THE POWER OF THE DEDES IN ALEVI SOCIETY IN SOUTH-WESTERN ANATOLIA

by

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Alevis of the Muğla-Antalya area are today peasants who can hardly be distinguished from other peasants of the same area. They are ordinary citizens living under the common rural socio-economic conditions of the Republic. Up until fifty to hundred years ago they were a highly distinct group of nomadic people who lived in a society regulated by their unique traditions. Their religious leaders, dedes, who were the only holders of power in their society were in charge of all social affairs; they were the local level social and political leaders. This power of the dedes has almost completely disappeared today. This is due to the fact that with certain social structural changes, with the Alevi nomad becoming an Alevi peasant, many factors that had contributed to the dede's power in the past no longer continue to do so under the changed conditions of life.

In order to find out about the differences between Alevi nomadic and peasant societies and about the factors that have led to the loss of the dedes' power, I have visited six villages and a small town in the Muğla-Antalya

area. I spent three weeks there staying with villagers and talking with them about these points. To talk to dedes of this area, I visited three villages in Aydın, Manisa and İzmir where they live. In this way I gathered information about past and present Alevi societies from the participants, both from dedes and from the common people.

In order to study the causes of the loss of the dedes' power, I will examine the influence of the larger Turkish society on Alevi society, and the economic and symbolic factors which shape power relations, and which are now different as a result of the change in Alevi social structure. As my concern is not with the reasons for and dynamics of this structural change from nomadic to peasant society in itself but rather with the effects of the change on the power of the dedes, I will not study nomadic and peasant social structures in any detail. I will only discuss the former Alevi nomadic society and today's Alevi peasant society as they have been related to me by the Alevis of the Muğla-Antalya area. I am not interested in the reasons why things are different in nomadic and peasant societies. The fact that they are different is enough to study the reasons behind a change in power relations, as my concern is with changing power relations in Alevi society. I will not refer to general characteristics of nomadic and peasant societies. I will only discuss the folk accounts of these two particular types of Alevi society, trying to reconstruct their social institutions

from their own perspective. Since there is not much literature on Alevi nomadic society, I will have to rely on the local peoples' own account of how that society worked, and it would be safer for purposes of comparison to deal with Alevi peasant society in the same way, that is, to rely on the peoples' account of how their society functions today. From this "folk" description of these two different living conditions, I will take up the relevant differences that have led up to the loss of the dedes' power. Therefore, a brief description of the two Alevi societies will suffice for my purposes. Here, I will be touching upon some issues in general I will take them up separately and in greater detail in the following chapters.

Alevis of the Muğla-Antalya area used to live in isolated tribes of about 30-50 people. They were nomads who lived in the mountain forests of the area cutting trees and moving from one location to another after good trees to cut. This occupation earned them the name "Tahtaci". They worked together in family groups including the women and children. There was no occupational differentiation and hardly any economic inequality. When enough wood was cut, a dependable man whom they selected from the tribe and called "kahya", would go down the mountain and barter or sell the wood to merchants of the area who dealt in wood and who expected the kahyas to come down the mountain with merchandise at certain periods of time. What the kahya got in return would then be

divided among the members of the tribe according to the number of trees each family had cut.

The peace and order of the tribes were provided by traveling dedes who claimed to be descendents of Ali and the Twelve Imams. All the male members of this lineage were dedes who passed on their religious knowledge from father to son; they were the only literate people among completely illiterate tribes. Traveling constantly, thus knowing about the outside world, being literate, and having religious knowledge made them teachers of the tribes since they were the only source of knowledge of things beyond the local world that the Alevi nomads had.

Dedes lived in a number of different tribes with other Alevis and visited other tribes as often as 4-5 times a year. The tribes looked forward to the visit of dedes with great enthusiasm and when they came, they stayed for a couple of weeks during which time nobody in the tribe worked but only served the dede's pleasure. When a dede performed the Alevi rituals, he first initiated the young people who were of age into the order and performed the marriage ceremonies that were kept waiting until his visit. Then, the dede opened the "mahkeme", the court session, where he settled the disputes of the tribe and passed judgements on the guilty. After this was over entertainment began; people ate and drank and danced to music. At the end of this stay, everyone gave the dede some money. There was no fixed price, people gave according

to their means.

When the dede was gone, a "murebbi" whom the people of the tribe had chosen among themselves for his old age, honesty, respectability and religious knowledge and whom the dede had sanctioned became the dede's local representative. In the dede's absence, people met every Thursday evening under the leadership of this murebbi. The murebbi could not perform the religious rites or hold court for important crimes; these had to wait for the next visit of the dede. But the murebbi could settle minor disputes and reconcile those who were not on good terms with each other. In the case of major crimes such as murder, rape and major theft, he made the guilty party swear that he would accept and observe the punishment the next visiting dede would give him.

In this nomadic tribal society, the superiority and power of dedes were never questioned. They were ceremonial leaders because they had religious power; they regulated public affairs because they had judicial power. Kahyas were directly in charge of the economy since it was they who sold the product of the tribes and supervised the work to be done in case of agreement with merchants in advance on a certain kind and cut of wood or on a set time for the delivery of the product. But their authority was only limited to production. Because dedes had judical power, they were the final arbitors in relation to problems arising with regard to the control and distribution of production. Every problem of this sort

passed through their scrutiny; therefore, dedes had indirect economic power. In short, the Alevi nomads who were geographically, economically, culturally and politically at the fringes of the larger Turkish society, lived in a society regulated entirely by their religious traditions in the person of their dedes.

Today Alevis of the Muğla-Antalya area are peasant farmers who grow cotton, vegetables or fruit on their own pieces of land around the villages in which they live with Sunnis. Small farmers who grow vegetables sell their crops in the local markets but big fruit and cottong growers sell their goods on the national market. In small towns where there are factories some people are factory workers and there are some rich merchants who have their own shops. In such towns and in villages near such towns there are a number of civil servants such as bank clerks or hospital employees. Alevi society is now occupationally differentiated and, though minor, there is economic inequality among people. Most of the people under the age of forty are literate, some have had middle school and lycee education.

Nowadays Alevis observe the laws of the state as much as Sunni villagers do. When somebody commits a crime, they first try to solve the problem among themselves. If this does not work, if they cannot set the person right and provide compensation for the wronged party, they go to government

authorities. A few elderly people among them still believe in the judicial authority of dedes and prefer to appeal to them for minor wrongs. But even they assert that major crimes fall in the sphere of government authorities.

The dedes of the Muğla-Antalya area still insist that they have the only legitimate judicial power in Alevi society, that going to government authorities is a sin. But in all the villages I have visited, I was told that a dede came to that village either once a year or once in two years. Even if some people wanted to refer to dedes for judicial problems, it was impossible to wait that long. Dedes in return say that they only go to villages that invite them, because they are not wanted and respected in many villages. They also donot want to travel from village to village for, they say, it is not a profitable thing to do in these hard times. For the same reason, most of the members of their lineage have chosen not to function as dedes and know nothing about being a dede. If and when a dede comes to a village most of the people are not even aware of his visit, and with the few people that attend the dedes meeting there is not much he can do. Very few people want their children to be initiated or married by the dede. Even fewer people bring over their disputes for the dede to solve. Therefore, his visit is not an important incident in the life of an Alevi villager anymore. There still are murebbis in Alevi villages but there are no weekly meetings. Very rarely, some elderly people meet under the

murebbi's leadership to discuss their problems. Murebbis have no other function in society.

Dedes superiority and respectability are not unquestionable things anymore. One dede himself said that if a dede is not correct and honest, people would not believe in him anymore and his lineage would not be respected as dedes. Aside from the possibility of dede lineages losing their dedeship by public opinion, there are now a number of people who are not dedes by birth but who call themselves dedes by public consent and, though only rarely, perform religious duties of a dede since there are very few practising dedes left. Although the original dedes say that these people are only murebbis, they travel to villages where they are wanted by a few elderly people, which is something murebbis do not by definition do. Public opinion has become more powerful than dedes themselves. In short, for these Alevi peasants who are no longer geographically, economically, culturally and politically isolated from the larger Turkish society, dedes have lost most of their power.

These differences between the former Alevi nomadic society and the present-day Alevi peasant society in the fields of economics, cultural symbols of power and the influence of the larger Turkish society have led to the decline in dedes' power. How the changes in these economic, symbolic and national factors have contributed to the change in the power of the dedes will be the subject of the following chapters.

THE ECONOMY

To study the economic factors which have contributed to the loss of the dedes' power, the economies of the former tribal Alevi society and today's peasant Alevi society must be studied. Today's peasant society falls within the general market economiy of the country. The former tribal economy is harder to define since it is not there to be studied anymore, and there are no written documents concerning it. From what has been related to me about the past, it seems that these Alevi tribes had a subsistence economy. It is, furthermore, misleading to talk about the Alevi tribal economy as if it was an institutionally separate sphere in their society. In a relatively undifferentiated tribal society such as that of the Alevis of the past, "structurally, "the economy" does not exist. Rather than a distinct and specialized organization, "economy" is something that generalized social groups and relations, notably kinship groups and relations, do"[1]. It is impossible to separate the economy of such a society from the whole, but for purposes of this paper I will take up the Alevi tribal economy as an analytically separate sphere.

Gellner differentiates between primitive tribalism and marginal tribalism. Primitive tribes are those that are both politically and culturally independent; there are no bridges between them and the outside world. Marginal tribes are politically independent but share the same culture with the outside world[2]. Alevi tribes fall into the latter category. Although they were theoretically under the political control of the Ottoman State living in its territory, practically they were independent since they did not recognize the power of that state within their own society and the state rarely went after them to subordinate them. The only times the Ottomans were interested in having control over Alevi tribes were at times of war with Iran when they were afraid Alevis would join forces with the Iranians, both being heterodox Muslims. Otherwise, Alevi tribes were left alone; they were, for all practical purposes, politically independent. On the other hand, although they had many cultural differences with the outside world, they basically shared the same Islamic religious culture; theirs was a heterodox version of Islam as opposed to the orthodox version of the Ottoman center, but it was Islam all the same. Alevi tribes also had an economic bridge with the outside world. They bartered or sold their product, wood, to the outside world and earned their needs in return. This connected them peripherally to the market mechanisms of the society outside of their tribes.

Polanyi observers; "Trade and money were always with us. Not so the market, which is a much later development"[3]. The fact that these three, trade, money, market have been viewed as an indivisible whole has led to the fallacy of "seeing markets where there are none and ignoring trade and money where they are present, because markets happen to be absent"[4]. Trade and money were present in tribal Alevi society but this does not mean that their's was a market economy. Alevi tribes traded their product for the basic necessities of life like food —mainly flour, sugar, salt— and clothes; things they did not produce themselves because they neither grew crops nor had herds. People who lived in the villages needed the wood that these nomads cut in the mountains. That is, there were supply and demand crowds. In a market economy, "The range of tradable goods —the commodities— is practically unlimited"[5]. But in the case of Alevis the traded goods were only wood in return for the few basics they needed. Although their wood entered the larger economy, Alevi trade with the outside world still left them peripheral to the market economy.

That there could be no market economy in tribal Alevi society is also seen in the fact that their production was aimed at use not at exchange. Sahlins states that in primitive economies there is exchange but this is an "exchange with an interest in consumption, and a production with an interest in provisioning"[6]. Though not primitives, this was also the case with Alevi tribes. Theirs was a production and exchange for

livelihood, not for gain. The goods they produced were changed into money through trade in order to purchase other goods they needed; these goods and trade were not used in order to make more money. They produced in order to trade their product for the basic necessities of life.

When there is production for use, "Production is under no compulsion to proceed to the physical or gainful capacity, but inclined rather to break off for the time being when livelihood is assured for the time being"[7]. When Alevi tribes had cut enough wood to trade for their needs, they stopped working for a few days until the kahya made the exchange and came back with the necessary goods. Since they did not work for more than they needed there was no surplus for the sole purpose of exchange. Sahlins says that primitive economies are underproductive, hence do not produce any surplus. He points out that in primitive economies work is a part-time activity which tends to be interrupted on any pretext from rituals to light rainfall[8]. Alevi economy shared these attributes with primitive economies. There was also an interruption in work when a dede came to a tribe. He usually stayed for forty days during which time nobody worked but served the dede and attended the rituals that he performed. Another example of the fact that labor forces were "underused" in Alevi tribal society are the terms under which kahyas functioned. Because kahyas conducted the trade with the outside world, they were somewhat privileged in tribal

society. The people of the tribe, after cutting trees for their own families, got together and worked for a day or two for the kahya, cutting about the same amount of trees as each family had cut for themselves. This became the kahya's portion for which he got food and clothes for his own family without working on wood. The extra money the kahya got was a small percentage he got from the merchants for actualizing the trade. Otherwise, in the tribe he got as much as other people did, only in his case without physical labor. If he had also worked he would have had much more to trade in, partly from his own labor and partly from others working for him. But within this subsistence economy, he did not feel the need to earn more. Although he was privileged he did not earn much more than others, but it enabled him to work less than others and earn more or less the same. Conversely, earning more would not have made him more privileged in that society. When basic needs were provided for, work was avoided.

The tribes worked intermittently; a lot of their time was spent on entertainment. Many people could play the "saz" and knew Alevi folk poetry by heart which they sang to music. This can be seen even today in villages where playing the "saz" and reciting poetry is still very popular. People enjoy telling stories and jokes, especially about Alevi religious history. It is apparent that they were leisurely people who liked to enjoy themselves and spent a lot of time on entertainment. Their total working time was also decreased

because of their fragmented work periods. They had to spend time in moving from one area to another, especially after cedar trees which the merchants wanted the most because those were the best quality wood in the area used in furniture making. This moving period usually took a few weeks during which there was no production.

In short, Alevi tribal society was underproductive in market terms; labor forces were underused because production was for use. Although they had trade with the society outside their tribes, this did not put them directly in the market economy since they traded only to acquire their basic needs.

Within this system, the kahya seems to have had an important place. He provided the connection between the tribe and the outside world. In earlier times he sold the product of the tribe to merchants and brought back basic necessities for the people. Later, he did business with the representatives of the Ministry of Forests, getting permission from them to cut trees in a particular area and then selling the wood to them. What the kahya did was an important service for the people since it was through him that they got their livelihood. As Blau says a powerful man is one who supplies services people need and cannot get elsewhere[9]. If the only possible source of what people need is one man then that man becomes powerful. Although a kahya supplied services people needed, like selling their product, he, as a person, was not the only possible source of this service. He was replaceable; anybody

who was competent and reputable enough could do the job he did. Being a kahya was not the privilege of certain people. It was not transmitted by blood. When a kahya died or was no longer wanted as a kahya, any man could volunteer to be the new kahya and if the majority of the tribe wanted him to do the job, he could become a kahya. But once a kahya was trusted, he was respected and his words were heeded. The kahya had control over production but this did not give the person of the kahya much power in society since the man himself was dispensable. In spite of his authority in the field of production, the kahya was never on an equal footing with dedes as far as power went. To be a dede was the dedes' birthright; their individual attributes were not important; their power was undisputable as an intermediary between God and men. Whereas a kahya was an ordinary person who had to prove himself worthy of the job in his community. His power was limited to his work and could be taken away from him at the will of the people and the dede. Dedes' power was superior to the kahyas' because their power came from God, whereas the kahyas' power was given to them by the people and the dedes.

In the society, the kahya's area was very limited as compared to the dedes'. The dedes, had ceremonial power, as ritual leaders, they had socio-political power, as regulators of tribal affairs, and having judicial power, and thus being indirectly in charge of the control and distribution of production, they had economic power. The kahyas were respected

for the services they provided and were heeded in the economic field only. Otherwise, they, too, were under the authority of dedes like other people. When there was a complaint about the dealings of the kahya, dedes were called upon to pass judgement on him. Having some authority in the economic field —this authority could not amount to much since the kahya was replaceable— did not give him power in society since, as I mentioned earlier, in the past economic processes were subordinated to non-economic areas like religion where the dedes reigned.

In this society, being actively in charge of the production and acquisition of goods was not a source of high status because in such a subsistence economy the economic field is not separated out from other functions of society and is not seen as especially important. The religious field had priority above all other fields. The spiritual status of people was important and that was what gave dedes power in society, including indirect power in the economic field. "The higher 'owners' in the primitive societies —chiefs, lineages, clans— stand in a relation of the second degree to production. It is an 'ownership' more inclusive than exclusive, and more political than economic: a derived claim on the product and productive means in virtue of an inscribed superiority over the producers. In this it differs from a bourgeois ownership that confers control over the producers by a claim upon productive means"[10]. Since dedes had superiority over the

producers as religious and social leaders, they indirectly had a "claim" on production, and therefore, power even in the economic field. They were entitled to pass judgements on economic affairs if, for instance, disputes occured concerning the distribution of acquired goods, since the economic field was only one part of the totality of people's lives which dedes regulated, and since the economy was subordinated to noneconomic spheres for the members of this society.

Around the turn of the century, this picture began to change[11]. In the Alevi tribes groups of people began to follow different kahyas and broke off physically from their own tribes. Although each tribe had a kahya, someone else from the same tribe or another tribe might came up with a good deal for work. Such individuals made deals with different merchants or the Ministry of Forests on their own for the delivery of wood for a certain price and then came to their own tribes or other tribes of the area with this new proposal. If this proposal promised more money for the people than the work their original kahya provided for them, they left their tribe and followed this new kahya to go to the area from where the trees were wanted. The emergence of such kahyas shows that there was now more individual contact of Alevis from the tribes with the peasant society of the area. And the possibility of different and better deals shows the emergence of bargaining for prices in the price-making markets and the beginnings of becoming a more integral part

of the market economy of the country for the Alevi tribes.

In the early years of the Republic, some tribes began to buy land and settle down. It was usually the kahya who bought land for the first time in a tribe since he had a connection with the outside world and found the life of the peasants of the area desirable. Kahyas either collected money from the members of the tribe and bought land for all to settle together or bought land for themselves and the others followed them after some time. This process, naturally did not happen all at once for all the tribes; some settled 50 years later than others. Even then, sedentarization was not complete. For many years, the tribes which bought land continued roaming the mountain forests for wood in the summer months and worked on the soil in winter. When, with years, their numbers increased, and the land they owned became insufficient to feed their families, many among them took employment in the chrome mines of Fethiye along with Sunnis of the area.

For most Alevis, this transition from nomadic to peasant life entailed buying land, working on the soil to produce crops to sell in the market, and selling their labor either in mines or later in factories. As Polanyi observed, "The modern rise of the market to a ruling force in the economy can be traced by noting the extent to which land and food were mobilized through exchange and labor was turned into a commoditiy to be purchased in the market"[12]. It is

apparent that Alevi peasants started to become a part of the market economy of the country. Aside from a few who sell their labor in factories today, the majority of Alevis in this area are farmers who till their land for the production of cash-crops; there is production for exchange. They sell their produce, vegetables, fruit, cotton, either in the local markets or to the markets in big cities. They are linked to the price mechanisms of the national market.

The economically semi-independent Alevi tribes are gone; the Alevi peasant is tied to the price-mechanisms of the market economy. With this change, a part of the dedes' power has also gone. They no longer can have any say in the field of economics since their followers have become a part of a much larger economic process, the market mechanism, which is above and beyond the control of the dedes. In this structurally much more differentiated society, the economic field is separated from the totality of life which the dedes controlled. The Alevi peasants' economic life, what he produces and how much he sells it for, could no longer be regulated by and within the Alevi society which was led by the dedes, but was ruled by the market economy of the larger society. This undermined dedes' power in the eyes of the people who had considered them as all-powerfull, since a part of their authority, the economic authority, could so easily be taken away from them. With this separate economic field, new sources of authority emerged, such as people who dealt in

the markets where Alevis sold their crops or employers in factories where Alevis worked. The authority of these people in the economic field became a challenge to the unquestioned power of the dedes. For example, a factory worker had to abide by the working schedules set by the factory authorities. Even when a dede was in the village, the factory worker still had to go to work. The dede's presence could not change the rules set by the factory authorities. Or when selling their crops Alevis had to deal with merchants or government authorities. Or when selling their crops Alevis had to deal with merchants or government authorities on terms set by them. Even if a dede did not find these terms fair, there was nothing he could do about it; merchants and government authorities fell outside his sphere of authority.

Dedes' omnipotent and omniscient status began to crack. With this, people began to question whether the dedes who were not so superior after all were really entitled to the concessions people made to them. This new doubt and resentment concerning the tradition of paying dedes money in return for their ritualistic services was also partly due to the loss of the "affluent society" that Alevis knew as nomads.

Sahlins states that "An affluent society is one in which all the peoples' material wants are easily satisfied... wants may be easily satisfied either by producing much or desiring little"[13]. In the case of Alevis, they desired

little. As nomads they made more than enough money for their needs because their needs were very limited. In their isolated societies, their needs had not developed beyond the basic necessities of life which they could easily get with the money they earned. They did not know what else they could spend their money on; they thought they had everything. Some old people told me that their fathers always talked about how they had everything and how happy their lot was when they were nomads. When they first settled down, they had trouble learning a new means of earning a living and making money as farmers. But by the time they had gradually learned to till the soil and started making money this way, their needs had increased. In village life, where they were in contact with other people, they began to see and hear of things that they could posess which they did not even know the existence of in isolated nomadic societies. As there emerged some occupational differentiation, there was now a slight economic inequality among people which made them become more aware of the importance of economic issues.

Many Alevis said that this new realization of their inability to satisfy their wants in the face of increasing wants and needs began to shake their religious beliefs. Elders say that in their former way of life where they were contented, their religion which covered all areas of life was seen as providing this happiness. They had believed that being God-fearing Alevis who lived by the rules set out for

them by dedes, earned them the bounty of God. Dedes had taught them that being good Alevis had rewards even in this world. But with changing conditions they realized that this was not the case, that appealing to God did not help them get what they wanted. Many people observed that in their everyday life economic problems came to the fore and religion which was not useful for them in this area began to lose its importance. They were more concerned with how much they would sell their crops for rather than with what the last dede preached about being a good Alevi. They were more interested in when they would be able to sell their crops rather than when a dede will come to their village again.

Along with this, the power of dedes also began to be questioned. These leaders whom Alevis had always appealed to for solving their problems were powerless in the face of their "economic hardships". These "hardships", of course, emerged because in the peasant society where they learned about all the things they could own, their wants increased. Although they, now, earned more money than when they were nomads, they also began to desire a lot which gave them the feeling of being deprived of the things they needed. Since economic wants and needs became the most important problems in the lives of Alevi peasants, dedes who could not do anything about this began to be seen as useless. One youth when asked about dedes said, "What are they good for? What we need is money; can they provide that?" The fact that they

cannot provide that is enough to rule them out as obsolete for most young people.

In these "hard times", many people resent the Alevi tradition of having to give money to dedes who visit their villages. After a dede performs the religious rituals, each person who has attended the ritual gives the dede some money. As nomads when they felt they had money to spare and had great reverence for religion and dedes, this money was considered to be the dedes' most natural right. But with changing economic conditions paying this money became a burden. Many people who felt they could not afford to pay dedes began to avoid the religious rituals dedes performed when they visited the village. Fewer people began to attend these meetings and still fewer paid a significant amount of money even when they did pay.

The dedes told me that though they never expected to profit from being a dede, they would at least like their traveling expenses to be met when they came to a village. They complained that let alone making money, they have to spend from their own pockets when they traveled because few people attended the meetings and among those who did some paid very little while others paid nothing at all. This, obviously, is one of the reasons why dedes do not come to villages as often as they did before. One of the reasons why they wait to be invited to go to a village may be, as dedes tell it, not to meet with disrespect by going to places where

they are not wanted. But another reason seems to be that when invited, they expect to be paid better since they are, then, in a position of doing a service to the people by going to their village.

This difficulty in getting money from the villagers has made it undesirable to be a dede. Since dedes cannot earn their living by practising as a dede, they are forced to work at different jobs which makes it impossible for them to travel as before. The fact that dedes have to work at ordinary jobs to make a living also lowers their status in the eyes of the people. When talking of this situation which occurs all over the Middle East Gilsenan says, "The position of the leaders were undermined... The Sheikhs had to take employment like their followers"[14]. In the case of dedes who are rather well off, those who own a lot of land, they do not want to go through all the trouble of traveling for an unprofitable job. All the five dedes I met were the only dedes in their families although all the male members of these families had a right to be dedes. Somebody in their families had to become a dede to continue the tradition and they, as the eldest sons, had to accept the job. I was told that the others were working at other jobs, that they did not want to be dedes, and that their own sons did not wish to become dedes either. The fact that practising as a dede has become unprofitable along with the loss of status of being a dede have made this birth-right undesirable for members of dede lineages.

In short, economic factors have contributed greatly to the loss of dedes power. The change from subsistence economy of the nomadic tribal society to market economy of the peasant society has resulted in a radical change in the way of life of the Alevis and as a result in dedes' loss of economic power. But the loss of economic power was not all. The possibility of undermining the all-powerful dedes in one area of social life, in the economic field, along with the economic problems that emerged in peasant society, have jeopardized the dedes' power in general.

FOOTNOTES

1- Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1976), p.76.

2- Ernest Gellner, Saints of the Atlas (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p.2-3.

3- Karl Polanyi, The Livelihood of Man (New York: Academic Press, 1977), p.123.

4- Karl Polanyi, C.M. Arensberg, H.W. Pearson, eds., Trade and Market in the Early Empires (New York: The Free Press, 1957), p.257.

5- Ibid., p.263.

6- Sahlins, p.83.

7- Ibid., p.84.

8- Ibid., p.86.

9- Peter M. Blau, Exchange and Power in Social Life (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964).

10- Sahlins, p.92.

11- Dates are not precise because the information is from oral accounts.

12- Polanyi, The Livelihood of Man. p.43.

13- Sahlins, p.1-2.

14- Michael Gilsenan, Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.200.

SYMBOLS

To study the socio-symbolic factors that have contributed to the loss of dedes' power, the religious organization of the former tribal nomadic society and today's peasant society must be understood. The Alevi nomads of south-western Anatolia lived in isolated tribes that were almost completely cut off from other people who lived in the same area. They hardly had any contact with the social worlds that these other people lived in. As a result, Alevis had a relatively autonomous "political" organization and a semi-autonomous culture of their own. As discussed earlier, they basically shared the same Islamic culture with the larger society. In Redfield's terms, their's was a part of the little tradition, a segment of the popular culture as opposed to the great tradition, the learned culture of the larger society[1]. The Alevi heterodox version of Islam was influenced by Central Asian Turkic traditions many of which Alevis could keep almost intact because their isolated nomadic way of life minimized the influence of other cultures, including the learned culture, the great tradition of Orthodox Islam of the larger society. In their politically isolated tribes, the

local culture provided them with one important way of defining their separate social system.

The Alevi nomads had their religious beliefs and rituals, their culture, to provide for social order in their closed societies. When a group of people are not organized as a part of the political structure of the larger society like the Alevis, "the organization of the group is articulated on informal lines, making use of kinship, friendship, ritual, ceremonial and other forms of symbolic patterns and activities"[2]. Religious symbols were used to provide for and legitimate the organization of power within the tribal Alevi society. Dedes claimed to be descendents of Ali and the Twelve Imams, hence symbolically superior to ordinary Alevis. In any society power emerges through dissymmetries in social relations, as Balandier points out[3]. The Alevi dedes' religious descent claim put them in a position superior to ordinary Alevi nomads. They articulated their distinctiveness in terms of a principle of unilineal descent from Ali which gave them power. Gilsenan says of the religious leaders in the Middle East who are called Saints, "The authority he claims for this imperative role depends on individuals' acceptance of his special link with God... The Saint arbitrates between men by virtue of their belief that he mediates between them and Allah"[4]. The dedes' symbolic link with God through Ali was accepted by Alevis and this entitled them to arbitrate between men, thus, enabling them to have power in the

organization of social affairs.

Religious symbolism gave the dedes power in society since these two areas of religion and "political" power were not separate in these undifferentiated societies. Acquaviva says along the same line, "In simple and unified communities... distinctive functions were fused: the chief presided over activities of both a secular and a religious nature. Social life was unified in all its manifestations"[5]. In the simple Alevi society there was hardly any structural differentiation; religion and "politics" were interwoven. Thus, dedes, being religious leaders, were also "political" leaders. There was no other alternative power to refer to but the dedes'. I was told by a number of elderly Alevis that when they were nomads, they wanted dedes to visit their tribes very often because after a certain period of time elapsed since the dedes' last visit, people would begin to "go wrong" and nobody could bring lasting order to the tribe until the dedes returned. The dedes' position was also symbolic of the unity of the tribes of the area since they traveled from one tribe to another and had power over all of them. Thus, these tribes though separate, shared a political and judicial tradition which was upheld by the dedes. The dedes were the unifying political force behind a dispersed group of people.

The dedes legitimized and kept up their power through religious rituals. These rituals consisted of three parts.

When all the adults of the tribe had met in the presence of the dede, people first talked about the complaints they had about each other and tried to solve the disputes between them. If there was a crime committed the dede passed judgements on the guilty. But the people at the ritual, that is, the whole tribe had to be in accord with this decision for it to be valid. Then the dede reconciled those who were not on good terms with each other. When justice was done and peace and good feeling was reestablished between people, the second part of the ritual began. There was a certain ritual for the new born babies. Then young girls and boys who were of age were initiated by the dede which was called "ikrar almak", acknowledgement. From then on these people were entitled to attend, "gençler samahi" young people's meetings where they danced the "samah", on ordinary evenings. People who were to be married were wed and couples who wanted to become "musahips" ritual brothers and sisters, were elevated to that rank through particular rituals that the dede performed. This entitled the "musahips" to attend the "musahip samahi" on other evenings. When all these rituals were performed, dinner and drinks, raki, were served. Dinner mainly consisted of the meat that came from the sheep sacrificed for new born babies, for the newly weds or for the new musahips, that is, for the occasions in the second part of the ritual. After eating, people began to play the "saz" and do the "samah" which went on until late in the night.

These rituals which dedes conducted contributed to the perpetuation of their authority by reconditioning people to the importance of religion and religious authority. Religious beliefs were kept alive by continuous socialization through rituals. Since only dedes could conduct these rituals, each performance reaffirmed to the people that dedes were the only link between them and God. And since the dedes presided over these rituals, it reconditioned the people to the dedes' superiority and right to leadership and power. Although in Alevi rituals there was a wholeness, a unity of the tribal community in which all the adults were present on equal terms with each other, there was one point of differentiation and that was the high status of the dede. There was a communion of equal individuals who submitted to the general authority of the ritual leader[6]. That is, rituals were very important in sustaining Alevi beliefs and customs, including dedes' power.

These ceremonials began to be performed less and less after the Alevi nomads became sedentarized. Their weekly religious meetings, symbolic rituals, under the leadership of the murebbis that were very important to them as nomads began to lose their importance for them as peasant farmers. This was partly due to the fact that their style of life changed. They began to live among other sedentary people of the area, thus, coming in contact with a different religious interpretation and culture for the first time. The change in their

own way of life and the contact with another culture presented to them a different world than the one they had known for centuries. Geertz says that a people's world view comprises the way they see the construction of the world and that their ethos is the prescribed human conduct that is appropriate in that particular world. Sacred symbols, religious rituals, synthesize people's world view and ethos. They portray to the group that the group's style of life is reasonable because it fits the world that their wold view describes[7]. But when reality changes, when the world as experienced changes, as it did for Alevis, then the old rituals that reflect the old world view, the construction of that world, fail to explain life in its new form. For Alevis, their style of life no longer fit the world that their religious world view described. The definition of real life that the symbols of their rituals taught them did not fit their present life style as it did their former tribal life. When religious symbols do not reflect actual life anymore, then religious ritual that uses these symbols begins to be undermined. "Religion draws its persuasiveness out of reality it itself defines. The source of any creed's vitality lies in the fact that it pictures the ultimate structure of existence in such a way that the events of everyday life seem repeatedly to confirm it. It is... when the world as experienced and the world as imagined no longer seem to be mere elucidations of one another that perplexities ensue"[8]. For Alevis, there appeared a discrepancy between how the world functioned in

their nomadic tribal society and how it actually did in their new style of life. For example, in the tribal society there was a togetherness, a unity in work where people helped each other while cutting trees and pooled their product for the kahya to sell outside the tribe. This unity was reflected in the rituals where all the adults got together to solve their problems and witness all the rites of passage in their community. But this togetherness was disrupted in the peasant society where each family worked on its own piece of land and sold their produce separately. The unity of the tribes which the rituals symbolically reflected was not there any longer. This disjunction also occured for Alevis when the power of dedes began to be undermined in the new sedentarized social conditions. Although dedes presided over all parts of the rituals, in real life in the village they were not the only leaders in all these areas of social life. Many Alevis went to state courts for their judicial problems, got married with state ceremonies, went to the "kahve" or watched television for entertainment, as I will discuss in greater detail later. They were no longer dependent on the leadership of dedes in these areas of social life. But in the rituals dedes were the sole holders of power in all these aspects which used to symbolically parallel the actual life they lived in nomadic tribal society. With sedentarization the power of the dedes was not what it was before. What was symbolically portrayed in the rituals no longer corresponded to real life.

Alevi traditions and rituals were applicable in their true form only in isolated nomadic societies of a small number of people. One dede explained that for the dede to pass judgement on a guilty person, the whole adult community of the tribe had to be present, and accept and confirm the crime and the punishment given by the dede to the guilty party because when the dede left they would be the ones to see that the guilty person abides by the punishment given to him by the dede. But in the more crowded village communities it was impossible for everyone to attend these meetings. Therefore, the judgement of the dedes was not really legitimated by the whole community according to original Alevi traditions. Another dede said that in the tribal society every person knew about every other; no one could get away with what he did. But now in villages people were not as close to each other and many people preferred to go to impersonal state courts where they could lie and sometimes get away with their crime which was much more difficult in the small tribal community. The unity seen in the tribes was disrupted in more crowded villages. In these tribes of 30-40 people there was one murebbi that was the representative of the dede in his absence. But in the villages there emerged one murebbi for every 30-40 people and this led to groupings around different murebbis who sometimes had different interpretations of certain issues. People who had different murebbis compared the advice given by them on similar issues. When these happened to be different, they began to doubt the validity of

these personal interpretations by murebbis. The fact that there was not one rule, one truth in Alevi traditions began to bother them. They distrusted each others' murebbis and this led to a hostility between groups of people with different murebbis. Obviously, the traditions of a nomadic tribal society became harder to apply in a sedentarized peasant society.

Aside from being less easily applicable, Alevi traditions and rituals were no longer as necessary for the functions they served in tribal society. The emergence of state laws in peasant society made the first part of Alevi rituals, the "court sessions", less needed and took away yet another part of dedes' power, their judicial power. In their isolated societies, religion covered the whole area of Alevis' social relations, including the judical area which gave dedes judicial power. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, religious and judicial areas were separated. There were other social structures Alevis could refer to for their legal problems that were completely outside their religious based social system. The existence of these other structures, such as the gendermerie and the state courts, was one of the causes of the undermining of the rituals and the loss of dedes' judicial powers.

One dede told me that it was considered a sin to go to court because it meant going to the Sharia, that is, acknowledging the power of Sunnis. Although they are aware of the

fact that the Sharia is no longer the basis of law in Turkey, many uneducated people still consider the state laws which were made by Sunnis as a reflection of the Sharia. This offence called for the greatest punishment in Alevi religious law. But these punishments did not have much affect on the people. The severest punishment in Alevi traditions is "düş-künlük", shunning, which means the guilty person is left outside the society for a period of time, the length of this time depending on the seriousness of the offence, sometimes a few months, sometimes a few years. During this time nobody in the community, not even the members of his family, talks to this person, nobody sits with him, shares food with him or helps him in any way. This was a very painful punishment within the small nomadic tribes where people needed to keep together and get help from each other in order to survive. To cut trees for their livelihood people had to work together; the job could not be done alone. But in the larger, more differentiated peasant society this punishment failed to affect people as much as it used to because a man could do his farming alone if need be. There was more individual autonomy now because of the change in production from one that called for tribal solidarity to another which consisted of separate farming that was done in family units. Besides, the size and scale of society had change people were not completely left alone in case of shunning because religious laws were not observed by all the members of the community anymore. Therefore, the attempts of dedes at preventing people from going to state courts have not been

successful; very few Alevis recognize the judicial power of dedes today.

Another reason why Alevi rituals lost their importance lies in the fact that they were no longer necessary for another function they served in tribal society: entertainment. The last part of the rituals which consisted of eating, drinking and dancing the "samah" provided entertainment for the people besides their great religious significance. As Turner points out there are two poles of meaning in ritual symbols: the ideological pole and the sensory pole. In the ideological pole lie the social norms and values which are considered as obligatory. In the sensory pole lie the individual desires and feelings which are both natural and desirable. In the first part of the Alevi rituals, the judicial part, the ideological side was more apparent; in the last part the sensory side was stronger. The middle part where life crisis rituals were performed, both these poles of meaning were merged since these rituals both regulated social life by putting people in their proper places in society and satisfied human feelings such as brotherly love in the case of "musahip" rituals. In a ritual, contradictions of human social life between norms and drives, between society and the individual are unified[9]. Individual desires were symbolically satisfied in the last part of the ritual which had orgiastic characteristics, where men and women got drunk and danced with each other. This kind of symbolic outlet for human drives was considered highly satisfying by the people.

A number of Alevis told me that when they were nomads, their religious rituals were the best entertainment they had. There was nothing else to do in the evenings and they looked forward to these meetings. There were two kinds of entertainment even in the dedes' absence: the young people's samah which unmarried but initiated people attended and the "musahips" samah which couples who were made brothers and sisters through a certain ritual attended. Uninitiated young people and married couples who did not have "musahips" were not allowed to attend these dances. This made people go through initiation and "musahip" ceremonies willingly in order to be able to enjoy themselves on ordinary evenings. The religious rituals, aside from providing entertainment themselves, also entitled people to further entertainment on ordinary evenings, in this way enforcing the rules of religion with mundane rewards.

When Alevis settled down and began to live in villages, they had other things to do such as listening to the radio, watching television, going to the "kahve", or playing cards with neighbors at home. Since they did not need the outlet and the entertainment these rituals provided them as much as before, they could more easily ignore the rituals and the demands of their religious customs. As Alevis' life style changed from that of an isolated small community of nomads to that of a more populated and mixed community of peasants, there emerged other structures, as we have seen,

them in recent years that some dedes punished those who did not give them money, although paying the dede is not really a must according to Alevi traditions. Many young men today blame the Alevi dedes and Sunni "hocas", priests, for making enemies out of these two communities. Although they are aware of the fact that this is not the only explanation, they find it more appropriate and acceptable in today's Turkey to blame the religious leaders for the hostility between Alevis and Sunnis. They say that Alevi dedes tried to increase the gap between these two groups of people by portraying Sunnis as enemies. Dedes wanted to keep Alevis apart and isolated from others in order to continue to have power over them. People say they believe that it was the dedes who kept them as nomads all these years in order to keep them ignorant so that they could prey on them. In the Alevis' revaluation of their past, the dedes usually get the blame for things they are not proud of today, especially for their past ignorance and nomadism.

Education is another important factor in the decline of the dedes' power. It is with education that Alevis really came to question the dedes' superiority. As nomads Alevis were completely ignorant and illiterate. There was not a man in the tribes who knew how to read and write. They did not know much about the world aside from their immediate surroundings and what dedes taught them about their religion. But dedes were literate and comparatively knowledgeable. They knew the Arabic script and a lot about religious history.

Because they traveled constantly, they knew what was going on in the outside world. Most of the information Alevis got was from dedes. The religion of these illiterate people had to be personally mediated; somebody had to tell them about religion. And the people who did that, the dedes, became powerful because, as Gellner points out, there arises an ethic of loyalty in people to the person who teaches them religion[11]. One dede told me that their forefathers had to be educated in order to be respected. Being literate and knowledgeable was a sign of superiority that added to their already high status as descendents of Ali. Dedes passed on their knowledge of religious rituals and history to their sons as well as teaching them how to read and write. Education was important for dede lineages; it earned them respect from tribes of completely illiterate followers.

This picture has changed now because those tribes of ignorant people do not exist any longer. In the six villages and the one small town I visited, I did not meet or hear of anyone under the age of forty who had not had at least a primary school education. A few have also had middle-school or lycee education. Even among the older people there are many who are literate. On the other hand, all the five dedes I talked to also had primary school education and they told me their children had the same. That is, they are not educationally superior to other people. They are quite frank about their ignorance even in their own field, in religious

matters. When they do not know something they refer you to other people in the village who, they confess, are more knowledgeable than they are. People even go as far as saying that one of the dedes today is so ignorant about religious matters that he performs the rituals by reading out the rules from the notebook he carries with him.

With the state of dedes' knowledge as it is, most Alevis think that there is nothing dedes can teach them anymore. Many young people believe that they know more about what is going on in the world than dedes do. I was told by an elderly man who regretted this state of affairs that the more education the youngsters got the more they looked down upon the dedes. Some lycee educated young people thought dedes were completely ignorant, and therefore, unworthy of respect.

There are now some new "dedes" who are not dedes by blood but who have been accepted by the people to practise as dedes by mutual consent. The importance of knowledge in increasing the status of dedes is obvious in the respect these new "dedes" get. Two such men I have talked to, though with only primary school education were very knowledgeable about Alevi rituals, the history of Islam and the state of the world today. Their knowledge, however, does not give them power in society today, because there are other educated people in the villages such as school teachers and a few young men who were sent away to big cities for lycee or university education and who come visiting their villages

from time to time. Therefore, these "dedes" are not the only knowledgeable people in their communities. But they are highly respected due to their superior knowledge as compared to most of the other villagers.

Obviously, being knowledgeable is relative. For the illiterate Alevi nomad dedes were highly knowledgeable; for the relatively educated Alevi villager they are not. A primary school teacher in one of the villages said that this was not due to a decline in the dedes' knowledge over time, but to the fact that almost all Alevis are now educated. Dedes were as ignorant as they are today but people who were worse, were in no position to judge them. The few things they knew about religious traditions and about the outside world were enough for people to label them as highly educated and respect them for it. But as Alevis became more knowledgeable both by going to school and by living in villages which enabled them to find out about the outside world, they began to question the superiority of dedes as far as knowledge went. That is, the change was not in the dedes but in the people themselves.

Aside from questioning the dedes' superiority because of education, going to school itself prevented people from learning to respect the dedes. As one dede observed, because children start school at the age of seven, they have less time to learn about being an Alevi. Just when they are growing up and learning things, they spend most of their days in school

under the supervision of their teachers instead of their families. In school they are given a national education that alienates them from their own local culture. Alevi traditions seem strange and meaningless to them because they are not brought up with them. With no respect for their traditions, they inevitably have no respect for dedes.

That some educated people do not have much respect for Alevi traditions is true. They dissect these traditions, analyze them, point to the reasons for their existence and the functions they served, after which they assert that under today's conditions they are no longer necessary or useful. For a young lycee literature teacher the dede institution was a remnant of shamanism. He said, "There is no common Alevi culture because each dede interpreted the traditions in his own way. Today there are different Alevi traditions in different areas of Turkey. Alevism has become a kind of adherence to superstition the dedes generated over time, and therefore, it is quite obsolete in today's world". One irreligious recent lycee graduate observed on a similar line, "When we were nomads, Alevi religious rules were necessary to regulate our social life. There had to be someone people would obey and dedes provided this. But today we no longer need religion for this purpose, or for any other purpose; its demands do not correspond to today's way of life". Cohen says of symbols that "To do their job efficiently their social functions must remain largely unconscious and unintended by the actors. Once these functions become known to the actors,

the symbols lose a great deal of their efficacy"[12]. Alevi symbols, traditions, have largely lost their effectiveness for some educated people because these traditions have been dissected and overanalyzed by them.

It is obvious that education is one of the factors that contributed to the undermining of Alevi traditions and to the loss of belief in the superiority of dedes' knowledge. When common people began to learn to read and write, dedes no longer had monopoly over literacy which they had used as a symbol of their superiority. The opportunity for education emerged for Alevis only when they became peasant farmers and started living in villages where there were schools they could go to and where they learned about the outside world which they were cut off from in their isolated tribes. That is, dedes began to lose their power because of yet another factor that was brought about by the change in Alevi social structure.

From all this, it is apparent that the decline in dedes' power has been triggered by the sedentarization of Alevi nomads. In the small, isolated nomadic society where the religious and social spheres were not differentiated, where religion covered the whole area of social life; dedes as religious leaders were the sole holders of power. But in the peasant society where other institutions existed aside from the religious, there appeared other structures that could

perform the functions the Alevi religious rituals and dedes did, the most important of which was to provide a system of order in society by reinforcing a social hierarchy. With such a drastic change in the world they experienced, the old symbols of their religious rituals failed to reflect this life, and thus, began to lose their importance. Educational factors also contributed to this decline. As a result, the dedes, who got their social power from being religious leaders in a religion based society and who legitimized and strengthened this power through these symbolic rituals, began to lose their power under changed social conditions. The traditional order has been disrupted and thus, the dede institution that regulated the traditional society has almost become obsolete.

FOOTNOTES

1- Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p.41.

2- Abner Cohen, Two Dimensional Man (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1974), p.68.

3- Georges Balandier, Political Anthropology (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

4- Michael Gilsenan, Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.43.

5- S.S.Acquaviva, The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society (London: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1979), p.87.

6- Victor Turner, The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1973), p.96-97.

7- Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, Michael Banton, ed. (Sussex: Tavistock Publications, 1968).

8- Clifford Geertz, Islam Observed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p.39.

9- Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p.28-44.

10- Balandier, p.40.

11- Ernest Gellner, "Pendulum Swing Theory of Islam", Sociology of Religion, Ronald Robertson, ed. (Bungay, Suffolk: Richard Clay Ltd., 1978).

12- Cohen, p.8.

THE LARGER SOCIETY

In the last fifty years the influence of the larger Turkish society also contributed to the loss of the dedes' power. When isolated Alevi tribes were sedentarized, they bagan to live in villages with Sunnis. The villages today are partly Alevi partly Sunni, most of the time half and half. These two groups live in separate neighborhoods in the villages, although men get together in the kahve of the village which they peacefully share. For example, in the small town I visited, the Alevi and Sunni neighborhoods were separated by the main street of the town where all the shops were. The Alevi and Sunni owned shops were next to each other. Once a week there was an open market near this street where both Alevi and Sunni villagers of the area came to sell their goods. This street and its surrounding area was shared by the two groups without any hostility. But in the open market where I randomly tried to buy some fruit from a stand, my Alevi companion stopped me and suggested that we do our shopping at another stand just across from that one. When I asked why, his answer was, "Because the other one is one of us". Alevis prefer to stick to their own kind both in business and

in friendship but they do not completely shun the Sunnis. They are in peaceful contact with the Sunnis around the village but there is an unspoken distance between them. There seems to be an underlying feeling of separateness but this is not at all apparent from the outside.

Living in villages with Sunnis and sharing the resources of these villages with them inevitably put the Alevis in touch with the larger Turkish society, its customs, its beliefs. Even Sunni religious practices which were at odds with what dedes taught Alevis concerning their own religion began to influence them. Alevis do not go to the mosque to pray, nor do they fast on Ramadan. But now there are some people among Alevis who believe that they have to go to the mosque and fast since they, too, are Muslims. This kind of Sunni influence is also seen in some others who say that their tradition of drinking 'raki' at their rituals was a false interpretation of their customs, that drinking is a sin. Some Alevis now believe that a good dede should know both 'the way of truth', the Alevi way, and 'the way of the Sharia', the Sunni way. The only place where I did not meet with this kind of Sunni influence was in a village which was 100 % Alevi. In this village Ali's pictures were hung on the walls of many houses. This village is situated next to the 'türbe', the tomb, of an Alevi saint, Abdal Musa, which is visited by Alevis from all over Turkey every year. The presence of this important 'türbe' near the village and the

crowds that come every year must contribute to the upholding of their religious beliefs. But the fact that these people live in a purely Alevi village partly prevents them from the influence of Sunni beliefs as in other villages where these two groups live together. Being influenced by Sunni beliefs and practices was also brought about by the contempt Alevis have met with when they came in contact with Sunnis. Once they became a part of the larger society, they attended the local schools, went out to do their military service, did business with Sunnis In these relations they kept hearing degrading things about Alevis and Alevi religious practices from Sunnis and were treated contemptuously. For example, one man of about 50 explained that when he was doing his military service he was first appointed to the kitchen. But when they found out that he was an Alevi he was removed from the kitchen because, they said, people would not eat the food touched by an infidel Alevi. When accounts about the "evil ways" of Alevis spread, especially about the age old hearsay that they were promiscuous, some young Alevis began to have doubts about their customs and beliefs and about the practices of their forefathers. It seems that Alevis needed to defend themselves and legitimize their beliefs by trying to show that these beliefs and practices were not really contrary to Sunni beliefs and practices. They could only do this by takin on some of the Sunni beliefs and practices or at least by talking about doing so, that is, by dissimulation. Being a minority, their reference group became the Sunnis, whose

beliefs and practices began to influence them. This tendency jeopardized the authority of dedes who were trying to uphold pure Alevi beliefs because many people preferred to be like the majority in order not to be looked down upon rather than follow the teaching of the dedes.

Although these issues are discussed by Alevis when somebody brings up the subject, there is now a general tendency of passing over the differences between Alevis and Sunnis and a readiness of people to assert that there is no problem between them. Since 1980, both groups have gotten along with each other quite well, peacefully sharing the resources of their villages, and they do not seem to be much concerned with each others' religious differences. Aside from the political factors that were responsible for this since 1980, the spread of secularism in Anatolia in general over the years also had an effect in this new tolerence between the two groups.

From the time when secularism was established by law in Turkey in 1923, lay and religious social life began to take different paths. Religious institutions no longer had legal authority over any area of social life. Secular education and a secular judicial system were established. Gilsenan talks about similar changes in the Middle East which occur with "the rapid shrinking of the wide field formerly embraced by the sacred as area by area of social life is taken over by new bureaucratic and economic organs..."[1]. Similarly, the wid

field of religion in society shrank in Alevi villages. Education was taken over by national schools, law was established by the state and applied by the genderme and secular courts, economic life was dictated by market mechanisms. The wide field of Alevi religion that had encompassed all these areas shrank, thus, leaving dedes very little space in which to exercise their power.

Another change in the larger Turkish society also affected the Alevis. As Turkish society itself had changed from the decentralized, regionally semi-autonomous Ottoman Empire[2] to the centrally controlled, judicially and administratively more uniform Turkish Republic[3], rural areas were peneatrated by the power of the state." The small areas of social life...are now everywhere becoming integral parts of large-scale social systems... Small communities should be analyzed within the context of the modern state"[4]. Today's Alevi peasant communities should be studied within the context of the modern Turkish state because the influence of the state has altered many characteristics of Alevi society. During the Ottoman era starting with the time of Yıldırım Beyazıt, Alevis were considered as Iranian subjects because they wished to be so in order to avoid serving in the army. Even the early sedentarized tribes, although living in Ottoman peasant society, were not taken in to do their military service[5]. This practise started when Alevis became Turkish citizens which was possible only after the Republic was

established and new laws were applied even in rural areas.

With the heightening of the power of the state and its penetration into rural areas there emerged an "incorporation of ethnic minorities into larger national units"[6]. There was a desire on the part of the Turkish State to integrate ethnic minorities into the larger society in order to establish national unity. This desire to integrate was also present in some of the Alevis themselves after they because sedenterized for, as some educated Alevis pointed out, being a minority, they felt they had to unite with and adapt themselves to the ways of the majority to be able to survive in their society. Traditional Alevi ethnic markers, such as their traditional social system and values, are disappearing today both because of the inevitable influence of their frequent interaction with the Sunnis and also because of the Alevis wish not to be seen as different than the majority. But the fact that Alevis still feel different and that this is something undesirable for them is seen in the need for many of them to repeatedly say that they are not different from the Sunnis and that they should not be considered and treated as different.

There may be another reason behind the undermining of Alevi ethnicity if it really exists. Cohen says, "when men fight across ethnic lines it is nearly always the case that they fight over some fundamental issues concerning the distribution and exercise of power, whether economic, political, or

both, within the social system in which they take part"[7]. If economic and political divisions coincide with ethnic divisions, ethnicity is heightened. But if new occupational and class cleaveges cut across ethnic boundaries, then ethnic distinctiveness is weakened[8]. If ethnic groups belong to the same occupation and the same social class with others, Cohen claims, their ethnic identity will largely disappear. They will begin to identify themselves with their class or with their occupation not with their ethnic group. Contrary to this view Alan Duben on the basis of research done among Alevi and Sunni workers in Aktepe near Istanbul, says that, "class consciousness among these workers does not readily develop because of the strength of traditional ties and categories of sect and community which cut across occupational lines"[9]. Being of the same sect and from the same region unites patrons and workers; there is not much unity among workers of different sects and from different regions just because they belong to the same social class. But this may be a characteristic of urban industrial areas. Alevis of the Muğla-Antalya area belong to the same occupational group and the same social class as Sunnis of the area. Most of them are peasant farmers who grow the same kind of crops, earn the same amount of money, and live under similar conditions in shared villages. Many young Alevis say that they see no other difference between themselves and the Sunnis of the area aside from their religious differences. They say that the truly different people for both Alevis and Sunnis of the area

are the people in big cities who are much richer and who have a 'modern' way of life that they see when traveling or on the now very widespread television. Compared with these 'outsiders', the people of their own area and village are not seen as much different from their own group, whether Alevi or Sunni. Whether true or not, educated young Alevis seem to consider this a sophisticated approach to ethnicity and assert that there is a feeling of solidarity between the people of the same area on grounds of shared living conditions.

Cohen says ofthe modernist tendency in ethnicity, "An ethnic group adjusts to the new social realities by adopting customs from other groups or by developing new customs which are shared with other groups"[10]. This seems to be true, in the case of Alevis, in the few Sunni beliefs and practices they have taken over and in the new standing of their women in village life. Alevi women used to be on an equal footing with men sharing everything with them both in work and in social life. They were present on every social and religious occasion. But now there is a greater distance between the sexes. Women try to avoid the company of men and in their families they stand around and serve the men who eat separately with the guests like in Sunni village customs. Although they are, in principle allowed to drink 'raki' like men, in practise, they drink very rarely now. They also do most of the work in tilling the soil and taking care of the crops

while most men spend a lot of their time in the village 'kahve', another typical Anatolian practise which is very much unlike the manner in which the Alevi families worked together while cutting trees as nomads.

According to Cohen, a modernist tendency in ethnicity entails, on the part of the ethnic group, "a tendency towards the rapid integration of their members within the modern socio-cultural context"[11]. This tendency of Alevis towards integration with the larger society and the undermining of their ethnicity was heightened by the coup d'etat of 1980 but also by the gradual spread of nationalist sentiment in Turkey. Alevis today say that they are concerned with the problems and issues of Turkey, not of Alevis as a separate entity. The educated among them worry about the joblessness and the economic problems of the country which, they say, is the same for all its people. They assert that they are no longer a minority but citizens of the Turkish Republic; that they are Turks living in their own country. Nationalist feelings seem to be quite strong and wide spread among them or, at least, they pretend it is so. Cohen talks about the undermining of ethnic grouping in Africa after the Second World War with independence and with the rise of nationalism. Ethnic groups were no longer officially recognized because they were not compatible with national unity, independence and equality of citizenship[12]. It is apparent that the structure and policies of the state affect ethnicity. Some states recognize ethnic

groups while others do not even accept their existence in the country and struggle against such groupings[13]. The latter is the case in Turkey.

What Gilsenan says of the Saints, the religious leaders, in the Middle East is a good example of the situation of Alevi dedes in Turkey. What the Saints did was "reshaping of the world on the divine paradigm"[14]. It was this devaluation of the world that made them a danger to the power of the state, and thus, made them undesirable. In Turkey the state ruled out the manipulation of ethnicity with laws, it does not recognize people's ethnic identity. Trimingham says that in the twentieth century Sufi orders in the Middle East gradually lost their effectiveness. "Turkey is the apparent exeception to this gradual process of erosion. There the process was accelerated since the orders became a direct object of attack by the secularizing movement, being regarded as something not merely decadent but politically reactionary and dangerous"[15]. For the same reasons ethnicity was also made unlawful like the 'tekkes', the religious orders. Ethnicity entails the use of values, myths, rituals, and ceremonials from the groups' cultural tradition, for Alevis it would uphold the power of dedes whom they would need for these ceremonials which are a part of their cultural tradition. But since Alevis could, by custom and moral pressure, no longer emphasize their ethnic identity, even if they wished to do so, the power of dedes declined since they were not needed

for these purposes. If what Alevis say today is true, that they are first Turks, then peasant farmers, then Alevis, dedes are no longer necessary to keep alive Alevi traditions and their power is no longer needed to regulate social life.

From all this, it is obvious that the penetration of the larger society into the rural areas bringing with it new laws such as those that limit the expression of ethnic identity, new tendencies such as desacralization of contemporary society, and new concepts such as secularism and nationalism have contributed to the loss of dedes' power.

FOOTNOTES

1- Michael Gilsenan, Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.195.

2- Şerif Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" Political Participation in Turkey, Engin Akarli, Gabriel Ben-Dor, eds. (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 1975).

3- June Starr and Jonathan Pool, "Impact of Legal Revolution in Rural Turkey".

4- Abner Cohen, Two Dimensional Man (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1974), p.1256-127.

5- Enver Bennan Sapolyo, Mezhepler ve Tarikatler Tarihi (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1964).

6- George DeVos, Lola Romanucci-Ross, eds., Ethnic Identity (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975), p.11.

7- Cohen, p.94.

8- Ibid., p.95.

9- Alan Dubetsky, "Class and Community in Urban Turkey", Commoners, Climbers and Motables, C.A.Q. Van Mieuwenhuijze, ed. (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1977), p.357.

10- Cohen, p.93.

11- Ibid., p.93.

12- Ibid., p.102-103.

13- Ibid., p.129.

14- Gilsenan, p.42.

15- J.Spencer Trimingham, The Sufi Orders in Islam (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.253.

CONCLUSION

The change in Alevi social structure from the former nomadic tribal society to the present-day peasant society has been the cause of the loss of dedes' power in the Muğla-Antalya area. The economic and symbolic differences between the nomadic society and the peasant society entailed different power relations. The change from subsistence economy to market economy and the undermining of religious rituals with an increase in education in peasant society contributed greatly to the loss of dedes' power as discussed in the previous chapters. These were changes within Alevi society itself. There have also been changes in the larger Turkish society such as the emergence of secularism and nationalism and the penetration of the state into rural areas which have also affected Alevi power structure. Here, too, the change in Alevi social structure was essential since Alevis got in touch with the larger society only after sedentarization.

With this crucial change in Alevi social structure, new values concerning social status emerged. The symbol and sources of power changed, hihgher education and economic success became bases of power. Eberhard observes that in

southern Turkey when former nomads settled down, the families of their former tribal chiefs were still regarded as the prominent families who had more authority and prestige than the others. He says that this picture is changing now, a new group of leaders are beginning to emerge from western-educated youths or from successful merchants[1]. This can be observed in Alevi villages where educated people, school teachers, rich shopkeepers, and large landowners are highly respected; they have a lot of prestige in society. In the new social hierarchy, these people are at the top because of their higher education or because of the predominence of economic values. Superiority provided by religion is no longer as important as it was before. Therefore, today, these people get more respect than the dedes do.

Peters says that Learned Families have captured all the administrative posts in the Lebanese village. They are the mayor, muhtar, municipal clerk[2]. Dedes might have preserved some of their prestige and authority if they had gotten administrative posts since working for the state is prestigious especially in rural areas. There are many examples of this being done by prominent families in the Middle East. Eberhard says of some prominent families, "In order to keep their social status they have tried to secure administrative rights in their home, such as governor, district-administrator or city mayor"[3]. But dedes still look down upon such jobs saying, being dedes, they are above serving people that these

jobs call for. Their refusal to get administrative posts might be due to their unwillingness to participate in the 'Sunni' state, a feeling they still seem to have just because the state was established by Sunnis.

Today dedes have greatly lost their distinctiveness as a lineage; men from inferior groups began to infiltrate into their ranks. As Kemanci points out, although the dedes of their nomadic days were all descendents of Ali, later Alevis also came to accept non-descendents who were educated and honest men as their leaders[4]. There are now some dedes who have become dedes later in life. An example of this is Musa Dede, a man very much respected in his area, whom I visited. He told me that ten villages around the area where he lives wrote a petition to the 'Çelebi' in Haci Bektaş to whom all Alevi Dedes are answerable and asked him to give Musa permission to become a dede. Musa was interviewed in Haci Bektaş, his religious knowledge was tested after which a written document was given to him that enables him to practise as a dede. Although his services as a dede are very rarely required, he is considered to be the wisest man in the area to whom people come for advice. He is very considerate of people's economic condition; for instance, when he rarely performs a ritual he does not ask for money and when a number of people want to sacrifice a rooster or a sheep before a ritual he recommends that these people share the expense of one animal instead of sacrificing one each, a practice not

done before. He is also respected by young people who he says should not be frightened away with old religious conservatism but must be listened to and reasoned with. Although Musa Dede tries very hard, it seems that his attempts at new interpretations of Alevi religious beliefs and practices will not be able to uphold Alevism since the whole traditional order that required and kept up this religion has been disrupted. Musa Dede is a symbolic remnant of this past order.

There are a few remaining symbols of the older Alevi order today, such as the dedes and the rare performance of religious rituals. Cohen says, "A great deal of symbolic order of the older regime will continue to exist, as otherwise life will be so chaotic that the whole social order will disintegrate... This continuity of symbolic forms does not entail automatically the continuity of the same functions that those symbols performed in the past. In the new situation the old symbolic forms may perform new functions"[5]. These remaining Alevi symbols are no longer there to regulate Alevi society as they used to, since state laws do that today. But rather, in a predominantly Sunni society where Alevis have, for centuries, been looked upon as a group of foreign people, these sybols still provide them with an identity, one that is different from that of the majority. Alevis may have begun to identify themselves with their nationality and with the social class of their occupations. But as DeVos points out, religious beliefs of a group also provide them

with an identity. When these beliefs are destroyed by a cultural contact with the dominant larger society, the individuals of the group suffer the loss of their identity[6]. These remaining symbols, especially the existence of dedes, remind Alevis of their past heritage and difference and therefore, are useful in giving them an identity of their own.

Abner Cohen argues that in changing socio-cultural systems, first power relations change, symbolic formations persist longer and change later[7]. Because of the changes in Alevi social structure, power relations changed resulting in the loss of dedes' power, but the symbolic forms of the old order still remain in the person of the dedes. Whether they will disappear with time or continue to exist in the future by serving new functions, only time will tell.

FOOTNOTES

1- Wolfram Eberhard, "Change in Leading Families in Southern Turkey", Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East, Louise E.Sweet, ed. (New York: The Natural History Press, 1970), p.244.

2- Emrys L.Peters, "Muslims in a Lebanese Village", Sweet, ed., p.87.

3- Eberhard, p.256.

4- Bayram Kemanci, Aleviliğin Kimliği (Izmir: Karınca Matbaacılık, 1979).

5- Abner Cohen, Two Dimensional Man (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1974), p.38-39.

6- George DeVos, Lola Romanucci-Ross, eds., Ethnic Identity (Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975), p.14.

7- Cohen, p.36.

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