



Author: Yayın Kurulu

The Alevi Encyclopedia

Summary

The Alevi Encyclopedia is a comprehensive initiative that aims to preserve the historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage of Alevism, supporting accurate knowledge production and passing it on to future generations through a scientific, digital platform.

Karanlık bilmeyiz nurumuz vardır,
Gerçeği söyleyen dilimiz vardır...
Düşünce karanlığına ışık saçanlara
aşk olsun...

Alevism as an ancient and deeply rooted belief tradition that is embraced by various ethnic and religious communities, defines ethno-religious groups/populations following this tradition that spans from Asia to Europe, including the Balkans and the Middle East. It, thus, encompasses rich diversity in societal practices, cultural affiliations, and social relationships, in the way of existing in linguistic-symbolic meanings; producing all its content collectively and through full consent; rejecting all hegemonic relationships; showing full respect for nature and all forms of life as its main tenet, and embracing love over violence.

Due to the exposure to various forms of violence (physical, political, economic, epistemic, etc.), the Alevi populations had to migrate from their homeland where they rooted down for millennia, have turned into a significant Alevi community, particularly in the Western European countries, where they have achieved recognition and organization as an autonomous faith following their struggle for such aim. However, in Turkey, where Alevi populations have the deepest roots and have existed for thousands of years, the efforts for their religious rights and demands continue to be consistently denied.



On the other hand, by the circles that control the state apparatus, the nature of Alevism has systematically been forced to transform into a form compatible with a certain ethno-religious ideological formation that desired, forced assimilation.

In this context, epistemic violence has been inflicted on Alevism through information deliberately produced by states and external actors, aiming to “redefine” Alevism and Alevis, not with their own concepts, languages, traditions, worlds of meaning, forms of emotion, and narratives, but rather according to the political expectations of these external ethno-religious actors. This process forcibly imposes entirely “alien” information onto living Alevism, constituting an act of epistemic violence.

In response to this, however, particularly since the 1990s, Alevi communities have not remained passive. They have begun to establish their own channels within international academic circles and civil society activities to counter this multi-dimensional epistemic violence through academic publications, journals, newspapers, TV, radio channels, books, bulletins, reports, and other intellectual productions. *The Alevi Encyclopedia* emerges as a new phase of this process—a willful expression of Alevism with its own voice, concepts, thoughts, and emotions that are carried out more decisively.

In this context, in the process of completing the first quarter of the 21st century, the initiative of the *Alevi Encyclopedia* emerges as a crucial fundamental need for compiling, systematically classifying, and examining Alevi knowledge from its own existing oral and written sources, conveying it to readers in a comprehensive and understandable manner, and making it accessible through technological tools that meet the requirements of the era. Additionally, the compilation, preservation, and transmission of the knowledge about Alevism that has been confiscated, distorted, or subjected to efforts of destruction and alteration up to the present day—in other words, the salvation of its collective memory—has become an urgent need.

The Alevi Encyclopedia stands as a vital information platform, offering crucial insights to navigate the obstacles and challenges to the historical existence of Alevism. It embodies three decades of academic and intellectual accumulation, marking a new chapter in articulating Alevism with its unique voices, concepts, thoughts, and emotions.

Why an Alevi Encyclopedia?



Encyclopedias differ significantly from dictionaries, compilation books, and special issues of journals in terms of their scope, writing style, and functions. Since they were shaped in the 18th century in France during the modern period, encyclopedias have aimed to enlighten society and liberate it from the yoke of the old regimes (*ancien régime*) by equipping it with the power of accurate knowledge. They continue to carry the same revolutionary essence today.

Therefore, the Alevi Encyclopedia aims to:

Preserve the Alevi cultural heritage, which has faced serious threats throughout history such as forced assimilation, massacres, and the distortion of its cultural legacy, and make it accessible to new generations through contemporary, scientific resources;

To enable Alevism, as a unique religio-cultural identity with strong social and political dimensions, to protect and defend itself against the intense and multifaceted epistemic violence inflicted upon it by states, and to construct its own knowledge sphere and to be able to resist;

To enable the Alevi community to combat the disinformation produced as a barrier to understanding, strengthening, and transmitting its own cultural identity;

To serve as an important tool for building a strong identity cohesion, not only reflecting the diversity and cultural heritage of Alevi communities in Turkey but also in all Alevi regions;

To present Alevism most inclusively, considering the expanding geography of Alevi communities and the broadening scope of Alevi studies, as well as different academic and intellectual approaches and interpretations;

To distill and compile this rich body of knowledge without deviating from scientific criteria and ethics, and as a digital platform open to constant updates, rejecting the epistemic hegemony created by hegemonic, colonial approaches over Alevi knowledge;

To accurately portray Alevism through its cultural codes, establish a foundational reference particularly aimed at younger generations, and preserve and transmit knowledge about the Alevi cultural heritage with a scientific approach, leveraging contemporary technologies.

What Kind of Encyclopedia?



Considering the diversity and historical depth of Alevi communities and the complex problems triggered by the multifaceted sociological transformations of today, it is clear that creating *the Alevi Encyclopedia* of this scope and breadth, will extremely be challenging and require substantial effort over a long period. The success of such an endeavor, in terms of time, capacity, and resources, will primarily depend on strong determination and collective intelligence. Therefore, contributions from academics, writers, and new-generation researchers who have dedicated themselves to this subject are of vital importance.

As a comprehensive intellectual effort, *the Alevi Encyclopedia* will be constructed step by step through periodic works organized by “the Encyclopedia Editorial Board” composed of competent scholars and researchers in their fields.

The Alevi Encyclopedia will address Alevism from its epistemic framework, encompassing concepts, institutions, historical background, contemporary sociological and anthropological dimensions, symbols, values, emotions, and oral cultural heritage of the Alevi faith and cultural world. The entries for the encyclopedia will be written by those who specialize in their respective topics and will be published after evaluation by the editorial board.

The Alevi Encyclopedia will be contributed by knowledgeable individuals, intellectuals, and faith leaders—representatives of the oral tradition within the Alevi cultural world—to transmit their knowledge of Alevi heritage.

In *the Alevi Encyclopedia* project, social scientific criteria will be the benchmark. A scientific framework that offers a holistic perspective to the reader—free from scattered, eclectic, and unfounded arguments—and covers the existing cultural diversity and various approaches to Alevism will be established.

The Alevi Encyclopedia, as a digital platform, will be undergoing continuous updates to maintain dynamic content that reflects the evolving social reality and to expand in quality and scope over time.

The Alevi Encyclopedia aims to be a multilingual platform accessible to everyone interested in learning about Alevism, particularly younger generations in the European diaspora. As the project progresses, the entries will be translated into different languages to serve a broader audience.



The Alevi Encyclopedia aims to:

To preserve the diversity of beliefs and rituals intrinsic to Alevism,

To highlight the cultural and linguistic variety within the faith's historical and traditional roots, countering efforts to homogenize Alevism and amplifying its diverse voices,

To address the need to make the complexity of the existing literature on Alevism more comprehensible.

Alevi Encyclopedia

Kurucu Yayın Kurulu