



## Blood, gelin and love: changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups

Benoît Fliche

### ► To cite this version:

| Benoît Fliche. Blood, gelin and love: changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups. Alevism and social change, pp.31-44, 2005, 975-428-308-7. hal-02419615

HAL Id: hal-02419615

<https://amu.hal.science/hal-02419615>

Submitted on 19 Dec 2019

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

## Blood, *Gelin* and Love: Changes in Patterns of Alliance in an Alevi Group

*Benoit Fliche*

How to marry when you are a young Alevi living in a *gecekondu* quarter in today's Ankara? This question appears simple; however, it can be a way to understand how alliance patterns have evolved among Alevis after experiencing social changes like urbanisation and migration to Europe.

Contemporary changes in marriage patterns have been analysed by many researchers<sup>1</sup>, but there are few works focusing specifically on Alevis<sup>2</sup>. Two reasons can explain this lack of research. The first is mentioned by Bozarslan : "Si... les études de qualité sur l'alévisme comme système de croyance ne manquent guère, les analyses sociologiques et anthropologiques sur la question font en revanche cruellement défaut" (Bozarslan 2000: 80). Since the Alevi revival in the nineties, sociological studies have been concentrated on identity issues, mainly with a political perspective<sup>3</sup>. Within this perspective, Alevi family issues have generally been neglected. The second reason is the mental representations of Alevis among researchers. Bozarslan noticed that Alevis are generally considered as being "liberal" and democratic (Bozarslan 2000: 80). However, they are also characterised by the structure of their religious endogamy (Gokalp 1987: 95)<sup>4</sup>. This link between Aleviness and endogamy seems so strong that researchers "forget" to analyse other aspects of the Alevi family structure.

The lack of research might give us the impression that there have not been any changes in spite of rural migration and urbanization. However, Alevis experienced the same changes as the other inhabitants of Turkey. Thus, it seems relevant to question how this "endogamy", and more generally the representations which structured it, reacted to these social changes. Are the representations structuring alliance practices in the village maintained or do they change in new

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example Stirling and Onaran Incirlioğlu (1996).

<sup>2</sup> This focus is absent, for example, from Rasuly-Paleczek's edited volume (1996), although it gives a good overview on the Turkish family, some fifteen years after the book edited by Kağıtçıbaşı (1982).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Olson et all (1998) or White and Jongerden (2003).

<sup>4</sup> See Gokalp (1980 or 1994) as well.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

environments? Nowadays, several decades after having left the village of origin, how are the patterns of alliance of these former villagers structured?

Therefore, this article seeks to describe changes of alliance patterns in a Turkish Alevi group, originating from a village in Central Anatolia and settled mainly in a *gecekondu* district in Ankara<sup>5</sup>.

## Various Endogamies: Aleviness and Ethnicity

The patterns of alliance in the village were first structured by a series of representations. The first one was religious endogamy. According to the civil register of the village, religious endogamy was strict until the 1970s. Religiously exogamic alliances, through kidnapping or escaping, were considered as transgressions, and regulated by a general mobilization of the village in order to recover the "stolen" girl. From the 1970s, we observe a certain easing of this endogamy: the boarders between Sunni and Alevi groups became more blurred. Until the middle of the 1980s however, "passing" from one to the other was possible only in one direction: an Alevi man could marry a Sunni woman, but the reverse was hardly possible. How can we explain this movement of opening and closing?

For some informants who married Sunni women, this opening resulted from "a period of Enlightenment" (*aydinlama dönemi*) : "We had May-68 here as well! And that is the reason why in the 1970s, several Alevi men married Sunni women. But afterwards, that was closed again. I met my wife in an association. We were both political activists" (Aslan, Ankara, march 2002). All Alevi men having married Sunni women did not meet their future wives in political organisations, but they very often shared a common ideology. Thus, religious exogamy was moderated by a "political" endogamy<sup>6</sup>.

In certain cases of tension, the wife's orthodoxy may be stigmatized, for example by being called "the girl of Yezid"<sup>7</sup> (the girl of a traitor). However, these Sunni women are integrated in the family without many difficulties and these unions are relatively well accepted by Alevis. This acceptance is based on representations of the body and transmission of identity. Aleviness is

---

<sup>5</sup> Because of the migration to Europe (Germany and France) and to Ankara, this village disappeared completely in the middle of the 70's. When I refer to "the time of the village", it is before 1975.

<sup>6</sup> Güneş-Ayata remarks the same political endogamy among Alevis (1996: 103).

<sup>7</sup> Yezid was the son of Muaviye, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. This caliph supposedly killed Hüseyin (or ordered the destruction of Ali's family) in Kerbela in 680. He is abhorred by the Moslems, and with stronger reason by Shiites and Alevis, for which he symbolises treachery.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

inherited by blood; only the descendant of Alevis can be an Alevi and conversion is impossible. This biological representation of Aleviness is linked to the representations of *soy* (lineage): the father passes on identity to the child; the mother is only the feeder receptacle<sup>8</sup>. Thus, exogamic practices are accepted when the husband is Alevi because the cultural, religious and physiological identities of the children are believed to be inherited from the father's side. An Alevi father will therefore transmit Aleviness to his children even if his wife is not Alevi. The opposite situation is considered a scandal.

Religious endogamy thus remains stable; most of the young people questioned were not ready to cross the religious border: "My wife will be Alevi. It cannot be otherwise. We must share the same culture" a young man answered, who however flirted with a Sunni girl (Ankara, August 2000).

Before migration, within the framework of a common religious obedience, patterns of alliance were also structured by "ethnicity". The informants define themselves as *Türkmen* (Turcoman). They hardly agreed to give their daughters to a Kurd, but the inverse case was not problematic, for the same reasons of "transmission of identity" mentioned above. Contrary to the Kurds, Turks were regarded as possible partners of exchange, even if elder people clearly expressed their preference for alliances with *Türkmen* (Turcoman). Ethnic groups are still important nowadays, even though they influence the patterns of alliance less than before. Kurds still have a bad reputation of being brutal with their wives, uncivilized and wild, but the difference between Turks and *Türkmen* (Turcoman) has lost much of its pertinence for young people.

## Representations concerning the Family

The patterns of alliance are also structured by a series of representations concerning the family. Marriage is a social obligation, but also a religious requirement, a command from God. Many informants consider those who would like to escape from marriage anti-social. In the same way, divorce is decried. It is often considered to be the sign of degeneration of the family institution and the loss of moral values. It is regarded as a "modern" evil imported from "the West". Two

---

<sup>8</sup> I refer to Delaney (1991) on the representations of the body. Men were connected to creation, the seed generating capacity, whereas women were comparable with the ground and the fields.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

types of families are opposed in the representations: the "de-structured" European family on the one side, and the Turkish "structured", solid and stable family on the other side. This opposition is often the background for great discussions on the degeneration of Europe:

In Europe, the family is completely degenerated. Have you seen the divorce rates? Here, it is not like that. There are only few divorces. And then, look at the rate of abortion in Europe. Everyone aborts in Europe. Is it normal? Young people start to have sexual intercourse at the age of twelve. Is it normal? No... No... The Turkish family is stable. You know who the father and mother of the children are (Can, Ankara, February 2002).

For some informants, the stability of the family constitutes the power of the Turks, both in Turkey and among the Turkish migrants abroad:

In twenty years, there will be more Turks than French in France. You know why? Because we have many children. You don't. We still have a solid conception of the family. We don't like divorced families like you, the French. Divorce hardly exists in Turkey. Turkish families are still structured. We don't want single-parent families (Ali, Ankara, July 2001).

In this comment, divorce is regarded as a sign of degeneration. However, one should not believe that divorce does not, or even, did not exist in Turkey. Even if they were socially sanctioned in the village, divorces and repudiations were not negligible. Wives could be repudiated due to sterility, which often led to rupture of the link between the two families. Today, divorce is a reality, but it is very difficult to say if it is more frequent than before. However, the perception remains that divorce is more frequent and easier nowadays, and the fear of divorce has increased considerably over the last fifteen years. This fear is reinforced by the social importance of virginity, which might make it difficult for a divorced woman to remarry.

The increased possibility of divorce influences the way in which alliances are passed today. In the village, to prevent divorce, the villagers preferred brides (*gelin*) who were already known, or about whom reliable information could be gathered. Does this mean that they married only with relatives? To marry within the family was also risky: a possible conflict or divorce bore the danger of rupturing a strong alliance within the extended family. Since the climate was not suitable for agriculture, the tools rudimentary, and the fields quite bad, family solidarity was crucial: in this context, marriage between cousins could put this solidarity in danger. This is the

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

reason why there were few marriages between cousins before urban migration. Marriages inside the lineage were very few: a more distant daughter-in-law was preferred. Because the bride-price (*başlık*) increases with social distance, it was more expensive, but it had the advantage of not endangering the unity of the extended family. This fear of the rupture of family unity is still present nowadays:

It is always better to marry someone with whom one does not have too many bonds. After, if there is a divorce, it is better. The relations are finished. We won't see this family again and that's all! Whereas if it is in the family, then... It is a pity. We dispute and the friendship relation is finished. No... It is better to marry someone outside the family (Nazik, Ankara, April 2002).

But to marry a completely unknown woman introduces another obstacle: not knowing her character induces a larger uncertainty about the success of the union. Thus the appropriate distance should be found — neither too close, nor too far. How, then, to find "the right *gelin*"?

## **Patterns Structured by Representations of the Gelin**

What are the criteria for choosing a bride? We can distinguish physical criteria, with representations related to the body, and moral criteria, with representations related mainly to the education of the future wife.

To choose a bride, the physical is fundamental, since it is on appearance that the young man decides to see the girl again (and vice versa). However, the first decision is carried out by the mothers. In the village, mothers took advantage of the *hamam* to examine whether the girl had any physical defects. Nowadays, the mothers can only examine the external appearance:

She must be "normal". But they must look like each other. If he is small and she is tall, it is not good. If he is slim and she is large, it is not good. It's the same thing with hair. But it is not the most important. It is necessary that he likes her (Cennet, Ankara, July 2001).

The "phenotype" is not enough. It is also necessary to consider the "genotypic" popular representations. Representations of the body and blood also determine the choice of the bride. The information campaigns by the Turkish government against endogamy on radio and television

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

in the seventies were effective, and everyone is now afraid of handicapped (*sakat*) children (Sirman 1990: 35). Family endogamy is thus considered dangerous:

Before, in the village, we did not know that close marriages were bad. Now we know. We are careful so that the spouses are not too close. Because it causes sick children afterwards. For example, the son of our neighbours is handicapped. It is because they married between cousins. They are too close (Durak, Ankara, september 2001).

The impact of media thus modified the perceptions of the body. Here, it is necessary to distinguish between women educated in the village, and those educated in the city. Fifty year-old women, knowing little or nothing about reading and writing, having grown up in the village, absorbed the information provided by the Turkish state, but interpreted it differently. An informant, seeking a wife for her son, had decided to marry him with his paternal aunt's (*hala*) daughter. She justified her choice by asserting that the girl of a paternal aunt does not represent a consanguinity problem: "But no, they are not close. They are not close, because the fathers are different. The father of this girl comes from far away, from another village. So, there is no problem". On the other hand, she finds that the parallel patrilineal cousin presents a proximity to be avoided: "Here, the fathers are brothers. They are too close. That can give abnormal children" (Cennet, Ankara, July 2001). The girl of the maternal uncle (*dayi*) also represents a certain proximity, since the father of the potential wife "does not come from far-away": he is the husband's maternal uncle. But that remains not as close as the girl of the paternal uncle (*amca*). On the other hand, the girl of the maternal aunt (*teyze*) is in the same category as the girl of *hala*. The rule of classification is simple: if the fathers are close, the children are close too. We find here a confirmation of the representation according to which the identity is transmitted by the fathers. As for the mothers, they are considered not to transmit "genetic" characters (Delaney 1991). Thus, for this woman and others of her generation, there are cousins who are "closer" than others, and not all kinds of cousin marriages are avoided.

For those of the informants who went to college, the girls of *dayi*, of *amca*, of *teyze* or of *hala* represent the same degree of proximity. On the other hand, young female informants who were educated in the village showed the same organizing principle: the closer the fathers are, the closer are the children. Thus, these representations of the "inherited body" result from a number

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

of representations, some maintained from the time of the village, others, like the information provided by the authorities, presented by the media.

In addition to these biological criteria, the bride must also meet requirements of being morally well educated. A housewife is not only a perfect master of the house, she must also show her submission to the social order. During the time of the village, expectations regarding the daughter-in-law were clear: she had to give birth to a male child in order to secure the lineage, and she had to provide household labour. Because of this, the selection of the girl was the primary concern of the mother. As many informants pointed out, the interest of the mother was initially to find a daughter-in-law who could function as a maid. As long as the young couple lived with the husband's family, the bride remained under the orders of her mother-in-law (*kayinvalide*). This cohabitation was not easy: work was hard and the relations with the mother-in-law were often tense.

The requirements regarding the bride, which often resulted in hardness of the mother-in-law towards her, reinforced the preference for relatives (*akraba*). The information about her character and qualities as labour force was thus more easily accessible<sup>9</sup>.

Nowadays, the bride's "submission" to certain moral criteria remains crucial. Even though she is no longer expected to be an obliging worker, the mothers-in-law are still looking for wives who are able to take care of their house. This criterion is extremely significant, and not only for the mothers. The husbands-to-be are also very attentive. It was from the male informants that I often heard the proverb "it is the female bird that makes the nest" (*yuvayı yapan dişi kuş*). This representation of the woman as a housewife is so significant that it structures not only the patterns of alliance in Turkey, but also in Europe. It is indeed one of the reasons why young Turks in Europe choose to marry girls from Turkey, even if there is an available "matrimonial market" in Europe. The majority of the young male informants living in Europe preferred to look for a wife in Ankara<sup>10</sup>:

I will confess that I did not want to marry a Turk who grew up in France. Because of her behaviour, her clothes, that would not have been good! It would have been difficult! In Europe, the girls lose the respect for

<sup>9</sup> About the evolution of the criteria for choosing a bride in rural Central Anatolia, see Onaran Incirlioğlu (1993).

<sup>10</sup> I did not find any case of bigamy like Autant observed. She explains the cases of bigamy as attempts by the young men to reconcile the opposites: With a Turkish woman they maintain a certain psychological and material safety while at the same time living in a relationship with a "Frenchwoman": A stable relationship with another, more "Western" design (Autant 2002: 174).

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

the family, the compliance of the rules of life. They are accustomed like "Frenchwomen", they are accustomed to the lifestyle of the French. But in Turkey, they are used to the Turkish lifestyle. For my wife, it is not total submission. But... But there are things which she must do. Nobody will see me cooking, only if my wife is not at home. If my wife is at home, she'll cook the meals for me. Returning from work, I won't do the housework! Whereas I have cousins who married Turkish girls in France. When they return from work in the evening, the woman is here, and the housework isn't done... Then, that! That... That hurts me! (Ibrahim, Narbonne, February 1999).

The mothers living in Europe entirely share this point of view. "I don't want a bride from France. No, I don't want. Because, in France, women think like men. They think they're like men. Here, in Turkey, the women do not think like men. They are humbler," explained a mother looking for a wife for her son who was brought up in France (Ankara, April 2002). Sometimes we can find the same reasoning among young people living in Ankara, but for them it is the women born in Ankara who are not suitable as wives:

I do not want a too independent woman. For you, a Frenchman, it is ok. But for me, I don't find that OK. If we go to the sea, we'll go together, not separately. But even here in Ankara, the women are too free. I don't want a woman from Ankara. I prefer a villager (Veli, Ankara, April 2002).

The brides from Turkey are more submissive, but a bride from Europe offers other advantages: marriage is indeed the only remaining means to migrate. Many young men marry to leave for Europe. Their situation, however, is not easy: upon arrival they find themselves in difficult conditions, similar to that of *içgüvey*<sup>11</sup>, and, compared to their cousins who grew up in France, they have less control of their wives, who have a perfect command of the language of the country and who also have work. Their husbands are initially completely dependent on them, and they must therefore obey their will. Marrying a Turk from Turkey allows the young women from France a significant freedom. Besides, it is interesting to see, nowadays, that the divorce rate increases considerably among these young couples of Turkish origin in France. Are these young Turkish women in a situation similar to that of North African girls who can find husbands neither in France nor in North Africa, thus entering a kind of "matrimonial desert" (Flanquart 1999)?

---

<sup>11</sup> The *içgüvey* is a man who, after marriage, has to live in his father-in-law's house. Coming from more modest conditions than his wife, his situation is far from enviable. He has to wait until the death of his father-in-law in order to become the head of the family, and before that, he is discredited by being the last to be seated for coffee, the last to enter the mosque, etc (Cuisenier 1965: 80).

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

Turkish migrants in France could easily find themselves in the same situation, but let us note that the situation is not completely similar: the French passport of a girl still remains a great attraction. In addition, these girls, even if they often appear "too free", are also socialized like their cousins from Turkey. Like them, they know that their marriage implies submission to certain social standards, such as, for example, the protection of virginity (*bekaret*).

## Representations related to Moral Order: Virginity

Virginity remains indeed very significant: it symbolizes the successful socialization of the girl. With due respect to those who see Turkey only through the prism of the districts of Beyoğlu, Cihangir or Bağdat Avenue, virginity constitutes a cardinal virtue for women as for men, independent of their level of education and their political ideas (Sirman 1998: 61). A young Alevi woman studying at Middle East Technical University<sup>12</sup>, considered to be one of the best and most liberal universities in Turkey<sup>13</sup>, explains how the significance of virginity is divided between two programs of truth<sup>14</sup>: her feminist ideology on the one side and her family education on the other:

Virginity? Of course, that it is significant. And even for the students. I have a girlfriend who remained four years with the same guy. They ended up sleeping together. But then they separated. My girlfriend became depressed. Not because they had separated, but because she had lost her virginity. I have another friend who went through the same thing. But now, she sleeps with everyone. Every second month, she has a new boyfriend. She doesn't take care of herself (*kendisine iyi bakmiyor, yani...*). The femininity of the woman resides there, in the virginity. If she loses it prematurely, she is regarded as a whore. And she also regards herself as a whore. Even if she is a feminist. That doesn't change anything. One part of you says it is normal, another part says that you are a whore. (Özge, Ankara, May 2001).

<sup>12</sup> *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi* (ODTÜ) One of the best public universities in Turkey, where the teaching language is English.

<sup>13</sup> In Ankara, universities were described to me by several students, distributed according to a "morality-excellence" scale: the greater the excellence of the university, the lower its morality; conversely, as its excellence decreases, its morality goes up.

<sup>14</sup> A truth's program is a concept of the historian Veyne. It is a unity of propositions which is considered by the agents to be the truth (Veyne 1983).

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

The importance given to virginity is clearly expressed and accepted by the girls, and they consider the boys to have the same opinion. For these young women, there is no doubt that the boys will not accept a deflowered wife, even if they claim the opposite:

They tell you it isn't important for them. You know, it is necessary to be modern. But when you have an argument, he will remind you: "The day I took you, you were not a virgin!". He will never forget. There will be always something which will embarrass him (Sevgi, Ankara, December 2000).

Indeed, some men live this confrontation between two programs of truth: the first, modern and liberal, and the second, traditional:

In fact, virginity, it is for them (the women) that it is important. But for young men, now, it doesn't matter anymore. If it is significant, it is because of the family, because of the ceremony of the "handkerchief", you know... it is for the old men that it is significant. But young people... But you know, it is like a car. It is better to have a new car which was never used before, no? (Ali, Ankara, August 2001).

For the majority of the young informants, their wives must be virgin when they marry:

Virginity is always significant. Good, of course now, girls leave to study, they leave their families, they have a relation with a boy... It is natural. But for us, that still remains significant. I want my wife to be a virgin. It is a question of virility. I would not stand the idea that she did that before with someone else. She must be a virgin. It is in my culture, I saw it in films or I heard it when we spoke about it in the family. It is a question of virility. You know, we live 90 % like our parents. I think like them... You understand, the man is afraid that she can compare. The man is afraid if she knew a guy before him. She can compare. It is necessary to be the first and... the last. With my wife, I want to be the first and the last. It is obliged. It is for that. I do not want her to have had flirts before. I do not want a whore. If she did it once, she can make it again afterwards. (Hüseyin, Ankara, August 2001).

The problem does not reside only in fear of comparison. It also rests on the woman's capacity to transgress the prohibition. A girl who has crossed the border can easily cross it again. She is sufficiently "strong" to be unfaithful to her husband. She is therefore too dangerous to marry. A wife must demonstrate submission to the social standards because her virginity not only represents the honour of the family, but also obedience to the social rules and acceptance of her role in safeguarding the virility of her husband.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

This is symbolized by the red ribbon which surrounds the waist of the bride with her white dress. Red is the symbol of blood, but also of virginity. In the villages, the wedding dresses were red. When the Western dress was adopted about forty years ago, virginity was still symbolized by introducing a red element into the white costume, despite the fact that white symbolizes purity and virginity in the Western code. This ribbon is tied by a male member of the family, generally the older brother. This act explicitly signifies to all that the given bride is a virgin, a fact that is confirmed shortly after the wedding night, with the ceremony of a blooded cloth—a ceremony which continues to be significant nowadays in urban environments.

## Patterns in Tension

These alliance patterns are structured by the place of love in marriage as well. Here we must distinguish between two sources of the programs of truth. The first one is of village origin, whereas the second one is "Western". In the first, alliance is a matter of reason, whereas in the second, it is a love affair. Two programs of truth thus clash: a "program of reason" and a "romantic program"<sup>15</sup>.

Does this mean that Turkish villagers are deprived the feeling of love? Of course not! Turkish novels are full of stories where love is contradicted by social rules. In the village, escapes and kidnappings of girls existed, but even more interesting are the stories about infidelity. Although it required discretion, infidelity remained possible:

When I was young, once I passed next to the fountain. Durak was there giving water to the animals. He arrived and whistled. There was a house there of a girl who had just married. She heard the whistle, ran out of the house and went to get water. I observed them both. I never said anything to anybody, but... everyone knew. It was even said that she had a girl who looked like Durak... And afterwards, he left for Germany and she went to Ankara. (Bektaş, Yozgat, January 2001).

We thus should not look at the rural world as closed in its rules and its concepts of honour<sup>16</sup>. Admittedly, vendetta was possible; but there was a flexibility related to the rules: even if it was sanctioned, infidelity did not always end in bloodshed. In short, there was both love and passion in the village.

---

<sup>15</sup>The topic of love feeds a significant musical and cinematographic production, especially in the "arabesk" movement. About "arabesk", see Özbek (1991) and Stokes (1992).

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

Nevertheless, love hardly determined the practices of alliance. In the village, marriages were "forced". They were concluded without the agreement of the interested parties: "We obeyed our parents, that's all. It was them who decided with whom one was to marry. There was no choice" (Bektaş, Yozgat, May 2000). After migration, this type of marriage received competition from another: the arranged marriage, in which the interested parties were consulted and had the right to refuse, even if the border between forced and arranged marriages was sometimes blurred. The passage of the forced marriage to the arranged marriage occurred at the beginning of the 1980s. Today, the decision-making process still remains mainly in the hands of the parents: their children seldom marry without their assent.

This maintenance of parental authority can be explained by the economic costs of marriage. The relation between land, marriage and economic survival is not relevant any more in the city, since subsistence does not depend on agriculture. Today marriage no longer constitutes a major economic cost, except when arranged as a strategy for migration to Europe. Any young person can have the opportunity, through marriage, to leave for Europe. In this context, the "arranged" marriage is the rule, and the "romantic" marriage remains the exception. The feeling of love is generally not taken into account. It is enough that the promised couple like each other. So, young people often marry someone whom they have barely had time to know, even if that someone happens to be a cousin.

We can be astonished by the passivity of the young married. What is astonishing is that this type of marriage does not seem to be lived like a constraint: young men trust their mother. That undoubtedly explains the lack of emotional value they grant the marriage, which is often experienced only like a rite of passage: "I had the age to marry. Then I asked my mother to find someone for me. I went several times to drink tea, to see girls and I found my wife like that" (Mehmet, Ankara, April 2001), or "My parents told me that I had to marry. I said "OK, you introduce girls to me and I'll choose". In one month, we found a girl" (Ahmet, Ankara, January 2002). These types of answers are rather frequent among young men, and there is an equivalent ease among girls: "You know, my parents started to put pressure on me. I looked around and I took the least ugly" (Ayşe, Ankara, January 2002 ), or "I was twenty years old. It was necessary that I thought about marrying. Then, Ahmet came. We liked each other. I said OK and we

---

<sup>16</sup> Starr 1978.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

engaged one month later" (Gül, Ankara, January 2002). Here, love seems little called upon as a justification for the union.

The program of "reason" is also clearly dominating in the urban context of contemporary Ankara. As many informants, both young and older, often reminded me, love marriages are rarely initiated. Marriages "of reason" are preferred because, like a proverb says, "the eye of the single is that of a blind person" (*bekar gözü, kör gözü*):

That's why the celibate person should be guided because he does not know what is appropriate for him. Thus, arranged marriages are preferred. But for us Turks, it is not like for you. For us, it is not love which is significant. Love comes afterwards. Or it does not come at all. But it is not important. What is significant is logic. We are logical and our marriages are logical, too. They are marriages of convenience (*mantık evliliği*). [That] is the reason why they are solid. (Ali, Ankara, September 2001).

Therefore, the alliance patterns of this particular Alevi group remain structured around representations which are relatively stable. However, this stability is accompanied by slow, but powerful changes in the representations, as shown by the increasing fear of divorce. In spite of the continued importance of virginity, and the representation of the stable family, these patterns are in tension, which can be observed through the confrontation between the marriage of reason and the romantic one. But the most significant change is the end of the forced marriage and the increased importance of the children's desire.

## References

- Autant, Claire. 2002. *Les chemins de familles entre France et Turquie : réseaux de parenté et négociation du destin en migration*, PhD. Diss.EHESS, Paris.
- Bozarslan, Hamit. 2000. L'alévisme, la métahistoire et les mythes fondateurs de la recherche. In *Turquie : les mille visages. Politique, religion, femmes, immigration*, p. 77—88. Edited by Isabelle Rigoni. Paris : Syllepse.
- Cuisenier, Jean. 1965. Matériaux et hypothèses pour une étude des structures de la parenté en Turquie, *L'Homme* vol. IV -1 : 73—89.
- Delaney, Carol. 1991. *The Seed and the Soil. Gender and Cosmology in Turkish Village Society*. Berkeley : University of California Press.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

- Flanquart, Hervé. 1999. Un désert matrimonial. Le célibat des jeunes femmes d'origine maghrébine en France. *Terrain* 33 : 127—144.
- Gokalp, Altan. 1980. *Têtes Rouges et Bouches Noires. Une confrérie tribale de l'ouest anatolien*. Paris : Société d'ethnographie.
- Gokalp, Altan. 1987. Le dit de l'os et du clan. De l'ordre segmentaire oghouz au village anatolien. *L'Homme* vol XXVII-102 : 99—108.
- Gokalp, Altan. 1994. « Mariage de parents » : entre l'échange généralisé et le mariage parallèle. In *Epouser au plus proche. Inceste, prohibitions et stratégies matrimoniales autour de la Méditerranée*, p. 439—452. Edited by Pierre Bonte and Françoise Héritier. Paris : Editions de l'EHESS.
- Güneş-Ayata, Ayşe. 1996. Solidarity in urban Turkish family. In *Turkish Families in transitio*. p. 98—113. Edited by Gabriele. Rasuly-Paleczek. Francfort, Berlin, Berne, New York, Paris, Vienne : Peter Lang.
- Kağıtçıbaşı, Çiğdem, ed. 1982. *Sex roles, family and community in Turkey*, Indiana : Indiana University Turkish Studies.
- Olsson, Özdalga E. and Catharina Raudvere, dir. 1998. *Alevi Identity*, Istanbul : Swedish Research Institute.
- Onaran-Incirlioğlu, Emine. 1993. Marriage, Gender relations and rural transformation in Central Anatolia. In *Culture and Economy : Changes in Turkish Villages*, p. 115—126. Edited by Paul Stirling. Huntingdon : The Eothen Press.,
- Özbek, Meral. 1991. *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski*. Istanbul : İletişim.
- Rasuly-Paleczek, Gabriele, dir. 1996. *Turkish Families in transition*. Francfort, Berlin, Berne, New York, Paris, Vienne : Peter Lang.
- Sirman, Nükhet. 1990. State, village and Gender in Western Turkey. In *Turkish State, Turkish Society*. p. 21—51. Edited by Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman. Londres : Routledge.
- Sirman, Nükhet. 1998. Nous vivons pour notre honneur. L'identité dans la parenté turque. *Hommes et Migrations* 1212 : 53—61.
- Starr, June. 1978. *Dispute and settlement in rural Turkey: an ethnography of law*. Leiden : Brill.
- Stirling, Paul, and Emine Onaran-Incirlioğlu. 1996. Choosing spouses: villagers, migrants, kinship and time. In *Turkish Families in transition*. p. 61—83. Edited by Gabriele. Rasuly-Paleczek. Francfort, Berlin, Berne, New York, Paris, Vienne : Peter Lang.

2005, "Blood, *gelin* and love : changes in patterns of alliance among Alevi Groups", in Markussen, Hege, dir., *Alevism and social change*, ISIS, Istanbul, pp.31-44.

Stokes, Martin. 1992. *The Arabesk debate – Music and musicians in modern Turkey*. Oxford : Clarendon Press.

Veyne, Paul. 1983. *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes ? Essai sur l'imagination constitutive*. Paris : Seuil.

White, Paul, and Joost Jongerden, ed. 2003. *Turkey's Alevi Enigma, A Comprehensive Overview*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.