

Alevi Dedes in the German Diaspora: The Transformation of a Religious Institution

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Zusammenfassung. Im Rahmen von Diasporastudien diskutiert dieser Artikel die sich wandelnde Stellung von *dedes*, der religiösen Spezialisten des Alevitentums. Das Alevitentum entstand als eine heterodoxe Tradition in der Türkei. In der Folge von Arbeitsmigration entwickelte sich eine alevitische Diaspora in Deutschland. Der Text zeigt auf, wie als Konsequenz einer neuen alevitischen Identitätspolitik, die in den nationalen Kontexten sowohl der Türkei als auch Deutschlands entstand, *dedes* als die zentrale Institution des Alevitentums von Freiwilligenorganisationen verdrängt wurden, und untersucht die daraus folgenden Autoritätskonflikte. Die Stellung und Praktiken der *dedes* in Deutschland wird durch biographische Skizzen von drei *dedes* illustriert. Der Artikel endet mit dem Schluss, dass Diaspora-Kultur nicht losgelöst von den nationalen Kontexten betrachtet werden kann, in denen sie situiert ist.

Abstract. Within the frame of diaspora studies this text discusses the changing position of *dedes*, the religious specialists of Alevism. Alevism originated as a heterodox religious tradition in Turkey but in consequence of labour migration an Alevi diaspora emerged in Germany. The paper shows that as a consequence of a new Alevi politics of identity emerging in national contexts in both Turkey and Germany *dedes* became replaced by voluntary associations as the central institution of Alevism and analyzes the ensuing contradictions of authority. The position and practice of *dedes* in the German diaspora is illustrated by three short biographical sketches of *dedes*. It is concluded that the study of diasporic culture cannot be analyzed in isolation from the national contexts within which it is situated.

[*Alevism, religious specialists, diaspora, mobility, politics of identity*]

Introduction¹

This paper focuses on the role of *dedes* in the German Alevi diaspora. *Dedes* are the religious specialists of Alevism, a heterodox tradition that emerged in Turkey. From a

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop "Transnational Communities and Religion", bi-annual conference of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde, Göttingen, October 7–10, 2001. Thanks are due to Elise Massicard for her valuable comments on this earlier version and Catharina Rzeplinski for her help in editing the paper. I also thank Ulla Johansen for carefully reading the text and for her many important suggestions. Further, I gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for my research on "Alevi politics of identity in the German

perspective of the comparative anthropology of religion (e.g. Pandian 1997) *dedes* can be categorized as belonging to the priestly type of religious officiants. In contrast with the shaman, the priest does not merge with the sacred but identifies with its symbols and interprets them for the congregation, frequently legitimizing thereby the social order. The unequivocal distinction between types of religious specialists is of course problematic – already Max Weber (1972: 259 f.) discussed a number of possible criteria to define priests without being completely satisfied by any of them – but it still seems useful to maintain a concept of a type of “clerics”, to use the term of Morton Klaas (1995: 66), that derive their specific charisma from being integrated into an institutional system, legitimized through certain dogmas.²

This paper, however, is not only a contribution to the anthropology of religion but presents an example of a field of study that has acquired central importance in recent years: culture on the move. Transnational communities, transnationalism, globalization, diaspora – these are some of the keywords which mark the refocusing in anthropology from the local, imagined sometimes as almost immobile, to the moving. All these terms have their shortcomings, relating most importantly to problems of definition, delimitation and their sometimes inflationary employment. As they signal an important reorientation in perspective I think, however, that we cannot do without them. Conscious of the fact that the debate about the meaning of “diaspora” is by no means concluded, I nevertheless suggest that the concept is still useful to categorize phenomena like Alevism on the move.³ To provide a minimal definition, diaspora is understood for the purpose of this text as referring to a group of people that has been relocated from its original place but that nevertheless continues to maintain relations with that place of origin as well as with other segments of that group that have moved elsewhere.

The topic of this paper is not diasporic Alevism in general but specifically the changes that affected the clerics of Alevism, the *dedes*, in consequence of being moved into a diasporic space. It will become clear, however, that diasporization must not be seen in isolation but that – at least in the case of Alevis – it is closely connected with the integration into a space imagined as national space and the ensuing economical changes, triggering off migration in the first place, as well as its specific politics of identity. Thus, also the perspective on Alevism in the German diaspora requires a glance at the history and contemporary practice of Alevism in Turkey.

Diaspora”, of which this paper presents some findings. Most importantly, however, I am indebted to the many Alevis in Germany who support my work by the interest they take in it. In this paper I have to mention especially the three *dedes* Ismail Aslandoğan, Ahmet Kömürçü and Zeynel Arslan.

² This short paper does not allow for a general presentation of Alevism. For general accounts on the history of Alevism, its beliefs and ritual practices see Kehl-Bodrogi 1988 and Dressler 2002.

³ For some important contributions to the discussion about the concept of diaspora see Anthias 1998, Clifford 1994, Safran 1991, Tölölyan 1996 and Vertovec 1997.

Dede literally means “grandfather” (father’s father), and this meaning already gives a hint to the kind of authority that is embodied by *dedes*: It is a kinship-oriented, genealogically-based authority. Not only the eligibility for the position was inherited but also the religious content; that is, the knowledge required to attain that position was handed down through patrilineal clans. My use of past tense in these sentences is to indicate that some change has occurred here. Alevism experienced a collective amnesia particularly between the years 1950 and 1990. As a consequence of this amnesia many institutions and practices which were described as essential for Alevism are found today only in a very limited and reduced scope. However, in their representations and descriptions of Alevism, Alevis generally pay little heed to actual, contemporary practices, instead referring to an ideal type image and essence of Alevism that supposedly existed in the past. This also applies to the institution of the *dede*. As timelessness is implicated by the ideal type image, my description of it will employ the ethnographic present.

I will proceed as follows: After describing the ideal type *dede* institution I will turn to the transition from *dede*-centered Alevism to an association-centered Alevism and the role of *dedes* within the developing Alevi diaspora in Germany, focussing on the relationships between *dedes* and Alevi organizations in Germany and on contradictions of authority. In order to illustrate the above I will present biographical sketches of three *dedes* living in Germany. In the final chapters I attempt a more general assessment of the transformation of the institution of the *dede* and its role within Diasporic Alevism today.

Ideal type Alevi Dedes

The special role and charisma of *dedes* among Alevis is based upon their presumed genealogical relation with the Prophet Mohammed. *Dedes* are *sayyids* (Turkish: *seyit*), i.e. they claim to be descendants of the Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. Alevis hold this genealogical reckoning of religious authority in common with Shiites. However, they differ from Shiites in most other aspects of religious belief and practice.⁴ Due to this genealogical relationship *dedes* are believed to share in the spiritual light and power of the Imam Ali. *Dedes* are always male. They are genealogically organized into named patrilineal clans which are called *ocaks* (hearths). Among the largest *ocaks* are, for instance, the Baba Mansur Ocağı and the Kureşan

⁴ In contrast to Shiites as well as Sunnis Alevis do not practice four of the ‘five pillars’ of Islam: Neither do they undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, nor do they offer the *namaz* (prayer), pay *zakat* (alms) and observe fasting during the month of Ramadan. Further, not all Alevis accept the divinity of the Quranic revelation. The Islamic law sharia (Turk. *şeriat*) is rejected by Alevis.

Ocağı.⁵ The term *ocak* also designates a place which is the spiritual center of the lineage, usually because an important ancestor is buried there. A great number of these *ocaks* are situated in the Turkish province of Tunceli, the erstwhile Dersim.

Although frequently all descendants of an *ocak* (the *ocakzade*) are called *dedes* only a small number of them actually performs the function of a *dede*. In order to assure intergenerational continuity a practicing *dede* normally assigns this role to one of his close male relatives of the next generation. This may be one of his sons or a brother's son. A *dede* needs the consent of his predecessor in order to be allowed to practice. In this paper I am concerned only with practicing *dedes* and therefore I will reserve the term *dede* for a man who is fulfilling the relevant tasks or at least a part of them. Also in personal address, generally only those *ocakzades* who practice as *dede* are referred to as such.

Dedes are spiritual leaders. Their counterparts, the followers or "laypersons", are called *talips* (dependents, pupils and/or students). Relations between *talips* and *dedes* are synonymous for relations between families. That is, each *talip*-family is consigned to a particular *ocak* and a *dede* of this *ocak*. Relations between *talips* and *dedes* are hereditary. They are indissoluble and unchangeable. Marriages between *ocakzade* and *talips* are not permitted. The social distance maintained between *dedes* and *talips* and the authority of *dedes* is also attested to by the many stories about miracles they performed with their spiritual power (*keramet*).

Both *dedes* and their *talips* are spread over a considerable area. *Dedes* do not necessarily reside among their *talips* (in most cases they do not). However, *dedes* are required to visit their *talips* at least once a year. Therefore, they are often travelling, mostly in the wintertime when they themselves and their *talips* are not busy with agricultural tasks. The relationship between *dede* and *talip* is structured by strict hierarchy. *Talips* must maintain a strict respect towards *dedes* and this is expressed through a number of practices. A *dede* is greeted by kissing his right hand and touching this hand with one's forehead, a gesture that expresses subordination and which is also generally used towards elderly and respected persons. For the same reason everybody has to stand up when a *dede* enters the room. The *dede* is seated at the best place, he is served first and receives the best pieces of a meal. When the *dede* visits a village, he is met at some distance away and lead into the village by a large group from the community. On the occasion of his departure he is similarly accompanied over a considerable distance. These practices of respect are also acknowledgments of the high moral standards that have to be fulfilled by the *dedes*. Above all, a *dede* has to be trustworthy and truthful.

⁵ For comprehensive lists of *ocaks* see Ali Yaman 1998, n.d. Genealogies of *ocaks* are provided by Birdoğan 1995: 183 ff.

In many cases the whole population of a village is served by the same *dede* and *ocak*. This is the case if the population is not too large and if there are no major cleavages in a village. One of the most important tasks of a *dede* is to guide the communal ritual *cem*.⁶ A *cem* has to take place at least once a year and it cannot be held without a *dede*. The ritual has both spiritual and social functions. A *cem* assembles the whole community of the *talips* of a *dede* in a particular village. The performance of the ritual requires that there are no disputes or strained relationships among the *talips* involved. Therefore the *dede* asks during the *cem* whether there are persons who feel offended by their fellows or whether anybody present knows about such an offence. If a dispute or offence is revealed, it has to be solved in a kind of juridical ceremony, in which the *dede* together with the community administers an arbitration or a punishment. The most serious punishment which is awarded for grave offences, is exclusion from the community. Only if all disputes are solved may the *cem* proceed. *Talips* are interviewed and counseled by the *dede* also in personal encounters where the *dede* gives advice on both mundane and spiritual matters. During their visits the *dedes* collect contributions in cash or kind that are called *hakullah* from their *talips*. A *dede* is only allowed to conduct a *cem* for his *talips*. If he leads a congregation of other *talips* he needs the permission of their *dede*.

Dedes stand in similar hierarchical relationships with *dedes* from other *ocaks*. That is, each *dede* and *ocak* is himself the *talip* of another *dede* from another *ocak* who is his *pir*, *rehber* or *mürşit* (spiritual guide). Above this first level of spiritual leaders there is a second, higher level. Usually, spiritual leaders of the first level are called *rehber* and those of the second level *mürşit* or *pir*, but these terms are not used very consistently, indeed sometimes they are reversed. A *dede* is not only a *talip* but also the *rehber* or *mürşit* of another *dede*. Some of the *ocaks* have committed themselves to the *ocak* of Hacı Bektaş Veli,⁷ one of the most important Alevi saints, thereby making him the superior spiritual authority. Others do not accept this authority and are therefore sometimes called "independent *ocaks*".

In order to become a practicing *dede*, a young *ocakzade* has to show a particular interest in religious affairs. In most cases there is no formal training. Learning takes place as a form of participant observation in which the aspirant *dede* sits in *cem* and other rituals together with a practicing *dede* who is usually his father or uncle. As a large part of the *cem* consists of songs accompanied by a lute, the *saz*, they also have to learn to play this instrument. Some *dedes* also refer to written sources, the most important being the *buyruk*,⁸ but literacy is not a requirement in order to become a *dede*.

⁶ On *cem* see Mehmet Yaman 1998

⁷ See Melikoff 1998 on Hacı Bektaş.

⁸ On *buyruks* see Bozkurt 1988 (also including a German translation of the *buyruk*) and Otter-Beaujean 1997.

To the contrary, in some cases illiterate *dedes* are especially praised because they are said to know all necessary texts, songs and teachings by heart.

Ideal-type Alevism is a rural affair and until half a century ago most Alevis did indeed live in rural areas, mostly in the mountaineous regions which were not well integrated into the Ottoman Empire or the early Turkish Republic. This was the result of centuries of persecution and discrimination as a heterodox minority by the Sunni majority which dominated the empire. To prevent discrimination, most Alevis practiced *takiya*, i.e. they dissimulated their religious membership and tried to pass as Sunnis. Alevism was a hidden tradition which, due to its secrecy, was subject to much defamatory fabrication by non-Alevis.

From *dede*-Alevism to associational Alevism

In a short paper on *dedes*, Ali Yaman, an *ocakzade* himself, writes: "The institution of *dede* is the most important of all the institutions integral to the social and religious organization of the Anatolian Alevis" (Ali Yaman n.d.). This is certainly true of the ideal-type *dede* and his relation with its *talips* as described above. However, today social reality generally does not conform with this image. Today, few *talips* are regularly visited by their *dedes* and only a few still know who their personal *dede* is.

The changes in the institution of the *dede* have to be understood within the larger frame of the changes affecting Alevism since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The government of Turkey took great efforts to integrate all parts of the territory and all sections of the population into the newly created nation-state. Due to the specific conception of the Turkish nation as culturally homogeneous, integration implicated the denial of heterogeneity of Turkey's population. Thus Alevis and other minorities were not recognized by the state. At times integration was executed by force, for instance when, after the uprising led by Seyit Rıza in Tunceli in 1937/38, Alevis from this province were deported to other parts of Turkey. However, more important in terms of its sheer scope was the infrastructural and economic integration: The institutions of the state, most significantly schools, were also established in remote places, the road network was extended, and due to the lack of economic opportunities in rural areas people started to migrate from the villages into the cities. Migration was a matter of both push and pull-factors. Industrialization and especially construction work provided employment in the cities but mechanization of agriculture also drove out manual labourers from the rural areas (Karpas 1976: 56 ff. cf. Kiray 1987). These processes of economic transformation and rural-urban migration started in the late 1940s.

Migration heavily affected the practice of Alevism because the *dede-talip* relationships were severed. Relationships between the rural communities and urban dwellers were not severed as chain-migration had the effect of conserving these relations. How-

ever, urban dwellers frequently lacked the opportunity to visit their villages in winter time when the visits of the *dedes* normally took place, as urban employment was much less subject to seasonal changes as compared with agricultural work. Accordingly, many urban Alevis were cut off from their ritual life.

However, Alevi rituals fell into oblivion not only in the cities. A decisive change in village Alevism began in the late 1960s when especially young Alevis came under strong influence of leftist convictions and started to participate in revolutionary movements that aimed at overthrowing the political and social system in Turkey and establishing a socialist society. Marxist ideas included the rejection of religion and therefore young Alevis that adhered to these ideas and participated in the movement came to see Alevism as a reactionary system of ideas and practices. Furthermore, *dedes* were specifically denounced as exploiters who lived at the expense of the people. In many instances *dedes* were attacked on the occasion of their visits to a village and driven out again by the leftist youth.⁹ Consequentially there are many Alevi villages in Anatolia where no *cem* had taken place since the beginning of the 1970s. Together, migration and ideological re-orientation resulted in the collective amnesia which I referred to earlier. To be sure, this amnesia was not total, but the practice of Alevism became a very much reduced affair. However, at the same time it was especially the *dedes* who provided strands of continuity through the time-space of oblivion. Through my interviews with Alevi migrants in Germany about the practice of Alevism in their home villages it became apparent that in many villages with a high proportion of *ocakzades* in their population, Alevi rituals did continue to be practiced. This does not mean that *dedes* and *ocakzades* were agents of tradition in every case. Like other Alevis also many *ocakzades* valued modern education higher than Alevi religious knowledge – and in this they could feel supported by Alevism as education and science are regarded to be among the central values of that tradition.

Since the late 1980s an Alevi revival has emerged almost coevally in Turkey and in the German diaspora. Alevism is no longer confined to secrecy and has entered the public space.¹⁰ Alevis have tried to recover knowledge about Alevism. New institutions were built, sometimes with the participation of *dedes* and *ocakzades*. But these institutions were totally different from the erstwhile extended *dede-talip* networks. Now formal membership associations became the prevalent institutions of Alevism. Such associations were founded both in Turkey and in the countries of migration. They are formally registered by state authorities and therefore subject to the respective regulations. They have regular organs such as chairpersons, committees and auditors, which are elected by a membership that is required to pay monthly fees. Some local associations are combined under the roof of different Alevi umbrella organizations. Although

⁹ See Vorhoff (1995: 162 f.) for a discussion of recent Alevi sources on these attacks against *dedes*.

¹⁰ On these changes see Kehl-Bodrogi 1992, Vorhoff 1995: 77 ff. and Vorhoff 1998.

associations frequently draw a considerable part of their members from particular regions or even villages they are not organized according to the *ocak*-principle. Therefore, *talips* related to different *ocaks* share a common membership and if a *dede* is invited to conduct *cem*, he may not necessarily have some of his own *talips* among the members. Some of the associations were founded by *dedes*, however, in many associations they did not have a decisive role.¹¹ The importance of *dedes* was reduced not only at the organizational level but also in the realm of teaching. Since the 1990s a great number of publications on Alevism have flooded the market and authors like Necat Birdoğan, Lütfi Kaleli, Rıza Zelyut or Cemal Şener have become spokespersons of Alevism – although they are not *ocakzades*.

Dedes and organizational Alevism in Germany

Turkish “guest-workers” started to arrive in Germany after a bilateral treaty on labour migration was concluded between Germany and Turkey in 1961.¹² From the beginning Alevis were among these new immigrants. However, contrary to their Sunni fellows, they did not seek to establish provisional structures in order to facilitate the practice of their religion in Germany. There were many reasons for this. First, Alevis had no religious structures, institutions and practices that could easily be transferred from one place to another. Sunnis had their prescribed prayers (*namaz*) which could be practiced anywhere, when the direction towards Mecca was ascertained. Communal prayers are said in the mosque and almost any room could be converted into a provisional mosque with little effort. Alevi worship, in contrast, does not focus in a fixed sequence of words and movements, but is rather established upon specific social relationships and networks which cannot easily be relocated. Alevi places of worship were more positions within a specific *social* structure than a spatial structure. For instance, there were no particular buildings in Alevi villages reserved for worship. *Cem* was held simply in a large house of an Alevi family. *Dedes* could not be transferred from one congregation to another like a Christian priest or a Sunni *hoca* as they occupied specific positions within particular and fixed networks of *talips*. Further, because of its frequency and regularity the Muslim prayer is – at least normatively – much deeper inscribed into the daily routine of Sunnis than is the infrequent *cem* in the life of Alevis.

Alevis themselves also perceived this difference. Reflecting back to the time of his arrival as a worker in Germany in the beginning of the 1970s, an Alevi *dede* recalled

¹¹ The most important *ocakzade* that play leading roles in Turkish Alevi organizations are Ali Doğan of Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı (Ankara) and İzzettin Doğan of Cem Vakfı (Istanbul). For *dedes* in German Alevi associations see below.

¹² See Jamin 1999 for the early conditions of labour migration from Turkey to Germany.

that already in the train to Germany some Sunni fellow workers spread their prayer mats and said their *namaz*. The Sunnis and Alevis stayed together in a hostel. The *dede* recalled, "After some months there was a meeting in our kitchen. One of the Sunni fellows said, 'Friends, we are staying anyway in rooms with three or four beds. Let us empty one room. We can put these beds into the other rooms. Then we will have one room as a prayer-room.' This is how they started. And today, whether it is right or wrong, there are mosques everywhere in Germany. In Hamburg alone there are forty mosques. We Alevis did nothing like that."

Although *ocakzades* were among the workers going to Germany, there was no practicing resident *dede*. Only in the late 1970s did a few *dedes* from Turkey visit some of their *talips* in Germany and the neighboring countries. Such events were quite rare and it seems that no *cem* was held during such visits. In particular one *dede* developed a more regular travel activity in Germany without, however, settling down in the country. This was Dede Şinasi Koç from Ankara who belonged to the Imam Rıza Ocağı. He also conducted the very first *cem* to take place in Hamburg in the early 1980s. This *cem* was organized by a political organization of Alevis, the Yurtseverler Birliği (Union of Patriots).¹³ This *cem* and similar events elsewhere in Germany signified a decisive change in the practice of the ritual. It was a great public event conducted with several hundred participants in a school hall. Consequently, the *cem* was not an event of a particular *dede* within the community of his personal *talips*, but a ritual with a heterogeneous mass of participants.¹⁴ Dede Şinasi Koç later also conducted *cem*s together with a *dede* living in Cologne, Niyazi Bozdoğan. In the late 1980s a few Alevi associations were established in some German cities¹⁵ and among them another *dede*, Derviş Tur of Rüsselsheim, played an important role. He not only founded an association in the area of Mainz and Wiesbaden, but also made the effort to initiate cooperation between the newly founded organizations.

Since the beginning of the 1990s and especially after 1993, when violent Sunnis attacked Alevis at a cultural festival in Sivas, leaving 33 Alevis dead, the number of Alevi associations in Germany has risen dramatically. In the majority of the newly founded associations, *dedes* did not play an important role. Most of the founders had a political rather than a religious background because they were activists of Turkish social democrat or socialist organizations in Germany. The reasons for the limited role of *dedes* in organizational Alevism is at least twofold. First, there were only very few practicing *dedes* in Germany. Also among those *ocakzade* who took an interest in Alevi

¹³ The Yurtseverler Birliği was the expatriate support organisation of an Alevi Party in Turkey, the Birlik Partisi (see Sökefeld and Schwalgin 2000).

¹⁴ See Sökefeld 2000.

¹⁵ According to Gül (1999: 86f.), Dede Şinasi Koç played a significant part in the foundation of the first associations because he toured many German cities, calling upon Alevis to organize themselves.

organizations, only a few had a religious education which would have enabled them to conduct a *cem*. For instance, the above mentioned Derviş Tur Dede was initially a businessman and started to conduct *cem* only after the mid 1990s, when he was gradually retiring from his business in order to devote more time to religious studies. Second, many of the former leftists who took a lead in founding Alevi associations continued to regard *dedes* with a certain amount of suspicion. That is, *dedes* were often viewed as *gerici* (conservative, backward-minded or even as reactionary). They were seen as being interested only in religious affairs. In contrast, the leftists considered themselves to be *ilerici* (progressive), which is the direct opposite of *gerici*. Accordingly, the support and participation of *dedes* in the foundation of the new Alevi associations was not especially encouraged in the beginning.

The first Alevi association in Hamburg was initiated by twelve men and none of them were *ocakzade*. These founders of the Alevi Culture Group which later became registered as the Alevi Culture Center had a strong political background with either the social democrat or the more radical leftist groups.¹⁶ For them, Alevism was in the first instance not a religious but rather a cultural affair. Many of them considered themselves atheists and they had eminent political reasons to found an Alevi movement.

In contrast, many *dedes* considered themselves to be non-political or even anti-political. It will soon become apparent that a particular conception of what is political was and continues to be significant here. However, also the political/non-religious Alevi considered *cem* as an important element of Alevism and therefore they needed the cooperation of *dedes*. When the Alevi Culture Group wanted to organize its first *cem* in 1989, they first asked Dede Şinasi Koç whether he was willing to conduct the *cem*. But Şinasi Koç was ready to conduct the *cem* only under the condition that a Turkish flag and a portrait of Atatürk were to be prominently displayed during the ritual. This was, however, rejected by the organizers. The dispute about the flag and Atatürk, which continued to be an issue in many Alevi associations, sheds light on the meaning of "political" in this context. Those *dedes* and other Alevi who consider themselves to be non-political generally demanded the display of *bayrak* (flag) and the portrait of Atatürk. These symbols are not regarded as political symbols. "Political" is from this perspective equated with oppositional and party politics. Thus Kemalism, the pervasive ideology of the Turkish republic which is disputed from various positions (e.g. from Islamism and Kurdish nationalism), is not regarded as a political ideology. However, from this "non-political", Kemalist perspective those leftists, how-

¹⁶ This association occupies a special place in the history of organisational Alevism because it was the first body that carried the word "Alevi" in its name. This was considered a decisive step to bring Alevism into the non-Alevi public. Earlier organisations had used less unequivocal names and thereby continued the dissimulation which is also practiced in Turkey. Explicit Alevi organisations are still prohibited in Turkey. See Sökefeld (2000) and Sökefeld and Schwalgin (2000) for the new Alevi politics of publicity in Germany and Schüler (2000) for the legal position of Alevi organizations in Turkey.

ever, who criticized the state and who even had struggled for a revolution in Turkey, are regarded as eminently political, and here "political" implicates a clearly negative evaluation. "Political" is almost an abusive term in this usage. For the members of the Alevi Culture Group politics was not a swear-word and they considered pictures of Atatürk and the flag as political symbols, which, according to their view, had nothing to do with *cem*. Consequentially they were not ready to comply with the *dede's* demand and called upon another *dede* instead.

When the Alevi Culture Group was officially registered as Alevi Culture Center in 1990, a further *dede*, Ismail Aslandoğan, became a member of the association's board. A few months after the registration a considerable faction of the association split away. Disagreement about the aims and the work of the association were at the heart of this dispute, and Dede Ismail Aslandoğan played a crucial role. For him, again, the Alevi Culture Center was not religious enough, rather it was too political. The faction which had split off founded its own association and the *dede* was promised a more religiously oriented work. However, his expectations were disappointed and he once again split away with a small faction of followers and founded his own association.

Contradictions of authority

This story exemplifies both that *dedes* were not always content with the rather minor role they were accorded in many of the organizations and that they still had sufficient authority to take a lead in disputes. There is a basic contradiction in the sources of authority between *dedes* and the Alevi associations that can hardly be solved. Alevi organizations pride themselves of having democratic constitutions. Democracy is counted among the basic values of Alevism and it is seen as distinguishing Alevis clearly from their principal others – that is, from both Sunni Muslims who are regarded sometimes quite sweepingly as potential Islamists (*şeriatçı*) and right wing nationalists (referred to as *faşistler* – fascists – by Alevis) in Turkey. The religious institution and authority of the *dede* has, however, no democratic foundation. *Dedes* are not elected. Their authority is genealogically legitimated and their relation with *talips* is simply inherited. This contradiction between sources of authority contributes to many difficulties in the relations between *dedes* and Alevi associations.

Alevi organizations in Germany have combined under an umbrella organization, the Federation of Alevi Communities in Germany (Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu, AABF).¹⁷ One of the organs of this Federation is the *dedeler kurulu*, the council of

¹⁷ Today this organization has 95 local membership organisations. However not all Alevi organizations in Germany have joined the Federation. Some have remained independent and some specific Kurdish-Alevi organizations have formed their own umbrella organisation.

dedes. The establishment of a council of *dedes* is an attempt to integrate *dedes* into the work of the Federation. However, cooperation is at times difficult. There were instances when *dedes* felt that their decisions were not paid sufficient attention by the Federation's board. Some *dedes* complained that the council was intended just as a further legitimization of the board's decisions without taking the *dedes'* opinions seriously. A *dede* who was asked several times by members of the board to join in the *dedes'* council never did so and explained his refusal with precisely these feelings: "I asked the chairman: When the *dedes* arrive at a decision which the committee does not like, would you then follow the *dedes'* decision? No, you wouldn't. Then what is the use of the *dedes'* making decisions?" Other *dedes* resigned from the council and in at least one instance an association left the Federation because of a conflict in which its *dede* was involved.

Conflicts not only arise between the *dedes* and the committees of associations but also among the *dedes* themselves. *Dedes* are great individualists. In many cases, they do not like to commit themselves to the decision of other *dedes*. Frequently *dedes* even deny another *dede's* legitimacy as *dede*, saying that somebody just pretends to be a *dede* but lacks genealogical credentials. "He is a *dede* only since yesterday" is a common phrase in this respect. Accordingly, cooperation among *dedes* is quite difficult to obtain. Diverse regional traditions of Alevism further contribute to this difficulty. For instance the federation's *dedeler kurulu* has tried to develop a kind of jointly accepted liturgy for conducting *cem* but so far it has failed to do so.

However *dedes* also regard their situation as precarious. The most important and obvious reason for this fact is that there exists almost no new generation of *dedes*. Nearly all practicing *dedes* in Germany are now well beyond their fifties, many are much older. Some of them are chronically ill and therefore have to reduce their activities. Most of them worked as industrial employees in Germany, just as other immigrants from Turkey did. For the greater part of their lives they did not conduct *cem*. Accordingly, their sons have had no chances to become involved with Alevi ritual matters through participant observation with their fathers. I do not know of a single son of a practicing *dede* in Germany who is now trying to become a practicing *dede*. Most *dedes'* sons have university degrees and many *dedes* lament their sons' disinterest in religious matters.

Biographical perspectives

In order to provide a closer point of view I will present biographical sketches of three *dedes* who live in Germany. My focus will be on the question of how they came to be practicing *dedes*. Most *dedes* in Germany rarely conduct *cem* – if at all. However a few *dedes* have become very popular among Alevi associations in Germany. Probably the presently most popular German *dedes* in terms of frequency of conducting *cem* are

Ahmet Kömürcü and the young Zeynel Arslan. Along with them I will also present Ismail Aslandoğan, a *dede* who has received a more formal religious education.

Ahmet Kömürcü

Ahmet Kömürcü was born in Ankara but his family stems from Pülümür in the province of Tunceli. He belongs to the Kureşan ocağı. He came to Germany at the beginning of 1962, at the age of 18 and studied engineering in Munich where he still lives today. His father was an active *dede*. In his youth Ahmet took an interest in Alevism and accompanied his father to his *cem*. About his period of learning he said, "If you are growing up in a particular family, in a particular area, you get everything automatically. Of course, nobody becomes perfect just in this way. (...) But those of a family who show more interest, they will try to get more, to read, and so on. There is no special school as for [Christian] priests or, in our country, the other religious community, the Sunnis. They have schools, they get state support and so on, we do not get anything. Just on our own potential, on our own will. And this task, if you are with the people day by day, you are confronted with problems, with thoughts and so on. This develops automatically. And I had this interest from birth, I do not know why. And it has continued until now... so that today I try to fulfill this task."

However, it was not until he was in his early forties that he conducted his first *cem*. "I was on holidays in Turkey, in our village. A few days earlier our *talips* had talked with my father. They wanted to come to our village, to bring their *kurban* [sacrifices], and they came. But on that day, unfortunately, my father's uncle died. Very early, around five in the morning. And my father... this was a sad event, he was not able to conduct *cem* on this day. He couldn't do that. And on this day my father called me and said: 'Ahmet, I know that also in Europe you took some interest [in Alevism]. You have seen the task that I, our family, carry out. I trust in you, you will do it today!' For the first time I got my father's permission. This was very difficult for me, I worried very much! (...) Of course, the *talips* are used to my father's way, how he does it and so on, I was worrying. But the task was given to me. With my worries, shyly, I sat down [for the *cem*] and it went very well. Very well. The *talips* were very happy. We had concluded the *cem* and also my father's uncle was buried. (...) The *talips* met my father. And the first thing they said, even before condoling, they said: 'Dede, we have found our *dede*! We can continue with him.' I was very happy and also my father had tears in his eyes, tears of joy. He said to me: 'Now you can do it.' Since that I have assumed this task."

It was not until four years later in Germany that Ahmet Kömürcü conducted the next *cem*. This was the *cem* of the Alevi Culture Group, which Dede Şinasi Koç had refused to conduct without flag and a portrait of Atatürk being displayed. Ahmet Kömürcü was then invited by another man from Pülümür who was living in Ham-

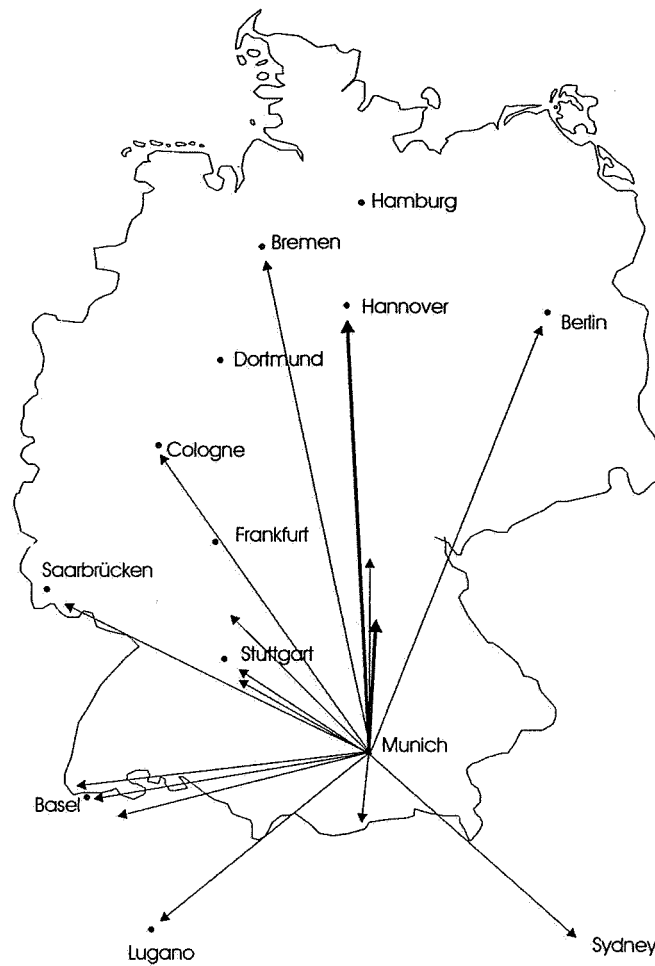


Fig. 1 Dede Ahmet Kömürcü; travels for conducting *cem*, January–August 2001. Strong arrows indicate several journeys to the same place. Only the names of larger cities are given.

burg. The both of them had been active earlier together in the Yurtseverler Birliği. In the years that followed Ahmet Kömürcü became very popular and busy as a *dede* in Europe. He is now conducting *cem* for Alevi associations, and not limited in serving his *talips* only. Living in Munich has also meant he lacks the opportunity to visit his *talips* in Turkey regularly. He is member of the local Alevi association in Munich but has no formal commitment there. At one point he had been elected as vice chairman of the Federation's *dedes* council, but he only took upon the position reluctantly, because, as he explained, "a *dede* should be 'pure,' he should not campaign for votes."

At the present time Ahmet Kömürcü is social worker in a town near Munich, but every weekend is spent touring Alevi associations in order to conduct *cem*. He has been not only all over Germany but also in France, England, Switzerland and he had even travelled to Australia in his *dede* role. Fig 1 shows his travels for conducting *cem* during the first eight months of 2001.

Zeynel Arslan

Zeynel Arslan is to my knowledge the only *dede* so far whose way to become *dede* took entirely place within Germany. He belongs to the Derviş Beyaz Ocağı and his family stems from Mohundu/Darikent in Mazgirt/Tunceli. He came to Germany at the age of one and lives in a small town on the Swiss-German border where he has grown up.

Zeynel Arslan was among the founders of the Alevi association in Müllheim, a nearby town. He recalls that the association had some difficulties in conducting its first *cem* in 1993 because due to migration its members had not participated in a *cem* for over twenty or thirty years – if at all. In the first *cem* Zeynel Arslan was given the function of the *zakir* who plays the *saz* and accompanies the *dede*. He explained, “There was no *zakir*, and spontaneously they thought about me, for, he is the son of a *dede*, he also plays *saz*, he should do it! I had a very different idea about *cem*, just as my parents, the elderly people had told about it, authentically, as it was done in the villages before. And then, during the *cem*, after the *cem*, I realized that I did not know anything! I knew that I knew nothing!”

Zeynel Arslan realized that he knew nothing and he wanted to learn. During the next four years he practiced intensely as a *zakir* and accompanied other *dedes*, including Ahmet Kömürcü, in *cem* whenever possible. His father also had practiced as a *dede* in Turkey, but the father’s brother was the more active of the two. Both of them did not practice as *dedes* after they had arrived in Germany in 1969.

Zeynel Arslan understands Alevism as a mystical teaching and he sees many parallels between Alevism and other forms of mysticism. He explains mysticism as “fusing the individual light that everybody carries in himself with the universal light, becoming one, realizing unity.” He started to work on his self, practiced techniques of breathing and discovered Yoga. Currently he is also taking courses to become a teacher of Kudalini-Yoga.

Rather by chance Zeynel Arslan ended up conducting his next *cem* in 1997. A small Alevi association in Switzerland wanted to have its first *cem* and they had invited another *dede*. Zeynel Arslan had wanted to visit the association after the *cem* was finished but, when he arrived, he was told that the *dede* had not come and that the *cem* had still not taken place. They were still waiting for the *dede*. He remembered, “And then they took me, I had to step in! I was not at all prepared but it worked. I won-

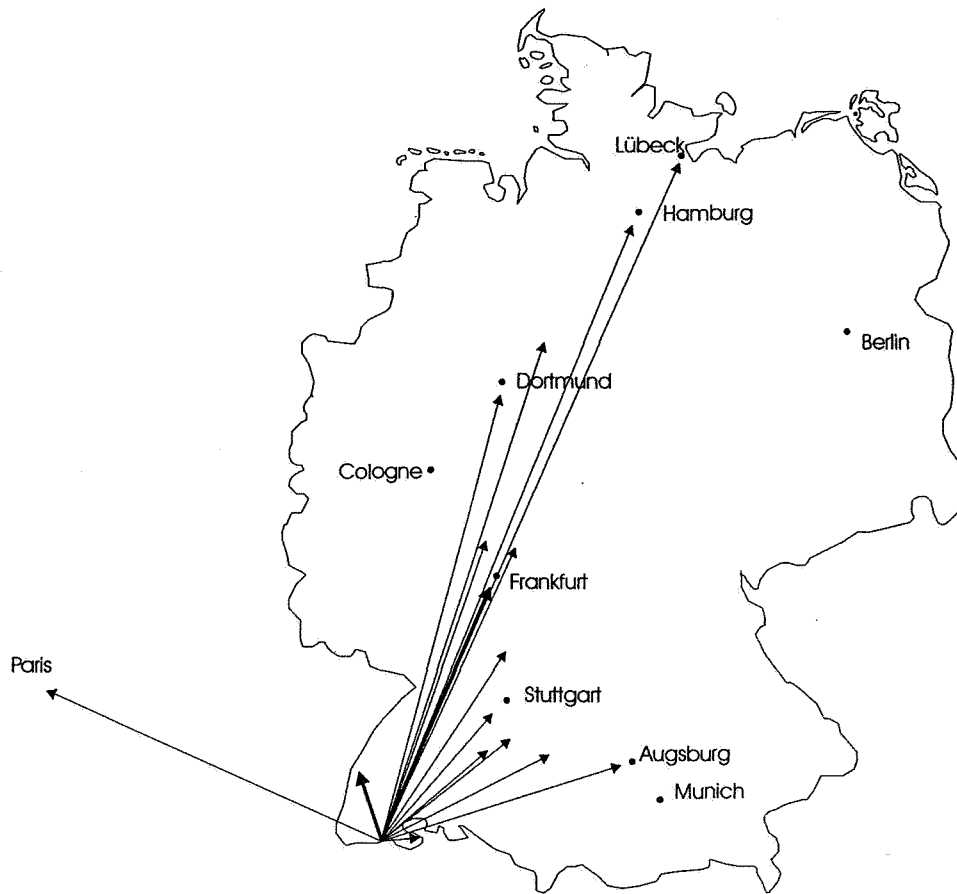


Fig. 2 Dede Zeynel Arslan: travels for conducting *cem* and giving lectures, January–July 2001. Fat arrows indicate several journeys to the same place.

dered, oh, what will the people think! They were already waiting for many hours. First of all, my Turkish is not very well because I grew up in Germany. I had some doubts, also about the course of the *cem*, that many things were missing, but then it turned out that the people were quite happy! One after one they came to me and because they themselves were speaking that Turkish spoken in Germany, that Germanized Turkish, they could understand me better than a *dede* who speaks pure Turkish. And this gave me further motivation. And, maybe, seen mystically, this was an indication, now you can do it! But at that time I did not realize it like that, I wanted to have much more experience. I continued for about a year [as a *zakir* with other *dedes*] before I consciously took the decision to conduct *cem* myself."

Zeynel Arslan has become very popular because he not only holds *cem* in German-Turkish, but also bilingually or only in German. Many local Alevi associations are eager to call on him for a *cem* because they expect that especially younger people will be able to understand him easier than an older *dede*. Zeynel Arslan does not only conduct *cem*, he has also become a specialist for inter-denominational weddings. He was the first *dede* to officiate together with a Catholic priest in a church wedding. He is also frequently invited as an Alevi representative to inter-denominational meetings and discussions about the future of religious education in Germany and like topics. During the first six months of 2001 Zeynel Arslan conducted ten *cem*-rituals, participated in several panel discussions and gave lectures on Alevism (Fig. 2). He too has kept rather aloof from the Federation's *dede* council, but he participates in many of the Federation's events. For instance, he conducted the opening-ceremonies for several *cem*-houses of local Alevi associations.

Ismail Aslandoğan

Ismail Aslandoğan who belongs to the Hıdır Abdal Ocağı is different from the other *dedes* so far introduced here in that he underwent some formal training in order to become a *dede* in Turkey. He was born in the province of Sivas but as a child he moved to Ankara and grew up there. Along with two cousins he was given religious instruction by his father's brother every day after school. He learnt Arabic and read the Qur'an. Both his father and his uncle were practicing *dedes* but his uncle was the more active one. The young Ismail went to many *cem*s along with his uncle in the villages of the provinces Sivas, Malatya and Erzincan. Contrary to many other *dedes* Ismail Aslandoğan stresses the importance of scriptural knowledge and he is very proud of his abilities in this field. He explained that he was gradually given more and more responsibility in the *cem*s from his uncle and father. "I went together with my uncle or my father. He told me: You have to do it like this or like that! And he was sitting there. When I made a mistake he said: You must not do it like this, you have to do it like that! [You have to know it] by heart! At home we had rehearsals. This was not easy, it was really hard work. If I told a story in *cem* (...) for instance about Hazreti¹⁸ Mohammed, about Hazreti Ali or about the Sunni side after the death of Hazreti Mohammed, I had to know to which verse of the Qur'an or to which Hadith this topic refers, I had to know it by heart, I had to learn it and to tell it."

Beside his religious formation he also studied at a technical university in Ankara. Ismail Aslandoğan was about 26 years old when for the first time he conducted a *cem* all by himself. He tells that before he received the permission to conduct *cem* he was examined by his *pir*. After three days of examination he had the allowance, *ikrar*, to

¹⁸ A honorary religious designation, meaning "holy".

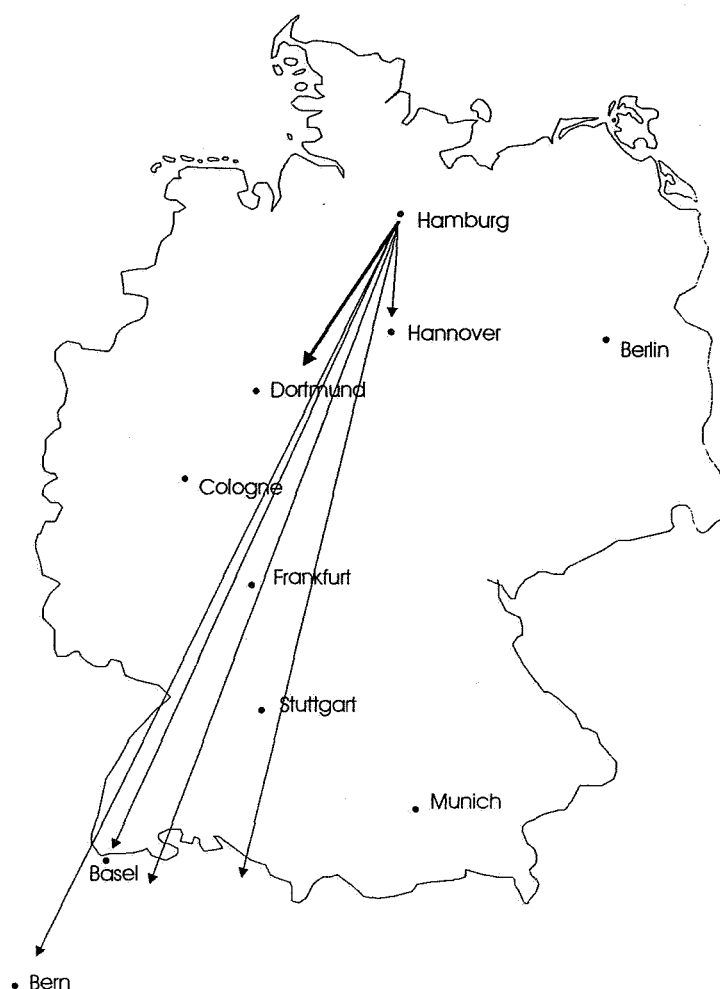


Fig. 3 Dede Ismail Aslandoğan: travels for conducting *cem*, January–July 2001.

take responsibility of *cem*. In 1969, when he was 27, he migrated to Hamburg where he worked as an electrician. In the subsequent decades he did not conduct *cem*s. Going to Turkey for holidays regularly he sometimes visited his *talips*, but he never performed a *cem*. However, he insists that he never stopped reading about Alevism. His uncle gave him all of his religious books, although the uncle had four sons himself. Ismail Aslandoğan is very proud about these books, written in Ottoman language and Arabic, because they testify not only his ability to read these languages but also that he has taken over the legacy of his uncle. He believes very strongly that Alevism is a part

of Islam, and even more so, that it is real Islam, whereas Sunnism is only a distorted tradition. Accordingly he is very critical about recent Alevi authors such as Nejat Birdoğan (1990) who consider Alevism a kind of syncretism that also accommodates influences of Shamanism or Zarathustrism.

It was not until 1987 that he conducted a *cem* again. This occurred in the German town of Ahlen where one of the first Alevi associations in Germany had been founded. I have already mentioned that at first he was a member of the Hamburg Alevi Culture Center committee, which he then broke away from with a faction to found another association. He subsequently again left that association to form his own organization. According to his view, there was too little sincerity and especially too little attention given to Alevism as a religion in both of the associations he left. His latest foundation, the Hamburg Alevi Cemaatı started with very few members, most of whom left, and is now defunct.

In the late 1970s he was also a member of a political association of Alevis, the Yurtseverler Birliği. Explaining his political commitment at that time he simply said, "I was young!" Today he equates politics with "telling lies". For two years İsmail Aslandoğan was also a member of the Federation's *dede* council until he left as he felt that the council's views were not sufficiently heeded to by the committee of the Federation.

İsmail Aslandoğan is now associated with Cem Vakfı in Turkey, an Alevi foundation with its headquarters in Istanbul. Cem Vakfı is criticised by most of the other Alevi organisations for having too close of a relationship with the Turkish state.¹⁹ İsmail Aslandoğan participated in a *dede* convention organized by Cem Vakfı in Istanbul in 1998.²⁰ Due to his relations with Cem Vakfı he has also conducted a few *cem*s for Alevi organizations in Istanbul. He is now retired and suffers from a heart disease. Therefore he rejects many invitations to conduct *cem*s. Still, he had eight *cem*s in Germany and Switzerland in the first seven months of 2001 (cf. Fig 3).

Dedes in diaspora – transformation of a religious institution

The practice of *dedes* in the German diaspora differs in many respects from the image of the ideal-type *dede*. Such differences are not only due to diasporic dislocation. Also *dedes* in Turkey generally do not exemplify that image today. In Turkey too voluntary organizations have become the principal institution of Alevism. Yet there are some differences between organizations in Germany and in Turkey. Many Turkish Alevi organizations are *cem*-houses (*cemevi*) and although they undertake all kinds of social

¹⁹ Although "Cem" in the name of the foundation implicitly refers to the ritual, it is an abbreviation of Cumhuriyet Eğitim Kültür Merkezi Vakfı, i.e. Republican Education and Culture Center Foundation.

²⁰ For the proceedings of this conference see Cem Vakfı 2000.

work the ritual *cem* occupies a central position in their activities. Some of these *cemevis* are established upon tombs of saints (*türbe*). The ritual has become a much more regular and frequent affair in these *cemevis*: It is celebrated once a week, normally on Thursday evenings. Some famous places of pilgrimage like Karacaahmet or Şahkulu Sultan in Istanbul which receive a constant flux of visiting devotees have *cem* several times a week. Such places are not served by visiting *dedes* but by *dedes* who are regularly employed. So far this new pattern of employing *dedes* does not exist in Germany. Here we find instead the traditional pattern of the traveling *dede* visiting diverse congregations in order to conduct *cem*. German Alevi organizations are much smaller than most Turkish organizations and they lack funds sufficient to employ *dedes*. German *dedes* are independent freelancers. They receive a certain remuneration from those associations for whom they conduct *cem*, but this is not sufficient in order to make a living.

Alevism is not founded upon strict dogmas but rather exhibits a broad range of beliefs, with reference, for instance, to the relationship between Alevism and Islam or to the importance of the Qur'an for Alevis. This diversity is also reflected by the *dedes*: Ismail Aslandoğan represents a kind of Qur'anic Alevism whereas the others take a much less explicit stance in this respect and some even deny any meaningful relation between Alevism and Islam. *Dedes* develop a certain public image and this image is decisive for which association invites which *dede* for *cem*. An association that generally views Alevism as different from Islam would never call Ismail Aslandoğan. The possibility to choose a *dede* according to his version of Alevism is a departure from traditional Alevism as *talips* were traditionally bound to their *dede* hereditarily, whether they abided by his teachings or not.

Although we find the traditional pattern of the traveling *dede* in Germany, this does not mean that tradition has actually been maintained. Rather, it has been reinvented on a transformed fundament. The *dede* no longer visits his *talips*, rather he visits local voluntary organizations. Also the temporal structure of this spatial practice is different: Whereas ideal type *dedes* visited their *talip* communities in winter when they were freed from agricultural work, present day *dedes* in Germany may visit the local associations at any time in the year (but only on weekends) with the exception of a few months in summer when many Alevis spend their vacations in Turkey.

This brings me to the question of transnational connections. So far – with the sole exception of Zeynel Arslan – practicing German *dedes* have become *dedes* in Turkey. The spatial dislocation of this practice was undertaken by persons who had been migrants themselves. But due to legal and political changes in Germany, migration between Turkey and Germany has almost been stopped. No new practicing *dede* has arrived for many years in Germany and it is improbable that *dedes* will migrate in future. Furthermore, visits of *dedes* from Turkey for the purpose of conducting *cem* for German Alevi organizations have become much less frequent than it was at the beginning of the 1990s. Most associations now call upon one of the few *dedes* living in

Germany. This is partly due to the fact that a train ticket from Munich to Hamburg, for instance, is cheaper than an air ticket from Ankara and that inviting a *dede* from Turkey involves a bureaucratic challenge in order to obtain a visa. However, it also became less necessary to invite *dedes* from Turkey because *ocakzades* living in Germany started or resumed ritual activities and especially because of Ahmet Kömürcü and Zeynel Arslan who conduct *cem*s nearly every weekend.

Thus the establishment of practicing *dedes* in Germany has rather weakened the transnational ritual relationships between Alevis in Turkey and in Germany. In addition the German *dedes* themselves do not generally maintain transnational relations that are centered upon Alevism. Of course, they have connections with Turkey. Like other migrants they go to Turkey for holidays, they visit their relatives and many of them have property in the country. But specific Alevi activities are much more limited: *Dedes* from Germany generally do not travel to Turkey in order to conduct *cem*, they have no fixed relationships with Alevi organizations in Turkey²¹ and they do not necessarily visit Alevi places of pilgrimage when they are in the country.

Conclusion: Dede in Alevism today

Alevism has undergone dramatic changes during the last fifteen years. Most importantly, it has been transformed from a hidden religious practice into a public affair. The position of *dedes* has been directly affected by this transformation. *Dedes* represented the most important institution in hidden Alevism whereas formal associations are the central institution of present-day public Alevism. In contrast to the *dede*-centered Alevism whose hidden religious practice was mainly a rural affair, associational Alevism is situated most importantly in urban centers, although a process of introducing the urban institutions into the villages has been started. The process of becoming visible did not actually reverse the collective amnesia that Alevism had suffered after the 1950s. The intergenerational transmission of Alevi knowledge and tenets could not be resumed to the extent that existed before the middle of the last century. For many of those who publicly profess to be Alevi this is more an expression of symbolic identification than of actual belief. Only a small minority of Alevis participate regularly in the ritual *cem* which is nevertheless regarded as the spiritual center of Alevism. In this respect Alevism parallels other religious traditions that in the process of secularization have been forced to deal with the fact that only a minority of believers and practitioners exists in contrast to a large majority of nominal adherents.

²¹ I know of only one exception in this respect: Dede Niyazi Bozdoğan from Cologne lives since his retirement several months the year in his home town Çorum and is regularly involved in the activities of the *cemevi* there.

The position of *dedes* has suffered from these processes of change as the belief on which their special hereditary charisma is based is no longer shared by all Alevis. The traditional authority of the *dedes* is challenged by authority based on elections within modern associations. Within these associations, knowledge received from institutions of formal education and management experience are a more important precondition for leadership than descent, religious knowledge and experience in conducting rituals. This does not mean that *dedes* are opposed to associations or vice versa, but, as I have shown, a structural contradiction remains that time and again engenders conflicts.

In Germany, Alevi organisations presently endeavour to provide a new basis for the intergenerational transmission of Alevi knowledge and belief. In most German Bundesländer, Alevi associations have applied for Alevi religious instruction in public schools. In Berlin the application has already been approved and instruction will start in some schools during the second half of 2002. So far no special provisions have been made to employ *dedes* as school teachers. Consequently the importance of *dedes* may be further reduced in future because the transmission of belief may increasingly be taken out of their hands. This is also the result of a vicious circle in which the institution of the *dede* is trapped within Germany: There are simply too few practicing *dedes* in order that they could have a decisive role in a more widespread school education. Older *dedes* generally do not qualify for this task because most of them lack a sufficient knowledge of German.

Still, *dedes* are needed to conduct rituals. Alevi organisations are unanimous in that some provision has to be found in order to ensure that the formation of *dedes* continues also in the future. Especially within the umbrella organization, the Federation of Alevi Communities in Germany, it is sometimes suggested that the institution of the *dede* should be "democratized". This means most importantly that being an *ocakzade* should be neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for becoming *dede*. At this time no practical steps have been taken to change the situation. Thus the institution of the *dede* mirrors the general condition of Alevism as a religious tradition and community which has undergone rapid transformations during the last few decades and which is still struggling to find its way to reconcile tradition and change. More specifically, the changing position of *dedes* within Alevism exemplifies the great transformatory processes that are generally subsumed under modernization, especially the shift from rural to urban contexts and from community based on kinship to a form of the social that emerges from voluntarily contracted relationships.

In the introduction I have situated the topic of this paper within the study of diaspora and moving culture. The example of the *dedes* shows that neither migration can simply be equated with mobility nor that pre-migration society was necessarily immobile. *Dedes* have traditionally been spatially mobile agents of their culture. Their specific mobility of visiting *talips* has come to a halt as a consequence of those political and economic processes of transformation that sparked off rural-urban migration in Turkey. Also transnational migration to Germany was not a sufficient condition to

make *dedes* resume their mobility. The necessary precondition for the new mobility of practicing *dedes* in Germany was a new politics of identity which made Alevism in the first place a public affair. Only the reinvention of Alevism as a public culture, based on and enacted by voluntary organizations, recreated the cultural space in which some *dedes* resumed their traditional mobility. But at the same time it caused the contradiction between the genealogically legitimated authority of the *dedes* and the democratic structure of the new voluntary organizations. The new Alevi politics of identity, in turn, was dependent upon the integration of Alevism into national economies of identity – as an unrecognized, silenced minority in Turkey and as a community of immigrants and foreigners in Germany.²² Thus, contrary to much popular enthusiasm about the “decline of the nation-state” in the wake of globalisation and increased mobility, the study of diasporic culture and society has to remain well aware of the respective “national order of things”.

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²² For a discussion of Alevis as “foreigners” in Germany see Sökefeld, forthcoming.

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