

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRINITY AND PRINCIPLE BELIEFS WITHIN THE BEKTASHI ALAVI ORDER

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The Bektashi Order is from amongst those orders whose teachings are based upon Shia thought, but whose practices have drastically transformed because of the influence placed upon it by the Christians and Sunnis in the Balkans and Anatolia. Their ontological view is centered on the concept of Imamate and according to them all the grace that is seen in the world is because of the Infallibles as they are the channel of Divine Grace.

So in addition to having a legislative role, the Imam has an influence on the system of natural law as well. This research, which relies upon the sacred scriptures of the Bektashi Alavi Order, aims to show that their fundamental beliefs were based upon Shia thought and that they have faith in the pillars and subsidiaries of religion; even though they may differ from the Shia in certain practices and apparent rituals, there is no difference between them regarding the pillars and fundamentals of religion. Furthermore, the attempts of certain Sunni scholars to try and separate this Order from its Shia roots and introduce it as a Sunni order in the form of academic articles will be shown to be incorrect and invalid. Furthermore, the attribution of a Christian trinity like concept to this order is a baseless and unfair claim and essentially flawed.

In this paper, light will be thrown on certain important discrepancies regarding the beliefs of the Bektashi Alavi Order that were previously overlooked and the unity of their belief system with that of the Shia's will be attempted to be proven by means of content analysis of the main sacred scriptures of the Alavis such as the *Buyruks*, *Husniyyah* and the *Divan of the Seven Poets*, as these texts act as interpreters for their beliefs.

**Keywords:** *Alavi, Bektashi, Shia, Sufi, Sufism, Imamate*

### *Introduction*

By bypassing the various meanings that exist for the term Alavi, today two main groups are recognized with this title: 1) the Turkish Alavis and 2) the Syrian Alavis. The objective of this paper is to extract the fundamental beliefs and culture of the Turkish and Balkan Alavis by analyzing the contents of their main scriptures. It must be noted that it has been proven elsewhere that the Syrian Alavis in terms of their beliefs are Shia. Today being an Alavi is not so much a religion or denomination but rather a philosophy and way of life.

Originally the Alavis were called Qizilbash, but because of the killing, torture, insults and slander that were aimed towards them changed their name to the Alavis by order of their leaders and elders in the year 1850 in order to escape from all of the above. It has also been said that the recognition of this group as Alavi was a result of the cultural activities undertaken by the Ottoman government in order to separate the Turkish Alavis from the Safavids of Iran and Shah Ismail (Nuri 2010: 14). Some other researchers believe that the name Alavi was used for the Qizilbash and Bektashi after the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Golpınarlı 1987: 108). Information concerning this group in Persian is very limited, so the focusing of this paper on the original texts of the Alavis distinguishes it from other research done on this subject.

Even though some researchers have divided the Alavis into two groups i.e. Bektashi and non-Bektashi, but in terms of ideology and beliefs there is no real difference between the two and it may be said that this division has political motives behind it. The differences which have been mentioned in order to divide them can be used as evidence to prove our claim. Some of the differences that have been mentioned are that the majority of Bektashis are city dwellers whereas the majority of Alavis are rural dwellers; the Alavis believe that the Dede<sup>1</sup> must descend from the progeny of the Holy Prophet i.e. a Sayyid whereas the Bektashi do not have this condition; the Bektashi is a recognized order, whilst the Alavis are not; the Bektashis have a close relationship with the government, whereas the relationship of the Alavis with the government is strained. None of the above creates a difference in the belief systems of the Bektashi and Alavis (Salehi 2020).

According to researchers and authorities in the field, the Bektashi and the Alavis are a single entity and only differ in the performance of certain specific rituals, because they all accept Haj Bektash. However, the Alavis do not see it necessary for the leader to be from the lineage of Haj Bektash, but can be any sayyid or elder (pir) (Ayub Uglu 1989: 66).

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1 Spiritual leader, lit. grandfather.

Another set of researchers opine that between the Bektashi and Alavi an incorrect merging has occurred. They believe that this occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more specifically from the year 1826 when the two terms and groups began to be recognized as a single entity. Today, the Bektashi see themselves as being Alavi. Others view the Bektashi as being a subgroup of Alavis that is attached to the Chelbiyaan branch of Alavism. This claim has been critiqued (Kuchuk 2003: 152). Others are of the opinion that the Bektashi are merely an Alavi political movement. However, as stated previously, most researchers see these two groups as being a single entity and believe that there is no difference between them (Olusoy 1986: 107). I have written another paper in which I have discussed the separation or unity of these two groups and in it have proven that they have a united belief system; so in this paper whenever the term Alavi is used it includes the Bektashi order.

### ***Opinions regarding the Beliefs of the Bektashi Order***

Works that have discussed the beliefs of the Bektashi Order have produced differing views. Some of these works have introduced the Bektashi Order as being an official Sunni order who secretly had inclinations towards esoteric teachings and Shia principles (Pavlovich Petrushevsky 1975: 366), whilst others have introduced and recognized it as being a Shia order (Shaybi 1975: 363).

According to some researchers this discrepancy and difference of opinion regarding the beliefs of the Bektashi Order is a result of the conflicting strategies that were adopted between the Bektashis of the East and those of the West within the Ottoman Empire. Those of the East always manifested their Shia nature which was clearly shown in their taking part in the uprisings against the Ottomans. It is in this way that the hypothesis of the Bektashi Order being Sunni according to these researchers relies more upon those who resided in the West of the Ottoman Empire, as they were forced to practice dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) because of the empires dominance in that area. Hence, it is possible that this was also to escape arrest and torture, as an important point that must be mentioned is that after the death of Bayazid the Second, who had a relatively good relationship with the Bektashi Order, Sultan Selim by means of his enmity towards the Sufis, created severe hatred towards the Bektashi and Shia groups (Kalich 2009: 124).

In order to analyze these opinions and come to a correct conclusion it is essential to study the beliefs of the Alavi from their own scriptures.

Apparently, the policy of ascribing the Bektashi Order to the Sunni Sufi Orders and separating of the Alavis from them is still being pursued currently in Turkey, in addition to Sunni writers following this trend when writing

books and articles about the Bektashi Alavi Order (Oz 1995: 218). Professor Orhan Turkudugan, in his book on the identity of the Bektashi Order and the Alavis, quoting the former mufti<sup>1</sup> of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs, writes: "Similarly to the four jurisprudential schools in Sunni Islam, Shia Islam is based on the Jafari School, but Imam Sadiq is a Sunni. The Sunnis view his eminence to be from amongst the Sunni school. The claim of the Shia that they are Jafari is just a form of dissimulation. Just as they have misused the name of Imam Ali. In my opinion the Shia, Alavi, Qizilbash are all the same thing. There is no difference between them. They are all originally Shia and have been pulled out from within Shia thought, which is that very Alavi thought, as Shia means a follower of Imam Ali. This following under what conditions occurred during history? Alavism is just a deviation of Shi'ism that found existence in the history of the Turks, Iranians and Arabs. Alavism has been critiqued and debunked and Anatolian Alavism has its source from Turkish thought. In reality, Alavism is a Turkish culture and not a religious sect or denomination" (Turkdugan 1995: 495).

He, then, very intricately tries to separate the Alavis from Shi'ism and attach it to Sunnism. He writes in this regard: "Shi'ism is divided into *Imamiyyah* and *Zaydiyyah*. They, like the Sunnis, are those who observe the prayer unlike other Shias such as the *Ghulat* (extremists) who do not pray. The Zaydis are closer to the Ahlul Sunnah than they are to Shi'ism. In terms of the Ghulat, they do not pray nor seek assistance, in other words they are all polytheists (*mushrik*)."<sup>1</sup> Until here, he considers the Shia to be like the Ahlul Sunnah and he removed the Ghulat from the equation. He then goes on to say that 90% of the Alavis, because of their belief in God, the Holy Prophet, in the other conditions of faith and in the Glorious Quran, should be considered to be one with the Ahlul Sunnah, as the Shia have critiqued them. It should rather be said that they have been removed from the body of the Ahlul Sunnah. He then adds that if the Ghulat also believe in the conditions of faith and the Glorious Quran then they too can be considered to be one with Ahlul Sunnah. What is meant by faith is belief in Allah, the Holy Prophet, the angels, the divine scriptures and the Glorious Quran, even though he may not act upon it, but because he has faith and belief in these he can be considered to be part of the Ahlul Sunnah (ibid.: 427).

The malicious attempts to destroy the relationship between the Alavis and the Shia have even entered the books and articles that discuss the Bektashi and Alavis to the extent that the name of Shia has been completely removed from them. The Professor continues and writes: "For respect of the

<sup>1</sup> He has since retired, but he held that position for nearly 17 years, answering the religious queries of the Turkish people.

Alavis, it is essential that we attract them towards us and create a form of unity between us and them. We must accept Alavism. By our research and efforts we must enliven the thoughts of Khawajah Ahmad Yasawi and Mawlana Rumi and reconnect the Alavis with them. We must strive to distance the thought of the Alavis from the thought of Imamate” (ibid.: 580).

Anti-Alavi sentiment and the policy of distancing them from the Shia has been a common trend from ancient times until the present day. Whenever a sign or allusion to Shi’ism was seen in the Alavi texts, the antagonists would make a point to censor it. In addition, within the Shia, some knowingly and intentionally or naively made efforts to destroy and excommunicate the Sufis. In our own era we see that Reza Shah burnt the Grand Library of Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardebili which contained priceless Alavi texts that showed their Shia tendencies. Writers continued to write and speakers continued to speak in such a manner until the protesting voice of Sayyid Haydar Amuli was raised (Amuli 1968: 222).

This was while the passing of years and centuries is a proof that the Alavis, especially those in the Balkans and even to an extent in Turkey, have tied their identity with Islam which has resulted in the survival of Islam and their Shia culture to be systemized within it. The intertwining of the religion of Islam, the Shia culture and Sufi practices with the cultural and social identity of the Muslims in that system formed a significant barrier in blocking that community from transforming and removing the identity forming element of the Ahlul Bayt from them. In such conditions, the protection of the religious identity of the Bektashi was one of the most important concerns of their leaders.

The Bektashi believe that they are part of Shi’ism and the sect of salvation. From amongst the poetic-like chants that they recite every morning and evening the following phrases appear: “Praise be to Allah who has made me his servant with my heart and soul. By being the humble servant of the one’s of the cloak I have left the path of darkness and stepped upon the straight path. From the slumber of inattentiveness have I awoken. My eye and heart have seen that I am the servant of the twelve Imams and from the sect of salvation from amongst the seventy two have I separated. Washed my hands of the rest and upon the true sect of Jafari am I. I am a follower of Muhammad and my leader has been made Ali. Upon the beauty of Muhammad and the perfection of Hasan, Husayn and Ali salutations” (Kaya 1993: 110).

The Ahlul Bayt are the cupbearers of the pond of Kawthar, from all impurities have they been protected (Razi 2016: 162).

A chapter titled Shia is also present within the Buyruks. This chapter defines the Shia sect and that after the Holy Prophet the Muslims will split into seventy two sects. Half of these sects accepted the Shia sect and acknowledge

Imam Ali as their Imam, the other half are non-Shia and acknowledge Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman as their leaders (Atalay Vaktidolu 2011: 190–203; Abbasi n. d.).

In this research we intend to reference the sacred and most important works of the Alavis such as the Divan of the Seven Great Alavi Poets, the Buyruks and the Husniyyah in order to prove this matter and show that the Bektashi Alavi Order is in fact Twelver Shia that, as a result of remaining aloof and distant from its origin and principles, has allowed for certain deviations to occur within in it. We intend to strengthen this claim at the end of this article where we will clarify the relationship between Alavism and Shi'ism. It should not remain hidden that many international institutes have tried with the writing of partial and one-sided 'academic' papers to prove that Alavis thought has absolutely no relationship with Shia thought and to attribute it to ideas of the Turks before Islam such as Shamanism and Manism or even to Christianity. Some have even tried to remove the Alavis from the fold of Islam all together, whilst others have attached them to the Ahlul Sunnah. We have tried in this article to show the invalidity of these claims by making reference to the most important books of the Alavis and also to show that they are in reality Shia who, because of historical oppression and 'fate', have fallen away from their origins and principles which is the Shia ideology and thought.

### *The Alavi Sacred Texts*

The primary beliefs of the Alavis are contained within the Buyruks, the Husniyyah Epistle and the Divan of the seven poets.

*Buyruks:* It is a source that is of great importance to the Alavis. Buyruks has the meaning of commands and what is meant here are the commands and orders of Imam Sadiq (Atalay Vaktidolu 2011). It contains the principles, practices and ethical code for the Alavis. This book has been rewritten by numerous persons. The critical edition of Adil Ali Atalay Vaktidolu, in which he has compared the extant manuscripts and added glosses, has been printed several times.

*The Husniyyah Epistle:* It has been said that Husniyyah was a knowledgeable woman slave or student of Imam Sadiq, who after the martyrdom of the Imam travelled to Basra and Baghdad to hold debates with the great Sunni scholars of those laces on prudent issues such as Imamate. It is reported that she defeated them all (Atalay Vaktidolu 2012: 3).

*The Divan of the Seven Great Poets:* Another important source that can be read and studied in order to acquire the beliefs of the Alavis is the Divans of poetry written by the Alavi poets. In the Alavi culture, poetry has a very

high position. The Alavis, maybe as a result of the oppression and limitations that they faced, poured all their beliefs into the mold of poetry. Hence, the poets and their poetry have added importance to them. Amongst the Alavi poets, seven of them are held in higher esteem than others, and are known as the Seven Poets. They are: 1) Pir Soltan Abdal (1480–1550)<sup>1</sup>, 2) Shah Ismail Safavi – Ismail I – aka Khitabi (1487–1524)<sup>2</sup>, 3) Sayyid Ali Imad al-Din Nasimi<sup>3</sup>, 4) Kul Himmat<sup>4</sup>, 5) Fudhuli (1480–1556)<sup>5</sup>, 6) Fadhil or Uglu aka Yamini<sup>6</sup> and 7) Virani<sup>7</sup>.

### *An Analysis of the Primary Beliefs of the Alavis'*

The Bektashi Alavis believe in the oneness of Allah, the law of the Holy Prophet and the Imamate of the Imams from the offspring of Lady Fatima and Imam Ali. The denomination of the Alavis and the Bektashis are Jafari (Bedri 1987: 53–59).

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- 1 He lived to the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. His original name was Haydar. He was born in the Turkish city of Sivas. He is one of the famous and popular Bektashi Alavi poets. His poems are recited together with a specific type of music within the Khanqah by the Alavis.
  - 2 The founder of the Safavid Dynasty. He was born in Ardebil. He passed away at the age of 37 in Tabriz and was buried in his hometown, Ardebil. Some of his writings are: Nasihat Name, Dam Name (Ashiq wa Mashuq).
  - 3 He was one of the most important poets in the Bektashi Alavi literary tradition. It was said that he belonged to the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD but his exact date of birth is unknown. It has been mentioned that he died around the years 1404 or 1414. He recited poems in Turkish, Arabic and Persian. Some of his important works are: Divan or poetry and Muqadimah al-Haqaiq.
  - 4 He lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown. He is one of the great Alavi poets. He has a Divan of poetry in Istanbul Turkish.
  - 5 His original name is Muhammad b. Ismail. He was born in the city of Karbala in a Shia household. He was an intellectual and scholarly poet who wrote poetry in three languages. With his literary works he created a transformation within the literary fields of Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Some of his Turkish works include a Divan or poetry, Layli and Majnoon, a translation of forty traditions and Hadiqah al-Saadat. In Persian, he wrote a Divan, Hasn Ishq, Anis al-Qalb, Rand wa Zahid, Risalah Ma'ma. In Arabic, he wrote a Divan and Matla al-I'tiqad.
  - 6 His name was Muhammad. He lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. There is not much information regarding his life. He died in the city of Munster. It has been said that he found fame because of his Divan and Fadhilat Name.
  - 7 His dates of birth and death are not known. According to Abdalbaki Golpinarli he lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries AD and died in an area of Turkey known as Karli Ovary. His Divan is very well-known. He also has a treatise that holds importance for the Bektashi Alavis.

### ***Monotheism***

Haj Bektash Vali describes monotheism in the book *Muqallat* as being the belief in the oneness and reality of God. In the Buyruks the concept of monotheism has also been discussed in great depth. They believe that God is the all-Knowing, the all-Seeing, the all-Hearing, the possessor of unlimited power and absent from all physical space. This belief of monotheism corresponds to the monotheism of the Glorious Quran, for Allah says in the Glorious Quran that your God is one; whoever wishes to earn proximity to Him must perform good and worthy deeds and acts; it is God who must be served and no partner must be associated with him (Bozkurt 1982: 125–126). Discussions concerning God can be found throughout the Buyruks and therefore it needs a separate discussion. In addition, many translated verses of the Glorious Quran have been used in this book and various parables have been used to emphasize Divine Oneness and Unity (ibid.: 10).

The Ahlul Bayt and their followers believe that God is pure and perfect and has power over all things. He is aware of everything and any act that He does is based upon wisdom and judiciousness. No evil or oppressive act can be ever attributed to Him. He never commands that which is unattainable (Razi 2016: 116). He rewards good deeds and punishes the bad; He dislikes His servants committing evil and oppression, and he never lets the efforts of the good go to waste. All the prophets are infallible from major and minor sins; they are immune from error and forgetfulness (ibid.: 161). In the Quranic chapter of Al-An'am, He says that eyes cannot see Him, but He sees all (ibid.: 148). Throughout the Buyruks, the oneness and unity of God is discussed. From the verses that have been mentioned in the Buyruks, the oneness of God can be easily understood (Bozkurt 1982: 10).

Hence, contrary to popular belief, the Buyruks contain nothing that indicates the divinity and God-like status of Imam Ali, but rather it mentions that God created Adam and hid himself within the heart of Adam (Ekinj 2004: 17).

### ***The Trinity Conspiracy***

One of the slanderous accusations that has been attributed to the Alavis is the discussion concerning the Christian Trinity. Some Western and Western influenced writers have compared the 'trinity' found in the Alavis doctrine to that of the Christian faith and have even claimed that the Alavis have taken their doctrine from the Christians. One of those writers is Lutfi Kalehli. He writes that the 'trinity' of the Alavis is the same as the Christian Trinity and that it is possible to merge them (Lutfi 1995: 20). Another is Prof.



Yusuf Ziya' Yurikan; he, because of the emphasis on the belief in 'Allah Muhammad Ali' and its vast applications within the Alavi doctrine, likened it to the Christian Trinity. He also believes that all Alavis give priority to Imam Ali. Yasar Nuri Ozturk, in his book dealing with the history of the Bektashi Order, (Nuri Ozturk 1990: 32) and Ismat Zaki Ayub Uglu, in his book on the Alavi Orders and traditionalists (Ayub Uglu 1989: 81), share the same view.

In contrast, another group of writers and scholars have resoundingly disproven this view. For example, Dr. Sayin Dalkarn, who is a teacher at the theology faculty of Ataturk University, writes: "This belief that Ali and Muhammad are a single light entered into the Bektashi doctrine from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is a mistake to equate it with the Christian Trinity, for the Alavi trinity is in no way similar to that of the Christians, because this subject is related to the discussions on prophethood and imamate" (Sayin 2002: 17). The head of the Turkish Bektashi Alavi Order, Bedri Noyan says: "The Alavi trinity has absolutely no similarity to that of the Christians" (Bedri 1987: 54). Prof. Dr. Adham Ruhi Faqlali, while presenting proofs, states: "What is meant by 'Muhammad Ali' in the Alavi doctrine is the concepts of prophethood and imamate. This subject has no resemblance to the trinity of the Christians" (Ruhi Faqlali 1995: 227–232). In his book on the principal beliefs of the Alavis, Dr. Ibrahim Uglu writes: "Some western authors have equated the 'trinity' of the Alavis with the Christian Trinity and even claim that it was taken from it, while in reality this is not correct". In the Buyruks it is written: "God created the light of Muhammad and Ali and the rest of creation from their light. It is possible to view this within the scope of the Unity of Existence" (Bozkurt 1982: 166–173). This has led Bedri Noyan to say: "The three terms of Allah, Muhammad and Ali exist in Islam, but not like the Trinity of the Christians. The Alavis believe that Muhammad and Ali are the servants of God and that they themselves never claimed to have descended from the heavens or ascended back to it. They always saw themselves as being the servants of God" (Bedri 1987: 56). In the Husniyyah it is mentioned that the Christians believe in three ancient elements. God distances himself from such a claim, and those who say so are disbelievers (Ma'idah/V: 73). The Holy Trinity consists of God being the Father, Jesus being the son and the Holy Spirit who is the Archangel Gabriel. It then adds that the Glorious Quran is the miracle of Prophet Muhammad, who is a created and temporal being. So then, how is it possible for a miracle to be an ancient entity? (Razi 2016: 148)

The above issue can be further explained as follows:

The 'trinity' of Allah, Muhammad and Ali is the core declaration of the Alavis. It has been emphasized and repeated countless times in their poetry and writings. This tripartite that exists within the Alavi Order has no

relationship with the Christian Trinity; those who equate them either have ulterior motives or are ignorant of the Alavi beliefs and teachings as found in their books and are unable to grasp the depths of their meanings. Furthermore, based upon the teachings of the Ahlul Bayt and consequently Islamic and Alavi mysticism, God was and there was nothing else. God then wished to manifest Himself in order to be known and to view Himself in another. This is the terminology of the mystics is known as manifestation (*Istijla*).

In order for this to occur, God manifested a reality and existent that was the most like Him and that was able to express His names and attributes in the most perfect and complete manner possible, which could only be the 'Muhammadian reality'. This reality, according to Islamic traditions, is the very reality of Muhammad and Ali. Therefore, before the creation of any heavenly and earthly being, God created the realities of Muhammad and Ali. So at that time no other being existed except God, Muhammad and Ali. It is from their reality that God created the rest of creation, hence they have authority over all of creation while being under the Absolute Authority of God. So based upon this, the existence of Muhammad and Ali is from God, while the existence of the rest of creation is from them in a conditional manner.

This was a brief exposition on the reality of the Alavi 'trinity' as per the Alavis. So, in what sense is this similar to the Christian Trinity that some have tried so hard to push onto the Alavis?

In the Alavi trinity, God is one and is Absolute and the Muhammadian reality has a conditional existence and authority; whereas in the Christian Trinity all three elements are on a horizontal plain. It may have been to prevent such a deviant understanding that the Alavi elders such as Kul Himmat, when mentioning this trinity, would first confess to the oneness of God and then bring the names of Muhammad and Ali. However, it is unfortunate that many researchers have not paid enough attention to this point in the words of the Alavi elders and it is this inattentiveness that has created a divergent understanding (Nuri Ozturk 1990: 180). In addition, many of the Alavi elders and authorities have answered this accusation and have clearly said that there is no relationship between the trinities of the Alavis and the Christians (Bedri 1985: 54).

When mentioning the Alavi trinity, Kul Himmet said:

*Kul Himmet pirinin derdine düştü  
Allah bir Muhammed Ali diyerek qa*

Kul Himmet felt the pain of his master  
For by saying Allah is one follows Muhammad and Ali (Ozmen 1995: II/328).

*Allah bir Muhammed Ali bulundu  
Anda seyrettiler Levhü Kalemi*

God is one then Muhammad and Ali are found  
It is upon that path that Pen and Tablet travelled (Kaya 1993: 19).

So, as can be seen from the above that when the trinity is mentioned, it begins with the name of God and the confession to His oneness, then the names of Muhammad and Ali are mentioned respectfully. The Alavi elders and authorities observed the existential and hierarchical order of these three beings and always mentioned the name of God first, as He was the first and eternal being, then they mentioned the name of Muhammad as being the first creation of God and then lastly the name of Ali, who was the first reality to be hidden within the Muhammadan reality and be with it (Kujadagh 2017: 103).

Is it worthy of such a doctrine which contains all these deep intricacies and mystical wisdom to be compared to the Christian Trinity? This was an explanation from an ontological point of view, but from an apparent and exoteric view, it must be said the trinity is a confession to the three witnesses. Firstly, it is a witness to monotheism and the oneness of God 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah'; secondly, it is the witness to the prophethood of Muhammad, 'I bear witness that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah'; and lastly, it is the witness to the Imamate and successorship of Ali and the Infallible Imams, 'I bear witness that Ali is the vicegerent of Allah'. So these words 'Allah Muhammad Ali' are the profession of religion and belief, and every true believing Muslim needs to bear witness and testimony to these three. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Alavis summarize and codify this tripartite testimony into 'Allah Muhammad Ali' and have made it their slogan.

So, as can be seen from the above, the Alavi trinity is a concept that is completely abstracted from within Islam, contains the highest concepts of religion and in manner is related or similar to the Christian Trinity; hence the attribution of it to the Alavis is a great disservice to the Alavis and is done in following a malicious objective.

It is our opinion that this accusation against the Alavis was created and forged by the Ottoman rulers in order to remove them from the fold of Islam and excommunicate them; for if they committed genocide against them without any proof it may have caused a revolt within their military ranks, but by means of this ploy they would be able to enter the Alavis under the umbrella of polytheism and show that they had the same doctrine as the Christians, thus making it easier for the Muftis to pass a verdict of disbelief on them and open the door of their genocide on behalf of the rulers. The

history of the Ottomans is filled with these kinds of verdicts. This is while the pure beliefs of the Alavis concerning God are contained and explained deeply in their sacred text known as the *Speeches of Husniyyah*, which is one of the most reliable sources when it comes to the Alavi beliefs (ibid.: 104).

One of the fundamentals that the Alavis believe in is the Justice of God. They consider this to be part of the principles of religion and claim that a seeker must believe that all evil comes from the Devil and the soul of the person, for God does no evil, because if He did, it would be injustice and God is far and pure from such an attribute.

### ***Prophethood***

Their belief in prophethood appears in the Buyruks in numerous places. It explains the lexical and technical meanings of witnessing as bearing witness to the prophethood and message of Muhammad, the successorship and vicegerency of Ali and to act upon their commands such as prayer, pilgrimage etc. (Bozkurt 1982: 95). God in the Glorious Quran says about His prophet: "Say that I am human like you except that I receive revelation" (ibid.: 125–126). In another, the Buyruks discusses the created light of the Prophet and the Imams (ibid.: 171). Within this book, Muhammad and Ali appear together on many occasions, with Muhammad being mentioned as the prophet and Ali as his successor. In no place is Ali given any sort of divinity or attributed with prophethood; these are mere rumors that have been created by the antagonists.

They also believe in the infallibility of the prophets from forgetfulness, error and from performing any major or minor sin and mistake, be it before the beginning of the message or after. They also believe that the prophets are the best creations of that particular era and that God gathered within them all the praiseworthy attributes (Madbuk 2000: 41–43).

### ***Imamate and its Status in the Alavi Doctrine***

The Bektashi Alavi Order believe that the station of Imamate is divinely ordained based upon the God's wisdom for the benefit of society at large; even the Prophet has no say in who is chosen to succeed him; it is God alone who makes that choice. They use the Principle of Grace to prove its necessity. The Imam is a mercy of God upon his creation (Fudhuli Baghdadi 1955: 234). They believe that, Jibrail descended upon the Prophet with a bucket of light and said to the Prophet: "O Muhammad, God sends his salutations to you. He now orders you to inform others of the right of Ali with regards to his successorship" (Bozkurt 1982: 12).

The Bektashi see the position of Imamate as a spiritual station and not as an administrative post that comes with a salary (Bedri 1987: 396).

It appears in the Husniyyah: No prophet left this world without leaving a successor. By divine will, the successor of our prophet is the Master of all Successors as chosen by God. God alluded to this point in the Glorious Quran. At Ghadir Khum the Prophet introduced his successor and all twelve of them as chosen and commanded by God. All of them possess miracles, authority and divinely inspired knowledge. They are versed in all knowledge... Their resting places are a means to seek requests. Whoever accepts them will earn salvation by the order of God and His Prophet. Whoever rejects them is deprived and an unbeliever. This world is never empty of God's Grace and hence an infallible Imam exists in each era. God sent 124000 prophets for the guidance of mankind and every one of them had chosen a successor for themselves, which came as a command from God and not from the people. So how is it then possible for the last prophet of God, who is the best and choicest of the prophets, to leave his community without a guide and successor who would protect the divine law and religion of God? (Atalay Vaktidolu 2012: 114)

In addition, the Husniyyah, by making reference to the verse of propagation: "O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord", addresses Abu Yusuf and says: "By God and His Prophet, those who are acquainted with the sciences of traditions (*hadith*) have all confessed that this verse was revealed in the matter of the Imamate of Ali and even when the Prophet was hesitant to pronounce this because of fear from the hypocrites the Glorious Quran states, 'and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message, and Allah shall protect you from the people'" (Ma'idah/V: 67) (ibid.: 121). Also by referencing the verse of mutual cursing (*Mubahala*) in which Imam Ali is introduced as the soul or self of the Prophet; furthermore the Husniyyah states: "Who, by accusation, prevented the Prophet from completing his task? Why did they cast a stone of doubt to the Prophet? While the Glorious Quran in honor of him mentions, 'nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him]'" (Najm/LIII: 3–4). Did the Prophet not say: 'I love you more than a mother loves her new born?' This verse in the chapter of Ma'idah: 'Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the zakat while bowing down', was revealed in honor of whom? All the scholars of Islam have testified that the above was revealed in honor of Imam Ali (ibid.: 123).

The traditional corpus of the Alavis is formed of the sayings of the twelve Imams, especially those of Imam Sadiq and Imam Baqir. The Bektashi Alavis also trace their mystical chain to Imam Kazim. Many recorded Shia supplications appear identically in the books of the Alavis. For example in the

Buyruks, the supplication of relief (*Faraj*) of Imam Mahdi such as: “O Allah! The trials are great...” and the twelfth supplication from the book *al-Misbah* of Kaf’ami which reads: “O Allah! Grant us success in obeying you and distance from your disobedience, pure intentions and true knowledge of your sanctity and honor us with guidance and perseverance...” – have been mentioned (Atalay Vaktidolu 2012: 408).

The word Shia also appears in parts of the Buyruks. In the middle of an Arabic supplication, which has fallen from the eyes of the sensors, we read: “O Allah! Be a friend to his (Ali) friends and an enemy to his enemies. Be a helper to those who help him...”, of which a part comes in the supplication of Nudbah. In the continuation of the above it comes: “...and make me of his Shia, by Your mercy, O the Most-merciful of those who show mercy” (ibid.: 150).

Furthermore, the confession at the burial (*Talqin*) of an Alavi has been mentioned in the Buyruks. It must be said on behalf of the deceased that: “Our master is Muhammad and our leader is Ali. The head of our sect is Jafar al-Sadiq” (Bedri 1987: 139).

The Bektashis claim that whoever testifies to the oneness of God, the truth of the Prophet and the leadership of Imam Ali and his eleven children is our brother on the path of truth, divine law and knowledge (Atalay Vaktidolu 2012: 182).

### ***The Names of the Imams in the Books of the Alavis***

The Alavis believe that the law of the Holy Prophet continued by means of the Imams. The names of the Imams chronologically appear in their books as follows: Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, Imam Ali Zayn al-Abidin, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, Imam Musa al-Kazim, Imam Ali al-Ridha, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi, Imam Ali al-Naqi, Imam Hasan al-Askari and Muhammad al-Mahdi (Bedri 1987: 53).

In the Buyruks, in mentioning the numerical attributes of a believer, they mention a tradition from each of the twelve Imams, starting with Imam Ali and ending with Imam Mahdi (Yaman 2000: 152–153). Pir Sultan Abdal, one of the seven poets, has a very lengthy and famous poem in which he mentions the name and qualities of the twelve Imams (Aslanoglu 2016: 471–472).

There are some rituals which appear in Alavi texts that are done in honor of the twelve Imams. For example, in the Buyruks it is said that if a person wishes to enter the spiritual path, he must first go through an initiation performed at the concourse or *jam khana*. In it, the person must serve the twelve Imams by serving twelve individuals. In reality, it is a form of humbleness and a means of learning humility. The twelve individuals are: 1) the master, 2) the pir, 3) the successor or *khalifah*, 4) the *zakir* or orator, 5) the

lamp bearer, 6) the security guard, 7) the owner of the staff, 8) the head of the path, 9) the general or *naqib*, 10) the water carrier or *saqqah*, 11) the cleaner or *farrash* and 12) the helper (Yaman 2000: 13).

### *Eschatology*

The Bektashis believe that a believer never truly dies, but rather transfers from the temporal realm to the eternal. This has caused some to attribute the belief of reincarnation to them! While in reality there is no connection between the two. Death in the view of the Bektashi Alavis is from the determined affairs. Death is not a separation, rather it is a becoming (Bedri 1987: 300). The Alavis affirm and believe in Heaven and Hell, the book of deeds and accounting, the resurrection after death and judgment.

### *The Branches of the Alavi Doctrine*

The Alavi branches of religion, as with the Shia, are ten. They are: 1) prayer, 2) fasting, 3) alms or *zakat*, 4) Haj, 5) *Khums* or the one-fifth tax, 6) Jihad, 7) enjoining the good, 8) forbidding evil, 9) association and 10) disassociation (Kaya 1993: 61). Some, such as Badri Noyan, added complete submission to the spiritual master and struggle with the self to the branches of faith (Bedri n. d.: 69).

The Buyruks mention five conditions for Islam: prayer, fasting, *zakat*, performing the obligatory and refraining from the forbidden (Ekinj 2004: 40). The compulsory nature of prayer appears clearly within the Buyruks but what has come to become common knowledge amongst some of the Alavis is that what is meant by prayer are supplications and litanies and that prayer must be read by those persons who have not yet reached the Truth on their journey towards Allah. This belief goes against and is opposite to what appears in the Buyruks. In the Buyruks it is mentioned that prayer must be done five times daily; concerning the Pir, it explains that the one who acts upon the teachings of the Holy Quran and that a true Pir is he who is firm in his practice of the four categorized responsibilities, obeys the commandments of the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali concerning the practical issues of prayer, fasting, Haj and *Zakat*, observes the two testimonies, his knowledge is effective i.e. he practices on his knowledge and his behavior is admired (Bozkurt 1982: 19).

By referencing the verses of the Glorious Quran the branches of religion and their compulsory nature have been established in the Buyruks. It reads that the third fundamental of the branches of religion is fasting, what is meant by fasting is any type of fasting. It is always mentioned together with

prayer and Zakat and surely indicates the fasting of the Blessed Month of Ramadan and not that of the Month of Muharram, which has found prominence amongst the Alavis (ibid.: 19). The fourth branch of Islam is the paying of Zakat which is compulsory in the form of a social responsibility. The fifth branch is the Haj or pilgrimage which is proven by making reference to the verses found in the chapter of Haj in the Glorious Quran (ibid.: 127).

Badr al-Din Noyan says that prayer outside of the battlefield is seventeen units. The Bektashis have become known as the ones who abandon prayer; however, this is not true as the Alavis within their concourses pray individually and also have night vigils. According to the Alavi sources, praying at five specific times is a divine command and another proof for its obligation upon the Alavis is that all the Imams used to pray and perform night vigils (Bedri 1985: 70).

In other books of theirs, discussions concerning the obligatory acts such as the importance of prayer from the traditions have been expounded on at length. However, the reason for the Alavis not being very observant of prayer and fasting needs to be examined in the lackadaisical attitudes of the Alavis towards them. In the book *Ilm Hal Bektashi* a lengthy discussion on the subject of the rites, rituals and importance of prayer from the sayings of Imam Sadiq has been brought and at the end it says that the ship of faith sails by means of prayer. Khums and its importance has also been discussed in the Bektashi Alavi texts. Kilich Uglu, a Bektashi author, writes concerning the Khums: "The beloved souls give the right of the Ahlul Bayt by means of giving a fifth of their profits to the servant Sayyid Muhammad Haj Bektash Vali who is their inheritor" (Kaya 1993: 50). In addition, Bedri Noyan, the leader of the Turkish Bektashi Order, says: "What is meant by Khums is the giving of one-fifth of profits to Haj Bektash Vali" (Bedri 1987: 61)<sup>1</sup>.

### ***Association and Disassociation (Tawalli and Tabarri)***

One of the odes that the Alavis recite in their Jam Khana is a poem by Yunus Emre, that very poet who the non-Shia are trying to introduce as a Sunni. His poem reads: "Whatever I have in my hand I have given for the use in the path of God. My expression has begun and light has entered my heart. That light is the light of my master Ali. From us is the highest Heaven,

1 Throughout the centuries, within Anatolia a form of payment was made to the Sayyids and Dedes who were associated with a certain family. This payment was seen as a right of God and had to be done; it was this this payment that was considered to be the Khums. However the peoples lack of knowledge on the specifics of this issue meant that it was done, to an extent, in an unorganized fashion and even at times be completely cancelled (Interview with Dr. Husayn Javlak, a Turkish Alavi)



my heart sees, what a sight... I believe in God and you are my master o Ali. One of the three, head of the seven chiefs<sup>1</sup> and father of the Imams are you o my master Ali. Yunus Emre will not separate from the court of God, for he is not God who gave us existence when we were not. You are our master o Ali!” (Ozmen 1995: 623)<sup>2</sup>

Abdal Musa, another of the seven Alavi poets, in a considerably long poem, alludes to this concept in one stanza where he writes: “Be an enemy to the enemies of Muhammad and Ali, for they are unbelievers. For their friendship with you is only apparent, they can never become your true friends” (Abdal Musa 1999: 3).

In the writings of Sayyid Nasimi, who after Pir Abdal Sultan holds a special place for his esotericism compared to other Alavi leaders, the authority of the Imams can also be seen. In one of his poems, he says: “You shone the existence of Your face on the light of Muhammad and Ali”; he then goes on to send salutations upon Muhammad and Ali and continues by saying that Ali is our master and the holder of guardianship. He then mentions the names of all twelve Imams and described them with grandeur until he reaches Imam Mahdi. With regards to him he says that when he returns nothing will remain hidden and all will be revealed. He will vanquish his enemies with the sword... Sayyid Nasimi praises and sends salutations upon the Imam at the dawn of every day. So send salutations upon our master Muhammad and our leader Ali (Ozmen 1995: 629). According to the Bek-tashi Alavis, the mentioning of the names of the Ahlul Bayt is a form of worship and they are very ardent on it. In addressing Ibrahim Khalidi, the Husniyyah reads, according to the verse: “Indeed We presented the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook it” (Ahzab/XXXIII: 72) this trust is the guardianship of Imam Ali. Additionally, by using the 124. verse of chapter Baqarah which reads: “He (God) said: ‘I am making you the Imam of mankind.’ Ibrahim then asked: ‘And from among my descendants?’ God replied: ‘My pledge does not extend to the unjust’” it says. Being unjust to God is being an idol-worshipper and polytheist. Abu Bakr and Umar has a history of worshipping idols, their flesh and bones were nourished with alcohol, they were unbelievers then they accepted Islam; so as per this verse the promise, which is Imamate, can never be given to an oppressor” (Atalay Vaktidolu 2012: 117).

1 The seven chiefs are the five of the cloak, Salman and Jibrail

2 In this poem, Yunus Imrah unambiguously states that the Shia Imams are his Imams and acknowledges that belief is only accepted if it is coupled with the authority of the Imams. This poem is sufficient to remove any suspicion of him being a non-Shia.

In another place, the Husniyyah reports the saying of Abu Bakr after he was chosen as the caliph where he says: "You all are more knowledgeable than I am, even those women who are in their homes", and "Leave me! Leave me! I am not the nest amongst you while Ali is amongst you". In these two statements he confesses to unworthiness of being the caliph and leader of the Muslim community (ibid.: 119).

### *Conclusion*

By means of delving into the main texts of the Bektashi Alavis such as the Buyruks, Husniyyah and the Divan of the seven great poets, which are considered sacred by them, we were able to unearth the strong common fundamentals and pillars of faith between the Alavis and the Imami Shia; as the Alavis believe in the five pillars of monotheism, prophethood, Imamate, justice and resurrection, in addition to the branches, even though they may not personally and practically act upon them. They do not reject anyone who has these beliefs nor do they deny that they are Imami and interaction between them and the Shia is possible via the traditions that they have of which a large part consists of the sayings of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq, rather they recognize their sect as being Jafari.

They are so heavily influenced by the pristine teachings of the Ahlul Bayt that their love and affection is seen as the model of their behavior. Furthermore, clear textual proof indicates the influence of Imami teachings on them and how their own understandings and views in all aspects have been taken from the luminous school of the Ahlul Bayt. It can thus be said without doubt that by calling them a Sufi Islamic sect they have been disconnected from their Shia origins. In addition, the current secular trends and the verdicts of certain Sunni muftis that were previously eluded to have tried to circulate this opinion that the Bektashi are Sunni and that it was only during the era of the Ottomans that Shia doctrines and teachings, in different forms, influenced the beliefs of the Bektashi Order.

This claim, by merely looking at the ancient and sacred texts of the Alavis, is invalid. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Bektashis are from the Twelver Imami School, but because of the genocide and merciless killing that was done to them, their elders decided to practice Taqiyyah and dissimulation and focus on the esoteric facets of religion. It was this continuous state of Taqiyyah of their past generations that has led them to be unaware of their Imami heritage. So, despite all the attempts, they are Shia and it is incumbent upon them to become more aware of their own sacred sources in order to become more practicing of their teachings and beliefs.

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