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# The process of marginalization of the Alevi in the Ottoman Empire: A historical perspective

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## Abstract

Alevis have been marginalized, massacred, and assimilated since the Ottoman Empire, during the Turkish Republic and continue to be even today. So far, Alevis had to hide their identities and there is no homogenous definition of this identity such as a sect of Islam, Anatolian Shia or a culture more than a religion. Therefore, the roots of Alevi belief have been under study and the agreed point of objective field researchers is claimed that Alevism is a syncretic belief system. At the same time, the reasons for being the “other” during the Ottoman Empire period have been questioned. The answers appeared in the form of opinions such as the Ottoman Empire tax system and the concomitant poverty, chaos, and rebellions; 16<sup>th</sup> century Safavid Empire’s propaganda led by Shah Ismail; and the concern related to fundamental religious practices which may damage Islam authority. Another reason, arising from the research, is that Alevism has its own system and heirarchical belief as Alevis conduct their social life based on humanism and equality. Thereby, this belief system and social practices are not compatible with any state government.

**Key words:** Alevism, Alevis, Kizilbash, Bektashism, the Ottoman Empire, Marginalization,

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## Introduction

Alevism is a belief which is still a debate subject in the scientific world in terms of how it started and is formed. In addition to definitions and social positions that can be assessed within the center-periphery relationship; orthodox-heterodox religious distinction, Turkish/Turkmen-Kurdish discrimination, etc. are deeply influencing these definitions. While according to some researchers, Alevism started with the Islamic Caliphate Ali; according to some others, it is an Anatolian interpretation of Shamanism which is a Central Asian Turkish belief. According to some other, it is the living version of Zoroastrianism in Anatolia. From another perspective, it is a religion that was born before Islam and Christianity and pioneered them. Based on historical evidence, Alevism, which is found in the context of “syncretism”, emerges as an identity problem, as it happens in all religions, ethnicity or other identities of belonging, from its existence to date. The Alevi identity is also evaluated together with the society it exists in. However, the most important thing for Alevis is the identity conflict with Sunni Islam, especially in Anatolia. A social identity has been formed through being the “other” in the presence of a dominant Sunni identity, having a historically opposite position to them, and seeing them as a threat.

The Alevis have been subjected to policies of denial, slaughter, and assimilation in Anatolia and Mesopotamia for centuries. During the Seljuk Empire, Ottoman Empire, and the Republic of Turkey, it is possible to say that they also routinely suffered from massacres, were subjected to a systematic policy of assimilation, and still suffer from marginalization today. From this point of view, the real problem of Alevism is having had the experience of serious marginalization, assimilation, and slaughter. This has been an important factor for the identity formation of Alevism. The perspective of a society that has been marginalized in the formation and development of its identity, which was assimilated and slaughtered, must have been developed around these influences. In this context, it is difficult to make a retrospective analysis and analyze the lives of the communities in today's world in which life changes constantly; new identities and ideas are formed. However, the evaluation and interpretation of existing information and documents are important from this point of view. It is important to remember that Alevism and all other religions in this region are under the influence of peasant life in the past. It should be considered that religion and life approaches of all communities in which social values have hardly changed and are closed to the outside. However, in the last century, rapid changes connected to the technology both in Turkey and the world have led to a significant

change not only in Alevis but also on all religious and non-religious communities. It is important not to forget that there will be serious differences between the present Alevism that emerged as a result of these changes and Alevism of the past. It is difficult or even impossible to evaluate Alevism and say that this is real Alevism because there is not much written documents. Analyses to be done using scientific data will exhibit a general approach. What is also being done in this study is to define Alevism in the light of scientific data and to shed light on what happened in this context.

Nowadays it is not possible to say that the majority of academic studies conducted on Alevism in Turkey is objective in nature. There are nationalist researchers who try to assimilate Alevism into Islam, Marxist researchers who see Alevism as a culture and a way of life instead of belief system, and various other studies. This identity has an expanding symbolic repertory and is nourished from innumerable elements. Among these, one of the most mentioned topics is the "doctrine of rebellion". One group argues that Alevism is resistant to Sunni repressive politics via secularism and humanism, while another group expresses that Alevism was born as pre-socialism and was a theology of salvation. In fact, all these aspects show that Alevism cannot be defined without noting politics and socio-economic aspects.

In this study, the theological foundations of the Alevi belief and their historical and cultural reality, specifically the identity of Alevism in the Ottoman Empire, and the critical attitude towards the Sunni tradition are emphasized. Historical and cultural conflicts between Alevi and Sunni sects denote that Alevism is not only a heterodoxy sect but also a belief that has its own unique values, written sources, rituals, and beliefs, with a historically strong tradition and a hierarchical system. The main subjects of this thesis are the historical origins of Alevism, its cultural identity and most importantly, how it evolved under the Sunni authoritative pressure of the Ottoman Empire and the influence of the Safavid Empire.

It should be remembered that it is the Anatolian Alevis who will be referred to in this study and that they have no connection with Azeri and Turkish speaking Alevis; Arabic speaking Syrian Alevis; nor Alevis who are the 'Orthodox' version of Twelve Imam Shiism in modern Iran. Only Alevis who speak Turkish and Kurdish are under research in this thesis. Kurdish-speaking Alevi people are also divided into two: those who speak Kurmanji and those who speak the related language Zaza.

The first part tries to explain the historical appearance and possible origins of Alevism by presenting a different point of view via reviewing the literature. The reason for distinguishing

Alevism in the subtitles of Anatolian Alevism, Kizilbash and Bektashism is because "Kizilbash" is placed in the Safavid Empire period with Shia culture but "Bektashism" is accounted for within the political processes of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, by offering a brief knowledge of god and human perception and religious practices of Alevism, it is intended to express that it is on different poles with Sunni Islam practices. Chapter 3 focuses on the slaughter of the Kizilbash and the pressures on them during the political and economic struggles of the Ottoman Empire - Shia Safavid Empire, evolving from the Turkish Alevism via relations of Safavid Empire. This statement is based on the periods of Bayezid II, Yavuz Sultan Selim and Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, and the fatwa and the sanctions given for the Kizilbash in those days. In the last subtitle, the Bektashism and the Janissary Army relations and the closing of the Bektashi conventions are stated. Chapter 4 summarizes the public uprisings, the majority of which are the Alevis, in the reign of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, the topics in Chapter 5 will become clearer through these summaries.

On the main question of the thesis, why the Alevis have been marginalized during the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman government's viewpoint of the 'marginal' and its sanctions on the Non-Muslims are briefly summarized. In conclusion, the identity problem of the Alevism from the past until today is addressed, and the solutions to this problem are examined through the data obtained in the thesis.

## Definition of Alevism

It is beyond doubt that any attempt to define theologically a faith system is very arduous. Economic, political, and geopolitical settings of the faith and its interactions with other faiths and religions have also an impact on such definitions. In recent Alevi studies, Kizilbash Alevism has been analyzed from different perspectives; however, there is no consensus among researchers and within Alevi communities themselves. The matter of the ethnic and religious origins of Kizilbash Alevism continues to be highly challenging whenever the history and the status of the Alevism are discussed.

Alevism is not a static belief but has developed throughout history by interrelating with several other beliefs, spiritual principles, and cultures across a wide geographical area from Asia to the Balkans. A process of gradual merging and synthesis of various mystical groups since the 13<sup>th</sup> century resulted in what is called Alevism today. A broad term, the concept of Alevism covers actually different linguistic and ethnic realities sharing the same beliefs.

According to a follower of ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad.<sup>1</sup> In the Ottoman documents, the term *Aleviyye* (*Aleviye*) was mostly used in the expression “the Alevi Seyyids”, which is a referential title for people who come from ‘Alī’s ancestry (*Ahl al-bayt*). In a text by the Ottoman bureaucrat and historian Mustafa Ali (1541–1600) dating to 1589, the term “Alevi” is also used referred to the Shia branch of Islam.<sup>2</sup> However, it is almost impossible to find this term in the Ottoman archival documents dating before the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is because during that period Alevi were not designated with this name, but were known as *rafizi* (heretic, separated from the commonly accepted belief), *zındık* (heretic, non-believer) or *Kızılbaş* (a term used also by Alevi themselves).<sup>3</sup>

Many people who are not Alevi still associate Alevi communities with the Alawites and Shias, who are primarily centered in Syria and Iran. Because ‘Alī is an important figure for these communities. Although the terms share a common etymology and pronunciation (in Arabic), the Alawites and the Kizilbash-Bektashi Alevi in Turkey are two distinct communities. The difference between the two will become more apparent when we examine the doctrines and rituals of Alevism

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<sup>1</sup> Figlali (1993): p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Nedkoff (1986): pp. 76: 103–109.

<sup>3</sup> Mélikoff (2004): p. 321.

## Historical overview of the definitions of Alevism

The Turkish historian Ahmet Yasar Ocak identifies three approaches in the research dealing with the origin of Alevism: Turkish nationalist, humanist, and Marxist approaches.

The nationalist approach denies the uniqueness of Alevism and tries to assimilate it to Sunnism.<sup>4</sup> For example, for the theologian Ilyas Üzüm, Alevism is a part of Islam and recognizes the Quran.<sup>5</sup>

The second approach has been adopted by some nationalists, by prominent Alevi as well as non-Alevi and by non-Sunni writers. For them, Alevism and Bektashism are a non-religious system rooted in humanism.<sup>6</sup> According to Bekir Topaloglu, for instance, the most accurate definition of Alevism is that of a non-religious culture. In his view, Alevism appears as a way of life defined by beliefs and customs dating to the pre-Islamic period that survived up to the present day. But it is also related to Alī and his recognition as a leader of the *umma* (the group of people who believe and follow a leader).<sup>7</sup> For Topaloglu, Alevism is thus neither a denomination nor a sect according to common definitions, because it has no scriptures and does not share the basic beliefs and practices of Sunni Islam.<sup>8</sup>

The third, Marxist, approach proposes a materialistic perspective in stating that Alevism-Bektashism is a socio-economic system that has been corrupted over time and that needs to be reformed to its initial state. However, for Yasar Ocak, none of these three perspectives is supported by historical evidence.<sup>9</sup>

These approaches are based on four different theses on the origins of Alevism. The first thesis argues that Alevism belongs to the Shia tradition; the second one associates it with Shamanism; the third with the ancient Middle East and the pre-Ottoman Turkish Anatolian culture; and the last thesis focuses on syncretism.

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<sup>4</sup> Ocak (2015): pp. 201-202.

<sup>5</sup> Üzüm (2013): p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ocak (2015): pp. 201-202.

<sup>7</sup> Ocak (2015): p. 200.

<sup>8</sup> Ocak (2006): p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Ocak (2015): pp. 201-202.



The thesis that connects Alevism and Shamanism is an old one, and is related to the opinion, shared by many researches, that throughout history Turkic people's belief systems included elements deriving from a large variety of religions, such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Lamaism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism (including Mazdakism and Khurramitism), Sabianism, Kaysanites, Judaism, and Christianity.

According to Mélikoff, there are clear similarities between Alevism and Tengrism, which had rituals such as sitting in circles during Shamanic ceremonies, dancing and drinking kumis. Indeed, prior to their conversion to Islam, ancient Turks had a widespread ritual in which married couples drank kumis according to a strict protocol. Through Turkish nomads and the Sufi order of the *Yasawiyya*, such ancient traditions spread to the lower parts of Turkistan and Transoxiana, and further to Anatolia and Babâî areas.<sup>10</sup> Another similarity between ancient Turkic and Alevi practices is the tradition of watching over a new-born baby and the puerperal mother for three days and three nights. Moreover, neither ancient Turks nor Alevis believed in angels,<sup>11</sup> and some figures considered sacred in Alevism were also revered in the ancient Turkic culture. Also, the numbers 3, 5, 7, 12, 17, 24, 32 and 40 are sacred both to ancient Turkic people and to Alevis.<sup>12</sup> Because of these similarities the roots of Alevism have been searched in Gokturk texts, as it was assumed ancient Turks were practicing Shamanism. These similarities suggest that Alevi beliefs result from a process of integrating and reshaping pre-Islam beliefs.

However, the existence of Shamanic practices among ancient Turks does not win unanimous support. For example, Ibrahim Kafesoglu holds the view that totemism and shamanism were foreign to ancient Turkic populations, as he considers – in line with M. Eliade – that Shamanism is an ecstasy technique.<sup>13</sup>

The second theory on origins, which relates Alevism and Bektashism to the ancient Middle Eastern pagan beliefs, especially old Anatolian ones, has been replaced in recent scholarship by a syncretistic thesis stating Alevism and Bektashism result from the merging, by heterodox Turks, of Shamanistic, Buddhist, Manichaean and Mazdean ideas and practices. What seems to be certain is that Alevism suffered from the influence of Neo-Platonism via Iranian Hurufism in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Safavid Shia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mélikoff (2004): p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> Yılmaz (2014): p. 132.

<sup>12</sup> Yılmaz (2009): p. 134.

<sup>13</sup> Kafesoğlu (1987): pp.85-90.

<sup>14</sup> Ocak (2015): p. 210.

Finally, many scholars deny the influence of ancient Turkic beliefs on Alevism and propose an organic connection with Shi'ism instead. Ahmet Yasar Ocak and Irène Mélikoff are the main supporters of this approach. However, given that there is neither spatial nor temporal relationship between the births and developments of these two religious traditions, and it is difficult to deny a certain influence of old Turkish beliefs on Alevism, this thesis alone cannot explain the multifaceted character of Alevism.

According to Ocak, Alevism, which surely had a different name, is a curious product born and grown up after Turks' conversion to Islam in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, with Shi'ism beginning to interfere in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century through the Safavid propaganda. Ocak equates the distinction between Alevism and Bektashism with the differences, on the one hand, "urbanite Turks", who had a settled life, knew how to write, and read and had developed a proper culture, and, on the other hand, nomadic Turkic tribes, who often changed places and could not read and write.<sup>15</sup>

According to Yorukoğlu, the best way to discuss the spiritual sources of Alevism is a chronological method that considers the history and geography of the movements of the Turks. Yorukoğlu identifies two groups: the beliefs that Turks came across before they arrived in Anatolia and those that they encountered therein. According to him, Turks could not find any new ideas in Anatolia, but the contact with concepts that they were already familiar with (such as those deriving from ancient Greek philosophy) increased their influence. Turks had two main belief systems before they came to Anatolia: Shia mysticism and the Turkmen traditions of Central Asia. Through the former, they also encountered Sufism and, through it, with ideas stemming from a large variety of religious traditions, from the Vedas to Buddhism and Christianity, to ancient Greek philosophy or Avicenna and Averroes.<sup>16</sup>

For some researchers, the reason Alevism cannot be attributed a convincing origin lies in the fact that the documents and artefacts related to it were destroyed. As a consequence, studies on Alevism moved away from proper evidence. It is, therefore, significant to review and compare the various opinions expressed so far.

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<sup>15</sup> Ocak (2015): pp. 205-206.

<sup>16</sup> Yorukoğlu (1990): pp. 143-144.

## Anatolian Alevism

The exact number of the Alevi population in Turkey is not known. The main reason is that since the Ottoman Empire until today, Alevis have been subjected to political disregard and oppression, which makes many of them reluctant to disclose their identity. According to KONDA, a private research company, there are 6 million Alevis living in Turkey, out of which 4 million are adults. However, some private companies reject this, claiming instead a figure of 25 million. According to a report prepared in 2012 by CHP (Republican People's Party) deputies to define the problems of Alevism and Alevis, 12.521 million Alevis live in Turkey. Also, deputies claim that 67% of Alevis hide their religious identities for fear of repercussions. Whatever the exact figure, it is certain that Alevi population ranks second in Turkey after Sunnis in terms of number.

Alevism is widespread in Turkey, and Anatolian Alevism, which is documented by both oral and written resources, continues to exist under many names in different geographical areas and socio-professional categories. David Zeidan cites a number of these: Kizilbash (after the Turkmen followers of the Safavid Sufi order of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries), Tahtaci, Cepni, Sirac, Abdal, Amuca, Bedreddin'i, Babagan, Nusayri, Kalender, Haydari, Isik, Hurifi, Bektashi (after the Anatolian Bektashi Shia Sufi order founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century). However, the majority of Anatolian Alevis are known under the names of 'Alevi', 'Bektashi', and 'Kizilbash'.

## Bektashism

Bektashism is a sect believed to be established by Haji Bektash Veli. His life, as well as core information related to the sect, are documented in what is the main written work of Bektashism, written in the 1400's, *Velayetname-i Hacı Bektaş*, but also in the discourses (*Maqālāt*) of Haji Bektash. The years of his birth and death are disputed. Some scholars argue for 1209 and 1271, while others propose 1248 and 1337. The first group emphasizes Haji Bektash's relation with the Babâîs and their rebellion against the state, while the second refrains from associating him with the Babâî revolt suggesting instead that he was a close ally of the Ottoman sultans.<sup>17</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> Yörükoğlu (1990): pp.169-170.

addition, other scholars claim that he arrived in Anatolia in 1281 and died in 1337, although these dates contradict the available written sources, according to which Haji Bektash met the Babâî leader Baba Ilyas, the preacher Ahi Evran (who died in 1260) and Mevlana (who died in 1273).

Contradictory information on Haji Bektash is actually abundant and constitutes rather the norm. As mentioned before, some researchers regard him as close to Sunni groups and to the Ottoman state, with others claiming that he escaped from the Babâî rebellion. At the same time, he is also considered as close to Shi'ism but also Sufi. In this regard, although it is true that a section of the *Vilayetname* (written document explaining Haji Bektash's life based on myths) suggests that he descended from Twelvers, no evidence supports the existence of Shia communities at that time in Anatolia, which renders Haji Bektash's association with Shi'ism indemonstrable.

Âşikpaşazâde, who wrote in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, provides key information on Haji Bektash. The Ottoman historian notes that Haji Bektash went from Khorasan to Anatolia, where he met Baba Ilyas. Then, his brother was martyred in Sivas and he settled in Sulucakarahöyük. It was certain that Haji Bektash Veli had come to Anatolia during the Mongolian invasion. According to *Vilayetname*, he came to Elbistan where Dede Garkın lived. Then, he went to Kayseri, Ürgüt, and Sulucakarahöyük respectively.

According to Yasar Ocak, Haji Bektash Veli had a Sufi culture informed by the beliefs of Ahmet Yesevi. In Haji Bektash's portrait in *Velâyetname*, Ocak sees a Haydari sheik living according to Yesevi traditions. The same historian claims that, when Haji Bektash came to Anatolia from his native Turkistan and took on the role of baba (leader of Alevi), he became a member of the Vefai sect till the end of his life. However, it is also claimed that Bektashism was established by Balım Sultan after he left Haydarism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> This hypothesis was rejected by Yorukoğlu on the grounds that Yesevism is a sect close to Sunna.<sup>19</sup>

Based on the *Vilayetname*, some scholars claim that Haji Bektash Veli studied under Ahmet Yesevi. This, however, raises the chronological problem of the nearly 100 years that separate the lives of the two. The assumed relationship between the two stems likely from the popularity of Ahmet Yesevi among Turkmens, but also from the fact that Haji Bektash was probably a follower of Ahmet Yesevi. Before being an adherent of Baba Ilyas' dervish convent, Haji Bektash was a member of the Haydari sect. For that reason, it is claimed that Haji Bektash

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<sup>18</sup> Ocak (1996): pp. 100-174-175.

<sup>19</sup> Yorukoğlu (1990): p. 175.

maintained his old religious approaches after that period as well. This approach makes it clear why Yesevism's traditional approach and beliefs are maintained in Alevism and Bektashism. After migrating to Sulucakarahöyük, Haji Bektash opened a dervish convent and educated people according to his life perspective. Vilayetname notes that there were 36.000 followers, 360 of whom served in his convent.<sup>20</sup>

A number of researchers date the beginning of Bektashi history to the Babâî rebellion. These researchers also argue that Haji Bektash Veli was one of the rebels in the Babâî rebellion. However, as we have mentioned in the chapter on the Babâî Rebellion, there is no evidence proving that Haji Bektash was one of the rebels.

However, even though Haji Bektash Veli did not join the Babâî rebellion, he was the spreader of Baba Ilyas ideology. Yet, there is no reference to Baba Ilyas in Vilayetname, the main source of Haji Bektash Veli and his ideology.

Even though Haji Bektash Veli had heterodox beliefs, dignitaries of Sunnism had respect for him after the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Many researchers use the term "Alevism" to refer to rural Alevis and "Bektashism" to urban Alevis. According to Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, many researchers explained the appearance of Alevism-Bektashism on a sociological basis and by referring to the nomad lifestyle. Thus, politics were made harmless, cleared the way for a full Islamization, and became acceptable in the frame of Turkishness. Fictionalizing Alevism as a nomad belief system led to envisaging them as disconnected communities with no internal integrity. However, traditional Alevi communities have a socio-religious structure that is more complex than other communities think it is. The socio-religious structure called Ocak (hearth describing family descent of Ali) – which could be roughly interpreted as "hand to hand, hand to God" – is mainly based on the aspirant-ocakzade (ocak members) difference. Each aspirant group is linked to the dede/pir who is believed to be a sayyid. These sages have their own hierarchy. Due to this semi-hierarchical but multi-centered socio-religious structuring, Alevis have continued to exist for centuries in an autonomous and holistic way.<sup>21</sup>

Under the rule of Bayezid II (1481-1512), the 8<sup>th</sup> Ottoman sultan, Bektashism was recognized as an institution. During this time, the members of the sect were not restricted to the countryside

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<sup>20</sup> Aktas (2000): pp. 1-33.

<sup>21</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): pp. 11-12.

only but were also living in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul. The Abdâlân-ı Rûm, ascetic Alevi practicing celibacy and withdrawal from the world, contributed a lot to this transition.<sup>22</sup> It is believed that even during the Byzantine dominance, dervishes were active near Istanbul. After the conquest of Constantinople, however, they did not take part in the urban life but joined instead the corps of Janissaries (roughly new soldier-elite infantry unit).

There were efforts to take control over Bektashism in the Corps of Janissaries during this period, but Bektashi followers found the opportunity to be organized within the Corp of Janissaries. Godfrey Goodwin indicated that the flag of Janissaries bore the sword of Ali, “Zülfikar”.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, soldiers in the Corp of Janissaries swore to be a follower of Haji Bektash Veli.<sup>50</sup> However, there were also soldiers who were adherents of other sects such as Halveti, Bayrami, and Naqxi in the Corp of Janissaries, where all Bektashi traditional rituals were practiced by the soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

The first Bektashi dervishes assumed the role of colonizer in the Balkan lands invaded by the Ottoman Sultans; they helped the Ottoman State convert the people in these countries to Islam and Turkishness.<sup>25</sup> For that reason, the activities of the Bektashi convent in the Ottoman Empire will be extensively explained in the first section.

Historical sources indicate that Bektashism was abolished during the reign of Mahmut II in 1241. When the Corp of Janissaries was abolished in the same year (an event called Vak`a-i Hayriye), the sect of Bektashism was also destroyed; its leaders were executed or exiled.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the development of Bektashism, which is believed to have started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Anatolia, occurred in two periods. The first period started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and finished in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The second period was started by Balım Sultan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Bektashism was institutionalized. The foundation of the current structure of Bektashism was laid during this period. After the abolishment of the Corp of Janissaries in 1826, Bektashi order also lost its power. Bektashism gained strength again until 1925 when the law prohibiting the lodges and zawiyas (Islamic institution) entered into force.<sup>27</sup> This period needs to be evaluated separately.

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<sup>22</sup> Senay (2004): pp. 1-9.

<sup>23</sup> Goodwin (2002): p. 74.

<sup>24</sup> Petrosyan (1987): p. 35a.

<sup>25</sup> Barkan (1942): pp. 279-386.

<sup>26</sup> Şener (2002): pp. 9-41.

<sup>27</sup> Yılmaz (2015): pp. 98-100.

Another name used when referring to Anatolian Alevi is Kizilbash. Therefore, all the assumptions and definitions given so far apply to this term as well. Scholars point to a few theories about the rise of Kizilbash belief.

According to the first theory, when Mohammed was injured in the Battle of Uhud by Mecca people, his head was covered in blood. As a remnant of this incident, Ali wore a red crown during the battles. The term Kizilbash (redhead) derives from this story.<sup>28</sup> There is another theory that is related to the Battle of Uhud. When Mohammed was injured, Ali prevented his blood from spilling on the ground. He wiped Mohammed's head with his own head; so, his head was covered all in blood.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, scholars generally accept that the name Kizilbash was used in a religious and sociological content for the first time in the Turkish history in the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Father of Shah Ismail, the founder of Safavid State, Haydar (D.1488), dressed his own side in headgears bearing twelve slices (Tâc-ı Haydarî) representing the Twelve Imams in Turkmen clans to distinguish them from their enemies. After Shah Ismail, the term Kizilbash became a common term to refer to the Turks who supported Shah Ismail and the Safavid State.<sup>30</sup>

Melikoff argues that the reason for assigning a derogative meaning to the word Kizilbash in the Ottoman documents is that they joined rebellions.<sup>31</sup> Today, the Alevi in Turkey still call themselves Kizilbash. This word is used frequently during rituals, in daily expressions and academic settings.

Furthermore, Dressler emphasizes that in the late Ottoman period there was not a connection between the terms Alevi and Kizilbash. In the first Turkish-Turkish dictionary, *Kāmūs-i Türkî*, there is no cross-referencing between the terms Alevi and Kizilbash. Accordingly, this dictionary attributes the meanings of (1) descendant of Ali and Fatima and (2) followers of Ali to the term Alevi ('alewî) whereas (a) "a class of soldiers of Shah Ismail" and (b) "a group of the Shiite gulat".<sup>32</sup> to the term Kizilbash (qizilbaş). In the 1920's Turkish nationalist authors

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<sup>28</sup> Sapolyo (1964): p. 254.

<sup>29</sup> Zelyurt (1990): pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Onat (2003): pp. 111-126.

<sup>31</sup> Mélikoff (2004): p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Sāmi (1901): pp. 949-1120.

began to use the term Alevi for the Bektashism as well as groups that used to be referred to as Kizilbash. The term also became more prominent gradually in the Western Orientalist discourse in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and began to be mentioned in encyclopaedical entries as the self-designation of the Kizilbash.<sup>33</sup> Hasluck juxtaposes the term Kizilbash as a “contemptuous term used to denote the adherents of all branches of the Shia religion, including, e.g., the Nosairi and Yezidi, irrespective of race or language” with “the corresponding to an offensive term, by which the Anatolian Kizilbash designate themselves, [that] is ‘Allevi’ (‘worshippers of Ali’)”.<sup>34</sup>

As mentioned above, various names are used to when referring to Alevi and Alevism. However, mainly Bektashism and Kizilbash are emphasized in this thesis. In fact, the terms Kizilbash and Bektashism only differ from each other in terms of the derivation of the words and rural and urban segregation. Today, besides the perception that all the Alevi are Bektashi and all the Bektashi are Alevi, there is another perception that Bektashi cannot be Alevi but Alevi can be Bektashi.

According to Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, while Kizilbash communities lived in the countryside in groups and they were well known with their attitudes against the Ottoman Empire, Bektashi, who did not attempt any acts against the state, intensively lived in cities and urban settlements nearby. For this reason, some historians argue that Bektashism was established by the state to bring the Kizilbash groups under control at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>35</sup> However, new documents found in Anatolia include information refuting this claim because these documents show that some Bektashi groups were against the Ottoman Empire and had close relations with the Kizilbash groups.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Franz (1915): pp. 744–745.

<sup>34</sup> Dressler (2013): pp. 3-4.

<sup>35</sup> Mélikoff (1975): pp. 49-67.

<sup>36</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): p. 20.



## Faith and worship in Anatolian Alevism

Before discussing the worship rituals, performed in the Anatolian Alevism, it is necessary to review the conceptual values of the basic points in these rituals. What does ‘God’ mean for an Alevi?

### God and Humanity Perception in Alevism

In Alevism, the notion of ‘God’ is based on the unity of existence and the sanctity of human beings, the most perfect piece of existence. The unity of existence belief holds that God has created everything from its own existence, light, splendor, and flame; existence was not created out of anything and cannot be terminated; God, nature and human beings are integral in that God (Hakk) bestowed some part of His spirit when creating human beings. Thus, in the essence of God (Hakk) belief of Alevis lies the “Ana-al Haq” thought of Hallac-ı Mansur, that is “God is in me, I am in God, I am the hak-i-kat (Truth)”. It is also possible to explain such concepts by referring to the Vahdetname of Harabi;

*Before either Creator or creature existed, We manifested and proclaimed it.*

*Before there was any place at all for Adam We took him in Our abode, We made him Our guest.*

*He had then yet no name. He had no substance, let alone name*

*He had neither outfit nor a picture. We gave him the exact form of a human being. (It means that we gave him to the name of Elif, Al-Maālik, Allah, Al-Jabbār, Al-Ghaffār, Huda, Rab, and God.)*

*In seven layers We built the heavens and earths*

*In six days the cosmos was finished*

*We created all these creatures in it*

*We gave their sustenance, We bestowed on them.*

*Without ground We created Paradise*

*We decorated the houris and youths*

*With many promises to every nation*

*We pleased them, making them happy and glad.*

An elaborate examination of the entire poem will demonstrate that Ahmet Edip Harabi summarizes the entire history of the universe from the perspective of Sufism.

Sivri believes that the word ‘Hakk’, repeated eight times in the poem, is used with the same meaning of Allah. However, the word Allah is also used in the poem and this dual-use is interesting. The word Hakk derives from the Arabic language and when used in the plural, it means law. On the other hand, Turkish dictionary assigns the meaning of justice to Hakk as the primary meaning. A number of studies revealed that the Sufists used the word Hakk for the first time. In “Vahdetname”, the historical line of Prophets is Adam, Saleh, Musa, Seth, Idris, Sulayman, Ayub, Yaqub, Shoaib, Yusuf, Dawud, Lut, Hud, Ibrahim, Ismail, Zakariya, Isa, Yahya and Muhammad.<sup>37</sup>

To Alevis, who believe in the unity and singularity, God, i.e. Hakk, is the ubiquitous and omniscient creator. It is not possible to fully count the properties of God. It is beyond the known boundaries of the human being to completely describe the grandness of God (Hakikat/ Truth).

For Alevis, Allah, Muhammad, and Ali are inseparable; therefore, “Hakk, Muhammad, Ali” is regarded as a combination. Some authors use the concept of “trilogy” to refer to “Hakk, Muhammed, Ali”. It is interesting that this concept is similar to the concept of “trinity”, i.e., “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” in the Christianity belief. However, there are significant differences between these two beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

In Alevism, ten names, some of which are God, Allah, Hu, Hakk, Huda, Shah, Mevla, Ulu, and Truth, are used to refer to the Creator. They believe God is in everything as everything comes from God. On the other hand, in the Sunni Orthodox belief, as Esat Korkmaz suggests, God is the absolute creator separate from the universe. In the Bâtînî thought, however, God and the universe are unified; God is the sign of the universe; the universe is perceived as the visible form of God and it is God Himself. For this reason, the human being is the minor universe while God is the major universe. This also recalls Haji Bektash Veli’s saying “Universe is inside the human, and the human is inside the universe”. The diversion of the creator and the created in the Sunni Orthodox belief leaves its place to unity in the Anatolian Bâtînî thought, according to which everything is a part of an entirety and nothing is created; it is just an appearance of the

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<sup>37</sup> Sivri (2017): pp. 11-24.

<sup>38</sup> Üzüm (1999): pp. 7-9.

Creator as there is only godly existence.<sup>39</sup> God is present throughout creation: All things, i.e. humans, plants, animals, the earth itself are present in God, hence. This belief also applies to the “can (life)”. The belief that “We come from the Hakk, we will go to the Hakk” sometimes refers to life or sometimes to the soul. As for the body, Alevi believe that “We come from the soil, we will return to the soil”. This belief applies not only to Alevi but also to all the people, both men, and women. Regardless of religions, life comes from God; God is present in life. God created man in His own image.

Alevi’ perception regarding the relationship between God and man is apparent most clearly in the Alevi expression called “devriye”. The term “devriye” in the Alevism refers to such a transformation. The Can (life), which has a journey through the four doors (4s) explained in Haji Bektash Veli’s book Makalat, undergoes a symbolic evolution. That absolute entity (soul/ life) completes the evolution in the universe of matter, plant and animal and the form of man. Then, it completes the phase of mature man, completes the ascension, and returns to its initial existence.

#### Dedelik

Before discussing the Cem rituals, it would be appropriate to introduce the elements of these rituals. A significant element present in the Cem rituals is the “dedelik” position. Dede is the religious leader of the Alevi sect and dedelik is the position of Dede. In Alevi sect, there are religious leaders such as Pir (old wise man), Dede (grandfather), Ana (mother) whereas Bektashis use the term Baba to refer to their religious leaders. Ana, who has an important role in Alevism, is the wife of Dede. Pir is, on the other hand, used for the most important leaders such as Pir Sultan. The general argument of many researchers is that the Dedelik institution in Alevism can be traced back to the Safavid period. The deprivation of Alevism of knowledgeable, cultured and educated dedes can be attributed to the Erdebil Takka’s loss of function as an educational institution in the 16<sup>th</sup> century rather than the massacre of Alevi scholars by Yavuz Selim (Selim I).

There is no certain form, time, or place of worshiping in the Alevi faith. God is always remembered everywhere. Alevi believe that the true house of God is not the place of worship,

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<sup>39</sup> Korkmaz (2007): pp. 92-110.

but the heart of the individual. In line with this belief, they describe the concepts of friendship, visit and conversation among people like a visit to the Kaaba (Heart's Kabe).

Dedes are spiritual leaders in Alevism. Their counterparts, the followers or “laypersons”, are called talips (dependents, pupils and/or students). Relations between talips and dedes are similar to the relations among families. That is, each talip-family is consigned to a particular Ocak (society), where a dede is the leader. Relations between talips and dedes are hereditary. They are indissoluble and unchangeable. Marriages between ocakzade (the person who is born in the Ocak or, shortly, dede) and talips are not permitted. The social distance is maintained between dedes and talips. Many stories about the miracles attributed to dedes and their spiritual power (keramet) are used to establish authority.<sup>40</sup>

The dedelik position in Alevism serves as a social court that judges individuals and thus provide justice within the society, as well as a spiritual authority which emancipates the members of the Alevi society from individualism and establishes a strong solidarity among them. Furthermore, dedes fulfill the functions of providing culture and education by teaching and infusing the community culture to the aspirants especially through the cem rituals. Each Alevi village is affiliated with a dede, whom they also call pir, and each dede is affiliated with another dede in another ocak (center). Thus, dedes are connected to each other in the form of a pedigree. The highest ocak is the Haji Bektash Veli Ocak.

Alevi dedes come from three main branches; Ocakzede, Celebi, and Dedebaba. The first of them, the Ocakzedes (Seyits) come from the lineage of the 12 Imams. The Celebis come from the lineage of Haji Bektash Veli and the 12 Imams. Each of these main branches is hierarchically connected to the authority of Dedelik (Postnisiin) and they also have many sub-branches spreading through the pedigree.<sup>41</sup>

## Cem

Cem rituals are religious ceremonies performed by men and women together, led by Dedes. During Cem rituals, music is played, songs are sung and the Dort Kapi Kirk Makam (Four Doors Forty Maqam/level) teaching is taught. Even though Cem rituals are considered as the

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<sup>40</sup> Sökefeld (2002): pp. 168-169.

<sup>41</sup> Algul (1996): p. 238.

only worship form of Alevis, there are also some Alevis performing the worship required by the Qur'an and the Sunnah, which, other Alevis reject to perform. Therefore, while some Alevis visit mosques for worship, most of them visit Cemevis, places where Cem rituals are performed. Nowadays, Cemevis is one of the issues being discussed in Turkey. They are not defined as places of worship by law and have not been granted legal status; so, their basic needs are not being met by the state budget.

Esat Korkmaz defends that the concept of “cem” etymologically derives from Arabic. The word Cem, which means “accumulation, gathering” or “community, crowd” in Arabic, refers to the worship of the Alevis-Bektashis in the congregation. In Sufism, it means the disappearance of the difference between Allah and His servant, that is, the creator and the created; in other words, “the state of knowing everything is from Allah, and the creator is present, and the subjects do not exist”. The first Sufis used the word Cem not alone but as “cem and tefrika” or “cem and difference”. According to them, what one obtains by worshipping and obeying sharia is the difference; grace given to that person by God, beneficence, and hunch are the cem. <sup>42</sup>

There are two types of Cem; the first one is the general Cem ceremony (Cem, which can only be started when dedes arrive), and the second one is Gorgu Cem. General Cem ceremonies are held once a year when the dede comes. Whether it is Turks, Kurds, Arabs or other Muslim Alevis, all the speeches, prayers, and sayings in Cem rituals are in Turkish. The Gorgu Cem is also performed once a year. Similarly, the dede administers the Cem.<sup>43</sup> Gorgu Cem is a kind of Cem where hard feelings are reconciled, blessings are received, folk poems are recited and semahs are performed.

Cem rituals also carried judicial functions. In the Ottoman period, the Alevis-Bektashis, who denied Sunni Islam's judicial system, viewed Seljuk and Ottoman judicial system to solve their problems. Alevis adopted these rules instead of the Ottoman laws.<sup>44</sup>

Cem rituals contribute to the maturation of the society by clearing and equalizing individuals in the spiritual direction towards becoming perfect human beings. In this regard, Haji Bektash Veli said: “worship performed to go to heaven is not acceptable”. This phrase is directly related to Alevi ethics of Four Doors. According to this, if the person wants something for himself, he is still at the gate of Shari'ah. However, the ones who participate in the Cem ritual think that

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<sup>42</sup> Korkmaz (2007): pp. 60-81.

<sup>43</sup> Algul (1996): p. 244.

<sup>44</sup> Korkmaz (2007): pp. 60-81.

they have arrived at the door of tarikat (order) and marifet (merit). Adherents at these doors do not have such an understanding like “mine” or “yours”. There is only “ours”.<sup>45</sup>

Cem rituals have more than one function in Alevism: educative, legal functions and religious functions. In Alevi societies, this kind of worshiping comes forward as a unifying element and tool to protect the social order. The reason Alevis established a social and legal order within their own society might be the fact that they had to hide their religious identities. As it is seen, Cem rituals have more than one function in Alevism. These are educative and legal functions as well as religious functions. In Alevi society, this kind of worshiping comes forward as a unifying element and tool to protect the social order. The reason Alevis established a social and legal order within their own society might be the fact that they had to hide their religious identities.

Yasar Ocak argues that Cem rituals, just like the dedelik institution, were closely related to the old Shamanist traditions among the Turks. Studies have shown that the Cem ceremony is a continuation of the ritual of kumis drinking, a ceremony administered by the Shaman, held by the Turks in Central Asia on a regular basis. Later on, this shamanist ritual also included Buddhist and Manicheist elements.<sup>46</sup>

Semah, ritual dances along with the recitation of folk poems, is also performed during the Cem rituals. According to the British Alevi Federation, Semah is;

...one of the main twelve services of the cem rituals, the religious practices of Alevi-Bektashi-Kizilbash adherents. It can be described as a set of mystical and aesthetic movements in rhythmic harmony performed by semahcis (semah dancers), accompanied by zakirs playing the saz (musical performers in cem rituals). One of the main principles on which semahs are conceptualized is the unity with Hakk which happens through a natural cycle. In this cycle, a man comes from Hakk and goes back to Hakk, a cycle which resembles the circulation of celestial bodies in the universe. However, man is the central point of this circulation. Hakk is omnipresent and semah is the way to reach Hakk. Hand and body motions in semahs have symbolical meanings. For instance, the motion in which one palm faces the sky while the other faces the earth is meant to say, “You are Hakk, we are the people, I come from You and hold your essence in me, I am not separate from You” and “To take from Hakk and give to the

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<sup>45</sup> Kaplan (2009): pp. 20-55.

<sup>46</sup> Ocak (2015): pp. 210-243.

community, to share”. The motion in which palms first face the sky and then turn to the earth is meant to represent this same thought.<sup>47</sup>

One thing that should be emphasized about Cem rituals, which are not performed in the mosques, is that men and women perform these rituals together. Moreover, Cem rituals are a form of social worship rather than an individual one. Cem rituals contain many more details, but this thesis does not cover them.

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<sup>47</sup>[http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App\\_Data/alevinet.org/Alevism-Resorces\\_en-GB/ Documents 2015-16/151854428\\_109173189\\_SEMAH.pdf](http://www.alevinet.org/AjaxRequestHandler.ashx?Function=GetSecuredDOC&DOCUrl=App_Data/alevinet.org/Alevism-Resorces_en-GB/ Documents 2015-16/151854428_109173189_SEMAH.pdf)

## The Ottoman Empire and Kizilbash

### The beginning of the Kizilbash in Safavid Dynasty period

Two reasons justify discussing here the Safavid State. The first one regards the fact that the Safavid State was under Shiite rule. The second is related to the disagreements between Safavids and Ottomans.

The establishment of the Safavid State is one of the important events that influenced and shaped the world order of the sixteenth century. With a rapid growth over the next fifteen years after its foundation, it dominated various regions such as Azerbaijan, Iran, and Iraq and continued to expand towards Anatolia and Khorasan.

Upon the collapse of the Akkoyunlu dynasty, which ruled Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, and Eastern Anatolia in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, a family called the Safavids succeeded in taking control of the political power in that same territory. During the two and a half centuries prior to the establishment of the dynasty, members of this family resided in Ardabil, hence the association between the Safavids and this city, founded, according to Muslim historiography, by Peroz I.

Muslim Arabs took control of this region under Umar, the second caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate. The area was afterward in the hands of Persian dynasties (Tahirid,<sup>48</sup> Saffarid, Samanid, and Buyid), of Seljuk Turks, Mongols and, from 1370, of the Timurids.<sup>49</sup>

Several historians hold that Timur's invasion of 1370 caused massive persecutions that led to the development of mysticism and the creation of numerous sects. Invaded in the same period, Anatolia witnessed the same economic, political, and social turmoil that the Mongol invasion caused in Iran. In this period, when the Seljuk state fell into internal disorder, some of the sects headed from Iran to Anatolia. In this movement, stand out the Sufis, whom the Mongol pressure pushed from northeast Iran, increasing thus their number in Anatolia.<sup>50</sup> Notable among these sects are the Bektashi and Mevlevi orders.

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<sup>48</sup> Aliyev (1995): p. 276.

<sup>49</sup> Temimdari (1372): p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Lapidus (1376): p. 434.



In Timurid times, dominated by economic problems and general turmoil, Timur's support of these sects served as a buffer against rebellions. Timur, who linked his coming to Iran to taking Imam Hussein's revenge, shed much blood of the Muslims in Damascus, who, for him, was from the generation of Yazid.<sup>51</sup> Timur came to Ardabil with the Kizilbash Turkmen, whom he had taken prisoners in Anatolia, and handed over the prisoners he brought with him. Moreover, he visited places like Mashhad, Najaf, and Karbala, which are regarded as sacred by the Kizilbash. All these developments led to rumors that Timur turned Shia. Although several historians have rejected this hypothesis, Iranian scholarship supports it.<sup>52</sup>

The Safavid sect succeeded in gathering a large number of followers under the leadership of Sheikh Safiaddin Is'haq, who laid the groundwork for the establishment of the Safavid State and to whom Timur paid homage. During the period of the Mongolian invasion, Safiaddin Is'haq, who attracted attention in the Mongolian invasion period with his miracles exaggerated by his followers, made good use of this, and ensured the support of the Mongols. Sheikh Safiaddin Is'haq was always close to the Mongolian rulers in order to meet the income of the dargah he had set up in Ardabil; inculcated in the people an attitude not resisting the invasion, in return for which he received a large amount of benefit in kind from Reshidüddin Fazlullah, the vizier of the time.<sup>53</sup>

Following the death of Sheikh Sadreddin, Alaaddin Ali, known as "Hodja Ali", headed up the sect.<sup>54</sup> He always wore a black cardigan in reference to the martyrdom of Hz Hussein, on whom he based his own lineage; he was therefore known as siyahpuş. Hodja Ali, who had strong bonds with Shi'ism, asked from Timur, after his three visits to him, that the Yezidis in Iraq and Syria be killed.<sup>55</sup>

In the period of Abraham, the son of Hodja Ali, who headed up the sect following his father's death, Shiite propaganda in Anatolia spread well; in the time of his son Cuneyd, the sultan was said to be the leader of the sect and a jihad was declared against non-Shiites. Sheikh Cuneyd, who married the sister of Uzun Hasan, the Akkoyunlu ruler who was there at that time, enabled the spread of Shi'ism in Anatolia and Azerbaijan through the Kizilbash.<sup>56</sup> The passage of the Safavid family from the sheik to the shah began after Sheikh Cuneyd accepted the path of the

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<sup>51</sup> Ahmed bin Muhammed ed-Dımaşki (1378): p. 7; Handemir (1380): p. 497.

<sup>52</sup> Karadeniz (2014): p. 58.

<sup>53</sup> Tevekeli (1373): p. 294.

<sup>54</sup> Karadeniz (2014): p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> Tarih-i Yezidiye (1353): p. 194.

<sup>56</sup> Sümer (1999): pp. 10-11.

sect order. Sheikh Cuneyd wanted to use this sect's influence as a political weapon and tried to establish a state of order. He wanted to make the city of Ardabil the center of this order. Thus, he opened a new turning point and a new page both in the history of the region and in the history of the Safavid dynasty. In the era of Cuneyd, the one who headed up the sect was called a "sheik"; however, the name "sultan" was also started to be used.<sup>57</sup>

During the period of Haydar, son of Sheikh Cuneyd who took his place after his death, the jihad that the order declared was usually against the Christians in Georgia and Trabzon; the jihad that Sheikh Haydar had declared against the Circassians in the North Caucasus came to an end when about 6,000 Circassians were taken prisoner and brought to Ardabil.<sup>58</sup> Because of the slaughter of Hodja Ali, Sheikh Cuneyd, and Sheikh Haydar, the religious leaders of the sect before the first Ismail who was the founder of the Safavid State, Kizilbashes protected and were attached to Ismail and at the expense of their own lives.<sup>59</sup>

Following the beginning of the Safavid rule, Turkish started to be used alongside Persian as an official language in both internal and diplomatic affairs of the state. From the time of the Shah Ismail onwards, Azerbaijan Turkish, which was the mother tongue of the ruling family, became a literary language and began to take its place in the palace as well as among the military aristocracy and the army. The Divan correspondence switched between languages depending on context: letters and firman-s sent to the regions where Turks constituted the majority were in Turkish, whereas Farsi was used in documents destined to Iranian-speaking areas.

The social consciousness of Kizilbash was politicized and nationalized together with Shah Ismail. The foundation of the Safavid Kizilbash State, which was laid with the transition from "Sheikhism" to "Shahism", was strengthened with the Cem rituals held in the Safavid palace.

While the impact of Kizilbash was being felt in Anatolia, there arose disputes between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid State. But if we take this issue chronologically, we first need to examine the Kizilbash politics of the Bayezid II.

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<sup>57</sup> Sukurov (2006): pp. 49-54.

<sup>58</sup> Sukurov (2006): p. 49-54.

<sup>59</sup> Rumlu (1357): p. 35.

## Bayezid II and Kizilbash politics

During the reign of Bayezid II (1481-1512), the Ottoman Empire encountered a new Turkic state that was rapidly expanding and strengthening in the East. According to Oktay Efendiyev, the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid State can be divided into two stages, prior to and after Ismail I founded the Safavid State and was declared shah.<sup>60</sup>

Following classical Ottoman historians, Bayezid II was a good-natured man favorable to *ṭarīqas* (Sufi schools). According to Baki Öz, authors such as Ziya Sakir, M. Serif Firat, and M. Tevfik Oytam see in the adjective ‘good-natured’ associated with Bayezid II an indication that the sultan was an Alevi or, at least, pro-Alevi. Baki Öz associates this description of Bayezid II with the close relations that he had with Shah Ismail I, which are reflected in Shah Ismail’s calling Bayezid ‘father’ and Bayezid’s reference to Shah Ismail as ‘son’, but also in Bayezid’s agreeing with the Bektashi Sufi Balım Sultan and his maintaining the Bektashis under state control. But Öz regards these facts rather as political games. For him, Bayezid did, in fact, feel no particular attachment towards Alevis.<sup>61</sup> This is plausible and could explain Shah Ismail’s successive conquests and geographical expansion.

After the Morea campaign during the Ottoman-Venetian war of 1499-1503, Alevi and Kizilbash communities were banished by Bayezid II to the Peloponnese. According to Western scholars, Bayezid II identified and separated Kizilbashes from the rest of the population by stamping their faces and imposing on them a red headgear. These were then arrested and executed because they were followers of the Safavid State. In addition, those who appeared to have a tendency towards Sufism and who engaged in affairs against the Ottoman State were banished to Morea together with their families. Messengers were sent across the country and the governors were ordered to closely supervise the Safavid supporters. It is worth mentioning that Turkish historians disregard this Kizilbash exile.<sup>62</sup>

As stated earlier, Ismail, who came to Tabriz in the autumn of 1501, proclaimed himself shah and established a state, the Safavid one, which turned out influential across Azerbaijan and the Middle East. After years of struggle, this state represented the interests of both the Safavid Sufi sheiks and the Turkmen tribes. During this time, Bayezid II (1481-1512) was caught in the war

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<sup>60</sup> Efendiyev (1999): pp. 90-94.

<sup>61</sup> Öz (2017): p. 160.

<sup>62</sup> Kreutel (1997): p. 41.

against Venice and consequently did little to prevent the establishment of the Safavid State. The belated measures he took turned out ineffective because of the border governors<sup>63</sup> and migration from the Ottoman territories into Azerbaijan could not be prevented.

The second Kizilbash exile took place during Shah Ismail's visit to Erzincan. The reason for this visit is the news that Elvend Bey, who escaped to Diyarbakır after the defeat of Serur, came to the vicinity of Erzincan. Bayezid II sent a letter to Elvend Bey when he was in Diyarbakır with his special envoy and suggested him to end the struggle between the sehzađes and use all his forces against the Safavids, promising him all the support. Elvend Bey was eventually defeated and took shelter in Baghdad.<sup>64</sup>

In the early days, the Safavids did not trust the people in Tabriz and its vicinity because most of them were Sunnis. Therefore, Shah Ismail implemented some of his policies using force. In doing so, he needed a great military force that was to be recruited by the Turkmens of Anatolia, who were also his followers. For this reason, Shah Ismail sent in AH 908 (1502-1503) a letter to Bayezid II asking him to allow the Sufis committed to him to come to the tekke in Ardabil, a request which the sultan denied.<sup>65</sup> The families who had sent their young men to Shah Ismail were banished, fell apart and never reunited again. According to Ismail Kaygusuz, there were two reasons why the Kizilbashes of Anatolia sided with Shah Ismail: the first was that the Alevi-Bektashi communities living in Anatolia did not feel part of the dominant Sunni ideology and created unique life and management styles; the second was the propaganda disseminated by the dede-s and abdāl-s that Anatolia would become a part of the Kizilbash state.<sup>66</sup> Surprisingly, however, Bayezid II had a very contradictory stance towards the Safavid State, when, in 1504-1505, he sent, according to Safavid documents, gifts with a delegation of envoys to Iran and officially recognized the state.<sup>67</sup> Numerous historians interpret this decision as a proof of Bayezid II's realistic and intelligent statesmanship, assuming that the sultan wanted to establish friendly relations with the neighboring Kizilbash State, despite the confessional differences between the two states.

Though peace dominated the relations between Bayezid II and Shah Ismail, sometimes tense situations also emerged. Kizilbash envoy, who visited Istanbul in 1505, objected to the border

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<sup>63</sup> Dedeyev (2008): pp. 217-218.

<sup>64</sup> Farzalibeyli (1999): pp. 97-98, Kaygusuz (2005): p. 252.

<sup>65</sup> Solak-Zâde (1989): p. 429.

<sup>66</sup> Kaygusuz (2005): p. 253.

<sup>67</sup> Shah Ismail's Anonymus History, British Museum Manuscripts, No: 3248, p. 81b.

violation of Trabzon governor Sehzade Selim, son of Bayezid II; when Sehzade Selim blockaded Erzincan in 1510, this time Bayezid II sent his envoys and prevented a war.<sup>68</sup>

An important event in Safavid-Ottoman relations is the Şahkulu rebellion, which broke out in 1511 and lasted for more than a year. The Ottoman Empire suffered severe political and economic problems during this revolt. A one-time emigration of 15,000 people and desolate places proliferating made the economic balance collapse. As a result, many went unemployed and the sipahi cavalry corps mutinied against the state.<sup>69</sup> With Bayezid II growing old and increasingly unable to rule, the increasing share of viziers in administration and struggles among princes (şehzade), a political crisis broke out in the country, which led to the Şahkulu rebellion in Anatolia.

In the last years of his life, Bayezid II promised to abdicate, which triggered an early fight for the throne among the şehzades. Eventually, the prince Selim won the succession thanks to the support of the Janissaries and the people. Bayezid II passed thus the throne onto Selim and left Istanbul for Didymoteicho. He eventually died in the village of Abalar, near Hafsa, before reaching Edirne in 1512.<sup>70</sup>

In conclusion, although the Kizilbash politics changed from time to time during this period, Bayezid II considered the Safavid State dangerous for his empire and its confession and tried to contain it through various policies. When compared to his son and successor Selim the Grim, Bayezid II's moves against the Kizilbashes do not appear harsh. However, it is certain that he regarded Kizilbashes in Anatolia as a threat to his empire.

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<sup>68</sup> Fisher (1948): pp. 94-97.

<sup>69</sup> Dedeyev (2006): p. 265.

<sup>70</sup> Tekindağ (1970): p. 1-17.

## Yavuz Sultan Selim Period and Kizilbash Politics

Selim the Grim Han, the ninth Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, took Anatolia and Africa geography under the Ottoman rule between 1512 and 1520. Selim the Grim, who was the governor of Trabzon in the last period of Bayezid II, tried to prevent the development and spread of the Safavid State since that time, causing a number of conflicts between the two states.

When the progress of a Safavid force of twenty thousand people to Ankara constituted a dangerous situation, sixteen thousand people, who were suspected to be Shiite, were exiled from Anatolia to the Rumeli. However, during the Şahkulu rebellion that broke out in 1511, much blood was shed all over Anatolia; during these rebellions, even a khutbah was delivered for Shah Ismail. These events that increased day by day led to a tension between the Sultan Bayezid II and his son Sehzade Selim; and as a result, Sultan Bayezid II was dethroned.<sup>71</sup> The unstable and timid relationship between Bayezid II and Shah Ismail was against the Ottoman State. The fact that Janissaries preferred a venturesome sultan rather than a passive one since they were fed by holy wars and plunders played an important role in the Janissary unrests that broke out in this period.

After Selim the Grim (Selim I) came to the throne, he solved the throne problems with his brothers in the first place, then headed towards the Safavid State. Sehzade Ahmet's son Murat accepted Shi'ism and took refuge in Iran. Upon this, Selim the Grim sent envoys to the lands of Safavid. However, the murder of the envoy caused Sultan Selim's reaction to the Safavids to increase.<sup>72</sup> However, Selim-I had greater reasons for his campaign over Iran. Reducing these reasons to only Sunni-Kizilbash sects under the Ottoman-Safavids relations will simplify the situation. In general, two important reasons that laid the groundwork for the conflict can be put forward: 1. To ensure domestic stability by securing the eastern borders of the state. 2. To control international routes of commercial relations between states and trade caravans.

In the process up to the Battle of Chaldiran, the most important and profitable caravan route for Safavid merchants was the Anatolian route. Before the Ottoman Empire, during the Seljuks and Mongols, Iran's trade goods, especially the fine Iranian silk, were purchased by Western merchants in Trabzon and at Iskenderun Bay and from there taken to their countries. Due to the struggle between the Mamluks and Iranian Mongols in this period, the importance of

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<sup>71</sup> Turan (1992): p. 236.

<sup>72</sup> Ekinci (2002): pp. 790-797.

Anatolian trade routes started to increase as an alternative to the routes passing through Egypt and Syria.<sup>73</sup>

During the time when he was struggling against other rivals in the East, Selim the Grim also applied a strict economic embargo politics against the Safavid State. It is known that the Iranian crude silk carried by the trade caravans using the Tabriz-Bursa route was sought after in European countries and that there was a great demand for the Iranian silk in these countries. In addition, it is also true that the silk trade realized over the Ottoman country was an important source of income for the Safavids. Because of this economic and strategic importance, in the spring of 920/1514, i.e. before the Battle of Chaldiran, Selim the Grim initiated an economic embargo against the Safavids. This embargo continued throughout the reign of Selim the Grim. In these years, the goods of the Ajam (non-Arabic speaker) merchants who did not comply with the embargo laws were confiscated and these merchants were imprisoned.<sup>74</sup>

Among the European states that wanted to establish friendship and alliance relations with Shah Ismail were the Italian city-states of Genoa and Venice. As mentioned above, the embargo, which Selim I had put on the Iranian silk, deprived Italian silk weaving industry of the most important raw material source, causing a panic among Italian city-states for a while. In the following years, entrepreneurial Genovese sought out new ways and attempted to revive trade traffic on the former Estarabada-Caspian-Astarhan route.<sup>75</sup> In fact, this route was a convenient route that was already known. Before Timur had turned Astarhan into wrecks, spices and silk generally came through this route and reached Tana.<sup>76</sup>

The friendship associations and alliance initiatives that Shah Ismail wanted to establish with European states usually remained inconclusive. But the steps taken on this ground were reflected positively on the future Safavid-European relations and new steps were taken later. The Safavid State benefited from the experience of European countries, especially Portugal, in the acquisition and use of firearms. Despite all the embargoes that the Ottoman state imposed on the Safavids, Shah Ismail continued to trade with Europe through important trade channels. These economic contests constituted other causes of the war with the Safavid State besides the sectarian differences and power struggles.

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<sup>73</sup> İnalçık (1996): p. 209.

<sup>74</sup> İnalçık (1996): p. 210.

<sup>75</sup> Allouche (2001): p. 125.

<sup>76</sup> Barbaro (2005): p. 45.

According to Ottoman laws, for the Sultan to declare a war on the Safavids, he had to take fatwas from religious scholars promulgating that the war is legitimate. First of all, the fatwa to be given about the Kizilbash was important. According to an opinion, Selim the Grim met with the scholars and learned about their ideas. But it is doubtful that all scholars agreed on the same subject.<sup>77</sup>

Selim the Grim's preparations for the slaughter of Kizilbash before the Battle of Chaldiran were expressed as follows in the Solakzade History:

(...) When Padishah lived in Anatolia, he sent firmans to provincial governors to oversee the Kizilbash and had the names of the bandits over 7-year-old of the disgusting mob registered. Some of these perverts, who were forty thousand in total, were killed and some were captured.<sup>78</sup>

One of the fatwas taken before the Battle of Chaldiran belonged to Sunguri Hasan B. Omer. He wrote an epistle called "Elsine-I nasda Kizilbas demekle ma`ruf taife-i rezilenin hezeyanlarini mubeyyin bir risale-i mustakille»: <sup>79</sup>

« ...« ...Bu nice ehl-i fesad Erdebil Seyhi, Seyh Haydar oglu Ismail`i serdar edip ummet-i din uzerine bagy ve huruc eylediler. Sam-i Serif kurbunde ve Cebel-i Ben-i Amir`den ki Sia ve Rafedi (Rafizi)`nin mecmaidir. Anda Tecammu edup murdar ehl-i cidal kidve-i eimme-i dalal, Abdu`l-Al nam bir rafidiyi, mel`un Ismail`e karin ve ol mezheb-i batili esaatte zahir ve muin olup Seyhu`l Islamlari namina Seyhu`L-Kufurleri oldu. »

In the introduction, Sunguri lists some of the features of Kizilbash, which were refused by the Ahl-i Sunnah. To summarize these features;

- They allow mut'a marriage.<sup>80</sup>
- They forbid Friday praying.
- They do not pray in the community.
- According to them, jihad is not legitimate because imam-i masum is not alive.

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<sup>77</sup> Ugur (1989): pp. 53-54; Allouche (2001): p. 122.

<sup>78</sup> Hemdebi (1989): p. 16.

<sup>79</sup> Ekinci (2002): p. 27.

<sup>80</sup> This is a marriage format occurred in first Muslim communities and some Shiah sects nowadays. Women and men agree and marry for a certain period of time and money.



- Caliphate is Ali's right; they do not regard the caliphate of the first three caliphs legitimate.
- They oppose some of the verses of the Qur'an. For example, "Allah ridavan elinden razidir."<sup>81</sup>
- They prostrate themselves on the ground and expect rewards.

Selim the Grim, not satisfied with this fatwa, had Ibni Kemal write another epistle on "blaming, destruction of Rafizis"(Fi Tetfiri`r Revafiz).<sup>82</sup> In this epistle, Ibni Kemal writes that "the goods of Kizilbashes are halal and their marriages are invalid" and "killing Kizilbash is permissible by religion", laying the groundwork for the slaughter.<sup>83</sup>

Selim the Grim, who prepared a legitimate ground for the war with all these fatwas, marched towards Anatolia in March 1514 with the army he had gathered in Edirne. He sent a letter to Özbek Han Ubaydullah informing him that it was a good time to revenge his uncle's death.<sup>84</sup> There was a drawback about Selim the Grim's campaign to the Safavid State: there were administrators and soldiers who were adherents of the Shi'a sect in his army. Sultan Selim Han`s real goal was to not leave behind a strong state like the Safavid State when he launched campaigns to other geographies.<sup>85</sup>

He sent a letter to Shah Ismail in April of the same year and asked him to give up his insults to the Hulefa-i Raşidin and leave the lands he had taken using force. In another letter he sent from Sivas, he asked Ismail to repent and accept the rule of the Ottoman State, forcing him into a war. The intent of these letters was to force Shah Ismail into the war because it was highly probable that some unrest would begin in the army for a big military campaign. At the same time, the logistical supply of a large army was extremely difficult. Shah Ismail wanted to extend the march of the Ottoman army to the far corners of Persia and with the help of winter, to defeat the Ottoman army. Along with the letter, Sultan Selim also sent prayer beads and prayer rug to Ismail, recommending him to leave behind state and war affairs and commit himself to be a

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<sup>81</sup> Qur`an, 48/18

<sup>82</sup> The name Rafiz, is claimed as the branch of Shiah Imamiye in some historical resources of Islam Sects. This term has been used for Alevi communities before Kizilbash and Alevi term in Anatolia. Generally, it is used for people who prefer a life style against the central one Ottoman Empire accepts, and in lawbooks they are described as "Yoruk"-Turkish nomad people- "mobile", "non-resident on land" Osmanlı Lawbooks, Milli Tettebular Mecmuası; 'h, s.307.

<sup>83</sup> Öz (2017): p. 166.

<sup>84</sup> Mehdi (1381): p. 19.

<sup>85</sup> Gokbilgin (2001): pp. 320-330.

dervish. Although he wrote his first letter in Persian, his second letter was in Turkish. He was now calling Shah Ismail only Ismail. In his last letter, he declared a war and sent a woman's robe to Shah Ismail. He marched towards Tabriz after this letter.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the ongoing disputes as to where the Battle of Chaldiran took place, some sources refer to a great plain between Hoy and Cors cities of Baku in Iranian Azerbaijan whereas other refer to the province of Van in Anatolia.

These lands where the war took place are to the east of the Ottoman Empire. However, as many sources indicate, it is probable that this geography was Iran's Chaldiran. Selim the Grim's invasion of Tabriz may be a reason for this.<sup>87</sup> Selim the Grim, who established the war headquarters in the region, started to wait for the arrival of Shah Ismail to the battlefield. The tents of Shah Ismail in the east are visible from the valleys that dominated the valley. Despite the warnings of treasurer, Selim the Grim ordered an attack to not give enough time to the raiders and to not allow them to change their ideas and to go to the other side.<sup>88</sup> Shah Ismail had not yet fully organized his army of Turkmen tribes; therefore, the administration of the army was more difficult. Some of the Shah Ismail's soldiers were not even wearing armor in the war because they regarded Shah as the Mahdi and a holy personality. For them, it was not possible for the Shah's army to be defeated. However, the Ottoman army had a very strong artillery and an armed infantry unit. This victory of the Ottoman state in Chaldiran led the Safavid state to a position of defense. The conquest of Erzincan and Diyarbakir as the result of this campaign strengthened the power and dominance of the Ottoman State in Anatolia. The Ottoman state was now dominant over Iran and the Mamluks.<sup>89</sup>

Shah Ismail, who was injured by a bullet shot by an Ottoman soldier during the war and fell from his horse, was able to survive after one of his fellow men, Mirza Ali Sultan, shouted: "I am the Shah" and sacrificed his own life. Another of his fellow men, Hizir, helped Shah Ismail to escape by giving his horse to him. The soldiers, children, and women who were taken prisoner were handed over to Selim the Grim; all slaves except children and women were slaughtered.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Sabbag (1420): p. 130.

<sup>87</sup> Gündüz (2014): pp. 118-121.

<sup>88</sup> Romer (1986): p. 219.

<sup>89</sup> Finkel (2006): p. 181.

<sup>90</sup> Hammer (1911-1918): p. 431.

When Selim the Grim was in the winter quarters in Amasya after the Battle of Chaldiran, Shah Ismail, who apologized and sought to make a peace and also wanted to take his wife Tacli Hatun back, sent him a group of envoys in order to prevent a second campaign to Iran. However, Selim the Grim rejected these requests.<sup>91</sup> Sultan Selim, who sent Grand Vizier Piri Mehmed Pasha to Northern Iraq on May 19, 1518, marched himself to the coasts of the Euphrates to do away with the Iranian Shah. When the army refused to take a step further to the east, Selim the Grim had to return to Istanbul as a result of this negative attitude of the Janissaries.<sup>92</sup>

After the Battle of Chaldiran, Selim the Grim continued the massacres. All the Alevi regions were re-scanned, the Alevi that escaped to the castle of Kemah and the Alevi of Erzincan and Bayburt region were killed.<sup>93</sup> A total repressive regime was established on the Turk, Turkmen Alevi of Anatolia. This also prevented the spread of Alevism across Anatolia.<sup>94</sup>

The point that is most emphasized about the Battle of Chaldiran is that there were as many Turks in Shah Ismail's army as there were in Selim the Grim's. There were members of the Oghuz and Turkmen tribes in both armies; in fact, most of them were the children of the same country.<sup>95</sup> This situation has generally been described as "fratricide" in history.

According to Ayfer Karakaya Stump, the relations of the Alevi/Kizilbash in Anatolia with the Safavid state following the Battle of Chaldiran did not find many places in the studies; it may even be assumed that there was a break in the relations after the defeat. However, according to the Alevism sources, the connection of Alevi / Kizilbash to Erdebil dargah continued until the Safavid State disappeared from the stage of the history. The dargah in Kerbela, which was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Greek Abdals and became Bektashi over time, and the magazines titled "Buyruk" are shown as the evidence supporting this. Among these magazines are a set of religious documents and letters sent from the Safavids to Anatolia. In addition, Hilafetname I (1089-1678) and Hilafetname II (1242-1826) are given as examples.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Hoca Saadeddin, *Tâcü't-Tevârih*, C. II, p. 287r.

<sup>92</sup> Grammont, *Bağcı* (1992): p. 178.

<sup>93</sup> Tansel (1969): pp. 73-80.

<sup>94</sup> Firat (1970): p. 61.

<sup>95</sup> Sümer (1972): p. 171.

<sup>96</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): pp. 85-91. The Caliphate-I is located between the special documents of a family of a grandfather of Imam Zeynel Abidin Society, who is from Malatya-Arguvan. It is a document associated with the halifetul-hulefa institution in Safavid documents and is known as a stemma. Hilafetname II is belong to a Dede family which is connected to Shah Ibrahim Veli lodge. In the text, the Safavid family tree starts from Shah Ismail to Imam Ali is stated. This society is the only one that advocates kinship with the Safavids.

One of the interesting topics in the Hilafetname-I is the expression of “white/clean Alevi nation” (millet-i beyzā-i Alevi) that emphasizes their attachment to the Safavid family and path. The importance of this expression is that the term "Alevi" was used with the meaning of collectivist identity before the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>97</sup>

Based on this Hilafetname I, it can be seen that until the period of Shah Suleiman in the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Safavids continued to appoint caliphs to Anatolia and Kizilbashes/ Alevi visited Erdebil. However, as it is understood, the effects of the Safavids on the Anatolian Alevi were usually through indirect ways, through associations and dervish dargahs.

Considering all the Ottoman Sultans, even today Alevi think that the worst of the persecutions against Alevi were during the Selim the Grim era. Having killed his father and brothers before he ascended to the throne, Selim is depicted as a cruel personality. Furthermore, to legitimize his cruelties, he took advantage of the Sharia laws. The slaughters, that started with Selim-the Grim were, however, soon to be continued by his successors.

Erdoğan Aydın describes the Alevi-Bektashi transformation in a time when there were conflicts between the Ottomans and Safavids under the "self-defense" heading as follows;

It should not be forgotten that the expansion of the twelve Imams cult across Anatolia happened with the influence of Safavids and during the period of Balim Sultan. (...) (...) Bektashi dargah had not discovered the twelve Imams belief until the period of Balim Sultan. (...) (...) In summary, as the twelve Imams belief spread across the Safavids and from there across Anatolia under the Shiite influence, Bektashi Dargah, which continued to stand outside this understanding yet, later accepted the twelve Imams belief as a reflection of the danger that the Ottoman Empire had in Anatolia. (...) (...) So, the rapid adoption of Ali from the 15<sup>th</sup> century is a reflection of self-defense instinct after the Sunni domination increased its influence through the state.<sup>98</sup>

Considering this comment, it can be said that opposition to the Ottoman Empire and opposition to Sunni Islam emerged as a «self-defense» against the dominance of Sunni Islam.

According to Ahmet Yasar Ocak, Alevi have dual thoughts in their memories. In other words, good and bad are in a constant struggle. This can be embodied in the battle between good and

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<sup>97</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): p. 87.

<sup>98</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): pp. 85-91.

oppressed Hz Hussein and Yazid, and during the Ottoman period, especially in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries when the expectancy of the arrival of a Mahdi increased, between bad and cruel Selim the Grim and Shah Ismail.<sup>99</sup>

### Kanuni Sultan Suleiman Period and Kizilbash Politics

When Sultan Suleiman came to the throne (1520), the Ottoman Empire was in one of its golden eras. The reason for this was, as mentioned in the previous section, the fact that Selim the Grim extended the empire's limits towards east and south and that the empire now covered three continents.

René Grousset describes this expansion as follows; "During the period of Selim the Grim, Turkey became a world state, a real-world state. Despite the fact that Sultan Selim was not interested in the European lands, his immeasurable conquests in Asia and Africa ensured this. The Mediterranean was about to become a Turkish Sea, and the Indian Ocean was now visible ".<sup>100</sup>

After Selim the Grim's ascending to the throne, Sehzade Suleiman became the great sehzaade, that is, heir to the throne. In fact, he was the only son. He was 17 years old. He was appointed to Saruhan (Manisa) sanjak seigniory. While Selim the Grim was about to campaign for the third time at the age of 50, he died in the otag-i humayun (large and luxury tent belong to sultans), near Edirne. Sultan Suleiman came to Istanbul 9 days later and inherited the throne.<sup>101</sup> It is also said that he set out from Manisa after Piri Pasha and vizier Ahmed Pasha asked him to "come before an Interregnum breaks out".<sup>102</sup>

In the first years of the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent, tension prevailed in Ottoman-Safavid relations. The continuation of the politics of the Selim I period and Shah Ismail's attempt to support Canberdi rebellion can be shown among the possible reasons for the tension. In the following years, the tension between the Ottomans and the Safavids softened and Suleiman felt the necessity to make changes in the sanctions against Safavids. In this context, the economic

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<sup>99</sup> Ocak (1990): pp. 817-825.

<sup>100</sup> Grousset (1992): pp. 642-644.

<sup>101</sup> Öztuna (2014): pp.16-21.

<sup>102</sup> Ancillon (1706): p. 14.

embargo was lifted; Ajam merchants in prison were released, and their goods were either returned or reimbursed.<sup>103</sup>

According to Baki Öz, the official ideology of the Suleiman the Magnificent era was Sunnism, and this was a means of oppression. Shaykh al-Islam was now an important duty and had a place in the Divan. This, in a way, was a victory for the Sunnism sect.<sup>104</sup> The administration was becoming more and more bigoted and obligations such as fasting during the Ramadan were being applied. Those who did not fast could encounter mortal punishments.<sup>105</sup> Discrimination in the society increased; Chepnis were not recruited because they were Kizilbash; moreover, those who were recruited previously were forced to leave the army.<sup>106</sup>

Just like in the previous periods, Safavid-Ottoman relations were based on political and economic factors rather than sectarian reasons in the era of Suleiman the Magnificent. As a result, campaigns would be started against Iran (Irakeyn).

After the death of Shah Ismail in the vicinity of Surhab in Azerbaijan on May 23, 1524, his son Tahmasb Bahadır (1524-1576) ascended to the Safavid throne.<sup>107</sup> Suleiman, who got angry because he was not informed of Shah Tahmasb's ascending to the throne by an envoy, did not think it was necessary to congratulate Tahmasb. He even had Koca Nisanci Celalzade write a letter full of insults and threats and sent this letter to Tahmasb in 1525.<sup>108</sup> In the letter, Suleiman tells Shah Tahmasb to pay the "culus" after his enthronement, asks "why he did not offer his servitude", and says that soon he would start his Iran campaign. The two young rulers faced each other for war once more; they desired to measure swords. The letter also reminded of Sultan Selim's victory over Shah Ismail.<sup>109</sup> Just like the letters written by Selim the Grim to Shah Ismail during the Chaldiran war, this letter of Suleiman the Magnificent also contained a rude and threatening style. It can be inferred from here that, just like his father, Suleiman also aimed to destroy the Safavid State.

Instead of writing back to Suleiman, Shah Tahmasb sent letters to German Emperor Charles (1516-1556), King of Portugal Joao III (1521-1557), Hungarian King Layos II (1516-1526),

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<sup>103</sup> Bacqué - Grammont (1991): p. 214.

<sup>104</sup> Öz (2017): p. 168.

<sup>105</sup> Thevenot (1978): p. 116.

<sup>106</sup> Sümer (1972): p. 183.

<sup>107</sup> Yazıcı (1966): pp. 53-59.

<sup>108</sup> Hilmi (1932): p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> De Lamartine (2005), p. 746.

proposing an alliance against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>110</sup> However, the Iranian campaign was postponed at that time because Suleiman's armies set out for the campaign to Mohács.

One of the reasons for Suleiman's Irakeyn campaign (1533-1535) was Bitlis Beylerbeyi Şeref Han's taking refuge in Iran and Azerbaijan ruler Tekelu Ulama Han's taking refuge in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>111</sup> The Iraqi Arab region was of great importance for both the Safavids and the Ottomans both politically and economically and for religious-ideological propaganda. For the Ottomans, the conquest of the Iraqi Arab lands was necessary in terms of the security of Syria and Egypt. The seizure of the Persian Gulf after the Red Sea would also be a factor facilitating the activities of the Ottoman naval base for the Indian Ocean. Again, with this place under control, and with Diyarbakir, Mosul, Kirkuk, and Baghdad becoming fortified headquarters for the army, campaigns towards Iran's interior regions would become easier.<sup>112</sup>

The Iraqi Arab lands were the transit point of the trade routes coming from the Far East and India and had an important position on international trade. The goods from East, mainly spice, brought to the southern port of Basra through the Spice Route, were sent from here to Baghdad with caravans and from there to Aleppo. The great gain this transit provided was quite attractive for both states. In fact, the Ottomans, who took control of this trade route as a result of the Irakeyn Campaign, engaged in a struggle that would take many years against the Portuguese to control the trade across the Indian Ocean.<sup>113</sup>

The first Iranian campaign (1533-35) of Sultan Suleiman was known as the Irakeyn Campaign because of the invasion of both Iraqi Persian (Acem) and Iraqi Arab lands. In fact, the Sultan had long been planning of this campaign, but due to the Central Europe issues, it could not be realized. The fact that Shah Ismail attempted to form alliances with the European countries during the first years of his rule, the attitudes of the two sides' border governors changing sides according to time and conditions, and several Kizilbash rebellions that broke out in Anatolia in 1526-28 were urging Suleiman to embark on a military campaign against Iran. The greatest of these rebellions was the Kalender Chelebi rebellion.

This rebellion broke out in Kırsehir-Ankara region in 1526. Suleiman the Magnificent returned from his Hungary campaign early due to this uprising.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Uzunçarşılı (1984): p. 449.

<sup>111</sup> Salis (1963): p. 134.

<sup>112</sup> Küpeli (2009): pp. 1-18.

<sup>113</sup> İnalçık (2002): pp. 397-398.

<sup>114</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 250-253.

However, the main event that put the Ottomans into action was the turmoil that broke out in the Safavid State during the early years of the reign of Tahmasb, the ten-year-old son of Shah Ismail, who succeeded him after his death in 1524. According to Shah Tahmasb, the reason for Suleiman's first eastern campaign was the fact that after Ulama took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, he provoked especially the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha.<sup>115</sup> The Uzbeks who took advantage of the situation attacked Khorasan. While the Safavids were struggling against the Uzbeks in the east, Sultan Suleiman, following his peace treaty with the House of Habsburg, sent Ibrahim Pasha, to whom he had given a free hand, to the eastern campaign in 1533.<sup>116</sup>

Ibrahim Pasha, who spent the winter in Aleppo, entered the Safavid capital Tabriz at the beginning of August 1534. Sultan Suleiman, who heard that Tahmasb marched to Tabriz, came here with his army at the end of September and joined Ibrahim Pasha. When the Safavid shah, concerned about the arrival of the Sultan, retreated to Sultaniye, Sultan Suleiman went after him. However, Shah Tahmasb never confronted the Ottoman army. Since the Castle's Safavid Commander Tekelü Mehmed Han had deserted, the Ottomans conquered Baghdad without encountering any resistance (28 November 1534).<sup>117</sup> According to Bacque-Grammont, however, despite the conquest of Baghdad and the Iraqi Arab, the Irakeyn campaign failed because of the large loss of troops and ammunition. This is because it was initially planned that the army would march towards Baghdad and the preparations had been done accordingly; however, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha marched the army towards Tabriz without adequate equipment and caused the losses to increase; what is more, when he received the news of Tahmasb's marching, he had to call for help from Sultan Suleiman.<sup>118</sup> Thus, while the Iraqi Arabs were completely controlled by the Ottomans, the Safavids officially recognized with the 1555 Amasya Treaty that these lands belonged to the Ottomans.

With the Amasya Treaty, the Safavids recognized that the Iraq, Eastern Anatolia and Georgia lands, castles, and cities which the Ottoman State had seized since 1514 belonged to the Ottomans and they officially recognized these places as the border.<sup>119</sup> According to the treaty, the territory of Georgia was shared between the Ottoman State and the Safavid State. Kakhet, Mosuk, Ahiska, Borçalı sections, Kartli, Göri, Tbilisi, Meshetiye were given to the Safavids whereas Başiaçuk, İmaret, Dadyan (Megrel), Güryel (Güriyan), Atabek lands along the Çoruh

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<sup>115</sup> Şah Tahmasb-ı Safevî (2001): pp. 29-32.

<sup>116</sup> Emecen (2010): pp. 116-117.

<sup>117</sup> Târîh-i Âl-i Osman Anonymous (1994): pp. 333-337.

<sup>118</sup> Bacque-Grammont (1991): pp. 217-218.

<sup>119</sup> Danişmend (1948): p. 295.



River, also called Keyhüsrev country, extending to the border of Trabzon, Dav-eli, Ardahan, Ardanuç, Oltu, Tortum sections remained under the rule of the Ottomans.<sup>120</sup>

Considering the time after this treaty, we can say that this treaty lasted partially. Although Suleiman ignored the Kizilbash uprisings after the treaty, reciprocal threats continued. Likewise, one of the important works of Shah Tahmasb is the transfer of the capital of the Safavid State from Tabriz to Kazvin to the east. This was because Tabriz was occupied and destroyed by the Sultan's army each time. After that, Shah Tahmasb tried to prevent any kind of conflicts with the Ottoman Empire until the end of his rule. To make an overview, competition, political disputes, and war between Selim the Grim and Shah Ismail were also seen between Suleiman the Magnificent and Tahmasb. However, the evidence reached from the literature review indicates that the Ottoman sources showed Tahmasb against Suleiman defenseless and inexperienced. According to Western sources, however, Tahmasb was as successful as his father Shah Ismail as a ruler, expanded the borders of the Safavid State and took lessons from the past incidents. As an example to this, we can say that in the Battle of Chaldiran, Shah Ismail successful not retreat and defended himself against Selim the Grim whereas Tahmasb abstained from confronting Suleiman during the Irakeyn campaigns.

According to some sources, Tahmasb said the following; "I will not move with my father's method. This enemy is very strong, I cannot face the enemy. Just like Hasan Padishah (Uzun Hasan) stood against Sultan Abu Said, I will walk around him in the same way. I will not allow his men to leave the army, then to return there ".<sup>121</sup> Indeed, historical documents, books and records, on which the relations between the Kizilbash and the Ottoman States were based, decreased during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. It may be possible to link this to the bad reputation of Selim the Grim and Suleiman's attempts to clean this bad reputation. For this reason, the embargoes dating back to the era of Selim the Grim were removed. However, it is not possible to argue that the sanctions upon the Alevis- Kizilbashes and the conflicts with the Safavid State came to an end in this period.

In this period, some other incidents apart from the Safavid- Iran relations also took place in the Ottoman Empire. Sehzade Mustafa, the second of the eight sons of Sultan Suleiman, was born in Manisa during his father's sanjak beylik in Saruhan (Manisa). Sultan Suleiman also had two other sons, named Mahmud and Murad, during his sehzade years. Of these two sons, Murad

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<sup>120</sup> Kütükoğlu (1993): p. 641.

<sup>121</sup> Kütükoğlu (1993): p. 642.

died at the age of two and Mahmud died at the age of 9 in the same year (1521). During his reign, on the other hand, he had five sons from Hurrem Sultan, whose names were Mehmed, Selim, Abdullah, Bayezid, and Cihangir, respectively. Abdullah also died in 1526 at a young age. Sehzade Mustafa ascended to the sanjak in Manisa, the city he was born, under the system of sanjak-ascending, which had been systematically applied in the Ottoman State since the era of Murad I (1360-1389) and aimed to teach the state management in the sanjaks which were a small-scale example of the central administrative structure.<sup>122</sup> Sehzade Mustafa, who was the sanjakbey in Manisa for seven years, was deprived of his supporters in the palace after the death of his grandfather Hafsa Sultan (940/1534), who had protected both him and his mother, and the murder of the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha, with whom he had good relations, after the Irakeyn Campaign (940-942/1533-1536); he was pushed aside over time. When Mehmed, son of Sultan Suleiman from Hurrem Sultan, was old enough to ascend to the sanjak; Manisa became the place where the incidents that led to the deterioration of Mustafa's relations with his father took place. Sultan Suleiman, presumably influenced by Hürrem Sultan, began to behave coldly against Sehzade Mustafa when he was in Manisa; Sehzade Mustafa wrote a letter to his father who had returned from the Irakeyn Campaign and asked him to be allowed to come to Istanbul to meet him and apologize. However, this request was denied. Sehzade Mustafa continued such attempts after he went to Amasya and could not get a positive response to his final permission request dated 958/1551.<sup>123</sup> A number of historian's attribute Sehzade Mustafa's persistent apology requests to his closeness with Ibrahim Pasha. Also, the death of Ibrahim Pasha, who had returned from the Irakeyn Campaign, is linked with Hurrem Sultan's struggle for one of her three sons, after the death of her son Mehmed, to ascend to the throne.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, after Rustem Pasha, who supported Hurrem Sultan, disseminated the news that Sehzade Mustafa had a secret contact with the Safavid Shah Tahmasb, Sehzade Mustafa was considered an «enemy to the religion and state» and a «traitor» who made an agreement with Tahmasb.<sup>125</sup> However, it should not be forgotten that the murder of Sehzade Mustafa cannot be linked only to the intrigues in the palace. The process with the Safavid state and Sehzade Mustafa's close relationships with the Janissaries did not leave many options to Suleiman.

Iran campaign, which was carried out when the probability of Sehzade Mustafa ascending to the throne increased due to difficult times of the army and people and when Sehzade Mustafa

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<sup>122</sup> Hammer (1911-1918): p. 128.

<sup>123</sup> Turan (2006): p. 290.

<sup>124</sup> Uluçay (1970): pp. 232-236.

<sup>125</sup> Gökbilgin (1995): pp. 11-43.

took some precautions to obtain, what he called, his hakk-ı şer (his right coming from God), was the last military and political campaign in the life of Sehzade Mustafa.

Suleiman's health deteriorated; soldiers wanted him to step aside, as he was too old to embark on campaigns and to live the rest of his life worshipping in Dimetoka. It was an open warning to the sultan by the soldier. And this request of the soldiers put himself in the position of Bayezid II, his grandfather, and his son in the position of Sultan Selim, his father. If Mustafa decides to take action to seize the throne like Sultan Selim, it is not unlikely that he would be forced to renounce the throne like Bayezid II. Therefore, Sultan Suleiman, who wanted to regain the confidence of the soldier, recalled Rüstem Pasha, and sent timariots to their places, declaring that he would embark on a campaign in the spring.<sup>126</sup> Sultan Suleiman, who thought that his son's deeds against him and his reign were more serious than the guilt of this slave and who took the necessary fatwa for the killing of his son, set out from Istanbul for the Nakhchivan campaign on 18 Ramadan 960/28 August 1553. Sultan Suleiman, who sent Karaman sanjakbey to Edirne for the protection of Rumeli and took other sehzades Selim and Cihangir with him, established his military headquarters in Aktepe/Akhöyük, near Konya Ereğli on 26 Shawwal 960/5 October 1553. He also called Sehzade Mustafa to the headquarters on grounds that he would commission him for a campaign to Erzurum where he would prevent an attack from Iran Shah Tahmasb.<sup>127</sup> Despite all warnings, Sehzade Mustafa decides to go to the ottag to meet his father. He came before the ottag accompanied by the applause of the soldiers; delivered his sword and dagger to the sergeant who welcomed him, and was killed with a rope used by executioners.<sup>128</sup>

There were other sehzades who were killed throughout the history of the Ottoman State; there were even sultans who were killed like Young Osman and Abdulaziz, but none of them produced the same impact as the murder of Sehzade Mustafa. Despite the fact that he was killed in 1553, 461 years ago, Sehzade Mustafa's death is still talked about today.

One of the texts that can explain why Sehzade Mustafa has been on the agenda for so many years is his poems. For, these poems reflect not the views of power but the personal findings and opinions of the individuals who represent the society. Despite the power and sovereignty of a Sultan like Suleiman, the killing of Mustafa had a great impact on the public. In some of

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<sup>126</sup> Mustafa Âli (1439): p. 502.

<sup>127</sup> Turan (1997): p. 37.

<sup>128</sup> Demirtas (2010): pp. 205-220.

the period's dirges, Suleiman was openly blamed; but Suleiman did not touch any poets. For, he also noticed the love of the people and the soldiers to Mustafa. So, although Suleiman was a powerful ruler, he saw a great mass of people supporting Mustafa, and he did not touch the poets in order not to further the chaos.

The Austrian ambassador Busbecq, who was in Turkey during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, said the following when he talked about Sehzade Mustafa (1533): "To be the son of the Turkish sultans is to fall into a great misfortune. Because when one of them ascended to the throne, the others had to be prepared to die. This is particularly relevant to the situation of the Janissaries. For, if the sultan has a brother alive, the wishes of these soldiers from the sultan will never end. If anything they ask is not accepted, they cry out "May God forgive your brother!" This is to tell the sultan that they want to bring his brother to the throne."<sup>129</sup>

The reason we discuss the murder of Sehzade Mustafa in this study is, as still discussed today, whether Sehzade Mustafa was a Bektashi or not. Sehzade Mustafa's uncle (his mother's brother) Sersem (Server) Ali Dede Baba was once the dedebaba (the highest-ranking authority in the Bektashi Order) of the Haji Bektashi order. He was also the founder of Sersem Ali Baba Dargah, known as Harabati Dargah, in Macedonia. The fact that Mahidevran (Mustafa's mother) was once banished to where his brother lived and that Sehzade Mustafa lived here with them in the dargah points to the spiritual aspect of Mustafa. This dargah is one of the seven major dargahs of Alevi and it does not pay taxes to the state.<sup>130</sup>

In sum, Suleiman, who died in 1566, was different from neither his father Selim the Grim nor his grandfather Bayezid II in his hostility against Alevi. As noted above, the books kept on the Rafidas decreased in the period of Suleiman and therefore the number of the Ottoman documents about the slaughter of Alevi in this period is few. According to Baki Öz, executions were quite frequent at that time with secret orders even though kadis (Muslim judges) did not find the person guilty.

After the murder of Sehzade Mustafa, Selim II ascended to the throne. There are several examples of oppression and slaughter in the documents dating back to that time. Some of the Alevi were killed only because they were Alevi; tekijes were under strict supervision; Alevi dedes were punished; those who talked about Mahdi were ordered to be killed; orders were

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<sup>129</sup> Busbecq (1974): p. 38.

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.politez.com/detail/-/6997/devletin-alevisi-olmak-ya-da-olmamak-asil-sorun-bu#.W2gJD9IzZPY>

given to blame and kill Rafidas who had relations with Iran; those who were truly Kizilbash would be killed whereas others who were suspected to be Kizilbash would be banished to Cyprus.<sup>131</sup>

There was not freedom of opinion during the reign of Murad III either. Different opinions were not allowed. A strict supervision was conducted on all Alevi movements, materialist tendencies and thoughts and actions like Bedreddinism which had major impacts on the society. One of the orders sent to the sanjak of Sivas in this period demanded the punishment of Kizilbashes on the grounds that they had deviated from the path of Allah, they did not live in line with the Sharia and they showed their commitment to the shah by wearing red helmets. During this period, a Sunni imam was appointed to every village and only those who accepted Sunnism were given the right to live.<sup>132</sup>

Another problem was the financial crisis. From the 1580s on, Ottoman markets were under the heavy influence of the silver from America. With the addition of the financial burden caused by wars, treasury deficits grew and the state had to lower the value of money in 1585-86.<sup>133</sup> The restructuring of the taxes made the people uneasy. For this reason, the rebellions of the people called “Celali” spread all over Anatolia.

Iraqi Arab region, which had remained calm for a long time after 1555, was heated up again when the Ottomans attempted to retake Azerbaijan in 1578. It was initially decided that an army from around Baghdad would enter Iran; this decision was later abandoned and it was planned that the forces in Baghdad-Sehrizor would plunder and destroy along the border to help the operation in the Caucasus. The forces that acted accordingly conquered some places especially after 1583. Around the same time, Shatt Arabs, who had been rebelling against the Ottomans for some time, were suppressed. The Ottoman conquests required the re-determination of the Iraqi-Arab border after the war. Negotiations that started with the end of the war in 1590 lasted for a long time especially because of Nihavend's sovereignty. As a result, the regions that went under the Ottoman rule were Mihriban, Pelengan and Nihavend Beylerbeyliks (Governorships).<sup>134</sup> With the appearance of the Safavid forces in front of Baghdad in 1603, the Iraqi Arab once again became the struggling area of the two sides.

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<sup>131</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 173-174.

<sup>132</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 174-176.

<sup>133</sup> Pamuk (1999): pp. 143-161.

<sup>134</sup> Kütükoğlu (1993): pp. 171-186, 204-224.

The Ottoman Empire, which held Azerbaijan for more than a decade, could not implement a systematic settlement politics here because of the war in the west, the Celali rebellions, and financial inadequacies, and could not establish authority over the Shiite people of the region. The Safavid army, which was led by the Shah himself, first took Tabriz, from where the Ottoman forces had to withdraw, and then Nakhchivan. Later, around mid-October 1603, he surrounded Revan Castle, where the largest Ottoman garrison in the region was.<sup>135</sup>

The Safavid attack caught the Ottoman State unprepared. While a majority of the army was in the battle on the west side, the administrators in the capital knew well that the Safavid threat could not be repelled with the troops of only the Eastern provinces. A significant portion of the forces was, in fact, busy with chasing and disciplining the Celali gangs. The death of Mehmed III (1603) at this very time made it impossible for the Ottoman armies to act immediately. After this defeat, the Safavids captured all the Ottoman garrisons in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Shirvan. In early 1606, Gence, and almost a year later Shemahi entered under the rule of the Safavids.<sup>136</sup>

The competition that had existed between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid states since the beginning began again shortly after the 1612 peace in the Caucasus, then in the Iraqi Arab region and the struggles continued until the final peace in 1639.

Another sultan who slaughtered the Alevi folks was Murad IV (1623-1640), who ascended to the throne after Osman II was killed during the Janissary rebellions. According to the sources, Murat IV was fanatic, bigoted and under the influence of mollahs. He destroyed many Alevi villages and executed many people from the Bektashi Order without a reason.<sup>137</sup>

Although Murad IV's ascending to the throne brought stability to the capital city, chaos did not come to an end in the countryside so soon. Although the army was sent three times to Erzurum Beylerbeyi Abaza Mehmed Pasha, who attempted to take refuge in the Safavid State every time he was in trouble, he could only be taken under control in 1628. After an ambitious person, for whom everything to be done to obtain and keep the Beylerbeyilik position was licit, involved Shah Abbas in his conflicts with the Ottoman State, all the balances in the region changed and when Baghdad was taken by the Safavids, a war broke out again in the East.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Kütükoğlu (1993): pp. 259-267.

<sup>136</sup> Kütükoğlu (1993): pp. 270-277.

<sup>137</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 176-177.

<sup>138</sup> Peirce (1993): p. 244.

In this period, the Ottoman Army came across the Safavid Army many times. As a result, the borders of Iraqi Arab and Azerbaijan were determined. The Safavids were not to engage in any intervention or assault on the places that belonged to the Ottomans within the framework of these boundaries. Likewise, the Ottomans would not interfere in any way with the Safavid lands. It will be more accurate to say that the current borders of Turkey-Iran and Iran-Iraq were determined not according to the 1639 Qasr-e Shirin Treaty, but according to the 1555 Amasya Treaty. Having faced a difficult situation with the advance of the Ottoman army and having lost much of his army, Shah Safi accepted the peace offer desperately. The peace treaty signed in Qasr-e Shirin in 1639 ended the Ottoman-Safavid war.

The peace treaty of 1639 ended the war of about 150 years between the Ottoman and Safavid states. Because of these wars, the two great powers of the Islamic world wore away each other in terms of politics, military, economics, and demographics. Especially the negotiations that Shah Abbas established with the Europeans related to the direct sales of silk, which aimed to make a devastating effect on his western neighbor, produced negative results for the Ottomans in the short term and for the Safavids in the long term. While the Ottomans lost their intermediary roles in the new order of the world silk trade, cities such as Basra, Baghdad, and Aleppo lost their former economic importance. While the Englishman and the Dutch, whom the Safavid Shah invited himself to buy silk from his country, became richer by the silk trade, they soon took control of all commercial activities in the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea. For this reason, the Safavids made a significant contribution to the spread of English and Dutch mercantilism throughout the world. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire, which had mobilized most of its military forces on Iran during the first half of the seventeenth century due to the intense fight with the Safavids, could not benefit from the weak state of Europe, which was devastated by the Thirty Years' War.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Küpeli (2009): p. 209.

## Ottoman Janissary Army and its connection with Bektashism

### Janissary Army

While the Ottoman lands were expanding with successful conquests, the Janissary union, which was established as a military unit totally affiliated with the sultan, undertook an important task such as guarding the sultan as well as was used as an important military force especially in the conquests. Unlike the timariots riding horses and using more conventional weapons of war, such as arrows, bow, shield, and sword in the battles, Janissaries were commissioned to use firearms such as rifles, which increased their importance. Janissaries were also used in other jobs besides fighting in battlefields.

The soldiers were chosen among the strong, decent-looking boys of the Christian people in the conquered territory. These devshirmes, whose all bonds of belonging were broken, were considered to be the permanent servants of only the Sultan. When it was first established, the Janissary unit mostly consisted of foot mercenaries gathered from Anatolia. As the state's structure developed, Janissaries began to be trained within the state. In time, the Janissaries became an integral part of the Ottoman Empire with their own cultural characteristics; they were positioned against other power foci.<sup>140</sup> The Janissaries who were closely related to the Sultans inevitably had a say in the state politics.

There are many opinions about when the Janissary unit was first formed. According to Ottoman sources (*Tevarih-i al-i Osman*), the first private military organization was in the time of Orhan Bey. In fact, when Orhan Bey conquered Izmit in 1338, he was accompanied by “servant guards” with a military function. Many states used this system.

According to Haji Bektashi Vilayetname of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; the Janissary Army was created during the period of Osman Bey. It is possible that this interpretation aims to emphasize that from the very beginning, the Ottoman State had links with the Bektashi order. According to Vilayetname, Haji Bektashi chooses Osman among many Anatolian beys; tears the sleeve of his robe and makes it a bork (Janissary headscarf- headgear) for Osman Bey. For some, this is the reason Janissary borks were long, curving on top and descending to the back of the neck. When the Janissaries were in trouble, Haji Bektashi sends his soldiers wearing white borks.

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<sup>140</sup> Göksel (2009): p. 6.



European authors argue that the word “yeniceri” (meaning Janissary in Turkish) derives from “yen” (sleeve). It is likely that there was a simple meaning confusion.<sup>141</sup>

From the beginning of the Unit until the end of the sixteenth century, the Janissaries were composed of a limited number of soldiers. Towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Janissaries was approximately 12,000. It is observed that the number of Janissaries increased rapidly especially after the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. The number of Janissaries, which was 27.000 during the reign of Murad III, reached 47.000 during the rule of Ahmed I. Many historians believe that this extraordinary increase, especially in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the number of Janissaries was a sign and reason that the military order and the state were beginning to collapse.<sup>142</sup>

With the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the state began to experience some problems not only in the countryside but also in the center and underwent some transformation. Instead of the idea of absolute power, a sultan profile, which did not participate in the campaigns and transferred his power to the households, emerged. The expansion of this tradition corresponds to the period of Suleiman the Magnificent. In this period, powerful families who were close to the dynasty appeared and political party conflicts began in the palace. In the 1660s, the sultan now only had his title; the power was transferred to a kind of intra-palace oligarchy.<sup>143</sup> Thus, the Janissary-state relations of the time of the sultan's reign were also transformed. As the attachment of the Janissaries, whose number increased, to the sultan decreased, partisanship of new alliance groups emerged; thus, they began to be divided within themselves. Since most of the Janissaries were devshirme, they were mercenaries. Therefore, they did not have a shared sense of national identity.

Another important point to note is that they were forbidden from getting married to ensure that they commit themselves to the rise of the state and that their only responsibility is Sultan. Their duties and lifestyles were strictly defined by the law “Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân” (Janissary law). Moreover, they were forbidden from achieving high status within the society and from getting rich. In fact, it was just the opposite. Of the 47 viziers who served from the time Mehmed II conquered Istanbul till 1623, only 5 were of Turkish origin.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Göksel (2009): p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> Elibol (2009): pp. 34-35.

<sup>143</sup> Goffman (2004): p. 149.

<sup>144</sup> Goodwin (2002): p. 124.

The economic depression and social disarray that radically changed the classical system brought about an important transformation in the countryside as well as in the center. In the framework of this transformation, ayans, who were powerful local notables, took the places of the timariots, who lost their timars (land granted by the Ottoman sultans). The ayans, whose both reputation and richness increased after they were commissioned with tax-collecting in the countryside, became important characters in the Empire in terms of their economic power with the commercial activities they carried out in Anatolia and Rumelia especially from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>145</sup> Since they sometimes gained so much power that disturbed the state and since they even formed alliances with the Janissaries, the state even sent armies against them to bring them into line.<sup>146</sup>

In 1793, Sultan Selim III founded an army called Nizam-i Djedid (new order), which was based entirely on modern rules, to reestablish the authority of the central government, to ensure the obedience of the ayans and the Janissaries. It was mainly based on French units and weapons were supplied not from the domestic market but from France. However, this army, which was sometimes used to suppress the ayans in Rumelia, led to a great discomfort for especially artisans, merchants, ayans, and Janissaries. The 1807 rebellion which was led by Janissaries and ulemas and supported especially by ayans and artisans led to the abolishment of Nizam-i Djedid.<sup>147</sup> Now, it was time for the Janissaries. However, the Ottoman Empire had to wait until 1826 for this to happen.

Taner Timur claims that an investigation of the Janissary rebellion and their abolishment outside the official history discourse can bring many facts to light. He also notes that the book “Üss-i Zafer” written by Esad Efendi, who was appointed to replace Şanizade Ataullah Efendi, who was relieved of duty and banished especially because of his Bektashi beliefs, the facts were twisted. According to Timur, Esad Efendi accused the Janissaries of deviation from the principles of Shari'a, not of bigotry. Besides, he notes that behind the Janissaries' rebellion, there were very simple reasons such as they did not want a gawur (infidel) commander or specialist for the army that was being founded.<sup>148</sup>

According to some authors, the abolition of the Janissary Unit was the last blow to the Alevi-Bektashi order. Mahmud II became a victim to the intrigues of Europe with the abolition of

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<sup>145</sup> Uzunçarşılı (1986): p. 40.

<sup>146</sup> Karpas (2006): pp. 70-73.

<sup>147</sup> Elibol (2009): p. 35.

<sup>148</sup> Timur (1989): p. 137.

Janissaries. The Western world deceived Mahmud II into the abolishment of the army, which would block the independence movement of the Greeks. Fundamentalist followers of sharia, taking advantage of the situation, ensure the abolition of the Bektashi order along with Janissaries. Bektashi dargahs and documents were burned. Many Bektashi leaders were killed or banished.<sup>149</sup> The abolition of the Janissary Unit in 1826 had a negative impact on the Bektashi order.

According to Palmer, the reason why Mahmud II abolished the Janissary Army that easily can be found behind his success to drive a wedge between the Janissaries and the ulema. For, it was always the Janissaries who took the support of the people and the ulema in the previous incidents. Examining the reports of British Ambassador Stratford Canning, Palmer notes that the number of the Janissaries killed in Istanbul was 6000. Canning also noted in his reports that the Janissaries were massacred in a very bloody way and that the forces of the state did not tolerate anybody who was related to the Janissaries. However, besides this cruelty and brutality, if we think about the brutal killing of the Janissaries outside Istanbul, it is clear that this number could be much higher.<sup>150</sup>

Another factor that played a role in the abolition of the Bektashi order along with the Janissary Army was that the Naqshbandi and Mevlevi Orders were powerful within the state. The fact that the sultans of the time were Naqshbandi or Mevlevi was also another factor. As the abolition of Bektashi tekijes, slaughters and exiles went on; Mahmud II replaced the exiled Bektashi leaders with Naqshbandis. However, when the rebellions and revolts were not over and when some Bektashis disguised and hid in some other orders, Mahmud II's Sunnism politics failed.

The concurrent abolition of the Janissary Army and the Bektashi Tekijes indicates the close relationships between the Janissary Army and the Bektashi Order. We can see an example of this in the “Sofa Tezkeresi” document given to the ones that have become Janissaries.<sup>151</sup>

“El-Minnetü li’llah

Kalu beladan beri Hakk’ın birliğini eyledik ikrar. Bu yola vermişiz can u ser. Nebimiz vardır Ahmed-i Muhtar. Ezelden beri mestaneleriz. Nur-u İlahi’de pervaneleriz. Bir bölük bu cihanda serseri divaneleriz. Sayılmayız parmakla. Tükenmeyiz kırılmakla.

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<sup>149</sup> Timur (1989): p. 117.

<sup>150</sup> Palmer (1992): p. 102.

<sup>151</sup> Eğri (1992): pp. 1-19.

Taşramızdan sormakla kimse bilemez halimiz. Oniki imam, oniki yolun cümlesine dedik beli. Üçler, yediler, kırklar, Nur-u Nebi, Kerem-i Ali, Pir'imiz Hünkar Hacı Bektaş Veli. »

The "twelve ways" referred to here are the morals and the ways of the Bektashi order. Thus, the person who has become a Janissary accepts that he has entered the Bektashi order.

Although there was no direct effect of Bektashism in the establishment of the Janissaries, it is possible to point out that they had intense relationships in the following periods. The greatest reason behind this was the influence of the state administration. For example, the plume, which was also called broom and placed on the Janissary uskufs (a kind of tubular headwear of 60 - 70 cm. in length that sags back when worn on the head) first appears in the period of Yıldırım Bayezid. When returning from his Karaman campaign, Yıldırım Bayezid visits the tomb of Haji Bektash Veli, where they see that the tomb is swept with a broom made of ostrich feather. So, that's how Janissaries started to place plumes on their uskufs.<sup>152</sup>

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a Bektashi baba and eight dervishes accompanying him were hosted in the new rooms of the Janissary Army close to the Sehzade Mosque, which further increased the close relationships between the Janissaries and the Bektashi Order.<sup>153</sup>

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, a Bektashi baba and eight dervishes accompanying him were hosted in the new rooms of the Janissary Army close to the Sehzade Mosque, which further increased the close relationships between the Janissaries and the Bektashi Order. These dervishes prayed day and night for the well-being of the state and the victory of the Janissaries.<sup>154</sup> These dervishes, who were called Hu-keşan (Huçekens) walked before the Janissary "aga" (supreme Janissary) in their green robes at the ceremonies with their two fists pressed against their stomachs; meanwhile, Bektashi baba said "Kerim Allah" (God is great) and prayed loudly for the state and soldiers; all the other dervishes accompanied him crying out "Hu" at the same time.<sup>155</sup>

According to Farlane, the relation of the Janissaries with the Bektashi Order was also reflected in the official documents. These documents refer to the Janissary Army with a number of other names like Bektashi Army (Ocag-i Bektasiyye), Hacı Bektaş köçekleri (dancers) and zumre-i Bektasiyan. Foreign sources refer to them with names such as sons of Haji Bektash and Haji

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<sup>152</sup> Uzunçarşılı (1984): p. 266.

<sup>153</sup> Brown (1868): p. 141.

<sup>154</sup> Hammer (1911-1918): p. 201.

<sup>155</sup> Elibol (2009): pp. 248-249.

Bektash Children.<sup>156</sup> Another important relationship of the Janissary army with the Bektashi order was that the Janissary Aga was also influential in the assignment of a postnishin (sheik) to the Haji Bektashi Veli tekije. For example, upon the death of Abdulkadir Çelebi who was the postnishin of Haji Bektashi Veli tekije, Elvan Çelebi was assigned to the post in this way. The letter signed by the Janissary Aga Ibrahim indicated that Elvan Çelebi was appropriate to become the sheik and therefore the post could be entrusted to him.<sup>157</sup>

Also, the aga whom the dargah sheik did not think appropriate could not be assigned to the head of the Janissary Army.

According to the sources of the period and research review articles, during the reign of Mahmud II, the material and spiritual relationship between the Janissaries and Bektashism left the Ottoman Empire in a difficult situation. Despite the measures taken and warnings made, the Janissaries continued to rebel, revolt, and engage in undisciplined actions with the support they received from the Bektashi tekijes. After a secret preparation, Mahmud II summoned an assembly of consultancy upon the rebellion of the Janissaries. He was acting with the fatwa received from the Fatwa Authority. He abolished the Bektashi tekijes along with the Janissary Army in 1826. First, the Janissary Army was abolished, and it was followed by the abolition of the Bektashi tekijes.<sup>158</sup>

Consequently, the relationship between the Janissary Army and the Bektashi Order started to be disturbing for the Ottoman Empire sometime later. Moreover, it was a dangerous situation for the Empire that the Janissaries started to have direct effects on the state politics and became economically stronger. The abolition of the Janissary Army also brought about economic and social consequences. In Istanbul and other cities, the Janissaries had great roles in the city economy.

The relations between the tekijes and barracks continued for centuries successfully; Bektashi Tekijes, fathers and dervishes gave great support to the Ottoman Empire. This support was in the form of giving spiritual support to the soldiers or even swinging swords in the battlefields. Undoubtedly, the Ottoman State protected the Bektashi Tekijes for centuries as a demonstration of faithfulness.

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<sup>156</sup> Farlane (1829): pp. 292, 293, 309.

<sup>157</sup> Soyger (1999): p. 87.

<sup>158</sup> Mutlu (1994): pp. 19-26.

## The Revolts in Anatolia and Alevism

In the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, founded by Osman Bey in 1299, Alevi Janissaries played an important role. Despite this fact, a separation arose between the Ottomans and Turkmens after years. There are different arguments as to the reasons for this separation. Some historians claim that this separation started during the reign of Murad II, some claim that it started during the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmed and some others argue that it started during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim. Some others also date this separation between Turkmens and Ottomans to the period after Murad II (1421-1451), who expanded the Ottoman lands up to Erzincan. This is mostly because, after becoming an Empire, the Ottomans acknowledged Sunnism as the official religion and after that period, the Ottoman State applied pressure on the Alevi community to assimilate them. This pressure was most intense after the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmet (1451-1481). To exactly understand this issue, the period of the Alevi Rebellions must be thoroughly examined.

There was a conflict between the Turkmen communities and the Ottoman administration. For that reason, the Ottomans trained people to govern the country; but these people were originally Christians who later converted to Islam. Hence, it is claimed that conflicts arose between the Turkmens (mostly Kizilbash) and new administrators.<sup>159</sup> These conflicts are mainly believed to have arisen from differing perspectives or views of Sunni or Alevi sectarians, between whom there were a number of significant differences.

There were also differences between Alevism and Bektashism. For example, the Alevism belief spread in rural areas whereas the Bektashism belief spread in urban areas. Bektashis had more knowledge about religious rules and politics etc. and they managed their relationships with the state more easily. However, after the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the influence of Shah Ismail, the head of the Safavid State established in 1501, on the Anatolian Alevis, some differentiation occurred.<sup>160</sup> Shah Ismail lived among the Turkmens before that time and he was very popular among them. He was a poet and he wrote many poems about Alevism, which later gained popularity among Alevis. In addition, Shah Ismail was a Turkmen, and this was what also affected the Turkmens and Alevis. However, the Ottoman Empire had a negative approach towards Shah Ismail's influences on Anatolia. Hence, the Ottoman State started to oppress

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<sup>159</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 4.

<sup>160</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 5.

Alevis and Turkmens after this period.<sup>161</sup> Moreover, this pressure had a negative effect on Alevis, causing them to feel closer to Shah Ismail. They paid taxes called “nezir” to the Safavid State. This situation led to a vicious circle for Alevis and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the Safavid State opened many Alevi dervish convents in Anatolia during that period. One of the heads of these dervish convents is claimed to have joined Shah Kulu rebellion. However, in the regions where Bektashis were concentrated, there was a less Safavid influence because, compared to Alevis, Bektashis were more educated. It was claimed that these movements (Bektashis) could weigh more than what the caliphs could bring for them. For that reason, Safavid supporters functioned mainly in scattered regions where the Alevis were concentrated.<sup>162</sup>

The above-mentioned facts are claimed to have been the most important reasons for the turmoil in the Ottoman Empire. Also, it is necessary to say that the Ottoman Empire was underdeveloped or developing society made up of various social layers.

Baki Öz lists the reasons for revolts as manufacturing forms, tax system, dirtiness, hunger, poverty, private ownership, and system of agha. The main reason, however, was the System of Tımar in the Ottoman Empire, claiming that all the lands belonged to the Ottoman Dynasty. Historical data demonstrate that this system was used from the beginning until the end of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>163</sup>

A. Tabakoğlu states that the term Tımar was used to refer to the lands cultivated by villagers but belonged to the State. These lands, which originally belonged to the state, were managed by the cavalryman (Sıpaht) under a private ownership. Historical data show that the Tımar system had started in the Anatolian Principalities before the Ottoman Empire and some aristocrats were preserved through this system until the end of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>164</sup>

The economic system of the Ottoman Empire, as in all the other states, completely depended on lands. It was mainly built on farmers, rayah, peasants and rural people. There were civil taxes charged by the state and they varied from region to region. For example, there was a beekeeping tax in a region and animal husbandry tax in another region. In addition to that, the local governments in any region could also force people to give more taxes to the Empire.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Erkan (2014): p. 8.

<sup>162</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 6.

<sup>163</sup> Öz (2014): pp 29-30.

<sup>164</sup> Barkan (1980): p. 818.

<sup>165</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 8.

As a result of this superfluous and variant taxation system, people suffered a lot, and this led to rebellions across the country.

Economic, social, and political reasons were the underlying reasons for rebellions. It is not logical to claim that there were only economic causes behind rebellions, though they had a significant effect. The Jelali Revolt had the same economic, political, and social reasons; it was not one of the Alevi revolts.<sup>166</sup> Baba Zünnûn, Şeyh Celal, Karayazıcı and Kalender Çelebi Revolts are, for example, defined as Jelali revolts. Baba Zünnûn initiated a rebellion against the Bozok Bey in 1525 with the support of popular masses suffering from the unjust tax system. The insurrection was triggered when a tax officer in İçel (center of Mersin city) took more taxes from the villagers and cut the beard of the villagers who refused to give taxes.<sup>167</sup>

The Alevi uprisings were also protests the religious structure of the Ottoman State. The most important aspect of the Alevis was defined as the identity of Alevism. Hence, there was a dimension of belief underlying these rebellions. As it is mentioned before, there was a great pressure from the Ottoman administration because of the religious identity of these people. The Ottomans carried out slaughters against the adherents of beliefs outside the official belief, especially against Alevism. For example, before the Kalender Çelebi Revolt, lands of Alevis were grabbed in an unjustifiable manner and there was dissatisfaction with his Alevi identity.<sup>168</sup> In conclusion, the Alevi community has suffered from economic and religious oppression throughout history. For that reason, in the next part, we will elaborate on some significant rebellions.

### Babâî Rebellion (1239/1240)

The rebellion is named after Baba İlyas Horasanî (1240), who lived in Amasya province. As it is known, Baba (Father) was the name of religious leaders of Alevis. The book *el-Evamerü 'l-alâ'iyye*, written by İbn Bibi, was the first book to refer to this uprising as Babâî rebellion. After that, this term (Babâî) was used in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in *Tevahiri Ali Osman*, written by Osman Bey. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was no religion name referred to with the name Babâî. Certain researchers such as Claude Cahen argue that maybe there was no such religion that used the

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<sup>166</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> Okan (2014): p. 87.

<sup>168</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 9.



term Babâî in that century. In addition, the Babâî rebellion was largely related to the economic and social structure of the Seljuk Empire, which was ruined by the poor administration of Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev II, who succeeded Alaeddin Keykubad II.<sup>169</sup> However, the use of the Babâî term and the subsequent identification of these rebellious masses as Alevi indicate that the term Babâî was not used as supposed. As known, Baba İlyas Horasani led the rebellion, and he was a member of the Vefaî cult which had similarities with the Yesevî cult. Therefore, it is easy to claim that Babâî term was not used as supposed because the Yesevî cult and its religious perspectives were not much more different from those of Alevism. For example, Baş<sup>170</sup> claims in his article that “in fact, the Babâî, Haydari and Bektashi pamphlets indicated that the narrations of Ahmed Yesevi were closer to the historical facts”. Thus, Babâî term was preferred to refer to the rebellion.

After being defeated by the Seljuk Empire in Amasya province, Baba Ishak was executed by hanging. After that, Baba Ilyas, a member of The Baba Ishak community, led the rebels; but they also were defeated in Malya lowland near Kırşehir province.<sup>171</sup>

Moreover, the members of Kalenderi, Vefai, Yesevi and Haydari sects joined this rebellion and they made war against the Seljuk Empire. This information also shows that the Babâî term was not used randomly for both Baba Ishak and Baba Ilyas. Furthermore, Ahmet Yasar Ocak claims that Babâîizm was a syncretic Islamic religion that contained many traditional historical parameters.<sup>172</sup> In addition, Ocak argues that the effects of Shiism were visible in Babâîizm at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the 12 Imams belief passed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century to Anatolia from the Safavid Shia sect.

Bahri Aslan also claims that Babâîizm and Baba Ishak rebellions were two different events. He states that Baba Ishak did not establish any sect under the name of Babâîizm. However, his followers identified themselves as Babâî. In addition, he argues that there is no more information about Baba Ishak and his life. Aslan and Ocak claim that there were no connections between Babâîizm and the rebellion, but it is impossible to make a separation between them. This is because there was no other sect that appeared suddenly and defined themselves by their

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<sup>169</sup> Islam Encyclopaedia, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c04/c040324.pdf>, 17.02.2018

<sup>170</sup> Baş (2011): p. 373.

<sup>171</sup> Islam Encyclopaedia, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c04/c040324.pdf>, 17.02.2018

<sup>172</sup> Islam Encyclopaedia, <http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/dia/pdf/c04/c040324.pdf>, 17.02.2018

leader's name. It is difficult to suggest that Babâizm appeared suddenly after the death of Baba Ishak and Baba Ilyas. On the contrary, this term gained maturity during that period.<sup>173</sup>

Members of Kalenderi, Vefai, Yesevi and Haydari sects and non-Muslims or Christians mostly joined this rebellion.<sup>174</sup> As known, Kalenderi, Vefai, Yesevi and Haydari sects were Alevi. For that reason, it is not logical to claim that Babâizm was an ideology that appeared after Baba Ishak Rebellion. The reason for this rebellion can also be attributed to the difference between the ideologies of the Ottoman Empire and the citizens and the adoption of Sunnism as the official religion. However, most of the citizens believed in syncretic religions such as Kalenderi, Haydari, Vefai, Bektashi, Yesevi, Alevi etc. and they called their spiritual leaders Abdal and Baba. In addition, most of the studies on this rebellion suggest that the main reason was the oppression of the governments to convert citizens to Sunnism. During this period, there were many revolts and due to these revolts, the amount of the taxes gathered by the state decreased and economic problems arose for the state. For that reason, the state needed to increase the tax rates. Under those conditions, not only dissatisfied non-Sunni groups, but also some Sunni citizens joined rebellions.

Subsequent effects of this rebellion could be categorized into two groups: first, its effects on the Seljuk Empire; second, its effects on the religion and social life. After the rebellion, the Seljuk Empire was divided into two different states: Iran Ilhanli State and the Seljuk Empire.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, this rebellion is assumed to have been the starting point of non-Sunni uprisings to take place in the future.

Another study by Ismet Kayaoğlu concludes that migrations, which had started after the collapse of Kharzem Shah State and beginning of the Mongolian movement, affected the life in Anatolia.<sup>176</sup> Ismet Kayaoğlu claims that great public leaders such as Ibnü'l Arabi (death 1240), Sadreddin Konevi (death 1274), Şems-i Tebrizi (death ?), Evhadüddin Kirmani (death 1289), Haji Bektashi Veli (death 1325 or 1337), Ahi Evran (death 1300), Necmeddin Dâye (death 1253), Fahreddin Iraki (death 1289) and Seyyid Burhaneddin (death 1240) came to Anatolia and they had a very significant influence on the people. Kayaoğlu remarks that even though local administrators accepted Sunnism as the official religion, citizens believed in their old religions and beliefs. They combined Islam and old religions or beliefs. Moreover, in

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<sup>173</sup> Arslan (2017): p. 374.

<sup>174</sup> Arslan (2017): p. 7.

<sup>175</sup> Arslan (2017): p. 147.

<sup>176</sup> Kayaoglu (1990): pp. 147-151.

another study, the author asserts that the governors believed in Sunni Islam; however, most of the citizens were practicing various religions such as Shamanism, Zoroastrianism and other local beliefs. The author concludes that this was one of the reasons for the rebellions in Anatolia, the other one being economic conditions. The author also states that Karmatism emerging in the 9<sup>th</sup> century was one of the reasons for the rebellions in the Islamic World which had an important influence on Alevism.<sup>177</sup>

Karmatism believed that all people are equal and have the right to live a peaceful and comfortable life. This ideology underpinned many revolts. Baba Ishak and his followers' beliefs were almost the same as Karmatism. Baba Ishak and his followers and governors believed in different religions. Baba Ishak followers finally started a rebellion to put an end to the repressive system.

#### Sheikh Bedreddin Rebellion (1420)

The Sheikh Bedreddin Revolt started in Antalya and spread to a large area including the Aegean, Mediterranean, Thrace, Balkan, Greece, and Bulgaria. The Sheikh Bedreddin Revolt had a very significant influence not only on Turkmens but also on other ethnic groups such as Greeks, Kurds etc.<sup>178</sup> This rebellion was not only an Alevi rebellion but also had a large influence on other religions and religious groups. This rebellion emerged as a protest against the Ottoman oppression and high amount of taxes. In addition to that, it can be defined as a movement that aimed to bring a different social life of equality and peace.<sup>179</sup>

In addition to all, not only the Sheikh Bedreddin Rebellion but also as a pioneer, the Babâî Rebellion (1239/1240) had an important influence on other ethnic groups and religions [2]. These two uprisings can be evaluated in different contexts. Both uprisings formed the necessary infrastructure for the formation of Alevism; the first one being in Anatolia and the second one in the Balkans.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Kayaoglu (1990): pp. 147-151.

<sup>178</sup> Öz (2017): p. 207.

<sup>179</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 203-220.

<sup>180</sup> Ocak (2000): p. 239.

Historian Fuat Bozkurt claims that Sheikh Bedreddin was neither Alevi nor Esoteric (Batini). He was, in fact, a kadiasker (a chief judge in the Ottoman Empire). Sheikh Bedreddin traveled to many places in the Islamic geography like Anatolia, Iraq, and Egypt for twenty-five years. On his return journey, he visited Alevi (Kizilbash) Turkmen cities. Middle East Islamic Mysticism and esoteric philosophy substantially influenced Sheikh Bedreddin.<sup>181</sup> He was against the distinction between the rich and the poor, Christian and Muslim and other types of contradictions. For Sheikh Bedreddin, who was executed for his unconventional religious views, all the religions and prophets were equal.<sup>182</sup>

Finally, after the followers of Sheikh Bedreddin were slaughtered and the riot was quelled in the 1420s, rest of the followers moved to Sivas to continue their lives and identified themselves as Alevi or Bedreddinî (member of the Bedreddin movement).<sup>183</sup>

### Shah Kulu Rebellion (1511)

The Shah Kulu Revolt took place in the vicinity of Antalya in 1511. Shah Kulu was born in the Yalımlı Village of the Korkuteli County in the Teke Province (today's Antalya).<sup>184</sup> The real name of the rebellion was Baba Tekeli. The rebellion spread across the Anatolian Region and to Izmir. Some historians argue that this rebellion grew to the extent of establishing a state. However, in the end, Shah Kulu was defeated by the Ottoman forces and according to a claim, killed near Erzincan. Yet, there are some other claims that Shah Kulu reached Iran with his remaining men and was executed there.<sup>185</sup>

The main frame of the rebellion consisted of Kizilbash, Sunni Muslim, and Non-Muslim Anatolian citizens; but the head of the revolt was Kizilbash. Shah Kulu uprising was the last uprising that took place during the reign of Bayezid II. At the height of the uprising, i.e. in 1512, Sehzade Selim, who was against the politics of Bayezid II, ascended to the throne by overthrowing his father.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Bozkurt (1990): p. 38.

<sup>182</sup> Eyuboglu (2010): p. 16.

<sup>183</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 10.

<sup>184</sup> Öz (2017): p. 221.

<sup>185</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 10.

<sup>186</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 225-230.

The main reason for the uprising is claimed to have been the high tax rates and Ottoman land politics. Overwhelmed by the high amount of taxes, people were looking for a savior. This person was Shah Kulu, also known as Baba Tekeli. He had a big impact on the society. Since Bayezid was aware of Shah Kulu's influence on the society, he tried to ensure his alliance with the state by sending him 6000-7000 coins each year.<sup>187</sup>

Nearly 30.000 people joined the war alongside Shah Kulu. They won the war against the Ottoman soldiers next to Burdur province on April 16, 1511. Afterward, they progressed to Kütahya province and they came across the Ottoman soldiers and defeated them again.<sup>188</sup> Ahmet Pasha, the governor of Anatolia, was captured by Shah Kulu and his supporters. After that, they turned their face to Prince Korkut, who ruled over the Tekeli area, where the strict administration also overwhelmed the locals. Prince Korkut ran to Manisa. The revolt spreads to a larger region. Bayezid II commissioned Hadım Ali Pasha with the order to kill all the Alevi in the Tekeli region. However, Hadım Ali Pasha could not arrive in Tekeli or Antalya province since Shah Kulu crossed his way. After that, Shah Kulu turned his face to Sivas and Tokat provinces because the Ottoman Empire had sent another group of soldiers to Sivas, where there were many Alevi that could help Shah Kulu. Fearing that the Alevi living here would side with Shah Kulu, the Ottoman State killed 3000 local Alevi. In order to help Alevi there, Shah Kulu went to Sivas, where he was wounded and Hadım Ali Pasha was killed. Shah Kulu, once more, defeated the Ottoman soldiers. Then, he sent his supporters to Tokat to recruit the Alevi there for his army.<sup>189</sup> However, his condition was getting worse each day, which demoralized his supporters. Finally, Shah Kulu died, and his commanders went to Shah Ismail to evaluate the last situation; but Shah Ismail killed them in 1511 autumn. Alevi were shocked at this as they had regarded Shah Ismail as their leader.

Yavuz Sultan Selim, the son of Bayezid II, thought that his father was unsuccessful and was nice to Alevi. Selim came from Trabzon to the palace to take the Ottoman throne. Yavuz Sultan Selim, who hated Alevi, wanted to destroy all the Alevi in Anatolia and to embark on a campaign to Iran to conquer the Safavid lands. It was not, however, as easy as he had thought. To this end, Shaykh al-Islam issued a fatwa about the Alevi stating many illogical or unethical

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<sup>187</sup> Zelyurt (1992): pp. 145-146; Öz (2017): pp. 225-227.

<sup>188</sup> Çinar (2008): p. 221.

<sup>189</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 225-228.

claims to provoke Sunnis against Alevis. Moreover, Selim slaughtered about 40.000 Alevis during that period.<sup>190</sup>

### Kalender Çelebi (1524)

Kalender Çelebi, a descendant of Haji Bektash, had an important effect on Alevis. Some historians argue that the reason for the Kalender Çelebi Uprising was the land issue.<sup>191</sup> The Ottoman Empire usurped the lands of Kalender Çelebi, causing him to rebel. A number of different communities such as Alevi, Sunni and Dulkadiri communities joined this revolt. Like other revolts, there was an economic reason for this revolt as well. For that reason, not only Alevis but also Sunnis joined this rebellion. However, the Ottoman Empire acted logically and gave back the usurped lands to the Sunni and Dulkadiri communities. For that reason, the Sunni and Dulkadiri communities withdrew from the rebellion and as a result, Kalender Çelebi failed and was killed.<sup>192</sup>

Öz claims in his book <sup>193</sup>: that most of the rebels were poor Alevi Turkmen peasants who were under great pressure. However, there was also a small Sunni community who were also poor and oppressed. Öz also argues that about 30-40 thousand people were involved in the uprising. *Timars* (lands) were taken away from most of the rebels and transferred to the Sultan's treasure. Historian Ibrahim Pechevi, as mentioned in the same book, confirms this. As cited in the same book, historian Muneccibasi Ahmet Dede evaluates the Kalender Çelebi incident as follows;

“The Dulkadir Principality, which was dispossessed of their lands, also participated in this revolt. A large Turkish community who were also dispossessed of their lands joined this revolt. It is also stated that Kalender Çelebi had a great reputation with this insurrection.”

The rebellion first emerged in Kırşehir; but over time, it spread to Ankara, Bozok, Sivas, Maras, Adana, and Tarsus, where Alevis were concentrated. The same book defines the reason for this rebellion as: “The rebellion and the imprisonment of the Ottomans led the palace to take other precautions and the cause of the incident was investigated. According to this, a great majority

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<sup>190</sup> Öz (2017): p. 165.

<sup>191</sup> Öz (2017): p. 249.

<sup>192</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 9.

<sup>193</sup> Öz (2017): p. 253.

of the insurgents in the revolt were Alevi but the main reason was the Timars taken from them”.<sup>194</sup>

To understand the Çelebi uprising better, the period of Yavuz Sultan Selim should be examined clearly. Even if the beginning of the uprising is defined as the land issue, the main reason for the revolt cannot be defined clearly. After Yavuz Sultan Selim ascended to the throne of the Ottoman Empire in 1512, he applied pressure on Alevi and other non-Sunni groups to convert them to Sunnism. However, the people who lived in Anatolia had a heterodox approach to religion and they didn't approve this orthodox religion mentality. For that reason, day by day, a new uprising emerged in the Ottoman Empire, one of which was the Kalender Çelebi uprising. There were two basic reasons for this revolt; one related to the economy and the other to the religion. As a Sharia State, the Ottoman Empire applied pressure on its citizens who rejected Sharia rules because they had syncretic religions and Sharia rules were not compatible with Alevi beliefs. In addition, government and Sunni ulema gave a fatwa stating that the “killing of non-believers and Alevi and destroying of their communities were mubah.”<sup>195</sup>

### Pir Sultan Abdal

Unfortunately, there is not enough information about Pir Sultan Abdal and the exact time when he lived. İbrahim Aslanoğlu claims in his work that there were many Pir Sultans in Anatolia: in the period of Yavuz Sultan, in the period of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, and in the next periods. However, as the story goes, Pir Sultan Abdal cannot be thought without Hızır Pasha, the governor who ordered the killing of Pir Sultan. A correct identification of the period when Hızır Pasha lived will enable researchers to have more information about Pir Sultan Abdal. However, according to Baki Öz, there were also many Hızır Pashas in the same period.<sup>196</sup>

For example, there was a Hızır Paşa who was the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>197</sup> This Hızır Paşa was the governor of Sivas in 1578 and during this time, there arose rebellion defined as the “Düzmece Şah İsmail Olayı (Pseudo-Shah Ismail Event)”. This revolt started in Kığı

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<sup>194</sup> Öz (2017): p. 253.

<sup>195</sup> Algul (1996): p. 124.

<sup>196</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 259-260.

<sup>197</sup> Öz (2017): p. 260.

district in Bingöl province and spread to Sivas. Next, this revolt spread to Aydın, Antalya, Thessaloniki (Selanik), and Bulgaria.

It is necessary to emphasize that even though the rebels who joined in these revolts were mostly Alevi, no conflicts arose between Alevi and Sunni. Historians attribute this to the fact that the problem was between the people and the government; not between people and that most of the people living in Anatolia during that period consisted of Alevi, not Sunni. Today, most of the people in the Central Anatolia Region believe in Sunnism; however, according to some pieces of research, between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the majority were Alevi.<sup>198</sup> There were efforts to assimilate Alevi and other minorities. The Ottoman Empire killed many Alevi when they sided with Iran against the Empire. Furthermore, Yavuz Sultan Selim ordered the issuance of fatwas to kill Alevi, with the tragic expression used commonly in the daily life “defterini dürmek” (settle one's hash). This word was commonly used to refer to the slaughter of Alevi during the Ottoman Empire Period. The late 15<sup>th</sup> century, when many revolts took place, was the time when the Alevi community underwent the greatest oppression. Baki Öz claims that many Alevi were exiled to Cyprus and other places such as Modan and Koron Islands.<sup>199</sup>

Some scholars argue that Pir Sultan, also known as Haydar, was born in Banaz village, Yıldızeli county in Sivas. Baki Öz claims that Pir Sultan was a grandson of Zeynel Abidin, who was the grandson of Hz. Ali.<sup>200</sup> Legends about Pir Sultan made him very popular among Alevi, and many legends have been told about him among the Alevi community. For that reason, it is difficult to find the true Pir Sultan as it is mentioned before. Besides the conflicts about Pir Sultan's life, there are also conflicts about his revolts. Some pieces of research claim that Pir Sultan revolted against the Ottoman Empire; however, some others claim that there is not enough information about Pir Sultan and his revolts. Pir Sultan's poems and legends show that he revolted against the Ottoman Empire and he became the hope of the people.

Baki Öz states in his work that some researchers claim that Pir Sultan was affected by Shah Kulu, Atmaca, Babab Zünnun and Kalender Chelebi revolts. In addition, they claim that Pir Sultan was executed by hanging in 1547. However, some other researchers claim that Hızır Paşa executed Pir Sultan Abdal sometime between 1603 and 1617. In addition, some others claim that Pir Sultan was born sometime between 1512 and 1520 and died between 1574 and

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<sup>198</sup> Aydın (1995): p. 12.

<sup>199</sup> Öz (2017): p. 267.

<sup>200</sup> Öz (1995): pp. 257-258.



1629. Some other researchers attempted to find the exact period when Pir Sultan lived with respect to Hızır Pasha, who was the governor of Sivas and executed Pir Sultan. The Hızır Pashas in the Ottoman State were:

- On July 30, 1587; Governor of Kars, Hızır Pasha embarked on a military campaign to Iran
- Governor of Sivas in 1588
- Governor of Yerevan in 1589
- He resigned in May 1590 and took office again in July 1590 to kill Alevis
- There are many Hızır Pasha as the governor of Silistre and Tuna (Danube) in 1590 and historians claim that they are the same person.
- Governor of Yerevan, Bagdad, and Tabriz in 1591
- Governor of Yemen who was assigned to Aleppo on July 17, 1591
- He left governorate of Aleppo in 1592
- In 1596, Deli (Crazy) Hızır Pasha won the war against King Simon in Georgia
- Deli Hızır Pasha came to Istanbul 5 months after the Georgia war for another job
- In 1597, he died as a poor man, because he had distributed his own properties.<sup>201</sup>

Baki Öz states that there was no relation between Deli Hızır Pasha and Pir Sultan. In addition, Öz claims that Fuat Köprülü, S. N. Ergun, and C. Öztelli thought that the person who executed Pir Sultan was Hızır Pasha, who was quite active during the reign of Ahmed I between 1603 and 1617. The reason for this claim is the fact that Sheikh Mahmut Hüdai Efendi prepared a document to suppress the revolts of Alevis. Hızır Pasha was a governor who had much information about Alevis, so this task was assigned to him. Thus, Hızır Pasha suppressed the Pir Sultan-Shah Ismail revolts and executed Pir Sultan. This Hızır Pasha was the governor of Van province in 1592 and governor of Karaman province in 1596 and died in 1608, but he was never the governor of Sivas. However, he worked in Rumelia and specialized in topics about Alevis and Bektashis there. Furthermore, as the story of Pir Sultan goes, Hızır Pasha was previously a disciple of Pir Sultan, from whom he had learned many things about Alevism. For

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<sup>201</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 261-263.

that reason, it is more likely that Hızır Pasha, who was the governor of Van province, was the one who executed Pir Sultan. In addition, Pir Sultan was young when Yavuz Sultan was the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and killed many Alevis in Anatolia. Hence, it is claimed that Pir Sultan was affected by these massacres and in the next years when he grew older, he rebelled against the Ottoman Empire.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 260-265.

## Domination of Sunni Islam and Marginalisation of Alevism in Ottoman Empire Period

There are various concepts used to explain the cohabitation situation of people from different cultures under the roof of the same state. Cultural diversity, cultural pluralism, multidimensionality, multiculturalism, multinationalism, multiethnicity, etc. are some of these concepts. The western-based multiculturalism debates involve many differences. However, ethnicity and religious differences are emphasized in general. It is possible to say that today there is no non-multicultural, culturally completely homogeneous state on the earth. In other words, all states in today's world are somehow multicultural in sociological terms. The concept of multiculturalism is concerned with the recognition of cultural differences. Those who do not ostracize but recognize cultural differences outside the dominant culture are becoming multiculturalists.

Given the many different social structures of the past, it is not possible to say that multiculturalism is only a phenomenon specific to today, because of the political organization models involving multiple cultural societies. It is also seen that multiculturalism is more common in the empires than in the modern nation-states, which are closed to multiculturalism because it has a particular nation-centered structure and thus a monist cultural structure. On the other hand, the empires have been political constructions which consist of different languages, religions, and races constantly due to their radial spreading characteristics. Although monolingualism is taken as a basis in the nation-states contrary to the discourse of equality of citizens, considering that not a single language is imposed on the entire population in the empires, it is possible to say that multiculturalism can be observed more easily in this type of political multiculturalism and Ottoman Empire structures. Communities that have been politically loyal since their subjugation and thus pay their debts for their security by paying taxes in an economically regular manner have been granted a relatively autonomous living space by the imperial center. On the other hand, it should be noted that the centralized repression in the empires was closely felt in different cultural societies far away from the center, especially in cases of disagreements on various issues.<sup>203</sup> These disagreements have brought about marginalization. Considering someone as "other", in other words, "different from me" or "outsiders" are nothing but marginalization. This approach, which cannot tolerate the different,

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<sup>203</sup> Anık (2012): pp. 79-80.

has manifested itself in the most striking way in the form of excluding and destroying the other. The most striking example of this is genocide. Alienation here can reach the extent of destroying the "other". This attitude, which forms the basis of all kinds of discrimination and enmity, is the reason for the rejection of the marginalization based on the fact that the other is different from "me".

In the Turkish states, the position of religion in fields such as governance, social life, and economics are quite different. This feature has reached the pinnacle with Islam, and the westerners who have combined Turkishness and Islam have expressed this as follows: "The Turks saw their identities so identical with Islam that they almost melted their identity in Islam."<sup>204</sup> The same Islam identity formation is also valid for the Ottoman Empire.

Religion-state relation in the Ottoman State has developed and changed in relation to the position, power, administrative structure of the state and events that have developed around it, but the basic principles inherent to it has continued until the Republic of Turkey. As a central environmental problem, the religion-state relationship has also passed through various stages and has reached until today without losing its currency.

As it is done in the Salafi Islamic states, the naming of Muslims and non-Muslims for differentiation shows that religion is one of the means to distinguish people and groups in the Ottoman State. In other words, religious identity is evaluated together with other identities in determining the social status of people. The clear identification of identities is important in establishing the basic boundaries that will define the attitude of individuals, groups, and government towards each other. In this respect, religious identity has a border function in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>205</sup>

The reason for informing about the Ottoman Empire and its non-Muslim politics is to make the marginalization of Alevism more understandable knowing the Ottoman Empire's perspective on the "other".

In general, the administrative system of Ottoman non-Muslims was tried to be met with the terms "nation system" or "dhimmi"<sup>206</sup>. These terms have failed to fully explain the centuries-old non-Muslim administration system. An important debate about the use of the word "nation" comes from considering the current meaning of the word in today's Turkish valid for an

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<sup>204</sup> Lewis (2007): p. 13.

<sup>205</sup> Quataert (2013): p. 212.

<sup>206</sup> Christians, Jews who are in the Islamic state and who pay tribute.

institution in the Ottoman classical age. Accordingly, giving the name "nation system" to the system is completely wrong. This is because the Ottomans began to use this word only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the sense of "nation".<sup>207</sup>

Although the term dhimmitude is not clearly articulated according to Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, it is shaped around the dhimmitude thesis.<sup>208</sup> It is expressed that Zimmet law is one of the legends that were later fabricated to conceal that non-Muslims are always insignificant towards Muslims in the Islamic states and that even the claim that they exist actually puts non-Muslims into second-class citizens' status.<sup>209</sup> Weinstein Gilles, on the one hand, accepts that a person who has been granted the status of Dhimmi has entered a relatively dependent or even humiliated categorization, on the other hand, that Mehmed II had appointed religious leaders and referred to them in communal affairs, and attributed religious freedom and respect to these categories and changed this status.<sup>210</sup>

In the Ottoman Empire, the system of non-Muslims administration came to be discussed with the conquest of Istanbul in an institutional sense. Non-Muslim elements that can be dealt with in this period include the Greeks, Armenians, Assyrians, Coptists, Ethiopians, Jews, and others; in religious sense Christians and Jews; and among the Muslim classification of religions, the People of the Book. In the Ottoman Empire, the most important condition determining the administrative system of non-Muslims is the tradition of preserving the situation before the conquest, which also causes it to look irregular. This condition stems from the Islamic Dhimmitude system. Accordingly, the life, property, and religion of the Non-Muslim People of the Book who were conquered are under protection. On the other hand, they would pay jizya tax with exemption from military service, and this depends on the circumstances.<sup>211</sup> In addition, women, children, mental patients, the poor and the clergy were not subject to jizya. Except for those, all non-Muslim men who were between the ages of fourteen and seventy-five years were obliged to pay for jizya to the state.<sup>212</sup> Apart from the tax collected from the non-Muslims by the state, there was also the tax collected by their own religious institutions. However, in doing

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<sup>207</sup> Buhl-Bosworth (1997): p. 61.

<sup>208</sup> Parker (2006): pp. 267- 296.

<sup>209</sup> Braude- Lewis (1982): pp. 1-34.

<sup>210</sup> Weinstein (1997): pp. 137-142.

<sup>211</sup> Seyfeli (2013): pp. 2-3.

<sup>212</sup> Nedkoff (1986): pp.621-624.

so, the Patricians were supervised by the state in order not to put their congregations into a difficult situation.<sup>213</sup>

When the penalties against non-Muslims are examined, it is understood that they are subjected to lighter penalties than Muslims. For example, there is a provision in the Suleiman Law that non-Muslims in adultery-related crimes are subject to fewer penalties than the Muslims who commit the same crime.<sup>214</sup> Non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire were usually interested in artisanship and trade, with the advantage of being exempt from state service. It is understood that in the trades books, dhimmis were included in the same trades organization together with Muslims. In these books, first Muslims, then Christians, and finally, Jews were recorded. Because of the languages they speak, Dhimmis have acquired very advantageous positions in commercial life and government service.<sup>215</sup>

In daily life, the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims can be explained by showing the following examples: From the end of the sixteenth century, some restrictions on the clothing of minorities began to be introduced. The collapse of the state has a big role in this social change. At the time of the Murat III, an imperial decree of 4 September 1577 ordered the direct punishment of those wearing clothes that were against the law.<sup>216</sup> In other words, non-Muslims were banned from wearing Muslim clothes and Muslims from wearing non-Muslim clothes.

It is understood from the documents that minorities were banned from sitting around mosques, prayers, and places of worship in cities like Mecca and Medina, which are considered sacred for Muslims. An imperial dictum dated 1581 also prohibited dhimmis from sitting around Istanbul's Eyup Sultan Tomb. Likewise, there were decrees for the removal of the Jews living around the Ortakoy mosque from that area.<sup>217</sup> Another rule was that, when the height of the houses to be built was being determined by an edict dated 1724, there was a restriction on seating and building which allowed higher buildings for Muslims and lower buildings for dhimmis.<sup>218</sup> Selim III wanted to make the houses of Muslims and non-Muslims specific by using a different color in the houses of the Muslims.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Bozkurt (1996): p. 31.

<sup>214</sup> Ercan (1983): p. 1143.

<sup>215</sup> Demirag (2006): p. 19-20.

<sup>216</sup> Refik (1931): p. 74.

<sup>217</sup> Demirag (2006): p.27.

<sup>218</sup> Refik (1931): p. 83.

<sup>219</sup> Karal (1949): pp. 98-99.

Despite some tolerance, there are also some issues where non-Muslims were restricted in their freedom of worship. These restrictions were mostly related to the sounds that were made during the time of worship, especially ringing the bell. It was stated that the bell was forbidden by Muslims as it was considered an attack on the supremacy of Islam.<sup>220</sup>

The Dhimmis were also free on funeral and burial ceremonies. Non-Muslims were able to bury their funerals in the cemeteries which were allocated for them after they had performed their ceremonies according to their religious beliefs. In a decree from 990/1592, a cemetery area with definite borders was given to Jews in Istanbul and it was requested that no Jewish funeral be buried outside this cemetery.<sup>221</sup>

Christians were banned from building new churches and the Sultan's permission was required for the restoration of existing ones. However, in practice, it seems that these rules were not followed. By ignoring these rules, Christians were sometimes allowed to build new churches from time to time. Non-Muslims, on the other hand, were not allowed to bear weapons, ride horses, marry Muslim women, and testify against Muslims. Christians and Jews were forbidden to give Muslim names to their children. Names such as Joseph (Yusuf, Yasef) and David (Davud) used in common in all three religions, especially during the Ottoman period, were written differently in order to specify the difference.<sup>222</sup>

If a general evaluation is made in the light of this data, non-Muslims living in the Ottoman Empire were placed in a system different from Muslims between private law and public law until the Tanzimat Reform. But in this system called "nation," they had the right to organize their own religious, social, and legal life. To be objective, however, they had no right to be a first-class citizen and no political liberty as a conquered people.

According to some Turkish historians, these restrictions actually served non-Muslims in many ways. However, these interpretations generally serve the understanding of the "tolerance of the Ottoman Empire". The obligation of the hat in the dress code for example, in a sense, has prevented the non-Muslims from being assimilated from their own cultures. Another example is that they were exempted from military service and thus got economically stronger. When such definitions are made, the concepts produced by different historical conditions such as

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<sup>220</sup> Erbaş (2003): p .19.

<sup>221</sup> Erbaş (2003): p. 19.

<sup>222</sup> Bozkurt (1996): pp. 284-285.

tolerance, equality, freedom, and citizenship are intertwined and often used in place of each other.

According to Braude and Lewis, if words like tolerance refer to the willingness of the religion in the predominant state to keep its existence together with other religions and their members, which should be understood in general, it is necessary to state that it was highly available in the Ottoman world.<sup>223</sup> According to Yahya Araz, while the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims continued on the usual terms without religious identities coming in the foreground, some of the developments that led to the tension of relations could turn religion into a tool of the outpouring of various quarrels. The religious or communal affiliation could even cause people to lose their positions after the relationship had come to this stage. In highly heated periods, the friction/conflict between the people of different religions was different from the friction/conflict between the people of the same religion. In this case, religious elements could be added to the conflict between people of different religions, which could change the course of the fight. At that time, the various canon regulations thought to have lost their social functioning could turn into a "nightmare" for non-Muslims in particular.<sup>224</sup>

In summary, the attitudes of the Ottomans towards the non-Muslims stayed within the border of rules that would limit daily life and protect Ottoman authority, and the relative tolerance was maintained at a certain level at all times. That was because non-Muslims had largely determined the Ottoman economy, and the positions of the non-Muslims, beginning with trade, progressed up to the government with various duties. When we compare these limitations with the attitude of the Ottoman Empire to the Alevis, it can be said that the Alevis were actually seen as a "source of trouble" that should be got rid of in the society rather than an "other". The introduction of non-Muslims in the governmental positions would lead to increased pressure and massacre for the Alevis.

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<sup>223</sup> Braude- Bernard (1982): pp. 3-4.

<sup>224</sup> Araz (2008): p. 194.



## Alevism as an “Other” in the Period of Ottoman Empire

The historical background of the Alevi's marginalization process in Anatolia dates to old histories as expressed in the above chapters. However, the marginalization, which became more evident with the Ottoman and Safavid struggle, reached its peak with the Battle of Chaldiran. Yavuz Sultan Selim's massacre of the Alevi for the fear that they would support Safavids has created a shame table settled in the memory of the Ottoman history. It is seen that the marginalization process of the Alevi/Alevism continued with the Republic. While Sunni-Hanafi belief and Alevism/Alevi have become a problem for the republic established by the goal of creating a Turkish ethnicity and the project of nation-building, it is understood that Sunni-Hanafi were accepted in the first stage with preliminary acceptance. Just like the Kurds and other minority peoples considered as Turks, the Alevi were also subjected to this process.

The massacres and despotism against Alevi did neither start nor end with Yavuz Sultan Selim. The most important question to be asked in this section is why the relative tolerance of the Ottoman Empire towards the non-Muslims were not also valid for Alevi in the same way. It would be quite wrong to address the answer to this question solely through sectarian distinction. As is the case of all state policies, this problem entails not only religious but also economic, social, and political reasons.

In order to examine the conflict between Alevism and Sunnism in a sociological observation, according to Barthos and Wehr, the discrepancy and the differences in the values of the aims of the parties are the main factors which are related to both the emergence of the conflict and the level of realization. At the root of Alevism and Sunnism conflict, the effects of sovereignty and power struggle, settlement-nomadism, integration-exclusion with the state are seen.<sup>225</sup> Just as it is here, "when opposing forces are encountered, either a union or conflict arise." The forces encountered are the Ottoman government, Turkic communities (nomads), the people who adopted a settled life and Sunni Islam and the Safavid government. The encounter of Nomadic communities with the power of the Ottoman government resulted in conflict, and the encounter with the Safavid government, namely Shah Ismail, resulted in a union. That is to say, the nomadic Turkmen Alevi who were excluded by the Ottomans were embraced by Shah İsmail. They were involved in the establishment of the Safavid state. Their own social economic

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<sup>225</sup> Bartos -Wehr (2002): p. 30.

activities, beliefs and traditions were understood.<sup>226</sup> Therefore, the union of Turkmen Alevi and the Safavid State is one of the major factors in the marginalization of Turkmen Alevi. However, as mentioned earlier, the Mahdi understanding emerged in the Alevi-Kizilbash communities and they saw Shah Ismail as a rescuer in this position. The Kizilbash people who went to the Battle of Chaldiran against the Ottoman military forces, in a defenseless state were waiting for a miracle by the Mahdi. They expected the destruction of the Ottoman state and the establishment of the justice system from Shah Ismail. This hope did not disappear even though Shah Ismail was defeated against the Ottomans.

While the Ottomans were institutionalizing and experiencing the period of becoming a state, semi-nomadic Turkmen communities reacted against settling and wanted to maintain their traditional forms of life. While the aim of the Ottoman Empire was to settle down, to have a certain home for its people, to assume responsibilities from paying taxes to the collecting soldiers; the aim of the nomadic Turkish communities was to be able to maintain their own economic social activities freely in a migrant settler way of life. Undoubtedly, the aim of the Ottoman administration was at the same time in conformity with the aims of a public group that had settled down and accepted the demands of the administration. The fact that the relations of the Ottoman and the non-Muslims take place within this understanding framework is also directly proportional to the functioning of this tax system.

With the centralization of the Ottoman Empire, the generally nomadic Turkmen tribes started to feel excluded from the management and its surroundings as a result of being subjected to a number of oppressive policies of the government such as taxation and compulsory settlement. (It seems that the fact that the Ottoman Empire started to appoint senior civil servants from non-Turkish and generally devshirmeh people is also effective in this).<sup>227</sup>

Another reason for marginalization is the rebellions against the Ottoman Empire, which is currently dedicated to Alevi. The fact that the uprisings of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are called "Alevi Rebellions", as stated by today's researchers, is not seen as a correct definition when the details of the uprisings are analyzed. This is because most of the rebellions carry economic and political reasons rather than sectarian reasons. It is not right to try to explain these rebellions through the Alevi identity. However, the fact that the majority of the people involved in the rebellion were Alevi is a factor that creates this perception. These economic and political pressures on the

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<sup>226</sup> Bartos- Wehr (2002): p. 6.

<sup>227</sup> Bacquies-Grammont (1987): p. 108.

Alevis will be a beginning of the rebellion period, as a justification for the rebellions against the state. The Shah Kalender rebellion, a turning point in terms of the position of Anatolian Alevis, also emerged under these conditions. For this reason, a great intensity has been struck in the uprisings of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkmen people, who have been overwhelmed by various forms of oppression in Anatolia since the end of the Second Bayezid period. It is possible to say that the main cause of the Shah Kalender rebellion is the government's massacres, tyrannies, heavy taxes applied by the government, taking away the timars of the timar holders and thus eradicating their source of livelihood.

Another reason for the Kizilbash uprisings such as the Shah Kulu (or Karabıyıkoglu) rebellion in the Teke region in 1511, Nur Ali Khalifa in Central Anatolia in 1512, Bozoklu Celal (also called Shah Veli) rebellion again in this region in 1520, Baba Zunnun in Bozok in 1526 and finally Shah Kalender rebellion in Central Anatolia in 1526-27, which have occurred around the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was the period in which the Kizilbash ideology was the most fervent and most active since it constituted the first years of the Ottoman-Safavid struggle. But even a superficial scan of the official Ottoman sources, largely consisting of documents and archives and partly archival documents, especially in the first half of the sixteenth century, would be sufficient to indicate that these movements were associated with the social and economic disturbances of some rural peoples and migratory environments and, to a certain extent, some timar holders, with the oppression and disability of local administrators.

The Ottoman administration used all the secret and open methods to keep the Alevis under pressure. The theses that show the Ottoman period as the period of happiness for the Turkish people or Anatolian people are refuted by the decrees written in the palace itself. The 16<sup>th</sup> century, considered the most magnificent period of Ottoman rule, is an age of bloodshed for Anatolian people, especially Alevis. After the establishment of the Safavid state, rapid adaptation of the understanding of the administration to the city culture gradually led to the alienation of the founding Kizilbash elements to the system. Nevertheless, it took two hundred years for the activities of the Kizilbash tribes, which constitute the backbone of the military aristocracy, to be eradicated completely.

There is another fact revealed by the documents that because of the power of the Safavid State formed in Iran, the Ottoman administration could not give a hard time to Anatolian Alevis in an obvious way, and thus this constituted a period called "the secret massacre period". The

secret but official decrees sent to the Ottoman principals ordered the Alevis to be found and massacred. The destiny of the Alevis who do not support the Safavid State directly was being exiled. It is clear that these exiles contained purposes such as suppressing the society by breaking them away from their geographical location and resources, ensuring that belief/intellectual and identity transformation to occur -this can also be called drawing to the orthodox line or sunnification-, breaking the resistance, reducing solidarity, mutual care, and protection by removing the communication and contact between the Kizilbash community, and preventing the actions that cannot be taken under control.

During the reign of Sultan Yavuz Selim, timar holder rebellions began, escapes from the military service, theft, and banditry began to appear. At the same time, the cadis (Muslim judges) who provided justice began to apply bribery and massacres, not differently from the timar holders. Historians generally think that political groupings started with Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror. The Conqueror's killing of the representatives of Turk-Turkmen descendants and the seizure of their goods by the propaganda of the devshirmehs became the culmination point of the separation. This separation continued in the form of enthroning the sultan's sons that were close to them on the political level and setting their own cadres beside him. After the controversy between the Bayezid II and his sons, the Janissaries enthroned Yavuz Sultan Selim, who was known for his enmity against Shi'i, by bringing Bayezid II down the throne. In the Kanuni period, the fight of Turkic nobles for coming to power fired the public rebellions. For a long period of time, Devshirmeh and Turk-Turkmen opposition continued in the form of Timar-Janissary opposition. Although these conflicts were not based on a sharp class politics, the Devshirmeh-Turk Turkmen conflict was realized at a political level during the Ottomans.<sup>228</sup>

The Alevis forever undergoing a defeat in the face of the state, is causing them to engage in the rebellion of the feudal lords in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As the greatest evidence, it can be said that the majority of the areas that Kuyucu Murat Pasha slaughtered were the Alevi settlements.

The intense pressure and invincibility of the Ottoman Empire, the constant breakdown of the Alevis brings the end of Alevi rebellions from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The diminution of the intensity of the Alevis and withdrawing in small units even by separating from each other stopped the Alevi rebellion.

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<sup>228</sup> Öz (2017): pp. 84-90.

Another reason why the Ottomans marginalized Alevi is that Alevism does not have a homogenous definition. The greatest example of this can be seen with a 19<sup>th</sup> century point of view. With a reference to Karakaya-Stump's "a critical approach to 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary records and Ali Gako's Story", The American Protestant missionaries who were active in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman geography and who wanted to make a commitment to their activities among the Alevi were claimed that the Alevi were converted to Islam by force, but they were communities that continued to have Christian beliefs under the surface. The Ottoman State intellectuals during the Union and Progress came against this thesis of the missionaries; but using the concept of 'syncretism' borrowed from them, they suggested that Alevism was "genuinely" Turkic, and that Alevism was nothing but a continuation of old Turkic beliefs like Shamanism brought from Central Asia under the cover of Islam. With the popularization of this Central Asian thesis about Alevi-Bektashism, it has been argued that even Kurt and Kirman Alevi were assimilated Turks.<sup>229</sup>

According to Karakaya-Stump, when Alevism-Bektashism definitions are being made, the construction of Alevism as a kind of faith system is accompanied by the judgment that the Alevi are deprived of a definable socio-religious organization. Alevism has been envisaged as a dispersed community. However, the point reached today is that Alevism has a more complex socio-religious structure.<sup>230</sup> As expressed in belief practices in the first part of the study, Alevism is based on the Ocak (Society) system, which has a hierarchy within itself. Therefore, it is possible to talk about the existence of various mechanisms in Alevism which enabled them to stay in touch, not to be separated from each other. Thanks to that Alevism managed to stay alive for centuries on an autocratic basis. However, it is necessary to state that this construction differs from any cult system. Another confusing issue in these definitions is how the definitions of Alevism-Bektashism and Kizilbash differ in these three names. It is known that Kizilbash emerged through Safavid propaganda and the common ground they had against Sunni Islam, and constituted from people of Ali-centered religious view. It can be said that the term Kizilbash term was used for the first time by the Ottoman Sultan II Bayezid and after that it entered the archival sources of the period. Bayezid II used the expressions "tfufe-i giriyye-i kizilbaŝe hazzelehumullah" and "cerriaat-ı kizilbas" in the letters that were sent to Elvend Akkoyunlu and the Kurdish Emir Hadji Rustem before the Őarur war which took place in 1501.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): p. 6.

<sup>230</sup> Karakaya-Stump (2016): p. 11.

<sup>231</sup> Allouche (2001): p. 95.

Bektashism is, according to many researchers, described as the cult version of Alevism-Kizilbash which is positioned in the city, but the communication network mentioned above introduces a complex structure within these groups.

Therefore, although the Bektashis and the Kizilbash have different characteristics, they are perceived as the same thing. In the documents of the Ottoman archives, the Alevis were recorded as "Kizilbash" or "Rafizi", as well as atheist, "unreligious", Rafizi, "separatist", Shiah and "Godless". The mention of the Alevi name is far behind as a result of the central authority and the non-religious and immoral meanings that the Sunnisian community has imposed on the "Kizilbash."<sup>232</sup>

Besides, Kizilbash is also referred to in Ottoman documents as “fazihâ-i cahilâne” (ignorant ugliness, disgrace), “itikad-ı batıla” (superstition) ve “tarik-i gayr-i meşru” (the road which is prohibited by law). Kizilbash is characterized as an "adaht-ı cahile" (ignorant traditions) in the article under the heading "Kizilbaşlığın ilgası", which was sent to Internal Supervision by the Military Inspector Ali Seydi Bey. It is emphasized that the Kizilbash should be taught the truth of Islam by expressing "ritual and ceremonial morality and the ideal of the Prophet and the mystery to Islam" (rituals are totally contrary to Islamic rules with general morals and methods).<sup>233</sup> During the influence of Islam, the Turkmens accepted many things that Muslims considered forbidden to their customs. In other words, they have subjected Muslims to a reform. They have never left wine, dance, harp, painting, etc., which Muslims consider forbidden. They did not accept the separate life with women and never removed women from the collective councils. They preferred Turkish over Arabic and Persian, etc. and continued to practice songs in Turkish.<sup>234</sup> In fact, this is not a fight only against Sunni Islam, but also against the Shi'i culture, which is a branch of Islam. So, it will be possible to say that Alevism does not belong directly to any branch of the Islamic religion. 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries are the important turning points in the formation of Alevi-Bektashi beliefs. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkmen immigration to Anatolia and the influence of Yesevi, Vefai, Kalenderi and Haydari Turkmen fathers led to adopting a mystical Islamic understanding. Thus, the Anatolian religion, social and political life, has changed dramatically.<sup>235</sup> It is not possible to call these migrant settler Turkmens Alevi-Kizilbash as we understand today since they did not have anything to do with the Twelve

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<sup>232</sup> Melikoff (2007): p. 53.

<sup>233</sup> Selcuk (2011): pp. 59 -75.

<sup>234</sup> Şener (1990): p. 123.

<sup>235</sup> Fırlalı (2006): p. 97.

Imams, Ali Ehli Beyt, Kerbela and Shiah motives till the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century. Although not among all Turkmens, the Turkmen who lived in northern regions and northern Syria were acquainted with Shiah propaganda earlier.<sup>236</sup>

Undoubtedly, as we speak of the Alevi beliefs in the early chapters, the fact that Alevism disturbed Ottoman Empire in religious terms is a set of practices and perceptions that are incompatible with the Sunni belief. These practices and perceptions were enough to define Alevis as "Godless" or "faithless". The most obvious one is the belief structure of Alevis with the emphasis on "man-God unity". Sunnism, on the other hand, emphasizes that God is an unattainable power outside the humans. Thus, the Alevis have accepted the concept of the "An-al Haq" which means the humans' becoming of God. It is possible to find the traces of these in Bektashi poems. Alevism aims to "make a man a perfect human being in this world", while Sunnism aims to "reach paradise in the other world". Alevis see collective and sustained worship necessary to become a perfect human being. Sunnism, on the other hand, sets forth people to worship God individually and gain heaven. Alevism values intention and content, Sunnism is more concerned with "Shape and Shariah". The two concepts have different and distinct characteristics, like these and so on. These types of beliefs of the Alevis impinge on the only religious policy of the Ottoman Empire, which is dominant by Sunni.

The repressive and massacrific state policies also shaped the judicial system of Alevis, and it has been seen that they did not accept the legal system of the Ottoman Empire and that they aimed at self-administration within the state. Except for the exceptional situations, they did not recognize the state. According to Riza Zelyut, the Alevis looking from their own historical experience, advocated that state mechanism was not "the distributor of right" but an "extortionist". Consequently, they have solved their problems in the Dedelik-Taliplik<sup>237</sup> organization. In Alevism, the aim of the judiciary is to win back the rights of the righteous, and secondly, to reintroduce the criminal to the society by ridding of their wrong-doings. There is absolutely no death penalty in this system. As the heaviest criminal method, they applied the "exposure-isolation" method. Consequently, in Alevism, since crime is concrete, punishment is also concrete; punishment is not referred to "the other world" as it is in other belief systems.<sup>238</sup> To compare, while the non-Muslims living in the Ottoman period did not have the right to an

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<sup>236</sup> Ocak (2000): p. 47.

<sup>237</sup> This word is used for all Alevis who are not from Prophet's family/ancestry.

<sup>238</sup> Zelyurt (1992): p. 243.

authority with a relatively autonomous system in the Ottoman judicial system, the Alevi preferred to settle their problems within their own systems.

Another sanction of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to pacify the Alevi-Turkmen organization of the society is the position of the madrassas opened. According to Suraiya Faruqi, the geographical distribution of the madrassas in the Ottomans and the distribution of the Bektashi lodges are comparable to each other. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century rural areas of Anatolia, madrassas were established despite in low numbers, but most of the masses were in cities. Bektashi lodges were located outside the city and in rural areas. According to him, it is not right to link the tendencies of Bektashi's lodges to be established outside the city or in the countryside only in agricultural activities. Apart from agricultural activities, keeping as far as possible from the viewpoint of their ulema and administration may be regarded as a strategic practice.<sup>239</sup> It is seen that madrassas were located in rural areas where Alevi beliefs and related lodges and zawiyas were concentrated. The Ottoman State sees filling these regions with educational institutions as the only way to prevent the spread of "Kizilbash". In other words, the Kizilbash were developing and spreading more commonly in places where there were no madrassas. This situation became even more oppressive with Islamist politics, the ideological formation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Abdulhamit II period. In this period, religious officials were sent to rural areas and provinces. At the same time, mosques were being built in the villages. Unwavering Islamic unity, the ummah unity was tried to be formed within the framework of Sunni belief. In this way, people's beliefs were intensely diverted from their heterodox nature and led to orthodox.

The guild of Janissaries who were opposed to the reforms of Sultan II Mahmud was closed down. The closure of the guild of Janissaries by Mahmut II has been instrumental in forbidding Bektashism, which is regarded as the belief of Alevism. In this period, the Naqshbandi cult was supported by the state. According to another perspective, the government, which actually wanted to confront the Janissaries, opted such a ban against the possibility of some Bektashis supporting them and Janissaries infiltrating and hiding in the Bektashi lodges. However, according to the historians of the period, the parliament established on the closure of Bektashi lodges stated that Bektashism was closed due to its state and behaviors against the religion rather than its relations with the Janissaries. Since this date, the Bektashi associations and dervish lodges have tried to keep their existence secretly. They tried to maintain their existence in line with the conditions of the period. According to the Ottoman historian Esad Efendi, the

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<sup>239</sup> Faruqi (2003): pp. 75-76.



government began the prosecution of the Bektashis who encouraged the Janissaries by participating in this case, while the Janissaries were being removed after the Vak'a-yı Hayriye (Auspicious Incident) by the government. After the investigations, a total of six Bektashis including Üsküdar sheik Kıncı Baba, Istanbul Agasizade Ahmed Effendi from the Kadis (Qadi) and Salih Effendi from Hacegan who were claimed to have supported Janissaries on the day of the Vak'a-i Hayriye were arrested and imprisoned to the mint prison. Later on, a meeting was held at the Topkapı Palace to discuss what decisions would be taken about these people and the Bektashis who cooperated with them.<sup>240</sup> During the rebellion launched against the Ottoman Empire by the Janissaries, Bektashis were shown as having participated besides the Janissaries, and when the Sancak-ı Serif<sup>241</sup> was pointed saying "Come beneath if you are a Muslim", it is stated that the Bektashis went beside the vessel of Janissary.<sup>242</sup> Asad Efendi also identifies the followers of the Bektashis with Janissaries and presents Janissaries as "the state" and "Bektashis" as "enemies of religion".<sup>243</sup> For many years the state has resorted to all kinds of ways to erase the traces of the Janissaries. The government made propaganda against the Janissaries and the Bektashis with official publications and historians.

After the period of Abdulhamid, various investigations have been made on Alevism faith in the period of Union and Progress and they were in contact with dervish lodges and religious sects. It should be noted that the main sect that focuses on the existence of the members of some Bektashi sects of the Unionists is Bektashism. There were party leaders who met Bektashis Fathers and dervishes and seek support for their policies. Within the framework of the work of the Committee of Union and Progress, Alevism will be expressed as persons who retained their Turkishness among the communities that emigrated from Central Asia to Anatolia. They will be positioned in the direction of the Turanian ideal. The connection of Alevism and the Turanian ideal should be related to the Cem ceremonies and Shamanism as well as the language of their prayers and breaths being in Turkish. This situation was also an important opportunity for the Turkism movement and the society and culture project brought along.<sup>244</sup>

It is debatable what kind of position Bektashism gained in the new order coming with Tanzimat. The claims put forward that Sultan Abdülmecid had sympathy for Bektashism. But apart from these exaggerations, the Imperial Edict of Tanzimat shows the existence of tolerance for every

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<sup>240</sup> Esad Efendi (1243): p. 207.

<sup>241</sup> Black Flag which was used in Prophet Muhammed period.

<sup>242</sup> Gölpinarlı (1947): p. 1199.

<sup>243</sup> Esad Efendi (1243): p. 206.

<sup>244</sup> Küçük (2003): p. 902.

religion and sect, and especially cult, in contrast to the period of Mahmud. It is known that the Haji Bektashi lodge was restored with a will of 1852 and was returned to Bektashis.<sup>245</sup>

As far as it is known, Kizilbash Alevism does not come from the Kizilbash, the military aristocracy of the Safavid state. First the addition of the Safavid state to an orthodoxy on the axis of the Twelve-Imam Shiahs, and then being destroyed completely (first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) left the Kizilbashes alone with their destiny who stayed in the lands of Ottomans. In this process, the Ottoman Kizilbashes moved away from the city centers and set up a social-religious order "in areas where the state is not". It is evident that this order is entirely based on the dynamics of rural life. The transition to the republic did not have a significant effect on this rural Kizilbash Alevi order. Kizilbash Alevis felt the decline of the state pressures that have been going on for centuries with the republic, but they did not come to the cities and join the actors of the new order. Therefore, the first 60 years of the Republic have not been the scene for radical changes in terms of the theological and social order for the Kizilbash Alevis.

Dersim, Sivas, Erzurum, Harput, and Elbistan were the regions where Alevis lived most in Anatolia. In this region where the Alevis lived in high density, the scattered Alevi villagers could be easily distinguished from other Sunni villages in the same region. Because there were no mosques in these villages that were places of Sunni prayer. The governments, including the Sultan Abdülhamit II period till now, have been trying to build mosques for the Sunnification policy in these villages where the Alevis live. In the Ottoman society, the Kizilbash term used for Alevis continued to be used until 1900. However, after this date, the majority of Sunnis could not change the prejudice of the Ottoman to this different community, even though this denotation left its place to the use of Alevism.

Sultan Abdulhamid II was directed to centralize the administration more effectively than any other reformist sultan before him and to modernize the education and health reforms that the Tanzimat administration had brought to the fore, dissolving the policies of these institutions in their own sense of central government. The Sultan tried to adapt the Yezidis living in Anatolia like the Alevis living in the Sunni society and accepted as Islam to the Sunni majority within the Sunnification policy.<sup>246</sup> Even though the Sunnification activities of Abdülhamit II have found value among the Muslims, the Alevis and the Yezidis have not been able to win with this strategy.

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<sup>245</sup> Ortaylı (1995): pp. 281-287.

<sup>246</sup> Deringil (1998): pp. 68-72.

Many researchers start the marginalization process of the Alevi from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was a period in which the struggle of the Ottoman-Safavid rule was sharpened, the political borders were constantly changing in Anatolia and the rebellions were intensifying. In fact, this view is seen more as a part of the 1400-year-long uninterrupted process of Alevism, which is supposed to be the starting point of the Alevism with the caliphate debate that began with the death of Muhammad and the injustice that considered to be practiced against Ali, from there to the descendants of the Ahl-i Bayt and the massacre against his followers in Karbala. According to Ali Yaman; "Throughout the whole history of Alevism, Ali's descendants and their followers were subjected to injustice and exposed to oppression. Alevi express this by often saying, "We have been under pressure for 1400 years." The main theme in the oral history of Alevism is that this process of continuous suffering is repeated with different events in time and space.<sup>247</sup> On the other hand, it is seen that this period of tolerance has been explained by the fact that the Ottoman Empire had not yet been institutionalized and the power had not yet reached the upper point, considering the establishment period relatively good. These aspects, forming blocks in different organizations and publications in the Alevi identity movement, predominantly tend to revenge against the Ottoman Empire and its "Sunnism". The view that the Ottoman Empire forced Sunnism to the people and that the Sunni sharia was used as the ideological device of the state to oppress and force the people of Anatolia forms the basic axis. The Ottomans whose belief was Sunnism, which constitutes the administration ideology of the "other" in publications where general evaluations of Alevism are made, was the heir and follower of the Umayyad, Abbasi and Seljuk tradition as a type of state and government. In this context, the Ottoman is a contemporary version of a general "other" category.

The causes of the Ottoman Empire to consider Alevi in the 'other' position are economic in terms of inhabited life and tax system, political (domestic and foreign) in terms of Safavid-Ottoman relations and rebellions, and theological in terms of differences in the practices of belief and in nature of the threat to the Sunni authority. Generally speaking, Alevism, which carried a political concept with Shiah culture by evolving to Kizilbash in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is a belief that has resisted to the Sunni repressive system in order not to be assimilated.

In summary, it can be said that if we do not consider the establishment period of the Ottoman Empire, especially after Yavuz Sultan Selim, the Ottoman Empire was a theocratic state of religion in which the Sunni side was predominant. For the Alevi, the Ottoman has become a

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<sup>247</sup> Yaman (1995): pp. 38-40.

fearful dream. They resisted them to protect their existence for 700 years. Numerous uprisings, of which Alevis constituted the majority, and mass murders arose for this reason in the Ottoman Empire. When the palace entered the area of influence of Arabic cultures in the Ottomans; the people who were deported, massacred, and taxed so heavy that they could not pay were mainly of Alevi origin. The people opposed to the despotic Ottoman state, which was practiced from above, abandoned all cities and towns to Sunni Ottoman for their security for 700 years. And for themselves, they adopted desolated villages and regions as their homes. They have tried to keep their lives hiding from the state.<sup>248</sup> In the Ottoman Empire, the use of religion to distinguish people and groups has created an inevitable list of separatism and at the end of this list, Alevism has taken its place after non-Muslims.

Hiding the identities of Alevis is not a foreign phenomenon even today. In the period of the Republic of Turkey, after the Alevi massacres such as Kocgiri, Dersim, Malatya, Maras, Corum and Madimak, the Alevis still cannot explain their identity today, so the official results as to the number cannot be still taken.

Today Alevi children still attend compulsory religious lessons in schools, Alevism is not being described as a belief or misinterpreted. The Cem houses of the Alevis are not accepted as places of worship and supported by the state. There are many examples of discrimination and marginalization in the public sphere. Consequently, the Alevis have been subjected to massacres and discrimination after the Ottoman Empire and continued to exist in an “other” position.

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<sup>248</sup> Şener (1998): pp. 54-56, 55-56.

## Conclusion

Anatolian Alevism emerges as a political identity in today's Turkey as a belief whose foundation is still debated. It was not possible to take Alevism, as it is understood in this debate, just as a religious identity, and to explain it by ignoring the socio-political situations. This situation is not unique to Alevism. Every religion, every culture, and even every identity contains socio-political situations. Religions not only exist as a belief system, they want to process it up to the tiny pieces of a society. Shariah in Islam is the clearest expression of it. Without fully understanding the Islamic Sharia, it would be incomplete to recognize the Anatolian Alevism. In today's Turkey and the foundation period of the Republic, one of the greatest fears of the Alevis who embraced Secularity tightly was the idea of Sharia. The ideas they have developed against it necessarily affect their religious views as well. The struggle and protective perception of Alevism which is separated sharply from Islamic philosophy with the perspective of God as the most fundamental issue must have pushed Alevism into secrets. It is understandable in this respect that the truths hidden as "secrets" against the Islamic massacres made Alevism hard to understand. It is not clear to Alevis and those who research Alevis as to what exactly secrets mean. The results of all the investigations made for this reason are open to debate, even though they are true.

When the Alevis' view of life is analyzed, the peaceful thoughts they have developed against man and nature has been rendered unprotected against all external threats and has led to being exposed to massacres. The Alevism having a similarity to the peaceful thoughts that existed in the belief of Malakan turned out to be open to oppression, exclusion, and massacres in the circumstances of the period. Moreover, when compared with the Allah belief of Islam, the Anal Haq belief of Alevism is the complete opposite of the Islam. This opposition has made it the target of all Islamic beliefs. It is obvious that this was the real breaking point. In spite of all the definitions made, the idea that Alevism is a non-Islamic religion that took shape after the emergence of Islam and was originally developed against its philosophy seems like the closest to the truth. Expressing that Alevism emerged before Islam does not reflect the truth scientifically, which is revealed as a result of the researches. But it does not change the reality that this Alevism is influenced by pre-Islamic religions and contains a lot of things from them. This does not apply only to Alevism. All religions are reflections of past religions and contain a lot of things from them. For example, like Islam contains a lot of things from Christianity and Judaism, and Judaism from Sumerians and Prophet Abraham. In this sense, no religion should

be evaluated on their own. When evaluating Alevism, it should not be misjudged by separating it from everything else and in its own particular way. In this sense, Alevism is neither completely within Islam nor outside it. Alevism contains many colors and spirits of the geography that it lives in like Islam and other religions.

When we look at the historical process, it is seen that the Alevis are perceived as being a problem, and are being exposed as such, rather than focusing on their problems as a society. Besides, they are expected to make a homogeneous definition of Alevism in every case they claim a right. The basis of this thinking is that the ruling powers that hold the state know that there is no single Alevi definition as mentioned above. The thought that Sunni Islam is the most official and only religion of the state by the ruling powers of the state is one of the main reasons why Alevis are deprived of their rights. Although there are many interpretations of Sunnism, this is completely the reason why the state, especially asked for a single interpretation from Alevis. It is against the nature to demand a single interpretation of Sunni or Islam in the same way. In this sense, this attitude of the state is the result of the idea of rejecting Alevism entirely.

The fact that such a rooted belief is experiencing identity problems nowadays is the main theme of this thesis. Since the thesis refers to the historical limitations of the Ottoman Empire, the greatest breakdown point of Alevism was assessed by the period covered by the influence of the Shi'i Safavid State, and post the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Republican Period Alevism perception were not included.

In many resources, the Ottoman Empire is referred to as a multicultural empire living in a certain system with non-Muslims, having a relative tolerance. Since the use of the word "tolerance" means that non-Muslims were hard to accept, it is possible to say that this is a wrong word usage. When looking at foreign resources, the conditions of the Non-Muslims have never been the same as the major group in terms of social status, even if they were granted partial religious freedom. According to Turkish Historians, Alevism comes the last in terms of the public uneasiness in the Ottoman Empire and freedom of self-expression. This order goes like a Sunni sect, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Catholic Armenians.

One of the greatest reasons for the marginalization and identity problem of the Anatolian Alevism is that the Turkmen communities we call Anatolian Alevis do not accept the Ottoman State's nationalization policies (such as tax system and settlement) by establishing settlements in remote areas. These communities having their own socio-economic systems and the lack of

trust in the Ottoman justice system are some of the reasons. This insecurity and economic pressure on the next period would start the "rebellions".

The transition of Shiah culture to Anatolia Alevism took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with Safavid State, due to the Ottoman's condition of the time and pressures on the Alevis. The second phase of marginalization starts in this period. Before the Shiah belief, Alevis were a community unaware of the Ali and Karbala cult, living with their own religious practices and social rules. With Safavid influence, they were recorded in the Ottoman official documents as Kizilbash and were considered as Safavid supporter close to the Shiah Sect, a branch of Islam. The Alevis supported Shah Ismail as a consequence of the pressures they experienced.

It should be noted that in the Ottoman Empire, the sultans respected the different religious beliefs of the community they ruled, and despite the different taxation methods between Islam and non-Muslims, they did not cause the non-Muslims to change their religion at any time by pressure. No matter what sect they were from, the clergy was serving as a scholar and a public figure. (An exception to this idea may be the Alevi Pirs). The sultans kept their closeness to other sects at the same distance. This was only until a resident religious cult in Erdebil brought forward its religious views and made it a state policy. When we examine the material and historical conditions of Shah Ismail's being seen as hope in Anatolia, the fact that the fight between Shah Ismail and Yavuz Selim is not the Alevi-Sunni issue, the essence of the fight is a political power struggle. The bill of this war was cut to Alevi-Kizilbash people, the decrees given by Yavuz through political pressures are the main reason for the murder of hundreds of thousands of Kizilbash in Anatolia even after the death of Yavuz, massacring them including the children, and the Alevi-Sunni tension still present today.

After these two reasons for the marginalization during the Ottoman period, the Alevi-Sunni conflict must be emphasized. It is absolutely wrong to describe this conflict on Sunni-Sii sectarian differences. Practically and conceptually, when the Anatolian Alevism is purified from Sii Islam, it seems to be a belief in respect for reason and wisdom, man and woman equality, and respect for nature, which is essentially based on humanism. The point of Alevism philosophy is that God would not exist without human beings. The practices that God has commanded are based not on systematic worship but on thinking, producing, and respecting human beings purifying themselves from the evil. However, Alevism has made no emphasis on any race and identity, and it is based on "human". This secular and liberal structure is obviously not compatible with any state system format. For this reason, the Alevis have never been in a

dominant position for centuries till today's Turkey. Alevis, whose “An-al Haq” belief could not be understood, have been degraded into a `faithless` position trying to keep themselves away from the sharia.

Sassanid, Umayyad, Abbasid, Byzantine, Seljuk, Ottoman, Turkey, Iran and Iraq states have systematically exerted pressure on Alevi society, which has occasionally turned into massacres. But why have these states wanted to massacre the Alevis and Alevism? Alevi belief is also a form of social organization. Although the state, kingdom, empire, rule, sultanate, and republic are also seen as models of "social organization" but in fact, they do not accept civil, local, democratic organizations. In the Alevi society organized through the "Unions", the forms of social organization contain systematic details. There is a vibrant and organized social, cultural, economic, and political relationship between the unions; but one union does not interfere with the other; there is no right to intervene. In this case, it is not possible for the Alevi unions, which do not accept the intervention of the friendly, compassionate unions, to allow the intervention of the states.

This study intends to explain Alevism with a historical perspective. From the Ottoman Empire until today, the effects of being an "other" on the Alevi perception are clearly revealed. It should be known that the Alevi problem is an “other” problem, which is a political phenomenon at the same time as its identity problems. Without solving the 'other' problem in the Turkish Republic, unfortunately, Alevis will not be able to exist just as a religious identity. Instead of being part of the official ideological institution, Alevis must become autonomous and emancipated from it. As long as they see themselves as part of the official ideological institution, the basic rights and freedoms demands of the Alevi society will not be met and Alevis will be condemned to be evaluated as a subclass as “the other”.



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