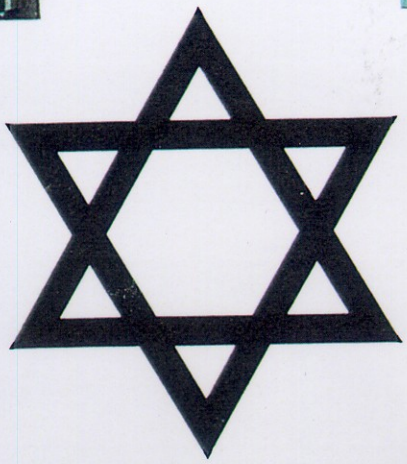
Alevilik ve Bektaşilik

Religion and Identity Formation in Contemporary Turkey



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CHAPTER ONE:
THE HACIBEKTAŞ MEMORIAL CEREMONIES

"The Prophet and Saints are God's gift to humankind".

Saying from Hacı Bektaş Veli.

1.1. Alevi and Bektaşi

'What is the difference between Alevi and Bektaşi?'
'What do you think it is?'
'Well, you have to be born into an Alevi family to be an Alevi, but you have to be initiated into the Bektaşi order.'
'That's right. But it is not only that simple.'

This conversation between an Alevi and myself took place in a car on our way to participate in the annual Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies in the town of Hacıbektaş. I had just arrived in Turkey to conduct a three month fieldwork, in the Alevi-Bektaşi community. The drive from Ankara to Hacıbektaş was my first opportunity to hold conversations leading to an understanding of topics books had not been able to provide. The distinction between Alevi and Bektaşi is a fundamental fact, which I had not been able to grasp completely through the literature available at home. As they are two different phenomena, the Bektaşi order being a Sufi fraternity with the characteristics of a secret society, and Alevi groups together constituting a religio-social movement, I did not grasp the nature of the close relation between these two analytical categories. But as the Alevi person told me: 'It is not only that simple.'

Alevism and Bektaşism are closely related through devotion to the common saint Hacı Bektaş Veli, and past incidents of severe suppression. While Bektaşism is a purely religious system, Alevism is not necessarily so. Alevi groups may be religious or secular, but their religious or moral philosophies are all derived from the teachings of their common saint. In the Ottoman Empire, both Alevism and Bektaşism periodically were considered heretic and in opposition to the Sunni authorities, because Shiism and Turkish traditional beliefs were parts of their philosophies. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, both groups welcomed Kemalism in their absolute loyalty to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. One of his slogans was permanent divorce between State and religion, enabling

the Alevi-Bektaşi community to believe in a future of free religious practice. In contemporary Turkey, they are still stigmatised, and, together they constitute a minority. They revitalise their common identity by creating a flow of information about the nature of Alevism and Bektaşism. This process has been called 'the Alevi renaissance' even though it also provides information about Bektaşism.

1.2.1 Hacıbektaş and Surrounding Sites

The town of Hacıbektaş is located in the province of Nevşehir, 236 kilometres South-East of Ankara and 15 kilometres from the Ankara-Kayseri highway. The centre serves as the home of approximately 6000 people[1], and it is the central administration of 30 surrounding villages. In addition to agriculture, a substantial part of the income is based on tourism. Both natives and foreigners visit the town and it's surrounding sites throughout the year. Handmade tools, gifts and souvenirs manufactured by alabaster, *kaymak taşı,* from the area, are products sold to the visitors.

We were far from the only ones arriving Hacıbektaş to attend the ceremonies. Most participants came travelling from big cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Adana, and some came all the way from Germany to pay respect to Hacı Bektaş Veli. During the three days, from the 16th to the 18th of August, the town is completely crowded with Alevis and Bektaşis participating in memorial activities in the centre and at sites in the vicinity of the town. My first activity was a guided tour to all the sites of symbolic significance for the Alevi-Bektaşi community. The centre is a small area containing houses and apartments of the local residents, administrative buildings, a market, a couple of hotels, museums and park areas. The main construction is the old Bektaşi *tekke*, a dervish convent of extreme importance. It is erected around the *türbe*, mausoleum, of Hacı Bektaş Veli, and it also contains tombs of other venerated figures. The tekke was closed down by the authorities in 1925, and did not reopen before 1964, completely restored as a museum. The reopening initiated the tradition of annual ceremonies in Hacıbektaş. During these three days, crowds of people visit the tombs, paying their respect to the memory of their saints.

Within a radius of 10 kilometres, places where Hacı Bektaş Veli is believed to have carried out spiritual activities like meditation and ecstatic dance, are visited for the purpose of worship and healing. At these venerated sites, a multitude of visitors engage in ritual activities like climbing through caves to test their spiritual pureness, and stoning the devil

[1] According to the census in 1996.

represented by a huge stone. Some spend the nights there, sleeping in tents or cars, while common meals are prepared from sacrificed sheep. The visit to the holy places, with the Hacı Bektaş Veli mausoleum as the sacred centre, starts days before the official program, and by the time of the opening of the ceremonies, Hacıbektaş town and surrounding sites are completely crowded.

1.2.2 The Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies

The Hacı Bektaş Veli Memorial Committee arranges the official part of the Hacı Bektaş Memorial Ceremonies. The members are elected from the municipality, Haçibektaş Society and from the population of the city. The program consists mainly of political and cultural activities like speeches (from politicians, writers and actors), debates, and theatre, musical performances and dance, *semah.* Walking among the crowds of people socialising in the central parks and squares gives a throbbing, mosaic picture of religion, culture and politics intertwined. The ceremonies unite the community, and an important part of their annual visit to the town is the opportunity for socialisation between members of the community who live far from each other, or who, for other reasons only see each other once a year. Religious ceremonies are conducted in private. Religious Alevis gather for ceremonies called *Muhabbet*[2]. These are discussions and conversations lead by their leader, *Dede*[3]*,* and they are held in the special buildings constructed like a circle, called *cem evis*[4]. Bektaşi rituals are conducted with only invited, already initiated members of the dervish order, *tarikat.* They are all led by the leaders of the *dergahs*[5], and conducted in private homes.

1.3.1 The 'Alevilik ve Bektaşilik' Literature

The Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies is the most important recurring event within the process of revitalisation and reconstruction of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity. Therefore, stands of published literature and other means of transmitting information about the heritage from

[2] Literally 'friendly conversation'.

[3] Literally 'grandfather'. Historically, the *Dede* was the highest religious and social authority in Alevi villages, see chapter three: 3.3.2.

[4] Ev literally means house. Cem evis means house of religious gatherings/assemblies.

[5] *Dergah* literally means 'dervish convent', the same meaning as tekke and *zaviye*. After the closing down of the convents, the Babas and their disciples continued their practice in private homes. In accordance with some of my informants, I use the term 'dergah' as referring to the groups of one Baba and his disciples.

Hacı Bektaş Veli, are featured. The information provided in most cases blurs the distinctions between Alevism and Bektaşism by seeking to simultaneously define and explain the nature of both. These kinds of publications are often entitled 'Alevism and Bektaşism', *'Alevilik ve Bektaşilik'*, in different versions. Through my participation in the ceremonies, I became interested in the fusion of Alevism and Bektaşism within the Alevi renaissance. The interconnectedness made me start wondering how the Bektaşi order as a secret society positioned themselves within this religio-social revitalising movement. Repeated questions like 'What is the difference between Alevism and Bektaşism?', 'What is their common foundation?', and 'What are their different roles and positions within the renaissance of identity?'. The response to these questions revealed differences of opinion. This made me realise that only through extensive research would I be able to do justice to the complex situation.

1.3.2 Research and Publications.

To define both differences between, and the common foundation of Alevism and Bektaşism, requires investigation on Hacı Bektaş Veli, and Alevis and Bektaşis in the Ottoman Empire. Among historic research important on this topic, is the work of Faroqhi, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien,* 1981, and several articles on the function of Bektaşi tekkes. Mélikoff is highly regarded by the Alevi-Bektaşi community for her contributions through articles and lectures on their early history. At the Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies in 1999, she received the 'Peace and Friendship Award' from the Hacıbektaş Society, and some of her articles are to be found in the works of both Popovic, Veinstein and Olsson, Özdalga, Raudvere, as mentioned below.

In order to learn more about the Bektaşi order *per se*, the classical work of Birge, *The Bektaşi Order of Dervishes*, 1937, and a collection of articles, *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach,* edited by Popovic and Veinstein in 1995 are two extensive works on different aspects of the order. Among later research on the process of revitalisation of the Alevi-Bektaşi community, the publication *Alevi Identity*, edited by Olsson, Özdalga and Raudvere, the thesis of Ataseven, *The Alevi-Bektaşi Legacy: Problems of Acquisition and Explanation,* and that of Shankland, *Alevi and Sunni in Rural Turkey; Diverse Paths of Change*, are among the central contributions. Together with non academic literature, this research is a part of what I choose to call 'the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature'. This academic literature is available

within the community, and is also seriously considered in the reconstruction of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity.

Vorhoff divides the non academic, Alevi publications into four categories (Vorhoff 1998b: 34-39). The first category is survey books, which try to explain Alevism and Bektaşism in toto. These books may have titles like 'What is Alevism and Bektaşism?', or 'Alevism and Bektaşism with all aspects'. The second category consists of doctrinal or devotional books, the history and legends of holy men and places, or books on rituals. The Vilayetname of Haçı Bektaş Veli, which is his hagiography, is the most important contribution to this type of literature. Literature reflecting on how to be an Alevi in daily life is another type of contribution within the revitalisation process, and monthly and quarterly journals are published to meet the growing demand for communicative literature caused by the Alevi renaissance. Also Sunni circles are interested in the religious and cultural heritage of the Alevi-Bektaşi community. The Research Centre for Turkish Culture and Hacı Bektaş Veli, at the Gazi University in Ankara publishes the quarterly journal *Hacı Bektaş Veli.* It also gathers information on Alevism and Bektaşism in their library, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive collection of published material (shown by the director, Yalçın, during a visit to the research centre).

1.4 The objective of this thesis.

This thesis provides an analysis of the Bektaşi participation in the Alevi renaissance. Such an investigation also offers possible approaches to the connections between Alevism and Bektaşism. The project is grown out of impressions acquired through participation in the commemorative ceremonies in Hacıbektaş, and through the following fieldwork among Alevis and Bektaşis in Ankara. Methodological advantages and implications of my stay in Ankara are considered in chapter two.

In order to fully grasp the processes of identity formation within the Alevi-Bektaşi community, the Turkish society, including state, military, politics and social movements, is examined. Chapter three elaborates the national context in which the Alevi-Bektaşi community responds to a general national identity crisis with identity politics.

Both Alevi and Bektaşi identities are constructed on the basis of selected incidents from the past, interpreted within a general concept of suppression and marginality. They consider themselves parts of the same minority group in Turkey, but recreate their history through different versions of the past. Chapter four analyses foremost the Bektaşi interpretation of history, but provides an outline of important Alevi incidents as well.

Members of the Bektaşi order are generally resigned towards the Alevi renaissance, and they emphasise the differences between Bektaşism and Alevism. Chapters five and six search for explanations of their attitude in their firm hierarchic social structure, which is theologically legitimised.

CHAPTER TWO:
THE FIELDWORK IN RETROSPECT

> *Doing ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript - foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventional graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour.*
>
> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures.*

2.1.1 From transient behaviour to permanent accounts

The process of transforming impressions of behaviour into accounts is a matter of approach. Examples of shaped behaviour are multi-layered codes perceivable through different perspectives. Choosing one specific strategy to grasp a part of the reality does not undermine the importance of other possible procedures. When the researcher is faced with unfamiliar codes of behaviour, his approach is likely to be conscious and well considered. In order to describe and explain the behaviour, he has to acquire a minimum of inside understanding.

The initiating visit to Hacıbektaş enabled me to take part in the atmosphere of festivity and socialising that the ceremonies provide. In between the official program the participants mingle in the town squares and visit each other's houses. The ones that only meet this time of year are catching up over a glass of tea with the attitude of sharing a common heritage. Among a multitude of impressions the rigid procedure of greeting the Bektaşi leaders illustrates a kind of shaped behaviour where the interpretation of its meaning depends on perspectives. They are approached honourably with a procedure of kissing and leading the back of their hands towards the forehead, sometimes with an additional movement of kneeling. An investigator without inside information about this gesture and the Turkish society in general, will have to seek information among insiders in order to understand and hence be able to describe and explain his observations adequately. As all search for knowledge is dependent on perspectives and approaches, his final explanation will be coloured by the research tradition in which he is operating.

2.1.2 My approach

In general, social research on religion investigates the relationship between religious beliefs and social structures. Within the extensive label of 'social research on religion', the focus of investigation varies. The prevailing strategy is to direct attention towards the interactive influence between religion and society and at the same time grasp the genuine religious belief of the people being studied. My approach to the field is to map how a religious community is interacting with the surrounding society, both past and present. This is truly a study devoted to the social structures surrounding the beliefs of this community, but the aim is to avoid reducing the religious system to a component in the interaction of different parts of society. It is to seriously consider the absolute worldview of the believers, recognising religion as a reason in itself and making it an integral part of the analysis. To uphold this perspective throughout the whole research process importance has been laid upon being faithful to the phenomena under study and not to any particular set of theoretical constructions or methodological principles. In accordance with this ethnological tradition, I have directed my attention towards the 'symbolic world'[1] of the Alevi-Bektasi community, recognising that in order to accumulate adequate knowledge of their social behaviour I need to understand their perspectives on life, and the description of their culture becomes the primary goal. The search for universal laws is downplayed in favour of detailed accounts of the concrete experience of life and the set of beliefs and social rules that are used as resources within this community (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 10).

2.1.3 This chapter

Self-reflection is the main tool of the investigator in the search for attentive and valid research results. Fieldwork accounts, either as a part of the presentation of the findings or as an independent account, are mostly reflections evolving around the strategies and methods chosen for the research. It is interesting to note that accounts of access and continuous relations in the field are solely based on the researcher's own reflections (Lee 1993:120). Because this is usually a part of the study, which is only written from one side, the researcher has to be attentive and honest. This chapter is such an account, analysing the different phases

[1] «By 'symbolic world' we refer to the meanings people apply to their own experiences, meanings developed through patterns of behaviour which are in some way distinctive by comparison to the outside world» (Gilbert 1993: 157).

of the fieldwork in addition to the general truth-value of the findings. The first subject is the question of reflexivity, in which the validity of the research in general is analysed. The fieldwork as qualitative research is then discussed by the example of my stay in Turkey from August to November 1999. The art of penetrating and getting along in the field is analysed with its emphasis on informants and helpers, emotional stress and the need for distance. The process of getting information through different means is discussed before a final consideration of investigating sensitive topics.

2.2.1 Reflexivity

Doing ethnography is a practical search for meaning, but it cannot be reduced to mere methodology. Symbolic interpretations of acts lie between what Geertz calls «thin and thick descriptions». Registering behaviour without searching the meaning is a project of thin description, which does not consider the actors' own symbolic interpretations of what they actually do. The ethnographic enterprise interprets the social and moral codes of behaviour. This thick descriptive mode of research is a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures, in terms of which acts are produced, perceived and interpreted (Geertz 1973: 7). In short, the ethnographer's data are his own constructions of other people's constructions of their social behaviour, and analysis is merely sorting out the significant structures from these data (Geertz 1973: 9). As this strategy is founded upon the human capacity for participant observation, the method in question is to participate in people's daily life for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:1). In this process, ethnography is actively situated somewhere between systems of meaning as it describes processes of innovation and structuring, and is itself a part of these processes as the interpreters constantly construct themselves through the others they study (Clifford 1986: 2-3,10). By being part of the social world he studies, the investigator is the research instrument *par excellence.* The process is active and selective with the aim of passing social discourse into accounts, which can be re-consulted. These accounts are to be considered partial truths and true fictions (Clifford 1986: 6-7).

2.2.2 Truth Value

The reflexive character of ethnographic research is clear. The investigator will have a certain impact on the subjects under study, and both his understanding and his cultural and individual background will bias the mediation. In addition, ethnographic research results are circumstantial because behaviour and attitudes are often not stable across contexts. Positivistic measurements like reliability, validity and objectivity[2] are irrelevant to the ethnographic enterprise because the information provided offers illustration and does not constitute scientific proof. Subjectivity is a part of the research strategies and it is important for the researcher in order to bracket the social life and grasp and render the genuine religious elements within the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures superimposed upon or knotted into one another (Geertz 1973:10). Still, it is important to achieve a certain level of neutrality in every phase of the research. A wider meaning of validity, as the correspondence between the research and the real world, is relevant for all kinds of social research. To present an illustration of the real world, the research has to be carried out for good measures. During a fieldwork, the researcher invests much effort to achieve this kind of validity, because we can generally assume that a long-term stay in a community facilitates the differentiation of what is valid from what is not. This is why the grounds for the credibility of the ethnographer's account are present. In any natural setting there are norms or rules of action in which members are competent. The investigator enters their social world by participating, observing and asking questions and through this, he learns the rules. The adept observer will be able to provide others with instructions on how to pass in the same setting, and hence, it should be possible for others to have similar experiences in that community (Gilbert 1993:164).

2.3.1.1 Fieldwork as qualitative research

Presence in the community under study is crucial for the researcher in order to acquire an essential understanding of social life. This qualitative researching emphasises holistic forms of analysis and explanations, and is mostly concerned with how the social world is experienced and interpreted. To adequately grasp a portion of the insider's point of view is only possible through systematic, strategic research conducted in a flexible manner.

[2] I define reliability, validity and objectivity in accordance with Wolcott's definitions:
«Reliability is the extent to which a measurement produce yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out. [...] Validity is whether a researcher has measured what the research purports to measure. [...] Reliability-along with his partner validity, [...], is frequently raised as a critical component of research, the pair sometimes described as two complementary aspects of objectivity» (Wolcott 1995:167).

Sensitivity towards the social context in which data are produced is obtained by a toolbox approach to the field. The context itself will usually suggest what is the most appropriate pattern to look for and which tool is the right one to reach for.[3] The starting point for the researcher is often widely defined with assertions of a general character. As the investigation progresses, the focus narrows and the ideas and hypotheses become more specified. When approaching foreign communities, this policy is a common way of securing flexible and sensitive research.

2.3.1.2 Fieldwork in Turkey

This was also my strategy upon entering the Alevi-Bektaşi community. Due to a general lack of research publications, my knowledge of their religious beliefs was shallow. Hence, I had to learn the basics of their culture and belief system, starting out in the field as a student with vague ideas of how to analytically approach the information presented. After the initial period of acquiring the basic understanding in Hacibektaş and Ankara, I left the field for a month, staying at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, where I analysed my data and prepared for a second visit to the field. When I returned to Ankara, my focus had narrowed into specific ideas of analysis. Distance to the field within the research milieu of the institute enabled me to reflect upon and reduce my own biases. I created the space and time during the first phase to continually regulate my understanding, get used to their specific way of thinking and achieve the opportunity to grasp some of their points of view. The need for attention and self-reflection is of course present not only during the initial phase of the fieldwork. It is important to uphold this attitude throughout the research process until the research account is written. Still, it was my awareness of this need during the initial phase which made me position myself and my biases through reflection upon my own societal, cultural and religious heritage. Raised in a Protestant country without any personal experience with absolutism, I spent some time understanding the importance and absoluteness of the religious beliefs of the Bektaşi Order. I had endless discussions with both Alevis and Bektaşis, about concepts like religion, culture, the state, and secularism, which slowly made me aware of my own interpretations as observer, participant and interviewer.

2.3.2.1 Entering the field

[3] O'Flaherty characterised the study of myth by this toolbox metaphor, which is useful in describing the ethnographic enterprise as well (O'Flaherty 1980: 5).

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman analyses social structures in the presentation of us to others. He says that «When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed.» (Goffman 1971:1). The need for positioning is also present for the person entering the social setting. With the aim of impression management, he seeks to control the impressions he intentionally gives and consciously gives off, as well as the carriers for sources of information about himself. As we all are guided by inference, the others will combine his expressions on both levels and attempt to create a holistic impression of him. These assertions do not only apply to face-to-face interaction. In the case of a researcher trying to enter the field and establish connections, these forces of impression and representation are at work for an extended period where the researcher is periodically engage in face-to-face interaction. The 'front' management he engages in by presenting his 'self' to the members of the group is vital for the level of access he acquires and for the definition of his fieldwork role (Gilbert 1993:158-159). Entering the data site is a process of 'getting in' and gaining acceptance by the people being studied (Lofland 1984:20).

2.3.2.2 Sponsors and Gatekeepers

To prepare for the coming phase of 'getting in', I evaluated different research sites in Turkey for richness of and access to data. I assumed that the annual commemoration ceremonies in Hacibektaş would be the site richest in data. I sent a letter to the Hacıbektaş Society, which is in charge of organising the event, announced my arrival and asked for help. A representative of the society responded and became my sponsor in the world of the Alevi-Bektaşi community[4]. Our relationship soon got the appearance of a friendship, which removed barriers to entrance. After arrival, I spent several hours telling him about my project, intentions and plans. I gave him a detailed account of my ideas and my level of knowledge about the community. We successfully connected and he gained faith in my project. He was a highly respected person in the community and he had a developed network in which he gladly introduced me. In addition to map me a way through the unfamiliar social and cultural terrain, he served both directly and indirectly to facilitate acceptance of me as a researcher. During the ceremonies, he introduced me to a large number of people who immediately agreed on

[4] A sponsor is a person in a respected position within the community under investigation, who acts as a 'bridge', 'guide' or 'patron' into the group (Gilbert 1993:54).

assisting me mostly because of his good reputation. [5] In addition, the Alevi-Bektaşi community emphasise the appreciation of scientific research, and several other researchers were invited for official participation in the ceremonies. Because the presence of a foreign student wanting to learn about the religion and culture of the community is not a common event, effort was put in to make sure that I had an informative stay in the Town of Hacibektaş. One of the informants, a member of the Bektaşi Order, explained the willingness to assist scientific research in religious terms:

> In our Koran it is said that this type of supporting people for studies and helping each other is considered as praying.[6]

The moral system within Bektaşism teaches each person's obligation to educate others in the religious science. This duty is a part of their search for enlightenment, and will be further explained in chapter five: 5.4.2.

Leaders of different dergahs within the Bektaşi Order were gatekeepers to information at all levels of membership[7]. They exercised both formal and informal control by allowing me into the setting on specific conditions. To reduce any risk they might run by letting me into their religious universe, we agreed upon some explicit procedures of our relationship. I was not to participate in rituals, which are only conducted in the presence of initiated members of the order, and if I was interested in information they could not reveal, they turned me down by saying

> If you become a Bektaşi, I will tell you.[8]

My fieldwork began with 10 days in the town of Hacibektaş. The stay provided me with a network of informants and a social position within their community. After the ceremonies, most of them left the town and went home to Ankara. When I arrived there, a week later, I was welcomed as a friend. Ankara became the natural site for access to information because I

[5] The ceremonies are normally held from the 16th to the 18th of August, but they were interrupted by this year's tragic earthquake on the 17th. The period in question, when I established the base of my Alevi-Bektaşi network, is my stay in Hacibektaş, which lasted for 10 days.

[6] Interview 2, Bektaşi member.

[7] Gatekeepers to both physical and social access to the field execute formal and informal control of the degree of access granted the researcher (Gilbert 1993: 54).

[8] Interview 4,7 Bektaşi Babas.

used the social network of my sponsor. This strategy of access often limits the area of investigation and makes it difficult to generalise beyond that specific social area. This is also true for my project. The assumptions and generalisations made in this thesis are only valid within the urban network of Alevis and Bektaşis of relatively high income and education in Ankara. In many cases, such a limitation would give unwanted restrictions on the research, but in this case it is not entirely so. This specific network of relations is the main force of the social processes in the wider Alevi-Bektaşi community, which I seek to explain. This is why, even though the research has merely local validity, the interaction of the local, regional, and national level must not be undermined. The processes in question is the revitalisation and rediscovering of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity, further elaborated in chapter three: 3.3.3.

2.3.3.1 Getting along

It is clear that the degree of success in entering the research field depends on who you are, what you know and who you know. But your accounts, knowledge and connections are vital in the further exploration and positioning within the community as well. The entry into the field is not a rite of passage and to be there does not necessarily mean that you will stay in a static setting. The field changes continuously, problems arise, solutions are found and people become more or less co-operative because their lives are affected. Cassell draws the distinction between getting in and getting on in the field, using the terms 'physical and social access' (Cassell as quoted in Gilbert 1993:53). Once the investigator has gained physical access, the ongoing, precarious process of re-negotiation of his right to be present starts. It is a multistage progressive entry with the aim of achieving social access to the setting while minimising premature closure of the project. The ability to grasp the information presented increases as the understanding of the community under study grows.

Initial contact in Hacibektaş and Ankara aimed at understanding the social landscape of the Alevi-Bektaşi community. At this stage, I was not able to give my informants detailed accounts of my project and they were free to talk about the subjects they considered important. By using this strategy of holding back, I laid the foundation of knowledge necessary for construction of a theoretical framework. It also gave the informants the opportunity to freely decide to which extent they wanted to let me into their lives. I was already considered trustworthy due to the favourable reputation of my sponsor, so the question of my capability and reliability was connected to the decisions of which information to present and how to present it. When they witnessed my efforts in understanding and

temporarily adopting their point of view, it became easier for both parties to regard one another with trust. Lofland describes the effort of the investigator in the field as 'getting along' (Lofland 1984:31). To get along with 'the folk' involves determining how to act or to present oneself in order to keep the flow of information coming. In this process, the researcher and the informants define their roles in relation to each other. It was convenient for both parties to stress my characteristics as a young, female student without internal knowledge about the community. Through the role of an interested student who needed to be taught 'obvious' things, my incompetence was accepted and I did not constitute any threat.

2.3.3.2 Distance

After the initial entry into the field it is in many cases favourable to keep a low profile for a period. It is important for the researcher to accumulate knowledge and acquire skills necessary to get along. The research project becomes the ultimate concern for the investigator while he is in the field, and therefore it is important to maintain the awareness that he is not always in centre of attention. The tragic earthquake in Turkey on the 17th of August 1999 was a reminder that I was interfering in other peoples' lives and that my project was a minor part of their lives.

The overall goal of a fieldwork is to collect the richest possible data, but the investigator has to enable himself to make use of the collected material in an appropriate manner. Hence he has to remain in control of both emotional stress and the project in general. The decision to leave the field was made during the preparations, and it left me with two intermediate stays in the research milieu in Istanbul, which turned out to be very useful.
I had the opportunity to discuss my project with other researchers, and this accelerated the process of being in charge of the investigation and the awareness of the difference between analysing and distorting the data.

2.3.3.3 Emotional stress

In addition to the stressful situation of being constantly marginal and afraid of being rejected, the multiple problems of betrayal and control were strongly present during my investigation in the field. Some of the informants explicitly expressed their fear of being betrayed by inaccurate accounts of their belief system and social life in general. Several times they expressed their need for control by saying

> Don’t do as others have done before you: Don’t write about things you don’t understand, it will be wrong anyhow.
>
> Maybe one day you will write a real book about Bektaşism. [9]

Wolcott emphasises the always-present aspect of betrayal of fieldwork. The purpose of the enterprise is uncovering and the responsible researcher will recognise the feeling of continuous execution of minor deceptions throughout the investigation (Wolcott 1995: 147-150). The apparent strive towards common goals often turns out to be mutual seduction in order to cover different needs.

2.4.1 Getting information

To have a toolbox approach to the field basically means that the investigator makes use of different means to acquire and record information. Participation, observation, and questioning both formally through interviews and informally by conversations are all different ways of reaching an adequate understanding of the community under study. In most cases, it becomes natural for the investigator to engage in more than one of these strategies. Participation, observation and conversations were natural tools for me to engage in during my presence in the everyday life of my informants. Using these strategies in addition to the pre-prepared, artificial setting of formal interviews increased my chances of understanding the worldview and perspective of the subjects. Many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction, or is concealed within. Attitudes, beliefs and emotions that correspond with reality can often be ascertained only indirectly through the interaction of oral accounts and behaviour. During interviews, the subjects have the opportunity to express their ideal, or what they would like the interviewer to believe. The best way to balance the information and increase its validity is to engage in methodological triangulation between open-ended informal interaction and structured questioning.

2.4.2 The interview situation

The structured setting of formal interviews initiated by the investigator increases the risk for the researcher to impose his own priorities and perspectives on the interviewee. It is more

[9] Conversations, Bektaşi Baba and dervishes.

likely that conversations develop into discussions of other topics than the ones on the agenda of the researcher. These digressions reflect the concerns of the subjects and their community far more than the questions imposed from a structured interview guide. When exploring new grounds the researcher needs to engage in flexible approaches, hence the degree of structure imposed on the interviews are to be reduced as much as possible. Regarding the interview situation basically as a 'guided conversation' where people exchange points of views, makes it possible to maintain an open-ended character of the situation. But an interview is also a journey that leads to knowledge and personal development particularly for the researcher. Because it is often arranged as an aid for the investigator, it is easier for him to control the situation than it would have been in a random conversation. The interviewer effect is always considered even though, according to Lee «interviewer effects are neither pervasive nor substantial across wide range of studies» (Lee 1993: 99-100). He refers to an investigation conducted by Sudman and Bradburn (1974) where they undertook a systematic review of a large number of studies on response effects. They concluded that in many instances interviewer effects were minimal compared to other kinds of effects. They further presented the idea that the belief in these effects is a consequence of the appeal of the intuitive character of the research and not estimations grounded in empirical demonstrations. This reminds us that the discussions of reflexivity in all stages of the research process run the risk of becoming to analytical and speculative. If we search well enough, we will always find reasons to doubt the validity of ethnographic research. Awareness and self-reflection are important tools of analysis in all stages of the research, but must not be drawn towards the positivistic stance of measurement.

The question of reflexivity was present during my whole research process, but became most obvious while conducting formal interviews. I have 9 formal, fully transcribed interviews in addition to field notes and transcribed informal questioning based on participation, observation and conversation. The informants were free to choose the setting of the interviews, which were carried out in their offices or in their private homes. They were free to invite other people, including their own translator. Because my language skills were not sufficient enough to conduct the interviews in Turkish, the information went through an additional level of interpretation.

2.4.2.1 The presence of others

Alevis and regular Bektaşi members were interviewed one-to-one, while the religious leaders of the Bektaşi Order chose to have some of their disciples present. In some cases, the presence of others led to group discussions, which provided information about the structure and dynamics of the dergah, and it illustrated the span of interpretations within the group. The interviewees frequently corrected and supplemented each other with the aim of illustrating the Bektaşi worldview correctly and understandably. During these discussions, the leader of the dergah was reserved, serving the role of the omniscient father from whom the members were seeking acknowledgement and recognition. In other cases, the disciples present were in the position of a silent, devoted audience, listening to their leader preaching. The interviews were conducted while the audience listened, learned and nodded appreciatively when the stories reached their climax. In many cases, answers were given as tales and the position of narrators enabled the leaders to influence the direction of the conversations (see chapter six: 6.2.3.) The impact of my presence was most obvious during these meetings with an audience. Even though I got the impression of how the regular meetings of the group were conducted, it was clear that my attendance transformed the meeting into a performance where the hierarchy and group formation was the main focus. This over emphasis of certain characteristics of the dergah was very informative, and it is a clear illustration of the impact of the researcher on the interviewees. The leaders gave the impression they wanted to give, which is in fact interesting because they are in the position of defining the structure and content of their dergah. Their power is constituted within the hierarchic structure of each dergah, theologically and historically legitimised. The processes of preservation of the social hierarchy are analysed in chapters five and six.

In a community-oriented society a highly respected individual is an important source for spreading idealised religiosity (Ataseven 1997: 84), a fact clearly illustrated by the rigid hierarchic structure of the Bektaşi fraternity. Still, with the aim of digging deeper and grasping some expressions given off[10], all the leaders were interviewed twice with a slight difference in the composition of the groups. The nature of the interaction between the interviewee and me as a researcher changed from the first to the second meeting. Once defined and localised, both parties approached each other with a higher degree of confidence, and an atmosphere of trust replaced the rigid performance of power relations.

[10] Goffman draws the distinction between expressions consciously given, and impressions unconsciously given off (Goffman 1971: 2).

2.4.3.1 The need to unmask sensitive information

In our culture there is a general desire to make both private and social life translucent. A secret has become something to be told, and the social sciences are expressions of the same tendency (Lee 1993:18). Attempts to reveal the hidden are based on the view that information is public property in which dispersion is beneficial for society in general. This approach may not always come to terms with the interests of the people being studied, creating opposition between the researcher and his subjects. Respect of sanctuaries is one of the ethical considerations central to the research process. What the investigator regards as proper means of data gathering, varies from covert investigation in private settings to overt research without ambitions of unmasking sensitive information. As each researcher has to follow his own preferences on this matter, I chose to respect that parts of the religious information, concealed in the 'Bektaşi secret' (see chapter six: 6.3.1) was esoterically closed for outsiders.

2.4.3.2 The concept of knowledge

The Bektaşi philosophy considers knowledge as given from the divine. Accumulation of information is a process of realising the nature of the world through levels of understanding, leading to enlightenment. The members climb the levels of knowledge, guided by their leader, and the nature of their belief changes in accordance with their placing. Presentation of information to an individual, who is not ready to receive it, will be a waste of time because of his inability to comprehend the hidden meaning, and it is believed that it might even harm him.[11] Initially, the religious leaders tried my competence in order to place me at the right level of understanding. This ranking decided which information they were willing to reveal and the way they presented it. They also warned me only to present facts in which I had grasped the secret meaning, and further stressed that real understanding comes from the heart, hence it is unexplainable. As I was in touch with different leaders guiding me through the information they personally considered appropriate for my level of competence, I realised that they graded me at different levels. This gave me, to a certain extent, the opportunity to acquire a holistic view of their philosophy, still respecting the fact that some information was concealed and therefore not available.

[11] The Bektaşi concept of knowledge is explored in detail in chapter five. I have emphasised this doctrine in order to throw light on maintenance and reproduction of the social hierarchy within the dergahs. I will argue that the notion of a gradual increase in divine knowledge creates a rigid hierarchic structure based on the different levels of human capacities.

2.4.3.3 Naiveté and power

The investigator's hunger for information is always evident in his interaction with the informants. To strike the golden mean between respect and data collection is an emotionally stressful process. To avoid the fear of offending the informants or only acquire information already available through publications, I settled in the role of a inexperienced but hard working young woman. This identity gave me leeway in many respects. My lack of knowledge and my failure of understanding was compatible with my age, and the fact that I asked until I was explicitly told that the information was reserved for initiated Bektaşi members, was in accordance with my naive and inexperienced appearance.

The leaders have unlimited influence on the religious life of their disciples and they exert a certain degree of power in other spheres of life. As I was in the role of a young student willing to learn and listen, the social status the leaders were ascribed by their dergahs became transferred into the power relations between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviews were non-standardised and the leaders were literate, articulate and self-conscious enough to use their power, resources and expertise to protect their reputation.

2.5 Concluding remarks

I was a stranger during the initial phase of my visit in Hacıbektaş. Codified behaviour is culturally conditioned, and to be able to understand my observations adequately, I entered the Alevi-Bektaşi community and got along with the people by general socialisation and communication. As time passed the means to acquire information became more structured, and implications like secrecy of knowledge and my impact as a researcher became evident. This chapter has mainly considered the process of getting information and gaining understanding of a society, which is in many ways basically different from my own. Appreciation of the approach that everything can be subject to scientific study, and the free reflection of each individual, are characteristics derived from the strongly individualistic context in which I grew up. The Turkish society is community-oriented, and the belief and practice of highly respected individuals have great impact for the people in their surroundings. Rigid hierarchic structures are in many cases favoured in place of democratic decision processes, a fact which made it complicated to gain information on topics considered sensitive. The gap between the cultural heritages of the informants and myself, required

unbiased willingness to step into the Turkish society and acknowledge the social structure of the people under investigation as reference frames of my analysis.

Understanding of the Turkish society is crucial not only during the fieldwork. Both analysis and presentation of the data collected in Turkey the importance of the social rules in which the informants are acting in accordance or in discordance with. For this thesis to adequately present possible explanations of the Bektaşi attitude of the revitalising processes within the Alevi-Bektaşi community, and hence, to describe relations between Alevism and Bektaşism in general, the context in which both these groups are operating, is taken into account. The next chapter provides an outline of politics, and military and state affairs in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic. The search for identity within the Alevi-Bektaşi community conforms with the general response pattern visible throughout the Turkish Republic, and is therefore part of national processes reaching beyond the re-establishment of the specific Alevi-Bektaşi identity. The last ten years, Turkish politicians and State officials have recognised the Alevi-Bektaşi community as one of the important social movements in Turkey. Therefore, they join into the process of redefining the Alevi-Bektaşi identity by participation in the official program at the annual ceremonies in Hacıbektaş, covering the political dimension of religiosity.

CHAPTER THREE:
ALEVISM IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

Our last names may be different, but our first name is Turkey.

Slogan from the ‘ Peace Party’ (Barış Partisi).

3.1.1 Dimensions of Religiosity

In addition to his religious sainthood, Hacı Bektaş Veli is perceived as a great philosopher, humanist and politician. Thus, the memorial ceremonies consolidate and maintain religious, cultural and political identities of the large heterogenous group of people attending for different purposes. It embodies several dimensions of religiousity, which are distinguished by activity and geographical location. In the tekke and by the holy sites in the vicinity of Hacıbektaş, activities with a folk-religious character take place (Ataseven 1997:144). Performances of magic and sacrifice are conducted by the tombs, or in places where holy people are believed to have spent their time. Strips of clothes are tied to trees and bushes, and stones are piled on top of each other in order to make wishes come true. Sheep are sacrificed and common meals are prepared in remembrance of the humanist approach taught by Hacı Bektaş Veli. Alevi cem gatherings are also a part of this dimension of religiousity.

The official program includes only activities satisfying needs within the dimensions of intellectual and political religiosity. Debates, selling of books, theatre performances, music and dance are all activities seen in the centre of the town. Because the ceremonies offer a concentration of left wing supporters, attendance by politicians and state officials are an important part of the official program. In 1999, their presence was most obvious during the opening ceremony, where their speeches bore witness to the governmental interest in the Alevi - Bektaşi community in order to attract voters.

The ceremonies have changed in character during the years, the main change being the governmental interference for the first time in 1990. After fifty years of ignoring the large non-Sunni Anatolian Alevi community, which had until then been a carefully

avoided matter in Turkish public discourse, the government decided to officially take notice of both the community and the activities carried out. They arranged an official program including speeches from ministers and other state officials.

The reasons why Hacibektaş was officially marked on the social map by the government are to be traced in the organisation of the Turkish state and party politics which, together, promote identity politics executed from minority groups, expressing their protest against inequality and domination. The development of the Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies and the state's attitude towards the Alevis exemplify how the Turkish State interprets internal disagreements as threats to its very existence, and how it needs to control these forces. By being present at the most important gathering of the Alevi-Bektaşi community and by taking part in organising the official program, they join the process of redefining the Alevi identity. The presence of politicians is understood by the fact that they need to gain votes. Governmental interest in the Alevi community led other politicians to recognise them as an important political group in Turkey. The idea of non-existing minorities has become difficult to sustain within the organisation of the Turkish State, forcing political parties to direct their attention towards these groups. The People's Republican Party, CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), which is supported by a large number of Alevis, surely considered their visit to Hacibektaş in August 1999 an important political act. Their chairmen who were greeted with enthusiasm worthy of heroes, represented the party.

This sudden governmental interest is also to be explained by structural and ideological changes within the heterogeneous complex of different initiatives, associations and actors, called Alevism (Vorhoff 1999: 136). The renewed interest in the Alevi identity, with attempts of redefinition and revitalisation, started in the 1980s. The most active groups in this renaissance emphasise the cultural and political elements of the Alevi identity, which also are the elements stressed during the annual ceremonies in Hacıbektaş. The process is driven by the reciprocal action of governmental interest in Alevism and the revitalisation from within the groups.

3.1.2 This chapter

Alevi revitalisation can only be understood in the context of the Turkish society, which I will argue, is best understood by its need for identity formation and legitimacy on all levels

from the State, military and politicians all the way down the hierarchy to social movements engaging in identity politics. This chapter aims at locating the Alevi community within this context, including the relationship with the state and executive politics. The basis of the state's organisation and for the performance of politics are the tenets of Atatürk, presented as Kemalism. An outline of the Kemalistic project is important in order to elaborate processes on the political arena since the 1950s. A consideration of the political landscape of State, army and politics intertwined, will provide the rest of the necessary background information before introducing Alevism by its means of identity politics. Then, the heterogeneous Alevi movement will be described. Alevi and Sunni groups identify themselves in opposition to each other. As the relationship between them is a part of their respective identities, this chapter will provide an outline of this relationship in order to crystallise its significance within the Alevi renaissance.

3.2.1. Kemalism

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk[1] established the Turkish Republic on October 29th 1923, aiming at constructing a homogenous Turkish identity as the foundation of a project of modernisation. This project, Kemalism (*atatürkcülük*), is summarised in six constitutional principles, of which laicism (*laiklik*) and revolutionism (*inkilapcilik*) are of importance for this thesis.[2] The Kemalistic understanding of laicism is not only separation between state and religion, but a subordination of religion which defines Islam an affair of the state. The principle of revolutionism gives both individual and groups the responsibility to have a permanent and unreserved faith in the Kemalistic process of reform and modernisation. These principles were constitutionalised in 1937 and are still the cornerstones of the

[1] Atatürk literally means father of the Turks. He was a general in the army and some of his greatest achievements were during the war of independence in 1921-22. After World War I, Turkey was among the loosers of the war and had to sign an agreement in Sevres in 1920 which left nothing of the once great Empire of the Ottomans. Fighting against both the Sultan in government and external enemies, Mustafa Kemal laid the basis of the new republic which recieved its new boarders through the agreement in Lausanne, July 24th, 1923.

[2] The other principles are Nationalism, complete political independence, Republicanism, opposed to the monarchy, Etatism, the cornerstones of the economy under the complete control of the state, and Populism, support from the people (Dankwart 1985: 237).

Turkish state. Devoted Kemalists of the population are actively upholding the principle of revolutionism, explaning unpopular rules and regulations in favour of Atatürk (see chapter four: 4.7.1).

In addition, two principles not written in the Constitution, are in practice important for the understanding of the organisation of the Turkish state and public politics. First, the army has to be in control of all political processes and state affairs to secure the principles of Kemalism, and to secure progress of the project of modernisation. In addition to be the first President of the Turkish Republic and the leader of the only political party, CHP, Atatürk was also a military general. Naturally, the military was given an autonomous and integral position in the decision making process of Turkey. Second, Turkey was to be a secular republic which, in accordance with the principle of laicism, separated the religious institutions from the state and enabled the state to be in complete control of these institutions. Atatürk tried to create a set of national myths, rituals and symbols to replace those of Islam, with the aim of lessening the need for religion, to undermine its importance in public life, and to finally get rid of "this decayed corpse which poisons our lives" (Lange 1998: 20). This extreme interpretation of secularism was a part of the fundamental basis of change both for the people and the nation as a whole. "God was to be twice replaced: as the source of sovereignty, by the people, as the object of worship, by the nation" (Vorhoff 1998a: 223). In order to limit the importance of, and increase the state's control over Islam, Atatürk abolished the Caliphate and replaced the Sultan with the National Grand Assembly which passed decrees under his guidance. Affairs related to Islam were submitted to the Directorate of Religious Affairs, DIB (Diyanet Işleri Başkanlığı), which is under the Grand National Assembly. This made it possible to control the religious affairs of the nation. In addition, the Islamic Law was replaced by a secular legislation, Islamic education was closed down, the script was changed from Arabic to Latin, and emphasis was put on the pre-Islamic history of Turkey. Religious costumes were only allowed in funerals or public religious arrangements, and the tekkes of the different religious orders were closed down (see chapter four: 4.5.2).

In accordance with the principle of maintaining unreserved faith in the project of modernisation, Atatürk has been subject to constant veneration and his policies have never been properly revised. He is both a national hero and saint, and severe criticism towards him and his policies are not tolerated. During the Haci Bektaş Memorial Ceremonies,

images of Atatürk, Haci Bektaş Veli and Imam Ali, flourished. These three most important personalities in the legendary history of the Alevis were figuring side by side with the Turkish flag. (The Bektaşi appreciation of the figure of Ali is analysed in chapter five: 5.3.5.1 and 5.3.5.2). The teachings of Haci Bektaş Veli and Atatürk are considered similar, both stressing humanity, equality and wisdom. With these qualities they both opposed Sunni Islam defined by the Ottoman State, with its appreciation of acceptance and obediance towards authorities.[3] They both have the role of saviour, giving relief to the Alevis in times of turbulence and problems. (The images of Atatürk and Hacı Bektaş Veli are further elaborated in chapter four: 4.3.1).

The status of Atatürk and his ideas combined with the autonomous authority of the army, which considers itself the true protector of the democratic processes, the basis of a modern nation, was supposed to secure the Kemalistic heritage. After his death on November 10th 1938, Kemalism has been the guiding principle of the Turkish Republic. The social engineering of Atatürk was based on Turkish[4] characteristics to secure the national unity. This approach excluded and denied the existence of a multicultural Turkish society, and it was not able to tolerate pluralism in any form. Imposing rather than debating the norms of modernity with both political and societal actors, reduced the practicability of the Kemalist modernisation effort right from the beginning. Hence, the project of establishing a national Turkish unity was imposed from above and created a harsh tension between Islam and the democratic creed. From that time on, both the state and politicians have tried in different ways to reconcile Islam and the modernisation effort, including the necessary element of secularisation. This tension is reflected in the ambivalence towards secularism and Islam in both state affairs and party politics in present day Turkey. As I have already made a distinction between state officials and politicians in

[3] Interview 9, Alevi. This is an example of how Alevis interpret the Ottoman history. For further analysis of the Alevi-Bektaşi representation of the past, see chapter four. Aspects of humanity and equality in the teachings of Hacı Bektaş Veli was also brought up by one of the Bektaşi informants. His approach focused on the fact that all religious figures teach humanity and equality, and that the Alevis had misunderstood the religious message from Hacı Bektaş Veli. He did not want to tell me the content of the message because it is a part of the secret knowledge only revealed to initiated members of the Bektaşi order (see chapter six: 6.3.1).

[4] In Turkey the term "türk" has both a national (linguistic) and racial meaning.

Turkey, the Turkish state and the national politics must be considered as two distinct forces in the race for power and control over the nation. But they are not equally strong. The state, controlled mainly by the military, has interfered several times in political proceedings defined as threatening to the Kemalistic base of the state. Politics are subject to supervision allowed in the Constitution of 1937, solidified in 1982.

3.2.2. Politics in Turkey

The political parties in Turkey are located in the forecourt of power. They are close to, but not in the centre of decision making, which is mainly occupied by the army. This section provides an outline of political events important for the understanding of Alevism in its national context.[5]

The period of one-party rule ended in 1950 when the old party of Atatürk, CHP, headed by president Inönü, had to give their position away to the only contesting party; the Democratic Party, DP.[6] This marked the end of a period of secular reform and centralised policy. The Democratic Party remained in power throughout the decade, introducing market economy and a more lenient attitude towards Islam. Unrest, high inflation and uncertainty increased until the military carried out a take over in 1960, the first of three coups during the century. The generals called for election in 1961 and banned DP from political activity. The period until the next coup in 1971 was marked by unstable coalitions and increased economic difficulties. Again, the army dissolved the government and directly interfered with the national political process.

The 1970s was a period of greater polarisation of the parties where increased confrontation between left (*sol*) and right (*sağ*) lead to instability on all levels of society. The left oriented CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) headed by Ecevit and its opposition, AP (Adalet Partisi) headed by Demirel were the two largest parties after the 1973 election. Until 1980, the leaders of these parties governed in different unstable coalitions. Because co-operation between the two parties was out of the question, CHP found support in the

[5] For further and more detailed information of political processes from 1923 and onwards, see Shankland 1993, Lange 1998, Ayata 1992/1997 and Savvides 1999.

[6] Inönü allowed for the first time in 1946 an opposition party, DP, to take part in the general election. CHP won majority and DP was not allowed to participate again before 1950.

Islamist MSP (Milli Selamet Partisi) of Necmettin Erbakan. Thus the door was opened for Islam to enter political life on its own terms in Turkey, and its influence grew rapidly. Economic and social problems grew correspondingly, and the continuous fight for power between Ecevit and Demirel increased the political violence and chaos. In September 1980, this led to the most severe coup d'etat. The army suspended all political activity, arrested more than 100 000 people and disbanded The National Grand Assembly. The main target was the political left: socialists, social democrats and members of trade unions. The generals reintroduced the old Kemalist synthesis of Turkishness (*türklük*) and Islam where the state's version of Islam was imposed from above. They followed a double discourse, segregating Islam from the public politics and at the same time incorporating Islamic politics into the system (Savvides 1999: 17-18). The army allowed civil elections in 1983, but they were completely under military control and only three parties were allowed to compete. These were the Nationalist Democracy Party, MDP, favoured by the army, The Motherland Party, ANAP, a rather liberal party headed by Turgut Özal, and the left-wing Populist Party, HP. ANAP won majority and Özal continued the project of "The Turk-Islam Synthesis" (*Türk-Islam Sentezi*), claiming that Islam and Turkishness had made up a harmonious and inseparable whole ever since the Turks converted to Islam. The terms "*Birlik ve Beraberlik*", "unity and togetherness", were used as the political rhetoric to propagate this theme. In addition, Özal maintained comparative peace by liberal policies in supporting the private sector, and stayed in power until 1989. The liberalisation of the 1980s weakened the political left considerably. Decrees, which limited the political freedom of the leftists, were passed[7], and the military supported the growing Islamic influence.

The Islamic response to these policies was multifaceted. On the political arena, people found voice in the banned Islamist Welfare Party, RP (Refah Partisi), headed by Necmettin Erbakan, and the Nurcu Movement and Nakşibendi tarikat became politically active. RP took part in and won the 1995 elections, and Islam was in the centre of political life and identity debate. This was a logical consequence of the foregoing policies of the

[7]From 1983 to 1987, it was forbidden for students and people employed at universities and colleges, to become members of political parties. Traditionally, the leftist parties had most of their supporters in this milieu. Lange 1998: 40.

military but they were not pleased with this new political paradigm. Acting according to the firm belief that non-compatible versions of Islam are direct threats to the stability and survival of the state the military establishment attacked "Islamic Fundamentalism" by introducing new laws restricting Islamic activities, including a resurgence of the dress code and limitations of religious practice (Savvides 1999: 21). Erbakan's government signed a formal declaration upholding the secular character of the Turkish state, but in February 1997 the National Security Council forced Erbakan to resign by issuing a list of instructions to the government which he refused to accept. In 1998, Turkey's Constitutional Court closed down the RP and banned Erbakan from political activity for five years.

In present day Turkey, politics are executed through three groups of political parties. The left-wing parties are still weak, and they are supported by the majority of Alevis who concidered themselves as social democrats. CHP, founded by Atatürk, is the only leftist party which is considered able to enter the Parliament, even though they did not win any representatives in the April 1999 elections.[8] The right wing parties ANAP and DTP are in the coalition in power, headed by Yilmaz and Ecevit. The Islamist party RP has been replaced by Fazilet Partisi, supervised by the military under the banner of fighting the threatening Islamists. Still, since 1997, the relationship between the Alevi community and the government has improved. In 1998, the government assigned an official payment from the state's budget to be spent on Alevi cultural affairs. There are official funds, politicians are laying foundation stones and attending cem evis, but there is still a sense of disequilibrium. State representatives do not approach the religious dimension of Alevism in accordance with the reconstructed Alevi identity, but attempt to join the identity making process by define Alevism as a part of the state Islam[9].

Public policies have, since the establishment of the republic, evolved around the issues of reconciling Islam and a secular, modern nation-state, and pleasing the Turkish army which has unlimited power in the decision making process. In the process of increasing liberalisation and polarisation, the rightists parties are gaining power at the expense of the political left. Islam gains a central position through the Türk-Islam Sentezi,

[8] Interview 9, Alevi.

[9] Examples of this attitude is to be found in Vorhoff 1999:142-143.

which in practice both supports state defined Islam and strengthens the Islamist groups. In addition, the state participates in the public debate, holding on to the Kemalist project, defining any groups opposing the ideological hegemony as security threats.

Still, the army is extremly popular in the Turkish population. The reforms of Atatürk and his created national ethic persist, and he is admired and venerated. The main channel for the Kemalist heritage are the public schools where he is presented as the national saviour beyond criticism and revisionism. The military considers itself the main protector of this national ethic. Their interference in political processes is legitimised by this self appointed role as the guardians of Kemalism.

3.2.3. The Turkish State and the Military

Savvides argues that the Turkish state suffers from a severe identity crisis because of its lack of both vertical and horisontal legitimacy[10]. In lack of loyalty to the ideas of the state and its institutions, and of tolerance of social groups, the state remedies its vulnerability by engaging in securitisation of issues, defining domestic challenges as security threats. Institutionalised military involvement in the political process undermines democratic consolidation by imposing regulations of discourse from above. This policy is antithetical to public debate and dialogue between different groups and alternative options which are necessary elements for democracy.[11] In addition, I would like to stress the challenges within the public sphere, where issues are debated and politics are made. Under domination and as subject to censorship by the military, the execution of party politics becomes a difficult task within artificial limits which ultimately undermine elements of democracy. This domination is undebatable due to its birth by the true Kemalistic regime in the 1920s.

Islam has always been a major force in the Turkish society, which the state gradually has become at emnity with. Due to the political and economic liberalisation of the mid -1980s where Islamic groups had the opportunity to bring themselves to the centre of political life, the state has defined them as internal threats in order to bring them under

[10] Vertical legitimacy is 'authority, consent, and loyalty to the ideas of the state and its institutions', and horisontal legitimacy is 'tolerance among social groups'. Savvides 1999:12.

state-control. At the same time, the Türk–Islamic Synthesis was reintroduced to overcome the imagined Islamic threat, and any Islamic group which did not fit into the framework of Islam created by the State was labelled as fanatic, radical and reactionary. State Islam, which is not necessarily compatible with practised Islam, ruled. Through control of, among others, the educational sector, assimilation was to be gained. The 1982 Constitution, drafted by the military, made religious education mandatory, meaning Islam within the frames of the state. One might call this a colonisation of Islam which gave the state a position in centre of supervision and control of Islamist discourse and activity (Savvides 1999: 20).

The 1982 Constitution also solidified the autonomous role of the army in the policy making and allowed the military to define both internal and external threats to the state. The National Security Council is in charge of security issues, and reduces the political autonomy and power of the National Assembly. Not only is there a general tendency to define internal challenges as security threats, there are constitutional opportuninties to carry through policies towards the "threatening" groups without making them subject to political debate.

3.2.4 Identity Politics

Since the 1950s, politics in Turkey can be characterised as a continuous fight for power between individual political leaders who maintain and increase their own position in society through their political parties. Coalitions and changes in policies are often strategically chosen for maintainance or increase in personal power (Lange 1998: 32-33). The Turkish state has, since its foundation, given the military a prominent role which has led to repeated military interference through the modern history. This lack of cooperation between the army, the state and the politicians, with each component fighting for their own survival, gives evidence of a severe identity crisis. The power to define whether the Turkish society is to be Islamic, secular, social democratic or liberal, is the issue at the basis of all actions done in the name of politics and affairs of state. The military is still in a favoured position, and serves the role of the identificator imposing its opinions from above. This situation requires elimination of troublesome movements, challenging this

[11]For a relevant discussion of the term democracy, see Savvides 1999: 3-6.

ideological hegemony. Social movements are viewed as monolithic, internal threats to be either ignored or eliminated. Among these groups we find Alevi groups trying to cope with their marginalisation. According to Ayata, Alevism in the 1990s is best recognised by the emergence of identity politics as the means of expressing protest against increasing inequalities and social, political and cultural domination. They are responding to increased gaps between the social classes and increased economic difficulties in general, products of the liberalisation of the 80s where the benefits were not equaly shared by the population. Their channels of political participation, the leftist parties, were eliminated by the military in the beginning of the 1980s, leaving identity politics as the only option for a public voice (Ayata 1997: 59-61). A natural consequence of the need to engage in identity politics, is the reconstruction of a specific identity, stressing qualities believed to be absent in the policies of the state, army and politics. The renaissance of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity is the concrete expression of the Alevi attempt to create accepted social and religious space in the Turkish society, and the Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies and the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik litertaure are the most visable signs of this attempt (chapter three: 3.3.3).

3.3.1. Classification of Alevi groups

There exist somewhere between 15 and 25 million Alevis in contemporary Turkey (Ataseven 1997:123, Kehl-Bodrogi 1997: xi). They are often viewed as a homogenous threat, but it is clear that all these people belong to different groups, which are far from similar. Alevism is often defined as a way of living, including a religious system, a specific culture, and a political orientation. Among these elements, individuals and groups choose how to define themselves. They do not always accept each other without reservations, sometimes they refer to each other as “fakes” or “misunderstood”.[12] What they do have in common is that their identity and social remembrance are constructed on the basis of chosen significant events from the legendary history. The following historical outline concerns only Alevism, leaving the Bektaşi remembrance of the past aside. Both groups consider themseves historically suppressed on the basis of different selected incidents of the past. As this survey is necessary to understand the foundation from which the

[12] Interview 4,7,8,9 Bektaşi Babas, regular members and an Alevi.

categories of Alevis are derived (see below), the history of the Bektaşi order will be elaborated in chapter four.

The Alevi groups historically consisted of the rural population of Eastern Central Anatolia, scattered around the area in small villages. They were self-supported and had their own legal and organisational structure. As long as the rural areas maintained relative peace, the central authorities did not show any interest worth mentioning. However, changes occurred after World War II when agriculture was modernised into cash cropping, and the structural changes gave surplus of labour and economic difficulties. Migration was for many villagers the best option for survival. Some moved to the urban areas, setting up businesses which most of the time barely survived. Others migrated to Europe, mainly Germany. Until the 1950s, migrants were mostly men leaving for seasonal work aiming to go back to their families. Later migrants brought their families and were determined to stay. After a while, young men and poor families became the largest groups of migrants both to Europe and urban areas in Turkey. After an increase in migrants in the 60s, an acceleration, especially abroad, was experienced in the 70s. In this first phase the migration offered the Alevis possibilities for upward social mobility. Until the 1980s, a significant proportion of the workers employed in the industrial sector were Alevis. This sector gave relatively good incomes, and they constituted large sections of the working class proper in the urban areas. They became a politically significant group, supporting leftism and the rising tide of social democracy in Turkish politics. But since the 1980s, they have experienced downward mobility, both economically and politically, and during the last ten years the social status and income of the educated middle class have been in decline.[13] The same pattern prevails among the migrants in Germany. The permissions to work abroad became restricted in the late 70s and early 80s, and it is no longer possible to gain visas to travel freely abroad in Western Europe. A large part of the Turks living in Germany are unemployed, experiencing the same situation they, or their parents moved away from. Today, the majority of Alevis live in urban areas. They constitute 25% of the

[13] An interesting illustration of this decline of the overall situation for the Alevis, is Ayşe Ayata's descriptions of the Alevis in 1992 and 1997 respectively. In the article "The Turkish Alevis" published in *Innovation* in 1992, she describes the Alevis as "... comprising a working class subculture of great organisational and political potential in contemporary Turkey." In 1997, she devoted significant space in the article to explain their decline during the 1990s.

population of Ankara and 15-20% of Istanbul's (Ayata 1997: 66). Politically, they have strengthened their domination of the social democratic parties, but, as we have seen, the left as a whole has lost prestige and power. Ayata describes the situation as: "The only solid supporter of the left in Turkey now is in the Alevi minority. And this leftism has become one of the ways of demonstrating their identity" (Ayata 1997: 69).

Alevism in present day Turkey has been classified in numerous ways.[14] On the basis of the explanation given of the general situation of the Alevis, I find the following three categories useful in a general outline of Alevism in contemporary Turkey.[15]

1. Rural Alevis
2. Urban Alevis
3. Returnees from Europe

The key terms connected to Alevi groups are migration and urbanisation. They were originally rural, and those who migrated to urban areas underwent both social and economic transformation in their attempt to adjust to the urban mode of living.[16]

The rural Alevis are living in villages in the Anatolian countryside. Each village (*köy*) is decleared by the state, and often various settlements are put together in one village, leaving dissonance between state given and traditional categories of village life. They have a traditional agricultural economy, tilling land which they own themselves. Some also receive money from migrated relatives in the cities or in Europe. Due to the steady increase in migration, the function of the village is changing, becoming a retirement basis for old people and an educational basis for the children. The state does not interfere in village life as long as order is kept and rural communities may run their own affairs. This low interaction activity has for a long time been convenient for the villagers as well, who have their own traditional system of dispute settling and authority chains. According to Shankland who studied Sunni and Alevi villages in the Black Sea area in 1993, the

[14] For others, see: Çamuroğlu, Reha "Alevi Revivalism in Turkey" *Alevi Identity,* 1998, and Bilici, Faruk "The Function of Alevi-Bektaşi Theology in Modern Turkey" *Alevi Identity*, 1998.

[15]My categories based on interviews (1,5 and 9. Alevi Dede, Alevi, Bektaşi Baba and regular Bektaşi members), and conversations.

[16] Interview 9, Alevi.

traditional structure of rural Alevism is changing, however, due to a steady depopulation and general attempts to become integrated into the Turkish society which is defined from the urban areas (Shankland 1993: xi-17). To fulfill this wish, they have to modernise (*modernleşme*) and develop (*gelişme*), which is their concept of modern people (*biz modern insanız*). Accepting the national central authority and wishing it to teach them Alevism (*Alevilik*) is a part of this process, which undermines the traditional structure of rural Alevism. In addition, a general scepticism towards their traditional faith, is developing among the Alevi villagers. They have come to doubt the existence of God and are leaning towards a secular humanitarian ethic containing some of the former religious elements, fused with Kemalism. Modern people also embrace the secular tenets of Atatürk and stress appropriate behaviour in society. The product of this fusion of traditional religious teachings is the Alevi commandment (*edep*) "Be master of your hand, tongue and loins!" (*Eline, diline, beline sahıp ol!)* changing into a secular ethic on the jural level. Within the Bektaşi order, the Sufi concept of the 'Perfect Man' is transformed into a set of morals referred to as the 'Mature Man' (see chapter five: 5.4.1 and 5.4.2). I will argue that we are witnessing results of the same processes of interpreting religious doctrines into social moral. In the Bektaşi case, this does not mean that they are loosing the religious approach to their doctrines, they are merely combining them with Kemalism.

The urban Alevis are living in big cities like Adana, Ankara and Istanbul. They are mostly migrants from rural areas seeking fortune in the cities. Unfortunatly, most of them remain poor and are fighting for survival both economically and ideologically. They live in the suburbs, and they often do not fit the occupational structure and have to create strategies and mechanisms for adjustment. They attempt to reproduce their traditional belief systems and organisations within the urban context, stressing the social solidarity of their religious network. The religious group becomes a social security mechanism in addition to its religious importance.

There are groups of Alevis in the urban areas often referred to as the Alevi elite. They have both a high income and educational level, and they are active in maintaining the Alevi culture and execution of politics, mainly connected to left wing parties. These groups perform religious activities in a secular setting, synthesising Kemalism and religious teachings into urban ethic. According to an Alevi informant in Ankara, urban

Alevis define their identity politically and culturally, whereas rural groups maintain their traditional religious identity.[17]

Urban and rural Alevis have in common that their identity is based on the life they are living in Turkey. Alevis returning from an often long stay in Europe (mainly Germany) provide an additional aspect of the general identity. Most of them migrated from the rural areas and return primarily to their home village, finding the same difficult situation they left. A common choice is to leave the village and settle down in the big cities, migrating for the second time. Helga Rittersberger-Tiliç has, through investigations in a town located in the Black Sea region, found that the migrant identity of the returnees from Germany living in the area, includes a strong Alevi identity in addition to being stigmatised on the basis of their stay in Germany (Rittersberger-Tiliç 1998: 69-72). The town under investigation is a mixture of Alevi and Sunni population and it belongs to an area of high out migration. As on the national level, the Alevis participated more in the migration processes than the Sunnis, due to their greater economic deprivation. The returnees live as a spatially as well as a socially segregated group in the town, socially stigmatised between two cultures. They are neither Germans nor real Turks, and they are given the label of *almancı*[18] which covers cultural pollution and the sense of otherness. They do, however, exercise a certain degree of power, arriving from the highly industrialised Western Europe which for most Turks is an unreachable goal. Apart from the economic power they constitute[19], they are also considered to be in possession of the power of knowledge. The returnees reformulate their identity as Alevis,which gradually becomes a part of the general Alevi community.

Explaining Alevism in categories is an attempt to describe the complex reality. Other criteria of categories might be as enlightening as these. Religious, cultural and political aspects are stressed differently among Alevis within the already mentioned

[17] Interview 9, Alevi.

[18] Literally German.

[19] Their economic standing was much better than before migration, and even though the majority of them did not participate in the active labour force, their lifestyles were above average standards of the town. Most of them were living as a kind of rentier class, their income being rents, payments or savings from Germany.

categories, and could serve as additional criteria, giving a further indication of the complexity.

During my fieldwork in Turkey, I spent my time in the environment of Alevis with relatively high education and income in Ankara. Naturally, my material is limited to the area of analysis to this group which consists of politically active people supporting left-wing parties as "The Republican People's Party", CHP, considering themselves as devoted Kemalists. Also, they are active in the presentation and maintainance of the specific Alevi culture, which is stressed at the expense of the religious dimension. There are also both formal, personal and kinship relations between these members and initiated members of the Bektaşi Order.

3.3.2. Alevi and Sunni

It is common among Alevis to refer to Islamists and the general Sunni population with the same label, namely Sunni[20]. The Alevi identity is today, and was historically, defined in opposition to this vague category of people and policies.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Alevis were characterised as a counter culture with their opposition to the urban, elitist culture of the Ottomans, and their resistance against pressure towards sunnification. They were regarded as a threat to the empire and in certain periods, they suffered persecution (see chapter four: 4.5.3 and 4.6.1). The establishment of the republic released them from pressure of assimilation through the Kemalistic project of secularism. The Alevis supported the republic in its infancy, hoping to be freed from the chains of a religious regime where their religious conviction and traditional organisation were considered heretic and rebellious. During the last fifty years the trend has been reversed, Alevism is not considered a potential threat to the state but the Alevis have periodically felt threatened by increasing sunnification of the state where they consider themselves unprotected against threats from Sunni groups. The fact that the country has been run in favour of (state) Islam is an element perceived as a continuation of the suppression of the Alevis in pre-Republican days. The double emphasis of the state is a betrayal of the republican cause and the solution for the Alevis to preserve their distinct identity is secularism including prohibitions against public display of religiousity. The

[20] Islamists are defined by Alevis as Muslims who want the secular laws of the Republic to be replaced by the Sharia.

content of the term secularism in contemporary Turkey, is a mixture of freedom of belief and prohibitions against visible signs of religious belonging. [21]

According to most Alevis, the most important threat in the present Turkish society are the Islamist groups fighting for a complete sunnification. Still, this conflict is not only between Islamists and devoted Alevis, but between more vaguely defined groups of Alevi and Sunni. As they possess different models of society, they represent incopatible worldviews and perceive each other as threats to their own existence. An example of disputes between these groups, is the national debate of veiling in public. In Turkey, veiling in state buildings is prohibited by law. Recent events where veiled women have been refused entrance at universities have resulted in a tense debate of the state's right to uphold directions on dress codes.[22] Between the two established opponents, Alevi and Sunni, this debate represents more than dressing. It reflects the state's double emphasis towards the role of Islam in society. Alevi response stress the heritage from Atatürk, which they are eager to uphold. In accordance with the wish for a complete secular nation where everyone has to perform their beliefs in private, they totally agree with the prohibition of veiling. Every person fighting for the right to wear their religious headscarf in public are considered Islamists.[23] Mutual distrust expressed in religious terms and lack of respectful dialogue characterises the relationship between the two camps, and Alevis tend to demonise the pro-Islamic movement, calling them fanatics. Sunnis dogmatically argue that they want to help the fallen people back to the right path to God, creating good Muslims of these non-religious people.

The opposition between the groups is also to be traced in national politics. Both Alevi and Sunni firmly support the parties which reflect most closely their religious or non-religious beliefs (Shankland 1993: 29). Local division between Alevi and Sunni expresses itself through the left/right division of national politics, making the opposition between them obvious on all levels of society. Governmental exploitation of this tense division became evident in 1997, when Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz, during the annual Memorial ceremonies in Hacibektaş, extended compulsory elementary education to an

[21] Interview 9, Alevi.

[22] For further and more detailed information, see Özdalga 1998.

[23] Interview 9, Alevi.

eight year period (Vorhoff 1999: 141). This was a harsh blow to the Imam Hatip Schools[24] which enjoyed great popularity in conservative Muslim circles. The decision was presented by the press as a gift to the Alevi community, even though this had never been a specific Alevi demand. Incidents like this enable the Alevi community to take advantage of the present anti-Islamistic atmosphere in Turkey, they indirectly worsen the relationship between the two camps as well.

Ruşen Çakır argues that the Alevis and the Sunni Islamists as rival movements are utterly dependent upon each other. He regards the Alevi activity carried out in Turkey in recent years as essentially political in nature, being a direct response to the rise of Sunni Islamism in the 1980s (Çakir 1998: 64). The two movements reinforce each other, and the nature of the tension between them can be characterised as the dynamic relationship between minority and majority groups, because the Alevi movement is taking the role of minority opposed to the Sunni majority.

Disagreements about how to live their lives and practise their religion are more important for the individual Alevi and Sunni. Traditional cultural, religious and organisational differences make them incompatible with each other. Shankland's studies in the Black Sea region show the huge differences in traditional social structure and order between Sunni and Alevi villages. He argues that Sunni traditional organisation is compatible with the structure of the nation-state, whereas Alevi villages are less successfully integrated into this structure. The religious system of the Sunnis has been associated with the urban government for centuries and they do not differ in sect from those who govern them. Both the state and the government support Islam, one motivated by social order, the other by popularity.The Sunnis can express their belief freely, without fear, because their religious symbols are compatible with the symbols of society. In addition, their traditional lifestyle implies obedience to the central authorities of the state. The traditional structure of rural Alevism is quite different. Historically, they lived in the mountain passes without interaction with the traditional authorities they were hiding from. They developed a system of dispute settling rooted in their religious system. The religious

[24] Education of religious staff. Turkey has about 500 secondary and high schools since the 1950s. Most of the existing Imam Hatip Schools were founded in the 1970s and 1980s ("The Increasing Loneliness of being Turkey" in *The Economist*, 19.07.98).

leader (dede) led the collective religious rituals and he was invited to settle disputes between the villagers. His decisions were absolute and all disagreements had to be solved before entering any religious ceremony, led by the dede. Today the influence of the dede has declined, and his duties are mostly to be in charge of the cem ceremonies (see chapter one:1.2.2). After the end of the Ottoman period, the villages were appointed a state employed leader, *muhtar*. Conflicts between two different chains of authorities occurred and, because of the general wish to modernise and become an integral part of the nation-state, the muhtars gained respect at the expense of the authority of the dedes. As a consequence, fewer collective rituals are performed, and there is a general decline in belief in the traditional religious system.

Both Alevi and Sunni acknowledge the legitimacy of the state within the frames of their own worldview. It is a reciprocal social structure: "Given that an authority is accepted, those who are subordinate attempt to manipulate those in authority to teach them in accordance with what they wish to learn" (Shankland 1993: 129). Alevis and Sunnis fight for two different identities within the frames of the Turkish Republic. This fundamental fight reflects the fact that the state and politicians try to serve two masters at the same time; Islam and Secularism.

3.3.3. Alevi Renaissance

Turkish societal actors, whether they are in minority or majority, in power or not, are all fighting for general acceptance and transmittance of their identity. The military state affairs and the execution of politics show clearly the ambivalent attitude towards Islam and secularism, which both are rooted in the consciousness of the nation. The deeply ingrained prejudices between Alevi and Sunni and their constructions of identities in opposition to each other, reflect the double emphasis on Islam and secularism by the state and in politics.

As the core of the Alevi identity politics, the rediscovering of the Alevi identity seriously started by the end of the 1980s, and a part of the identity reconstructed is marked by the Alevis having taken the role as minority. This emphasis might be a response to the dramatic events in the 90s. In 1993, 37 Alevis were killed in a fire at a hotel in Sivas. Alevis instantly blamed Islamistic groups for setting fire to the building, and criticism was raised against the state because the emergency aid was below acceptable standard, and they also experienced general passiveness by the security forces. From the Alevi point of

view it was not a result of any Alevi-Sunni conflict, but a more deeply grounded opposition between those in favour of democracy (Alevis, secularists, Kemalists), and those against it (Islamists) (Ataseven 1997: 9). Riots at Gaziomanpaşa in Istanbul in March 1995 is another remembered event. It was a violent assault on Alevi coffeehouses in which two people were killed and several others were injured. The following protest was violent in character, ending in a general slaughter were more than twenty people were shot dead by the police (Vorhoff 1998a: 222). A general shift in the state's attitude towards minority movements, where they are no longer ignored in the way they were before, might be another explanation of the Alevi revival. The Turkish state does not consider the Alevi movement as the most troublesome, but political and military strategies towards the Kurdish and Islamist movements might affect the Alevi movement as well.

Alevis complain that the Sunni Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) misuses faith and religion for politics, claiming it undermines the principle of a secular republic. Therefore, most Alevis tend nowadays to dismiss the idea of the foundation of an Alevi party.[25] Anyhow, violent events like the assault in Istanbul in 1995, stimulates the discussion on the necessity of an Alevi party, as they are criticising existing institutions in the Turkish society. They complain they are financing the Directorate for Religious Affairs by their taxes but do not benefit from it in any way. They are not even represented in the directorate. If the directorate is to exist, it needs to be restructured under democratic principles where each religious community will be represented by their own religious leaders. The compulsory religious instruction in public schools is criticised for focusing mainly on Sunni Islam and the Alevis consider this as an attempt of assimilation and contrary to the principles of secularism.

However, the growing enthusiasm for Alevi folklore, oral traditions and religious practice, is a more fundamental change in the Turkish society. Attempts of constructing a

[25] In 1995, the Peace Party (Barış Partisi) was established as a reaction to the ignorance on Alevi matters in national politics. It started out as a movement advocating equal treatment and rights to all ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. The party seemed to be a pure 'Alevi party', as it was set up by an Alevi businessman, worked with Alevi symbols and drew support from the Alevi community (Vorhoff 1999:136-137). Votes were expected especially from Alevis in urban areas, but after the 1999 elections, the party was closed down because of a massive lack of support (Interview 9, Alevi).

holistic identity based on a uniformed theological structure, flourish in publications of books and magasins. This is the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature, which is sustained by quite subjective attitudes and intentions (see chapter one:1.5.1). It does not only try to revive, but to reformulate and reshape the Alevi culture in accordance with the urban Alevi way of life which is different and not compatible with the traditional rural Alevi community. Due to migration and raise of the educational level, the urban Alevi elite has grown both in size and influence, and their interest in their cultural heritage has increased. The natural heterogenity of Alevism dissappears in the attempts of uniting different sets of belief. The urban groups are mostly concerned about the political and cultural aspects of Alevism. This makes the revival a difficult task due to the fact that it is a revival of a religious system in the name of secularism. In addition, the revival is not realised through the traditional Alevi institutions or by the traditional leaders, but by this western-educated elite via modern media and secular forms of organisation like associations, foundations, concerts, staging of traditional rites, public conferences, and publications (Vorhoff 1998a: 234). Further, the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature implies representations of the past which can be characterised as imaginations and inventions of a supposed common history among the different groups of Alevi and the Bektaşi order. Representations of the past are significant elements within identity construction, and hence, within the execution of identity politics, and therefore, will be further analysed in chapter four. Members of the community may be united by bonds of blood through the genealogies of the dede. Historical considerations often make up more than two-thirds of the total volume of the new publications on Alevism, and it is typically written in the "classical" narrative form of historiography (Vorhoff 1998a: 236, 246). The fragmentary documentation of Alevi history allows the possibility of flexibility in dealing with the facts. Each past era has produced its heroes and anti-heroes, each representing the opposing principles of Good and Evil. This does not have to be interpreted as religious considerations, but mainly an ethical system of binary oppositions.

The Alevi ve Bektaşilik literature elaborates the relationship between Alevism and Islam, searching for the definition of the specific and autonomus "Alevi Islam" which does not acknowledge the unity of all muslims. This religious system often has the image of secularism and appeals to young urban Alevis who do not know much more about their culture than the fact that they are Alevis. Even though performance of the traditional

ceremonies are ceasing in the rural areas, the Alevi cem evis, their centre of cultural and religious gatherings, grow in numbers in the big cities.

3.4.1 Concluding remarks.

I have chosen to approach the general Turkish society from the angle of identity construction, claiming that Turkish national politics is executed under strong influence of the military fraction, which has most of the ultimate power in national affairs. State, military and politics are intertwined institutions, which all strive to clearly define their profile independently of each other. It is a legitimacy crisis in the higher levels of society. Within this context, Alevis possess an alternative model of society than both the State defined model and the Sunni way of living. Together with other Turkish movements, like the Kurdish and the Islamist, the Alevis engage in identity politics. This makes the need of clearly defined and legitimised identities apparent. The revitalisation of the Alevi identity is clearly illustrated in miniature during the three day gathering in Hacıbektaş, where State representatives and politicians participate in the ongoing process of reconstruction of identity, carried on mostly by Alevis from urban areas. Who defines and from which sources, is a complex matter of past and present, Alevis and non-Alevis, intertwined. The role of the Bektaşi order within this renaissance is as interesting as the general relation between Alevism and Bektaşism. In order to define their position, this relationship has to be considered by a closer look on their respective selections of past incidents. Contemporary Alevism and Bektaşism are constructed on the basis of different historical episodes, with the same conclusion of marginality and suppression.

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE HISTORY OF THE PAST

"The past reveals to the present only
what the present is capable of seeing."

R.H.Tawney

4.1.1 The Heterodox Past

> "The word heterodoxy, what does that mean?" "It is the opposite of orthodoxy. Out of rule. People that do not accept the official rules of Islam. They are not objecting to Islam, but to the written rules of Islam."[1]

The quotation above is from an interview with a member of the Bektaşi Order. We were discussing the present situation of the Bektaşis in Turkey, and I brought the word heterodoxy into the centre of attention because it generally serves as a reference to suppressive episodes in the past. It is obvious that the question automatically provoked an explanation of the historical relationship between the orthodox, Ottoman authorities and the Alevi-Bektaşi community. The answer touches the essence of identity construction within this community. The world is seen through a historic filter, which crystallises objects and makes them appropriate in accordance with the present situation. The answer shows that the respondent identifies himself with a certain interpretation of the past, an identity constructed on the base of marginality through an extensive, historical use of the term heterodoxy. This common base is the main ingredient in the feeling of fraternity among the Alevis and Bektaşis. Defining heterodoxy as 'out of rule', and defending the right to be called Muslims, imply an identity strongly defined as marginal and in the periphery of power. Maintenance of this interpretative memory of the past is realised through the annual ceremonies in Hacibektaş.

[1] Interview 6, Bektaşi member.

4.1.2 This chapter

This chapter provides an illustration of how the Alevis and Bektaşis interpret and preserve their identity through selected episodes of the past. It investigates how their social memory embraces the past, uniting them in a concept of minority within the present Turkish society. Their marginality is annually celebrated through the commemorative activities in Hacıbektaş, which is a central part of the revitalisation of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity. Due to the rather resigned Bektaşi attitude towards the reconstruction of a common identity, the Bektaşi selection of past episodes is considered. The Bektaşi interpretation of the past contains both ascendancy and oppression united in the identity as a minority. The Alevi and Bektaşi selections of past incidents are different roads leading to the same conclusion, namely marginality and suppression.

4.2.1 Preservation of Identity through Commemorative Ceremonies

The throbbing life of Hacibektaş during the ceremonies is remarkable. Crowds of people are circulating the area, visiting holy places, listening to speeches and debates, and socialising around the different stands of information about the Alevi-Bektaşi community. It is the atmosphere of festivity in which Alevis and Bektaşis commemorate their past and embrace their present identity. This annual highlight of collective production of memory strengthens the feeling of belonging to the community with its distinctive past and present social existence. The three day gathering is like the revitalisation of Alevism in miniature. The reciprocal influence between past and present within the complex process of identity construction is brought to the surface of consciousness and hence, to the centre of attention. Even though the structure of the cognitive universe of an individual is acquired throughout life by listening to myths and stories of legendary character, taking part in traditional events connected to the stories is crucial to the feeling of closeness to the past. Myths and legendary stories are reminders of continuity between past and present, a message that is easily sustained by performance. Rituals represent the continuity by repetition of formalised performance and specification of the relationship between the participants and their ritual actions (Connerton 1991: 43,45,54,57). Commemorative ceremonies constitute a distinctive category of rituals on this matter. In addition to re-presenting and implying continuity, they claim the idea of life as a structure of celebrated recurrence. This is a notion breaking with the modern principle of development that serves as a guiding impetus of the Alevi-Bektaşi community. The celebration of this continuity becomes meaningful through calendrically observed repetition because calendars make

possible the distinction between quantitative and qualitative identical units of time (Connerton 1991:64-65). In this lies the importance of organising the ceremonies in Hacibektaş annually. Through repetition, the celebration itself becomes part of the continuous history.

4.2.2 Social Memory

Arranging commemorative ceremonies is an extensive activity that requires a considerable amount of resources. Investing effort in such a project signalises the importance of the memorised figure or event throughout the society in question. The Hacibektaş Memorial Ceremonies locates Haci Bektaş Veli in the centre of their common base of identity. In addition, such an arrangement creates the time and space for the individual to personally embrace the social memory of the past. This memory is de-contextualised as collective interpretations of the vanished past, which are developed in present time in a specific context. It is not an equivalent of remembered sequences of the past because it has its own structure, and it creates meaning rather than passing on knowledge (Eriksen 1996:36). The commemorative activities in Hacibektaş are both emotional and intellectual. Following the distinction of Connerton, they engage in both historical reconstruction and production of social memory (Connerton 1991:13). The 'historical apparatus', which are mainly institutions and actors with a certain degree of influence and publicity (Eriksen 1996: 38), contributes by satisfying the intellectual hunger for official information about both recent and distant past. It re-constructs history, referring to the past with a high degree of truth-value and providing the community with a message of suppression. The collective, social memory, alive in the individual remembrance, creates a feeling of contact with the past, which define present social existence as marginal in relation to the rest of society. The feeling of being oppressed is in the mind of the individual, regardless of personal experiences of suppression in present time. The practice of historical reconstruction, and the creation and maintenance of social memory, are political activities directed to shape and uphold a universe of meaning. As a part of the Alevi-Bektaşi culture, these activities mutually guide each other towards a common experience of oppression. As the past is re-presented, the identity of the community is continually redefined. Still, the interpretations constantly evolve around some basic elements. The importance of Haci Bektaş Veli and specific incidents of suppression feature among historical and legendary facts that provide frames of identifying the common grounds of Alevism and Bektaşism.

4.3.1 The image of Haci Bektaş Veli[2]

Banners and posters with pictures of Haci Bektaş Veli flourish in Hacibektaş during the ceremonies. The most common pictorial representation of the saint emphasises his holyness by picturing him with a bonnet in the shape of the letter *elif*, which symbolises God. His kindness and strength are symbolised by a deer and a small lion, which he holds in his hands. He is remembered and celebrated as a holy man who was in communication with the divine. He is believed to have mediated between God and human and his partly divine qualities made him a bridge builder between divinity and profanity. The Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature identifies his holyness as living in the hearts of people, depicted through poetry and music. His behaviour and teachings are examples to be followed by believers. This is not only due to his holyness, but also because he is wisdom personified. His teachings have constantly been enlarged to all spheres of life of both Alevis and Bektaşis, and the universal character of his words has been emphasised as being as valid today as it was in the 13th century. He is perceived as representing the same path as Atatürk, and they are complementary guides of the right way of living. They both advocated what was genuinely Turkish by using the Turkish language and re-establish and reconstruct pre-Islamic traditions. They both taught equality among every human, including women, and they appreciated science as crucial for human development.

> A path not guided by science goes to darkness.[3]

This saying is attributed to both Haci Bektaş Veli and Atatürk. Together, their venerated figures form the ideal way of living. They are pictured together on banners and posters featuring in Hacibektaş every August, and there is an Atatürk corner in the main Bektaşi tekke. They are historical and legendary figures to identify with, and the commemorative acts imply remembrance of both these figures and a specific set of moral values.

Haci Bektaş Veli is foremost a legendary person. The sources of his life are insufficient. The main source of his legendary biography is the Vilayetname of Haci Bektaş Veli. This is a hagiography existing in different editions and translations. It contains numerous stories about his miraculous powers, which prove his holyness and

[2] The name given him by his birth was Bektaş, which, according to Birge, means ‘an equal with a prince’ or ‘companion in rank’ (Birge 1937: 36). The two other names, Hacı and Veli, are titles of honour he acquired through life. He received the title Hacı by performing the hajj in a miraculous way (Smith 1971: 21-24).

[3] Museum catalogue, 1999, Hacbektaş Museum.

maintain the distance between him and the mundane world. These legends are remembered and written down for and by dervishes for religious purposes, and this makes it hard to study them comparatively and to distinguish historical facts from them (Vorhoff 1998b:24). Historical facts about Haci Bektaş Veli are a matter of dispute, and the following description of his life is an attempt to let legendary stories, historical research and utterances from the Alevis and Bektaşis I interviewed during the fieldwork, complement each other in a holistic picture of the saint.

4.3.2 The life of Haci Bektaş Veli

In spite of the fragmented sources about both historical and legendary details of Haci Bektaş Veli's life, there is agreement centred on the fact that he was a Sufi belonging to the Turkish tribes in Anatolia, following the teachings of the Central-Asiatic saint Ahmed Yesevi.[4] Vilayetname tells us that Lokman Perende, a disciple of Ahmed Yesevi and the teacher of Bektaş, soon realised that Bektaş was exceptionally gifted.[5] According to legends, he came from Horasan. This is a cliché often used in ancient chronicles and hagiographies, which mainly refers to the idea of migration (Melikoff 1998:1). He arrived in Anatolia in the 13th century[6] and found hospitality in the village Soluca Kara Öyük.[7] He lived the rest of his life in this village, later called Hacibektaş, with a woman called Kadincik Ana[8] and her spouse Idries. His life was dedicated to meditation and spirituality, and although he was a Muslim, he also held on to shaman traditions still alive among the Anatolian villagers. He was one of the dervishes of the time who functioned as bridge

[4] For further information about Yesevi, see Ataseven 1997: 104-117.

[5] This story is an example of legends about Hacı Bektaş Veli, which provides proof of his holiness and contact with the divine sphere. It tells us that when Lokman arrived for the first lesson with Bekta¶, both Muhammad and Ali were already there, teaching him respectively external and internal science.

[6] The year of arrival is not certain. The Directorate of the Museum of Hacı Bektaş Veli tells us that he lived from 1248 to 1337, and that he lived in the village from 1270 (Museum catalogue, 1999). Mélikoff does not agree on these dates, and says that he lived from 1220-1273, and arrived in Soluca Kara Öyük in 1230. She refers to sources describing Hacı Bektaş as one of the disciples of Baba Ëlyas, who was of the leaders of the Baba-i revolts from 1239-1240 (Mélikoff 1998: 2).

[7] The name is said to have the meaning of 'watery, black hill' (Conversations and guidance in Hacıbektaş in August 1999.)

[8] Literally, *kadın* means woman. The relationship between Hacı Bektaş and this woman is a matter of dispute. Some say she became his wife, others say she was his daughter. The story of the five stones at Beştaşlar (see Smith 1971: 68-70) informs us that Kadıncık Ana had a husband called Idries whom Hacı Bektaş lived together with. There is, however, agreement on the fact that they had a very special relationship.

builders between Islam and the Anatolian traditions. Islam was brought to the area by the conquerors, and in a melting pot of Shamanism, Christianity, Manicheism and Gnosticism, the mystical dervishes also served as mediators between the rulers and the villagers. Politically, the newly conquered area consisted of minor units trying to maintain and expand its territories. Lack of political stability and continuous warfare contributed to unrest among the people. In this matter, the dervishes were channels for frustration among the exploited people as they represented the individual search for unity by integrating Islam with already existing, local traditions. Haci Bektaş Veli spoke the language of the people and performed miracles and devotional activities in accordance with local traditions. Through his religious performances, recorded in the Vilayetname, he is remembered as a man of the people. These legends legitimise the veneration of sites in the vicinity of Hacibektaş.

Stories about his life and performances were transmitted orally for generations after his death, until collection of the Vilayetname. Other legends are still told and interpreted orally, and the once clear examples of his guiding behaviour and teachings vanish through time because he did not leave a specific set of procedures for his followers. There are no certainties in the assumptions of what he left upon his death. Members of the Bektaşi Order focus on his quality as a spiritual teacher, stressing that he opened a school to educate illiterate villagers. According to Melikoff, Haci Bektaş did not establish any religious order during his lifetime, nor did he have any disciples. She says, however, that an order was established right after his death (Melikoff 1998: 2). Trimingham goes even further, suggesting that the relationship between the Bektaşi Order and Haci Bektaş might not be right. He is the centre of identity, but the order was established in the 15th century by Balim Sultan (Trimingham 1971:55).

Despite the insufficient knowledge about the period of Haci Bektaş Veli's life, he is perceived as the original founder of Bektaşism. As the objective of this chapter is to analyse the interpretation of the past within the Alevi-Bektaşi community, the certainties and truth-value of historical and legendary information is of second priority. The choice of structure for the following historical outline is based on interviews conducted for the purpose of grasping the Alevi-Bektaşi understanding of history. Hence, it is surveyed thematically by the issues considered most important by the interviewees. The history is told from the Bektaşi point of view in order to recognise the basic foundation of their identity. Still, the descriptions of each issue are complemented by historical research.

4.4.1 Creation of the Ottoman Empire

We are faced with an almost undocumented period between the lifetime of Haci Bektaş and the later emergence of Bektaşi as an institutionalised collective in the 16th century (Karamustafa 1993: 122). This was the period of initiation of the Ottoman Empire, in which the followers of Haci Bektaş are believed to have taken part. Chronologically, this is the first of the most important episodes after his death. Socially, it is recalled as a wealthy period, which gives a wider perspective to later incidents of persecution. Even though the history of the Bektaşi order is mostly a remembrance for oppressive occasions in the past, they were once in the forefront of power and in alliance with the authorities. As they fell into disgrace, they experienced centuries of suppression.

Members of the Bektaşi order explain the past prosperity of the brotherhood in terms of relations with the sultanate, through the Ahi guild organisation and through infiltration of the Yeni Ceri army (see below). After the Seljuk Empire dissolved into small independent units at the end of the 13th century, Sultan Osman I gained control of the area and initiated the Ottoman period. The 14th and 15th century was the peak of the wealthy period for the followers of Haci Bektaş Veli, and during the first three hundred years the sultans politically supported them by donations and gifts for their tekkes and zaviyes.[9] In the reign of Sultan Bayezid II, at the end of the 15th century, alliance between the sultanate and the Bektaşi Order is seen in the fact that the sultanate financed constructions of several tekkes. The donations were motivated by the desire to strengthen the dynasty on both supernatural and mundane levels (Faroqhi 1995: 174). The dervishes cultivated *vakif*[10] land granted by the sultan, and the tekkes played a pioneering role in Turkish settlement in the newly conquered land (Inalcik 1970: 208-209). As villages came into being around the tekkes and zaviyes, Hacibektaş Village grew up in the vicinity of the central tekke of the Bektaşi order during the 16th century.[11] The surrounding house holdings were in mutual contact and dependence with the convent, which was one of the larger economic units in Central Anatolia. The main sources of information regarding the nature of the Hacibektaş tekke

[9] In the translation of Law 677, prohibiting all dervish orders in 1925, tekkes are defined as dervish lodges, and zaviyes as central dervish lodges (see Appendix: 1)

[10] Tax exempted pious foundations.

[11] There is no agreement on the time of construction of the tekke in Hacıbektaş. According to Vilayetname and Faroqhi, the nucleus was built during the lifetime of Hacı Bektaş and his mausoleum was erected immediately after his death. Later, several sultans complemented the convent with new parts until completion in the 16th century (Faroqhi 1976a: 183-185).

within the Ottoman society are, apart from Vilayetname, inscriptions within the compound of the tekke and in other buildings in the village, and Ottoman documents like defter, registers in the Ottoman financial administration and bureaucracy. Even though the sources are incomplete and sometimes contradictory, it is possible to draw some conclusions about its position in society. It was a convent of medium size, smaller than huge compounds built by the sultans in the urban areas, but still self-governed and in control of other Bektaşi establishments. There seems to have been remarkably little interference from outside, in accordance with a central policy of letting local powers administer the countryside as long as the peace was preserved. The central administration and the Bektaşi Order governed their respective spheres in society, legitimised by different historical explanations of their superiority. The alliance ended, however, with the death of Bayezid II in 1512, and during the next century, the two great institutions, which had started with co-operation and harmony, ended like opposing poles in the Ottoman religio-political culture (Kafadar 1995: 97-98).

4.4.2 The Ahi organisation

Historical sources are mostly silent on the Bektaşi involvement in the Ahi organisation as well. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to believe that the connection between the Bektaşis and the sultans worked on many levels, one of which was through trade alliances. The Ahi guild organisation was a fraternity of merchants and artisans for the purpose of keeping a high level of trading moral. It was a continuation of the Fütüvvet institution, which emphasised youthfulness, bravery, unselfishness and chivalry.[12] Originally, it was an expression of young, heroic and self-sacrificing soldiers in the army, but was kept alive in brotherhoods in urban environments where rules for morally correct behaviour was needed. Without doubt, the trading sphere was such a place (Ataseven 1997: 258). The Ahis were involved in the institution of vakif*,* and they were situated in towns where they had lodges built up around each line of business and around the masters of each craft. In these places, common meals were given, and singing, dancing and praying took place. These rituals showed similarities with Bektaşi rituals, and the Ahi connection to both Haci Bektaş and Osman I is documented in the Vilayetname of Haci Bektaş. This connection probably was of utmost importance for the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

[12] EI(2nd ed.) art. “Futuwwa”.

4.4.3 The Yeni Ceri Army

The Bektaşis were also directly connected to the sultanate through the Yeni Ceri Army, which was the regular infantry created by Sultan Murat I in 1362.[13] The recruiting was based on the devşirme system of periodical levy of Christian children.[14] It was the principal force of the Ottoman authorities, and rendered possible the vast conquests made in this and the following centuries. The relationship between the corps and the Bektaşi order is described in the Alevi-Bektaşi homepage as follows:

> "Down through history Bektaşi Babas accompanied the Yeni Ceri troops, acting in the capacity of chaplains. An official representative of Haci Bektaş lived in the barrack of the corps. The head of the Bektaşi Order, on being appointed to his place, is said to have come by custom to Istanbul, where after a formal procession, his tac[15] was placed on his head by the Commander-in-Chief of the Yeni Ceri. Selim III is said to have appealed to them as servants of Haci Bektaş. In becoming enrolled as members of the corps a vow of faithfulness to the Way of Haci Bektaş was extracted from each soldier."[16]

How the Yeni Ceri came to pay allegiance to Haci Bektaş is very unclear, but it is believed that from the beginning the new troops were under his patronage and regarded as affiliated to his followers. As existence of a Bektaşi fraternity is uncertain at the time of initiation of the corps, the quotation above describes the relationship at a later stage. It implies a fixed set of Bektaşi procedures for the soldiers to relate to, and a developed philosophy for identification. An urban brotherhood of Bektaşi dervishes was created in the 16th century by standardisation of the fragmented heritage from Haci Bektaş Veli, and at that time, the Yeni Ceri army was one of the cornerstones of the Ottoman society. The quotation implies mutual influence between Bektaşism and the army. On one hand, the presence of Babas within the corps and the Bektaşi identity of the soldiers are emphasised. On the other hand, a certain level of reciprocal influence is realised by recognising the role of the Commander in Chief in the initiation ceremony of the head of the Bektaşi order. Despite uncertainties,

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[13] The organisation is believed to go back to sultan Orhan, the successor of Osman I.

[14] 'Devşirme' was the Ottoman term for the periodical levy of Christian children for training to fill the ranks of the Yeni Ceri, and to occupy posts in the Palace service and in the Ottoman administration (EI, 2nd ed., art, 'Devshirme'). It is uncertain when this levy of Christian boys from Balkan started, but it was well institutionalised in the 15th century. For further information, see Goodwin 1997: 32-53.

[15] Literally headgear, crown.

[16] Alevi-Bektaşi homepage, http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis.

this relationship is an important part of the social memory of the Bektaşis. There is agreement on the fact that a relationship was obtained, and it is remembered as an important part of the identity. In the early years of the Memorial Ceremonies in Hacibektaş, Yeni Ceri bands attended and performed Turkish military music (Norton 1995: 192), and Yeni Ceri prayers with devotional vows to Haci Bektaş, are quoted in the Alevi-Bektaşi homepage.[17]

4.5.1 The Destruction of the Yeni Ceri Army in 1826[18]

Through the infiltration in the Ottoman army, and supposedly, by being a part of the Ahi organisation, the Bektaşi order became a part of the higher strata of society. A new urban life characterised by essentials like coffehouses, tobacco and opium, was growing, and gave social space for the Sufi orders to strengthen their influence and visibility as an integrated part of the urban Ottoman environment (Kafadar 1995: 45). Within this urban context, the discipline among the Yeni Ceri soldiers declined as the levy system of recruitment faltered towards the end of the 16th century. Admission of foreign elements[19] caused the corps to loose its value, and the soldiers gradually became more interested in trade than warfare. They were given the authority to deal in salaried positions, which consequently completed the ruin of the corps as a military force. The Yeni Ceri was never enormous, on their most they counted 40-50 000 soldiers. Still, they gained power to terrorise both sultans and the civilian population, and they controlled the political sphere by appointing and removing vizirs. The sultans were under the power of the army until Mahmut II created a new corps in 1808. The Yeni Ceri soldiers revolted when the new army was announced, ending up in a general slaughter of soldiers on the 15th of June 1826 (Birge 1937:76-77). This was the end of the Yeni Ceri army, and inevitably it affected the Bektaşi order and their tekkes and zaviyes. The sultan called a session of the high-ranking

[17] An example of such a prayer:

"Allah Allah illallah. We are blameless. We have our hearts afire.

Our devoting to the Sultan is revealed.

The Three, the Seven, the Forty, the Light of the Prophet

Muhammed, the Beneficence of Ali, our Pir the head sultan Hacı Bektaş Veli,

Let's say Hu for all of them, Huuu' (http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis).

[18] For further information about the destruction of the Yeni Ceri Army in 1826, see Reed 1951.

[19] Sultan Murad II admitted entertainers from the circumcision of Prince Muhammad III into the ranks of the Yeni Ceri. At that time, the levy was already expanded from Balkan to Anatolia, and Muslim substitutes were granted due to a lack of Christian boys (EI, 1st ed., art., 'Janissaries', Goodwin 1997: 32-53).

ulema and representatives of other dervish orders. They decided on the abolition of the order, including execution of the most prominent members and surveillance of the rest. The old convents were confiscated and turned into Friday mosques, *medreses* and *mescits*,[20] or they were turned over to other dervish orders. Those tekkes recently built for which no new use could be found were destroyed, and in most cases mausoleums of saints were the only part of the compound which escaped destruction (Faroqhi 1976b: 88). The tekke in Hacibektaş was given to the Nakşbendi order and the Bektaşi dervishes departed, converted or were executed. The central administration confiscated the vakifs, and it seems that landholders profited from the sale of tekke lands. Local residents made up the vast majority of the buyers and a considerable number of the buildings were torn down and sold as building material (Faroqhi 1976b: 78-79). In Ottoman administrative documents, this extensive extermination of Bektaşism is legitimated both by their heterodox beliefs and their connection to the Yeni Ceri army. Among Bektaşi members in present Turkey, this incident is remembered as the most severe examples of suppression. Both explanations of the reason for the persecution are accepted, and it has become an important part of their identity.

4.5.2 The Law of 1925

After the reign of Mahmut II, the relatively tolerant regimes made it possible for the order to re-establish their organisation. From the 1850s, they were allowed to practice again, and under the government of a declining Ottoman regime, the Bektaşi order grew strong until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. As a part of the secular reformation of the state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk prohibited all dervish orders by Law 677 of November 20th 1925 (see Appendix). The tekkes and zaviyes were closed down for the second time, and ranks, posts and titles were proscribed and sanctioned by a minimum of three months in prison. Some of the movable property including books and publications was collected and given to public museums. Due to the independence from the central organisation, the Sufi orders continued their practice as independent units, by a certain degree of secrecy and by making selective alliances with the police, military and parliament (Kafadar 1995:48). The anti-religious drive was relaxed in the 1950s, and since then, the Bektaşis have carried out their activities mostly in private.

[20] *Medrese* means religious college and *mescit* means a small mosque without a pulpit (McCarty1998: Glossary 389-392).

4.6.1 The theme of Persecution

Rural Alevi groups have experienced long periods of severe oppression. As was the case with the Bektaşi order in 1826, suppressive activities have been legitimised by both political reasons and by accusing the suppressed groups of heresy through heterodox beliefs. From the time of Haci Bektaş Veli until the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the authorities had identified with Sunni Islam. The Anatolian villagers supported Shi'ism and integrated it with pre-Islamic traditions. The continuous opposition between the Ottoman State and the Alevi villagers distinguish them from the members of the urban Bektaşi order. Bektaşism and Alevism developed side by side as two distinct groups. While the Alevis underwent the most intensive period of persecution in the 15th and 16th century, the Bektaşi order was in their peak of prosperity and power. Nevertheless, to grasp the core of the social identity within the Bektaşi fraternity, the period of wealth and power must be examined within its historical context. Both Alevis and Bektaşis were persecuted for their beliefs, but the oppression reached its climax at different times, the Bektaşi order in 1826 and 1925, and the Alevis during the 15th and 16th century. In addition to Haci Bektaş Veli, suppression is the second common feature they share as a base of identity.

4.6.2 Balim Sultan and the Division of Bektaşism.

In 1502, Balim Sultan was appointed as the master[21] of the central tekke in Hacibektaş. Under his leadership, the followers of Haci Bektaş was divided into two branches. He gave permanent form and content to the urban brotherhood of Bektaşis as he integrated new elements with the teachings of Haci Bektaş. They were organised in tekkes in urban areas, and their religious system and organisational structure was transformed and adapted to the urban mode of living. By the assertion that Haci Bektaş never married and did not produce any children, he initiated an institution of celibate dervishes in Hacibektaş (Faroqhi 1976b: 82).

The other branch, the Çelebis, claims to be descendants of the saint. They were in control of management and properties of the central tekke, and the whole dervish community was subordinated to their control. They controlled the wealth and defended the Bektaşi organisation both politically and in court. The relationship between them and the

[21] *Postnişin,* 'He who sits upon the sheep's skin' (Birge 1937: 57, Trimingham 1971: 80-83).

highest autority of the Bektaşi fraternity, the Dedebaba, was not always cordial. Conflicts over the question of leadership of the central tekke in Hacibektaş inevitably led to a definite break between the two branches when the Çelebi Bektaşis attended uprisings against the Ottoman state (Ataseven 1997: 151-152).

The Bektaşi order of dervishes, as it exists in present Turkey, follows the canonised procedures inherited from Balim Sultan. The urban fraternity, which he established, has developed its specific identity based on past experience within the order. However, the Çelebi Bektaşis and the Alevis lack adequate definitions. The Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature blurs the distinction between Alevis and Alevi/Bektaşis, and Ataseven suggests that the Çelebi Bektaşis were later to be called Alevi/Bektaşis (Ataseven 1997:151-152). Fragments of past events in the history of Alevis and Alevi/Bektaşis, is now to be told. The description is crucial in attempts of understanding the Alevi/Bektaşi legacy within the identity of the Bektaşi order.

4.6.3 Suppression of Alevi Groups.

Alevism was originally the mode of living carried out by the nomadic groups in the rural areas of Central Anatolia. In Ottoman documents, these groups were called Kizilbaş, literally "red head", derived from the headgear of some of these groups, which supported the Safavide Empire. The Kizilbaş were not integrated in the central administration, and their reputation in the urban areas was bad, their name being synonymous with "heretic" because of their Shi'ite orientation. According to official history, the Ottoman era was a period of tolerance and prosperity, art and politics. From the point of view of the Anatolian farmer, poverty, exploitation and unrest marked the period (Ataseven 1997:119). The ruling class had the freedom to extort tax from the population, and the local rulers became more powerful as the central authorities became weaker. As the anarchic tendencies in Anatolia increased, some chose to migrate to the cities for security (Ataseven 1997:120). The remaining rural population experienced hardship through poverty, insecurity and general discontent. In the 15th and 16th century, revolts and uprisings occurred all over the rural part of the empire. They were mostly unsuccessful, probably because there was no unity between the different groups (Ataseven 1997: 125). It is difficult to find historical traces of a united Alevi group or movement, hence, we do not know for certain if the rebellions were in the name of Shiism or democracy.

In the beginning of the 16th century, sultan Selim I initiated war against the Safavid Empire, which was both an ideological enemy and an area of important trade routes. Some

of the Kizilbaş groups sided with Shah Ismail, and the war naturally developed into a war against all Kizilbaş. Religion was extensively used to legitimise the following persecution, and administrational registers, Mühimme defterli, from that period, identify all Shiite and pro-Safavide elements in the empire as Kizilbaş, leaving these groups as the main target for the intensified search for heretics throughout the empire (Imber 1979: 245-248). To procure information about the heretics, the authorities employed a network of spies and informers and voluntary testimonies from Sunni Muslims must have flourished in the atmosphere of persecutions (Imber 1979: 264). Orders of investigation were sent down through the administrational hierarchy, and the feedback rate must have been high, because individuals had the opportunity to imprison people solely on suspicion of heresy. Only in certain cases were there open trials for the heretics (Imber 1979: 270). Most of the time, there were no trials and the accused were not informed of the real charges which was often heresy like cursing the orthodox chalifes, including women in rituals and lack of respect of the five pillars of Islam.

After the 1580's, the persecution gradually came to an end. Kizilbaş uprisings are recorded until the beginning of the 17th century, so if the Ottoman administration had given up the massive repression of these groups, it was not because the danger from these movements had disappeared. It is possible to assume both that the repression continued, but was recorded in secret registers instead of the regular Mühimme defters, and that the change in documentation was due to a real change in policy (Faroqhi 1995: 176). Anyhow, it was not until September 1619 that the Ottoman authorities signed a treaty, which finally ended the persecution (Tietze 1995: 166). The assumed change in Ottoman internal policy might include assimilation of remaining Anatolian Kizilbaş by using the Bektaşi Order to neutralise them as a political force. This contact may have led to other dervishes affiliating themselves with the Bektaşi Order. If they tried to avoid persecution by joining the order, the Ottoman administration must have tolerated and even encouraged this move (Faroqhi 1995: 177). However, this only makes sense if the Bektaşi leaders were appointed privileges by being allowed control of the people entering the organisation. Recorded incidents where leaders of the tekkes are granted the privilege of proposing, and even appointing leaders for affiliated tekkes, exist (Faroqhi 1995: 178-179). So this might be the case. If so, it made sense for the administration to be generous towards the Bektaşi dervishes and their tekkes (Faroqhi 1995: 180). The relationship between the sultanate and the Bektaşi dervishes, however, is difficult to grasp due to lack of consistent sources of the continually changing relationship. The main tekkes were not closed down during the

intensive repression before and during the war against Persia, but we do not know much about how they were functioned. It seems likely that the major Bektaşi tekkes were not the main targets of repression (Faroqhi 1995: 174).

4.7.1 The Present Situation

Interpreted together, the years 1826 and 1925 constitute the foundation of the Bektaşi identity as a historically suppressed minority. Their infiltration of the higher strata of society, through trade and military alliances, also serves as a frame of interpretation of their position in contemporary Turkey. The past is made up of glory and hardship, and both aspects influence the present-day social existence. As past and present mutually act on each other, current events in the Alevi-Bektaşi community guide the selective process of remembering the past. Their social identity is a complex matter. Composed by past and present, wealth and poverty, and on the basis of this social existence, explanations of their position in present Turkey emphasise their marginality and a general lack of suppression simultaneously. The law of 1925 is still effective, but it seems like the state pretends it does not know about the Bektaşi activities carried out (Interview 9, Alevi). Hence, rituals and ceremonies are still conducted in private and the disciples often gather at their Baba's home. As they are still prohibited, they are marginal to society, but the most severe problems they face, are uneducated leaders and a general lack of historical sources (Interview 7, 8, Bektaşi Babas). These are both traces of past suppression because a great part of the movable property and written documentary sources disappeared after 1826 and 1925, and prominent leaders have been under pressure from the authorities.

Due to their Kemalist orientation, the prohibition of Sufi orders is explained in favour of Atatürk:

> In 1925 all the tekkes were closed. Atatürk didn't make this on intention. He didn't mean that. By mistake. He didn't know that he was going to get this result. But after this, the Bektaşi culture lost its sources for the second time.[22]

> The only reason for the closure of the tekkes, was that they had gained too much power in society.[23]

[22] Interview 6, Bektaşi member.

[23] Conversation, Bektaşi Baba.

It is not considered a personal attack on the Bektaşi order, but an appendage of a general resolution from his extensive reform programme in the 1920s. The execution of the law was a necessary, but nevertheless suppressive act. Its continued effectiveness is not clearly defined as oppression. But it exists, and hence, it is a reminder of the past.

4.7.2 Bektaşism within the Alevi Revitalisation

Devotion to Hacı Bektaş Veli and the common interpretation of the past as suppressive constitutes the foundation of the Alevi-Bektaşi minority. This is a considerable part of their respective identities, but nevertheless, they perceive each other as separate entities. Members of the Bektaşi order clearly distinguish themselves from the wide range of Alevi groups. According to a Bektaşi informant,

> The situation of the Alevis is a pitiful one because they sense Haci Bektaş Veli as the final point, and claim they are in his path. But they do not do what is necessary to follow that path.[24]

Nevertheless, in the process of positioning themselves, Alevism is always considered. It is a wall to play against, as definition of self-distinctiveness is always in relation to conceptual categories of 'us' and the 'others'. The 'others' are mostly Alevis, the Ottoman authorities, or Sunnis in general. Due to the common legacy of Alevism and Bektaşism, their relations are close as they communicate frequently without severe frictions.

The revitalisation of the Alevi identity in contemporary Turkey has already been examined in chapter three. Bektaşi members characterise the situation as a rise of Alevism after the decline of Socialism. Their heritage is accentuated in the process of rediscovering their old identity. As the written sources of their heritage are few, the need for transformation from an oral to a written tradition is pressing. The production of Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature is increased to supply this need, but even though these publications also include Bektaşism, they do not consider themselves a part of the renaissance. The fact that the early history of Alevism and Bektaşism is put into writing is appreciated, but attempts to explain the core of the Bektaşi belief system is disregarded as mostly mistaken and unnecessary.

[24] Interview 8, Bektaşi Baba.

4.8.1 Minority and Strategies

The Alevi renaissance may be characterised as the rise of a minority. From this point of view, reconstructions of identities become necessary components in the execution of identity politics. In order to create social space and acceptance, the Alevi-Bektaşi community defines identities suitable for the task.

Richard Tapper defines the term minority as follows:

> ... a collection of people of a given state, who are on the one hand identified by sharing either language, culture or religion, or a combination of these, and on the other hand, either are substantially excluded from power in the state, or constitute fewer than 50 per cent of the total population, or (more usually) both.[25]

He distinguishes between religious and ethnolinguistic minorities, which are both culturally defined entities. Theoretically, its religious belief and practice defines a religious minority, while membership in an ethnolinguistic group is determined by language and assumed cultural affinities. In reality, the use of these labels of identity have political connotations, used by both insiders and outsiders. In accordance with this definition, the Alevi-Bektaşi community is a religious minority as far as it is a group of people defined by their religious belief and practice, constituting less than 50 per cent of the population and is not situated in the power centre of the contemporary state. However, the definition lacks a dynamic aspect, which seriously takes into account the selfconception[26] of the members. As we have seen, their interpretation of their position in both past and present society varies through history and their identity as a minority may change under different circumstances. Considering importance of the history reproduced through interpretation of the present situation, we are in need of a dynamic definition, which is able to grasp this changing conception of identity in which the content of the term minority is constantly changing. Minority groups only exist as far as they are perceived marginal in a specific relationship with the majority, which is most adequately understood as a centre-periphery

[25] Tapper 1992: 2.

[26] Vorhoff uses the term selfconception as follows: "[...]contemporary Alevism has not yet managed to brake the prevailing categories of 'the religious' in Turkey. Instead, it still struggles with its selfconception as 'religious'" (Vorhoff 1999: 149). It is important to note that the term covers both individual and collective understanding of self identity.

liaison. The majority is in the centre of interest, whether it is in the heart of economic or political control. Still, closeness and distance to the majority do not solely define the marginality of a minority. Within the Bektaşi order, both past suppression and ascendancy are embraced as equal elements within their identity as marginal. Periods of apparent mutual backing between majority and minority, whether it is real or illusion of support, when no alternatives are available, may be characterised as a part of majority force. When the Bektaşis supported and received economical and political aid from the Ottoman authorities, they were nevertheless totally dependent on the benevolence of the rulers. The incident in 1826 is a clear-cut example of the power structure between majority and minority. When the authorities defined the Bektaşis as falling into disgrace, they gave rise to display of power.

Yapp gives an outline of possible strategies adopted by minorities to cope with suppressive situations.

> A crucial factor in deciding the fate of minorities is the degree to which they are territorially compact or dispersed. Those living in large compact groups may aspire to political autonomy through violent resistance [...]. Groups, which are both small and scattered, have fewer choices. One strategy commonly followed is to avoid attracting attention by concealment and secrecy [...]. Another is an attempt to redefine the public image of the community by adopting an accepted modern ideology such as nationalism or communism and playing down religious or ethnic distinctiveness. Otherwise, minorities must conform with the ruler's demand, up to and including religious conversion; or emigrate. Religious minorities in particular, where they suffer discrimination or persecution, tend to seek relief in migration to a regime [...] which is more tolerant, or avowedly secular [...].[27]

There has never been any attempt from the Bektaşi order or the Alevi/Bektaşi community in general, to seek united, political autonomy. Instead, they have been regarded as a threat because of their size and occasional alliances with powerful fractions of society.

The Bektaşi fraternity has simultaneously adopted different strategies throughout history. Secrecy and concealment have been favourable to avoid attention on the parts of their religious system, which have been regarded as heresy from the Sunni stance. Assimilation in the sense of re-definition of the public image has been another attempt to avoid negative attention. By defining themselves as Kemalists and supporting Atatürk's political ideas, they do not at any time shake the ground of the existing politics. Considered

[27] Yapp as quoted in Tapper 1992: 2.

together, these strategies reflect an image of apolitical effort in maintaining history, which is to accept the identity as it is transmitted in the apolitical sphere by staying away from ambitions requiring the support of a large following of people (Ataseven 1997: 72-74). A political group is visible and therefore a target for others to attack. The Bektaşi fraternity is seldom seen even though most people know they exist. Their role in society is difficult to evaluate because nothing is done in the name of Bektaşism. The members are in the mainstream and simultaneously marginalised. It is in their marginal role that their identity is taught, learned and lived (Ataseven 1997: 72-74). Their claim for universality is not shouted out in public, but lived and preached within the group. The message is that there is no need to raise one's voice as a Bektaşi. Bektaşism has never been robbed of its position, and it is not in the nature of their philosophy to act on the administrative level (Interview 7, Bektaşi Baba).

4.8.2. Effects

Theoretically, centuries of strategic concealment and assimilation will have an impact on the religious expressions of the Bektaşi fraternity. A search for traces of influence blurs the analytical boarders between belief system, rituals and organisational structure because it is all a part of living Bektaşism. Ritual and theological esotericism manifests itself in the structure of the order through mystical understanding of knowledge, which keeps a certain kind of information closed to outsiders, and prohibits participation in central rituals for those who are not initiated. The group structure is firmly hierarchical where it is necessary to climb the levels of the organisation to reach the Baba position. The Baba is in complete control of revelations of knowledge and ritual behaviour, and enjoys unquestionable respect and admiration. The most important ritual, the initiation ceremony, *aynicem*, is closed and it is strictly forbidden to invite outsiders for observation or participation. To obey these rules is to keep a part of the identity within the secret sphere and bind the members together in a common internal structure, which defines them apart from the 'others'. As a basis of their specific group identity, the secrecy is, and has been, important for the survival of the order (see chapter six: 6.3.1). Describing these esoteric elements of Bektaşism as merely consequences of historical occurrences might not be accurate as it undermines the insider understanding of their own belief and practice. Presenting an analysis of historical effects on the belief system of the order, to a Bektaşi Baba, made me aware that some things are absolute and not to be analysed. He corrected my analysis, explaining that the Bektaşi belief had never been transformed except for the erosion that

has taken place for the whole humanity. This erosion is the reason of the slight difference between the religious practices of different Bektaşi groups[28], but the main guidelines are similar. For him, the direction of the effects is the reverse of what my analysis indicates, where the historical situation is believed to have influenced the content and structure of the belief through the need of secrecy. According to his absolute beliefs, historical incidents and social structures are God given and out of human control. Changes in accordance with human needs are therefore not appreciated.

4.9 Concluding remarks.

The Hacibektaş Memorial Ceremonies are crucial for preservation of religious and social identities within the Alevi-Bektaşi community. Both Alevis and Bektaşis gather to embrace selected episodes of the past in communion with commemoration of Haci Bektaş Veli. Past and present mutually guide each other towards the common feeling of marginality. Due to the different selections of past incidents, and different social organisations, Alevi and Bektaşi identities are acquired and developed distinctively. The rather loose Bektaşi commitment to the revitalisation gives evidence of their distinct identity, independent of the Alevi-Bektaşi solidarity. The specific Bektaşi identity is created and preserved through the theological system, emphasising devotion to God and social moral (chapters five and six).

[28] A Bektaşi group is made up of one Baba and his disciples. There are approximately thirty Babas in Turkey today (Interview 7, Bektaşi Baba).

CHAPTER FIVE:
THE BELIEF SYSTEM

"God imposes on each man only what he is able to bear".

Koran, ii, 286

5.1.1 Structural Elements of Symbolic Importance

> Entering through the main entrance of the Museum you will find yourself in a wide yard. On the east side [...] there is a fountain. [...], on top there is a star with six points, which is called *Mürhü-Süleyman*, meaning, the seal of Süleyman. [1]

This is a description of the first of three main courtyards in the tekke of Hacıbektaş. It focuses on two structural elements of importance, the division of the compound into three great yards, and a decorative six-pointed star on the eastside wall. The courtyards bear witness to a rigid ranking system in the organisational structure of the Bektaşi order. When the tekke served as the home of the Bektaşis, their daily life and religious duties were distinguished by ranks. The first yard, which contained a bakery and a stable, was the home of the newly arrived dervishes. They were assigned the heaviest chores and advanced in accordance with their practical and spiritual abilities (Interview 2, Bektaşi Baba). It was a purely hierarchic system where the position of chief within one yard secured entrance to the next. The physical movement to the inner centre of the convent symbolised a spiritual journey towards the divine source of life. The religious centre of this cluster of buildings is within the third yard, which contains the sarcophagi of Bektaşi saints. The head of this yard was the spiritual guide of the whole dergah, and he was believed to have reached the state of divine unity. The six-pointed star of Süleyman[2] symbolises the hierarchical structure in the process of existence. Within the Bektaşi belief system, life is a slow rise in levels by accumulative search for divine knowledge and understanding. The rigid hierarchy, still present within the fraternity, is theologically legitimised as the essence of existence, easily explained by the hexagram.

[1] Museum catalogue, 1999.

[2] The biblical Solomon, see EI (2nd ed.), art 'Sulayman b. Dawud'.

5.1.2 This chapter

The star of Süleyman and the ranking system serve as gateways into respectively theological and historical means of legitimising the firm hierarchy within the Bektaşi order. This chapter is a guide into the Bektaşi belief system through the hexagram, symbolising both theological and moral doctrines. The outline is necessary in order to understand the preservation of the rigid structure of the Bektaşi organisation, which is legitimised by a complex mixture of theology, history and social moral. As this chapter provides the basis of further examination of the hierarchic structure within each Bektaşi dergah (chapter six), it is also fundamental to and understanding of the Bektaşi attitude towards the Alevi renaissance.

5.2 Ranking

The most clear-cut division within the group of disciples is related to the official initiation, *nasip*.[3] Before initiation, people attracted by the Bektaşi philosophy, *aşiks*, visit the Baba, listening to Bektaşi music and stories, clearly stating their loyalty to Bektaşi principles and practice. They become candidates for initiation and participate in ceremonial Bektaşi dinners. Even though they are in this preliminary condition, they are considered a member of the religious community. Through ritual behaviour and conversations the Baba assesses if they are worthy of official membership. Initiated members, *muhips*, are qualified to participate in formal rituals, and they continue visiting their Baba for religious guidance. Some may choose to advance to the position of *dervish.* This involves a further commitment to the religious principles of Bektaşism, and they are assigned duties and rights in accordance with their rank above regular members. Before the closing down of the tekkes, they lived in the tekkes and wore the official Bektaşi headpiece, *tac.* Today, the Bektaşis continue living in accordance with their philosophy. As the fraternity does not live collectively at the present time, the regular duties according to rank mostly deal with religious assignments. During ceremonial Bektaşi dinners, the ranking is obvious. Approximately twelve times a year, the group gathers at sunset for this special dinner in one of the members' home, or at the home of the Baba. Procedures underlining the prominence of the Baba are paid attention to, and etiquette by the table is emphasised.[4]

[3]Literally, *nasip* means portion, share, destiny, luck. The candidates take the nasip through the initiation ritual, *aynicem*. For a detailed description of this ritual, see Birge 1937: 175-202.

[4] My analysis after participation in several ceremonial dinners in different Bektaşi groups in Ankara, September to October 1999.

Even though the Babas are not in charge of any tekkes in contemporary Turkey, they still serve the position of *mürşit,* the spiritual guide. The aşik is born into reality through the influence of the murşit, and this second birth is celebrated during the initiation by the assignment of a second age and identity, which is symbolised by a compulsory purification ritual. The mürşit is the personal trainer of his disciples, and a master in the art of spiritual living. Through this, he is the representative of the ultimate mürşit Hacı Bektaş Veli, despite important differences. Haçi Bektaş was in possession of divine knowledge upon his arrival on earth and had the opportunity to teach his knowledge immediately. The Babas have themselves climbed all the steps on their way to the mystical understanding they have achieved, and they started off at the same level as the disciples they are guiding. Every Bektaşi needs a guide because nothing can be understood without his help. Therefore, the mürşit is treated with complete obedience, and his opinion is the right opinion. Through conversations, interviews, and e-mail correspondence, the dervishes and regular members did not want to give me their point of view before they knew the answer from their leader. When he had revealed his answer, there was no need for elaboration. The hierarchic structure of the Bektaşi organisation requires the Baba to be in charge of the learning process of his disciples (see chapter six: 6.2.3). He decides when they are individually ready to receive and accumulate knowledge, and what information to disclose at each level. Within the group of disciples, the Baba is in possession of the highest rank. There are approximately thirty Babas in present day Turkey, who are coordinated by seven representatives, *halifes,* in position of supervisors of regional Bektaşi activities. On top of the hierarchy is the office of Dedebaba, who historically had its main office in the Hacıbektaş tekke. The present Dedebaba was elected in 1997 by the halifes after the death of the former Dedebaba, Bedri Noyan, who was a subject of veneration and was believed to be a person with extraordinary skills.

5.3.1 The Seal of Süleyman

The six-pointed star of Süleyman illustrates the principal aspects of Bektaşism. The hexagram consists of two triangles, which were explained to me in details during several interviews.[5] The following outline of the theological universe is based on their explanations, therefore, I make use of the drawings presented to me by my informants. The foundation of the theological legitimisation of the hierarchic structure within the order is

[5] Interview 5,7 and 8. Bektaşi Babas and groups of Bektaşi members.

the concept of knowledge as a gradual rise towards the divine sphere. This gradual accumulation of knowledge is symbolised by one of the triangles in the hexagram. Hence, I will argue that the theological concepts illustrated by the Seal of Süleyman legitimises the firm hierarchical structure of the Bektaşi order.

5.3.2 God and the Circle of Existence

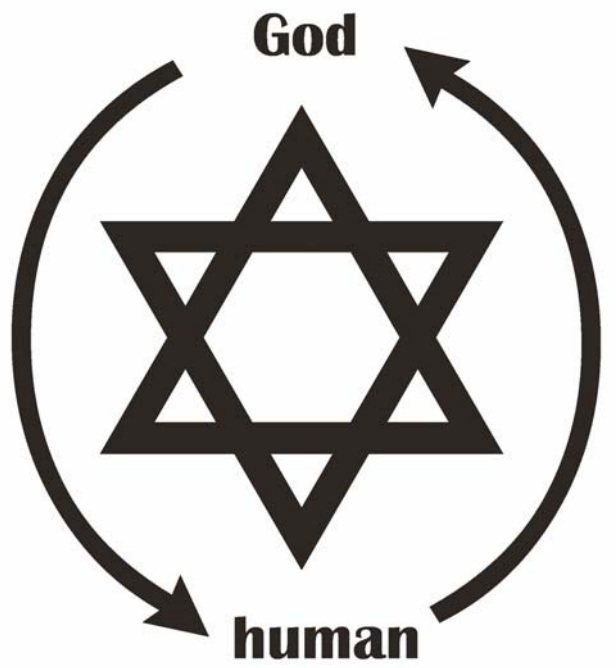
Two aspects are emphasised in the Bektaşi characterisation of God:

> The world is God. Whatever we call him, he is everything.[6]

And

> Allah is the human being.[7]

Within this notion of God, there is no clear distinction between the divine and the profane spheres. As he created the universe, its elements contain parts of him, and all his characteristics are to be found within humans. He created the cosmos and is the ultimate reason for every appearance.



[6] Interview 6, Bektaşi member.

[7] Interview 6, Bektaşi member.

In an ongoing process of existence, he still creates from an undifferentiated unity, projecting out series of emanations. The process is illustrated as a continuous circle. Downward emanations from God to human move from the divine reality to worldly, physical material. Everything is a shadow of God, but the proportion of divinity within worldly elements diminishes as the descent goes farther from the source.

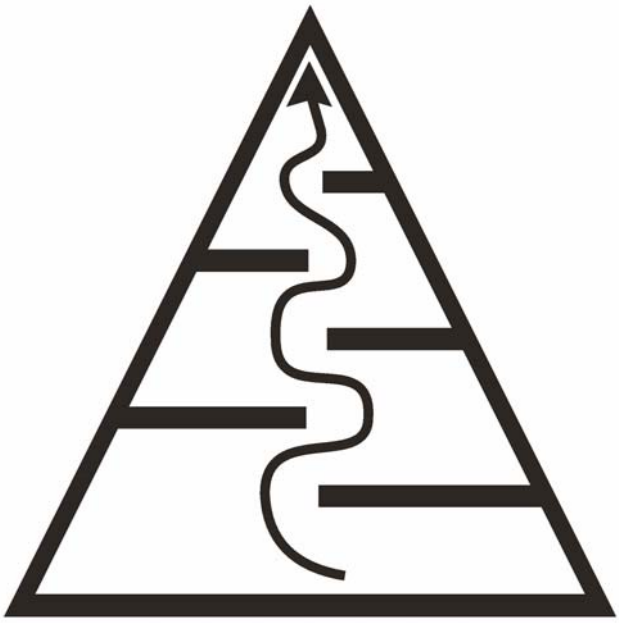
The Bektaşi philosophy contains heritage from Plato and Plotinus on this matter.[8] Plato distinguishes between 'the visible world' and 'the spiritual world' (Jansen 1971:30). The spiritual world is the home of ideas. They are perfect and find their realised form in the visible world. Perceptible objects are never complete even though the ideas are copied in as detailed a manner as possible. Thus, humans are incomplete images of their creator, and their souls are longing back to their divine home as they are still bound to the material world. This ambivalence within the human soul is the cause of duality. Plotinus elaborates the notion of the imminent world as an image of the transcendent world, which contains true existence. Within the human soul, there is *logos*, which is the will for realisation within the ideas in the spiritual world. It is both the creative force and the force of maintenance within existence. Humans are microcosmic as both an image of, and a part of macrocosm. As they are bound to transcendence, their ability to think differentiates them from animals. Thoughts, which are the ability to seek origin, are created by logos within the human soul. As they are bound to both heaven and earth, humans are bearers of the cosmic duality by their perpetual and perishable character. The mystical approach of Plato, Plotinus and Bektaşism regard cosmos as an incomplete image of God. Desire and ability to ascend back to divinity is the essential basis of the mystical experience of God, where the souls become embraced and absorbed in the divine unity. The ascending emanations take more and more divine aspects until there is a complete return into holyness.

[8] Plato and Plotinus are considered the ancient ancestors of Bektaşism (Interview 1 and 6). It is possible to trace the mystical tradition within Islam to Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240), and further back to Plotinus, Aristotle and Plato from the 4th to the 2nd century BC. Islamic mysticism was born within the Hellenistic worldview and the antique philosophies were translated into both Persian and Arabic. A transformation of religious philosophies into practical religious systems occurred in the Hellenistic era. These systems were mixtures of different worldviews in an area, which had for a long time been inhabited by a multitude of civilisations (Cornell 1998: 54- 57).

5.3.3 The Path

As every human carries an element of its creator and the secret knowledge of the divine, they are bound to complete the circle of existence back to divinity. The ultimate goal of living is to bring the drop of holyness as far as possible on its way back to the divine sea. The metaphor of the drop on its way back to the sea is an illustration frequently used to explain the meaning of life within Bektaşism (Interview 2,4,6 and 7, Bektaşi Babas, dervishes and regular members). Humans are described sometimes as the drops, and sometimes as carrying the drops. They are all on their way to the sea and when they reach it, they will become a part of it without sensing the difference between themselves and the rest of the sea. Unity will overshadow the cosmic duality, which blurs reality. Humans are shadows of God, they are less complete images, which are completed in the final reunion with their divine origin. When they reach their full dimension, the sense of dualism disappears because it is not a part of reality. It is only created for humans to live through it and learn by it. The ultimate dualism is good and bad, or positive and negative. Humans gain knowledge and understanding through a process of elimination of the negative pole by turning bad things into good things. To enable themselves to appreciate everything as good, humans have to accept love as a fundamental principle of existence. God created the universe with love, and every person has to gradually accumulate love and appreciation for the universe. Dualism is created to enable humans to reach enlightenment through unconditional love and complete absence of hatred.

The ‘right path’ within Bektaşism is illustrated by one of the triangles, which make up the six-pointed star of Süleyman.



Humans advance towards final enlightenment by living duality. As they make progress, they obtain increased portions of the divine knowledge. Therefore, the content of Bektaşism varies individually and according to each level of capacity. Religious information is revealed through open expressions like play on words, stories and poems. Words contain layers of meaning in which individual interpretations are fundamental. However, there is a constant divine knowledge to discover. It is referred to as the hidden meaning, which can be gradually uncovered. Humans climb the path to enlightenment through the different levels of understanding by living through four levels of spirituality. They are illustrated as doors placed after each other, with the only possibility of gradual advancement through one door after the other. The four doors are *şeriat*, the religious law, *tarikat*, the teaching and practice of the secret religious order, *marifet*, the mystic knowledge of God, and *hakikat*, the immediate experience of the essence of the divine reality.[9] Bektaşis acknowledge the Muslim law only as a first level of worship, and they do not fulfill the commandments of the five pillars of Islam.[10] Still, it is considered a

[9] Muhammad is believed to have said that ‘The law, şeriat, is my words. The way, tarikat, is my actions. Knowledge, marifet, is my chief of all things. Truth or reality, hakikat, is my spiritual state (Birge 1937: 102).

[10] The five pillars of Islam are confession of faith, fasting, ritual prayer, religious tax and pilgrimage.

necessary platform of superficial worship in order to step into the mystic spirituality. Hacı Bektaş himself mentions the level of şeriat:

> The first stage to spiritual wisdom is right conduct.[11]

In Bektaşi poetry, the conception of progressive doors is emphasised, and in some poems the levels of marifet and hakikat are perceived as one door.

> I climbed into the branches of a plum tree. It was grapes I ate there. The owner of the garden objected saying: Why do you eat my walnut?[12]

This poem is commonly interpreted as the search for the ultimate truth. The level of şeriat is like a plum with attractive meat easily available, but with an impenetrable kernel. Tarikat is like a grape, edible all through, but nevertheless with stones in its centre. The last level, illustrated by a walnut, has a hard, forbidding exterior but is filled with rich meat.

The distinction between the first two levels, şeriat and tarikat, is the most significant one. Crossing the bridge between them is to move from external worship to an internal search for God. It implies fundamental differences in the experience of the universe. At the şeriat level, the world is perceived dualistically with God and the universe as two distinctively existing elements. The world is understood as created out of nothing. By the mystical knowledge taught at the level of tarikat, dualism disappears and the unity between God and the universe implies that the world was created out of the already existing substance of divinity. To move from şeriat to tarikat is the start of a gradual approximation to the mystical experience leading to the divine truth, transforming the believer into a mystic. These explorations of one's inner self can only be carried out through unconditional love with the aim of disclosing the illusionary dualistic character of existence. Plato considers the path to enlightenment as experiences into the mysteries of Eros, the impulse that keeps the memory of the origin within the human soul. As Eros is unlimited love, it has to be approached with intuition in addition to objective reflection. Plotinus emphasises the human capacity to conduct dialectic research by rational reasoning

[11] Museum Catalogue. This is also connected to general moral behaviour (see 5.4.2).

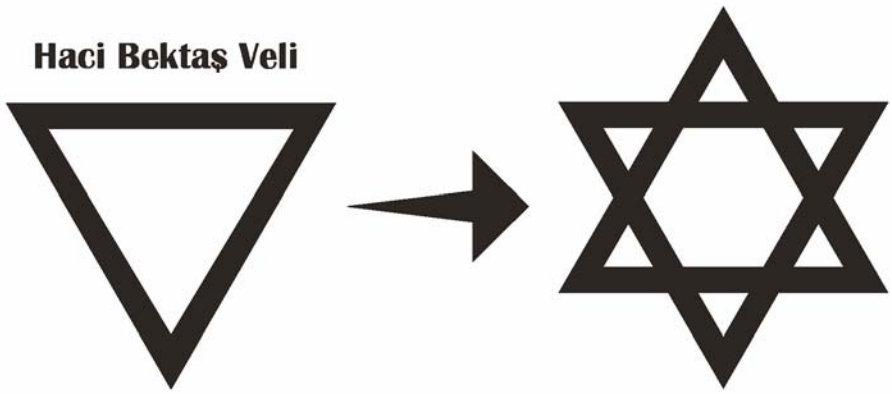
[12] Birge 1937: 107-108. This is a poem by the Sufi poet Yunus Emre. His poems are considered as the most powerful expressions of pietism in Turkish Anatolia (Kafadar 1995: 7).

and immediate understanding, which is the key to unification in the divine sphere (Jansen 1971:115-116). In line with the antique philosophical tradition, Bektaşis systematise and intellectually answer questions of the ultimate existence by exposing the nature of their mystical, religious experiences. The appreciation of scientific explanations and logical reasoning, intertwined with emotional feelings, is the core of Bektaşism. The mystical experience leading the believer on the path to enlightenment is provided through wisdom and divine knowledge (E-mail correspondence with a Bektaşi Baba in January 2000). Hence,

> […...] knowledge is extremely significant to utilise the tools around and in yourself in order to unite them. However, to put the pieces in the right places, you have to improve your wisdom. And, through personal mystic experience, which is actually a 'gift', you begin knowing yourself.[13]

5.3.4 The Reverse triangle

Human souls are created in the divine space. From there, they arrive on the worldly earth carrying the mystical knowledge unaware of its presence within their soul. As distinct to humans in general, Hacı Bektaş Veli was created conscious of his divine elements; therefore he was bound to teach it to others.

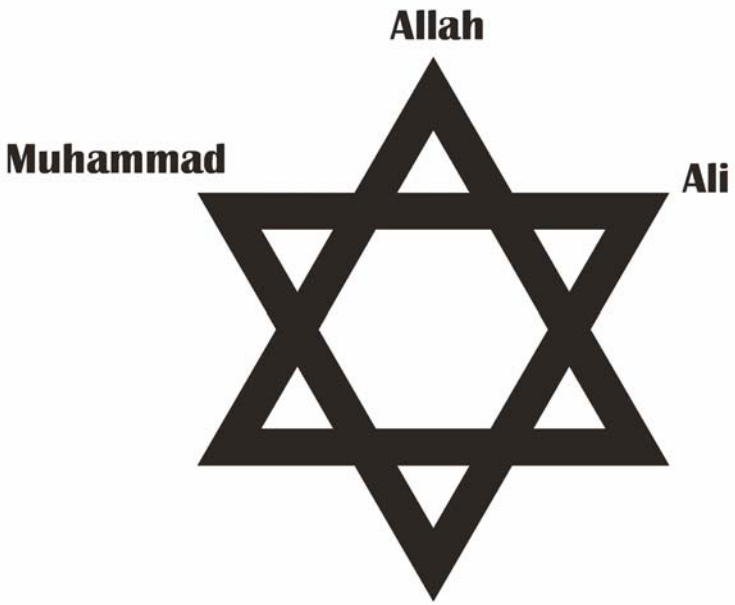


His teachings enable people to slowly improve their awareness of the divine elements. In the six-pointed star, his significance is illustrated by the second triangle. Together, humans and their saint constitute the hexagram, symbolising existence.

[13] E-mail correspondence with a Bektaşi member in January 2000.

5.3.5.1 The Trinity of Allah, Muhammad and Ali

Each of the six corners of the hexagram symbolises an important doctrine within Bektaşism, and the upper section of the star signifies Allah, Muhammad and Ali.



Muhammad is appreciated as the seal of the prophets, the receiver of the Kuran and father-in-law of Ali. Following Shiite doctrines[14], the Bektaşis do not recognise the first three caliphes, considering Ali as the rightful, intended successor of Muhammad. He married the prophet's daughter Fatima, and received two sons, Hasan and Hüseyin. The death of Hüseyin is celebrated by remembrance of the Battle at Kerbala in the month of Muharrem, initiated by twelve days of fasting. Ali, Hasan and Hüseyin are considered members of the family of Muhammad, *Ehli Beyt*, and they are the first three of twelve imams, *oniki imam*.[15]

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[14] The Bektaşi philosophy contains several doctrines in accordance with Shiism. However, Bektaşi representatives differentiate their belief from Arabian, Iranian Shiism, focusing on the genuine Turkish heritage of Bektaşism (Interview 2,7 and 8, Bektaşi Babas).

[15] According to Twelver Shiism, the Imams are considered God's representatives on earth. The other nine Imams stem from the bloodline of Hüseyin, and are named as followed: Imam Zeynel Abidin, Imam Muhammad Bakır, Imam Cafer-i Sadık, Imam Musa Kâzim, Imam Ali Rıza, Imam Muhammad Taki, Imam Ali Naki, Imam Hasan Askeri, Imam Muhammad Mehdi. The 12th Imam is believed to have disappeared during childhood, and he is expected back on earth. Hacı Bektaş Veli is believed to descend from Imam Husayn and is therefore considered a *seyyid*, a descendent of prophet Muhammad (Smith 1971: 15, EI (2nd ed., art. "Ithna 'ashariyya").

To a certain degree, Bektaşis equate the significance of Muhammad and Ali. On the levels leading to enlightenment,

> The şeriat is in the tongue, the tarikat is in the Soul. Muhammad, Ali; şeriat, tarikat.[16]

Ali is worshipped as the master of the inner science, and his spiritual wisdom goes beyond the external Muslim belief and practice, taught by Muhammad. To reach the mystic understanding of the hidden meaning is only possible through Ali.

> I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its gateway.[17]

This saying from Muhammad is frequently quoted among the Bektaşis, and it illustrates how Muhammad and Ali are often considered as different aspects of one person, together constituting a theological figure from whom the religious mysteries are derived (Birge 1937: 133-134). This extreme veneration of Ali sometimes gives the image of a holy trinity of Allah, Muhammad and Ali.[18]

> God, Muhammad, Ali, all are one secret.[19]

5.3.5.2 The Legendary Ali

Ali is the ultimate symbol of the Bektaşi mysticism. His spiritual significance is illustrated by the legend of Muhammad's ascension, *mirac.* His attendance is commemorated in both poems and pictorial representations. Muhammad met a lion on his way to God. It scared him until a voice from God calmed him down by saying that the only thing the lion needed was a token. Muhammad gave away his ring and passed into the presence of God where he discussed the ninety thousand mysteries. The conversation was made through a screen, and when it was finally raised, he saw Ali on the other side. Before leaving, Muhammad received forty grapes as a gift for Hasan and Hüseyin. On the way back, he came upon a

[16] Birge 1937: 106.

[17] Alevi-Bektaşi homepage: http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis

[18] The Holy Trinity' is a Christian concept, which I have no intentions of analysing within the Islamic frame of Bektaşism. Here, it simply points to the fact that in certain poems, Allah, Muhammad and Ali are depicted on the same level of significance, and sometimes as different characteristics of one figure. It is not perceived as a threat to the monotheistic character of Islam because the mystical approach blurs and temporarily remove the distinction between the creator and the created.

group called 'The Forty'. While conversing with them, an invisible hand squeezed a grape. As one of the Forty drank from the juice, they all became intoxicated. They started to sing and dance, and one of the people present went in the middle and took Muhammad's ring out of his mouth. Muhammad then recognised the person as Ali, the divine reality. The story emphasises Ali's rightful place in the divine sphere, achieved through mystical and spiritual abilities. One of these skills is his capability to change his physical appearance exemplified by the belief of his presence at his own funeral. On his deathbed, he called Hasan and Hüseyin, informing them about a veiled person who would arrive after his death to carry him away. On the day of his death, the person arrived, and out of curiosity Hasan and Hüseyin asked him to show his identity. He then revealed himself as Ali.

The legendary Ali is not only perceived as a guide into the mystical state of mind. Pictured with a mule, *Düldül*, and his two-pointed sword, *Zülfikar,* Ali is also remembered as a great warrior. These are his two most important possessions in eight common stories about the warlike achievements of Ali. He is believed to have saved both Muhammad and the whole Muslim community in the battle at Uhut where Muhammad was badly wounded. While the angel Gabriel protected the prophet with his wings, he called Ali with a prayer, *nadi Aliyen*.[20] Ali arrived and defeated the enemies with the help of Zülfikar.

Due to the mystical Bektaşi approach to existence, presenting a holistic picture of Ali's figure is impossible. As God and human melt together in unity, the boundary between the prophet Muhammad, and the symbol of spirituality, Ali, vanishes. They are two distinct figures, representing different aspects of divinity. But, as the universal is cosmic and the particular is mundane; divinity is characterised by its unity. Muhammad and Ali are holy figures, and thus, their individuality disappears. In addition, Hacı Bektaş Veli is sometimes perceived as a reincarnation of Ali, and a part of this holy unity.

> He who sat upon the road as a lion
> He who squeezed the grape juice for the Forty
> He who carried away his own funeral
> The Sovereign Hacı Bektaş is Ali himself[21]

The most prominent common characteristic of Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli is their position as the ultimate mürşits. Together, they constitute the model of the human strive towards the

[19] Birge 1937: 132.
[20]In Arabic it is said 'Madad Ali'.

holy unity, they are the figure in which humans seek guidance on the path to enlightenment (see also chapter four: 4.3.1).

5.4.1 The Perfect Man

The idea of attaining total completeness with divinity is related to the common theological concept of the Perfect Man, *insan-ı Kâmil*, in Sufism.[22] Within the philosophical universe of Plotinus, humans are microcosmic beings living as a part of the macrocosm. As they contain the world in which they are living, they are characterised by the same complexity as the complete universe. The ability to think is within the human soul, leading towards the self-reflection and understanding necessary for the search back to the origin. Within Sufism in general, the Perfect man is the person who has fully realised his essential oneness with God. As he is a mirror of both God and the universe, he is the bridge, which unites the one and the many (Nicholson 1921: 78). The Bektaşi concept of Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli gives them the prominent position of representatives, mediators and examples of the cosmic power within the universal perfect being. They are representatives of perfection in the art of mastering one's own existence so that the illusory character of the world is disclosed, and freedom from the chains of the material world is achieved (Ataseven 1997:59).

5.4.2 The Mature Man

In accordance with Muslim tradition, purification is an important part of the Bektaşi initiation ritual.[23] It is a symbolic act of purifying the soul for its sins, preparing for the second birth into a life long struggle to control human desires. Within the Bektaşi

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[21] Birge 1937: 139, The Alevi-Bektaşi homepage: http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis

[22] The experience of realisation of unity with God and the universe is the foundation of Sufism. The term was first used by ibn l-Arabí, but the notion underlying it is almost as old as Sufism itself (Nicholson 1921: 77). For further information, see EI (2nd ed.), art. 'al-insan al-Kâmil'.

[23] Ritual purity, Tahâra, is the state in which every Muslim has to be to perform ritual activities. Minor ablution is expected before ritual performance. A Muslim may be in the state of major ritual impurity, djanâba, caused by marital intercourse and touching of a corpse. In addition, women are in this state after birth and menstruation. A person in this state may not enter any mosques, or touch or recite the Koran, and will only become purified through the major ritual ablution, ghusl (EI (2nd ed.) art "Ghusl", "Djanâba",

philosophy, the theological concept of the Perfect Man has a normative aspect, which guides the believers through everyday life. The mystical understanding of mastering existence is transformed into perfection in moral behaviour. Bektaşism is 'The Methodology of Raising the Mature Man',who is the one to control his senses (Interview 6, Bektaşi member). Maturity is passively connected to controlling human needs. By suppressing all physical desires, the content of ideas and beliefs becomes meaningful. At the last stage, physical existence disappears in the great unity (Interview 6, Bektaşi member). Poems and stories about dervishes living their lives by denying their bodily needs support this transformation of the mystical concept of the Perfect Man.

> Some Bektaşi dervishes live with only a single olive. They are spending a day with only a single olive. This shows that he can control his body, he can control his feeling of hunger.[24]

The initiation ritual requires the candidate to clean his hands and promise never to steel or to harm anyone. He also washes his mouth and gives an oath to never lie or utter bad words. The whole body is to be cleaned in this way, enabling the candidate to morally purify his soul before entering the order, starting his new life as a moral *tabula rasa.*

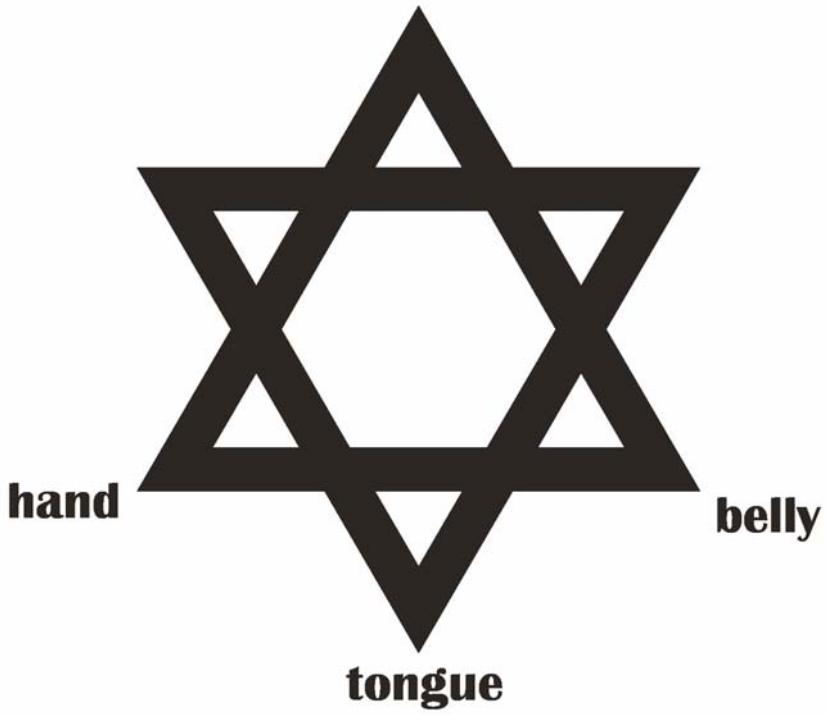
Also on this matter, Ali and Hacı Bektaş Veli serve as role models in the art of treating everything in existence with love and respect. Among frequently quoted sayings derived from the philosophy of Hacı Bektaş, the ones teaching right behaviour are in majority.

> Wise men are both pure and purifying.
>
> Do not forget that your enemy is human.
>
> Do not hurt even if you are hurt.[25]

Simonsen 1995: "Djanaba", "Tahâra", "Wudû"). The ablution in the Bektaşi initiation ritual is in accordance with ghusl.

[25] Museum catalogue, 1999, Hacbekta¶ Museum.

The lower part of the six-pointed star of Süleyman symbolises the significance of moral behaviour within Bektaşism.



The hand, tongue and belly are two-fold symbols consisting of both active and passive aspects. In addition to avoid bad actions, the hand denotes production. It is expected on each level of reality to be creative and leave something behind. The tongue is a reminder of always telling the truth. Furthermore, every person is required to teach and educate other people. Hacı Bektaş Veli is the ultimate symbol of this obligation, as he was created fully aware of his divine knowledge. Naturally, he is remembered as the great teacher who opened a school to educate illiterate Anatolian villagers.

The belly signifies the last remaining symbol of the Seal of Süleyman. Through human reproduction, the family is a reminder of origin and past experience. As every human is on its way to divinity, it has to learn, teach and move on. It is considered important not to live in the past, because it is only valuable through success in the accumulation of knowledge as a mean for building the future.

> The past is like a bus, which you take to a certain point where you have to get off and move on.[26]

[26] Interview 7, Bektaşi Baba.

For a Bektaşi, it is not enough to remain on the bus, avoiding bad actions. He also has to put effort into acts, which benefit other people. From the Bektaşi point of view, this is a fundamental difference from normative Islam.[27] Instead of passively accepting Islamic rules and regulations, they are obliged to reflect upon their own behaviour and to take control of their own advancement towards God.

> For instance, on the back of your car there is a sticker saying 'Peace in Islam', but you drive as if you are a 150 km/h speeding road maniac. This is very important, how your spiritual mind is covered by these things.[28]

5.5 Muslim Diversity

Distinguishing themselves from Islam on the grounds of their rejection of the five pillars, is in accordance with an Orientalist perspective on Islam, which teaches that 'Islam does not develop, and neither do Muslims; they merely are' (Manger 1999: 1). Islam is often seen as a static entity without considerations of its internal pluralism, ethnic diversity and multiple discourses. This leads to the belief that religious practice not conforming to the text-based, normative interpretation of Islam is peripheral and syncretistic (Manger 1999: 3). Descriptions of Bektaşism as a dynamic 'discourse' create distance to what is perceived as Islam. The Bektaşi fraternity is a moral community in which there is a discourse about the conscious belonging of the members. Such discourses are evaluations of beliefs, practices and rituals based on what is accepted or rejected from the past history as well as criticism of others (Manger 1999: 15-16). The Islamic world is geographically enormous and covers as many varieties of Islam as there are Muslim communities. Nevertheless, the consciousness of *dãr al-islãm* is a part of the Muslim identity. Identification of 'the world of Islam' is locally defined within each Muslim community, more often by ranking Islamic groups in degrees of being real Muslims or not, than by defining them as non-Muslims. The Bektaşi distinction between themselves and other Muslims, is a part of the tradition of considering Islam preached and Islam lived as two entities relating to each other. Within this concept, Islam preached has a higher status than Islam lived, therefore, the multitude of different ways of living Islam can be ranked in a

[27] On this matter, the informants generally used the terms 'Islam', 'Sunni Islam', or 'orthodox Islam', mainly referring to the five pillars.

[28] Quoted interview with a Bektaşi member in Ataseven 1997: 193.

hierarchic system where each Islamic tradition perceive their own interpretation as the right path to God.

> Muhammad said that the Muslims were going to be divided into 72 pieces, and one of them is the correct way of representing Islam. Now everybody says that they are the right way. Bektaşis as well.[29]

5.6. Concluding remarks.

The historical organisation of the Bektaşi dervishes in the tekke in Hacıbektaş, the Seal of Süleyman, and the Bektaşi concept of the Mature Man, are all key elements in the process of understanding the basic foundation of the firm hierarchic structure of the Bektaşi order. They all provide explanations of a God given hierarchy in which abilities to comprehend the universal order determine the believers' ranks through their closeness to divinity. The moral system derived from the concept of the Perfect man is part of their feeling of 'otherness' within the national boundaries of Islam. The organisation of the Bektaşi order implies the definition of outsiders and assurance of self-exclusiveness, and in order to examine their participation in the revitalisation of identity, each dergah has to be considered as a religio-social group.

[29] Interview 6, Bektaşi member.

CHAPTER SIX:
IDENTITY GIVEN

[...] what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying [...]
Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*

6.1.1 The Apparent Homogeneity of Alevis and Bektaşis

Among the participants of the Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies, the only apparent distinguishing mark is social status. A large group of people spends these three days in their lorries and tents, selling sheep for sacrifice, posters and jewellery. They mainly engage in the folk-religious activities at the mausoleum and the holy sites in the vicinity of the town. Together with groups of people begging in the streets and by the holy places, they are labelled as 'the poor people'. There is no communication as equals between 'the poor ones' and people representing the group of participants who are economically and socially 'better off'. This group constitutes the audience of activities carried out within the intellectual and political dimension of religiosity. They listen to debates and speeches, and watch semah and theatre performances on the streets while they socialise with members of their own social group. Political and cultural figures invited as part of the official program form a third group of visitors. These people mostly arrive for their own performance and leave the town before the end of the ceremonies.

The people I socialised with during the ceremonies, were the ones to become my informants. They were mostly urban intellectuals attending for the intellectual and political parts of the activities. Apparently this group was rather homogeneous, and whether they were Alevis or Bektaşis was not observable.[1] At first glance, the Alevi-Bektaşi community consisted of Alevi-Bektaşis differentiated only by social status. The flourishing Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature supported the mistaken notion of a consistent community. In the process of understanding the difference between Alevism and Bektaşism, I realised that my difficulties in drawing distinctions were mostly due to the lack of an established dividing line between them. The quotations below exemplify how Alevis and Bektaşis approach the

[1] With the exception of formalised ways of greeting Bektaşi Babas, see chapter two: 2.2.1.

task of defining each other with confusion. To categorise the real world is an analytic project, which seems redundant because the difference between them are perceived by intuition acquired through living Alevism and Bektaşism. It is also a matter of approach, and it is clear from the quotations that there does not exist any fixed strategy of differentiating Alevis and Bektaşis.

> There is a difference between the Bektaşi philosophy and the philosophy of Hacı Bektaş Veli. The Bektaşi philosophy is founded on Hacı Bektaş Veli's thoughts, so the foundation is the same. [...] But I consider the Bektaşi order as a club.[2]

> Because Alevis are in a process of searching for their identity, and if they call themselves plain Alevis, the Sunnis will look upon them with hatred. But by using the two words together, they say ' We are Muslims and we follow Hacı Bektaş Veli'. Therefore they say Alevi-Bektaşi. [...] But in the meanwhile all the dergahs are being renovated and looked after by Alevis, and we thank them for this. Because the law in Turkey abandons the tarikats and not the Alevis.[3]

The Alevi quotation emphasises the distinction between the philosophy of Hacı Bektaş Veli and the Bektaşi philosophy, which the respondent understands as rules and regulations of a 'club'. It is most likely that this notion is triggered by the organisational structure of the Bektaşi order as a secret society with elements of initiation, hierarchy and concealment. This structure is the basic distinguishing mark between Alevism and Bektaşism, and is also crucial for the Bektaşi location within the Alevi renaissance.

The Bektaşi attempt to separate themselves from the wide range of Alevi groups takes the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature as its starting point, asking for the reason why the terms are commonly fused. On the base of their common ground in the devotion of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the reason is to be found in the Alevi and Bektaşi relationship with 'the Sunnis', namely the authorities. The Alevis need to relate to Bektaşism in order to be accepted by the authorities as Muslims who follow the teachings of Hacı Bektaş Veli. The Bektaşis can not renovate their tekkes because they are still abandoned by law. These considerations are strongly coloured by past stigmatisation of both Alevis and Bektaşis, an important component of the feeling of solidarity between them. Even though the difference in nature between the social movement of Alevism and the Bektaşi Sufi brotherhood is

[2] Interview 9, Alevi.

[3] Interview 8, Bektaşi Baba.

analytically easy to grasp, the fundamental distinctions are undermined by the practical use of the terms.

6.1.2 This chapter

The lack of distinguishing marks between Alevis and Bektaşis in the social atmosphere of the Hacıbektaş ceremonies, and their own difficulties of defining themselves in relation to each other, show how difficult it is to establish analytical categories and distinctions, which coincide with reality. The role of the Bektaşi order within the Alevi renaissance is difficult to grasp as they have a somehow resigned attitude to the flow of 'Alevilik ve Bektaşilik' information. I will argue that the Bektaşi order witnesses the Alevi renaissance from the inside as outsiders. A Bektaşi is given an individual identity by initiation into the order, and is therefore not in need of searching for it. The role of the Bektaşis in the Alevi renaissance is determined by their individual identity, which is a crucial part of their group identification. The objective of this chapter is to analyse the nature of their position by focusing on their specific identity formation within the frames of their organisational structure.

6.2.1 The Bektaşi Order as a Collection of Socio-religious Groups[4]

The resigned attitude towards the Alevi revitalisation is observable on two levels. The Bektaşi order as a whole within the national boundaries of the Turkish Republic, contributes to the flow of information of the Alevi-Bektaşi community. It is mainly Bektaşis in leading positions who find interest in, and are considered capable of explaining and defining Bektaşism.[5] However, within each dergah, the given personal identity of the members has a restraining effect on the need for identification with the Alevi community. To individually become involved in the revitalisation of group identity requires transformation of collective needs to individual ones. For the individual Bektaşi, this need is covered by the identity given through initiation. The following analysis examines the processes at work within each Bektaşi dergah.

[4] All religious communities are social, hence, the term 'sosio-religious' is a matter of approach. This chapter focuses on the social aspects of the Bektaşi order as it sees it as a socio-religious group.

[5] The Dedebaba Bedri Noyan contributed to the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature by several articles and books. After his death, these contributions were collected in the comprehensive work called 'Bütün Hönleiyle Alevilik ve Bektaşilik', (Alevism and Bektaşism with all aspects). Other Babas also contributes to the flow of information of the Alevi-Bektaşi community.

Even though social groups consist of both vertical and horizontal bonds[6], they emphasise the directions of influence in accordance with their philosophy. The hierarchic structure of each Bektaşi dergah depends on vertical ties of loyalty, with influence directed from top to bottom. The members turn to higher ranks for models in the dialectic process of defining correct behaviour and sets of thoughts. As the influence is internalised, the group becomes the 'generalised other', which gives the individual his unity of self. The attitude of the 'generalised other' becomes the attitude of the whole community (Mead 1967: 154). After initiation, members are to be socialised into the socio-religious network by positive or negative reinforcement in accordance with the Bektaşi principles. Only parts of the philosophy are revealed by the time of initiation. The candidates promise fidelity to the Bektaşi identity as it is expressed during the time they have spent together with the Baba and the rest of the dergah. They are given the foundation of their future personal identity, and once accepted, the dialectic process of adaptation starts.

6.2.2 A Meaningful Universe

The process in question is that of objectification of social structures. Through physical and mental activity, resulting in material and cultural objects, humans produce and externalise society, thus creating a meaningful universe. When the world becomes objectified into a static reality, it confronts its producers as a fact beyond their control (Berger 1974: 16). Through internalisation, the objective structures are transformed into subjective determining structures of both social and individual behaviour. Internalisation is a life long, continuous process of socialisation through which the group creates nomos, a meaningful order of experiences working as a given and natural reality (Berger 1974: 30). Because the extent of the Bektaşi nomos coincide with the cosmic order, religious meaning created by the nomos, and fundamental principles of the universe melt together in the notions of micro cosmic mirroring and divinity present in every part of existence (see chapter five:5.3.2). The organisation of the dergahs mirrors the cosmic order. The dervish concept of a spiritual hierarchy is the ideal model of the structural organisation of the order, and as humans contain cosmos in which they are living, the ranking system is a microcosmic image of the universal order. The power of such a religious system is likely to spring from its claim to be immutable (Ataseven 1997:29). It is not only God given and

[6] Within and between social groups, individuals are bound together by vertical and horizontal ties of loyalty. Vertical ties imply some kind of hierarchic structure, while horizontally, individuals relate to each other as equals. A social, or religious, network is a complex network of vertical and horizontal links.

independent of man-made systems of identification, holyness is a part of it and the divine sphere is imagined as a reachable target for the devoted believer. The reference group[7], from which each individual finds the ideal identity, consists of both holy and mundane figures. Because the holy beings are not interacting directly with all the members, it is an imagined community[8], which once imagined, is modelled, adapted and transformed by its members (Anderson 1989: 15). Even though God is not directly and visibly acting back on the believers, he is a societal actor to consider within the sosio-religious network.

6.2.3 The Bektaşi Leaders as Narrators

As the leaders of the dergahs are closest to divinity, they are chosen for interaction with the deity. They are regarded by their disciples as masters in the art of living Bektaşism. Responsibility arrives with such a title, and they are obliged to constantly recall the group to the specific set of Bektaşi principles and values they officially recognise. They also provide manuals of behaviour and are in charge of the collective process of organising diversity into a meaningful universe. Within the fixed horizon of expectations and patterns of reactions, the Babas execute their responsibility by telling stories and tales. The specific genre of Bektaşi tales, of which the content is often difficult to understand, provides expectations of interpretations that cannot be derived from the semantic content alone (Tonkin 1992: 2). The tale is an external evidence for the authority of the leader, because it creates a time beyond time and gives the impression of being universal. In addition, the leader is the one who knows the right interpretation of the unexplainable content, and which set of principles and values it reflects. By monopolising objectivated cultural competence, *cultural capital*, the leaders possess knowledge of the immanent law, perceived as both eternal and universal (Bourdieu 1997: 181). Their guidance through life on the Bektaşi path to God is a personal gift irreducible only to the rendering of complete obedience. They are holders of the world of common sense, and they are in the position of defining situations and identities. Due to the complete obedience of the Bektaşi members,

[7] A reference group is a group of which individuals identify and compare themselves. By being models of behaviour, the members of a reference group provide norms of actions and opinions (Korsnes, Andersen, Brante: 1997).

[8] A community is imagined as far as members never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1989: 15). The Bektaşi community is imagined on two levels. First, due to the communion between the dergahs, and second, becuse the holy beings are related to as societal actors.

the dynamic, situational process between the Baba and his audience freezes, and reflection and questioning are themselves guided by underlying expectations and already provided channels of expression (Tonkin 1992: 107-108). Thus, the leaders are in charge of the establishment of the group identity of the Bektaşi order, in which the individual members are personally identified. Identity is both an individual and a collective matter, and it is preserved through a process of individual imitation. Reproductions are never true copies of their originals. In the dialectic relationship between imitations and their origins, they are projections of each other. Thus, influence between personal identity and group identification is somehow reciprocal, even though it is far from equal. The social order of the dergahs are perceived as natural, and the personal identities are given and received without objections in a continuous process of circular reinforcement, where the practice of the members strengthen each others' collective and individual belief.

6.2.4 Habitus and Doxa – Objectivations of Structures

Private experiences become located within an already constituted discourse, changing the nature of the purely personal attachment to Bektaşism into a collective consciousness of living in harmony with the cosmic order. According to the structural analysis of Bourdieu, this reciprocal correspondence between social and mental structures is the product of the fundamental virtue of conformity. By conforming to the social order, the members of a group reassert the solidarity between them (Bourdieu 1997: 157). It is not a conscious strategy of each member, but a system of durable, transposable 'dispositions' produced by the structures of a specific type of environment. These dispositions are 'structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures', together constituting what he calls *habitus*, the mental structures through which members of a group interpret the social world. The system of habitus reproduces the objective structures of which it is the product by creating practices, which work to be immediately perceived as intelligible and foreseeable, and thus taken for granted. Through mastering a common code within the dergah, each member is a producer and a reproducer of objective meaning and both collective and individual practices. This code is an immanent law preserved in each member by guidance on the path to God. This is habitus as the precondition of socio-religious conformity (Bourdieu 1997: 72,78,80).

Both social and mental structures form not only the group's representation of the world, but also the group, which orders itself in accordance with this representation. Within this relationship between social structure and religious belief, the established order

produces the naturalisation of its own individuality and appears as reality. This experience is called *doxa,* which is the world as common sense. Through its character of a natural phenomenon, it is the undisputed universe of unanimity, upheld by answering questions, which can not be explicitly asked. Objectification guarantees the permanence of symbolic acquisitions, which can then subsist without continuous recreation. The objectified social order projects division of the group and gives the sense of natural limits. The system at once divides and unites by legitimacy of the apparent hierarchic principle of unity in division (Bourdieu 1997: 158-160, 163, 178).

In his structural analysis, Bourdieu examined group formation in general, and therefore, his focus is not specifically secret religious societies. Within the sphere of doxa there are no explicitly told rules, because once they are verbalised they become subjects of reflection. Doxa is upheld by unconscious processes, which provide affirmation of its existence as natural. In addition of being subject to these unconscious processes, maintenance of social structures and formation of identities, within the Bektaşi dergahs, relate to rules and regulations explicitly uttered from the time of initiation. Still, they are not subject to critical reflection. Because the divine beings, and holyness as a state of mind are parts of the social hierarchy, Bektaşi laws are cosmic laws and thereby indisputable in the same way as objectified structures. As they are transmitted through the hierarchy in a form which renders them both eternal and universal, they validate the structure of power relations. Due to the closeness of divinity, obedience becomes the primary concern above questioning the legitimacy of structures and laws. To consider social structures and religious laws as phenomena beyond criticism is a part of religious absolutism. As the sphere of doxa is systemised through veneration, the area of unquestioned structures and phenomena is enlarged and strengthened.

6.3.1 The Bektaşi Secret

The individual strive to live Bektaşism is upheld by gradual revelation of the esoteric knowledge kept within the order as the *Bektaşi Secret* (Birge 1937:159). It is a concept in which concealment on all levels is included on the right path to God (see chapter five:5.3.3). A ‘secret’ implies social relations between at least three actors and is constituted by binding a group together in opposition to those who are not in possession of certain knowledge (Rothstein 1999: 89). It is only a secret if ‘others’ do not know the content, and it is a social structuring mechanism as far as the outsiders are aware of their lack of insight. It is the administration of the secret, rather than its content, which

determines the social structures of each Bektaşi dergah. To maintain information completely within the order requires legitimate explanations of the exclusiveness of the members. The awareness of this exclusive inside understanding of the world determines the social hierarchy by degrees of insight into the Bektaşi secret, the most knowledgeable being closest to God. To be in possession of this secret knowledge gives power to define insiders from outsiders and to establish an insurmountable gap between them. The result is a dualistic approach of 'us' and 'them', which is theologically explained by the human need to live through duality in order to reach the great enlightenment (see chapter five:5.3.3). By redefining bad incidents into good ones, the Bektaşis manifest their closeness to divinity, in opposition to outsiders. As the past is remembered as a chain of suppressive incidents (see chapter four: 4.6.1), the nature of suffering develops as a theological concept with the mission of transforming the marginal character of agony into a legitimate and understandable abstraction (Berger 1974: 61). This Bektaşi theodicy teaches the members that their practice, which is derived from knowledge of the higher truth, is not appreciated by the average society, and thus agony is a sign of closeness to God.

> Light emerged from darkness, but the darkness did not understand the light.[9]

Experience of hardship is best understood as a natural consequence of progress towards divinity, hence, those who are willing to acquire the mystical knowledge have to be prepared for suffering. It is an apolitical and passive stance towards discrimination, which necessitates a symbolic secret within the frames of rigid hierarchical structure. This attitude is made possible through simultaneous rationalisation and veneration of collective experiences.

6.3.2 The Bektaşi Secrecy and the Alevi Renaissance

The esoteric aspect of religious fraternities is often sustained through tension with its surroundings. In such cases, the 'secret' works as a socially segregating mechanism. As the secret has to be shared by the minority in a society, success is its enemy (Rothstein 1999: 102-103). The exclusiveness of secret, religious societies are crucial for their existence, hence, once they become popular the structures necessarily loose their strength. Therefore, leaders with the power to decide who and what to teach are necessities for the continuous

existence of the order. Suspicion and specific ways of testing potential members are parts of the execution of this power. When candidates are invited to the ceremonial Bektaşi dinners, the leader evaluates their potential abilities. After a certain period, sometimes by conference with his dergah, the Baba takes the decision whether to grant the candidate the nasip or not. During the initiation ritual, the candidates give oaths of loyalty to God, which also is loyalty to the Bektaşi order as an organisation. When studying Egyptian Sufis, Valerie Hoffman experienced 'humiliation and apparent rejection' by her shaykh, in order for him to see how she reacted and 'thereby revealed her hidden defects' (Hoffman 1995: 43). This was the way the shaykh tested his disciples in order to evaluate their abilities and disclose possible motivations in disagreement with his philosophy. A person's level of knowledge is measured by his social behaviour by which he achieves gradual advancement within the hierarchy. It is a chain reaction controlled by the leader of the dergah.

6.4.1 The Apolitical Effort

> We hate politics. Have you ever been to a Hamam? Then you will understand what politics is. You will use a small cup to pour water on you, and when you are done you leave the cup behind. And others will come and use the same cup. So the name of the cup is politics.[10]

The quotation above illustrates the general Bektaşi attitude towards politics in its wider sense. It includes social movements as the type of identity politics carried out by Alevi groups, as well as national party politics. As the Alevi-Bektaşi community consists of heterogeneous groups, focus on common traits is systematically used to meet the need of a coherent identity. This is in essence what the revitalisation of the Alevi-Bektaşi identity is about. Therefore, it becomes a central part of the execution of identity politics. This withdrawn attitude towards political action on the behalf of the Bektaşi identity, is an apolitical effort in strengthening the inner structure through concealment and absolute definitions of their own exclusiveness. It is a choice between strategies of preservation and survival on the religious marketplace of Turkey.

[9] Interview 4, Bektaşi Baba.

6.4.2 Choices on the Religious Marketplace

The 'religious marketplace' is a metaphor referring to a multicultural context in which religious institutions and traditions compete for adherence and worshippers 'shop' for faith that satisfies them (Kurtz 1995: 274). In Turkey, the selection of worldviews are all related to Islam. No other religion is seriously in competition with Islam, hence, the real choice is whether to be Muslim or not, and further, between different interpretations of Islam. Within the context of the Turkish society, where people experience legitimacy crises and identity search on all levels (examined in chapter three: 3.2.2-3.2.4), selection between Muslim practices is a choice between structures. The option of entering the Bektaşi order presents hard, exclusive and permanent structures,[11] which provides sacred canopies perceived as the only available system of righteous answers to essential questions of human life (Kurtz 1995: 10-11). Popularity and democratisation of the social order may rub away the firm structures necessary for preservation of the sacred canopy the Bektaşi order provides.

6.5 Concluding remarks.

Due to a practical fusion of the distinction between Alevism and Bektaşism, defining the role of the Bektaşi order within the Alevi renaissance is an analytical project best perceived intuitively by the members of the community. The Bektaşi attitude towards the revitalisation is resigned on two levels. Within each dergah, objectified social structures work as legitimising mechanisms of a rigid hierarchy, where the position of the leader ascribes him a central role in the dialectic process of definition and affirmation of personal and group identity. Through him, the members are given a Bektaşi identity, and are therefore not in need of individually searching for it.

As an order, including all dergahs, Bektaşis contribute to a certain extent to the spread of information. However, it is a modest contribution, limited by the fact that the continuous existence of the order, and the ability for the philosophy to provide individual identities, depend on its ability to teach the members' exclusiveness. Popularity and

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[10] Interview 8, Bektaşi Baba.

[11] Hard, exclusive and permanent structures are typical fundamentalist choices, which have good chances on the religious marketplace just because of the simple, clear structures (Stoltz 1996: *Fundamentalistic Movement as a Post Modern type of Christianity*, Lecture held at the University of Bergen 09.10.96).

CHAPTER SEVEN:
CONCLUDING REMARKS

7.1 Summary

This thesis analyses the Bektaşi participation in the Alevi renaissance. It also offers possible approaches to the connection between Alevism and Bektaşism in contemporary Turkey. The project grew out of impressions during the Hacıbektaş Memorial Ceremonies and the following fieldwork in the Alevi-Bektaşi community in Ankara. During the ceremonies, Hacıbektaş town is the Alevi renaissance in miniature, enclosing Alevis and Bektaşis in devotional and other social activities and a flow of information including the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature. To fully understand the processes at work in the revitalisation of this community, I have analysed the Bektaşi commitment to the renaissance within the context of the Turkish society. Three major institutions: State, military and politics, are all experiencing severe identity crises. Shifting alliances and continuous strive for power and legitimacy are all attempts of synthesising the Kemalist heritage and Islam. In the national atmosphere of identity formation, social movements engage in identity politics, creating social space and acceptance for themselves.

Contemporary Alevism is such a social movement**.** The Alevis are revitalising their identity in order to define themselves within the Turkish Republic. This reconstruction of identity requires considerations of the past, understood as a selection of the past. Through different historical events, Alevis and Bektaşis interpret their past towards a common feeling of suppression. On this basis, their reconstructed present identity covers marginality, as both Alevis and Bektaşis perceive themselves as a minority in Turkey. This common identity is embraced and celebrated during the ceremonies, and it is defined and explained through the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature.

Despite their common ground, members of the Bektaşi order generally have a resigned attitude towards the renaissance. Explanations of their lack of commitment are found in the hierarchical social structure within each dergah. The leaders are approached with complete obedience, giving them the responsibility to define and deliver the specific Bektaşi identity, which the members develop into their personal identities. The hierarchy is theologically legitimised through Sufi doctrines, teaching the path to God as gradual advancement towards divinity. This rigid structure decreases the individual need of engagement in identity politics. In addition, the ‘Bektaşi secret’ implies a high degree of exclusiveness of the members. Because it is a secret society, popularity and expansion are

not favoured, and the Bektaşi order remains apolitical and an exclusive choice on the Turkish religious marketplace.

7.2 My Contribution

Available research on the Alevi-Bektaşi community and the process of revitalisation of identity mainly examines Alevism. Due to the secret nature of the Bektaşi order, the information revealed is both insufficient and controlled by the Bektaşi leaders. Through analysing the Bektaşi attitude towards the Alevi renaissance, this thesis contributes to the understanding of Bektaşism and their relationship with Alevis.

People in the Alevi-Bektaşi environment are mainly intellectuals contributing to the production of the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature. In the process of revitalisation of identity, they read and interpret the academic literature on the subject. It is reasonable to believe that this thesis will be read as well, and thus will become a part of the renaissance through incorporation into the Alevilik ve Bektaşilik literature.

7.3 Future Research

This project raises a multitude of questions for future research, among which the need for redefinition of traditional concepts of religiosity and secularity is pronounced. The fusion of the religious Bektaşi fraternity and the Alevi social movement is an interesting phenomenon not only in this specific case study. The Alevi renaissance may be characterised as a secular revival of religion through veneration of Atatürk and the humanitarian interpretation of the teachings of the mystic Hacı Bektaş Veli. Within the context of the secular Turkish Republic, the renaissance is a denial of religion through its revival. Such a complex case of religion, culture, politics and secularism intertwined, might be a witness of a general transformation of the Turkish society.

APPENDIX

1. LAW 677 of November 20th 1925.

This law was a part of the reforms carried out by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. It prohibited ritual activities in connections to mausoleums of saints, closed all dervish tekkes and zaviyes, and abolished both individual and organised mystical practice. This translation is from the Alevi-Bektaşi homepage, http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevıs, 27.09.00.

Clause 1.

All the tekkes (dervish lodges) and zaviyes (central dervish lodges) in the Turkish Republic, either in the form of wakf (religious foundations) or under the personal property of its sheikh or established in any other way, are closed. The right of property and possession of their owners continue. Those used as mosques and mescits (small mosques) may be retained as such. All of the orders using descriptions as sheikh, dervish, disciple, dedelik (elder of Alevis) chelebilik (title of the leader of one branch of Alevis), seyyitlik (a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad), babalik (elder of Bektaşi order, a kind of sheikh), emirlik (descendant of the Prophet Muhammad), nakiplik (warden of religious order), halifelik (deputy sheikh), faldjilik (fortune teller), buyudjuluk (witchcraft), ufurukchuluk (a person who claims to cure by means of the breath), divining, and giving written charms in order to make someone reach their desire: service to these titles, and the wearing of dervish costume, are prohibited. The toms of the sultans, the tombs of the dervish orders are closed, and the profession of tomb keeping is abolished. Those who open the closed tekkes (dervish lodges) or zaviyes (central dervish lodges), or the tombs, and those who re-establish them or those who give temporary places to the orders of people who are called by any of the mystical names mentioned above or those who serve them, will be sentenced to at least three months in prison and will be fined at least fifty Turkish liras.

Clause 2. This law is effective immediately.

Clause 3. The cabinet is charged with its implementation

2. Interviews conducted during my fieldwork in Turkey, August to October 1999.

Interview 1.
17.08.99 in Hacıbektaş
Bektaşi member

Interview 2.
17.08.99 in Hacıbektaş
Bektaşi Baba

Interview 3.
18.08.99 in Hacıbektaş
Alevi Dede

Interview 4.
September-99 in Ankara
Conversations with a Bektaşi Baba during a ceremonial dinner.

Interview 5.
04.10.99 in Ankara
Group interview with a Bektaşi Baba and some disciples and candidates during a ceremonial dinner.

Interview 6.
06.10.99 in Ankara
Bektaşi member.

Interview 7.
07.10.99 in Ankara
Bektaşi Baba

Interview 8.
09.10.99 in Ankara
Bektaşi Baba

Interview 9.

12.10.99

Urban Alevi

3. Other sources

E-mail Correspondence.

5.11.99 – 30.11.00

Bektaşi Baba, Bektaşi dervish and Alevi

Alevi-Bektaşi homepage.

http://www.sahkulu.org/xalevis

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