



The Institution of Analık in Alevism

Dr. Sonmez Alvanoğlu Yolcu

sonmezalvanoglu@hotmail.com

Published Date:

15 July 2026

Downloaded Date:

13.10.2026

Suggested Citation: Alvanoğlu

Yolcu, Sonmez (2026). The Institution of Analık in Alevism. Alevi Encyclopedia — ISIL: DE-4607. <https://doi.org/10.68413/alevian-siklopedisi.rt376> (Access Date: 13.10.2026)

The Alevi Encyclopedia is registered under the code **ISIL: DE-4607** within the scope of the **International Standard Identifier for Libraries and Related Organizations**.

ISSN 3055-9928

ISIL URI /isil/DE-4607

LOBID

lobid.org/organisations/DE-4607

Permalink id.zdb-

[services.de/resource/organisations/DE-4607](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:5:1-63864-p0011-9)

Address: Alevi Ansiklopedisi

Körnebachstr. 49-51, 44143 Dortmund

info@aleviansiklopedisi.com

Summary

Analık, as a socio-religious role in Alevism, constitutes a significant component of the traditional and social structure of the Alevi belief system. It plays a key role in the transmission of religious and cultural practices, particularly with regard to women's representation within the sphere of belief. However, compared to the institution of 'dedelik', analık has remained less visible and has relatively declined, particularly in the context of urbanization and broader processes of social transformation. This entry examines the institution of analık within the framework of its historical development, its position within Alevi belief and ritual practices, social functions and particularly transformation in response to processes of modernization, urbanization and migration.

Keywords: Alevilik, Ana, Analık

The Historical and Social Position of the Institution of Analık

Although the institution of *analık* constitutes an important component of the traditional and religious structure in Alevi social organization, it has received limited attention in the literature and has largely been defined in relation to the institution of *dedelik*. Indeed, in some studies, conceptualize the *ana* as the *dede's* spouse, interpreting the status as one that emerges from the marital bond. (Ulusoy, Yılmaz, Karşıcı & Selçuk, 2014; Gümüş, 2011, p. 24; Okan, 2014, p. 29; Arı,

2019). While this approach explains a particular aspect of the *analık* institution, it reduces it to a one-dimensional framework and renders its position in religious practices and its role in social functions largely invisible.

While studies emphasizing that the traditional Alevi social structure is organized around *dede* lineages (*ocaks*), *musahiplik*, and the *cem* ritual (Coşkun, 2017; Sis & Çeçen, 2016) outline the main contours of Alevi institutional organization, they tend to position the institution of *analık* at a secondary level within this structure. However, field observations and oral narratives demonstrate that *ana*'s do not occupy merely a symbolic position, but rather play an active role in the transmission of religious knowledge. As Yıldırım notes, in the traditional Alevi social structure, the transmission of religious knowledge is carried out through specific actors. In his book *Geleneksel Alevilik*, based on extensive fieldwork, Yıldırım indicates that, alongside *dedes*, *âşıks* (*zakirs*), *babas* and *çelebis*, *anas* also participate actively in this process. This finding suggests that the institution of *analık* cannot be reduced to a merely symbolic status; rather, it should be understood as a functional and active component of the transmission of religious knowledge and practices within everyday religious life (Yıldırım, 2018, p. 106).

The discourse of equality between women and men within the Alevi belief system provides the foundation for women to assume active roles in both religious and social spheres. Indeed, the principle of gender equality constitutes one of the core elements of Alevi doctrine. The strongest basis of this perspective, which places the human being at its center, is the concept of *can* (Okan, 2023, pp. 166-167; Altıntaş, 2023, pp. 75-76). This approach also offers an important framework for explaining the legitimacy of the institution of *analık* and the figure of the *ana* within the belief system (Menemencioğlu, 2011, pp. 130-131; Koç, 2015, p. 129). However, this principle of equality, emphasized at the theoretical level, is not always reflected in practice (Küçükkeleş, 2023, p. 121). The distinctly male-dominated

character of the institution of *dedelik* within the traditional Alevi structure constitutes a significant factor limiting the visibility of *anas* in the sphere of religious authority. For example, when an *ana* attends a *cem* ceremony together with her husband, who is a *dede*, the ritual seat (*post*) belongs to *dede*, while she is positioned beside or behind him. When an *ana* participates in a *cem* together with her son, either she or her son may occupy the *post*; nevertheless, as a woman, she does not possess the authority to conduct a *cem* independently (Altıntaş, 2023, pp. 81-82). The fact that women are not authorized to lead a *cem* on their own and that such authority is generally exercised only in conjunction with a male religious figure, further reinforces the limited visibility of the institution of *analık*. Consequently, the institution of *analık* often remains positioned not at the center of religious authority but rather at its periphery.

It is clear that, the relatively limited visibility of the institution of *analık* today, compared to the institutions of *pirlik* and *dedelik*, cannot be understood independently of the structural and social transformations that have occurred throughout history. In particular, the increasing prominence of gender-based divisions of labor within traditional Alevi social organization, together with the burden of difficult living conditions and care responsibilities placed upon women, contributed to the organization of rituals and religious practices within a male-dominated framework. Within this structure, the public representation and visibility of *anas* remained relatively limited (Hanoğlu, 2025). In an interview recorded by the Alevi Encyclopedia with Ana Cevahir Altınok, Altınok explains that despite her long-standing service within the Alevi faith tradition, she experienced gender-based discrimination, that gaining recognition alongside *dedes* took considerable time and that she encountered various challenges in attaining the status of *ana* (Alevi Encyclopedia, 2025). This testimony demonstrates that the principle of gender equality, emphasized at the theoretical level within Alevism, has not always been fully realized in practice.

At the same time, Altınok's statement that "the scales of Truth (*Hak*) are in the hands of the *pirs* and the *anas*" highlights both the significance and the authority of the institution of *analık* within the Alevi belief system. Recalling the principle that "the path (*yol*) passes through service," she emphasizes that she attained the status of *ana* through her dedicated service to the faith community (Alevi Encyclopedia, 2025). Furthermore, Ana Cevahir Altınok notes that her husband is not a *pir* and describes herself as a "servant of the path" (*yol hizmetkârı*). She stresses that the role of an *ana* extends beyond merely conducting *cem* rituals and also encompasses functions such as social guidance, mediation, and moral leadership. Her statements that "*pirs* and *anas* must be peaceful in order to keep society together" and that "the *ana* is the gate of truth" underscore the social and spiritual importance of the institution of *analık* within the Alevi belief system (Alevi Encyclopedia, 2025).

According to Pir Ali Doğan, the institution of *analık* occupies a central position within the Alevi belief system through the framework of the *Dört Kapı* doctrine. Doğan directly associates the fourth gate of *Hak* with the institution of *analık*, while regarding other positions such as *pirlik*, *rehberlik* and *taliplik* as complementary elements of this holistic structure. Within this perspective, the institution of *analık* is not viewed merely as a supportive role but rather as one of the constitutive components of the belief system itself. Indeed, drawing on the example of Dersim, Doğan emphasizes the significance of *analık* by noting that every *ziyaret* has its own *ana*. Furthermore, he argues that concepts such as kutsal emanetler "sacred relics" and the "Hak Döşegi" (Bed of Truth) make visible the foundational and protective roles that women assume within this religious tradition (Alevi Encyclopedia, 2025).

Modernization, Urbanization and the Reconfiguration of Position

With the process of urbanization, religious practices within Alevi communities have been spatially and institutionally

reorganized. The weakening of traditional oral transmission networks and the relocation of rituals to institutional settings such as *cemevis* have also transformed the functional position of the institution of *analık*. Indeed, Akdemir's study demonstrates that, although the status of *ana's* has maintained its historical continuity, their visibility has gradually weakened and taken on new forms in response to changing social conditions (Akdemir, 2020, p. 16; Yolcu, 2018, pp. 68-69).

However, in recent years, the institution of *analık* has re-emerged as a subject of debate, and arguments advocating for women's participation in practices such as leading *cem* rituals and occupying the *post* (spiritual seat of authority) have gained increasing support. Indeed, examples have emerged in some *cemevis* where women, bearing the title of *ana*, have assumed the *post* and conducted *cem* ceremonies. Some Alevi *dedes* argue that views opposing women's right to occupy the *post* are incompatible with Alevi teachings and contradict the principle of equality embedded within the faith tradition (PİRHA, 2018). In an interview recorded by the Alevi Encyclopedia, Ana Narin Gülçiçeği explains that her experience as an *ana* has been shaped by various challenges and exclusionary attitudes. Gülçiçeği states that she has encountered claims asserting that "an *ana* cannot perform religious service," and further notes that prevailing assumptions defining *analık* through lineage-transmitted through men rather than women have rendered the legitimacy of this status a matter of debate (Alevi Encyclopedia, 2025). Within this context, some scholars and Alevi activists argue that *anas*, like *dedes*, should be entitled to take part in the ritual leadership of *cem* ceremonies. Akkaya, for instance, maintains that the gender equality theoretically emphasized in Alevism has not been adequately reflected in practice and therefore advocates for removing barriers that prevent *anas* from conducting *cem* rituals (PİRHA, 2018). These developments suggest an ongoing effort to bridge the gap between the egalitarian discourse that has strong theological foundations within the Alevi

belief system and its practical implementation in everyday religious life.

In recent years, debates concerning the religious authority of *anas* within Alevi religious practice have increasingly evolved into concrete institutional practices. A notable example can be found at the Bağcılar Cemevi in Istanbul, where Ana Sevim Sağol, carrying the title of *ana*, sits on the *post* alongside the *dede*, offers prayers and conducts *cem* rituals. This practice constitutes a tangible example of the long-standing debate within the Alevi community regarding whether *anas* can lead *cem* ceremonies (Sonbahar, 2019). Field data presented by Köksal (2022) further indicate that, in some *cemevis*, women have been able to occupy the *post* as *anas* through a combination of institutional encouragement and community support. One female interviewee holding the status of *ana* stated that she had assumed the *post* with the support of the foundation's administration and described the process as both a learning experience carried out in cooperation with *dedes* and a practice that was positively received by the congregation (Köksal, 2022, p. 156). At the same time, these developments are significant because they render visible, within the ritual sphere, the principle of gender equality that is frequently emphasized in Alevi teachings.

The increasing visibility of certain female figures within the sphere of religious belief has become particularly noteworthy in recent years. In this context, Elif Ana has emerged as a prominent figure who was believed to possess healing powers and knowledge of future events during her lifetime, and whose shrine continues to attract visitors today. Sultan Ana, through the association and cemevi she established, continues to sustain religious practices while contributing to the public visibility of Alevism by bringing together diverse segments of society. Zöhre Ana, drawing upon narratives rooted in her mystical experiences, founded a dervish lodge (*dergâh*) and gained a wide following as a *pir* who conducts *cem* rituals and is believed to bestow healing. These three examples clearly illustrate the growing authority

and visibility of women within the Alevi religious sphere (Yüksel, 2016, pp. 53-54). In this regard, Zöhre Ana may be regarded as a contemporary example of female-centered religious authority. The organization of the ritual space has been designed in a manner that spatially renders Zöhre Ana's charismatic authority visible; her central and elevated position makes her the focal point of participants' attention. This demonstrates that female religious authority has acquired a form of visibility that is not merely symbolic but is also institutionalized at both ritual and spatial levels (Soileau, 2025, p. 10). Accordingly, these examples suggest that the institution of analık has undergone a process of restructuring in the modern period.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the institution of analık has historically remained in a secondary position within the Alevi belief system due to the gendered division of labor, the predominantly masculine character of dedelik and the male-centered organization of ritual authority. Nevertheless, analık should not be understood merely as an institution defined in relation to dedelik. Rather, it is an institution that is regaining visibility in the contemporary period and reasserting its identity. As evidenced by field findings and oral traditions, analık constitutes a functional and active religious actor within the traditional, social and religious organization of Alevism.

As discussed above, while the processes of modernization, urbanization, and migration have diminished the visibility of the institution of analık by contributing to the erosion of traditional social structures, the institution has recently re-emerged as a subject of debate and gained renewed visibility through women's increasing demands to conduct cem rituals, occupy the post, and participate in religious authority. Accordingly, there remains a significant need for further field-based research across diverse geographical and social contexts in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation and contemporary

dynamics of the institution of analık.

References & Further Reading

Akdemir, Ayşegül. 2020. "The Construction of Gender Identity in Alevi Organizations: Discourses, Practices and Gaps." *Ethnography* 0 (0): 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138120924435>.

Alevi Ansiklopedisi. 2025. "Ana Olmak & Analık Deneyimi ve Zorluklar." (Access Date: 23.02.2026). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8aOxP59h0s>.

Alevi Ansiklopedisi. 2025. "Analık Kurumu, Ocak Sistemi, Sosyal Değişme." (Access Date: 23.02.2026). <https://www.aleviansiklopedisi.com/pir-ana-kayit/analik-kurumu-ocak-sistemi-sosyal-degisme-6762/>.

Alevi Ansiklopedisi. 2025. "Ana Olmak, Analık Kurumu, Toplumsal Cinsiyet & Kırmancı Dualar." (Access Date: 23.02.2026). <https://www.aleviansiklopedisi.com/pir-ana-kayit/ana-olmak-analik-kurumu-toplumsal-cinsiyet-kirmancki-dualar-6601/>.

Alevi Ansiklopedisi. 2025. "Analık & Pirlık Makamı - Hakkın Dördüncü Kapısı." (Access Date: 23.02.2026). <https://www.aleviansiklopedisi.com/pir-ana-kayit/analik-pirlik-makami-hakkin-dorduncu-kapisi-6735/>.

Altıntaş, Nimet. 2023. "Alevilikte: Sahi Eşit miyiz?" İçinde *Aleviler: Din, Beden, Cinsiyet, Neşeden Kedere*, derleyen Çilem Küçükkeleş ve Ayhan Yalçınkaya, 73-100. Dipnot Yayınları.

Arı, Yılmaz. 2019. *Alevilikte Dini Otorite: Değişim ve Süreklilik (Adıyaman Örneği)*. Erciyes Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Ana Bilim Dalı.

Coşkun, Hasan. 2017. "Tokatlı Alevi Dedelerinin Alevilik ve Bektaşilik Anlayışına Sosyolojik Bir Bakış." *Turkish Studies: International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and*

History of Turkish or Turkic 12 (35): 89-104.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.12685>.

Gümüş, Nazlı. 2011. *Alevilikte Kadın: Şahkulu Sultan Dergahı'ndaki Kadınların Alevi Kadını Algılayışı*. Dumlupınar Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Sosyoloji Anabilim Dalı.

Hanoğlu, Hayal. 2025. "Kadın ve Alevilik." *Alevi Ansiklopedisi*.
<https://www.aleviansiklopedisi.com/madde-x/kadin-ve-alevik-6660/>.

Koç, Adem. 2015. "Güruhu Naci'nin Saçlı Bacıları: Alevi Bektaşî İnanç Sistemi'nde Kadın Olmak." *Karadeniz Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (12): 126-145.
<https://izlik.org/JA53PF36MN>.

Köksal, Cemil. 2022. *Türkiye'de Aleviliğin Yapısal Dönüşümü: Cemden Cemevine Nitel Bir Araştırma*. Yayımlanmamış doktora tezi, Maltepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

Küçükkeleş, Çilem. 2023. "Hafızadan Silinen Kadınlar ya da Tersinden Tahrip Edilen Hafıza." *İçinde Aleviler: Din, Beden, Cinsiyet, Neşeden Kedere*, derleyen Çilem Küçükkeleş ve Ayhan Yalçınkaya, 119-134. Dipnot Yayınları.

Menemencioğlu, Belkıs. 2011. "Bektaşî ve Alevi Kültüründe Kadın." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 60.

Okan, Nimet. 2014. "Alevilikte Kadın Erkek Eşitliği Söylemine Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım." *Antropoloji* 28.
https://doi.org/10.1501/antro_0000000301.

Okan, Nimet. 2023. "Can'ların Cinsiyeti: Babalar ve Bacılar." *İçinde Hakikatın Darına Durmak: Alevilikte Kadın*, hazırlayan Bedriye Poyraz, 165-182. Dipnot Yayınları.

PİRHA. 2018. "Gülfer Akkaya: Alevi Cemlerinde Analar da

Cem Yürütmelidir.” 24 Şubat 2018. <https://pirha.org/gulfer-akkaya-alevi-cemlerinde-analar-da-ce-m-yurutmelidir-108285.html/24/02/2018/>.

PİRHA. 2021. “Dedeler PİRHA’ya Konuştu: Kadın Posta Oturamaz Diyenlerin Yoldan İkrardan Haberi Yok.” <https://pirha.org/dedeler-pirhaya-konustu-kadin-posta-oturamaz-diyenler-yoldan-ikrarindan-haberi-yok-286639.html/>.

Sis, Nesrin ve Mehmet Akif Çeçen. 2016. “Yaşayan Alevi Kültür ve İnanışları Üzerine Bir Araştırma (Onar Köyü Örneği).” *Journal of Turkish Language and Literature* 2 (1): 413-430. <https://doi.org/10.20322/lt.14095>.

Soileau, Mark. 2025. “The Visual World of Zöhre Ana.” *Religions* 16 (2): 141. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020141>.

Sonbahar, E. 2019. “Bağcılar Cemevi’nde Postta Artık ‘Ana’ da Var.” *Sivil Sayfalar*, 13 Mart 2019. <https://www.sivilsayfalar.org/2019/03/13/bagcilar-cemevinde-postta-artik-ana-da-var/>.

Ulusoy Yılmaz, Duygu, Gülay Karşıcı ve Selçuk Ali. 2014. “Sivas Beydilli Köyü İnanç Sistemi İçinde Kadın.” *İnsanbilim Dergisi* 2 (2): 22-43. <https://izlik.org/JA48AZ72TP>.

Yıldırım, Rıza. 2018. *Geleneksel Alevilik: İnanç, İbadet, Kurumlar, Toplumsal Yapı, Kollektif Bellek*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Yolcu, Mehmet Ali. 2018. “Bacılar ve Kardeşler: Toplumsal Yapı ve Söylem Açısından Alevi Ataerkilliği.” *İçinde Motif Vakfı Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Sempozyumu*, editör Dr. Mustafa Aça, 66-69. Çanakkale: Motif Vakfı Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Sempozyumu.

Yüksel, Emine. 2016. *Alevi Bektaşî Kültüründe Yaratılış Anlatıları ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet İlişkileri*. Yüksek lisans tezi, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Tarih Anabilim Dalı.