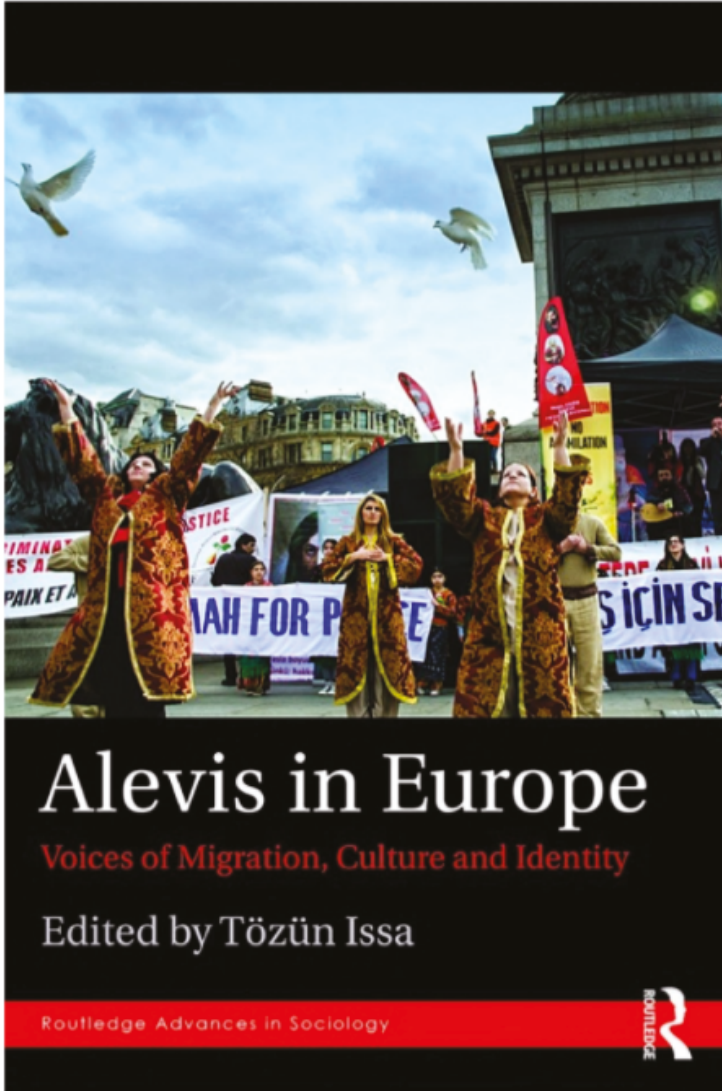


Tözün Issa (ed.). *Alevi in Europe: Voices of migration, culture and identity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017, xxx + 252 pages.

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Tözun Issa's edited book *"Alevi in Europe: Voices of migration, culture and identity"* basically covers the redefinition of Alevi identity in Europe by concentrating on the ethnographic studies which are conducted in European countries; however the book also includes a comprehensive background that explains the roots of Alevism and transformation of Alevi identity throughout the history. The thirteen articles within the four parts of the book examine the transformation by focusing on political, economic and social factors which affect and determine the reproduction of Alevi identity.

The first part of the book, *"An introduction to Alevism: Roots and practices"*, includes three articles which focus on the "roots and practices" of Alevism by emphasizing its multi-dimensional characteristics. Rather than an effort for exploring one way certain definition of Alevism; the articles emphasize the different dimension of Alevism in terms of ethnicity, culture and space. Hayal Hanoğlu's article gives an introductory knowledge for Alevism, its roots and evolution throughout the history. By acknowledging that the roots of Alevism is a controversial topic; she remarks two separate origins of Alevism; one is Bektashi belief which is based on Central Asian Turcoman culture, and the other is Kızılbaş Alevism which was flourished around Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Based on these roots the later evolution of Alevism has two critical junctures; one is the contact of Kızılbaş Alevism with Islam, and the other is Turkish-Islamic synthesis. Hanoğlu's emphasis on "Alevism is multi-cultural and multi-ethnic population; thus it cannot be constrained to one language and one traditional form" is supported by later two articles of the part. In chapter two; İlkey Şahin, Ali Selçuk, Hava Selçuk focus on a female charismatic movement of Anşa Bacı and the Sıraç Alevi by claiming that there is even heterodoxy within heterodoxy since Anşa Bacı resisted to both the state and the cooperation of traditional leaders of Hubyar Ocaks with the state; she formed his own authority and created a new form of Ocak. Because of the female leadership and their resistance for the traditional, the Anşa Bacılılar became isolated and marginalized both from the Alevi and Sunni community until they migrated to İstanbul in 1980s; hence they believe that they are the only representative of original form of Kızılbaşism which is not deteriorated by external factors. In the last chapter of the first part, Filiz Çelik covers the multi-dimensional characteristic of Alevi identity by elaborating Alevi of Dersim which is predominantly Kurdish-Alevi. The article argues that Alevism in Dersim represents not only a sect but it represents their faith, their way of life and their collective identity. Alevi practices in Dersim include the sacredness which is

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attributed to the nature. Also the effect of Dersim massacre, the migration from the homeland and mobilization in the left wing politics created different paths of Alevi identity in terms of time and space in *Dersimis*. Thus; the first part as a well-organized part of the book depicts that Alevism has different roots and it has different paths both contextually and conceptually.

The second part of the book *“The politics of identity in transformation”* is based on the idea that the history of Alevism cannot be separated from the migration. Alevis have had to migrate throughout history because of political and economic reasons within Turkey and to Europe. Obviously, this migration processes and the interaction with new political and social orders strongly affect the redefinition of Alevi identity. Hüseyin Mirza Karagöz in chapter 4, introduces the tensions created by the state policies towards Alevis from Ottoman to the Turkish Republic. Because of economic and political consequences of those tensions; Alevis were exposed to the migration flows. The settlement policies from Seljuk and Ottoman to Turkish Republic, violent events and massacres towards Alevis in Dersim, Maraş, Çorum and the socio-political developments after 1950s including military interventions of 1961 and 1971 were critical points in the migration of Alevis. While Karagöz depicts a map of Alevi migration; in the following chapter, Burcu Şentürk focuses on the migration from rural to urban with a qualitative research in Ege Neighborhood, Ankara. Şentürk elaborates the “urbanization” as a source of transformation of Alevi identity; not only the urbanization but its alliance with Marxist movement in 1960s and 1970s also gives new meanings to Alevi identity. In chapter six, Rıza Yıldırım also explains the transformation of Alevi identity with the destructive effects of urbanization. According to Yıldırım, the transformation occurred as a change from rural-mystical milieu to urban-secular one. He argues that rapid migration to big cities dramatically changed the social and spatial dimension of the religion. According to Yıldırım, the transformation in Alevism can be categorized under two phase; first detaching from religion with urbanization and then merging Alevism with left movement and secondly Alevi revivalism in 1990s. While Şentürk and Yıldırım examine the Alevi population’s interaction with the outside world in the identity formation, in chapter seven, Özlem Göner emphasizes the role of state-led discursive and institutional practices against Alevism. She focuses on the transformation of power relations between the state and Alevis. She argues that the relationships of power and struggle between transnational, national and local dynamics shape discourses and practices of identity. Thus the relations between the state and Alevis causes redefinition of

identity in terms of changes in the relations. Göner emphasizes that with the EU accession process, in 2000s the relations between Alevis and the state came into another phase by re-definition of Alevism according to Sunni ideas and it was reduced by the government to “loving Hz. Ali”. Along with, the violence towards Alevis in Gezi, Okmeydanı during AKP era, the Alevi identity remarginalized.

The third part “*Dimensions of migration: Alevis in Europe*” elaborates how Alevi identity has been reimagined and reproduced in Europe. In chapter eight, Metin Uçar explains the reinterpretation of Alevi identity by using the conceptual framework of Hobsbawm and Ranger, “invention of tradition”. According to Uçar, Alevi institutions such as dede have been loaded with new meanings, secular organizations were founded and the role of cemevi as a place of worship has changed. He argues that those transformations are not only result of urbanization and secularization but also Europeanization and globalization. Deniz Coşan-Eke, in chapter nine, uses the lens of transnationalism to analyze the Alevi identity within the historical, political and economic context of Turkey and Europe. She claims that although there is de-territorialization, the space and place is still important for transnational communities both in the symbolic and physical level. The transnational networks enable “the being” to be in two places simultaneously. Coşan-Eke emphasizes the role of multiculturalism and transnationalism in creating community identity and diasporic organization of Alevis in Europe. She argues that multicultural policies which promote the maintenance of cultural diversity and institutionalization have impacted the Alevi movement in Europe. In addition, while Alevism is mainly defined as a religious group in Turkey, migration to Europe created a transnational Alevi community. Besim Can Zırh, in chapter ten, tries to explore that how community making can be understood in relation to place-making to Alevism based on his ethnographic study in London, Oslo and Berlin. He focuses on socio-spiritual organization of Alevism and its geographical implication as well as Alevi geographies under Turkish politico-administrative category. Zırh argues that Alevis were able to sustain their cultural geographies in transnational context. He uses the metaphor of *Kırmancıya Beleke*, meaning “the motley homeland” used for Dersim. Although the community is detached from its origin space, the spiritual commitments made any place a part of *Kırmancıya Beleke* in the discourse. Ayşegül Akdemir, in chapter eleven, by analyzing the Alevi community in Britain, explains that religious boundaries are more clear-cut than ethnic boundaries so identities interact one another. She explains that migration triggers this interaction and fosters people’s awareness on their

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identities because places of residence, citizenship and source of cultural identity are no longer the same physical place. In Britain, boundary created by “us-them” differences in the discourse of Alevi emphasizing its differences from Sunni-Islam. However, boundaries between Kurds and Alevi are blurred since being Kurd and Alevi in Britain are intricate. In the last chapter of the part, Tözun Issa and Emil Atbaş “*Alevi communities in Europe: Constructions of identity and integration*” also analyze the formation of identity in transnational context by focusing on intergenerational variations in perceptions and aspirations of Alevi communities.

The fourth and the last part of the book “*Implications for educational policy and practice*” has only one chapter which is written by Alistair Ross, “Minorities and migrant identities in contemporary Europe”. The chapter includes Ross’s conversation with young Alevi and their interpretations of their identity and living in Europe, but it needs well-constructed explanations and the content is not suitable with the main topic of the part.

Overall, Tözun Issa’s book has crucial contribution to the literature in two senses: First of all, it offers a multi-layered analysis of Alevi identity. Secondly, it brings sociological, political and cultural aspects regarding the transformation of Alevi identity together. The book also fills the gaps in Alevi studies in the sense that most of the works on Alevism based on theological aspects and the others, as Martin Sökefeld emphasized in the foreword of the book, came from authors who were labeled as “araştırmacı/yazar” (researchers/writers); however the book includes political, cultural and sociological analysis of Alevi identity. While the first part of the book is best organized, the articles in the following chapters include too much repetition regarding the history of Alevism; however I argue that it shows us the “infant” stage of Alevi studies in social sciences. In the introduction, it is also emphasized that the studies on Arab Alevism event cannot be reached for the book. Thus, the book actually brings the valuable studies together and offers a broad perspective towards the redefinition of identity. Overall articles in the book mainly share the idea that Alevi identity is defined and redefined in terms of time and space both contextually and conceptually.

