THE FORMATION OF ALEVI SYNCRETISM

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS

OF BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

By

Ceren Selmanpakoğlu

August, 2006

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

_____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Mutman (Principle Advisor)

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

_____

Assist. Prof. Andreas Treske

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

_____

Assist. Prof. Dr. Oktay Özel

Approved by the Institute of Fine Arts

_____

Prof. Dr. Bülent Özgüç, Director of the Institute of Fine Arts

ABSTRACT

THE FORMATION OF ALEVI SYNCRETISM

Ceren Selmanpakoğlu

MFA in Graphic Design

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Mutman

August, 2006

The aim of this study is to explore the formation of Alevi syncretism by examining historical facts and religious interactions. By understanding how Alevis adapted various cultural, religious and social phenomena, and how they have reflected these phenomena on their practices and social representation, almost ten-century-old heterodox Alevi syncretism's nature will be comprehended. Since the Cem Ceremony signifies the reflection and representation of all influential features' unification, it has a significant role in Alevi understanding. The concept of syncretism, which indicates Alevis' opposition to the concepts like 'true faith' and 'absolute Truth' of orthodoxy, reveals itself throughout the study. Like in the notion of *birlik* (oneness) of God-human-universe, with its inextricable components Alevism represents the 'unity' of all religious and political features that contributed to its formation.

ÖZET

ALEVİ SENKRETİZMİNİN YAPILANIŞI

Ceren Selmanpakoğlu

Grafik Tasarımı Yüksek Lisans Programı

Danışman: Yard. Doç. Dr. Mahmut Mutman

Ağustos, 2006

Bu çalışmanın amacı tarihi olayları ve dini etkileşimleri inceleyerek Alevi senkretizminin yapılanışını araştırmaktır. Alevilerin farklı kültürel, dini ve sosyal olguları nasıl kendilerine uyarladıklarını ve bu olguları pratiklerine ve sosyal temsiliyetlerine nasıl yansıttıklarını anlayarak, neredeyse on yüzyıllık Alevi senkretizminin doğası kavranabilecektir. Tüm etkileşim öğelerinin birleşimini yansıtması ve temsil etmesi nedeniyle Cem Töreni'nin Alevi anlayışında önemli bir rolü vardır. Alevilerin ortadoksinin 'gerçek inanç' ve 'mutlak Gerçek' gibi kavramlarına karşıtlığını belirten senkretizm kavramı tüm çalışma boyunca kendini açığa vurmaktadır. Tanrı-insan-evren birliği görüşünde olduğu gibi, ayrılamaz bileşenleriyle Alevilik, oluşumuna katkıda bulunan tüm dini ve siyasi özelliklerin 'bütünlüğünü' temsil eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Bektaşilik, Senkretizm (Bağdaştırmacılık), Batınilik, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Türkmenler, Din, Inanç

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1.   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to explore the formation of Anatolian Alevism-Bektashism in social and religious contexts. The examination of social and religious interactions that Alevis exposed to, and the impact of these interactions on Alevi practices will enable us to understand that the nature of this phenomenon is an unintentionally constructed structure. It is neither an extension of Shia Islam that happens to exist in Anatolia nor merely a sect within Islam like many other approaches have presented. This belief structure is called Alevism, or in other words Alevi syncretism, which has its own norms nourished from various interactions.

In this study, I depend on the previous researches of Iréne Mélikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak for constituting the framework of the historical facts and articulating the belief systems. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak's contribution particularly on understanding the belief systems that lay in Alevism is highly significant. Both Mélikoff and Ocak depict Alevism as a heterodox and syncretic belief system.

The first chapter begins with Turkmens' migration to Anatolia, going through their various social interactions and reactions to the Seljuk and the Ottoman administrations. The Turks in the Central Asia met with Islam around 765. Since nomadic Turkmens were practicing Shaman lifestyle living in fragmented communities spread in Asia, most probably this acceptance was only partial. As a matter of fact, as they resisted Arab invaders, according to Nejat Birdoğan, their internalizing Islam by means of adapting it into their own traditions took more than

two centuries (203). During the infiltration of Islam the high ranks easily adapted themselves to religious education, whereas the public assumed the official belief in long range while continuing their own traditions. The maintenance and adaptations of various beliefs and traditions led to the emergence of the Alevi syncretism. Iréne Mélikoff defines Alevism as "Islamized Shamanism." In all nations, during the acceptance of a new belief, the tendency always heads towards the major religions. Shaman Turks were influenced by many religions –mostly by other syncretic ones–however, they have shown the most resistive attitude towards Islam (Mélikoff 149-150).

Initiated with Ahmet Yesevi and later with his disciple Hacı Bektaş Veli, Turkmens started adapting their beliefs and practices to Islam. Due to his articulation of Islam Sufism with nomadic Shaman Turkmens' practices, Ahmet Yesevi is considered to be the foundation of this adaptation under the concept of 'popular Sufism.' In the 16th century Balım Sultan who was a follower of Hacı Bektaş Veli institutionalized Turkmens' belief system under the name of 'Bektashism.' However, neither Ahmet Yesevi's adaptation nor Hacı Bektaş Veli's approach of prioritizing human did not depict Turkmens' literal acceptance of Islam because of their continuation with their heterodox approaches.

For the maintenance of their beliefs, practices and political stands both in the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires, Turkmens participated in various organizations and belief groups like Ahism, Hurufism, and reformist movements like Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) in the late Ottoman period, all of which had common denominators with Bektashism. It will be seen that

these groups, movements and Bektashism have influenced each other reciprocally. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in the beginning of the 20th century, in Atatürk's Republic Bektashis continued their reformist attitude by supporting Atatürk's secularist discourse. As a part of the Republic revolution all *tekke*s and *zaviye*s were closed down in 1925, and so were the Bektashi ones. In spite of loosing their *tekke*s' they did not object to this application because of their support of secularization and Atatürk. In the 1970s they started raising their voices by positioning within leftist political movements and in the 1990s by the communication technologies like media. However, the left-right conflicts within the Turkish society and later the rise of radical Islam were at the same time a series of Alevi-Sunni clashes.

In the second chapter, the belief systems, which influenced the formation of Alevi syncretism, will be explored. These beliefs comprise former Turkish beliefs in Central Asia, Shamanism, Buddhism, Persian religions and notions like *Vahdet-i Vücûd* and *kamil-insan* (mature-man) adapted from the representatives like Hallac-ı Mansur of esoteric beliefs within Islam or in other words Islamic Sufism. While entering a new religion, or being exposed to a new one, Turkmens have preserved the features of their former beliefs that did not collide with the new one. Also, when some notions of esoterism have collided, then they have adapted their approaches to the motifs of the new one. This custom is observed in the process of entering into Islam too like in the example of borrowing the Ali figure in Islam and adapting it into a representative of their exposition of unjust practices. All these belief systems, and cultural and religious practices have contributed to the formation of Alevi syncretism and various features still maintained in today's Alevi practices.

In the third chapter, the Cem Ceremony, which is considered the foundation of the Alevi practice will be examined. The features gained and adapted from various beliefs are reflected symbolically particularly in this ceremony. While some understand this ceremony in terms of worshipping, for some it is a ritual and should be interpreted separate from worshipping. *Semah* –the ritual dance- and music –played by *bağlama* and accompanied by *nefes*es by Aşıks or Dedes- have a significant role in the Cem Ceremony as well as in the Alevi community.

The fourth chapter is where the main argument of this study arises. In this chapter, in the broad sense, I will examine how the impact of the interactions that Alevis exposed to throughout their history took place in Alevi practices and understandings. Since the term syncretism is crucial for the study, in this chapter this term will be examined thoroughly.

It will be seen that the notion of *birlik* –oneness-, which signifies the unification of human, God and universe, and to reach this unification becoming *kamil-insan* (mature man) –similarly in Islamic Sufism- constitute an important role in Alevi belief.

Additionally, as one of reflections of Alevi syncretic structure, Reha Çamuroğlu's way of conceptualizing the phenomenon of 'time' in Alevi belief and tradition have a significant role in understanding how the oppositional manner of Alevis can be pursued. For instance, since it is considered that time has a cyclic structure everything is taking place 'now,' so as the notions like hell, heaven or in other words

any finalized phenomena is brought to 'now,' in the present life, not in an after life like in orthodoxy.

Moreover, this study especially focuses on the notions of heterodoxy and syncretism in terms of in what ways this structure reveals itself in Alevism. On this subject, Georg Elwert's articulation of the terms 'switching' and 'recreation' have been employed. Opposing the phenomena of 'true faith' and 'absolute Truth' of orthodoxy is the core of Alevism's heterodoxy. This opposition accompanied with the notion of 'tolerance', gave way switching from one belief system and social representation to another. This switching process causes the recreation of the structure, which indicates the syncretic nature of Alevism. As a matter of fact, the switching process not only indicates Alevism's being a belief system but also its representation in social context. The social representation of Alevis within the Turkish community depicts various approaches on how Alevis are perceived today. The phenomenon of switching from one representation to another depicts how Alevis switch from religious diversity to defenders of secularism or vise versa.

Given the above analysis, defining Alevism merely as a syncretic or heterodox structure is insufficient. With its religious and political stands Alevism comprises all the facts that will be examined throughout this study, which are all inextricable components. By defining in such accounts like 'a sect', 'culture', 'Islamic Sufism' etc. will cause avoiding other aspects. Excluding even one aspect of this phenomenon might lead to misinterpretation. Which is why I came into conclusion of defining Alevism as the *effect* of all. *Effect* is in the sense of both as a result but not a finalized result since it is being constantly recreated, and at the same time *effect* in

the sense of a reflection of all the features within it. In summary, understanding Alevism with all of its aspects as a whole without avoiding any features will automatically reflect itself to us as an *effect*. *Effect;* as the reflection of an ungraspable and unfinished active structure of Alevism.

2. THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF TURKMENS FROM 11th TO 21st CENTURIES

It will be seen that Bektashis' or Kızılbaşs' or Alevis' have been placed secondary – other- to orthodox Sunnism in social and religious contexts throughout their history. This positioning has been directly indicated with the terms *zındık, mülhid* and *rafizi.* Their names were called synonymously with these terms that depicted their being heretic, excluded and unaccepted. In the community their experiencing such attitudes including their political protestations gave way to a series of uprisings, one of which, the Babai uprising in mid 13th century arouse from social and political reactions. In the Ottoman Empire, Bektashis were in relation with or were influenced by Ahism and Hurufism. In the beginning of the Ottoman Empire, due to their good relations with the initial Sultans, Hacı Bektaş cults' situation was in good shape that it is considered that this relation even gave them way to influence the new converts of the Janissary corps with their esoteric approach on the way of introducing them to Islam. During this process Janissary corps adopted Hacı Bektaş as their patron saint. However, long after this interaction, in the early 19th century, Janissary corps was abolished. Even no relation was remained between Bektashis and the Janissary corps at the time, still Bektashis were also punished by being executed or forced to exile.

During the Safevi-Ottoman clash two Turkmen groups; Bektashis and Kızılbaşs put in a position of confrontation with each other because of the reactions developed towards the Ottoman state on economical bases. Like Babai uprising, Şeyh Bedreddin insurrection plays an important role in Alevi-Bektashi history too, due to

its representation of the unification of various ethnic and religious groups under the advocacy of egalitarianism. In the 19th century Bektashis continued to support and take part within the reformist movements like Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) and continued their manner in Atatürk's Republic. They witnessed the threat of losing the significance of their oral traditions during the migration to urban life. However, urbanization offered them to raise their voices first by being part of political movements and later with communication technologies like television and radio. Nevertheless, none of which redeemed them from being the victims of many left-right conflicts' becoming Alevi-Sunni clashes. Still today Alevis struggle in order to be represented and recognized socially and religiously.

2.1. *Zındık, Mülhid, Rafizi*

Zındık (*zendeka, zendik, zindik*) expression was initially appeared around 260 AD during the Sasani Empire. Since Mazdakism was accepted officially in the Empire, the unheard interpretation of the Iranian dualist belief by Manicheans gave way to their being proclaimed heretic and named after the term *zendik*. Later, in Islam the first written example of the term *zındık* is seen in the 8th century during the Emevis. Consequently, it has to be said that this term is directly related with Zoroastrians, Mazdakis and Manicheans. In the Islam history the initial *zendeka* movement signifies Persian rooted groups who maintained former Iranian religious systems, particularly Manichean tendencies, under the appearance of Islam (Ocak, Zındıklar ve Müllhidler 9-12). So, in general it can be said that this expression was signifying being heretic.

The term *ilhad* (*mülhid*) is mentioned in Koran as 'leaving the right path, turning to the wrong one.' Around the 9th century this term was used in the meaning of "irreligious, Godless" by Islamic jurists and theologians. These terms *zendeka* and *ilhad* or *zındık* and *mülhid* are also used together in the Ottoman Empire. After positioning together in the literature it is seen that the difference between these two terms *ilhad* and *zendeka* is based on the term *ilhad*'s comprising the rejection or criticism of the concept of 'divinity.' Consequently, *ilhad* is the latter phase of *zendeka* by approaching the criticism of divinity (Ocak, Zındıklar ve Müllhidler 13).

While struggling against the former religions, Judaism and Christianity, orthodox Islam also waged a 'theological war' against the divisions in itself. The intellectual and social movements that indicated the exteriority of the orthodox Islam turned into social, religious and political forms with various impacts. These movements were called *zındık* (*zendeka*) and *mülhid* (*ilhad*). Metaphorically speaking, these divisions have to be considered as a cultural resistance of the 'conquered' towards the 'conqueror.' Because conquered ones tried to continue their former beliefs, opinions and cultures by concealing them under the frame of Islam. Consequently, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak explains *zındık* as referring to the person who does not believe in God and any religion, and also who conceals it (Zındıklar ve Müllhidler 8-9).

So, while *zındık* referred to Manicheans, in time, in addition to Manicheans it become related with Zoroastrians and Mazdakis, and gradually represented the ones who maintained their former religions under the appearance of Islam, ones who had any kind of heretic belief and the ones who did not believe in God etc. but still

concealed their belief since they were part of an Islamic society (Ocak, <u>Zındıklar ve</u> <u>Müllhidler</u> 14).

According to Bernard Lewis, these two terms signify any sort of suspicious belief, materialism, atheism, and agnosticism as separate from Sunnism, and eventually, any intellectual and religious tendency that threatens the order of the state and society (Lewis 54-56 also, Ocak, <u>Zındıklar ve Müllhidler</u> 14). Although these terms are considered within the Islamic belief, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak feels the need to emphasize that they also comprise social and political protests (<u>Zındıklar ve Müllhidler</u> 15). We can see another similar term in the use of *rafizi* for Kızılbaşs during the Ottoman and Safevi clash in the early 16th century. The circumstances not only led the central Ottoman administration to recognize the division within the society, but also the division within the Islamic world as Sunni and *Rafizi* (Kızılbaş), which even made them organize their political strategies based on these conditions (Ocak, <u>Zındıklar ve</u> <u>Müllhidler</u> 100-103). Historically Turkmens were exposed to these terms and their names often become synonymous with them. The significance of these terms is based on understanding the social impacts as much as religious ones on heretic movements since their integrity enlightens the position of nomadic Turkmens, Bektashis, Kızılbaşs, which will later be called Alevis.

2.2. Turkmens' Migration to Anatolia

Beginning from the mid-11th century until the 13th century the Turkish tribes gradually entered Anatolia in two movements. Firstly, in the 11th century, with the battle of Malazgirt, fought against the Byzantine Empire, and secondly, in the 13th century, due to the Mongol invasions they migrated from Central Asia and

Khorassan to Anatolia to the Seljuk Empire. During this period the Seljuk administration gradually adapted a Sunni Islamic discourse. Sultans were influenced by the Iranian culture and consequently in the urban life written and oral language was based on Persian language. On the contrary, the rural life was still loyal to their ancestral Shaman traditions (Mélikoff 58-61). In this period Ahmed Yesevi as the representative of popular Sufism in both Central Asia and Anatolia plays an important role in constituting the understandings of Turkmens who migrated particularly from Khorassan. Turkmens who migrated from Central Asia or Iran, who were later recognized as Bektashis, were called as *Horasan Erenleri* (members of the Khorassan sect).

2.2.1. *Kalenderilik* (Qalandariyya)

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak indicates that the researches done on Sufism depict that in the first century of Islam, chaos of political, socio-economical and cultural change within the social structure initiated Sufism. It emerged as a mystic reaction against all these negative conditions and particularly in Khorassan and Maveraünnehir areas where mystic Iranian culture existed vividly. *Kalenderism* has arisen within the communities that were excluding the political and social order by their way of living, dressing, and approaching the Islamic regulations (Ocak, Kalenderiler 3-5). This attitude can even be examined in the meaning of the word *Kalender*, which in Sanskrit –Kalandara- means illegal, irregular and disrupting the order (Ocak, Kalenderiler 6). *Kalenderism* cannot be considered as a single movement since there were *Kalenderis* that had various point of views, but still they shared the notions like ignoring worldly issues, attributing the significance to divine love, and interpreting the Islamic regulations in these terms (Ocak, Kalenderiler 5).

Köprülü explains that "… a fundamental principle of Qalandarism to be completely free of worldly bonds and relations and to give essentially no thought to the future. Wandering Qalandaris therefore distinguished themselves by divestment from worldly concerns, poverty, asking for alms, and indifference to censure (*malama*)" (12).

When the relation between Bektashis and Kalenderis is considered, as Ocak indicates, Bektashism is not a *tarikat* that is influenced by Kalenderism, on the contrary, for various reasons due to the domination of the cult of Hacı Bektaş Veli, Bektashism is a branch of Kalenderism arisen within it (Kalenderiler 210). This phenomenon reveals itself on the documents that display Hacı Bektaş Veli's mode of dressing[1] like Kalenderis, as to he was a Kalenderi, (Ocak, Kalenderiler 208) and also on Bektashi poems *nefes*es and literature. Abdal Musa and Kaygusuz Abdal, who are important in Bektashi literature and poetry, were Kalenderis. All the issues that Bektashi poetry expressed except the Shia motifs were depicted in Kaygusuz Abdal's poems in the end of the 14th and the beginning of 15th centuries (Ocak, Kalenderiler 209-210).

In addition to the *nefes*es of poets like Kaygusuz Abdal or Abdal Musa, the term *abdal* that is patched to their names indicates their being a Kalenderi. The term *abdal*, which plays a significant role in Alevi-Bektashi culture, has been derived from the meaning 'Kalenderi dervish' (Ocak, Kalenderiler 204-205). "The early Ottoman historians used the words *abdal, eshik, torlak, shayyad, haidari, edhemi,*

---

[1] Hacı Bektaş Veli has been portrayed half naked, his hair, beard and eyebrow are shaved but with long moustache. This portrayal is opposite to his 17th century iconography as with beard and moustache, dressed and with traditional hat called *tac* (Ocak, Kalenderiler 208).

jami, and *shemsi* synonymously to mean Qalandari" (Köprülü 12).

Mélikoff also adds the significant features of the Kalenderi meetings, as to men and women are gathered and alcoholic beverages are important for the trance (*cezbe*) (92), which indicate us that these meetings have endured on Alevi-Bektashi Cem Ceremonies.

Kalenderis' nature of disrupting the order has been reflected in many instances throughout the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires, like the Babai uprising against the Seljuk administration in the 13th century. As can be understood, the initiator of the uprising, Baba Ilyas and his two caliphs Baba Ishak and Hacı Bektaş Veli were also Kalenderi (Ocak, <u>Kalenderiler</u> 205). However, after the 16th century and particularly after the progress of Bektashis after 17th century Kalenderis have dissolved within Bektashis.

2.2.2. *Babai* Uprising in the Seljuk Empire

"The vigorous religious coalescence that took place in Anatolia and western Iran up to the eleventh/seventeenth century and the various groups and *tariqas* that came into existence there beginning in the seventh/thirteenth century are closely bound to the history of the Qalandariyya…" (Köprülü 12).

"Under the apparent guise of Sufism, and in the name of such orders as the Qalandariyya and Haidariyya, the *babas* spread extremist Shii doctrines and *batıni* (esoteric) ideas among the Turkmen clans. The first religio-political movement that they initiated in Anatolia was known as the Babai rebellion" (Köprülü 13).

The nomadic/semi-nomadic heterodox Turkmens were under the influence of syncretistic beliefs based on oral tradition. Since the urban life was practicing Islam, Shaman Turkmens were being despised for their heterodoxy and syncretistic beliefs (Yaman). Thus, Turkmens' opposition towards the Seljuk Sultan Kay Khusrau II for not handling the socio-economical problems and failing to fulfill the administrative requirements combined with their being despised in the society. These circumstances had a stimulating effect on the masses' initiating serious uprisings. The social discontent appeared as religious uprisings. One of these, the *Babai* uprising, named after their chief leader Baba Ilyas, occurred in the 1239-40s. This uprising seriously weakened the Seljuk government and caused its collapse under the impact of the Mongol invasion.

The rise of such an effectual uprising was based on two factors. First factor is the dissemination of the assumption of Baba Ilyas's supernatural powers like healing illnesses in the community. Second one is his exposing the oppressive and unjust practices of the viziers towards Turkmens, with his promise of providing them equality in the community. The dispersion of these factors within the community and within the Seljuk army intimidated the army, which compelled the Empire to hire Frank soldiers to cope with the uprising (Mélikoff 72-73). Although they have succeeded in suppressing the uprising, the Empire was seriously weakened. As the dynasty declined in the middle of the 13th century, the Mongols invaded Anatolia in the 1240s and divided it into small emirates called the Anatolian *beylik*s, which in turn were later conquered by the Ottomans.

The term *Baba* is the name given to the ones who are commissioned to disseminate Islam in the Central Asia. In Anatolia under the Islamic appearance *Baba*s preserved the old ceremonial forms. This process had such an active structure that later in Alevis the forms that took place in Cem Ceremonies have differed in various regions like Thrace and Anatolia due to this reason. At the time, since the similarity between the Islamized *Baba* and Shaman was apparent, Turks' taking part in the *Babai* uprising was not unexpected. The major similarity between the Shaman, *Baba* and Hacı Bektaş Veli lay in the belief of their having supernatural powers (Mélikoff 149-150).

Irene Mélikoff states that although Hacı Bektaş Veli was considered Baba Ilyas's disciple it is assumed that he never joined the *Babai* uprising and it is known that he never initiated his *tarikat* (spiritual fraternity, sect, order). In the documents, his name primarily appears during these uprisings as the 'pre-eminent disciple' (*halife-i has*) of Baba Ilyas (Mélikoff 69-75). His name would come to the fore in the 15th century when the Ottoman sultans considered him the *pir* (patron saint) of Janissary corps even though he was not alive at the time.

2.3. Movements Within The Ottoman Empire

As Hacı Bektaş Veli, the Ottomans come from one of the Turkmen Oghuz Tribes too. Mélikoff states that before becoming defenders of orthodox Sunnism, like all the ones who come from Turkmen tribes, the Ottomans used to follow a heterodox belief and carried the traces of their Shaman roots. This privileged bond between the Ottomans and Hacı Bektaş cult had continued during the conquest period with Bektashi Abdals' supporting the initial sultans. In the course of time, dervishes

became representatives of the dissemination of Islam, and on another aspect sultans have found a way to take the heterodox movements under control (146-147).

2.3.1.   Ahism

"In order to justify the use of Islam as a channel for political stability, the Ottoman Empire took great efforts to preserve the religious administration, the class of *ulema*[2] (which was granted enormous authority), in order that it could serve the well-being and stability of the state.

At the same time, other groups within the empire developed interpretations of Islam that were often independent and at odds with state-sanctioned dogma. These were the spiritual fraternities, or *tarikats*. In contrast to the *ulema*, the *tarikats* were theoretically independent of the state, and on the whole they represented diverse social and occasionally political segments of the Ottoman population" (Lelić).

Starting from the 11th century, organizations called *Fütüvvet* were widespread in Anatolia in the similar notion of guilds in the West. In their beginning, although they were based on social issues, later they were influenced by Sufism and these guilds of tradesmen's would be adapted in Anatolia as *Ahism*. The word *Ahi* in Asian Turkish means 'open handed,' and 'brother' in Arabic (Eyuboğlu 156).

In the 13th and 14th centuries Ahis articulated the revolts against social injustice with mystic beliefs and grounded their roots to Hz. Ali (Mélikoff 157). Although Ahism showed features of sects, originally it is an organization of tradesmen. In these guilds every member is equal and considered as brothers of each other. Although they are

---

[2] *Ulema* strictly adheres to canon law.

comprised of men it is known that there were women Ahis like Ahi Ana (Barkan 302). The specific conditions that have to be fulfilled in order to be accepted to the organization, and specific ceremonies of 'entering into the path' (*yola giriş*) are considerable similarities observed in both Ahis and Bektashis (Gener 106-108).

*Zaviye*s, which were smaller than *tekke*s and mostly located in rural areas, were giving service to the dervishes in terms of accommodation during their travels. It is known that Ahis were not only active as guild organizations but also they had activities in rural areas as a part of these *zaviye*s (Barkan 289). In addition to their role in the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, these guild organizations were significant for the administration due to their assistance on housing and building rural areas and religious propaganda (Barkan 289). The support of Ahis continued in Orhan Sultan's period as well (Barkan 292). In addition to the support, actually the first three Ottoman Sultans, Osman Gazi, Orhan Gazi and Murad I are known as Ahis (Gener 106-108).

The first Ottoman sultans have given dervishes some important missions on the establishment of the Empire, particularly the ones in *zaviye*s who were settled on empty lands in rural areas, where they cultivated the lands and not yet become government employees and salaried contrary to the ones settled in cities and dealing with rituals and worshipping in *tekke*s (Barkan 285). Most of these dervishes were coming from Khorassan with Yesevi roots and they had an active role in building the Ottoman Empire as a Turkish state. Hacı Bektaş Veli, as coming from one of these roots, was one of the disciples of Baba Ilyas and companion of Ede-Bali, and he was respected and loved by the initial sultans (Mélikoff 197-201).

Although Ede-Bali is mentioned as the father-in-law of Osman Gazi in some documents like Aşıkpaşazade's statement of "the mother of Orkhan Ghazi (Osman's son) passed away and one or two months later his grand-father Edebali, too…" (Inalcık, <u>Ashık Pasha Zade</u> 153), Halil Inalcık states that in the records "there is nothing particular which confirms his being father-in-law of Osman Beg" (<u>Ashık Pasha Zade</u> 149-150). In either case what is known is that "Ede-Bali played a key role in the establishment of the Ottoman dynasty and state […] Under Osman Beg he was consulted on various crucial matters concerning Islamic law" (Inalcık, <u>Ashık Pasha Zade</u> 152). In his article Ömer Lütfi Barkan indicates that Ede-Bali's importance for Osman Gazi has another aspect based on his being a respected and influential Sheikh. Consequently, Barkan interprets the marriage whether it took place or used metaphorically, as symbolizing a political pact between Ede-Bali and Osman Gazi. This pact could be considered as when Osman becomes the sultan then Ede-Bali's domain would be prioritized within the Empire (Barkan 287). Barkan also emphasizes that Ede-Bali is considered to be an Ahi, which should remind us of Ahis' important role in establishing the empire (Barkan 288), (Mélikoff 197-201).

2.3.2. Hurufism

In the 14th century, Fazlullah, founder of the Hurufism doctrine, grounded his doctrine on deifying letters. According to the letters in Koran, he draw a conclusion about the unity of the universe and actually all the letters represented a single one, which would only manifest itself when man reaches the level of *insan-ı kamil* (perfect man, mature man). "In the end all of Fazlullah's doctrines, including the very intricate science of letters (*ilm-i huruf*), converged to demonstrate the most important and greatest of all secrets – that man is the Divine" (Lelić).

Fazlullah's significant disciple Nesimi reached Hurufism by departing from Sufism and introduced Hurufism to Anatolia and Rumelia. His understanding of universal love was based on *Vahdet-i Vücûd* (unity of being). He placed God in the center but only becoming a mature Man would make reaching to God possible. Nesimi did not raise Man to God; on the contrary, he brought God down to earth.

Due to representing an un-orthodox belief, the disturbance of Hurufism in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries in Khorassan, Central Asia and also in Anatolia, could be considered within the socio-religious movements. Such movements were all nourished from the same root with the Şeyh Bedreddin uprising in the 15th century. The common denominators of these rebellious movements are: social utopia, the belief of manifestation of God in Man's form and public's or craftsman's discontent (Mélikoff 170).

Hurufism's even gaining entrance to the Ottoman administration would make the Sultan Kanuni Süleyman to endeavor to redeem the Empire from perversion. However, despite many differences, the similar notions between Hurufism and Bektashism like *Vahdet-i Vücûd* and *insan-ı kamil* had been already intermingled. The basic difference between two is that in Bektashism there is no mysticism of numbers and the unity of being becomes more materialized by replacing anthropomorphism with pantheism (Mélikoff 170-173).

2.3.3.   The Kızılbaş

In the 14th century Sheikh Safiuddin Ishâk founded *Safevi* sect in Persia. Even though at the beginning this sect was based on Sunni Islam, in his grandson Sheikh

Cüneyd's period (1447-1460) an extreme-Shia Sufism aspect has been observed. However, due to their cooperation with Turkmens they were influenced from Shaman practices too. In the second part of the 15th century, in Sheikh Cüneyd's son Sheikh Haydar's period, Turkmen Kızılbaşs' and Safevids' reciprocal impact was considerably observed. The red headgear they wore, which they were named after, made them recognized by it[3] (Mélikoff 176-177).

> "The Kızılbaş movement was as much social and political as it was religious, and from the fifteenth century it became an expression of the strong Turcoman opposition to the Ottoman administration" (Inalcık, Ottoman Empire 195).

Although nomadic and warrior Turkmen Kızılbaşs followed a heterodox belief, by their religious and political manners they had become supporters of *Gazis* who were fighting for their beliefs during Sheikh Haydar's sovereignty. This movement initiated by supporting Sheikh Haydar and continued after his death by supporting his son Shah Ismail in the 15th century. As Mélikoff states, although Shah Ismail had a Shia education, which made him understand Sufism and literature of his time, and wrote poems both in Turkish and Persian, he has internalized Turkmens' Shaman beliefs and practiced their traditions (179). Consequently, Kızılbaş Turkmens of Anatolia supported the Shah. This relation was taking place reciprocally by means of Turkmens' being influenced by the Shia belief. As this situation can be observed on the transformation of the Shamans' Gök-Tanrı (Sky-God) in becoming Hz. Ali, Hz. Ali becomes the manifest of God in human form. At the same time it is accepted that one of these manifests is Hacı Bektaş Veli (Mélikoff 177-185).

---

[3] 'Kızıl' in Turkish means 'red' and 'baş' means 'head'.

Around the 16th century, in the process of becoming settled in urban places, dervishes adapted themselves to this new circumstance by initiating the norm of *tekke*s. In addition to various features, these *tekke*s were particularly fulfilling services as cultural centers and enabling to disseminate public beliefs. The Ottoman sultans have benefited from these centers by taking the control of heterodox and problematic elements in the community because irregular dervishes in rural areas were starting to become unrest gradually. In short time these dervishes in rural areas were united under one roof with the support of the Ottoman sultans and ones who have lost their reputation united under the name of Hacı Bektaş Veli (Mélikoff 195-196).

In the course of time, the nomadic and settled portions of Turkmens constituted two separate branches. The settled and institutionalized ones in the cities were named after Bektashis and nomad or semi-nomad ones named after Kızılbaşs, which would be called Alevis in the future. If someone is eligible to be accepted to the *tekke* and believes in Hacı Bektaş Veli's doctrine, then that person could enter into the Bektashi sect, but in order to be Alevi or Kızılbaş that person has to be born as Alevi, in other terms, that person is considered to be coming from the Hz. Ali's lineage. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasized that both branches revered the same person, Hacı Bektaş Veli (Mélikoff 197-201).

2.3.4. The Janissary Corps (Yeniçeri Ocağı)

The Janissary corps was a powerful army and even though the exact date of its establishment is not certain it is considered to be established in the mid-14th century. This army became an important factor on the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Although

it is considered that Hacı Bektaş Veli had never participated in any battle, and moreover he was dead at the time, from the end of sixteenth century he was officially recognized as the *pir* (patron saint) of the Janissaries (Inalcık, Ottoman Empire 194). In other words, the Ottoman military appropriated his name and used it as legitimation.

> "By the fifteenth century, Bektaşi-ism had established itself in the Janissary corps. Some have sought to explain this by the fact that the majority of the Janissaries had originally been Christian children from the devşirme, or else prisoners of war. However this may be, these devşirme children, who had been sent to live in Turkish villages in Anatolia in order to learn the Turkish language and the Islamic religion, tended towards the popular forms of religion rather than to sunni Islam" (Inalcık, Ottoman Empire 194).

Since the central power was protecting Bektashis, they were influential on Janissaries on their affiliating to the popular forms of religion. This influence took place reciprocally and Bektashis were influenced by Christianity. This alteration was mostly observed in Bektashis in the Thrace and the Balkans (Mélikoff 203).

2.3.5. Şeyh Bedreddin Insurrection

The *Babai* uprising that took place in the 13th century is later considered to be the foundation of the Şeyh Bedreddin insurrection around the 1410s because both uprisings were led by dervishes and their disciples, and their decisive goals were initiated in political terms. However, Ocak indicates that these two also has significant divergences in terms of the social classes that participated in these uprisings. While peasants and particularly nomadic Turkmens participated in the Babai uprising, *sipahi*s (mounted soldiers) and feudalists constituted the Şeyh

Bedreddin insurrection. Ocak emphasizes this distinction because he states that after

the Ottomans promised lands to feudalists in order to suppress the rebel, these

feudalists and *sipahi*s left their leaders and started supporting the Ottoman forces.

This issue played an important role in the failure of the Şeyh Bedreddin insurrection.

On the other hand, the Babai uprising could be suppressed by hiring frank soldiers

contrary to the betrayal of the supporters of Bedreddin (Ocak, Zındıklar ve

Müllhidler 180).

Şeyh Bedreddin lived at the end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th century.

Originally he was a religious scholar and worked on religious sciences. Additionally,

he was an administrative employee as *kadıasker*. For twenty-five years he traveled

many places in the Islamic geography like in Anatolia, Iraq and Egypt. On his return

he visited Alevi (Kızılbaş) Turkmen cities (Atay 163-164). After these experiences

and interactions "…as a mystic he found the 'exoteric sciences' unsatisfying, entered

a tarikat and became a şeyh. He abandoned exoteric for esoteric knowledge (Inalcık,

Ottoman Empire 189). "His role as a revolutionary is a good example of how, in the

Islamic world, religious and mystic thought is interpreted in social and political

action (Inalcık, Ottoman Empire 188).

> "The reign of Bayezid I was a period when orthodox Islam and classical
> Islamic culture, aided by a policy of centralization, became increasingly
> strong; but the rout at Ankara in 1402 initiated an era of social and political
> upheaval and reaction, with heretical religious movements spreading
> throughout Ottoman territory, and great religious and political uprisings. The
> revolt of Şeyh Bedreddin (d. 1416), the foundation of the Bayrami order of
> dervishes, and the spread of the Hurufi movement in the Ottoman Empire,
> were signs of this unrest" (Inalcık, Ottoman Empire 188).

In addition to the socio-religious factors of heterodox structured groups, the quarrels within the emperors who are illegitimately declaring themselves as emperors in various parts of the Anatolia (*Fetret Devri*) and socio-economical crises in the community united the various cultural groups, which shared common sufferings. Şeyh Bedreddin invited these groups to be adherents by proposing solutions and promising an egalitarian society. Consequently, it can be seen that in this uprising various cultural and religious masses, including non-Muslims and Turks, took their parts for the same purpose. Şeyh Bedreddin's egalitarian notion in both property and religion was an important factor on gathering these groups but at the same time it took him to execution.

2.3.6.   Conditions and Rebellious Acts

Even though on the rise of the Ottoman Empire, Ahis' and Bektashis' contribution was highly significant, around 16th century, various consequences caused the decline of Bektashism. One impact is the withdrawal of Ahis from the administration, for their power was no longer required. Other one is to understand movements like Hurufism, emerged in 15th century, as perverted, which constitutes the risk of distorting the right path. And the last one is Safevi Kızılbaşs' gradually developing hostility towards the Ottomans. All these conditions revealed and clarified Bektashis' heterodoxy explicitly and henceforth they were even called *rafizi* (heretic, separated from the generally accepted belief) (Mélikoff 204-205).

Selim I shut down the Bektashi *tekke* until 1551 when it was reopened. All these consequences led to the necessity of the alteration of the Bektashi sect. In the 16th century Balım Sultan, follower of Hacı Bektaş Veli, united the sect that had been

disseminated through villages and small towns and had accomplished the institutionalization of the sect (Mélikoff 205). Balım Sultan, founder of Bektashism, bounded the Bektashi belief, tradition and ceremonies by putting it into rules.

The social injustices, segregations and the religious order's oppression due to Kızılbaşs' heterodox interpretations constituted the basis of rebellions. Rejecting the settled order and having a belief other than the official religion made Kızılbaşs the target of the central power, and even made them recognized as *asi* (rebellious) and *zındık* (unbeliever). According to Mélikoff, all these experiences led to the formation of secret ceremonies and covert literature, as well as 'accumulation of consciousness' and 'insight' (221-227).

In 1511 the *Shah Kulu* uprising prepared the conditions for the collision between two Turkmen rooted groups. The ones who escaped from this event were taken refuge by Shah Ismail. The initiator of this event, Shah Kulu, who is considered to be influenced by Shah Ismail, was aiming to constitute a new political formation in Anatolia against the Ottoman state. Which is why his gathering various groups in an organized way is considered to be the first organized resistance towards the Ottoman order. Even though this uprising cannot be appropriated for Turkmens, it is known that within the groups that participated in this event Kızılbaşs were taking their part. This uprising constituted its basis from Ottoman's taking unfair taxes from peasants and seizing *sipahi*s' *tımar*s (fiefs given for their military service). Consequently, peasants and *sipahi*s comprised the uprising against the Central Ottoman State (Yetkin 291-293).

As a consequence of this uprising the clash between Safevis and the Ottomans starting with Sheikh Haydar and continuing with Shah Ismail in the 15th century resulted in the massacre of Kızılbaşs, which is considered more than 40.000 Kızılbaşs, with the *fetva* (advisory involving religious law) released in order to suppress these uprisings in 1512 by Selim I just after he got his throne. This *fetva*, which legitimizes the persecution, defined this event as a "religious duty, a good deed" (*sevap*). During this time Shah Ismail had tried to gather the Turkmen supporters from various regions. As a response to the persecution of his supporters Shah Ismail despoiled the regions in the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman and Safevi battle resulted in 1514 with the conclusion of two Turkmen branches' opposition (Mélikoff 221-224).

In 1520 Anatolia witnessed some other uprisings. These activities came within the context of the *Celali* rebellion. This rebellious act had such a stimulating effect that for almost one and a half century long all the events, whether relevant or irrelevant, that took place were named after this uprising. This rebellion was based on economical factors, like applying heavy taxes to peasants and the suppliers' holding most of the incomes of the lands of sultan's (Yetkin 319). However, such economical factors caused social tension and this tension combined with administrative, juridical and political matters which effected all social structure (Akdağ 1). "Sipahis, whose timars had been confiscated or yielded insufficient income, and nomads seeking plunder, joined the" rebellion (Inalcık, <u>Ottoman Empire</u> 50). This uprising could only be suppressed by great force and since they were also part of the event, some Kızılbaşs were forced to exile from Anatolia to the Balkans and the Rumeli (Mélikoff 225-226).

Pir Sultan Abdal, who lived in the period of the Ottoman Sultan Kanuni Süleyman (1520-1566) and the Safevi Shah, Tahmasp (1524-1576), was the leader of a socio-religious attributed uprising. In addition to his rebellious act he was and is still one of the most respected and commemorated poets in Alevi-Bektashi community. Hızır Pasha who was Pir Sultan Abdal's former disciple was commissioned to suppress the uprising. According to the legend, after Pir Sultan Abdal was captured, in order to free him from death, Hızır Pasha asked him to tell three *nefes*es (poem) that did not praise Shah. But on the contrary, he told three *nefes*es which all praised the Shah including expressions like, "I too shall go from this plateau to the Shah," ("Ben de bu yayladan Şah'a giderim") which meant that he was ready to sacrifice his life in devotion to the Shah. 'Shah' here represents two meanings: one is the spiritual Shah, in other terms Ali, and at the same time, it is the Safevi –Iranian- Shah at the time, Shah Tahmasp (Mélikoff 290-292).

The events occurred in the beginning of the 16th century were based on the Kızılbaşs' understanding articulated with the religious and political contributions of the Safevis. However, the ones that took place in the late period of the century were indicating economical structures (Mélikoff 232).

In the nineteenth century the Janissary institution was on the way of abolition due to its corruption and inefficiency in battles. For example, while Janissaries were supposed to be only soldiers, lived by military rules after entering the corps, educated on military norms and ethics, and were not supposed to marry, in time outsiders like, mostly, merchants joined the army who could get married and they were going back to trading after the battles (Dedebaba 158). Consequently, since in the beginning,

27

Bektashis were influential on teaching the Janissaries the esoteric interpretations of Islam contributed by the norms of Bektashism like tolerance, they were no longer attached to Bektashis. After the abolition of Janissaries, with the members of the army Bektashis, as the spiritual supporters of the Janissary corps, got their share in terms of the Sultan's declaring to closing down the Bektashi order and their dervish convents in 1826, following with asserting their leaders' execution or exile. So, in order to stay alive in such a violent environment they had to conceal their identity and change their appearance in order not to be recognized as Bektashis since dressing styles indicated their belonging, because at the time the term Bektashi became a term used in order to despise people (Dedebaba 164).

According to Barkan, at the time although there were no relation left between the Janissaries and the Bektashis, the reason of closing down the Bektashi *tekke*s and applying cruelty was a consequence of the Vizier Hâlet Efendi's relation with the Mevlevis (Barkan 288). Dedebaba additionally states that the *ulema* and some *tarikat*s like Mevlevism and Nakshibendism supported the decision of closing down Bektashi order (Dedebaba 164). It has to be mentioned that during this period Nakshibends were actively participated in the administration of the Ottoman Empire. This circumstance can be interpreted as the position of Bektashis was lent over to Nakshis.

2.3.7. Bektashis' Participation in the Reformist Movements

In the 19th century Bektashis continued their practices in various ways. After the declaration of the political reforms made in the Ottoman Empire –*Tanzimat*- in the 19th century, common denominators between Bektashism and Freemasonry like

liberalism, non-conformism and anti-clericalism led Bektashis to approach to Freemasonry, which became effective at the time. In addition to this affinity, Bektashis supported the Young Ottomans due to the common denominators like proposing egalitarianism and the removal of absolutism. These relationships encouraged them to reorganize their *tarikat*. Within the revolutionary movements in the Ottoman Empire the Young Ottomans Association (*Yeni Osmanlılar Cemiyeti*), established in 1865, plays an important role. This association's goal was to transform the existing system into a constitutional one. Although it was abolished in 1872, on accomplishing to establish the first parliament (*meclis-i mebusan* and *ayan*) and on declaring the Constitutional Regime (1st Meşrutiyet), the movement's contribution is highly significant (Armaoğlu 592-603).

Due to the criticisms made in the council the Sultan Abdülhamid II closed the council in 1878 and sent the members of the society to exile. Some Ottoman military and intellectual figures, who followed the political legacy of Young Ottomans, established the Committee of Union and Progress (Ittihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti) in 1889. The aim of this association was to build the council again in order to bring justice, equality and liberty. Like in the first movement despite inner conflicts they accomplished declaring the Constitutional Regime (2nd Meşrutiyet) in 1908 (Armaoğlu 592-603).

Consequently, after 1826 the most considerable reason behind the continuation of Bektashism is based on the supporters within the high administrators including many Sultans. This period lasted until all the *tarikats* were shut down in 1925 within the aim of secularization of the Turkish State (Mélikoff 304-307).

2.3.8. From Bektashi to Kızılbaş, From Kızılbaş to Alevi

According to Ilber Ortaylı before the 19th century in the Ottoman archival documents an expression such as "Alevi" cannot be found (stated by Ortaylı in the symposium "Alevism in Turkey and Comparable Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East in the Past and Present", 1995). Before the 19th century Alevis did not have an apparent name. They were mostly called 'rafızi' (heretic, separated from the generally accepted belief), 'zındık' (heretic, unbeliever), 'mülhid' (irreligious) or 'kızılbaş' in the meaning of 'rebellious to God' (Mélikoff 321).

After accepting the term 'Alevi', which designates 'the devotion to Ali', the derogatory meanings charged to the expression 'Kızılbaş' were transmitted to the term 'Alevi.' They were excluded in the society due to their diverse religious and social practices like not worshiping in mosques, not fasting in Ramadan, using alcoholic beverages, and the women's not wearing veil and sitting together with men (Mélikoff 321).

In order to understand how the word 'Alevi' is derived and the meanings attributed to it Hz. Ali's significance in Islam has to be understood. The derivation of the word takes its basis from a historical fact. After the death of Hz. Mohammed, on the subject of taking the caliphate position some quarrels took place within the ones who were close to Hz. Mohammed. It is said that Hz. Ali was the closest to Hz. Mohammed and he bequeathed the caliphate position to Hz. Ali. However, Hz. Ebu Bekir, who became the caliphate, did not leave this position to Hz. Ali. This event made the first division within Islam in terms of ones who supported Hz. Ali and ones who did not. This division emerged "Shi'ite Ali" ("supporters of Ali") expression,

which became the root of the word Shia. Later Muaviye made Hz. Ali murdered in order to take the caliphate position. In order to consolidate his position, even though Hz. Hasan (Hz. Ali's oldest son) waived his caliphate right Muaviye made him murdered. After the death of Muaviye his son Yezid took the position and in Kerbela massacre (A.C. 680) Hz. Ali's other son Hz. Hüseyin was murdered as well because of his refusal to recognize Yezid as the caliph and declaring that he has the right to be the caliph since this right has been taken away from his father by political intrigue. As a consequence of these events Islam has been radically divided into Sunnis and Shias. However, although the names of the characters who represent these events and the themes are indicated in folk literature of Anatolia, this division can not be betokened until the 16th century in Anatolia (Mélikoff 84-85).

As it can be considered, in Arabic, the word Alevi is derived from the word Ali and – i syllable. The –i suffix means 'related to the noun it is patched.' Thus, the word Alevi means 'related with Hz. Ali.' In time, 'Alevi' word is adapted as: a) ones from Hz. Ali's lineage, b) ones who are bias of Hz. Ali, c) ones who keep Hz. Ali's rank on a high level (Savaşçı 17-20).

2.4. The Construction of the Turkish Republic

Throughout the dominance of the Ottoman continuum the non-conformist approach of Bektashis on religious matters, in the 19th and 20th centuries, became considered under the notion of 'free opinion.' The abolishment of the Janissary corps and Bektashi *tekkes* made Bektashis approach to the evolutionist movements like Freemasonry and Young Turks due to their consolidating norms of free cogitation. Later these norms were maintained by supporting Atatürk in establishing the Turkish

Republic and in his aim of secularization of the state. His visit to the Alevi town of Hacıbektaş in 1919 for consolidating their support was an important event for the Alevi community and is still being commemorated. As it will be explained in details in the next chapter in Alevi practice there is a tendency to attribute the manifestation (*tecelli*) of Ali or in other words God to rebellious characters. This tendency takes its basis from the understanding of attributing the unjust execution that Ali was exposed to, to other rebellious characters in the Alevi history. As a consequence of this approach this tendency has proceeded on Atatürk's becoming Ali in Alevi community (Mélikoff 340). The manifestation of Ali is being reflected on Atatürk as a rebellion.

In 1923, Turkish Republic was built over multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual empires' remains as a modern nation-state by detaching from feudal and theocratic monarchy of the Ottomans. Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic, aimed to break with the imperial past and make Turkey catch up with the West. In opposition to the Sunni religious law a secular structure was aimed. Within the applications due to this aim "…in 1925 by the republican government of Kemal Atatürk to abolish all religious brotherhoods, to ban all ceremonies and meetings of the orders, and to close all sect lodges (*tekke*) as well as tombs, shrines, and other places of pilgrimage. With this edict, the government hoped to curb religious fanaticism and promote the secularizing policies of the new state" (Markoff 98). By the state a worldly version of Islam was objected as to be the fundamental social identity. Turkish culture was shaped in a way so that it includes Islam, which facilitated the creation of a homogenized nation state. In other terms, in order to dissolve everyone living in Turkey under a single concept Islam has been employed. These objects caused

defining 'being Turkish' by intermingling it with 'being Muslim' (Aydın 57-60).
Consequently, the groups –cultures- living in this land were united under the concept
of 'Turk', however, still being exposed to a practice based on a Sunni rooted and
preferably Turkish speaking population. Insistence on a single national identity under
the notion of 'Turk' was an obstacle for the recognition of different ethnic, religious
rooted groups. Consequently, even though Alevis did support this application still
they were experiencing lack of recognition due to their religious understandings.

Starting with the period -1920s- of the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into
Turkish nation-state, marked traumatic events on cultural groups especially when it
is considered that this state comprised various ethnic groups. The Kemalist state's
task was to establish the cultural homogeneity instead of the existing cultural
diversity. However, this generated resistance within the groups –cultures- due to
perceiving change within the culture as menace. Because as Todorov explains "to
possess a culture means having at our disposal a pre-arrangement of the world…
which permits us to orient ourselves within it" (Robins and Aksoy 203, and
Todorov). This world that Alevis possess is the syncretism of some features of
monotheist religion traditions with heterodox pantheistic[4] beliefs. Alevis oriented
themselves in a world where God is brought down to the earth's surface by the union
of God and Man. From stone to sun everything is sacred. This culture, where they are
permitted to be themselves, represents belonging in a group, existing together,
existing only as existing together.

---

[4] Pantheistic religions involve the belief of God's presence in everything in nature and the universe.

The transformation followed the program of eliminating the communities of identification and building a cultural unity, which constituted the basis of Turkish nationalism. Later this nationalism gained a new aspect by the "invention of tradition" in terms of perceiving the significance of tradition. Now the ideal nation had to become modern and traditional at the same time. "The need for 'synthesis' has been constantly articulated, but the conditions for fusion have never seemed achievable" (Robins and Aksoy 208).

2.4.1. The Significance of Oral Tradition

In the 1960s and 70s the migration from rural areas to big cities and to Europe was an important phenomenon in the society, thus Alevis were a part of this migration too. In Alevi culture oral tradition plays an important role. This tradition forms a bridge between the generations. The old people make this bridge possible with the tradition of telling stories. The appearance of Alevis within a social movement emerged disagreements inside the Alevi community in terms of their political opinions, future goals and definition of Alevism. And the basic problem was how to adopt the tradition of oral tradition in rural areas -in terms of its importance on transferring the religious and traditional values through generations- in this new world of urban life.

According to Dhomnaill, in oral tradition, speaking and hearing means remembering. Dependence on writing weakens the memory (Neyzi 158). When we consider the generally accepted aspect of Alevis' denying to be tied to the sacred book Koran, it is seen that this feature is strictly related with the significance of oral narration within the Alevi culture. The old people or former generations teach the right and the

traditions with their stories or speeches and the understanding of tolerance forms the basis of these stories or any sharing.

Daily life comprises the elements of cultural memory -religion, language, politics, economics etc-, consequently, the religious structure is within daily life. So, the understanding of God, universe and life relation is inherited in Alevis' daily space. This space is divided from the religious-social outside structure with "Dede"s[5] and in some occasions with "Aşık"s[6]. "Dede"s and "Aşık"s, who form the core of the oral cultural structure, represent the memory and togetherness of the community. "Tradition itself is nothing if it is not a transmission. How is tradition to be transmitted, to be passed on, if not through translation?" (Chow 183). Dedes and Aşıks are the ones who translate the tradition.

2.4.2. Political Positioning in the Republic

In new social environment Alevis have started to play an active role in Turkish politics. Due to the Sunni rooted discourses and practices of the state, Alevis had to conceal their identity because of the fear of being exposed to discriminatory treatments. As a consequence of their lack of representation in both public and political spaces they showed tendency to move to the leftist movements for their secularist discourse. Starting with supporting Atatürk's political party Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP) (Republican People's Party) from its beginning, is considered that Alevis always voted for the left wing, and continued to give countenance to CHP, in addition to taking parts within other parties rarely. However, experiencing lack of

---

[5] Dede is the wise man in Alevi communities. He informs, teaches the right, reconciles the cross ones and finds solutions for the problems. Since during the birth of religion and Alevism there was no law made by states Dede's were fulfilling this task.
[6] Aşık's are traditional poets who sing with their *bağlama*, which is a traditional stringed instrument.

representation within the CHP gave Alevis way to commence new forms of institutionalizations like, associations, journals and organizations including taking parts in many socialist and communist parties (Mélikoff 335-336).

Alevis, who were always sensitive towards heterodox movements, in the 70's and 80's approached to Marxist movement and were influenced by it (Mélikoff 314). The dissemination of the Marxist ideology by the leftist intellectuals had an effect within Alevis who were continuously vigorous on participating in rebellious events if they had common goals.

2.4.3.   From Left-Right Opposition to Sunni-Alevi Conflict

The Directorate of Religious Affairs, established in 1924, gained more importance during the Democrat Party's power (1950-60s). Later in the 1975s, the Directorate became effectual on organizing the pilgrimage to Mecca and building mosques especially in Alevi villages. However, Directorate's undertaking the mission of 'Islamizing the perverted beliefs', striving to define Alevism within Sunnism with the support of writers, and accusations caused Alevis give serious reactions. In addition to supporting the political parties, which were already being charged with being socialist and communist, Alevis' experiencing such lack of representation and accusations began a series of new struggles. In the 1960s and the 70's the opposition to the regime of the state turned into left-right conflict and led to sort of a civil war. Under such circumstances the historical division between Sunnis and Alevis was pursued on the left-right opposition as well. In this period -1970s- the most serious clashes between Sunnis and Alevis took place and culminated in anti-Alevi pogroms in April 1978 Malatya, in September Sivas, in December Maraş, and in 1980 Çorum

events. "The local police infiltrated by the extreme right, did little to protect the Alevis, which resulted in an increasing alienation of Turkey's Alevis from the state" (Bruinessen, <u>Kurds, Turks and the Alevi revival in Turkey</u>). These Alevi-Sunni clashes are considered to be prior triggers to the September 12th 1980 Military Coup (Mélikoff 337).

As in any groups in Alevi cultural group, the continuation of belonging and togetherness is maintained by two factors: the repression and the idealization of the group's own self. The repression of the traumatic events occurred against Alevis led them to silence in order to protect each other. They had to take a defensive position. Belonging and experiencing the traumatic events together strengthened the idealization of the group's own self, where no one from outside would enter in to contaminate.

Under such circumstances in the 1970s Hacı Bektaş Veli was no more a public representative, he was transformed into a revolutionary thinker. The religious matters were substituted for social struggles. The tradition of converting all time's enemy Yezid into the current period's hostile figure now gains a new meaning of causing social injustice. The Kerbela martyrs and Pir Sultan Abdal have become social victims. But more importantly although these figures like Yezid, Kerbela martyrs – Hüseyin- and Pir Sultan Abdal still do represent all time's struggles, now the Alevi community has gained new victims and enemies based on these social struggles. As Aşık Feyzullah Çınar says: "while there is our own martyrs why cry for Kerbela martyr?" (Mélikoff 323).

Whether they were not part of the common religion or were practicing nomadic traditions in the past, Alevis' being forced to exile and including today their being excluded made them sensitive towards those others who experience oppression and suffering from unjust practices (Mélikoff 322).

2.4.4.   The 90s and Today

In the 1980s with the military coup, Alevism starts entering into public space as a new identity. The new communication technologies like television, radio and press becoming widespread play an important role in the 1990s' public space. With the ability to speak with these technologies Alevis start breaking their silence combining with the branch at Diaspora. In the period of the rise of Islamic and Kurdish nationalism, Alevis began to represent a new public movement.

With the coalition of center-right and the rise of communication technologies, the Alevi publications increased and Cem Houses established. Supported by the left parties Alevis continued to resist the Directorate of Religious Affair's mission of 'Sunni-cising the Alevis" (Mélikoff 338). The violence towards Alevis continued in 1993 in Sivas in the organization held for the memory of Pir Sultan Abdal and in 1995 in Istanbul in Gazi Mahallesi.

Today, fundamentally, Alevis still want to be properly represented and officially accepted. They request recognition of their identities and beliefs. They oppose the Islamic administration of the Directorate of Religious Affair by putting secularism forward. As a conclusion, the problem that took place for centuries still continues today with even becoming more problematical.

3.   THE BELIEFS THAT CONSTITUTE ALEVI SYNCRETISM

It has to be said that trying to systemize a belief, which has not been systemized or made into rules for almost ten centuries is a vacant effort. However, the aim is just to give way sensing the features that are borrowed and internalized from various beliefs that spread almost all Asia, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. Obviously, when the time passed and lands and consequently beliefs that are experienced are taken into consideration what will be mentioned below are just a drop in the ocean.

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak explains the sociological phenomenon of, communities that possess a particular culture and progress within this culture for centuries. For some reasons when they pass through a different culture, during this transition and even after a long period of time, they do not leave the affinity with their former culture, maintain some features exactly and some by adjusting to the new one. Obviously, this phenomenon has been experienced within various Turkish groups that happen to enter to the Islamic culture in different times and places. When these Turkish communities have entered to new religions, long before accepting Islam, they have preserved the features of their former beliefs that do not collide with the new one and adapt the colliding ones by nourishing them with the motifs of the new one. The same process is observed in Islamic period as well (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 53), (Cahen 207).

When pre-Islam religions of Turks in Anatolia are studied, it is seen that these religions were not seen in same intensity in every place and they display divergence

as to regions. However, these societies that ingrained their beliefs in their daily spaces and even after accepting Islam due to various reasons could not internalize Koran are peasant, nomad societies that continued their former traditions (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 55).

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak defines Alevism-Bektashism as a *syncretic*[7] belief. Turkish heterodoxy that created Alevism and Bektashism is actually initiated with the former Turkish beliefs in the Central Asia. With Shamanism and Buddhism this belief took a mystical shape. It nourished from Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. With Yesevism it was accused of Islam and Islam Sufism. The manner of Khorassan *Kalenderism* was added and consequently it reached Anatolia. It met with specific features of local cultures of former Payen[8] and Christian periods of neo-Platonism[9]. It took a new shape by the motifs of Iran Hurufism in the 15th Century and Safevi Shiism in the beginning of the 16th Century. Briefly and roughly this is the real story of the roots of Alevi and Bektashi beliefs (Ocak, Türk Sufiliği 210-211).

---

[7] The word *Syncretism* is first attested in English in 1618 and is derived from modern Latin *syncretismus*, drawing on Greek συγκρητισμός (*synkretismos*), meaning 'a union of communities.'
[8] Huges de Payens (1070 – 1136 AD), a French nobleman, was one of the first Grand Masters of the Knights Templar. In this period, the influence of Hasan Sabbah and *batıni* (esoteric) doctrine was weakened. The Knights Templar was protecting the pilgrims and Europeans who were making the pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Jerusalem) (Sayın).
[9] Neo-Platonists believed human perfection and happiness were attainable in this world, without awaiting an afterlife. Perfection and happiness -seen as synonymous- could be achieved through philosophical contemplation. They did not believe in an independent existence of evil. They compared it to darkness, which does not exist in itself, but only as the absence of light. So, evil is simply the absence of good. Things are good insofar as they exist. They are evil only insofar as they are imperfect, lacking some good that they should have. It is also a cornerstone of Neo-Platonism to teach that all people return to the Source. The Source, Absolute or One, is what all things spring from and super-consciousness is where all things return. It can be said that all consciousness is wiped clean and returned to a blank slate when returning to the source.

3.1. Syncretism

Syncretism is the attempt to reconcile diverse, even opposing, beliefs to meld practices of various schools of thought. Especially in the theology and mythology of religion it is associated with the attempt to merge and analogize several originally discrete traditions.

Syncretism in folk belief is a sign of cultural acceptance of an alien or previous tradition, but the other cult may still survive. While some religious movements embrace syncretism, others strongly reject it due to its devaluing precious and genuine distinctions.

3.2. Early Turkish Beliefs

(The Cult of Ancestors, The Cults of Nature, and The Cult of Sky-God)

As in every society, the early beliefs of the Central Asian Turks were formed by their life conditions, which is the nomad steppe life and its culture they experienced. The foundational feature of this life is horse. Horse has been disseminated in every domain of the nomad steppe cultured life. Although since 19th century various researchers have focused on Shamanism as the oldest belief of Turks it has been cleared that a triple religious understanding formed the belief systems of the primal Turk societies in the Central Asia: the cult of ancestors, the cults of nature, and the cult of Sky-God (*Gök-Tanrı*) (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 56-61).

3.2.1. The Cult of Ancestors (*Atalar Kültü*)

The cult of ancestors is observed in almost every North and Central Asia tribes. It is interpreted as the consequence of the matriarchal family structure and has existed

since the oldest Turk society, the Huns' time. The foundation of this belief is based on the religious respect to the ancestors who passed away. While the person is not being worshiped while he is alive, this belief is structured on this person's protection against his family from evil and aiding them after his death (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 62-63).

3.2.2.   The Cults of Nature (*Doğa Kültleri*)

The cults of nature in old Turk societies are in a dual appearance as land (*yer*) and sky (*gök*) cults. In every existence in nature there are certain powers that their essential character cannot be comprehended. Consequently, some objects like mountain, hill, stone, rock, tree and water are considered as living beings.[10]

The nature of physical conditions effects a particular community. However, the cults of nature in Turks were never deified and nor seen as divine. It is believed that the whole nature comprises secret spirits –powers-. Mountains, hills, trees and rocks are beings that can feel, hear and make goodness and badness. In other words, what is capable of doing these is actually the secret power within them. Consequently, the sacrificial ceremonies do not represent worshiping the literal objects, but the secret powers within them (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 64-66).

Particularly three fundamental cults of nature are seen in the traditional Turkish belief system: the cult of mountain and hill, the cult of stone and rock, and the cult of tree.

---

[10] This understanding is seen in pantheistic beliefs.

3.2.2.1. The Cult of Mountain and Hill (*Dağ ve Tepe Kültü*)

Since the oldest periods of time due to their height and closeness to the sky mountains and hills were the symbols of sublime and divine. It is believed that the transcendental and divine beings inhabited in mountains and hills. The superior powers or spirits that resided on mountains or hills were transformed into saints (*evliya*) in Islamic period. In folk epics like Köroğlu, mountains are being called out and spoken to. When the mountains have no passage Köroğlu calls for the *evliya*s on the mountains that they open a passage for him. These are the reflections of the cult of mountain and hill on the folk tales (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 114-122).

3.2.2.2. The Cult of Stone and Rock (*Taş ve Kaya Kültü*)

There are many myths about how Hacı Bektaş Veli has divided a rock into two when someone did not believe that he was an *evliya,* but most importantly Eliade states that people did not worship the substance of the stones or rocks. They worshipped the existence of the 'thing' within them that would cause the goodness or badness. In this case, the subject of the cult is not the substance of the stone or the rock but the 'thing' within them (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 122-123).

3.2.2.3. The Cult of Tree (*Ağaç Kültü*)

A similarity is found between the life courses of human being and of a tree in terms of their both gradually growing from a small sprout and finally decaying. Because of this reason, since the archaic times people connected every place they considered sacred with trees. This attitude is particularly seen in Bektashi-Alevi culture where there is the tradition of planting trees to the surroundings of a tomb or building the tomb besides a tree that is considered as sacred. Especially, it can be seen that trees

that have single trunk, like pine trees and plane trees, have a significant role within the Alevi community due to the belief that they are sacred. Also, some *evliya*s were named after trees as if they are the trees like 'Çınar Dede' (Plane Dede) and 'Ağaç Dede' (Tree Dede) (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 128-123).

As in other cults of nature Eliade indicates that it is not the substance that is worshipped at, it is the feature of the tree and powers that it represents makes tree the subject of the cult. The researches demonstrate that particularly fruitless and grand trees are considered as sacred. (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 129).

This cult is observed in Shamans as well. Particularly, the beech tree and juniper (*ardıç*) tree have a significant role. When a Shaman is born a beech tree is being planted and he grows gradually with the tree and when he dies they remove the tree too. This phenomenon indicates the bond between a Shaman and a tree. Seeing such an involvement between two lives is based on tree's being able to revive and its representing spreading or carrying life (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 133). Also, in Alevis the seed's potentiality of life and human's has been expanded in terms of "…just as a seed is thought to contain within itself a tiny tree, so a man, at least in his ideal state, contains within himself the macrocosm" (Birge 118).

> "Bir ağaçtır bu alem
> Meyvası olmuş adam
> Meyvadır maksut olan
> Sanmakı ağaç ola" (Gaybi Baba)
> ("This universe is a tree; Man became its fruit. That which was intended is
> the fruit; Do not think it was the tree") (Birge 118).

It has to be added that the importance of the juniper (*ardıç*) tree in Shamans is because of juniper's being a means for trance. By the smoke of the juniper tree Shaman contacts with supernatural beings and enables them to come down to the earth (Mélikoff 127-128).

3.2.3.   The Cult of Sky-God (*Gök-Tanrı Kültü*)

The term *Gök*, which is pronounced *kök* in Anatolian Turkish means *blue*, and *tanrı* is a word derived from *tengri* or *tangri,* which means god (Bazin 109).

Since the cult of Sky-God does not involve land it is considered that this cult would exist in nomad communities. The studies of Eliade have revealed that this belief did not only exist in Turks but also it was common in the North and Central Asia communities. However, Turks were not interested in the sky matter but moreover they were focused on the sky itself. As a matter of fact, it is natural for the ones living in Asian steppes in ancient times to understand sky, which is above and dominating all, as God (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 66-70). There is no detailed information on the cult of Sky-God but what is known is that the nomadic Turks worshipped the sky by intermingling it with the cults of moon, stars and sun. Thus, the cult of Sky-God also comprised all the features within the sky (Eröz 108). Another aspect of this belief is that since this cult has been transmitted to Shamanism extensively it is usually examined within Shamanism.

3.3. Shamanism

Various researchers indicate that Turks' time of acceptance of Shamanism is not definite. Although first traces are observed in the documents of the 6th Century, the

indications of Shaman Turks are gradually intensified in the documents beginning

with the 9th Century. Before the 4th and 5th centuries in Central Asia there is no trace

of Shamanism, which betokens various other beliefs' existence within Turkmens,

like the cult of ancestors, the cults of nature, the cult of Sky-God, Buddhism,

Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, Manichaeism. By internalizing various features and

traditions of these beliefs, Turkmens produced their own syncretism, which was later

considered as Shamanism. Whichever belief they have accepted, in all periods

including Islam period, Shamanist features were always observed (Ocak, Islam

Öncesi Temelleri 72-73).

Although the word *Shaman* is an expression mostly used in modern Western

literature the original word is *Kam*, which means 'sorcerer' who communicates with

the spiritual world. Fuat Köprülü explains the sorcery as a form of religious system.

He indicates that Shamanism took place in a matriarchal order and they believed in

matriarchal totems (Birdoğan 176).

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak explains Shamanism as a religious-magical system surrounded in

the environment of an innately magical and powerful personality of a *Shaman* or in

other words *Kam*. *Kam* never uses such powers for evil. He continues by defining

Kam as not merely a sorcerer or a physician. As it is seen in the history of Turks and

Mongols, a *Kam* has an active and powerful role in the political life as well (Ocak,

Islam Öncesi Temelleri 71).

Shaman's "special relations with the 'spirits,' ecstatic capacities permitting of

magical flight, ascents to the sky, descends to the underworld, mastery over fire, etc.

are here already found integrated with a particular ideology and validating specific techniques" (Eliade 6).

> "Shaman is indispensable in any ceremony that concerns the experience of the human soul as such… The shaman performs the function of doctor and healer; he announces the diagnosis, goes in search of the patient's fugitive soul, captures it, and makes it return to animate the body that it has left. It is always the shaman who conducts the dead person's soul to the underworld, for he is the psychopomp par excellence" (Eliade 182).

According to Eliade, Shaman's universe in general is conceived as having three levels, which are: sky, earth and underworld, and they are connected by a central axis. "This axis, passes through an 'opening' and the dead to the subterranean regions; it is through the same hole that the soul of the shaman in ecstasy can fly up or down in the course of his celestial or infernal journeys" (Eliade 259). The symbolism of the 'center' has been applied to any sacred space and manifested other 'realities' that came from the sky or in other words, from anywhere but our world. "The idea of a 'Center' followed from the experience of a sacred space, impregnated by a transhuman presence: at this particular point something from above (or from below) had manifested itself. Later, it was supposed that manifestation of the sacred in itself implied a break-through in plane" (Eliade 260).

As it will be seen below the most fundamental peculiarity of Alevi-Bektashi belief, which is the manifestation of God in Ali or in other words in every existence has been a feature borrowed from Shamanism. Obviously, this characteristic has taken the appearance of Islam but defining Ali as an essence or something beyond the material life has continued just by changing its name. Eventually what is reached is

still the manifestation of one's own self by breaking the bonds with the material world.

Shamans have used ecstatic herbs as means to communicate with the souls. This approach has been reflected on Alevis as communicating with an inner existence, or in other words, the essence and also to be able to unite itself with its essence – become one with God-. And, in order to do so, instead of ecstatic herbs, Alevis gave importance to wine. Wine takes part in almost every aspect of Alevis' life and this phenomenon can be observed on *nefes*es like the Hacı Bektaş Veli's:

"We have drunk the wine of Union with Thee" (Birge 114).

3.4. Buddhism

According to reincarnation (*tenasüh*), which is the fundamental belief of Buddhism, after their death the living creatures return to the earth in various forms until they reach nirvana (eternal happiness). A similar belief has survived among Turkic tribes until the acceptance of Islam. After Turks become Muslim, in some extent, they adapted this understanding to saints like Ahmed Yesevi and transformed them into saint epics (*menkabe*) (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 82).

The belief of human soul's transition to another body and even in some understandings transmigration to animals, plants or inanimate creators is mostly observed in India. Buddhism has made this belief the fundamental feature of its doctrine. Even though the monotheist religions do not accept this belief it has been endured in beliefs like Alevism- Bektashism (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 183-184).

The change of shape is mostly an award for goodness or a punishment for malice delivered by a higher power –God, sorcerer, witch, saint-. In many instances it has been tried to explain how the inanimate object becomes the way it is (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 206-207).

This tradition has been transmitted into Turkmen culture. The expression of 'donuna girmek', which refers to 'getting in the shape of' or 'transmigration' has been used in Turkish epics, folk tales and legends. Particularly, transfiguring into dear and bird has a significant place in these stories (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 207).

With the influence of Buddhism, Turkmens attempted to build a temple for Buddha but Vizier Tonyukuk rejected the attempt on the basis of a temple's being monopolistic. This understanding is one of the reasons why later there will not be any specific place of worship in Alevis and any place can become a place of worship (Birdoğan 177).

3.5. Persian Religions

(Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, Manichaeism)

Central Asia culture has been in an intense cultural exchange with Iran. In the 7th century in Persia during the Sassanian Empire, the official religion was Zoroastrianism. Mazdakism and Manichaeism, which were in strife with Zoroastrianism, could not reside in Iran and consequently took refuge in Turkish areas in Central Asia. Due to these circumstances, Turks were influenced initially by Zoroastrianism and later by Mazdakism and Manichaeism (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 85).

In the course of time, Zoroastrianism and Mazdakism became effectual within Turks and some accepted these beliefs. Later, as Zoroastrians and Mazdakis they even played an important role during the counter strife against the Abbasi State (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 90).

3.5.1. Zoroastrianism (*Zerdüştlük*)

Zoroaster[11] was an ancient Iranian prophet who preached in Bactria[12] and founder of Zoroastrianism, which was the national religion of the Sassanian dynasty of the Persian Empire. The original form of his name was Zarathushtra (*Zaraθuštra*), but he is usually known in English as Zoroaster. The words *zarad* and *uştra* form the term Zoroaster, which means 'yellow camel.' After Arabs invasion of Persia Zoroastrians refused Islam and migrated to North India (Birdoğan 76-77).

Before Zoroastrianism, in Persia, it was believed in various cults of nature like Mithra (God of Sun) (Birdoğan 81). Zoroastrianism has highly influenced by this belief. Mithra (Sun) and fire as its form in the earth's surface, constitutes the basis of Zoroastrianism. This belief later has been transmitted to Shamanism where Shamans kept stoves lit and interpreted one of its being extinguished as a sign of a disaster to happen (Birdoğan 91).

In Zoroastrianism it is believed that fire has power of cleansing and renewing life. The malice spirits and ominous things that bother can be removed by fire. Human

---

[11] Zoroaster is generally accepted as a historical figure, but efforts to date Zoroaster vary widely. It is usually estimated roughly near 1700 BC. Birdoğan states the date as 1541 BC (Yol Ayrımı 77).
[12] Bactria was the ancient Greek name of the country between the range of the Hindu Kush (Caucasus Indicus) and the Amu Darya (Oxus); its capital, Bactra (now Balkh), was located in what is now northern Afghanistan, southern Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

soul has been created from fire and after death the soul will unite with the divine fire in the sky (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 247).

One of other cults of nature believed in before Zoroastrianism was Vayu, a space God related with wind and vault of heaven. Since Vayu represented the blow of the wind, wind was considered as its breath. It is understood that the reason of the Alevi folk poems' (*deyiş*) being called *nefes* (breath) is because of believing its holiness (Birdoğan 81).

Similar to Buddhism, in Zoroastrianism there is the belief of incarnation (*hulûl*), which is the belief of God's getting in the shape of human. However, it must not be confused with anthropomorphism, which is the thought of God as human. God is not considered as human but takes the form of human. In radical Shia beliefs the incarnation initiates with Adam, transmitted to all prophets and later continued with Hz. Ali and his children. This phenomenon can be observed at Bektashi and Kızılbaş *nefes*es starting from the 15th century until today (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 197-201).

3.5.2. Mazdakism

Mazdak was a proto-socialist Persian philosopher who gained influence under the reign of the Sassanian king Kavadh the 1st. He was hanged and Khosrau the 1st, Kavadh's son, massacred his followers. He was the founder of Mazdakism, whose adherents share the dualistic cosmology/theology with Manichaeism. This dualism is based on two principles, which constitutes light as good, and darkness as evil. These two concepts were mixed by a cosmic accident, and man's role in this life was to

51

release the parts of himself that belonged to the light. But where Manichaeism saw the mixture of good and bad as a cosmic tragedy, Mazdakism viewed this in a more neutral, even optimistic way. Mazdak preached that the mixture of good and evil had touched everything, except God.

> "Just as Mani's eclectic Faith was a pointer at the germs of decay in the Sassanian body-politic, so also Mazdak's teaching was a pointer at the inevitable downfall towards which the Sassanian Empire was heading. Mani came within one generation of the establishment of Sassanian rule in Iran; Mazdak came towards the end of that rule, about a century before the Empire was overthrown by the Arabs" (Taraporewala).

The fundamental features of Mazdakism are to worship fire and cremation (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 88).

3.5.3. Manichaeism

Mani, who was born in western Persia and lived approximately in 210–276 AD, found Manichaeism in the third century AD. The name 'Mani' is considered mainly as a title and a term of respect rather than a personal name. Mani's holy book was called Arzhang and was beautified with paintings. This gave him the title 'The Painter.'

Manichaeism emerged in Mesopotamia, as a religious-social reaction against the official religion of Sassanian Persia. The state and Zoroasters oppressed Manis, but against all odds, they secretly drew supporters and had the chance to disseminate in Anatolia, Syria and Central Asia. Although they had the opportunity to practice their worships freely in China they were still exposed to the state's interventions (Ocak,

Islam Öncesi Temelleri 91). In order to suppress the uprising that initiated due to such circumstances, China asked Turkish Uygur dynasty's help. Even though Uygurs did suppress the uprising, in consequence of staying with Manicheans for some period of time, they were influenced by Manichaeism. This situation even carried forward in terms of Manichaeism's becoming the official religion of a state for the first time (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 92-93). Underneath the acceptance of a foreign religion there lies some similar beliefs like accepting the holiness of various cults of nature (Bazin 99,109). Although this Persian religion was intense in Uygurs it endured its presence from the 8th century until the 13th century (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 95). During the interaction with Buddhism, Manichaeism's syncretism became an articulation of Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Gnostic[13] Christianity (Bazin 100).

Mani religion is based on the conflict of principles of goodness and malice. In human, inside the body, which symbolizes the malice, there is soul, which symbolizes goodness. According to the belief after long working processes goodness wins (Birdoğan 136).

As in Buddhism in Manichaeism too there is the belief of reincarnation (transmigration) (*tenasuh*). However, even the soul constantly transfigures in Manichaeism, in Bektashism this alteration (*don değiştirmek*) takes place in the name of *devir* (cycle) as starting with an inanimate creature, later with plants, from plants

---

[13] Gnosis is the Greek word for 'knowledge.' Later Valentinus interpretted the word as "privileged 'knowledge of the heart' or 'insight' about the spiritual nature of the cosmos. The Turkish word for 'gnosis' is 'irfan.'

to animals, and from animals to humans. This alteration follows the path of developing through the higher created form (Ocak, Islam Öncesi Temelleri 197).

The basic transference of belief practices between Manichaeism and Alevism is the understanding of 'controlling mouth, tongue and loins.' In Alevism this trinity has been interpreted as 'controlling hand, tongue and loins' (e*line, diline, beline sahip olmak*) (Birdoğan 136). 'Hand' represents the actions, 'tongue' speech, and 'loins' sexuality. But in Alevism some other restrictions were interpreted differently like not placing any limitations for alcoholic beverages and meat or any particular sexual prohibition (Bazin 113). Controlling these three represents controlling *nefs* (self) in other words, the excessive demands, and not harming anyone.

3.6. Esoterism (*Batınilik*)

Esoterism refers to knowledge that is secret or not generally known. It is the knowledge of an 'inner' nature, as opposed to exoteric knowledge, which is well-known or public. It is used especially to describe mystical, occult and spiritual viewpoints.

Like Martin van Bruinessen states, instead of being dependent on religious law (*şeriat*) Alevis possess a devotional belief based on series of ethical rules; more than exoteric[14] (*zahir*) demands of religion, they live complying with its 'inner' (immanent) (*batın*) meaning (Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik 118). This is why Alevism is defined as esoterism.

---

[14] Exotericism comprises religious practices and laws that are meant to regulate human activities in the 'external' world and are easily understandable and practicable by the masses, as opposed to esotericism. The goal of exoteric regulations is based on securing a favorable place for the soul in the afterlife by following the prescribed behaviors and rituals of the organized religion.

The division between God and Man in orthodox Islam does not take place in Alevi esoterism. On the contrary, since everything is the reflection of God there is no abyss between the creator and the created. "God is present in every man and every man must seek for 'purity of heart' and self-knowledge" (Zeidan). "Alevis interpret the Quran in an esoteric, allegoric and symbolic (*batıni*) manner, rejecting literal interpretations" (Zeidan). Unlike the understanding of orthodox Islam, Man as the most splendid sign of God, knows how to behave and does not need to learn it from Koran. According to Esoterism beyond the word meanings of the sentences written in Koran there are hidden deeper meanings (Dierl 24-25). These deeper meanings are identified as inner or immanent –esoteric- (*batın*).

Nejat Birdoğan explains this 'inner' (*batın*) meanings of religious texts; esoterism, as the united root of Anatolian Alevism, which is instead of being Islam actually it is clearly a belief system based on the reaction towards orthodox Islam (31). In other words, it is reaction to the orthodoxy of Islam or exoteric meanings of it. Ismet Zeki Eyuboğlu explains that this esoteric movement, which is formed by foundations like neo-Platonism, Alevism and Polytheist[15] beliefs, has been reorganized by Hasan Sabbah (1049-1134) and gained a political characteristic. According to Eyuboğlu, esoterism is both a political foundation and the resistance of an accumulation, formed by the former beliefs, to the thought of Islam (Tarikatlar 314-316).

Unlike conventional religion beyond this cosmos there is no after life (*ahiret*) and judgment day, and rebirth notion does not exist. Living happy in this universe means that they are in heaven and unhappy people are in hell. God is a natural power that

---

[15] Polytheism is believing in, or worshipping to multiple Gods or divinities.

possesses a creative attribution; unlike Monotheist religions assert that it supernaturally calls into being from absence. It has no judging feature (Eyuboğlu, Tarikatlar 315).

3.7. Hallac-ı Mansur (Masur al Hallaj)

Hallac-ı Mansur (857-922) has united all his thoughts on the notion of 'human-universe-god' identity. 'Multiplicity' is an appearance; it is the reflection of 'one' in various form features and this 'one' is the God. Since universe and human is within this 'one,' in other words, identical with 'one' he comes the conclusion of "En el Hakk" (I am God) (Eyuboğlu, Tarikatlar 113-115). According to esoteric doctrines *kamil-insan* (mature man) is the reflection of God. From this approach the expression "I am God" ('Ben Tanrıyım') becomes a valid one (Gener 14).

According to Birdoğan, during the aim of disseminating Islam, Shias became more effectual. One of the Shia missioners Hallac-ı Mansur changed his appearance as a soldier and traveled in order to make Turks accept Islam (205-206).

Hallac-ı Mansur's influence on the formation of the heterodoxy of the Turks' beliefs, particularly after the acceptance of Islam, is crucial. As it is mentioned earlier, Nesimi, who is an important poet in Bektashi community and lived around the 15th century, introduced Hurufism to Anatolia and Rumelia. He can be considered as one of the representatives of the understanding introduced by Mansur. This phenomenon can even be observed on his being murder in 1417. When one of Nesimi's disciples is arrested for cursing because of reading one of Nesimi's poems aloud, in order to save him Nesimi confesses that the poem belongs to him. As a punishment during the

torture he would keep saying "En el Hakk" without loosing his conscious. In this instance it is understood that Mansur's doctrine came into existence in Nesimi.

While Mansur reaches the unity of universe as a reflection of deifying human, Fazlullah, the founder of Hurufism, reaches the same conclusion of 'oneness' by deifying numbers. On the other hand, Nesimi again reaches the same understanding of 'unity of being' (*Vahdet-i Vücûd*) by placing 'love' as the foundation of his doctrine instead of numbers. His *deyiş*es (folk poems, songs of mystical love) speaks for itself:

> "Ey Nesimi, cemalin Tanrının cemalinin tecellisidir"
> (Nesimi, your facial beauty is the manifest of God's facial beauty)

> "Kendini bil, ta ki Tanrıyı bilesin" (Mélikoff 168).
> (Know yourself so that you can know God)

The understanding of knowing oneself as to know its divine nature and its divinity represents the fundamental principle of Bektashism. *Insan-ı Kamil* (man who is the base of being) who is the manifest of God and love constitutes the foundation of Alevism. Human becomes deified and the division between human and God is abrogated. One step further with the weakening of religious influence human is no longer the manifest of God but actually becomes God. As in the *deyiş* of Feyzullah Çınar:

> "Allah benim, ben Allahım"
> (God is me, I am God)

The removal of the division between the creator and the created puts human in the center of the universe. And, in the course of time, *Vahdet-i Vücûd* leaves its place to human rights and democracy (Mélikoff 320).

3.8. Ahmed Yesevi

Ahmed Yesevi was one of the nomadic Turks from steppe lands who acquired knowledge on Islam. He aimed to dissolve the new Islam belief's norms within the past ancestor beliefs and traditions. His effort could be seen in the meetings he organized where women participated too. Although he received reactions from the *ulema* he continued practicing according to his norms. His basic understanding was based on the technique of 'turning towards within' (introspection) in order to reach God. His belief was against the orthodox Islam since he did not pay attention to the world that is lived in. According to him God could not be understood by mind but only by heart by 'turning towards within.'

The foremost feature of Ahmed Yesevi is his disseminating Islam within the Turks in Central Asia by the conduit of Sufism. By filtering Islam with Iran Sufism he made it comprehensible and acceptable for the nomad/semi-nomad Turk tribes who were coming from Buddhist, Shamanist and Manichean mystic cultures in the Central Asia (Ocak, Türk Sufiliği 32). In addition to wars in order to make Turks accept Islam most effectually Ahmed Yesevi's method was the actual reason for succeeding. According to Ocak, Ahmed Yesevi represents 'Islam of Turk public' ('Türk halk Müslümanlığı') (Ocak, Türk Sufiliği 75).

Ahmed Yesevi, as the representative of popular Sufism in both Central Asia and Anatolia, plays an important role in constituting the understandings of Turkmens who migrated particularly from Khorassan. Members of the Bektashi sect who migrated from Central Asia or Iran will later be called *Horasan Erenleri* (members of the Khorassan sect). It is assumed that Ahmed Yesevi died in 1166 (Eyuboğlu, Tarikatlar 255).

3.9. Hacı Bektaş Veli

Hacı Bektaş Veli, who was born in Khorassan in 1209/1210 and died in 1271 in Kırşehir/Sulucakarahöyük (Hacıbektaş) (Eyuboğlu, Tarikatlar 169), got his first education from Lokman Perende, a disciple of Ahmed Yesevi. Although Hacı Bektaş Veli and Ahmed Yesevi lived in different periods Hacı Bektaş Veli is considered to be his disciple. There are no certain documents that indicate Hacı Bektaş Veli's being the disciple of Ahmet Yesevi, however, it is known that in some way Hacı Bektaş Veli has been influenced from his doctrine or at least form one of his disciples'. Still this fact does not weaken the autonomous character of Hacı Bektaş Veli and does not necessitate including him to Yesevism tarikat since at the time it was not established yet (Karamustafa 73-77).

Hacı Bektaş Veli preached the love of humanity as the highest goal for people and rejected the five basic principles of Islam and much other religious dogma. "He was considered the leader of a new *tariqa* that was virtually no different from the Qalandari-Haidari *tariqas*" (Köprülü 29).

According to the legend Hacı Bektaş Veli has two lives; his actual life and the mythical one. In his mythical life he becomes a falcon or a pigeon and flies. If necessary, he shakes himself and becomes human again. At the same time he can be in different places. He can dominate animals, stones, fire etc. (Şener 103). In every story there is the interpretation of the public. This interpretation comprises one's wish, thought, understanding, expression, and there is a real ground of the story that it basis. Which is why in some cases the real becomes a folk tale and a saying. This feature is common in all religions. A Christian saint kills a dragon as well as a Muslim and a Buddhist one, all transmigrates to an animal and all walk on the water, fly etc. These supernatural events do not arise from religions or sects, but from the polytheist religions' period. These are the wishes of prosperity and peace. They are the feeling of wanting to reach the unreachable (Şener 104).

Many researchers have examined various documents in order to give certain information about Hacı Bektaş Veli's life and thoughts. However, in addition to not being able to be certain on his lineage, who he met, got in contact with, and if he wrote any of the texts that are considered as his, they also cannot give definite information on what his goal was or what he wanted to teach etc. In fact, the reason underneath such a lack of or incomplete information is most probably because he neither initiated his sect nor wanted to become a *mürşit* (guide, teacher). Even though some basic information can be acquired about his actual life still about what lied underneath his becoming such an important character in Alevi-Bektashi community stays blur. Among some information it is known that he thought his understanding to Kadıncık Ana, his adopted daughter, and even according to some researchers his disciple. This fact indicates his understanding of the equality of the sexes.

Leaving the judgment of what is right and wrong to the person can be interpreted as another proof of Hacı Bektaş Veli's reluctance to become a religious guide and make effort to constitute his disciples. People are encouraged to make their own judgments.

Hacı Bektaş Veli has removed *sünnet* (sayings of Hz. Mohammed that has to be fulfilled) and religious law, which are regulations of Islam, and made the worshipping language Turkish. Also the *nefes*es were said and written in Turkish. In circumstances where worshipping language is in Arabic and the education in the palace in Persian, worshipping in Turkish can be seen as a radical act. According to Dierl, this attitude may have even prevented Anatolia to get Iranized or Arabized. From this approach it could be said that Hacı Bektaş Veli replaced religious law with the former communities' former social rules and religious practices of Turks. In this period there were three basic principles for Bektashis: using the main language for worshipping, the Cem Ceremony and a life without religious law (*şeriat*), which would mean that fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca are not mandatory and that there are no sexual discrimination, and no forbiddance of alcoholic beverages. Dierl explains Hacı Bektaş Veli's approach as a symbolic expression of harmonizing and uniting the former beliefs of Turks including the ones besides Anatolia (Dierl 45-47).

The aphorism attributed to Hacı Bektaş Veli: "the biggest book to be read, is human" ("okunacak en büyük kitap insandır") summarizes Alevis' religious understanding (Dressler 38).

"You look for *kıble*[16], *kıble* is in you.

---

[16] *Kıble* indicates the direction of Mecca.

You look for *secde*[17] *mihrab*[18] is in you.

You look for *Kaaba*, *Kaaba* is in you" (Dressler 38).

Kul Hüseyin's (16-17th C.) poem above represents both the Alevi belief and its reaction against the orthodox Islam, which actually makes *namaz*, pilgrimage and such issues mandatory. Obviously, these terms in the poem are not used in their literal meanings; they criticize Islam by its own features in metaphors.

3.10. Islam

Alevis' gradually adapting themselves to Islam cannot be examined without considering their former religions, traditions and practices because, as mentioned earlier, their acceptance of Islam is not in literal terms. This acceptance is based on adapting their former beliefs' features to Islam. On the way of this adaptation *baba*s, "who were popular saints, as Islamized versions of the old Turkish *kam/ozan* (shaman/wandering minstrel)" (Köprülü 5) play an important role. These *baba*s "were surrounded by an aura of holiness inherited from the old wandering minstrels (s. *ozan*), among the Turkmen clans. These *babas* controlled their simple, primitive souls" (Köprülü 11).

> "These nomadic Turkmen clans were the only vigorous element that could carry out a religious or political movement against the multi-factional armies of the Seljuk emperors, who followed a policy of pursuing the form of Sunnism that was the official creed of the state in Anatolia. We therefore constantly find these Turkmen clans at the center of all the religio-political uprisings that

---

[17] *Secde* means prostration.
[18] *Mihrab* is the niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca, consequently, the direction of the prostration.

occurred in Anatolia from the first instance until the later periods of the
Ottoman sultanate" (Köprülü 11).

Although Anatolian Alevism was submitted to Islam, it was influenced by it as much
as it was by all other religions in Anatolia and Central Asia like Shamanism,
Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, which made it possible to become heterodoxy
after entering to Islam. The same interaction made what is now called Anatolian
Alevism syncretism. In another aspect, it can be said that interacting and
synthesizing the features of former beliefs before the infiltration of Islam already
made this belief syncretism, however particularly after Islam this attitude has been
forwarded as heterodoxy as opposing orthodoxy.

The two main branches in Islam, Sunnism and Shiism, reciprocally accused each
other with perversion by the literary, verbal and political references of religion and
competed about the same dogma religious law practices (Aydın 308). The Sunni-
Shia division has showed its signs in Anatolia starting with the Ottoman-Safevi clash
in the beginning of the 16th century (Mélikoff 107). As Claude Cahen states before
this period Shia features have infiltrated Anatolian Islam, however the ones who
accepted these features were not conscious about whether they were part of Shiism or
Sunnism. Before Safevis officially organized Shiism, the distinction between Shiism
and Sunnism was not known within the communities (Cahen 218). Although after
this period Shia features were observed in Bektashi *nefes*es Erdoğan Aydın states
that Alevism is distant to Shiism as much as to Sunnism. While in both Shiism and
Sunnism Koran, in other words religious law, is fundamental, Anatolian Alevism in
an esoteric approach prioritizes human as its foundation. In Alevism Mohammed,
Ali, Hasan, Hüseyin, twelve imams etc. have always taken place in a symbolic

manner. The actual leaders were considered as Baba Ishak, Baba Ilyas, Sheikh Bedrettin, Hacı Bektaş Veli, Balım Sultan, Nesimi, Hallac-ı Mansur, Pir Sultan Abdal etc. (307-308).

In order to endure to the Sunni pressure Alevi society has defined themselves within Islam. They possessed all suppressed leaders in Islam history, foremost Ali, and used them as a legitimization base, but never bound or obligated themselves with what these characters have experienced and done like worshipping in mosques, pilgrimage to Mecca, practicing Koran and esteeming Ramadan, separate seating of men and women, religious penal code, forbiddance of alcoholic beverages, belief of hell, *cihat* (holy war) or any other. Aydın explains this understanding as accepting seventy-two nations, in other words, seventy-two beliefs as one and equal, rejecting servitude to God and creating an image of a humanist God by making it identical with itself. Alevism produced itself by becoming an association by Dedes, discipleship and Cem Ceremonies opposing the traditional Islam foundations of Sunnism and Shiism (Aydın 308-309).

As it is reflected in Bektashi *nefes*es, "Mohammed-Ali" duality represents one single identity in the meaning of "seen and hidden." "Mohammed" on its own is incomplete. It is only the "seen" and without the "hidden," meaning "Ali," it will be lacking (Mélikoff 289). "Muhammad and Ali are not thought of as two persons. They are to the Bektashi one, pronounced and written as if two names of one person" (Birge 133). This phenomenon has been reflected on various *nefes*es like the Yesari's:

> "Haşa birdenbire kim ayrı gördü
> Muhammed Alidir, Ali Muhammed."

(God forbid that anyone should see them as separate from one another. Muhammad is Ali, Ali Muhammad) (Birge 134).

In Alevism there is a tolerance for all beliefs including Christianity. However, only Sunnism is not included in this tolerance because of the pressure and torture applied by the Sunnis for centuries (Mélikoff 290). This attitude has started with Yezid who murdered Hüseyin and led to Yezid's representing all the tyrants.

As conclusion, the Shaman based incongruous features within the Bektashi belief have become clear by conjoining with the influence of Ahi guilds, the anthropomorphic pantheism of Hurufism, the Shia heterodoxy of Turkmen Kızılbaşs and western effects of Christianity, and in Mélikoff's words became "accumulation of consciousness" and *irfan* (gnosis) (211-212).

3.11. Islamic Sufism –*Tasavvuf*-

Even though *tasavvuf* in the Ottoman Empire had its own peculiar form, it has to be said that this peculiarity cannot be taken into consideration independently from other norms emerged in various belief systems and in other Islamic countries outside the Ottoman borders because, as will be mentioned, the interactions and social conditions constituted the Sufism in Anatolia.

Since Bektashism is considered within the Sufi *tarikat*s established in the Ottoman period my aim is to clarify the common and distinctive features between the Bektashi *tarikat* and others. However, since in this study all the Sufi movements, *tarikat*s and their notions cannot be stated, as a representative of others, Mevlevism (13th century) will be compared briefly with Bektashism. Within many *tarikat*s, Mevlevism has

been chosen for the comparison due to its having common features that can be compared with Bektashism like rituals that comprise dance and music, and also, their both continuation to their extensive existences even today. But, first of all, the incidences and consequently the common norms that constituted Islamic Sufism will be mentioned.

Sufism –*Tasavvuf*- in Islam and Mysticism in western terms can only emerge after that religion's establishment. Thus, we can say that when Islam was established there was no movement that can be called as *tasavvuf*. It has been developed gradually. However, mysticism or Sufism already existed like in India, China or Iran, in other terms it existed in every region where a religion was present. So, Turgut Akpınar emphasizes that *tasavvuf* is not an Islamic institution, on the contrary, it is a movement, which exists in every region and religion where religion is seen insufficient on the way of reaching to God. Hence, *tasavvuf* is the form of 'universal mysticism' that arose in Islam countries as well. Since this movement is contrary to the viewpoint of orthodox Islam it shows a heterodox character (Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet 85-87).

From this point of view, it can be said that religion's formalist and normative aspects did not satisfy the ones who were seeking an individual interpretation of God so as to reach God on their own ways contrary to the collective methods. This individual approach explains Gölpınarlı's statement where he indicates the absence of theories of Sufis and their incompatible interpretations (Akpınar, Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet 85).

When we localize the formation of Islamic Sufism it is seen that it initiated in Khorassan and Turkistan due to their being in the trade routes and consequently interacting with many cultures and religions from the Far East and Iran. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first *tarikat*s, which are representing the Islamic Sufism, and the first Turkish *tarikat*, Yesevism (12th century), have been formed in Khorassan and later disseminated to Anatolia (Akpınar, <u>Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet</u> 87-89).

When a new belief is on the way of acceptance and even internalized that belief transforms depending on the region and the features within that region. This transformation takes place by the movements that arouse from social conditions, and they are executed by leaders (Akpınar, <u>Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet</u> 89). These movements with their leaders give way to the transformation by the adaptation of former understandings and beliefs with the new one. This adaptation reveals the heterodoxy since the former ones prevent the new ones' literal infiltration. From this heterodox approach Islamic Sufism emerges. One of the major influential leaders is considered to be Ibn Arabi (d. 1165) (Uludağ 28). However, a former Sufi, Hallac-ı Mansur's (d. 922) notions initially influenced Arab Sufis like Ibn-Arabi, Iran Sufis and Turk Sufis like Ahmet Yesevi and Yunus Emre (Uludağ 22). As a consequence of this interaction the heterodoxy of Islamic Sufism lay in the notions like *insan-ı kamil* and *vahdet-i vücud*, which were spread in Anatolia particularly after 13th century with Hacı Bektaş Veli, Yunus Emre and Mevlana.

Due to the existence of various beliefs and interpretations of Islam in Anatolia in both Seljuk and Ottoman periods, as Akpınar indicates, in the broad sense public was showing heterodox applications (<u>Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet</u> 79-81). Thus, the *tarikat*s

within these communities represented this heterodoxy in terms of opposing the orthodoxy of Islam. What constituted the foundation of these *tarikat*s was instead of accepting the formalist terms of Islam focusing on various individual interpretations. When we compare Mevlevism and Bektashism two aspects arise. First one is based on the application within the *tarikat*s and second one on their social positioning. The applications on the *tarikat*s as ceremonies and doctrines differ in terms of Bektashis' virtual elements or in other words symbolic representations. Tanman explains this fact by stating that when it is compared with other Sufi groups Bektashi doctrine and rituals give more place to esoteric and symbolic elements and particularly the virtual elements in Bektashi *meydan*s (hall) intensify. For instance, the center of the *meydan* is called "dar-i Mansur" for the memory of Hallac-ı Mansur as "the martyr of ene'l Hak" and the vertical axis that passes from this center is considered to be the closest path to reach to God (Tanman 335).

In another aspect, "Mevlana considered music and dance, *sema*, as the most effective means to attain mystic ecstasy, the highest degree of sufi experience" (Inalcık, The Ottoman Empire 201). *Sema* in Mevlevism represent an individual performance by attaining the mystic ecstasy, which is considered to be the 'highest degree.' On the other hand *semah* in Bektashis or Alevis represents collectivity. While oneself can perform *sema*, *semah* has to be performed at least with two people. Also, while Mevlevis as 'whirling dervishes' attain a mystic ecstasy with the dance and music and this whirling constitutes the actual ceremony, the dance is only a part of the Bektashi ceremonies. This difference will be understood thoroughly in the next chapter but for now it can be said that while dance and music is the actual ritual in Mevlevism, in Cem Ceremony the existence of Dede and his conducting the

ceremony, the accompaniment of twelve services and active role of the participants in the ceremony actually depicts more of a theatric ritual. From this point of view it can be said that although in both doctrines the aim is to reach God, while Mevlevis try to reach independently, in addition to this individuality of trying to become *kamil-insan*, Bektashis' interpretation of 'the manifestation of God on every being' – Can- depicts itself on *semah* ritual and Cem Ceremony by including the participants as well.

The second aspect of the comparison lay in social terms. Mevlevism draw attention in big cities in the Ottoman Empire particularly in palace milieu in Istanbul and many statesmen, bureaucrat and intellectual participated to Mevlevi *tarikat* (Uludağ 35). "As Maulana (Mevlana) himself had been, his successors were usually close to the ruling class, and from fifteenth century the Mevlevîs established themselves in many Ottoman cities as a tarikat appealing to the elite…The Mevlevîs thus became a tarîkat with adherents among the Ottoman ruling classes and with an increasing sunnî character; but another branch of the order openly adopted the esoteric doctrines of the shiites and the Kızılbaş and in their beliefs approached the Bektaşîs and the Melâmîs" (Inalcık, The Ottoman Empire 201).

From this point of view it is understood that Mevlevis neither crossed with administration nor participated in oppositional acts. Additionally, the notions like *Vahdet-i Vücut* and its followers were never taken into account as contrary approaches, and this notion was not used synonymously with Sufism that collides with or opposes to the regime and administration (Chodkiewicz 101). At this point the distinction between Mevlevism and Bektashism in social context becomes

apparent because as seen in previous chapter Bektashis have always participated in social uprisings as oppositions to the applications of the administrations. The tarikats within the Ottoman Empire, consequently Islamic Sufism in its general forms exist by adjusting instead of colliding with social discontents. As a matter of fact, we cannot see other Islamic Sufis in any active social participation, however Bektashis' essential existence took place in social contexts as much as religious. Like we can see in Mevlana's words:

> "All loves constitute a bridge leading to the divine love.
>
> To love human beings means to love GOD" (Celebi).

While Mevlevis' main feature is surrounded by the notion of "reaching the love of God" or "submission to the Divine" Bektashis' come up on the agenda by their oppositional acts in addition to their requests on their belief practices.

4.   THE SIGNIFICANCE AND RITUAL OF THE CEM CEREMONY

Although the roots of Cem Ceremony is found in Asia, some traditional spokesmen and intellectuals who give intellectual logistics to them search or adapt the social source of Cem in Islam. However, the scientific researches have revealed that the Cem Ceremony is an extension of the Shaman's ritualistic drinking koumiss (*kımız*) ceremonies. Later Buddhist and Manichean features were added. The former prays and hymns of Shamans, Manicheans and Buddhists were replaced with *nefes*es and the Shaman who led the ceremony is replaced with *Dede* who plays the *saz* and tells the *nefes*es (Korkmaz, Anadolu Aleviliği 205-301).

The Shamans' women-men gathered ceremonies with drinking and dancing as means of trance (*vecd*), and their sacrificial ceremonies have been transmitted to Alevis. After the acceptance of Islam, it is known that the nomadic Shaman Turks continued to apply these ceremonies in their heterodox nature. It is considered that the women-men gatherings in Shamans later continued in Bektashism and Alevism, as Cem Ceremonies, however, Islamic features were gradually adapted in these ceremonies.

Although these ceremonies are considered to be adapted from Shamans and *cem* means 'uniting' and 'place where it is being gathered,' in a different approach, Esat Korkmaz starts out from the Persian meaning of c*em* as the Shah's name who found wine. In Zoroastrian religion, in particular times of the month, for the memory of Shah who found wine, a ceremony was held. In this ceremony wine was drunk, poems were read and musical instruments were played. This event was representing

the respect for the Shah and by drinking wine he was made sacred. In Persian language this ceremony was again called 'ayin-i cem' in the meaning of commemorating, celebrating Cem and meeting for drinking for his name. But, also Korkmaz adds that such ceremonies have existed since the ancient times, the time's of Dionysus in Anatolia, and finding such similarities between different ceremonies is merely the consequences of the interaction between civilizations (Anadolu Aleviliği 206-207).

Worship places in monotheist religions are based on 'worshiping God'. However, in Alevi belief, the Cem Houses are mediators for 'reaching the god within the being.' Contrary to the meaning of the word 'Cem' (uniting, gathering), the word 'mosque' signifies a 'house honored by God.' While everything done in mosques is for God's approval, in Cem Houses the ritual symbolizes a journey neither to be approved nor disapproved. It is one's own journey to one's inner self to eliminate one's being.

While Allah awards justice in Islam, in Alevis justice is regulated in Cem Houses within the community and led by Dede. "Their holy men (*dede*, *pir*, *baba*, *mürşid*) who supervise their rituals and religious instructions, are recruited from privileged lineages that authorized by the central Bektaşi dervish lodge" (Markoff 96). As Ismail Kaygusuz mentions, the Cem Houses has a social function where the community is guided and their problems and questions are discussed. In addition to this, in these places the community gets the chance to socialize and express and share their belief, understanding and problems. He adds that these ritual activities are not like orthodox Islam's institutionalized *namaz* so as can be performed in mosques (Kaygusuz).

4.1. *Dört Kapı Kırk Makam* (Four Doors Forty Positions)

Alevi belief and understanding is based on reaching the inner energy that constitutes the essence of the being, which is described as *kamil-insan* or Ali. In Alevis, the reaching the essential-self represents '*reaching and becoming one with Hakk.*' This briefly defined journey of the self is revived in the Cem Ceremonies, which are held in Cem Houses. In these ceremonies, it is conceived that the Alevi-Bektashi belief is learned.

In Alevi-Bektashi belief, person is born to *reach Hakk*. In this path of reaching God, person who was born raw, will try to be mature and become *kamil-insan* (dignified, mature man). This path has four doors (gateways) and every door has ten positions (tasks), which are stated as 'four doors forty positions' -*Dört Kapı Kırk Makam*-.

John Kingsley Birge borrows the metaphor of 'sugar' used by an Alevi Dede in order to explain this process of four doors: "One can go to the dictionary to find out what sugar is and how it is used. That is the şeriat Gateway to knowledge. One feels the inadequacy of that when one is introduced directly to the practical seeing and handling of sugar. That represents the *tarikat* Gateway to knowledge. To actually taste sugar and to have it enter into oneself is to go one step deeper into an appreciation of its nature, and that is what is meant by *marifet*. If one could go still further and become one with sugar so that he could say, " I am sugar," that and that alone would be to know what sugar is, and that is what is involved in the *hakikat* Gateway" (Birge 102).

In the first door, *şeriat* (religious law), person learns the basic knowledge of the belief. The second door, *tarikat* (the path), is where the Alevi-Bektashi *yol* (way, method) is learned, the worship is held, Cem Ceremony takes place and, 'twelve services' (*on iki hizmet*) are performed. This is where the person acquires some experience on the way to become mature. In the third door, *marifet* (knowledge), person starts getting into the essence of Its (*Can*)[19] religion. In the fourth door, *hakikat* (ultimate truth), person conquers Its being *–nefs-*, overcomes Its self and becomes ready to be *Hakk ile hak olmaya* (become god with God). "This struggle to overcome self and the sense of duality is made possible by the power of 'love,' *aşk*" (Birge 111). This is the door where one reaches the position of a *kamil-insan*.

In order to become *kamil-insan* one must free oneself from one's personality and 'proper name', in other terms, one has to sacrifice the materialistic aspects of oneself. The fourth leg of the symbolic sacrificial animal in the Cem Ceremonies is risen up to symbolize the removal of the personality in the symbolic order. This removal can be accomplished by the fundamental approach of the Alevi-Bektashi doctrine, which are based on love, tolerance, and modesty but not 'being a good person' because there still is an ego in being a good person. The only way to return to one's inner self and see Ali within one's self is not to make judgments. Consequently, the journey of reaching the inner self or the essence symbolized by leading towards to be *kamil-insan* from rawness is represented in this ceremony.

---

[19] In this research the term 'It' is used instead of 'he/she,' in order to underline the nature of the Alevi understanding, which does not comprise gender discrimination. 'It' refers to '*Can*', which is an expression that Alevies use to each other in the meaning of 'life' and 'essence.'

This stage of seeing Ali within oneself is identified as the *Marifet Door*. In time, one will manage to remove Itself completely and vanish it, so as 'to be one with Hakk' and 'know Hakk without a mediator' and reach the stage of *Hakikat Door*. One other interpretation of calling this ceremony 'Cem' has nourished from the idea of this ceremony's representation of this unification. Without depicting this ceremony, study of the crucial aspects of this understanding would be incomplete.

4.2. Finding *Birlik* (Oneness)

"To the Bektashi, as to the pantheistic mystic in Islam generally, the physical world is a reflection of Reality in *Adem,* non-existence; and the sense of duality, *ikilik,* is the veil which hides the reality of God's existence from men. Men feel themselves separate from God and look upon the world about them as also being separate from God. Since in this seeming separateness the only touch of reality lies in the fact that man and the universe are emanations of Divinity there is, therefore, in man a spark of Real Existence which is ever seeking to be reunited with the source from which it came. This tendency to find *birlik*, or oneness with the only real being, expresses itself in a struggle with self. As self is conquered the sense of 'oneness' is made possible" (Birge 110).

The completion of the circle of 'finding inner self' or the 'essence' begins with a 'call.' The purpose of the 'call' to Cem is to initiate one's own journey, mediated by Dede. Caliph Ali represents the transition from the materialistic world to the spiritual one. The essential feminine energy within Hz. Fatma (Hz. Mohammed's daughter) awakens and she marries Hz. Ali. The 'threshold,' *eşik*, on the entrance of the Cem House symbolizes Hz. Fatma and the spiritual awakening, while Hz. Ali symbolizes the consciousness, which will take us to unification. The consciousness inside us - Ali- is the light of the 'divine appearance' -*ilahi suret*-, which is why every being is a

living Kaaba and is sacred. Each being that participates in the Cem is sacred and there is no difference among the ones that passes through the *eşik* in the entrance. Therefore the term *Can* is used for every *living Kaaba*.

4.3. The Hierarchy in the Cem Ceremony

"These ceremonies are attended by families bound by kinship who assemble in private homes *(cem evi),* where religious beliefs and spiritual filiations are renewed and reviewed under the direction of the *dede*, who acts in the judiciary capacity as a 'director of conscience'" (Markoff 96).

The ritual of the Cem Ceremony starts with everyone saluting (*niyaz etmek*) each other. Dede executes the ceremony and makes a general speech about what is going to take place in the ceremony. He asks if there is any offended person and asks three times as: "Gönüller bir mi erenler?" ("Are our hearths one?") and people reply "eyvallah" ("okay"). If there is anyone who has a complaint Dede mediates in order to solve the problem and makes the offended ones come to an agreement. This action can be seen as a public court.

"…*Alevilik* is court and religion rolled into one: a regulatory, mediating and reconciliatory function is present in almost every part of its doctrine and practice. Thus there is a correlation between the participation of women in ceremonies, and the great significance which they possess for the social order in the Alevi villages. This does not necessarily mean that women are equal in all ways to men: rather, that there is a doctrine of social control enshrined in the *cem* which acknowledges all people, and requires that all, whether men or women, be answerable to it" (Shankland 94).

76

Later Dede makes a speech including good wishes for removing the troubles, offences and worries. Afterwards the twelve services are called with *saz* and *deyiş*. Dede speaks about good wishes for the acceptance of the services comprising the historical figures who represent these services. The ones who will perform the twelve services come to the *meydan* (hall) and salute.

The particular place assigned with a sheepskin in a slightly higher position where Dede is seated is called *post* and "…it is commonly supposed that there are in the Bektashi *meydan* twelve *posts*, each standing symbolically for some great figure in Bektashi history" (Birge 178). "Corresponding in number to the Twelve Post's it is also said that there are in connection with the *Ayinicem* Twelve Services" (Birge 179).

4.4. The Twelve Services

After making offended ones come to agreement the 'twelve services' are distributed. These services are equivalent to transcendental services. "The *dede* leads all ceremonies, often with the aid of twelve assistants who are named according to their specialized ritual function and the historical mythological figures they represent. For example, the water carrier *(ibriktar, ibrikçi, Selma)* plays the role of Selman Farisi, who supported Ali's rightful ascension to the caliphate, and the primary keeper of order who maintains discipline throughout the ceremony (*gözcü*) plays the role of Karaca Ahmet, the famous mystic of Anatolia" (Markoff 100). It is considered that the person who serves will not see Itself superior to another, and by overcoming Its personality, reaches a spiritual awareness, which is based on being modest.

'Services' is one of the positions (tasks) of the *Tarikat* Door and among all forty positions, it has a significant role and its parts are displayed in the Cem Ceremony:

1. *Dede* -leads the ceremony

2. *Rehber* -guides the ones who enter to the *tarikat*

3. *Gözcü* -responsible for the order of the ceremony

4. *Çırağcı* -lights the candels

5. *Zakir* -one who plays and sings

6. *Ferraş* (*Süpürgeci*) -sweeper

7. *Saka* (*Dolucu*) -one who pours water

8. *Sofracı* (*Sofradar*) -responsible for the food served

9. *Pervane* (*Kapıcı*) -responsible for preventing strangers to enter

10. *Meydancı* -responsible for cleaning

11. *Ibrikçi* (*Ibrikdar*) -spills rose scent or water

12. *Izinci* (*Ayakçı*) -responsible for organizing shoes

(Korkmaz, Dört Kapı Kırk Makam 30-31), (Mélikoff 263-264), (Birge 179-180), (Zelyut, Öz Kaynaklarına Göre Alevilik 187-188) [20]

Dede tells the *tecella tercemanı* (pray), which is about the services. After every action or activity that takes place in the *meydan* Dede tells a pray on wishing the action's acceptance and its bringing good fortune. Dede addresses the participants about everybody's right to make mistakes but still invites them to do their best to accompany the service performers.

---

[20] In different sources the names and roles of these services varies but the duties in some degrees are displayed in this form.

Ibrikçi makes the participants do the ablution (*abdest*). A woman accompanies him by carrying a towel. He spills three drops of water by saying "Allah-Mohammed-Ali." *Çırağcı* tells a *düvaz* (*deyiş*es comprising lyrics on twelve imams) of Hatayi or Pir Sultan Abdal. *Ferraş* takes the service and while keeping the broom under his left arm he stays in the hall (*dar*) and tells a pray. Dede wishes the pray to be accepted.

4.5. *Kırklar Meclisi* (*Meydanı*) (Place of the Forty)

The *Kırklar Meclisi* (*Meydanı*) (Place of the Forty) myth, which was a community comprised by men and women and led by Hz. Ali is the base symbol of the Cem Ceremony. In the myth, Hz. Ali squeezes one white one red grape in his hand and drinks it which makes the rest thirty-nine become enraptured and intoxicated. In the ceremony, this enrapture of *knowing God without a mediator*, is symbolized by drinking wine or *dolu* (*rakı*). In the Alevi community and in researches this event is being mentioned in various forms but the outcome of all is the same, which is the symbolization of *birlik* (oneness) with all as to all are connected with each other. "This traditional meeting is said to be the prototype of the *Ayinicem*…" (Birge 138).

4.6. *Görgü Cemi* (The Cem of Manner)

The Cem of Manner -*Görgü Cemi*- is held in Cem Ceremonies occasionally when there is a request. It starts with two couples of *musahip* (symbolically sibling) families coming to the arena in order to be interrogated. *Musahips* state that they are pleased with each other and salute the hall continuing with a pray. Dede asks the participants that if anyone has a complaint about these *can*'s they should come fore and declare it. If there is Dede mediates for the solution. Later he tells a pray on the subject of not hurting and doing malice. After the pray he asks if everyone is pleased

with each other and themselves. The participants reply "eyvallah." In consequence of this action it is declared that these *musahip* couples come clean in front of the community as to pass from the manner – *görgüden geçmek*- either by revealing their guilt or approving their innocence. They salute the *meydan* and go back to their places.

Later, the symbolic sacrificial animal is brought to the *meydan* and is fed with water and salt. The owner of the animal raises the animal's right front leg and covers his left foot with the tip of his right foot. While the animal stays in the *meydan* Dede tells *tekbir* and prays. *Zakirs* tell *deyiş*es about sacrificial animals. After wishing good fortune *Ferraş* sweeps the *meydan* three times and they give a break to the ceremony.

After the break the *Çırağcı* lights the candles. This action is called "waking the light" (*Çerağının uyandırılması)*. He places the candles on his right, left and front, and tells a *düvaz*. Dede wishes the best of *Çırağcı*. *Zakirs* tell a well-known *deyiş* of Hatayi for three times. *Ferraş* sweeps the *meydan* for three times. *Ibrikçi* brings a bowl of water and spills three drops of water on Dede's index finger. A woman accompanies him with a towel and they go around all participants as a symbolic expression of displaying ablution (*abdest*, purification).

4.7. *Tevhit*

Three *tevhits* are told and "La ilahe illallah" sentence at the end of every stanza is told altogether accompanied by gently hitting the knees with hands. Later another *tevhit* is told altogether by prostrating (*secde*). After this action another break is

taken. And after the break *miraçlama* (rise to the sky) is told. While the *miraçlama* is told the sentences are accompanied by the participants as in actions like while the sentence "Muhammed ayağa kalktı" (Mohammad stood up) is said everyone rises and while "cümlesi de secde kıldı" (all prostrated) is said everyone prostrates. In another sentence some start performing *semah*, which is rather slow in the beginning and gradually gets rapid.

4.8. The Ritual

In Cem Ceremony the events such as the creation of the universe, prophets' rise to sky –*mirac*- and the Kerbela[21] event are revived. These revivals are inspired by historical facts, and their meanings are tried to be executed by symbolic rituals. For example, the 'Allah-Mohammed-Ali' discourse represents the creation of the mankind but contrary to Sunni belief where Ali is a sacred person with flesh, here, he is a mythical personality.

> "During the collective ritual action that characterizes these gatherings, recitations from the Koran, religious formulas, prayers, and blessings combine with sung mystical poetry in the vernacular and ritual dance *(sema)* that is accompanied by the sacred ritual instrument called the *bağlama, saz,* and sometimes *çöğür* (long-necked plucked folk lute with frets). The expressive art forms of poetry, music, and dance are viewed as inseparable components of the cem and function in the invocation of saints and reinforcement of the legitimacy of Alevis as their spiritual descendants. The poetry is still instrumental in satisfying the spiritual needs of many levels of Turkish society as well as in reaffirming the values and ethics of the Alevis and preserving their beliefs and practices" (Markoff 96-97).

---

[21] Hz. Ali's son Hz. Hüseyin has been murdered in Kerbela because of not recognizing Yezid as the caliph.

The *nefes*es (hymns concerning the mystical experience) and *deyiş*es (songs of mystical love) sang in the Cem Ceremonies are the expressions of the doctrine and belief. The *semahs* are swiveled with love of God and one lets an inner will to undertake the service. This is why s*emah* represents submission.

> "Although ritual dance follows worship and the experience of sung poetry accompanied by instrumental music in Alevi religious services, the ultimate aim of music or dance is not to induce trance. Rather, trance is discouraged, and the *gözcü*, primary keeper of order and disciplinarian throughout the ceremony, puts a halt to tendencies toward excessive emotional display in all members of the event, and particularly in those who have been given the honor to rise and perform the dance" (Markoff 101).

4.9. The Music

The Alevi music has a polyphonic structure and a choral characteristic. Even the Alevi music has nourished from a religious source, gradually it gained different aspects like rebellious, epical and social lyrics music. Although people from various ethnic or religious origins do perform Alevi music today, the religious or in other words religious ceremonial music is considered to be known only by Alevis due to its secrecy gained (Zelyut, <u>Aleviler Ne Yapmalı?</u> 180-186) with the social positioning of Kızılbaşs as stated earlier. Like the Cem Ceremonies the indispensable feature of these ceremonies, the Alevi music, became a part of this secrecy (Erseven 158).

The *ozan*s –*Aşık*s- who perform the Alevi music reflected and reflects the resistance towards periods' restraint and oppressive administrations, criticism of the order and

even rebellion to God. The integrity of these *nefes*es and *deyiş*es represent the Alevi-Bektashi understanding (Erseven 158).

"The most traditional tuning for Alevi repertoire performed on the folk lute is the Alevi-Turkmen tuning la-re-mi (top, middle, and lower courses respectively) that is known as *bağlama düzeni* (the bağlama tuning) and sometimes as Alevi düzeni (the Alevi tuning) or even Veysel düzeni (in honor of the contemporary minstrel-poet Aşık Veysel). This tuning facilitates the crossing of strings and the creation of an intricate texture that features the movement of voices in parallel fourths and fifths, a distinctive feature of nomadic Turkmen lute performance practice" (Markoff 103).

"Meter in Alevi music spans a wide spectrum of meters found in Turkish traditional rural music, such as the duple variety as it is known in the West and the unique *aksak* (limping) asymmetric combinations that are found in neighboring Balkan countries as well, such as: 5/8, 7/8, 9/8, and 10/8" (Markoff 103).

In the ceremony Dede asks everyone's agreement (*razı*) on the ones who will perform the music and semah. If so, they come up to meydan and salute (*niyaz*) ("bowing, prostration to the religious leader that can include kissing him on both knees, on the chest, or the floor in front of him" (Markoff 105)) to the Dede. After his blessing he recites a prayer "in which he asks for a blessing from Allah, Muhammad, the twelve Alid imams, and Hacı Bektaş, for all the members of the community, for the zakir who performs the music, and for the women and men who will participate in the dance *(semahcılar).* The prayer ends with the mystical formula *Gerçek Erenler Demine Hû* ("Hû, to those who have truly attained the mystical knowledge of God"). Once the musicians begin to play, the dancers, who can number

from one to sixteen or more, acknowledge one another with dignified and respectful bows or symbolic embraces" (Markoff 105).

4.10. *Semah* (*Semah Üçlemesi*)

(*Ağırlama* (slow), *Yürüme* (marching), *Hızlanma* (rapid))

After the pray *Zakirs* start playing the *Kırklar Semahı* (*semah* of forty) and usually six men and six women do the *semah* performance. After every *semah* performance (three times) a *taçlama* is told by Dede. Later the service of *Saka* takes place. Initially *saka* is given to Dede, *Rehber* (Guide) and another person, and then to all participants. As the last service *Sofracı* brings the bread and sacrificial *lokma*. All food is placed equally and no one starts eating before they are all served. Some can spare some amount of food from their share for the destitute or old people. When it is made sure that all are equally distributed then everyone starts eating. Again the *Ferraş* sweeps the *meydan* three times and *Zakirs* play three *düvaz* as to conclude the ceremony (Korkmaz, <u>Anadolu Aleviliği</u> 205-301).

"Once the trance state had been attained, it became 'exteriorized by means of dance'" (Markoff 101). "As they eat and drink musicians play upon stringed instruments and *nefes*es are sung. Then those who wish rise for the dance, *sema*[22], which is done in couples, a man and a woman together. They first go to the Baba, *niyaz* to him and then go to the center of the room where in several "figures" they perform the dance. According to *Ziya Bey's* description, the first "figure" consists of rhythmically bending their bodies to the right and left, at first slowly then with in-

---

[22] The word *sema* literally means "hearing." It comes to mean dance from the fact that the hearing of the tune on the stringed instruments and the singing of the *nefes*es leads to a desire for the accompanying circular dance.

creased speed. In the second "figure" they put their left hands on their breasts, bow

slightly, then as their bodies bend, swing also their arms from right to left and back.

In the third "figure" they move around, *devrederler.* After encircling the room a few

times they pass to the fourth "figure" in which each turns as they together move

about the room, the music quickening and becoming louder. *Ziya Bey* describes the

dance as beautiful in the harmonious, rhythmic movement of hands and swaying of

bodies. There is nothing, he says, suggestive or improper in the behavior of the

dancers. In fact a guard, *gözcü,* is there to interfere if there is the slightest

impropriety. According to *Ziya Bey* this dance is a custom inherited from very

ancient days when the Turks were Shamanists" (Birge 199).

> "Just as the characteristic of the *Rufai* order is to produce a state of ecstasy by
> the swaying of the body and the repetition out loud of God's name and
> praises of Him; and just as the *Mevlevi's* produce their "state" by whirling in
> their special manner to the tune of the *ney* and drum; so the Bektashi here
> claims, in the spirit of a sacrament, remembering the recognition of God
> before creation began, that it is the Bektashi's characteristic rite or ceremony
> to produce a state of spiritual intoxication by the drinking of wine or *rakı*"
> (Birge 201).

During *semah* the dancers try not to turn their backs to the Dede or each other. While

semah is performed the participants to the ceremony observe in silence and

sometimes they sway from side to side as a response to the rhythm and sensual

appeal of the music.

> "The choreographies utilize circle formation, line formation, and
> arrangements in which couples face one another, synchronizing their
> movements more closely. The actual dance figures employ walking steps for

85

the slow movement of the dance *(ağırlama),* with restricted arms movements, faster steps, and more animate movements in the second movement *(yeldirme, yelleme),* when arm movements are said to imitate birds in flight. A third movement is sometimes present *(hızlanma),* in which the figures become even more complex and intense" (Markoff 105-106).

There are various s*emahs*, however one of which, the *Turnalar Semahı,* seems to be slightly more important. "The preparation of cranes for flight is alluded to in the movements of the Dance of the Cranes *(Turnalar Semahı).* The elegant crane is also a familiar image in Turkish folk poetry, which is not surprising as it is known to be an important totem for the Turkic-Mongol peoples of Central Asia. The movements of the dance, then, can be viewed as possible links to a shamanistic legacy, in which shamans in performing miracles are transformed into birds who then take off in flight. This idea of the metamorphosis of a human into a bird is found also in the miracles of Bektaşi saints such as Ahmed Yesevi and Barak Baba. In addition, legend tells it that Hacı Bektaş himself traveled from Khurasan to Anatolia in the form of a dove *(güvercin).* The legend continues that Hacı Bektaş received the power to work miracles from the imam Ali, the so-called "king of saints," who is sometimes symbolically represented in Alevi-Bektaşi poetry as a crane" (Markoff 106).

5.   SYNCRETISM

Through the examination of Alevi history and belief it is seen that Alevi understanding has been formed by the interaction with various beliefs and exposition to socio-political circumstances. Belief and historical phenomena cannot be separated from one another and they proceed by accompanying one another. The Alevi belief and practices were formed under these interactive circumstances. When the conditions and how Alevis adapted themselves to these conditions are taken into consideration, the formation of Alevi belief becomes apparent. By the interaction with various beliefs, particularly with the ones which are also practicing heterodox applications, the Alevi belief has been articulated. Accompanied by socio-political and socio-economical sanctions, Alevis opposed these practices by applying rebellious activities. In some cases the applications nourished from political rivalry like in the implications that took place during the Ottoman and Safevi clash in the early 16th century (Ocak, "Tarih ve Teoloji" 166). Exposition to these sanctions contributed to the formation of Alevi understanding in terms of causing Alevis to develop and adapt their own way of interpretation and approach by means of their oppositions. "Alevis are now trying to overcome the centuries of Sunni prejudice and persecution and assert their own identity" (Zeidan). However, accomplishing this assertion initially necessitates a consensus on the definition of Alevism or in the broader sense how Alevism is perceived. This chapter will explore this phenomenon by examining particularly the term 'syncretism' in terms of focusing on the perception of Alevism's syncretic nature.

5.1. Constitution of Alevi Syncretism

From the interaction of all religions, beliefs and understandings mentioned, a belief system and a cultural form of understanding emerged a syncretism called Alevism-Bektashism. In this syncretism, the perception of God, in what grounds it resides and the position or the rank of human form the core.

The duality of god[23] and human is based on understanding human as the manifestation of god. In Alevism, god as in orthodox Islam (Sunnism and Shiism), and in other monotheist religions is not in a higher power as a creator. On the contrary, god in Alevism becomes the very human. This conclusion arose from a circular system, which is that god is manifested on Ali and Ali already represents the essence. This phenomenon can be observed on Kaygusuz Abdal's nefes:

> "Hak'kı ararsan Ademde ara
> Irak'ta, Mekke'de, Hac'da değil" (Eyuboğlu, Bektaşilik 221).
> (If you are looking for God, look for it in Adam. Not in Iraq, Mecca or pilgrimage.)

From this point of view, the main goal in Alevism reveals itself in terms of reaching this essence, which is signified as becoming *kamil-insan* (mature man). This *kamil-insan* is represented by Ali and is the essence of the universe, maturity and purity (Eyuboğlu, Bektaşilik 224). Consequently, it can be understood that Ali is removed from its fleshed human form. While it is the essence of all, naming it 'Ali' depicts the duality within it. Even though this understanding heads long before the infiltration of Islam in Turkish communities, naming this phenomenon 'Ali' occurred after the influences of Islam and particularly Shia Islam. If we put aside this fact, still

---

[23] In this chapter 'God' will be written in small letters as 'god' due to not attributing a superior position to it and placing it within oneself in Alevi understanding.

naming this phenomenon after a human again indicates the binary structure as in god and human. Here Ali is both the essence and at the same time the representative of all human kind. What is derived from this situation is that Ali is within all human beings in the form of *kamil-insan*. Only way to reach this aspect within one, lies in 'love' (*aşk*). The term *aşk* is significant both in Islamic Sufism and Alevi-Bektashism. However, while *aşk* in Sufism represents 'love for the Divine,' it is important in Alevi belief because it is considered that loving every existence in the universe is the path of reaching to become *kamil-insan*. In addition to guidance of *aşk*, one has to unleash itself from the material aspects of itself and boundaries gained in the material world. This could be accomplished by passing four doors, as it has been explained in details in the previous chapter.

Everything that takes place in Alevi-Bektashi understanding and rituals are based on an inner (*batın*) journey. Whatever is done is unleashed from the physical aspects of life, as it can be seen on Alevis' approach on worshipping practices. In the case of *namaz*, since the body is an appearance, and the body applies the *namaz* it has no meaning and importance (Eyuboğlu, Bektaşilik 227). What counts is the worship done within oneself by trying to become mature by the guidance of love.

5.2. The Cyclic Structure of Time in Alevi Belief and Its Reflections

As it is mentioned, Alevi history, long before they were even named as 'Alevi' is based on their oppositional approach to social, political, economical and religious issues. Under these oppositions, in addition to actual facts, these facts' sanctions' fixative contexts lay because by nature sanctions make people obey on fixed norms. So, what actually lies underneath their oppositional acts is their not accepting to be

positioned by and within the fixed concepts and definitions. Since fixed concepts do not welcome alteration by means of temporal and spatial contexts this aspect can be forwarded by examining the perceptions of time and space in Alevism.

Çamuroğlu explains the absence of time, and presence of space concepts in Alevism by the absence of completeness feeling of the events in the history. Time has a 'multi layered meaning' ('katlı anlamlı') structure, in other words, on account of meaning it has a stratified ('katmanlı') structure (60). Bektashis believe in evolution but this evolution has a spiral and cyclic structure (Çamuroğlu 63). There is a 'now' ness that is unhistorical and constantly rotating. This 'now' ness takes place in a different dimension, which has a door. The door of the *tarikat* represents contacting with this dimension via this door. There is an oscillation between the historical 'now' and the 'now' in the other dimension. Systemically and consciously conjoining both 'now's is maintained by the *tarikat ereni* (saint). In other words, the *cem* (uniting) of them is held in the *tarikat* by the guidance of Dede. The hierarchy between past, future and present has been removed, and both past and future takes place in present –'now'-. 'Now' can only be comprehended by understanding its continuity, infinity and cyclicality (Çamuroğlu 64-65).

The reflection of the cyclic perception can be observed in the trinity discourse of "Allah-Mohammed-Ali." This discourse does not indicate the historical characters but explains the creation of mankind (Çamuroğlu 66). Çamuroğlu corresponds 'Allah' to wisdom, 'Mohammed' to love and 'Ali' to moment. Wisdom is necessary for interpreting the truth and for acting within it; love is for comprehending the genuine that is beyond the truth and to find the joy of right leap; and moment is the

possibility of this leap (67). All these exist at present. Consequently, a time concept that does not comprise a future to come cannot accept the existence of the judgment day or an end, and neither the belief of heaven and hell. Within the notion of 'now' both heaven and hell take place now. Unlike the linear time understandings of history and orthodoxy, in cyclic time understanding they both happen now. In the same sense, Bektashism removes the opposition between god-human in orthodox Islam and unites them. Similarly, since there is no end that can be mentioned, death takes place in this life too. As it can be seen in the saying "die before you die" liberation from the symbolic life that is lived in this life represents death and it is celebrated because it represents the path of becoming *kamil-insan*. In the second death, physical death, still there is no thought of leaving the C*an*'s. These C*an*'s will be communicated in difficult times as Shamans did with the souls (Çamuroğlu 78).

The time perception in Alevism, in terms of everything's happening at present, can be seen on the adaptation of significant historical figures in Alevi history as all times figures. Starting from Ali and continuing with Hasan and Hüseyin, Hacı Bektaş Veli and Pir Sultan Abdal these characters are removed from their historical personalities and become today's martyrs. As it is mentioned in previous chapters these names become symbols of present martyrs. In addition to this, Atatürk becomes one of these symbols as in transforming into a savior. All these figures still exist today and 'now.' This phenomenon is another reflection of the perception of time and 'now'ness.

From this point of view it can be said that: "As a revolutionary political ideology Alevism always led the fight for liberation against all tyranny in the succession to

Muhammad, upholding the oppressed masses against a Sunnism which served the rich and powerful dominant elites" (Zeidan).

Alevism's presentation as a humanistic ideology "represented by the typical Alevi characteristics of tolerance, love, and respect for all men created in god's image and in whom god manifests himself, regardless of race, religion, or nation. Love, help for those in need, kindness, solidarity, sharing, honesty, self knowledge, freedom, equality, fraternity, democracy - all are seen as unique humanitarian Alevi traits" (Zeidan).

> "Socially Alevism is seen as a positive revolutionary force always fighting against oppression and all forms of evil in society, representing the poor and marginalised nomads, peasants and worker classes in their struggles against their exploiters, and demanding equality and justice. Ali was the defender of the poor and oppressed. Hasan and Huseyn were martyrs in the cause of the dispossessed. Religious differentiation was transformed into political differentiation and Alevism became the representative of socialism, progress, social justice, and a classless society, branding Sunnism as reactionary" (Zeidan).

5.3. Social Representation of Alevism

Within the Turkish community Alevi identity is defined in various aspects in accordance with the presentation of Alevis' identities or how they have been perceived. These aspects can be expressed as "a separate religion, a belief-system, the true Islam, an Islamic Caferi madhab[24], a Sufi tariqa, an ethnic group, a

---

[24] Imam Caferi (Ja'far al-Sadiq) is the sixth Shia imam and he was named after a Shia school of thoughts that basis the belief in twelve Imams. The assumption of some literature presents Alevism as arisen from the Caferi sect.

philosophy, a worldview, a way of life, a political position, a social opposition, a culture, and a civilization" (Zeidan).

> "Since the beginning of the Republican era, the 'Turkish thesis' claimed Turkishness as a main marker of Alevism, seen as a specific Turkish religion which succeeded in combining Islam with elements of authentic Turkish culture including Shamanism, thereby developing a faith much more suitable for Turks than Arabic Islam and including authentic Turkish traits such as tolerance, humanitarianism, egalitarianism, and a stress on the inner religion of the heart - traits suppressed by Sunnism. Alevism is viewed as the true preserver of authentic Turkish culture, religion, and language amidst Ottoman pressures to Arabise or Persianise" (Zeidan).

Elwert explains the phenomenon of *switching* process within 'we-groups' as in "a rapid change from one frame of reference to another. A class movement may become a nationalist one, a nationalist movement transforms itself into a religious movement, or a religious network redefine itself as a class movement. Switching processes easily escape scientific treatment because they 'change the department'-from religious to social, to political studies" (Elwert 67). In Alevism *switching* plays an important role due to its nature of comprising both religious or cultural and political stands, which means belonging to different reference groups simultaneously. "According to the opportunity of situations, they may stress one or the other of these affiliations as their 'real' one" (Elwert 71). In some cases the switching act can take place as "involuntary situational switching" (Elwert 72). "Switching implies negotiation over identities…" (Elwert 78). In Alevism it can be said that while in some cases they bring their ethnicity or belief forward, in some cases they emphasize their being the guards of secularism, as in the example of Kemalist Alevis.

As it can be seen in Zeidan's explanation of Alevism's social representation: "Alevism is presented as the religion of reason and wisdom which stresses education, is progressive, stands for secularism, democracy and science, promotes personal and public honesty, and is compatible with modernity", reciprocally the bond between Alevis and Atatürk has been constituted. Due to the affinity between Atatürk's notions and Alevism's "In Atatürk's Republic, Alevis became fervent republicans and were overrepresented in left-of-center republican and socialist organizations" (Elwert 67).

"Neither ethnic groups nor nations constitute a 'natural' order. They compete in human history with other types of social organization for the place of the central organizing structure" (Elwert 67). Elwert's statement of their not constituting a 'natural' order signifies these groups' or nations' being already constructed structures. When the Alevi history of social development and belief are taken into consideration it has to be said that Alevism has been constructed as well. Their interaction and opposition within the society have led the construction of Alevism. "We also have to keep in mind that nations and ethnic groups are social structures which have to be reproduced. That means they must be recreated by each successive generation. That may have to fulfill new functions and may use old plausibilities. The transmission of plausibilities works only if the functions are satisfied" (Elwert 67). The reproduction of groups or nations, in our case Alevi group, depicts a dual path. On the one hand, the recreation of the understanding or the belief in accordance with new interactions experienced by each successive generation, and on the other hand, reproduction of the position taken in the social order. Both circumstances take place and progress reciprocally.

Without questioning the process of recreation what is at stake is the direction of the tendency of recreation. Putting aside the fruitless discussion of whether this tendency is 'good' or 'bad,' my aim is to determine Alevis' tendency. Due to worries on the social representation of Alevis in the Turkish community, Alevism is being reproduced by many ways like becoming socialist, Marxist and Sunni-cized. Although we cannot adapt this fact to all Alevi community, an observation I had in a Cem Ceremony in Istanbul (April 2006) gave me the impression of their unconscious tendency towards being Sunni-cized. The worry of being seen as perverted within the Turkish community led Alevis to transform one of the crucial features of the Cem Ceremony, which is the sitting position. It is known that in Cem Ceremonies men and women are seated disorderly and without questioning whether a men or a women is seated next to one. However, in this Cem Ceremony the *Gözcü*, who is responsible from the general order of the ceremony as part of the twelve services, particularly led the participants to be seated *haremlik-selamlık* (men on one side, women on the other). Even if the aim of this act is to prevent any negative baseless impressions like accusations of perversion and orgy (*mum söndü*) as occurred throughout the Alevi history –stated by the *Rehber* in the ceremony-, still this act actually causes the transformation of Alevism towards Sunnism. The irony of this event was that the participants were initially sat mixed up until they were warned, which meant they had no particular consciousness of how to be seated, and also they subconsciously had the knowledge of sitting together. But after they were moved they neither questioned their being misdirected nor became aware of the reason they were moved.

5. Syncretism

"Syncretism is a term used in Christian theology since at least the seventeenth century. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* it denotes an 'attempt to

95

sink differences and effect union between sects or philosophical schools'. While Erasmus of Rotterdam used the term in 1519 in the sense of reconciliation among Christians, the theologian Calixtus of Helmstadt was the first to use 'syncretism' in theological debate to mean the sinking of theological differences, at a church conference in Thorn in 1645. While syncretism thus sounds like a positive strategy to contain conflict and promote tolerance or, in recent parlance, at least 'dialogue', it is striking how pejoratively the term is often used by the defenders of 'the true faith'. It is seen as a loss of identity, an illicit contamination, a sign of religious decadence. In theological disputes it was generally regarded as a betrayal of principles, or as an attempt to secure unity at the expense of truth. Syncretism is seen as a corruption of the Truth" (Veer 196-197).

Peter van der Veer states that the term 'syncretism' is "often used in anthropology and history as if it were a transparent, descriptive term, referring to the 'borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols, or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation'" (Veer 196 and Berling 9). He continues by suggesting that "the term 'syncretism' refers to a politics of difference and identity and that as such the notion of power is crucial in its understanding. At stake is the power to identify true religion and to authorize some practices as 'truthful' and others as 'false'. Syncretism is regarded positively by some, as promoting tolerance and negatively by others, as promoting the decline of the pure faith" (Veer 196).

> "These notions replace the idea that there is only one absolute Truth and that expressions of that Truth are ultimately authorized by the universal, Catholic Church. Deviations from that Truth were heresies, and certainly not alternative, in principle equal forms of expression of natural religion […] Syncretism as the union of different, supposedly equal, theological

96

viewpoints can also only come up when the idea of absolute Truth is abandoned" (Veer 197).

In the case of Alevis, Sunnism or in other words the Directorate of Religious Affairs is the authorized association of the 'absolute Truth.' Consequently, Alevis are the ones who abandon the 'idea of absolute Truth.' Abandonment of absolute Truth can also be interpreted as abandoning 'primordial values.' In that case Elwert explains that: "The phenomenon of switching is uncomfortable for any essentialist theory because 'primordial values', which presumably constitute by their very 'nature' the boundaries of ethnic groups, suddenly lose relevance" (Elwert 71). The loss of relevance of 'primordial values' and abandonment of 'absolute Truth' in Alevis constitute the basis of Alevi understanding because bringing god to the earth's surface and placing it within oneself can only be established by leaving or opposing these notions. So, this act is another feature that enables the construction of Alevi syncretism. In another aspect, not only making these terms lose their relevance but also actually by abandoning them, building a new understanding is made possible. Forwarding this manner, in this formation abandoning absoluteness of time concept and how the interpretation of time takes its part in Alevi belief is another indication of a syncretic nature.

Since time is a conceptual apparatus describing the interrelations between events when the Alevi history is taken into consideration it is seen that in many instances they have tried to alter or defeat particular events by being dissidents and borrowing others from the past as if they exist at that instant. Interrelation between former events and characters and today's is made possible by the rejection of linear time or in other words 'literal time.' The historical figures who are brought to today become

the representatives of all times martyrs and interpreted as the defenders of resistance against notions that comprise any sort of absoluteness. They became the spokesmen of Alevis, who were not intimidated or subjugated by the representatives of orthodoxy or in other words 'true religion.' They have become heresies, *rafizi*, *zındık* etc. and after the 70's *kızılbaş* in the meaning of rebellious to god. This phenomenon can even be seen in Kaygusuz Abdal's words:

Yucalardan yuca gördüm	(I've seen you higher than sublime
Erbabsın sen koca Tanrı	You're the authority, great God
Alem okur kelam ile	People read with word
Sen okursun hece Tanrı	You God, read syllable
Asi kullar yaratmışsın	You've created rebel servants
Varsın şöyle dursun deyu	To stay aside
Anları koymuş orada	You've left minds there
Sen çıkmışsın uca Tanrı	You God, ascended to top
Kıldan köprü yaratmışsın	You've created bridge out of hair
Gelsün kullar geçsin deyu	For servants to pass
Hele biz şöyle duralım	We shall stay here
Yiğit isen geç a Tanrı (Öz).	If you're brave, you pass God)

These words have to be understood as a manner of questioning the nature of god. Because only by questioning it, god can be brought to the inner self of human as the essence. Accepting its superiority as in orthodox approaches will only emphasize the differentiation between human and god. However, as it has been mentioned Alevism is based on removing this division.

Their religious positioning as in the example of opposing the absoluteness of god, conceptual oppositions like in the perception of time and social oppositions to

sanctions intermingle and drive their resistance towards social and religious truths. All these features are the very reasons Alevis' being positioned as 'other' throughout their history. The unification of all these phenomena, none of which are inextricable, has constructed the Alevi existence and representation.

In another aspect as Colpe states "… there is established a new relationship between things which have become different; but finally this is the metamorphosis of one thing, not the synthesis of two things. Therefore, only the analysis based on horizontal grades of fusion applies, not layers of superimposition, subjugation or balance" (Colpe 46). This statement explains that the syncretism of Alevis does not arise by merely synthesizing various features from different religions and cultures by interacting over time. It is "a process of religious amalgamation, of blending heterogeneous beliefs and practices" (Veer 208), which reveals or creates 'one thing' or in other words a new thing. Since it is the 'metamorphosis of one thing' it constantly amalgamates, blends and transforms.

So, even if we can examine and define the features and understandings, which were adapted from different religions and cultures, and even if we can come into some conclusions, such a belief and cultural structure cannot be comprehended and finalized as such. We cannot fix this system, particularly, such a transformative system, which has been nourished from various practices, beliefs, movements and oppositions against restraints, and which is constantly being articulated on the way of revelation of a new thing.

Although Alevism emerges by the harmonization of various religions and their practices, defining Alevism merely as 'syncretism' is lacking in account of definition. It has to be said that this syncretic structure reveals something new. As it is discussed above, Alevism does not reveal itself either as a sect, as merely a syncretism or any other definitions like culture, philosophy etc. Alevism is a new structure, which recreates itself by recent interactions. "What results is neither a new Islam nor a non-Islamic community" (Colpe 46) because as one of the religions which has influenced Alevism, Islam has its contributions but defining Alevism as merely a branch or a sect within Islam as 'a new Islam' will cause eliminating other religious, social and cultural phenomena. Also, defining Alevism as 'a non-Islamic community' will eliminate Islamic features, which would mean avoiding Islamic expositions for almost eight centuries. As already mentioned defining Alevism merely as a sect, culture, philosophy, syncretism, a new Islam, non-Islam, Sufism, movement, political stand etc. will be lacking in account of definition. What has to be said is that neither are extricable components on the construction of Alevism. Consequently, as in the manner of comprising all, it can be said that Alevism is the *effect* of all interactions. Since if one phenomenon within the nature of Alevism is avoided, that definition would be lame. Uniting all and comprehending Alevism as the articulation of all will enable us to understand Alevism as the *effect* of all and at the same time enable us to sense the *effect* of Alevism. The term *effect* here is in the meaning of both the conjunction of all the components that construct Alevism and at the same time reflecting that conjunction as wholeness.

6. CONCLUSION

Alevi syncretism has been formed by intermingling, interacting and reconciliation with various cultures, beliefs, practices, and social oppositions experienced over time. However, these interactions have all rotated around a *batın* –inner- (esoteric) journey. In every interaction, the adaptation of the new tradition or understanding has gained an esoteric approach or it already comprised an esoteric notion. Esoterism has been affirmed and endured in every incidence throughout the Alevi history. This tendency has been observed in Alevis' social as well as religious positioning. In social context the indispensable concept of 'tolerance' enabled accommodating and welcoming various features from different practices.

Alevis possess a syncretic culture, belief and understanding based on opposing or abandoning notions like 'true faith', 'pure faith', or 'absolute Truth.' This attitude reveals itself by questioning God's nature in terms of where it is placed and in what nature it reveals itself. By the guidance of this questioning the absoluteness of God, time or any other concepts have been unleashed. On the other hand, reciprocally the absoluteness of these concepts in orthodoxy has given way to the formation of a *batın* –inner- approach. Because bringing the absolute Truth –God- into the earth's surface or in other terms into ones' inner self has nourished from opposing the concept of 'absolute Truth,' which is placed in a superior rank. Abandoning the superiority of God and replacing it with becoming *kamil-insan* indicates the notion of human superiority. Since God is within oneself and it is depicted as becoming mature –*kamil-insan*-, God is replaced with human. Consequently, the superiority becomes

human. By abandoning the absoluteness of time, removing the features and the proper name gained in symbolic –materialistic- order could be accomplished.

As it is mentioned, the cultural and religious groups as well as the nations endure by reproduction. In another aspect, the syncretic nature of these groups nourish from this reproduction or recreation. In Alevis' case, due to concerns on their social representation Alevis show the tendency to be drawn near to Sunni approaches. Converting their customs that take place in Cem Ceremonies is an indication of this tendency. This fact can be taken into consideration in two aspects. First of all, Alevism is being recreated by adapting into a new approach, which seems natural for a syncretic belief system, and secondly, the representation of Alevism is under great risk due to permitting the conversion of one of the crucial features like not permitting gender discrimination. For almost ten centuries Alevis have been influenced by other sects, movements or religions. Today this process reveals itself by Alevis' gaining features from Sunnism. This act can be interpreted as Alevis' becoming Sunni-cized or as their natural form of adaptation in terms of gaining Sunni aspects by adapting them to their own beliefs and traditions. This consequence seems to be their way of coping with being un-represented and un-recognized. In my opinion, although this tendency seems to put the Alevi traditions under stake, actually the centuries old Alevi syncretism is applying its own tradition of adaptation currently. If the Alevi community does not reconsolidate on the norms of Alevi belief and practices, and force the administrations for their recognition under their definitions, then in the long run the representation of Alevism would be at risk. Alevis' have to 'turn within' and declare their indispensable features to be recognized.

Although in political and social life the recognition of Alevis and their rituals like Cem Ceremonies seem crucial to the community, from the analysis here we can state that neither Alevi belief nor representation are under risk. The centuries-old and religiously and culturally harmonized structure of Anatolian Alevi-Bektashi understanding, with its intimate aim of reaching the essence of being with tolerance, love, and modesty will most probably survive and continue to reflect this structure as an *effect* within the society. But this survival may not take place with their recognition, acceptance or constitutional guarantee, although for social, political and economic reasons some solutions should be put into practice. It will continue as an *effect* of all the features of this doctrine mentioned above. Since this *effect* nourishes from its very nature of syncretism and heterodoxy, and what counts for the Alevi doctrine is the journey to reach the mature essence of the being and continue to declare their oppositions towards unjust applications, this journey of the Anatolian heterodox essence may continue to unleash and reflect its essence as an *effect* on society and culture.

In spite of various interpretations of Alevism within the Turkish society and Alevi community, Alevism endures its heterodox applications. Alevi heterodoxy cannot be taken into consideration merely as a religious community but it should be considered as a social community as well, which indicates that Alevism intermingles religious and social discourses and this unity becomes the very Alevi representation. This unity has been and is being reflected within the society as a political stand. Consequently, it is seen that throughout their history including today, Alevis become the representatives of a political stand nourished from an alternate way of perception. This phenomenon of alternation and political opposition emerge from their

heterodoxy. The orthodoxy of both religious and social contexts have been opposed to by this heterodox perspective. So, we can conclude by saying that the fragmented features gained by the interaction with various religions and cultures created the conjunction of all but also, this conjunction is united with the social oppositions so as became a whole. This whole is being recreated constantly by new social and religious interactions. Such an active structure becomes the *effect* of all historical experiences, interactions, political positioning and also singular performances. What this means is that the phenomenon of Alevism within the Turkish society and even within the Alevi community cannot be grasped literally and finalized by merely definitions. Alevism is an active structure that is being recreated by the singular experiences, in addition to the reflection of their social representations. Alevism becomes the *effect* of the conjunction of various religious, cultural and practical facts and political stands. Removing theological, cultural and political differences and reaching a unity by becoming mature is one of the *effects* of Alevism. Thus, Alevism creates *effects* and at the same time is the *effect* of all.

Effect is in the sense of both as a result but not a finalized result since it is being constantly recreated, and at the same time *effect* in the sense of a reflection of all the features within it. *Effect* as the reflection of an ungraspable and unfinished active structure of Alevism.

REFERENCES

Akdağ, Mustafa. <u>Büyük Celali Karışıklıklarının Başlaması</u>. Erzurum: Atatürk
Universitesi Yayınları, 1963.

Akpınar, Turgut. <u>Türk Tarihinde Islamiyet.</u> Istanbul: Iletişim Yayınları, 1993.

Armaoğlu, Fahir. <u>19.Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi</u>. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları,
1997.

Atay, Tayfun. "Çözülmemiş Bir Tarih Sorunu: Şeyh Bedreddin." <u>Sosyal Bilimleri
Yeniden Düşünmek</u>. Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001.

Aydın, Erdoğan. <u>Kabustan Demokrasiye: Milliyetçilik, Şeriat ve Alevilik</u>. Istanbul:
Gendaş Kültür, 1999.

Barkan, Ömer Lütfi. "Istila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler."
<u>Vakıflar Dergisi. V. II.</u> Ankara: Vakıflar Umum Müdürlüğü Neşriyati, 1942.
Also, http://www.dervisan.com/yazi2/kolonizator.html#_ftnref1

Bazin, Louis. "Uygurlar'da Maniheizm ve Senkretizm (Bağdaştırmacılık)." <u>Tuttum
Aynayı Yüzüme Ali Göründü Gözüme</u>. Trans. Ilhan Cem Erseven. Istanbul:
Ant Yayınları, 1997.

Berling, Judith A. <u>The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao-En</u>. New York: Columbia
University Press, 1980.

Birdoğan, Nejat. <u>Anadolu Aleviliği'nde Yol Ayrımı</u>. Istanbul: Mozaik Yayınları,
1995.

Birge, John Kingsley. <u>The Bektashi Order of Dervishes</u>. Hartford: Hartford Seminary
  Press, 1937.

Bruinessen, Martin van. "Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey"
  http://www.let.ruu.nl/oriental_studies/mvbalevi.html

---. <u>Kürtlük, Türklük, Alevilik: Etnik ve Dinsel Kimlik Mücadeleleri.</u> Trans.
  Hakan Yurdakul. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000.

Cahen, Claude. <u>Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu</u>. (La Turquie pré-ottomane,
  1998). Trans. Erol Üyepazarcı. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfi Yurt Yayınları, 2000.

Celebi, Celaleddin B. His 1989 address to UNESCO assembly in Paris. UNESCO,
  October 1989, Paris. http://www.mevlana.net/celebi/unesco_address.htm

Colpe, Carsten. "The Phenomenon of Syncretism and the Impact of Islam."
  <u>Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East.</u> Collected papers of the
  Symposium "Alevism in Turkey and Comparable Syncretistic Religious
  Communities in the Near East in the Past and Present", Berlin 1995. Eds. K.
  Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean. Leiden, New
  York, Köln: Brill, 1997.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. "Ibn Arabi'nin Öğretisinin Osmanlı Dünyasında Karşılanışı."
  <u>Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler.</u> Ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara:
  Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005.

Chow, Rey. <u>Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and</u>
  <u>Contemporary Chinese Cinema.</u> New York: Columbia University Press,
  1995.

Çamuroğlu, Reha. <u>Dönüyordu: Bektaşilikte Zaman Kavrayışı</u>. Istanbul: Metis

Yayınları, 1993.

Dedebaba, Bedri Noyan. <u>Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik ve Alevilik.</u> V.1. Istanbul:
Ardıç Yayınları, 1998.

Dierl, Anton Jozef. <u>Anadolu Aleviliği</u>. Trans. Fahrettin Yiğit. Istanbul: Ant
Yayınları, 1991.

Dressler, Markus. "Alevi Geleneğin Dinsel Boyutları." <u>Bilgi Toplumunda Alevilik</u>.
Ed. Ibrahim Bahadır. Trans. Aydın Ayhan and Hasan Coşkun. Bielefeld:
Bielefeld Alevi Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2003.

Eliade, Mircea. <u>Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy.</u> Trans. Willard R.
Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Elwert, Georg. "Switching Of We-Group Identities: The Alevis As A Case Among
Many Others." <u>Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East.</u>
Collected papers of the Symposium "Alevism in Turkey and Comparable
Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East in the Past and Present",
Berlin 1995. Eds. K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-
Beaujean. Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1997.

Eröz, Mehmet. <u>Eski Türk Dini (Gök Tanrı Inancı) ve Alevilik Bektaşilik</u>. Istanbul:
Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 1992.

Erseven, Ilhan Cem. <u>Aleviler'de Semah</u>. Ankara: Ekin Yayınları, 1990.

Eyuboğlu, Ismet Zeki. "Bektaşilik'in Doğuşu." <u>Tasavvuf Tarikatlar Mezhepler
Tarihi</u>. Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1993.

---. <u>Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik</u>. Istanbul: Yeni Çığır Kitabevi, 1980.

Gener, Cihangir. <u>Ezoterik-Batıni Doktrinler Tarihi</u>. Istanbul: Gece Yayınları, 1994.

Inalcık, Halil. "How To Read Ashık Pasha-Zade's History." <u>Studies In Ottoman History In Honour Of Professor V.L. Ménage</u>. Eds. C. Heywood and C. Imber. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1994.

--- . <u>The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600</u>. London: Phoenix, 1994.

Karamustafa, Ahmet T. "Yesevîlik, Melâmetîlik, Kalenderîlik, Vefâ'îlik ve Anadolu Tasavvufunun Kökenleri Sorunu." <u>Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler</u>. Ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005.

Kaygusuz, Ismail. "Namaz, Cami ve Cemevi." http://www.t-k-p.org/alevilik/namaz_dua.htm

Korkmaz, Esat. <u>Anadolu Aleviliği</u>. Istanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 2000.

--- . <u>Dört Kapı Kırk Makam</u>. Istanbul: Şahkulu Sultan Külliyesi Mehmet Ali Hilmi Dedebaba Araştırma Eğitim ve Kültür Vakfı Yayınları, 1998.

Köprülü, Mehmet Fuat. <u>Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion</u>. Trans. and Ed. Gary Leiser. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993.

Lelić, Emin. "Mulhid Vahdeti: A 16th-century Bosnian Hurufi Poet." http://www.bektashi.net/history-lelic.html

Lewis, Bernard. "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of

Islam." <u>Studia Islamica</u>, 1953.

Markoff, Iréne. "Music, Saints, and Ritual: Sama and the Alevis of Turkey."
    <u>Manifestations of Sainthood in Islam</u>. Ed. Grace Martin Smith. Assoc. Ed.
    Carl W. Ernst. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993.

Mélikoff, Iréne. <u>Hacı Bektaş: Efsaneden Gerçeğe</u>. (Hadji Bektach: Un Mythe Et Ses
    Avatars, 1998). Trans. Turan Alptekin. Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitapları, 2004.

Neyzi, Leyla. "Metin-Kemal Kahraman'ın Müziği: Yaşlı Kuşağın Belleği Yoluyla
    Dersimli Kimliğinin Yeniden Keşfi." <u>'Ben Kimim?' Türkiyede Sözlü</u>
    <u>Tarih,Kimlik ve Öznellik</u>. Istanbul: Iletişim Yayınları, 2004.

Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar. "Aleviliğin Çözüm Bekleyen Iki Temel Problematiği: Tarih ve
    Teoloji." <u>Bilgi Toplumunda Alevilik</u>. Ed. Ibrahim Bahadır. Bielefeld:
    Bielefeld Alevi Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, 2003.

---.   <u>Alevi ve Bektaşi Inançlarının Islam Öncesi Temelleri.</u> Istanbul: Iletişim
    Yayınları, 2000.

---.   <u>Osmanlı Imparatorluğu'nda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler (14-17. Yüzyıllar.</u>
    Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992.

---.   <u>Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Müllhidler</u>. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt
    Yayınları, 1998.

---.   <u>Türkiye'de Tarihin Saptırılması Sürecinde: Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar</u>. Istanbul:
    Iletişim Yayınları, 1996.

Öz, Gülağ. "Kaygusuz Abdal."
    http://www.alevikonseyi.com/alevi/17/27/37/47/367.html

Robins, Kevin and Asu Aksoy. "Deep Nation. The National Question and Turkish Cinema Culture." <u>Cinema and Nation</u>. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. Also, Todorov, T. "The Co-Existence of Cultures." <u>Oxford Literary Review 19</u>, 1997.

Savaşçı, Özgür. "Alevi Sözcüğünün Kökeni." <u>Alevilik</u>. Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004.

Sayın, Ümit. "Dünyayı Yönetin Gizli Örgütler." <u>Teori V. 157.</u> February 2003. Also, http://www.turkocaklari.org/sayfalar/gizliorgutler.asp

Shankland, David. <u>The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition.</u> London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

Şener, Cemal. <u>Alevilik Olayı</u>. Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1989.

Tanman, Baha M. "Osmanlı Mimarisinde Tarikat Yapıları/ Tekkeler." <u>Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler</u>. Ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005.

Taraporewala, Irach J.S. "Mazdakism." <u>In Iran Chamber Society</u>. http://www.iranchamber.com/religions/mazdakism.php, 2006.

Uludağ, Süleyman. "Osmanlı Dönemi Tasavvuf Düsüncesi." <u>Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf ve Sufiler</u>. Ed. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2005.

Veer, Peter van der. "Syncretism, Multiculturalism and the Discourse of Tolerance." <u>Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis</u>. Eds. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Yaman, Ali. "Şeyh Bedreddin." http://www.alevibektasi.org/bedred1.htm, 1997.

Yetkin, Çetin. Iktidara Karşı Türk Direniş ve Devrimleri. V.1. Istanbul: Otopsi
       Yayınları, 2003.

Zeidan, David. "The Alevi of Anatolia."
       http://www.angelfire.com/az/rescon/ALEVI.html, 1995.

Zelyut, Rıza. Aleviler Ne Yapmalı? Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1993.

---.   Öz Kaynaklarına Göre Alevilik. Istanbul: Anadolu Kültürü Yayınları,
       1990.