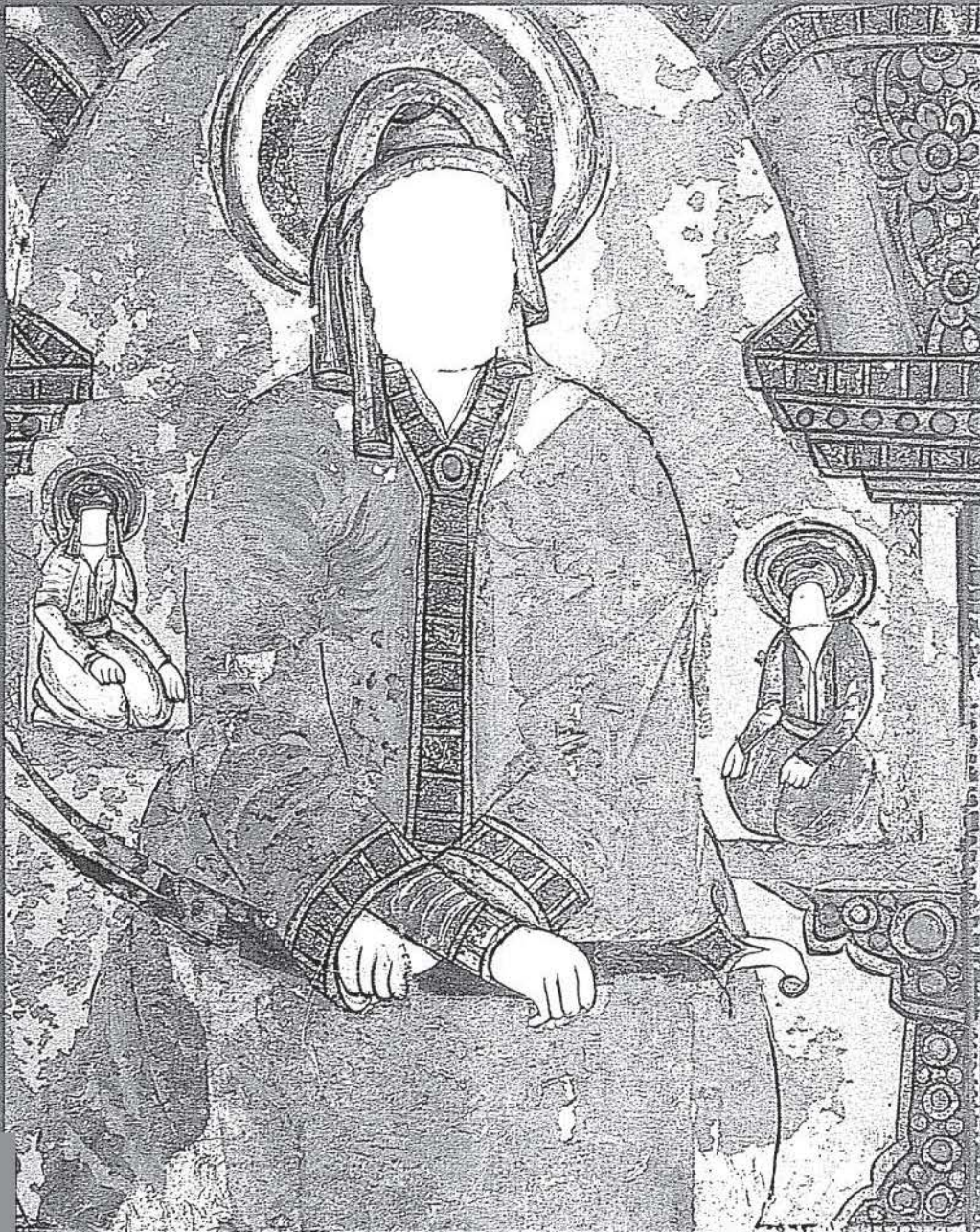


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ALEVI IDENTITY



Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga, Catharina Raudvere
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CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

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Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and
Catharina Raudvere



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State-Community Relations in the Restructuring of Alevism

FUAT BOZKURT

Beliefs are living organisms, just like human beings. The survival of a belief is closely bound up with the environment in which it exists. Beliefs have to renew themselves with the passage of time. The concepts of revolution and evolution also hold good for beliefs.

Alevism has undergone no great quantitative changes leading to violent convulsions. In its adaptation to the passage of time it has consistently followed an evolutionary course. It originated as a religion of nomads and gradually evolved into a religion of villagers. It makes no resistance to the changes demanded by new conditions. It has thus reached the end of the 20th century without undergoing any violent change. This way of life is characterised by certain special qualities in the Alevi community, as regards both the individual and the community as a whole.

As Irène Mélikoff has very aptly pointed out, the true name of Alevism is *Kızılbaşism*. Alevism would appear to be the name which the *Kızılbaş* adopted or were given in the process of their transition to Islam. Although the Alevi claim that the name *Kızılbaş* originated in the Islamic religion, there is actually no connection between the name and Islam. For one thing, the name is Turkish. For another, it is employed even in regions where Alevism does not exist. It is very commonly to be encountered in the sense of "pervert".

Alevism displays certain characteristic features, one of the most prominent being its reliance on passive resistance. In the past the Alevi have generally chosen the hard way. They have scarcely ever conformed to the system. On the contrary, they have endeavoured to continue their existence without compromising in any way. They have suffered massacre. They have turned to desperate resistance. They have given priority to sheer worldly existence. They have developed the concept that religion is essential for life. They have produced a system of belief in close harmony with nature.

The Problems of Urban Alevism

Alevism is a system of belief generally suited to rural life. It lays down principles for the organisation of daily life in an isolated location. Strict control forms the essence of this belief, which aims at keeping the community going without appealing to the state security forces and without state support. All their ceremonies and sanctions are aimed at achieving this end.

The Hereditary principle

This outlook, as a way of life, a culture and a philosophical attitude is broadening the general outlook of the educated Sunni. At the present day it is out of the question that Alevism should exclude anyone who heartily approves this way of life simply because he is born of Sunni parents. We must now get used to the fact that "inborn Alevism" is no longer valid as a principle. In the coming century, the elements linking these two groups will far transcend any religious bond.

Thus Alevism is confronted with the absolute necessity of transcending the "inborn Alevism" principle. With the appearance of a new world outlook and attitude to life rapidly consolidated by marriage and friendship this principle is bound to change.

The cultural aspect and way of life of Alevism are revealed more particularly in this point. Alevism combines in a secular, democratic outlook people from very different backgrounds. This is, indeed, what is meant by the Alevi "cultural identity". The aim is not to combine people from the same family and the same beliefs, but rather ensure unity through an identical world outlook and a similar cultural identity.

The Dede

The institution of the *dede* or sheikh in Alevism is, in my opinion, a very special survival from shamanism. There is a remarkable similarity between the life-style and functions of the dedes and those of the shamans. This similarity was to persist until quite recent times, although in a somewhat diluted form.

It is well known that the authority of the dedes began to decline in the 70s and 80s. With the adoption of left-wing views by Alevi youth, the dedes began to be regarded as part of the system of exploitation. Nor do the dedes possess sufficient knowledge to be able to adapt themselves to changing circumstances. They are unable to respond to the demands of a new generation that has embarked on a process of urbanisation. The old tales and legends hold no interest for modern Alevi youth, who regard them as mere superstitious fabrications.

It is in such an environment that the decline of the dede as an institution is taking place. As the old dedes gradually die off, no new dedes are found to take their place. Young people trained as dedes no longer feel any interest in it as a profession. They tend to choose more substantial jobs by which they can earn a better livelihood. Moreover, dedes who choose another profession are very often opposed to and highly critical of the whole dede institution. As a result, by the 80s, dedes possessing any real knowledge of Alevism had almost completely disappeared. Dedes were obliged to conduct the *cem* ceremonies by referring to written documents in front of them.

Last year an attempt was made to find a solution to this problem by starting courses for the training of dedes in several *tekkes*, dervish lodges, in Istanbul. But the Alevi found themselves confronted with a number of problems:

- How were the dedes to be chosen? The position of dede had been traditionally handed down from father to son. Now that Alevism was undergoing reform, was this tradition to be rejected? Should anyone who wishes be allowed to become a dede?

- How will the community regard dedes emerging from such an environment? This would surely be a superficial type of dedeism. Moreover, the Hacı Bektaş Order still possesses a definite, though now rather limited, power. This order once played a significant rôle in the choice of the Bektashi dedes. If this institution is set aside surely those devoted to it will resent the change.

How efficacious will these courses prove? They are, in the end, quite small teaching institutions. At the present day, how influential will the individuals produced by



A dede performing the sema ritual at a cem ceremony.

these institutions prove when confronted by authorities belonging to other religions who have graduated from institutions providing a comprehensive religious and cultural education.

Will those trained in these institutions be willing to adopt the position of dede as their true profession? And will the people provide them with an income capable of ensuring their livelihood?

- Will the *vakıfs* (pious foundations) be able to support the steadily increasing number of dedes? And if so, will this tend to make the dedes too dependent on the *vakıfs*?

- The responsibilities of a dede are not restricted to conducting the meetings of the congregations. They must also be capable of conducting marriage and funeral services. The dedes must be trained with all these various functions in view.

These and other problems constitute an important obstacle in this connection.

In my opinion, the most realistic solution is that provided by a university education. The Alevi departments at present under consideration in some universities both at home and abroad would prove highly efficacious. These departments would provide a broad education, and well-qualified graduates from these departments would be perfectly capable of performing the duties of a dede in a manner approved of by the congregation.

Cem

Alevi customs have had to be modified in such a way as to conform to urban life, and the meetings that used to occupy the long winter nights have now been replaced by weekend meetings. They have also had to assume a new form and function. Only an institution composed of well-educated individuals would be able to replace the monotonous meetings in which the same thing is endlessly repeated by meetings which would steadily increase the knowledge of the congregation and go some way towards solving their problems. So far, the dedes have not succeeded in adapting themselves to urban life, nor has the community become truly urbanised. After a quarter of a century they still have one foot in the village. They have not attained a

cultural level capable of satisfying the requirements of urban life. They still lead a rural life style characterised by exclusion from the outside world, in which interference in each others' lives, lack of restraint in human relations and gossip give rise to continual resentments and unease. The *cemevleri* (meeting houses) could be transformed into the type of culture centres to be seen in the West, with which their whole development is perfectly compatible. The younger generation could receive enlightenment through activities such as the presentation and development of popular culture and the organisation of folk-dances. However, the greatest obstacle in the way of achieving this is the lack of trained personnel. The very people most suited to run such activities usually stay away from the meetings and refuse to participate in them.

Musahiplik

Musahiplik, fraternity, is one of the institutions in need of reform at the present day. It is well known to be an association displaying strong solidarity. It is regarded as the mainstay of *Kızılbaş* Alevism. In actual fact, fraternity consists, as İlhan Başgöz has stated, of participation in adult society. Otherwise, everyone from an Alevi family is an Alevi. In Anatolia, participation in this community is obligatory. It is the brotherhood of two men, of two families. According to the principles of their belief, brothers share their property and their lives in common.

At the present day, however, it is impossible to carry out the requirements of such a fraternity. Either Alevism must abandon the institution entirely or apply it in a symbolic fashion. It would, however, be inadvisable to abolish it altogether. It is the product of personal habits and customs. Alevi from the rural districts are anxious to preserve their old customs, and would be very unwilling to abandon these customs and traditions. In that case, it is essential that the Alevi community should display a certain flexibility. The *Kızılbaş* Alevi, who form the majority, will want to persist with the oath of brotherhood. In that case, the fraternal oath will survive in symbolic form as a pleasant souvenir of the past.

Görüm

Görüm is another important principle incompatible with the principles of urban life. The gatherings (*cem*) are divided into two. These two forms of meetings, the *Abdal Musa* meetings, which call upon the community to unite, and the *görgü* meetings, differ in aims and beliefs. Anyone, save those who are excommunicated, may join the *Abdal Musa* meetings. *Abdal Musa* is regarded as the conciliator. His gates of repentance are more open. Thus there is no objection to those who have committed a venial sin joining these gatherings.

The *görgü* gatherings, on the other hand, assume the function of a judicial institution. No one in the community regarded as guilty of an offence may join these sessions. Interrogations are held behind closed doors. The individual concerned gives an account of all that he has done throughout the year before the *dede* and the whole gathering. These institutions have emerged with the aim of ensuring order in the community while at the same time keeping relations with the state to a minimum. This custom probably dates back to nomadic times before the state was in existence and bears all the characteristics of that primitive way of life.

There are two main reasons that make it impossible for the *görgü* institution to exist in an urban society. For one thing, they cannot perform the function of a force of law and order in an environment with modern judicial institutions and obligatory

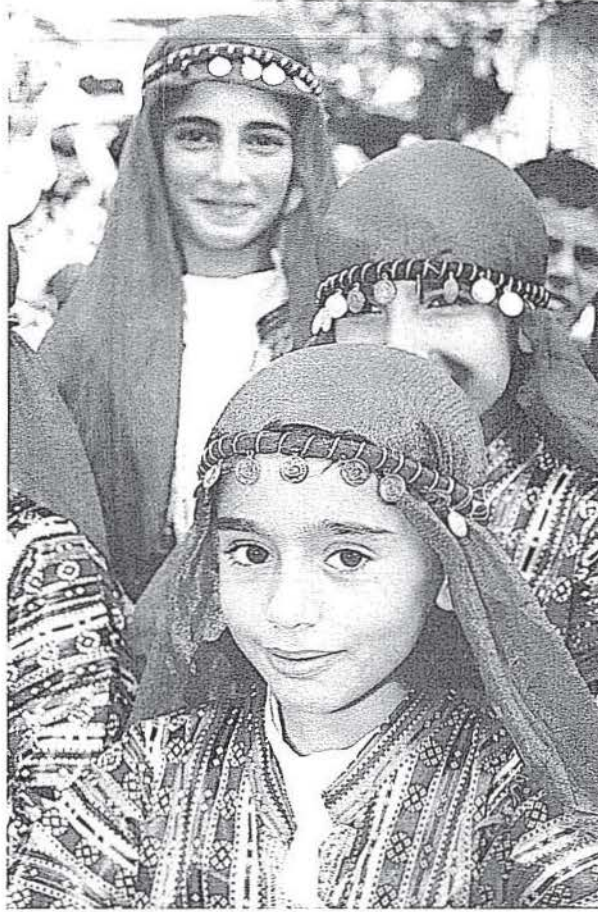
relations with the state. In urban life, it is utterly out of the question that people should exercise personal control over each other. In this, the rules and regulations of rural society are totally incompatible with urban life. For example, concepts such as excommunication (*düşkünlük*), persistent excommunication (*sürekli düşkünlük*) and momentary excommunication (*geçici düşkünlük*) are quite inapplicable in the cities. Anyone who has committed an offence will, in any case, be punished by the judge. Moreover, some actions which are regarded as offences in traditional Alevism are not regarded as offences in secular society. For example:

- In traditional Alevism marriage is regarded as a sacred institution. Except in very exceptional circumstances no divorce or separation is allowed. Questions of compatibility and incompatibility, which play such an important rôle in modern society, are simply not recognised. It is imperative that the marriage should persist under all circumstances, whereas in modern society marriage is a union which persists only as long as it ensures mutual content. Nevertheless, separation and divorce occur quite frequently in modern Alevi family life. In such an environment, it is impossible to regard a divorced man or woman as an offender. The dedes can only offer advice, mediation and reconciliation.

- The expropriation of another's rights may cause momentary excommunication. In a rural environment everyone knows exactly what is going on. They know exactly who is in the right and who is in the wrong. It is thus possible to bring about conciliation in front of the dede.

This is impossible in the city. Particularly as far as commercial transactions are concerned, everything is on paper and in the form of documents presented to the state judicial authorities. The verbal oath has lost all significance.

Finally, "excommunication from the community" has no meaning in urban society. Excommunication would merely mean that one more person has been lost to the Alevi community. The *görgü* associations have had to confine themselves to efforts by the dedes to bring about conciliation and agreement. That is actually the duty performed by the dedes in the cities. Their function is now confined to bringing the members of the community together and doing their best to preserve social peace and unity.



A group of young sema performers from the cemevi in Gazi (Istanbul).

Funeral Rites

One of the most important problems confronting Alevism in the transition from rural to urban life is that of funeral rites. Islamic funeral rites are totally alien to Alevi tradition. The oldest burial services are to be found, as is the case for several other institutions, among the Tahtacı (Turkoman Alevi). Tahtacı funeral rites are very simple. The body is buried with the approval of the community and the recitation of the *Hatayi* in Turkish. This recitation of the *Hatayi* is known as the *ism-i a'zam* prayer. In many cities, the burial of the dead which, in rural areas would be carried out by the dedes, poses a problem. In many cases, either they are not allowed in the mosques or the *imams* regard it as a sin to conduct the funeral rites of an Alevi. Under these circumstances, the question of funeral rites has become a very urgent problem that has recently led to the Alevi associations taking over responsibility for their performance. An Alevi who has never in his life been inside a mosque is very unwilling to attend a funeral held in one. Furthermore, as most of them have taken part in oppositional activities and may have rebelled against strict religious commandments, they feel very uncomfortable in the mosque environment. In the present decade the urban Alevi have felt themselves obliged to seek a solution to this problem, which has sometimes been found in choosing the meeting house (*cemevi*) as a proper location for the performance of the funeral rites.

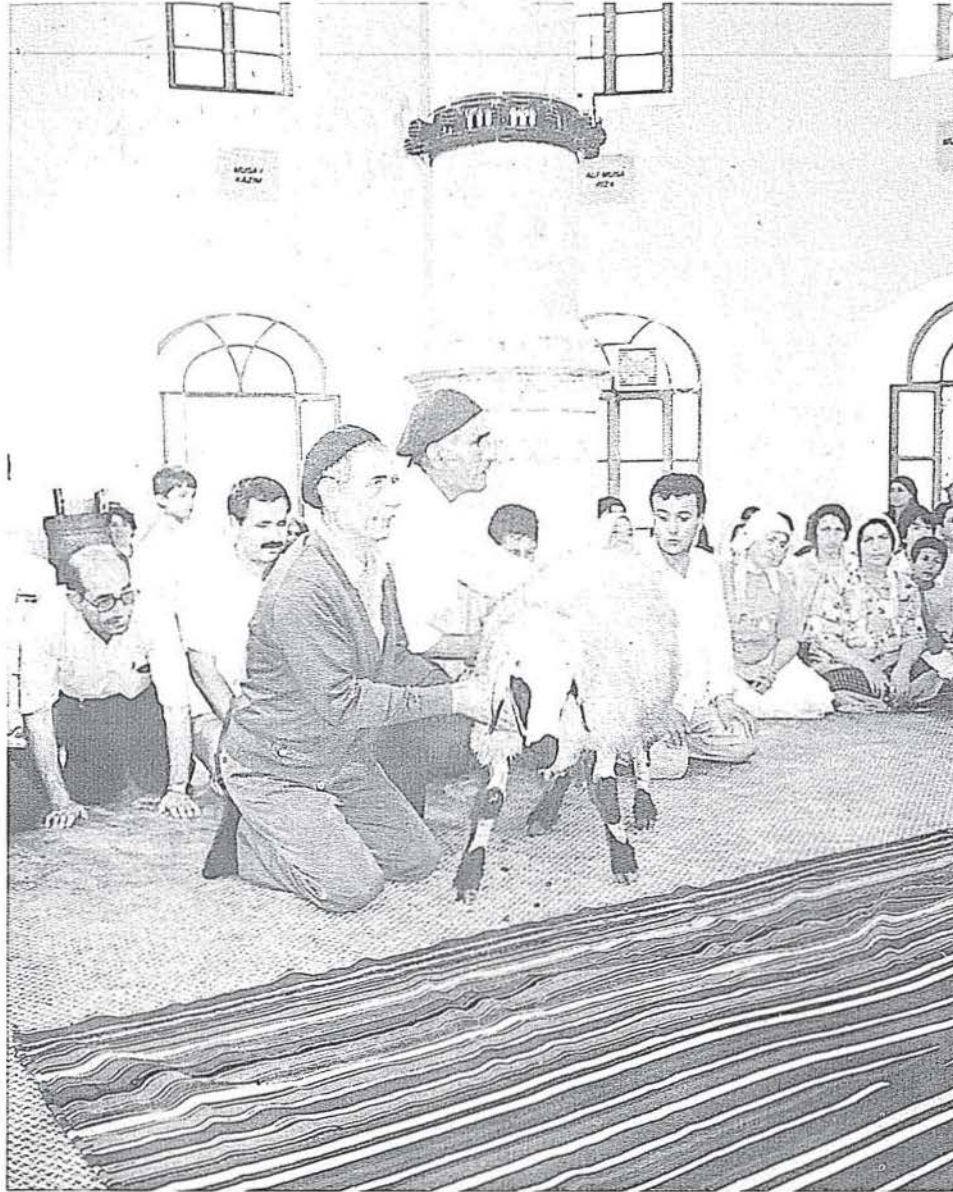
Yet another problem has arisen in connection with the performance of funeral rites. Arabic prayers are difficult to understand, and the Alevi community wishes to understand the meaning of what is being said. In the course of reform, the Alevi have found themselves obliged to draw up a Turkish funeral service, with the recitation of Turkish prayers accompanied by quotations from the great Alevi poets. It is possible that the Alevi federations may be able to adopt a single type of service for the whole Alevi community and that a relevant liturgy may be drawn up.

Memorial Services

Memorial services have also begun to pose a problem for the Alevi. Alevi practice differs from the Sunni as regards the traditional practice of reciting the Koran and the *Mevlüt* by the side of the grave. With the transition to urban life, the Alevi have been influenced by certain Sunni traditions and rites, which poses a very special problem. As we pointed out in a previous work, the Alevi finds the recitation of the *Mevlüt* a totally alien practice. It is quite incompatible with the Alevi outlook in both content and the style of its recitation. That a poem on the subject of birth should be recited without the accompaniment of music is quite alien to the Alevi spirit. On the other hand, the remembrance of the dead is a fine tradition practised by every civilised person. It has thus become imperative for the Alevi to compose their own memorial services, in the matter of which the Alevi have a much richer repertoire than the Sunni. In this respect, one may point to the *mersiyes* or dirges. *Tevhit*, unity prayers, can also be recited. These memorial services can even include the *sema* or ritual dance. These memorial services could very well take the form of a kind of mourning gathering.

Bayram Prayers

The question of *bayram* prayers poses another problem which may set the Alevi off in quest of a new solution. The strictly organised communal worship of the Sunni has always been more dynamic than that of the Alevi. Communal worship, as repre-



A sheep brought to sacrifice in the Şahkulu cemevi in İstanbul.

sented by the Friday and *bayram* prayers, are in the nature of religious practices ensuring the spiritual unity of the people. In both these respects Alevism lags far behind Sunnism. Particularly in recent years, the Friday prayers have begun to be transformed into mass demonstrations in support of religious law, *şeriat*. Confronted by the phenomenon of religious services erupting beyond the confines of the mosque itself and bringing crowds on to the streets with harangues aimed at indoctrinating the masses, the Alevi feel themselves obliged to take steps to keep their own community together.

Instead of Friday prayers, the Alevi have begun to hold meetings (*cem*) at the weekends. As participation in these meetings grows, they will increase in both function and efficaciousness. But each meeting must produce something new, the *dedes* must furnish themselves with new knowledge so as to be able to offer the congregations new theories and new information. In this respect, a generation gap has begun to appear in the Alevi community. There are great divergencies between members of the older generation, who were born and brought up in the village, and members of

the younger generation who have grown up and received their education in the cities. The older generation tends to avoid any notions that clash with received opinions. Ali is the mainstay of their belief, and is a subject on which no discussion whatever can be permitted. They cannot tolerate even the slightest doubt touching upon the legendary or imaginary aspects of his life story. To the younger generation such stories are mere fables.

While increased enlightenment results in the elimination of empty superstition it also causes a certain disturbance in the social order. The Alevi community now includes a younger generation of Alevi who, far from merely approving and supporting everything the dede says, criticises and seeks out flaws in his every statement, to such an extent that the slightest error or slip of the tongue can bring about the disintegration of a whole Alevi community. The dede is confronted by a very critical audience composed of young people who have received a middle school or even a lyc ee education and are in no mood merely to accept everything on trust. They demand new thoughts and new ideas consonant with their knowledge and intellectual attainment. The traditional meetings have become first and foremost centres of debate. The dede who finds himself incapable of modifying the old tradition in accordance with modern views is finished. The dede must be able to make a clear distinction between dream and reality, knowledge and faith. His pronouncements must offer new ideas on the philosophical plane. This may well help Alevism to take its place in the Turkish community as a new way of life.

New ideas in the realm of thought are thus of the greatest importance for the future of Alevism. This will provide a sanctuary and stronghold not only for the younger generation of Alevi but also for Sunni youth who are democrats by tradition. They are units of teaching which perform a service to life as a culture and a cross-section of life.

The Erosion of Alevism

The first signs of erosion appeared at the beginning of this century. The upheavals of the war years and the steady migration to the cities gave rise to certain changes in the social structure. The establishment of the Republic was followed by comprehensive changes on a country-wide scale and radical reforms brought about far-reaching changes in the Alevi community. Links were now formed between the cities and the remote, isolated villages in which the Alevis had formerly found refuge. Primary schooling was made compulsory. Communications were established with the outside world and people from other parts began to settle in the Alevi villages. At the same time, the Kemalist policy of secularisation removed some of the constraints that had previously been imposed by the majority groups. With the abolition of the *seriat* and the introduction of religious freedom the outside world began to lose its hostile aspect in Alevi eyes. The community thus entered a period in which the inner dynamism, religious attitude and collective self-knowledge of the community was to undergo a fundamental change. This process gained extra momentum in the years 1948 to 1956 following the mass movement of the Alevi to the cities during the wave of migrations from the rural to the urban areas.

For nearly four hundred years the Alevi have been endeavouring to prove that they are Muslims. Although they generally regard their community as an integral part of Islam and offer a rational interpretation of the teachings of Muhammed, they have been unable to convince either the state or society of their Muslim credentials. Under the appearance of devotion to Ali, Alevism comprises within its fabric a number of



The enclosed meeting place and the *cemevi* at the Alevi cultural center at Şahkulu, İstanbul.

different religious cultures and philosophies. As far as the tradition of devotion to Ali is concerned, the Alevi believe that the holy light returned to shine in the world in the form of Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of Muhammed, and the Twelve Imams descended from him. Respect for Ali and his son Hüseyin, who was left to die of thirst, forms the basis of their religious outlook. Taking the esoteric (*batıni*) tradition as their point of departure, they produced a spiritual interpretation of the Islamic law of the Koran. As a result, they have never accepted Islamic doctrine as strictly binding. This belief, together with their way of life, has led to their being accused of immorality and perversion.

For four hundred years, the Alevi have endeavoured to prove to the state and their Sunni neighbours that they are indeed Muslims, but all to no avail. Now the tables are turned. Since 1990 it has been the state and the Sunni theologians who have been trying to prove the Muslim credentials of the Alevi while the opposite opinion is being put forward by Alevi writers of the younger generation.

How has this come about? How is it that a teaching which, throughout the whole period of the Ottoman Empire, was rejected as a heretical doctrine and a perverse belief should suddenly win approval?

At the root of this change in attitude lies a concealed process of erosion, an attempt at intellectual assimilation. Alevism is rapidly becoming absorbed within Sunni doctrine. This is being achieved, not by methods such as exclusion or rejection of their beliefs, which can only give rise to hostility, but by methods of much greater circumspection and sophistication. An alienated community, especially if it succeeds in gaining a certain standing in the economic and social sphere, can put up a very tough resistance. Equipped with the powers attained through education, the Alevi are now perfectly capable of giving free expression to their own individual identity. At the same time, the old Ottoman methods have lost their validity. A new path has been opened up.

In its essence, the policy pursued by the Republican government is a type of painless assimilation. The concept of "perverted belief" is now replaced by the concept

“ignorant belief”. According to the new discourse, the Alevi are Muslims. There is no essential difference between Alevi and Sunni. If Alevism is indeed based on the love of Ali and his sons then almost every Sunni is an Alevi. Is it possible for any Muslim not to love Ali and his sons? Alevi and Sunni share the same Book, the same Prophet, the same belief. There is only one difference between them. As a result of mistaken policies, the Alevi have been alienated and filled with resentment. That is the reason for their having ceased to perform, and gradually having forgotten, some of the fundamental elements of the Muslim religion, such as ritual prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. Now this policy of exclusion will be abandoned and the Alevi welcomed back into the fold.

Both in terms of influencing people’s minds and changing concrete, tangible realities, official policies are carried out, which aim at the erosion of Alevism. In the first case education is focused, in the second special emphasis is given to the building of mosques in Alevi villages.

In the field of education, the erosion of Alevism began with the introduction of compulsory religious instruction in the schools. Religious instruction was originally introduced in schools in the 1940s. It was first of all applied to the first two classes of middle school (*ortaokul*) and later extended to the other classes. At first, children belonging to families who wished their children to attend religious instruction lessons had to bring a letter from their parents. This was later switched around so that the letter had to be sent by those who wished their children to be exempt from attendance at religious instruction classes. Later, in accordance with the articles of the 1982 Constitution, religious instruction was made compulsory in all primary and middle schools. The insertion of several topics relating to Alevism into the religious instruction curriculum was simply an attempt to kill two birds with one stone. On the one hand, the policy of exclusion was abandoned, while on the other the work of assimilation was given much greater impetus. Moreover, an attempt is now being made to give the impression that religious instruction is not confined to Sunni doctrine but covers Islamic teaching as a whole. The aim of the religious lessons is to introduce the pupil to all religions as well as to offer a genuine view of Islam. The aim and range of content of the lesson will thus form a barrier against reactionary, pro-shari’a initiatives.

In actual practice, however, the reality is very different from the appearance. In almost every part of Turkey, religious instruction has been entrusted to the *hocas*, most of whom have been trained in the *İmam-Hatip* (religious vocational) schools and in institutions of higher religious education. They are all people whose attitudes and outlook have been shaped and consolidated in their youth. In the classroom they are used as instruments of religious indoctrination.

The most important resistance to this policy of Alevi assimilation in education is concentrated on the topic of compulsory religious instruction, and, in the coming years, the most vehement struggle will be concentrated on the attempt to bring about its abolition. These lessons are being employed as a deliberate attempt to mould the minds of the younger generation. I know a number of concrete examples. A son belonging to a family of my acquaintance from my own village allowed himself to be totally won over by Sunni indoctrination. Nothing we said was of any avail. It was only after the Sivas massacre that this young man began to modify his views. But even the abolition of religious instruction as a compulsory lesson in line with the Turkish social fabric is no real solution to the Alevi problem. It is essential that the Alevi should arrange separate lessons of Alevi religious instruction and it is also essential that these lessons should be taught by an Alevi teacher. Answers must also be found to problems such as the lack of qualified teachers, the lack of a curriculum



Kermess in Şahkulu Cemevi in Istanbul.

and the lack of class text-books. Alevi teachers in every branch should be obliged to follow a certain course of instruction, while a group of academics should be chosen to draw up the new curriculum and prepare the necessary text-books. This would constitute one phase in the attainment by Alevi youth of an individual identity and outlook. It is the duty of the state to approach each doctrine with impartiality. Any infringement of this impartiality can destroy any validity the principles may have held and give rise to severe social unrest.

Social change and development is closely linked to the surrounding conditions. Unfortunately, I can see no sign in Turkey of the type of secular environment that can be observed in the civilised countries of Europe.

As far as concrete implementations are concerned, the most striking example of erosion and assimilation of Alevism is found in the construction of mosques in Alevi villages. The Alevis have never, in any period, accepted the mosque as an institution, but this policy is being implemented with the connivance and assistance of certain Alevi who derive considerable personal profit from the scheme. The same policy serves to identify Alevism with the older generation. The construction of mosques in Alevi villages and the appointment of *hocas* paid from the state coffers is simply an attempt to bring about the complete dissolution of Alevism.

Is there any other government in the world that follows a similar policy? I don't know, but by implementing a policy that rejects a people's own traditional culture in order to impose a foreign culture upon it the Turkish Republic appears to be embarking on a new and original enterprise, and it is the politicians with Allah, the Koran, mosque and call to prayer always on their lips that are the chief architects of this policy. How is talk of "secularity" and the continual stress laid on the danger posed by the fundamentalists, to be reconciled with such slogans as "carrying the mosque to Europe"? Is a policy of religious expansion consistent with the secular state? There is good reason to doubt the genuineness or sincerity of such policies.

Finally, such disingenuous practices, find supporters however few, also among the Alevi themselves. Mosques are being built in a number of Alevi villages, the excuse for this being the "lack of *hocas* to bury the dead". At the same time, new Alevi organisations are being established in several regions. A chain of Alevi

mosques is being constructed on the initiative of a former deputy for Çorum. The same group is bringing out a monthly journal advocating the adoption of a doctrine based on the love of Ali as the true meaning of Alevism. Every effort is being made to link Alevism to Shi'i doctrine.

The first public reaction to this irresponsible course of action on the part of the Alevi came from the writer and researcher on Alevism Nejat Birdoğan in 1995. In an article published in *Aktüel*, a magazine with a very large circulation, Birdoğan described Alevism as being "outside Islam". This statement aroused a sharp reaction from several Alevi writers as well as from the Alevi community as a whole. In a book published at a later date, Birdoğan embarked on a defence of his theory. This view, openly stated by Nejat Birdoğan and supported by myself, should be regarded as of really vital importance. It serves to erect a barrier against the erosion of Alevism and its assimilation by Sunni doctrine. It is the most effective way out of the dilemma "Are you a Muslim? Then here is a Koran for you!".

The following are the most concrete measures to be taken against the erosion of Alevism:

1. The abolition of compulsory religious instruction in schools. Teaching on Alevism should be available on a voluntary basis.
2. No time should be lost in putting an end to the construction of mosques in Alevi villages. As for the mosques already built, the *hoca* should be dismissed and the buildings converted into Alevi meeting houses (*cemevis*).

Every radical change, every innovation is implemented by the community under the leadership of the educated members of society. Until the Alevi community adopts this principle no real reform will be possible.