

INTRODUCTION

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At the very beginning of my graduate programme in European Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven, I decided to write my master thesis on the secularization process in Western Europe. The question that my thesis tried to answer was simple: “Why is Europe considered the most secular region in the world?” In this study, the word “Europe” will refer to particularly to Western Europe, unless otherwise is stated. However, while writing my thesis, I noticed that before anything else, i.e. before dealing with the European secularization process, the concept of secularization needed to be discussed in detail, since there was no agreement on the meaning of the term among scholars. Particularly after the first half of the 20th century, dozens of books and hundreds of articles have been devoted to the seemingly endless debate on what the concept of secularization means (Martin, 1965; Shiner, 1967; Wilson, 1979; Luckmann, 1979; Lechner, 1991; Casanova, 1994; Yamane, 1997; Stark, 1999; Bruce, 2002).

The first thing that strikes the eye in this discussion is the deep disagreement among scholars with respect to the definition of the concept and the proper methodology to measure it. In the early 21st century, two scholars have been at the heart of these discussions: Steve Bruce and Rodney Stark. The claims of these two scholars

have been reviewed in numerous academic works. Some of these works attempt to find a middle way between Bruce and Stark or else side with one of them (Pollack & Pickel, 2007; Norris & Inglehart, 2008; Warner, 2010; Roberts & Yamane, 2012).

To explain the reasons behind the secularization process as seen in societies, Bruce and Stark use different models, i.e. the Classical Secularization Theory and the Religious Market Model, respectively. The Classical Secularization Theory claims that the process of secularization is intrinsically connected to the process of modernization, namely that the decline in religious practices and beliefs in Western Europe is an inevitable result of historical progress due to modernization, i.e. “industrialization of work; the shift from villages to towns and cities; the replacement of the small community by the society; the rise of individualism; the rise of egalitarianism; and the rationalization both of thought and social organization” (Bruce, 1999a: 266). The Religious Market Model, by contrast, argues that the decrease in religious activity can be explained by the lack of a free market in religious goods as well as by the lack of significant competition between the providers of such goods. Competition is seen as a stimulus for religious growth. Well-respected publishing houses and journals have published the works of Stark and Bruce in an effort to pit one against the other. The article by Stark (1999), “Secularization R.I.P.”, and the book by Bruce (2002), *God is Dead*, became peak-points of these discussions. It would seem that for Stark, almost everything asserted by Bruce had been interpreted wrongly by historians. While Bruce claims that modernization is the cause of the secularization process, Stark adamantly rejected this idea on the basis of statistics from another modern country, the USA, and further asserted that beyond the USA there is a worldwide religious revival which should be accepted as a very strong sign for the rebuttal of Bruce’s renowned argument, viz. that modernization and secularization go hand in hand. The abstract of Stark’s sensational article states it as follows:

From the beginning, social scientists have celebrated the secularization thesis despite the fact that it never was consistent with empirical reality. More than 150 years ago Tocqueville pointed out that “the facts by no means accord with [the secularization] theory,” and this lack of accord has grown far worse since then. Indeed, the only shred of credibility for the notion that secularization has been taking place has depended on contrasts between now and a bygone Age of Faith. In this essay I assemble the work of many recent historians who are unanimous that the Age of Faith is pure nostalgia –that lack of religious participation was, if anything, even more widespread in medieval times than now. Next, I demonstrate that there have been no recent religious changes in Christendom that are consistent with the secularization thesis - not even among scientists. I also expand assessment of the secularization doctrine to non-Christian societies showing that not even the highly magical “folk religions” in Asia have shown the slightest declines in response to quite rapid modernization. Final words are offered as secularization is laid to rest (1999: 249).

The following excerpt from Stark asserts that Bruce himself accepted his mistake and does not believe anymore that there was a Golden Age of Faith during Medieval times:

Steve Bruce of the University of Aberdeen has long been one of the most die-hard proponents of the secularization thesis. Recently, even he admitted that, in terms of organized participation, the Golden Age of Faith never existed. Indeed, Bruce (1997: 674) proposes that the medieval church was not even especially concerned to bring the people to mass as “was clear from the very architecture of churches and forms of service” (1999: 263).

However, in *God is Dead*, Bruce accused Stark of distorting his views:

It is an unfortunate feature of Stark’s style that he often misinterprets those with whom he disagrees. On this point he says of me: “Recently, even he [Steve Bruce] admitted that, in terms of organized participation, the Golden Age of Faith never existed.” (2002: 243).

Since the focus of the theoretical part of this thesis is based on the ongoing discussions among these two scholars, an extensive discussion regarding their views is provided in the theoretical part of

the thesis. Why? Because, after all the criticisms raised by Stark and his followers, Bruce restricted himself to a certain place and time. He admitted that he does not make his claims for all societies in the world; whatever he claims is related geographically to Western Europe and its offshoots¹, and historically is based on the beginning of the Protestant Reformation:

Instead, I take the secularization story, like Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis, to be an attempt to explain a historically and geographically specific cluster of changes. It is an explanation of what has happened to religion in Western Europe (and its North American and Australian offshoots) since the Reformation (Bruce, 1999a: 265).

The secularization paradigm combines two things: an assertion about changes in the presence and nature of religion, and a collection of related explanations of those changes. It is not a universally applicable scientific law, but a description and explanation of the past of European societies and their settler offsprings (Bruce, 2006: 35).

However, the present dissertation claims that Bruce's secularization paradigm is not only valid for West European countries and their offshoots, but also may provide valuable insights into the secularization processes in the other parts of the world. But to render his paradigm valid for other modern or modernizing societies that have not experienced the Protestant Reformation in their own history, Bruce's paradigm needs to be extended. In this regard, aspects of his paradigm that related to the Protestant Reformation need to be downplayed, while those with more universal relevance need to be highlighted. For illustrating it, the extended secularization paradigm is then applied to the Alevi community in Turkey, which is not part of Western Europe or one of its offshoots, and has not experienced the Protestant Reformation in its history. The sole reason for the selection of a community from Turkey is not the need for a non-Protestant group. The outcome of this study may also provide

1 By using the word "offshoots", Steve Bruce refers to Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

some impressions concerning an issue that had preoccupied Turkish public opinion for years. Many academics, journalists and opinion leaders in Turkey claim that Turkey has been getting more religious especially ever since the AK Party came into power in 2002 (Toprak, Bozan, Morgül & Şener, 2010). For example, during rallies in cities such as İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir in 2007, criticism of a Turkish society that was becoming more Islamized has been openly voiced. Millions of people at these demonstrations (called Republic Rallies) have screamed out slogans saying that they would not allow Turkey to become another Iran and openly invited the Turkish Armed Forces to intervene in Turkish politics (Sivil Media, 2009, December 2). Consequently, another reason for selecting a community in Turkey as part of this study is the domestic and international perception of a country that keeps getting more and more religious such as Turkey *vis-à-vis* Bruce's claim that a society that gets modernized will inevitably become secular. Does the "Islamization" of Turkey mean that Turkish society is going through a process of "desecularization" or can Turkish society become more religious while at the same time becoming more secular?

This study chose the Alevis in Adana, Çorum and Tunceli regions as its focus, with premarital dating, mate selection, marriage rituals, divorce, and the institutions of spiritual brotherhood and the people's court -as far as they are concerned with marital issues- as the topics to be explored.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEMS / ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Present dissertation investigates whether or not the extension of Steve Bruce's secularization paradigm could give plausible explanation for the social transformations in other modern or modernizing countries apart from West European countries. Therefore we will analyze the modernization process among Alevi communities in Turkey as well as the changes they encounter on marital issues in or-

der to ascertain the answer to the above question. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to find plausible answers to the following ten questions:

1) What does the concept of secularization mean?

For a discussion of whether the claims of the secularization paradigm can be extended and whether it can provide a reasonable explanation for the Alevi communities' situation in Turkey, first of all it is crucial to clarify secularization as a concept. For that reason, at the outset of the thesis, the concept of secularization will be discussed and defined. Then, in order to indicate the inadequacy of the general perception of "secularization = disappearance of religion" which has been put forward by many prominent scholars (Hadden, 1987; Stark & Iannaccone, 1994; Cox & Swyngedouw, 2000) and which also finds support in Turkey (Küçükcan, 2005; Köse, 2006; Yapıcı, 2012), and also in an effort to differentiate the concept of secularization from laicization (the two terms are often confused in Turkey due to Turkey's own peculiar history), it is necessary to discuss how the concept of secularization differs from being irreligious and why it is mistaken wrong to use the two terms (secularization and laicization) interchangeably. Although they should not be used as substitute terms for historical and etymological reasons, Turkish intellectuals, scholars, editors of dailies and interpreters have continued to use the two terms alternatively (Duran, 1995; Akşit, 2005).

2) Is it possible to explain the secularization process among modern or modernizing societies in light of an extended paradigm?

According to Bruce's secularization paradigm, modernization is accepted as the main reason behind the vigorous secularization process in Western Europe. In this case, a vital question of this thesis is "whether it would be possible to come up with a Secularization Paradigm in order to understand not only the secularization process

experienced by modern West European societies but also the secularization processes that take place in other modern or modernizing societies which have not experienced the Protestant Reformation in their own histories?” The answer of this study to this question is affirmative. But there is no need for a new paradigm that is totally independent of Bruce’s. This study is convinced that if his paradigm is revised and extended, we can come up with a key paradigm that may provide a coherent explanation for the secularization process of other modern or modernizing societies apart from West European societies. Therefore, in the theoretical part, after exploring secularization as a concept, I will shed some light on what Bruce’s secularization paradigm asserts. Then, in a clear departure from Bruce, I will argue that his paradigm is not only valid for West European societies, but also for Alevi communities in Turkey. However, to extend the scope of his paradigm in its relevance, aspects of the paradigm that belong to the history of Western Europe and its offshoots will be somewhat downplayed while those with more universal relevance will be upgraded.

3) Why is the Protestant Reformation vital for Bruce’s paradigm?

By presenting more details on the extended paradigm’s pillars, my aim is to show that Bruce’s paradigm may provide us with insights into the secularization process in other societies besides Western Europe and its offshoots. However, I still think it crucial to explore the vital place of the Protestant Reformation (which is not part of the extended version) in Bruce’s paradigm. Bruce used his paradigm “to explain a historically and geographically specific cluster of changes” (Bruce, 1999a: 265) in Western Europe which started with the Protestant Reformation. Therefore, Chapter II will shed some light on why the Protestant Reformation is vital to Bruce’s paradigm.

4) Why not use other models as a starting point (i.e. Religious Market Model, Secure Secularization Theory and Religious Individualization Theory) rather than Bruce's paradigm?

Apart from Bruce's secularization paradigm, there are other theories that bring to light cause-effect relations on the subject of the secularization process of societies. Although these theories have dominated contemporary thinking on the question of secularization as much as Bruce's paradigm, I have not chosen them as my starting point because of their premises which will be discussed in detail in Chapter II. Therefore, before discussing the details of the extended secularization paradigm, I will explore the main assumptions and inefficacies of three alternative theories: the aforementioned Religious Market Model advanced by Stark *et al.*, the Secure Secularization Theory of Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, and lastly the Religious Individualization Theory proposed by Thomas Luckmann and later advanced by Grace Davie.

5) What are the pillars of such an extended secularization paradigm?

The historical dynamics behind the West European secularization process consists of the following seven dynamics: the Renaissance (15th century), the Protestant Reformation (16th century), the emergence of absolute monarchs (16th and 17th centuries), the Scientific Revolution (17th century), the Age of Enlightenment (18th century), industrial capitalism (from the middle of the 18th century to the middle of 19th century), and urbanization (19th century). The major and vital social, economic, political, and cultural changes that came about with these historical dynamics are regarded as the segments of modernization. This modernization process has also led to a decline in religion's prestige and power in Western Europe. However, although these historical factors did play a vital role in Western Europe's secularization process, it does not necessarily mean that all these seven factors are indispensable for secularization in other

parts of the world. For even though the seven historical dynamics do not seem to occur in other countries as they did in Western Europe, still, some of them could be sufficient to trigger the process of secularization regardless of the peculiar histories of those non-Protestant societies. This dissertation suggests that these three factors of Bruce's secularization paradigm, 1) scientific advancements 2) industrial capitalism 3) urbanization, might be sufficient to trigger an increase in the secularization level of societies regardless of the dominant religious culture.

6) Why does the secularization process accelerate with the diffusion of scientific knowledge and advancements in daily life?

To answer this question, I will first emphasize that it is not abnormal for religious people to trust science or that a scientist can be religious since there is no zero-sum relationship between science and religion according to the secularization paradigm asserted in this study. Secondly, I aim to explain how scientific advances accelerate the secularization process in the absence of a zero-sum relationship. The section concludes that the impact of scientific developments on the secularization process is twofold: (i) the increase in rational consciousness by which human beings start to explain the natural phenomena in a rational cause-and-effect relationship, and (ii) the spread of technology which has reduced the number of areas and issues previously occupied by religion.

7) Why does the secularization process seem to be accelerating in capitalist countries?

As an economic system, in capitalism, the means of production are supposed to be tied to private ownership. The government does not intervene in the economy wherein goods and services are freely ex-

changed² (Barry, 2002; Hazlitt, 2012; Machan, 1993). Capitalism is one of the main dynamics that led to Western Europe becoming the world's most secularised region (Casanova, 1994). Moreover, if we look at the world map, it can be seen that religion recedes into the background where capitalism becomes the dominant economic model (Norris & Inglehart, 2008: 77, 104). Therefore, my aim is to build a theoretical framework for the regression of a dominant religious culture at the social level in different regions of the world on account of capitalism.

Because of the peculiarities of capitalism, rational and organic³ societies come into the picture, while the power and social prestige of religion, folk-religions, religion-like mechanisms and superstitious beliefs are restricted. Notwithstanding the absence of a zero-sum game between capitalism and religion, at least on paper, statistically it can be shown that countries with a free market economy are more secular than countries with a command economy (Norris & Inglehart, 2008). In this section, it will be examined in detail how the capitalist mode of production reduces the social power of religion under four subheadings:

1. Rules of Economy and Secularization (Weber, 1930/2005; Mises, 1981)
2. Disintegration of Traditional Family Structure and Secularization (Finer, 2007; Chartsbin, 2009).

2 How and why a country is called capitalist has been detailed in Chapter III. But, briefly, it might be said that capitalist countries have an economic system where there is private or corporate ownership of the means of production. It should be noted that in this study we are not talking of “pure capitalism” which is an idea that private markets are most efficient and functional if government does not interfere in the economy. Today, although there are many countries that call themselves capitalist, there is no “pure capitalist” country in which the government does not play any role in the economy.

3 The term “organic” is here used in a Durkheimian sense, meaning that interdependence of the component parts of society emerged with the industrial revolution (Durkheim, 1893/2014).

3. Increase in Welfare and Secularization (Hartwell, 1965; Skouesen, 1994; Kasper, 2002)

4. Downsizing of the State and Secularization (Dal Lago, 1999; Berlin, 2004)

8) Why does urbanization lead to an increase in the level of secularization?

Religion turns into something “alien” in urban life every passing day (Bruce, 2014). Young people who have had some kind of religious life in their rural communities just before tertiary studies start to have less religious life after enrolling at university (Kirman, 2005a; Amman, 2010). Alevi and Sunni religious leaders, who are regarded as the representatives of God in rural areas, lose their prestige and social clout in the face of urban life mechanisms (Balkanlıoğlu, 2012). With urbanization, estrangement towards anything beyond the material world increases, while the impact of religious identity on daily life decreases. Sexual minority groups (e.g. homosexuals, transsexuals), which do not have the opportunity to exist or express themselves freely in rural areas, are becoming part of everyday life due to the structure of urban life (Harry, 1974; Yılmaz, 2012, October). The number of inter-denominational marriages, dates and pre-marital sexual intercourse, all of which are mostly forbidden in traditional communities intertwined with Abrahamic religions, also increases in urban life (Yılmaz, 2005; Dinçer 2007). In short, religion loses its power and prestige for providing guidance in urban society. But why? The basic argument for such a link is that urbanization accelerates secularization by creating problems for religion, folk religions, religion-like mechanisms and superstitious beliefs. That is, as urbanization increases, secular and rational solutions begin to replace religious regulations, values, and teachings which normally handle the problems of daily life in rural society. Therefore, the following three dimensions will be elaborated in this section, in an effort to build a theoretical framework for the decline of dominant

religious culture at the social level where urbanization increases: 1) mobility (Cox, 1965), 2) access to Different Alternatives (Dobbe-laere, 1985), and 3) privatization of personal life (Wirth, 1938).

9) What does the extended secularization paradigm *not* assert?

To avoid possible confusion, it is essential to concisely mention what the extended secularization paradigm does *not* assert. This will be examined in the Chapter III under six subdivisions:

1. The extended secularization paradigm is not limited to particular parts of the world.
2. The extended secularization paradigm is not a secularist or a progressivist ideology.
3. The extended secularization paradigm does not claim that the end point is atheism.
4. The extended secularization paradigm is not “synchronized swimming”.⁴
5. The extended secularization paradigm is not based on the frequency of worship -or lack thereof- only.
6. The extended secularization paradigm is not relevant for monotheistic religions only.

10) Can the extended secularization paradigm provide a plausible explanation for Alevi communities in Turkey even if there has been a revival of Alevism?

According to the secularization paradigm proposed in this thesis, the level of secularization of societies may increase if the effects of scientific developments can be seen in people’s daily lives, the capitalist economic system becomes prevalent, and urbanization rate

4 In synchronized swimming, athletes try to accomplish a synchronized routine of intricate moves in split-second accuracy in the water. Based on this, the secularization paradigm does not claim that secularization comes into being under modernization in the same way or within the same time frame for all parts of society.

increases. Turkey has experienced these three processes since the 1960s as will be illustrated in Appendix A. Since Alevi communities are part of Turkey, they are supposed to be affected by these structural changes as well. However, according to the hypothesis of this study, while secularization of the Alevis was expected as a result of the modernization process experienced in Turkey, many academic works published in Turkey and also abroad (Çamuroğlu, 2003; Çaha, 2004; Shah, 2013) have pointed to an Alevi revival in Turkey especially since the 1980s. Alevis, who previously were assumed to be nil at the state level and also at the social arena, have become one of Turkey's most important agenda items. Alevis' struggles for their rights when they arrived in cities, establishment of Alevi associations, the opening of Cem houses for worship in the center of large metropolitan areas, broadcasting their rites and rituals in Cem houses to millions via state televisions, and the new generation of Alevis expressing their Alevi identities without hiding in contrast to previous generations – are some examples presented as part of the Alevi revival.

So, the field research of this study has been designed for Alevi communities in an attempt to find answers to the following questions: If Alevi revival is a fact, then how have Alevi communities been affected by the rise of scientific developments, capitalism and urbanization? And, how has this influenced their secularization level? Is it possible for Alevi communities to experience secularization and revival at the same time?

Why are Alevis chosen as the subject of this study?

Although the findings part of the thesis provides detailed information about the history and the position of Alevis in Turkey, it should be briefly discussed here why Alevis have been preferred for present dissertation. As an illustration case for the extended secularization paradigm, initially, my aim was to study the secularization process of Turkish society instead of the Alevi communities. However, since

the scope of such a study would be far bigger than a PhD thesis can cover, it would create insurmountable problems in terms of budget and incompatibility in terms of scope and sampling. For that reason, choosing one single community in Turkey as a focus seems much more convenient for the objective of the thesis. This community would have to be a religious one, because the aim of the thesis (application of a secularization paradigm in Turkey) necessitates this. Sunnism and Alevism are the two prominent denominations in Turkey. The Sunni denomination was not chosen because it is the most common religious community and the official faith of the Turkish state. These features would have also pushed the boundaries of the thesis. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA, *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) is an institution serving only Sunni Muslims since, for the state, being a Muslim is automatically interpreted as being a Sunni Muslim. Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (*Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi Dersi*), which is lectured as compulsory subject in the public schools, is based on the Sunnite belief. Since the sub-religious groups are not officially recorded, data on the precise number of the Sunnite population are not available. Nonetheless it would not be an exaggeration to say that their population amounts to tens of millions. For this reason, selecting a religious group with fewer adherents was more convenient in terms of the limited character of the dissertation.

However, even though there are fewer Alevis than Sunnis in Turkey, they still constitute the second largest religious sub-group. They live in cluster-like structures in different parts of the country. As I will explain in more detail in chapter IV, from past to present, they have always been a minority and identified themselves with their belief. Alevi identity is not only a religious belief, but also an identity. Several massacres were carried out against Alevis in Anatolia in the last quarter of the 20th century (the massacres in the cities of Çorum, Maraş and Sivas). All these massacres, as well as the resulting state of introversion, living out their beliefs behind

closed doors, the obligation imposed by the state to take part in classes where the compulsory subject of religion based on Sunni belief is taught, non-recognition by the state, being humiliated in society, and the difficulties they experience within the bureaucratic apparatus to reach administrative positions, have rendered them all the more sensitive in comparison to Sunni people in terms of their identity. In other words, because of both late urbanization and the above mentioned social problems, Alevis are supposed to secularize rather slowly and they are likely more connected to their religious sense of belonging. Alevis have been known to be self-enclosed and sensitive about their faith-based identity as Alevis (Erdemir, 2004; Erdem, 2010).

Another reason why Alevis have been chosen as the focus group despite being part of a modernizing country is the sheer number of academic works concerning an Alevi revival in Turkey especially since the 1980s. Better organization by Alevis, their efforts to increase societal awareness regarding their rights, owning their own television and radio channels and lobbying efforts at the state level for recognition have made Alevis part of Turkey's agenda as never before. Such an Alevi revival, hand in hand with the secularization of Alevis, seems contradictory on paper, making Alevi communities a more interesting subject, at least for research.

Finally, although it is not easy to define what Alevis is, at least it will not be difficult to denote what Alevis is not.⁵ For all these reasons the Alevi communities of Turkey has been considered a proper example for the application of the extended secularization paradigm to a religious group.

Why does the present dissertation focus on the generation gap with regard to the subjects of premarital datings, mate selection, marriage rituals, divorce, the institution of spiritual

5 The detailed discussion on Alevis is made in the PART B.

brotherhood (*musahiplik*) and the institution of the people's court (*düşkünlük meydam*)?

Due to its position in the center of Alevi belief and rituals, the marriage institution has become the subject of this thesis. The marriage institution is for Alevis of utmost importance as it concerns posterity and continuation of their community. The direct relationship between some vital Alevi institutions (the institution of spiritual brotherhood and that of the people's court) and marriage is not coincidental. For an Alevi individual, being married and sustaining it in accordance with Alevi belief and traditions means being a complete Alevi. Consequently, individuals who are thought to have harmed the marriage institution face enforcements that may at times include death and being an outcast. Due to the vital position of marriage in Alevi faith, it has thus been chosen as the issue to be illustrated in this thesis' field research.

Premarital datings or non-matrimonial relationships are conducts that are not at all approved in traditional Alevi communities and perceived as one of the most severe religious sins ever to be committed. What's more, not only the lovers, but also the engaged pairs are not allowed to stay by themselves in a room or they cannot go out together without being accompanied by a relative. Conducts that can harm a matrimony may result in social exclusion and people pay, in certain places, for such conducts with their lives (Bayatlı, 1957). The information we got during the field survey in the present study has also confirmed the strict structure of Alevi traditions with respect to dating in the premarital phase. Elderly participants stated that the bride and the groom especially did not see each other until the wedding night. An elderly participant from Tunceli, 64 years of age, said that conditions were so conservative in his youth that girls and boys were not allowed to communicate with each other; it was even prohibited to see the face of their fiancées/fiancés. Another participant from the city of Çorum said that they always got cold feet in front of elderly family members and they always did

whatever they were told. He further said that he did not see his wife before the matrimony, and that it was his mother who chose her as his spouse.

Divorce is another sensitive issue relating to matrimony in traditional Alevi communities. Divorce is always a frightening event for Alevi families. Divorced people are regarded as incompetent and incomplete in Alevi communities. It is seen as damnation when married women return to the house they lived in as maiden. It used to be expected that Alevi girls would obey their husbands and never return to their maiden home, even if the result would be their death. Young people in an Alevi community, be it girls or boys, had no other option to choose (Yaman, 2007). Divorce was an event that resulted in social exclusion.

Whether there has been an increase or decrease in the social prestige and power of the institutions of spiritual brotherhood and the people's court will also be investigated in this thesis. These two institutions are directly associated with the matrimony in an Alevi community, and it was these two institutions that enabled Alevis to re-create themselves and maintain their traditions for centuries. For this reason, the changes in the social effects of these two institutions will provide significant information in terms of the secularization process of Alevi communities.

Spiritual brotherhood is a concept which could be referred to as the development of a relation between two Alevi men by means of a contract after they get married. The two men become closer than real brothers after going through certain social processes and rituals. Thus, it is not a blood relation, but they become even closer than that. Spiritual brotherhood could also be known as "holding brotherhood," "fellowship of the road," and "hereafter fraternity" (Yaman, 2007). The traditional Alevi faith requires that every man should have a spiritual brother after he gets married. Otherwise, it would not be suitable for him to be part of any religious ceremonies. It is mandatory for spiritual brothers to help each other throughout

their entire lives. This includes addressing even private matters of each other's family, and paying the other's debt if required (Melikoff, 2012). The concept of spiritual brotherhood goes back to the times of the Prophet Muhammed. The information present in the sources and the statements of the respondents both are well aligned with regard to the origin of the concept of spiritual brotherhood. The prophet Muhammed developed the concept of social solidarity when he announced brotherly association between a Muslim who had migrated from Mecca to Medina and another Muslim who was from Medina (Tiryaki, 2013). It is stated by the Alevis that each person had found a spiritual brother except for 'Alī, and so the Prophet Muhammad had announced that he would be 'Alī's spiritual brother. Since that time, the Alevis have been using this concept to revive their own customs.

Finally, in Alevi communities, the *institution of the people's court* is one of the main social institutions related to marriage. When traditional Alevi communities are considered, their institution of the people's court was similar to that of current courts. This indicates that the court ensures correct law and order. The places in which the institutions of people's court functions are known as the *Houses of Cem* (sacred place of Alevis for gathering, religious rituals and other social issues). The issues which are dealt with and resolved include parental discord, rural planning, inheritance issues, and other community related problems. If a person is found to be guilty by the religious guides and judges (the *dedes*), then, depending on the degree of the crime, the social sanction applied on the person could include "excommunication". People who have been excommunicated are not allowed in the House of Cem as they become known as *decayed* (*düşkün*).

In case a person is announced to be *decayed*, s/he would not be allowed to live in the community at all. This means when someone is declared as *decayed*, s/he has to face the disastrous consequence of social hatred and exclusion. The overall community ends all ties

with the *decayed* person and they cannot be invited to the House of Cem either. Nobody visits the *decayed* person and they are not even helped if required. Sacrificing animal to God is not permitted to them and nobody eats their *lokma* (highly symbolic dessert offered in religious ceremonies). There is no communication with the *decayed* person, meaning s/he is completely excluded. The boycott is to such an extent that even family members cannot stake a claim on him/her. Moreover, in case a spiritual brother is announced to be *decayed*, his other spiritual brother and immediate relatives are directly affected. Their lives become morally troubled (Üzüm, 2009: 170-71; Tiryaki, 2013: 144-45). As David Zeidan (1999: 76) explains, the Alevis tried to ensure strict endogamy so they could avoid penetration by hostile outsiders, which ultimately made them a quasi-ethnic group. The Alevi taboos restricted any communication with the leading Sunni political-religious centre. Those who married outsiders, ate with outsiders, or had economic cooperation with outsiders, were threatened with the ultimate punishment of excommunication. Use of the state (Sunni) courts was also not permitted.

Considering this given information, it should be evident that in Alevism, marriage, as a social institution, has an extremely important position. Marriage is used as a tool to keep the community growing. In their entire history, Alevis have gone through strict sanctions and social elimination any time they caused damage to this institution. For this reason, this study focuses on understanding the institution of marriage and issues related to it with respect to the process of secularization.

RESEARCH METHODS

This thesis is divided into two main parts. The first part provides a theoretical discussion of the concept of secularization and the secularization paradigm on the basis of the relevant literature. The second part (Part B), includes a fieldwork study conducted to illustrate the theory put forth in the first part.

For the conceptual framework of the theoretical part, Steve Bruce's works and the works of Bryan Wilson by whom Bruce is influenced mostly, have been used as the main sources. Furthermore, the theories opposing Bruce and interpreting the secularization process from the perspective of different dynamics have also been discussed.

The aim of the second part is to investigate possible transitions in terms of three elements of modernization, i.e. scientific advances, industrial capitalism, and urbanization, among Alevi generations and their effects on the institution of marriage and related subjects such as dating, mate selection, marriage rituals, divorce, spiritual brotherhood, and the people's court. I conducted in-depth interviews with 60 Alevis in total (30 parents and 30 children) during field studies in Adana, Çorum and Tunceli. While identifying the persons to be interviewed, I preferred the snowball sampling method as those persons are not easily accessed due to socio-political reasons. In this method, respondents were chosen by the previous ones.

As the purpose of this study is to examine the transforming effect of belief on marriage issues, I opted to do interviews with one parent and one of his/her children. I also applied a special coding for them in order to protect their privacy.

In semi-structured interviews, I posed 28 core questions to the parents and to their children.⁶ Inherent to semi-structured interviews, sometimes it was not possible to ask the same questions in the same order. At times, I needed to add questions or did not need to ask questions that I had planned. I grouped the questions in two: I posed the first group of questions to learn about the generation gap in terms of the modernization level; I then asked the second group of questions, in order to understand the transformations and impacts of belief on marriage. After decoding the interviews, I used a qualitative data analysis software called MAXQDA to organize,

6 These questions can be seen in Appendix D.

encode, take notes, and analyze hundreds of pages of Word documents.

RELEVANCE OF THE THESIS

This study, which aims to understand whether the extended secularization paradigm can provide a reasonable explanation for the Alevi communities in Turkey, is important for a couple of reasons. As previously mentioned, Bruce restricted his paradigm to Western Europe and its offshoots, while admitting that his paradigm is based on the Protestant Reformation and covered geographically some particular parts of the world. By contrast, the present dissertation claims that Bruce's paradigm could be applicable to non-Protestant societies. Therefore, his paradigm is here applied to a non-Protestant community in a non-European country. As such, this study sets out with a fairly new approach.

This study further intends to investigate the secularization process among the Alevi communities without either a religious or secularist agenda; it also avoids a Eurocentric or Islamic bias. In addition, it has an integrated interdisciplinary thematic profile: it does not treat its subject from an exclusively philosophical, sociological, theological, political, or historical standpoint. Moreover, this study can encourage new academic studies that could contribute to the discussion on the subject of secularization in Turkey or in other non-Protestant communities.

Besides, this research sheds light on an important social debate in Turkey. According to many scholars and public opinion leaders Turkey has become more conservative and has been losing its secular roots over the years (Toprak, Bozan, Morgül & Şener, 2010). Although this study claims that Alevi communities have been secularized due to scientific advances, industrial capitalism, and the urbanization process that Turkish society has experienced for decades, the general impression in both domestic and international public opinion is quite the opposite. For example, in 2007, to raise

public opinion against the gradual promotion of Islamists and Islamism by AKP government, several mass rallies were organized in the big cities of Turkey. Millions of demonstrators gathered in city centres in support of the secular society of Turkey. “We don’t want to become another Iran, another Afghanistan” was one of the most verbalized slogans. Those millions of demonstrators, several popular dailies, many scholars, and secularist opinion leaders all regard the Turkish Armed Forces as the protector of Turkey’s secular identity. The impression of a more religious Turkey is very tangible, particularly among secular people, and even they do not find it necessary to discuss the opposite claims since it is pretty obvious for them (Firat, 2003, June 23; Medya Radar, 2009, December 2). The army has been both implicitly and explicitly asked to stage a coup against the pro-Islamic government.

If my dissertation would succeed in showing that at least one part of Turkish society is in fact more secular than it has been in the past, and that there are no signs of a reversal in this transformation, then the general public may be encouraged to let go of the idea that a militarily controlled Turkey is a necessary part of the process of secularization. What is more, this study might reveal that it is not an easy job for a conservative or an Islamist government to transform society by just passing some pro-religious laws since scientific advancements, industrial capitalism, and urbanization are strong triggers of the process of secularization regardless of the laws and/or intentions of conservative politicians.

LIMITATIONS

This study investigates the generation gap in terms of premarital dating, premarital sex, marriage rituals, divorce, spiritual brotherhood, as well as the subject of the people’s court in relation to marriage and divorce issues among Turkey’s Alevi communities. It tries to find answers to the question which generation is more in touch with religion regarding the aforementioned subjects in light of the

secularization paradigm. However, it should be stressed that this paradigm is neither new nor original. On the contrary, it is based for the most part on Bruce's secularization paradigm.

Besides, it should be stressed that this study also has limitations in terms of its scope. I conducted in-depth interviews with 60 people divided into 30 pairs from the three regions of Adana, Çorum, and Tunceli. Therefore, we should be careful about generalizing the result of the research to all Alevi communities living in other parts of Turkey. The Alevi denomination is perhaps not the largest denomination in Turkey, but it is still the second largest denomination, consisting of millions of people. The total Alevi population is not exactly known since sub-religious identity is not officially required at the governmental level. As a result, the number of Alevis varies according to different authors. Sunni authors' numbers are generally lower than those of their Alevi counterparts. But despite these diverse figures, it is generally accepted that their number amounts to several millions and Alevis are the second largest denomination in Turkey. Therefore, it should be emphasized once again that the result of this study has to be supported by other studies before generalization on this subject can duly be made.

In addition, since Alevis are being studied in their own lands, the impact of internal or external migration to big cities on the secularization process among Alevi communities in Turkey and Europe is omitted in this study. Due to the chain referral sampling method, there is a risk of involving only a certain kind of people and being overly directed by previous respondents. My control over the sampling was very limited due to the nature of the chain referral sampling method. As Chaim Noy neatly summarizes:

The fact that all of the information about informants available in snowball sampling is supplied solely by the informants themselves has a crucial consequence. Unlike the bulk of sampling procedures and designs, in snowball sampling the researcher relinquishes a considerable amount of control over the sampling phase to the informants (2008: 332).

This method could lead researchers towards a sampling bias. Since respondents are chosen by previous respondents, they might recruit only people who are very well-known to them. Therefore, it is quite possible that the interviews are conducted with people who would be classified in a rather similar way. In addition, although face-to-face in-depth interviews help researchers acquire insight into their field subject, respondents will be likely to give more politically correct, rather than truthful answers to the questions, and they might behave differently than normally due to the face-to-face nature of the interviews.

Also, since I am unable to communicate in the Kurdish language, it is possible that this may have created some very minor problems for respondents in the Tunceli region. Despite the fact that I only managed to contact them via my reference, due to the thirty-year-long conflicts in the Eastern Turkey between Kurdistan Workers' Party and Turkish Armed Forces, some respondents could have been a bit skeptical. Therefore, it is not abnormal that my two respondents already gave up and cancelled our meetings in the last minute. However, when my respondents from Tunceli realize that the questions were not related to any political issues, they become more relaxed while answering the questions. Therefore, this study should be evaluated with these limitations in mind. Also, it must be supported by other related studies.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The following parts of the thesis consist of three main units: Part A, Part B, and Part C. There are three chapters in Part A which contains the theoretical skeleton of the thesis. The first chapter includes a debate as to what secularization is, and what it is not, as a concept. The second chapter includes a detailed review of Bruce's secularization paradigm which is a source of inspiration for the extended secularization paradigm. This chapter will put forward why Bruce's paradigm is Christianity-based, and later discussion shall clarify

why Bruce's paradigm has been taken as the basis (and not others') for the extended secularization paradigm. The third chapter, the last chapter of PART A, will include arguments concerning what the extended secularization paradigm is and what it is not. Part B contains field research done to illustrate the theoretical framework created in Part A. In this part, after providing historical information concerning Alevis, and discussing the Alevi revival since the 1980s, data obtained from the field research will be presented. Part C consists of the Discussion and Conclusion sections where data from both theory and area are merged and discussed.