ALEVI IDENTITY

Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga, Catharina Raudvere

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL 1998

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CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

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Papers Read at a Conference Held
at the Swedish Research Institute
in Istanbul, November 25-27, 1996

Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL
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Front cover: The Imam Ali, glass-painting, Ömer Bortaçina Collection, *Cam Altında Yirmi Bin Fersah*, Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1998

Back cover: Symmetrical inscription of "Ali" adorned with the crown of Hacı Bektaş Veli and *Zülfikâr* (the sword of Ali)

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Republication has allowed us to give special attention to the illustrations. Above all, we owe our heartfelt gratitude to the photographer Murat Küçük for allowing us to include many of his valuable pictures in this volume.

Istanbul, April 2003.

The Editors.

Preface

Turkish Alevi groups are often referred to in international massmedia with various epithets like "liberal Muslims", "extreme Shia sects", or "heretics". Hereby ambiguous and contradictory images of the Alevi communities are produced and reproduced. For a long time the milieu in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's novel *Nur Baba* (1922) was the prejudiced prototype for the backward and superstitious lives of the Alevi. Based on oral jocular stories about Bektashi dervishes the novel petrified pejorative common clichés of the Alevi as newly urbanized Anatolian peasants and the lodge as the site of corruption and decadence. In contemporary Turkey, the Alevi serve the role as the significant other and the public notion is to a large extent formed by a number of dramatic events: the clashes in Kahramanmaraş in 1979 and Çorum in 1980, the incendiarism in Sivas in 1993, and the riots in Istanbul (Gaziosmanpaşa) in 1995. Less evocative but in the long rum more significant is the current rising enthusiasm for Alevi folklore, oral traditions and religious practices. The fact that Alevi *cemevi*s, centres of cultural and religious gatherings, have increased in number is significant for these changes in attitude and self-definition.

The present book is a collection of papers from a conference "Religion, Cultural Identity, and Social Organization among Alevi in Ottoman and Modern Turkey" arranged by The Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, November 25-27, 1996. The meeting was part of a two year programme "Islamic culture" conducted by Professor Elisabeth Özdalga.

The speakers offered historical as well as anthropological and sociological analyses and several of the contributions related to marginal religious groups in neighbouring areas. Both insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspectives were presented but the religious aspects of Ali-oriented communities in West Asia were particularly focused. Some of the participants are themselves active in Alevi groups and therefore political and ideological issues were constantly present at the conference.

Discussing the Alevi touches the most important issues in modern Turkish history: nationalism, secularization politics, urbanization, migration. Consequently, a recurrent theme in the present book deals with how identity and social memory are constructed by the choices of significant events in legendary history. In many aspects these Alevi narratives contradict official Turkish history writing, stressing other genealogies and other identities. The various attempts to construct a homogeneous and powerful Alevi identity through the use of history can serve as an example of Benedict Anderson's discussion on 'imaginary communities' when analyzing the use of historical events, legendary or other.

Different Alevi groups claim different self-definitions and stress social, political or religious aspects of their identity. The leftist emphasis from the 1970s is turning more and more into a new pride and consciousness of cultural and religious tradition and the former biased notion of the Alevi as Anatolian peasants has changed. A distinct Alevi social and intellectual élite has emerged during the 1980s and 1990s and a host of books and journals debating very different Alevi positions have been published. To some authors it is important to stress Alevism as a tradition within Islam. Others more easily conceive *Alevilik* as a conglomeration of groups that do not necessarily define themselves as religious, but rather as a basis for the formulation of

alternative life-styles. Some stress the theological roots in Shiism, in contrast, other groups claim liberal traditions for their interpretation of religion. The Alevi have never been recognized as distinct groups or associations by the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DIB: *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). Such a recognition is therefore a vital aim for the circles around the journal *Cem*, while other Alevis hail the underground image that has been the result of the state strategy of keeping such large groups out of public arenas.

This volume does not concentrate only on the Alevi in Turkey, but includes articles on other Ali oriented communities in West Asia. Here the perspective is widened and similarities in historical development and theological structure are underlined.

The volume opens with an essay by Professor Irène Mélikoff on the historical roots of the Bektashi order with special emphasis on its relation to the *Kızılbaş* groups. Professor Mélikoff makes an overview and compares the differences in theology and ritual practice in order to demonstrate parallels. This historical survey is followed by Ambassador Erik Cornell's discussion on Bektashism in the Balkans. Considering the importance of the extensive migration in the beginning of this century from this region to Turkey and its influence on modern Bektashi communities, it is a topic of utmost importance. The historical perspective is further developed by David Shankland when analyzing the present use of cultural heritage and history in the construction of Alevi culture. Shankland strongly argues for more contextualized studies of the complexity of Alevi culture, the avoidance of stereotypes, and an emphasis instead on what he terms "the process of cultural recreation".

In view of the explosion of Alevi publications during the last decade Karin Vorhoff's essay will serve as a future guide. Her comprehensive discussion on academic and more popular writings on the Alevi and the Bektashi highlights the heterogeneity under the same umbrella term. Vorhoff also makes the important observation that the Alevi publications should not only be interpreted on a discursive level since they also function as signals and symbols of Alevi consciousness in private homes. The semiotic relevance of these books is not only substantial in relation to outsiders, but also within the Alevi communities: putting the more liberal journal *Cem* on the table is quite different from having books by the radical Cemal Şener on the shelf.

Faruk Bilici interprets Alevi-Bektashi theology as a variant of "liberation theology" in contrast to Sunni orthodoxy. Bilici observes a development of Marxist Alevi ideology of the 1970s that today merges with mystical religious dimensions and in its new form establishes tools for liberal interpretations and alternative theology. This "progressive" self-image of many Alevi groups is, however, questioned by Ruşen Çakır as he makes a critical overview of the political field. Çakır calls attention to the sharp contrast between the much spoken of ideals and social reality, especially when it comes to the position of women. In this provoking essay the rise of Alevi consciousness is convincingly compared to the revival within Islamistic groups.

The impact of the returnees from the diasporic Alevi communities in Germany on contemporary Alevism is discussed by Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç. The ambiguous position of these *Almancı*s is considerable: sometimes well-off, but always contaminated by Western culture. As such they unintentionally challenge the national Turkish identity and are hereby pushed toward a clearly defined Alevi identity. Reha Çamuroğlu analyzes recent trends within Alevism (*Alevilik*) in the light of the collapse of the socialist block in Eastern Europe, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and the emergence of the Kurdish question. These developments have effected the Alevi in different, sometimes contradictory directions and points to the complexity of the Alevi movement itself.

With his insider perspective Fuat Bozkurt gives an overview of doctrines and ritual practices from a local perspective. He also discusses the nature of the relation between the state and modern Alevism with special emphasis on educational matters and the erection of new *cemevi*s.

The last part of the volume consists of six essays stressing other foci than *Alevilik* in Turkey and treating various religious groups with relevance to the understanding of the Alevi. Some of these essays point to the complex relation between the state and religious groups in a marginal position. İlber Ortaylı's article on the *Dönme*s, followers of the Jewish convert and charismatic leader Sabetai Zvi (d. 1666), introduces a minority among minorities that for long has shared with the Alevi the position of being invisible in public discourse, but much talked of in popular culture.

In his historiographical survey of the Ahl-e Haqq of Kurdistan and Luristan Jean During discusses how marginal status in local societies have had an impact on the academic analyses of the history and legacy of these communities. In his attempt to outline their different selfdefinitions During also identifies an open-minded ideology among the Ahl-e Haqq that he finds similar to the Alevi of Turkey.

The two following papers deal with the Druze communities in Lebanon and Israel. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen examines the relation between the concept *taqìya* (concealment) and the late modern understanding of civil society, while Aharon Layish analyzes the consequences of Shaykh Amin's will. The death of the Israeli Druze spiritual leader launched a debate on what conditions authority was kept up and the implements for negotiations for power.

Tord Olsson analyzes common features of the Ali-oriented communities in West Asia. He establishes the ecological and cultural conditions of the Syrian Alawites and, through textual analysis, makes an explication of their complicated cosmological doctrines. Catharina Raudvere discusses questions related to the intersection between urban and religious studies. The more active Islamic encounter with modernity has led to access to new political foras and a new visibility of Muslim culture. Hereby the cultural dominance of the urban secular élite is seriously challenged. Finally, in the epilogue of the book, Tord Olsson demonstrates how the Ali-oriented groups under the conditions of modernization have been profoundly transformed by scripturalization.

As editors of this volume we want to convey our heartfelt gratitude to all the participants of the conference and to the Director of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul Professor Bengt Knutsson, who generously hosted the conference. Special thanks also to the board of trustees of the Institute for their generous financial support and encouragements. We also owe the copy-editors Adair Mill, Çağatay Anadol, Hamdi Can Tuncer, Derya Özkan and Bilge Kurt Torun of the History Foundation many thanks for their patient work.

It is the intention of the editors that the following contributions will shed light on the complexity of Alevi identity, past and present.

Istanbul, June 1998

Tord Olsson
Elisabeth Özdalga
Catharina Raudvere

Contents

Bektashi / *Kızılbaş*: Historical Bipartition and Its Consequences

IRÈNE MÉLIKOFF

Bektashism, as well as Alevism are both, in their earlier stages, examples of religious syncretisms. However, it is not possible to explain in so short a space the formation of these syncretisms, nor to discuss the elements which compose them.[1] So I shall mainly try to describe the genesis and the different evolutions of these phenomena.

The Bektashis, as well as the Alevis or the former *Kızılbaş*, refer to a popular saint called Hacı Bektaş. I shall therefore begin by that charismatic and legendary figure who is nevertheless endowed with historical reality. I shall also try to insert him into his social background.

The 15th century historian Aşıkpaşazade, who was a descendant of Baba İlyas, one of the main leaders of the *Baba'î* revolt that shook the Seldjuk Empire during the years 1239-1240,[2] describes Hacı Bektaş as a disciple of his ancestor.[3] The same thing is reported by Elvan Çelebi[4] who wrote in the 14th century and who was the grandson of Baba İlyas. We may also mention another 14th century testimony, that of Eflâki, who says that Hacı Bektaş Horasani was a *Halife-i-has*, a favorite disciple, of Baba Resûl, alias Baba İlyas.[5]

We therefore know that Hacı Bektaş "came from Khorassan", following Baba İlyas. "Coming from Khorassan" is a cliché, often used in ancient chronicles and hagiographies. It mainly refers to the idea of migration. The Turkmen tribes started coming to Anatolia at the end of the 11th century. Their migration became more intensive during the 12th and especially throughout the 13th century when they were obliged to escape the Mongol invasion. The road followed by the migrants, generally coming from Central Asia or Transoxiana, passed through Khorassan and followed the Caspian shore into Iranian Azerbaijan. It was the usual road that avoided the Iranian deserts. So the mention "coming from Khorassan" meant that the people involved were not autochtones, but immigrants.

1 On that subject, see the following articles: I. Melikoff, 'Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme bektaşi-alevi, in *Studia Turcologica Memoriae Alexii Bombaci Dicata*, Naples 1982, pp. 379-395; I. Mélikoff, 'L'Islam hétérodoxe en Anatolie: non-conformisme-syncrétisme-gnose, in TURCICA XIV, 1982, 142-152 Reprints in *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc - Recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie*, ed. ISIS, Istanbul, 1992.

2 On the Baba'î revolt, see: Claude Cahen, *EI*[2], s.v. Baba'î; C. Cahen, 'Baba Ishaq, Baba Ilyas, Hadji Bektash et quelques autres', in TURCICA I, 1969, 53-64; C. Cahen, 'A propos d'un article récent et des *Baba'î', in Journal Asiatique* CCLXVIII, 1980, fasc.1-2, 69-70; A. Yaşar Ocak, *La révolte de Baba Resûl ou la formation de lé hétérodoxie musulmane en Anatolie*, TTK, Ankara, 1989; A. Yaşar Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı - Aleviliğin Tarihsel Altyapısı yahut Anadolu'da İslam-Türk Heterodoksinin Teşekkülü*, İstanbul 1996.

3 Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Âli, Istanbul, 1332, pp. 204-206; Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevarih-i Âl-i Osman*, in *Osmanlı Tarihleri I*, ed. Çiftçioğlu Atsız, Istanbul, 1949, pp. 237-239.

4 Elvan Çelebi, *Menâkibü'l-Kudsiyye fî Menâsibi'l-ünsiyye - Baba İlyas-i Horasâni ve Sülalesinin Menkabevi Tarihi*, İsmail E. Erünsal ve A.Yaşar Ocak (eds.), TTK, Ankara, 1995, pp.169-170.

5 Şams el-dîn Ahmad al Aflâkî al-'Arifî, *Manakib al-'Arifîn*, I, ed. Tahsin Yazıcı, TTK, Ankara, 1959, p. 381.

Hacı Bektaş, a Turkish dervish, came to Anatolia towards the year 1230, perhaps in the company of the Kharezmians who were seeking refuge after the conquest of Kharezm by the Mongols.[6]

The Seldjuks who reigned in Anatolia were tolerant and understanding rulers. They had to be so for their country was inhabited by people of different races and religions. Seldjukid towns were centers of culture and welfare. But the Turkmen tribes were rather turbulent and brought trouble to the peaceful and well-organized people of the cities. They occupied lands where they could find pastures for their herds and became more and more troublesome as their numbers increased.

Hacı Bektaş found himself involved in the *Baba'î* revolt during which his brother Mintash was killed while fighting for Baba İlyas.[7] However, Hacı Bektaş took no part in the final phase of the revolt,[8] which ended in a general slaughter in the plain of Malya. After some years of hiding, he reappeared in the village which bears his name today, but was then called "Soluca Kara Öyük" or "Karayol". The place was then occupied by the Oghuz tribe of Çepni. Though he was not himself a Çepni, Hacı Bektaş was welcomed to one of the seven houses of the village, that of Kadıncık Ana and her spouse Idris.[9] There, he led a life of holiness and meditation. He founded no order and had no disciples.[10] According to Aşıkpaşazade, the order that bears his name was founded after his death by a woman: the same Kadıncık Ana who was either his adoptive daughter, according to the historian, or his spiritual wife, according to the *Vilâyetnâme*, the hagiographical life of the saint. Kadıncık Ana founded the Order with the help of her disciple Abdal Musa.

Hacı Bektaş, who died, according to tradition, in 1270, at the age of 63,[11] belonged to the Turkmen tribes. Many of these tribes followed the religious teachings of the Turkic saint of Central Asia, Ahmed Yesevi, who died towards 1167/1168, at Yesi (now Turkistan).[12] However, all the tribes were not yet Muslims and those who had embraced Islam had not always assimilated Muslim culture. For instance, the Çepni tribes were known as being rather heterodox. Later on, they were to join the Safavid movement.[13]

Hacı Bektaş was no theologian. He had not studied in the Medrese as did Mevlanâ Celâleddin Rûmî, who was his contemporary. He was a mystic, born among the people and who remained near to the people. Though he was a Muslim, he did not give up the ancient practices and customs of Central Asia.[14]

He was also a healer and a thaumaturge. This is clearly seen from his hagiography, the *Vilâyetnâme*. It tells us that Hacı Bektaş did not like to pray in mosques. He would climb a mountain with his *abdal*s. That mountain, called Hırkadağı, "the mount of the cowl", is an ancient vulcano. It is located near the present village of Hacıbektaş. In ancient days, juniper-trees grew on its summit. The dervishes used to light fires and dance around them, performing the *sema*, ecstatic dance. One day, in

6 See C. Cahen, 'Baba Ishaq, *Baba İlyas*, Hadjdji Bektash et quelques autres', 56-59.

7 Aşıkpaşazade, ed. Âli, p. 204; ed. Atsız, p. 237.

8 Elvan Çelebi, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

9 See Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Menakib-i Hacı Bektaş-i Velî "Vilâyet-Nâme"*, Istanbul, 1958. This work shall be refered to as *"Vilâyetnâme"*.

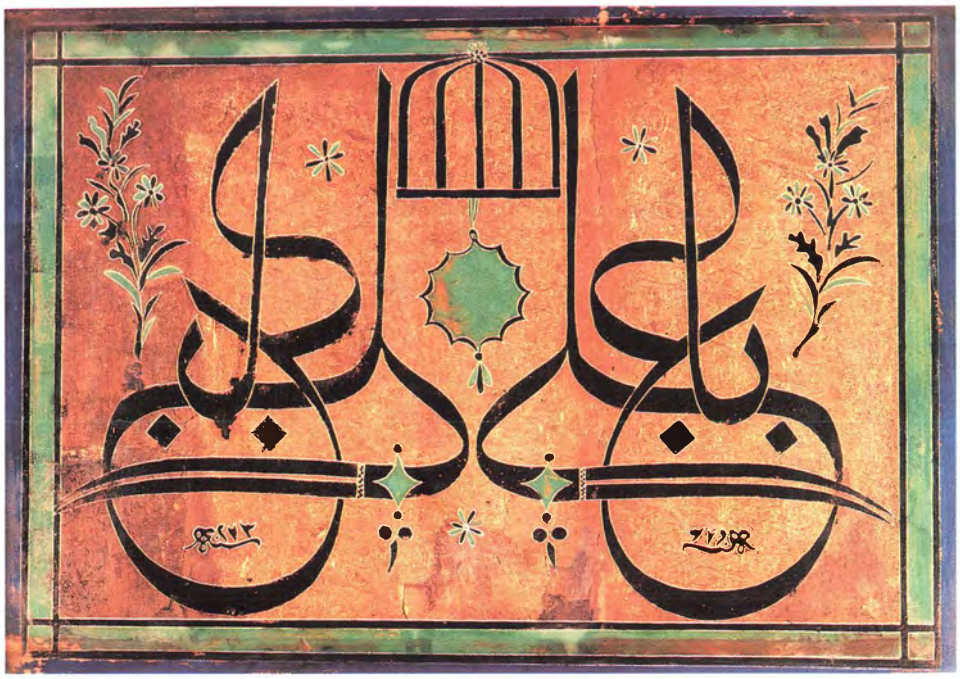
10 Aşıkpaşazade, *op.cit*, *loc.cit.*

11 See *Vilâyetnâme*, pp. XIX-XX.

12 On Ahmed Yesevi, see: Fuat Köprülü, *I.A.*, s.v. Ahmed Yesevi ; Fuat Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, Ankara, 1966, pp. 5-153; I. Mélikoff, 'Ahmed Yesevi et la mystique populaire turque', in *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc*, pp.139-150.

13 On the Çepni, see; Faruk Sümer, *Oğuzlar (Türkmenler) - Tarihleri-Boy Teşkilâtı-Destanları*, Istanbul, 1992 (4th ed.), pp. 241-248, 317; Faruk Sümer, *Safevî Devletinin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü*, TTK, Ankara 1992, pp. 50, 104.

14 According to Eflâki, Hacı Bektaş, though being a Muslim, did not confine himself to follow the prescribed laws of Islam: see *Menâkib-al 'Ârifin*, p. 381.



Symmetrical inscription of "Ali" adorned with the crown of Hacı Bektaş Veli.
Glass-painting, Şahin Paksoy collection, *Camaltında Yirmibin Fersah*, İstanbul 1997,
Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık.

a state of ecstasy, Hacı Bektaş threw his cowl into the fire. That was why the mount was called Hırkadağı.[15]

The juniper-tree is well known among the shamans. When burning, its branches bring on a state of ecstasy. It is therefore considered a sacred plant and is still used among the Kalash and their shamans in Pakistan,[16] as well as in Tibet, for purification purposes.[17] The smoke from the burning branches of the juniper goes to the skies and calls down the "Invisible Beings" (*Ga'ib Erenleri*), the tutelary spirits of the shamans; without those spirits, no ceremony can be performed.[18] In the *Vilâyetnâme*, a whole chapter is devoted to these "Invisible Beings" who revealed their presence to Hacı Bektaş and his dervishes. They perceived lights burning on the Hırkadağı. They went up and spent three days with the "Invisible Beings". During these three days, time stopped so that nobody in the village was aware of their absence.[19]

Kaygusuz Abdal, a disciple of Abdal Musa and one of the first Bektashi poets, has given us, in one of his poems, a description of these healing dervishes with their cowl, their coarse woolen cloak and prayer-rug of animal skin :

Rum Abdalları gelür "Ali dost" deyû	The Abdals of Rum come calling upon Ali,
Hırka giyer, aba deyü, post deyü	They wear the cowl, the cloak, the rug.
Hastaları gelür derman isteyü	Those who are ill, come to them for healing
Sağlar gelür Pir'im Abdal Musa'ya[20]	The sound ones go to my master, Abdal Musa.

15 See *Vilâyetnâme*, pp. 24-25, 35-36, 57, 74.

16 See Viviane Lièvre and Jean-Yves Loude, *Le chamanisme des Kalash du Pakistan*, éditions du CNRS, Paris-Lyon, 1990, pp. 50-53, 496-500.

17 See S. G. Karmay, 'Les Dieux des terroirs et les génévriers: un rituel tibétain de purification', *J.A.*, tome 283, 1995, no.1, pp. 161-207.

18 See V. N. Basilov, *Samanstvo u narodov Srednej Azii i Kazakhstana* (Shamanism among the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan), Moscow, 1992 (Nauka), pp. 229-278. A review of this book has been made by I. Mélikoff in TURCICA XXVII, 1995, pp.269-277.

19 See *Vilâyetnâme*, p. 66.

20 See Fuat Köprülü, *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi I*, Istanbul, 1935, s.v. Abdal, p. 29; İsmail Özmen, *Alevi-Bektaşi Şiirleri Antolojisi*, Ankara, 1995, p. 228.

Hacı Bektaş is usually represented in the image of a holy man wearing the *Elif Tacı*, a bonnet in the form of the letter "elif" that was to become the headwear of the Janissaries (Ottoman army corps). In his right arm, he holds a deer and his left hand is petting a small lion. We shall always remember this picture symbolizing both his kindness and strength, but it would surely be more appropriate to look for him in the miniatures of *Siyah Kalem*. There we can see dancing dervishes, sometimes hairy and bare-footed, dressed in short tunics, sometimes wearing caps, long cloaks or animal skins.[21]

Though historical sources are rather scanty, they all describe Hacı Bektaş as a Sufi belonging to the Turkmen tribes. His environment was the same as that of the Ottomans who belonged to the Oghuz tribe of the Kayi. That can probably explain the relationship between the Ottomans and the first Bektashis. They came from the same social background.[22]

In his hagiographical life of Baba İlyas, Elvan Çelebi says that Hacı Bektaş was closely connected to Edebali, who was to become the father-in-law of Osman Gazi. He describes Edebali as a companion of Hacı Bektaş.[23]

Though we cannot suppose Hacı Bektaş to have known Osman Gazi, for the former died before the latter appeared on the world stage at the end of the 13th century, yet among the companions of Orhan Gazi we find quite a number of dervishes including Abdal Musa, the founder of the first Bektashi Order.

Those dervishes took part in the conquest of Thrace and the Balkans. They had become *gazi*s, Islamic war heroes. They received land in the conquered territories. They built *zaviye*s and *tekke*s, dervish lodges, which often became centers of Turkic culture and religious teaching.

In a well-known work, Ömer Lütfi Barkan has studied the role of these colonizing dervishes and their *zaviye*s at the time of the Conquest.[24] The Bektashis who settled in the Balkans, gave up their monastic way of life.

The Ottoman historian Oruç tells us about the close connection between the brother of Orhan Gazi, Ali Pasha, and the Order of the Bektashis. Ali Pasha, who was himself to become a dervish, advised his brother to put the newly founded army corps of the Janissaries under the protection of Hacı Bektaş.[25] This is of course a legend, as Hacı Bektaş was already dead, but nevertheless the Janissaries were connected to the Bektashi Order of dervishes. They were recruited from elements of foreign stock, at an early age, so it seemed appropriate to place them under the moral and spiritual protection of an Order of colonizing dervishes.

We have seen the spreading of Islam in a tribal society. We shall now describe two different currents: on the one side, we see the gradual transition of one group to a sedentary way of life and its adjustment to urban centers. On the other side, we have those who remained in the Anatolian countryside, leading a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life and who became exposed to periods of turbulence and trouble.

Sedentary life led to the settlement of the dervishes in *tekke*s located near the towns. During the first three centuries of Ottoman rule they were protected by the

21 See M. S. İpşiroglu and S. Eyüboğlu, Fatih albümüne bir bakış - Sur l'album du Conquérant, Istanbul, 1955; Beyhan Karamağaralı, *Muhammed Siyah Kalem'e Atfedilen Minyatürler*, Ankara, 1964.

22 See I. Mélikoff, 'L'Origine sociale des premiers Ottomans', in *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)*, Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (ed.), Institute for Mediterranean Studies, Halcyon days in Crete I. A symposium held in Rethymnon 11-13 January 1991, Rethymnon, 1993, pp.135-144.

23 Elvan Çelebi, *op.cit.*, p. 169 (verse 1995).

24 Ö. L. Barkan, 'Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir iskân ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak vakıflar ve temlikler I: Istilâ devirlerinin kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve zaviyeleri', *Vakıflar Dergisi* V (1942), 279-386.

25 See Oruç, *Tarih-i Âl-i Osman*, ed. Franz Babinger, Hannover, 1925, pp. 15-16; *Oruç Beğ Tarihi*, ed. Atsız, Istanbul, 1972, p. 34.

A young Tahtacı (Turkoman Alevi) girl.

Sultans, who bestowed on them donations and gifts. The Ottomans also made use of the beneficent influence of the *tekke*s in colonizing their newly conquered lands.[26] And they also used them in their efforts to control the heterodox and turbulent elements that had remained in the Anatolian countryside, where there appeared a number of anarchical dervish groups: Abdal's, Torlak's, Işık's and others known under the more general name of Kalender.[27] These groups had their religious chiefs, their local saints. But soon, as the result of the efforts of the Ottoman rulers, all these saints became concentrated under the name of one single figure: Hacı Bektaş Veli who came to control the religious life of the people.

Nevertheless, two distinct groups appear: the Bektashis who led a sedentary life in organized *tekke*s, and the Kızılbaş who were still nomads or semi-nomads. For a long time, the Kızılbaş had no definite name. In the Ottoman documents, they are called *zındık*, heretic, *râfizi,* schismatic, and also "shi'ite", *mülhid*, atheist. Later on they will become known as *Alevi*.[28] *Kızılbaş* is their historical name. It refers to the village groups and tribes who followed the first Safavids. Their name appears in the time of Sheykh Haydar (1460-1488), the father of Shah Isma'il. *Kızılbaş* means "red head". That name was given to them because of their headdress: a red bonnet with twelve facets. It was also called Tac-i Haydarî "the crown of Haydar". In the

26 See Barkan, *op.cit.*; I. Mélikoff, 'Un ordre de derviches colonisateurs: les Bektasi. Leur rôle social et leurs rapports avec les premiers sultans ottomans', in *Memorial Ömer Lütfi Barkan*, Paris, 1980, pp. 149-157. Reprint in *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc*, pp. 115-125.

27 See Fuat Köprülü, *Les origines de l'Empire Ottoman*, Porcupine Press, Philadelphia, 1978 (reed.); A.Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderîler (XIV-XVII yüzyıllar)*, TTK, Ankara 1992.

28 See I. Mélikoff, 'Le problème *Kızılbaş*', in *TURCICA* VI, 1975, pp. 49-67 (reprint in *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc*, pp. 29-43.

Ottoman documents, *Kızılbaş* has the meaning of "heretic" and "heretic rebel". That pejorative meaning was the reason why the name *Alevi* took the place of *Kızılbaş* and became that of the heterodox groups in Turkey. The word *Alevi* refers to the worship of Ali who is regarded as divine by these groups. However, in Iran, those who worship Ali are called *Ali-ilahi*. Alevi there means a descendant of Ali, a *Seyyid*.[29]

Nevertheless nowadays in Turkey, Alevi has received the same pejorative meaning as Kızılbaş. The beliefs of the Kızılbaş-Alevi are identical with those of the Bektashis. Both groups refer to Hacı Bektaş. But the Bektashis formed an organized group, whereas the Kızılbaş-Alevi, who lived in villages, remained more or less disorganized. The Bektashi follow an unchangeable ritual whereas the Kızılbaş-Alevi believe in myths in which legends are mingled with local folklore. The beliefs of both groups are syncretic. They contain elements from different origins, belonging to religions with which the Turkic people have been in contact: Buddhism, Manicheism, Nestorian or local Christianity.[30]

We must also keep in mind that the Turks have often settled in territories which had been centers of heresies, so that there has often been a superposition of heretic creeds. For instance, the region of Erzincan-Divriği-Sivas was the center of the Paulician heresy (a strongly dualistic sect) before becoming the center of the Kızılbaş-Alevis.[31] Anatolia -especially Eastern Anatolia- was throughout the centuries a melting-pot where people and creeds have been subjected to a permanent procedure of catalysis. It is therefore difficult to isolate elements which have been fused in this way.

Fuat Köprülü called the Alevi "country Bektashis" because they present themselves as a rough form of the same phenomenon.[32] For instance, the rites of initiation of the Bektashis are the same as those of any secret society, whereas the initiation ceremony of the Kızılbaş-Alevi seems closer to the customs of tribal societies.

Anyone can become a Bektashi if he wishes to and if he is found to be worthy. But one cannot become an Alevi if one is not born an Alevi.

In Bektashism, the *baba* is the chief of the *tekke*. To become a *baba*, one has to have been initiated and to have attained the degree of perfection required for such an honour. But among the Alevi, the *dede* or spiritual chief of the community, must belong to an *ocak* (hearth), the genealogy of which goes back to Ali. Every Alevi village is connected to an *ocak* and the *dede* who belongs to that ocak is obliged to visit at least once a year all the villages in his dependence. The *dede* must be invested with supernatural powers. In the Alevi communities, myth takes the place of ritual and the ceremonies are the repetition on earth of archetypes that took place in the Other World, beyond Time. For instance, the *Ayin-i Cem* is the repetition on earth of the Banquet of the Forties that took place during the Night of *Mirac*, the ascension of the Prophet.[33]

Turbulence has always been a characteristic of these socio-religious movements. Their followers were discredited and persecuted. They always remained marginal. For their safety, they had to resort to secrecy. As their beliefs were condemned, they took gnostical forms: secret teachings revealed by esoteric interpretation of sacred

29 See I. Mélikoff, 'Le problème *Kızılbaş*'.

30 See supra, note 1.

31 See I. Mélikoff, 'Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektaşi-Alevi', (reprint in *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc*, pp. 59-60.

32 See Fuat Köprülü, 'Les origines du Bektachisme. Essai sur le développement historique de lé hétérodoxie musulmane en Asie Mineure', in *Actes du Congrès international d'histoire des religions* (Paris 1925), 1926; Fuat Köprülü, *Influence du chamanisme turco-mongol sur les ordres mystiques musulmans*, Istanbul, 1929.

33 See I. Mélikoff 'Le problème *Kızılbaş*'.

texts, initiation of the profane, ceremonies held by night in hidden places, hermetical language by which adepts could express themselves.[34]

Asia Minor has always been a land of mystical and martial enthusiasm. That can be seen during the first centuries of the Ottoman Empire. The first Ottomans owed their military success to the stimulation of martial mysticism. War and religion combined together. The dervishes became *gazis* and the Janissaries were connected to the Bektashis. But things were to change during the 16th century with the Ottomano-Safavid wars.

In Eastern Anatolia the Kızılbaş movement owes its development to the impulse of the Safavids. Kızılbaş mystical ideology was combined with martial enthusiam. The Kızılbaş ideology was the source of a series of religious revolts known in Ottoman history as the *Celali İsyanları*,[35] from the name of one of the first rebels. These revolts, though inspired by religious motives, often had social and economical aims. They are generally attributed to the Kızılbaş, but one cannot exclude the moral participation of the Bektashis who may have often inspired action by means of their spiritual and intellectual influence.

In later Ottoman history, Bektashism had become synonymous with non-conformism in matters of religion. During the 19th century, after the collapse of the Janissaries in 1826 and the closure of the *tekkes*, the non-conformist Bektashis became free-thinkers and later on, in the 20th century, progressivists. They often became Free-Masons, as sharing the same ideals: non-conformism and free-thinking.[36] They also joined the Young Turks. Later on, when the Turkish Republic took the place of the Ottoman Empire, they embraced the cause of Atatürk and supported his efforts for a secular state. The Alevi went even further and compared Atatürk to Hazret-i Ali.

Though Bektashis and Alevis go back to the same origin, they have formed two parallel groups. These groups have been subjected to different ethnical influences: the Bektashis were influenced by the Balkans,[37] the Alevi by the people of eastern Anatolia: Iranians, Kurds and others.

Though the Bektashis dominated the others under the Ottoman Empire, with the loss of the Balkanic provinces, the center of gravity changed. Nowadays, the predominant part is played by the Alevis, and the Bektashis find themselves more or less driven into the background. One is actually tempted to promote the "Alevi problem" and to suppress the Bektashis, though both groups continue to worship the same patron-saint: Hacı Bektaş Veli.

34 See I. Mélikoff 'Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektaşi-Alevi'; and 'L'Islam hétérodoxe en Anatolie: non-conformisme-syncrétisme-gnose'.

35 See Mustafa Akdağ, *Celâli İsyanları (1550-1603)*, Ankara, 1963.

36 See I. Mélikoff, 'L'Ordre des Bektachis aprés 1826', *TURCICA* XV, 1983, 155-178 (reprint in *Sur les traces du soufisme turc*).

37 See I. Mélikoff, 'Les voies de pénétration de lé hétérodoxie musulmane en Thrace et dans les Balkans', in Halcyon days in Crete II (a symposium held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 1994. *The Via Egnatia under Ottoman Rule (1380-1699)*, Elizabeth A. Zachariadou (ed.), Rethymnon, 1996.

On Bektashism in Bosnia

ERIK CORNELL

Of the European countries conquered by the Ottoman Empire only Albania and Bosnia became Islamized. The other ones, present day Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania remained Christian. They belonged to the Orthodox church, the existence of which was never questioned but on the contrary acknowledged as a *millet*[1] and consequently so to speak integrated into the Empire. There is hardly any exaggeration in claiming that the Ottoman Empire protected the Orthodox believers from Catholic ambitions of penetration. Albania and Bosnia, however, were Catholic and could be suspected of nursing links with both the Vatican and the Emperor in Vienna. Albania "seems to have been Islamized as a matter of deliberate Ottoman policy to help suppress resistance after the Turkish-Venetian war in the seventeenth century".[2] On the other hand "the process by which Bosnia gained a majority population of Muslims ... took the best part of 150 years".[3] This does not indicate a single-minded policy but nevertheless it can safely be argued that the Sublime Porte preferred to see the border areas towards the Catholic Roman Empire to be settled by Muslims or Orthodox peoples. The way in which the peaceful conversion of Bosnia took place is still a topic for discussion.

Bektashism in Albania has been well documented by Birge[4] and, for that reason this paper limits itself to a preliminary inquiry into its occurrence in Bosnia. In Albania Bektashism was an acknowledged faith during the Kingdom (1922-1939) and suffered like all other denominations from oppression during atheist rule. But it survived clandestinely and in 1991 an Albanian delegation again attended the pilgrimage to Hacı Bektaş in Cappadoccia.

Bosnia

A glance through the literature on the history of Bosnia and of Islam in the Balkans gives the impression that Bektashism did not really find its way to this country. The role of dervish orders is recognized but "the one order which, curiously, never became very popular in Bosnia was the Bektashi order of the Janissaries: it did have some dervish lodges (*tekke*) there, but these were supported mainly by visiting Albanians and Turks. It seems that the aura of heterodoxy which hung over the Bektashi order was disapproved of in Bosnia".[5] Interviews with religious scholars and dignitaries in Sarajevo in 1996 confirm this opinion. Bektashism is regarded as being and having been more or less non-existent in Bosnia. This is astonish-

1 Religious community of Jewish or Christian believers.

2 Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia. A Short History,* Macmillan, 1994, p. 57.

3 Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p 54.

4 John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, London, [1937], 1965.

5 Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 104.

ing, as the first impressions of mediaeval Bosnian civilization, the circumstances attending the Ottoman conquest and the prevailing attitudes of contemporary Bosnian Muslims would indicate a favourable climate for and some affinity with Bektashism. Only one author mentions the importance of Bektashism in the Islamization of the Balkans.[6]

Two remarks should be made at this stage. Firstly, that the above-mentioned informants in Sarajevo gave the impression of being familiar mainly with conditions during the last two centuries, i.e. beginning with the battles for independence of the southern Slavs in the early 19th century when nationalism added its stamp to the differences of religion. Secondly, that the presence of the Mevlevi order is well documented, especially in towns, and that the differences in life-style between towns and countryside has been a Bosnian characteristic. The strongest surviving order, however, is the Naqshibendi. This leads a scholar to the conclusion that "Bosnian Muslims were Sunni Muslim ... most Bosnian Muslims were probably unaware until recent years that other Muslim sects even existed".[7]

The Bosnian Church

Among the south Slavs the Serbs found their way to Orthodox Christianity while the Croats were at least partly conquered by the Franks and came under the Catholic Church, the influence of which extended into Bosnia. Following the split in 1054 Bosnia fell nominally under Rome. The inaccessible Bosnian lands changed hands repeatedly and in the absence of consistent temporal rule no stable church organization emerged. Apparently an east Christian tradition of Basilian monasteries had been established and survived with some superficial adaptation to Catholicism, while the Catholic influence was mainly exerted by Franciscan monks. Both lacked or had a weak territorial organization with priests and parishes. As a consequence the Bosnian church gradually drifted away on a path of its own. A formal schism with Rome did not occur, but in spite of the existence of some Catholic rulers [8] it was considered heretic and became isolated from Catholic jurisdiction.

The Question of Bogomilism

The heretic character of the Bosnian church has given rise to the theory that it had come under the early influence of Bogomilism. This theory has nowadays been refuted[9] but still has its defendants.[10] Given the low degree of religious awareness which apparently characterized the inhabitants of Bosnia it seems rather unlikely that they should have adhered to this strongly dualistic sect, known for its hard discipline and strong coherency, and hardly a fertile ground for easy conversion to Islam.

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6 Smail Balic, *Das unbekannte Bosnien*, Köln, 1991, p. 93.

7 R. J. Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle: The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1878-1914*, New York, 1981, p. 1.

8 J. V. A. Fine, "The Medieval and Ottoman Roots of Modern Bosnian Society", in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, M. Pinson (ed.), Harvard, 1994, p. 7.

9 Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 29; R. J. Donia and J. V. A. Fine, *Bosnia and Herzegovina. A Tradition Betrayed*, Hurst, London, 1994, p. 35; Fine, "The Medieval", *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 6.

10 Jasna Samic, *Bosnie Pont des Deux Mondes*, pp. 3 and 48; C. Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*, Hurst, London, 1995, p. 17; Christopher Cviic, *Remaking the Balkans*, Chatham House, London, 1995, p. 76.

According to what might be called a compromise theory, pre-Ottoman Muslims had in the 10th century penetrated from the plains north of the Black Sea to the Danube region and into Hungary and Bosnia; there was a certain Bogomil influence, which has been exaggerated; the Krstjani - as the Bosnian Christians were called - were influenced by Paulicians and Messalians (dualistic sects), and these doctrines had some similarities with Islam.[11] The heretic Bosnians, also called Patarens, categorized their adherents in levels which are, to a considerable degree reminiscent of the organization of Sufi orders, e. g. Bektashi.[12]

Under these circumstances the conclusion may be drawn that there did not exist any established parish institution with priests guiding the believers, who lived scattered over the country, either conserving pagan and superstitious practices or, to a certain extent, adhering to heretical beliefs. As Christianity in Bosnia was consequently characterized by lack of both depth and organization, especially in remote areas, or by an admixture of ideas closer to Sufism than to Roman dogma, the advance of Islam in all likelihood did not meet with strong and conscious resistance. The heretics' inclinations towards a mysticism more akin to Sufism than to Catholicism must have rendered the Patarens more open to dervish influence, not least in order to maintain their resistance against Roman dogma. "Die Islamisierung dürfte unter diesen Umständen keinen radikalen Bruch mit der Vergangenheit bedeutet haben".[13]

The Janissary Factor

Bosnia was conquered by the Ottomans in 1463 and remained under their rule until the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when it came under Austrian administration, to be fully annexed in 1908. Ottoman rule must have brought with it an obvious presence of Janissaries, who belonged to the order of Bektashis. Most likely, they were to a considerable extent recruited in Bosnia and Serbia through the devshirme system. Their impact in the process of Islamization is underlined, albeit in general terms, by Balic[14] but more explicitly in a quotation from an Albanian traveler in the 17th century who gave as a reason for the Islamization the influence exerted upon relatives by dignitaries who had risen to high positions through the devshirme system.[15] The same scholar also mentions prominent Bosnian born dignitaries bearing names like Ahmed Çelebi in the 16th and Dervish Aga in the 17th century, factors perhaps worthy of further investigation.[16] Retiring after long service, Janissaries could receive the right to marry and have children. Malcolm quotes a French traveler who in 1803 noted that "the title Janissary" is held by most of the Muslim townsmen; he was told that out of 78.000 Janissaries, only 16.000 received pay and performed real military service, and the rest were artisans who just enjoyed the rank. How strong their influence was is illustrated by the fact that they refused to surrender after the show-down in Istanbul in 1826 when they were defended by the local Bosnian notables. The sultan had to organize a special expedition in 1831 to crush both them and

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11 Balic, *Das unbekannte Bosnien*, pp. 80 and 90ff.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

14 *Ibid.*, p 101.

15 C. Heywood, "Bosnia under Ottoman Rule, 1463-1800", in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 40. Devshirme: The practice of taking Christian boys to the Ottoman capital and raise them in the service of the Sultan.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 33 n31 and 37 n43.

the notables in order to introduce his reforms, i.e. regularizing judiciary under central authority.[17] There are indications that Janissary imprint on Bosnian society must have been very deep.

Religious Attitudes

There are also many witnesses to the mutual acceptance of Christians and Muslims alike of each others' saints, holy days and practices during the Ottoman era. In some instances they can be traced back to pagan times.

> Thus we not only find Muslims kissing the most venerated Christian icons ... or entering Christian churches to pray; we also find them, in the early nineteenth century, having Catholic Masses said for them in front of images of the Virgin in order to cure a serious illness. ... Conversely, there are also records of Christians inviting Muslim dervishes to read the Koran over them to cure them of a dangerous illness.[18]

Balic quotes similar events and also claims that the Ali-cult spread as a result of Bektashi influence.[19] Religious tolerance obviously remained a Bosnian hallmark. Nevertheless, as a result, Malcolm insists that

> Islam in Ottoman Bosnia was, for the most part, orthodox and mainstream. The only seriously heterodox movement was that of the 'Hazevites', followers of a sheikh Hamza Bali Bosnjak who was executed for heresy in 1573. Little is known about his teachings, though they apparently went far beyond the Bektashi in admitting elements of Christian theology.[20]

As this heresy could hardly have emerged out of a vacuum it could be another indication of the circulation of Bektashi ideas.

The Bosnian Muslims in this century, before the outbreak of the wars of the 1990s, were noted for their lack of fanaticism, for secularism and tolerance, e.g. by accepting mixed marriages. Apart from acts of revenge after obvious provocations, their reaction to the atrocities lately committed against them has been comparatively mild and passive - an attitude which could perhaps be explained by the conviction that 'evil' in itself does not exist but signifies lack of knowledge and a low degree of spiritual development, a concept prevalent in Bektashism.

Only earlier this year (1996) a study regarding the actual situation was published under the title "Où sont les Bektachis de Bosnie?" by Jasna Samic. She supplements written sources with oral interviews not only with Bosnian scholars and members of dervish orders but also with many of the few surviving adherents of Bektashism in the country. Her inquiries show that Bektashism declined, even disappeared, in the 19th century, that it was more common in Albania and Serbia, that there once existed a number of Bektashi *tekkes*, that "alors que la Bosnie fut toujours des plus orthodoxes, les haut fonctionnaires qui la gouvernait avaient souvent des penchants hétérodoxes" and that "les Bektachis de Sarajevo seraient des gens renfermés, évitant tout contact avec l'extérieur". She also underlines that "toutes ces indications sur les Bektachis de Bosnie restent incertaines ..." and that "de fait, on ne dispose pas de documents historiques concernant les Bektachis de Bosnie; leurs traces restent très ténues."[21]

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17 J. McCarthy, "Ottoman Bosnia 1800-1878", in *The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina*, p. 75.

18 Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 59.

19 Balic, *Das Unbekannte Bosnien*, p. 117.

20 Malcolm, *Bosnia*, p. 104.

21 J. Samic, *Où sont les Bektachis de Bosnie?*, ISIS et Institut Anatolien, Istanbul, 1996, pp. 382-385.

Conclusions

With respect to the influence of Bektashism in Bosnia the following circumstances have to be taken into consideration:

1. the weak imprint of Christian dogma on the Bosnian church and the low religious awareness of the people;

2. the presence and origin of Bektashi Janissaries;

3. the well known albeit superficial similarities between Christianity and Bektashism;

4. the traditional tolerant attitudes of Bosnian Muslims which have prevailed into this century.

Against the background of these statements a strong Bektashi tradition would be expected in Bosnia but this is not the case.

Some of the available evidence of the presence of Bektashism during the earlier Ottoman centuries has been referred to above, but it is remarkably scanty. It seems that the oppression of the Bektashi order following the annihilation of the Janissaries in 1826 was so complete as to eliminate every trace, with the result that the position of the Ottoman religious establishment and, later, the Reis-ul-ulema (the Bosnian equivalent of the Sheikh-ul-Islam) as leader of the religious/educational/judicial branch of the administration gained total supremacy. The prevalence of the Naqshibendi order in Turkey as well as in Bosnia could be regarded as an indication of this fact. But in Turkey, Bektashism reemerged in less than half a century and was again permitted in 1908. This shows that it continued to exist clandestinely, in the absence of the military Janissaries, probably through the "civil servants" who took their place,[22] also originally recruited according to the devshirme system but known as *enderun,* belonging to the palace. Apparently few representatives of this group or of the above-mentioned artisans-townsmen survived in Bosnia.

Representatives of Islam, especially when speaking to foreigners, are eager to stress the unity of their faith and accordingly paint a one-dimensional picture of pure Sunnism or, when being asked for details, often deny the existence of differences and thereby belittle the influence of the Sufi orders. The calamities of the 1990's in Bosnia have created favourable conditions for the growth of traditional and even orthodox Sunnism - whether or not the same goes for Sufism is uncertain. This religious renaissance is a new phenomenon. It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of the refugees from the wars in Bosnia preferred to go to Western countries against only an estimated five per cent choosing Muslim states.[23]

The picture of a more or less total non-existence of Bektashism in Bosnia is not convincing, given the favourable climate for its acceptance in earlier days as well as the attitudes of contemporary Bosnias. Its absence in to-day's Bosnia is, however, obvious, but its impact from the time of the Ottoman conquest up to and including the events of 1826 clearly calls for further research. As the Bosnian archives in Sarajevo have recently been destroyed by artillery shells, the main source is probably now to be found in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul. An investigation on the conditions of Bektashism in the Sanjak area would also be of interest.*

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22 A. J. Dierl, *Geschicte und Lehre des anatolischen Alevismus-Bektashismus*, Dagyeli, Frankfurt am Mein, 1985, p. 49.

23 Zlatko Dizdarevic, oral information.

* Interviews in Sarajevo:
Reis ul-ulema Ismet ef. Ceric
Zlatko Dizdarevic, Oslobodjenje Journal fra Luka Markesic OFM
Prof. Dr. Omer Nakicevic, Dean of the School of Islamic Science, University of Sarajevo
Vinko Kardinal Pulic, Nadbiskup i Metropolita Vrhbosanski
Prof. Dr. Jasna Samic

Anthropology and Ethnicity: The Place of Ethnography in the New Alevi Movement

DAVID SHANKLAND

Periodically, even since the founding years of the Turkish Republic, there have been attempts to 'discover' the Alevi. These accounts have usually followed a pattern: the reporter stresses certain Alevi qualities: their humanism, their loyalty to the state, the equality of men and women, and the 'hidden' or occluded rituals which lie at the heart of their society. The Alevi then appear lost to the public view until the next intrepid writer, who produces something fairly similar. Today, in 1998, the situation is different. Whilst there is no lack of journalistic interest, there have appeared in addition a spate of publications covering diverse aspects of Alevi society, their history, relations with the state, ceremonies and doctrines. These are not just articles but major publications, going through many editions. Unlike the previous accounts, many of them are written by the Alevi themselves.

It is frequently said that these new works lack innovation. This is unfair. There is no doubt that they represent something very different from the hitherto periodic rediscovering of the existence of the Alevi people. These volumes represent and display varied and important aspects of Alevi life: explorations of attitudes and beliefs which have previously been spoken rather than written down, the beginnings of a codification of an oral tradition, the working through of what it means to be an Alevi today in both fiction and prose, odd pieces of anecdote and research, and more coherent sweeps of several different aspects of Alevi social history and ethnography. Realising that they are such spontaneous outpourings, rather than outcome of a guided research programme, explains their colloquial tone, repetitiveness and at the same time the intimacy that they often offer the reader.[1] Indeed, they are part of a general trend, and should not be seen as distinct from it. The past decade has seen an unprecedented rise in Alevi cultural associations, periodicals devoted to exploring the nature of 'Aleviness', television programs, discussion groups debating the 'Alevi question' and higher political exposure than they have before known. In short, there is occurring nothing short of the creation of a modern cultural heritage by a people who until recently were mute on the national stage.

These developments are at once exciting and deeply worrying. One of the triumphs of the Republic is that the conflict between Alevi and Sunni which marked

1 Out of many, see for example C. Şener, *Alevilik Olayı*, Yön Yayıncılık, Istanbul, 1982, for a very popular summary of Alevi religious history which has now gone through many editions; Şener *Alevi Sorunu Üstüne Düşünceler*, Ant Yayınları, Istanbul, 1994 for commentaries on contemporary Alevi problems; F. Bozkurt *Aleviliğin Toplumsal Boyutları*, Tekin Yayınevi, Istanbul, 1990 for a description of different Alevi customs; Birdoğan, *Anadolu'nun Gizli Kültürü Alevilik*, Berfin Yayınları, Istanbul, 1990, for a similar and even more extensive description of Alevi traditions; B. Pehlivan *Aleviler ve Diyanet*, Pencere Yayınları, Istanbul, 1993, for a discussion of the Alevi links with the Directorate of Religious Affairs; B. Öz *Aleviliğin Tarihsel Konumu*, Der Yayınları, Istanbul, 1995, for an examination of Alevi history; and İ. Kaygusuz *Son Görgü Cemi*, Alev Yayınları, Istanbul, 1991, for a novel conveying some of the difficulties facing Alevi villages in Anatolia as they modernise.

some of the most bloody episodes in the history of the Ottoman Empire has been so markedly reduced. The reasons for this are complex, but are certainly linked to the fact that both Alevi and Sunni Turks have felt able to identify with the aims and desires of the new Republican movement. Today, however, the increasing Sunnification of the Turkish nation has resulted in many Alevi people becoming uneasy. They are explicitly concerned that the ostensibly neutral territory of the state is being used for religious purposes and will accordingly result in their being discriminated against.

The Alevi reaction to these fears will not be identical, their community is after all large and diverse. However, there is a sad possibility that increasing sectarian sensitivity will lead to open disagreement, even violence between the two sects. It need not do so, and I hope profoundly that it will not. However, it would be irresponsible for us as researchers actively associated with the study of the Alevi not to be aware of the dangers.

This, indeed, is the rub. We are academics gathered together to discuss and publish an account of Alevi society. What we publish will also be taken up by the people for whom the revitalisation and recreation of their culture is a vital issue. How are we to evaluate our place in this cultural process of uncertain outcome? Should we not publish at all for fear of the way that this work will be used? I do not think so. On balance, I believe that a world deprived of reasoned research is worse off than a world with it, even if the consequences are so very difficult to predict.

But what is our role? There is no simple response, and perhaps no one answer. In a famous passage, Malinowski, the man who above all was responsible for the crystallization of Social Anthropology as a modern discipline, assumed that one of the prime justifications of field research was to provide information about the way people live before they are swept up in a tide of modernization.[2] Whilst the process of global industrialization is perhaps less straightforward than he claimed, to supply as precisely and as clearly as possible ethnography based on detailed fieldwork seems to me still the best ultimate justification for our discipline. Not everyone will agree.[3] At least, however, this approach conforms to the minimum academic requirement of supplying information as accurately as we can, and also, in as much as it tries to offer information which does not conform to the stereotyping of particular communities, avoids the oversimplification which is so often inherent within the political process.

The Alevi are an excellent case in point. Contrast the situation today with that even a few years ago. Until the wave of industrialization and modernization which has swept through Anatolia since the late sixties and early seventies, the Alevi have been a largely rural community. It is true that many Alevi respect the Bektashis as their spiritual leaders, and that this provides a minimal degree of leadership and codification of their doctrines.[4] In practice, however, the rituals and practices of the Anatolian Alevi are those of tight, closely knit but far-flung communities which have developed a complicated and varied *modus operandi* with the surrounding Sunni villages, so much so that it is not always possible to be clear where Aleviness stops and orthodox Islam begins: indeed individuals may take different lines on precisely this point. That is not to say that there is no sense of being an Alevi; there is, and a very powerful one at that, just that the every-day boundaries are unclear.

Contrast this with the situation today. Migration, modernization, industrialization are all continuing rapidly. The previously largely isolated communities are simply no

2 B. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. XV.

3 Cf. the bold assertions in H. Moore (ed.) *The Future of Anthropological Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1996, Introduction.

4 Cf. J. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Luzac & Co. London, 1937, p. 211.

longer so. Social ties, where they were once confined for the majority of the villagers to their immediate community and neighbours, now spread across the country, and even internationally.[5] The great thirst to learn about the Alevi comes from the people who have moved from the community but who wish to retain contact with their cultural roots. No longer living in tightly knit rural communities with their local, mainly oral means of passing on their doctrines, they turn to writing and learning through publications, both scholarly and otherwise. In doing so, there is occurring a process of codification, of doctrinal specificity which simply did not exist in the village setting as I knew it. The previously fuzzy boundaries[6] are in the process of being made hard, and as a result the past may suffer from a needless process of simplification.

Fieldwork

It is time to be more specific. Between 1988 and 1990, I conducted fieldwork in one particular sub-province, living in an Alevi village but making also frequent visits to the surrounding communities. At no time did I use an interpreter, and by the end of my stay I had spent a little more than twelve months in the fieldwork area. I have kept in regular contact with the villagers and the area in question, though the account I give below is based largely on my experience during that one long period of fieldwork and my use of the ethnographic present refers to that period.

Administratively, the sub-province consists of a sub-province centre, which is also the largest settlement, and 96 villages. Of these villages, but for any state personnel stationed there, 20 are solely Alevi, 74 Sunni, and two both Alevi and Sunni. All the Alevi villages regarded themselves as being Turkish, as do all the Sunni villages but three. These last have come to the sub-province as the result of official resettlement policies: one consists of Kurdish people from the east, another of Muslims from Yugoslavia (known as *göçmen* - immigrants), and the last Muslims from Circassian (*Çerkez*).

Both Alevi and Sunni villagers explained to me that during the troubles of the late seventies sectarian relations had been very tense. This culminated in 1979, when there were riots, and the shops owned by Alevi had their windows smashed. As a result of this, most of the Alevi of the sub-province centre moved out, leaving it predominantly, I estimate 90 per cent, Sunni. Now, relations are broadly peaceful: villagers of both sects come into the town in order to conduct their official business, attend market day and, occasionally, to sell their livestock. In spite of this, Alevi and Sunni largely go to their own respective shops, restaurants and garages. Unless a man is a civil servant or interested in left-wing politics he is unlikely to meet members of another sect on a regular basis. There is little inter-marriage between the two sects, and even in the two villages with a mixed sectarian population, the Alevi and the Sunni live in separate village quarters.

Though the two communities lead such separate lives, there are highly significant points in common. They are aligned to the same state, the same nation, speak the same language, and share an immense amount of practical and local knowledge. They both regard themselves as being Islamic. Among both Alevi and Sunni, the standard economic unit is the patrilinial, patrilocal household which owns the land it farms, and consumes its own produce. There are no large landowners, the average

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5 Cf. D. Shankland, "Alevi and Sunni in Rural Turkey: Diverse Paths of Change", in P. Stirling (ed.) *Culture and Economy: Changes in Turkish Village*, Eothen Press, Huntingdon, 1993, pp. 46-64.

6 I owe this expression to Professor Paul Stirling.

household holding is about thirty *dönüm**. The land throughout most of the sub-province is poor: fields yield at very best 12 or 13 to 1, and most much less than this. In the whole of the sub-province, there is only one private business which employs more than ten people, and no tourism. In practice, whilst most people who stay in the sub-province do farm, whether Alevi or Sunni the majority rely for their cash needs on relatives who have migrated, either to Germany or urban centres within Turkey, and are now prepared and able to remit back regular sums of money.

There are also major and important differences in social organization and ideology.[7] One of the most striking is the settlement layout: Sunni villages are collected together in distinct, nucleated settlements. In the centre of each lies a mosque. As the village expands, a new quarter adjoining the old may be built, in which case a new mosque is built in the centre of the new quarter. By contrast, the Alevi villages are more dispersed, sometimes in as many as twenty village quarters, each separated from the next, and each with its distinct fields and pasture and woodland rights. Whilst there usually is a mosque in an Alevi village, it is not usually in the new style with dome and minaret, and there is very rarely more than one for the village as a whole, however many village quarters there may be.

Patrilineages

Patrilineages have been a subject of controversy among people who study Anatolia since Stirling asserted their existence among the Sunni village he studied in Kayseri.[8] In fact, among the villages, both Sunni and Alevi, where I worked, the lineage exists and operates much along the lines described by Stirling: a number of households are linked together through common descent through male ancestors. In certain circumstances these lineages co-operate together for mutual defense and other social support but were not otherwise corporate groups and rarely reached more than about fifty households.

In the Sunni communities, amongst men there exists a loose equality: they differ by virtue of their wealth, their age and their position in the lineage, but no man is held to be qualitatively superior or closer to God than any other. This is quite different among the Alevi, whose society has three quite distinct ranks. About one in ten Alevi lineages regard themselves, and are regarded by their fellows, as being descended from a founder distinguished in the eyes of God through possessing *keramet*. *Keramet*, is sometimes literally translated as 'charisma'. In the context used by the Alevi, it is used to mean favoured by God by virtue of being able to perform a miracle, as in Sufism in general. The oral histories of *dede* lineages invariably include one or more episodes in which a male figure has performed such a feat. The distribution of these lineages varies: occasionally, a village quarter consists only of *dede* lineages, on other occasions a *dede* lineage lives in a village quarter where the other residents are not *dede*. Often, a particular *dede* lineage would claim descent from other similar *dede* lineages in the area, forming a network of related lineages laterally across the countryside.

Every lineage, whether a *dede* lineage or not possesses a *dede* lineage with whom they were defined *talip*. At one level, to be a *talip* implies to be in a relation of subordination and respect. In practice, a *talip* lineage may call in a *dede* to mediate in

* One *dönüm* is approximately 1000 m^2.

7 D. Shankland, "Six Propositions Concerning the Alevi of Anatolia", *International Journal* of *Turkish Studies*, forthcoming.

8 P. Stirling, *Turkish Village*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1964.

quarrels between them or another lineage. He may also be requested to mediate in marriage negotiations, and if widely respected, requested to comment on matters of significance to the community as a whole. The *dede* themselves characterise their task to be the way, the light, the inspiration to a community. They sometimes refer to themselves as *rehber*, guides, whilst their followers may refer to their *ocak*, 'hearth', with implications of being the source of light and warmth of a household.

These two ranks are accompanied by a third: that of *efendi*. *Efendi* are said to be descended from Hacı Bektaş Veli himself. They usually live at Hacıbektaş town, and representatives come to the village about once a year, when they may collect a due, known as *hak kulak*. It is said that the *efendi* may be used as a sort of court of last appeal if there are disputes to be settled. I did not see them fulfill such a function, though many villagers do revere them, and I think some would accept them in such a role.[9]

Whilst the *efendi* lineage may have little influence on the day to day life of the community, the legendary figure of Hacı Bektaş and his monastery are highly important within the village cosmology. The villagers say that the *dede/talip* links were given to them by Hacı Bektaş Veli. Many *dede* lineages claim to be descended from holy men who attended Hacı Bektaş's *tekke* in the town of that name, near Nevşehir. The emphasis on Hacı Bektaş is reflected also in prayer and poetry, where he is referred to variously as 'Saint' (*Pir*) and 'Sovereign' (*Hünkâr*). Several of the villagers visited the tomb of Hacı Bektaş whilst I was in the village, referring to the trip as going on the pilgrimage, *hac*. Many villagers claim also that Hacı Bektaş is descended from the twelve *imam*s, and through them to *Ali* himself. Hacı Bektaş is thus at once a spiritual focus, and also an orienting figure through which the Alevi build up a link and define their place in the wider world of Islam as a whole. The three ranks together give Alevi society a strong hierarchical basis, one that links in all its members into an overlapping network with a well-defined ritual, spiritual and poetic tradition.

Alevilik and *Sünnilik*

The *dede* are rightly regarded as one of the keys to Alevi society: they are at once its focus, its teachers, temporal judges and links to their religious heritage. From the individual's point of view, however, Aleviness can be more focused. All the villagers I spoke to were quite clear that to be Alevi was encapsulated in the saying *'Eline, diline, beline sahip ol!:* 'Be master of your hands, tongue and loins!' Glosses on this vary, though the most frequent is 'Do not take what is not yours, do not lie, and do not make love outside marriage!' The phrase is well-known within mystical Islam, where it is called *edep*, the Alevi are distinctive in that they have made it part of the very core of their concept of religious fulfillment.

The Alevi further characterise their way of life through a series of comparisons with the Sunni communities with which they are surrounded. The principal Alevi ceremony is the *cem*, at which both men and women worship together. The cem celebrates several things at once: its core rituals symbolise the martyrdom of Hüseyin at the Kerbala, but they also include music and interpretation of key themes within Alevi doctrine, such as the *edep* philosophy. The ceremonies may last for several

9 Of the distribution of power within the village, D Shankland, "Social Change and Culture: Responses to Modernization in an Alevi Village in Anatolia", in C. Hann (ed.), *When History Accelerates*, Athlone Press, London, pp. 238-254.

hours, and one of their features is that all in the congregation must be at peace with one another before worship can begin. If there are any quarrels, the protagonists must either make up their differences, or leave the gathering.[10] This last point is very important with the Alevi men, who contrast their way with the Sunni prayer in the mosque, saying that the greatest problem about praying in a mosque is that it is possible to be next to a murderer without realising it, something which the Alevi prohibition on strangers, and on all present being at peace with each other before the ceremony begins precludes.

Though men vary to the extent that they are able, or indeed wish to articulate their religious beliefs, many men also draw a contrast between the depth of the Alevi, and the supposed superficiality of the Sunni religious experience. Thus, they maintain that belief in the Sunni God is based on fear, but that the Alevi base their faith in love, a love which is within all people and that can be found within them. They illustrate this by saying that in the beginning, God created the world, and gave creatures life (*can*). However, He looked at his work and felt that there was nothing which truly reflected His Being. Accordingly, He gave all humans a part of Himself, this part is our soul (*ruh*). Now, when we pray together in the *cem*, we do so face to face, and through the collective worship, see into one anothers' hearts and so become part of God.

The Four Doors of Islam

The boundaries of Aleviness however, are not ultimately made up with a simple contrast between the Alevi and the Sunni way of going about things. Whilst it is important to realise that individual villagers vary to the degree with which they elucidate these matters, the *dede* teach that there are four ways to God: *şeriat, tarikat, marifet* and *hakikat*. A person may pass through one stage on an individual progression to God, going from the *şeriat* to the *tarikat* level (where most Alevi are said to be) to *marifet*, and finally to *hakikat*, when a person is at one with God. At this last stage, the physical properties of this world no longer become an impediment. *Dede* lineages are ideally held to be at this last level.

These categories also apply to the more broad practice of Islam itself. There is a consensus that the ritual and prayer which is taught by the *dede* is loosely known as *tarikat*. *Tarikat* is associated with the use of Turkish rather than Arabic in religious poetry and prayer, and also implies the private life of the Alevi community, where a strict segregation between men and women (*haremlik/selamlık*) is not usually practiced. It is for this reason that it has been necessary to 'discover' the Alevi so many times in the last decades: the Alevi traditionally do not allow strangers access to their ceremonies, nor do they provide detailed accounts of their rituals, procedures and doctrines. As I write, in 1997, this is changing very quickly: but certainly whilst I was in the village in 1989 I was permitted to attend *cem* ceremonies only after a great deal of discussion and deliberation. In spite of this token acceptance, many men were highly concerned at talking with me, and whilst wonderfully hospitable, clearly preferred not to discuss such intimate matters.

To the villagers, *şeriat*, generally is thought of as the way religion is usually conducted in the local Sunni villages. *Şeriat*, however, also implies the power of the state, the religious orthodoxy that it supports, the use of Arabic prayers, and the pub-

10 Cf. Shankland, "Alevi and Sunni". On the Alevi rituals in the village setting, see also the pioneering fieldwork conducted by A. Gökalp, *Tetes Rouges et Bouches Noires*, Société d'ethnographie, Paris, 1980.

lic, male side of life.[11] In practice, though, the Alevi villagers did not absolutely reject the ideas and practices associated with *şeriat*. Rather, life in the village itself consisted of a subtle interplay between different concepts of *şeriat* being the outward form of existence, and *tarikat* being the inner, more meaningful reality. It is immensely difficult to extract these interplays between belief and practice, and turn them into a codified document and say this is *Alevilik*.

To give an extended example of this. Only *dede* are permitted to lead Alevi rituals, and only they may pronounce Alevi prayers. Yet the *dede* themselves may pride themselves on their knowledge of Islam as a whole. Further, if a non-*dede* man is interested in religion, he may take the trouble to learn a body of prayer associated with orthodox religion, he may also learn how to conduct a funeral and to lead a mosque prayer ceremony. Such men are known as *hoca*, and the practice *hocalık*. This acceptance of the orthodox Islamic practice shows itself in many ways. The village only has one mosque, a building which but for being slightly larger looks not greatly different from the traditional village house. However, they respect the mosque *imam*, though a Sunni man appointed by the state, as the official prayer leader in the village. They gave him a house, a donkey with which to fetch wood, and gave him the use of a field to grow wheat without charge. Whilst very few men attended the five daily prayers regularly (I believe two), rather more than this would go to the Friday prayers (up to a dozen), and the mosque would be full on the two religious festivals of the year: *kurban bayramı* and *şeker bayramı*.

The sequence of funeral rituals illustrates this synchronism also. After their death, a person, whether man or woman, is washed, placed in a shroud and laid out in front of a purely male congregation in the open air, just as they are in a Sunni village. The mosque *imam*, or a village *hoca*, then pronounce, a service which the villagers' regard as being part of orthodox Islam, common to both Alevi and Sunni. Whilst I could not be sure of this claim, certainly the fact that the state-trained mosque *imam* may conduct the ceremony gives it support. The body is then taken to the graveyard, and interned to the intoning of *ilahi*, Arabic hymns, by the *hoca*.

Three days after the funeral, however, a further and quite different ceremony takes place, known as *dar çekme*. In this, neighbours and relatives collect in the deceased villager's house. In the main room, twelve people, six men and six women line up in a horseshoe formation. They face a number of *dede* lined up in front of them, and the spouse or close relative of the deceased. To their left, the hoca recites a prayer, and a verse is read from the Koran. I was unable to attend this brief ceremony, but I was kindly supplied the text of the prayer. It consists chiefly of repeated supplications to the one God, begging for mercy and asking for forgiveness. After the ceremony, the congregation partakes of a sacrificial meal. Nothing like this is found on the Sunni side, indeed it contains various elements: the *dede* who bless the sacrifice, and the men and women gathering together in a private ceremony are characteristic of the Alevi doctrines, whilst the prayer recited by the *hoca* is associated with orthodox Islamic practice.

In sum then, the Alevi acknowledge the different practices of their neighbours but do not disassociate from them entirely in their own ritual and personal life, they contrast the workings of the state with that of their own community but they do not reject the authority of the state. The consequences of this overlapping of different ritual cycles and different layers of belief within Alevi life are profound. The traditional

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11 E. Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1969, in his research among the Berbers in the High Atlas mountains also stresses such a contrast, between the *Makhzen*, the area controlled by the state and its codified, orthodox *Kuran*-based rule, and *siba*, the area outside its authority where the Berbers defined their own practice of Islam much more freely.

assertive firm self-belief that characterises so much of religious belief is absent. Their doctrines are embedded within the wider sphere of Islam, and the orthodox Sunni practices are not rejected but respected and side-stepped. Ultimately, this means that the Alevi communities in Anatolia define their everyday existence more in terms of peacefully going about their daily lives rather than in any form of proselytising, and that inherent within the very terms of their religion is the possibility of different forms of belief and practice.

A sociological argument could be put forward to explain this tolerance: one of its consequences is that outsiders are able to be accommodated within the villages, another that individual believers can take up different individual positions within the Alevi faith: moving toward the supplementing of the Sunni form or moving away from it as the case may be, without suffering the condemnation of their fellows. Whatever the sociological explanation may be, there is a built-in respect for other people's views which, along with the emphasis on the mystical inner self, gives Aleviness much of its fascination for the outside world, and indeed for its present apologists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, I would reiterate my main plea. There is a process of re-evaluation of the Alevi culture and heritage which may lead to the codification of different Alevi schools, each with their own texts and moral codes. The creation of these different areas of thought will inevitably lead to speculation as to which is the true, the final form of the Alevi religion. In practice, however, any claim to be a true form of Aleviness will be empirically incorrect, simply because Aleviness has over the centuries arrived at such complex forms of accommodation. More importantly still, the very fact of learning to live with the dominant tradition has resulted in a combination of mystical philosophy and a doctrine of peace and equality between the sexes which is remarkably attractive. If, as researchers, we permit this flexibility, inherent within Alevi communities, to be written out of the process of cultural revival, we are failing in the one area where we may be of use. This is not to say that we in turn will offer one single interpretation of *Alevilik*: not at all, there are many ways that a reinterpretation of the Alevi heritage can take a particular person. Nevertheless, this indication of a complex background that we can offer ultimately is perhaps the one justification for our interfering with the process of cultural recreation that we have gathered together to celebrate and to discuss.

Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey

KARIN VORHOFF

Alevilik bir sır değildir - "Alevism is no secret" declares an Alevi religious leader in the title of one of his recent books (Celasun 1993).[1] Some ten years ago such a statement would hardly have come to the minds of those who were neither experts in the field nor Alevi religious authorities. Only now and then had Alevism or Bektashism been taken up publicly during republican times, and if ever, Turkish nationalism seemed to be the actual issue.[2] They were always quite instrumentalist approaches, rather than serious attempts to keynote the substance of Alevi faith, rituals and morals. The statement cited indicates that in Turkey of our days some things have changed fundamentally: According to the official ideology the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of Turkey's population had for long been evaded as a topic, or even denied in public. Then, in the second half of the eighties, taboos that had restricted the discourse so far, were broken. Suddenly Alevism appeared on the public agenda. Alevi and Bektashi started to reflect openly on the doctrines and ritual practices of their once esoteric religion - a transgression that would in former times have incurred the penalty of exclusion from the community. By way of contrast Alevism is nowadays no longer something mysterious, "Alevi reality" can no longer be avoided in Turkey's social and political life, even if the enthusiasm that set the Alevi community into motion in the early nineties and which brought the topic to the fore has somewhat abated. The discussion on Alevism appears in countless publications. Prior to this, one can observe a scientific interest in Bektashism in particular for nearly a hundred years.[3] Therefore I will first review the result of scientific studies. In contrast, most of what has appeared in Turkey in recent years must be qualified as more or less journalistic and popular works addressing a large reading public. As I will explain later, one has to take these publications not so much as first hand information, but for the light they shed on the social dynamics that have produced them, and which they in their turn fuel. Sure, the demarcation between the two categories is sometimes blurred, the position of the foreign scholar obliged to judge the academic - or otherwise - production of those he or she studies, is not always a pleasant one. I will, therefore, concentrate not so much on the immediate political and social dimensions of the social process that we might call the Alevi revival, as on its presentation in the media, specially the printed media.

1 In the forties one Bektashi dared to publish a book on the order with a similarly scandalizing title, cf. Çavdarlı 1944. There is a rumor that the author died under mysterious circumstances, as Bektashi circles might not have appreciated the communication he addressed to a wider public.

2 Mostly Sunni took up writing, e.g. Baha Said 1926a-c, 1927; Bardakçı 1970; Benekay 1967; Eröz 1977; Otyam 1964; Türkmani 1948. For a sympathetic presentation cf. Oytan 1970/1945-47; Sertoğlu n.d., 1966. For less politically biased theological studies cf. Erişen/Samancıgil 1966; Şapolyo 1964; Sunar 1975.

3 Literature and manuscripts concerning the Bektashi order as well as the Alevi can be traced in a bibliography arranged by Mürsel Öztürk (1991). However, the collection is not exhaustive, especially not for the titles that have appeared in Western languages.

Inquiries

Alevi-Bektashi studies were until recently largely the domain of the Ottomanists. They concentrated on the history of the Bektashi order (*tarikat*),[4] which goes back to the 13th century, and the *Babaî* and *Kızılbaş* (lit. "Redhead") movements. In the 13th and 16th centuries tribal and rural groups of probably mostly Turkish origin had rebelled against Ottoman central authority, first under the spiritual guidance of the *Babaî* - wandering dervishes and heterodox Sufi leaders - and later with the support of the Safavid *şeyh*s and *halife*s who had their center in Ardabil in Northeastern Iran. These groups adhered to a sort of folk Islam that integrated Shiite elements and later developed further towards heterodoxy and syncretism. Concerning the studies on these issues there is no need to repeat what Faroqhi (1995) has reviewed recently. She concludes that thanks to the works of Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1925, 1929, 1966/1919), Abdülbakî Gölpınarlı,[5] Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1983, 1989, 1996), Irène Mélikoff[6] - and we should not forget her own study (Faroqhi 1981)[7] - "we possess a reasonable understanding of the overall history of the [Bektashi] order" (Faroqhi 1995: 27). The same applies to research on the political and socio-economic aspects of Ottoman-Safavid relations, which are associated with the "Kızılbaş problem" that shook the Ottoman state from the late 15th through the whole of the 16th century.[8] There are indications that the rebellious Kızılbaş being followers of the Safavids, entered only after the Safavids' defeat at Çaldıran (1514) into closer relations with the Bektashi order. For the most part they adopted the legendary founder of the Bektashi order, Hacı Bektaş Veli (around 1300), as their patron saint (Faroqhi 1995: pp. 15-16). Certainly, such a spiritual and personal entanglement of Bektashi and Kızılbaş milieus must have led to mutual influence and cultural exchange. One may deplore the scantiness of sources concerning this process and the evolution of Bektashi doctrine and ritual, as well as the Alevi religious system. But it is also true that only a small part of the legends of Bektashi and Alevi holy men (*menakıbname*, *vilayetname*) have been edited in a sufficiently scholarly manner to be studied in a comparative perspective.[9] After Köprülü, a pupil of Mélikoff, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1983, 1996), has done some pioneer work in that field. On Bektashi legends we also have some studies by Hans-Joachim Kissling (1986) who worked especially on the Balkans, and a recent article by van Bruinessen (1991). Even though the abolition of the Bektashi order in 1826 and the suppression of all *tarikat* activity in 1925 may have caused some losses, we can be sure that a bulk of devotional literature still awaits study.[10] In the course of the recent Alevi revival it came to light that the descendants of the traditional religious leaders, the *ocakzade*, dispose of copies of the Alevi doctrinal books (*buyruk,* lit. "order"),[11] the Ottoman *icazet,* diploma of author-

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4 Note on transcription: Names and technical terms, even if of Arabic and Persian origin are here spelled in accordance with modern Turkish orthography. Transcriptions will be used only for distinctive purposes.

5 E.g. 1958, 1978, 1979, 1989. Gölpınarlı is an interesting personality of Turkey's academic scene as he had inclinations to Sufism and later to Shiism.

6 See her selected articles Mélikoff 1992, 1995a.

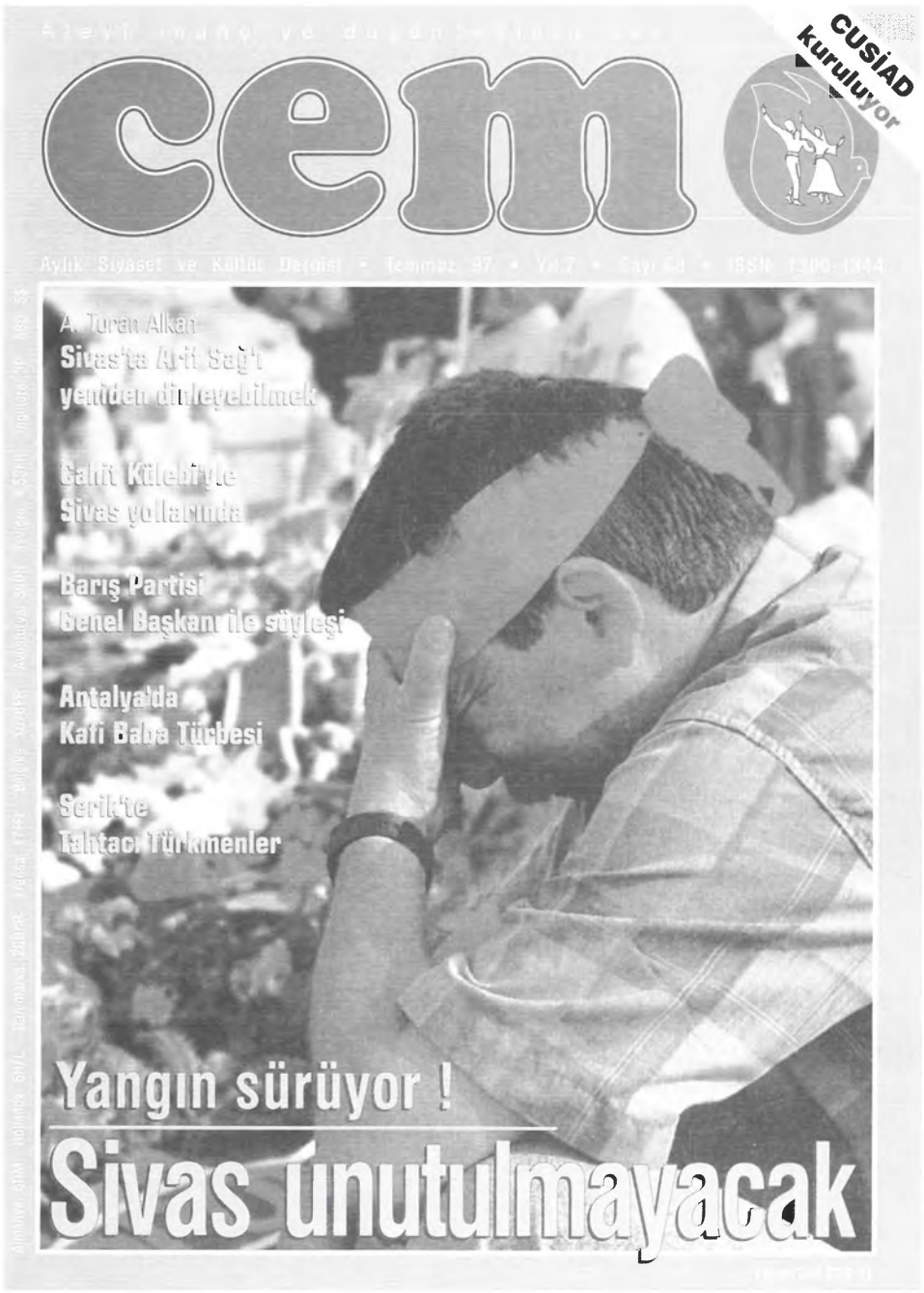
7 Note also an interesting recent contribution: Beldiceanu-Steinherr 1991.

8 For a survey and bibliography cf. Roemer 1989; recently Calmard 1993; Gronke 1991.

9 Gölpınarlı 1958. Popular editions cf. footnote 53. Comment and summary of the legend on Hacı Bektaş Veli in German cf. Groá 1927. For another Bektashi legend cf. Tschudi 1914. For a list of manuscripts cf. M. Öztürk 1991: pp. 26-36.

10 Just around these turning-points in Ottoman history (reform measures, revolution of the Young Turks, founding of the republic) we observe a boom in Bektashi apologetic literature, cf. e.g. Ahmed Cemaleddin Çelebi 1992/1909; Ahmed Rıfkı 1909-1912; B. Atalay 1991/1924; Mehmed Süreyya [Münci Baba] 1995/1914-1915.

11 There are only more or less popular editions cf. Aytekin 1982/1958; B. Ayyıldız 1984; Bozkurt 1982; Erbay 1994; *Tam ve Hakiki İmam*, 1989.



"The fire goes on! Sivas will never be forgotten". Front page of the Alevi magazine *Cem*.

ity, and similar first-hand sources. The large body of poetry that occupies a prominent place in Alevi and Bektashi religious and social life has been compiled mainly in popular editions,[12] but has only rarely been studied by philologists or linguists.[13]

Such a research as well as investigations in oral history might close some of the blank spaces in our knowledge on the fate of the Kızılbaş in the 18th and 19th century, as the official sources mostly pass over that question after the great revolts and

12 Cf. Arslanoğlu 1984, 1992; Bezirci 1996; Bayrak 1986; Çırakman 1992; Koca 1990; Özmen 1995; Şimşek 1995.

13 As biased, unsatisfactory works in that field of Eyuboğlu 1991; Özkırımlı 1985. Again a study by a historian cf. Jansky 1964. For a linguistic discourse analysis cf. Trix 1993.

the immediate repression had ended. As far as information on the Bektashi order after its abolition in 1826 is concerned we are a little more fortunate: Mélikoff (1983, 1988, 1995) has written some articles, and Ramsaur (1942) added a short contribution, while Thierry Zarcone (1993) dedicated a comprehensive work to Rıza Tevfik (1868-1949), who represents, as a mystic and thinker a period and tendency when the Islamic Sufi orders were affected by modernizing influences. The Bektashi order in particular opened itself up to western ideas and free-masonry and attempted to rework its philosophy.

In the seventies, one witnesses the Alevi religious system dissolving and Alevi identity slipping into the political sphere.[14] In times when Sunni Muslims rediscover religion as a tool for political claims and attack the existing secular system because it restricts religious liberty, the overwhelming majority of Alevi saw the Kemalist Republic as a guarantee of their survival, though they still have to suffer discrimination occasionally, and though some of the Kemalist reforms have dealt Bektashism and the Alevi religious system some harsh blows. At a time when methods of oral history are still applicable, investigations in Bektashi and Alevi communities since the early republican period would not only help to reach a deeper understanding of the different ways Sunnis and Alevis have dealt with imposed change and modernization, and of how they experienced secularization, but also serve to fill the gaps of knowledge on Alevi and Bektashi cosmology, religious practice and the social system bound to it. Nevertheless, some substantial work has been done in that field:

Birge (1937), who carried out research mainly among Albanian Bektashis, is still the reference work on the Bektashi order.[15] Clayer (1990) has recently added a comprehensive study on Islamic mystic orders in Albania in modern times, including a fundamental stock-taking of the local Bektashi *tekke*, the dervish lodge. We owe the first ethnographic information on Alevi groups in Anatolia to travelers, geographers (Brandenburg 1905), missionaries (White 1913, 1919; van Rensselaer Trowbridge 1921), orientalists and archeologists (von Luschan 1886) on the *Tahtacı*, a formerly nomadic but now settled group of woodworkers. Nevertheless, these articles are of limited value, because they frequently offer not much more than the superficial observations of outsiders who were not specialists in the field. At the same time, we can take this as evidence of the strict reserve that the rural Alevi seemed to have practiced not only towards Sunni Muslims, but towards any kind of "outsiders". Hasluck's (1929) selected articles give a pertinent picture of the often fluid boundaries between Christian and Islamic folk religious practices (e.g. the visiting of holy places, whether the graves of holy men or just some prominent trees, stones or fountains). He lists the *Kızılbaş* and Bektashi groups and localizes their sanctuaries. It is true that Westerners have up to the days of Klaus E. Müller (1967)[16] often been biased by the desire to trace vestiges of Christianity or the heritage of antiquity in heterodox Islamic groups as in folk Islam generally. Even Birge, though he based his study on a vast range of "native" sources, written and oral, harps perhaps too much on the influence that Neoplatonism had, in his opinion, on Bektashi doctrine.

The reaction of Turkish scholars since the pioneer work of Köprülü to such orientalistic stances tended in its turn to see only the Turkish element at the expense of

14 On the bloody clashes between leftists (Alevi) and rightists (Sunni) in the late seventies cf. Eral 1993; Laçiner 1985. On the Bektashi at that time cf. Norton 1983, 1990.

15 Additionally cf. Jacob 1908, 1909. For special aspects as arts and architecture cf. De Jong 1989 [cf. also for a rich bibliography], 1992; Koray 1967; Mirkov 1994; Wulzinger 1913. For popular general works on the order cf. Dierl 1985; Haas 1988.

16 Müller is a German ethnologist who had in the sixties worked on heterodox groups in the Near East, which he classified as "pseudo-Islamic".

The stand of *Cem* Publications in a book fair.

an understanding of Bektashism and Alevism as forms of syncretism. Popular and even more politically biased contributions have presented Alevism as a kind of Turkish Islam or, when written by Kemalists of the early times, as a Turkish, pre-Islamic religion.[17] Also Western scholars, especially French (as Mélikoff 1992; Gökalp 1980, 1989, 1990; Roux 1970), have worked on its Turkish elements. Mélikoff for example, shows a continuity from the idea of a *Gök Tanrı*, a "Celestial God", that is supposed to be a common religious representation among the central Asian Turkic groups in pre-Islamic times - to the representation of Ali in Alevi cosmology. There has also been the tendency to classify most elements in Turkish Sufism as the heritage of shamanism, a religious practice ascribed to the pre-Islamic Turks. Nevertheless, one should not be too hasty in accepting superficial parallels as the result of one continuous tradition, as anthropologists have insisted that shamanism is not a too well chosen term for a not very consistent system of beliefs and practices. There is no doubt that heterodoxies, gnosticism and syncretism are generally not well explained by means of unilinear evolutionist models or from a unidimensional perspective. Nevertheless, the Turkish elements in Alevism (and Bektashism) are decidedly prominent.

The (self-)censorship of research and the influence exerted on it by non-scientific factors becomes perfectly clear when one considers our knowledge of Zaza- or Kurmanji-speaking Alevi groups. Unfortunately, the results of Bumke's research in a Kurdish-Alevi region have not been published in full (Bumke 1979, 1989). Yalman (1969), who also worked in the eastern regions of Turkey shows that ethnic and religious identities are not easily separable categories, and that religious affiliation

17 Cf. Baha Said 1926-1927; Türkmani 1948; Yılmaz 1948.

(Alevi or Sunni) was in Turkey at that time the decisive factor for socializing and the formation of alliances among Turks and Kurds. van Bruinessen's (1989, 1994, 1996, 1997) and Kieser's (1993, 1994) recent articles, which give substantial information on the historical and socio-political dimension of "Kurdish Alevism", should encourage further investigations.[18]

While the historians' work had for a long time left a deplorable lack of knowledge on Alevism and Bektashism as a system of faith and a form of social organization, two comprehensive anthropological studies appeared in the eighties. Studies with a folklorist approach that had been carried out by laymen or students who did not really enter the community[19] were not sufficiently analytic to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social dynamics and theology of Alevi groups. Altan Gökalp (1980) worked among the Çepni, a formerly nomadic Alevi tribal group that had settled in the hinterland of the Aegean coast of Turkey. His study concentrates on social organization, but he also analyzes Alevi cosmology and ritual. Gökalp believes that the inextricable integration of the social and the religious sphere allowed the Çepni to preserve a type of social organization that he considers characteristic of Turkish tribes despite the Ottomans' intention to break tribal autonomy and structures. For one who would prefer to emphasize the situational flexibility of ideological and social systems, the structuralist rigorism that marks Gökalp's study might be somewhat too normative.

The historical bias typical of Alevi studies as well as of the German ethnological tradition characterizes the work of Kehl-Bodrogi (1988a) when she reconstructs the historical outcome of Alevism as she encountered it in her field-research among central Anatolian and Western Alevi groups and in their religious poetry.[20] The study is a comprehensive work of reference on the Alevi/*Kızılbaş* as an Anatolian *esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft* ("esoteric community in faith") shortly before the community went public. The author also devoted some articles to the recent developments in Alevism (Kehl-Bodrogi 1989, 1992, 1993). As the process of rediscovery, revitalization and redefinition of Alevism increased in scope, other scholars discovered the topic.[21] Certainly, analyses of the cultural revival and the identity politics bound up to it are of no lesser importance, but basic research on Alevi faith, ritual, social organization and specific sub-groups[22] should not be neglected; in particular as long as a form of Alevism that had not yet completely been eroded by modernity are still alive. Considering the high rate of voluntary or forced migration from the formerly Alevi dominated regions, Alevism can no longer be classified as a purely rural phenomenon. Consequently, research in Alevism in a process of urbanization and urban Bektashism is a compelling task.[23]

Shankland has carried out a comparative study on the changes resulting from the

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18 For a recent, but quite descriptive and short contribution cf. Danık 1996. Note one further article on to inter-Alevi ethnicity. Unfortunately I could not yet get hold of it, cf. P. White 1995.

19 Cf. Yılmaz 1948; Yetişen 1986; Yörükkan 1928, 1929-1931, 1931. All report on the *Tahtacı*.

20 For collections of Alevi religious hymns and chants cf. Arslanoğlu 1984, 1992; Erdal 1995; Şimşek, Yörükoğlu 1993. On one genre of hymns cf. Yürür 1989. On the role of Alevi music in modern Turkey cf. Markoff 1986.

21 Cf. Vorhoff 1995; shorter contributions: Vaeth 1993; Vergin 1991/1981; and several articles in Birikim no. 88 (1996).

22 It is also important to mention the following sociological studies on the *Tahtacı* and the *Abdal* and their interaction with their non-Alevi neighbours: Grønhaug 1974; cf. Kehl-Bodrogi 1988b; I. Akdeniz Yöresi... 1995. For an Alevi's contribution cf. Küçük 1995.

23 We have a few contributions on Alevi communities in Europe, but Alevism or Alevi communitarian life was not the main subject of these studies; cf. Gitmez/Wilpert 1987; Mandel 1987, 1989, 1990; Naess 1988; Pfluger-Schindlbeck 1989.

Alevi dance ceremonies in Hacıbektaş.

modernization and integration into the state structure of the Turkish speaking Alevi and Sunni villagers. He proposes that "the Sunni villages are more successful than the Alevi villages at moving into the modern world" (Shankland 1993b: p. 47), because their ethics, social order and life-style is "compatible with" the concept of a "national, centralized administrative system", which demands a patrimonial relation between citizen and state (Shankland 1993a: p. 5). The Alevi could only integrate, after "relinquishing [their] ... belief in their myths, rituals and ideals" (Shankland 1993b: p. 47). These are based on a socio-religious hierarchy and organization that questions the authority of a central national state and a Sunni dominated rule (*ibid.*: p. 58; 1993a: passim). A dilemma arises from the fact that the Alevi in present day Turkey strive for modernization, but are actually not the ones who decide on its methods. Moreover their specific culture functions on mechanisms that are opposed to such a form of modernization. Without doubt, this thesis needs further investigation on a larger scale of comparison. Considering my Istanbulian fieldwork data, I have my doubts if Alevi really do generally so badly once they have arrived in the urban areas, or if this generalization holds true only for migrants from certain regions, or for those who have only lately migrated. If we dare make statements about the compatibility of certain religious systems with modern political systems, one has also to consider these dynamics as they develop among Kurdish Sunni and Alevi. This is because elements of a tribal organization are still effective among the Sunni population in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, i.e. tribal leaders and dynamics of social organization may challenge the state's authority.

Another compelling task for research would be to look at the relationship between the Anatolian Alevi and other heterodox groups on the Balkans and in the Near East, such as the *Ahl-e Haqq* in Iraq and Iran,[24] the Alevi groups in Azerbaijan and the Bektashi of Southeast Europe.[25] The first steps towards this have been taken in the last ten years during congresses on mystic and heterodox Islamic groups, such as the congress on the Bektashi in Strasbourg in 1986,[26] on the Mevlevi in Bamberg in

24 Cf. Hamzeh'ee 1990, with further bibliographical references.

25 Cf. Clayer 1990; Georgieva 1991; Mikov 1994.

26 The contributions have only recently been published, cf. Popovic/Veinstein 1995.

1991,[27] on the Melami-Bayrami in Istanbul 1987 (forthcoming), and on Alevism and other syncretistic groups in Berlin in April 1995.[28] Above all, the relation of the "Anatolian" Alevi and the Arabic-speaking *'Alawī/Nuṣairī* in Syria[29] and the Turkish province of Hatay has to be clarified, since there is still some confusion whether they belong together (they do not by theological and historical origin). When one looks at the directions each of these groups choose in modern times, structural and substantial similarities can be discovered. It would be compelling to venture a wide-ranging comparison of their modernization method and the identity politics in each of their countries.

Frances Trix (1993) has recently published her research on a peripheral Bektashi center. This *tekke* had been established in Michigan by an Albanian refugee Bektashi *baba* (lit. "father", the title of the Bektashi religious leaders) and his disciples. The approach and methodology is new in Bektashi studies: a linguist's minute discourse analysis. Although this is telling on the nature of communication in Sufi milieus and the character of mystic instruction, historians and social scientists will be disappointed in their hopes to find a comprehensive presentation of modern *tekke* life or Bektashi teachings. As the author frequented the *tekke* for twelve years, one may hope that she will continue to publish the findings that are not immediately relevant for her branch,[30] but which may satisfy the curiosity of her colleagues in the historical and social sciences.

The recent Alevi revival has attracted increased public and academic interest in Alevism. Accordingly, some work is in progress and research projects are being set up, some of them being presented in this volume. Moreover, Anke Otter-Beaujean from the Freie Universität Berlin is working on a dissertation on the *buyruk*, the Alevi's doctrinal religious books, which they trace back to the sixth Imam Cafer-i Sadık and the Safavid Şah Ismail. Ayşe Ceren Ülken de Barros from the University of Kent is working on a PhD on the "formation of 'Alevi' identity in an urban setting". İlhan Ataseven from the University of Lund has carried out research on the acquisition of religious knowledge, and lived in urban Alevi and Bektashi milieus. From an anthropological perspective he analyzes how individuals representing these groups formulate their beliefs and how they lay claim to their own history and religion, especially in modern times (Ataseven 1997). At the University of Utrecht Frederick De Jong, who is working on the symbolism of Bektashi art and architecture, is setting up a computerized data base of the Alevi and Bektashi religious hymns, the *nefes*. The program allows the user to trace authors, titles, special terms and editions. Textual tradition and the history of specific concepts may be reconstructed more accurately, when such a working tool is at our disposition. One can expect this to become a rich source of information for any research on Alevism, but especially for philological and literary studies.

Discoveries

At the end of the eighties Turkey's public was confronted with a host of books, booklets and journals, which unanimously declared one aim: to try to understand and describe Bektashi and Alevi history, their religious and social reality - in as objective

27 Published in Osmanlı Araştırmaları (Journal of Ottoman Studies) vol. 14 (1994).

28 Kehl-Bodrogi et al. (1997). Furthermore cf. Gaborieau et al. 1990; Popovic/Veinstein 1986.

29 See contributions in this volume.

30 As e.g. Trix 1995.

Alevi *saz* players.

a fashion as academic work had attempted since the early days of our century. Yet a closer look at these texts shows that they are very much influenced by non-scientific factors. Sure, nobody would deny that subjectivity, political prejudices and scientific fashions also have an influence on academic work, but recent Turkish writings are even more directly part of a social and political process. I would go so far as to say that they affect the constitution and perception of social reality itself. But let us first have a look at some concrete facts, before drawing up a detailed thesis in subsequent comments on the literature in question. At this point I must first mention that, in view of the huge mass of publications, it will not be feasible to consider single works or authors, and only a general survey will be possible.[31]

At the beginning of the eighties, even those who were familiar with Alevi society, such as Kehl-Bodrogi (1988), expected that the community would dissolve in a secularized Turkish society and no longer persist as a segregated confessional community. Then, in late 1989 and early 1990, Alevi who had just begun to form associations joined with secularist Sunni journalists, intellectuals and artists in drawing up an "Alevi manifesto" (*Alevilik Bildirgesi*). A revised version was published in *Cumhuriyet* (May 15th, 1990: p. 15), a newspaper in the Kemalist tradition and in other liberal papers. Both groups felt at that time threatened by the continuous rise and radicalization of political Islam and the fact that Turco-Islamistic circles had gained control of some government departments. For the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic[32] the Alevi declared themselves openly not only as a political force, but also as a religious community claiming the right of self-determination and official recognition. The press and publishing houses entered the arena. A series on Alevism appeared in almost all the big Turkish papers and journals, countless new books on the topic were published, and new editing houses were founded. A similar boom could be observed in the music sector, with masses of new cassettes and Compact Disks of ritual and traditional Alevi music placed on the market. A closer

31 For detailed discussion and review cf. Vorhoff 1995.

32 One has to concede that an expression of Alevi consciousness in public was for a short period to be witnessed in the second half of the sixties (cf. footnote 63). Though, this did not grow to the dimensions of the present Alevi movement and it did lin fact ead to a principal reorganization of the Alevi community. What is actually going on in Turkey will to my mind have lasting effects on the whole Turkish society.

look at the publications indicates that much of the traditional segregations, affiliations and pressure groups still persist. Roughly two groups of authors oppose each other: religious-minded Sunni authors and Alevi, who advocate a self-determined presentation of their community and culture. Between these two stand a few secularists[33] and leftists (Yürükoğlu 1990, Özkırımlı 1990) of Sunni origin. Both groups seem to be interested in the Alevi mainly as political fellows, be it as companions in the strife for Socialism or be it as defenders of a secular state, democracy and progressive ideals.

The religious Sunni authors are mainly theologians and historians holding academic positions, such as Yaşar Nuri Öztürk (1990) from Istanbul University and Ruhi Fığlalı (1990) from Muğla University, or who work for the state's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*)[34] like Abdülkadir Sezgin (1990). Furthermore, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has edited books on Bektashism.[35] Some of the Sunni authors seem to have their background in Sufi orders, especially the orthodox *Nakşibendi* Esad Coşan (n.d.), head of the *İskender Paşa Cemaati*; Abdülkadir Sezgin (1990); Müfid Yüksel[36] (1995); Mehmed Kırkıncı (1987) who is the leader of a branch of the *Nurcu* movement. Abdülkadir Duru (1984) founded a "discipline of thought" aiming to overcome the contradiction of materialist and idealistic thinking. Though, he and his disciples reject any relationship to a *tarikat*, his organization very much resembles *tarikat* life. He has a network of followers - mostly recruited from his home-country Erzincan - he has founded education centers and other enterprises, and is still the subject (he died in 1989) of a veneration similar to that of a *şeyh*. Şahin (1995) is an exception from the Sunni mainstream, as he goes to the extremes with his critique of the Bektashi order. He belongs to a marginal group of people who, based in Çorum, drew up the project of drawing the Alevi over to the contemporary type of Iranian Shi'ism. There are also contributions by Sunni, who are interested not so much in theological argument as in nationalistic politics. Their point is that the Alevis are "pure" Turks (*Öz Türk*), and Alevism is a kind of proto-Islamic monotheism.[37] Formally considered, the Sunni biased publications fall into two categories: the overwhelming part consists of general works on Alevism and/or Bektashism.[38] Besides these we have editions of Bektashi texts.[39] However, I must leave the judgment of their scientific character and reliability to the Ottomanists.

When one considers the political setting of the Sunni interest in Alevism and Bektashism that rose in the eighties, the meta-plane that prejudices most of the Sunni writings becomes totally clear: none of them accuses the Alevi directly of unbelief or immorality. Sunni authors reject the charges that were traditionally brought forward against the Alevi by expatiating on what Alevism really is, but what Alevi themselves have forgotten or neglected. Most of these authors expose quite paternalistic attitudes,

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33 For reprints of articles from the secular press cf. Ayyıldız 1990; Kaleli 1990; Selçuk et al. 1991. Also cf. Eyuboğlu (1980, 1987), a secularist Sunni sympathetic to Sufism. Gülvahaboğlu (1987) is a striking example for the tendency to explait a cultural phenomenon for political aims. The book praises Bektashism and Alevism as a form of secularism and national consciousness in pre-modern times. I am not sure if the author is of Alevi or of Sunni origin.

34 On the Alevi's position with regard to this institution cf. Pehlivan 1993b; Cem vol. 6, no. 61 (1997).

35 E.g. a new edition of Coşan (n.d.): Özbay/Coşan 1990; M. Öztürk 1991; Sağdıç n.d.; Temren 1994. The latter is as an initiated member of the Bektashi order quite sympathetic to it.

36 I should like to express my thanks for his allowing me see the manuscript of his forthcoming book.

37 Cf. Bilgiseven 1991a, b; Erdoğan 1993; Eröz 1992.

38 Especially cf. Fığlalı 1990; Günümüzde Alevilik... 1995; Sezgin 1990; Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli... 1988.

39 Cf. Mehmed Sürreyya (1995/1914-15); Özbay/Coşan 1990; Şardağ 1985.

when they explain what Alevi as humble Anatolian countrymen, cut off from Islamic civilization and learning, got wrong in their understanding of Islam. Such a presentation cannot lead to a theological discussion among peers, because it makes the exclusive validity of the orthodox view quite plain and constructs the Alevi as innocent, yet naive (*saf*) and ignorant (*cahil*) people who - due to unfavorable conditions - deviated in some regards from the right path. Approaching Alevi arguments about the Koran or their skeptical position regarding the so-called five pillars of Islam in that manner, one must not take them seriously and can explain Alevi worship as folklore. The authority to state something relevant on these matters can even be refused to them. Ignorance, misguidance by intervention from without and politicization are made responsible for the Alevi's theology and ritual life that is actually quite independent from orthodox Islam, and for their preference for left-wing parties in modern times. As some Alevi individuals have partly assimilated to the Sunni mainstream, Sunni-orthodox authors can point to model Alevi,[40] who go to the mosque for the five-time daily prayers, fast in the month of Ramadan, go on the pilgrimage to Mecca and refuse alcohol.[41] Sunni authors may also find in the Bektashi apologetic literature indications that the Bektashi accepted the Islamic law (*şeriat*) and the five conditions of Islam (e.g. Yüksel 1995), whereas Alevi tend to see these as mere formalities, and their performance as not essential for being accepted as a faithful Muslim. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that this type of literature has to be understood as a reaction to the slander campaign that was launched against the Bektashi after the abolition of the order in 1826. I have come upon one striking exception among recent Sunni writing on Alevism: Sözengil (1991) does not share the good-willed attitude of the other authors. Again, he brings up some of the prejudices and slanders which have been aimed at the Alevi and Bektashi since Ottoman times, and presents practices of folk Islam, as if they were only due to the Alevis' deviations from the right path.

To most of the Sunni writers not only religion, but also the category of nation and ethnic belonging is of uttermost importance for their argument.[42] Sympathizing mostly with the ideological tenets of the so-called Turkish-Islamic synthesis (*Türk-İslam Sentezi*) according to which Turkishness and Islam for centuries formed an unseparable unit, Sunni authors often introduce Alevism as thoroughly marked by the culture of the Turkish nomads, who once came from Central Asia to Islamize and Turkify Anatolia. When these presentations try to flatter the Alevi as good, Turkish Muslims, they attempt to win them as defenders of a unified Muslim-Turkish nation and keep them away from the Kurdish cause at a time when the Kurdish movement had grown to a threatening extent, and when Kurdish Alevi feel disappointed by the Kurdish and Socialist movements. These had in the seventies also denied the Alevi a separate religious identity.

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40 One example may be Yıldırım 1996.

41 To prevent misunderstandings: What Alevism "really is" and what its religious requirements are (-or should be), is not relevant here. For my argument it is important to bear in mind that the individuals concerned have highly differing views on the norms of belief and religious practice. "Islam" and "Alevism/Alevi Islam" must then be conceived of as a continuum. When there are people who doubt that attendance at the mosque is a condition for being considered as a good Muslim, and when they practice forms of worship, that differ from the "mainstream", but claim at the same time that these are Muslim practices, and that they themselves are Muslims, this has to be taken seriously, as a Muslim's expression of his Muslim faith. The claim of some men who have been trained in *medrese* (traditional institution of Islamic learning) or *ilahiyat* (theological) faculties that these people can not be accepted as Muslims, makes no difference: The first are still somehow related to Islam. It is then a matter of a theological dispute, and this is not our concern.

42 For a sociologist's presentation of the matter cf. Türkdoğan 1995. Notwithstanding its nationalistic bias, the work has some value as a source book, because it includes many citations from the interviews that the author carried out among Alevi in different regions of Anatolia.

Sunni writing on Alevism is not really new,[43] but the fact that the Alevi themselves have taken the floor and can no longer be ignored is so. Up to the end of the eighties only now and then were single books written by Alevi on Alevi issues published;[44] one Alevi publishing house (*Ayyıldız Yayınları* in Ankara) produced cheap editions of Alevi devotional books.[45] Then, at the end of the eighties the situation was ready for a boom in Alevi publications: many Alevi who due to secularization and modernization had given up much of their cultural peculiarities, and who had done so for the sake of solidarity, encountered the challenge of political Islam. As a consequence, they had not much choice left, but to oppose to the growing presence of Sunni lifestyle in public life and politics, if they did not want to accept it as their own. As elsewhere in the world we witness in Turkey the end of purely political ideologies and the rise of identity politics among different segments of society. The Alevi revival has to be understood as one part of this trend. Nevertheless, at that time the traditional Alevi religious system had very largely broken down. The relations between the traditional religious elite and their rural communities had been disrupted in the seventies through migration and the leftist political agitation of the Alevi youth. Bektashi higher learning had suffered serious blows even much earlier (in 1826 and 1925).

But in the eighties a new Alevi elite[46] arose, which was recruited from the first generation of Alevi having some academic or higher education. Quite a few of them had lost their posts after the 1980 military coup. They had to resign from direct political activism and entered culturalistic politics. Moreover, a first generation of Alevi migrants had become successful businessmen and industrialists, ready to subsidize the revival and remaking of Alevism, feeling perhaps somewhat ashamed that they had in the past hidden or even denied their origin, only to be able to climb up in a society that seemed to be dominated by Sunni. Now, social and political conditions combined with manpower and capital to make a sudden Alevi "coming-out" possible. Whereas Alevism in former times was based on mainly oral traditions, relying principally on personal relations, and social position was defined by descent, age, and gender, now, secularized minds, an urbanizing society, individualistic men and women called for new solutions, though they would prefer the new solutions to appear in the guise of the old ways. Personal relationships and communication had to be replaced by the script and mass-media if a reorganization and consolidation of Alevi society was to be realized. Inherited authority had to give way to attested qualification if one wanted to satisfy the need for reflection of those who were educated in modern institutions. These below the age of forty were often completely ignorant of the doctrines of religion. Therefore, an Alevi literary production could hope to find a profitable market. Furthermore, Alevis may have felt the need to oppose what outsiders, Sunnis or foreign scholars had written about them. Regarding the structural conditions, it is not surprising that the Alevi revival expressed itself very much through the extensive use of modern media. Since 1990 every month a heap of Alevi books and journals appears, and still the production does not seem to fall off.

Alevi publications can be classified into roughly four categories: most prominent are survey books trying to explain Alevism and/or Bektashism in toto.[47] This type represents a first generation of the booming Alevi book production, since there was an

43 Cf. footnote 17.

44 Cf. Bozkurt 1982; Gülşan 1975 (the author is probably a Bektashi); Hacı Bektaş Veli. *Bildiriler*... 1977; Öztoprak 1990/1956; Oytan 1970/1945-47 (the author is a Bektashi); Sümer 1990/1970; Tuğrul 1979.

45 E.g. early editions of Fuzuli's *Hadîkatu's Sü'eda*. ([Fuzuli] 1988); B. Ayyıldız n.d., H. Ayyıldız 1970; Tanrıkulu n.d. 2

46 For biographies of some prominent Alevi spokesmen cf. Yağız 1994.

47 Birdoğan 1990; Bozkurt 1990a; Çamuroğlu et al. n.d.; Kaya 1993; Noyan 1985; Odyakmaz 1987; Pehlivan 1992; Şener 1991/1989; Uluçay 1993a; Ulusoy 1986/1980; Yaman 1993; Zelyut 1990.

Alevi demonstration.

urgent need for a holistic view of the problem to open the debate and satisfy the demand for basic information. These books give precedence to the question of the outcome of Alevism and its claim for equal authority with Sunni Islam. The outlines of the Alevi faith and ritual are sketched without much personal touch, which makes it clear that most authors are no longer familiar with Alevism as a lived culture. More than six years after Alevism had "exploded" in the public - the contemporaries tended to experience the sudden "coming out" as an *Alevilik patlaması* - Alevi publishing still flourishes.[48] Yet, hopes for original presentations and new points of view will in the most cases be turned into disappointment. To copy from one's predecessors or one's own works is easier than to carry out new investigations in the field or in Ottoman archives. The dynamics of capitalism and personal vanity are also at work.

On the other side one has to admit - as some of the Alevi writers complain bitterly - that Alevi society is for the most part not a reading public.[49] However, actual reading seems to be not so important. Even if the books only decorate the show-cases of the book-shops and the bookshelves in private houses, they may still function as signals and symbols:[50] We, the Alevi, form a community of our own, we are present and alive - still and again - we can not be silenced, and we are (also) learned. Considering the vast literary production of the Islamist scene since the early eighties, the aspect of signaling and showing off publicly must not be underestimated. Yet, the need for symbolizing can not in itself explain that books on Alevism are written or panels are held. It is only one dimension of the use of new expressive forms that one

48 Recent works on Alevism in general cf. Kaleli 1995 a, b; Kaygusuz 1995, Öktem 1995.

49 Several radio stations with an unmistakable Alevi stance have been started meanwhile. Today they are well established beside those with a Sunni religious bias. The establishment of television channels has for years been discussed and enthusiastically welcomed among Alevis, but the Alevi dominated channels which started broadcasting (e.g. *Kartal Maltepe Pendik TV* in Istanbul) have not yet attained the professionalitsm and quality of the Sunni private stations.

50 I find that confirmed by the complaints of an editor from the Alevi journal *Cem* (for further information see below), who wonderis why the journal's sales figure were rising while relatively few reactions from the readership were coming in: "... does that mean that they do not read us?" (personal communication, January 1997).

can observe both in Alevi and Sunni milieus. The fact that both begin to ponder on the "essence" of their culture and the basis of their faith, and that they choose similar ways to re-invent their "communities", indicates that the same social processes and spiritual needs are urging them on.[51]

After the first enthusiasm about Alevism had died down, the idea of reviving the religious practices had to be transformed into concrete action. Bektashi *tekke*s and the graves of Alevi and Bektashi holy men had to be restored, assembly houses where the traditional rites, the *ayin-i cem*, could be held, had to be built and maintained. As rites, benedictions, devotions and other Alevi religious texts such as the *buyruk* had often fallen into oblivion, it was not only the male descendants of the traditional religious leaders, the *ocakzade*, who felt the need to have some literature as a guideline when resuming their traditional religious duties. Also, laymen would like to read up what they could hardly understand, when the prayers were pronounced during the rites in their antiquated Turkish. Therefore doctrinal and devotional books,[52] the history and legends of holy men and heroes,[53] the stories of specific holy places and lineages,[54] as well as books on ritual[55] were brought out in a second wave of Alevi publications. The time to write on special aspects of Alevi history and faith[56] was ripe. Publishing houses such as *Ayyıldız* (Ankara) and *Can* (founded by Ali Adil Atalay in Istanbul) are the most active in that field.

In 1995 a group of Alevi *dede*s and a professor hiding behind a pseudonym edited an Alevi Koran that claimed to include verses which, according to Shiite and Alevi opinion had been eliminated from the Koran's textual tradition by the Ummayyad opponents of Ali ('Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet, the fourth caliph).[57] In contrast to the Sunni's *Kur'an-i Kerim* (i.e. "illustrious Koran"), they called theirs the *Kur'an-i Hakim* (i.e. "the all-wise God's Koran"),[58] added a transcription in Latin letters and a comment in Turkish. The project did not go uncriticized, not only by the Sunni orthodoxy, but also by the Alevi. The latter might have realized that substantial differences between Alevi and Sunni approaches to the holy script will be blurred, when Alevi engage in a scripturalization that was up to then foreign to the *dede*s' interpretation and practice of their religion. Some were perfectly aware that, once Alevi entered a theological debate about

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51 I wish to express my thanks to Günter Seufert for inspiring discussions on the parallels between the Islamist and the Alevi movements. I am his also indepted to him for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

52 Cf. Atalay 1992, 1994; new editions of Aytekin 1958; Ayyıldız n.d., 1984; Birdoğan 1996; Erbay 1994; İlhan 1989; *Tam ve Hakiki İmam*...1989; Kaya 1989a-b; Kaygusuz 1991; Kılıç 1989; Korkmaz 1995; Saygı 1996b; Süleyman Dede n.d.; Tanrıkulu n.d.1, n.d.3; Uğurlu 1991. A Sunni's contributions: Uluçay 1992, 1993b.

53 Arslanoğlu 1992; Bezirci 1996; Birdoğan 1991; Eraslan 1993; Kaleli 1993; Noyan n.d.; Öz 1996; Pehlivan 1993c; Saygı 1996a; Şener 1991; Seyirci 1992; Tanrıkulu n.d.3, 1994; Yaman 1984. Interviews with dede cf. Yörükoğlu 1991, 1992. Even a drama on Hacı Bektaş Veli, the patron saint of the Bektashi, has been written, cf. Engin 1996.

54 Birdoğan 1992; Şahhüseyinoğlu 1991; Şimşek 1991.

55 Bozkurt 1990b; Erseven 1990; Metin 1992.

56 Öz 1990/1989, 1990; Pehlivan 1991, 1993a; Zelyut 1991. On the Tahtacı cf. Küçük 1995; an encyclopedic work cf. Korkmaz 1993.

57 *Kur'an-i Hakim ve Öz Türkçe Meali. Ehlibeyt Muhiblerine Kelâm-ı Kadim.* Alevi 'Alimler Heyeti (ed.), Ankara 1995. I thank Faruk Bilici and Irène Mélikoff for two important hints: Faruk Bilici reported that the text of the "new" Alevi edition differs in no way from the "Sunni" version except for several footnotes discussing, whether or not special verses had to be interpreted as referring to the Ehl-i Beyt (the "People of the House [of the prophet]", i.e. Muhammed, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hüseyin). Irène Mélikoff added that there have been attempts to publish a Shiite Koran already in the 13th century.

58 Only a tentative translation is possible. Hakim is one of the 99 Koranic names of God pointing to God's boundless wisdom.

the Koran and other written sources, they could not be so persuasive as learned Sunnis, because they could not back their argument with erudition in Islamic sources, and could at best employ only mystic experience. Just as in the case of Sunni Islam in modern times, the Alevi revival and the many publications it produced led to a popularization of holy texts that had until then not been accessible to laymen. In the case of the Alevi, such texts were in former times kept secret not only from outsiders, but also from Alevi laymen. The scripturalization of a primarily orally transmitted and living culture can have contradictory results. Scripturalization means consolidation. Thereby the tradition might gain even more the aura of unquestionable authority. But at the same time it is exposed to a wider public, who may start to reflect about it - sometimes in a sceptical and critical way.[59]

However, one can not yet witness the same profound spiritual and theological reflection among the Alevis and Bektashis as among the Sunnis. The Alevi community still seems too much occupied in reorganizing itself, consolidating and uniting its regional and ethnic sub-groups in controlling different political fractions and in confronting "the other" - the Sunni and the state. Therefore, the third category of Alevi publications - reflections on Alevism - sticks mainly to concrete questions and daily politics.[60] In this respect, one has to keep in mind that Sunnis had higher education for centuries, whereas not only is mystically inspired heterodox Islam based on other forms of learning, but the institutional frame of Alevi learning had also suffered two serious blows: the abolition of the Bektashi order in 1826 and the closing of the mystic orders (*tarikat*) and the tombs of holy men (*türbe*) in 1925. A modern form of Alevi erudition has not yet been brought forth,[61] and the new Alevi elite still seems to prefer politics to philosophy and theology.[62]

The urgent demand for communication among the reorganizing Alevi community was met by means of monthly and quarterly journals. As a fourth category of Alevi publications these papers and journals contain contributions of all the kinds mentioned so far. It is impossible to comment here in detail on the tendencies of the different journals, as they have been continuously restructured and their editing board and authors frequently changed. Just let me name the most important: The first journal with a clear Alevi bias has appeared since early in 1990 as *Kavga* ("quarrel"). Though it is connected to one section of the "Communist Party of Turkey" (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*), it seemed that the editing board was at one time ready to make concessions to a broader Alevi public for a more culturalist approach when the paper was renamed *Kervan* ("Caravan") in December 1992. Today the journal has again become quite marginal, since it stopped professional distribution in 1995 and fell back on political sectarianism.

The monthly *Cem* ("gathering", to be understood as an allusion to the principal Alevi ritual, the *ayin-i cem*) has a forerunner that appeared under the same title and was directed by the same editor (Abidin Özgünay, he has since resigned) in the late sixties.[63] The "new" *Cem* came out in June 1991 as a journal representing more

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59 İlhan Ataseven discusses and illustrates this point in more detail. I thank him for letting me read the manuscript of his thesis, now published as Ataseven (1997).

60 On contemporary problems of Alevism cf. Baldemir 1994; Balkız 1994; Çamuroğlu 1992b; Eyuboğlu 1995; Güner 1995; Öktem 1995; Öz 1996; Pehlivan 1993b; Zelyut 1993, 1996. On the events in an Alevi dominated squatter area of Istanbul (Gazi) in March 1995 cf. journalistic witnesses: Dural 1995; Marcus 1996. Presentations of the same events by an illegal marxist-leninist organization cf. Barikat Günleri... 1995; Gazi... 1996, which are somewhat representative for the way extreme leftist groups in Turkey approach Alevism.

61 One may except Çamuroğlu 1992a, 1993.

62 E.g. Güner (1995), whose argument is not very sophisticated, statis that Alevism is the only "system of thought" and "way of life" which reconciles historical materialism with religion.

63 Cf. *Cem* vol. 6, no. 60 (1996): pp. 64-65. 16 numbers of the journal appeared between July 1966 and

moderate circles that are primarily interested in spreading historical and religious information about Alevism[64] as well as in backing the secular republic. It does not reject cooperation with the state completely; instead, it claims the Alevi's share of the budget of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. In February 1996 the journal ceased publication for six months to appear again in August 1996, this time with the support of the probably best-funded and most influential of the Alevi foundations, the *Cem Vakfı*.[65] Considering the new and more professional get-up, higher pretention and greater sales of the journal, the odds seem to be in favour of its becoming the organ for a broader Alevi public. *Nefes* (lit. "breath", i.e. the religious hymns of the Alevi and Bektashi) would appear to have been founded with similar intentions in November 1993. It had better presswork than the "old" *Cem*, had coloured photographs and covered a broader range of subjects. But that did not last for long. Splits among the editing board and authors and financial restrictions led to a loss of quality and the narrowing down to a leftist position. In December 1996 it was finally sold to Muharrem Demir's "publication group" (*Demir Yayın Grubu*). This seems to have quite commercial ambitions, and is actually setting up a rival project to *Cem* under the title *Alev* ("flame"). Whether Demir will also publish *Nefes* is not yet clear.

Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür ve Sanat Dergisi ("P.S.A. Journal of Culture and Arts") has appeared since 1992 as the bimonthly of one of the big Alevi associations, the *Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür ve Tanıtma Derneği* ("P.S.A. Culture Association") founded in Ankara in 1988. Alevi have become quite active in the restoration and revitalization of two traditional Bektashi religious centers in Istanbul: the *türbe* of Karacaahmet Sultan and the Şahkulu Dergahı, the latter being an old Bektashi *tekke*.[66] Both are supported by associations, which are also engaged in distributing written information. *Gönüllerin Sesi* ("Voice of the Hearts") has appeared for some years as the monthly journal of the association of Karacaahmet Sultan. At the *tekke* of Şahkulu the visitor is confronted right at the entrance with a book-shop offering the new Alevi journals and books. Beside the mentioned journals, several were founded only to be closed down shortly afterwards. Since the end of the eighties

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September 1967. Its title (*Cem* together with the central Alevi ethic norm *eline diline beline* in the subtitle) and design (red and white dominating, i.e. the colors of the Turkish flag) yet hint at the journal's outlook: defense of the Kemalist, secular Republic and support for of the Alevi cause, launcing at the same time anti-Islamist propaganda and a good deal of Turkish nationalism. In the late sixties there was in Turkey for the first time a short period during which Alevi consciousness was brought to the fore. Other Alevi biased journals, such as *Ehl-i Beyt*, appeared, and a party, the *Birlik Partisi* ("Unity Party"), whose symbolism and rhetoric addressed obviously an Alevi electorate were founded. Alevi biased organizations such as the *Türk Görgü Derneği* were founded, organizing panels, *sema* (the Alevi's ritual dance) presentations and concerts. It seems as if the contemporary Alevi movement had a short-lived forerunner. It also rose in a period that was marked by political liberalization (the constitution of 1961) and rapid social change as a consequence of mass-migration. Similar things took place with greater intensity at the end of the eighties, when Turkey was recovering from the years of military rule after the coup of 1980 and new waves of migrants from the eastern regions reached the metropolis. At the same time, certain segments of Turkish society felt the secular principle of the Turkish Republic menaced by rising Islamic consciousness. For brief information on the earlier Alevi revival cf. Bayart 1982; Dumont 1991; for a contemporary document of these debates cf. Özbey 1963.

64 Note its present subtitle: *Alevi inanç ve düşünce yayın organı* "Publication organ of Alevi faith and thought".

65 Actually its name is an abbrevation of *Cumhuriyetçi Eğitim ve Kültür Merkezi* ("Republican Education and Culture Center"). This appears to me to be a form of *takiyye*, the dissimulation of one's faith that is religiously permitted to Shiite Muslims: For everyone belonging to the Alevi community the name has a religious connotation (the *ayin-i cem*), whereas the foundation appears under the guise of a secular institution. Thereby it circumvents the Turkish law that ban organizations aiming at "religious propaganda" or *mezhepçilik* ("sectarianism").

66 Cf. *Anadolu Moderna* vol. II (1991).

quite a few Alevi journals have been produced in Europe, especially in Germany.[67] As association activities and publication started a bit earlier in the Alevi diaspora than in Turkey, one can assume that migrants in Europe may have to some extent stimulated the Alevi awakening in their native country. However, this merits a separate study.[68]

The Alevi community is split into a majority of Turkish-speaking and a minority of about one third of Kurmanji- and Zaza-speaking groups, all united in the use of Turkish in their worship. As Turkish nationalism has often set the tone in the recent discourse on Alevism, Alevis of Kurdish origin who did not agree with assimilation reacted by presenting a diametrically opposed position. According to them the origin of Alevism is traced to Kurdish culture.[69] *Pir* (title of Sufi religious leaders; bimonthly since January 1996) and *Çağdaş/Yeni Zülkfikar*[70] (since the end of 1994) are two journals with a Kurdish and/or *Dersimli*[71] bias. They also print articles in Kurmanji or Zaza. *Zülfikar* is accused of being the organ of the pro-Kurdish PKK. Both journals probably have very low circulations as they are scarcely to be seen in news-stalls or book-shops. Sunni circles have also produced a few issues of a journal. This appears under the title *Hacı Bektaş Veli* as the organ of the "Research Center for Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş Veli" of the Gazi University in Ankara. Its general guideline seems to be the tenets of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis.

Conclusion

Summing up, a great qualitative difference can be noted between scientific and popular writings on Alevism and the Bektashi order. As Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1991) has shown for Turkish publications on the topic which have appeared before 1990, books addressed to a broader public are generally badly informed concerning the findings of scholarly endeavors or they prefer to admit them only selectively. Recent Turkish literature is heavily influenced by ideological preconceptions, present-day interests and subjective perceptions. As most of the academic works have been published only in European languages, they are for the most part inaccessible to those Alevi eager to rediscover their history and culture.[72] But above all, the socio-political circumstances out of which the new interest in Alevism arose could hardly permit less sentimental approaches, well-substantiated and long-term enquiry.[73] In the

67 Review cf. Vorhoff 1995: p. 87.

68 On migrants of Alevi origin in Europe cf. Gitmez/Wilpert 1987; Mandel 1989, 1990; Naess 1988. Books on Alevism, claiming objectivity and scientific method were also published in Germany cf. Backhausen 1992; Baş 1992; Dierl 1985; Haas 1988; Gülçiçek 1994. As the authors are personally engaged in the field, their contributions are as biased and journalistic as anything written in Turkey on the topic.

69 Cemşid Bender (1991) is one of the spokesmen of this group. Also cf. Xemgin 1995; Kocadağ 1992. Interviews with Ali Haydar Celasun, a dede born in Tunceli cf. Yörükoğlu 1992. For a contrary point of view brought forward by another Tunceli Alevi cf. Yıldırım 1996. The author may appears in the eyes of some Alevi spokesmen as the example of a "sunnized Alevi", as he defends the fulfilment of the five pillars of Islam. Pamukçu argues for an autonomy of the Zaza-speaking Alevi from the Kurds (1992). The author's first name, being one of the first three caliphs that are often ritually cursed by Alevi, suggest that he is of Sunni origin. Turkish nationalistic presentation cf. Başbuğ 1984.

70 "Modern Zülfikar", i.e. the legendary two-edged sword of Ali. This was renamed into *Yeni Zülfikar*, i.e. "New Z." in June 1996.

71 Dersim is the pre-1938 name of an East-Anatolian province that is mainly inhabited by Zaza-speaking Alevi.

72 One can not accuse them of lacking curiosity in foreign academic work. Alevi publishing houses have translated the books of Birge (1937/1991); Hasluck (1995/1929); Dierl (1991/1985) and other foreign writers on Bektashism and Alevism cf. Şener 1990.

73 On the construction of Alevi identity in these writings cf. Vorhoff 1995 and Vorhoff (forthcoming).

course of the Alevi revival, Sunni and Alevi have tried to correct what they perceived as distorted views on Alevism and Bektashism, each at the same time relating to the other. This has not yet turned into a real dialogue. Instead, it consists for the most part of talking at cross-purposes. If one group claims the ultimate truth, different ways of religious contemplation can not be tolerated. If the other group, in reverse, perceives of itself as always being crushed, ill treated and discriminated against, it might easily demonize their opponent. Hopefully, the time for real dialogue and mutual acceptance will come.

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The Function of Alevi-Bektashi Theology in Modern Turkey

FARUK BİLİCİ

At the present day, Alevism is experiencing the pangs of a new birth amidst the plurality of voices, the search for a new identity, the formation of a civil society and the process of general democratisation characteristic of modern Turkey. These birth pangs may well stem from the rapid economic, ethnic and political changes now taking place, but, in my opinion, the most important question confronting Alevism today is that of identity and legitimacy, and the basic factor determining this identity undoubtedly consists of the positions adopted by the "congregations" in the theological sphere. Alevism, which never, at any period in its history, has produced so much theological material as at the present day, is now engaged in intense efforts to explain itself to itself and, although it has left this rather late in the day, to others (it would probably be an oversimplifaction to say "to the Sunnis").

In this paper I shall concentrate on the function which Alevi theology aims to perform at the end of this century both within its own community and in other sections of Turkish society. I will do also on the basis of modern Alevi literary production and my own research carried out in Istanbul and Çorum.

This study of Alevi theology will concentrate on two main issues. The first concerns the different roles played by Alevi theology within the Alevi congregation; the second is related to the new approaches towards Alevism adopted by the official Sunni Islamic circles, representing the majority.

"*There is One Path but Many Ways*"

This saying refers to the great theological variety and wide religious range displayed by Turkish Alevism in both the theological and mystical realms. In this connection, although every region and every group may be shown as following its own peculiar "path", it is possible to reduce Alevism in Turkey, on the basis of the opinions put forward by writers and group representatives who are doing their best to explain what Alevi theology in Turkey "is" and "is not", to four main families separated by no very definite boundary lines.

The first of these, a family to which we shall be giving rather less attention, is what we might term the "materialist" branch, formed during the process of industrialisation, urbanisation and general modernisation in Turkey.

The second branch, although very comprehensive in range, is one that is to be found more particularly in the heterodox current of Islamic mysticism.

The third is a more traditional branch which defines itself as belonging to the *Caferi* sect and, from the theological point of view, as an integral part of the Islamic religion, even going so far as to regard Alevism as the true and genuine Islam.

In addition to these three families one may mention a fourth type of Alevism, a relatively recent trend, which we have defined as "Shi'i-inclined Alevism".

Alevism as a "Liberation Theology"

The first branch, which defines Alevism as a popular movement with an ideology supporting the oppressed and, consequently, in this sense, one element in the class struggle, might be regarded as producing a type of Marxist-Alevi theology analogous to the "liberation theology" of the 70s and 80s in South America. It has its main support among intellectuals who had previously played a part in various left-wing parties and trades unions. This branch, which had greatly intensified its activities and its production of material, particularly after the military coup of 1980 and, more importantly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, began to emerge as a movement following in the footsteps of Pir Sultan Abdal (16th century poet and martyr). This approach, which also embraced the Kurdish question, was in the nature of an Alevi ideology in line with the declaration in Engels' *The Peasant War in Germany* that "in every age, religious wars are the reflection of class wars conducted during the same period". From this point of view, the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Associations,[1] said to have some 70,000 members in Turkey today, the increasing numbers gathered around the periodical *Pir Sultan Abdal* and the monthly *Kervan*[2] and the "Kurdistan Alevi Union" in Germany and its organ *Zülfikâr,* all regard themselves as supporters of this ideology. From the political point of view, and particularly as regards Kurdish nationalism, these groups, though distinguished by important differences in method, are all united within the synthesis or mosaic produced by this ideology. It would thus be erroneous to identify Alevism with Islam. Alevism is not in itself a religion, but rather a way of life that has come under the influence of various religions.

> The way of life of the Alevi in Turkey resembles the way of life in no other Islamic country. It resembles neither the Shi'a of Arabia and Iran, nor of Libya and Egypt. Anatolian Alevism displays a quite individual structure, having adopted an Alevite form after coming under the influence of all the various cultures that had previously existed in the region. Of these may be mentioned Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, it has fused with none of these... It is a movement which, in struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed, has always sided with the latter...Alevism is situated neither totally within nor totally outside the religion of Islam.[3]

A similar judgment can be found in the "Programme" of the Kurdistan Alevi Union:

> Alevism is a religious belief which formed and proliferated within the process of development of Islam among the peoples of the Middle East, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. It spread more particularly among the impoverished nomadic and semi-nomadic Kurdish and Turkmen tribes. While Sunnism, the predominant Islamic right-wing interpretation and evolution, was preferred by the dominant feudal classes and states, Alevism was the religious belief held by the oppressed classes whose interests were totally opposed to those of the ruling classes and states against whom they conducted a perpetual struggle. This was, in effect, a class war that assumed a religious form and was conducted under the guise of a struggle between different faiths and religions. Alevism was a rebellion, a resistance, a flag of liberation raised against the ruling classes who, with Sunnism, the dominant form of Islam, adopted a feudal structure and established centralised states and empires...[4]

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1 There are forty branches of these associations in Turkey, with fifteen of them in Istanbul. I possess a cassette recording of my conversation in July 1996 with Hikmet Yıldırım, General Director of the Pir Sultan Associations.

2 The 63rd issue of this monthly periodical appeared in November 1996.

3 Interview with Hikmet Yıldırım.

4 *Zülfikar,* No. 9, November 1995, 21.

This theological family, characterised, even in the most extreme "syncretistic" discourse by the egalitarian and revolutionary aspects of the Muslim religion and the priority it gives to the human individual, appears as the basic ideology of this branch insofar as it endows the fundamental concepts of Alevism with greater social significance, engages in a struggle against individualism and aims at the establishment of a "city of consensus" (*Rıza Kenti*)[5] in which, in contrast with the "ideal city" envisaged by the Sunni Islamists, everything is shared and all property held in common. According to this branch, God is man himself or a part of man, a manifestation. In this type of Alevism, the Kaba is not in Mecca but in man himself. Thus "Alevism is not a mystery".[6]

The Koran is of no particular significance for members of this branch. A book written 1400 years ago as a guide to forms of worship cannot be taken as a point of departure at the present day. According to them, the Koran is a text compiled by Ömer, Osman and the Umayyad party in general. It is scarcely conceivable that men responsible for killing members of the Prophet's family could write anything favourable about that family.[7] The difference between them and the Sunni Muslims is clearly expressed by a *dede* (Alevi Sheikh) belonging to this movement:

Biz	We
Cem eyleriz,	congregate together.
Semah yürürüz,	We perform the ritual dances
Saz çalarız,	and play the ritual music.
Türkü, deyiş, nefes söyleriz...	We sing songs, hymns and incantations.
Dem içeriz	We drink wine.
On iki imam yası,	We mourn for the twelve *imams.*
Muharrem orucu,	We keep the *Muharrem*
Hızır orucu tutarız.	and *Hızır* fasts.
Yıl kurbanı,	We perform the yearly sacrifice,
Adak kurbanı,	the votive sacrifice,
Musahip kurbanı,	the social sacrifice,
Düşkün kurbanı keseriz.	the sacrifice of atonement.
Biz kadı bilmeyiz.	We recognise no *kadı.*
Sorma sofu bize mezhebimizi,	Do not ask us our sect.
Biz mezhep bilmeyiz,	We recognise no sects.
Yolumuz vardır, deriz.	We say, "we have our path".[8]

Heteredox / Mystical Islamic Alevism

Commencing from this syncretistic concept, we may speak of a second trend based on Islamic mysticism and heteredoxy, the boundaries of which are still not very clearly defined. The basic thesis of this group, which is assembled more particularly around the Hacı Bektaş Veli associations and lodges, is to view Alevi religious devotion and the love of God from the point of view of the "individual". According to them, the world was created because God, as "the secret treasure", "loves to be known". In other words, love is the root and cause of all existence. An individual born in another religious environment and brought up in that particular cultural and religious environment need be no "worse" or "farther from God" than a Muslim. Ghandi was more of a believer than Tamberlane, and St. Francis might be regarded as more Muslim than Yezid. According to this branch, religions cannot be arranged

5 İsmail Kaygusuz, "Aleviliğin 'Ütopya'sı: Rıza Kenti'nde Canı Cana Malı Mala Katmak", *Kervan,* No. 55, December 1995, 8-9.

6 Ali Haydar Cilasun, *Alevilik Bir Sır Değildir,* Ceylan Ofset, (no place of publication), 1995.

7 Hikmet Yıldırım.

8 A. H. Cilasun, *op.cit.* p. 19.

in a hierarchic order, and the value of an individual is to be judged, not by his "piety", as is taught in orthodox Muslim doctrine, but by the "love" he bears.[9]

Heteredox Attitudes

A third group, which regards itself as an integral part of the Muslim religion and which, in my opinion, is viewed with greater sympathy by the Turkish Alevi communities, is gathered around the *Cem Vakfı* and the *Cem* periodical.

This group, which has emerged into the limelight through its demands for Alevi representation in the Directorate of Religious Affairs and for financial assistance from the state in the establishment of *cemevi*s, Alevi meeting houses, also constitutes a very special problem for official Islam. This group is accepted as an Alevi sect following in the footsteps of Imam Cafer-i Sadık, with fundamental differences between themselves and the Sunni in several aspects of belief and worship and, more particularly, in the interpretation of some of the basic religious texts, such as the Koran and the hadith.

According to this sect, which is in no way distinguished from other Muslim sects in its attitude to belief in God, the Koran in its present form is not a miracle. There is no such thing as a complete and unadulterated version of the Koran. For example, the verses relating to Ali and the Prophet's family have been excised, the available text being "the text officially accepted by the Caliph Osman after the other texts were destroyed in order to prevent the partition of the religious community". The Alevi intellectuals have revived the theological-historical disputes which continued for centuries on the basis of the work undertaken on the history of the Koran, more particularly by Suyûtî, the German orientalists Nöldeke and Schwally,[10] Dierl and Subhî al-Salih.[11] The "moderate" view that "there were over four hundred passages in the Koran referring to Ali but that these were all omitted from the Koran of Osman" is held by all members of what might be described as the more "moderate" group. Thus the first three Caliphs and the Sunnis that succeeded them are regarded with very serious suspicion.[12]

This movement, which questions the *fıkıh,* Muslim canonical jurisprudence, and *kelam,* scriptural studies, which together compose classical Muslim theology, possesses its own Alevi *fıkıh* theory. According to this, every aspect of the life of the individual or the community should be based on judgments made on the basis of a combination of faith, reason and life, and that action should be taken in accordance with decisions based on free will. Thus, in this theology, contrary to shari'a, all human problems are related to the actual world, and relevant judgments arise from life itself. In other words, the gate of *ijtihad,* interpretation and innovation, which, in the world of orthodox Islam, closed many centuries ago, still remains wide open. In their opinion, the *fıkıh* as found in official religious discourse is a dogmatic system of divine origin which ignores specific features of time, place and society.[13]

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9 Reha Çamuroğlu, *Günümüz Aleviliğinin Sorunları,* (2nd edition), Istanbul, Ant Yayınları, 1994, pp. 22-34.

10 Theodor Nöldeke and F.Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans,* I-III, 1860-1926.

11 For studies on the hadiths and disputes on this topic, particularly those in Arabic sources, see: Turan Dursun, "Kur'an'ın Orijinalleri Yakıldığı İçin Şimdi Yok", *Din Bu,* I, Kaynak Yayınları, Istanbul, 1990, pp. 78-89.

12 For a detailed account of this question see: Baki Öz, *Aleviliğe İftiralara Cevaplar,* Can Yayınları, Istanbul, 1996, pp. 102-105

13 Abidin Özgünay, "Alevi Fıkhı", *Cem,* No. 52, September 1995, pp. 4-5.

The statue of Pir Sultan Abdal in his birth place, Banaz, Sivas.

A New Shi'i-inclined Alevism

Attempts to "instruct" the Alevi and to "set them on the right path" are not confined to official Islamic circles in Turkey. Considerable efforts in this direction can also be observed in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Large quantities of books are distributed free, particularly among the Turkish Alevi, and it is also well-known that Alevis trained in Iran are being sent back to Turkey as *imams*. The Ehl-i Beyt Mosque in Çorum and the Zeynebiye Mosque in Istanbul may be quoted as institu-

tions of this type. The periodicals *Ondört Masum*[14] and *Aşure* are organs of a certain group of Alevi. The members of this group, who declare themselves to be followers of the Twelve Imams and Iranian Shi'ism, make a clear distinction between Bektashism and Alevism, violently rejecting the former and connecting the latter with the Twelver Shi'a. They stress that the rules of Islamic shari'a must also be strictly implemented by the Alevi, and assert, in common with the strictest followers of the shari'a, that "the Muslim religion must enter every aspect of life and that it comprises commandments and prohibitions that cannot suffer alteration or modification in accordance with time or place".[15] This system of thought, which has no connection whatever with the other Alevi theologies to be observed in Turkey, points to a type of Alevism, the formation of which is regarded as desirable or even essential.[16]

These agree with the Sunni in accusing the Alevi of ignorance. They claim that the doctrine of the Twelve Imams which arose in the Arab world arrived in Anatolia in a weak and somewhat corrupted form. In a period when the level of literacy was very low, persons with only a limited amount of learning were held sacred, and these began to spread opinions incompatible with true Muslim belief. They also claim that the Alevi acquired a true knowledge of the Muslim religion only with the assistance of the Sunni of the Ottoman and, later, the Republican period. Thus the genuine Twelve Imam doctrine never spread through Anatolia, with the result that the Alevi were cut off from their own roots. At this point, what we may describe as "Shi'i-inclined" Alevi ideas may be summarised as follows: Alevism is the Way of the Twelve Imams, and all Alevi must strive to resemble them. Bektashism is an institution established and developed by the Ottomans in order to keep Anatolia under their control and to prevent the spread of the doctrine of the Twelve Imams. Alevism and Bektashism are two, wholly incompatible movements. The institution of the *dede* or sheikh, which for centuries has exploited the Alevi in both the economic and intellectual spheres, should be done away with. The *cem* assemblies have nothing whatever to do with Islam, they are pure entertainment. One should strictly avoid the *cemevi*s, the Hacı Bektaş meetings and all forms of Bektashism. Alevism is based on the Koran, the doctrine of the Twelve Imams and the *namaz,* ritual prayer. These Alevi totally reject any idea of Alevism being connected in any way with the Directorate of Religious Affairs or the establishment of an Alevi Assembly, which they see as potentially very harmful to their own interests. They also regard the Turkish-Islam synthesis as pure fascism. Every single Alevi congregation should constitute in itself an Ehl-i Beyt Mosque totally independent of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. This Alevi trend, which regards Hacı Bektaş Veli as a Sunni scholar and mystic and even, with an eye to winning over Turkey, claims to see the Sunnis as brothers,[17] expresses quite openly thoughts rarely expressed by the Sunnis, and thus, in a sense, confronting Iranian Shi'ism with Ottoman and Republican Turkey. Almost all the fifty-two works comprising the list of Alevi books[18] which are recommended by this group as providing more accurate information on this point and which have been translated into Turkish, refer to the ideologies of the Twelve Imams or the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Most of these, headed by works from the pen of Murtaza Mutaharri, Ali Şeriati and Tabataba, have been printed and distributed free by the Iranian Islamic Republic. At the same time, works

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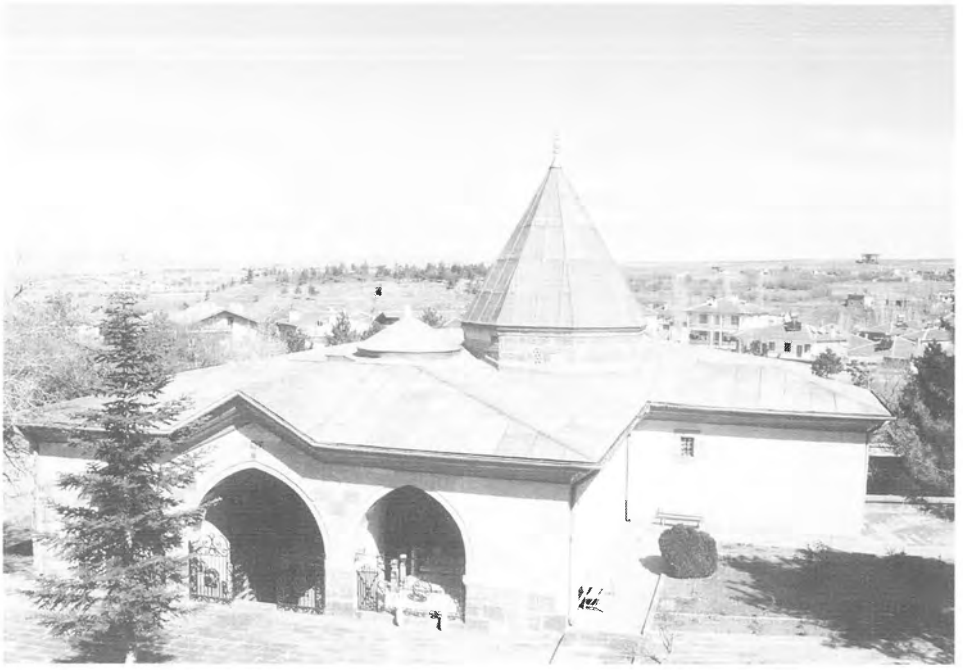
14 This small brochure is produced in Çorum under Teoman Şahin.

15 Teoman Şahin, *Alevilere Söylenen Yalanlar, Bektaşilik Soruşturması,* Armağan Yayınları, Ankara, 1995, p. 20.

16 *Ibid.,* p. 13.

17 For a summary of all these doctrines see: *Ondört Masum,* vol.4, No. 44, July-August 1995.

18 For this list see: Teoman Şahin, *op.cit.,* pp. 187-188.



The türbe (tomb) of Hacı Bektaş Veli in Hacıbektaş.

such as *Kuran Meali,* by the distinguished Shi'ite scholar Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, who was born and brought up in Turkey, the *Nahc-ül Belağa* attributed to the Caliph Ali, and books entitled *Hazret-i Ali, Oniki İmam* and *Şiilik* are also included in the list. In my opinion, works by Humayni have been omitted so as not to alarm the Alevi community. In this connection, the use of the word Alevi rather than Shi'i arises from the same consideration.

Fundamental Dilemmas in Alevi Theology

Although, in practice, all Alevi, apart from members of this last "Shi'i-inclined" group, attend the *cemevi,* perform the ritual dance, hold gatherings (*muhasip*) and perform the other religious observances, in theory they form a mosaic that is very far from presenting a uniform appearance. It is in this that both their strength and their weakness lie. Such a union of faith and worship resting more particularly on an oral and traditional culture may find itself confronted with very serious dilemmas as a result of a rise in the level of literacy and the development of the media. This view is expressed by an Alevi intellectual in the following terms:

> The Alevi are confronted with a paradox. Either they must draw up a systematic theology and define their position in written terms, or withdraw from the religious-metaphysical dimensions of their traditions and so begin to find themselves increasingly isolated within a closed ethno-political arena. One of the most frequently encountered problems is the following: In the villages the *dede*s say "We cannot answer these questions, what are we to do?" We are confronted with the problem of establishing a theological structure.[19]

As far as purely theological attitudes are concerned, Alevism is still engaged in attempting to emerge from long years of constraint. That is why most modern written materials are in the nature of attempts to gain legitimacy by dealing with questions such as "The Origins of Alevism", "The Problems of Alevism", "What is

19 Recorded conversation with Reha Çamuroğlu in July 1996.

Alevism-Bektashism?" or "Answers to Calumnies against Alevism". There is, however, little unanimity as regards definitions and sources. Attempts to give Hacı Bektaş and Yunus Emre a certain legitimacy in Alevism introduce nothing new in the sphere of theology.

It is quite obvious that the infrastructure is lacking for the resumption of the old discussions on the traditional topics of canonical jurisprudence (*fıkıh*) and the scriptures *(kelam)* such as the belief in God, the compilation of the Koran, the verses contained in it and the Caliphate of Ali. In this connection, two main problems may be mentioned.

1 - On the one hand, Alevi sources are very scattered and complex, while, on the other, the Alevi communities themselves have many different heads and dimensions. The Alevi, whose culture is predominantly oral, cannot find satisfaction in written sources which stem mainly from the Bektashi tradition.

2 - In general, the Alevi have not yet acquired a sufficient body of knowledge to be able to read and explain the basic essentials of Islamic scholarship (the Koran, the Hadiths, jurisprudence and philosophy). They did not, like the Sunni, attend *medreses* or religious schools. On the other hand, the number of Alevi attending school has shown a rapid increase, and in the last ten years, during which the Alevi have begun to show a much greater familiarity with written culture as compared with the Sunni (partly in so far as they have no objection to sending their girls to school), the need has been felt for this new learning to be set down in writing. As a result, everyone has quite naturally begun to explain his own Alevism by adding the many new influences which he may have encountered. This has led to the provision of schools in which Alevi doctine might be taught appearing on the agenda of discussions in the *vakıf*s, the *cemevi*s, the associations and the Alevi Representative Assembly.

It is well known that the compulsory nature of religious instruction under the title of "religious culture", which, in practice, means religious indoctrination, introduced by the 1982 Constitution (Article 24), further reinforced the dominance not only of the Sunni but also of the Hanafi order. It goes without saying that this Constitution, characterized as it is by the stress on uniformity and conformity, displays no open inclination towards any particular group. But the actual practice founded upon this and the text-books prescribed clearly display a quite remarkable fusion of Turkish nationality with the Sunni religious approach. In a study[20] of the text-books for the lesson entitled "Religious Culture and Morality" introduced in middle schools and lycées after 1982 we found in only one instance[21] any mention of the *Ehl-i Beyt* (the family of the Prophet). But even here, mention of the great love that the Turkish people feel for the family of the Prophet, the frequent repetition of the names of the members of that family (Fatma, Hasan, Hüseyin), and the avowal that Ali was accepted by all as the "Lion of God", is followed by a warning addressed to the Alevi community to the effect that "excessive love of Ali may lead to the same sort of excess displayed in the Christian deification of Christ".

Realising the impossibility at the present time of applying their own teachings in State institutions, the Alevi generally regard the State with a certain distrust. It might even be said that the practice intitiated in 1982 (combined with the construction of mosques and the appointment of *imams*) has given rise, in many places, to a reaction quite contrary to what was originally intended. The insistence of graduates from the Faculty of Theology now employed as teachers of religious instruction on inculcat-

20 Faruk Bilici, "Islam, modernité et éducation religieuse en Turquie", *Modernisation autoritaire en Turquie et en Iran,* L'Harmattan, Paris, pp. 41-60.

21 Süleyman Hayri Bolay, *Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi, Lise II,* Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınevi, Istanbul, 1987, pp. 62-63.

Alevi celebrations in Hacıbektaş.

ing traditional, official Islamic doctrines has incited Alevi children to embark on a search for their own identity and encouraged them to seek out written works on the subject of Alevism. In some places this has led to violent conflicts, and, in recent years, the State would appear to have begun to approach the subject with rather more circumspection.

Orthodox Islam and the Alevi

No mention is made of Alevism in Koran Courses, the *İmam-Hatip* (religious vocational) schools established in 1949, the later Higher Islam Institutes or the Faculties of Theology. It would be no exaggeration to say that the curriculum is entirely directed towards the teaching of Sunnism. This state of affairs reveals the fundamental contradiction in the principle of secularity adopted during the Republican period. The religious institutions established by the State were arranged entirely in accordance with the Sunni school of theology and with the beliefs of the Hanafi sect in particular. The Republican administrators and intellectuals, who tended to regard modernity as synonomous with uniformity, also adopted a dogmatic approach in the field of religion. While wishing to remove religious commandments affecting legal and commercial transactions from the political sphere, they preferred uniformity and conformity in belief and ritual. Thus, in addition to civilian, military and university bureaucracies endowed with the mission of modernising society by means of commands from above, there flourished and proliferated by its side a religious bureaucracy which managed to attract very little attention. At the moment, the orthodox religious circles comprise some 100 000 religious personnel, 400 000 students and graduates of *İmam-Hatip* Lycées and Faculties of Theology. There are also media groups, pious foundations, associations and holdings, members of political parties, religious orders and other religious movements and important pressure groups parallel to these, who now support the very same imposition of uniformity in religious matters of which they themselves had complained for many years. In such

an environment, it is very difficult for the Alevi to make their voices heard, especially in the theological sphere.

The Alevi (*Kızılbaş*), regarded by Şeyh-ül Islam Ebussuud[22] and the Ottoman *ulema* in general as *zındık*, atheists, *rafızi*, heretics, and *kâfir*, unbelievers, and frequently condemned to death as such, continued to be treated with the same scorn and contempt by the Sunni *ulema* and intellectuals in the Republican period. Even in the period of transition to multi-party government, Eşref Edip (Fergan) (1882-1971), a person greatly revered and respected by Islamist intellectuals, was to say of the Alevi:

> These miserable wretches constitute the most ignorant, the most credulous community in Anatolia. Beliefs incompatible with reason, culture or even humanity have reduced these unfortunates to the level of animals...[23]

On the subject of national unity in Turkey the same writer asks:

> Wouldn't it be more reasonable to achieve union (between the Sunni and the Alevi) by raising them to our own level rather than lowering ourselves to theirs?[24]

Again, in describing the Alevi as "heretics and enemies of Islam",[25] Hüseyin Hilmi Işık adopts an obviously hostile attitude towards the Alevi. The same individual calumniated the Alevi by bringing up allegations of promiscuity and incest.

The Directorate of Religious Affairs, the body representing official Islam in Turkey, can no longer deny the existence of an Alevi and Bektaşi theology. The function of the Directorate as a representative of state ideology and defender of "unity and fraternity" prevents it from adopting such a course. In any case, its position as a self-regulating assembly may at any moment expose it to the attacks of the media. Thus, instead of declaring openly, on the basis of the Koran and the hadith, that Alevism is incompatible with Islam and that those who defend that belief are heretical, they have attempted to assimilate it by adopting one of the three following courses: One method is to regard Alevism as a type of folklore or "sub-culture"[26] within the synthesis formed by "God, the Book, the Prophet, the Nation, the State, the Fatherland and the Flag", thus denying it any significance on the theological level. As opposed to those who say that the Alevi should be represented in the Directorate of Religious Affairs they prefer to regard Alevism as a mere sect or religious order, and oppose its representation on the grounds that the Directorate of Religious Affairs is superior to all the various sects and religious orders. Or, finally, they assume the position of a referee sifting the good Alevi from the bad on the grounds that Alevism is being used as a tool by atheists, materialists, Marxists, Christians or Jews. The Alevi in general, however, have little respect for this body, and the dialogue initiated by the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1992 to discuss these topics proved abortive in face of a severe-

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22 Ertuğrul Düzdağ, *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı,* Enderun Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1983. The *fetvas* regarding the *Kızılbaş* issued by Ebussuud could well form the topic of a separate study. Here we may confine ourselves to saying that even this Sheikh-ul Islam, who appeared much more tolerant and broad-minded than reactionary and doctrinaire *ulema* (doctors of theology), such as Mehmed Birgivî, issued *fetvas* describing the *Kızılbaş* "in every sense heretical" *(ibid.,* fetva 479), remarking that "this crew consists of wicked and evil individuals from every sect who have created a sect of blasphemers and perverts *(ibid.,* fetva 481), and answering the question "What room is there for an individual who curses Mu'awiya, one of the companions of the Prophet?" by declaring that these "deserve the most severe imprisonment and punishment".

23 See Baki Öz, *op.cit.* pp. 44-47.

24 *Ibid.* p. 45.

25 H. Hilmi Işık, *İslam'ın İç Düşmanları,* Işık Kitabevi, Istanbul, 1970, p. 47. I have not yet seen H. Hilmi Işık, *Alevi'ye Nasihat,* Istanbul, 1970, p. 64.

26 S. Hayri Bolay, "Günümüzde Alevilik ve Bektaşilik", *Günümüzde Alevilik ve Bektaşilik,* Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı (Turkish Religious Foundation), Ankara, 1995, p. 3.

An aşık playing *saz* at the yearly Alevi festival in Hacıbektaş.

ly hostile reaction on the part of broad sections of the Alevi community.

The question of Alevism, like other questions on matters of thought and belief, can only be solved in an atmosphere of freedom of expression, general citizen rights and the total avoidance of all dogmatism typical of a modern civilised state. Any attempt, direct or indirect, by one group to dominate any other group in Turkey will now meet with a fitting response.

In an environment described by one Islamist writer as "leading out of the world

of uniformity and conformity into a pluralist world in which respect is shown to differences and diversity",[27] Alevism has re-embarked upon the search for an identity. However, according to the same writer, the only means of finding such an identity is by returning to "the pure religious path". "If the State is really destabilized, the only way by which the communities can avoid being thrown into chaos and confusion is by turning to the pure spirit of Islam, to the Koran and the Sunna."

This response, given by an Islamist known to be the most moderate in Turkey, is far from providing a real solution. On the contrary, there arises the very real danger of uniformity and conformity. As a matter of fact, it introduces a new thread of argument and disputation to which no solution can be found. Old problems appear once more on the agenda. Problems such as: Which Islam? Which Koran? Which Sunna? How far do the limits of pure holiness extend? In the absence of an institution such as the Papacy (the Caliph has never assumed such a function) who in Islam is to decide whether a particular idea is "true" or "false" are all questions which have occupied the Alevi throughout the ages and have become particularly pressing at the present day. The divergency between the Alevi and official orthodox Islam far transcends the political sphere, based as it is on contrasting theological positions. In considering the dilemma whether these differences stem from Islam itself or the manner in which Muslims interpret their religion, it is, quite naturally, the second alternative that holds the greater interest for us. If, on the theological plane, the Alevi believe that some verses have been removed from the Koran and others inserted and that some verses accepted literally should be interpreted metaphorically; if the forms of worship in Alevism do not conform to those accepted by the Sunni but if the Alevi regard themselves as Muslims - as the vast majority do - and if they wish, when their lives are over, to be buried according to Muslim rites in a Muslim cemetery, who is to say to them "You are not Muslims. You are ignorant, unenlightened mountain people"? If the belief that true prayer is not the *namaz*, the set ritual prayer offered with prescribed words and motions five times a day, but rather the *niyaz* or *dua*, (a personal, spontaneous prayer not bound by any rules or rituals), and that Islam comprises no discrimination between men and women, who has the right to force them to abandon this belief?

If, on the question of the Caliphate, one believes that Ali was deprived of his right to the office but, instead of saying "If that is what you prefer, so be it!" they give a dogmatic answer reminiscent of the doctrine of "Papal infallibilty", declaring that "the companions of the Prophet could not err", who is to decide on the truth of the matter? In my own opinion, the proper function of Alevi theology in Turkey is to create an environment of a type that exists in no other Muslim country, in which all these questions can be posed, and even problems that are now the subject of a complete taboo should be openly discussed.

27 Ali Bulaç, *İzlenim,* May 1993.

Political Alevism versus Political Sunnism: Convergences and Divergences

RUŞEN ÇAKIR

It should be noted that the observations and evaluations presented in this paper as a contribution to a comparison of Alevi and Sunni political activity are essentially the comments of a journalist who has given particular attention to the examination of the Sunni Islamist movement. At the same time, I should point out that a large amount of the material utilised in this comparison was amassed during work on the preparation of a 12 day series on "Alevi Activity" for the Istanbul daily *Milliyet* in 1995. At the same time, for the reader's information, I should like to add that I myself am a Sunni by origin, but that I spent my childhood and early youth in a predominantly Alevi neighbourhood and spent some time as a member of a predominantly Alevi left wing political movement.

Any comparison of Alevi and Sunni activity tends to be both difficult and provocative, this being a subject which tends to embarrass activists on both sides and which they would all prefer to avoid. For example, the Alevi, who present themselves as the "humanist face of Islam" are unwilling to be placed on a level with the Sunnis, whom they regard as the "aggressive face" of the same Islam. The leaders of the Alevi movement regard themselves as "progressive" and the leaders of the Sunni movement as "reactionary".

Alevis paying their respect to Atatürk at his mausoleum Anıtkabir, in Ankara.

Perhaps we should mention here that while accepting the existence among the Alevi of an engagement in every type of theological and cultural activity, in other words, in a search for an individual identity, I regard the Alevi activity carried on in Turkey in recent years as essentially political in nature.

In the same way, the Sunni Islamists, insofar as they constitute the vast majority of the population, reject any idea of equality with the Alevi.

Indeed, they go so far as to regard Alevism as a non-Islamic, heretical and deviant trend.

As in other social phenomena of this kind, each side both follows and influences the other. In other words, they are utterly dependent on each other. It is quite obvious that Alevi political activity was a direct response to the rise of Sunni Islamism in the 1980s. Thus the most important point in the Alevi political agenda is the preservation and development of the principle of secularism in Turkey and the struggle, in this connection, with "Sunni fundamentalism". This can undoubtedly be traced to the fact that Alevi constitute a much smaller part of the population than the Sunni.

Although it would be incorrect to claim that the struggle against the Alevi holds prime place on the political agenda of the Sunni Islamists, it is significant that the Central and Southern Anatolian regions in which, as a result of both population make-up and historical development, Alevi-Sunni tension is at its highest, are exactly those regions in which the rise of the Sunni Islamist movement which began in the 1980s has been most striking. It is no secret that the Sunni harbour a strong, though concealed, antipathy towards their Alevi compatriots and that they have therefore converted each of these regions into a fortress.

The Alevi tend to exaggerate the strength of the Sunni and by stressing their minority situation hope to win greater sympathy and support. In the same way, the Sunni Islamists endeavour to stress their majority status by underrating the strength of the Alevi presence. In other words, quite apart from religious and other possible sources of tension, the Alevi-Sunni tension is of exactly the same nature as that existing between any other minority and majority group.

The Strategy of the Sunni Islamists

There is a very simple answer to the question "How do the Sunni Islamists view Alevism?" They generally just ignore it. And even when they take Alevism into consideration they form a completely superficial view of the true dynamics of Alevi activity. This superficial view is most strikingly expressed in a favourite saying of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Lord Mayor of Istanbul: "If Alevism consists of a love of Ali then I, too, am an Alevi!" This statement might at first appear to be based simply on ignorance, but actually it is an outright denial of Alevism. To the Alevi, this type of approach, which reduces Alevism to a devotion to Ali, is an insult to their faith.

The Sunni Islamists combine this superficial attitude towards the problem and the denial of Alevism which it entails with a deliberate policy of assimilation. The essential aim of the Sunni Islamists is to reduce Islam to a single interpretation (that of Sunnism), and call upon all Alevi who regard themselves as Muslims to attend worship in the mosque. That is why the process of opening mosques in Alevi villages, which crowned the policy of suppression of the Alevi and their assimilation to the Sunni form of the faith implemented by the 12 September military regime, won such wide support from the Sunni Islamists.

The radical interpretation of political Islamism, which markedly increased in strength following the revolution in Iran, served as a sort of "agent" of Iran in forwarding a policy of "Caferisation"[1] the Alevi in line with the Teheran-centred strat-

1 Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), the 6th Shii imam. He is often viewed as a unifying figure of Shia, since he appeared before the split into the "seven" and "twelve" branches.

Alevis gathering in the Cem Kültür Evi in Yenibosna (İstanbul).

egy of bringing the sects closer together. As Caferism is the Shiite movement closest to Sunnism, some of the less radical Sunni Islamists have encouraged the Caferisation of the Alevi. It would appear that Çorum was chosen as a pilot area for this policy, but in spite of all efforts the strategy proved a failure.

Convergences

In spite of all the differences between them, there are also certain resemblances between the Alevi and Sunni Islamist trends. For example, as we mentioned above, Alevi activity began as a reaction to Sunni Islamism and as a sort of imitation of that trend. In the 1970s, while the Alevi were active in all sorts of associations, trade unions and professional organisations, the Sunni Islamists preferred to congregate in the more elitist foundations. At the present day, Alevi have for the first time in history established foundations enabling them to engage in social activities such as education and communication, while the Sunni Islamists have formed associations in a variety of fields and taken a more effective rôle in certain professional organisations.

At one time, the Alevi experimented with political activity in conjunction with a single party, in this case the *Birlik Partisi* (Union Party), but now they are saying "The Sunni have their own parties, why shouldn't we have one of our own?" As a result of such discussions the *Demokratik Barış Hareketi* (Democratic Peace Movement) was founded as a specifically Alevi party. The founders of this party declare that their door is also open to the Sunni, in exactly the same way as the leaders of the *Refah Partisi* (Welfare Party) have declared that their door is open to the Alevi.

Another point of resemblance between these two opposing movements is that although each presents a monolithic appearance neither is more than an aggregate of individual groups, trends, environments and personalities. All these different factions are locked in a fierce struggle one with the other. Both movements comprise elements opposed to the system, but in my opinion neither is under the control of revo-

lutionary or radical elements. In other words, neither current is directly opposed to the regime.

Both currents are controlled mainly by members of the professional middle classes (engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc.) and enjoy wide support from the business community. At the same time, both currents draw their strength predominantly from grass roots organisations (more particularly the poor and destitute in the large cities, women and young people). Consequently, both currents are forced to conceal the potential for internal conflict and dissension that they both harbour by inflaming and sustaining passions against "the other".

Alevi activity is in the left-wing political tradition, but the present Alevi leaders are intent on purging the movement of extreme left wing elements and positioning the Alevi once more on the centre left. Nor should it be forgotten that certain of them are making overtures to the centre right. Sunni Islamism, on the other hand, is traditionally placed on the right, but, under the *Refah Partisi* government (June 1996-June 1997), the *Refah Partisi* itself was obviously moving, in spite of its traditional elements, towards the centre and taking up a new position there. In this connection, the Sunni may be said to have stolen a march on the Alevi.

"Born Again" Muslims

Another common feature of both movements is that a struggle for power is being waged between the traditional leadership and those that have more recently been included within it. The leadership of Sunni Islamism, in the form of the *Milli Nizam Partisi* (Party of National Order), the *Milli Selamet Partisi* (Party of National Salvation) and the *Refah Partisi*, has moved from its traditional base among the *ulema* (doctors of Muslim theology) and the sheikhs of the various religious orders to professional politicians with a secular background and education. We are now witnessing a struggle for power between the traditional politicians and the young, new Islamists.

The same is true for the Alevi. Before the *dede*s (Alevi sheikhs) were able to recover from the loss of prestige resulting from the influence of the Marxist left in the 1970s, a group of "Alevi intellectuals" put forward their claim to leadership. A large proportion of these are former leftwing militants who have discovered their Alevism since the middle of the 1980s. In other words, in the 1970s the militants were in the forefront and religion was relegated to the background. Today religion is in the forefront, but the same militants retain, or endeavour to retain their influence.

An interesting point is that Sunni Islamists who, until quite recently, looked down upon the traditional Islamic way of life of the common people, have now, in the 1990s, discovered religious piety and, more importantly, are now turning towards the furtherance of Islamism in terms of legislation, something which they formerly looked upon with disapproval. These old militants, exactly like their Alevi counterparts, are no longer content with a modest position in society and are aiming their sights on government positions.

Another of the more important features common to both movements is their male domination. The Sunni Islamists tend to avoid any discussion of the rights granted to women in their doctrine, preferring to point to and boast of the admission of women into the community. The Alevi Islamists, on the other hand, are never tired of holding forth on the rights granted to women in their doctrine, but never discuss the question why the Alevi woman has remained so passive in social, economic, cultural and political life. For example, not a single one of the "Alevi intellectuals" is a woman.

Conclusion

Alevism and Sunnism are seen as rival and even antagonistic movements. But this does not overshadow the fact that these two movements reinforce each other. One had better keep in mind that the political aspects of both these movements are not determinative. In other words, to try to explain the religious revival among Alevi and Sunni only in terms of politics will be a mistake, even though, as in this article, the political aspects easily get the upper hand over the religious.

Development and Reformulation of a Returnee Identity as Alevi

HELGA RITTERSBERGER-TILIÇ

The presented study is actually the product of a research that was conducted in 1988, investigating a returnee community inside a Turkish small town. The main focus of this study was, among others, the analysis of the formation of a "migrant identity". Even though several years passed, contact with this returnee community continued. Finally, in May 1996 the field was revisited in a more formal manner.

The returnee community under investigation can be characterized by two criteria: first, all its members are migrants, who migrated, lived, worked and returned from Germany; and second, the majority belongs to the Alevi branch of Islam (70 percent or 131 of the 186 interviewed returnees).

In total 184 persons above 14 years of age were included into the analysis (87 men and 97 women). Parallel to this formal questionnaire, 14 in-depths interviews were conducted during a 4 months stay in the town. Also frequent visits and a large number of talks to officials, politicians and inhabitants and a multitude of observations collected at social events like weddings, funerals, circumcisions, religious meetings, periodical meetings of women (*kabul günleri*) etc., provided further important insights into the situation of the returnees in the studied small town. The small town itself is actually located in the Black Sea Region bordering Central Anatolia, constituting an area of high out migration. This region is at the same time characterized by the intermixture of Alevi and Sunni population. It can be assumed that the Alevi population, because of their greater economic deprivation, participated much more in migration processes (on the rural - urban, as well as international level).[1]

At the time of the original research the small town had a population of about 29 thousand inhabitants. In the 90s it reached about 35 thousand. It mainly serves as the administrative and educational centre of the sub-province population (incorporating 102 villages). Agriculture and stock breeding provide the main sources of subsistence.

Identity Formation Upon Return

International migration and the life of Turkish workers and their families in

1 See K. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş-Alevi. Untersuchung über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft*, Berlin, 1988; R. Zelyut, *Aleviler Ne Yapmalı? Şehirlerdeki Alevilerin Sorunları-Çözümleri*, Istanbul, 1993, p. 225; D. Shankland, "Alevi and Sunni in Rural Turkey, Diverse Paths of Change", PhD dissertation, Darvin College, Cambridge (1993), pp. 14-19.

Germany resulted in the formation of a "migrant identity".[2] This identity stands on the one hand for the Turks in Germany, as well as for those labeled as the Germanlike, *Almancı, Alamancı* or *Almanyalı* returned to Turkey. The interesting aspect of this returnee community is that besides being *Almancı*, the majority of the returnees are Alevi. The study pointed out that the *Almancı* identity comprises aspects of "otherness", which to a large part include aspects of "cultural pollution". The fact of being seen as "culturally polluted Turks" is substituted in time by the returnees by an Alevi identity.

Before turning to this formulation of an Alevi identity, it seems to be necessary to give at least a short summary of the situation of the returnees in the studied small town and their *Almancı* identity. Only by pointing out these aspects and by settling them in the recent historical context in Turkey might the reformulation of an *Almancı* identity into an Alevi identity be understood.

The study of returnees in Turkey is usually connected with an analysis of the situation of migrants in Germany, or the emphasis is put on the analysis of migration mechanisms in general. Most of the studies on returnees are dealing with economic aspects. Without doubt, the migration to Germany can be described as labor migration and return migration can be considered as a part of these migration movements. The economic gap between the two countries, the need for cheap labor in Germany and unemployment in Turkey can be seen as the main forces behind this more than 30-year lasting migration history.

With the establishment of the Turkish population in Germany and a growing social network, supported by certain policies directed at the foreign population in Germany (such as recruitment stop and family reunions) the migration process went into a phase of consolidation. The social and communication network that meanwhile was established between the migrants and those who stayed in Turkey resulted in an independent variable reinforcing migration as well as remigration processes. These networks provided knowledge as well as psychological and material support, thus reducing risks and costs in the decision making processes.

Politicians and scientists of both sides promised not only jobs and money but also development, progress, modernity and, together with this, a democratization at all levels of society. The migrants were considered to be the carriers of this development. However, the migrants turned more and more into "immigrants" and return, although existing as a "myth" decreased in the number involved. While the 60s and mainly the 70s were dominated by a discussion of socio-cultural integration of foreigners in Germany, in the 80s and 90s the discussion concentrated on return promotion and multiculturalism.[3]

Discussions on multiculturalism always incorporate the theme "foreignness" or "otherness" and the formulation of an identity (in a monovalent or polyvalent form).[4]

2 R. Mandel and C. Wilpert, "Migration zwischen der Türkei und Deutschland: Ethnizität und kulturelle Zwischenwelten", in R. Hettlage, *Annali di Sociologia. Soziologisches Jahrbuch. Migrationsprobleme in Deutschland und Italien. Zwischen offenen Räumen und neuen Grenzen,* 10/I-II, Italienisch/Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie, 467-486.

3 M. Brumlik and C. Leggewie, "Konturen der Einwanderungsgesellschaft: Nationale Identität, Multikulturalismus und 'Civil Society'", in K. J. Bade (ed.), *Deutsche im Ausland - Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* C. H. Beck Verlag, München, 1992, pp. 430-442; A. Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press, 1994; H. E. Kürşat-Ahlers (ed.), *Die multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Der Weg zur Gleichstellung?* Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Frankfurt, 1992.

4 E. Dorfmüller-Karpusa, "Bikulturalität-Belastung oder Privileg?", in H. E. Kürşat-Ahlers (ed.), *Die multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Der Weg zur Gleichstellung?,* Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Frankfurt. 1992; M. Hettlage-Varjas, "Bikulturalität-Privileg oder Belastung?", in H. E. Kürşat-Ahlers (ed.), *Die multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Der Weg zur Gleichstellung?,* Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, Frankfurt, 1992.

Representatives for an Alevi association in Germany selling books and other publications

Collective social identities like e.g. ethnicity act in this context in very different ways. People see themselves as ethnically homogeneous groups against the background of a common historical fate and the tendency to define and/or to protect their identity emerges specifically in 'bordersituations', where different ethnic groups meet each other.[5] The formation of ethnic communities is based on a feeling of togetherness and self definition as well as external definition as a member of an ethnic group.[6] Return migration can be seen in this context as an interesting example, because it arises the question whether returnee identities can be compared with identities of ethnic groups.

International migration, as was stated before, resulted in migrant identities. These "cultural borderlines" sometimes result in self-conscious identities and solidarities.[7] Often however, they turn into problematic zones. The migrant turns into a commuter, whose systems of reference and levels of identification are commuting between the world s/he is living in and the world s/he is not. Chain migration processes reinforced the formation of ethnic communities in Germany and as the study showed, similar processes could be found in relation with the settlement upon return. The stay abroad puts the returnees upon return into the status of "stranger", in a Simmelian sense.[8]

The small town context of this research provided a good basis for such an analysis, because it was not too large to facilitate the flight (of the returnees) into anonymity, as in a metropolitan area, or the social homogeneity of a village. They experience

5 F. Barth, "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity", in H. Vermeulen and C. Govers (eds.), Het Spinhuis Publishers, *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, Amsterdam, 1994.

6 F. Heckmann, *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation*, Enke, Stuttgart, 1992.

7 E. Pankoke, "Wanderer Zwischen Zwei Welten. Ausländerarbeit im Soziokulturellen Feld", *Archiv für Wissenschaft und Praxis* 2 (1988), 126-145. M. Weber. "Economy and Society", in G. Roth and C. Wittich (eds.), *Ethnic Groups*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, pp. 385-398.

8 To be a stranger is, according to Simmel, nothing but a specific form of interaction. G. Simmel, "The Stranger", in K. H. Wolff (ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, New York, 1950, p. 402: "The unity of nearness and remoteness involved in every human relation is organized, in the phenomenon of the stranger, in a way which may be most briefly formulated by saying that in the relationship to him, distance means that he, who is close by, is far, and strangeness means that he, who is far, is actually near."

a stigmatization as *Almancı*, which to a large part incorporates elements of "pollution" and/or "jealousy". This state most often is defined as negative, because the returnee is seen as "in between two cultures", without roots and alienated, in a constant search for an identity.

Almancı also incorporates criteria of distinction from the "real" or "true" Turk. In this connection not only the phenomenon of international migration but also Turkey-specific experiences with ethnicity are of importance. Theories of ethnicity have a tendency to point out primordial differences. Here, a common past or shared history and a feeling of belongingness are of importance. The *Almancı* have in this context much less pretension to ethnicity than Kurds, Turks or, Alevi.[9] Together with migration, processes of ascribing and categorizing, similar to ethnic relations, occurred. The migrants' membership is however, not exclusively accepted and unequivocally defined, but their cultural world is defined by a consciousness characterized by a dual orientation and floating/flexible borders.

In our example the *Almancı* identity is overlapped by a clear cut ethnic unity as Alevi. In the original study the Alevi identity was not openly declared. Although the *Almancı* identity has a largely euphemistic connotation, most of the returnees themselves accepted this ascription and saw themselves as "in between two cultures". The shared migration experience, their common village origin (mainly two villages close to the studied small town) and their Alevi background supported the formation of spatially as well as socially segregated communities in the studied small town.

This spatial as well as social segregation has to be seen in the context of a growing ethnic polarization and the revival of Alevi consciousness in recent Turkey, and has to be seen as a potential for similar developments not only on the national but also on the local level. Thus, it is not surprising that the returnee community in this small town also shows a tendency towards a reorientation to Alevi values and to an Alevi identity.

However, it should be emphasized that identities are seen as socially constructed and not as naturally given.[10] Finally, each identity formation is seen as the result of different power structures. At the same time, identity is seen as flexible and not finite and as a constant claim for power. Smith, too, describes ethnic identities as the result of power structures:

> If ethnicity is constructed and reconstructed by articulatory practices growing out of contemporary conditions and power relations among social groups and the interpretative meanings people give to them, rather than out of some timeless or primordial dimension of human existence, then creative leadership by political and cultural elites and public intellectual, as well as the everyday interventions of ordinary people into the flow of racial and ethnic discourse do matter, perhaps more than we are now prepared to imagine.[11]

Socio-Economic Situation of Returnees

To understand the situation of the returnees/*Almancı*, some of the results of the original research will shortly be presented here:

1. The date or better to say the year of return falls parallel to the return promotion law, which was installed at the end of 1983 by the German state.

9 Mandel and Wilpert, *op. cit.*, p. 481.

10 P. Bourdieu (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 72.), provides an interesting attempt to combine psychological, social, economic and physical aspects in an identity model under the concept habitus.

11 Cited in A. Elliot, *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition. Self and Society from Freud to Kristeva*, Oxford, 1992, p. 526.

Alevi associations in Germany organizing a demonstration.

2. The returnee's economic standing is much better than before migration, although the majority do not participate in the active labor force. Most of them are living as a kind of rentier class (rents, payments from Germany, savings).

3. The tendency to engage in small enterprises can be found among the youngsters, where it has mainly to be interpreted in the sense that they either had the alternative to be unemployed, to be supported by their families, to migrate again or to open an enterprise.

4. Most of them own a three to four floor apartment house and the electronic equipment and furnishing can be described as above average standards for the small town.

5. The decision to migrate as well as to return has to be seen in a chain migration process, where it turns out that the majority of the returnees returned as couples (first generation migrants) mostly leaving their children and grandchildren in Germany.

6. They live a spatially as well as socially segregated life. The contacts are clearly limited to the direct neighborhood which to a large part is constituted by returnees, and/or family members and/or villagemates. These family members also share to a large part a common experience in Germany (i.e., same town; neighborhood; same work place).

7. In studying neighborhood contacts, emphasis was laid on the female returnees. The traditional Turkish small town context describes the action space of women much more in the private sphere (of neighborhood, family). Here also commonly held periodical women's meetings (*kabul günleri*) in the small town were studied. However, it turned out that returnee women were excluded from these functions. The reasons for rejecting their participation can be their being considered as unsuitable or not conforming to the expected status and prestige criteria, as well as their membership of the Alevi community.

8. As for the women, it might be said that their stay abroad and specifically their working experiences resulted in an upgrading of their position inside the family and their self consciousness.

9. The social activities of the female returnees are limited to the direct neighbor-

hood that arouse associations of village life (with open doors, women knitting, cooking and chatting in front of their houses).

10. Here it should be mentioned that the life styles and practices of men and women and of different generations showed quite important variations.

11. Very little information about religious practices was provided. They pointed out that religious meetings (*cem ayini*) were not conducted. However, their economic betterment upon return resulted in charity payments and sacrifices that were out of question before migration.

Many other results could be summed up here, but their *Almancı* status forms one of the foci of this paper. Asked about their identity, the returnees emphasized that they felt themselves degraded as *Almancı*. Cultural pollution formed the key concept for their "otherness" in Germany and again it is used as a legitimization for a social distancing upon return. To be an *Almancı* in itself already creates antipathy mixed with jealousy among the small town population. The fact that the majority of these returnees are also Alevi reinforces these negative feelings. The Sunni population describes the returnees as Alevi villagers, villagers who got money without having received any education. Thus, you could hear discriminative statements like: "They are golden chickens, but with empty heads".

The *Almancı* are seen as strangers, strangers who however, have a certain degree of power. Firstly, economic power but also the "power of knowledge". The years in Germany, in a Western European, highly industrialized country still forms the "unreachable" target for a large part of the small town population.

Although, the *Almancı* identity cannot necessarily be equated with an ethnic identity, it is nevertheless used to differentiate migrants/remigrants and non-migrants. Like all identities, it undergoes changes. Migration resulted in changes in behavior patterns and the use of symbols and values is typical for this cultural border situation. As opposed to purely ethnically defined solidarities, the status of *Almancı* is characterized by not being onesidedly oriented. This often results in the stigmatization as "polluted" Turks. These facts might lead the returnees to try to strip off their *Almancı* identity and adopt instead a collective solidarity that is ethnically defined. However, in the original study they emphasized their identity as returnees, as "urban" and a member of the small town community, rejecting the *Almancı* identity. However, they pointed out that the small town population ascribed this identity to them. They also often referred to their village roots (indirectly refering to their Alevi origin). Thus, they claim to be from the Çamiçi villages, which are known by everybody in the small town as Alevi villages.

Findings of the Revisit to the Returnee Community

In May 1996 the field was revisited. One of the reasons was the fact that throughout the years major changes could have occurred among the returnees. Thus, while formerly the Almancı identity (although mainly externally defined) occupied their lives, after the 90s the *Almancı* identity was substituted by a mainly self-defined Alevi identity.

In the revisit no questionnaire was applied, but 9 in-depths interviews were conducted (6 formerly already interviewed and 3 newly). We can summarize the results as follows:

The younger generations pointed out that they have no hope for a professional and/or educational future in the small town (this hopelessness was often extended to the national level). They emphasized that most of the young people who returned to

Alevi celebrations in Hacıbektaş.

the small town are now without work or living at the expense of their parents and are considering marriage with an *Almancı* as the only way to escape from this situation.

The older generations live the life of retirees, visiting their villages for weekend and holiday trips. However, a new development could be seen in the fact that most of the first generation *Almancı*s had now a country house in the mountainous vicinity. Interestingly, again here, too, the *Almancı*s join together in their own groups, which again resulted in spatial segregation. In this context, it should be mentioned that the younger people preferred a summer house on one of the Turkish coasts.

In these talks it also became clear that a large number of more specifically the older generation migrants practiced a kind of commuting life: house in the small town, weekend house, summerhouse, village house and in addition frequent visits to Germany. Visits to the country of migration were often combined with visiting the family and recourse to medical services. Thus, we are confronted with a state of temporariness which seems to be difficult to integrate in an identity.

The town quarters in which they mainly concentrated also underwent some changes. The number of shops, restaurants and coffeehouses increased, and they now have jewelry shops, attributed to the demand (investment in gold) of the visiting migrants in the summer months.

The in-depth interviews of the revisit made clear that an Alevi consciousness gained more and more importance for the returnees in the small town context. This found, among others, its manifestation in the foundation of a Hacı Bektaş foundation; an Alevi religious, cultural center.

Before discussing the reasons for such an institutionalization and the aims of this foundation, it seems to be necessary to give at least a rough chronological overview of certain events in the late 80s and 90s which resulted in an Alevi revival all over Turkey. The events on the national level also caused the revival of Alevi identity on the local level.

One index for this general revival is a dramatic increase in publications on Alevism, and discussions in the media in general. This revival is mainly oriented at a revival of religious traditions and practices, as well as at claims for equality con-

cerning religious practices (i.e., religious ceremonies, funerals, etc.). Nevertheless, this revival can be differentiated into at least two main tendencies. On the one hand, there is a group which aims at the revival of a real Alevi consciousness by reestablishing religious institutions (e.g. religious leaders, *dedelik*), religious principles (some intending to bring about a standardization of Alevi practices, a separate Religious Directorate, etc.). On the other hand, there is a tendency to activate the political potential of the Alevi population, which is seen as "leftist" and "democratic". Obviously, a religiously defined Alevi identity is of minor importance in this version. While the reorientation towards religious values and principles also found recently growing support from officials, other voices emphasize the fact that there exists a danger that this kind of religiously oriented revivalism will lead to a form of Alevi fundamentalism.

These discussions, the killing of 37 intellectuals, mostly Alevi, in the Central Anatolian province of Sivas, by Sunnite Islamic fundamentalists and some spontaneous Alevi uprisings in the 90s in Istanbul were interpreted by some state officials as signs of the potential danger of further ethnic clashes.

Finally, in late 1995, an Alevi attempt to form a political party and the presentation of independent candidates under the name of the Democratic Peace Movement was another sign of rising Alevi consciousness. Although the candidates were withdrawn in the December 1995 elections, the leader of this movement, Ali Haydar Veziroğlu was determined to found a party. His determination became already clear when he bought the National Press Agency (UBA, *Ulusal Basın Ajansı*) in early 1996. At the end of September, the party was finally founded. The party, which was founded under the name of the Democratic Peace Movement, was closed by the Constitutional Court, because of its rejection of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in its program. Immediately a new one, with the name of the Peace Party, was founded to succeed it.

Without an examination of these developments on the national level, it might be difficult to understand the emerging Alevi revivalism in the studied small town. Thus, it is not surprising to see that the studied, elderly returnees/Alevi ask, among other things for the revival of the *dedelik* institution. However, not only the claim for a reinforcement of *dedelik* was mentioned, but also the wish for Alevi religious officials conducting funeral ceremonies and, of course, the request of a *cemevi*, a meeting place in which to practice their religious rituals.

The most recent and important development in this connection is the foundation of a Hacı Bektaş Foundation in the small town, which however is not interlinked with the nationwide Hacı Bektaş Associations. It was officially founded on 29.4.1995. According to the information of one of the founders, the foundation had already 371 members officially registered in the first year. He, however, emphasized that they have a basis of about 3000 supporters.

Women play an important role and take an active part in the activities. The women's section meets regularly at the weekends, combining these meetings with religious talks. Another founding member stressed that their foundation followed the principles of a secular, democratic and Kemalist Turkish Republic.

The activities of this foundation include seminars and conferences on Alevi culture, education, and democracy, *sema* (Alevi folk dance) and *saz* (Anatolian string instrument often used by Alevis) courses. Future projects compose courses on funeral ceremonies and student scholarships, and they are also planning to form a pressure group that would demand the inclusion of classes on Alevi religious belief in the official school curricula. Another important function of their foundation is the protection of pupils specifically during the Ramadan, fasting month, when they fall victim to religious discriminations.

All these demands finally resulted in the need for a "cultural center" (the term *cemevi* was not used by the foundation members), obviously to escape from accuzations of religious fundamentalism. The Alevi population of the small town, however referred to it as *cemevi*.

This "cultural center" was planned to include a library, meeting halls (also for religious ceremonies), concert halls, a health station, kindergarten and a home for elderly people. As can be seen from these projects, there obviously exists a need for mutual support and solidarity and, in the words of one of the interviewees:

> The foundation has led to an increase in solidarity in the Alevi community. From now on, the Alevi in our small town will be not ashamed of their Alevi identity and will not try to hide it. We now openly appear as a pressure group, which also goes to the schools and asks for the equal treatment of Alevi pupils.

The Role of Returnees in the Local Alevi Revival

After these descriptions, we can point out the role of the Alevi returnees *Almancı* in the local revival. Obviously, the most important role they play is in providing a large part of the financial resources. However, they are important not only on the material side. It is also clearly pointed out that they are the actual initiators of this foundation, so to say the founding fathers and mothers. Another interviewee summarized this in the following words:

> The native Alevi population is very poor. That was also one of the main reasons why they migrated to Germany. The returnees, as well as those still in Germany, are however now capable of providing financial support. They also have a better experience of organization. Years ago, they founded Alevi organizations in Germany and other countries of Europe and now they are carrying this experience into their countries of origin.

The power of initiative of the Alevi returnees/*Almancı* is shown in the fact that the experiences collected abroad now serve as basis for an ideological leadership. Here one should note that the ideological leadership came from migrants, who were still abroad, to be more specific, from members of village associations (*Çamiçi Köyleri Dernekleri*) founded in Germany. These associations originally aimed at giving aid to those who stayed in Turkey, as well as uniting and supporting those abroad.

The same interviewee goes on to explain the difficulty of organizing the non-migrant Alevi people as follows:

> The native Alevi population has been under political pressure for years. This oppression comprises a long history of massacres in the 70s in Sivas, Maraş and Çorum and the military coup of the 12th of September 1980. The Alevi are afraid to organize in any form. The *Almancı*, however, are free of these fears.

In the case of the Hacı Bektaş Foundation the claims are limited to a comparatively non-political level. This is also one of the reasons for the conflict between them and another group of mainly politically organized Alevi in the small town who unite around the socialdemocrat or extreme left parties. The founders of the newly founded leftist *Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi* (ÖDP, Freedom and Solidarity Party) are also mostly Alevi in the small town in question. These are mainly from the younger generation. I will cite here a discussion between a father and his son. The father supports the foundation of a non-political Hacı Bektaş Foundation but the son accuses him of Alevi fundamentalism. The son:

> ...the activities of the foundation entirely conform to the framework the state provides for the Alevi population. It cannot be considered as a way towards emancipation of the Alevi population.

Another representative of the anti-Haci Bektaş Alevi group who founded the ÖDP declares:

> The foundation is a place where right oriented and relatively wealthy Alevi - *Almancıs* unite. They see this foundation as a source of income. Recently, they went to Germany and collected 50.000 DM in the name of the foundation. Even now these trips to Germany continue. The foundation is not tied to the nationally organized Alevi associations because in this way they do not have to share out what they collect in Germany and they are financially more free.

On the other hand, one of the founders answered the question why they were not tied to the national Alevi associations, by stating that "we did not want to become lost in the multitude of Alevi sects and interpretations."

Conclusion

We may conclude by saying that parallel to the Alevi renaissance on the national level the small town also experiences such a revival. On the one hand, there is the tendency to revert to an Alevi culture, religious practices and the institutionalization of a network of mutual support, on the other, there is a more radical and politicized version of a revival of Alevi consciousness, emphasizing not the religious values but rather the minority status of the Alevi population.

It is also interesting to note that the returnee population, which of course continues its contacts with Germany, facilitated by the fact that close family members are still living abroad, initiated an Alevi revival. This may be, on the other hand, interpreted as a way to declare themselves in public and to appear as a pressure group. Their economic position provides among others the necessary basis for this. Thus, the *Almancı*, which formerly were perceived as "spoiled" or "polluted" Turks, now define themselves more and more as Alevis. Even though the Alevi were also discriminated against, they are now members of a bigger and "pure" community which, as an identity, is in a process of revival all over the country.

Alevi Revivalism in Turkey*

REHA ÇAMUROĞLU

At the beginning of the 1980s, in the public consciousness of Turkey, the existence of *Alevilik*[1], a centuries-old religious community, was nearly forgotten. In the course of the 1970s the majority of its members turned to socialism, abandoning their formerly religiously defined identity. Statements claiming the complete disappearance of Alevilik as a community were frequently heard throughout Turkey. Was Alevilik at this time really extinguished and merely a matter of history? The answer to this question came in a striking way. From the late 1980s on, Alevilik became the object of a dazzling process of rediscovery. The efforts at community revival were soon recognised by the public, and thus the "question of Alevilik" became one of the most discussed topics in the Turkish media.

As the term Alevilik refers at the same time to a belief system and to a particular community, I prefer to use the Turkish term Alevilik instead of Alevism in order to emphasize both the ideological as well as the sociological aspects of the phenomenon. The first visible signs of the revitalisation of Alevilik were the emergence of Alevi periodicals and newspapers, a great number of (mostly apologetic) publications by Alevi authors on Alevilik, and the establishment of community-based associations throughout Turkey and in the European diaspora. They expressed a new and often contradictory understanding of the essence of Alevilik. As a result of these activities, the community experienced a rapid penetration into all realms of the public arena.

The rediscovery of the Alevi community depends on various factors at various levels. Among them we can roughly distinguish sociological and political factors. From the sociological point of view, the rural exodus, which in the case of the Alevi reached its peak during the 1970s for economic and political reasons, is surely the most decisive factor. Migration to the cities inevitably imposed new, urban forms of expression on Alevilik which, in the foregoing centuries had maintained its existence in remote rural areas of the country. Rapid urbanisation led not least to fundamental changes in the social structure of the community. Thus the great increase in the number of educated Alevi and the emergence of an Alevi bourgeoisie resulted in a new social stratification.

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1 The term *Alevilik* refers to a widespread religious community, members of which are to be found primarily in Turkey and in smaller numbers in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania and Albania. In spite of its syncretistic belief structure, which shows strong traces of gnosticism, the community recognises itself inside the general frame of Islam. As a community which defines membership through descent and possesses a strong and exclusive collective identity, Alevilik exhibits in some ways the characteristics of an ethnic group as it is regarded in the "formalistic" view of Frederik Barth (Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity, in H. Vermeulen and C. Govers eds., *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, Amsterdam, 1994) and his followers.

In very broad terms, the political factors can be reduced to three essential points. The first is the collapse of the socialist block in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s. As a result of this development, socialism, which in the previous two decades had an indisputable authority as an ideological alternative for the young and middle generations of Alevis, lost its former importance. Politically frustrated, a large part of the Alevi population began to seek other paths. Among them there were a great number of individuals who in the course of their activities in left-wing parties and groupings throughout the 1970s had gained political experience and extensive social networks. In the late 1980s, many of them began to redefine themselves as "Alevi". Looking back, they regarded the neglect of Alevilik in favour of socialism as a failure. They discovered Alevilik as an ideology, which they now regarded as being even more just, egalitarian and libertarian than socialism. Their motto became "From now on we will strive for Alevilik". The "return" of these circles to the community to which they had belonged led to a rapid introduction of modern terms and methods into Alevilik.

The second and perhaps most important factor was the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, or, more accurately, of political Islam in Turkey. Because of their considerable and extensive historical inheritance, the Alevi were put on the alert by the Islamic reassertion, which had gained a new impetus through the Islamic Revolution of Iran. I am of the opinion that the most important motive for the establishment and rapid expansion of Alevi organisations today lies in the defensive instinct of the Alevi against the rise of Islamism, which led to various efforts by the emerging organisations to create political unity. How deep-rooted this fear is can be seen in the fact that even organisations with differing understandings of the nature of Alevilik were able to exhibit a common political attitude. A massacre of participants in an Alevi cultural festival in Sivas on 2 July 1993 by Islamists aggravated this traditional tension and strengthened the tendencies toward the politicisation of the Alevi community.

The third political factor responsible for the Alevi revival is the Kurdish problem. Since an important part of Alevis are Kurds,[2] they became aware through this conflict of the fact that nationalist tensions directly affected their community. This awareness led to various expressions of Alevi ethnicity according to the dominant discourses in the country. Thus, when faced with Islamism, the Alevis tend towards the political choice of secularism and express their identity in political terms. When confronted with Kurdish nationalism, however, they tend towards the principle of unity and stress their religious identity and affiliation as Alevi.

The great uneasiness the Alevis felt in the face of the growing Islamisation of Turkish culture and society led them to search for ideological alternatives to it, which many find in the universalist ideology of Enlightenment. Confronted with post-modern ideologies, however, which have gained in importance among Western intellectuals, Alevi community leaders, who until very recently took part in movements of Third World socialism, became paralysed. Since the ideology of Third World socialism involves Westernisation from above, it has strong parallels to Kemalism. The representatives of the Alevi community movement, who were ideologically still bound to the idea of universalism, became increasingly aware of the contradiction between their claimed universalism and the particularistic character of the Alevi revival in which they were active. This resulted in a state of political irresolution. In the course of these developments, the formerly commonly held religious identity and the new ethnic-political identity turned against each other.

2 As it is neither possible to make an accurate statement about the real size of the Alevi, nor the Kurdish population in Turkey, the proportion of Kurds among the Alevis as a whole can only be estimated at between 10 to 20 %.

In the 1980s, in the midst of this confusion, when Alevis from every stratum and ideological orientation felt themselves struck with a deep sense of solitude and alienation, they began to appear in the public sphere. Their activities were directed to the revitalisation of various aspects of Alevilik and led to the beginning of what we can call the Alevi rediscovery movement. In its first phase it expressed a sort of compulsory unity of different political aspirations, and social and religious positions. At this time, Alevis established close connections with various sectors of the society and political circles. But the impossibility of maintaining the initial picture of unity soon became generally recognised. Efforts were now made to define the direction of Alevi revival. Due to the heterogeneous character of Alevi society, however, these efforts resulted in the establishment of axes based on sociological, political and cultural criteria. In addition, contradictions between the traditional and new community leaders and their political and social preferences created the present-day image of a chaotic Alevilik.

In the course of the rediscovery process, Enlightenment theory, positivism and Marxism began to play quite different roles in Alevi society than they had in the 1970s. At that time, these ideologies, while defended by a great number of Alevis, were not identified with Alevilik itself. On the contrary, their protagonists emphasised the necessity of abandoning Alevilik in favour of new, secular ideologies and identities. Today, however, they argue that "true Alevilik" means nothing but a democratic, progressive and secular system of thought. Alevilik interpreted as such appears as a slightly different version of the Declaration of Human Rights.

For centuries, Alevilik could maintain its semi-syncretistic[3] religious structure within the framework of oral tradition. Under urban conditions however, as orality could no longer play its former role in passing on religious traditions, we observe the emergence of new political and divergent religious preferences. Within the present process of rediscovery, neither the traditional nor the new Marxism-oriented circles could maintain their former positions. In the following section, I would like to discuss some aspects of the main discourses inside the Alevi community which reveal these contradictions.

Recently, some members of the traditional religious elite began to describe Alevilik as the "real Islam". They argued that since Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet and the central figure of Alevi religious teaching, had also fulfilled the five *farz* laid down by Islam, the Alevi should do this in the same way. While coming close to the orthodox understanding of Islam, the defenders of this view were faced with the difficult choice of deciding for the Sunni or the Shi'i path of Islam. According to the religious inheritance of Alevilik, which shares some of its main symbols with the Shi'a, they were actually more willing to accept Shi'a as the right way. But in the face of the political disadvantages arising from traditional Turkish-Iranian rivalry, they at last seem to favour Sunnism.

An important group of the new circles defines Alevilik as a "secular belief" supported by folkloristic features. They intend to free traditional Alevilik, which depends on the doctrine of a trinity in the form "Allah-Mohammed-Ali", from its "superstitions". These circles define Alevilik as an ethno-political entity lying largely outside religious contexts.

A third group consists of a coalition of the so-called modern and traditional circles inside Alevilik. Their attempts are directed at keeping those features of Alevilik which are considered authentic, including its heterodox and syncretistic structure.

3 See Carsten Colpe, "The Phenomenon of Syncretism and the Impact of Islam", in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele, Anke Otter-Beaujean (eds.), Brill, Leiden, 1997.

Thus they stay at an equal distance from both positions defining Alevilik as a "secular belief" and as the "real Islam". Hence, this group has had to manage under the most difficult conditions, as, under urban conditions, maintenance of the oral transmission of an eclectic theosophy. This became nearly impossible, but led to the emergence of new questions of how to create an Alevi theology. Should Alevilik try to establish a theology for itself? Or should it set the goal of reforming Islam in Turkey by building a bridge built on Sufism between Alevilik and Sunnilik?

It seems that the latter two groups will become the most influential in defining present and future Alevilik. The adherents of the first mentioned group are likely to become integrated either into the Sunni or Shi'i community. It seems that a new Alevilik will emerge as a result of the activities of the latter two groups. Their answers to the questions, which cut both groups vertically, require confrontation with tradition. The answers will determine the frame of a new Alevilik.

The most important question regards the definition of an Alevi. Traditionally, membership in the Alevi community was determined by descent. For those circles who want to establish an ethno-political movement, reliance upon a descent-determined community as a ready socio-political base makes the realisation of their political aspirations easier. This attitude, however, involves a principal difficulty. As this group defines Alevilik in terms of universal values, it has to justify why it should be treated as a separate entity by individuals or social movements outside the community, which likewise refer to the Universal Human Rights Declaration.

The second group, which I call the coalition of "traditional" and "modern" circles, has the same difficulties, resulting however from other considerations. This group, while defining Alevilik as a belief system, easily distinguishes Alevis from non-Alevis, but at the same time suffers from the fact that an important number of Alevi are not attached to Alevi beliefs. Since they define Alevi beliefs as universal, in principle everyone should be acknowledged as Alevi who defines himself or herself as such. Does this also mean that in some cases individuals with Alevi origin would not be acknowledged as Alevi?

The same subject raises, especially for the second group, another important problem. A liberalisation pertaining to the origin of and connection to the lineage is directly related to the position of the members of the Holy Lineage, the *dede*s themselves. The term *dede* refers to the spiritual leaders of the Alevi. They obtain their spiritual power by claiming descent from the Prophet Mohammed through one of the twelve Imams. As such, they are accepted by their adherents as being innocent by birth, a belief of obviously Twelver Shi'i character. As the traditional spiritual leaders defined through descent from the Holy Lineage, the *dede*s now see their positions endangered by the possibility of "self-ascriptive" Alevis, since they could also generate "self-ascriptive" *dede*s. For them, to stress the importance of descent and thus that of lineage, is a matter of maintaining the source of their legitimacy as unquestioned authorities. At this point, the relation between Alevilik and *Bektaşilik* appears in a new light. As a Sufi order, *Bektaşilik* shares the basic beliefs and symbols of Alevilik but, in contrast to it, membership in the order depends on voluntary association. Until very recently, Alevi and *Bektaşi* expressed sharply different social, cultural and religious identities. The Bektaşi Order traditionally had its adherents among the middle- and lower-class urban and semi-urban population. In the course of the recent Alevi revival movement, which is mainly an urban phenomenon, a convergence towards *Bektaşilik* became more and more apparent. This approach can be seen as part of a political strategy to strengthen its own position by gaining allies. From the beginning, it became usual to speak of "Alevi-*Bektaşilik*" as one and the same phenomenon; for the sake of unity the shared principles came to the fore, while

the differences were overlooked. At this point, however, the emergence of serious problems might be expected for the future, especially concerning the question discussed above, i. e. the legitimacy of leadership. As *Bektaşilik* determines its spiritual leaders by election, it rejects the Twelver-Shi'i principle of hereditary leadership (*imamet*).

Another important point directly related to this question must be considered. Until recently, the Alevi movement was one of "organising one's domestic life". This means that it was merely engaged in the internal affairs of the community, such as the building of new community structures and institutions. Due to recent socio-political developments in the country, however, the Alevi movement has become more outward-orientated. Today its representatives address non-Alevi and intend to make Alevilik a centre of attraction for them. This fact requires a particular form of address. Alevis occasionally brag about a Sunni Muslim or a Christian converting to Alevilik. The outcomes of such events, however, are still not clear with regard to their general acceptance.

As a result of this process of opening outward, Alevilik will face an important problem concerning its religious choices. As long as Alevilik depended on oral tradition, it could maintain various antagonistic religious ideas. The most striking example regards the theory of *imamet* versus that of *velayet*.[4] A decision in favour of the theory of *imamet* will undoubtedly bring Alevilik closer to Shi'ism. At present, the possibility of favouring the theory of *velayet* seems to be more realistic. In this case, Alevilik will be dominated by its Sufi tradition. The choice the Alevi will favour in the future will undoubtedly have political consequences, as Sufi and Twelver Shi'i concepts have had completely different attitudes towards political power.

At this point it is necessary to make some remarks on the historical emergence of Alevilik. Until the 16th century, we can not speak of the existence of the religious group which later came to be known as Alevilik. There were various heterodox groups in Anatolia with more or less close relations to one another. With the emergence of the Safavi Dynasty, however, two differing tendencies became influential inside these groups. Beside the various Sufi, *tasavvuf*-influenced beliefs which existed all along inside these heterodox groups, a more juridical, *fıkıh*-oriented understanding became visible due to the Safavi influence. We have at present no proof of Shi'i traces in Anatolian heterodoxy. A principle like *teberra*, withdrawing, for example, or themes like the Twelvers' *düvezdeh imam* and the martyrdom of Hüseyin at Kerbela are nearly impossible to find in the *nefes,* hymns, before the 16th century. It seems that Alevilik, which did not make a decision between its *tasavvuf* inheritance and that of the historically more recent theory of *imamet*, will be forced to make this choice due to the restrictions of the newly emerged written tradition nearly 400 years after the beginning of the Savafi indoctrination.

Let us turn back to the present development. It seems that the most divergent tendencies within the rediscovery movement are those on the political level. The overwhelming majority of the Alevi population is strongly opposed to the Islamist movement, including the idea of an Islamic state. More narrowly, an important majority supports social democratic policies. But recent developments, especially as a consequence of the massacre at Sivas, led to the emergence of new political alternatives. A proposal for the foundation of an Alevi political party, which did not generate

4 Here I refer to the Sufic concept of *velayet* as defined by Muhyiddin ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240). According to Ibn al-'Arabi, a person can reach perfection by individual efforts and thus become a *veli* or a Perfect Man/Woman (*insan-ı kâmil*) who possesses direct knowledge of God. In this conception of *velayet* the principle of descent is irrevelant.

much interest in previous years was put on the agenda. On the other hand, the overall nationalist discourse in the country, first of all in connection with the Kurdish problem, increasingly affected both Kurdish and Turkish Alevi. A considerable number of Kurdish Alevi took sides with the Kurdish movement. Among a section of the Turkish Alevi, a new tendency can be observed reflecting Turkish nationalist and even racist attitudes. Both of these political choices are completely alien to Alevi traditions. The stressing of a merely ethnic/national identity, be it Turkish, Kurdish or Zaza, until recently did not play a role in Alevilik, as its members defined themselves by religious categories. In nation-oriented discussions of Kurdish or Turkish Alevi, common symbols tend to be divided along ethnic lines. Thus, the patron saint of Alevilik, Hacı Bektaş, appears at the same time as the patron saint of Turkish nationalism. On the other hand, those who insist upon their Kurdish identity as prior to Alevi identity, take the 16th century poet and rebel Pir Sultan Abdal as their symbol.

Thus, all the important questions in the history of the Alevi in particular and that of modern Turkey in general are combined in the rediscovery movement inside present-day Alevilik. The problems affecting society as a whole have increasingly become the problems of the Alevi community itself. Answers sought to these questions are not sought in an empty arena. The community in question is not a minor one, with approximately 15-20 or, according to other estimates, 6-10 million adherents, it represents at the very least 10 %, more probably 25 % of the entire population. Therefore, answers to the questions discussed above may require the interference of the political forces in Turkey and may even reach international platforms.

State-Community Relations in the Restructuring of Alevism

FUAT BOZKURT

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

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

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

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

The Problems of Urban Alevism

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

The Hereditary principle

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

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

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

The Dede

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A dede performing the sema ritual at a cem ceremony.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cem

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

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

Musahiplik

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

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

Görüm

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Funeral Rites

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

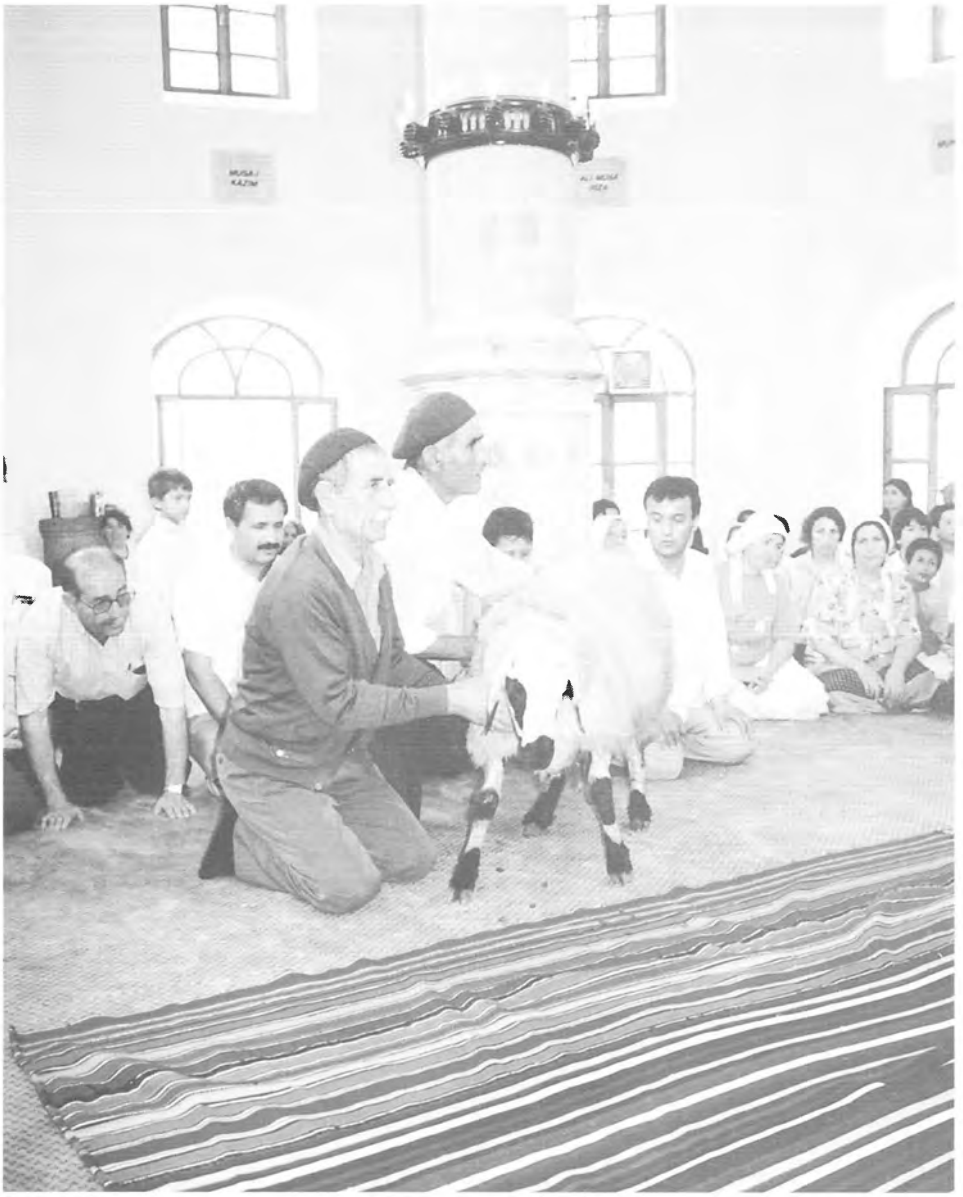
Yet another problem has arisen in connection with the performance of funeral rites. Arabic prayers are difficult to understand, and the Alevi community wishes to understand the meaning of what is being said. In the course of reform, the Alevi have found themselves obliged to draw up a Turkish funeral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

Memorial Services

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

Bayram Prayers

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The Erosion of Alevism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kermess in Şahkulu Cemevi in Istanbul.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. The abolition of compulsory religious instruction in schools. Teaching on Alevism should be available on a voluntary basis.

2. No time should be lost in putting an end to the construction of mosques in Alevi villages. As for the mosques already built, the *hoca* should be dismissed and the buildings converted into Alevi meeting houses *(cemevis).*

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

Ottoman Modernisation and Sabetaism

İLBER ORTAYLI

16 September 1666 was a date of great importance in the history of both the Jews and the Turks. On that date, Sabetai Zvi, who had succeeded in convincing the Jews in several parts of the Ottoman Empire and even some of the Jews in Eastern Europe that he was the long-awaited Messiah, was brought to Edirne by Sultan Mehmed IV and put on trial before the Imperial Council (*divan*). The reason for this lay in the complaints made by the Rabbis, who had been disturbed by the influence Sabetaî had begun to exert in Istanbul. The Sheikh-ul Islam, Vanî Mehmet Efendi, was himself one of the judges. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Pilates were rather more circumspect. If Sabetai Zvi were put to death he might possibly become a Messiah with a large public following. On the other hand, any such crisis would be prevented by his conversion to Islam. On learning that he would be condemned to death, Zvi hesitated, but decided at the very last moment to become a Muslim with the name Aziz Mehmet Efendi. This he did on the sugggestion of a Jewish physician by the name of Hayatîzade, who was himself a convert to Islam.[1] Sabetai Zvi was pardoned, awarded a salary of 150 akçe with retirement from the post of *kapucubaşılık,* head of the Palace doorkeepers. His followers were granted the same rank and the same payments on condition that he and his followers left Izmir, where they had been the cause of disturbances. From then on, Salonica was to be the centre of the congregation. Sabetaî himself went to Albania, where he died. Those who had remained faithful to him awaited the return of the Messiah. To the Turks, the followers of Sabataî were known as *Dönme* or *Avdetî*, while to his old co-religionists they were known as *sazanikos*, a type of fish that changes its colour in accordance with its environment. His followers, however, called themselves *ma'aminim*, or the faithful. Sabetaism was never, as some suppose, simply a secret religious sect. Some of the Jews lost heart at the idea that Zvi had been afraid. Others returned to their old faith. But some followed their old leader. The conflict spread to Eastern Europe, where discontent appeared among the Frankist Jews in Poland and the Russian pale. But the real confusion was to be found in the sphere of historiography, with some pointing to this incident as the cause of the decadence to be observed in Ottoman Jewry after the 17th century.[2] As a matter of fact, the same approach is to be observed in Turkish historiography, with Muslim religious figures indicated as the cause of all the decline. Secular historians sometimes overestimate the importance of religion. The Sabetaists cannot be likened to the Marranos (crypto-Jews) or Moriscos (crypto-Muslims) after the *reconquista* in Spain. The Sabetaists consisted of a group of the faithful who awaited the return of the Messiah (false or true) and who, meanwhile, continued a modified form of the old ritual while in appearance practising, and to some extent actually accepting, the Muslim religion. Just as previously they had rejected intermarriage with Muslims, they now also rejected intermarriage with orthodox Jews.

1 Fındıklı Mehmet, *Silâhdar Tarihi*, vol.1, p. 431, H.1077/1666.

2 Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, Princeton, 1987, p. 147.

The exceptional cases of intermarriage with Muslim Turks in the 20th century marked the beginning of the assimilation of the Sabetaists. The wedding of the distinguished Muslim Turkish journalist Zekeriya Sertel to the Sabetaist Sabiha (Sertel) in the Second Constitutional Period was in the nature of a semi-official wedding attended by a number of distinguished statesmen.[3]

Information regarding the Sabetaists is not usually to be found in official records. The Sabetaists were Muslim, or accepted as Muslim, so not liable for the taxes paid by non-Muslims but liable for military service, which was extended after 1909. There is thus no mention of any category such as *Dönme* or Sabetaist in official records such as the population census or the Ottoman fiscal survey. It is also interesting to note that these names are not normally mentioned in *memoirs*. Nor is this community referred to in memoranda and reports regarding the political and social state of the country. A distinguishing feature of the Ottoman bureaucracy is that no reports describing the country were penned until a relatively late period. There were very few works such as the *Halât-ı Kahîre* of the 16th century writer Gelibolulu Mustafa Ali or the *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi. Memoranda and reform projects belong principally to the reign of Abdülhamid II in the 19th century. For example, the fact that prior to the Reform period, the Ottoman Administration received no official information concerning the qat leaf consumed in such large quantities in the Yemen[4] demonstrates how long it took for interest to be awakened in an item of staple consumption in a province that had for three centuries formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Although a few brief references to the Sabetaists are to be found during Mithat Pasha's period of office as Governor of Salonica, these are not treated in the literature. Nor has a systematic evaluation been carried out on consular reports regarding Salonica, as for example those presented by the Austrian-Hungarian Consul-General August von Kral.

No objective and scientific study of the Sabetaist community has so far been carried out in Turkish by members of the community, Muslims or Jews. There is a great shortage of historical documents, an oral history is more or less out of the question and material that would cast light on the problem is steadily disappearing. Moreover, some of the studies on the Sabetaists contain geographical errors. For example, Yaşar Kutluay declares that the branch of the "Sabetaists" known as the "İzmirliler" lived at Ramle in Israel.[5] This is incorrect. There could only have been very few Sabetaists in Israel. Ramle was inhabited by orthodox Jews and members of the Karaî community from Egypt.

Is Sabetaism connected with Islam only in appearance or are there also relations of substance? We know very little of the secret beliefs, but it is well known that in the 17th century the millenarian idea of the end of the world was adopted and Sabataî hailed as Messiah by many who were not Jews. In the same way, the 19th century was to witness the emergence of two sectarian Messiahs one after the other - Şukr Kuhayl I (1861-1868) and Şukr Kuhayl II (1868-1875), while a false Jewish Messiah by the name of Yosef Abdallah emerged in the years 1888-1893. All three had followers and disciples amongst the Muslims. As a matter of fact, conflict arose between the Jews and the Zeydi Shiites, both groups claiming Şukr Kuhayl II as their own.[6] It is difficult to find documentary evidence for this belief, which was handed down from one generation to the next by some Sabetaists in Turkey and

3 Yıldız Sertel; previously Zekeriya Sertel, *Hatırladıklarım*, Gözlem Yayınları, Istanbul, 1977, pp. 77-81.

4 BOA- İrade Dahiliye. No. 19680, H. 20 Muharrem 1271/13 October 1854.

5 Yaşar Kutluay, *İslamın Yahudi Mezhebleri*, Ankara, 1965, p. 208.

6 See Bat. Zion Eraqi Klorman, "Muslim supporters of Jewish Messiah in Yemen", *Middle Eastern Studies* 29/4 (1992), 4.714.

which was current in Salonica at that time, but reference is made to it by Cahit Uçuk, who had family connections with the Salonica district and who presents in his autobiography an unprejudiced account of the various cultural forms, rumours and points of view that characterised the locality.[7] According to this tradition, "On seeing that Christians and Muslims were also becoming members of this sect, the Sultan issued a threat to Sabetai Zvi, declaring that unless he and his followers became Muslims they would be all beheaded, whereupon they all became Muslims in appearance..."[8] If this is indeed a true account, and there is no documentary evidence to prove it, the Court and the Ottoman administration succeeded in avoiding the crisis to which such mass executions would have given rise by accepting the apparent conversion to Islam of Sabetai Zvi and his followers. It would appear probable that there was some historical basis for this popular interpretation and belief. It also seems very probable that some of the members were converts from religions other than the Jewish. Cahit Uçuk records that in Salonica the members of the community conformed to certain Muslim rites and usages such as prayer and fasting. It would also appear that in the 19th century this community surpassed all the other communities in both their economic and cultural level. Mehmet Tevfik Bey, who was sent to Salonica as Governor in May 1901, points out in his memoirs that the Feyziye Schools (he does not mention, and indeed may not have been aware of the fact that these schools were founded by this community) were superior to all the other schools and produced very able civil servants.[9]

Sabetai Zvi and his followers in Izmir in 1666.

An important feature of these schools was the wide acceptance they enjoyed in Salonican social life. Originally designed for the education of young Sabetaists, these schools brought about a considerable modification in the ideology and world outlook of their founders. They were now pleased to offer education to children of all Ottomans, particularly the children of the Muslim Turks. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was one of the Muslim children to be educated at one of these primary schools.

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7 Cahit Uçuk, *Bir İmparatorluk Çökerken*, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, Istanbul, 1995, p. 79.

8 For rumours on this subject see N. Slousch, "Les deunmes, une secte judéo-musulmane de Salonique", *Revue du monde musulman*, no.XII (1908), Paris; İbrahim A. Gövsa, "Sabatay Sevi", *Resimli Yeni Lugat ve Ansiklopedisi*, I-V, Istanbul, 1939; Abdurrahman Küçük, *Dönmeler ve Dönmelik Tarihi*, Ötüken, Istanbul, p. 155.

9 *Bir Devlet Adamının (Mehmed Tevfik Biren) II. Abdülhamid ve Meşrutiyet Devri Hatıraları*, vol.1, Arma Yayınları, Istanbul, 1993, p. 170.

According to his own account, his mother would have preferred him to be sent to a Koran school but his father insisted on his being sent to the school founded by the Sabetaist Şemsi Efendi. This Şemsi Efendi is said to have belonged to the Kapanî group, but he cooperated with the Karakash group, and hoped to effect a union between the two rival *Dönme* groups by means of education. Atatürk himself said that he learned to read and write more quickly and more accurately in this Şemsi Efendi school, which was actually one of the modern Feyziye schools opened by the Sabetaists. However, Şemsi Efendi's modern ideas and his endeavours to unite the two opposing Sabetaist groups led to his expulsion from the community. In 1912 he migrated to Istanbul, where he died in 1917. He is buried in the Sabetaist cemetery at Üsküdar.[10]

After the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the Sabetaists in Edirne and several towns in Thrace joined the Muslims in the general migration to the Empire and settled in cities such as Istanbul and Izmir. No such *millet* existed in the Ottoman Empire. They were nowhere registered as Sabetaists, and some, in abandoning their distinctive rites, lost an important and distinctive badge of identity, which was finally completely obliterated in Turkish society on the introduction of Kemalist secularism. For centuries, the Sabetaists had been officially regarded as Muslims and, during the process of modernisation which characterised the 19th century, assimilation proceeded smoothly and uneventfully. It is this process of modernisation that forms the subject of this paper.

Two points make it quite clear that Sabetaism was neither a secret religion nor a secret Jewish sect. The Sephardic Jews, who in the 19th century and previously had spoken a Judeo-Spanish language, later adopted French, whereas from the 19th century onwards the Sabetaists used Turkish at home. The Orthodox Jews excommunicated them, but the Sabetaists were even stricter on this point. The second and very important point was that the members of this community, while devoutly awaiting the coming of the Messiah (i.e. Sabetai Zvi), performed most meticulously the rites of both religions. While the secret Christian communities in the remote corners of the Ottoman Empire had themselves officially registered as Muslims but neglected to perform the rites, the Sabetaists were notable for their punctilious approach to the performance of religious worship. This was a particularly important point as far as their mysticism was concerned. Finally, after the promulgation of the Reform Rescript of 1856, when several secret Christian communities in Crete, Macedonia, Eastern Serbia and, particularly, in Albania and the Eastern Black Sea region took advantage of the new atmosphere of freedom to openly declare their religious beliefs and abandoned all attempts to conceal their true religious identity,[11] the large Sabetaist congregation in Salonica made no such declaration and continued to combine the performance of Islamic rites with their own. Even those known to be rabbis made no open declaration. They formed no relations with the Talmud-Torah Jews and nothing has been published on the subject of their beliefs (apart from recent work by Ilgaz Zorlu). On the contrary, the old Sabetaist merchants and craftsmen gave even greater importance to education and accepted even more positions in the Ottoman bureaucracy. The orientalist Martin Hartmann, who visited Salonica and

10 Özcan Mert, "Atatürk'ün ilk öğretmeni Şemsi Efendi", *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 7/28 (March 1991), 330ff.; Ilgaz Zorlu, "Şemsi Efendi Hakkında Bilinmeyen Birkaç Nokta", *Toplumsal Tarih* 1 (January 1994), 59-60.

11 İ. Ortaylı, "Tanzimat Döneminde Tanassur ve Din Değiştirme Olayları", *Tanzimatın 150. Yılı Sempozyumu*, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1989, pp. 1-7; for Crete, BA, Ir.Mec.Mah. no.357, 14 C 1274/30-1-1858; for Skopje, BA, Ir.Har. no. 8922, 25 L 1275/28-VI-1859; for Albania, Bardhyl Graceni, "Le Crypto-christianisme dans la religion du Shpat au cours de la derniere periode Ottoman", *Studia Albanica* XXVI/2 (1989), 93-102.

Istanbul during those years, mentions in his observations on Salonica (1910) a certain Ali Enis who was employed, like his father İbrahim Suzi, in the German Consulate, and who married the daughter of a Sabetaist merchant by the name of Sami Teldji. Ali Enis was a well-bred, cultured young man, and there were many like him in the community. Saturday was observed as the Sabbath by the Sabetaists as by the Jews, and, although there was a separate "*Dönme*" cemetery in the town, it closely resembled a Turkish cemetery and the earliest of the tombstones bears the date 1716/H.1128.[12] The Sabetaists played a greater role in the patriotic movements of the 19th-20th centuries, and were usually self-employed. The only periodical they produced during this period was neither religious nor political in content. It was, indeed, a fortnightly publication devoted to the question of the education of a secular and civilised youth. We shall dwell a little on this periodical. The Ottoman census was based on religious categories, and the Salonica Sabetaists were registered in the same category as the Muslims and not in the same category as the Jews. There was no question of any declaration of belief in the 19th century or later. No such community was recognised by the state. It is also extremely doubtful if the community kept its own records as a secret organisation. In any case, the community had disintegrated after Sabetai Zvi's apostasy, and it is obvious that an organisation of this kind would have little to reveal in the way of secret records and population counts. That is why we have no certain knowledge concerning the number of Sabetaists past or present.

Coronation of Messiah.

The first periodical known to have been produced by the Salonican Sabetaists is a fortnightly magazine entitled *Gonca-i Edeb*, the first issue of which appeared on 1 March 1299 (1882). The chief editor was Fazlı Necib. It contains no information or propaganda connected with Sabetaism. It addresses youth, but never mentions religion. As a matter of fact, the *Mevlevî* order, a cosmopolitan Turkish religious order which numbered both Jews and Christians among its members, is highly praised and references are made to the rites performed in the *Mevlevî* convent in Salonica and the inscriptions on its walls.[13] This cosmopolitan dervish order was very popular in westernised, cosmopolitan circles. On the

12 Martin Hartmann, *Der Islamische Orient*, Leipzig, 1910, p.18.

13 *Gonca-i Edeb*, H.1299/1882 Milli Kütüphane, Ankara no. SA. 98.1956.

other hand, according to Martin Hartmann, who was in Salonica in 1910, although the *Mevlevî* convent and its sheikh were on good terms with all the other communities in the city, they felt no sympathy for the *Dönme*s, whom they tended to distrust.[14] The periodical contained literary articles, poems (some of them very amateurish), travel notes, translations of Victor Hugo (secular writers were always chosen), together with articles on the education and behaviour of young intellectuals. Although most of its contents are rather naive and provincial in tone, its aim is always education, more education and an opening to the outside world. It is quite obvious that the Sabetaists preceded the Jews in achieving emancipation through westernisation and education, and the cultural contribution which, in Europe, had been made by the Jews to their own communities, was carried out in Turkish society by the Sabetaists. In the Feyziye and Terakki lycées, which were founded somewhat later, great stress was laid on secular education. In the Işık Lycée in Istanbul, the religious lessons which are now imposed by law as a compulsory subject in the curriculum, are treated from a secular point of view. *Gonca-i Edeb* laid great stress on education, and every issue contained explanations of chemical and biological terms. It mentioned the schools then opened, and the advance in education and schools opened in conformity with the customs and usages prevaling under Abdülhamid II. This met with the approval of both the regime and the censorship, but the aim of the periodical remained westernisation rather than conformity with the censorship board. The modernist Sabetaist élite believed that the closed community life could be changed by modern Western type education. References to religious subjects are rarely to be found in this periodical (apart from praise of the *Mevlevî* order) but according to one of a series of articles in the *Vatan* newspaper published on 10 January 1924, the *Gonca-i Edeb* was published by a group of progressive, modern *Dönme*s who regarded Sabetai Zvi as a charlatan.[15] I myself have been unable to find this passage. In a series signed "Research Historian" it was stated that the younger generation was displeased with this superstitious sect and favoured marriage into Muslim-Turkish society.

After their migration to Istanbul, the Salonican Sabetaists opened schools similar to those in their native city and proceeded to lead the way in the foundation of a secular-nationalist Turkish educational system. We have no definite information regarding the process of modernisation followed by the Sabetaists in Salonica, Edirne and Istanbul, but it would appear that the contributors to the periodical were members of the bureaucracy, that articles and statements were printed by several individuals from Istanbul and that readership extended as far as Edirne. It would also appear from the attitude of the periodical towards education and the personality of the writers that there was a certain inclination among the Sabetaists towards the Ottoman bureaucracy, in which, thanks to their knowledge of foreign languages, they were in a much more favourable position than either the Turks or the Jews.

Meanwhile, the Sabetaists known as *Dönme*s, who had adopted a type of secular nationalism, tended to join either the Jeune Turc movement or the party of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki*). Mehmed Cavid Bey, the distinguished Ottoman Minister of Finance and skilled economist, who was one of those who favoured a separation between the Sultanate and the Caliphate, was a Sabetaist. Nüzhet Faik, another minister of finance, Mustafa Arif, a minister of the interior and Muslihiddin Adil, educational advisor and professor of law, were all of Sabetaist extraction. Another Sabetaist was Ahmed Emin (Yalman), a distinguished figure in Turkish journalism and the owner of the *Vatan* newspaper. It was Ahmed Emin who published the first article on this subject in *Vatan* in January 1924. There were Sabetaists in the army, the press and in Union and Progress circles. One of these was Hasan

14 *Ibid.* p.15.

15 "Tarihin esrarengiz bir sahifesi", *Vatan*, 20 January 1924, 3.

Tahsin (Osman Nevres), a very interesting member of the Union and Progress group, with ideas bordering on anarchism, who has gone down in history as the hero who fired the first shot at the Greek troops as they landed in Izmir on 15 May 1919 and thus started the resistance movement. Selânikli Şükrü Bey, who joined Hasan Tahsin in his resistance to the Greeks and fell in the ensuing conflict, was also a Sabetaist.

In January 1924, at the beginning of the Republican period, the Turkish public found itself suddenly confronted with the *Dönme* problem. The reason for this was the fact that the community had spread beyond its original limits. After the death of Sabetai Zvi, the Sabetaists split up into three rival groups: 1. *Yakubî* (or Hamdi Bey group), 2. *Karakaş* (or Osman Baba group) and 3. *Kapancı* (or İbrahim Agha group). For some still unexplained reasons, in a speech made in the Turkish Grand National Assembly at the beginning of January 1924, Karakaş Rüşdi Bey, a member of the second group of Sabetaists, described the *Dönme*s, a community of which he himself was a member, as a non-Turkish, non-Muslim group who exploited and abused their Turkish nationality, and demanded that they should only be allowed to participate in the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey and be accepted in Turkey as Turks on condition that they abandoned their superstitious beliefs and attitudes and accepted a truly Turkish nationalist approach. The reason for this outburst is said to have been dissension within his own family and a desire for revenge against other *Dönme* leaders. Ahmed Emin (Yalman), himself a Sabetaist, published an article in his newspaper accusing him of profligacy and immorality. This started off a controversy in the newspapers, during which a number of rumours concerning Sabetaist (*Dönme*) beliefs were published and discussed. Finally, Ahmed Emin published a series of articles on the *Dönme* question in the *Vatan* newspaper between 10-22 January 1924 in which he described the *Dönme*s as a secular, nationalist, patriotic group who had abandoned this faith. These series of articles are of particular interest insofar as it was the first time that the Sabetaist question had been introduced and discussed by one of their own community. The series is, however, anonymous, being signed only as "research historian". Ebuzziya Tevfik, the editor of the conservative periodical *Sebilürreşad*, responded with an attack on Ahmed Emin, while Hüseyin Cahid (Yalçın) published articles criticising and bringing accusations against both Karakaş Rüşdi and *Sebilürreşad*, declaring that the Sabetaists were Turkish, and that any view to the contrary was pure racism and utterly incompatible with the real situation in Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. He described the proposal to exclude the Sabetaists in Salonica, which now lay outside the Turkish borders, from the exchange of population as both reprehensible and dangerous.[16] The reason for Karakaş Rüşdi Bey's proposal remains uncertain. Did it arise from some resentment towards the community, or was it intended as a means of helping Sabetaists who were unwilling to have to abandon their work and possessions in Salonica? Just at that time, a certain Mustafa Bey had presented a petition to the Greek government, declaring that the *Dönme*s were actually Jews and were to be regarded as neither Turkish nor Muslim. They should therefore be exempted from the exchange of population and should not be compelled to abandon their homes, employment and homeland. Although Konortas appeared to be sympathetic to this view, some ministers regarded the Sabetaists as more dangerous to Greece than the Turks themselves, and advised their instant expulsion to Turkey.[17] As controversy over the *Dönme*s, i.e. Sabetaists increased in vehemence, a few journalists asked the distinguished Rabbi Haim Becerano how closely the *Dönme*s were related to Judaism. In a reply given on 12 January 1924, the Chief Rabbi declared that he had carried out a great deal of

16 *Sebilü'r-reşad* vol. 23, 175; Abdurrahman Küçük, *op.cit.*, p. 232; *Tanin*, 5 January 1924 (H. 1340).
17 *Vakit*, 4 January 1924 (H. 1340).

investigation into this matter, but he had no knowledge regarding the Salonicans and that he knew no more than anyone else, adding, however, that "the Sabetai Zvi tribe formed a sect opposed to true Jewish belief."[18] This rather hesitant, ambiguous statement was the first official pronouncement concerning the Salonican *Dönme*s made by an Ottoman leader of Turkish Jewry in the two centuries following the Sabetai Zvi incident. It remained, however, without sequel, the Turkish Jews preferring to remain silent on the question. Nor was the question of the *Dönme*s discussed either by the secular, nationalist Republicans or by the Republican People's Party. Censorship ensured that discussions of this kind were confined to whispered exchanges in conservative circles. After the Karakaş Rüşdi incident the Sabetaists felt impelled to remain silent, preferring to adopt the secular nationalism of the new society. Indeed, ever since the 19th century, there had been Sabetaists among those who looked forward to the creation of a secular-nationalist society. At the same time, narrow-minded anti-semitic groups continued to spread rumours referring to leaders of the secularist movement quite indiscriminately as *Dönme*s or "Free Masons".

The implementation of the law promulgated in 1942 during the Second World War imposing a "wealth tax" on excessive profits resulted in the *Dönme* question appearing on the agenda in bureaucratic circles in a rather interesting form. Faik Ökte, who was at that time Treasurer (*Defterdar*) of Istanbul, wrote that the tax to be levied on the *Dönme*s came under schedule "D".[19] As is well known, the Bezmen family, which was included in this category, was liable for the highest amount of tax. This "wealth tax", undoubtedly the most reprehensible measure in the whole course of Turkish history, met with a strong reaction from various circles and was very soon abandoned. No such measure was ever again introduced, either directly or indirectly.

At the present day, the Sabetaists keep themselves very much to themselves, neither carrying out nor publishing any investigations concerning their distinctive beliefs. We should, however, mention with due appreciation the exception, and the one and only exception, presented by Ilgaz Zorlu, who has contributed to periodicals such as *Tiryaki* and *Toplumsal Tarih*.[20] There would still appear to be individuals who profess this belief and identity, but no one knows how many. No doubt, in the course of the developments in secularism and the new urban culture over the last seventy years, Sabetaist secularism has become an integral part of secular ideology, and, more particularly, of the new secular way of life, and it was, indeed, this group that displayed the greatest enthusiasm in introducing and implementing the new secularism. I hear that research on this group is at the moment being carried out by Lucette Valensi. Of course, the Ottoman archives, contrary to accepted belief, will yield nothing. Her research will have to take the form of oral investigation and the examination of the few documents generally available.

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18 *Vakit*, 12 January 1924 (H. 1340) (interview with Chief Rabbi Haim Becerono).

19 Faik Ökte, *Varlık Vergisi Faciası*, Istanbul, 1947, pp. 85, 87, 195; also see A. Küçük, *op.cit.*, p. 258.

20 Ilgaz Zorlu regards the Sabetaist community as a branch of Turkish Jewry in both race and culture and feels that it is now high time that they declared themselves Turks belonging to this independent sect. The fact that the traditional silence continues, that there is no change in the situation and there has been no favourable reaction would appear to indicate that his view is accepted by very few. The writer's works include: "Sabetaycılık ve Yahudilik", *Tiryaki*, 1/4 (November 1994), 39; "Mistik bir kişilik, Sabetay Sevi", *Tiryaki*, 1/5 (December 1994), 41-42; "Üç Sabetaycı Cemaat", *Tiryaki* 1/6 (January 1995), 28-29; "Atatürk'ün İlk Öğretmeni Şemsi Efendi", *Toplumsal Tarih* 1 (January 1994), 59-61; "Sabetaycılık ve Osmanlı Mistisizmi", *Toplumsal Tarih* 10 (October 1994), 22-24.

A Critical Survey on Ahl-e Haqq Studies in Europe and Iran*

JEAN DURING

Ahl-e Haqq consider Bektashis as their closest members of a large family which includes a few other hyper-Shia[1] groups, of which only the Nusayri, and 'Ali Allâhi are clearly identified. Tradition has it that Soltân Sahâk founded the Ahl-e Haqq *maslak* in Iranian Kurdistan and Luristan. After a hundred years of spiritual reign in Kurdistan, he disappeared, then reappeared, and manifested himself in Anatolia under the name of Hacı Bektaş.[2] When giving an account of the Ahl-e Haqq in a seminar on Bektashi and Alevi, I found it more appropriate to make a survey of the Ahl-e Haqq studies at large but with a critical eye, and to suggest some research perspectives, rather than to focus on a specific point. Thereby the reader will get a general idea of the present situation of this religious group and its problems, and hopefully be able to draw comparisons with the case of the Bektashi and Alevi.

One and a Half Centuries of Ahl-e Haqq Research

For a long time, one of the main concerns of Western scholars working on the Ahl-e Haqq was to find out their historical and religious origin and to give an account of their practices and beliefs.[3] Their views relied more on sacred texts than on field work and personal contacts with the Ahl-e Haqq and when the latter was the case, it was based on research carried out only with a few groups among a great number of communities scattered over a wide territory. After the pioneers came a new generation of scholars perhaps better equipped to sketch a realistic portrait of this religious group. These were M. Mokri, a Sunni Kurd who published in French and had full access to the original texts and to Kurdish culture, C. J. Edmonds who translated an

* I wish to thank Dr Martin van Bruinessen for his kind advice and remarks concerning this article.

1 I suggest avoiding the term "extremism shiism" to label Alevi, Ahl-e Haqq Nusayri, etc. The terms hyper-Shia or hypershiism (for *ghuluw)* are politically, as well as scientifically, more adequate.

2 Pir Esmâ'il Kuhlâni, a disciple of Soltân Sehâk, says in a *kalâm*: "Among the Bektashis, among the Bektashis /The receptacle of the essence of my King manifested himself among the Bektashis / My King has gone from Perdivar to his new house / He manifested himself in Hacı Bektaş / He founded the Bektashi path, unveiling his Science / the seven *(haftan)* have had many lives *(yurt)*". (Safizâde, 1981, 96).

About Hacı Bektaş's hierarchical rank, there are other traditions (see van Bruinessen, 1995, pp. 119-20, 134, Beik Baghban, pp. 66, 256). Some sources say he was Gabriel or Dâwud, one of the seven Archangels. Other sources consider him as a manifestation of Khân Atesh or Shâh Veys Qoli, that is a *zât mehmân* ("host of the Essence", but not *zât bashar* "the Essence in a human" like 'Ali). Edmonds (p. 94) relying on Iraki sources, gives the names of Hacı Bektaş's companions, from which there is no doubt that he was the King *(shâh)*. Sacred history does not bother with chronology, but strangely, in all the versions, Hacı Bektaş comes *after* Soltân (d. probably 1506), though he lived more than two centuries before him. (This anachronism is solved by some traditions according to which he lived three hundred years.) The anteriority of the Bektashis over the "official Ahl-e Haqq" is compatible with the fact that all the Ahl-e Haqq know about the existence of their Turkish cousins, whereas the Alevis have no idea of the existence of the Ahl-e Haqq in Iran or Irak.

3 Gobineau, Minorsky, Iwanov.

interesting Ahl-e Haqq doctrinal summary, and S. C. R. Weightman, who had contacts with Ahl-e Haqq in Tehran.

From 1963 onwards appeared important first hand material like the *Borhân ol-Haqq* written by Nur 'Ali Elâhi, a respected spiritual personality among the Ahl-e Haqq. This book was discussed by Weightman[4] and mentioned by Minorsky in his article in the Encyclopaedia of Islam as an essential contribution to the knowledge of the Ahl-e Haqq tradition and practices. It is based on the most reliable traditions[5] and uses Islamic theological concepts and Koranic references to present the doctrine in such a way that Islamic censure could raise no objection against it. After several reprints, a new edition was issued in 1975 with 400 pages of commentaries and replies to questions. All the books published in Iran after the *Borhân ol-Haqq* make extensive use of this source and mention it generally in first place in their bibliographies.[6]

The same year saw the publication of the *Shâhnâme-ye Haqiqat,* from Hâjj Ne'matollâh Jeyhunâbâdi, Nur 'Ali Elâhi's father. This is a complete sacred history in 11 000 verses in Persian stretching from primeval to modern times. In the new edition *(Haqq ol-Haqâyeq)* it includes contemporary events which took place during Hâj Ne'matollâh's time but are still viewed as part of the same sacred history. This feature is quite rare in such writings, which generally do not include the present times. This book may be considered the main source of the Ahl-e Haqq besides the sacred *kalâm*s or *daftar*s, and for Hâjj Ne'matollâh as the last great Ahl-e Haqq charismatic saint in the traditional style. Whereas all the *kalâm*s were written in Kurdish, Hâjj Ne'matollâh dictated it in Persian, perhaps intending to open the Ahl-e Haqq tradition to the large public of non Kurdish speakers. He was also innovative in choosing a historical approach instead of the classical paraphrase of the ancient *kalâm*s. His work continues the tradition of the sacred *kalâm* written in the course of the centuries by great Ahl-e Haqq saints. It is often referred to as the *Kalâm of Mojrem.*[7]

A few years after the appearance of these sources, several works were published in Iran, some of them more or less inspired by the *Borhân ol-Haqq*. They can be classified in three main categories, though some works combine several approaches: canonic texts, erudite presentations, and insider's spiritual or catechism approaches. To these categories can be added ethnological descriptions and sociological approaches which are not concerned primarily with the Ahl-e Haqq as a religious group, but as a group representing a different culture in a wider sense.

Canonic Texts

Ahl-e Haqq canonic literature has not been systematically collected or studied. In order to open the way for further research, it may be useful to sketch a general table

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4 Weightman, 1964.

5 The author possessed many copies of the sacred *Sarânjâm* collected by his father, and used a copy from the hand of Aqâ Ahmad I, successor of Shâh Hayâs, dated *circa* 1770. It could be the oldest Ahl-e Haqq manuscript.

6 Another important reference source of this author is the *Asar ol Haqq* (vol I 1979, vol II 1992, c. 700 pp each) consisting of informal conversations transcribed on the spot during *jam'* sessions. Though it is mainly a spiritual teaching not specifically addressed to Ahl-e Haqq, it provides interesting clues and anecdotes with their commentaries, for an inner approach of the Ahl-e Haqq culture, not to speak of its mystical content.

Scholars can also benefit from the notes taken by some dervishes of this master and published by M. Mokri with his commentaries: *L'Esotérisme kurde* (1966). It contains a lot of material on the Ahl-e Haqq traditions and rituals, but the author (who is actually not the editor of the book) disapproved its publication, since he could not review it.

7 They follow those of Teymur, Zulfaqâr, Darvish Qoli and Nowruz.

of the literature of this group. The essential text is the *Kalâm Sarânjam,* also called *Kalâm Khazâne* or *Daftar-e Perdiwari.*

I have consulted a collection of texts, copied by Seyyed Nure (d. c. 1970), a Shâh Hayâsi Ahl-e Haqq from Sahne. According to Seyyed H., his son, the most important book in this collection is the *Kalâm Sarânjam* which contains the old texts relating to the time of Soltân and his predecessors Shâh Khoshin (c. 10th century) and Bâbâ Nâ'us. Seyyed H. said that several other booklets (*daftar*) can in fact also be considered a part of the *Saranjâm,* since they report stories from the same period. These texts may have been written later by saints who were themselves reincarnations of the same persons, or who had spiritual access to those times and were supposed to relate what had been said and what happened. The typical example is that of Qoshchi Oghli. These texts always use formulas like "Soltân declared" *(maramu),* "Benyâmin declared" etc.

Of secondary importance are the writings of what can be called the second period (17th-18th c.), such as the predictions of Khân Almâs or Il Begi, the *kalâm*s of Shâh Hayâs, Aqâ Abbâs, etc. Another category of writings consists of mystic poems relying on canonic texts or referring to them, the most esteemed being those of Sheikh Amir. During two to three centuries there has been a considerable production of mystic poetry of this kind by people who occupied a "rank" *(maqâm)* in the socio-cosmic hierarchy, or at least were acknowledged as enlightened dervishes *(didedar).*

Seyyed H.'s manuscript has 380 pages, the *Sarânjâm* itself extends to 138 pages and contains the following chapters: Shâh Khoshin 20 pp, Bâbâ Nâ'us 10 pp, a section on Soltân's time 25 pp, the story of Pire wa Pirali, of Yâdegâr and Shâh Ebrâhimi, of the Haftawâna, the Twelve Imâms 33 pp, the Cheltan, the Qawaltâs, and the recommendations of Soltân for the performance of the *jam* (ritual). According to him there are no major variations between the different versions available, but some traditions contain additional material related to Soltân's period. For instance, the *daftar Diwâna Gawra* belongs to the local Gurân tradition. All the versions do not clearly separate the different sections by means of headings. This is why the number of chapters may vary in the different copies, though the content is the same. For instance, Seyyed H.'s copy had no title for some small sections which otherwise have been called *Kalâm Goru Goru, Kalâm Dire Dire, Kalâm Kale Zarde.* The rest of the Seyyed H.'s manuscript contains selections of *kalâm* poems by great Ahl-e Haqq saints or poets, from 'Âli Qalandar, Qoli (one of the Qawaltâs), the stories of Shâh Ebrâhim, Zonnur, and 'Âbedin, texts from Seyyed Ahmad, Seyyed Farzi and his disciples Nâder Veys, Nowrus, Zolfaqâr, etc. All this is only a small part of the totality of the texts, and of secondary importance.

Publications of canonic texts can be divided into two categories: a. non-academic editions (often facsimiles of manuscripts); b. academic editions with philological, historical, religious, and anthropological comments.

The first publication of a religious text is Minorsky's Russian translation of a *Saranjâm* (1911) which is now practically unavailable. Fifty years later, Ivanow published a collection of Persian Ahl-e Haqq texts extensively commented in the light of the history of religions. It must be said that these texts, though interesting for scholars, are totally rejected by Ahl-e Haqq disciples and never quoted in books by Iranian scholars.[8]

M. Mokri published with parsimony some fragments of the *Kalâm-e Sarânjâm* (also called *Kalâm Perdivari,* or simply *Kalâm)* in a few articles, presented as rare secret texts and accompanied by abundant comments on linguistic and cultural con-

8 These texts have been published under the title *Majmu'e rasâ'el-e ahl-e haqq,* Bombay, 1950.

ditions. By doing this, instead of publishing the whole *Sarânjâm*, he succeeded in preserving the mystery of Ahl-e Haqq studies. This mist of mystery was however quickly lifted by the publication in Iran of a Turkish version of the *Sarânjâm*.[9] Later on, in 1981, J. Afshâr published another version of this Turkish source, the *Divân-e Qoshchi-oghli*.[10] It starts with the story of how this saint was cured of deafness and dumbness by a miracle of Shâh Ebrâhim (16th c.). Acknowledged as a new manifestation of Gabriel after Benyâmin (in Sultân's time), he adapted the *Sarânjâm* into Turkish with his comments and poems. In 1975, Afzali, an Ahl-e Haqq *seyyed* published some important basic Kurdish texts under the title *Daftar-e Romuz-e Yârestân. Ganjine-ye Soltân Sehâk*.[11] Two sections of the *Sarânjâm* have been edited separately in a scholarly form by Safizâde: *Dowre-ye Haftawâna,* (1982, 900 verses, 191 pp) and *Dowre-ye Bohlul,* (1984, 60 verses, 115 pp).[12] The section *Daftar-e Cheltan* has been issued in the form of a facsimile manuscript by Awrâng and Khâdemi (1978).

In addition to these basic texts, several minor but revered *kalâm* were published in facsimile:

— The complete *divân* of Sheykh Amir (b. 1713), perhaps the most popular source of this kind among Ahl-e Haqq Kurdish speakers. The book contains a handwritten pages long introduction by K. Nik-nezhâd (nd).

— *Goftâr-e Khân Almâs* (d. 1725) has been published in the same form (1973, 54 pp).

— The *Pishbini-ye Il Begi-ye Jâf* (1980, 44 pp), edited and introduced by Safizâde, contains amazing predictions about modern society (moral decadence, freedom of women, changes in dressing, and even the invention of steam locomotives).[13]

All these are not academic editions, but the followers' own contributions to the diffusion of the canonical texts, generally without comments, introduction or index. In this process, the Turkish speakers from the Atesh Begi *khânedân* proved to be more active than the Gurân, the most conservative Ahl-e Haqq group.

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9 Kalâmât-e Torki, Tehran, 1973, 336 pp. A facsimile of a dervish's copy, without introduction, comments or table of contents.

10 This story is also found in the *Shahnâme-ye haqiqat,* p. 503. The interesting point is that since he was Benyâmin in his previous life, Qoshchi-oghli could speak in his own name to relate the sacred historical events.

11 This book of ca. 740 pp is not a regular "Kalâm Sarânjâm" but a collection of canonic texts of different epochs and importance set together without chronological concern. These are: —*Daftar-e Sâvâ* (14 pp), — *Daftar-e Gavâhi-e Gholâmân* ("on Shâh Ebrâhim and Yâdegar, on the creation of the *haftawâna* and the contracts *bayâbas)* (10 pp), —*Daftar-e Diwâne Gawara (dowre-ye Pire va Pirâli) (10 pp)* — *Daftar-e dowre-ye shenderavi (Gelim kul)* (40 pp) —*Dowre-ye Shâh Khoshin,* (24 pp) —*Zalâl zalâl* (67 pp), the *daftar* of 'Abedin-e Jâf (100 pp), the recents *daftar* of Nowruz (n. 1320 Hq) Seyyed Brâke's *guyande* (260 pp). It is followed by the *kalâm* of Teymur (170 pp). One finds also a presentation (40 pp), hagiographic notes on Shâh Ebrâhim and Bâbâ Yâdegâr, as well as a few pages on Zoroaster, since the author had contact with a Zoroastrian from India and tried to relate Ahl-e Haqq belief to Zoroastrianism (Beik Baghban, p. 23). The absence of a table of contents, of clear classification, content and index, the incoherent division of the sections and the pagination by chapters (50 pp being omitted) make the consultation of this corpus uncomfortable. In any case it is not a complete *Sarânjâm*, but in adding to it the other *daftar* available, one can reconstitute a good part of the corpus. These are: *Dowre-ye Haftawâne*, *Dowre-ye Bohlul* (Safizâde), *Dowre-ye Cheltan* (Awrang), *Dowre-ye Wazâwar* (Mokri, 1968), *Dowre-ye Dâmyâri (idem.*, 1968), *Divân-e Gawra (idem,* 1977). For other later *kalâm*s, see Safizâde, 1982, p. 14). Beik Baghban's photocopied manuscript also provides some material. One can identify twelve parts: *Dowre-ye Dâmyâri, D. Diwâna Gawra, Gelim wa Kul, D. Shâh Khoshin, D. Cheltan, D. Wazâwar, K. Goru Goru, K. Dire Dire, K. Kale zarde* (these three *kalâm* being very short), *K. Khâmush, Farmâyesh-e Bâbâ 'Ali Darvish* (not from the *Saranjâm), K. Marnow*. The absence of the *Dowre-ye Haftawâna* may be explained by the fact that they are not liked by some Gurân groups (van Bruinessen, 1995, p. 134).

12 This scholar follows the method of Mokri, with comments and linguistic analysis. Three other sections of the basic *Kalâm* have been published by M. Mokri.

13 This text, which constitutes for the follower a proof of the authenticity of their saints, has been translated into Persian verses by Adib ol-Mamâlek (end of XIX c.) and are often quoted in Ahl-e Haqq studies. Il Begi died in 961 h.

The old secret books finally became available, though their distribution was limited. Yet, strangely enough, no Western scholar paid any attention to them, nor to the numerous publications which have appeared from this period onwards. I won't quote all this material, and will limit myself to a few significant publications.

Erudite Approaches

Under this heading, one can distinguish three subcategories: a) those that adopt a neutral position, b) those which defend an ideology c) those concerned with relations to other religions.

Erudite approaches through textual sources are rare. Along with Mokri, who did not publish in Persian, Safizâde made the first contribution with his *Bozorgân-e Yârestân* (1964). He later improved in his useful *Mashâhir-e Ahl-e Haqq* (1981) 234 pp), with about 150 biographical notes on great Ahl-e Haqq saints and dervishes. This collection of written portraits and spiritual filiations provides a new view of the Ahl-e Haqq culture, which I will discuss later. The same approach is used in the two syntheses of the Ahl-e Haqq doctrines published by Iranian scholars in the *Shii Encyclopaedia (Dâ'yerat ol-ma'âref-e tashayyo,* Tehran, 1993).

Two publications deal with the Cheltan (Qirqlar), which are closely related to the Ahl-e Haqq: *Ilkhchi*, a geographical study of an Azerbaijani village, and the *Hamâse-ye por shokuh-e Ahl-e Haqq Cheheltanân,* by Bâbâzâde, 1968.

Though it presents itself as a neutral approach, the *Sarsepordegân* by Khâjeddin (1970, 188 pp) seems to emphasize the non-Islamic aspect of the Ahl-e Haqq, perhaps as a reply to the *Borhân ol Haqq,* which explicitly related the Ahl-e Haqq doctrine to Ja'fari Shiism. Due to lack of erudition this book does not meet the required academic standards.

Of the same kind is the *A'in-e Yâri* of M. Alqâsi (1979, 106 pp) with the difference that the author is a Gurân disciple who obviously addresses an Ahl-e Haqq audience. His approach is therefore more prescriptive than descriptive, and follows the classical dogmatic structure used by Afshâr (1977). Perhaps it is inspired by the *Borhân ol-haqq,* beginning with definitions and origins, then dealing with Ahl-e Haqq customs like festivals, fasting, *jam,* benedictions, initiations, ablutions, moustaches, etc. Among the interesting points are his many quotations from various *kalâms*. He published another essay *(Andarz-e Yâri,* 1980, 94 pp) with many quotations, but no index.

One can speculate whether the development of Ahl-e Haqq publications in Iran is the reason for the loss of interest in this topic among Western scholars? Not only has the field lost its originality with all this new material, but it has also become more difficult to work on. The Western contributions consist only of three or four articles by van Bruinessen. Although accurate and relevant, his approach is limited in scope and ambition. H. Halm has published a short article in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* which cannot match Minorsky's articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* in spite of the fact that the latter appears a bit outdated. Personally, I spent several years in Iran and became familiar with Ahl-e Haqq culture, mainly through its ritual songs and music. This experience led me to write a general account of the Ahl-e Haqq with special references to music (During, 1989: 293-520).[14] The latest Western scholarly work on Ahl-e Haqq consists of articles by Z. Mir Hosseini, who has collected a large amount of interesting empirical data on the present situation, without, however, much

14 This chapter will soon be published in Persian as a separate book.

methodological coherence.[15] This kind of work dealing with sensitive contemporary facts without a thorough knowledge of traditional culture is more akin to a journalistic approach and leads to disputable conclusions. The most significant Western publication of the last decades remains the *Yaresan* of Hamze'ee (1990), a well documented study on the Ahl-e Haqq which lays great emphasis on its relations to ancient cults and religions. Although this scholar is an Iranian of Ahl-e Haqq origin, he relies on written rather than oral sources.

A survey of Ahl-e Haqq studies may give the impression that they are sometimes conducted in a quite non-academic way. Pittman published a very interesting résumé of the *Kalâm-e Saranjâm,* without even mentioning where the texts came from, in what language, or from what time.[16] H. Beik Baghban recived a Doctorat d'Etat in France, but part of the thesis is merely a photocopy of a manuscript, and even printed excerpts from canonical writings. He did not edit the text, and did not take the trouble to separate the chapters, or to number the pages or to give an index or a table of contents.[17] Even M. Mokri relies on a rare "not published manuscript" in his last article on Soltân Sehâk's family (the founder of the Ahl-e Haqq *maslak),* a text which had actually already been extensively used fifteen years before by Safizâde in an important study. Mokri deliberately ignores this as he just ignores any Persian publications directly related to this matter. Although he has used his copy of the *Kalâm* for years, he has never described the sacred corpus and the general content. There is still no description available of this sacred corpus at all.[18] Ahl-e Haqq is complex enough in itself, not to be rendered more obscure by our own approach.

What the Ahl-e Haqq Say

A way to gain objectivity is to look at what Ahl-e Haqq themselves say. Or, to be more accurate, what they write, since the written official discourse of the elite may not reflect the illiterate or oral tradition of the people.[19]

Borhân ol haqiqat (J. Afshâr, 1977) is a catechism for Ahl-e Haqq. Its originality lays mainly in the fact that it relies mainly on Qoshchi-oghli's Turkish *kalâm*. The book deals with the spiritual, ethical and ritual basis of the Ahl-e Haqq documented texts.[20] It was probably composed as a reply to what Alqâsi wrote in his book (1979), since he belongs to the trend which rejects the Islamic basis of the sect.

There have been several pious books written in the mystical or catechism style with more quotations from Hâfez or Mowlânâ than from the Kurdish texts, such as those of Movâhed and Valâ'i. This genre, which tends to present the universal,

15 Not to mention the number of contradictions, inaccuracies, mistakes and personal deductions which can't be justified by what she calls an "anthropological or sociological approach".

16 It covers the Ahl-e Haqq history from Shâh Khoshin to Atesh Beg and probably belongs to the Atesh Begi tradition.

17 There is nevertheless some useful information in his "enquête de sociologie religieuse", such as the bibliography, the ethnic and geographical repartition of the Ahl-e Haqq and the translation of *kalâms* which document some ritual or dogmatic points, though often without references.

18 Even Beik Baghban, who had access to these texts, provides only a list of their titles (p. 24).

19 We can't include in this category the three books published in French (and several western languages) by Bahrâm Elâhi, Nur 'Ali's son. The reason is that they are no longer representative of Ahl-e Haqq tradition, except perhaps for some fundamental dogmas such as perfectionment, cosmology, *mazhariat*, successive lives, ethics, etc. which are considered as "universal". Beside this, these books, which express Nur 'Ali's personal spiritual teaching, are addressed mainly to a non Ahl-e Haqq audience.

20 It refers to some unpublished late manuscripts from Teymur II, Sheikh Nazar 'Ali Jenâb (his disciple, d. 1915), and 'Ali Ashraf Khân. The author consider the Ahl-e Haqq as Muslims and rejects the label of 'Ali-Allâhi.

humanistic and spiritual message of Ahl-e Haqqism, introduces very little original material, but is still useful for those who want to understand how the followers define themselves, how they want to be known, what they have to say to the world, how they adapt to changes. They deserve a serious study in their own right. This would be no less interesting than the speculations on the origins of the Ahl-e Haqq mythology or ritual, or on their recent political manoeuvres and internal conflicts (Mir Hosseini). I will later present the main characteristics of the Ahl-e Haqq world view, based on this literature and on the attitude of the bulk of the followers.

Ahl-e Haqq and Mainstream Islam

There are a lot of very interesting issues concerning the Ahl-e Haqq and their doctrines which deserve careful study. However, in the majority of writings -by outsiders as well as insiders- the central debate is the relation between Ahl-e Haqqism and other religions, with a special emphasis on Islam. The question is particularly delicate after the foundation of the Islamic Republic.

Orientalists have taken for granted the hypothesis claimed by early scholars that Ahl-e Haqqism is a strange crypto-Mazdean or Mithraic religion covered by an Imamite varnish. They have also taken for granted the definition of the faith as being syncretistic. It seems to be more fascinating for them to deal with the religions of the Yezidis or Druzes, than with popular Sufism. The early Western studies presented the idea that there is a new trend among the Ahl-e Haqq followers that aims at Islamizing or even reforming the Ahl-e Haqq doctrine. This conception has been taken for granted by almost all scholars, in a way which deserves a *mise au point*. The bias is also typical of Iranian intellectuals, who like to emphasize the endogeneity of their culture and spirituality, and minimise the Arabo-Islamic lore. It is quite striking that in his well documented study, Hamze'ee uses all the resources of history of religion to find some links between Ahl-e Haqq and pre-Islamic cults and doctrines. But he does not even mention its connections with Sufism. Beik Baghban, who had close contacts with the Gurân, asserts his position as follows: "La plupart des savants et chercheurs ont rangé les Ahl-e Haqq parmi les sectes islamiques, voire chiites, mais, comme nous essayerons de le démontrer, la religion de Vérité est une religion différente de l'Islam." (: 58). Khâjeddin notes that some define the Ahl-e Haqq path as *â'in-e irâni* an "Iranian religion" (: 92) which has the character of hyper-Shiism *(gholov-e shi'e)*. I do not deny the ancient cultural strata on which Ahl-e Haqqism flourished, but as a contrast to this one-dimensional perspective, I will point at a number of circumstances which demonstrate the strong links between the Ahl-e Haqq and kinds of Islam and Sufism. After that, I shall discuss the polemic as it appears in Ahl-e Haqq contemporary writings.

One common argument against the Ahl-e Haqq is that they worship the Devil. However, except for two verses, there is no mention of Satan in Ahl-e Haqq texts, and the authenticity and meaning of the two are controversial.[21] van Bruinessen (in an unpublished study) suggests that this belief appeared only at the end of the 19th century among some Gurân groups in contact with Yezidis. The recent adhesion to this myth may also have a psychological basis: Satan (the archangel Dâwud) had been secretly ordered by God not to prostrate in front of Adam and was thus only

21 The verses are found in the *Dowre Bâbâ Jalil* (one of the theophany anterior to Soltân). Bagtar says that his name in the pre-eternity was Sheytân and that his evilness *(sharr)* is only for God's enemies (Alqâsi, 1979, p. 51, Beik Baghban, p. 251s). Alqâsi notes that the belief in the holiness of Satan is limited to south-western Kurdistan (Gurân). There is no mention of this question in Khâjeddin or in Safizâde's books.

apparently banished. This version is not far from the story of the paradoxical rehabilitation of Satan in classical Sufi poems, such as those of Attâr.[22] It is not necessary to look for a mythological background or even Sufi influences to explain the fact that some Ahl-e Haqq adopted this myth. They may feel sympathy to Satan since they find in this figure a doctrinal justification of their own situation: outwardly heretics, but secretly closer to God than any Muslim. They are proud of their position subversive élite and do not fear to say: "we don't observe the Ramadan, but we have our own fast (*marnowi and qavaltâsi*),[23] we don't pray but we give *niâz,*[24] we don't go to the mosque but we take part in the *jam* once a week", etc.

The non-observance of Muslim basic duties is, however, by the large majority compensated for by the respect for Islamic customs, mainly *harâm*[25] and jurisdiction. The fact is that all their sacred history starts with Imâm 'Ali and his companions. Between the manifestation of Khawândegâr in the pre-eternity and that of 'Ali, it is as if nothing had happened. The Scriptures mentioning the name of some heroes of the ancient Iranian epic as avatars of the archangels (i.e. Siâvash, Hoseyn and Yâdegâr are the same person), but there is not even a single mention of Zoroaster, Mani or Mazdak. The few pre-Islamic references belong to the Koranic and the Biblical tradition. 'Ali is even more present (at least his name) in Ahl-e Haqq oral narratives, praises and devotion than Soltân. Imâm Hoseyn has an eminent place, with all his incarnations *(dun),* and the blessing of the offerings *(niâz)* ends with the mentioning of the Twelfth Imâm (*Mahdi sâheb-e zamân*). Even the Prophet Muhammed is highly revered, though more in his later *dun*, when he was Seyyed Mohammad, i.e. Soltân's brother. This is enough to define Ahl-e Haqq as Twelver Shia, or Imamites.

It is true that some aspects of the doctrine and practice are reminiscent of old culture and religions. But the permanence of these elements does not allow us to talk of "borrowing". Borrowing implies an awareness, a clear intention and the acknowledgement of the fact of borrowing, including an explicit discourse about it, as for example when the Prophet Muhammed adapted pagan rituals to Islam. Otherwise anything can be said to be derived from anything that happens to be similar.[26] In addition, borrowing means that the same original meaning and context are preserved. Without these conditions, any cultural artefact is to a certain extent borrowed and derived from something else, and nothing is really genuine and original. This is especially true for Islam, where religious forms are flexible and consensus tolerates non-regular cults and beliefs such as Sufism. As İlber Ortaylı has pointed out, in the Ottoman empire the Alevi did not have a status comparable to the Druzes or Nusayri, just because they were seen as Muslims.

22 See *Elâhi Nâme*, Song VIII, 4, 6. In the *Borhân ol-Haqq* (p. 317 s). N. 'A. Elâhi responds to a question in verses about Sheytân by 300 kurdish verses to demonstrate that according to the Kalâm, the rehabiliation of Sheytan is not acceptable.

23 Each being of three days. Beside that, some dervishes, mainly belonging to the school of Hâj Ne'matollâh, practised an ascetic vegetarian fast of forty days, generally starting ten days before Ramadan and ending with it. Asceticism in the dervish style is found only among Ahl-e Haqq mystics, not among ordinary adepts. Arguments against fasting in general, and specially during the Ramadan, are found in Ivanow's texts, the validity of which is contested by Ahl-e Haqq scholars. Only Khâjeddin refers much to it in his *Sarspordegân.*

24 Khân Atesh says in a Turkish *kalâm*: *min rakat verdi peyghambar bir âlmâ*: The prophet has given a thousand prayers for an apple (Khâjeddin, p. 63). Dehkhodâ also pointed to this fact in his article on the 'Ali-Allâhi, as well as Hamze'ee (p. 165).

25 They do not drink alcohol or eat pork, but there are exceptions among some Turks who do drink and the Gurân who eat wild boar.

26 On a similar question, J. Paul notes that "L'attitude extrémiste est de voir dans une pensée non musulmane le responsable de tout ce qui constitue la pensée et la prataique du soufisme" (p. 203) L'histoire du soufisme ne saurait s'écire en énumérant les religions et les idées non musulmanes qui ont pu inspirer les mystiques musulmans (p. 204) Jürgen Paul, "Influences indiennes sur la Naqshbandiyya ?" *Cahiers de l'Asie Centrale,* 1996 / 1-2.

An Ahl-e Haqq authority with whom I discussed this question explained that Soltân Sehâk was a mystic of Muslim obedience, a guardian of the secrets of the prophets and the imams (as all Ahl-e Haqq do say), i.e., mainly the successive lives *(dunâ dun)*, the cyclic manifestation of the divine essence *(mazhariat)* and the Seven Angels *(haftan)*. The specific colour of the Ahl-e Haqq comes from the fact that Soltân had to adapt his teachings to the specific culture of the people who flocked around him. Had he been in another environment he would have formulated himself in another way. To the question: "are there Buddhist or Zoroastrian influences in the Ahl-e Haqq tradition"? Alqâsi's (1979: 104) answer is: "Taking into account the low cultural level of the rural area during Soltân's time, this possibility is excluded. Ahl-e Haqq are convinced that the origin of the prescriptions is in revelations *(kashf o shohud)* and mystic awareness, and does not stem from researches. Anyhow, the majority of them consider themselves as a branch *(kish)* of Islam." It is easier to bring arguments for this hypothesis than against it. For instance:

— The lack of any mention of any previous religions in the *kalâm*s, indicates that the founders of the Ahl-e Haqq doctrine did not want to assume any other legacy than Islam and Sufism.

— The majority of early Ahl-e Haqq names show the strict Muslim -or even Sunni- origin of the followers. Many of them were mullâ or *seyyed*: Mollâ Rokneddin (who became a manifestation of Michael), Bâbâ Faqi, Seyyed Mohammed. Zahiroddin ibn Mahmud, known as Seyyed Kheder, was acknowledged as a manifestation of Gabriel. They were angels in human form and the closest companions of Soltân. Another one, Mostafâ Dâwudan, was a *fiqh* student of Mollâ Elyâs from Shahrezur. 'Abedin, to whom one chapter of the *Kalam* is devoted, was a *talebe,* hostile to Soltân before his conversion. The only non-Muslim of all the great Ahl-e Haqq is Pir-e Shahryâr Awrâmi II, who was a Magus and son of a Magian before converting to Islam and becoming a disciple of Soltân.[27]

Safizâde and Mokri have demonstrated the reliability of the traditional, Sunni version of the origin of Soltân. Soltân's father, Sheikh 'Isi, as well as his brother Sheikh Musâ, were indeed important Sufi sheikhs (probably not precisely Qâderi and Naqshbandi as the tradition says, but rather Nurbakhshi). According to some sources they were the sons of the well known Sufi 'Ali Hamadâni, an interpretation which may express a spiritual rather than biological filiation. The kind of Sufism they professed could have had some affinities with the future Ahl-e Haqq doctrine, since there is a subversive or extravagant dimension in their claims and behaviour. In a poem, Sheikh 'Isi says that he is Jesus ('Isâ: 'Isi), son of Maryam. The writer, who is a Sunni, feels obliged to explain that this kind of mysterious statement is the expression of a mystical *hâl* (Mokri, 1994). Several miracles or anecdotes attributed to Soltân by the Ahl-e Haqq tradition are told by this author to Sheikh 'Isi. This, however, confirms that Soltân was the son of another woman than his eleven or twelve brothers. The names of some of these brothers are also found in Ahl-e Haqq sources, mainly Seyyed Mohammad and Mir Sur who was a *hâfez* (he knew the Koran by heart). Both were dervishes close to Soltân and are considered in this text as major mystics. Paradoxically, the text mentions Soltân Sehâk only briefly without a single allusion to his achievements, whereas he portrays 'Abdolqâder as an evil person (who, according to the tradition, sought to kill Soltân). As a Sunni, the author may have deliberately omitted to elaborate on Soltân and preferred to make a panegyric on 'Abdolkarim, the founder of the spiritual dynasty of the Barzanje *seyyed*s who became the promoters of the Qâdiriyya in Kurdistan.

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27 See Safizâde (1981, p. 49). The other personalities and their Muslim origin are well known by all the disciples.

Without going into more detail, it is obvious that Sufism was a family affair in Soltân Sehâk's environment. In this context, it could naturally happen that Soltân revealed his superiority and attracted to him his two brilliant brothers as well as a great many disciples already devoted to his family. Five members of the *haftawâna* (the second group of Seven) came from his father's followers. Yet his prestige was not restricted to the area where he was living, since many people came from far away to meet him. Some of these foreigners, such as Ivvat-e Ardebili, were attributed the highest rank, the manifestation of an archangel *(haftan),* a distinction which Soltân did not even give to the members of his own family, with the exception of his mother. Actually, this "spiritual dynasty" died out with him and his devoted brothers, since they did not marry. The celibacy of all the members of the highest hierarchical level, including Soltân himself and later 'Âli Qalandar and Zonnur Qalandar, may account for *qalandari* elements.[28] Therefore, with the exception of 'Ali himself, the seven manifestations of the divine essence[29] had no progeniture. It is only at the second level, that of the *haftawâna,* that some dervishes had children and constituted dynasties of *seyyed.* This is why, in the absence of descendants, Soltân organised the posterity of his religious movement in seven hereditary clans *xânedân* or *ojâq,* to which four others were later added. Then great charismatic figures such as 'Âli, Zonnur or Âtesh Beg (17-18th century) appeared in the Ahl-e Haqq community.

In the light of this information, Ahl-e Haqqism can be seen neither as a syncretism of Islam, nor as a form of old religious heresy, but rather as an offshoot of a kind of Sufism which adapted itself to Kurdish customs. One can not deny that the Kurdish ground was favourable to the development of non-Muslim elements, some of them even being attested by the canonical sources. But it is unlikely that representatives of Sufism trained in Islamic sciences could have converted regular dervishes to a new religion or a new mysticism cut off from any Islamic roots but nevertheless able to attract foreigners from so widespread places as Samarqand, Chinese Turkestan (Mâchin), Istanbul, Syria, Sistan, Ardebil, Basra, Fars, Esfahan, India, and Mâzânderân.

How, then, did Ahl-e Haqqism become specific enough to be considered a separate religion (although most of the followers do not agree with this statement)? Besides the absence of important Muslim practices, which makes the Ahl-e Haqq at most *bi shar'* mystics, there is the strange archaic tonality of the *Kalâm-e Sarânjam.* It is revered as a Koran, with its myths and stories written in a rare incantatory style far remote from the Sufi poetic style. This style and structure deserves a separate literary and stylistic study. It was probably shaped to facilitate memorization, and it could be that it was first orally transmitted by religious minstrels *(kalâmkhwân)* like any epic, or transmitted both by memorization and writing, since there is no great divergence in the different available versions. It is remarkable that the great sheikhs of Soltân's family and surroundings did not commit themselves to any classical doctrinal Persian prose writing and preferred to rely on oral transmission and Kurdish poetry. The explanation may be that the esoteric teachings could not be uttered in a clear tongue or in academic treatises without risk of persecution. In addition, for the provincial Kurdish culture, a poetic text in incantatory style was the best chance for the doctrine to propagate itself among common people. Chanting them with the lute, *tanbur,* in regular socio-religious events helped its diffusion. Soltân used Kurdish culture to propagate his ideas, and he reached not only Iranian Kurds, but also Kurds in Iraq and Turks living in Iran.

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28 See van Bruinessen 1991, p. 69.

29 From 'Ali to Shâh Hayâs, 18th century.

Apart from the style of the *Kalâm*, the strong emphasis laid on the spiritual kingship has also archaic overtones. It gives the picture of a royal court hierarchically organised in rank and functions, with vizir (Pir Musi is the *vazir)* scribes, khalif, chiefs, servants, all totally subjected and devoted to a king *(shâh)* being not only God's representive, but the divine manifestation itself, or for some, God himself. This ancient image of a double absolute power (spiritual and temporal), found perhaps its last historical manifestation in Iran, among the Ahl-e Haqq on the one hand and Shâh 'Esmâil, the Safavid king, on the other. It is no accident that Shâh 'Esmâil was a direct descendant of Sheikh Safieddin Ardebili, initiated by Soltân[30] and supporter of the Qizilbash, who are closely related to the Ahl-e Haqq. This kind of connection shows that instead of tracing Ahl-e Ḥaqq customs and beliefs back to an age-old religious background, it is perhaps more relevant to look at its Sufi and Shia roots which, of course, may also include some historical elements. I shall give some examples.

Like many others, Khâjeddin put forth arguments for the syncretistic aspects of Ahl-e Haqq beliefs, but his argument is not convincing. For instance, he sees in the moustache *(shâreb)* a vestige of Zoroastrianism, and ignores the fact that it is common to all Shii Sufi orders.[31] He considers the common meal as derived from the Christian communion, though it is also found in many other dervish groups and attested by old customs. He finds a connection between the Jewish fast and the three Ahl-e Haqq days, but the Ahl-e Haqq themselves argue that the Muslim tradition establishes the *ayyâm ol biz,* three days of fast every month.[32] Is the belt that the followers wear during the *jam* borrowed from the Zoroastrian *zonna* and reduced to a simple string? It could also be the belt of the biblical prophets. In any case, it is said to express the idea of being ready to serve God. Is it legitimate to trace the custom of sitting "on the knees" *(do zânu)* back to Zoroastrianism, when it is prescribed in the Islamic *namâz* as well as in Oriental *bonnes manières* as a mark of respect? Following this author, one is led to the conclusion that Ahl-e Haqq is a syncretism of Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian elements.

Hamze'ee's work, however, goes much further in the comparative approach and discovers some really convincing similarities. In spite of the many parallels he draws between Ahl-e Haqqism and ancient religious trends, he still fails to establish any historical link. For instance, he considers the divinization of 'Ali as a survival of ancient Iranian religions, while Khâjeddin relates it to Hinduism. Considering that it could also be viewed as being borrowed from the divinization of Jesus in Christianity, how can we speak of borrowings or influences, when three different religions or more are considered to be "at the origin of a belief"?

In such a situation it is much more rational to adopt the Ahl-e Haqq point of view that 'Ali was recognised as a manifestation by some of the initiated. This belief is so natural to Shii mysticism that Miller could express it in terms which apply perfectly to the Ahl-e Haqq: "one is inclined to suspect that the real God of the Sufis is 'Ali. He performs the functions of the Divinity for them. Him they know and love and through Him they hope to attain some knowledge of the Unknown God whom he reveals".[33] Anyhow, there is an important detail which establishes a clear-cut distinction between Christians and 'Ali-Allâhi or Nosayri:[34] for the Christians the

30 He was in charge of collecting wood *(hizum kesh)* and obtained from Soltân a spiritual rank as well as the political kingship for his ascendants up to seven generations (Elâhi, 1979, no. 1765).

31 A Ne'matollâhi told me that according to his sheikh, if a dervish cuts a single hair of his moustache, he should sacrify a cow as a matter of compensation.

32 They also mention the three days of Adam expelled from Paradise, the three days of Jonas in the whale, of Hoseyn in Kerbela, etc. and eventually of Soltân in the cave, to argue that it always existed.

33 1923, p. 363.

34 Even Alevis recognise only two manifestations: 'Ali and Hacı Bektaş.

Divinity revealed itself only once, whereas for the Ahl-e Haqq it manifested itself at least seven times.[35]

In usual Ahl-e Haqq devotion, the figure of 'Ali is so strongly present that it overshadows even that of Soltân, even though it is not a problem since they are both the same. This is why some Ahl-e Haqq groups are not reluctant to claim to be 'Ali-Allâhi. The veneration of a human being as a *qotb*, *vali* or *mazharollâh* is actually not a common attitude in classical Sufism. The veneration or quasi divinization of the sheikh is rarely found among Arabs, but is typical of Iranian culture in the broad sense. Hamze'ee[36] developed this point by referring to the early Islamic heretic movement of Khorramdini. For the same reasons, Khâjeddin sees Hindu influences in Ahl-e Haqq: 'Ali and Soltân are like incarnations of Brahma, and the *haftan* similar to Krishna, Sarasvati, Kâli, etc.[37] Actually, it seems to me that the veneration of the sheikh by the dervishes is much stronger in Kurdistan than elsewhere in Inner Asia, something I also witnessed among the Qâderi. Only their strict loyalty to Islamic doctrine prevents them from talking of *zât* and *dun* incarnation.

If the first pillar of the Ahl-e Haqq faith is the knowledge of the cosmic hierarchy and its manifestation among mankind, the second one is the doctrine of successive lives *(dunâ dun),* considered in the old time as a secret, the unveiling of which could lead to death.[38] It is tempting to see the *haftan* as avatars of the Zoroastrian *ameshâspands*[39] (one of them being also of feminine gender), but the other side of the doctrine, that is their transmigrations into human existences, is totally absent from most of the ancient Iranian religions. On this matter again, Ahl-e Haqqism must be related to its own origins, that is, Islamic heterodoxies which shared these beliefs. There is no need to look for Buddhist or Hindu influences. In early Shia gnosis, the imâms are pre-eternal entities emanating from God's light, they are superior to the prophets but were present in each of them.[40] Besides this "the belief in some form of reincarnation is found in embryonic form in the ancient corpus of the Imâms" (ibid.: 110). In any case, in the primitive Shiism "one always feels the continuity with the Christian, Jewish, and even Mazdean tradition".[41] If the Ahl-e Haqq gives the same impression, it is just because they are influenced by Shia and Sufism.

How the Ahl-e Haqq Define Themselves

I mentioned in the introduction that one of the aims of this paper was to put forth arguments for a balanced evaluation of Ahl-e Haqqism, since its non-Islamic aspects have been so much emphasized by scholars. In their defence, one must admit that their opinion partly has been shaped by the way some Ahl-e Haqq followers define themselves. Yet the issue of self-definition is far from clear, since the many groups belong to different cultures or social strata. In addition, times are changing and forcing them to modify their image.

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35 Khâjeddin: 94, Elâhi, 1975, p. 635.

36 p. 47 s.

37 Once a Ahl-e Haqq *pir* asked me about Hinduism, (a religion he did not recognize), then after a few explanations on the gods and their incarnation, he said, "so they say the same as us".)

38 The importance of this dogma is attested by the considerable place it occupies as a narrative device in the Kalâm. For instance, it is told that Nasimi (the famous *horufi)* was sent to martyrdom by his *pir* because he had publicaly revealed the secret of Ahl-e Haqq and debated with a mollâ.

39 Safizâde, 1982, p. 23, Hamze'ee, p. 113.

40 Amir Moezzi, pp. 41, 82.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

Ahl-e Haqq are referred to by expressions or concepts such as *tâyefesân, yâresân,* 'Ali-Allâhi, Kâkâ'i (in Irak). Sheytânparast and Dâwudi are labels given by non-Ahl-e Haqq. Ahl-e Haqq call their faith a *din* or *mazhab* (religion), a *maslak* or *râh* (path), *reshte* (branch), *ferqe* (community), *â'in* (ritual), thus covering a wide spectrum extending from a distinct religion to an Islamic spiritual path or branch. This divergence reflects the contrast between rural and urban culture, a structure which accounts in similar ways for the differences between Alevi and Bektashi. Rural environment has favoured the preservation of ancient elements, the resistance to Islamic influences and the development of folkloric elements, not to mention deviations, whereas in urban and learned environments open to various religious expressions, the Sufi or Islamic dimension has prevailed. Up to a point, self-definition is conditioned by the religious environment: in Kurdistan, Ahl-e Haqq live among Sunnis who are hostile to them, and only in a few large cities like Kermânshâh can they meet other dervishes (from the Qâderi branch) with whom they may feel some affinities.[42] Outside Kurdistan, they live in a Shii environment where the figure of 'Ali is omnipresent, and they can meet with all kinds of dervishes, some of them being close to them, like the Khâksar. It is therefore more natural for them to feel part of the Muslim society in the towns.

The claim to belong to a religion totally separate from Islam is rarely found at the present day, but when it is the case, one should be cautious about the meaning involved in the concept of religion. *Din* or *mazhab* differ in some respects from the Western concept of religion.[43] The problem for the Ahl-e Haqq who claim to belong to a separate religion would be that Islam does not recognize any religion after Muhammed. On the other hand, with all the Islamic elements it contains, it is impossible for them to pretend to be an age-old religion, even though in their homeland (Dâlâhu) they are often called Zoroastrians by Sunni neighbours. The term Gurân which designates an Ahl-e Haqq group is considered as being derived from *gabrân*: the Zoroastrians.

On the other hand, some followers themselves claim to be true Muslims. Khâjeddin quotes some of these claims collected during interviews. Their attitude could, of course, be that of fully converted Muslims (*chaspide*), or, it could be sheer dissimulation (*taqie*). Those who are Ahl-e Haqq by birth *(chekide)* never respect the Ramadan or perform *namâz*, which banishes them to the margins of Islam. Probably, the majority of the followers consider Ahl-e Haqqism as a particular branch of Shia Islam. The term 'Ali-Allâhi does not, as we have said, account for the Ahl-e Haqq belief in the divine successive manifestations, yet it is still much used by outsiders with pejorative connotations. Anyway, the Ahl-e Haqq feel themselves close to the 'Ali-Allâhi, Nusayri,[44] and particularly to the Cheltan (Qïrqlar) and Bektashis. All Ahl-e Haqq recent books state that the followers of this branch can be found in India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Perhaps the Isma'ilis who are numerous in these countries were considered to be Ahl-e Haqq. All that we know is that Bâbâ Yâdegâr was sent to these countries to propagate his faith. These connections have never been docu-

42 In all my researches I have never come across any expression of hostility, disapproval or scorn between Ahl-e Haqq and Qâderi in spite of their essential differences. The fact that the Qâderis invoke 'Ali and the Imâms during their *zikr* is appreciated by the Ahl-e Haqq.

43 Alqâsi uses also the expression *mazhab-e Ahl-e Haqq* (or *haqiqat)* as well as *din-e Gurân.*; other terms are *â'in-e yâri (â'in:* tradition, liturgy; *yâr*: the beloved, God). While *din* can have the meaning of "religion" (Islam, Judaism), *mazhab* rather covers the concept of "confession" inside a "religion": *mazhab-e sonni, mazhab-e shii esnâ 'ashari.*

44 Ahl-e Haqq know almost nothing about the Nosayri community, but the figure of Nosayr is part of their mythology. He appeared during Shâh Khoshin under the name of 'Abedin (as the *Kalâm* says). Nosayr proclaimed the divinity of 'Ali, a blasphemy for which 'Ali himself had to kill him. Yet, in his mercy, 'Ali resus-

mented, except by Alqâsi, who mentions the Baluchi Zikri as a variety of Ahl-e Haqq. This should be checked more carefully, but although there are similarities in form this does not mean that there has to be any connection between those two groups.

In a recent article in the Shii Encyclopaedia the Ahl-e Haqq are divided into three groups: Muslim Ahl-e Haqq, 'Ali Allâhi and Sheytânparast, the "devil worshippers". This quite provocative article was based on the claims of the Gurân Ahl-e Haqq before the 1979 Revolution.[45] Still recently several groups professed their devotion to Satan and wrote a manifest signed by numerous *seyyed*. At the last moment they understood that they were tying the noose around their own necks, and stopped the diffusion of this pamphlet before it reached the libraries. Some "regular" Ahl-e Haqq told me that it is really a piece of anthology.[46] But the most interesting is that they replied to Halm's article in the Encyclopedia Iranica with another one, which was published at the same time as an addendum,[47] and in addition with a whole book entitled *Ahl-e Haqq chi miguyad (What says the Ahl-e Haqq?)*. In the preface of this book the author, M. Valâ'i, addresses himself to the writers of the mentioned article and gives all the arguments he can to prove that the Ahl-e Haqq are nothing but good Muslims who even gave many martyrs to the Islamic revolution.[48]

We may object that this is just *takie* "dissimulation", but it can also be the expression of the Islamic trend which, despite some scholar's' opinions, has always existed within Ahl-e Haqqism. There is no reasons for accepting the statement of some scholars that a "reformist Islamic movement" was initiated by H. Ne'matollâh Jeyhunâbâdi (d. 1921), an author quoted in all the studies on Ahl-e Haqq.[49] A short glance at the treatise published by Edmonds shows that a Kâkâ'i from Iraq born around 1870 shares the auto-definition and the views expressed in 1963 in the *Borhân ol-haqq* of Ostâd Elâhi. Nevertheless, this book is viewed by some orientalists (such as Mir Hosseini) as a manifestation of Ahl-e Haqq reformism, although the majority of the Ahl-e Haqq and scholars (including the author mentioned above) always refer to it when they need clear data on Ahl-e Haqq doctrines and practices. Half of the references in Hamze'ee are taken from this author's and his father's work.

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cited him. Again Nosayr proclaimed his faith and again 'Ali executed him. This was repeated four times. The Ahl-e Haqq quote this story to distinguish themselves from 'Ali Allâhi, saying that Nosayr's mistake was *holul*. Khâjeddin points to the fact that *shii gholov* is probably the only religion in which the leader himself rejects the belief of his followers (p. 95). A more subtle interpretation would be that this was the first lesson in *taqie*.

In any case, spiritual life and religious style of the Nosayri's arevery different from that of the Ahl-e Haqq. In comparative religious studies, an anthropological approach reucalls much more than a doctrinal one. Thus, comparing Ahl-e Haqq and Alevi, the general impression is that they share the same sensibility and religious experience, the same values and the same images of sainthood. There is no doubt that any Ahl-e Haqq would feel at ease among Alevis, and vice versa. The main difference between the two groups is the Alevi emphasis on the Twelve Imams and the place devoted to Muhammed, which, compared to the Ahl-e Haqq world-view, is much more Islamic. On the other hand, what could appear exotic to the Alevis is the constant reference to the cosmic hierarchy and the cyclicity of sacred history.

45 In those times, many Ahl-e Haqq defined themselves openly as 'Ali-Allâhi (Khâjeddin, p. 97) and had their own "propaganda centres" in Kermânshâh. With the Islamic regime, this label has become highly suspect.

46 Arguments for the rehabilitation of Satan are given by Alqâsi (1979, p. 51).

47 This article is not defensive, and only presents the dogmatic and ritual basis of Ahl-e Haqqism.

48 He says that this encyclopaedia article is a historical attack on the Ahl-e Haqq and equates it to racism and concludes that any book that is contrary to the Koran and the rules of Islam is rejected by the true Ahl-e Haqq (p. 13).

49 In the same vein is the claim that Hâj Ne'matollâh "broke the seal" (Mir Hosseini) by writing a Persian *Kalâm* accessible to the non-initiated. Although this work was not even published or diffused during his life time, it was accepted later as a canonical text in many Ahl-e Haqq circles, though he himself did not presented it as a *Kalâm*.

Ahl-e Haqq and Sufism

The most common view is that Ahl-e Haqqism comes *after* Islam both historically and theologically. Historically, Ahl-e Haqqism is the last step in the unveiling of religion, which commenced with the cycle of the *shari'at* represented by Muhammed, developed in 'Ali as the *tariqat* cycle, was followed by the *ma'refat* cycle (Bohlul and the great Sufis), and culminated in the era of *haqiqat* proclaimed by Soltân Sehâk.[50] All the messengers of God adapted the law to the conditions of their time. Thus, the Muhammedan law *(shar')* was amended by other divine apostles. In the same way, the divine manifestations following Soltân modified points of the ritual and clarified the doctrine. This is why there are some ritual divergences even between the Ahl-e Haqq *khânedâns*. The levels of gnosis have also another interpretation: that is, *shari'at* is compared to the shell and *haqiqat* to the fruit. The level of *haqq* is the ultimate one to which only the elite who have reached the station of God's proximity have access. The followers say that at this level the law and prescriptions are different. For instance, the aim of fasting is to get closer to God. Hence, one who already is in His presence does not need to fast any more. Statements of this kind may sound very pretentious, but they reflect the idea that the Muslims belong to the *shari'at* step, and the Sufis only to the *tariqat,* or at best to the *ma'refat* step, and if they want to go further they must become Ahl-e Haqq *(sarseporde).* A follower quoted by Khâjeddin expresses this idea in a concrete way: "The Sufi must first observe the Ramazan and pray five times a day, for two or three years, sometimes for twelve; when he then is steady in his faith, his *pir* allows him to be initiated in our path". This is the rule in principle among Khâksâr Shia dervishes.[51]

If the Ahl-e Haqq had been heretics or non-Muslim, the Qâderi or Ne'matollâhi would never have opened the doors of their *khânegâh* to them. Yet, according to the hierarchical steps of mysticism, this mark of hospitality is not reciprocal. The mentioned dervish says: "we never allow a Sufi to take part in our *jam* if he is not at the step of Truth, but we can go to their meetings". He adds: "we respect the Koran [...] our religion is Islam, the Twelve Imâm branch, but our ideas differ from yours [...] We are not a branch of *tasawwuf*, but the Sufis would like to be a branch of us". J. Afshâr, a Turkish dervish is even more explicit: "The Ahl-e Haqq are Muslims and Twelver Shias, respectful of all the principles *(osul)* of Islam and with their heart and soul they assume the *Sunna* of Mohammad and the Islamic prescriptions such as circumcision, marriage, ablutions, funeral prayers, etc."[52]

Some Research Perspectives

According to the encyclopedist Dehkhodâ the Ahl-e Haqq are Twelver Shias and represent one of the seventeen (!) Sufi paths. This opinion is shared by many scholars and literate people in Iran. Very much has been said about Ahl-e Haqqism as a religious and mythological system. Yet, despite its profound Sufi or *'erfâni* roots, there has been almost no research on this topic from the point of view of *tasawwuf*. This is due to the fact that Sufi studies are generally based on classical texts, on official discourses and doctrines which are almost non-existent among the Ahl-e Haqq.

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50 There is an absolute unanimity on the fact that the Ahl-e Haqq faith is the ultimate step of Islamic mysticism *('erfân)*. See Alqâsi, 1979 (p. 12), Valâ'i (p. 19) who discusses also the different levels of *shari'at, tariqat,* etc. (p. 82s). This point is documented by the *Kalâm* (see Elâhi, 1975, p. 188; and Afshar, 1977, p. 45).

51 See also Alqâsi, 1979, p. 7; and Chahârdehi (1990).

52 1977, p. 111.

An anthropological or phenomenological approach is therefore required. The Western academic point of view, which has been based on written sources, should be modified since the most essential part of Sufi transmission and tradition is never written, discussed or even uttered. It is deduced from facts and anecdotes and implicitly expressed in behaviour. In the folowing I shall evoke some peculiarities of the Ahl-e Haqq way which I have found original and interesting to investigate.

The Cycle of Manifestations: Zât *and* Dun

One of the pillars of the Ahl-e Haqq system is the notion of *zât*, of essence or souls at a high level who manifest themselves in successive human lives. A close examination of this system shows that the seven archangels *(haftan)* and their different manifestations through history correspond to mystical types: Gabriel-Benyâmin is generally the founder of a spiritual movement (not necessarily a prophet), like Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Ja'far Sâdeq. If Gabriel is the *pir* (the Alevi would say the *morshed),* Dâwud is the *dalil* (Alevi: *rahbar)*, the guide who indicates the way. He manifests complete compassion and has the function of successor and intercessor, like Khezr, Imâm Rezâ, and Shams-i Tabriz. Another typical figure is Yaqiq, whose destiny is generally to be a martyr. He was 'Esmâ'il, Siâvash, John the Baptist, Imâm Hoseyn, and several Ahl-e Haqq saints who died for the cause like Yâdegâr, 'Âli Qalandar or Teymur I. The idea of the essence *zât* leads to strange paradoxes, among which is the belief that hierarchical rank is more important than function and achievements. Thus, Moses or even Muhammed, have a lower status than Qanbar or Salmân Fârs, who were the archangels Michael and Gabriel, even if the intensity of their manifestations looks very pale compared to that of those prophets.[53]

How these ranks were attributed is another question: who decides who is who? The person himself or a consensus of believers? The Ahl-e Haqq religious society relies on a category of clear-sighted dervishes, the *dideddrs*, those who have inner sight and who can identify the spiritual nature of beings. They may have played a role in this, at least to prevent any illuminated to pretend to be such or such an angel. We know nothing about the way these ranks were testified or acknowledged, but the question is too important to be ironically ignored. These ideas are still strong among Ahl-e Haqq but for almost one century nobody has been officially and unanimously recognised as a manifestation of an "essence".[54]

If the attribution of *zât* remains a mystery, the question of the divine mission is sometimes put forth through very concrete events. The divine particle *(zarre-ye zât),* which can inhabit[55] a saint, and make of him a supreme *vali* above all human beings, is really "something" which comes and goes under the form of a bird (a white falcon) or a spark, in a way which is obvious only to the initiates. This reminds us of the Zoroastrian *farr-e izadi* (Hamze'ee notes it), and, to a lesser extent to the Jewish patriarch's blessing or the Sufi *baraka.* Some people retain this particle all their lives, others lose it. This was the case of king Jamshid, according to the tradition, who "was illuminated for a certain time", but then thrown into jail because he denied

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53 Alqâsi admits that the intensity may vary considerably, yet it does not seem to be taken into account by the followers (1979, p. 13)

54 The last were Seyyed Brâke, Teymur and Hâjj Ne'matollâh. It seems that in the Sahne-Kermânshâh tradition, another concept prevailed, that of illumination (see below).

55 That is a *zât mehmân* (see note 1) or *shâh mehmân*; one uses also the expression *tajalli-e zât* (or *haqq)* "illuminated by the essence (or the divine)".

his spiritual ambitions and became a normal man.[56] Aqâ Seyyed Ahmad (c. 1800), another *zât mehmân*, in moments of exaltation proclaimed he was the Truth, like Hallâj did. As a punishment for his pride he was not allowed to transmit his *zarre* to any of his forty sons, who were perfect dervishes. Instead, he had to give it to the son of his servant.

Manifestation and History

In the same line is the notion of *zohur*, manifestation or even parousia.[57] There are different levels of *zohur*: universal and apparent, or restricted and esoteric *(khâs)*. Thus, a great saint, may archive the parousia according to his disciples, but this does not mean that he will put an end to History and establish God's realm on Earth. There are several stories of *zohur* which give the impression that the saint plays with its two levels.[58] The last of these messiahs was the Seyyed Mohammad Kelârdashti (Alamgir) who enjoyed the image of a king, with royal clothes, flags and so on.[59] The shâh arrested him, fearing a popular upheaval, but released him after he understood that his ambitions were only mystical. Teymur was not so lucky and was executed in Kermânshâh in 1865.[60] His movement, like all the others, is interpreted by contemporary Ahl-e Haqq as purely spiritual, even if he presents himself in his poems as an agitator, but it is much more probable that many followers believed that the Time had really come. Here, too, the convenient explanation would be that all these charismatic figures were just exalted millenarists, but if so, why is this story and its tragic "failure" repeated from generation to generation? The millenarist expectation could be the misunderstanding of common people, or the best way for the saints to motivate people, a spiritual pedagogy or a literary motif.[61] A wise Ahl-e Haqq dervish drew my attention to the fact that the great *bâtendâr*, the Ahl-e Haqq seers, always commence their career with a great noisy show demonstration or agitation *(shuluq)*, generally as a theatre play, in order to proclaim their mission, and to establish their authority and to give a warning to the people and a chance for them to repent. This is accompanied by a dualist perception of the world in which there is no progress without resistance and trials, no saints without enemies, no light without darkness,[62] no grace without a price. The archetypal example is that of Imâm Hoseyn, though martyrdom is not the rule. This principle produces saints of a totally different style than the official Sufi sheikhs.

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56 According to some oral traditions he was condamned to death by the mollâs of Kermânshâh. Beik Baghban (p. 216) reports a short hagiography of him, without references.

57 Another term is *dowrân-e bâqi*, the cycle of resurrection, a formula which can be understood also as the mystic state of subsistence *(baqâ)* coming after the stage of annihilation *(fanâ)*.

58 Perhaps like Jesus-Christ who cultivated ambiguity when he entered in Jerusalem acclaimed as a King of this world. The double meaning of *zohur* is clearly explained by Jesus addressing the Phariseans: "God's realm does not occurs as a fact one can observe. One cannot say: here it is or there it is, since God's realm is in you".

59 Pictures are found in Chahârdehi, c. 1978. Apart from the pictures, this book, like all the publications of this author, must be taken very cautiously.

60 Hamze'ee, pp. 140-1.

61 It is found in the poems of Sheykh Amir and Nowruz (Alqâsi, 1980, p. 46). A closely related theme is the announcement of the *zohur* at the end of time.

62 The *Shahnâme* speaks of the seven chiefs of darkness *(sardâr-e zolmâni)* as the negative reflection of the chiefs of light. The cosmic dualism of light and darkness could be a vestige of Zoroastrian philosophy, but there is no opposition in Ahl-e Haqq theology between spirit and body, as is found in Iranian dualism. In primitive Shiism, God created 75 armies of Light, but Ignorance wanted its armies too, and God created 75 armies for it.

Power

Another characteristics of Ahl-e Haqq thought is the integration of violence at the highest mystical level. The absolute saint can even kill and destroy, like Shâh Khoshin when he was awakened from his sleep. Bâbâ Nâ'us, who was a manifestation of the Essence, is said to have represented the divine attribute of wrath: he could annihilate entire villages on a simple pretext. Of course, there is always a wisdom in that, as in the story of Khezr, who kills the innocent child. The violence is present in the figure of Imâm 'Ali who killed many enemies of Islam, as well as in a Biblical prophet like Elias, but there is nothing of this sort in the Sufi traditions. It could be that in their past of persecutions, Ahl-e Haqq developed the idea of divine destruction as a response to their enemies. In the beginning of this century there were still dervishes who asked their *pir* Hâjj Ne'matollâh the permission to sing "mortal songs" directed towards their enemies.[63]

In a milder form, rivalry or competition is an important factor totally integrated into the spiritual progress as a dynamic element. The story of Hacı Bektaş transforming himself into a dove attacked by Karaca Ahmet, and then into a lion, indicates that power belongs to the stronger and must be obtained by force, by ruse, or by merit, all means being, of course, only the expression of God's will. The *haftan* (the seven archangels) are hunters "equipped with bows and nets" who arrange spiritual "conspiration"[64] and thus succeed in capturing the divine Essence. This principle of struggle for spiritual life (even between mystics) seems to reflect some rivalry between respectable saints. However, the initiated say that it is competition, not animosity.[65]

Thus, power is an integral part of the Ahl-e Haqq religious view. Although it is not temporal and political, it has to be taken, kept and transmitted, if possible within the family. After Soltân, the spiritual authority was delegated to seven persons who more or less kept it to their descendants, in a way which froze the mystical Ahl-e Haqq stream despite the effort of some charismatic saints.[66] The system of *seyyed* and representatives of the original *pir* and *dalil* harmed Ahl-e Haqq spiritual life and ended in generating clashes, animosity and persecutions. In the beginning, the *khânedân* system did not prevent mystics who were not *seyyed* from displaying their charisma and from having disciples, like Teymur I and Teymur II. Some of them could even open new *khânedân* like 'Ali Qalandar or Shâh Ayyâz.

The first to suffer from the power of the *seyyed*s was probably Hâjj Ne'matollâh, though he was so respectful to the local religious authority that he left his village for several years. The *seyyed*s of the country and their partisans planned to kill him, but they feared him and abandoned the idea. After his death (1921) they threatened his son Nur 'Ali Elâhi who was only 26, but failed to kill him *(Asar ol-haqq,* no.1889). At the end of his life, he had perhaps a thousand disciples and supporters, many of them of non-Ahl-e Haqq origin. He was not a leader as some scholars present him, but he was respected if not accepted by all his disciples during his life-time.

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63 This song, *Donyâ fânian,* was sung at funerals, but outside this context it had mortal effects (see During, 1989, p. 349). Their leader did not allow it to be used for destructive purpose.

64 See the story of the *haftan* arranging the weddings of Sheykh 'Isi and Khâtun Razbar in order to allow the supernatural birth of Soltân (Safizâde, 1981, p. 51s).

65 According to oral traditions, a great saint robs the light of the clear-sighted *(didedâr).* That is, when the saint meets these people, their spiritual light vanishes and they lose their influence. Common people think that they are "light robbers". The truth is that those lights can only be seen at night, like candles, but when the sun is up, their light are no more perceptible.

66 Since the *haftan* had no descendant, the *khânedân* were given or transmitted to the members of the second hierarchy, the *haftawâna*.. Some say that the *haftawâna* were only intended to attract the followers in order to reinforce their power. This may be the reason why, among the Gurân, the *haftawâna* are considered as tenebrous beings, opposed to the *haftan*, although this view is in contradiction with the dogma.

Nevertheless, Ahl-e Haqq *seyyeds* managed to destroy his shrine[67] with the help of some local authorities, a gesture which provoked public protest by one of the most revolutionary âyâtollâhs.

A long time ago Elâhi had foretold the decline of the Ahl-e Haqq socio-religious system and the betrayal of the clerics. During the last 20-30 years, many things have changed: the secrets, once revealed, are no longer secret nor sacred, the archetypes have lost their power, the celestial hierarchy has withdrawn into the other world, the *tâyfesân* has blood on his hands, and the dervishes look for political support.

In these conditions, the legacy of a dozen Ahl-e Haqq spirituals, masters, sages and poets, now handed on by learned disciples, is no longer mystical, but rather cultural, if we can separate the two. The essence has maybe evaporated, but at the bottom of the alchemical pot remains the substance of an original humanism which is also the achievement of the elite of this religious community.

The Ahl-e Haqq Legacy: Towards an Original Humanism

The Ahl-e Haqq humanism is very similar to the Alevi ideology and perhaps to that of other similar communities. It relies on several characteristics rooted in the original religious practices and doctrines.

- *Social link and solidarity*. In Ahl-e Haqq devotion, the offering (of food *niâz)* is more important than ritual individual prayers. This fact implies the value accorded to conviviality, charity, and equality since all the *niâz* are distributed in a perfectly equal way.

- *Promotion of endogenic culture vs formal exogenic ritual*. The followers do not pray in Arabic, since, they say "God does not speak Arabic". Their devotion is that of the heart and of emotion and sentiments.

- This goes along with their *artistic taste* as expressed in poetry and music. Like Ali, Ahl-e Haqq play the sacred lute during the *jam*.[68]

- *Tolerance and openness* to other religions. Several religions are integrated in the Ahl-e Haqq world view, thanks to the system of manifestations *(dunâ dun):* Benyâmin was the Mahdi, Ja'far Sâdeq, Jesus, Zoroaster, Abraham and Buddha. Even the Greek philosophers are manifestations of these essences.

- *This tolerance extends to culture*: Women occupy a high position in society compared to other Muslim societies. Many of them are mentioned in the holy books, and one among the seven angels and of the *haftawâna* appears always in a woman's clothes *(dun)*.[69]

Ahl-e Haqqism is not restricted to remote Kurdish populations, but has a universal dimension: therefore the *Kalâm* was adapted in Turkish and inspired the Persian *Shâhnâme-ye Haqiqat*. The links with other communities in other countries form part of the Ahl-e Haqq myth. This is to be seen in the story of the Cheltan who come from very strange places, including France *(farang),* and bear strange names. This mani-

67 The shrine was rebuilt, and, since no corpse could be found, it is now revered as a holy place even by the non-Ahl-e Haqq population of the region. Nearly ten years after these events, all the Ahl-e Haqq followers of what has sometimes been called "Hâji Ne'mat's *khânedân"* cut their moustaches in order to dissociate themeselve from the Ahl-e Haqq community. This fact is reported by Mir-Hosseini, but should not be interpreted as reformism.

68 The *tanbur* has two strings, the highest being generally doubled. It is played by all the fingers of the right hand, not with a plectrum. These characteristics are also those of the west Anatolian ancient Alevi *sâz*, a similarity which attests cultural links between the Ahl-e Haqq and the Alevis, perhaps due to their Kurdish roots.

69 Nevertheless, there is no mention of any female essence among the other levels of the hierarchy.

fests itself concretely in the openness to foreigners, who are actually more warmly welcomed by them than by other Iranian Muslims.

-Progressivism. Perfectionism *(takamol)* is the key word of all Ahl-e Haqq literature and dogmas. Each being (mineral, vegetal, etc.) is carried upwards in a cosmic stream which culminates (for man only) in God. This philosophy echoes that of the great Safavi theosophers of the Mollâ Sadrâ school who professed the pre-eminence of existence over essence and the trans-substantial movement *(harekat-e jowhari).* It provides a dynamic vision of the world (balanced by the static structures of the sacred history, which repeats itself from era to era, from *dawr* to *dawr).* Ahl-e Haqq do not feel bound to their past like the Islamist, since the sacred "beginning" can always re-actualise itself in new manifestations and with new personalities.

- *Elitism* is part of the Ahl-e Haqq culture: they have the conviction that they stand above standard Islam, and belong to a kind of avant-garde. They possess the key of understanding of historical events, which permits them to interpret all contemporary events in a sometimes paradoxical way. For them, there is always a hidden meaning behind the appearances.

-This leads them to *subversion.* They never fear the law nor the blame: "support people's blame, to support the blame is good" *(tana kish khâsa, bekishu ta'ne)* says Sheykh Amir in his famous verses chanted in opening the *jam.* They often like to show themselves as provocative, professing shocking beliefs or non-conformist practices. However, this subversion is never really political or mundane, even if they are persecuted. In spite of an "anti-establishment" tendency[70] which promoted their enthusiasm for the Revolution, unlike the Alevis, the Ahl-e Haqq never rebelled against authorites, even if the Qâjâr Government feared some upheavals. In modern Iran the Ahl-e Haqq have not taken a political stand, like the Alevi in Turkey. They just endeavour to remain on good terms with the Islamic Republic.

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Taqīya or Civil Religion? Druze Religious Specialists in the Framework of the Lebanese Confessional State

JAKOB SKOVGAARD-PETERSEN

Ever since European intellectuals came into contact with the secretive Druze religion in the 17th century, its very secretiveness has had a strong attraction on scholars. Most of its secret teachings were, however, relatively quickly discovered as the Druze religious writings became available in major European libraries. Even if corrected on a number of points by later scholarship, Silvestre de Sacy's monumental exposition of the Druze religion from 1838 still stands as a clear and detailed analysis of the cosmology and dogma of the early Druze religious canon which operates with a series of divine manifestations on earth, terminating in the intriguing figure of the Fatimid caliph al-Hakim bi Amr Allah.

Throughout the ages, this particular faith in a divine manifestation in a human being has been considered a grave heresy by Muslims, as is witnessed by a number of very hostile fatwas on the Druze religion by Sunni authorities such as ibn Taymiya. The traditional reaction to Sunni hostility has, so it seems, been the confinement of Druze religious teaching even within the community to the selected few, the *uqqāl*, and a strong communitarian discipline. This has allegedly taken the form of a permission for the individual Druze to conceal his religion and claim another religion when amongst non-Druze.

Known as *taqīya*, this principle of concealment or secrecy has developed into a key concept in scholarly investigations of Druze religion and identity. This is quite remarkable, since, for obvious reasons, we are not in a postion to determine or even investigate how widespread this practice of concealment has actually been throughout the ages.[1]

One possible explanation for the prevalence of *taqīya*-centered explanations could be the 19th century historicist and evolutionist focus on origins and on religions as consisting of belief and dogma canonized in holy scripts. According to this understanding of religion, in order to understand the behaviour of contemporary adherents of a faith all we need to do is to study their holy books, and if they don't behave according to their holy books they must be either ignorant or bad members of their community, or they must be deceiving us, as in the case of *taqīya*. Although few scholars of today would endorse such a crude view of religion, there still seems to be some reluctance to accept the idea that basic tenets of a religion may change over time.

Another explanation for the *taqīya*-centered explanations is politics. It is no secret that the French Mandate of Syria based its policy on the experience of its Moroccan

1 Whether the principle of *taqīya* is in fact rooted in Druze religion at all has recently been questioned by Qais Firro in the article "The Druze in and between Syria, Lebanon and Israel" in Milton Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East*, Cornell University Press, 1986, pp. 185-97.

enterprise which may be summarized in the fomula of divide-and-rule. The territory of Syria, divided into Ottoman administrative districts, was re-divided into statelets, complete with flags and parliaments, based upon the religious divisions of the Syrian population. The only survivor of these states is the state of Lebanon, but there was also a separate Druze state on the Jabal Hawran in southern Syria. Thus, a separate and unified Druze religious identity was encouraged by the French administrative authorities, and attempts by Druze chiefs and intellectuals to define the Druze religion as a branch or particular school within Islam were dismissed as *taqīya*. This tension between, on the one hand, claims to a Druze particularism outside the religion of Islam, and on the other hand, claims to a Druze identity within Islam, is by no means a thing of the past. Many Druze would claim that the state of Israel has pursued policies identical with those of the French, creating separate Druze courts and the like and thereby cutting them off from their Muslim brethern. In Lebanon, too, there have been tensions between exclusivist Druze identitites and a politically dominant group who advocated a Druze identity within Islam.

In all of this, it can be argued, some sort of *taqīya* is clearly at play. Those who advocate a Druze religion within an Islamic framework are undoubtedly aware of the political benefits of this position. Moreover, it is true that there are important Druze religious and political leaders - in Mandatory Syria as well as in present-day Israel - who have stressed a Druze particularism outside Islam. *Taqīya*-centered explanations, then, are not merely the product of Western scholars, but based on Druze scriptures as well as on evidence from at least some contemporary Druze.

Even so, there are great problems with raising *taqīya* to a position where it can be used to dismiss all evidence contrary to a Druze particularist explanation. First of all, it is clear that, taken so far, *taqīya* suddenly becomes a ploy or a practice which, ironically, enables outsiders to define Druze religion and religious identity without allowing the Druze a say in the matter. This is evidenced by a number of books written by Christians during the civil war in the 1980s, all of them aiming at preventing an alliance between the Druze and the Muslims by depicting Druze religion as a flagrant heresy to Islam and dismissing Druze statements and claims to the contrary as mere *taqīya*.[2]

Another problem would be the sheer number of Druze who seem to be quite comfortable confirming their relationship with Islam. The upholders of *taqīya*-centered explanations may end up building their interpretation on a fairly limited group of "authentic" Druze statements and doing away with a rather greater corpus. How far could this be taken before it became absurd?

Related to this is the interesting phenomenon of literature on the Druze religion published by Druze - a mere handful of books in the first half of this century but since the mid-1960s - and especially the 1990s - several books a year, practically all of them affirming the Islamic identity of the Druze. Although admittedly most of these books could be described as apologetic and very selective in their rendering of the Druze theology and history, publication of books certainly is a far cry from the traditional definition of *taqīya* whereby an individual hides his true religion by claiming to belong to another. It is hard to believe that such a vast body of literature should be the product of a deliberate and organized strategy on the part of the Druze - and that it should neither reflect the true convictions of its authors nor affect the convictions of its readers, especially since at least in Lebanon some of these books are part of the curricula in Druze schools and have clearly been written for Druze consumption.

2 Here mention could be made of the first edition of the Druze holy Script, *al-Ḥikma*, published anonymously around 1980, or the book *Bayna'l-'Aql wa'n-Nabī* from 1985 published under pseudonyms, but habitually attributed to Maronite scholars at the University of Kaslik.

Werner Schmucker, who analyzed these books in the 1970s, has pointed out that they typically take their point of departure in the concept of *tawhīd*, a key concept in Druze Scripture but equally central to 20th century reformulations of Islam.[3] In the books, the Druze religion is depicted as rational, flexible, scientific and morally superior, favoring among other things the legal equality of women and men. In addition, the Druze are said to have a long history of succesful defence of the Arabs and Muslims against crusaders and imperialists, and their conservative attitude to the Arabic language and social mores is singled out. The Druze, in these books, are depicted as model Arabs. Finally, in the influential interpretations of the Druze religion by figures such as the political leader Kamāl Junblāṭ and the American University of Beirut (AUB) professor Sāmī Makārim the Druze religious doctrine is an advanced and elitarian Sufism, which may be the reason why not all Muslims are capable of understanding it.[4]

Now, in a *taqīya*-centered interpretation this may be said only to prove the point that the Druze - now in a collective, public enterprise - are striving to appear like the religions around them and to prove their Arabic and Islamic credentials. Alternatively - and much more convincingly, I believe - it could be seen to confirm the ideas of Peter Berger, Ernest Gellner and others, that in a modern setting, religions will be subjected to modernist interpretations that will tend to rationalize, moralize and stress religion as a collective historical identity rather than as an adequate and sufficient transcendental explanation of the world. It should come as no surprise, then, that people who live in the same time and place and share a great number of basic values and world views interpret their various religions in ways that are broadly similar and may even - consciously or unconsciously - borrow some ideas from each other. Indeed, it would be much more surprising if this were not the case, and we would be well advised to search for an adequate explanation. The Druze, in short, have developed a reading and interpretation of their history and religion which confirms their moral, political and communal world-view of today, and in this they are hardly different from what adherents of other religions have done. To identify anything the Druze have in common with Islam as a conscious *taqīya* is to deny the Druze the right to inspiration, or the borrowing or downright theft that other religions have always practiced, and more broadly to deprive the Druze religion of development and history.

A final problem in relation to *taqīya*-centered interpretation would be the Druze statelet that emerged in the wake of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 1983. For a period of seven years the Lebanese Druze community - always the strongest and most self-assured of the Druze communities - was in a posititon to set up its own administration and run its own territory under the leadership of Walīd Junblāṭ. How did they make use of it in terms of elaborating on the Druze identity? Nobody has analyzed this in any detail, but from my own investigations of the schoolbooks they introduced and the radio-station they set up, the answer is that it had little impact on the self-image of the Druze. This material insists on describing the Druze as model Muslims, model Arabs and model Lebanese who have always defended the liberalism and integrity of Lebanese territory. Once again it can be argued that the Druze knew very well that, sooner or later, they would be reintegrated into a larger Lebanese entity and therefore continued their practice of *taqīya*. Still, Sunni and Shia radicals did not feel these inhibitions when calling for an Islamic state, and, more

3 Werner Schmucker, *Krise und Erneuerung im libanesischen Drusentum*, Bonn, 1979, pp. 163-66.

4 Kamāl Junblāṭ's views on the Druze religion have been analysed by Bernadette Schenk in *Kamal Joumblatt*, Berlin, 1994, especially pp. 138-47. Samī Makārim's views are expressed especially in *The Druze Faith*, N. Y. 1974.

importantly, one may ask how strong an attachment is to a postulated "genuine" Druze religion beneath the *taqīya* if it is not allowed to manifest itself under any conditions - and is even confined to a minority of initiates - whilst the so-called *taqīya* interpretation of Druze religion and history has held sway for decades.

From my point of view the uniquely divided character of the Druze community, still has relevance in a discussion of the study of the Druze, no doubt because it is split between three states pursuing very different minority policies: Lebanon, Syria and Israel. At least, I have touched upon a number of similarities - or perhaps only apparent similarities - between the situation of the Druze and that of the Alevi: among these similarities are sociological points such as new urbanized literate strata challenging the old initiates and lineages with new interpretations, widely published in a new literature on the religion; and there are some ideological points such as the stress on being patriots and model citizens in the nationstate, and the stress on the Islamic character of the faith, sometimes seen as a form of advanced Sufism. These and other features should be compared in order to investigate the positions and strategies of formerly heterodox religious movements in dealing with Islam and Islamic resurgence within the framework of a modern state with proclaimed freedom of religion. But one more theme mentioned must not be overlooked: that of a substantial division within the religious community itself as to its basic identity, and the fierce struggle among its political and religious leaders over the right to define the position of the community within the greater framework of the modern state.

It is this theme that I shall develop in this second half of my paper. I shall concentrate on the Lebanon and on conditions which seem to me specifically Lebanese, namely the set-up of the confessional system and the role of the Druze religious head, the *Shayk al-'Aql* therein.

The Lebanese Confessionalism

Politics in Lebanon is inscribed within what is commonly referred to as the confessional or inter-sect system, according to which ministries, seats in Parliament and high-level administrative positions are shared by the country's 17 religious communities roughly in accordance with their numerical size.

The Lebanese Constitution of 1926 spoke of the confessional power-sharing as a temporary phenomenon which should be abolished when other identities than the strictly confessional had taken roots in the Lebanese population. It seems, however, that far from contributing to an abolition of confessional identities among the Lebanese, the political system has effectively consolidated such identities. No matter how irreligious he is as a person, a Lebanese will still be forced to accept his religion as his basic identity in Lebanese society, determining which courts, offices and sometimes even schools and sporting clubs will let him in. The confessional system has effectively weakened the state by turning government and the administration into a battlefield where communal leaders fight over spoils for their client groups. And what is worse, the confessional system ensures that positions are distributed according to confessional identity and connections rather than qualifications and achievements. Politics in Lebanon is about families, patrons and clients.

The main beneficiaries of this religious clientilism are the major communal leaders within each political community, normally referred to as the *zu'amā*. Although sometimes referred to as feudal lords, the *zu'amā* are not a survival of the past, but modern politicians with access to state patronage through control of high offices from which they can distribute jobs and contracts to their client groups. A precondi-

tion for the *za'īm* is a state that renders services and a clientele that wields some political power of its own which it can deposit with him.[5]

Turning from the political leadership to the religious leadership and organization of the different communities, we note a great similarity between them in structure and legal status. This is due to the fact that although the Lebanese state in principle acknowledges the autonomy of the religious groups in internal affairs, this has not protected them from penetration by the confessional system.

The main reason for the great similarities between at least the Muslim communities is that they have copied each other. The 1960s laws setting up the Druze and the Shia internal organizations were based upon Decree 18 of 1955 regulating the Sunni religious administration. All three confessional communities are granted autonomy in their internal affairs, which are to be run by a council empowered to legislate in communal affairs. Among the ex officio members of the council are all ministers and MPs, that is, the *zu'amā* and their clients are present and dominate the council.

The council is presided over by the traditional religious head of the community, and both the council and its president are elected by the confessional group. The Lebanese state has been careful to place these religious heads on an equal footing with equal positions in the state protocol. This function as an official spokesman of a religious community within the framework of the modern state is an important addition to the traditional responsibilities of these religious offices and yet another example of the impact of the confessional system. Whatever differences may once have existed between the supreme offices of the various religious communities - Mufti, Cardinal, Patriarch, *Shaykh al-'Aql* etc.- to the Lebanese state they are all functionaries with equal functions, salaries and status.

It is also precisely the function as official representative and spokesman which makes the religious head an important player in the internal political affairs of the religious communities. No wonder, then, that the elections of the religious head amongst the Sunni, Druze and Shia have never gone smoothly but been a major battleground for the power struggle between the *zu'amā*.

The Lebanese Druze

Such is the framework for Druze social and political life in Lebanon. We note that, like the other major religious communities, the Druze have access to certain top positions in the state - usully two or three ministries, the defence ministry traditionally among them - and a number of key positions in the administration and the army. The Druze community in Lebanon had traditionally been affected by severe rivalry between two factions, the Junblāṭīya and the Yazbakīya. In the 19th century the Arslān family, which had been relatively neutral in this rivalry, was promoted by the Ottoman administration to the position as official heads of the Druze, a move which invariably involved it in the traditional factionalism, in which it came to represent the Yazbakīya against the dominant Junblāṭī family. When the state of Lebanon was created in 1920 and the confessional system put into place, these two families, Arslān and Junblāṭ, immediately came to dominate Druze politics, and their traditional rivalry has continued within the new framework of the state and its institutions. The two dominant Druze *zu'amā* after independence, Majīd Arslān and Kamāl Junblāṭ, were

5 On the Lebanese confessional system and the *zu'amā*, see Arnold Hottinger, "Zu'ama in Historical Perspective", in Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon*, New York, 1966; and Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut. The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State*, Ithaca, 1986.

strongly opposed to each other although they sat in numerous governments together during the period between independence and the civil war. As was the habit in Lebanese political culture, both of them teamed up with *zu'amā* from the other confessions, Majīd Arslān primarily with the dominant Maronite politicians, Kamāl Junblāṭ more daringly with a number of popular forces on the Muslim left, including the Palestinians.

As mentioned, since its earliest days the Druze community has been divided into two groups, those initiated into the religious secrets, the *'uqqāl*, and the larger group of non-initiated, the *juhhāl*. The *'uqqāl* have never enjoyed the political power which has been in the hands of certain dominant families. For some hundred years, at least, an intermediary office has been in existence, a representative of the *'uqqāl*, who has had an active political role, serving among other tasks as a conciliator and mediator between the Druze peasants and their feudal lords, and occasionally between the feudal lords themselves. This man, the *Shaykh al-'Aql*, was not elected by the *'uqqāl* but, as far as we can see, simply appointed by the dominant Druze political prince with whom he was in close cooperation.[6] Since 1825 the office has been divided into two - or even three - *Shaykh al-'Aql* positions, reflecting the Junblāṭī-Yazbakī split.

When the Druze were incorporated into the independent Lebanese state as an official religion, a law was passed assuring the independence of the Druze community in religious matters and establishing an electoral procedure for the office of *Shayk al-'Aql*, now officially recognized as the spiritual head of the Druze and their representative in Lebanese society. He was also made permanent president of the newly established Communal Council responsible for the community's social life and finances, including its religious trusts - clearly a key position with great political implications. This law of 1962 still operated under two *Shaykh al-'Aql*s, but when one of them died in 1970 - and a grosteque campaign for the office followed in which none of the 14 candidates was found worthy of the office, Majīd Arslān and Kamāl Junblāṭ agreed to cancel the elections and work for a revision of the law to provide for only one *Shaykh al-'Aql*. This work, however, was never completed due to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, and the law of 1962 still awaits revision. In the meantime, the surviving *Shaykh al-'Aql*, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā, continued as the *de facto* sole *Shaykh al-'Aql*.

Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā and the Reformulation of Druze Identity

It would be hard to overestimate the role of Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā in the formulation of a Druze religious identity within the Lebanese state. Already appointed *Shaykh al-'Aql* in 1948 - the year when a Law of Personal Status of the Druze Community was promulgated marking the official recognition of the Druze as a distinct religious community - Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā was at the forefront of Druze communal politics until his death in 1991, one year after the end of the civil war. Although originally the Yazbakī *Shaykh al-'Aql* and thus linked to the Arslān family, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā developed close ties with Kamāl Junblāṭ, and it was their cooporation, especially in the 1960s, that led to the reformulation of the Druze religious identity as an Islamic spiritual tradition akin to that of Sufism and of the Brethren of Purity.

Acting upon the Law of 1962 which made *Shaykh al-'Aql* the official head of the Druze Community, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā set out to construct the formidable "House of the Druze Community" in the fashionable Beiruti district of Verdun to

6 On the history of the *Shaykh al-'Aql*, see the informative article by Judith Harik, "Shaykh al-Aql and Druze of Mount Lebanon: Conflict and Accommodation", *Middle Eastern Studies* 30/3 (1994), 461-85.

serve as the seat of the Community Council and the *Shaykh al-'Aql*'s daily administration. He took steps to organize the most important *'uqqāl*, the *ajawīd*, but they resisted.[7]

Abū Shaqrā also sought to trace the position of *Shaykh al-'Aql* back to the Fatimids and the institution of the Imam. This move would, if successful, have enhanced is political position considerably, but his endeavours to politicize the office were looked upon with mistrust in many Druze quarters.[8] When, in 1965, the wave of Druze publications on the Druze religion was initiated with a book by 'Abd Allāh an-Najjār - the first book to quote from the Druze holy scripture - Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā and Kamāl Junblāṭ decided to let Sāmī Makārim write a refutation, but they themselves were on the reform-side, quite willing to discuss Druze religion and spirituality in public.

A recurrent theme in the books by Sāmī Makārim and Kamāl Junblāṭ was the Islamic character of the Druze faith. This was also the position of Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā, one of whose more lasting achievements was the resurrection of a monthly magazine on Druze affairs, significantly named *aḍ-Ḍuḥā*, the Morning Light - a reference to the Koran's sura 93. Among the recurring themes of this magazine are, of course, communal politics among the Druze, but rather more space is taken up by themes such as the political suppression of Muslims around the world or great personalities in the Islamic spiritual tradition.

The Islamic interpretation of the Druze religion became politically crucial during the civil war. When, in 1975-76, during the initial stages of the war, Kamāl Junblāṭ and Sāmī Makārim were strongly divided over which policy to pursue, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā emerged as the spokesman for overall Druze communal interests. On a number of occasions he met with the Shia religious Head Mūsā Ṣadr and the Sunni Mufti Ḥasan Khālid to issue joint statements to the media on the war, criticising Christian political dominance and calling for a redistribution of power to the benefit of the Islamic communities. Moreover, as state services declined during the war, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā's political influence enabled him to provide needy Druzes with medical treatment, jobs, and other services normally exclusively controlled by the *zu'amā*. Although Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā's relations with Kamāl Junblāṭ's son Walīd were often strained, by the end of the war it was clear that the position of *Shaykh al-'Aql* had consolidated itself as an important power base at the interface between politics and communitarian identity among the Druze.

Walīd Junblāṭ, who came to the fore after his father's assassination in 1977, succeded in establishing an autonomous Druze territory in the Shuf mountains from 1983 and for seven years reigned supreme as Mājid Arslān had just died and had been discredited among the great majority of the Druze for his support of the Israeli invasion in 1982.[9] Walīd Junblāṭ was much less interested in the Druze religion than his father and the most important ideological initiative during his unchallenged reign was a revision of the schoolbook curriculum, especially in history, where a new set of books extolled the Druze Lebanese patriotism from the 17th century emir Fakhr ad-Dīn to the time of the civil war. The Druze identity stressed in these books was not primarily religious but rather a "community of fate" - and this identity must have corresponded well with the sentiments of many Druze who were not initiated and, besides, had little interest in the contents of the Druze religion but whose Druze identity had been firmly consolidated by the war's general sectarianism.

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7 'Afīf Khiḍr, "Mashaykhat al-'Aql bayna's-siyasa wa'r-ruhānīya", *ad-Diyār*, Febrary 2, 1995.

8 On Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā's political initiatives in the 1960s, see Josef van Ess, *Zerstrittene Drusenscheiche*, *Die Welt des Islams,* N. S. 12 (1969), 99-125, pp. 108-109.

9 See *Herald Tribune*, July 12, 1982.

However, Walīd Junblāṭ made another move of great potential importance for the Druze ideological commitment to Druze religion: he devoted a wing of the national museum of Beiteddin to the memory of this father, the martyr Kamāl Junblāṭ. There is today among Lebanon's - and even Syria's - Druze a veritable Kamāl Junblāṭ cult - no doubt primarily due to his political achievements but also in recognition and warmly admiration of the spiritual aspect of his life, including his poetry, his asceticism (he even had a guru in India whose ashram he occasionally stayed in) and his spiritualized Socialist tiers-mondism. According to the latter, the Druze are the true heirs of the Orient's spiritual traditions and have a unique mission in the future in spiritualizing Western materialism and promoting a just global democracy. One suspects that to the majority of the Lebanese Druze, these ideas may be overly grand and visionary and far beyond their immediate interest, but they are nevertheless important because they provide the Druze religion with a place and a vocation in the modern age - something it had badly needed. They are certainly not to be dismissed as *taqīya*.

Druze Identity and the Role of the *Shayk al-'Aql* in Post-War Lebanon

The Taif Accord of 1989 and the following constitutional amendments of 1990 laid out the future of Lebanon's political system and called for the dismantling of the confessional system after a period of transition. As of yet, no step has been taken in the direction of an abolition of the confessional system which seems to be as consolidated as ever, as witnessed in the general elections in 1996. The *zu'amā* are back in government - not necessarily the old *zu'amā* but new and powerful ones, some of them the major warlords who have been allowed to trade their military position for central positions in the state. This is the case with Walīd Junblāṭ, who has been an important minister since the Lebanese government resumed its functions in 1991. Many forces both inside and outside the Druze community have tried to promote Majīd Arslān's son Ṭalāl to challenge Junblāṭ and reestablish the classical state of Druze factionalism, but so far in vain. In the electoral laws of 1992 and 1996 Walīd Junblāṭ succeeded in obtaining special exemptions for the size of the electoral districts in the Mount Lebanon, thereby preserving the Shuf, Aley and Upper Matn areas as his fief. As a result, Talāl Arslān had a poor result in the elections in August 1996, in which all his allies lost and he himself only just made it to Parliament. His promotion to Minister in October 1996 must be seen as a strategy by Prime Minister Rafīq al-Harīrī the check to power of his ally Walīd Junblāṭ. Druze factionalism is reborn, but Walīd Junblāṭ is still far too strong to be challenged on his home turf.

One day before he died in 1991, Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā appointed an interim successor, the businessman Bahjat Ghayth. Such an appointment was a circumvention of the Law of 1962 according to which there is no such thing as a deputy *Shaykh al-'Aql*, and the *Shaykh al-'Aql* must be elected, not appointed. Still, Walīd Junblāṭ accepted the appointment until elections could be made, and Bahjat Ghayth has been in office ever since. The revision of the Law of 1962 has been jeopardized by the rivalry between Walīd Junblāṭ and Ṭalāl Arslān, who cannot agree among themselves as to the correct procedure for the appointment of an interim council to organize the election of the *Shaykh al-'Aql*.

Although he is only deputy *Shaykh al-'Aql*, Bahjat Ghayth has maintained a high profile in office. He makes statements to the media and takes his official function as spokesman of the Druze very seriously. This has on several occasions annoyed Walīd

Junblāṭ - and also some influential *'uqqāl* who never found him worthy of the office in the first place. Matters came to a head in the fall of 1995 when Ghayth openly defied Junblāṭ in his support for a candidate for presidency in Lebanon - eventually the elections were cancelled - and spoke at a Shia meeting organized by Junblāṭ's most powerful political rival Nabīh Berrī. At a meeting in the Shuf village of Baaqlin, Junblāṭ obtained a resolution calling for the dismissal of Ghayth, and on October 25 Prime Minister Rafīq al-Harīrī complied with the wish of his ally and appointed another deputy *Shaykh al-'Aql*, Salmān 'Abd al-Khāliq. Bahjat Ghayth, in turn, has refused to accept his dismissal. He raised a case against Harīrī's appointment at the Conseil d'Etat, and although it was rejected in January 1996, he simply stayed on in the Community House. Some sort of compromise can be expected to materialise after the elections of 1996, but even though Walīd Junblāṭ is in a very strong position, politically, it seems doubtful whether he will be able to fully control the office of *Shaykh al-'Aql*, which appears to have acquired a public role to be reckoned with.

This argument seems to be borne out by another development - and the last one to be mentioned here - namely, the slightly altered role of the religious heads in the post-war so-called Second Republic. As mentioned, they hold equal status in the protocol of the state. They were and are regularly invited to official ceremonies, and the obligatory photo of all the Christian and Muslim religious leaders in their variegated dresses and headgear is a familiar symbol of national unity in the Lebanese media. This in itself is not a new phenomenon, but after 15 years of civil war in which these leaders were focal points of their various communities, this symbolism has gained greatly in significance. In this sense it can be said that the unity of these religious leaders is a forceful expression of a Lebanese religious pluralism which approaches the status of a post-war national ideology: individually these men represent their own religions, but taken together they could be said to represent Lebanon as a whole.

This civil religious development has been institutionalized, if only tentatively, in the new Constitution of 1990. As mentioned, this Constitution calls for the abolition of the confessional system and the introduction of a non-confessional Parliament. This, however, will not mean a complete abolition of confessionalism, but rather its relegation to alternative and perhaps less mundane bodies than Parliament itself - a move which could hopefully defuse the confessionalist penetration of practically all political issues. Confessionalism would then primarily survive through the establishment of a Senate with due representation from all the confessions and an explicitly national vocation, as stated in article 22: "With the election of the first Parliament on a national, non-confessional basis, a Senate shall be established in which all the religious communities shall be represented. Its authority shall be limited to major national issues."[10]

Moreover, for the first time the Heads of State are given a constitutional role: article 19 stipulates that it is only they - or the President, or the Prime Minister, or ten MPs - who can raise an issue in the newly established Constitutional Court which has already manifested itself as an important political institution in Lebanon. While it is unclear what this newly acquired right of the religious heads may entail in practice, it certainly endows them with a constitutional legitimacy of some weight. The Lebanese confessions - and their religious representatives, such as the *Shaykh al-'Aql* - seem to be moving towards a position as symbols of national unity in a new Lebanese civil religion.

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10 A translation of the Lebanese Constitution of 1990 can be found in *Beirut Review* 4 (1983), 119-60.

Conclusion

Since the creation of Lebanon, its Druze community has been moving towards an increased public presence which seems to be a far cry from any form of *taqīya*, even if its adherents - like those of any other religion - have a highly selective interpretation of Druze history and have advanced a number of relatively novel formulations of Druze identity, stressing the Islamic identity of their faith. This move has partly been inaugurated by Druze individuals who - many of them non-initiates - decided to publish books and articles on Druze religion. It has, however, been greatly furthered by the institutionalization of an official Druze communal identity through the Communal Council and the *Shaykh al-'Aql*, and by their policies during the Lebanese civil war. Today this public communal identity is well established and may be expected to survive a political de-confessionalization if the latter follows the lines set out in the recent Constitution.

The Druze Religious Will as a Political Instrument*

AHARON LAYISH

In memoriam Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf

On October 2nd 1993, Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf, the undisputed Spiritual Leader of the Israeli Druze community, passed away. In his will, Shaykh Amīn nominated his cognatic grandson, Shaykh Muwaffaq Ṭarīf, as his successor. This nomination brought about a severe split within the Druze community between traditionalists and intellectuals, the latter striving for the democratization of the process of electing the Spiritual Leader and other communal institutions. Justice M. Cheshin's description of the situation is very much to the point: "The decease of a great leader leaves behind a big vacuum, and in the absence of an acknowledged and accepted successor, the vaccum is filled by an outpouring of overt and concealed powers and interests pushing in different directions."[1] The disputing parties resorted ten times to the High Court of Justice (HCJ) before a final decision was handed down in 1966.[2] But the conflict is far from being resolved.[3] The purpose of this paper is to analyse the Druze religious will as a political instrument, and more specifically in the case under review—as a tool to retain the position of the Spiritual Leader under the control of the powerful Ṭarīf clan (*ḥamūla*).

The Legal Status of the Druze Community

The Druze have never been recognized as a religious community under Muslim rule due to the fact that the Druze religion, though originating from the Ismā'īlīs, seceded completely from Islam. Furthermore, all their efforts to achieve a recognized status under the British Mandate in Palestine were unsuccessful. The Druze were finally recognized as a religious community in Israel on April 15, 1957, in accordance with the Religious Communities (Organization) (Druze Community) Regulations, 1957 (hereafter the 1957 Regulations), which were based on the Religious Communities (Organization) Ordinance of 1926 (the 1926 Ordinance). They were granted this status in recognition of their identification with the State and their acceptance of conscription into the army.[4]

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* My colleague, Professor David Powers, read the manuscript and made valuable comments.

1 HCJ 365/96, September 11, 1996, p. 14.

2 HCJ 804/94, 4687/94, 3187/95, 4779/95, 7351/95, 7523/95, 7649/95, 7765/95, 146/96, 365/96.

3 See *Haaretz* (Daily in Israel), October 4, 1993; November 15, 1996.

4 For more details see A. Layish, *Marriage, Divorce and Succession in the Druze Family*, Leiden, 1982, pp. 1ff.

Communal Organization

The communal organization of the Druze in Israel is shaped, to a large extent, by the esoteric nature of their religion, the principles of which are shared by a small number of religious shaykhs. This is due to existential considerations dating back to the religious-political circumstances prevailing at the time when the Druze religion emerged in the 11th century.[5]

The Druze community is basically divided between the *'uqqāl*, "sages", i.e., those who have been initiated into the secrets of the religion, and the *juhhāl*, "laymen", those who have not been initiated. The *'uqqāl* alone have free access to manuscripts of the holy books, and they are expected to carefully observe moral ethics and a modest way of life. The initiation procedure is very strict.[6]

The *juhhāl* are the vast majority of the community. Their knowledge of religion is scant. Naturally, they are not expected to observe formal religious duties. Their religious identity is shaped indirectly through their recognition of spiritual leaders and religious functionaries who represent for them the embodiment of the Druze historical entity and the doctrinal unity that have survived for centuries under conditions of intolerance on the part of the dominant Muslim community. Mechanisms of survival, the most important of which is *taqiyya*, simulation, have been adopted to facilitate the Druze's accommodation to changing conditions.[7]

In the Druze community there is a clear distinction between religious-spiritual and mundane-political leadership. Whereas in the latter the *juhhāl* and *'uqqāl* are admitted, the religious-spiritual leadership is left exclusively to the *'uqqāl*. Although the two domains are totally separated from each other, there is a degree of coordination and consultation between them, especially in matters of political and existential significance. In fact, the Spiritual Leadership was strongly involved in such crucial decisions as the political orientation of the Druze in the initial stages during and after the emergence of the State of Israel, the recognition of the Druze as a religious community, and the conscription of Druze youth into the Israel army. Even the nomination of Druze candidates for the Knesset (Israeli parliament), on the basis of their clan affiliation, was decided after consultation with the Spiritual Leadership until the early 1970s. On the other hand, until recently it was inconceiveable that *juhhāl* should participate in matters which are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Spiritual Leadership. Generally speaking, the institution of the Spiritual Leadership was, until Shaykh Amīn's death, honored and respected by the vast majority of the Druze community.

The Spiritual Leadership - Its Jurisdiction and Election[8]

The institution of the Spiritual Leadership (*al-riʾāsa al-rūḥiyya*) emerged in the

5 M. G. S. Hodgson, s.v. "Durūz", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Leiden and London, 1960ff., pp. 631-34; K. M. Firro, *A History of Druzes*, Leiden, 1992, pp. 16-17.

6 Hodgson, "Durūz," p. 633; D. J. Stewart, "*Taqiyyah* as performance: the travels of Bahā'al-Dīn al-'Ālimī in the Ottoman Empire 991-93/1583-85", in D. J. Stewart, B. Johansen, and A. Singer (eds.), *Law and Society in Islam*, Princeton, 1996, p. 2; Ḥasan Amīn al-Bu'aynī, *Jabal al-'Arab. Ṣafaḥāt min ta'rīkh al-muwaḥḥidīn al-durūz*, Beirut, 1985, pp. 95-96; D. Bryer, "The origins of the Druze religion", *Der Islam* 52 (1975), 247.

7 A. Layish, "*Taqiyya* among the Druzes", *Asian and African Studies* 19/3 (1985), 245-81; idem., "The status of Islamic law in the Druze family in a non-Muslim state as reflected in judicial practice", in K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean (eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, Leiden, 1997, pp. 147-53; Stewart, "*Taqiyyah*", 2ff. Cf. Firro, *A History*, pp. 20-23; Skovgaard Peterson in this volume.

8 Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 12-13.

western Galilee more than a century ago. Some claim that it dates back to mid–18th century. All the spiritual leaders belonged to the Ṭarīf clan. When Shaykh Muhannā Ṭarīf died in the late 19th century, he was replaced by a collective spiritual leadership, the members of which were representatives of well-known clans in the western Galilee: Ṭarīf of Jūlis, Mu'addī of Yarkā, and Khayr of Abū Sinān. The last collective Spiritual Leadership comprised shaykhs Kamāl Mu'addī, Aḥmad Khayr and Amīn Ṭarīf. The first two members predeceased Shaykh Amīn at intervals of several years, after which Shaykh Amīn remained as the sole Spiritual Leader until his death in 1993.

Prior to the recognition of the Druze as a religious community, the Spiritual Leadership lacked statutory status, although in practice the authorities treated it as a body representing the Druze community in almost every respect. The procedure for electing members of this body was regarded as a domestic affair of the community, and it was regulated by the religious shaykhs. Since its emergence, the office of Spiritual Leader has been transmitted hereditarily within the Ṭarīf clan. The question of the legal status of the Spiritual Leadership first arose in Israel after the recognition of the community in connection with the question of the material law of the Druze religious courts. The problem was that Druze religious law, to the extent that it was applied by Druze religious arbitrators, was uncodified and thus unknown to the *juhhāl*. In 1961, the Minister of Religious Affairs issued the 1957 Regulations establishing a "Religious Council," identifying, in the body of the regulations, the names of the members of the Spiritual Leadership as members of the Religious Council.

The powers and functions of the Council are not defined in the regulations. The Council regarded itself as alone authorized to decide matters of religious law and as competent to prescribe rules for the administration of the Druze waqf. Shortly after its formation, the Council adopted the Law of Personal Status of the Druze Community in Lebanon of February 24, 1948 (the 1948 Lebanese law) as the material law to be applied in the Israeli Druze religious courts. This law embodies far–reaching reforms. It synthesizes a variety of religious and secular, local and foreign sources: Islamic law (mainly in its Ḥanafī version), Islamic reformist legislation, and Druze religious law. The 1948 Lebanese law was adopted with some important modifications pertaining to the status of the Ḥanafī school and the Lebanese legislation, with a view to accommodating the law to the new political situation.[9] Additionally, the Council amended a few provisions in the 1948 Lebanese law on the grounds that they were not compatible with Druze religious norms.

As a transitional measure, members of the Religious Council were appointed as members of the Court of Appeal, which implies that this body was the supreme statutory institution for the interpretation of the religious law (in its codified and uncodified version), for the identification and formulation of the Druze customary norm, and for the application of secular Israeli legislation especially entrusted to the religious courts. By virtue of their status as members of the Court of Appeal, members of the Spiritual Leadership served as members of the Committee for the Appointment of Druze *qāḍī*s of the court of the first instance.[10] From time to time the Spiritual Leadership discussed with the *qāḍī*s problems arising in the course of judicial proceedings, and issued legal opinions on matters of personal status and religious endowment (*waqf*), as well as on topics of Druze public concern, such as worship, chastity, morality, religious education and autopsies.[11]

9 For more details see *ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Shaykh Amīn's Will

In his will of March 20, 1985, that is, eight years prior to his death, Shaykh Amīn nominated his cognatic grandson, Shaykh Muwaffaq Ṭarīf, to replace him, after his death, as the Spiritual Leader of the Druze community. He justified the nomination on the grounds of Shaykh Muwaffaq's religious training (graduate of the Khalawāt al- Bayāḍa in Ḥaṣbāyā), and his personal qualifications and credibility. In the will, Shaykh Amīn instructed the members of his family [i.e., clan], the spiritual religious shaykhs (*mashāyikh al-dīn al-rūḥiyīn*) in the villages, and the mundane [political] leaders (*mashāyikh al-zamāniyīn* [sic!]) to sustain the nomination of Shaykh Muwaffaq and "appoint [him] as his successor" (*bi-an yuqīmū 'iwaḍ 'an...*).[12] Shaykh Amīn also instructed them to acknowledge Shaykh Muwaffaq as "responsible" (*mas'ūl*), that is, in charge of the [religious] services (*khidma*) rendered to the shrines Maqām al-Nabī Shu'ayb (near Qarney Ḥiṭṭīn), Maqām Sīdnā al-Khiḍr in Kafr Yāsīf and Khalawāt Jūlis.[13]

Making a will is regarded by the Druze as an obligatory religious duty (*farḍ lāzim*), a meritorious performance, a good deed, and a righteous act (*'amal mabrūr*) which will stand its doer in good stead on the day of the resurrection of the dead. One must obey the command of al-Amīr al-Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Tanūkhī, last of the great commentators on Druze religious law (d. 885/1480),[14] who taught that "no godfearing (*dayyān*) true believer should sleep a single night without his will under his pillow in case a sudden death overtakes him."[15] This command is also mentioned in Shaykh Amīn's will.[16]

The Druze religious will, unlike the Sunnī will, is not bound by the *ultra vires* doctrine, which prohibits making a will in favor of a legal heir or a will exceeding one-third of the net estate unless the legal heirs' consent for such a will has been obtained (after the testator's death).[17] The Druze will serves to circumvent Ḥanafī compulsory inheritance rules, which have been adopted by the Druze in the Levant by way of *taqiyya*.[18] Absolute freedom of testation enables the testator to avoid the fragmentation of the patrimony among the legal heirs by excluding females from their portions in real estates (though providing them with maintenance out of the estate), thus preserving the patrimony intact in the hands of his sons and—in their absence—other male agnates.[19] In this respect the Druze will fulfills the same function as the Sunnī family *waqf*.[20] Since the Druze enjoy complete freedom of testation there is no incentive to establish family waqf. The Druze will also serves various charitable purposes in a manner similar to the Muslim *khayrī waqf*.[21]

As expected, Shaykh Amīn's will deals first with the division of his patrimony among his heirs. Most of his landed properties are bequeathed to his five daughters

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12 Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf's will of March 20, 1985 (see below, p. 149), lines 17ff.

13 *Ibid.*, lines 20-21.

14 Layish, *Marriage*, p. 11.

15 For more details see *ibid.*, 305-06; Petition of Druze religious shaykhs of December 27 1994 submitted to the HCJ, line 19. Cf. D. F. Powers, *Studies in Qur'an and Ḥadīth. The Formation of the Islamic Law of Inheritance*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986, p. 147 and the sources indicated in the Muslim traditions.

16 Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf's will of March 20, 1985, lines 7-8.

17 N. J. Coulson, *Succession in the Muslim Family*, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 235ff.

18 For more details see Layish, "*Taqiyya*", 269-71.

19 For more details see Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 318-44. Cf. idem., "Bequests as an instrument for accommodating inheritance rules: Israel as case study", *Islamic Law and Society* 2, 3 (1995), 282-319.

20 A. Layish, "The family waqf and the *shar'ī* law of succession in modern times", *Islamic Law and Society* 4, 3 (1997), 352-88.

21 G. Baer, "The waqf as a prop for the social system (sixteenth-twentieth centuries)", *Islamic Law and Society* 4, 3 (1997), 264-97.

(probably because Shaykh Amīn had no sons), to be divided equally among them. A separate will is made exclusively in favor of one of the daughters (not the first born) who is also appointed as "responsible" (*mas'ūl*) and "administrator" (*wakīl*), that is, *mutawallī* of certain estates, the revenue of which are dedicated for the hospitablity (*ḍiyāfa*) of shaykhs. Some monies are allocated for the maintenace of holy shrines of Druze prophets (*anbiyā'*), *khalawāt* and observant shaykhs,[22] in the best tradition of the Druze will.[23]

The concept underlying the inducement for making a will is that the testator should settle all his mundane affairs, most important of which is the division of his patrimony among his heirs, before his departure from this world. This concept has been extended in the case under review with a view to enlisting the religious sanction of the will for political purposes. In other words, the resort to the will implies that it was incumbent on Shaykh Amīn to settle the question of his successor as Spiritual Leader before he passed away.

The nomination of spiritual leaders by their predecessors has precendents dating back to the initial stages of the consolidation of the Druze religion in the 11th century. Thus, when al-Ḥākim, the Fāṭimid Caliph of Egypt, disappeared late in 411/1021, Ḥamza b. 'Alī announced that al-Ḥākim had placed "the sword of victory" in Ḥamza's own hands, and Ḥamza, in his turn, appointed Bahā' al-Dīn al-Muqtanā to succeed him.[24] Moreover, testamentary nomination of a religious leader may have been inspired by the Shī'a. According to a Shī'ī tradition, 'Alī was the *waṣī*, authorized agent, who had been designated by the Prophet to replace him as a *khalīfa*.[25]

A petition by Israeli Druze religious shaykhs submitted recently to HCJ (see below) gives a good notion of their attitude concerning the transmission of religious and other functions by means of a will. One should, however, bear in mind that this document was inspired by practical considerations, namely the desire to support the nomination of Shaykh Muwaffaq as the Spiritual Leader of the Druze community by virtue of Amīn's will. In a petition of December 27, 1994, entitled "The Religious Men (*rijāl al-dīn*) Composed of the Shaykhs of the Druze Community,"[26] the religious men argue that the mode of transmission by will of important functions has a long tradition: The Patriarch Abraham transmitted, by means of a will, the prophecy to his son, the Prophet Isaac, thereby laying the judicial basis (*sharra'a al-qānūn*) for the procedure of nomination (*ta'yīn*) by means of a bequest.[27] Similarly, the Prophet Shu'ayb commissioned his son–in–law, Moses, by means of a will, as a *mu'allim*, teacher [viz., prophet] to disseminate religion among his people (lines 5-8).

The position of prophets (including Muḥammad himself), saints (*awliyā'*) and venerable men (*ṣāliḥūn*) was transmitted from one to another over the centuries (lines 16-18). The shaykhs cite in this connection Q. 2:180 and 2:181, which threaten to punish whoever modifies such wills (lines 10-13). "The Qur'ānic bequest verses" (2:180, 240) are generally held by Islamic tradition and Western scholars to have been abrogated or superseded by the later "inheritance verses" (4:11, 12, 176).

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22 Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf's will of March 20, 1985, lines 6-7.

23 Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 230-35.

24 Hodgson, "Durūz", p. 632.

25 R. Strothmann, s. v. "Shī'a", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden and London, 1913-38, p. 351.

26 The copy at my disposal lacks the names and signatures of the shaykhs. The document, however, seems to be authentic (the signatures may have been collected on a separate document), and thus worthy of public attention.

27 Lines 4-5. In fact, it is claimed in the petition that this procedure dates even earlier. Thus, Adam made a bequest to Eve, though the petition does not specify the content of this will (lines 14-15).

Henceforth, it was prohibited to make a bequest in favor of a legal heir or of more than one third of the estate.[28] The Druze, however, acknowledge complete freedom of testation with no limitation whatsoever.

Transmission by will applies to functions other than religious ones. Thus, David transmitted the kingship to his son Solomon, and Plato transmitted his position as a leading philosopher to his pupil Aristotle (lines 14-16). The nomination of priests and clergymen by the heads of various churchs derives its legitimacy from the New Testament (lines 9-10).

More to the point, the Amīr Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Tanūkhī, the last of the great Druze interpreters obtained his position—thus it is claimed in the petition— by means of a will made by the Amīr Yūsuf al-Dīn al-Tanūkhī, and the Amīr Jamāl al-Dīn·Abd Allāh, in turn, transmitted his religious-legal knowledge (*'ilm*) to one of his pupils, the Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn Jabra'īl (lines 18-20). Indeed, it was Jamāl al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh al-Tanūkhī who urged the writing (*tadwīn*) of a will during one's life in order to relieve one's conscience and meet one's obligation (*barā'atan li-dhimmat al-mūṣī*) [towards his relatives], and for the sake of peace of mind of his heirs (lines 20-22). In fact, al-Tanūkhī—so it is argued—set an example that has been followed by Druze religious men everywhere to this day as to transmitting [religious functions] by will from father to son (lines 24-25). A case in point is the Lebanese Shaykh al-'Aql Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā, who nominated Shaykh Bahjat Ghayth to replace him during his lifetime (lines 24-25).[29]

The religious shaykhs argue that a will is anchored in religion and that it should be regarded as a sanctified statute (*dustūr muqaddas*), a fundamental rule (*qā'ida asāsiyya*) and a formal regulation (*niẓām rasmī*) (lines 27-28). They further argue that religion is founded on wills whose purpose is to command what is good and interdict what is reprehensible (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*). Only those who are knowledgeable of the profound significance of this precept (the *'uqqāl*) qualify [to handle the nomination of a spiritual leader by means of a will], unlike the *juhhāl*. This issue is an unchangeable, indivisible principle [that is, it is not subject to compromise], and not bound by personal caprice or [external] interference [which may refer to the Minister of Religious Affairs] (lines 29-31). The religious shaykhs request that the HCJ sustain (*ta'yīd*) and implement (*tanfīdh*) Shaykh Amīn's will (lines 35-36, 40-41).

To sum up, the religious shaykhs regard the testamentary nomination of Shaykh Muwaffaq as legitimate and binding. Shaykh Amīn's will was endorsed by hundreds of religious shaykhs from all over the country, as well as by delegations of religious shaykhs from Lebanon (Khalwat al-Bayāḍa) and the Golan Heights who were present at his burial service.[30] At a meeting held in Jūlis in November, 1993, dozens of religious shaykhs decided to give Shaykh Muwaffaq full authorization to appoint a religious body that would assist him in running community affairs, including the financial management of Maqām al-Nabī Shu'ayb and Maqām Sīdnā al-Khiḍr, and the administration of waqfs.[31]

However, many Druze intellectuals (including university professors, doctors, and lawyers) vehemently opposed the nomination of Shaykh Muwaffaq as Shaykh Amīn's successor on the grounds that he does not qualify for the office and that the method of election is not compatible with democracy. Needless to say, some have

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28 Coulson, *Succession in the Muslim Family*, pp. 213-15. For another approach to this issue see Powers, *Studies in Qur'an*, pp. 143-55.

29 See below, p. 145.

30 See, e.g., petition of October 22, 1993.

31 See, e.g., petition of November 13, 1993.

also been inspired by political considerations, namely the struggle for power within the community.[32]

The Druze Religious Council

At first the Israeli government was careful not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Druze community, on the grounds that the community was entitled to run its own affairs independently. However, the deterioration of the communal organization left the government with no option but to intervene. When Shaykh Amīn passed away, the judiciary almost ceased to function. Only one *qāḍī* of the Court of First Instance remained. The rest had died or retired. The Committee for the Appointment of Druze *qāḍī*s could not be convened since the number of its members had dropped below the minimum (six) required by law. At this stage, the Minister of Religious Affairs declared his intention to issue the Religious Communities (Organization) (the Druze Community) Regulations, 1995. The draft was amended twice (in 1995 and 1996) on the initiative of the HCJ.[33]

According to the proposed regulations, the Minister was empowered to appoint a Druze Religious Council (DRC), consisting of 60 religious functionaries, as follows: 30 *suwwās* (sing. *sā'is*), religious leaders, serving in *khalwa*s (houses of Druze religious retirement), 15 members to be elected by members of Druze local municipalities, and 15 members to be appointed by the Minister after consultation with [Druze] local municipalities and the entire *suwwās*.[34]

The DRC is authorized (Sec. 10) to deal with any religious subject (provided it is not within the jurisdiction of the Druze religious court), to represent the Druze community in matters pertaining to religion vis-à-vis State authorities, to regulate instruction and other activities, to develop and administer holy shrines, and to establish religious institutions and communal centers. The DRC is also authorized to impose fees on the Druze community. The Chairman of DRC is to be a member of the Committee for the Appointment of Druze *qāḍī*s.

So far, ten petitions have been submitted to the HCJ with respect to the composition of the DRC and the procedure by which it is to be elected. The objections to the proposed 1995 regulations claim that they are incompatible with the spirit of time and place; that they violate the principle of democratic election (the right to elect and be elected); that they validate the defective political appointment of the *suwwās* (the office being transmitted hereditarily within certain families); that the composition of the DRC fails to be truly representive of the community; that the regulations interfere in the domestic affairs of the community and thus violate its independence; and finally, that they are incompatible with the nature of the Druze religion. Advocate Zakī Kamāl, the former Director of the Druze Religious Courts, on behalf of the petitioners, suggested that 45 members of the DRC should be elected directly by those attending the *khalwa*s for the purpose of prayer.[35]

The religious shaykhs, on the other hand, object to the appointment of religious functionaries to the DRC by the Minister of Religious Affairs, on the grounds that the procedure of electing *suwwās* in *khalwa*s is in glaring contradiction to the Druze religion. Appealing to the principles of democracy and freedom of religion, they

32 See, e.g., *Haaertz*, February 14 and 18, 1994; a petition of October 8, 1993, signed by some fifty Druze intellectuals assembled in Bayt Jann, in support of Shaykh Muwaffaq's nomination.

33 HCJ 365/96, pp. 14-15.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 8-9.

object to the imposition upon them of procedures that are repugnant to their religious conscience, and whose application—so they claim—is doomed to failure.[36]

After all attempts to bring the parties to an agreed solution failed, the HCJ reached the conclusion that the only way was to settle the issue by judicial decision of the HCJ. In a minority view, Justice M. Cheshin accepted the petitioners' request and rendered the proposed 1995 regulations null and void as an act that exceeds the Minister's powers. His main argument was that the regulations profoundly violated fundamental principles in a democratic state, namely equality and representation (thus, the office of *sā'is*, who is *ex officio* member of the DRC, is hereditary from father to son).[37]

However, Justice Cheshin's decision was overruled by his two colleagues. Justice A. Goldberg argued that the DRC is designated by its very nature to provide the community with religious services. Its composition should, therefore, be a function of its roles, which implies that it is not necessary for such a body to be elected by direct and democratic elections. The DRC is the lesser evil considering the alternative. Goldberg ruled that the proposed regulations be valid for a period of five years, at the end of which they should be revised in the light of the accumulated experience of their application .[38]

Justice Y. Zamir joined Goldberg's decision. He argued that the fact that the regulations do not reflect democratic principles is not sufficient grounds for invalidating them. Democratic principles, such as equality, are not absolute. Practical considerations should also be taken into account. Moreover, compared to the 1957 regulations, on the basis of which the DRC was composed of an oligarchy of three members with their names marked explicitly in the regulations, the 1995 regulations are, in his view, a big step towards the democratization of the DRC.[39]

The 1995 regulations were not published in the Official Gazette before the general elections of May 1996, which implies that they are not valid and enforceable. The Minister of Religious Affairs of the new government has not yet initiated any step towards their publication, whether in the original or any amended version. In other words, the severe split in the Druze community with respect to the issue of Shaykh Amīn's successor as Spiritual Leader remains unresolved.

Lebanon and Syria

In Lebanon, where the Druze had been recognized as a religious community prior to independence, the procedure of electing the spiritual and mundane leaderships is anchored in statutory legislation. The Shaykh al-'Aql Law of 1962, which recognizes Druze autonomy in matters of religion, waqf and charity, provides that the community shall have two *shaykh al-'aql*s with a status similar to that of other heads of communities. To qualify for the office the candidate must be, *inter alia*, a religious man, observant and knowledgeable of communal traditions. He is to be elected by secret ballot by all male members of the Druze community eligible to vote for the Lebanese House of Representatives. A *shaykh al-'aql* is to be elected for life.[40]

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36 *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 33.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14, 53.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 62.

40 Amīn Ṭalī', *Mashyakhat al-'aql wa'l-qaḍā' al-madhhabī al-durzī 'abra al-ta'rīkh*, Beirut, 1979, pp. 57-58, 65-68. Cf. Skovgaard Peterson in this volume.

However, the law has never been implemented. The recent replacement of a *shaykh al-'aql* by another was carried out in the traditional manner. Late in 1991, Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā, who had been appointed to the office in 1949, announced that he was not able to carry on due to health problems. Subsequently he elected Shaykh Bahjat Ghayth to replace him in office. When Shaykh Abū Shaqrā died, Shaykh Ghayth entered into his shoes without being formally elected in accordance with the procedure laid down by law.[41]

The reasons that the 1962 Lebanese law was not applied apply also with respect to the Israeli Druze:

(1) It is difficult to impose democratic methods of election, especially the election of a spiritual leader, on a traditional society that has not experienced statutory institutionalized communal organization and that fails to regard these methods as a binding way of life and as a source of inspiration.

(2) The *juhhāl* are not regarded as qualified to assess the suitability of a candidate for the office in terms of religious-legal authority, knowledge of religion, morality, modesty, etc. Moreover, it is felt that the interference of the *juhhāl* in this procedure might expose religious secrets whose concealment has been carefully observed for centuries.

(3) The religious shaykhs are extremely sensitive regarding this last issue. They argue that the most appropriate way to handle the matter is to allow them exclusive discretion in electing a spiritual leader, since they alone are fully qualified to decide the suitability of a candidate for the office.

It is therefore no wonder that in Lebanon the transmission of the office of *shaykh al-'aql* within certain well-known clans is a common practice even in the 20th century. Thus, for example, when Shaykh Ḥasan Ṭalī' died he was replaced by his two sons successively—first Shaykh Muḥammad Ṭalī', and, after his death in 1916, Shaykh Ḥusayn Ṭalī'. Shaykh Ḥusayn Ḥamāda replaced his father, Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥamāda, and upon his death in 1946 he was replaced by his son (that is, the grandson of Shaykh Muḥammad), Shaykh Rashīd Ḥamāda. The same applies to Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā who died recently: he was preceded in the office by members of his family.[42]

In Syria, no statutory legislation has ever regulated the procedure of electing a spiritual leader (the title of *shaykh al-'aql* is relatively new in Jabal al-Durūz). The election was carried out according to "tribal custom" (*al-'urf al-'ashā'irī*), that is, by religious shaykhs, and was endorsed by the consensus of religious shaykhs, political leaders (*zu'amā'*) and public figures. The spiritual leadership in Jabal al-Durūz was transmitted within three well known clans: al-Jarbū', al-Hajarī, and al-Ḥinnāwī. The Syrian authorities preferred not to interfere in the religious affairs of the Druze and acknowledged the election *de facto*.[43]

Summary and Conclusions

The function of the Spiritual Leader of the Druze community derives its significance from a combination of factors:

1. As the Chairman of the DRC he is the supreme religious authority. His decisions

41 Muḥammad Abū Shaqrā, "Bayān al-taklīf", *Al-Duḥa*, special issue (January 1992), 9; al-Bu'aynī, *Jabal al-'Arab*, pp. 123n, 124. See also a petition of December 27, 1994 signed by "men of religion (*rijāl al-dīn*) belonging to the shuyūkh of the Druze community".

42 Ṭalī', *Maskyakhat al-'aql*, pp. 100-3. Cf. al-Bu'aynī, Jabal al-'Arab, pp. 121.

43 Ṭalī', *Maskyakhat al-'aql*, p. 141; al-Bu'aynī, *Jabal al-'Arab*, p. 124; Sa'īd al-Ṣughayyir, *Banū Ma'rūf fī al-ta'rīkh*, al-Qurayā [(Lebanon], 1984, pp. 126-27

with respect to any religious and moral issue (provided the issue is not within the jurisdiction of the Druze religious court) are therefore binding on every individual.

2. As President of the Druze Religious Court of Appeal, he is the final judical instance within the Druze community on matters pertaining to personal status and waqf.

3. As a senior member of the Committee for the Appointment of Druze *qāḍī*s, he is in a position to promote his own candidates and reject others. It is inconceiveable that a *qāḍī* would be appointed against the will of the Spiritual Leader, although formally he has no right of veto. *Qāḍī*s enjoy considerable social prestige: their salaries are relatively high; being nominated by the President of the State they are not dependent on the executive authorities; their appointment to the office is for life or until retirement; in accordance with official protocol they are invited to attend important state events; and finally, but no less important, the Druze court has exclusive jurisdiction in matters pertaining to the establishment and the internal administration of a waqf that has been founded in or out of a Druze court according to Druze religious and customary law. Naturally, such a wide jurisdiction affects the actual administration (that is, the appointment of *mutawallī*s, the collection of revenue, the allocation of entitlement, transactions of property etc.) of waqfs in the villages, which occasionally may involve considerable amounts of money.[44]

4. As the administrator of the communal shrines, the most important of which are Maqām al-Nabī Shu'ayb (near Qarney Ḥiṭṭīn) and Maqām Sīdnā al-Khiḍr (in Kafr Yāsīf),[45] the Spiritual Leader has effective control over the waqfs of these shrines. Moreover, he has sole discretion, anchored in his spiritual authority, with respect to the use of monetary donations and contributions for religious and charitable purposes (*ṣadaqa*) and of the revenue from the waqf properties which have been dedicated for the maintenace of the shrines, as well as with respect to the allocation of money to religious shaykhs and other purposes for the benefit of the Druze community. Needless to say, donations for religious and charitable purposes are strongly encouraged by religious functionaries, especially when they are requested to formulate religious wills.[46] Indeed, there is evidence to the effect that enormous amounts of money have been accumulated in the shrines, especially in the Maqām al-Nabī Shu'ayb. In fact, since Shaykh Amīn's death several petitions have been submitted to the Druze court on grounds of mismanagement of the properties and monies of these shrines by the Ṭarīfs.[47] In this connection it is interesting to note that Shaykh Amīn was buried in the courtyard of his patrimony in Jūlis, probably with a view to converting his tomb into a shrine of a saint, and thus, into an object of large–scale pilgrimage.

As expected, the combination of these factors is being translated into political terms within the Druze community, which may explain the Spiritual Leader's involvement in political matters that apparently have nothing to do with religion. It seems therefore that social, political and economic considerations (control of the community *waqf*) led Shaykh Amīn to nominate in his will, in the absence of male issue, his cognatic grandson, Shaykh Muwaffaq Ṭarīf, as his successor. To this end the religious sanction of the Druze will was enlisted. The vast majority of religious

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44 For more details see A. Layish, "The Druze testamentary waqf", *Studia Islamica* LXXI (1990), 147-53.

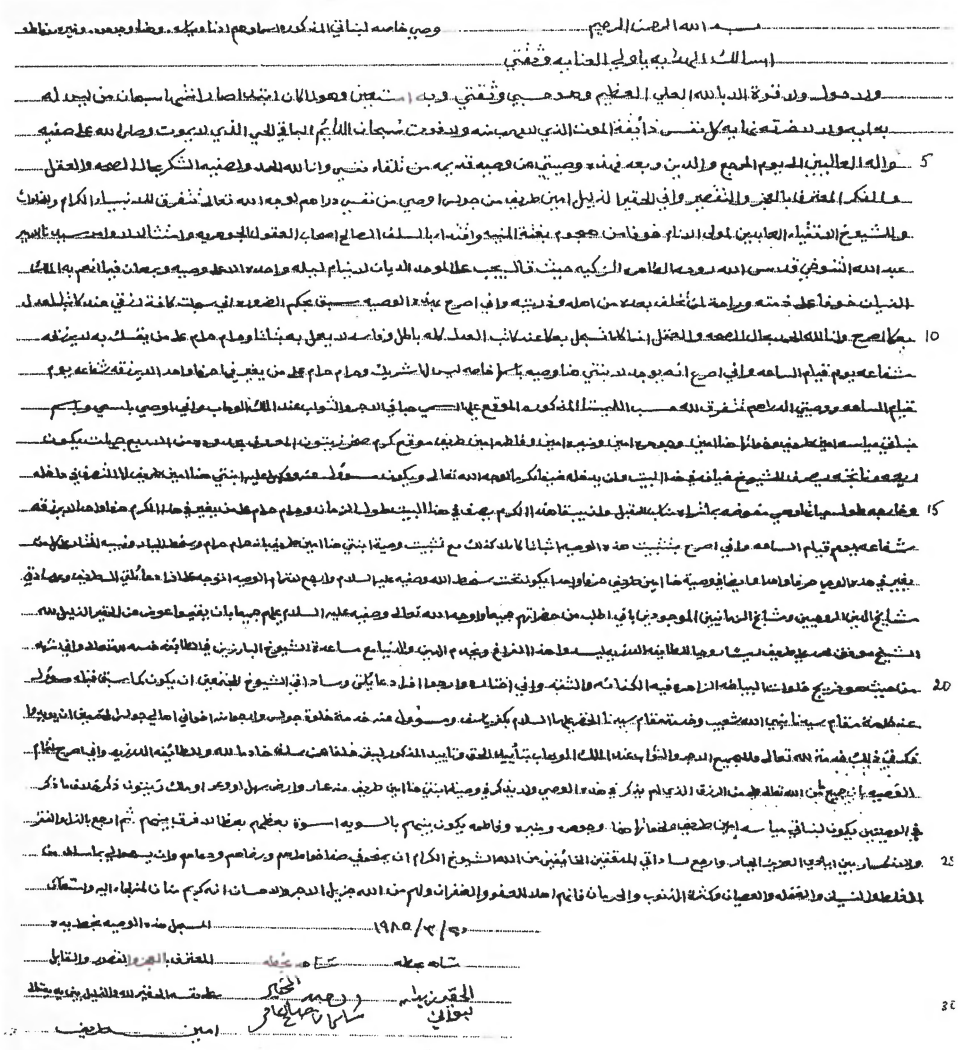
45 These shrines have been renovated and developed by spiritual leaders of the Ṭarīf clan since the middle of the 19th century. In the 1960s the government acknowledged Druze ownership of a hundred dunams of disputed land near the Maqām al-Nabī Shu'ayb, and since then the shrine has been extensively renovated and developed by the Ṭarīfs. See Layish, "The Druze testamentary waqf", 153.

46 See Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 361-62; idem., "The Druze testamentary waqf", 144-45.

47 *Haaretz*, April 17, 1996; November 15, 1996.

functionaries still consider themselves bound by a religious will. Hereditary transmission of communal functions is, however, strongly opposed by Druze intellectuals who are anxious to bring about the democratization of election procedures. Needless to say, behind this motive we have to do here with a struggle over the control of one of the most important positions of political power in the Druze community, a struggle that cuts accross clans and political parties. It seems that unlike previous generations, the new Druze social, cultural and political elite now emerging in Israel is not impressed by religious sanctions, and thus has no inhibitions about resorting to the HCJ in order to resolve the issue of Shaykh's Amīn' successor in a manner more compatible with the norms of modern society.

Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf's Will of March 20, 1985



Translation of the Will [48]

[1] In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

A will exclusively in favor of my daughters whose names are mentioned below: Mayyāsa, Hinā, Jawhara, Munīra and Fāṭima

48 The translation is literal as much as possible with a view to preserving the original style of the will to the extent that it does not cause any difficulty in understanding the text. Short explanations appear in the body of the translation in square brackets. Longer explanations were brought in the footnotes.

[2] I ask for Your divine guidance, Oh Sponsor of divine providence and my trust.

[3] There is no power and no strength save in God, the Supreme (*al-'alī*), the Exalted (*al-'aẓīm*). He [viz., God] is sufficient for me,[49] and it is to Him that I resort for help. He is the beginning and the end. Praise [the Lord] who has no [4] beginning, and His hereafter has no end.

Every soul experiences death, which is unavoidable and inescapable. Praise [the Lord], the Everlasting (*al-dā'im*), the Eternal (*al-bāqī*), the Living (*al-ḥayy*) who shall never die, and God bless His Chosen one (*ṣafī*)[50] [the Prophet Muḥammad],[51] [5] the most Exalted God [*ilāh al-'āliyīn*) till the day on which one eventually returns for refuge (*yawm al-marji'*)[52] [the Day of judgment] and for religion.

Now then, this is my will, [which replaces] an old will,[53] [written] by my own accord, while being—praise be to God and thankfulness to His Chosen [Prophet]—in a state of [physical] health, sound in mind [6] and in possession of my mental faculties. I, who acknowledge my weakness and incapability, the despised one, the submissive [servant of God], Amīn Ṭarīf from Jūlis, I hereby bequeath (*ūṣī*) of my own accord money for the sake of God, be He exalted, to be allocated to [the shrines] of the noble prophets,[54] places of retirement (*khalawāt*),[55] [7] [religious] elders (*shuyūkh*), godfearing worshippers of the Lord (*mawlā*) of mankind. [The will was written] for fear of being overtaken by a sudden death while following the example of the venerable forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*), the possessors of the intellects of substance (*al-'uqūl al-jawhariyya*),[56] and in obedience to the instruction of our master (*sayyidunā*) al-Amīr [8] 'Abd Allāh al-Tanūkhī,[57] may God sanctify his pure chaste soul, who maintained: "It is incumbent on a pious 'unitarian' (*muwaḥḥid*)[58] not to sleep a single night unless his will [is under his pillow]."[59] [This is] a proof to what the King (*al-malik*), [9] [and] the Judge (*al-dayyān*) [viz., God] has bestowed [on mankind]. [The will was written] out of concern for his [the testator's] conscience (*dhimma*) and for the sake of the peace of mind of his relatives and descendants who survive him. I hereby declare [the validity] of this will. Previously, due to constraint (*ḍarūra*),[60] I registered, by means of a notary (*kātib al-'adl*) in [10] Acre, my entire property. I hereby declare—praise be to God—while in a state of [physical] health and sound in mind, that the entirety of what has been registered in Acre by a notary is null and void (*bāṭil*) and irregular (*fāsid*); it is not effective (*lā yu'mal bihi*) absolutely (*batātan*).[61] It is strictly forbidden (*wa-ḥarām ḥarām*) [by God] for anyone to adhere [to the abrogated will. God] will not grant one [who nevertheless adheres to it] [11] advocacy on doomsday.

I hereby declare that there exists a will in favor of my daughter, Hinā, written exclusively in her name [viz., in her favor] with no partner [sharing the will with

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49 Cf. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2 vols., reprinted, Cambridge, 1984, p. 566.

50 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1704.

51 The allusion to Muḥammad here has nothing to do with *taqiyya*. The Druze, like the Ismā'illīs, consider Muḥammad more important than 'Alī. See Bryer, "The Origins" (1975), 260.

52 Cf. petition of December 27, 1994, line 2 (*Allāh... ja'ala al-dīn marji'an li-jamī' al-shu'ūb*), line 13 (*fa'alat al-nabiyyīn marāji' al-adyān li'l-'ibād*).

53 The testator may legally abrogate previous wills during his lifetime.

54 Such as Shu'ayb and al-Khiḍr. See below, line 21. For more details see, Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 330-33; Bryer, "The origins" (1975) 247.

55 D. Bryer, "The origins of the Druze religion", *Der Islam* 53 (1976), 24-25.

56 See Hodgson, "Durūz", p. 632; Bryer, "The origins" (1975), 58; idem., "The origins" (1976), 18-19.

57 See above, p. 140.

58 See Hodgson, "Durūz," p. 631.

59 See above, fn. 15.

60 Cf. V. E. Meyer, "Anlass und Anwendungsbereich der *taqiyya*", *Der Islam* 57/1 (1980), 260

61 Cf. Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 315-16.

her].[62] It is strictly forbidden [by God] to modify a single letter in it [i.e., the will. Whoever does so, God] will not grant him advocacy on [12] doomsday.

As for the money [mentioned] in my will, it is to be allocated for the sake of God[63] in accordance with the aforementioned list on which my name is signed out of desire for reompense and reward from the King [viz., God], the One who dispenses His bounties [without constraint] (*al-wahhāb*) [God].[64]

I bequeath on behalf of myself and [13] my daughter,[65] Mayyāsa Amīn Ṭarīf, and her sisters, Hinā Amīn, Jawhara Amīn, Munīra Amīn and Fāṭima Amīn Ṭarīf, a place [which consists] of vineyard, rocks and olive plantation of which the boundaries—with respect to the four directions—are known. [14] The proceeds (*ray', nātij*) [accruing from these estates] will be spent on the elders (*shuyūkh*) for the purpose of hospitality rendered in this house in sympathy with anyone who enters it as a guest[66] in honor of God, be He exalted. The responsible (*mas'ūl*) [*mutawallī*] and trustee (*wakīl*) in charge of this [estate] is [after the testator's death] my daughter Hinā Amīn Ṭarīf. She is entitled to dispose (*taṣarruf*) of its interior [15] and exterior to the end of her life. She is authorized to act according to what she deems appropriate henceforth. The residue of [the proceeds of] this vineyard will be spent on [the maintenance of] this house for ever. It is strictly forbidden [by God] for anyone to modify a single letter [of the will pertaining to] this vineyard. [Whoever does so, God] will not grant him [16] advocacy on doomsday.

I hereby declare the complete substantiation (*tathbīt, ithbāt*) of this will as well as of the will [in favor of] my daughter Hinā Amīn Ṭarīf. It is strictly forbidden [by God to modify the will]; the anger of God and His Chosen Prophet [will be imposed] on anyone [17] who modifies a single letter of this will. [This applies] also to anyone [who modifies] a single letter in the will [in favor of] Hinā Amīn Ṭarīf—he will be exposed to the anger of God and His Chosen Prophet, peace be upon both of them.

For the sake of completion of this will I turn to the members of my family [clan], the Ṭarīfs, my masters (*sādāt*), [18] the spiritual elders of religion (*mashāyikh al-dīn al-rūḥiyīn*) and the temporal elders (*mashāyikh al-zamāniyīn* [sic!]) who are extant, requesting their honors—all of them—while resorting to God and his Chosen [Prophet], peace be upon him, [I request] all of them to appoint, as successor of the despised submissive [servant] to God [viz., Shaykh Amīn Ṭarīf], [19] Shaykh Muwaffaq Muḥammad 'Alī Ṭarīf as the Spiritual Leader (*ra'īs rūḥī*) of the Druze community in order that the latter fill this vacuum and serve religion and this world with the assistance of the prominent elders of the community for the sake of God, be He exalted. I hereby testify [20] to the effect that he is a graduate of the luminous Khalawāt al-Bayāḍa. He has the qualifications and the authority [for this position]. I [therefore] have chosen him (*akhtāruhu*) [for the position], and request the members of my family [clan] and the masters due to assemble [at the ceremony for reading Shaykh's Amīn's will to endorse Shaykh Muwaffaq]—similarly to what was prior to his [election]—as the responsible [*mutawallī]* [21] one in charge of the service rendered at Maqām Sayyidunā Nabī Allāh Shu'āyb and Maqām Sayyidunā al-Khiḍr in Kafr Yāsīf, peace be on both of them, and in charge of the service rendered at

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62 That is, neither Shaykh Amīn's other four daughters nor any other relative. The testator also put Hinā (the second daughter) in charge (*mas'ūl, wakīl*) of the administration of various properties bequeathed in favor of a family hospitality (see below, lines 13-15), apparently because she was the most competent to dispose of property.

63 Cf. Layish, *Marriage*, p. 331.

64 Lane, *Lexicon*, p. 2969.

65 This actually implies that the daughters were deprived of their rights to certain properties that were bequeathed for purposes indicated below.

66 Cf. Baer, "Waqf", 273-74.

Khalawāt Jūlis. I expect my brothers, the honorable inhabitants of Jūlis, to support [22] the abovementioned [nomination] for the sake of God, be He exalted, and may the entire community [be worthy of] recompense and reward from the King, the One who dispenses His bounties (*al-wahhāb*) [viz., God] in return for supporting the truth (*ḥaqq*) and the abovementioned [Shaykh Muwaffaq] in order that he may proceed as successor of the former [responsible=*mutawallī*] and as servant of God and the Druze community.

I hereby declare, for the completion [23] of the will, that the entire property that God, may He be exalted, had bestowed upon me, [the property] which has not been mentioned in either this will or the will [in favor of] my daughter Hinā Amīn Ṭarīf, which consists of buildings[?], plain or rocky land or property [of the kind of] olive plantation —the above-mentioned, unlike what is mentioned [24] in the two wills— will be in favor of my daughter Mayyāsa Amīn Ṭarīf and her sisters Hinā, Jawhara, Munīra and Fāṭima,[67] to be [distributed] among them equally, each of them receiving the same [portion] as the others with no discrimination between them. Thereupon, I return in submission, want [25] and in state of brokenness to the Almighty (*al-'azīz*), the Omnipotent (*al-jabbār*) as well as to the pious masters who fear God, the noble elders [requesting them] to grant me the sincerity of their thoughts, good will and good wish, and to forgive me for any previous [26] wrong, oblivion, negligence, disobedience [to God] (*'iṣyān*), abundance of sins, and deprivation (*ḥirmān*) [of someone of some right such as inheritance]. Surely, they qualify to forgive and pardon [me]. They deserve from God ample recompense and charity (*iḥsān*). God is generous, a benefactor to anyone who resorts to Him and seeks [His] help.

[27] March 20, 1985.

The recorder of this handwritten will

[28] The one who acknowledges his weakness and inability, the one who obeys [29] [God] of his own accord, the despised submissive [servant] in front of Him, may He be exalted.

[30] Amīn Ṭarīf [signature]

A witness signing with his hand
The despised Zaydān Nabawānī

A witness signing with his hand
The despised Salmān Ṣāliḥ al-'Āmir
fingerprint (*baṣma*[?])

P.S.

In August 1997 a Druze Religious Council, composed on the basis of the regulations proposed by the former Minister of Religious Affairs (see above, p. 143), was finally established. The DRC convened and elected Shaykh Muvaffaq Ṭarīf as the Spiritual Leader of the Druze Community. An agrcement was signed between the disputed parties to the effect that: 1. the DRC will be elected in general elections every five years; 2. the Spiritual Leader will be elected from among its members; and 3. the proceeds of the Druze waqf will be under the supervision of an accountant and a lawyer. (See *Haaretz*, December 11, 1997).

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67 Bequests of real estate in favor of daughters and other females is not a common practice among the Druze. As a rule, the Druze will, which is not bound by the *ultra vires* doctrine, is used as an instrument to exclude females and cognates from intestate succession with a view to concentrating the patrimony in the hands of sons and, in their absence, agnatic descendants (for more details see Layish, *Marriage*, pp. 337-52). In the case under review Shaykh Amīn had no sons.

Alevis in Turkey - Alawites in Syria: Similarities and Differences

MARIANNE ARINGBERG-LAANATZA

Has a paradigm shift occurred in the history of the Alevis and the Alawites? This question is focused upon in this paper, where the similarities and differences between the Alevis and the Alawites are analyzed. The former discrimination of the two minorities during the Ottoman period is over. The policy of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey and the one of France in Syria opened the doors for the Alevis and the Alawites to get some influence in their societies respectively. The political influence of the Alevis and the Alawites has increased remarkably during the last seventy years. The changes of their socio-economic conditions need to be highlighted to understand their new positions, as well as the response to such a development from other groups in Turkey and Syria - aspects including both frustration and acceptance.

The Background of the Alevis and Alawites

Different Hypotheses on the Origin of the Alevis and Alawites Respectively

The Alevis in Turkey generally describe their origin as one of homogeneous Turkish or Kurdish tribal background depending on mother tongue, just as the Alawites in Syria describe their origin as a homogeneous Arab tribal one. The Turkish speaking Alevis declare that their sectarian orientation has its roots in a pure Turkish Islamic context with Turkish spiritual leaders - and not in other ethnic or religious contexts. The statement of the Arab speaking Alawites is a similar one, namely, that their development of sectarian orientation has its roots in a pure Arab Islamic context with Arab spiritual leaders - and not in other ethnic or religious contexts. The eventual linkage between Alevism and Alawitism is therefore normally completely denied. Like all other religious communities or sects, these sects have established their beliefs on their own myths, which from a religious point of view have to be respected as such.

Just as religious traditions and myths have their legitimacy, other historical aspects also have their legitimacy as complementary socio-economic aspects. The approach of this paper is based on perspectives linked to socio-economic empirical conflict research.

The Conquest and Islamization of Anatolia and the Islamization of Jabal Ansariyya

The Turkish tribal invasion of Anatolia[1] started following the battle of Manzikert in 1071, when the Turks captured the Byzantine emperor, Romanos I, and opened

1 Ira M. Lapidus, gives an overview of the Islamization in Anatolia in the chapter on Turkish migrations and Ottoman empire in his work: *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

the way for a massive migration and changes in the region. It was the Oghuz people, who had already established the Seljuk empire in Iran and Iraq, who established another Seljuk state and society in the up to then Byzantine Anatolia. They were organized in small bands of warriors called ghazis under the leadership of chieftains (*beys*) or Sufi holy-men (*babas*).[2]

The Christian population, mainly Greek, Armenian, Georgian and Syrian, which had already been reduced by previous invasions, were further decreased in number by warfare and migration and by conversion to Islam.[3] The Sufis were particularly important in Anatolia during the Seljuk regime. Members of different Sufi brotherhoods, like the Qalandariya and the Rifa'iya, migrated into Anatolia from Inner Asia and Eastern Iran; others were driven westward by the Mongol invasions. For the migrating Turkish people, the Sufi *babas* provided leadership. They established their residences in newly settled areas and helped to bring those into cultivation. Hospices (*tekkes*) and mills were built, orchards planted, schools developed. They provided for the safety of travelers, and mediated in disputes among tribes. Rural Sufis also adopted a tolerant attitude toward Christians and facilitated the conversion of Greek and Armenian peoples to Islam. In Anatolia, Hacı Bektaş (d.c.1297) was widely revered. He preached a version of Islam which synthesized Sunni and Shi'i beliefs and Muslim and Christian religious practices.[4]

Muslim missionaries appealed to a demoralized Christian population which saw their defeat as a sign of punishment from God or even of the end of history. Muslim holy-men further appealed to Christians by presenting Islam as a syncretism of Muslim and Christian religious beliefs. Christian holy places were taken over; Jesus was venerated by Muslims. But the Christians themselves often brought Christian belief and practices after converting to Islam. Baptism, worship of saints, the celebration of Easter and belief in the healing efficacy of churches were introduced from Christianity into Islam.[5]

The roots of Alevism has to be sought for in the context where a mingling process took place in large areas of Anatolia between abandoned Christian communities and Turkish as well as Kurdish tribes, which had adopted different forms of Muslim Sufism.

The Alawites in Syria, originally named Nuṣayrīs[6] had already established their religious sect during the tenth century in Jabal Ansariyya near Latakia. Their secret faith is described as a blend of ancient Syrian or Phoenician paganism (mainly the worship of the triad: the sun, the moon and the stars or sky), possibly influenced by Christian Trinitarianism (Holy Trinity) as well as by various Christian ceremonies and feasts, and largely manifested in a Shi'i-Ismaili fashion with adherence to Imam Ali, Prophet Mohammed's first cousin and son-in-law, and to Salman al-Farisi, one of Mohammed's Persian followers.

For centuries the Alawites were landless serfs, agricultural workers or servants of urban Sunni and Christian landowners and proprietors. The Alawites were detested by the Sunni Muslim majority population for their religious heresy and cultural backwardness. A fatwa was issued in the fourteenth century by a distinguished Sunni Muslim scholar, Ibn Taymiyya, stating that they were greater infidels than

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2 *Ibid.*, p. 304.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 304.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 305.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 308-9.

6 Moshe Ma'oz, *Asad, The Sphinx of Damascus*, New York, 1988, p. 19. (Regarding the name Nusayri Ma'oz mentions that it derives from Abu Shuayb Muhammed Ibn Nusayri, a Shi'i religious scholar who lived in Basra, Iraq, in the ninth century, while the name "Alawis" might indicate the worshippers of Ali.

Court proceedings in Elazığ after the Kurdish-Alevi insurrection in Dersim, Tunceli, in the 1930s.

Jews, Christians and many other idolaters and that waging war against them should please Allah.[7]

The Alawites were not only persecuted on religious grounds, but were also considered as 'a wicked race' who deserved 'no mercy, no protection'. They were abused, reviled and ground down by exactions, and their women and children were sometimes led into captivity and disposed of by sale. During the last year of Ottoman rule, their economic conditions gravely deteriorated and they would frequently sell or hire out their daughters to the townspeople, often Sunni Muslim families.[8]

Under the Ottomans

By the fifteenth century more than 90 percent of the population in Anatolia was Muslim, compared to the period before the Turkish migration started, when the vast majority was Christian. Some of this change was due to the immigration of a large Muslim population, as earlier mentioned, but in great part it was due to the conversion of Christians to Islam. These conversions were basically due to the breakdown of Anatolian Christianity through the weakening of the Byzantine state and the Greek Orthodox church, and the collapse of Anatolian society in face of the Turkish migrations. In the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Turks expelled bishops and metropolitans from their seats. Church revenues and properties were confiscated. Hospitals, schools, orphanages and monasteries were destroyed or abandoned, and the Anatolian Christian population was left without leadership and social services. The remaining Christian clerics had to turn to the Turkish authorities to handle internal disputes on terms which only further weakened Christian institutions.[9]

7 Ma'oz, *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 20
9 Lapidus, *ibid.*, p. 308.

The Alevis were discriminated against during the Ottoman era. Periodic massacres of Alevis have been recorded since the sixteenth century,[10] although some influence could be exercised through the representatives of the Bektashi religious order associated with the Janissaries until the last mentioned organization was dissolved, abolished and destroyed in 1826.[11] The Alevis were excluded from the military organization as well as from jobs within the administration.

The National/Cultural Identification: Turkish, Arab or Kurdish

In reality, the Alevis are far from being a homogeneous group, as stated above. They contain, ethnic and linguistic cleavages. Four different language groups are found among them, namely Turkish, Arabic, Zaza and Kurmanci, the latter two being Persian- and Kurdish-related language systems.[12] The identification is deeply related to the mother tongue of each group. The consequence of this phenomenon is the almost total lack of intralingual cooperation or connections.

The number of Alevis is a subject of dispute. Some Alevi sources claim that they represent up to 40 per cent of the Turkish population, while most scholars estimate their proportion rather to be about 20 per cent.[13] In the beginning of the 90s they presented themselves as in total 20 million,[14] other sources say not more than 15 million. It is, however, clear that their number has risen since the middle of the 80s when the Alevi Turks were estimated to range from about 3 million to over 8 million. In addition to Kurdish Alevis, which are to be about 25 percent of the Kurds in Turkey (1.5 to 2 millions),[15] many of Turkey's about 1 million Arabs are Alawites. Most of these, who live in or near Hatay/Alexandretta Province, are Nusayris and retain their ties with the Alawites in Syria.[16]

The Turkish Alevis, as described above, do not relate themselves in any way to the Alawites in Syria, although they - to some extent - have a common historical background based on elements of Christians converted to these special forms of Islam, where both the sects have integrated and have preserved essential parts of the Christian tradition like Easter and drinking of wine, and none of them construct any mosques. Their identification seems anyhow to be deeply related to those geopolitical tribal contexts of Arabic, Turkish or Kurdish background into which they were once integrated or from which they originated. These ethnic-language identities function as disintegrating and isolating factors. These attitudes, in combination with the use of *taqiyya*, which is an Islamic term for dispenzation from requirements of religion under compulsion or threat of injury,[17] makes it, however, very difficult to prove. Maybe the different language identity together with the influence of

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10 Philip Robbins, *Turkey and The Middle East*, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1991, p. 8.

11 Lapidus, *ibid.*, p. 598. In the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Ottomans brought the Sufi orders under state control, and the Bektashis were taken under the wing of the Ottomans as chaplains to the janissaries. They lived and marched with the soldiers and provided them with magical protection in battle. See Lapidus, *ibid.*, p. 326.

12 Robins, *ibid.*, p. 9.

13 Robins, *ibid.*, p. 8. See also Frederick W. Frey, *The Turkish Political Elite*, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge and Massachusetts, 1965, p. 147.

14 In appeals spread by a number of Alevi organizations in Turkey in the beginning of the 90s. In appeals spread by a number of Alevi organizations in Turkey in the beginning of the 90s.

15 David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1997, p. 10.

16 *Turkey, A Country Study*, Area Handbook Series, Library of Congress, Washington, 1988, p. 87.

17 Ma'oz, *ibid.*, pp. 20-21; Robins, *ibid.*, pp. 8-9: ...the Alevis have tended to deal with their own persecution not by self-assertion but through the practice of *taqiyya*, a tactical public disavowal of their faith.

Phoenician paganism in the Nusayri community are enough to explain the absence of any formal recognition and acceptance of each other - or are they applying the *taqiyya* towards outsiders?

The Alawites constitute around 12 to 15 per cent of the Syrian population.[18] As mentioned above, their religious sect was established during the tenth century in Jabal Ansariyya near Latakia. This is still their principal region although the urbanization process in combination with an increased number of Alawites within the military and political networks of decision-makers on different levels has had its impact on their presence in other areas and particularly in Damascus.

From the Kurdish-Alevi insurrection in Dersim: One of the insurgents, Alişir, together with his wife.

Regarding the about 1 million Arab speaking Alawites in Turkey, who are mostly living in or near the Hatay/Alexandretta Province, the following could be mentioned: Turkey agreed in 1921 on a compromise with France, who had received the mandate for the whole of Syria from the League of Nations. The Province or Sanjak was to be administrated under the terms of the mandate in return for extensive cultural concessions to the large Turkish population. When, however, the French proposed in 1936 to grant independence to Syria, including the Sanjak, Ankara reacted negatively, and in 1939 it was instead formally incorporated into Turkey. Still the question is controversial whether the Turks or the Arabs were the largest single group in 1939.[19] Of the total population, approximately 220 000, 39 percent were ethnic Turks, 28 percent Alawites, 11 percent Armenians, 10 percent Sunni Arabs, 8 percent other Christians and the rest Kurds, Caucasians, and Jews.

The most down-trodden peasants were the Arabic-speaking Alawites, who were exposed to the exploitation of a Sunni landowing class composed mainly of Turks. When the Sanjak was transferred to Turkey, many left. After two months, about 50 000 refugees had already entered Syria and out of these some 10 000 were Alawites.[20]

How the Position of the Alevis in Turkey Developed.

Kemal Atatürk and Secularism

Kemal Atatürk vigorously pursued the institutional secularization of the country, which included the abolition of the caliphate, the office that, in Islamic usage, symbolized the Sultan's spiritual powers and provided him with authority over all

18 Ma'oz, *ibid.*, p. ix; and Alasdair Drysdale and General H. Blake, *The Middle East and North Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 185.

19 Robins, *ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

20 Philips S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, Princeton University Press, London, 1987, pp. 495-6, 513.

Muslims concerned. The unorthodox but highly influential dervish, or mystical orders were also suppressed by Atatürk, and locally based religious education was abolished. Together with the ideologically secularist and modernist urban elite, the Atatürk regime attempted to uproot the Islamic institutions that had bound religion and state together.

Although Atatürk was successful in ensuring that Islam could not be used in the political process to threaten his position or his reforms during his lifetime, Islam did not disappear - only lay dormant. The religious orders were not destroyed - only forced underground. Among the military, the intelligentsia, and in the major cities, the reforms had a wide impact, but not with the peasantry in rural areas or with the new rural migrants to the big cities.[21]

For the first time, the Alevi Turks got an opportunity to improve their position in society, and to a large extent they supported Atatürk. The elimination of all Sunni Muslim establishments and the separation of the religious institutions from those of the state, put the Alevis formally on an equal level with the Sunnis. Although the Alevis also found their religious institutions, the *tekke*s, suppressed,[22] their pro-government attitude was the dominant one, and through applying the *taqiyya*, they could in secret continue to be true Alevis, (and the same goes for the Alawites). As for their relations to the Armenians, the Alevi Kurds had been notable for protecting them in their areas, as they did in 1915.[23]

During the Kurdish rebellion in Turkey in 1925, the Alevi Kurds fiercely attacked the Sunni insurgents. This dual character of the rebellion can be explained. Although the aim of the leadership was an autonomous or even independent Kurdistan, the rank and file acted from religious motives, wanting to restore the old order with the caliphate, while the Alevi Kurds - because prejudice against them were deeply rooted among the Sunnis - preferred the secularist tendencies of the republic.[24]

The Left and the Alevis, and the Threat from the Right-wing Parties during the 60s and 70s

When Turkey initiated a multiparty system in the aftermath of World War II, the policies changed and the Kemalist étatism was replaced by liberalism. When the Democratic Party (DP) achieved power in 1950, its program was to transfer the state economic enterprises to the private sector. The goal was to transfer Turkey into a "little America" within a short period, which failed because of too low domestic savings, too limited amounts of foreign aid and credits, lack of administrative experience in handling a liberal economy and inability to hinder a remarkable increase of inflation. This process has since then been repeated almost every tenth year. It has always ended up in economic instability and the development of political instability, creating regime crises and take-overs by the army,[25] in which the struggle between leftists and rightists has to a great extent been a struggle between Alevis and Sunnis.

The role of the Turkish military leadership has however been accepted since 1961, when article 111 of the constitution provided for the creation of the National

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21 See Robins, *ibid.*, pp. 38-39; and *Turkey, A Country Study*, pp. 88-89.

22 See Robins, *ibid.*, p. 8; the rites were banned by Atatürk's legislation against the tarikats, or religious orders, in 1925. See also McDowall, *ibid.*, p. 196; and *Turkey, A Country Study*, pp. 48-50 and 127-8.

23 McDowall, *ibid.*, p. 128.

24 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey, A Modern History*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1993, p. 178.

25 Irvin Cemil Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak, *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 20-21.

Security Council.[26] The generals have ideologically generally been more sympathetic to centre-right parties (like the Justice Party, JP, led by Demirel) with a program promoting capitalism in Turkey despite the opposition of traditional conservative groups, while they have been more hostile to socialist groups and parties (like the Worker's Party of Turkey, WPT), to which Alevi sympathies were directed. Earlier, the generals had supported the Republican People's Party (RPP), the heritage from Atatürk, but in 1972 they became more ambivalent as the party moved in the direction of social democracy and a more independent foreign policy, which was against the interest of the generals and NATO membership. The image of the RPP under the leadership of Atatürk's former chief lieutenant, İnönü, had by the late 1970s become, in part, identified with Alevi leftists and Kurdish separatism. At the same time, Demirel's JP became increasingly linked with militant Sunni fundamentalism, as well as rightist trade, teachers, and police unions or associations.[27]

During the 70s, terrorism greatly increased in Turkey. Several attacks were made on the Alevi community. The Alevis, who generally supported secularism, voted therefore, as stated earlier, to a large extent for the Republican People's Party (RPP). They became the targets of the ultra-nationalist members of the Nationalist Action Party's Grey Wolves, who considered them communists. The major attacks took place in Malatya, Sivas and Bingöl in 1978.[28] The prime minister at that time, Bülent Ecevit, was and still is himself a supporter of the Alevis.[29] Communal violence against the Alevis continued and there was a major attack in Çorum in July 1980. In September the Army took over the power again.[30]

The most important factor in the success of the neo-fascist party, the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) during the 70s, was its use of an aggressive and fanatical religious ideology directed against so called internal enemies, namely communists, Alevis and Kurds. Party publications spoke of the establishment of a "Great Turkish State that would once again dominate the entire world", and the NAP would cleanse its "national state" of all minorities. The party's Turkism and hostility to minorities was primarily a tactical issue, so in areas with national and sectarian differences like Kurds and Alevis, these groups were regarded as the foremost enemies after communists, while poor and oppressed groups within the Sunni Turkish community were stirred up against the privileged.[31]

The Alevi Kurds and Political Mobilization

The Alevi Kurds in Turkey may represent long-standing differences of origin. The Alevi religion is strong in central Anatolia, particularly in the Dersim region. The large overlap between the Zaza speakers and the Alevis raises the question of a

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26 According to Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 11-14, this body includes the Chief of the General Staff and the commanders of the land, sea, and air forces, and assists the cabinet in the making of decisions related to national security and coordination. Its functions have increased since then, and the armed forces have become virtually an autonomous institution. In 1961 the armed forces were also brought directly into business and industry through the creation of the Army Mutual Assistance Association (OYAK).

27 Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey, A political Dilemma*, Westview Special Studies on the Middle East, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990, pp. 24-25.

28 Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 172.

29 Ecevit has repeatedly stressed his deep sympathy and understanding of the Alevis. Recently he did so in his speech at the Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm in October 1997.

30 Ahmad, *ibid.*, p. 176.

31 Irvin Cemil Schick and Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak, *Turkey in Transition; New Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 196-205.

special connection between them.[32] The relations between Sunni and Alevi Kurds generally have been fractious since the Sunni-Shi'i struggle in Anatolia in the sixteenth century. As mentioned above, in the 1920s during the uprisings in Kurdistan against the Kemalists, the Alevis were divided and frustrated. On the one hand, several Alevi tribes and leaders supported the idea of the autonomy or even independence of Kurdistan, on the other hand most of the Alevis did not trust the Sunnis and their intentions. To many Sunnis the restoration of the Caliphate was the central issue.[33]

During the 50s the Kurdish countryside became once more the stronghold of Islam, an environment hostile to, and dangerous for, radicals of the secular left. The Alevi Kurds feared this development. The majority of Sunni Kurds felt closer to Sunni Turks than they did to Alevi Kurds.[34]

In the late 40s and early 50s, large numbers in Turkish society began to advocate a return to traditional practices. It became clear that the religious sentiment among the people had never weakened but rather that public practice, especially in the metropolitan areas, had declined. An important issue in the resurgence of Islam was the decision to reintroduce religious education in the schools in the late 40s. The Sufi orders were permitted to resume their activities after 1950.[35]

In 1961, when a Turkish constitution for the first time allowed the establishment of a socialist party, the Turkish Workers' Party (TWP) was established. Kurds and Alevis became the backbone of the TWP at the end of the 60s. Many were attracted to the party because of the land ownership question and the grip of the agha class, while others were attracted to its leftist ideas. The Kurdish issue was also highligthed by the TWP. The party was declared illegal in 1971.[36]

The violent confrontations within Turkish society at the end of the 70s and in the first half of 1980 were attacks by rightists on leftists, Turks on Kurds, Sunnis - both Kurds and Turks - on Alevis. In such a climate Abdullah Öcalan initiated in 1974 a specifically Kurdish national liberation movement based on Marxism-Leninism. He, as well as those around him, were former students in Ankara belonging to different left-wing groups. Alevi-Kurdish background was common. They severed all connection with Turkish Left groups and withdrew into Kurdish areas in 1975 to build up bases in Urfa, Elazığ, Maraş and some other places. This was the start of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). The enemies of the PKK were "the fascists, agents of the state and those who supported them; the Turkish Left, which had subordinated the Kurdish question to the leftist revolution, and the exploitative Kurdish landlord class". In 1984 they launched the first series of attacks on Turkish forces in the Kurdish region.[37] Since then the confrontations have continued and their intensity has increased.

Some Kurdish Alevis supported the pro-Kurdish People's Labour Party (HEP), which was formed by former Kurdish parliament members expelled from the Social Democrat Populist Party (SHP). HEP was banned in 1993, and following that, some ex-HEP deputies formed a new group, the Democracy Party (DEP). In the run-up to the local elections on March 1994, the DEP formally withdrew after the assassina-

32 McDowall, *ibid.*, p. 10. McDowall raises the question as to whether the Zaza-speaking Alevis were formerly Sunnis, but consider the opposite to be more likely, namely that the Zaza-speaking Sunnis were Alevis or belonged to a related sect. (Likewise in southern Kurdistan it is probably no accident that the Ahl-i Haqq religious group uses the Kurdish language/dialect Gurani as its sacred language. The Ahl-i Haqq religion bears many similarity to Alevi belief. See *ibid.*, p. 10).

33 McDowall, *ibid.*, pp. 137, 184, 194 and 204.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 397.

35 *Turkey, A Country Study*, p. 129-31.

36 McDowall, *ibid.*, pp. 406-7.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 418-9.

tion of party members, bomb attacks on its headquarters and branch officers, and the arrest of many members. Another new Kurdish party, the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) was formed.[38]

The pattern shows that the Kurdish Alevis are more separated in the 90s from their Turkish Alevi counterparts and their parties and organizations than during the 60s and 70s.

The Neo-Islamic Trend

The public "reintroduction" and strengthening of Islam in the 80s is obvious. Religious education of primary and secondary school children was made compulsory in the 1982 Constitution. The number of students in the Koran schools increased from about 68 500 to over 155 000 during the decade. These schools are organized and financed by the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and they had a completely religious curriculum and were open to students beyond elementary-school. The Directorate had 20 officials working abroad in 1980 and in the end of the 80s this figure had risen to 628. During the 80s and the beginning of the 90s about 1 500 new mosques were built each year and from 1979 to 1989, the staff in the Directorate increased from some 50 000 to almost 85 000. Mosque building continued to be a mixture of public and private enterprise in the late 80s and 90s.[39]

The National Security Council (NSC) thought that Islam could be a factor of unity - undermining the left and a bridge between the Turks and the Kurds, and this Islamic approach was adopted by the Motherland Party government under the leadership of Özal. Such a policy got the opposite result and the mobilization among the Alevis became stronger and more outspoken then ever before.

Several cases of tension and confrontation on a small scale have occurred between militant Sunni Muslims and Alevis during the 90s. One event deserves particular mention, namely the incident in Sivas, where militant Sunni Muslims tried to burn participants of an Alevi cultural conference to death in their hotel at night.

In December 1995, the Islamist Welfare Party or *Refah Partisi* (RP) won the largest number of votes in the general election, raising the prospect of an Islamist presence in the government. Since the 1994 municipal elections, many of Turkey's biggest cities, including Greater Istanbul and Ankara, have had Welfare Party mayors. The Secularists including the Alevis as well as the EU and US became worried. It seemed as if "Turkey's very gateway to Europe had been taken over by the Islamists" through the RP and its leader Necmettin Erbakan.[40]

The Mass Demonstration to Defend the Constitution

During the 90s some very large demonstrations have taken place under slogans in defense of the constitution, and particularly its statements regarding secularism. The secularists as well as the Alevis have felt threatened by the new Neo Islamic Trend. Their anxiety is based both on the prospect of their personal freedom within the Turkish society and the image as well as the status of Turkey in Europe and other Western societies.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution, providing that the exercise of this right does not threaten the "indivisible integrity of the state". It is stated that no one is to be compelled to worship or to participate in religious ceremonies or rites. Primary and secondary schools are required to provide religious instruction under

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38 *Ibid.*, pp. 438-9.

39 Ahmad, *ibid.*, pp. 219-21; and *Turkey, A Country Study*, pp. 130-1.

40 Erturul Kürkçü, "The Crisis of the Turkish State", *Middle East Report*, April-June 1996, Washington, pp. 3-4.

state supervision and control. The principle of secularism is reaffirmed in the provision that forbids "even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets".[41]

Since the end of 1997 this policy has changed dramatically and the normal elementary school will be prolonged for three years to prevent the choice of religious schools. With Ecevit back in the government the status and protection of the Alevis has been upgraded. This policy became possible since the party leader of the Welfare Party, Erbakan, was obliged to leave the political stage and accused of acting against the Secular Constitution.

The Alevi Reaction to the Pan-Turkist Trend

Although the significantly strong Turkish identity of the Alevi Turks has had and still has a positive impact on their attitude towards the new Republics in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, there are also signs of hesitation among the Alevis based on earlier experience of the ultra-Turkish movements like the Nationalist Action Party under Türkeş's leadership during the 70s. The policy of this neo-fascist party with its goal of establishing a Great Turkish State was also directed not only against Kurds but also against Alevis.[42] The influence and revival of Sunni-dominated fundamentalism and Sufism, like the Nakshibandi, constituted other reasons for hesitation.[43]

The Alevi Attitude Towards the European Economic Community/Union (EEC/EU)

The attitude of many Alevis towards the European Economic Community and its successor the European Union is positive. It is expressed particularly through their support of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the True Path Party (DYP). The main reasons for this stance are the following:

- the modern historical identification with Europe based on the policy of Kemal Atatürk could be confirmed through Turkey's membership of the EEC/EU
- the expectations that the EU will guarantee both a democratization and a liberalization of the Turkish community, and
- EU-membership would eliminate future opportunities of any re-Islamization of society and any other future threat against secularism as a basic part of the constitution, which includes security to the Alevis against any marginalization by the Sunni Muslim majority in Turkey.

The negative attitude adopted by the EU towards Turkish EU-membership has therefore greatly upset the Alevis.

How the position of the Alawites in Syria Developed

The Alawites during the French Protection and the Years after the Independence

Syria became a French mandate in 1920. The serious challenge to the French during the first years came from the countryside, particularly from the Alawite moun-

41 *Turkey, A Country Study*, p. 246.

42 Schick, *ibid.*, pp. 56-57, 196-205.

43 Sami Zubaida, "Turkish Islam and National Identity", *Middle East Report*, April-June 1996, Washington, pp. 10-15.

tains. In the Jabal Ansariyya there was a state of complete anarchy, filled with roving bands of Alawite rebels who held the territory "at their mercy".[44]

In December 1924 the Alawites, whose share of the Syrian population is between twelve and fourteen percent, won their own independent state, a Federal Territory, attached to the Syrian Mandated Territory. The separate Alawite state had a French Governor and was to last until 1936, when it became part of a unified Syrian state in preparation for the Treaty of Independence with France. The Alawites expressed grave doubts about unity, mostly for sectarian reasons.[45] The Treaty was, however, never ratified by the French Government. The Mandate didn't end until 1943.

Parallel to the actions of Alawite separatists, a propaganda campaign was launched with sectarian implications supported by the French, other Alawites, mostly intellectuals and professionals joined, with the League of Alawite-Muslim Youth to combat separatism and to push for Syrian unity.[46]

During the first years after independence, the Syrian government's efforts to eliminate sectarianism and forge a single nation were energetic - and harsh. Revolts in Alawi- and Druze-populated districts were violently crushed.[47]

The Alawites and the Ba'ath

Since the 40s many ambitious Alawite youth have entered the army or the Homs Military Academy. By the early 60s, many non-commissioned and junior officers were Alawites. In 1963, Salah Jadid, an Alawite officer, assumed control over military appointments and promotions and purged some seven hundred officers, replacing more than half of them with Alawites. Three years later he carried out a coup based on the Alawite network. In 1970 Hafez Asad made another coup and brought even more Alawites into top posts in the Ba'ath party, security services, and key army units. Then about two out of three of Military Academy students and over half of the top ranks of the officer corps had an Alawite background. The number of Alawites in the Ba'ath party also increased.[48]

Recruitment to the Ba'ath party was characterized by those who were outside the system of connections, patronage or kin on which the old regime was built. The minorities and the rural lower middle class as well as educated sons of peasants formed groups of importance in the "new" Syrian society, and particularly the Alawites. President Assad has now, to a certain extent, reached out to Sunnis, and their presence in the Ba'ath has been growing. Although a transformation of the party from a revolutionary movement has taken place, it is still a platform for Assad together with the army and the bureaucracy.[49] Assad and his fellow Alawite officers constitute the real power elite of the government and of the party.

Not only economic reasons, such as the advantages of the land reforms, made the Ba'ath party attractive to the Alawites, but also because the social structure of the Alawites could be used in a way within the party, and especially in their tribal network.[50]

44 Khoury, *ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 466.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 522.

47 *Syria Unmasked, the Suppression of Human Rights by the Asad Regime*, Human Right Watch, 1991, p. 92.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

49 Alan Richards and John Waterbury, *Political Economy of the Middle East, State, Class, and Economic Development*, Westview Press, 1990, p. 313.

50 David Roberts, *The Ba'ath and the Creation of Modern Syria*, Crown Helm, Beckenhem, 1987, p. 24.

There are, however, many Alawites who are sharply critical of the regime. Many intellectual Alawites are active in the secular opposition parties, especially in the Party for Communist Action, which is dominated by Alawites.[51]

Confiscation of Land Owned by Sunni Arab Landlords

The pro-reform land-tenure system in Syria as well as in other regions in the Middle East can be characterized as large estates, accounting for a quarter to four-fifths of privately owned land and in the main tilled by sharecroppers; a huge number of very small peasant properties, often with highly fragmented holdings; short and precarious leases; high rents, large debts, rising land values; and a growing landless proletariat earning very low wages. An attack on the political and economic power of the land owners lay behind the land reforms throughout the region, and the reformers could expropriate the land of their enemies and Syrian Ba'athists under their Alawite (and to some extend Druze) leadership seized the lands of urban, mostly Sunni merchant absentee landlords.[52] More than sixty percent of the population of the Latakia province consisted of impoverished Alawite peasants in the mountains and plains behind the coastal towns. A significant portion of the land farmed by Alawites was owned by Sunnis from Latakia and Hama. Clearly, divisions of wealth exacerbated religious divisions.[53]

Don't Talk about Alawites...

Although the Ba'athist regime in Syria has in many ways raised the status of the Alawites, it has of course, never presented it as such. State measures such as irrigation were used to recast rather than to reinforce the social-class structure. To illustrate this, the development of the new irrigated areas in the Ghab region could be mentioned. The Syrian Ba'athists sponsored state cooperatives and brought in poor farmers from other areas as part of the land-reform. By carefully mixing different ethnic groups, the regime has sought to promote its vision of a "new society", no longer composed of Alawites, or Druze, or Sunnis, but of Syrian small farmers, dependent on the state.[54]

There are things no editor may ever allow to be printed. Not only criticism of the President Asad, but also any mention of an "Alawite role" in the regime. Even any other reference to the "Alawite" as such or any other minority is taboo. Critical references to the military and the security agencies are also strictly forbidden.[55]

The Clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood

Sunni Muslim opposition to the Alawite sectarian regime increased during the late 70s and the early 80s. This opposition was manifested in political assassinations of Alawite military officers as well as governmental and Ba'athist officers. A kind of guerrilla struggle culminated in February 1982, when a large group of Muslim Brotherhood initiated an armed rebellion in the city of Hama. They took control of the city after killing tens of government and military personnel.[56]

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51 Syria Unmasked, p. 94.

52 Richards and Waterbury, *ibid.*, p. 148.

53 Khoury, *ibid.*, p. 520.

54 Richards and Waterbury, *ibid.*, p. 168.

55 *Syria Unmasked*, p. 116.

56 Moshe Ma'oz, "The Emergence of Modern Syria", in *Syria under Assad*, M. Ma'oz and A. Yaniv (eds.), Croom Helm, Beckenhem, 1986, p. 32.

The government accused Syria's Muslim Brotherhood for the above mentioned assassination campaign against Alawite army officers, and when the Brotherhood seized Hama, President al-Assad took the decision to ring the city with artillery and leveled parts of it in order to flush out the brethren.[57] Some 30.000 inhabitants were killed. The brutal suppression of the Hama revolt, as well as other harsh measures employed by the government, have deterred the Muslim Brotherhood and their followers from organising another similar uprising up to now.[58]

The Power Elite in Syria and the Risk of Revenge

A crucial question is what will happen to the Alewites regarding their position in Syria after President Asad has passed away. After the riots in Hama etc. in the 80s, the dominant opinion was that a confrontation between the majority of Sunni Muslims and the Alawites would be unavoidable. Such a risk exists, but it is important to stress the consolidation of the country through the nation-building institutions which have been established under Asad's leadership. A new political community has been developed based on Alawites, sections of other religious minorities, large numbers of Sunni Muslim peasants, workers and other lower-class people.[59] The younger generation, including a large percentage of well-educated people, who have, to a great extent, benefited from Asad's policy, may stay loyal to the system.[60]

The military elite contains not only Alawite alternatives, but also possibilities to establish a collective Alawite-Sunni leadership after Asad, as the recruitment of Sunnis has been carried out in a very tactical way during the last twenty years. Through a slow process of economic liberalization the platform for the private sector is expanding, creating new opportunities for several important Christian and Sunni Muslim families.[61] Such a development can also strengthen stability in a post-Asad scenario.

Possible conclusions to be drawn from the above mentioned aspects regarding the position of the Alawites could be the following:

- it seems to be brighter than it looked ten to fifteen years ago, and
- they will be less influential after Asad, but not marginalized to such extent or treated so badly as before.

To some extent it can even be correct to state that a kind of change has already occurred in the framework of the economic liberalization, which slowly, step by step, is taking place in Syria. It is obvious that not all the Alawites have been privileged and there are also other families and clan groups who have benefited from Asad's policy. President Asad has both surrounded himself with a number of highly experienced and trusted lieutenants and opened the door for several influential families and groups of Christians and Sunni Muslims in the business community.[62] This combination works probably in favour of stability.

The Alawites and Regional Political and Economic Integration

If the interests of the Alawites in general can be said to be expressed through the leadership of President Asad, it is possible to draw some conclusions. Asad's policy has been characterized by his intents in keeping all the other regional political actors

57 Richards and Waterbury, *ibid.*, p. 295.
58 Ma'oz, *Syria under Assad*, p. 32.
59 *Ibid.*, pp. 193-6.
60 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
61 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
62 Hisham Melhem, "Syria between two transitions", *Middle East Report*, Spring 1997, Washington.

at a distance, always anxiously observing every step towards cooperation or integration between any of the other regional political actors. This strategy consolidates the position of the Alawites. Any closer cooperation with the neighboring could weaken the position of the Alawites.

His hold on Lebanon has been and is combined with strategic and tactical relations with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This pattern has been particularly clear since the end of the 80s, when the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) was established by Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and the Arab Republic of Yemen (North Yemen) as an organization aimed at balancing the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was established in 1981 by the rich oil-producing states, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Republic. The ACC was considered as a potential challenge and threat to the GCC, a situation that worked in favour of Asad.

To the Alawites it is of course unacceptable to recognize the special religious status referred to by the Hashemites in Jordan.[63] The old question of Greater Syria has still its psychological platform. The cooperation between Iraq and Syria, which at least formally could refer to the same ideological platform, the Ba'athist one, has not been a real option. The Ba'ath party in Iraq has been, and still is, dominated by an urban middle class of Sunni Muslims.

The current cooperation between Turkey and Israel and the close relations between Israel and Jordan is considered as a serious threat to Syria. Recently, joint military exercises took place between Israel, Turkey and the US, adding Jordan as an observer, and such events irritate the Syrian Alawite leadership.

No Formal or Mutual Acceptance and Cooperation Between Alevi and Alawites

Although there are similarities between the religious contexts of Alevism and Alawitism and their common experience in the discrimination and marginalization of their communities over the centuries, there seems to be no interest in or any expressed acceptance of each other - at least not openly. With the application of *taqiyya*, one can of course be cheated, as an outsider.

There are, however, many other reasons why neither acceptance nor cooperation have developed between the Alevi Turks in Turkey and the Alawite Arabs in Syria. The most essential arguments or explanations are the following:

- Both the Alevi Turks and the Alawite Arabs strongly support and openly identify themselves with nationalist parties and movements in their respective countries. In the case of the Alevi Turks, they were given a historical opportunity to improve their social and economic status through supporting nationalism and secularism, developed under the leadership of Kemal Atatürk, and through supporting left-wing- and social democratic parties with a strong Turkish-secular identification. The improvements in the status of the Alawites in Syria is both related, as earlier described, to French policy and the opportunities offered within the military sector in combination with clever and tactical political maneuvers, particularly within the Ba'ath party, which stands for Arab Nationalism and gives space to secularism.

- Although both the Alevi Turks and the Syrian Arab Alawites can blame the Ottomans, and other Sunni Muslim rulers, for centuries of discrimination and, to a

63 The Royal Hashemite family of Jordan claim descent from the Prophet Muhammed. The King of Jordan refers to this relationship as the basis for his spiritual legitimacy, which, from the ideological religious point of view is relevance to the Alawites.

large extent, suppression, there is a difference in their approaches. The Alevi Turks stress the differences between themselves and those representing the old Ottoman establishment and other anti-Alevi Turkish political actors, groups and parties, while Syrian Arab Alawites continue to consider all Turks, either representing the Ottomans or current Sunni Muslim or Alevi parties and groups, as actors hostile or negative to Syria and its national interests.

- A crucial question has been how to achieve a balance between national unification and identification, Turkish in Turkey, Arab in Syria, and the class struggle, while at the same time protecting their respective sectarian interests.

- The Alawites in Syria, like most Syrians, have always criticized the French for handing over the Sanjak of Alexandretta/Hatay to Turkey in 1939. In 1921 the Turkish government had agreed on a compromise with the French, who had received the mandate over the whole of Syria from the League of Nations. Turkey recognized that the Sanjak should be administered under the terms of the mandate in return for extensive cultural concessions. Controversy still surrounds the question of whether the Turks or the Arabs were the largest single group in Alexandretta/Hatay at the time of its incorporation into Turkey.

- In this picture of controversial relationships between the Alevi Turks and the Syrian Arab Alawites, the Kurdish Alevis play a crucial role and are used in the game of Syrian-Turkish antagonism. The Syrian government has at times given support to the PKK.[64] Such an action is, of course, unacceptable to the Alevi Turks.

To conclude, both the Alevi in Turkey and the Alawites in Syria have improved their conditions, socially and economically, in the context of Kemalism and Ba'athism, stressing both secularism and nationalism. Their political influence has become obvious, particularly in Syria. Those left behind on the threshold to the next century are the Alevi Kurds as well as the Arab Alawites in Turkey. The battle in Turkey against the PKK includes, as mentioned above, a tragic Alevi-Kurdish dimension.

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64 McDowall, *ibid.*, pp. 420, 424 and 436.

The Gnosis of Mountaineers and Townspeople. The Religion of the Syrian Alawites, or the Nuṣairīs

TORD OLSSON

The Syrian Nuṣairīs, or the Alawites (‘Alawīūn), as they are presently called, are an ethnic and religious minority group of great interest today, not least politically.The majority of the Syrian people are Sunni Muslims, but the leading stratum of the Ba’th party and the politically important corps of officers consists of Alawites, among them the most powerful men in Syria, such as the president of the Republic, Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Members of his family have played, and play, a prominent role in the political life of the country, such as his brother Rif‘at, who has been the Commander of *Sarāyā d-Difā‘*, the Defence Units that surround Damascus and control its access routes; further his brother Jamīl al-Asad, who has had another leading position within the defence forces that are responsible for the security of the Alawites, and his cousin ‘Adnān al-Asad, who has been Commander of the Struggle Units, *Sarāyā ṣ-Ṣirā‘*.

The turns and alterations of Syrian politics often consist of transfers and regroupings of persons in the Asad family. Recently (January 1997), Jamīl al-Asad has been transferred to Geneva, and Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad’s son Bashār al-Asad has gained reputation as the coming man, and is the object of considerable massmedial speculation.[1]

Ecological and Cultural Conditions

The Alawites compose 12 percent of the population of Syria. We also find Alawites in Southern Turkey, in the provinces of Hatay, Seyhan (Adana), and Içel, in Lebanon, and in Israel after the annexation of the Golan heights. (I have no access to recent statistics, but the population figures for 1970 are: 680 000 in Syria, 185 000 in Turkey, and 9000 in Lebanon.[2] In Syria the Alawites live in small villages along the Mediterranean coast and in the town of Latakia, in the mountains and in the inland plains. But the heart of the Alawite region is the mountain range running parallel to the coast from Turkey to the south; it is named after the Alawites, or Nuṣairīs: Jabal an-Nuṣairīya.[3]

These Nuṣairī mountains, where the bulk of the Alawites live in numerous small villages, can be described as exceptionally poor: there are few rivers and other water resources, hard erosion caused by heavy rains, and lack of fertile soil. Despite the impoverished condition of the area, the Alawites are in the main a rural people, pri-

1 *Al-Watan al-Arabi*, No 1039, Friday January 31, 1997, 20-21.

2 Peter Gubser, “Minorities in power: the Alawites of Syria”, in R. D. Mc Laurin (ed.), *The Political Role of Minority Groups in the Middle East*, New York, 1979, p. 18.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

marily living in the mountains. They constitute the majority of the population of the Latakia province, but are only 11 percent of the population of the city of Latakia. Substantial numbers of Alawites live in the provinces of Homs and Hama, but very few in the principal towns of these provinces. These facts are worth mentioning since they are contrary to the general pattern in the Arab Middle East, where the urban element is otherwise very prominent. In Syria as a whole less than 2/3 of the population is rural. However, in the province of Latakia, where the Alawites dominate in number, more than 3/4 of the population live in the countryside, a figure that reflects a different pattern, implying that the Alawites tend to live away from the cities.[4] These conditions have been slowly changing during the last decades, due to political reasons. I shall return to this below.

This distribution of the Alawite population can be explained by historical causes. Some of these causes are religious and are related to the character of the Alawite religion, which strongly diverges both from Sunni Islam and generally accepted forms of Shia. Because of the distinctive character of their religion, the Alawites have been a persecuted minority from the time of the Mamluks and Ottomans until our own day. They have always had to protect themselves, and the mountains have offered the best place of refuge. Today, with the Alawites in power, this pattern is gradually changing. Many move in to the towns, and the physical defense mechanisms in the political and the religious spheres are superseded by verbal, interpretative, and theological means of defense, and a *taqīya*-principle that is now not only religiously, but also politically warranted. *Taqīya*, "dissimulation", denotes the right to conceal, or give a false impression of one's religious conviction, as a means of defense in menacing situations. I shall soon illustrate by examples these functions, but let us first consider the concrete reasons that would justify such defense measures. What is the nature of the Alawite religion, and how does it diverge from Sunni Islam and from current Shia?

The teaching is secret and very complex, and I shall here only mention a few vital features which could be considered as fundamental to an Alawite and at the same time offensive to an orthodox Muslim and which would warrant the esoteric character of the Alawite religion and the above mentioned defense measures.

The Secret Scriptures and the Apotheosis of ʿAlī

Religiously, the Alawites belong to a secret sect of Shia type, with striking gnostic features. Except for the Mandeans, the Alawites now seem to be the only living group of people who adhere to a mythological gnosis that has been transmitted for centuries as a religious legacy.

The materials for the study of this religion are very rich, but consist mainly of unedited manuscripts in European, Syrian, and Turkish libraries. Most of these manuscripts are unique, each of them existing in one copy only. They are written in a particular religious sociolect which contains dialectal features as well as other non-literary characteristics. The particular sociolect represented by the language of the Alawite texts has, to a certain extent, to do with their esoteric nature. Since they presuppose that a certain amount of secret knowledge has been previously transmitted in some form of tuition, such as initiation or individual study of doctrinal works, they are characterized by a particular jargon, often interspersed with colloquial and dialectal elements. Massignon has rightly characterized this style as "littérature patoisante"

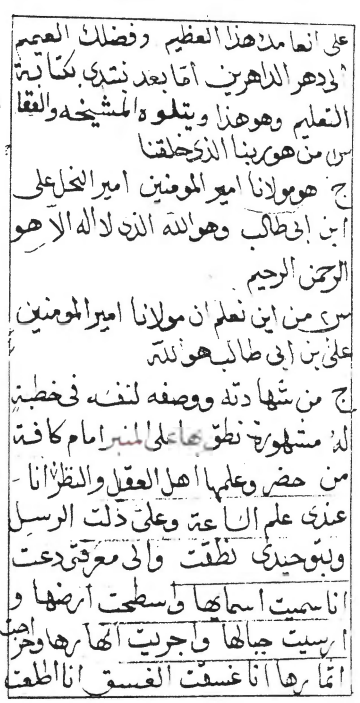
4 *Ibid.*, p. 18f.

with "particularités dialectales".[5] Linguistically, the bulk of Alawite writings thus represents a form of Muslim Middle Arabic (I say "Muslim" since most studies of Middle Arabic have been carried out in the fields of Jewish or Christian Middle Arabic). But above everything, these scriptures are stamped by their esoteric content. Certain key words and gestures which are taken from the esoteric doctrinal and ritual traditions of the Alawites are used as code words for mutual identification among the initiated. From a sociology of language perspective all these features may be considered as expressions of the cultural identity of the group, and are certainly important at the transmission of tradition.

Both Arabic and European scholars have drawn attention to the fact that the doctrine of the divine nature of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is the basic element in the Alawite or Nuṣairī religion - hence the designations "'Alawī" and "Alawite". In general, however, this doctrine has been presented in the scholarly literature as a mere curiosity, and without any serious studies of its expression in the primary sources. One prominent exception is René Dussaud's book *Histoire et religion des Noṣairīs*, (Paris 1900), so far the only monograph in any European language on the religion of the Alawites. The doctrine of the divine nature of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib finds expression in most treatises of the sect, particularly in those used in the initiation rituals. These scriptures are composed as catechisms with questions and answers, often in the form of allegorical Koran interpretation or as quotations from scriptures and speeches ascribed to 'Alī. In these quotations we find a representation of God that is determined by the tension between 'Alī as a *cosmic* being and the *historical* 'Alī, in his role of khalif and imam. The proof of the divine nature of 'Alī is seen in his appearance as a political and religious leader and in his deeds as transmitted in his biographies, but particularly in certain autobiographical statements which are ascribed to 'Alī himself. A pregnant expression of this doctrine is found in the first paragraphs of the catechism *Kitāb ta'līm diyānat an-nuṣairīya*, Ms Paris.arab. 6182, fol 2v, 4-12:

s 1 man huwa rabbunā lladhī khalaqanā
j huwa maulānā amīr al-mu'minīn amīr an-naḥl 'alī ibn abī ṭālib wa huwa llāhu lladhī lā illāha illā huwa r-raḥmān ar-raḥīm
s 2 min aina na'lamu anna maulānā amīr al-mu'minīn 'alī ibn abī ṭālib huwa llāhu
j min shahādatihi wa waṣfihi li-nafsihi fī khuṭbatin lahu mashhūratin naṭaqa bihā 'alā l-minbar amāma kāffa min ḥaḍar wa 'alamihā ahl al-'aql wa n-naẓar

Q(uestion) 1: Who is our Lord,who has created us?
A(nswer): He is our master, the Commander of the fathful, the prince of the bees, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and he is God, of whom (it holds true that) there is no god except him, the merciful, the compassionate.
Q(uestion) 2: From what do we



5 Louis Massignon, "Esquisse d'une bibliographie Nusayrie', *Mélanges R. Dussaud II,* 1939, p. 914; for the dialect spoken in the "Jebel Ansariye", see Bernhard Lewin, *Notes on Cabali. The Arabic dialect spoken by the Alawis of "Jebel Ansariye"*, Orientalia Gothoburgensia 1. Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, Göteborg, 1969.

know that our master, the Commander of the faithful, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is God?
A(nswer): From his own testimony, and his own description in a famous sermon by himself, which he gave from the minbar, in the presence of all the local people and the eminent, people with common sense and discernment.

It follows a quotation from the sermon mentioned, beginning as follows: "I have knowledge of the hour of resurrection and for me the apostles furnished evidence..." (*anā 'indī 'ilm as-sā'a wa-'alayya dallat ar-rusul*, fol 2v, 12f). Here is another example, from Ms Kiel. arab. 19,[6] fol 1, 4 - fol 2v, 4:

anā ṭawaytu asbābahā wa 'alimtu ghuyyābahā wa saraytu sarāyāhā wa rakamtu asḥābahā. anā muzalzil al-arḍ wa jibālahā wa mukhrij kunūzahā wa athqālahā. anā muqīm al-qibla wa ṣāḥib al-ka'ba wa mubdi sh-sharī'a wa muṭfi' nār al-ḥāmiya. anā dhābiḥ iblīs. anā rāfi' idrīs wa nākis al-kufr wa nāṭiq bi-kulli sifr. anā ahlaktu l-qurūn ba'da l-qurūn. anā a'dadtu wa abdaytu wa dammartu wa afnaytu wa a'lamu mā tabdūna wa mā takhfauna wa mā ta'kulūna wa mā taddakhirūna. wa-inna mā min ghaib illā 'indī mafātīḥuhu. anā ahlaktu 'ād wa thamūd wa aṣḥāb ar-raththa wa qurūn baina dhālika kathir. anā rāfi' as-samāwāt wa sāmikuhā wa dāḥī l-araḍīn wa sāṭiḥuhā wa ghāris al-ashjār wa munbituhā wa mufajjir al-anhār wa mujarrihā. is'alūnī 'an 'ilm al-manāyā wa l-balāyā wa l-wasāyā wa faṣl al-khiṭāb wa l-qaḍāyā wa 'an maulūd al-islām wa 'an muwallid al-kufr wa 'an shāh ḍallat wa 'an fī'a ḍallat wa htadat wa 'an sā'iqihā wa ba'ithihā wa 'an mā kāna wa mā huwa kā'in ilā yaum al-qiyāma. anā qarm min ḥadīd. anā fī kulli zamān wa waqt jadīd. anā munbi' an-nabīyīn wa mursil al-mursalīn. 'alayya dallat ar-rusul wa bi-tauḥīdī naṭaqat al-kutub.

I keep the (heavenly) causes folded (in my hand) and I know its (heaven's) hidden secrets. I spread those of it that are travelling by night (the stars) and I accumulate its clouds. I cause the earth and its mountains to quake and I cause its treasures and its burdens to emerge. I am the resident of the Qibla and I am the master of the Ka'ba. I reveal the law. I extinguish the hot fire. I slaughter the devil. I exalt Idrīs and humiliate the unbeliever, and I am the speaker in every holy scripture. I destroyed generations after generations. I made plans and carried them out, and I annihilated and destroyed. I know what you exhibit and what you disguise, and what you consume and what you store away. There is no hidden secret to which I have not the keys. I destroyed 'Ād, Thamūd, and the men of Raththa, and many generations in between. I keep the heavens high and make them tight, and I spread the earths and make them plain, and I plant the trees and make them grow, and let the rivers and streams flow. Ask me about the knowledge of destinies, calamities, admonitions, unmistakable lawsuits, about the birth of Islam, and about the origin of unbelief, about a sheep which went astray, and about a group which went astray, but was led on the right way, and about their driver and their resurrection, and about what has been and what will be till the day of resurrection. I am the lord of iron. I am renewed in every time and period. I call the prophets and send the messengers. For me the apostles furnished evidence, and the scriptures announced my unity.

According to the manuscript, these words are quoted from the famous *Khutbat al-bayān*, which 'Alī delivered from the minbar in Kufa. On the one hand, the proclamation of these mighty acts is ascribed to the *historical* person of 'Alī as a political and religious leader in the history of Islam in his role of khalif and imam. On the other hand, one of the most striking features in these self-proclamations ascribed to him is the extent to which 'Alī appears with epithets taken from the Koran, where they are attributed to God alone. By the transfer of these epithets to 'Alī, he appears as a *cosmic* being, or God himself. This tension in the representation of God, between the human and historical element, and the cosmic and mythological element, is a constitutive feature in the traditional scriptures of the Syrian Alawites.

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6 Untitled catechism. Facsimile in Rudolph Strothmann, *Morgenländische Geheimsekten in abendländischer Forschung und die Handschrift Kiel.* arab 19, Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Kl. f. Sprachen, Lit. u Kunst, Jahrg. 1952:5, Berlin 1953.

Such teachings are, of course, also considered heretical within Shiite Islam. Statements like those in the above quoted passage are not even to be found where we more than elsewhere would have expected to find them, as in the Shiite collections of speeches and sermons called *Nahj al-Balāgha*,[7] which are attributed to ʻAlī. These collections are much read by learned Alawites. They often compare the embellished and ingenious literary style of these documents with the beauty and elegance of the language in the Koran, thus using them as evidence of the divine nature of ʻAlī. Such excellence of language cannot derive from human beings, they argue. However, self-proclamations of the sort quoted above are not found in these collections. From this negative evidence alone we cannot draw too far-reaching conclusions, of course, but I would assume that such doctrines were considered "heretical" and inopportune in the official forms of Shia. Only by the commentators of the different editions of the *Nahj al-Balāgha* do we occasionally meet with short fragments citing statements on the divine nature of ʻAlī, and then with a negative reference to persons who have exaggerated (*ghalā*) the excellence of his nature and his mighty acts. For instance, in the edition by ar-Raḍī,[8] al-Ḥadīd comments as follows with reference to the *ghālī* al-Mughīra b. Saʻīd:

> fa-ghalā fī ʻalī (ʻalaihi s-salām) wa qāla lau shāʼa ʻalī laʼaḥyā ʻādan wa thamūdan wa qurūnaṇ baina dhālika kathīran
>
> And he exaggerated concerning ʻAlī (peace be upon him) and said: "If ʻAlī had wished it, he had given new life to ʻĀd and Thamūd and many ages in between."

Further references to the divine nature of ʻAlī is found only among the Arabic chroniclers and "heresiographers", in quotations and accounts by late Shiite writers and from the Imamite *rijāl*-literature. In all these cases the provided evidence refers to movements originating in the so called extremist tradition, *ghulāt*.

The exaggerated position that the early *ghulāt* and their later off-shoots ascribed to ʻAlī's person may be of great importance both for our understanding of the most vital religious doctrines in the early Shia and its later developments in relation to the response of a Sunni environment. The ideological and cultic background, taken in a broad sense, is of course part of the general history of the different ʻAlī-oriented forms of Islam, which is outside the scope of this paper. Here, I shall restrict myself to drawing attention to a few concrete parallels and singular literary motifs which in form - as self-proclamations - and in content, are related to the Nuṣairī aretalogies.

The Ismāʻīlītic (Fatimide) preacher al-Muʼayyad fī d-Dīn ash-Shīrāzī (390 or 400 - 470 a.H.), in his 30th - 37th *Majālis*,[9] takes the above quoted *Khutbat al-bayān* as a basis for his discussion on Shiite conceptions of the imam, in comparing those ideas with the notion of Christ, *masīḥ*. The version quoted by Shīrazī runs as follows:

> anā l-awwal wa anā l-ākhir wa anā ẓ-ẓāhir wa anā l-bāṭin wa anā bi-kulli shaiʼin ʻalīm wa anā lladhī rafaʻtu samāʼahā wa anā lladhī daḥautu arḍahā anbattu ashjārahā wa anā lladhī ajraytu anhārahā
>
> I am the first, and I am the last, and I am the manifest, and I am the hidden, and I am the one who knows everything, and I am the one who has kept its

7 Alledged ʻAlī speeches collected by ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī, with comments by Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd al-Madāʼinī, I-IV, Cairo, 1329 A. H.

8 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 309.

9 al-Muʼayyad fī d-Dīn ash-Shīrāzī, *al-Majālis al-Muʼayyadīya. al-Miʼat al-ūlā*, vol. I, ed. Muṣṭafa Ghālib, Silsilat at-Turāth al-Fāṭimī, 13, Beirut, 1974.

heaven high, and I am the one who has spread out its earth, and I have let the trees grow, and I am the one who has let the rivers stream.

Concerning the reception and understanding of this sermon Shīrāzī notes three groups of interpreters:

1) Those who reject it.

2) Those who embrace a truly balanced interpretation. In this group are included the Fatimide Ismā'īlīs of whom Shīrāzī himself is a spokesman.

3) The exaggerators, the *ghulāt*, who understand the text as an apotheosis of the imam.

As we have seen, the last position finds its most radical exponents among the Nuṣairīs. Besides the texts handed down by themselves, shorter passages with similar content to that in their own tractates are quoted in the so called *Rijāl*-literature.

A notable fragment is quoted by the imamite writer Kashshī (d. 324/ 935 or 340/ 951):[10]

'an abī ja'far ('alaihi s-salām) qāla qāla amīr al-mu'minīn ('alaihi s-salām) anā wajh allāh wa anā janb allāh wa anā l-awwal wa anā l-ākhir wa anā ẓ-ẓāhir wa anā l-bāṭin wa anā l-wārith al-arḍ wa anā sabīl allāh wa bihi 'azamtu 'alaihi

From Abū Ja'far (on whom be peace) who said: The Commander of the Faithful (on whom be peace) has said: I am the face of God, and I am the side of God. I am the first, and I am the last. I am the manifest, and I am the hidden. I am the heir of the earth, and I am the expedient of God. Hence I have decided for him.

The self-proclamation ascribed to the Commander of the Faithful, that is, 'Alī, is here brought into connection with the particular historical setting in which the early so called *ghulāt* flourished. His words are said to be transmitted by Abū Ja'far, i.e. the 5th imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 115/ 733), who is known to have surrounded himself with *ghulā*t thinkers. Stylistically, the 'Alī-aretalogy quoted here exhibits the same characteristics as the Nuṣairī aretalogies and the passage cited by Shīrāzī: short anaphoric sentences beginning with the pronoun *anā*, and connected in pairs on a principle of *complexio oppositorum*. Two significant Koranic ideas, which appear in the same terms in the Nuṣairī texts deserve particular attention:

1) 'Alī is the first and the last being.

2) 'Alī is the manifest (exterior) and the hidden (interior).

For stylistic reasons the expressions "heir of the earth" and "expedient of God" may be considered as a compound, because they appear as the last in the series of paired oppositions of which the text is composed. A certain emphasis is thereby given to 'Alī's two-fold connection with the terrestrial and divine spheres. The context further suggests that he is of both earthly and more or less divine nature; he is the "face" and "side" of God. The notions which are here attached to 'Alī's person apparently reflect an ideology based on his position as the imam, who was considered as the heir of religious authority on earth, and in whom the so called *ghulāt* and other Shiitic thinkers saw the divine nature manifested in human form.

The Turkish Alevi and Bektashi literature is rich of examples illustrating the identification of Ali with the divine reality, by attributing to him some of the "beautiful names" otherwise given to God only. Much of this literature consists of liturgic poet-

10 Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Kashshī, *Ma'rifat akhbār ar-rijāl,* Mataba'a al-Muṣṭafawīya, Bombay, 1317/1899f, p. 138.

ry called *nefes*, and its composers make use of the same type of concepts and stylistic arrangements as we have seen above. So did Mehmet Ali Hilmi Dedebaba who was one of the last *postnişin*s of the Merdivenköy Şahkulu Sultan Dergâhı. Here are a few verses from one of the nefes hymns he composed, elaborated on a much liked motif in Alevi literature: A person who looks in a mirror does not see himself, but Ali, and indirectly God:

Âyine tuttum yüzüme
Ali göründü gözüme...

İsa ve Ruhullah odur
Muminlere penah odur
İki Âlemde Şah odur
Ali göründü gözüme

Ali tayyib, Ali tahir
Ali bâtın, Ali zahir
Ali evvel, Ali âhir
Ali göründü gözüme

Ali candır, Ali canan
Ali dindir, Ali iyman
Ali Rahim, Ali Rahman
Ali göründü gözüme

I took the mirror to my face
Ali appeared to my eye...

He is Jesus and Christ
He is the refuge to the believers
He is the Shah of the two worlds
Ali appeared to my eye

Ali is the pure, Ali is the clean
Ali is the hidden, Ali is the manifest
Ali is the first, Ali is the last
Ali appeared to my eye
Ali is the life, Ali is the Beloved
Ali is the religion, Ali is the belief
Ali is the Merciful, Ali is the Compassionate
Ali appeared to my eye[11]

Among the Turkish Alevi the nefes hymns constitute an important and vital category of oral and written tradition. They are usually chanted to the accompaniment of saz at different occations, the most important setting being the *ayin-i cem*, and other common Alevi rituals. Here is an example:

Şu dünyanın evvelisin, âhiri
Şu kevn-ü mekânda sultan olan Şah

You are the first and the last of this world
Shah, who is the sultan of the universe[12]

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11 Turkish text in Nejat Birdoğan, *Anadolu'nun Gizli Kültürü Alevilik*, Hamburg Alevi Kültür Merkezi Yayınları, Hamburg, 1990, p. 305.

12 Turkish text in *Bektaşi Gülleri*, p. 35; cf. Krizstina Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş/Aleviten. Untersuchung über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Anotolien*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen Band 126, Berlin,1988, p. 130.

Another example:

Yedi iklim dört köşeyi dolandım
Ben Aliden gayrı bir er görmedim
Kısmet verip âlemleri yaradan
Ben Aliden gayrı bir er görmedim

Bir ismi Alidir, bir ismi Allah
İnkârım yoktur, hem vallah hem billah
Muhammed, Ali yoluna Allah eyvallah
Ben Aliden gayrı bir er görmedim

I wandered around in every corner of the world
I never saw any other man than Ali
Who bestowed Destiny and created the worlds
I never saw any other man than Ali

One of his names is Ali, one of his names is Allah
By God, I swear by God, I do not deny
Facing the way of Ali and Muhammad
I never saw any other man than Ali[13]

A number of nefes hymns are attributed to Hatayi, the head of the Ṣafawīya order, Shah Ismā'īl, the Persian ruler 1501 - 1524; these hymns are still recognized as Şah Hatâyî nefesi[14], here an example:

Ali'dir dünyaya edâyı veren
Ali'dir sofiye sevdayı veren
Ali'dir Yezid'e kavgayı veren
Hakk'a vâsıl olan merdan Ali'dir

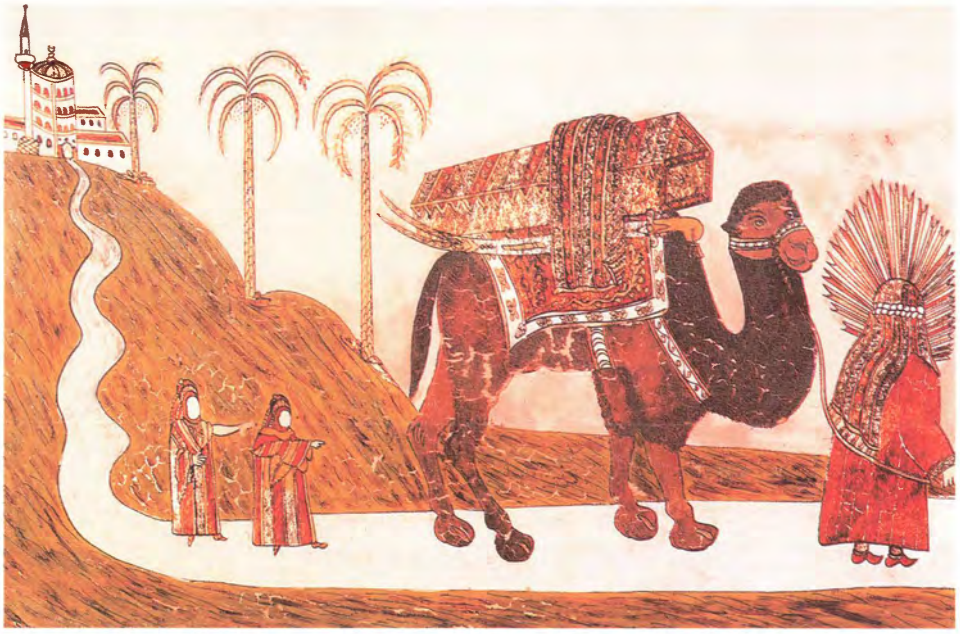
Ali'dir cesetin kendisi yuyan
Yuyup kefeniyle tabuta koyan
Ali'dir devesin kendisi yeden
Hak ile Hak olan Arslan Ali'dir

It is Ali who fashioned the world
It is Ali who imbued the Sufi with love
It is Ali who combatted Yazid
The man among men who joined with God is Ali

It is Ali who washed his own corpse
who wound it in a shroud and put it in a coffin
It is Ali who lead his own camel
He who is God with God is Ali the lion[15]

The last stanza refers to the tradition according to which Ali shortly before his death told his sons Hasan and Hüseyin that his corps was going to be washed and carried away by a veiled man, and he asked them to let the matter be done that way. On his death it happened as Ali had predicted, but his sons being curious, followed the mysterious man who was leading away the camel loaded with the bier, and made the

13 Turkish text in *Bektaşi Gülleri*, p. 35; cf. K. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş/Aleviten.*, p. 130.
14 *Buyruk*, ed. Sefer Aytekin, Ankara, 1958.
15 Turkish text in *Bektaşi Gülleri*, p. 21; cf. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kızılbaş/Aleviten*, p. 130.



After his death the corpse of Hz. Ali was carried away on a camel lead by himself and followed by his sons Hasan and Hüseyin.
Glass-painting, Robert Anhegger-Mualla Eyüboğlu Anhegger collection, *Camaltında Yirmibin Fersah*, Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1997.

man unveil himself. To their surprise it was Ali who had come to carry away his own body.[16] The story is well-known among Turkish Alevi. Many times I also heard it told with great affection during the long evenings among the Syrian Alawites in the small villages in the Nuṣairī mountains. The legend has become a beloved motive of folk art. An example of it is included above.

In the early New Persian Nizārī Ismā'īlitic text *Haft Bābi Bābā Sayyid-nā*,[17] which was composed ca 1200 CE, and exclusively preserved by the Badakhshani communities at the Upper Amu Darya, we read the following:

> va-dīgar 'abd allāh-i 'abbās rivāyat mīkunad keh 'umqīyat-i insān bimithl-i 'alī ibn abī ṭālib ānkeh mīgūyad keh man rūy-i xudāy-am va-man pahlū-ye xudāy-am va-man afrāshteh-am āsmānhārā va-man gustarānīdam zamīnhārā va-az īn samt suxunān bisyār ast va-ānkeh mīgūyad keh man dast-i xudāy-am va-dast dar ātash kunam va-bandagān-i xvēshrā az ātash bīrūn āvaram va-dushmanān rā dar ātash bi-guzāram pas ātash rā bigūyam īnhā marā va-ānhā turā.

> And further: 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās reports the traditions that, the depth of man is like 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, he who says: "I am the face of God and I am the side of God. I raised the heavens, and I spread the earths". And there are many words of the sort. And he who says: "I am the hand of God, and I put my hand in the Fire [i.e. Hell], and bring my own servants out of the Fire, and I leave the enemies in the Fire. Then I say to the Fire: 'These for me, and those for you'".

I have here translated *rūy* literally, and not e.g. as "front", because of the body-symbolism employed (*pahlū* "side", and *dast* "hand"). As in the Kashshī fragment, 'Alī thus claims to be the face of God and the side of God. The mighty acts asserted

16 *Ibid.* p. 131.

17 W. Ivanow ed., *Two Early Ismaili Treaties: Haft Babi Baba Sayyid-na and Matlubu'l-mu'minin by Tusi, Persian Text, with an Introductory Note,* Islamic Research Association No. 2., Bombay, 1933.

by ʻAlī are found again in the Nuṣairī catechism of the Ms Kiel. arab. 19. I have identified two motifs.

The first motif: He has raised the heavens and spread the earths.

fol 2, 6f	*anā rāfiʻ as-samawāt ... wa dāḥī l-aradīn*
	I keep the heavens high...and spread the earths
fol 7v, 5 =	*anā lladhī rafaʻtu asmāʾahā*
fol 17v, 3f	I am the one who has made its canopies high
fol 7v, 5f	*anā lladhī aḥṭaṭtu l-arḍ wa arsaytu jibālahā*
	I am the one who has made the earth level and its mountains steady
fol 17v, 11	*ana lladhī basaṭtu l-arḍ wa arsaytu jibālahā*
	I am the one who has extended the earth and made its mountains steady

The second motif: He bring his servants out of the fire of hell, and leaves the enemies in it. Certainly there is no word-for-word correspondence in the catechism, but the basic concept is the same:

fol 3, 9	*anā....qāsim al-janna wa n-nār*
	I...parcel paradise and hell
fol 4, 5f	*anā ...ṣāḥib an-nār dhāt al-wuqūd*
	I am ...the master of the burning fire
fol 7, 7	*anā....mutfiʾ an-nār al-ḥāmiya*
	I...extinguish the hot fire
fol 18, 6-8	*wa anā musʻid ahl al-janna wa mukhiṣṣuhum bi-l-anwār wa anā mushqī ahl an-nār wa muṣlīhim saʻīran wa mudammiruhum tadmīran*
	I make the inhabitants of the paradise happy and bestow them with lights. I make the inhabitants of the hell wretched, let them burn in the fire, and annihilate them completely.

The same stylistic and conceptual elements are thus found in the aretalogies of the Nuṣairī chatecism, in the passage quoted by Shīrāzī, in the fragments in Kashshī's book, and, transcending the linguistic frontiers, in *Haft Bābi Bābā Sayyid-nā*. They are composed as a series of short anaphoric sentences, which are connected in pairs on a principle of oppositions, an arrangement which is based on formulas in the Koran, and especially in the lengthy texts, apparently employed in order to convey an impression of completeness. The common notions articulated in the texts, as well as their almost complete verbal identity suggest that the alleged self-proclamations by ʻAlī were expressed in a fairly standardized form.

Our knowledge of the so called *ghulāt* movements, which is crucial for our understanding of the religious and political processes described as the emergence of sects in Islam has so far mainly been based on indirect sources such as the above mentioned chroniclers, the Imamite *rijāl*-literature, quotations and accounts by late Shiite writers and the reports of the "heresiographers". They all refer to the "extremist" position with disapproval. The Nuṣairī-Alawite texts, mostly unpublished manuscripts, have on the whole remained unused by historians of religion. However, the most extensive, and positive, quotations are found in the Nuṣairī literature, where they hold a central position in testifying to the divine nature of ʻAlī.The situation would thus suggest the hypothesis that the doctrines which are briefly touched upon in the just mentioned literature and apparently have their origin in the so called *ghulāt* tradition, are relatively completely retained, in an archaic form, in the Nuṣairī-Alawite literature. The central religious problem on which these teachings are focused is the question posed by every religion with a conception of a transcendent God, that is, how God manifests himself in this world. The Nuṣairī-Alawite

answer is that this takes place in the person of the religious and political leader, whose prototype is ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Cosmogonical and Cosmological Doctrines

As I mentioned, the Alawite religion is a strongly ʻAlī -oriented type of Shia, and shows striking gnostic features. Acquaintance with fundamental cosmogonical and cosmological doctrines is usually taken for granted in the religious scriptures of the Alawites. These scriptures represent secret knowledge and are, according to the religious norms, only accessible to readers who have been ritually initiated into the fundamental mysteries of religion.

As in other gnostic religions, the objective content of this knowledge is basically identical with the cosmogonical and cosmological doctrines of the sect. These doctrines display and explain the existential conditions of the world by exposing its transcendental history and its structure. The above outlined concept of the divine ʻAlī is embedded in such narrative contexts.

The main part of the material which concerns cosmogonical and cosmological doctrines consists of fragments, scattered and interwoven in different types of texts, such as prayers, hymns, cultic texts, aretalogies, Koran interpretations, doctrinal works, and catechisms. Fortunately there is also a small number of comprehensive texts in which cosmogonical and cosmological topics are dealt with in a relatively systematical way.

One of the most important sources of the Alawite religion is a version of an origin myth, contained in the *Kitāb al-bakūrat as-Sulaimānīya fī kashf asrār ad-diyānat an-nuṣairīya*, written by the Nuṣairī renegade Sulaimān Efendī al-Adhanī (born 1250/1834-35), and published in Beirut 1863. It is a rare work. Section IV of this tractate is entitled "On the Fall" (*fī l-habṭa*). It contains one of the few comprehensive accounts, in narrative form, of the cosmogonical and cosmological ideas of the Alawites.

> All groups of the Nuṣairīs believe that in the beginning, before the existence of the world, they were shining lights and luminous stars and that they used to distinguish between submission and rebellion, neither eating, drinking, nor excreting, but beholding ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib in the yellow aspect. They remained in this condition 7,077 years and 7 hours. Then they thought among themselves, "As for creation, there has not been created anybody nobler than we". This was the first transgression that the Nuṣairīs committed. And so he (ʻAlī) created for them a veil (*ḥijāb*), keeping them under restraint for 7,000 years. Thereupon, ʻAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib appeared to them saying, "Am I not your Lord?" and they replied, "Indeed", after that he had made visible to them his Omnipotence. But then they imagined they could apprehend him in his fullness on their supposition that he was one unto themselves. By that they committed a second transgression. Then he showed them the veil, and they circumambulated it for 7,077 years and 7 hours. Thereupon, he appeared to them in the form of an aged man with a hoary head and beard, by which form he tried the people of light, the supreme luminous world (*ahl an-nūr al-ʻālam al-ʻalawī an-nūrānī*). But then they imagined him to be such as that shape through which he appeared to them. And he said to them, "Who am I?", and they replied, "We do not know". Then he appeared in the form of a young man with a twisted moustache, riding on a furious-looking lion, and again he appeared to them in the form of a small child. Again he called them and said, "Am I not your Lord?". And he repeated the question to them on each manifestation, in his company being his Name (*ism*) and his Gate (*bāb*) and the people of the grades of his holiness (*ahl marātib qudsihi*), namely the first seven grades, constituting the Great Luminous World (*al-marātib as-sabʻ al-awwal al-ʻālam al-kabīr an-nūrānī*). And when he called them, they imagined that he was one like unto themselves, and they became confused and

did not know what to answer; and so he created them, out of their backwardness, doubt and confusion. And he called them, saying "I have created for you a lower abode (*dār suflānīya*) and I intend to cast you down into it. And I shall create for you fleshly temples (*hayākil basharīya*) and I shall appear to you in a veil as one of your kind; and he who acknowledges me amongst you, and acknowledges my Gate and my Veil, him will I bring back hither. But he who rebels against me, out of his rebellion will I create an Adversary (*ḍidd*) to confront him. And he who denies me, him will I enclose in the vestments of transmigration (*qumṣān al-masūkhīya*)". And they replid, saying, "O Lord, lodge us here, then we shall sing your praise and serve you, and cast us not down into the lower abode". Then he said, "You have rebelled against me, but if you had said 'O our Lord, we have no knowledge, except what you have taught us; indeed, you are the One Who Thoroughly Knows the Invisible Things (*al-'allām al-ghuyūb* sic!)', then I would have rescued you". Then he created out of their rebellion the devils and Satans and out of the sins of the devils he created the women. / For that reason they do not teach their prayers to their women; this explanation is moreover found in *Kitāb al-haft*, in *Kitāb ad-dalā'il* and in *Kitāb at-ta'yīd* / [Obviously a gloss inserted by Sulaimān].

Thereupon he appeared to them in the 7 Canopies (*al-qubāb as-sab'*): The first Canopy called *al-Hinn* in which the name of the Ma'nā was Faqaṭ, and the *Ism* was Shīt [Seth], and the *Bāb* was Jaddāḥ, and the *Ḍidd* was Raubā' [The text continues in this way with all the Canopies, identifying the holy trinity Meaning-Name-Gate, and its Adversary, with enigmatic names]. ...In all the Canopies thus mentioned, the *Ḍidd*, that is Satan (*ash-Shaiṭān*), consisted of three persons in one, namely the trinity (*al-aqānīm*) Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān. And after that he ('Alī) appeared to them in the 7 Person Canopies (*qibāb adh-dhātīya*), which are those from Hābīl [Abel] to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.[18]

We are here presented with the main tenets of the Nuṣairī-Alawite religion in a concentrated narrative form, and we can get a preliminary idea of the phenomenological type of religion we are dealing with. In its general structure, its imagery and symbolic language, the myth shows a number of features common to the salvation dramas of gnostic religions. Thus, it is based on a tripartite structure which takes the form of speculations on a pre-existent state before the fall, on the fall itself, and on the return to the original state. The text is a dramatic expression of a world-view which is based on a dualism between this evil world of material existence and the other world, spiritual and good. The two worlds are connected by the descent at the fall and the ascention at salvation.

Though these dimensions are all present, the narrative is mainly concerned with the stages which precede the fall; the location of the actual scene is in heaven. In this respect, the bulk of the text is a specimen of a sub-genre or of a type of episode which is common in gnostic mythological writings, namely the Prologue in Heaven. In this first act of the salvation drama, the ultimate conditions of human existence and the conditions for salvation are determined forever. In general terms the original state is, thus, the scope of salvation and, from a mythological point of view, the act of salvation is the inversion of the fall. In religious practice, this means that salvation becomes possible through the right understanding of these matters; that is, through gnosis.

Considering the structure and perspective of the text, it is important to note that this is not the type of pseudo-scientific speculation often met with in gnostic or neoplatonic writings, which concentrate on the degradation of the divine world. The chief interest throughout the text is concentrated on the anthropological problem of the relation between the divinity or ideal existence and the destination of man. The focus is on divine manifestation and on anthropogony, and not on theogony or cosmogony in a restricted sense. The text indeed conveys very little, if any, information in positive terms concerning the essence of the supreme Deity. Only indirectly we

18 *Kitāb al-bakūra*, pp. 59-62.

can conclude that the Godhead existed "in its fullness" (*fī kullīyatihi*), and that this dimension was not truly perceptible and comprehensible to the heavenly Nuṣairīs. Although this fullness surpassed their comprehension it possessed at the same time a quality of manifestation. Despite any explicit speculation on the divine fullness itself, this unknown dimension, however, is a presupposed element which is necessary for the development of the discourse. In fact, the text is built up around the same central tenet in Nuṣairī religion as we have met with above in the aretalogies of the catechisms and related texts, namely, the true recognition of the divine dimension in ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, in whose form the Deity manifests itself among men, along with his Name and his Gate.

The problem how a transcendent god manifests himself, that is, how religious experience is at all possible, was posed by the early Sufis and the early ʿAlī-oriented religious groups in the Islamic world, and is retained by the Nuṣairīs as the most fundamental of all questions. The answer in the aretalogies and related texts, in which the mighty acts of ʿAlī are glorified, is that the divinity manifests itself in him, as the historical person, though endowed with cosmological and cosmogonical implications. In the origin myth, the notion of divine manifestation in a succession of imagined historical personalities from Abel to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib is only briefly mentioned at the end of the discourse; in the main part of the text the problem is transferred to the celestial level and dramatized in cosmogonical and cosmological terms. The objective content of the Nuṣairī gnosis, i.e. the secret, revealed, and saving knowledge about a particular system of reality, as it is presented here, is also taken for granted in other types of religious texts, such as hymns, prayers, and ritual texts, including initiation manuals.[19]

Initiation Rituals

The three degrees of initiation are still the vital moments in the transmission of the Alawite religious traditions, in particular of esoterical doctrines and theology. The initiation rituals are confined to male individuals whose parents are both Alawites. The teachings are transmitted orally to the initiand or by delivering secret canonical scriptures, such as aṭ-Ṭabarānī's *Kitāb majmūʿal-aʿyād*.[20] Of particular importance is the initiation in *taʾwīl*, the allegorical interpretation technique. It is a central, most vital and generative element in Alawite religious life, through which Koran verses and rituals of Islam are given esoteric interpretations by the use of Nuṣairī doctrines, holy persons and traditions as a frame of reference. So far, written initiation manuals like those of the Ismailites are not known outside the circles of initiated Alawites, but from Sulaimān's *Bakūra* it may be concluded that the author has drawn from some manual, or manuals, in the part about his own initiation. Therefore, his book is still the most important text available on this subject.

However, most of the sources have not been published and will, for very good

19 Tord Olsson, "Extrem shiʿa—synpunkter på de syriska ʿalawiternas religion", *Religion och samhälle i Mellanöstern*, J. O. Blichfeldt and J. Hjärpe eds., Vänersborg, 1985; T. Olsson, "Imagery of Divine Epiphany in Nuṣairī scriptures" *Acta Iranica. Hommages et Opera Minora*, vol. XII, Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen, Leiden, 1988; T. Olsson, "Den gudomlige ʿAlī. Aretalogierna i den nuṣairiska litteraturen", *Religionsvetenskapliga studier. Festskrift till Sven S. Hartman*, A Geels, T. Olsson, P. Schalk eds., Religio 12. Lund, 1983, pp. 117-130; T. Olsson, "The Divine ʿAlī. The Aretalogies in the Nuṣairī Literature", *Proceedings of the XXXII International Congress for Asian and North African Studies*, Hamburg, 25th-30 August 1986, A. Wezler, E. Hammerschmidt eds., ZDMG-Suppl. 9, Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1992, pp. 428-429.

20 Surūr ibn al-Qāsim at-Ṭabarāni, *Kitāb majmūʿal-aʿyād,* R. Strothmann ed., "Festkalender der Nuṣairier", *Der Islam* 27 (1944-46).

reasons, never be published. This is due to a unique type of procedure which consists of a combined oral and written transmission. My Alawite friends told me that catechisms, like the ones I have quoted above, have as a rule been taken down in writing by sheiks, in order to be used by individual young men in preparation for their initiation, and only then. The handwritten text was entrusted to the initiand to be studied in private, and when his sheik had made sure that he had learnt it by heart the text was burnt. However, a number of manuscripts have been preserved outside the Alawite community, and are to be found in Syrian, Turkish, Egyptian, and European libraries.

Ta'wīl and Taqīya

An interesting but rather neglected phenomenon in the religious practice of the Alawites is the connection between *ta'wīl*, the allegorical interpretation of the Koran and the Islamic rituals, and the *taqīya* practice, or the right to conceal or give a false idea of one's religion in situations of political or religious menace. Acting on these two principles seems to be a complementary practice among the Alawites in Syria today, especially because of the political situation with the Alawites in power. By applying *ta'wīl* inwardly, towards the interior of the communion and in the communication between its members, and *taqīya* outwardly, in relation to others, it is possible for an Alawite to appear officially as a Sunni or a common Shiite, who follows the Koran and observes the canonical rituals. Acting on these two principles would probably serve the integration of the community and its members' experience of an Alawite identity. Besides, open conflicts with other Shiites or with the Sunnite entourage can be avoided as well.

The Alawite leaders deny emphatically any affinity with mythological gnosticism or any other dissentient belief or practice that would stray from conventional Shia. For instance, in a formal declaration delivered in 1973, 80 religious authorities declared that their holy book was the Koran, that they were Muslims and followed the majority of Shia, i.e. the Twelvers, and that whatever else was attributed to them consisted of lies fabricated by their enemies and by the enemies of Islam. However, when they were asked to publish their secret scriptures, as an answer to the suspicion nursed by other groups in Syria, they refused.[21] It is difficult to see this as anything else but politically warranted *taqīya*. In 1982 and 1984 I received a similar impression in my interviews with influential personages, including for instance 'Alī Kheir Bek, the editor-in-chief of the leading ideological mouthpiece *Mujallat al-Iqtiṣād*, "Economic Journal". The arguments were frequently based on "the history of religion", and very often started from the conflict between Mu'āwiya and 'Alī: since it was 'Alī alone in this conflict who represented the true Islam, it is his followers, i.e. the Alawites, who are the real exponents of the true Islamic tradition, that is, Sunna. Moreover, we have the same Koran, and 'Alī was the first Sufi.

The distribution of power in Syria during the last two decades has resulted in a new middle class, including an intellectual stratum, of urbanized Alawites in Damascus and Latakia. At the time of my fieldwork the religious and legal head of the Alawites lived in Damascus, namely the now late mufti Shaikh 'Abdu r-Raḥmān al-Khayyir. He wrote a number of religious scriptures in which he laid particular emphasis on the importance of *ja'farīya* for the Alawite tradition. This was also a recurrent theme in our conversations in his home in Damascus. An interesting polit-

21 Hanna Batatu, "Some observations on the social roots of Syria's ruling, military group and the causes for its dominance", *Middle East Journal*, Summer-Autumn 1981.

ical and religious fact is that Muḥammad Amīn Ghālib aṭ-Ṭawīl's book *Ṭa'rīkh al-'alawīyīn*, (1st edition 1924), a popular and partly romanticizing account of the history of the Alawites, appeared in a second edition in 1979, with a 60 page introduction by al-Khayyir - one of the few books on the subject that has been permitted by the censorship during the Alawite regime in Syria.

Mountain-Dwellers and Townspeople

The ordinary Alawites have little knowledge of religious doctrines and theology, especially the majority of non-initiates. Among the mountain-dwellers some general features typical of Middle East folklore are found, such as the use of amulets and the veneration of *ziyāra*s, the burial sites of holy men, to which people go on pilgrimage. Many of the shrines I visited in the Alawite mountains were filled with incense and photos of the petitioners and their simple votive gifts. People often spent a long time at those sites in the presence of the saints.

A widely spread belief, especially among people dwelling in the mountains, was concerned with Khuḍr, the green divinity of the waters and of agriculture who appears from time to time as a savior in the form of a man. Some people told me that he has 365 shrines in the land of the Alawites. Farmers as well as people of some schooling all liked to talk about this beloved figure. One man I have known had the name of Khuḍr tatooed on his forearm. The traditions related to Khuḍr are rich, manifold and full of nuances. He shares some of his vital features with St. George, the dragon killer, who is a very important saint in the Syrian churches; and also with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. He is armed alike with his sword and like him he appears in the religious poetry of the Alawites under the name Mar Gurgīs (St. George). Both of them are related to notions of time and manifest themselves regularly to human beings. If I have rightly understood the emotions of the Alawites I have known, the two divine persons are the objects of very strong devotion. Functionally, the figure of Khuḍr in the folklore of the Syrian Alawites thus seems to be intelligible: to the non-initiates he certainly plays the same role as 'Alī to the initiated, that is, as the corporeal manifestation of the divinity. It is thus very likely that the bulk of legends connected with Khuḍr is an exoteric analogue to the esoteric myths which are linked to 'Alī as the physical epiphany of the transcendent divinity. According to my Alawite friends there is a great varity of legends related to Khuḍr, but to the best of our knowledge very few records exist. Fieldwork in the land of the Alawites is badly needed to qualify the written sources, and to test hypotheses like the one suggested here.

The former isolation of the Alawites in the mountains and their want of communication and education left them with little awareness of other groups; a full consciousness of their religious identity was probably not essential. However, the changing conditions during the last decades have led to an increased religious awareness and self-confidence, not at least among the urbanized, educated class of Alawites. Besides, membership of the Alawite sect has become a political asset as well. Since Alawites have attained high positions in society, fellow Alawites can appeal to their religious loyalty when applying for jobs or seeking social or economic benefits. Thus we find that the Alawites closely follow a pattern which has been called "situational selection", by which a person selects the group to which he wants to belong and which he can claim membership, and from which he will benefit most in a given situation.[22]

The crucial problem of transmission of tradition and its apparently integrative function involves very complex relations and can not be analyzed according to any

22 Gubser, "Minorities in power", p. 22.

simple model. It is evident, however, that the transmission of tradition both in content and in its more technical sense functions in different ways at different local and social levels. Political factors play an important role today because of the Alawites' powerful position during the last decades. Among the mountaineers, the traditional practice still goes on, with its different grades of initiation, including oral tuition and the handing over of holy tractates to the novices as its most vital elements. Though I have no access to any sort of statistics (which probably do not exist anyway), it is my general impression that the number of novices who attend initiation has decreased, which is a very likely result of the education politics in the country and the economic support given to the Alawite population in the mountain areas. Still, the initiated among the rural people are bound by the religious *taqīya*, probably with rather few political elements involved.

As a result of the political development, an increasing number of Alawites now live in Latakia and in Damascus, many with a high position in the power structure. Here, the *taqīya* principle may be warranted by political circumstances. A notable fact is the importance given to *ja'farīya*, the bundle of traditions which are thought by believers to go back to the 6th imam, Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (d. 148 / 765), that is, to the imamate *before* the division into the sects ot the Seveners and the Twelvers. I remember how the mufti of the Alawites gladly returned to this theme during our lengthy conversations in his home and willingly gave me access to the rich materials on this subject in his private library. By evoking the *ja'farīya* stock of traditions and referring to an imagined community before the split into sects as the soil from which they sprang and a model to live by, the Alawites appear as trustees of a common Shiite tradition, both to themselves and to those around them. Besides the philosophy that these notions are relatively acceptable to other Shia groups and to the Sunni majority in Syria and hence used as arguments in the religious-political discourse, such notions are key terms in the strategically important measures of integration in the urban milieu to which Alawites arrive from different villages with mutually diverging religious traditions and practices.

Among the urban middle class some are initiated, but so far I have not had a suitable opportunity to examine more closely their religious views and attitudes. To cautious inquiries in passing about initiation I was only given vague answers, e.g. "like in Sufism". Generally speaking, intellectuals showed a great interest in Sufism, especially in the philosophically elaborated and theosophical variants, as found in the works of Ibn al-'Arabī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and in the tractates of the *Ikhwān aṣ-ṣafā'*. Following a universal trend, many were attracted by modern expositions of Jungian psychology and psychoanalysis. They often proved to be quite familiar with the very specific Nuṣairī doctrines, but interpreted them by using such materials as frames of reference.

Poetry

Symbolic, expressive and narrative elements received orally or in writing from theology, legend and folklore meet in cultural life and are handed down in festivals and in the rich artistic literature, especially in the religiously tinged poetry, such as the panegyric of 'Alī. However, many religious dimensions of Alawite poetry have generally been ignored, probably because of the very character of the texts themselves. They can be read as profane love poems or as Sufi poetry, understanding the beloved as a human or a divine person, but to the initiated they also articulate specific Alawite religious views. In the "twilight language" typical of much mystical

poetry, including that of the Sufis, the Alawites express their own unique devotion of the divine ʻAlī and their specific gnostic doctrines. However, Alawite editors and writers who have had the ambition to deal in public with this literature have been placed in a quandary because of the obligation to keep its specific doctrines secret. For instance, Makhzūn as-Sinjārī's poetry has been edited and analyzed in bulky volumes by Ḥāmid Ḥasan, *Al-Makhzūn as-Sinjārī, baina l-imāma wa sh-shiʻr wa taṣawwuf wa falsafa*, I-IV Damascus 1970-72, and by Asʻad Aḥmad, *Maʻrifat Allāh wa Makhzūn as-Sinjārī*, I-II (3rd ed.) Beirut 1979. In these and other works Makhzūn has constantly been read as if he were a Sunni philosopher or a Sufi, whereas the specific Alawite dimension in his poetry is passed over in silence. Among the several glaring defects of this treatment the most flagrant is that verses containing Nuṣairī esoterical doctrines have been systematically omitted from the texts. The editors have practiced *taqīya*.

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions

Summing up, I would suggest that the Syrian Alawites deserve further studies to be carried out by students of different social and historical disciplines.

- From the point of view of sociology and political science, the Alawites deserve attention because of their having formerly been a marginalized and suppressed Shiitic minority, who are now in power in Syria. With regard to religion, this has led to a politically justified *taqīya* for fear of serious attacks in religious-political terms from the Sunni orthodoxy. Because of the "heretical" character of their religious teachings and practices the Alawites' status as Muslims is constantly being called in question by their adversaries, who refer to the constitution of the country according to which the president must be a Muslim.

- The Alawite literature conveys a vivid picture of the importance and ideology attached to the political and religious leader figure in Shiite Islam. This and the following paragraphs might be of special relevance to students of Islamology and history of religions.

- As a religious group, the Alawites are of great interest insofar as they have retained an archaic form of Islamic gnosticism.

- The Alawite scriptures contain very important source materials for the study of the still rather unknown religious doctrines and practices of the most pronounced ʻAlī-oriented groups in the Islamic world. They have been called *ghulāt,* or "extremist" Shiites, designations which reflect the perspective created by the early orthodox Muslim "heresiographers", but which are still widely used as standard terminology by scholars.[23] The life and teachings of these various groups in their primeval forms were part of the milieu in which the early Islamic orthodoxies were gradually chiseled out and established. The study of these groups would thus touch upon the conditions in which the creation of Shiite and of Sunnite orthodoxies as religious phenomena took place.The basic question of religion formation in early Islam should thus not be posed as a problem concerned with the division of sects from a supposedly orthodox religious core, but as a politically determined formation of orthodoxies out of a milieu of various amorphous religious groups.

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23 E.g. by Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites, The Ghulat Sects*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 1988, p. 171.

Urban Visions and Religious Communities: Access and Visibility

CATHARINA RAUDVERE

The following essay is not primarily focused on the Alevi, but on some questions related to the intersection of urban and religious studies.[1] Since urbanity is a vital issue when discussing the Alevi, whether they are understood as a social or religous group, some more general trends in Turkish society could be brought up. Moreover, this essay is an attempt to avoid the tendency to view religious communities as purely and solely religious. Faith is not the only way to explain the activities of pious people. Religion is sometimes so sharply focused that other dimensions of human life tend to fade away. My own interest in the relation between religious life and urbanity emanates from a fieldwork I have recently conducted in Istanbul among some young women in a small, independent Muslim group. Their ability to stretch given social and religous boundaries has made me realize how very direct the impact of the mega-city is on individual lives. Through negotiations within the given system, freedoms and possibilities hitherto unthinkable have been obtained. During the last decade, Islamistic women, as well as the Alevi, have gained access to social and political platforms, and thereby a new visibility in society. The young and active in Turkey have developed their own rules in the 1990s.

It is undeniable that Istanbul, like all major Turkish cities, has been exposed to an uncontrolled growth of population, which is often emphasized when the new visibility of Islam is debated. The drastic consequences of urbanization are certainly not only demographic and economic. Istanbul has in the last decade attracted scholarly attention as a mega-city with its new constellations and loyalties between groups.[2] The importance of the local arena - and its relation to the global - is attracting more attention. Istanbul is now part of a worldwide economy and complicated economical networks have been built up throughout the city. The evaluations of the social and cultural effects are topics of constant debate inside and outside Turkey. New city dwellers - often frowned upon by people with a longer family history in the city and used as scapegoats in populistic argumentation - have rapidly developed distinct forms of urban culture.[3] Istanbul is now encountering a process of global cultural hybridization, offering its inhabitants and visitors a paradox of given forms and

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1 Kenneth Brown noted more than ten years ago that few studies are "particularly concerned with religious dimensions or representations of religion in the spatial or social landscape of urban life" ("The Uses of a Concept: 'The Muslim City'", *Middle East Cities in Comparative Perspectives*, K. Brown et al. (eds.), London, 1986, p. 79). And to a large extent that opinion still holds true.

2 See Ç. Keyder and A. Öncü, *İstanbul and the Concept of World Cities*, Istanbul, 1993; M. Sönmez, "Istanbul and the Effects of Globalization", *Istanbul* [English ed.] 1996, 101-111; A. Aksoy and K. Robins, "Istanbul between Civilization and Discontent", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 10 (1994), 57-74.

3 See Keyder and Öncü. *op. cit.*; K. Robins, "Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe", *Questions of Cultural Identity*, S. Hall and P. du Gay (eds.), London, 1996; Ş. Tekeli, "Istanbul: The Lost Paradigm for Understanding Turkish Society", *New Perspectives on Turkey* 15 (1996), 119-126.

changable personal choices.[4] The city with its ancient history is often conceived by its old inhabitants with a romantic past time glory and with a considerable portion of nostalgia.[5] Today there are apparent dreams of the Ottoman era among various groups, with assiduous attempts to "re-connect with Ottoman culture - aiming to reformulate its cosmopolitan principles in the modern and global context of the 1990s" as Nilüfer Göle formulates the problem.[6] Some secular debaters stress the Ottoman blend of cultures and religions in contrast to later Kemalistic centralism, while Islamic writers point to the *millet*-system and the well-structured relations and unquestionable hierarchies between various religous groups and the state. Some participants in the debate on identity and cultural heritage praise how global culture in the cities is now mixed with local traditions from more distant parts of Turkey. But what is hailed as the fruits and benefits of the world city, is not appreciated by, or even accessible to, all İstanbul's inhabitants. Opponents of the enthusiastic view argue that the postmodern city is characterized by lack of planning and structure, and not only by an opportune fluidity and blend of life styles, but also by severe conflicts at different levels of society.

Today the cultural dominance of the urban secular elite is challenged by first and second generation rural migrants and by a steadily strengthening Muslim middle class. The sound of *arabesk* and *ezan* merges in the air of Istanbul.[7] New syntheses are established, where religious traditions have a more evident role than twenty years ago. Michael Meeker has summarized the processes: "The resurgence of Islam in Turkey is better understood as a transformation, rather than a revival, of religiosity".[8]

It is doubtful whether it is proper to speak of the Muslim movement in the singular, complex as it is. The various Muslim groups involved are certainly not only *şeriat*-oriented Islamists. In contemporary Turkey there is a multitude of religious voices: radical Islamism as well as Islamic welfare policy making, increasing interest in Sufi-traditions and mysticism, the rise of Alevi consciousness, and interest in the more liberal interpretations of Islam connected to Alevism and the traditional rituals of the Bektaşi-order, along with various local and ethnical traditions. However, too often nowadays Muslim activities are entirely identified with the Refah Partisi and its sometimes very hegemonic claims.

The recent religious awareness can loosely be defined as a new understanding of the Muslim heritage with a distinct nationalistic bias. Islamism in this broad sense serves as a link between the various Muslim groups, with more or less radical programmes, and as a basis for networks. In its more pronounced Islamistic form this discourse articulates resistance, cultural as well as political, to what is vaguely defined as "Westernism". The Islamic activism is in many respects an anti-colonial attempt to meet the problems and challenges of modern society with religious answers. From an Algerian perspective Marnia Lazreg comments on the Islamistic critique of the West: "as a comparative referent point against which to gauge the failures of the state to foster and sustain a coherent culture and economic system".[9] The situation is the same in Turkey.

The more active Islamic encounter with modernity has led to access and a new visibility in Muslim culture. In the wake of this development the modern Turkish

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4 P. Werbner, "The Making of Muslim Dissent", *American Ethnologist* 23 (1996), 102-122.

5 N. Göle, "Istanbul's Revenge", *Istanbul* [English ed.] 1993, 20-23.

6 Aksoy and Robins, *op. cit.*, 63.

7 M. Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate*, London, 1992.

8 M. Meeker, "Oral Culture, Media Culture, and the Islamic Resurgence in Turkey", *Exploring the Written*, E. P. Archetti (ed.), Oslo, 1995, p. 31.

9 M. Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*, New York, 1994, p. 215.

history must be rewritten. Islam is not revitalized, since it was never erased from the cultural map and it was never solely the interest of uneducated rural migrants. There existed an urban Muslim middle-class even in the heyday of Kemalism, but its visibility was limited. It was a muted group, in Edwin Ardener's terminology, and the activities of both rural and urban Muslims were under the strict control of the centralist state. Today, a redefinition of conceptions of state power and legitimacy is apparent. The modernistic intentions under Kemalism of creating a homogenous Turkish identity had permeated all levels of society, but in the last decade the secular image of a uniform Turkish national identity has been deconstructed. Today, being a conscious Muslim (*şuurlu Müslüman*), has become an accepted and highly publicly expressed identity.

An important lesson to be drawn from urban studies when analysing religious communities is the stress on change and diversity,[10] while continuity and stability are emphasized elsewhere.[11] Dynamics and development are as such at the core of interest, not only at a macro level, but also in the way individuals relate to changes. Both aspects have been very apparent in the women's group I am working with. Their lives, the choices they make, and their moves in society today were not possible ten or fifteen years ago. Something apparently has happened.

The Great Change

Kemalistic modernism was a project of emancipation based on an ideology of progress. Its hope of large-scale industrial development and social reform had many European parallels. A more emphasized market economy has in many countries precipitated the development towards a post-industrial society. For Turkey the break-up and transformation took a dramatic turn after the political turbulence in the late 70s and the military coup in September 1980.

The background to the changes in Turkish society during the last decade is to a great extent centered around one person, the late Turgut Özal, and the economic, social and cultural consequences of his politics.[12] Despite the shifting evaluations of the prime minister, and later president, during his life time, nobody denies the irreversible turn Turkey took after 1983 when civil government was re-introduced. Among other things, these transformations and openings made way for new attitudes towards diversity and complexity. State centralism was strongly questioned as ideology and identities other than Kemalistic Turkish -e.a. ethnical, religious, social- were more openly expressed. These upheavals led in some cases to open conflicts and in others to more symbolic confrontations. But the changes also introduced a tendency of greater acceptance - at least among young people. My field-work gives evi-

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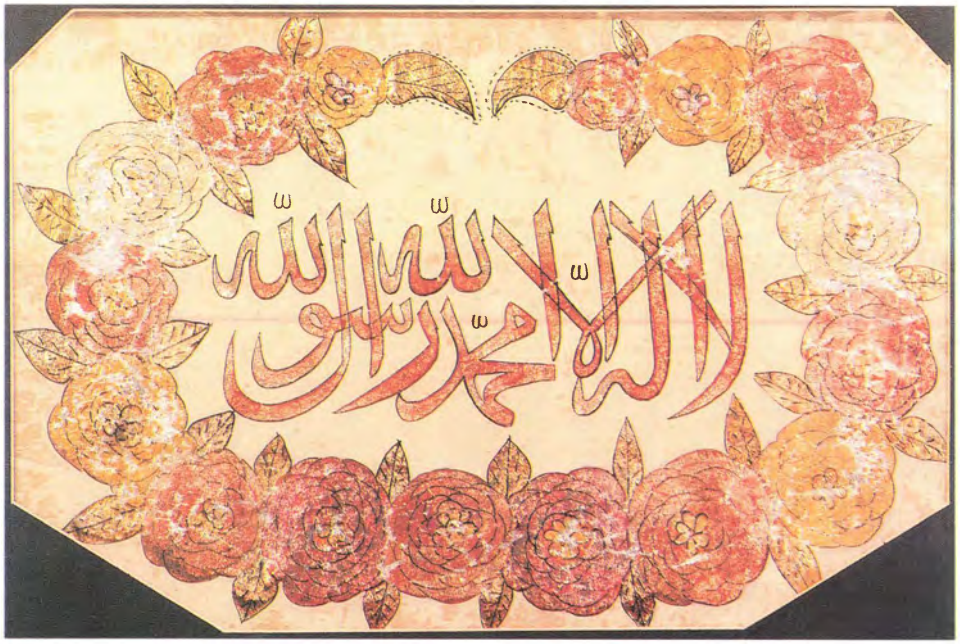
10 U. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York, 1992.

11 Urban studies is a wide field of social and cultural research. The impacts of globalization and world economy on urban life, especially in the Third world, have been discussed at length. The various attempts to define and discuss postmodernity have also deeply affected urban studies. The frequent emphasis on network analysis - how communication and inter-personal relations are made possible - is of special interest when studying religious groups. U. Hannerz, *op. cit.*; idem; *Exploring the City. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, New York, 1980; K. Gibson and S. Watson, "Post-modern Spaces, Cities, and Politics", in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, S. Watson and K. Gibson (eds.), Oxford, 1993; A. Rogers and S. Vertovec, "Introduction", in *The Urban Context: Ethnicty, Social Networks and Situational Analysis*, A. Rogers and S. Vertovec (eds.), Oxford, 1995.

12 F. Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, London, 1993, pp. 181ff; E. Zürcher, *Turkey A Modern History*, London, 1993, pp. 292ff; Keyder and Öncü, *op. cit.*, pp. 19ff; M. Sönmez, *op. cit.*; K. Robins, "Interrupting Identities"; idem and D. Morley, "Almancı, yabancı", *Cultural Studies* 10, 248-254.

dence of marked generational differences in attitudes. Although age is hardly a stable category, the younger generations seem more prepared for handling difference without necessarily experiencing it as a threat. Education, more than any other reform, has brought about insights into other people's lives. There is a parallel development between Özal's transnational economic liberalism and the religious movement in all its incarnations. And from very different angles these two processes have brought about a more complex political discourse.

From several aspects, the recently visible groups have moved from periphery to centre. The various groups of Alevi and Islamic women share the position of being "other" in relation to mainstream secular society and the traditional Sunni community. The influence of postmodernism on analyses of the living conditions in modern Turkey is also apparent. Intellectuals in general, express a reluctance to accept the claims of Kemalism and other positivistic and universalistic ideologies.[13] To what extent there is an influence of postmodernism on Islamistic theology in Turkey is more of an open question. This is discussed at length by Ali Yaşar Sarıbay in his *Postmodernite, Sivil Toplum ve İslam* (1994) where he argues that postmodernity operates as the conjunction between Islam and civil society. Some Islamistic debaters seek legitimation with the help of arguments influenced by discussions on relativism,



Inscription representing *Kelime-i Tevhid* (the unity of God).
Glass-painting, Sinan Genim collection, *Camaltında Yirmibin Fersah*, İstanbul 1997,
Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık

the critique of positivism and the development of civil society.[14] Such a position can constitute an intellectual framework for personal faith in a way modernism in Turkey never could. But in the end: will not Marshall Berman and Judith Butler always clash with *tevhid*?

Islamism has challenged the Kemalistic project of modernity and opposed secular conceptions of religion as a private matter; the idea that religion belongs "at

13 N. Göle, "Authoritarian secularism and Islamist politics: the case of Turkey", in *Civil Society in the Middle East, Vol. 2*, Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), Leiden, 1996.

14 A. Saktanber, "Becoming the 'Other' as a Muslim in Turkey: Turkish women versus Islamist women", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 11 (1994), 99-134; Sarıbay, *op. cit.*.

home", separated from public life, labour and production. Instead, a complementary relation between religion and society is claimed. In western Europe, after the French Revolution, the ultimate aim of secularization and modernization was separation between religion and politics. Religion, for the modern and enlightened, should be a mater of private concern, and the constitutional freedom of religion was the icon of the liberal ideas of freedom in general. The method of obtaining privatization of religion in most European countries was through institutional differentiation and through the organization of religion in specific areas of society.[15] This effort has been one of the characteristics of most modernization projects; i.e. to indicate that a modern society is not governed by religious ideas.

What can be observed in Turkey today might seem quite paradoxical. On one hand, more than ever before, religion is a private matter. As has been pointed out by José Casanova in a discussion on private and public religions, an important turn in the development of politicized religious movements has taken place during the last two decades. Through modernization (urbanization, spread of education, mass-media, communication technology etc) a greater variety of choices of religious modes of life are accessible for individuals. In her analysis of the development of an Islamistic counter elite, Nilüfer Göle does not hesitate to claim that this complexity enforces a form of secularization within the religious communities: "To the extent that rationality, individualism, and critical thinking emerge as autonomous value references for the Islamist elite formed through modern education, a process of secularization has set in".[16]

In a comparison between the religious life of a rural area in Turkey and Alevi migrants from the same Anatolian village living in Germany, Werner Schiffauer makes some important observations in the processes of change. Personal expression and self presentation become more and more important as a demonstration of certain values which also has a deep effect on ritual life. A complementary relation between religion and society can hardly be claimed by migrant Muslims in the West, instead, an "islamization of one's self" takes place to enforce the visibility of religion.[17] Barbara Metcalf has lately taken up Schiffauer's theme when analysing how Muslim space is constructed for everyday ritual and practice in diaspora communities.[18] Although Schiffauer and Metcalf analyse migrant groups, it can be noted that at a discursive level, many Islamists in Turkey define themselves as being in a diaspora in relation to mainstream secular society. A rhetorical twist is often made in the self-image of the Islamic movement between being the representative of genuine Muslim Turkish heritage and, due to Kemalistic politics over the last seventy years, being forced into a marginal position. The islamization of the self seems to be a likely development within Muslim urbanization projects in general.

In Turkey today, religious groups have a stronger visibility on the political arena and have gained access to instruments of political power. Radical Islamism has come into sight stressing the priority of religion over politics. By no means all are demanding *şeriat* as the base for public administration, but there is a certain tendency to universalism and hegemonic claims. Consequently, the local groups of various orientations dwell in-between.

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15 J. Casanova, "Private and public religions", *Social Research* 59, 17-57.

16 N. Göle, "Authoritarian secularism". 39.

17 W. Schiffauer, "Migration and religiousness", in *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, T. Gerholm and Y. G. Lithman (eds.), London, 1988, p. 155.

18 B. Metcalf, "Introduction: Sacred words, sanctioned practice, new communities", in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, B. Metcalf (ed.), Berkeley, 1993.

Small Groups, Big Issues

In most cases, interest groups established post-1983 function as non-governmental organizations (NGO's). The veritable explosion of NGO activities over the last decade has caused a certain confusion in public discourse as regards the groups' relation towards the state. This was apparent during the preparations for the UN Habitat conference in June 1996. When groups representing very different concerns and strategies in policy-making had to co-operate, they discovered - what sociologists had pointed out before - the similar conditions they were acting under. Rather than only stressing ideological differences, it can be worth noticing the shared social conditions of the NGO's. Binnaz Toprak has outlined three major similarities concerning new mobilization: the legal infrastructure (the legislation for foundations with non-commercial cultural or social activities), changes in economy (much more private money available to support the NGO's) and, finally, an open political challenge against the establishment outside the party system. Thousands of groups registered as active have had a determining impact on the formulation of political arguments. The changes during the Özal regime and onwards brought about spheres of social autonomies and initiatives of a kind that had never been seen before in Turkey.[19]

Most religious groups in contemporary Istanbul can be defined as belonging to this variety of NGO:s and many of them are constituted as foundations, *vakıf*s. The increasing number of "covered" NGO:s, (*çarşaflı* NGO) as one journalist has named them,[20] run by Islamistic women concentrate their activities on small scale community work, far from the eyes of the general public. The women offer basic religious education programmes and elementary social welfare such as the supply of food, clothes, school grants, legal advice etc. They perform voluntary work at all levels of society and, if not in direct power, they seek to exert influence on local society. An apparent process of formalization of religious activism has taken place, i.e. a transformation from private to public. For covered women, the establishment of a *vakıf* is often the only way of taking part in political discussions. Through the *vakıf*s they gain not only stability and structure, but also public recognition and opportunities to address wider audiences. This change has meant a shift from meetings in family houses or apartments in accordance with very traditional patterns, to the conquest of spaces like university campuses and the modern media. Nilüfer Göle has noted the Islamistic groups' "attempts to reappropriate control over the orientation of the cultural model problematizing the relations of domination in spheres of lifestyle and knowledge".[21] These changes are dramatic for women's ways of gathering and have raised questions about access to urban space. To whom does the city belong? According to whose rules are the lines of division drawn? Greater and greater parts of the city have become accessible, and women have started to move over great distances to be able to reach the groups of their choices.

Islamism in Turkey has become a public drama and street culture is filled with signs and symbols indicating various religious positions. Wearing a headscarf or the participation in the activities of a certain *vakıf* is a *dava*: a mission within one's own society.

At functional and symbolic levels several similarities between the Alevi groups and the Islamistic groups I know from my field-work can be noted. According to

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19 S. Zubaida, "Islam, the state and democracy: contrasting conceptions of society in Egypt", *Middle East Report, November-December 1992, 2-10; B. Toprak,* "Civil Society in Turkey", in *Civil Society* in *the Middle East*, Vol. 2, Augustus Richard Norton (ed.), Leiden, 1996.

20 A. Ulusoy, "Haldun Hoca'nın çarşaflı NGO'su", *Aktüel* 276 (1996), 20-27.

21 Göle, "Authoritarian secularism", p. 41.

Alberto Melucci,[22] there are three basic requirements for the establishment of a distinct group in a social movement. There must be a conception of solidarity, around which a collective identity is constructed and maintained through mutual symbols (be it headscarves or *cem* ceremonies). The interest of the group is focused on a social conflict and defines a mutual enemy (be it the secular establishment or the Sunni élite). The third characteristic is the struggle for social change (be it an Islamistic utopia or liberal equality demands). Neither women's groups, nor the Alevi communities fall into the official Turkish categories of religous groups; for the hitherto "invisible" groups the NGO's represent new fields of possibilities and new contact zones with the rest of society. The NGO's have freer forms of organization and not always very clear relations to the state and the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DIB: *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*). The Alevi have never been officially recognized as a specific community in any formal sense. Until the 1980s they remained generally marginalized and were looked upon as rurals by both secularists and representatives of mainstream DIB-Islam. Not surprisingly, Alevi culture has flourished in diaspora, especially in Germany.[23] The impact of urbanism on Alevi culture is great. Activism in local society is to a large extent organized through NGO's giving voice to attitudes and interests from other strata of society, to former outsiders such as the Alevi. Symptomatically, it is the Alevi in urban areas that have become visible over the past decade. It would be incorrect to view the formation of the new NGO's as a protest against the state alone. As pointed out by Sami Zubaida, the new groups display a complex attitude towards the state, combining protest and dependence.[24] Individual choices of what group and what symbols to use, is a mode of controlling the complexity of modern society. In most groups there is a subtle relation between choices and individual freedom on the one hand, and conformity on the other. Both of these are related to the privatization of religion.[25]

Although visible and sometimes vociferous, these groups have limited direct political power. As an alternative to party politics, they are focused on activism and mobilization to solve concrete problems in local communities. By support from grass roots, the NGO's claim to build civil society in a nation with weaker and weaker infrastructure. They replace, or rather fulfil, the obligations of the state and the municipalities. In relation to this aspect there is a certain risk of liberal romanticism, especially when discussing womens' groups, and it must be remembered that many of the religious groups can be quite authoritative. The Islamic NGO's have been successful in presenting themselves as focusing simultaneously on practical problems as well as eternal.

Claiming Space and the Localization of Religious Activism

The Islamic vision of the future is remote from life as it is lived in the mega-city, where many women have to work outside the family. Most women use the complicated communal system of transportation with overcrowded buses and ferry boats that makes it hard to preserve the ideal norms. Women are constantly exposed to the male gaze.

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22 *Nomads of the Present Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, London, 1989.

23 R. Mandel, "A place of their own: contesting spaces and defining places in Berlin's migrant community", in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, B. Metcalf (ed.), Berkeley, 1996.

24 Zubaida, "Islam, the state and democracy".

25 P. Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London, 1994.

As mentioned above, the development of urban culture in Muslim cultures is in some respect comparable to the establishment of the Muslim diaspora communities in the West.[26] In her discussion on how social space for religious activities is created among Muslims in diasporic cultures, Barbara Metcalf shows a pattern applicable to analysis of womens' religious activities in Istanbul. First, there is a certain objectification, a new stress on personal appearance, stressing individuality as part of modernity and quickly readable signs on the body. Secondly there is also a greater stress on what is conceived to be normative practice, collective rituals, that signify the transformation from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, with new bonds and new loyalties. Thirdly, there is "a more dispersed leadership", where women have appeared in leading positions (at least among other women) to an extent that would not have been possible a decade ago.

Even though it has been said many times before, the discussion of spatial dimensions in a Muslim context must begin with a consideration of the ideal normative separation between men and women. Islam is a very body sensitive religion with a high sense for spatiality. The position of the body, when in prayer or elsewhere, what is coming in and out of the body, as well as the proper places for male and female bodies to dwell, have their formal rules. Henrietta Moore has noted on gender division and bodies that: "More recent feminist work in anthropology has stressed the importance of understanding gender as embodied, and the consequent dangers involved in ignoring the role the body plays in the construction and experience of gender and gender categorization".[27]

The basic dichotomy between public and private/domestic domains is apparently stronger than Muslim religious behaviour, and much space in secular Turkey is still gendered according to this pattern. Instead of claiming Muslim origins for the (ideal) separation it is possible to view the division as part of a complicated eastern Mediterranean hierarchical system of age, social status and gender, visible from indivual clothing to the construction of major cities and urban planning. But religion has been an effective way of giving legitimacy to spatial separartion. Important feminist critique has been expressed in this issue regarding the risk of arguing in circles: women are defined by domestic space and vice versa.

This hierarchical division could be found all over the eastern mediterranean area - at least a generation or two ago - among Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. However, the discussion of the relation between sex/gender and space can not simply end with this observation, since conceptions of properly gendered space are coming into focus with a new emphasis in contemporary Islamistic discourse. When women want to gain influence and power within the Islamistic groups they have to make careful choices and select strict strategies on how to balance public visibility and preserve the separation. But politics is in itself dealing with other people; it is by definition a public activity. The new female religious groups interact and communicate in their local districts and they have constructed zones and claimed space entirely intended for female activities. The urban lifestyle expedites the process of establishing new meanings to old places.

Some urban planners stress the immense changes in Istanbul, not only in terms of the uncontrolled growth of population, but also the destruction of the historical city in terms of segregation and separation of functions. Others stress the positive effects of the postmodern city on women's possibilities to establish religious networks.[28]

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26 Metcalf, *op. cit.*

27 H. Moore, "Epilogue", in *Carved Flesh, Cast Selves: Gendered* Symbols and Social Practices, Vigdis Broch-Due et al (eds.), London, 1993, p. 279.

28 K. Robins, "Istanbul between civilization and discontent", *City* 5-6 (1996), 6-33.

In their article on urban rituals, Heidi de Mare and Anna Vos take up a discussion over "the city's topology of significance" and its production of meaning; how the city is read by its inhabitants and visitors: "the city's toponomy, the nomenclature of streets and squares - reputation of particular city districts - urban facilities - the attribution of sacred and profane values".[29] The vicinity of my own field-work, Fatih, can serve as an example of the importance of such a local structure. The social and cultural construction of a landscape like Fatih, a district in old Istanbul, has formed a very different estimate among the citizens of Istanbul concerning the lives of men and women in the area.[30] The area around Fatih Mosque has for centuries maintained strong networks between those institutions where men practise their religion in public, such as mosques, dervish lodges, religious schools and theological seminars, while women's activities were traditionally kept within the *haremlik*. The contemporary challenge of the modes of religious life is therefore also to a great extent a challenge of urban space. The district's history involves much of the Muslim identity of the city and its inhabitants, and takes its name from Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Sultan Mehmet the Conquerer. The Fatih Mosque was constructed after 1453, as a contrast to the Byzantine parts of Constantinople with Hagia Sofia as its centre. Today, the district is known to secular people as an icon of Islamism and has developed its own system of symbols and signs in the streets. The anniversary of the conquest, May 29 in the secular calendar, is celebrated in religous circles with a special hymn that hails the patron of the district. Refah Partisi has over the last years organized huge meetings at gigantic football stadiums in commemoration of the hero and the party mirrors its contemporary projects in legendary history. As Kirsten Hastrup writes in *Other Histories*: "The recollection of events also follows the logic of social significance. Like the narratives of culture, the story of the past is therefore a selective account of the actual sequence of events, but it is no random selection".[31]

The Authority of the Past: the *Yurt* Model vs the Medine Model

A more than seventy year old ideological conflict has been fought between the image of Ottoman cosmopolitan Istanbul and its rival, national Turkish Ankara. In the late 1920s a new republican capital was established in the heart of Anatolia, with the degradetion of Constantinople as a consequence. The conflict has been fuelled over the decades in both political and literary discourse. Istanbul soon became the symbol of foreign explotation and deprivation while Ankara represented the solid base of the Turkish heritage on which national modernity was to be built.

In the writings of Ziya Gökalp from the first decades of this century, an ideological web was spun around resistance towards both oriental and occidental influences. The ideals were pictured in accordance with conceptions of the ancestral Turkic nomads: "Among the ancient Turks, sovereignty belonged to the tribe (...) Equality was a strongly established institution".[32] In Kemalistic rhetoric, the independence and free minds of these ancestors, moving easily over the steppe, was contrasted with

29 H. de Mare and A. Vos, "Urban rituals in Italy and the Netherlands", in *Urban Rituals in Italy and the Netherlands*, H. de Mare and A. Vos (eds.), Assen, 1993, p. 11.

30 T. J. Barnes and J. S. Duncan, "Introduction: writing worlds", in *Writing Worlds. Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, T. J. Barnes and J. S. Duncan (eds.), London, 1992.

31 "Introduction", in *Other Histories*, K. Hastrup (ed.), London, 1992.

32 Z. Gökalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, Leiden, 1968; pp. 103ff; original edition: *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, Istanbul, 1923. Istanbul.

the image of narrow-minded Muslim orthodoxy as well as cosmopolitanism and its incarnation Constantinople. Despite the modernization projects, the fundamental vision of the ancient Turks was on a pastoral, not an urban model. It is therefore interesting to observe the contrasts in the contemporary Islamic vision of Medine, the good society as represented in the Koran and the hadith. The Islamistic answers to the problems of modern society are legitimated through the visualization of this legendary utopia. Sacred history is, Sami Zubaida writes, "the original period of Islam in which the Prophet ruled and organised the affairs of the Islamic community with divine guidance".[33] Hence the boundaries between yesterday, today and tomorrow become fluid. The vision of the Islamic historical utopia is woven around the lost harmony of Medine, *dâr-al-hicret*, the city of migration. This utopia is to a large extent an urban vision. By analogy, the living conditions of the twentieth century can be interpreted in the light of the early *ümmet*. The upheaval of time brings the historical utopia to life.

The Medine model is the rhetorical pattern for Refah Partisi vision of future society, which is as vague as the descriptions of the city in the holy scriptures. The Koran and the hadith dwell in great detail on certain points, but there is no really full-fledged social context. It is the authority of the past, to speak with Andrew Rippin, that is needed for the construction of solid arguments.[34] Rather than concrete solutions, vivid imagery is constructed around concepts like *hicret*, *cihad*, and the initial struggles of Muhammed and his faithful followers. The legends of the first generations of Muslims, *salaf*, are considered an authoritative source for practice and guidance. Despite the set-backs experienced by the historical characters, the *hicret*-metaphor in the texts promises ultimate victory. The scenes visualized are the first decades of Islam when the new religion was established in developing urban centres, but the imagery is easily applicable to modern experiences. A central concept in historical descriptions as well as contemporary arguments is *câhiliyye*, the age of paganism and ignorance. The conception of this pre-Islamic period is in everyway a contrast to the utopic Islamic society. It is used as a technical term both for a historical era as well as in an abstract sense. As one of the most important Islamistic philosophers, widely read by Turkish Islamists, Said Qutb, writes in *In the Shadow of the Quran*: "Modern-style jahiliyya in the industrialized societies of Europe and America is essentially similar to the old-time jahiliyya in pagan and nomadic Arabia. For in both systems, man is under the domination of man rather than of Allah".[35]

Although human, Muhammed serves with his authoritative behaviour as an example for mankind. The aim of Muhammed's migration to Medine, when the people of Mecca had turned their backs on him, was to build a community in accordance with to the law of God. The new religion demanded attention, belief and knowledge, and the limits, *hudutlar*, were staked out in line with Muhammed's revelations. The very exact language of the Koran and the hadith on human relations is the language of the ancient Arabic trades-men. The rules have almost the character of a contract between God and man. It is apparent that the image of society is based on the presumption of rather complex social relations. It takes social and economical differences, gender relations, the presence of other religions as well as the significance of foreign powers into consideration.

Hudut is as such a highly spatial concept, an individual is either inside or outside,

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33 S. Zubaida, "The city and its 'other' in Islamic political ideas and movements", in *Middle East Cities in Comparative Perspective*, Kenneth Brown et al (eds.), London, 1986, p. 333.

34 A. Rippin, *Muslims, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, The Formative Period*, London, 1993, pp. 65ff.

35 Quoted from E. Sivan, *Radical Islam*, New Haven, 1985, p. 24.

and it is used both in an abstract metaphysical sense and in a more concrete and legalistic mode. A comparison with another spatial concept, *haram*, should be taken into consideration.

If Mecca is the geographical and ritual centre of religious life, Medine, as described in the Koran and the hadith, signifies the core of righteous religious and social life. A hadith from the Bukhari collection states that Medine purifies people to perfectness, according to the saying of Muhammed: "Medine is like a furnace, it expels out the impurities (bad persons) and selects the good ones and makes them perfect".[36] In theology and pious argumentation the Medine model corresponds with God's intention regarding his creation. Muhammed's love for Medine, the faithful, is repeated, and the city called a sanctuary. When reading these holy texts it is apparent that the vision expressed, produces to a very great extent images of urban life. It is a society with extensive outside contacts, inhabited by traders and travellers, and also by people of different beliefs. Although a fierce argumentation against Judaism and Christianity is at hand in the Koran, the tone of criticism and rejection is different from the extremely aggressive anti-semitism of this and the last century, that plays such a prominent role in contemporary Islamistic discourse.

The norms of Medine keep people within *hudut*. Inside there is permanent order and justice, whereas the outside is characterized by *fitne*, disorder and disobedience. This dichotomy and terminology is frequently used in contemporary İslamistic rhetoric. In escatological theology *fitne* is one of the certain signs of the impending Day of Judgement. The idolatrous cults of paganism, *câhiliyye*, is compared to the materialism of our own time which draws people's attention away from God. In sharp contrast to the Islamistic notion of harmonious and homogeneous Medine, stands contemporary Istanbul, the equivalent of Babylon, a cursed place according to the hadiths.

Babylon, as an urban metaphor, represents the illnesses of society, the image of the human body in deprivation. Refah's promise of a just order, *âdil düzen*, includes social reforms that will be the medicine for a good and healthy society. And following the paradigm of tradition: it is very vaguely described as Refah's alternative economic plan for Turkey, with few – if any – proposals for the national economy. The vivid organic (body and family) imagery, both in repudiation and panegyric is striking. The family metaphor lies more or less open in Refah's rhetoric. It has an underlying reference to the Ottoman *millet* system, in which everyone knew their proper place, their in given positions, and in this discourse the party's chairman Necmettin Erbakan plays the role of a chasting caring patriarch.

Much of the media's interest is centered around Refah's charismatic leader. Necmettin Erbakan's personal background is of significant importance in an urban perspective: he is a native of a smaller town in Anatolia and a social climber, and in his rhetoric he is not a son of some modern Babylon. He fits into Nilüfer Göle's model of the rising Muslim middle class and the social mobility of the new Islamistic élite. An engineer himself, Erbakan has, since the late 60s, been a spokesman for Anatolian businessmen and entrepreneurs. Much of his agitation has been aimed at cosmopolitan Istanbul, a westernized city with international networks. Basically, Necmettin Erbakan is a protectionist, which is in line with his nationalistic world view and vociferouos anti-western rhetoric. His vision of Turkey as the leading Muslim country in the world is his rather chauvinist message to small people outside the city centres. Whether they live in the shanty towns or in the countryside, Islamistic rhetoric promises to open the city gates, the road to the New Medine.

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36 Al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī, Beirut, vol. 3:30, p. 107, 1989.

Some Concluding Remarks: Coping With the Demands of Urban Life

To conclude: The hegemonic tendencies among the Islamistic voices raise questions as to how much space there is for more independent and free thinking religious groups. Will they be let into the visions of the postmodern Medine? It must be noted that in the legendary history of the Alevis there is no such urban model as discussed above, but an egalitarian pastoral. Confrontations with both the Islamistic Medine model and Turkish mainstream society are therefore inevitable. Alevis share the image of the Turkic conquest of Anatolia with the Kemalists, but the interpretations differ when it comes to the legacy left by the free men of the steppe founded as it is in another meta-history. "All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives", as Benedict Anderson writes in *Imagined Communities*.[37] The transmission of the legendary history of Hacı Bektaş Veli connects past and present and is an essential part of Alevi discourse. Many pilgrimages and festivals focused on the person and the place, his village in Anatolia, have undergone a quite distinct revival.

In a rural Anatolian perspective it was the digressing religious beliefs and - perhaps more importantly - practices that differentiated the Alevi communities from the surrounding Turkish Anatolian villages. Most Alevi recognize themselves as the keepers of a considerable cultural and religious heritage older than Islam which gives them an identity as outsiders in opposition to the authoritarian modernist project. From a contemporary perspective the Alevi groups share a position of opposition: towards the Sunni *ümmet* and to the political establishment in general. It is most disputable whether the Alevis can be considered as an ethnic, group in any formal sense of the term, and there are various emic definitions of what the *Alevi toplumu* really is. To some groups the religious identity is indispensable, while others, with politically radical preferences (*toplumcu*), have a rather negative attitude towards religion - and the contrast between groups is even sharper if we turn to the diasporic Alevi communities in Germany and the Netherlands.

Rather than compressing all Alevis into one unifying definition it is interesting to focus on the options shared by all kinds of religious groups and their conquest of the modern city. The urban condition has had a profound impact on the conditions of religious life, as regards both access and visibility. For the Alevi groups the struggle for ritual space has some important features in common with the more independent Islamic women. As NGO:s they strive for spatial platforms for their engagement and activities to a large extent in novel urban surroundings. "[A] city is a place of discoveries and surprises".[38] It is an environment where identities and histories are discovered and traditions constructed, and the city is also the place where surprising discoveries are made as regards the strength of these novel traditional positions. Therefore the experiences of urban modernity in a megapolis like Istanbul are significant from three major aspects.

Firstly, at individual level, many migrants express life in the city in negative terms as a radical "uprooting". It is often said that there is no longer any easily grasped identity. There are new constellations of the family in terms of economy and power which affect the "traditional" gender system and thereby ritual life. The outcome is both uncertainty and the opportunity for personal choices. The situation bears an obvious ambiguity - stress on the personal project and at the same time acceptance of the requirements of mass communication.

37 New York, 1991, p. 204.

38 Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, 1992, p. 173.

Secondly, at the communal level, new harsh living conditions are generally shared by members of a local community. The construction of the *gecekondu* complexes are unstable in more than one sense. Consequently new institutions are needed to replace support from the larger family, broken up in the context of the megacity, as is the mastering of new discourses and new sets of signs and symbols.

Thirdly, at state level the secular hegemony is now openly questioned by more and more groups outside the political establishment. The keywords for the 90s have, for different reasons, so far been difference, ambiguity, individuality and a new understanding of subjectivity. The political and religious life of the last decade has presented a multiplicity of new forms of activism that develop political discourses as well as the infrastructure between the groups.

Nevertheless, additional questions in relation to these mainly positive changes must also be raised: who has the possibility of grasping them, who has access to the social spaces where the opportunities can be seized? The evaluation of the contemporary political blend by the intellectual élite, frequently influenced by postmodern ideas is mainly positive. Many of them conceive themselves as world-citizens who reject the stable categories of modernity and positivism. The contrast between this postmodern optimism and attempts to create unifying ideological systems such as Islamism, Alevism and nationalism is quite striking.

When it comes to visibility, recognition of the Alevi minority by DIB has been on the agenda for several Alevi groups. The status of the Alevi meeting places, *cemevi*s as a spatial and symbolic indication of Alevi presence, is comparable to the formation of *vakıf*s for circles of self-contained religious women, as is the Alevi stress on their particular outline of Islam in contrast to traditional orthodoxy, and the women's attempt to form new interpretations.

Finally, visibility is also a question of political factors outside the parlimentary system. The riots in Alevi areas and the recent clashes on the university campuses show a significant shift in the focal point of conflicts. Conceivably, it is no longer only a Islamism vs secularism conflict, but a regression to political struggles similar to the skirmishes fought in the 70s.

When summarising the urban context and living conditions in postmodern cities, Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson express an optimistic attitude when they write on contemporary urbanism: "No one political solution will emerge which will be universally just. Power will be continually contested, and new and different strategic alliances will emerge at each point of resistance. Rather, postmodern politics allows for optimism and possibility, since it celebrates struggles and new possibilities at many sites - both marginal and mainstream - recognizing the victories are only ever partial, temporary and contested".[39]

39 S. Watson and K. Gibson, "Postmodern politics and planning. A postscript", in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, S. Watson and K. Gibson (eds.), Oxford, 1993, p. 262.

Epilogue: The Scripturalization of Ali-oriented Religions

TORD OLSSON

Religion does not wither away or disappear under the conditions of modernization, but as a rule it is profoundly transformed. This is aptly illustrated in the case of the Ali-oriented religions, which have been the topic of the conference papers here published. Former secluded communities with their esoteric teachings and secret rituals, by tradition only accessible to the initiated, have gained new visibility. The Alevi community was earlier a closed world with very limited interaction with the political and social centres of Ottoman society and later with the institutions of the Turkish Republic. For instance, marriage regulations were endogamous, not only normatively, and religious traditions were esoteric, and transmitted orally at secret rituals. These and other historical, social, and religious circumstances have lead to the shaping of concepts by which the Turkish Alevi have identified themselves, and have been identified by others, as a distinctive community.[1] Similar conditions have formed concepts by which the predominantly Iranian Ahl-e Haqq and the Syrian Alawites/Nuṣairīs have been identified, and by which they have have identified themselves and their relation to the state and to mainstream Islam.

The newly awakened interest in the various Ali-oriented religious communities in the Near East has mainly been focused on these groups. Also, much of the current discussion has been concerned with their moot relation to mainstream forms of Islam and to other expressions of cultural, social and political hegemonies. In the present discourse the exponents of different positions among these religiously and socially identifiable groups articulate their perspectives by means of mixed vocabularies, using political, social, cultural and religious terms. As a rule, the terminologies employed by the advocates of the Ali-oriented positions claim to expose hidden hegemonical structures of the dominant society and its great narratives, and to deprecate the apparent ones. Opposite positions taken by the spokesmen of mainstream Islams, or forms of national politics which conform with the great society, stamp the Ali-oriented communities as religiously sectarian, syncretistic and heretical, politically separatist, socially deviant, and culturally exotic. In fact, much of the oral discourse during the conference at which the contributions in this book were presented, very well illustrated the on-going discussions in wider Middle East contexts.

In Turkey, the host of written publications that in the late 1980s suddenly brought on stage the former secluded Alevi community, with its esoteric teachings and secret rituals, by tradition only accessible to the initiated, can be seen as a phenomenon within a much wider global process in which the status and rights of minorities often are radically changed. Among the rights claimed by minorities like the Alevi is the right to write their own version of history. Transnational processes, including migration caused by real or imagined suppression and the development of diaspora com-

1 Kehl-Bodrogi et al 1997, xii. The "Alevi manifesto" (*Alevilik Bildirgesi*) published in 1990 in the leading newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (May 15th, p.15; see Vorhoff in this volume) has been seen as marking the end of the "invisibility" of the Alevi (Kehl-Bodrogi et al 1997, xiv).

munities, regularly stimulate reflection on social, cultural and religous identity which is deliberately contrasted with "significant others".[2] The reflection on a common past would normally take shape in a body of interpretative postdictions which we call "history". By writing or telling one's own history an imagined community[3] of an idealized past is constructed, and even conjured up, into which the needs and wishes of the present are projected. Like genealogies and origin myths, the telling of history provides meaning, experience of identity, and visibility. Hence, historiography creates mutually conflicting histories which are used and abused to justify politically controversial issues, such as claims on land and independence. In fact, the fight for the right to define the past is one of the great political conflicts of today. The new visibility of the Ali-oriented communities and related groups in the Middle East should be seen in in the light of such a transnational perspective.

The traditional identification of Alevi religious and social life was based on the oral transmission of knowledge, including the esoteric religious teaching, which was handed down ritually from person to person. The tuition was communicated in distinctive ritual settings like initiation, as well as in less ritualized contexts, and consisted of personal transfer of knowledge and abilities from master (*dede*) to disciple (*talip*). The esoteric teaching was received as a religious inheritance in a close and enduring personal relation to the master in a process of transference that could last for years or be a life-long intimacy. Similarly, the evidence from the Syrian Alawites clearly shows that religious knowledge, in the fundamental sense as models to live by, was inherited by means of oral tuition, and transferred from master (*ustādh, shaikh, ʻāqil, murshid, sayyid*) to disciple (*ṭālib*).

The instructions given at the initiation and at later religious tuition were conducted by a master the disciple took as his religious father (*wālid dīnī*) in a life-long relation, and who received even more honours than his physical father.[4] The oral transmission of religion among the Ali-oriented communities has apparently constituted a vital element of a distinctive type of situated social practice, by which personal tuition has implemented deeep socialization into a religious life-style that was gradually internalized over years.

Both among the Alevi and the Nuṣairī this face-to-face transmission of knowledge has been successively scripturalized and objectified in catechisms and similar written instructions.[5] The scripturalization of the oral tradition started early. The oldest extant texts, both the Turkish *Buyruk* catechisms from the 16th century and the Arabic Nuṣairī ones from the 18th century, however, have retained the dialogue form of the personal teaching situation and much of the character of spoken language. Such features are still prominent in the Nuṣairī manuscripts from the late 19th century. In fact, many of them can be characterized as intermeditate forms between oral and written texts. The Nuṣairī initiation texts consisted of dialogues between master and disciple which the individual sheikh took down in writing and handed over to his disciple. The copy was studied by him in private, and when his master had made sure that the initiand had learnt it by heart the text was burnt in order to preserve its secrecy. During my last field work in Syria in the mid 1980s I was told by my Alawite friends that this procedure was still practised at the initiation rituals. However, a

2 Hylland Eriksen 1992. See also Mills 1998, chapter 5, on "othering" and on colonial and postcolonial discourse theory. Inspired by Marxist theorists like Michel Pecheux and Renée Balibar, Sara Mills stresses even more than Foucault "the conflictual nature of discourse, that it is always in dialogue and in conflict with other positions" (ibid, 14).

3 Anderson 1991. Ronald Robertson 1992 deals with "the nostalgic paradigm" (169) in chapter 11: 'The search for fundamentals' in global perspective.

4 Described in the untitled Ms arab. Berlin 4291, see Strothmann 1952, 177 (Arabic text), 183 (German translation). Focusing on Marocco and inspired by the work of Foucault, Abdellah Hammoudi (1997) has brilliantly demonstrated how the fundamental dialectic between Sufi master and disciple is deeply embedded in social life and reflected on the political level in the authoritarian structure of power.

5 See my contribution in this volume

number of these manuscripts have escaped the fire and are available in libraries and private collections.[6] On the whole, these early forms of scripturalization among the Turkish Alevi and the Syrian Nuṣairī did not essentially change the predominantly oral character of religious transmission, since the catechisms were still in the hands of the *dede*s and *shaikh*s and the manuscripts were used by them only in situations of strictly personal instruction.

Similarly, among the Ahl-e Haqq, the rich oral traditions, the *kalam* (lit."word"), which were not written down until the 19th century, have retained their essentially oral character even after they were committed to writing. The manuscripts of the *kalam* were carefully guarded by the *seyyed*s, the religious leaders, and the *kalam-khan*s, the "masters of the word". It is true that these authorities were challenged by Hajj Ne'mat (1873-1920), who believed that the time had come to disclose the secrets of the Ahl-e Haqq, but the literary style and genre characteristics of his own *Shahname-ye Haqiqat* essentially remains true to the *kalam* narrative. His work is a testimony of faith in which the author does not attempt to justify, by any discursive arguments, the mysteries he reveals. And only in a vague manner does he try to trace the revealed truths to a general Shia background. The essential character of the person-to-person transmission of knowledge, as inherited wisdom transferred from master to disciple, seems to have been retained until the early 1960s, when we find the first serious attempts to reconcile the Ahl-e Haqq teachings with Shia orthodoxy. From then on the texts have gradually changed their character towards objectification and adjustment to the socially conditioned verbal practices of the contemporary religious discourse.

Hajj Ne'mat's son Nur Ali Elahi (1896 - 1974), in his books *Borhan ol-Haqq* (1963) and Ma'refat ol-Ruh (1969), presents the Ahl-e Haqq as a Shia mystical order whose adherents follow the shari'a. Approach and method in these books relate in a general way to Shia scholarship, not only by the use of a standard type of justification with references to Koran and hadith, but also by means of new interpretations of Ahl-e Haqq rites and doctrines. The result is a rather interpretative synthesis of Ahl-e Haqq traditions and mainstream Shia, by which alleged "heretical" elements are undercommunicated. In her instructive account on the modern transformation of the Ahl-e Haqq community, Ziba Mir-Hosseini remarks:

> The sect's increasing contact, through its educated members, with the urban religious elite whose Islam was theologically more elaborate, and with the modern educated elite who were attracted to religion on a more personal basis, had already transformed the sect's traditional sphere of authority. Ahl-e Haqq faith now had to be modified, if it was to be meaningful in the new contexts. First, dogma had to be reinterpreted in order to be purged of elements that had put it outside the boundaries of official Islam. Secondly, the sect had to compete with the Islam of the Shi'a ulama without offending them.[7]

After Nur Ali Elahi's death in 1974 the tradition has been carried on by his second son Bahram Elahi (b. 1931). After medical studies in France he returned to Iran and is now Professor at Teheran University. On his return to Iran he went through a spiritual conversion and was entrusted with the mission to guide others in the tradition of his "Master".[8] In practice this means that his followers now study the printed texts of his father Nur Ali's writings, such as *Borhan ol-Haqq*, as well as the printed editions of his "sayings", the *goftar*. The latter were recorded during the last decade of his life, and were compiled and published by Bahram Elahi as the two volumes of *Asar ol-Haqq* (Vol I, Teheran 1978; Vol II, Teheran 1991).[9]

6 For the *Buyruk* texts, cf Otter-Beaujean 1997; cf also Bozkurt 1988, for a German translation and comments. For the Nuṣairī manuscripts, see my contribution to this volume.

7 Mir-Hosseini 1997, 186. My account of the Ahl-e Haqq draws from Mir-Hosseini's higly instructive article.

8 ibid, 188

9 ibid, 189

In addition to the publication of his father's teaching, Bahram is himself the author of two books in French, *La voie de la perfection: l'enseignement secret d'un maître kurde en Iran*, Paris 1976 (Engl. transl.1987 and 1993), and *Le chemin de la lumière: la voie de Nur ' Ali Elahi*, Paris 1985 (Engl. transl.1993). These books are an attempt to re-interpret the Ahl-e Haqq teaching according to a transreligious frame of reference in order to make it available to any traveller on the "path of perfection". As Ziba Mir-Hosseini has rightly pointed out, the approach and style already in the first of these books "reveal the influence of both traditional Sufi literature and contemporary Western self-awareness manuals. Its focus is on the individual, dealing with stages of self-knowledge and self-improvement, while placing Ahl-e Haqq teachings in the context of universal esoterism".[10] Finally, she concludes that in the 1993 edition of this book "there is no longer any mention whatsoever of Ahl-e Haqq; the reformists now appear to be rejecting this label altogether. The separation from the traditionalists is now complete".[11]

The story of the Ahl-e Haqq traditions and texts is especially significant because it is a clear-cut but little known example of the successive stages in a scripturalization process among a predominantly Iranian group of the same family as the Turkish Alevi and the Syrian Nuṣairī. The progressive course of Ahl-e Haqq scripturalization demonstrates a type of process that regularly takes place in post-traditional Middle East societies, and especially in big cities. The unstable, ambivalent conditions of the urban scene and its marked cultural differences, where old traditions and life-styles are now transplanted, implies that no form of existence is any more its own raison d'être. Each ambiguous case has to be identified and argued for, or argued away, and chosen or rejected. Here, the illocutionary force specific of the printed word comes into play with its double-dealing ability to change the form of a religious tradition, from being a ritually transferred model to live by into a standardized doctrine. The commission to writing can transform a lived religion into a systematized and objectified body of printed texts from which knowledge is no more inherited, but acquired. The transmission of religious knowledge now takes place in a different medium and in a differently situated social practice. It is now part of a discourse in the hands of new religious agents, and in competition with other religious positions, as in the example here discussed represented by New Age and powerful forms of Islam.

In Turkey, the vocabulary of the public discourse has been reframed in accordance with the radically changed conditions since the 1960s and 1970s, through the military coup in 1980, and especially with the success of the Islamist movement. These events have had a strong impact on the recent development of the Alevi and on the way they have come to articulate themselves. Religious and cultural concepts are again used in the discourse about the identity of the Alevi and their position in relation to mainstream Islams. In this development, the new visibility of the Alevi and related groups in the Middle East should not only be seen as a local example of a global pattern or as a contrast to Sunni forms of Islam, but also, and more narrowly, as internal processes by which aspects of political , social, cultural, and religious life have become objects of conscious reflection and debate among the Alevi themselves. During the radical political climate of the 1960s and 1970s the Alevi seemed to have adopted a new variant of their centuries-old rebellious ideology, forged in politically leftist terms. During those years, and until the mid 1980s, Alevi identity was not defined publicly in religious terms, but politically. Indeed, at that time many believed that the Alevi would become assimilated into secularized Turkish society and no longer exist as a religious group. These expectations about the future of Alevism were probably based on the common idea of politics as centered on "interests" and power relations alone, taking very little account of politics as "a struggle about people's imagina-

10 ibid, 190f
11 ibid, 192

number of these manuscripts have escaped the fire and are available in libraries and private collections.[6] On the whole, these early forms of scripturalization among the Turkish Alevi and the Syrian Nuṣairī did not essentially change the predominantly oral character of religious transmission, since the catechisms were still in the hands of the *dede*s and *shaikh*s and the manuscripts were used by them only in situations of strictly personal instruction.

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8 ibid, 188

9 ibid, 189

tions",[12] including notions on culture, morals and religion. However, it is not only the case that political issues are expressed by means of religious language, as is often pointed out by experts on Middle East politics; it also occurs the other way around, that basic cultural, moral, or religious values are articulated by means of "received" political vocabularies. Different vocabularies are thus used according to circumstancies and the conditions of the time, but the cultural, moral, and religious values themselves are not circumstantial in the same way as vocabularies are. These different expressions would be intelligible consequences, I think, if cultural processes, morals and religion are seen as vital constituents of the political life itself, not as "a residual dimension of purportedly real politics", and still less as consisting of "an insubstantial screen upon which real issues are cast in pale and passive form".[13]

Texts have a life of their own. The very concept of *writing* is by itself a challenge to the idea of a meaning restricted by the intrinsic structure of the written text; the notion of a structure that can be displayed, automatically presumes other structures, fundamentals, or hierarchies of meanings, and it is just such notions which the endless differing and deferring of writing calls in question. This process of spacial and temporal differing and deferring, as well as the continual tendency of the written discourse towards overflow, were summed up by Jacques Derrida in his early writings in the words *différance* and *dissémination*.[14] Among the hybridized eclectics in cultural studies and literary theory who thrive on the thought of Derrida this has been trivialized into trendy, arrogant, and sterile ideas like "there is nothing outside the text".[15] However, if Derrida's own notions are taken seriously they seem to be extremely seminal when applied in the field of religion, especially as a tool for assessment and understanding of the scripturalization processes which take place today among the many religions which have earlier been transmitted orally in the main. This is a wide field upon which anthropologists and historians of religion have hardly entered. The scripturalization of the Alevi traditions that takes place today in front of our eyes is only one example of a world-wide phenomenon among minorities who claim the right to create their own historiography, which conveys meaning

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12 Eickelman & Piscatori 1996,9 quoting Kyösti Pekonen

13 Eickelman & Piscatori 1996, 10 quoting Clive Kessler

14 Derrida 1972a; 1972b; 1972c; Eagleton 1995, 134. The succesive accumulation of interpretations is not at all restricted to orally transmitted texts, but is thus also a vital element in the readers' intercourse with written texts. Indeed, it seems to be a universal feature of writing itself, and especially in its tendency towards abundance which evades any final definition of meaning. As Jacques Derrida has pointed out in many of his works, all sorts of written discourse shows what he calls *dissémination*, a continual overflow, flickering, and defying of definite meaning, which seem to break the structure and limits of the text. The word is used by Derrida as a cover term for the very working of texts and their "movement" including displacements and irreducible alterabilities (Derrida 1972a; Derrida 1972b, 61, 107f). The place where it is most evident is of course "literary" discourse, but it is equally true of all forms of writing. In fact, Derrida refuses to make any absolute distinction between literary and non-literary texts. Even the texts of archives display the tendency towards surplus meaning, and frustrate the scholarly prejudice on such evidence as if they were given objects, once and for all delivered to the past. He speaks ironically about

> les normes classiques du savoir, de la *scholarship* et de l'épistémologie qui dominent dans toute communauté scientifique: ici l'objectivité de l'historien, de l'archiviste, du sociologue, du philologue, la référence à des thèmes et à des concepts stables, la relative extériorité par rapport à l'objet, en particulier par rapport à une archive déterminée comme *déjà donnée, au passé*, ou en tout cas seulement *incomplète*, déterminable et donc terminable dans un avenir lui-même déterminable comme présent futur, domination du constatif sur le performatif, etc. (Derrida 1995,83)

Even archive texts carry features which are not intrinsic in the documents themselves: "Le premier archiviste institue l'archive comme elle doit l'être, c'est-à-dire non seulement en exhibant le document, mais en *l'établissant*. Il le lit, l'interprète, le classe" (Derrida 1995, 89). Such localization and interference give to the document a surplus meaning and will constitute characteristics of the document as text and its future reception.

15 For a survey of recent post-colonial critique of various textualist positions, see Loomba 1998, 94 - 103.

to the form of life they live - their *Meinungsgeschichte*, as I would call it, in want of a better term - and to put into writing their cultural and religious life .

To avoid misunderstanding, let me just point out that I am not specifically referring here to the much studied, but more limited processes by which individual oral traditions, oral texts, or pieces of orature are committed to writing[16] Neither am I raising the problem of the advent of writing in a general sense.[17] What I am referring to is the scripturalization of entire religions which exist as forms of life in the sense of verbal, practical, and institutional traditions. The committing of particular oral texts to writing is only part of the displacements in the wider field of religion, while the scripturalization of its more comprehensive oral expression, practice and institutions are both symptoms of and provoke its transformation. This poses important methodological problems, as to how to study these changes. How shall we approach and "read" the new upsurge of Alevi literature?

Seen in the perspective of comparative religion the growing amount of Alevi writings is a special case of a now world-wide and continuously developing genre that could be labeled *emic historiography of religion*. Typical of a description belonging to this genre is that it constitutes itself a part of the religion it claims to describe, even a ritual part, and the content of the description is itself part of the religious belief. Typical examples of this category of writing are found in Judaism, Mandeism, Islam, and Bahá'í. The main part of the new Alevi scriptures on religion belongs to this genre of literature, and should be dealt with accordingly by historians and social scientists, that is, as written articulations of Alevi religion which make use of the formal features of scholarly genres and its terminology. In spite of their at times scientistic style, the Alevi writings on religion lack the empirically based and theoretically founded comparative dimension and are in this respect fundamentally different from academic works in comparative religion. Even if the latter accidentally may appear as strictly idiographic exploratory soundings they are even then tacitly governed by nomothetical research-guiding interests. These are important principles by which the academic historian or anthropologist of religion takes some form of meta-position in relation to his or her subject. In contrast, such positioning is not characteristic of the Alevi writings on religion. On the contrary, being part of the ongoing process that they attempt to describe, they are in all essentials religious writings, and as such their great importance should not be underestimated.They probably constitute some of the most important religious elements of urban Alevism today. The separation from village life has obviously stimulated the use of literate forms as a means of keeping up Alevi identity.

In the new Alevi scriptures imaginary constructions of the present religious worlds of the Alevi in terms of a mystic rural past is a recurrent feature.[18] These constructions exist today as narratives which circulate in the printed books, pamphlets and journals, and they have their own enchantments. In contrast to the early scrip-

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16 Such as in the now classical studies carried out by Albert B Lord, Milman Parry, Jan Vansina, Walter J Ong, Jack Goody, Ruth Finnegan, Lauri Honko, Dennis Tedlock, see the comprehensive bibliographies in Ong 1982; Vansina 1985; Goody 1993, and especially Finnegan 1992, 234-269, including mainly folklorists and anthropologists; cf also the journal *Oral Tradition*. For works by historians of religion, egyptologists, indologists, islamologists, judaic and biblical scholars from Hermann Gunkel and later, see Honko 1979, 3 - 34. For a survey of the Old Testament research cf Jeppesen & Otzen 1984, and for the New Testament cf Wansbrough 1991; cf Halverson 1994 for a critique of Kelber's radical distinction of the oral and written Gospel tradition, now in the new edition Kelber 1997 (the first ed. appeared in 1983). For the mutual relation between the oral and the written, and for the most recent survey of the state of New Testament research, see Gerhardsson 1998).

17 As Lévi-Strauss did in his "leçon d'écriture" in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955, chapter xxviii), thoroughly discussed by Derrida (1974 , Part II).

18 In contrast to the new Alevi writings the *Buyruk* scriptures invite the scenario of an Anatolian Gemeinschaft in which the scriptures themselves were composed, dominated by the above-mentioned orally communicated knowledge and models to live by, inherited face-to-face at initiation and other ritualized situations. The type of knowledge that we would expect to find in this generalized scenario is the everyday know-how and wisdom that Foucault designed by the terms *pouvoir / savoir* (Foucault 1972; this book is about *savoir*

turalization that took place in traditionally patterned and closed ritual settings, the present scripturalization takes place in an open arena where competitive actors, like secularists and Islamists with their tinge of agressive pseudo-intellectualism, also give their performances. These conditions are reflected in the texts: the religious teachings and practices are objectified and organized into dogmatic systems, and they are articulated in a form that enables them to serve as markers of positions in the on-going cultural and religious discourse. The texts have become arguements aimed at defending exposed positions rather than expressions of religious sentiments. Consequently, as usual when primal religious texts are included or transformed into popular "specialist" literature, its bold imagery and aspects rich in connotations are suppressed by reasoning and pseudo-scientific passages. The supposed narratee should not be confronted with hosts of connotations and unexplained metaphors. As a consequense, the texts take on an arguing and discursive character. If the new Alevi writings on religion really are important religious objects which reflect and stimulate the religious life of the urban Alevi, then we have to conclude that their religion is profoundly transformed.

Taking the Turkish situation into consideration I would thus urge that we pay close attention to the Alevi writings as writing, not as a mere window to some other, more "real" Alevi reality, in the past, present or future.The new domain in which the Alevi now articulate themselves is a popular form of "specialist" literature. Because of the obvious abundance of the new Alevi literature on religion, which is in striking contrast to the situation in the 1980s, because of its accumulative and repetitive character, and because of its mediocre scholarly quality, which both Turkish and European scholars have pointed out.[19] I would suggest that we take this evidence seriously. The kind of reading to be undertaken by scholars would then deviate from the master paradigm of philosophy, which rests on a naively representational theory of language, with its attempts to efface the vehicle of meaning in order to allow the truth to make its appearance in all its purity.[20] It would also deviate from the historian's source-critical attempt to find out the historical truth behind the biased dis-

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as its original French title indicates: *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Gallimard: Paris 1969. Foucault never wrote any *Archéologie du pouvoir*, cf Spivak 1993, 36). This is also the "low" world of personal proximity and concern, basic values and experiences, non-verbalized in the main, which is not easily caught by systematic descriptions, and which Gayatri Spivak calls the *ontic knowing* (Spivak 1993, 37ff; she opposes "ontic knowing" and "ontological knowledge", *ibid,* 39; she elaborates Foucault's terms *ibid*, 34ff; behind the terminology hides, of course, Heidegger's existential analysis). The facts of mass communication and mass education, as well as the resurgence of Islamism have thoroughly reshaped the organization of religious knowledge among the Alevi and profoundly transformed their religiosity (cf Meeker 1994; Meeker 1991 on Islamic intellectuals, media culture and the resurgence of Islam in Turkey). The recent scenario is the Gesellschaft of the big city with its institutionalized regimes of power and knowledge which settle how the world should be described and governed. These great apparatuses of knowledge, which Foucald called *puissance / connaissance* and Spivak calles *ontological knowledge* (Foucault 1969 and 1972; Spivak 1993, 39), are typical of the journalistic, academic and political worlds. It is a common supposition among the fashionable set that such knowledge conveys an objective picture of the world, and that it does and should agree with everyday experience. The profound transformation of religion in Turkey in recent years, including Islamisms, Sufisms, and Alevism, seems to be marked by a drift towards institutionalized forms of knowledge. This implies that religious knowledge can increasingly be acquired through writing and other mass media, that religions transform themselves into institutionalized systems of knowledge and survive in this form within the Gesellschaft, and that religious life is largely reprogrammed into membership of religious organizations.

19 For instance, Ethem Ruhi Fığlalı, who is professor at the theological faculty in Izmir, complains in the introduction to his book *Türkiye'de Alevilik-Bektaşilik*, that the main part of these publications lack a "scientific" outlook and should at the best be regarded from an ideological perspective (Fığlalı 1991, 1 - 6). However, as Bilici 1996, 294 rightly points out, Fığlalı's own approach is ideologically tinged: "En somme, pour cet auteur, les Alévis ne sont que les *Sunnites turkmènes*, terme qui ne correspond à aucune réalité historique et doctrinaire". In her contribution to this volume Karin Vorhoff expresses a similar opinion, but goes one step futher, saying that "recent Turkish writings are even more directly part of a social and political process...and that they affect the constitution and perception of social reality itself". I agree with these views, and suggest that the argument can even be sharpened in the case of the Alevi who write about their religion.

20 Eagleton 1995, 143; Atkinson in Derrida 1992, 76. My views derive from my early field studies of religious speech-situations among the Maasai nomads in Kenya 1972 - 1974, and from my critique of mimesis

courses of the sources. The kind of reading I suggest would not reduce the texts to a display of a social context, a moral, a belief, a biographical or historical origin or course of events, or a political agenda. Although the new Alevi books claim to mirror Alevi religious life in a true way, scholars would derive very little benefit from them if their value is reduced to such mimetic functions. Also, we would profit very little if the written texts were considered as sullied versions of pure oral tradions and uncontaminated beliefs. Rather, the particular manifestations of the written texts, including their contaminations, are themselves powerful articulations of Alevi religion, and valuable evidence if they are taken as objects which are part and parcel of the on-going process of religious change.

Writing and reading are apparently important steps today in the making of a new religious identity of the Alevi, and in marking the presence of their religion. If we apply speech-act theory to writing, the very appearance in writing of Alevi books has not only a locutionary aspect, attempting to tell some audience about the beliefs and customs of the Alevi. The process as such has also a distinctive illocutionary force in that it involves a performance that demonstrates the presence of the Alevi in the larger Turkish society. By doing this, the process may convince people that this is so; they may accept this fact or regret it. The act of writing has a perlocutionary force since it brings about such effects. However, we know very little empirically about these intentions and effects of Alevi writing, and also very little about the actual reading habits among the Alevi. Anthropological studies carried out in this field are nonexistent for the Alevi and meagre for the rest.[21] Writer and reader oriented investigations could benefit heavily from the text-pragmatical methods and the reader-respons criticism that have been elaborated and practised by scholars of comparative literature and religion during the last two decades.[22]

Religious texts are profoundly worldly. The spoken and written things of religion, including its emic historiography discussed here, are worldly objects, though sometimes intangible, sometimes events. As such they are part of the social life in which they are created, located and used.[23] The bulk of the new Alevi literature on religion should thus be treated as objects, in certain respects as ritual objects, of the current urban Alevi religion, to be studied in their own right. The buying and keeping of books also seem to be an epigraphic, and even "talismanic" phenomenon with formulaic and iconic ingredients. The book and its title, in the bookstore and in the bookshelf at home, or an issue of an Alevi magazine that has been left on the table, demonstrate and define the presence of an identity. Writing, and the keeping of written things, seem to deny deaths: that of memory, of fame, of identity, and indeed that of absence, which as such carries a trace of death. If that were not so there would probably be no writing and no keeping of written things. The written, however, will not really fill the vacancy of the absent thing, it rather attempts to incorporate metonymically its absense.

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theories of religious language. Variants of naive mimesis notions of language, ritual and iconography have tacitly governed much of the comparative research in religion in a most devastating way, cf Olsson 1982, 13 - 68. Regrettably, I was not acquainted with Derrida and his critique of the logocentric position and his views on writing at that time, but have later profited greatly from his works, such as Derrida 1972a; 1972b; 1972c; 1974; 1992; 1995.

21 Archetti 1994, 23; Pálsson 1995; see, however the short but interesting account in Lambek 1993, chapter 5: "Educating Citizens: The Reproduction of Textual Knowledge", 134 - 161.

22 On Foucault and Derrida on authorship, cf During 1992, 120ff, which has also inspired me to the concluding words. For an overview of reader-oriented theories and methods cf Selden & Widdowson 1993, chapter 3. An anthology of contemporary essays is provided by Bennett 1995. On the newly awakened interest in written texts among anthropologists, see Archetti 1994 and Pálsson 1995.

23 Here, my view on the location and life of texts agrees with Edward Said's. He says: "My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (Said 1984, 4). With respect to the life of texts the deconstuction position of Derrida, outlined above, is not incompatible with the "new historicism", as exemplified by Said. Deconstruction is, in my view, not in itself anti-historical or anti-sociological.

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Editors

Professor Tord Olsson, Department of History of Religions, Lund University, Sweden.
Fax: + 46 46 222 44 26

Professor Elisabeth Özdalga, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
Fax: + 90 312 490 36 68

Associate professor Catharina Raudvere, Department of History of Religions, Lund University, Sweden.
Fax: + 46 46 222 44 26

Participants

Professor Faruk Bilici, Institut National de Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, France.
Fax: + 33 1 49 26 42 99

Professor Fuat Bozkurt, Tarih Bölümü (Department of History), Akdeniz University, Antalya.
Fax: + 90 242 227 89 11

Ambassador Eric Cornell, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm, Sweden.
Fax: + 46 8 26 68 73

Rusen Çakır, Journalist, Istanbul.

Reha Çamuroğlu, Istanbul.
Fax: + 90 212 639 74 43

Professor İzzettin Dogan, Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences, Galatasaray University, Istanbul.
Fax: + 90 212 243 57 83

Professor Altan Gökalp, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, C. M. Inspection Générale de l'Education Nationale, Paris.
Fax: + 33 1 40 47 86 80

Professor Bengt Knutsson, Director of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.
Fax: + 90 212 249 79 67

Dr. Marianne Laanatza, Department of Asian and African Languages, Uppsala University, Sweden.
+ 46 8 751 66 84

Professor Ahron Layish, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.
Fax: + 972 2 532 25 45

Professor Irène Mélikoff, 32 Rue de l'Université, Strasbourg 67 000, France.

Professor İlber Ortaylı, Political Science Faculty, Ankara University, Turkey.
Fax: + 90 312 319 77 36

Dr. Helga Rittersberger-Tılıç, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara.
Fax: + 90 312 210 12 84

Dr. David Shankland, Anthropology Unit, University of Wales, Lampeter, Wales.
Fax: + 44 1570 42 10 91

Dr. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, University of Copenhagen.
Fax: + 45 35 32 89 26

M. A. Karin Vorhoff, Orient Institut der DMG, Istanbul.
Fax: + 90 212 249 63 59

Professor Ahmet Yürür, Mimar Sinan University, Istanbul.
Tel.: + 90 212 260 10 50

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