

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROLE OF DEDES IN MODERN TIMES*

Modern Zamanlarda Dedelerin Rolünün Dönüşümü

Die Transformation der Institution des Dedetums in der heutigen Zeit

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the transformation of the *dede* institution, one of the basic institutions of Alevism, throughout the urbanization. *Dede* institution played a primary role in the survival of Alevism until today. That is why it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that this institution is of key importance for an understanding of Alevism in Anatolia. *Dedes* have moved away from their roles in *dede-talib* relations, which are based on *ocaks* in traditional life, and also from their traditional functions due to urbanization.

Today, *cemevis* and cultural centers in Turkey and the urban centers around Europe are widely run by associations and foundations. It is now clear that traditional institutions which had a significant power in the past, such as *ocak* institution, have been transformed. The socio-economic transformation caused by urbanization has also caused significant effects on the life of Alevi. It is necessary to compare the status of *dede* institution in the past with its current status in order to better understand

* This article is based on my previous works on the institution of *dedelik* such as Yaman (2006, 2010, 2012).

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this situation. There are great differences between the new and the old qualifications and functions of *dedes* in the new social order. The functions of *Dede* institution have either disappeared with time, or have continued with various changes along with the new conditions and new needs of the society. The change is still continuing.

Keywords: Alevism, *ocak*, *dede* institution, transformation.

ÖZ

Bu makale Aleviliğin temel kurumlarından olan Dedelik Kurumunun kentleşme ile yaşadığı dönüşümü ele almaktadır. Dedelik kurumu Aleviliğin günümüze ulaşmasında temel rol sahibidir. Öyle ki bu kurum Anadolu'da Aleviliği anlamak bakımından anahtar bir öneme sahiptir denilmesi abartılı olmayacaktır. Dedeler, kentleşmeye bağlı olarak geleneksel yaşamda ocaklara dayanan dede-talip ilişkilerinden ve işlevlerinden uzaklaşmışlardır.

Bugün Türkiye'de ve Avrupa'daki kent merkezlerindeki var olan Cemevleri ve Kültür Merkezleri büyük ölçüde dernekler ve vakıflar tarafından yönetilmektedir. Bugün artık açıktır ki eski ocak kurumu gibi geçmişte önemli güce sahip geleneksel kurumlar dönüşmüşlerdir. Kentleşmenin yarattığı sosyo-ekonomik dönüşüm, Alevilerin yaşamında önemli etkiler yaratmıştır. Bu durumu daha iyi anlayabilmek için Dedelik Kurumunun geçmişteki durumu ile günümüzdeki durumunu karşılaştırmak gerekmektedir. Yeni toplum düzeninde dedelerin yeni ile geçmişteki nitelikleri ve işlevleri arasında büyük farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. Dedelik kurumunun işlevleri zaman içerisinde ya tamamen ortadan yok oldu, ya da yeni koşullar ve toplumun yeni ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda değişerek yoluna devam etti. Değişim bugün hala sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Ocak, Dedelik Kurumu, Dönüşüm.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel behandelt die Transformation, die die Institution des Dedetums (Dedelik), die zu den primären Institutionen des Alevitentums gehört, aufgrund der Urbanisierung durchlaufen hat. Die Institution des Dedetums spielte die Hauptrolle beim Überleben des Alevitentums bis heute. Aus diesem Grund wäre es keine Übertreibung zu sagen, dass diese Institution eine Schlüsselbedeutung beim Verstehen des Alevitentums in Anatolien einnimmt. Die Dedes haben sich aufgrund der Urbanisierung von den Dede-Talib-Beziehungen, die im traditionellen Leben auf den Ocaks (Geistlichenfamilien) basieren, und ihren Funktionen entfernt.

Cem-Häuser und Kulturzentren in städtischen Zentren in der Türkei und Europa werden heute größtenteils von Vereinen und Stiftungen geleitet. Heute ist es klar, dass sich traditionelle Institutionen, die in der Vergangenheit über signifikante Macht verfügten, wie die Ocak-Institution, transformiert haben. Die sozioökonomische Transformation, verursacht durch die Urbanisierung, bewirkte erheblichen Einfluss auf das Leben der Aleviten. Um diese Situation besser verstehen zu können, muss die Situation der Institution des Dedetums in der Vergangenheit mit ihrer heutigen Situation verglichen werden. In der neuen Gesellschaftsordnung lassen sich bedeutende Unterschiede zwischen den neuen und alten Qualifikationen und Funktionen der Dedes finden. Die Funktionen der Institution des Dedetums sind mit der Zeit entweder vollständig verschwunden oder wurden unter Veränderung gemäß den neuen Bedingungen und neuen Bedürfnissen der Gesellschaft fortgeführt. Die Veränderung hält bis heute an.

Schlüsselwörter: Alevitentum, Ocak, Institution des Dedetums, Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Before analyzing the dede institution and its roles in Alevi society within centuries, a general assessment of Alevism should be useful. This article is based on the argument that Alevism and its institutions cannot be understood without taking considering the historical migration process of Turks from their motherland Asia to Anatolia. Both the religious and cultural context in Anatolia and Asia and their experiences in the long process of migration affected the transformation of Alevi institutions. Thus, to examine the roots of Alevism-Bektashism by only focusing on the events that gave rise to Sunni- Shi'ite split on Islam would be historically and sociologically invalid. The crucial studies on the issue, such as the works of Fuad Koprülü, F.W. Hasluck, Irene Melikoff, Sureya Faruki and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak prove my argument. In other words, I assert that to understand Alevism it is crucial to examine the religious and cultural syncretism of the belief which is the result of interaction between Turkish-Alevi society and other groups in different geographies throughout the history. Alevism in Anatolia can be defined as a type of “folk Islam” created by this syncretism. It is a “folk Islam” because it is based on oral tradition in which both the myths and beliefs of the old Turkish generation survive under the Islamic tradition.

The institution of Dede will be will also analyzed within this historical and sociological context. For centuries, the institution of Dede has been one of the basic structures in the Kizilbash Alevi society. The other key institutions of Alevism, the Alevi “ocak” is also based on Dede families. The role of Dede in Alevi society is not only restricted to religious issues, but they also deal with educational and judicial mechanisms in society. Members of Alevi Ocak were at the top of the social hierarchy; hence their hierarchical position and spiritual authority helped them maintain social order. It is obvious that Kizilbash Alevi dedes have taken crucial role in the survival of Alevism in Anatolia. However; their traditional roles have transformed throughout history.

Before moving on to evaluations of the traditional state and its transformation, I find it useful to introduce the background of the studies on the “Dedelik” (Religious Guideship) Institution. Especially in the late 1990s, both Alevism and the “dedelik” institution began to attract more researchers’ attention. Academic institutions and academicians in particular have carried out various studies. In addition to many symposiums, conferences and panels, numerous books and articles were published.

Many foreign academicians, such as Markus Dressler, Gloria L. Clarke, Martin Sökefeld, David Shankland, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, Robert Langer, Janina Karolewski, Hiroki Wakamatsu, Elise Massicard, Academicians or researchers from Turkey, such as Alemdar Yalçın, Mehmet Ersal, Gıyasettin Aytaş, Nilgün Çıblak Coşkun, Sabır Güler, Bülent Akın, Ahmet Taşğın, Rıza Yıldırım, Ali Selçuk, Havva Selçuk, Hayri Şanlı, Doğan Munzuroğlu, Hüseyin Çakmak, Seyfi Muhundi, Erdal Gezik, Veli Saltuk, Piri Er, Fevzi Rençber, Talip Tuğrul, Yılmaz Arı, Hasan Ögütçü, Mesut Özcan, Erdoğan Yalçın, Dilşa Deniz, Mehmet Demirtaş, Hüseyin Dedekargınoğlu, Musa Karakaş, Baki Yaşa Altınok, Yalçın Çakmak, Abbas Ulusoy, Mehmet Bayrak, Arif Kala, Hamza Aksüt, İrfan Çoban, Refik Engin, Ayhan Aydın, have also published many studies on the subject.¹

While my studies in the 1990s focus more on the understanding of the traditional structure, from 2006 onwards my attention centres on the transformation of Alevism, including the “Dedelik” Institution, and its current problems. My master thesis, that started in 1996 and focused on the functions of the “Dedelik” Institution, continued with my PhD thesis entitled *The Process of Change in Alevism within the Framework of the Institutions of Religious Guideship*, completed in 2001. During my master’s and doctoral studies, the transformation of Alevism and its institutionalization through “cemevi” reached its peak. I conducted interviews with elderly “ocakzade”s for a year in my room in the Shakhkulu Dergah (Lodge). I asked them to talk about their childhood because after them, it would be no longer possible to find anyone to talk about those times. Over the years, I’ve come to understand how right I was. At the same time, I regret not having more conversations with people who had seen so much more of this traditional life. There are so many questions I could have asked them. However, I believe that I have brought a new approach to the subject by supporting the information that has been known until then, both in terms of literature review and fieldwork. I am very happy to see that our efforts aren’t wasted as I see the references made to my studies in other researchers’ studies.

Here, I would like to present the latest studies to the interested parties by mentioning some of the books on the subject of “ocak” (hearth), done in Turkey and abroad:

-Alevilik: Kavramlar ve Ocak Sistemi Çubuk Havzası Örneği, (“Alevism: Terms and Ocak/Hearth System – The Cubuk Basin Example”) (Ankara, Gazi Üniversitesi

1 For many of their works see the bibliography.

Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Merkezi Yayını, 2016) study done by Mehmet Ersal.

-İz Bırakan Erenler ve Alevi Ocakları. (“Notable Erens and Alevi Ocaks/Hearths”) (2. printing, Ankara, 2011) study done by Veli Saltık.

-Alevi Ocakları ve Örgütlenmeleri (“Alevi Ocaks/Hearths and Their Organization”) (Ankara, Kalan Yayıncılık, 2013) study done by Erdal Gezik and Mesut Ozcan.

-Ocak und Dedelik Institutionen religiösen Spezialistentums bei den Aleviten, (“Ocaks/Hearths and Dedelik/Religious Guideship as Religious Institutions Among Alevis”) (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013) study done by Robert Langer, Hüseyin Ağuiçenoğlu, Janina Karolewski and Raoul Motika.

The urbanization process after the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic and structural exclusion towards Alevs are two main dynamics that determine the deterioration of *dedelik*. While the urbanization process caused the breaking down of the relations between *dede* and *talip*; the favoritism, towards Sunni Islam by the government officials, the exclusion of Alevism from the public sphere, especially related to the educational and religious issues, affected the role of *dedelik* in society. However, in the 1990s due to the revival of the Alevi movement in Turkey and Europe, *dedes* regain their roles in the religious sphere. Although they do not have a strong position in the current society should be concerning their traditional role, the institution of *dede* still has a crucial role to understand Alevism and its transformation. This article, first, analyzes the status and the importance of *dedelik*; then it focuses on the transformation of the role of *dedes*.

As a well-known story, the foundation of the Republic of Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rural depopulation transformed the traditional structure of the socio-economic life in Turkey. Compared with Sunnis, it can be argued that Alevs encountered more problems during this transformation and their adaptation to modern urban life. Since the traditional religious life was practiced only in rural areas, Alevs felt as outsiders in modern cities in both religious and cultural sense. As a result, the *ocak* system, which is based on the *dede-talip* relationship, and which has a vital role on the social structure of Alevism, gradually became alienated from its traditional tasks. Moreover, this process adversely affected the relations between the families of Alevi *dedes* and their *talips* and the other non-

Alevi communities as well. With the rise of urbanization and adaptation to modern urban life, the traditional Alevi institutions started to lose their significance.

One of these traditional Alevi institutions is the institution of *dedelik*, which is represented by the spiritual leaders of Alevi who lived in closed communities since the 16th century. This institution has a crucial role to understand Alevism. The spiritual leaders of the community are named *dede*, *baba*, *pir*, *mürşid* or *rebber*. *Dedes* are recognized as the head of the social hierarchy. They are responsible for the religious affairs, and their authority (and power of sanction) over the community give them an important role in the society. That's why it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that this institution is of key importance for understanding Alevism in Anatolia.

Alevi *dedes* are the members of the *ocaks* located in various cities of Turkey, and they are also authorized under the name of *ocakzade* (literally, sons of hearth). The *ocakzade dedes*, also called *seyyid*, are believed to be the descendants of the Prophet (*Evlad-ı Resul*). There are a series of documents proving that they have the confirmation of certain lodges and *Nakibül Eşraf* (the chief of the descendants of the Prophet). *Dedes* usually visit their talip communities, perform religious ceremonies, enlighten the public and help community members to overcome the controversies among them. It has been known for a long time that there is a division of labor among the *ocakzade dedes* similar to the one among *mürşids-pirs-rebbers*. This can also be expressed with the principle of *El ele el Hakk'a*. This is why *dedes*, one of the members of *ocaks*, constitute a kind of domestic hierarchical order to provide discipline for its members.

The people whose names were given to *ocaks*, such as Ağuiçen, Sarı Saltık, Hıdır Abdal, Baba Mansur, Hubyar Sultan, Şah İbrahim Veli, were ranked based on their characteristics related to their ancestries, miracles and services. The Alevi-Bektaşî religious leaders throughout Anatolia and the Balkans can be categorized into four:

1. Independent *ocakzade dedes*,
2. *Dedes/babas/vekils* (representatives) affiliated with the Çelebis of Hacı Bektaş,
3. *Dikme dedes/babas* commissioned by *ocakzade dedes*,
4. *Halifebabas, halife* and *babas* affiliated with the branch of *dedebaba*.

The Alevi community recognized *dedes* as the heads of the social hierarchy, but their power diminished because of the new social structure emerged after the

foundation of the Republic of Turkey. There are a number of factors damaging the structure of *dedelik* such as the positive discrimination towards Sunni Islam by the official administrations, the breakdown of the relationship between *dedes* and *talips*, which stemmed from the exclusion of Alevism from public life especially from educational and religious services. Nevertheless, starting with the 1990s, the role of *dedes* in the society has been revitalized, especially in *cemevis* in Turkey and Europe. Although today *dedes* are far from their heydays in the past, they began to earn their old reputation in the community with respect to new social requirements. Alevi, most of whom live in cities, have more different characteristics and needs than the traditional ones living in the countryside. It is clear that there are some differences against Alevism in terms of understanding, relation and practice. Alevism can be able to continue its existence as an identity in the cities where traditional Alevi institutions but its ethnocultural dimension rather than its belief aspect becomes prominent. Compared to their traditional functions, now Dedes are much more delimited and have transformed into salaried or voluntary relief leaders serving at hundreds of downtown Cemevis of which communities come from different regions.

THE TRADITIONAL ROOTS OF THE INSTITUTION OF *DEDELIK*

In this section, the origins and the formation of the institution of *dedelik* in Anatolia are explained in light of historical events.

Although there is not sufficient evidence, it can be predicted that there is a close linkage between the constitution of *dedelik* and the colonization movement headed by the sheiks and dervishes succeeding their migration to Anatolia. *Ocaks* were called by the names of the surviving dervishes, which implies their close relationship. These dervishes lived in different parts of Anatolia, established dervish lodges, contributed to the population growth, provided sustainable economic growth and became spiritual leaders. It is important to underline that Alevi *ocaks* contain a spiritual identity and have survived until today through their descendants.

There is different historical evidence, which support this hypothesis. For instance, Baba İlyas, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, Emirci Sultan, Dede Garkın and Sarı Saltuk were some of the most powerful and active sheiks in Anatolia in the 13th century. Their power and influence can be proved by the extent of the Babailer uprising in the same century. Until now, the names of Dede Garkın and Sarı Saltuk have survived with some Alevi *ocaks*. Also, in Vilayetname, it is possible to see some associations

titled as Karadonlu Can Baba, Cemal Seyyid, Seyyid Mahmut Hayrani, Hacı Doğrul (Gözü Kızıl) and Güvenç Abdal. Moreover, it is possible to see the names of some dervishes such as Samit Abdal (Sheik Samit or Samut) and Hızır (Hıdır) Abdal who were recorded in the Tales of the Ottoman Baba and in Sheik Muhyiddin Celebi's Divan in the 15th century (see Gölpınarlı 1968, 792; Ocak 1992, 102; Yaman 1989, 140).

The concept of *Enlad-ı Resul* descendants of the Prophet has developed and taken its current form do to the Safavi propaganda. According to the Alevi tradition, it is a mandatory qualification to become a *dede*. As a result of the intense Safavi influence and activities targeting Alevi, Alevi mobilized and became more organized. Besides, the institution of *dedelik* became consolidated with the help of the written documents (Buyruks) that were brought by the *halifes*, the assistants of Shah Ismail. Embedded with Shiite motifs, Alevi Islam, spread throughout Anatolia and the Balkans. Hence, by disseminating these written documents, the *halifes* contributed to making Alevism have a more structured form.

Under the rule of Shah Ismail, the notion of 'ancestry' also gained importance. The fact that they used similar statements to gain a social status is why the Safavids employed the notion of *sayyid* to exert influence over Anatolian Alevi. Cults such as Ahl al-Bayt, Ali, the Twelve Imams and the mourning of the Kerbela incident were brought to Anatolia through the Safavi propaganda in the late 15th century and, they became the key factor in promoting the notion of 'ancestry'.

In conclusion, the institution of *dedelik* was born as a result of these legendary characteristics of Alevi *ocak* leaders such as Dede Garkın, Sarı Saltuk, Baba Mansur, Hıdır Abdal who were the descendants of the Twelve Imams. These *ocak* leaders contributed to the construction of legendary *dede* title. In addition, Alevi show respect for the descendants of those who became *dede* ocaks it must be taken into consideration that there are some similarities between *dedes* and the spiritual leaders of the ancient Turks, both in terms of context and form. Bozkurt (1996: 86) claims: "In my opinion, the institution of *dede* or sheikh in Alevism is a special survival from shamanism. There is a remarkable similarity between the lifestyle and the functions of the *dedes* and those of the shamans..."

The study of 'ancestry' in the context of *dedes* should first consider its meaning during the Old and Middle Ages. During this period, being a descendant of the nobility

had its privileges. Only those who managed to prove that they are a descendant of either the Sultan or the Prophet could receive political and/or religious power.

In terms of their internal organization, every Alevi-Bektaşî community follows a particular *dergah* (convent) or *ocak* (hearth). Which *dergah* or *ocak* one is affiliated with is of primary importance. Alevi *ocaks* carry the names of holy religious figures that are, by tradition, assumed to be the descendants of the Prophet through the line of Ali (*seyyid*) such as Dede Garkın, Sarı Saltuk and Kara Donlu Can Baba. Over time, the descendants of these holy dervishes called *ocakzade* institutionalized the *ocaks* members of these *ocakzade* families. Similar to the institution of *dedelik*, *ocaks* have been scarcely researched. Below they are explained only at an introductory level.

WHEN DID THE ALEVI OCAKS EMERGE

It is well known that Alevi-Bektaşî groups have different kinds of beliefs associated with their customs. *Dedebabas*, *çelebis*, *ocakzade dedes*, *babas* and *dikme dedes* all come from different origins. There are four main hypotheses for these differences:

1. The Alevi *ocaks* were first founded during the time of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli.
2. The Alevi *ocaks* existed before the time of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli and were founded by the descendants of Ali.
3. The Alevi *ocaks* first emerged during the time of Shah Ismail.
4. The religious and political leaders of the Turkmen tribes who migrated to Anatolia later became the founders of *ocakzade dede* families.

The interviews I conducted with *dedes* also include crucial assertions related to these hypotheses. Each of these hypotheses must be examined separately in a detailed way.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF OCAKS

Alevi *ocaks* can be classified according to various criteria such as their functions, organizational patterns and ritual practices.

According to their functions:

1. *Ocaks* of the *mürşid*
2. *Ocaks* of the *pir*
3. *Ocaks* of the *rehber*
4. *Ocaks* of the *düşkün* (excommunicated).

Some independent *ocaks* later joined *çelebi ocaks*; hence a distinction is also made between:

1. *Dönük* (convert) *ocaks*
2. *Purut ocaks*

According to their ritual practices:

1. *Ocaks* who use *erkân*
2. *Ocaks* who use *pence*

THE TRADITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF KIZILBAŞ ALEVI DEDES

Because the Alevi communities in Anatolia are geographically dispersed, there are often wrong assessments about them. The Alevi *ocaks* are numerous and diverse in all dimensions. Nonetheless, the existing literature comprises of numerous easy generalizations. For example, on the hierarchy of *dedes*, Hasluck (1929: 147) claims:

The priests are called *Dede*: above them are bishops and patriarchs. Of the latter, there are two, one of whom resides in a *tekke* at Khubyar, fifty-five kilometres north-east of Sivas. The patriarchs are descendants of Ali and infallible in doctrine. The religious head of the Kizilbash resides in the Dersim.

In fact, according to the traditions that survived among Alevis and the books of Buyruk, which include the basic principles of the Alevi faitha *dede* must have the following qualifications:

1. to be a descendant of the Prophet (*ocakzade*),
2. to operate as an educator and a moral guide (*murebbi*) for the community,
3. to be knowledgeable and exemplary in his character and manners (*insan-i kamil*),
4. to follow the principles written in the Buyruks, and the established traditions of Alevism.²

In traditional life, every Alevi-Bektaşî community followed a particular *dergah* or *oak*. While *tekkes* and *zaviyes* operated mostly in cities, belief centers, called *ocaks*, operated in rural regions. Alevis in rural regions were under the influence of *dedes* associated with these *ocaks* relatively to a greater extent. According to some sources,

2 On the issue of the qualifications and functions of *dedes*, see also Bumke, 1991.

it is highly possible that there was a relationship between the Alevi *ocaks* and the cult of the hearth, which was common among the pre-Islamic Turks (For example, see Er, 1998: 83-91). Because the rural Alevi communities had an oral tradition, there is currently no sufficient data, and hence, more research in this area is needed.

THE CHANGE IN *DEDES'* QUALIFICATIONS

In traditional rural life, *dedes* used to be the men of wisdom, education and moral guide. They were well-educated people knowing the Ottoman script as well. They had broad knowledge about various issues; they had written sources and carried the oral culture to the younger generations. Overall, these characteristics gave them a traditional authority in society. In the past, *dedes* had a leading and active role in ensuring the justice in society by using their traditional and religious authority, which came from their ancestry. In this way, their authority in society continued for centuries. However, due to the rise of the modern education system, their privileged status has been weakened in time. Today, they are deprived of their traditional roles, and as such, their juridical and exemplary roles disappeared.

There are many different aspects of the change that *ocaks*/hearths experienced after urbanization. The socio-economic transformation brought about by urbanization has caused the emergence of four different *Ocakzade dede*/religious guide typology today:

1. As a new phenomenon, *dedes* who give religious services either on salary or voluntary basis in *cemevis*, associations and foundations where Alevism is experienced and applied in cities,
2. *Dedes*, members of the traditional *Ocakzade* families, who are not in charge of certain *cemevi*, association or foundation but maintain their religious services among Alevi society both in cities and in Anatolia,
3. *Dedes* who don't maintain religious services belonging to the traditional *dedelik*/religious guideship but who have information and observations obtained from their fathers or relatives and/or informed by written sources,
4. Another group can be described as "members of *dede* families who aren't knowledgeable as they don't serve *cem*" (Yaman, 2012: 23-24).

And there are also many changes that the institution of *dedelik* is facing at present day. Many young descendants of *dedes* do not aspire to become a *dede* due to the

existing social conditions. Only a few of them are willing to provide this religious service, even though *cemevis* are institutionalized in cities. Secondly, at the present day, *dedes* do not work voluntarily, but are paid and are in charge of jobs allocated by the heads of Alevi associations. Thirdly, in the old days, the *dede-talip* relations were based on Alevi *ocaks* and used to take the ancestry relations as the basic parameters. It was compulsory for *dedes* to be an *ocakzade*, in other words, to be an *Evladi-Resul* or to come from an *ocakzade* family, which has an ancestry of Alevi-Bektaşî path exalter who had achieved to become a *mürşid* by means of service or prophecy. Nowadays, these qualities do not seem to be enough. The education level and the oratory skills are also necessary to achieve the *dede* position in the new social order.

Finally, following the principles written in the Buyruks containing the principals of the Alevi faith (known as Menakıb-ı İmam Cafer, Menakıb-ı Şeyh Safî), as well as the established traditions of Alevism was another important qualification. These principles in the Alevi tradition have been transferred from generation to generation for centuries as such: ‘The “path” is the most exalted of all’, ‘Four Doors Forty Levels’, ‘Control one’s hands, tongue, and loins’. These written and/or oral rules that *dedes* had to obey have disappeared, because the books, which determined the principles of the ‘path’ and which produced solutions for problems pertaining to rural life hundreds of years ago, haven’t been updated. Hence the traditional Alevi institutions have disappeared, and with urbanization, the role of Alevi *dedes* and their position in the social hierarchy have changed.

THE CHANGE IN DEDES’ FUNCTIONS

Every social institution gains its importance through its professional functions and the structures that lose their functions in social life are condemned to disappear. Thus, it would be beneficial to compare *dedes*’ functions in the past (see Yaman, 2004: 161-171) and those in the present day in order to understand the transformation in *ocaks*.

Today the function of ‘guiding the society as spiritual leaders and being exemplary with their behaviors and lifestyles’ for *ocakzades* is not as effective as in the past. Notable and esteemed *dedes* still exist inside or outside of the Alevi institutions (associations/foundations/*cemevis*), but it is not possible to say that *dede-talip* relationships are sustainable. The development of modern education and communication means resulted in *dedes*’ function (of being a social and religious

guide in society) to disappear. Hence, *dedes*' social influence and traditional authority have been diminished in time.

Unlike those in rural areas, the *dedes* who serve voluntarily in *cemevis* in cities address to a 'hybrid' society comprised of urbanized disciples who belong to various *ocaks*. For instance, a *dede* who carries out a *cem* ritual may be from the Kureyşan *ocak*, but disciples may belong to various *ocaks*, and there can even be sometimes non-Alevi people in the audience. Hence, the number of *dedes* who address only to disciples of their *ocak* (i.e. who have the same ancestry) has gradually decreased.

It is evident that the traditional function of 'being the enlightener and the educator' in a community does not work anymore. This function has been replaced by the newly established educational institutions, facilities and written or visual communication channels that reach the farthest regions of Turkey. Faith centers (in the form of associations/foundations/*cemevis*) have also started to subrogate *ocaks*, *zakirs*, and *saz/semah* instructors. The administrators of these institutions are able to take up the role of enlightening society alongside *dedes*. Besides, the widespread educational institutions and communication channels pursue this function. Since *ocaks* lost their functions after urbanization, *cemevis* emerged since the 1990s in cities, but the lack of knowledge in faith issues in these places still raised the necessity for *dedes*.

The traditional function of 'securing social unity and solidarity' has also vanished. In fact, this function was related to the guiding role of *dedes* in society. Their spiritual and social guidance is used to allow them to secure social unity and solidarity. As a parallel to their weakening in power and social influence, this function has lost its force also in cities. Instead, faith centers (in the form of associations/foundations/*cemevis*) have started to take up this role.

Traditionally, *dedes* have carried out the function of 'leading social/spiritual rituals and rites (such as the *cem* ritual, funeral and marriage ceremonies)'. These rituals and rites have been interrupted in most places since the 1990s, and a big vacuum emerged in the absence of a divine authority in the urbanized society. Many Alevis in cities who did not have access to *cemevis* were unable to find Alevi preachers or *dedes* to carry out their funeral and wedding ceremonies. Thanks *cemevis*, which started to be established in the 1990s, they can now have access to big cities' funeral services. Wedding ceremonies were not only carried out by *dedes*, but also by older Alevis

who did not necessarily have a *dede* ancestry. The demand for *dedes* to conduct these ceremonies increased due to the opening of *cemevis*.

The traditional function of ‘securing justice and punishing criminals through the institution of *düşkünlük*’ has also mostly vanished except for some rare cases. Alevis living in rural areas used to secure justice through a kind of social discipline, namely the institution of *düşkünlük*, which was facilitated by *ocaks*’ religious power. Also called ‘the people’s court’, this was a domestic legal order ensured by *dedes* asking the people’s opinion and holly worshiping the *ocakzade* community. The transformation of urbanized Alevi communities in the current socio-economic structure has resulted in destroying this old traditional justice mechanism too. The institution of *düşkünlük* is still carried out in some communities, which try to keep their traditional structure and their *dede*-disciple relations alive. However, these are very few in number. Overall, the change in the institution of *düşkünlük* is important to understand the great transformation in Alevism.

The function of ‘keeping the faith and the traditions alive and transferring them to the next generations’ has survived in villages for centuries mostly with the help of *ocakzade dede* families. In addition to coming from a *dede* ancestry, *dede* families have had a privileged status in transferring the Alevi faith and traditions to the next generations. *Ocaks* were deprived of these functions after the great transformation that came with urbanization. After the 1990s, new *cemevis* started to be built during the process of ‘returning back to the Alevi identity’, and this process made *dedes* necessary for the ritual faith services. Traditionally, it was the *ocakzade dede* families who had the adequate knowledge to carry out this tradition, but nowadays, *dedes* carry it out only partially.

The traditional function of ‘being the responsible person for those people who are in financial or spiritual need and who are sick’ has also diminished considerably. Disciples used to give financial support to *dedes*-known as *hakkullah*, *çıraklık*, and *dedes* used to use some of this support for the society and even give some of it to the disciples who were in financial need. They also supported the disciples spiritually with the help of their role of being a religious leader in their society. Moreover, *dede* families were known to be the health care providers by using a various solutions including traditional folk remedies. For example, those people who had minor ailments went to the *dedes* of Sarısaltuk *ocak* in Tunceli, Hozat. Because of the development of modern medicine, the function of *dedes* also weakened.

THE CHANGE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *DEDES* AND THE *CEM* RITUAL

The change in the institution of *dedelik* has also influenced the *cem* ritual. After *cemevis* were established in cities, this religious service, which was previously carried out by *ocaks*, started to be controlled under a hybrid authority. Like *ocaks*, the *cem* ritual has also been affected by urbanization. Erdemir (2005: 945) emphasizes that there is an ongoing debate over this newly emerging form of the *cem* ritual: while some assert that it is a lost rural tradition, others argue that there is an effort to keep it alive in modern urban life. It can also be said that *cem* rituals are becoming urbanized by following different paths compared with the traditional ones. Below I explain the ways how *cem* rituals have changed.

First, the purpose and the traditional functions of the *cem* ritual have changed. The functions of faith, education and justice are not as prevalent as in the past. Today some *cem* rituals are practiced in big sport halls as a representation of the Alevi identity and broadcasted on TV channels every week.

Second, there has been a major change in the status of *dedes*. *Cem* rituals are carried out weekly every Thursday night and are called the 'Friday night'. In urban life these *cems* are led by incumbent *dedes* who work voluntarily or who are paid. These *dedes* are determined by the directors of Alevi associations or foundations. *Dedes* who do not work in *cemevis* can carry out *cems* only under exceptional conditions, for instance when the *dede* of a *cemevi* gets sick, or quits. Today almost all *cems* carried out in *cemevis* are conducted in this way. Other *cem* rituals are 'etiquette and/or Hızır *cems*' trying to keep the *dede*-disciple relationship based on ancestry related to an *ocak*. These are carried out by disciples together with *dedes* of *ocaks* a few times a year. If the *dede* of an *ocak* and his disciples wish to carry out the *cem* ritual not in houses but in a *cemevi*, they have to get permission from the *cemevi* administration. As *cems* are regularly carried out in these places, it is not easy to have permission for Thursday nights. Hence, it is possible to argue that *cem* rituals are not only in control of *dedes* of *ocak* (and *cemevis*' *dedes*), but mostly under the control of the *cemevi* administration. It can be said that *ocaks* do not have an influence on disciples anymore and *dedes* gain their power not through their *ocaks* but through other ways.

Third, the functions of the services in *cem*, namely the twelve services and the way they are carried out, have changed. Some services are now dysfunctional; others

have completely changed (for instance, now mail, telephone, media, or TV can be used instead of *peyikçi*).

Fourth, the traditional places where *cems* are carried out have changed. *Cems* used to be carried out usually in mobile places that is to say in big rooms or *cemevis*. Now they are carried out mostly in some *cemevis*, dervish lodges or associations.

Fifth, there is also a change in the days when *cems* are practiced. In the past, *cems* used to be carried out by *dedes* on Friday nights, now they are carried out in weekends or in days depending on social demands. For instance, Şahkulu Sultan Dervish Lodge, which is one of the most notable dervish lodges in Istanbul, and which now functions also as a *cemevi*, holds *cem* rituals on Fridays, which is the day when most people come in.

Sixth, the physical environment of the place where *cems* are carried has changed. Service holders now wear folkloric clothing instead of casual and *dedes* who lead the *cem* and *zakirs* who play *saz* wear ties. It is also seen that the pictures of famous political figures are hung on walls along with traditional religious leaders such as Imam Ali and Hacı Bektaş.

Seventh, the tools that are used during *cems* have changed. Traditional tools like *ocak*, post, baton (*tarîk*) and candles disappeared. Instead, new tools such as electric lamps instead of candles, lecterns on which *dedes* put texts of idioms and prayers, microphones, video recordings and professional *zakirs* became part of the contemporary *cems*.

Eighth, the purpose and the intention of participants in *cems* have changed. In the past, the purpose was to perform the ritual. Nowadays people attend *cems* for different purposes. Few Alevi attend them regularly since they are members or incumbents of *cemevis*/associations; some attend because they are the service holder; some attend to see them for the first time; few attend for research purposes; and some Sunnis attend to see what is happening and test what they previously heard. Rituals range from worship to teaching.

Finally, the impact of *cem* rituals on the participants, including the *dedes* has changed. In the past, Alevi used to understand the language used in *cems* as well as the mystic and spiritual environment in traditional life much better. Now idioms, expressions and information mentioned in prayers cannot be fully understood by

the contemporary people. Overall, the change in the institution of *dedelik*, which was shaped according to the conditions of centuries ago, and which failed to be updated for various reasons, and the change in the urbanized population's ability to understand the *cem* rituals and to apply them in their life daily are the indicators of the great transformation in Alevism.

THE CHANGE FROM OCAKS TO NEW FAITH ORGANIZATIONS

It is remarkable that the oral tradition of Alevism has transformed into a written style together with urbanization. With the increase of the number of *cemevis*, many people who work in other jobs started to be interested in the institution of *dedelik*. Similarly, some institutions in Turkey and Germany need further institutionalization, which would be comprised of *ocak* members. One example for this is the Faith Council, which was established by twelve *dedes* and *anas* in AABF (Alevi Federations) in Germany and which is a crucial entity related to the faith services. Another one is the Alevi Islam Religious Services Directorate founded by the CEM Foundation in Turkey. Parallel to the needs of urbanized Alevis, these institutions try to prepare various educational programs for *ocakzade dedes*. To this end, the CEM foundation opened a *dede* course, which is still active. Also, the AABF Faith Council annually carries out *dede-ana* seminars in Germany (Kaya, 2012: 9).

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned before, the institution of Dede is the most important of all the institutions integral to the social and religious organization of the Anatolian Alevis. Although much weakened due to the socio-economic transformation experienced in Anatolia towards the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly due to accelerated migration from the rural to the urban areas after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, it played a primary role in the survival of Alevism until today.

In conclusion, the roles of Dedes have changed a lot since the beginning of urbanization. Dedes have experienced great changes in terms of qualities and functions they have had. Urbanized Alevism symbolizes an important transitional period with its all institutions. The adaptation of Alevism into city life, which has taken form up to traditional life and continued its existence in this way, is a really difficult issue. Our duty is to observe and to analyze this transformation.

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