

Yuri STOYANOV

School of Oriental
and African Studies
University of London

MANICHAEAN
AND EASTERN CHRISTIAN
DUALIST ELEMENTS
IN ALEVISM AND
BEKTASHISM – EVIDENCE
AND CONJECTURES

The existence of earlier Manichaean and/or later, medieval Eastern Christian dualist layers in Ottoman Alevism (*Alevilik*)/Kızılbaşism (*Kızılbaşlık*) and Bektashism has been variously postulated, argued for, assumed and conjectured in a number of early, more recent, and newly published studies focused largely or in passing on their ritual and belief systems. Admittedly, early publications on Alevism and Bektashism had at their disposal far less primary internal and external evidence than today while, on the other hand, anthropologists, travelers and missionaries had access to these sectarian communities' networks and cultic sites which were subsequently gravely affected during the process of the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire and the early post-Ottoman period. Such early publications could also be variously affected by the nation-building and confessional agendas of the different evolving and crystallizing Balkan national historiographies of the late Ottoman era, as well as by the explicit or implicit missionary *raison d'être* of some of the early Western accounts of and approaches to Alevism and Bektashism.

Contemporary studies of Alevism and Bektashism are in a much better position as far as their access to relevant published primary material is concerned. The growth of the evidence-oriented research in this sphere of scholarly enquiry (especially in the last 30 years or so) has resulted in the publication and studies of principal source material such as the the Alevi doctrinal-catechistic book, the *Buyruk*, the *Maqālat*, (the “sayings” attributed to the eponymous founder of the Bektashi order,

Hacı Bektaş Veli (c. 1300 ?), the *Menakıb-nāmes* and *Vilāyet-nāmes* of Alevi and Bektashi sacred personages and the religious hymns, *nefes*, as well as the results of much valuable oral traditions material assembled during the field-work of anthropologists and folklorists. Still, in a number of such recent popular and some scholarly publications on Alevism and Bektashism all this lately assembled and growing primary evidence (available in several languages) is duly ignored or used selectively. Instead of drawing on this invaluable material, such publications have tended to reiterate and/or paraphrase some of the interpretative schemas and generalizing theories of studies of and perspectives on Alevism and Bektashism dating from the earlier (or even earliest stages of) research on this problematic. Some of these inherited historiographic constructs and perspectives are concerned with the otherwise important problem of the interchange between Christian and Islamic heterodoxies (as well as popular beliefs and practices) and thus directly or indirectly also with the posited existence of Manichaean and Eastern Christian dualist elements in Alevism and Bektashism.

The continuing attraction, re-use and reformulation of these rather fixed explanatory frameworks and assumptions regarding the provenance and evolution of pre/non-Islamic layers in Alevism and Bektashism undoubtedly result from the perceived relation of this particular problematic with certain larger areas of the historical study of the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods with intermittently actualized religio-political importance. Such areas include the relationship between Christianity and Islam and the dynamics of the processes of Islamicisation in the Balkans and Anatolia during these periods as well as the origins and nature of the non-Turkish Islamic communities in these regions. The proposed evidence and theories regarding Manichaean and Eastern Christian dualist strata in Alevism and Bektashism need to be treated, therefore, in the larger framework of the main trends of research as well as inherited and newly advanced historiographic models in these wider areas of study, as they have also variously determined and shaped both scholarly and general approaches to the Alevi/Bektashi problematic.

One of the most popular and continuously instrumentalized of already mentioned nineteenth-century historiographic models postulates mass conversions of Christian sectarian communities in the Balkans and Anatolia to Islam during the early Ottoman period. This model was applied in the nineteenth century to the versions of medieval Christian dualism in Eastern Christendom, Bogomilism and Paulicianism (and re-

lated currents, communities and individual heresiarchs)¹ and subsequently re-used and remains in currency in various modern confessional and religious-political contexts. The model was based on the theory that Christian dualist heretical communities in Anatolia and the Balkans converted swiftly and in large numbers to Islam as a reaction against the persecution which they had suffered at the hands of secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the Eastern Orthodox world during the medieval the pre-Ottoman era. It was first most forcefully applied to early Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina which in the period preceding its conquest by the Ottoman armies in the second half of the fifteenth century was the scene of a severe religio-political collision between the adherents of the Bosnian Church (schismatic both from Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and generally known as ‘Patareni’ and ‘Krstjani’) and Catholicism. The Catholic suppression of the Bosnian Church (the much debated nature of its relationship with the Christian dualist movement in the Western Balkans remains outside the scope of this article), which reportedly included forcible conversions of its adherents or their banishment from Bosnia, led according to this line of reasoning to the collaboration of the Bosnian Patarenes with the Ottoman invaders and their large-scale acceptance of Islam.²

By the time of the last references to active dualist heretics in the Bosnian lands in the latter half of the fifteenth century Bosnia had been repeatedly described by Catholic heresiologists, travelers and observers as a land inhabited by ‘Manichaeans’. From the medieval period onwards the “Manichaean” paradigm continued to be applied to the medieval Bosnian Church in subsequent general and polemical contexts in Europe and inevitably exercised a major impact on early historiographic approaches to pre-Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina.³ The late medieval

¹ On the rise, historical development and teachings of the Christian dualist movements and trends in the medieval Eastern Orthodox world, see the anthology of translated primary sources in J. Hamilton and B. Hamilton, eds., Y. Stoyanov, assist. ed., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c.650-c.1450* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

² See note 4 below.

³ On the provenance and evolution of the “Manichaean” paradigm of the Bosnian Church, see Y. Stoyanov, ‘Between Heresiology and Political Theology: the Rise of the Paradigm of the Heretical Bosnian Church and the Paradoxes of its Medieval and Modern Developments’, In: *Political Theologies of the Monotheistic Religions. Representation of the Divine and Dynamics of Power*, ed. G. Filoramo, La Morcelliana, Brescia, 2005, pp. 161-180.

stereotype of heretical and “Manichaean” Bosnia eventually re-emerged as a focus of confessional debate when medieval dualist heresy came to be implicated in the evolving Catholic-Protestant controversies and debates over the nature and genealogy of medieval heretical, dissenting and reformist groups. These Catholic-Protestant controversies over the nature of medieval heresy continued and were subjected to various re-interpretations in novel religio-political contexts during the nineteenth century which in Eastern Europe included the newly formulated Slavophile, Slavophile-influenced and nationalist historiographic approaches to and versions of medieval and modern political and confessional history. It was in such a political, intellectual and religious climate that the Bogomil/Manichaean thesis of the reasons for Ottoman Bosnia’s widespread Islamicisation evolved. It postulated the rapid and full-scale conversion of the hierarchy and adherents of the “Manichaean” Bosnian Church to Islam and came to be used in a variety of contemporaneous popular, nationalist and scholarly texts on Bosnia-Herzegovina, betraying contrasting and often conflicting agendas.⁴

To make this conjectured process of transition from Christian dualism in Islam in Bosnian-Herzegovina even more sweeping, it was also applied to all other Balkan and Anatolian areas where Christian dualist communities were known to have existed in the medieval period.⁵ The predictable next step was to characterize all, or at least a substantial part, of the Slavonic-speaking Muslim communities in the Balkans descendants of the medieval Christian dualists envisaged to have

⁴ For characteristic and emphatic nineteenth-century expressions of this line of argument, see, for example, A. Evans, *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection, August and September 1875: with an Historical Review of Bosnia, and a Glimpse at the Croats, Slavonians, and the Ancient Republic of Ragusa*, (London: Longmans, Green 1876), p. lv; J. von Asboth, *Bosnien und die Herzegovina. Reisebilder und Studien* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1888), pp. 86-87; H. C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1888), vol. 2, pp. 307-313; J. J. I. von Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, (Munich: Nördlingen, 1890; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 126-127, 242-250.

⁵ For typical early articulations of this viewpoint, see, for example, K. Irechek, *Istoriia na bŭlgarite*, tr. by N. A. Rainov i Z. Boiadzhiev (Tŭrnovo, 1886: Pechtanitsa na K. Tuleshkov, 1886); 2nd ed., ed. by V. N. Zlatarski, tr. by A. Diamandiev and I. Raev (Sofia: S. Slavchev, 1929), pp. 271, 289; A. Teodorov-Balan, ‘Bŭlgarskite katolitsi v Svishtovsko i tiahnata cherkovna borba’, *Letopis na bŭlgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo*, 2, 1902, pp. 101-211, esp. pp. 123ff.

embraced Islam in the early Ottoman period.⁶ Subsequent evidence-based and –oriented research has progressively demonstrated the untenability and ideological foundations and biases of this “Christian dualism to Islam” model, highlighting a variety of other religious, political and economic factors which determined the differing courses of the Islamization process in the various Balkan and Anatolian regions. But it has also shown remarkable vitality in being repeatedly resurrected, whether in its sweeping or less extreme forms, both in general and scholarly discourses, especially in periods of increasing external and internal focus on and preoccupations with past and present Balkan and Anatolian religious and political history.

At this early stage of research on the fortunes of Christian heterodoxy in the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods the hypothetical mass Islamization of Eastern Christian heretical communities was thought of as the principal venue for the entry of Manichean/Eastern Christian dualist traditions into Ottoman Islam. However, no direct or circumstantial evidence was sought or offered to prove such an influx and spread of non-Islamic heretical traditions. The subsequent gradually increasing awareness that early Ottoman Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia was not homogeneous, normative Sunnism but a rather heterogeneous phenomenon, with its array of syncretistic, antinomian and Shia-related and –influenced trends, was accompanied by a growing interest and research into Alevism and Bektashism and their doctrinal and historical genealogies. Some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century missionaries’ and travelers’ reports of their encounters with Alevism/*Kızılbaşism* and Bektashism have drawn attention to the negative Sunni attitudes to the perceived “heresy” and antinomianism of these sectarian communities as well as what appeared to them Christian-related notions in their beliefs and cult observances.⁷ Highlighting what they recognize as Christian layers in Alevi and Bektashi teachings and practices, the

⁶ See, for example, Irechek, *Istoriia na bŭlgarite*, pp. 271, 289; more recently, Starvo Skendi, ‘Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans’, in *Balkan Cultural Studies*, ed. Stavro Skendi, pp. 233-257. Boulder, Colo.; New York: East European Monographs distributed by Columbia University Press, 1980 (first published in *Slavic Review* 26 (1967): 227-46), p. 240.

⁷ For a select bibliography of such early missionaries’ and travelers’ reports, see Y. Stoyanov, ‘On Some Parallels Between Anatolian and Balkan Islamic Heterodox Traditions and the Problem of their Co-Existence and Interchange with Popular Christianity’, in *Sycrétismes et hérésies dans l’Orient seljoukide et ottoman des XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, Paris, 2004, ed. G. Veinstein, Paris, 2005, pp. 75-119, at pp. 94-95, n. 44.

missionary account is particular in effect attempt to disassociate these communities from Islam in general and thus legitimize their proselytizing agenda among them.⁸ Scholarly, ideological and general interest in such presumed or reconstructed Christian layers in Alevism and Bektashism was understandably high in the post-Ottoman Christian majority states, underpinning what could be defined as the indigenization approach to and instrumentalization of this problematic, a trend of research and analysis that was and remains periodically rather prominent in South-Eastern Europe. The indigenization approach attempted to anchor Alevi and Bektashi identities in the local Christian (and generally non-Muslim folk) environment, deliberately ignoring or downplaying their historical affiliations with their co-religionists in Asia Minor and other Islamic religious minorities in the Near East.⁹ Arguments in conjunction with suspect or fabricated evidence that Alevi and Bektashi communities actually were descendants of Christian groups (orthodox or heterodox), forcibly Islamicized in the Ottoman period, understandably represented a highly charged topic in the historiographic, religious and general discourses in the Christian-majority post-Ottoman states.

In some of the early applications of the indigenization approach the initially separate arguments regarding respectively the posited Christian origins of and/or elements in Alevism and Bektashism and the conjectured en masse conversion of Christian dualist groups to Islam in the early Ottoman era began to merge into a new theoretical construct, hypothesizing a Christian dualist pedigree for the Alevi and Bektashi communities as a whole. Since the formulation of this hypothesis the expanding scholarly evidence-based research has accumulated valuable material and observations for and against its premises, increasing in the process substantially our knowledge of Christian-Islamic co-existence and interchange in the Ottoman period. Scholarly study, however (espe-

⁸ For recent scrutinies of the Protestant missionary approaches to and interactions with the *Kızılbaş*, see A. Karakaya-Stump, 'The Emergence of the Kızılbaş in Western Thought: Missionary Accounts and their Aftermath', in D. Shankland, ed., *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: the Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920* (Istanbul: Isis, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 328-353; Hans-Lukas Kieser, 'Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia. The Interactions between Alevis and Missionaries', *Die Welt des Islams*, n. s., 41:1 (2001), pp. 89-111.

⁹ See Y. Stoyanov, "Contested Post-Ottoman Alevi and Bektashi Identities in the Balkans and their Shi'ite Component", in Lloyd Ridgeon (ed.), *Shi'i Islam and Identity: Religion, Politics and Change in the Global Muslim Community*, London: Tauris, 2012, pp. 171-219, at pp. 183-185

cially in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey), has coexisted and occasionally overlapped with top-down political and religio-political projects executed by ideologues with little or non-existent grasp of the relevant problematic, intended to mould public opinion and “official” historiographies in accordance with the ideological directives of the respective political and religious establishments.

The advance in research and publications of primary and secondary sources on Alevi and Bektashi history and religious traditions as well as on the Ottoman period in the Balkans and Anatolia in general allow for a critical reappraisal of some of the early and still periodically reiterated argument for the hypothesized (and occurring nearly immediately after the Ottoman conquest) mass conversion of the Christian dualist communities to Islam. As already observed, the theory that Christian dualist sectarians converted to Islam as a reaction against their past and recent suppression by the established church has not been supported by the publication and analysis of the various sources for the religious and cross-confessional dynamics of the early, mid- or later Ottoman era. Recent research on Paulicianism in the Balkans in the early Ottoman era, for example, has completely disproved the earlier theories that the Paulicians went over rapidly and en masse to Islam in the wake of the Ottoman conquest - during the first two centuries of Ottoman domination in the Balkans their communities actually stabilized and even may have grown before they became a target of Catholic proselytism from the last decades of the seventeenth century onwards.¹⁰ But the Paulician communities which embraced Catholicism found themselves drawn in the continuous and intense Habsburg-Ottoman conflicts which unfolded in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, compelling some of these communities to flee from Ottoman territories. Amid these severe political and religious tensions and pressure faced by the Paulician communities which stayed in the Ottoman empire, some of them chose to embrace Orthodoxy or Islam, while others of the new Paulician Catholic converts went over to Orthodoxy, practiced dissimulation, or lapsed openly back to

¹⁰ See now the summary of the evidence of the history of the Balkan Paulician communities during the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries and its up-to-date analysis in M. Iovkov, *Pavlikiani i pavlikianski selishta v bŭlgarskite zemi XV-XVIII v.* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Okhridski” 1991). Some of the important documents related to the Catholic missions to the Paulician communities in the Balkans have been published in B. Primov *et al.* (eds.), *Dokumenti za katolicheskata deinost v Bŭlgariia prez XVII vek* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Okhridski”, 1993).

Paulicianism.¹¹ Late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was not the only period that Paulician communities found themselves in political and religious conflict with an Islamic power – when in the ninth century Byzantine campaigns had forced Paulician groups to flee to areas under and bordering Arab Islamic powers in eastern Anatolia, these groups formed strategic alliances with these powers but also could be engaged in rivalry and confrontation with them. All these developments traceable through and demonstrated in the primary sources highlight the complicated nature of the religious and political processes in which Paulician communities found themselves involved vis-à-vis Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam from the early seventeenth century onwards and again, expose the obsolete and one-dimensional nature of the schema of swift and thorough absorption of Balkan Christian dualism into Ottoman Islam.

Another type of argument has also been advanced, attempting to theorize that such transition from Christian dualism and Islam was made possible and effected by the supposed rapport and correspondences between their religiosity and ethics. Such presumed “points of resemblance” between these two religious traditions were exemplified by the repudiation of the veneration of the cross, icons, clerical hierarchy and liturgical ceremonies and the sacraments of baptism and marriage.¹² So far, however, no actual direct or circumstantial evidence has been offered to substantiate such claims which thus remain theoretical presuppositions which can begin to be considered only if and when such evidence is offered. Other arguments that Puritanism, the “simple fatalism” and “simplicity” of Islam¹³ had especial appeal to late medieval Christian dualists are even less convincing and hardly merit serious consideration. Of these suggested points of resemblance it is perhaps the parallels between Christian dualist and Islamic iconoclasm that would need a proper exploration in late Byzantine and Ottoman contexts but this needs to be preceded by a comparative survey of these attitudes and any records of their interaction in the above period which has not been attempted as yet.

As far as the attempts to pose parallels between Christian dualist and Islamic attitudes to normative Christian sacramentalism are concerned, these should take into close consideration the immediate histori-

¹¹ On these complicated religious processes, see now the survey of the evidence in Iovkov, *Pavlikiani i pavlikianski selishta*, pp. 66-102.

¹² See, for example, Asboth, *Bosnien und die Herzegowina*, p. 87.

¹³ See S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee. A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946, p. 114; the “Muslim simplicity” argument has been reiterated more recently by Skendi, ‘Crypto-Christianity’, p. 240.

cal and religious contexts of the relevant periods and areas under discussion, otherwise they appear ahistorical and exceedingly sweeping. Claims, for example, that the Paulicians' negative stance on the established Armenian and Byzantine Churches' sacraments led to an accord between their communities in eastern Anatolia and the various Turkoman groups who entered and began to settle in the region in the Seljuk period,¹⁴ need to situate this conjectured accord in concrete historical and religious environments and offer some evidence from the period during which this process was supposed to have taken place. Furthermore, generalizations about early and evolving Paulician non-/anti-sacramentalism may have to be revised in view of the continuing debate over the nature and theology of original Armenian and later Byzantine and Balkan Paulicianism (which has implications regarding their earlier and later ritual practices) and the indications that Bogomil sacramentalism may have influenced Paulician communities in the Balkans.¹⁵ In any case, arguments for non-/anti-sacramentalism as an alleged factor facilitating Christian dualist-Islamic affinity is definitely inapplicable to the other version of medieval Eastern Christian dualism in the Balkans and Anatolia: Bogomilism. Bogomilism developed what can be described as a sacramental system, parallel and opposed to that of normative medieval Christianity, in which the rite of spiritual baptism, *teleiosis*, was of central salvationist and eschatological importance, making it effectively a telling example of Christian dualist sacramentalism.¹⁶ Attempts, therefore, to describe Islamic non-sacramentalism as a feature which propelled late medieval Christian dualist sectarians to endorse and embrace Islam, rest on outdated and superficial knowledge and understanding of the history and theology of medieval eastern Christian dualism.

The above schemas of purported religious affinity between late medieval Eastern Christian dualism and Islam (leading to the assimila-

¹⁴ See J. R. Barnes, 'The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire', in R. Lifchez (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 34-35

¹⁵ See the discussion of the very plausible association of Balkan Paulicianism with the radical Balkan dualist church of Drugunthia and the importance of the rite of baptism in Spirit for both moderate and radical medieval dualist communities in Y. Stoyanov, *The Other God. Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy*, London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 197-201.

¹⁶ On the sacramental character of the Bogomil/Cathar version of Christian dualism, see J. van den Broek, 'The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics', in J. van den Broek *Studies in Alexandrian Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, pp. 157-78; Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 170, 197-200, 274.

tion of the Eastern Christian dualist communities into Ottoman Islam) as a rule completely ignore or avoid any even general discussion of the vital doctrinal spheres on which any such comparison-based argumentation should have been based. And it is in virtually all significant spheres of doctrine – cosmology, theology, anthropology, soteriology and eschatology (which in the case of Christian dualism were created and elaborated by a doctrinally-conscious religious elite and literati) – that Christian dualism and Islam (especially normative Sunni Islam) display a series of evident and emphatic incompatibilities and ultimately irreconcilable differences. These incompatibilities and conflicting doctrinal positions underlie Islamic polemics against Manichaeism, the most systematic and influential system of religious dualism which Islam encountered in the Near East.¹⁷ Proposing an assimilation into Islam initiated by the Christian dualist elite, based on a conjectured religious affinity between Christian dualism and Islam, while ignoring all the crucial doctrinal evidence which belies this supposed affinity, is patently the wrong starting point and premise for a religious history investigation or theory.

Undergoing conversion from one religious tradition to another as a consequence of perceived religious affinities between the two traditions should not be confused, moreover, with a cross-confessional rapprochement for religio-political or socio-political reasons – as in the case of the Anatolian Paulician communities who, faced with Byzantine military and political pressure in the eight century, entered strategic alliances with the Arab Islamic powers in eastern Asia Minor. As in normative Christianity, cases in which individual or communal heterodox Christian conversion to Islam could occur for socio-economic and political reasons as well as instances of the simulated adoption of Islam (after which the new pseudo-Muslim continues to practice his true confession in secrecy) fall into an altogether different category of inter-confessional dynamics. Further investigation and publication of the records of the processes of Islamization in the Ottoman empire have already and will doubtless continue to throw much new light on such conversion patterns among orthodox and heterodox Christians. The study of the patterns and types of Christian conversion to Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia dur-

¹⁷ For an up-to-date survey of Islamic testimonia about Manichaeism's history and teachings in the Islamic world, see now J. C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamic Manichaeism*, Sheffield: Equinox, 2011. On the place of Manichaeism (real and perceived) in Islamic heresiography, see, for example, C. F. Ernst, *The Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, pp. 117-132.

ing and after the Ottoman conquests, however, has been for more than a century in South East Europe and to some extent Turkey, a field heavily contested by rival nationalist and confessional agendas and still rife with controversies and semi-taboo areas after all the decades of the respective regimes' manipulation and control of research and publications. It will need further de-ideologization, a process which been advancing slowly but steadily in post-Communist South-East Europe but still needs some way to go before the field can throw off this legacy and be able to integrate the theoretical and practical insights of some recent valuable comparative studies of post-Islamic conquest Islamization patterns in Asia and Africa.

This brief survey of the state of research (with a focus on some of the anachronistic but still intermittently and widely enough applied schemas of ethno-religious and socio-political provenance) and knowledge of the fortunes of Christian dualism in the Ottoman era and its variously assessed links with the process of Islamization will provide the essential historiographic background to the following analysis of early and more recent approaches to Alevi/Bektashi interrelations with normative and heterodox Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia. The various patterns and manifestations of Christian-Islamic interchange and syncretism attracted the attention of many of the early observers and explorers of the religious life of the late Ottoman empire.¹⁸ The question of whether such movement towards religious interchange and syncretism developed also in the spheres of Christian and Islamic heterodoxy and heresy was also introduced in some of the early studies on Alevism and Bektashism, variously betraying the impact of the contemporaneous influential schemas and conjectures regarding the history of Christian dualist communities in the Ottoman period. Characteristically, approaches to this question could blend elements of the already mentioned indigenization thesis (seeking to derive Alevi and Bektashi beliefs and ritual practices from local Christian and pre-Christian traditions) with

¹⁸ The collection and examination of valuable material related to the interaction and syncretism of popular Islamic and Christian beliefs and cultic observances in the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia in F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), has been followed by a series of studies and publications of further primary source material demonstrating more cases of such syncretism and interchange or re-examining Hasluck's material and interpretations such as D. Shankland, ed., *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: the Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*, 2 vols., (Istanbul: Isis, 2004).

arguments for their continuity with pre-Ottoman Christian heretical and heterodox communities (forcibly or voluntarily converted to Islam).¹⁹

While such approaches were clearly related to contemporaneous ethno-religious attitudes to and lines of interpretation of national and religious history, the growing research and data on Alevi/Bektashi problematic provided some interesting indications that some regions in the Balkans and Anatolia where medieval Christian heterodox and heretical communities were known to have resided in or been active, happened to be also hotbeds of Islamic heterodoxy during the Seljuk (in Asia Minor) and Ottoman eras, often assuming a religio-political character challenging the Seljuk and Ottoman rule and order. Both earlier and more recent studies of the religious currents and conflicts within Islam in Anatolia and the Balkans during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods came to point to a possible historical continuity between the prevalence of medieval Christian and later Islamic heterodoxies in more or less the same or nearby regions. It has to be said that in a number of other Balkan and Anatolian areas the presence of medieval Christian heresy has not been superceded by any analogous anti-conformist Muslim heterodox religious development but such could evolve in other regions where similar Christian precedents have not been attested. Furthermore, in the geography of Alevism and Bektashism issues such as the centre-periphery dichotomy in the sphere of religious control and authority (and definition of orthodoxy and heresy) as well as the patterns of socio-economic migration and settlement arrangements of the various *Kızılbaş* and *Baba'î* tribal groups (often a result of their religiously-instigated rebellions and inter-tribal relations) need to be considered first before forging schemas of Christian-Islamic heterodox continuity over the span of several centuries.

The suggestion that Kizlibash groups may have reached a religio-political rapprochement with Anatolian or Balkan Christian heretical groups on the basis of their shared non-conformist and anti-establishment ethos²⁰ remains a theoretical construct which would merit consideration only once it is supported by some concrete evidence. As

¹⁹ See, for example, D. Marinov, "Narodna viara i religiozni narodni obichai", *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniia, nauka i knizhnina*, 28 (1914), pp. 423f. V. Marinov, *Delior-man (Iuzhna chast). Oblastno-geografsko izuchavane*, (Sofia: Self-published, 1941), pp. 54f., 79-80.

²⁰ See, for example, MÉLIKOFF, "Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi", 59-60.

the matters stand, even the most obvious first step of exploring whether the Balkan Paulician communities which are recorded to have undergone full-scale or partial Islamization may have had any contacts with Kizilbash groups has not been taken as yet.

Still, this is clearly a potentially rewarding venue of research worth pursuing, particularly regarding, for example, the territories of earlier medieval substantial Paulician settlements and activities in Cilicia and Cappadocia in central and eastern Asia Minor (more concentrated specifically in the Erzincan-Divriği-Sivas district) which became the centers of the Baba'î and *Kızılbaş* groups' activities and agitation during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods.²¹ Similarly areas in Thrace and Macedonia in the Balkans which also had been repeatedly acknowledged in the medieval period as focuses of Christian heresy and heterodoxy in the Ottoman era characteristically display dense Bektashi network of settlements and cultic sites as well as active presence of Islamic heterodox groups. Localities in and around Philippopolis/Plovdiv in Thrace which were known for their sizeable Paulician communities in the medieval through the Ottoman eras, for example, became later also major focal points in the establishment and spread of Hurufism and its secretive

²¹ See, for example, F. Cumont, 'Kizil Bash', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, with the assist. of J. A. Selbie *et al*, vol. 7 (Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark ; New York : C. Scribner's Sons 1914), pp. 744-45 at p. 745; F. Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion*, tr. ed. and intr. by G. Leiser (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1993), pp. 60n12, 72n46; M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: the ghulat sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 435ff.; I. Mélikoff, "Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi", in A. Gallotta and U. Marazzi (eds.), *Studia Turcologica—Memoriae Alexii Bombaci dicata*, Naples, 1982, 379–395; repr. in *idem, Sur le traces du soufisme turc. Recherches sur l'Islam populaire ena Anatolie*, Istanbul: Isis, 1992, pp. 41-61, at pp. 59-60; *idem*, 'Bektashi/Kızılbaş: Historical Bipartition and its Consequences', in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga and C. Raudvere, eds., *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), pp. 1-6, at p. 6; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars: genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 36-37, 163-64; *idem*, "Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis et les interférences avec d'autres mouvements gnostiques", in Veinstein, *Sycrétismes et heresies*, pp. 65-75, at pp. 69-71; A. Y. Ocak, 'Un aperçu général sur l'hétérodoxie musulmane en Turquie: réflexions sur les origines et les caractéristiques du Kizilbachisme (Alévisme) dans la perspective de l'histoire', in K. Kehl- Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean, eds., *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 198ff.

network in the Balkans in the sixteenth century.²² Similarly, the further study of any extant evidence that may potentially link the enduring presence of Christian heterodoxies and dualist heresy in the pre-Ottoman western Balkans and the Hamzevite movement and agitation of the Mālamī Shaykh Hamza of early Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina deserves attention and may bring some worthwhile results.²³ Still more potentially instructive data may emerge from further research on the various records of the rise, spread and rebellious activities of the early Ottoman-era trans-confessional and universalistic religio-political movement of Shaykh Badr al-Dīn (d. 1417/1420) and its geography,²⁴ especially in the already mentioned Balkan areas of Christian heterodox presence and intermittent anti-clerical agitation.

Future research in these spheres certainly could enrich and transform our knowledge of the religious life and transmutations of the late Byzantine/Byzantine Commonwealth and early Ottoman periods in the Balkans and Anatolia but it is still severely hampered by the very insuf-

²² On the concentration of Hurufism in Thrace and the Philipopolis area, see Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 175, 237.

²³ On Shaykh Hamza, his movement and role in the history of *Malāmatiyya*, see T. OKIĆ, “Quelques documents inédits concernant les Hamzawites”, in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of Orientalists held in Istanbul September 15 to 27th 1951*, vol. 2, Istanbul 1957, pp. 279-286; Colin IMBER, “Malāmatiyya”, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 6, Leiden: Brill, 1991, pp. 227-28; H. T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World*, London: Hurst, 1993, pp. 116-19; D. Čehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama sa posevnim osvrtom na Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo: Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu, 1986, pp. 185-208; H. ALGAR, “The Hamzeviyye: A deviant movement in Bosnian Sufism”, *Islamic Studies*, 36:2 (Islambad 1997), pp. 243-261; Slobodan ILIĆ, “Hamzeviiskaia i hurufitskaia eres v Bosni kak reaktsiia na politicheskii krizis Ottomanskoi imperii vo vtoroi polovine XVI stoletiiia”, *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 28:1-2 (2000), pp. 34-40.

²⁴ Earlier studies of Shaykh Badr al-Din and his movement include Franz Babinger, “Schejch Bedr ed-Din, der Sohn des Richters von Simaw”, *Der Islam*, 11 (1921) pp. 1-106, and Nedim Filipović, *Princ Musa i šejh Bedreddin*, Sarajevo: “Svjetlost”, 1971; more recent studies include M. Balivet, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: Vie du cheikh Bedreddin, le "Hallâj des Turcs", 1358/59-1416* (Istanbul: Isis, 1995); Dimitris Kastritsis, “The Revolt of Şeykh Bedreddin in the Context of the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413”, in *Halcyon Days in Crete VII*, Rethymno: Crete University Press, PP. 221-238 (forthcoming). For arguments that heterodox Christian apocalypticism played a major role in the religio-political agitation in the Ottoman empire in the early sixteenth century, see K. Zhukov, “K istorii religioznykh dvizhenii v vostochnom sredizemnomor’e v XIV-XV vv.: novaiia interpretatsiia vosstaniia Berkliudzhe Mustafy v Turtsii (okolo 1415 g.)”, *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik*, 98 (35) (1998), pp. 84-98.

ficient work on the various extant and not insubstantial number of manuscripts belonging to or relevant to Hurufism and the movements of Shaykh Hamza and Shaykh Badr al-Dîn. Of these manuscripts some have been studied and published (or are approaching publications stage) but a great number of them remain little-studied or virtually unexplored. Before the necessary textological and historical-critical work on these manuscripts has been carried out it would be very premature to leap to wide-ranging conclusions, as has been the case with statements in some scholarly studies, declaring that in Ottoman Thrace Bektashism was a successor to pre-Ottoman Christian heresies in the region,²⁵ that Bektashism implanted itself and became well-rooted in Balkan areas where crypto-Christianity used to thrive²⁶ or even that the religio-political ideology of Shaykh Badr al-Dîn's movement represented a blend of Bogomilism and Muslim mysticism.²⁷ Such general statements should not precede but follow and result from systematic work on the diverse types of relevant evidence (internal and external manuscript sources, inscriptions, funerary stele, reliable oral histories, etc.), otherwise, given their sweeping nature, they could be rather injudicious and misleading on the theoretical and practical level.

When finally de-ideologized, the promising but frequently biased and doctrinaire study of crypto-Christianity in the Ottoman-era Balkans and Anatolia²⁸ can also be of considerable importance for the exploration of the interaction of Alevism/Bektashism with normative, popular and heterodox Christianity. Generally, the steadily advancing research on the patterns of interchange and overlap in the spheres of cult and belief between the various local versions of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, Caucasus, the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Anatolia from the medieval to the modern periods has provided significant material and valuable observations with a number of direct implications for

²⁵ Eustratios Zenkines, *Ho bektasismos ste D. Thrake: symvole sten historia tes diadoseos tou Mousoulmanismou ston Helladiko choro*, Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1988, p. 249.

²⁶ Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity", pp. 249-50.

²⁷ P. Konstantinov, *Istoriia na Bŭlgariia*, Sofia: Feniks, 1993, p. 42.

²⁸ On the phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia, cf., for example, Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 469-74; R. M. Dawkins, "The Crypto-Christians of Turkey", *Byzantion*, 8 (1933), pp. 247-75; Skendi, 'Crypto-Christianity'; S. Dimitrov, "Skritoto khristiiianstvo i isliamizatsionnite protsesi v osmanskata dŭrzhava", *Istoriicheski pregled*, 2 (1987), pp. 18-34; K. Photiades, *Peges tes historias tou kryptochristianikou provlematos* (Ekd. Oikos, 1997).

the study of Alevism and Bektashism. This is especially the case in the widely attested phenomena of shared sanctuaries, saints and saintly figures, feasts and various superstitious observances in popular Christianity and Islam in these areas, with such cross-religious borrowing and exchange being predictably and typically much more active and extensive at the popular rather than at the elite religious levels (although interchange at the latter level also took place on various occasions).

The study of Christian-Islam interaction and types of syncretism and symbiosis in the Ottoman period has been greatly enhanced by the expanding research on the role of dervish orders (including the Bektashi order) in the process of Ottoman colonization in newly conquered territories during which they came to use or took control of Christian churches, saints' tombs and sites of veneration.²⁹ Whether actual convergence with Christianity was sought or not, one of the consequences of this course of action, among other things, was the emergence of dual/mixed veneration cultic sites in the Balkans at some of which such sharing arrangements and observances still continue.³⁰ The miscellaneous evidence gathered and analyzed in previous and ongoing research on

²⁹ See Ömer L. Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğundaki bir iskân ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak vakıflar ve temillikler. I: İstilâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve zaviyeleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, II (Ankara, 1942), pp. 279-386; Irène Mélikoff, "Un ordre de derviches colonisateurs: les Bektâşîs", repr. in *idem*, *Sur le traces du soufisme turc*, pp. 115-26; G. G. Arnakis, "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire. Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12:4 (1953), pp. 243-44; Zenkines, *Ho bektasismos ste D. Thrake*, pp. 77-129; John D. Norton, 'The Bektashis in the Balkans', in Celia Hawkesworth, Muriel Heppell and Harry T. Norris (eds.), *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001, pp. 168-200, at pp. 185-188.

³⁰ See, for example, S. Dimitrov, 'Küm istoriia na dobrudzhanskite dvoobredni svetilishta', *Dobrudzha*, 11 (1994), pp. 76-94; E. I. Germanova, 'Süborüt pri Demir Baba teke – proiava na religiozen i kulturen sinkretizüm', *Godishnik na muzeite ot Severna Bülğariia*, 20 (1994), pp. 297-313; P. Magnarella, 'St Nicholas in Christian and Muslim Lands', repr. in *Anatolia's Loom. Studies in Turkish Culture, Sociology, Politics and Law*, Istanbul, 1998, pp. 193-201; Ger Duijzings, "Christian Shrines and Muslim Pilgrims: Joint Pilgrimages and Ambiguous Sanctuaries", Chapter 3 in *idem*, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2000. pp. 65-85; D. Radionova, "Kum vuprosa za genezisa na dvoobrednite svetilishta v severoiztochna Bülğariia prez XIV-XIX vek", *Nauchni Suobshteniia na SUB, klon Dobrich, Istoriia*, 3 (2001), pp. 160-171; E. Koneska and R. Jankulski, *Zaednichki svetilishta/Shared Shrines*, Skopje: Macedonia Center for Photography, 2009; Glen Bowman, "Orthodox-Muslim Interactions at 'Mixed Shrines' in Macedonia" in Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz (eds.), *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010, pp. 195-219.

these phenomena has been of direct relevance to some of the characteristic earlier arguments for a Christian impact on Bektashi and Alevi ritual, types of initiatory and rites-of passage practices, veneration of saintly and charismatic figures, celebration of Christian-like festivals and (adopted) saints. Such Christian influences have been sought, for example, in the Bektashi reception ceremony, with its distribution of bread wine, bread and cheese to novices and what various observers have interpreted as a Bektashi practice of the confession of sins and absolution.³¹ Some early Western accounts of encounters with *Kızılbaş* groups describe them as observing practices resembling the Eucharist, the Christian kiss of peace and the Agape.³² Occasionally Christian influences have been also sought in Alevi and Bektashi hierarchies³³ and the establishment of the celibacy for the *babas* in the Babagân branch of Bektashism as a result of the reforms of Balim Sultan (d. 1519) seen in such views as betraying the impact of Christian monasticism.³⁴ Parallels with Christianity have also been sought in the distinctive Alevi/Bektashi “trinity” of Allah, Mohammed and Ali and what some have construed as a Christ-like exaltation of Ali in Alevism and some other related heterodox traditions.³⁵ Future explora-

³¹ Cf. for example, G. Jacob, ‘Fortleben von antiken Mysterien und Alt-Christlichem in Islam’, *Der Islam*, 2 (1) (1911), pp. 232-34; John K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac, 1937 (repr. 1994), pp. 215-16; R. Tschudi, ‘Bektashiyya’, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, 1960, p. 1162; H. Rinngren, ‘The Initiation Ceremony of the Bektashis’, in C. J. Bleeker (ed.), *Initiation: contributions to the theme of the study-conference of the International Association for the History of Religions held at Strasburg, September 17th to 22nd 1964* (Studies in the history of religions. Supplements to Numen 10), Leiden: Brill. 1965, pp. 202-208, p. 207; Mélikoff, “Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi” p. 42; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 160, 180.

³² G. Nutting, “Mission to Central Turkey: Oorfa: Letter from Mr Nutting, 30 July 1860”, *Missionary Herald*, 56 (November 1860), pp. 345-47; G. E. White, ‘The Shia Turks’, *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, 40, 1908, pp. 225-39, at p. 231; E. Huntington, “Through the Great Canon of the Euphrates River”, *The Geographical Journal*, 20 (1902), pp. 175-200.

³³ See, for example, Cumont, ‘Kizil Bash’, pp. 744-45; Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: the ghulat sects*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988, pp. 422-23.

³⁴ Cf., for example, Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, p. 216; Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 154-61; Barnes, ‘The Dervish Orders’ pp. 36-37.

³⁵ On Alevi/Bektāshī teachings concerning the “trinity” of God, Mohammed and Ali, see, for example, Birge, *The Bektashi Orde*, pp.132ff; Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 50ff.; Frederick De Jong, “The Iconography of Bektashism. A survey of themes and symbolism in clerical costume, liturgical objects and pictorial art”, *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, vol. 4, 1989, pp. 8-9; K. Kehl-Bodrogi, *Die Kizilbaş/Aleviten. Untersuchungen über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Anatolien*, Berlin: K.

tion and synthesis (when ultimately accomplished) of the earlier and recently accumulated (and still growing) evidence of Ottoman-era Christian-Islamic interaction will offer a good base from which to assess the validity of these arguments and parallels as well as the attribution of these posited Christian traits in Alevism and Bektashism to the Bektashi association with the Janissaries and/or Bektashi missionary tactic to attract Christian converts with a more adaptable and recognizable system of belief and ritual.³⁶ In this context traditions recorded among some Bektashi groups³⁷ that their ancestors had been Christian should be assembled and their validity and provenance re-examined.

Virtually all of these purported Christian elements in Alevi and Bektashi teachings and observances, however, relate to normative and popular but not heretical dualist Christianity which rejected the Eucharistic theology and sacrament of the established church, the use of wine in church ritual and generally among its adherents (in the case of Bogomilism), professed Docetic Christology (which could not be reconciled with the incarnationist tendencies among the Alevis and some *ghulāt* and *ghulāt*-influenced traditions), conceptualized trinitarian cosmological and theological speculations (in the case of medieval Eastern Christian moderate dualism) which are at complete variance both with normative Christianity and the Trinitarian-like notions in Alevism/Bektashism (it is worth noting that medieval Christian radical dualism variant advanced

Schwarz Verlag, 1988, pp. 135-38; Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, pp. 94ff.; Karin Vorhoff, *Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft. alevitische Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart* (Berlin: K. Schwarz Verlag, 1995), pp. 64ff. For discussions of a potential Christian provenance of this trinity of God, Mohammed and Ali and what some see as a Christ-like exaltation of Ali in Alevi/Bektāšī teachings, see, for example, M. E. Grenard, "Une secte religieuse d'Asie Mineure: les Kyzyl-Bâchs", *Journal Asiatique*, ser. 10, 3 (1904), pp. 511-22; Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 40-42; White, 'The Shia Turks', pp. 225-39; Mélikoff, 'L'Islam hétérodoxe en Anatolie', *Turkica* 14 (1982), pp. 142-154, at 151-153.

³⁶ Opinions on these issues still vary - see, for example, Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, pp. 215-16; Tschudi, 'Bektashiyya', p. 1162; Norton, 'The Bektashis in the Balkans', pp. 186-87; Skendi, 'Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan area under the Ottomans', pp. 249-50; D. P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century, Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture Under Ottoman Rule*, Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarlan, 1993, pp. 60-61; Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 19-20, 48, 424-25, 430-31; Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 153-54.

³⁷ M. Filipović, "The Bektashis in the District of Strumica (Macedonia)", *Man*, 54 (Jan 1954), pp. 10-13, at p. 11; on the oral traditions concerning the Christian origins of Alevis in the Deli Orman area, see F. de Jong, "Problems concerning the Origins of the Qizilbāš in Bulgaria: Remnants of the Safaviyya?", in *Convegno sul tema: La Shi'a nell'Impero Ottomano (Roma, 15 Aprile 1991)* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1993), pp. 203-16, at 207.

dyadic rather than triadic systems of supernatural principles which are even more far removed from the theology of orthodox Christianity and even the most unorthodox forms of Islam). Therefore, if future re-assessment of the above arguments for Alev/Bektashi interaction with Christianity (on the basis of the combined evidence of earlier and new research) confirms its impact on certain Alevi/Bektashi beliefs and ritual observances, the source of such an impact would have been certainly not heretical dualist Christian groups but normative Christianity, especially its popular versions which as elsewhere variously included a number of pre-Christian traditions and superstitious practices.

Any future scholarly quest for mainstream and heterodox Christian-related/influenced notions in Alevism and Bektashism also needs to take into consideration the characteristic mutability of Kızılbaşism/Alevism both in its belief and ritual systems which has over time integrated a variety of local traditions (deriving from folk versions of Islam and Christianity as well as pre-Christian and pre-Islamic traditions) in areas extending from the north-east Balkans to eastern Anatolia, where the religious processes can be indeed defined as “a permanent procedure of catalysis”.³⁸ This permanent “catalysis” often makes the detection and dating of such locally-obtained elements and differentiation from the earliest and core layers in Alevism (and to some extent in Bektashism) a particularly challenging task. In an earlier investigation of the Ahl-e Haqq teachings and practices their belief system has been defined as “conglomerate-like” (comprising ancient animism and a solar cult, popular Mazdaism, Christian sectarian teachings, Islamic Shi’ite layers – Ismaili and Safavid-related).³⁹ A similar approach has been attempted to stratify the components of Alevi/ Kızılbaş syncretism⁴⁰ but the perceived emphasizing or deemphasizing of some of the strata of the “conglomerate” has attracted some criticism.⁴¹ The contrasting and conflicting prioritizing of respectively, ancient Anatolian, pre-Islamic Turkic/Central Asia shamanistic, Shi’ite-related and Iranian (in Kurdish- and Zaza-speaking Alevi circles) layers in such a perceived Alevi conglomerate structure has also played a major role in recent and current Alevi identity

³⁸ Mélikoff, ‘Bektashi/Kızılbaş’, 6.

³⁹ V. Ivanow, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan: Ahl-i haqq Texts* (Bombay: Maṭba’-i Qādirī, 1950), pp. 31-75.

⁴⁰ Various advanced in Mélikoff’s studies of Alevism and Bektāšism but most systematically in Mélikoff, ‘Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi’ and *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, chap. 4.

⁴¹ See, for example, the reviews of Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, respectively by H. Algar, in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (4) (2004), 687-689, and M. van Bruinessen, in *Turcica* 31 (1999), 549-553.

politics in Turkey and among the Alevi diasporas in Western Europe and North America.⁴² The study of the antiquity, precedence and religious significance of these or other elements and strata in Alevi/Bektashi syncretism has acquired thus some topicality and importance in Alevi-focused historiographic, confessional, popular, media as well as internal Alevi discourses which need to be considered critically and cautiously.

A number of studies have drawn attention, moreover, to the existence of a possible Manichaean layer in Alevi/*Kızılbaş* teachings and practices, usually construed as traceable to the exposure to and adoption of Manichaeism by Central Asian Turkic groups, most consequentially, the Uighurs, after the ruling elite of the Uighur empire converted to Manichaeism converted to Manichaeism in 762 and it remained the official religion of the empire for more than a century. Parallels have been highlighted between the Manichaean prescription of the 'Three Seals' (the seals of mouth, hands and breast) and the Alevi/Bektashi triple rule: '*eline, diline, beline sahib olmak*', ('to be master of one's hand, tongue and one's loins') and its other variants, attested both in Anatolia and the Balkans.⁴³ Arguments have been advanced that further analogies between Manichaeism and Alevism can be detected in the use of the notion and symbolism of light (especially in the sphere of prophetology), religious hierarchy and the practice of confession.⁴⁴ The analogies between the Manichaean

⁴² See the summary of research and these different and contrasting approaches to the components of this Alevi "conglomerate structure" in Stoyanov, "Contested Post-Ottoman Alevi and Bektashi Identities", pp. 174-180.

⁴³ See C. Elsas, 'Religionsfreiheit für die türkisch-manichäisch-(pseudo)muslimischen Aleviten', in H. Preissler and H. Seiwert (eds.), *Gnosisforschung und religionsgeschicgte. Festschrifte für Kurt Rudolph zum 65 Geburtstag*, Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 1994, pp. 80-94, at pp. 85; Mélikoff, "Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi", pp. 56-57; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 163, 181; *idem*, "Hasluck's Study of the Bektashis and its Contemporary Significance", in Shankland, *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage*, pp. 297-308, at pp. 302; *idem*, "Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis et les interférences avec d'autres mouvements gnostiques", in Veinstein, *Sycrétismes et heresies*, pp. 65-75; at p. 67. The triple rule is attested not only in the Anatolian Alevi/Bektashi traditions but also in those in the Balkans in the version: '*eline tek, diline pek, beline berk*', see I. Georgieva (ed.), *Bülgar-skite aliani. Sbornik etnograficheski material*, Sofia: UI "Sv. Kliment Okhridski", 1991, p. 93 (reference to material gathered during a field work among Alevi groups in the Deli Orman area undertaken in the 1980s).

⁴⁴ See Elsas, 'Religionsfreiheit', pp. 83-85; Mélikoff, 'Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi', 57; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 20-21, 163; *idem*, 'Hasluck's Study', pp. 302-305; *idem*, 'Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis', pp.

and Alevi (or Bektashi) religious hierarchy are inconclusive (the differences seem more pronounced than the similarities) and the same applies to the use of the symbolism and semantics of light in the cosmologies and prophetologies of the two systems. Regarding the “Triple Rule” one needs much more textual evidence from Central Asian Turkic Manichaean texts than the proponents of the thesis of Manichaean Turkic-Alevi/Bektashi affiliation usually offer, given the increasing availability and publications of such valuable Central Asian Turkic material.⁴⁵ Before such direct textual support from Central Asian Turkic sources is provided, the proposed “Triple Rule” connection remains a provisional and unsubstantiated theory. Further comparative textual study of the Central Asian Turkic Manichaean manuscripts and corresponding Alevi and Bektashi material (in areas such as religious terminology and phraseology) is certainly worth pursuing and has not been attempted in any more systematic fashion as yet – again, any general conclusions regarding the conjectured Manichaean Turkic-Alevi connections/analogies need to stem from, not precede such comparative study.

One of the characteristic traits of the earlier and current proponents of the Alevi/Bektashi-focused indigenization and “Islamic-Christian heterodox” continuity theses in South-Eastern Europe has been their general unawareness or deliberate disregard for the Shi’ite-related Islamic layers in Alevi/Bektashi syncretism as well as the ongoing debates regarding its variously reconstructed Turkic shamanic and archaic Iranian strata and even the above arguments for its absorption of Central Asian Manichaean Turkic notions and religious vocabulary. This selective or defective approach to Alevi/Bektashi problematic is accompanied by an inability to or lack of interest in applying the latest advances in research on heterodox religious minorities in the Middle East and the Levant and the important results of the increasing amount of work on their oral traditions and the refinement of oral history methodologies. Consequently, recent re-deployments of the Alevi/Bektashi indigeniza-

65-68. Cf. the cautious analysis of potential Manichaean- Alevi/Bektāṣī interaction in A. Haas, *Die Bektaṣi: Riten und Mysterien eines islamischen Ordens*, Berlin: Express edition, 1988, pp. 147-150.

⁴⁵ On the latest state of research on Central Asian Turkic Manichaean texts, see the relevant Turcological contributions in the recently published *Der östliche Manichäismus – Gattungs- und Werks-geschichte*, Z. Özertural and J. Wilkens (eds), Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011. The Series Turkica of *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum* envisages the publication of 3 volumes of Turkic Manichaean sources.

tion and Islamic-Christian heterodoxy continuity theses have been replete with major factual errors, ahistorical and anachronistic assertions and contentions, underpinned by simplistic and outdated methodologies.⁴⁶ Based to a large extent on recent fieldwork among Alevi communities in the Balkans, these publications actually present some valuable findings but the authors have chosen to mould this material into preconceived schemas of a postulated impact of Christian dualism (Bogomilism) on Alevism in the spheres of organizational hierarchy, socio-political attitudes, angelology, diabolology, visionary mysticism and eschatology.⁴⁷ Virtually all of the presented arguments for such parallels and continuities are either anachronistic or theologically and historically unsustainable,⁴⁸ but inevitably have their impact on local public discourses on Alevism.

Other recent reinstatements of the thesis of original Christian dualist layers in Alevism in Turkey have actually gone so far as to falsify relevant primary sources for the history and teachings of medieval Eastern Christian dualist heresies.⁴⁹ To concoct such a Christian dualist strata in Alevism fragments of medieval source texts have been misused and mistranslated to prove a supposed direct continuity between Anatolian Paulicianism and Alevism in the spheres of organizational hierarchy, general religious vocabulary, communal network, sectarian assemblies and other related areas.⁵⁰ All these recent and continuing reinven-

⁴⁶ See, for example, R. Lipchev, 'Bŭlgarski ezicheski i khristiianski elementi v obredite, obichaite i poveriata na kŭzŭlbashite v Severoiztochna Bŭlagriia', *Dobrudzha*, 2 (1985), pp. 136-145; *idem*, 'Bogomilski elementi, motivi i siuzheti v obichaino-obrednata sistema na bŭlgarskite aliani', *Dobrudzha*, 6 (1989), pp. 26-38; I. Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite otvŭtre i otvŭn* (Silistra: Tibo, 2004), pp. 97-125.

⁴⁷ See especially, Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', pp. 27, 28, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34; Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite*, pp. 43, 59, 60, 70, 85, 146-148, 151-52.

⁴⁸ See the detailed analysis of these arguments for Christian dualist-Alevi continuities in Y. Stoyanov, "Early and Recent Formulations of Theories for a Formative Christian Heterodox Impact on Alevism", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, December 2010, 37(3), pp. 261-272, at pp. 268-272.

⁴⁹ These fabrications of primary source evidence have been carried out in three successive books of E. Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Yılı*, Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2007; *idem*, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2007; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri* (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2008, as well as in a pirated and duly falsified edition of the anthology of translated primary sources in Hamilton, Hamilton and Stoyanov, *Christian Dualist Heresies* published by Kalkedon Yayınları in 2010 but subsequently withdrawn from the market for violation of copyright.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, pp. 144, 145, 158; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, pp. 78, 140, 137, 142-143, 149. These falsifications of original textual evi-

tions of the early theories of the equation between Alevism and preceding Eastern Christian dualist heresies have direct implications for the ongoing competing discourses on the religious essence and affiliations of Alevism in Turkey, South-Eastern Europe and among the Alevi diaspora communities in Western Europe on whether Alevism should be defined as an authentic Islamic tradition, a secularizing current in Islam or an extra-Islamic confession.

Such debates regarding the Islamic or non-Islamic nature of Alevism are interestingly reminiscent of the scholarly controversies triggered by some scholars' recent assertions that the belief systems of the syncretistic religious minorities in Anatolia and the Near East have little or nothing in common with Islam, i. e. they are of a 'pseudo-Muslim' character.⁵¹ The transfer of concepts such as "heresy" and "syncretism" from external scholarly to internal Alevi discourse to define Alevi religious identity has been observed in some recent studies of Alevism and Islamic heresiography in general⁵² and this process may be also of relevance to the internal Alevi debates over the Islamic or non-Islamic character of Alevism.

The above ongoing attempts to verify the existence of Balkan and Anatolian dualist layers in Alevism respectively have also aimed to prioritize them as the historically and theologically original strata in Alevi teachings and practices. The outdated and arbitrary techniques used to mould and fix the evidence in rigid preconceived models of the

dence have been analyzed in H. Aksut, H. Harmancı and Ünsal Öztürk, *Alevi Tarih Yazmında Skandal* (Istanbul: Yurt Kitap, 2010) and Stoyanov, "Early and Recent Formulations of Theories", pp. 271-272.

⁵¹ Klaus Müller, *Kulturhistorische Studien zur Genese pseudo-islamischer Sektengebilde in Vorderasien*, Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1967, chs. 2 and 3; Elsas, 'Religionsfreiheit für die türkisch-manichäisch-(pseudo)muslimischen Aleviten', Hamzeh'ee, 'Methodological Notes on Interdisciplinary Research on Near Eastern Religious Minorities', in Kehl-Bodrogi, *et al.*, *Syncretistic Religious Communities*, pp. 119-39, at pp. 108-109; Barnes, 'The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire', pp. 34, 35.

⁵² See the observations of this process in Robert Langer and Udo Simon, "The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies", *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 48 (2008), pp. 273-288, at pp. 285-288; Janina Karolewski, 'What is Heterodox About Alevism? The Development of Anti-Alevi Discrimination and Resentment', *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 48 (2008), pp. 434-456, at pp. 455-456; M. Dressler, 'How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference: 'Heterodoxy' and 'Syncretism' in the Writings of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890-1966)', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2010, 37(3), pp. 241-260, at pp. 258-259.

first approach and the outrageous violation of textual sources to forge false historical and religious data ventured in the second approach have not offered any new primary sources-based or theoretical support to the case for the existence of such layers in Alevism – if anything it has weakened it and has compromised further such ideologically-warped treatments of the problematic. Such opportunistic reinstatements of obsolete nineteenth-century historiographic models should not, of course, prejudice the further scholarly quest for evidence of the potential interaction of Alevism/Bektashism with Christian heterodoxies in the Ottoman-era Anatolia and Balkans.

Indeed the evolving study of Ottoman and post-Ottoman *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektāşism has continued to bring new material and observations to spheres which could shed a new light on the interaction of heterodox and popular forms of Christianity and Islam in the Ottoman era. The most promising of these spheres concern some telling points of analogies (and potential contact) between the cosmogonies, anthropogonies and satanologies of popular and heterodox Christianity and Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia⁵³ whose study will need a methodologically balanced and prudent approach. It will also need some methodological and terminological clarity given the ambiguous and potentially misleading methodological approaches and terminology in earlier and some current studies of the problematic. In the Middle Ages both the Eastern and Western Churches generally tended to condemn medieval dualist heresies as a resurgence of the old dualist rival of the early Church, Manichaeism, and accordingly drew on relevant patristic texts in their polemics against Christian dualism. Adopting such clear-cut definitions from medieval Christian heresiology can lead to very erroneous conclusions. When such medieval descriptions of Paulicianism as a “Manichaean heresy” are quoted uncritically and then Paulicianism is conjectured to have exercised an impact on Alevism, a fictitious Manichaean chain of transmission can be constructed and claims for “Manichaean” layers in Alevism/Bektashism accordingly advanced without any concrete evidence. Indeed differing readings of references to the Paulicians in Armenian and Byzantine sources have led to conflicting conclusions as to whether they were originally dualist or whether after initially adhering to Adoptionist but non-dualist teachings some Paulician groups embraced dualism later in their history.⁵⁴ Symptomatically, when

⁵³ Y. Stoyanov, ‘Islamic and Christian Heterodox Cosmogonies’; *idem*, ‘On Some Parallels’, pp. 101-118; *idem*, ‘Early and Recent Formulations’, pp. 269-270;

⁵⁴ See the summary of research and scholarly debate on the original nature of religious evolution of Paulicianism in Y. Stoyanov, ‘The Interchange between Religious Hetero-

proposing a potential Paulician impact on Islamic heterodox groups in Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia, Ivanov was referring mostly to a late eighteenth-century text of Adoptionist and non-dualist character, *The Key of Truth*,⁵⁵ whose provenance and authenticity have been questioned in recent scholarship. But this text, being representative of an Adoptionist and non-dualist current in Armenian heterodoxy, clearly cannot be used to substantiate a Paulician dualist impact on Alevism or any other Near Eastern Islamic heterodox groups which has been done on occasions.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Alevi/Bektashi teachings focused on man's ultimate aim to awake from the sleep of unconsciousness and be brought back to his divine origin is not sufficient to define Alevism/Bektashism as a Gnostic creed⁵⁷ where indeed salvation is reached by knowledge (*gnosis*) about the origins of the inner self in the spiritual realm. Gnostic systems, however, develop also a theological and anti-cosmic dualism which is notably absent in Alevism/Bektashism but is one of the main characteristics of medieval Christian dualism. The absence of such type of Gnostic or Gnostic-related theological dualism in Alevism/Bektashism needs to be emphasized but regrettably the differentiation between the existence of "gnosis" and non-existence of Gnostic theology proper in Alevism/Bektashism is rarely made.⁵⁸ Furthermore, nineteenth-century evidence and developments in Alevism and Bektashism (when the latter in particular was opened to Western influences) need to be treated cautiously and critically. Such notions detectable in nineteenth-century Albanian Bektashism⁵⁹, for example, which

doxies in the Balkans and Caucasus - the Case of the Paulicians', in I. Biliarsky, O. Cristea and A. Oroveanu (eds.), *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 106-116.

⁵⁵Published by F. C. Conybeare, ed. and tr., *The Key of Truth: a Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia*, Oxford 1898. For arguments regarding its influence on Islamic heterodoxy in Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia see IVANOW, *The Truth-Worshippers*, pp. 50-57, and Moosa, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 439-42.

⁵⁶For such treatment of the *The Key of Truth*, see, for example, Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach*, pp. 164, 194; *idem*, 'Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis', p. 74.

⁵⁷Mélikoff, 'Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis', *passim*; *idem*, 'Universalisme et gnosticisme dans les heterodoxies du proche et du moyen-orient', *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 26 (2) (2002), pp. 135- 154, *passim*; *idem*, 'Hasluck's Study', pp. 304-305.

⁵⁸This important distinction was made, for example, by A. Gökalp, *Têtes rouges et bouches noires. Une confrérie tribale de l'Ouest anatolien*, Paris 1980, pp. 176-182.

⁵⁹See V.L.Guidetti, *Elementi dualistici e gnostici della religione bektashi in Albania fra il XVII e il XIX secolo*, in G. Sfameni Gasparro (a cura di), *Destino e salvezza tra culti pagani e gnosi cristiana (Itinerari storico-religiosi sulle orme di Ugo Bianchi)*, Cosenza 1998, pp. 239-264.

could be construed as reminiscent of Gnostic or dualist traditions may be the result of such external impact whose likelihood should be assessed first before being projected back to the earlier religious history of Alevism and Bektashism in the Ottoman empire.

The objective appraisal of the question of the existence of dualist layers in Alevism/Bektashism is thus of some importance not only to the field of the study of Islamic heterodoxy during the Ottoman period but also the current instrumentalization of the problematic in the dialogue and interchange between theological, scholarly and internal Alevi discourses on Alevism and Bektashism in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey. It will also contribute to the further exploration of important wider spheres of the medieval and Ottoman-era religious and cultural history of the Balkans and Asia Minor which will need to be better integrated into the study of Mediterranean Europe and the Near East during these periods and within the corresponding spheres of research which have enjoyed a rather impressive progress and the application of new and original research methodologies in the last decades.

Yuri STOYANOV

**MANICHAEAN AND EASTERN CHRISTIAN
DUALIST ELEMENTS IN ALEVISM AND
BEKTASHISM – EVIDENCE AND CONJECTURES**

- s u m m a r y -

The article reassesses the problem of the purported existence of earlier Manichaean and/or later, medieval Eastern Christian dualist layers in Ottoman Alevism (*Alevilik*)/Kızılbaşism (*Kızılbaşlık*) and Bektashism. It offers a reappraisal of the early historiographical models advanced to postulate the presence and provenance of such strata in Alevism and Bektashism as well as newly published studies focused largely or in passing on their ritual and belief systems. These earliest and most recent theories and conjectures are re-examined against the background of the current state of knowledge and research on the interaction and interchange between heterodox forms of Islam and Christianity in the late Byzantine and early Ottoman era.