

## Chapter 15

### INSTITUTION OF “MUSAHIPLIK” IN THE ALEVI-BEKTASHI TRADITION (TOKAT TURKMEN ALEVIS’ EXAMPLE)

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In the Alevism, “Musahip” means a brotherhood between two people. In the Alevi communities, individuals born of Alevi parents only by getting married and finding another married couple as a “Musahip” can become a full and an official member of the community. These two families (four people) constitute the core of the Alevi community and are regarded as siblings. This is also called “ahiret kardeşliği”; a brotherhood of afterlife. Meaning, this brotherhood both exists in this world and the next. Musahiplik, which is a both religious and a social institution, is based on the principle of helping each other. A grandfather (called dede) is the religious leader in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition. In Alevi community, a grandfather has the highest social status. They are the authority in both religious and earthly matters. And they are accepted as the main source of information. We have taken the opinions of these grandfathers, who are seen as the main sources of information in the Alevi / Bektashi tradition, on the Musahiplik institution. In this study, we examine and analyze the opinions of the Tokat Turkmen Alevi Grandfathers, where the very rich religious and social manifestations of Alevism cultism are experienced, against a highly institutionalized and a very traditional Musahiplik institution, within regards to religious sociology. We tried to reveal the relationship between the Grandfatherhood Institution as a social and religious authority and Musahiplik Institution as a social solidarity organization. We tried to examine the Musahiplik Institution in the context of the data we obtained in our research as the brotherhood of religion and road of life. We have also tried to determine whether the Musahiplik institution fulfilled its functions today or not.

Key Words: Alevism, Tokat, Alevi-Bektashi, Musahiplik, Social Solidarity,

#### INTRODUCTION

“Musahiplik”, a word derived from Arabic, means friendship, brotherhood, and accompaniment. And “Musahip” means a companionable, nice to talk per-

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and will not be considered as an Alevi when he dies.” The door to the musahip is considered is the foundation of being and Alevi and entering the road. Because in Qizilbash communities, the one that does not hold any musahip will not be considered as real Alevi. For what we have seen in our research; even though musahiplik could not protect the power in its traditional structure, it’s still being kept alive, people are trying to keep it alive. And Musahiplik carries a great importance for Qizilbash Turkmens. Musahip families are considered as superior to birth-brothers. Everyone is free in choosing their own musahip.

Especially after the start of migration from the villages to cities, like the institution of grandfatherhood, the institution of musahiplik have begun to change and transform. Musahiplik could not be applied in urban life as it has been in the past. The Alevi-organized system based on traditional musahip customs and law has begun to dissolve gradually and has come to the point of getting out of practice over time. The practice of musahiplik is well known especially by the grandfathers and talips who emigrated to the cities, which were born in the villages. And even the elderly generation of Alevi have or had musahips. The Qizilbash Turkmens consider the families, that they have also defined as “musâb gardaş”, as their friends and brothers for the road ahead. The brotherhood of the road is regarded as one of the basic principles of religion, especially among the Alevi-Turkmens. Alevi-Turkmens stick true to the principle of “road is higher than the sentence” so they consider the principle of “brotherhood of the road is more important than any other” as the most important, and they try to keep this principle alive.

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