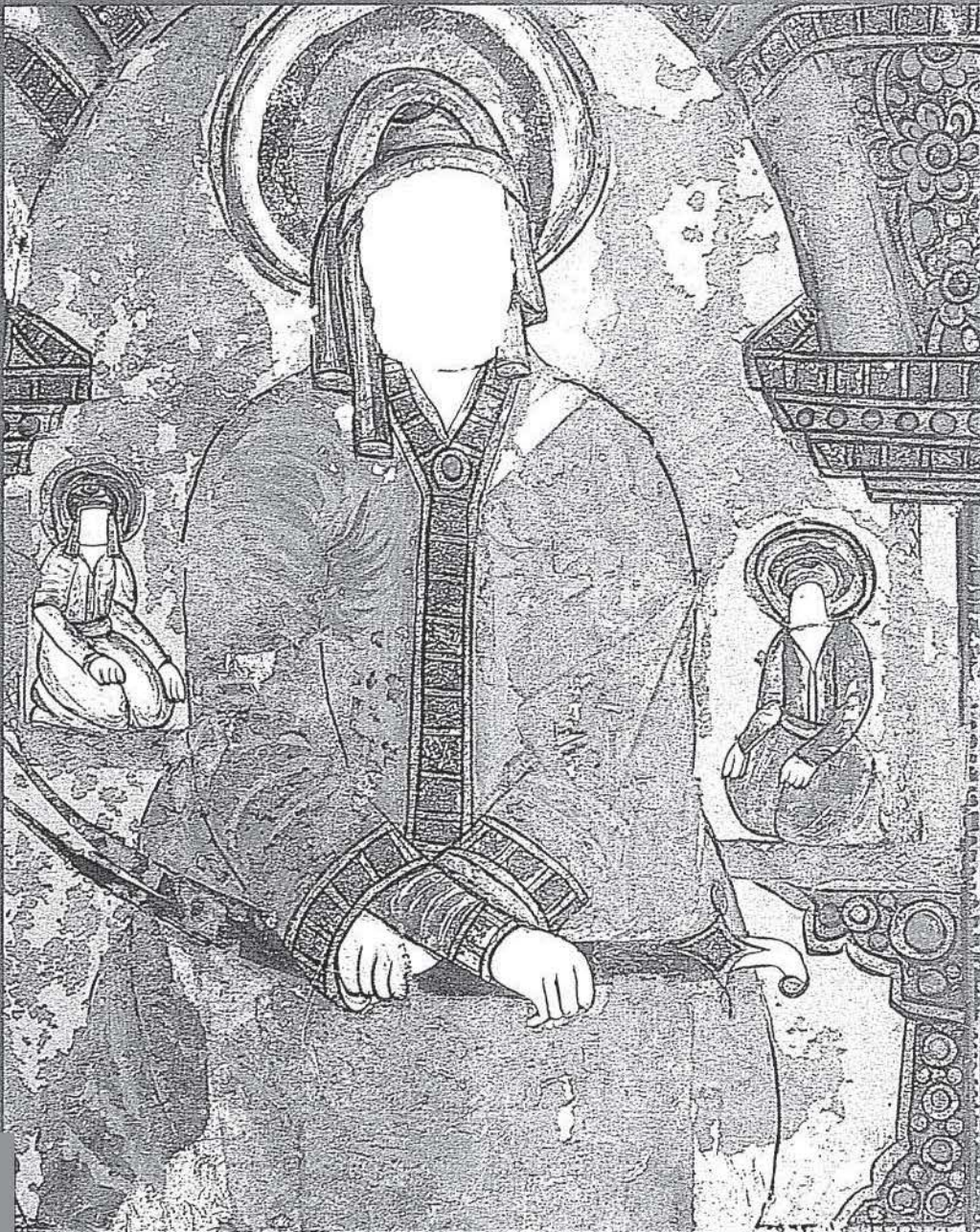


ALEVI IDENTITY



Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga, Catharina Raudvere
SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL 1998



ALEVI IDENTITY

CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

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

Edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and
Catharina Raudvere



SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL
TRANSACTIONS VOL. 8

Academic and Journalistic Publications on the Alevi and Bektashi of Turkey

KARIN VORHOFF

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

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

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

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

Inquiries

Alevi-Bektashi studies were until recently largely the domain of the Ottomanists. They concentrated on the history of the Bektashi order (*tarikât*),⁴ which goes back to the 13th century, and the *Babâî* and *Kızılbaş* (lit. "Redhead") movements. In the 13th and 16th centuries tribal and rural groups of probably mostly Turkish origin had rebelled against Ottoman central authority, first under the spiritual guidance of the *Babâî* - wandering dervishes and heterodox Sufi leaders - and later with the support of the Safavid *şeyhs* and *halifes* who had their center in Ardabil in Northeastern Iran. These groups adhered to a sort of folk Islam that integrated Shiite elements and later developed further towards heterodoxy and syncretism. Concerning the studies on these issues there is no need to repeat what Faroqhi (1995) has reviewed recently. She concludes that thanks to the works of Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1925, 1929, 1966/1919), Abdülhakî Gölpinarlı,⁵ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1983, 1989, 1996), Irène Mélikoff⁶ - and we should not forget her own study (Faroqhi 1981)⁷ - "we possess a reasonable understanding of the overall history of the [Bektashi] order" (Faroqhi 1995: 27). The same applies to research on the political and socio-economic aspects of Ottoman-Safavid relations, which are associated with the "Kızılbaş problem" that shook the Ottoman state from the late 15th through the whole of the 16th century.⁸ There are indications that the rebellious Kızılbaş being followers of the Safavids, entered only after the Safavids' defeat at Çaldıran (1514) into closer relations with the Bektashi order. For the most part they adopted the legendary founder of the Bektashi order, Hacı Bektaş Veli (around 1300), as their patron saint (Faroqhi 1995: pp. 15-16). Certainly, such a spiritual and personal entanglement of Bektashi and Kızılbaş milieus must have led to mutual influence and cultural exchange. One may deplore the scantiness of sources concerning this process and the evolution of Bektashi doctrine and ritual, as well as the Alevi religious system. But it is also true that only a small part of the legends of Bektashi and Alevi holy men (*menakıbname*, *vilayetname*) have been edited in a sufficiently scholarly manner to be studied in a comparative perspective.⁹ After Köprülü, a pupil of Mélikoff, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak (1983, 1996), has done some pioneer work in that field. On Bektashi legends we also have some studies by Hans-Joachim Kissling (1986) who worked especially on the Balkans, and a recent article by van Bruinessen (1991). Even though the abolition of the Bektashi order in 1826 and the suppression of all *tarikât* activity in 1925 may have caused some losses, we can be sure that a bulk of devotional literature still awaits study.¹⁰ In the course of the recent Alevi revival it came to light that the descendants of the traditional religious leaders, the *ocakzade*, dispose of copies of the Alevi doctrinal books (*buyruk*, lit. "order"),¹¹ the Ottoman *icazet*, diploma of author-

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

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

6 See her selected articles Mélikoff 1992, 1995a.

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

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

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

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

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

cem



Yeni Sivas ve Alevi Dergisi - Temmuz 97 - Yıl 7 - Sayı 68 - ISSN 1300-4324

A. Turan Alkan
**Sivas'ta Alevi Sağı'
yeni den dileyebilmek**

Bahit Külelliyle
Sivas yollarında

Barış Partisi
Genel Başkan ile söyleşi

Antalya'da
Kafî Baba Türbesi

Serik'te
Telitacı Türkmenler

Yangın sürüyor !

Sivas unutulmayacak

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The stand of Cem Publications in a book fair.

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

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

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

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

While the historians' work had for a long time left a deplorable lack of knowledge on Alevism and Bektashism as a system of faith and a form of social organization, two comprehensive anthropological studies appeared in the eighties. Studies with a folklorist approach that had been carried out by laymen or students who did not really enter the community¹⁹ were not sufficiently analytic to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social dynamics and theology of Alevi groups. Altan Gökalp (1980) worked among the Çepni, a formerly nomadic Alevi tribal group that had settled in the hinterland of the Aegean coast of Turkey. His study concentrates on social organization, but he also analyzes Alevi cosmology and ritual. Gökalp believes that the inextricable integration of the social and the religious sphere allowed the Çepni to preserve a type of social organization that he considers characteristic of Turkish tribes despite the Ottomans' intention to break tribal autonomy and structures. For one who would prefer to emphasize the situational flexibility of ideological and social systems, the structuralist rigorism that marks Gökalp's study might be somewhat too normative.

The historical bias typical of Alevi studies as well as of the German ethnological tradition characterizes the work of Kehl-Bodrogi (1988a) when she reconstructs the historical outcome of Alevism as she encountered it in her field-research among central Anatolian and Western Alevi groups and in their religious poetry.²⁰ The study is a comprehensive work of reference on the Alevi/*Kızılbaş* as an Anatolian *esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft* ("esoteric community in faith") shortly before the community went public. The author also devoted some articles to the recent developments in Alevism (Kehl-Bodrogi 1989, 1992, 1993). As the process of rediscovery, revitalization and redefinition of Alevism increased in scope, other scholars discovered the topic.²¹ Certainly, analyses of the cultural revival and the identity politics bound up to it are of no lesser importance, but basic research on Alevi faith, ritual, social organization and specific sub-groups²² should not be neglected; in particular as long as a form of Alevism that had not yet completely been eroded by modernity are still alive. Considering the high rate of voluntary or forced migration from the formerly Alevi dominated regions, Alevism can no longer be classified as a purely rural phenomenon. Consequently, research in Alevism in a process of urbanization and urban Bektashism is a compelling task.²³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Alevi dance ceremonies in Hacibektaş.

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

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

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

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

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

1991,²⁷ on the Melami-Bayrami in Istanbul 1987 (forthcoming), and on Alevism and other syncretistic groups in Berlin in April 1995.²⁸ Above all, the relation of the “Anatolian” Alevi and the Arabic-speaking ‘*Alawī/Nuṣairī*’ in Syria²⁹ and the Turkish province of Hatay has to be clarified, since there is still some confusion whether they belong together (they do not by theological and historical origin). When one looks at the directions each of these groups choose in modern times, structural and substantial similarities can be discovered. It would be compelling to venture a wide-ranging comparison of their modernization method and the identity politics in each of their countries.

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

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

Discoveries

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

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

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

29 See contributions in this volume.

30 As e.g. Trix 1995.



Alevi saz players.

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

At the beginning of the eighties, even those who were familiar with Alevi society, such as Kehl-Bodrogi (1988), expected that the community would dissolve in a secularized Turkish society and no longer persist as a segregated confessional community. Then, in late 1989 and early 1990, Alevi who had just begun to form associations joined with secularist Sunni journalists, intellectuals and artists in drawing up an "Alevi manifesto" (*Alevilik Bildirgesi*). A revised version was published in *Cumhuriyet* (May 15th, 1990: p. 15), a newspaper in the Kemalist tradition and in other liberal papers. Both groups felt at that time threatened by the continuous rise and radicalization of political Islam and the fact that Turco-Islamistic circles had gained control of some government departments. For the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic³² the Alevi declared themselves openly not only as a political force, but also as a religious community claiming the right of self-determination and official recognition. The press and publishing houses entered the arena. A series on Alevism appeared in almost all the big Turkish papers and journals, countless new books on the topic were published, and new editing houses were founded. A similar boom could be observed in the music sector, with masses of new cassettes and Compact Disks of ritual and traditional Alevi music placed on the market. A closer

31 For detailed discussion and review cf. Vorhoff 1995.

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

look at the publications indicates that much of the traditional segregations, affiliations and pressure groups still persist. Roughly two groups of authors oppose each other: religious-minded Sunni authors and Alevi, who advocate a self-determined presentation of their community and culture. Between these two stand a few secularists³³ and leftists (Yürükoğlu 1990, Özkırımlı 1990) of Sunni origin. Both groups seem to be interested in the Alevi mainly as political fellows, be it as companions in the strife for Socialism or be it as defenders of a secular state, democracy and progressive ideals.

The religious Sunni authors are mainly theologians and historians holding academic positions, such as Yaşar Nuri Öztürk (1990) from Istanbul University and Ruhi Fırlıklı (1990) from Muğla University, or who work for the state's Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*)³⁴ like Abdülkadir Sezgin (1990). Furthermore, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has edited books on Bektashism.³⁵ Some of the Sunni authors seem to have their background in Sufi orders, especially the orthodox *Nakşibendi* Esad Coşan (n.d.), head of the *İskender Paşa Cemaati*; Abdülkadir Sezgin (1990); Müfid Yüksel³⁶ (1995); Mehmed Kırkıncı (1987) who is the leader of a branch of the *Nurcu* movement. Abdülkadir Duru (1984) founded a "discipline of thought" aiming to overcome the contradiction of materialist and idealistic thinking. Though, he and his disciples reject any relationship to a *tarikât*, his organization very much resembles *tarikât* life. He has a network of followers - mostly recruited from his home-country Erzincan - he has founded education centers and other enterprises, and is still the subject (he died in 1989) of a veneration similar to that of a *şeyh*. Şahin (1995) is an exception from the Sunni mainstream, as he goes to the extremes with his critique of the Bektashi order. He belongs to a marginal group of people who, based in Çorum, drew up the project of drawing the Alevi over to the contemporary type of Iranian Shi'ism. There are also contributions by Sunni, who are interested not so much in theological argument as in nationalistic politics. Their point is that the Alevi are "pure" Turks (*Öz Türk*), and Alevism is a kind of proto-Islamic monotheism.³⁷ Formally considered, the Sunni biased publications fall into two categories: the overwhelming part consists of general works on Alevism and/or Bektashism.³⁸ Besides these we have editions of Bektashi texts.³⁹ However, I must leave the judgment of their scientific character and reliability to the Ottomanists.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

40 One example may be Yıldırım 1996.

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

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

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

But in the eighties a new Alevi elite⁴⁶ arose, which was recruited from the first generation of Alevi having some academic or higher education. Quite a few of them had lost their posts after the 1980 military coup. They had to resign from direct political activism and entered culturalistic politics. Moreover, a first generation of Alevi migrants had become successful businessmen and industrialists, ready to subsidize the revival and remaking of Alevism, feeling perhaps somewhat ashamed that they had in the past hidden or even denied their origin, only to be able to climb up in a society that seemed to be dominated by Sunni. Now, social and political conditions combined with manpower and capital to make a sudden Alevi "coming-out" possible. Whereas Alevism in former times was based on mainly oral traditions, relying principally on personal relations, and social position was defined by descent, age, and gender, now, secularized minds, an urbanizing society, individualistic men and women called for new solutions, though they would prefer the new solutions to appear in the guise of the old ways. Personal relationships and communication had to be replaced by the script and mass-media if a reorganization and consolidation of Alevi society was to be realized. Inherited authority had to give way to attested qualification if one wanted to satisfy the need for reflection of those who were educated in modern institutions. These below the age of forty were often completely ignorant of the doctrines of religion. Therefore, an Alevi literary production could hope to find a profitable market. Furthermore, Alevis may have felt the need to oppose what outsiders, Sunnis or foreign scholars had written about them. Regarding the structural conditions, it is not surprising that the Alevi revival expressed itself very much through the extensive use of modern media. Since 1990 every month a heap of Alevi books and journals appears, and still the production does not seem to fall off.

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

43 Cf. footnote 17.

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

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

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

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



Alevi demonstration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

After the first enthusiasm about Alevism had died down, the idea of reviving the religious practices had to be transformed into concrete action. Bektashi *tekkes* and the graves of Alevi and Bektashi holy men had to be restored, assembly houses where the traditional rites, the *ayin-i cem*, could be held, had to be built and maintained. As rites, benedictions, devotions and other Alevi religious texts such as the *buyruk* had often fallen into oblivion, it was not only the male descendants of the traditional religious leaders, the *ocakzade*, who felt the need to have some literature as a guideline when resuming their traditional religious duties. Also, laymen would like to read up what they could hardly understand, when the prayers were pronounced during the rites in their antiquated Turkish. Therefore doctrinal and devotional books,⁵² the history and legends of holy men and heroes,⁵³ the stories of specific holy places and lineages,⁵⁴ as well as books on ritual⁵⁵ were brought out in a second wave of Alevi publications. The time to write on special aspects of Alevi history and faith⁵⁶ was ripe. Publishing houses such as *Ayyıldız* (Ankara) and *Can* (founded by Ali Adil Atalay in Istanbul) are the most active in that field.

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

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

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

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

54 Birdoğan 1992; Şahhüseynoğlu 1991; Şimşek 1991.

55 Bozkurt 1990b; Erseven 1990; Metin 1992.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

61 One may except Çamuroğlu 1992a, 1993.

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

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

moderate circles that are primarily interested in spreading historical and religious information about Alevism⁶⁴ as well as in backing the secular republic. It does not reject cooperation with the state completely; instead, it claims the Alevi's share of the budget of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. In February 1996 the journal ceased publication for six months to appear again in August 1996, this time with the support of the probably best-funded and most influential of the Alevi foundations, the *Cem Vakfı*.⁶⁵ Considering the new and more professional get-up, higher pretention and greater sales of the journal, the odds seem to be in favour of its becoming the organ for a broader Alevi public. *Nefes* (lit. "breath", i.e. the religious hymns of the Alevi and Bektashi) would appear to have been founded with similar intentions in November 1993. It had better presswork than the "old" *Cem*, had coloured photographs and covered a broader range of subjects. But that did not last for long. Splits among the editing board and authors and financial restrictions led to a loss of quality and the narrowing down to a leftist position. In December 1996 it was finally sold to Muharrem Demir's "publication group" (*Demir Yayın Grubu*). This seems to have quite commercial ambitions, and is actually setting up a rival project to *Cem* under the title *Alev* ("flame"). Whether Demir will also publish *Nefes* is not yet clear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

67 Review cf. Vorhoff 1995: p. 87.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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