is at the core of institutionalization. With the acceptance of Islam, the role of the person who possesses or facilitates communication with the sacred in old Turkic belief has been replaced by the cult of veli (the Saint), which carries the concepts of *velâyet* and *nübüvvet*. The founders of the *ocak*s believed to be descendants of the Prophet and their descendants have inherited the role of the sacred individuals. Dede is a person who possesses sacred memory in addition to being descended from the holy lineage. Therefore, they are sacred. The charismatic belief leaders who founded the *ocak*s, along with individuals representing the sacred and believed to carry the *velayet*, and their tombs are considered as part of the sacred. The houses where these individuals live, and often the *cemevi*s built as an extension of these houses, are also considered sacred. This sacred space has been formed by symbols and objects possessing sacred qualities. The Dede, also can sanctify the places they visit.

Examples of the traditional architecture of cemevi as sacred places of Alevi belief system

Rituals are among the fundamental structures that facilitate the socialization of the sacred (Şahin 2008: 271). Eliade states that myths have the power of repetition, whereby the deeds of gods, heroes, or ancestors are reenacted in rituals (2018: 26-27). In this regard, Kırklar Cemi is at the mythical origins of Alevi theology. The creators, conveyors, or performers of the ritual also possess a sacredness of belief. The locations where the first performance of the Kırklar Cemi, believed to have taken place, is also considered sacred. The place where the Kırklar perform the cem, as well as the attendants of the place and the sections within it, are regarded as sacred. Even locations such as sacred hills, springs, and wooded areas, where it is believed that the Kırklar gather and perform the cem, are considered sacred. The creation of the sacred space, and sacred time through ritual holds importance in terms of the continuity of the belief system and reminding the individual of their sacred journey. Departure from this sacred integrity prevents the individual from being part of the sacred wholeness. This departure leads to a shift from traditional ritual settings towards new focuses driven by functional concerns. The deviation from this sacred integrity prevents the individual from being part of the sacred wholeness. This shift leads to a move from the traditional ritual environment towards new focuses driven by functional concerns.

In the context of the Alevi belief system recreated in urban settings through migration, it is observed that the spaces lack the functions of sacred spaces and are not constructed with a focus on rituals. The construction of *cemevi*s is driven by social and economic concerns. Although the term "cemevi" is written on the signs of these places, many of them lack a separate space dedicated only for the performance of the *cem* ritual. These new spaces are constructed and continue to be built with material and social concerns focused on wedding halls and funeral services. The roles and functions of the sacred figure have changed. There is a transition from the ocak-centered religious structure to a structure determined by non-governmental organizations, which is distant from the traditional context. Rituals are being altered to be centered around individuals, ideologies, and ethnicities. This change often leads to the disappearance of ritual means in many places and the loss of the ritual's function in shaping the social community. Rituals have become a fund of capitalism by disconnecting from the sacred context.

The *cemevi*s that were built by functional concerns through the modern context in rural (Türkiye)

The cemevis that transformed from a factory through the functional concerns in Duisburg (Germany)

The creation of sacred spaces by non-governmental organizations emerging from urbanization and migration has occurred with a different understanding. The quest for spaces by Alevi non-governmental organizations is shaped not only by the effort to create a space of faith but also by the aims of socialization and gathering of people with the same beliefs and origins. Therefore, the initial spaces, which can be described as local or café-like rather than being strictly identified as places of faith, are created out of a need for socialization. People whose lives are formed by migration have planned to transfer the cultural environment in their homeland to their new worlds by coming together with like-minded people in these spaces. These spaces have taken on the function of being a place where men gather to play games and socialize for most of the year. Days when the community comes together are marked by sacred times and national celebration days.

Places are usually created by renting small shops or apartments or structures of the type of abandoned industrial plant. The expenses of the place were covered by the money earned from the local and the dues of the members. In later periods, spaces were obtained through the attempts of non-governmental organizations to buy spaces. These places were taken with money collected from the Society for many years in the form of common debt, shareholders or borrowing of several people. Many works (renovations and infrastructure) of the place were also carried out by individuals. Especially in Europe, the vast majority of these places are abandoned industrial facilities. A religious place fiction has not been considered. When rituals were performed in sacred time zones, carpets, rugs, etc. were laid on the places in the largest hall of the place and rituals were performed. The primary function of the spaces taken in the first period is aimed at social needs. In this context, clubhouses, which are places of socialization, are in the first place as the sine qua non of space. However, "sacred" is considered transcendent from the worldly and the mundane (Wach 1987: 13). In contrast to the sacred spaces observed in the traditional structure of the Alevi belief system, where the sacred remains distinct, the "modern" understanding influenced by the social and economic concerns of the city and diminishing the importance of belief, has created a new situation where sacred spaces intertwine with everyday and ordinary life. Later, the need for a place where rituals and ceremonies belonging to the rites of passage of life will be performed took priority. For this reason, priority has been given to places in the form of large halls where wedding and funeral services can be performed. The dining halls of abandoned industrial facilities were used as wedding halls, and the units with offices were used as clubhouses and administrative rooms. Basements or suitable parts of these facilities are also designed as “gasilhane” for funeral services. This functional perspective has caused the structure organized as a religious institution to move forward with a structure that prioritizes everyday needs. In the first period, religious spaces were built and designed in this way, while new buildings were built, especially in the 2000s, to create new spaces. Looking at these buildings, it is seen that most of them were built as clubhouses, wedding halls, and funeral services, as in the first period structures. In many of them, a detached “cemevi” place has not been built. Therefore, many of the places are not built with a sacred space identity and do not have religious architecture. Many are ordinary multi-story buildings. In some, a binary structural fiction is included. Cemevi building was located on one side and social facilities were located on the other.

Material reasons and the transition of society from a religious context to a material context played a role in the construction of the structure in this way. All costs of these spaces are covered by the money earned from wedding hall and funeral services. For

this reason, priority has been given to these services. In many institutions, wedding halls have been transferred to private operators. In a sense, this has led to the transformation of the place of faith into a structure with facilities managed by operators. The spaces rented to the operator caused the space to lose its property to be a social place of the Alevis. The person who runs the wedding hall can rent the hall to anyone who pays for it. In agreements with some operators, it was agreed to provide members with a certain discount. While the traditional ritual and cultural universe became decisive in the institutionalization of the first period, the opportunities offered by the institution came to the fore later. Many members continue their membership to benefit from wedding hall and funeral services. The clearest indication of this situation is that the number of members arriving at the venue during the holy periods varies with the number of members arriving at weddings or funeral services. We observed this situation in our conference and observations. The religious and scientific activities organized by non-governmental organizations during sacred times are very low relative to the number of total members. However, this number increases during events such as weddings, funerals, and folk dance nights. I have been invited to "Köln Hacı Bektaş Veli Cemevi, Duisburg Alevi Toplumu Cemevi, Hamm Alevi Kültür Birliği, Darmstadt Alevi Kültür Merkezi ve Cemevi" to give a lecture and participate in Muharram activities, during which there is the highest attendance for rituals in *cemevi*s from the perspective of Alevi belief system. Despite having a membership of over a thousand people, the number of attendees during the mentioned period was significantly low compared to the total membership of these *cemevi*s. Even on the most crowded day, such as Ashura Day, the low attendance relative to the membership count was easily observable. The managers of the relevant institutions indicated that the high membership count was due to the ease of using the venue for events such as weddings, engagements, and funerals for members. Additionally, they shared that participation is higher in cultural activities such as folk dance events or barbecue gatherings. The break in the traditional ritual context has also caused the place to lose its sacred function except on certain holy days. Apart from the holy time zones such as Nowruz and Thursday night, especially the month of Muharram and the days of Khidr, which are one of the holy time zones, places continue to exist in a way that is disconnected from their ritual contextual function. Although it is suggested that this situation is shaped by the ritual calendar of the Alevi belief system, the economic and social concerns of the modern world override the perception of sacred spaces determined by ritual in the traditional context. In order to illustrate the change in the perception of sacred spaces more clearly, we would like to share two cases we identified during our fieldwork. The first piece of information was conveyed by Fatma Yaşar, the President of the Duisburg Alevi Community Cemevi in Germany. Duisburg is one of the cities where the Alevi community has migrated most densely. When the decision to officially offer Alevism courses in schools in Germany was made, the administration of one of the schools where Alevism courses were taught decided to take the students on tours to introduce them to the sacred spaces of each religion and belief covered in the curriculum. After visiting the sacred spaces of many religions and beliefs, a request for an appointment to visit the Duisburg Cemevi was sent. Upon hearing the explanation for the visit to the sacred space, the President mentioned that they did not have a separate cemevi space for the cem ritual. Following this incident, the association's management decided to redesign a small area for the cem ritual by relocating the area where members played games.

The second example is as follows: The wedding hall, which is part of the Şah Hatayi Cemevi in Vienna, Austria, has been leased to a private company. The lease agreement did not include any provisions regarding the special days of significance in the Alevi belief system. Therefore, during our stay in Vienna in the month of Muharram in 2018, a wedding was taking place while mourning rituals of the Alevi belief system were being performed in the *cemevi* building. The mourning rituals and the wedding both took place in the same building. These two examples facilitate our understanding of the transition from the sacred context of the space to the material context. Besides circumcisions, weddings, engagements, and entertainment night arrangements, funeral services are also one of the incomes of *cemevi*. Especially in Europe, cemevis that run funeral services have more members than other cemevis. For funerals, many companies, especially Alevi institutions, play a role. Funeral services and funeral transportation to the country is an important sector. This sector is important in shaping the ritual universe and serves as one of the revenues of the *cemevi*s. In the traditional ocak-centered ritual context, rituals such as *ikrar*, *musahiplik*, dar, and görgü rituals take precedence. Conversely, many individuals who become disconnected from the traditional ritual universe experience death without being included in the ritual community due to urbanization. Therefore, a significant part of society encounters the *cemevi* for the first time with an event such as a wedding or a social activity. Funeral services are one of the most important incomes for *cemevi*s. Especially in Türkiye, the primary source of income for *cemevi*s is food charity held on the 3rd, 7th, and 40th days after the funeral. For this reason, the most attempted" reconstruction of ritual" occurs in funeral-centered rituals. While the funeral is an out service in the traditional context, it has become the most important point of discussion in the world of Alevi individuals today.

An example of multifunctional use of the same places such as cem rituals, folk dances, wedding dinner and funerals.

Many institutions and individuals, ranging from associations to federations and religious leaders, have been or are involved in constructing funeral-centered rituals. In the traditional context, the priority is given to the ritual universe centered on *ikrar* and *musahiplik*, symbolizing entry into the circle of faith. However, due to the significant

decrease in participation in *ikrar* and *musahiplik* in urban settings, there is no discussion about the differences in the construction of these rituals based on local and regional traditions. Since death is an inevitable reality for each individual, funeral rituals are taken into account. Especially notable are the discussions surrounding the intensified construction of funeral rituals in the last five years. While the primary focus of these discussions appears to be on rituals, a significant portion addresses material concerns. Alevi institutions publish texts called "*erkanname* of funeral" and conduct funeral rituals according to the this text written within their own institutions. As a result, funeral rituals at cemevis are determined based on decisions made by the cemevi and its affiliated higher authorities. The dedes also manage their services according to these decisions. As a result of these changes, religious leaders are shifting their focus towards ritual practices that operate based on institutional acceptance from traditional performances. One of the main reasons for the strong emphasis on funeral-centered discussions is the financial support provided to institutions and the religious leaders serving in these institutions. Although these changes and discussions may be presented as theological debates, their ideological and material reasons hold significant importance. Rituals, although they may take on the appearance of modernity, continue to adhere to the traditional in one way or another. In this regard, traditional structures transform and renew in modern forms (Kasap 2021: 128). Evaluating this change and transformation as the functional use of tradition in line with new needs would be accurate. The new needs of postmodern society, processes brought about by globalization and urbanization, and economic requirements have resulted in the evolution of Alevi rituals in urban.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on our findings, the ritual universe created by the Alevi belief system with the traditional closed society context has begun to transition from its traditional context to a new world with the influence of elements such as migration, urbanization, modern life, and rejection of dominant authority. The process of capitalist building society on material expectations has also led to the evolution of Alevi society and its rituals. This change has influenced communities over time, which continue to live in a traditional context while being observed with stronger fiction in cities. Today, we can easily express that Alevi rituals are being reconstructed in the fiction of a material world, moving away from the traditional context of creation and transmission. The traditional structure of the belief system suitable for rural life has not been able to be transferred to the new living spaces in cities, brought about by migrations from Türkiye and abroad. The social self-regulation, power, and function of the social structure shaped by rituals have been lost. The belief system could not be adapted to the city, and its representation in the urban environment as a semi-rural transitional community has led to conflict. Society's religious aspect have diminished, the balance between the belief system and the cultural world has not been achieved, and belief has evolved into ideology. The dominant perception of Sunni Islam by the ruling authority has continued to strengthen over a long period, contributing to these changes. Capitalism has focused social perception on material expectations. This situation has also led to the evolution of Alevi society and rituals. While this change initially manifested stronger in cities, it has also gradually influenced communities that continue to exist in a traditional context over time. Based on the data from our field research conducted in Türkiye, Germany, Austria, and England, we can confidently state that

Alevi rituals are being reconstructed in the framework of a material world, moving away from the traditional context of creation and transmission.

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NOTES

1. Durkheim argues that ritual is necessarily associated with the sacred and that there can be no ritual devoid of the sacred (1995: 35). Additional sources for the relationship between myth and ritual, see: Segal, 1980; Bell, 1992; Bell, 1997; Eliade, 2021.
2. Due to the article's focus on the ritual and the materialization of the ritual, and the word limit specified in the journal's writing guidelines, it was not possible to provide a general evaluation based on studies addressing Alevism in the context of migration and urban environments. Many studies are focusing on migration, urbanization, and organization. For a few of these, see: Okan, 2004; Yıldırım, 2012; Langer, 2015; Salman 2018.

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