

**DERVISHES IN EARLY OTTOMAN SOCIETY AND POLITICS: A STUDY
OF VELAYETNAMES AS A SOURCE FOR HISTORY**

**The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
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ABSTRACT

Dervishes in Early Ottoman Society and Politics: A Study of *Velayetnames* as a Source for History

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The study aims in general to reconsider the role of dervishes in early Ottoman society and politics within the framework of the march culture during the fourteenth century. It deals with the socio-religious conditions of the marches and with special emphasis of the non-orthodox nature of the folk-Islam in general and of the beliefs and practices of the dervishes in Anatolia in particular. The role of the dervishes in the socio-political developments of the formative period of the Ottoman state is studied in this context mainly through the hagiographic literature or *velayetnames* / *menakıbnames* of the fifteenth century in comparison with the earliest chronicles as well as other contemporary or near-contemporary sources.

The examination of two *velayetnames*, *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli) and of Abdal Musa, reveals the fact that the dervishes of the Ottoman marches are generally portrayed in such sources as ghazi dervishes or warrior dervishes sometimes within the Islamic concept of Holy War. Whether or not this portrayal of dervishes as “Holy warrior” corresponds to the historical reality, it is clear that the dervishes of the period were indeed very much involved in the early Ottoman military activities in the marches. It is also clear from the sources that they played a significant role in legitimizing the Ottoman power among the Turko-Muslim population of Anatolia, mostly nomadic in character, through an effective preaching activity. In addition, their role as colonizer in the newly conquered lands is once more confirmed by the sources used in this study. As a conclusion, the study points out that the dervishes and the early Ottomans appear to be the sides of a complex relationship of a story of mutual interest, both recognizing the power of each other and benefiting from it.

Keywords: Dervish, *Velayetname*, Sufi Orders, Heterodox Islam, Abdal Musa, Seyyit Ali Sultan, Kızıldeli, Alawi, Bektashi.

ÖZET

Erken Dönem Osmanlı Toplum ve Siyasetinde Dervişler: Velayetnamelerin Tarih Kaynağı Olarak Kullanılması Üzerine bir Çalışma

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Bu çalışma genel olarak on dördüncü yüzyıl uç kültürü çerçevesinde dervişlerin erken dönem Osmanlı toplum ve siyasetindeki rolünü tekrardan gözden geçirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tez genelde halk İslamının cemaatdışı doğası ve özelde Anadolu'daki dervişlerin cemaatdışı inanç ve uygulamalarına bilhassa vurguda bulunarak uç toplumunun sosyal ve dini yapısına temas etmektedir. Bu çerçevede, dervişlerin Osmanlı devletinin kuruluş yıllarındaki sosyo-politik gelişmelerde oynadığı rol asıl olarak on dördüncü yüzyıl evliya menakıbnamelerine dayanarak ve bunlardaki bilgilerin erken dönem kronikleri ve diğer çağdaş veya yakın çağdaş kaynaklarla karşılaştırılması suretiyle incelenmiştir.

İki velayetnamenin, Seyyit Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli) ve Abdal Musa Velayetnameleri, incelenmesi şu gerçeği ortaya çıkarıyor: Bu tür kaynaklarda Osmanlı ucundaki dervişler genel olarak İslami kutsal savaş konsepti içinde gazi-dervişler veya savaşçı dervişler olarak gösterilmektedir. Dervişlerin bu kaynaklarda kutsal savaşçılar olarak anlatılması tarihsel gerçeklere işaret etsin veya etmesin kesin olan bir nokta varki, dervişler uçlarda erken dönem Osmanlıların askeri faaliyetlerinde fazlasıyla yer almışlardır. Elimizdeki bu tür kaynaklarda açık olan bir husus daha var: dervişler özellikle Anadolu'nun göçebe karakterli Müslüman Türk toplumu içinde etkin birer din yayıcısı ve temsilcisi olarak Osmanlı gücünün özellikle kırsal alanlarda meşrulaştırılması hususunda önemli roller oynadılar. Bunlara ek olarak dervişlerin yeni fethedilen topraklardaki kolonizatör rolleri de kullanılan kaynaklara bir kere daha vurgulanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada, dervişler ve erken Osmanlıların aslında karşılıklı çıkara dayanan ve tarafların karşılıklı olarak birbirlerinin güçlerini tanıdığı ve bundan fayda sağladığı karmaşık bir ilişkinin tarafları olduğu ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Derviş, Velayetname, Sufi Tarikatler, Heterodox İslam, Abdal Musa, Seyyit Ali Sultan, Kızıldeli, Alevi, Bektaşî.

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INTRODUCTION: AN OVERVIEW

In his seminal article published in 1942, Ömer Lütfi Barkan pointed out the important role of sufi dervishes in the process of colonization of newly conquered lands in the early periods of the Ottoman State¹. Although several other scholars dealt with the same theme and gave references to the position of dervishes in the society prior to and during the formative years of the Ottoman power in Anatolia and the Balkans, Barkan devoted his article to a particular dimension and attempted to formulate the contribution of sufi dervishes and their *tekkes* (hospices) to the Ottoman conquest and colonization process in detail.

Right at the outset, Barkan states his aim as to contribute to the debate on the problem of the foundation of the Ottoman State. He mainly follows Köprülü's tradition which emphasizes the dominant role of Turkish elements behind the rise of the Ottomans, and underlines the need for analysis of the Ottomans in the context of medieval Anatolian history in general and of diversity of the dynamic elements which were active in every spheres of life during this period.²

According to Barkan, to understand the dynamic forces behind the success of the Ottomans one should look at the matter within the framework of the westward migration of Turkish masses under the pressure of Mongols in the thirteenth century³. Turkish tribes coming from central Asia brought with themselves their customs, traditions, and beliefs. These Turks, mostly nomadic in character, were the main supply of manpower

¹ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler; İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler", *VD, II*, 1942.

² Barkan, pp. 279- 281.

³ Barkan, p. 284.

for the conquering Ottoman armies, and they were the first Muslim settlers in newly conquered lands. Barkan directs his attention to the religious structure of these Turkoman nomads who organized themselves under certain spiritual leaders that were mostly sheikhs. Those dervish sheikhs were not always tribal chiefs, there were many dervishes with no tribal connection who gathered many adherents around him by preaching their sufi teachings. The relationship between the Ottoman dynasty and these sufi groups were merely warm and pragmatic in the early period. Their crucial and successful role in preaching Islam and Islamic culture among local population attracted not only the attention of the Ottoman *begs* but also of other Turkoman *begs* in Anatolia. Due to their advantageous geographic- strategic position and successful policies against Christian Byzantium, early Ottoman *begs* made their lands more favorable for dervishes. Many of such dervishes migrated along with the Ottoman army after conquests, first to Bythinia region and then to the Balkans.

Barkan tends to see those dervishes different from the wandering dervishes depicted by Fuat Köprülü in *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*⁴. On the contrary, these dervishes were not cut off the earthly activities; rather they were very active in constructing settlement centers in abandoned or conquered lands⁵. In return for their activities beneficial to the Ottomans in their conquest significant part of them were given lands by the sultans as *vakf* or pious endowment. In the *vakf* lands they soon founded religious hospices (*tekkes*, *zaviyes*), where they fulfilled many social, economic, and cultural functions along with religious ones. In the course of time, these *rekkes* gradually

⁴ See Fuat Köprülü, "Abdal", *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul, 1935. In this article Köprülü defines *abdals* as wandering *dervishes* who were extreme *Alawi- Shi'ite*. They lived single and avoided all worldly activities.

⁵ Barkan, p. 285.

became a religious, cultural, and economic centers and some of them gave way to the emergence of villages. Many villages founded around such dervish *tekkes* during this process survived even to the present in the Balkans. In his article, Barkan gives some examples of such settlements by using early extant Ottoman tax and population registers from the fifteenth century.

Barkan's main focus in his article is the process of colonization and his primary concern is the *tekkes* as a means of colonization, and, of course, inevitably the main actors of these process: dervishes. We should immediately point out, however, that the dervishes are not at the center of Barkan's analysis. Barkan does not deal much with their way of life, their beliefs, and their influence on the society, culture, politics, and religious life of the contemporary society. The contribution of these dervishes to the foundation process of the Ottoman State, with no doubt, is more than their colonizing role in newly conquered lands. Their sphere of influence was fairly large especially among rural population of the contemporary society. The relationship of this kind of religious groups with Ottoman begs can be traced back to Ertugrul. Since these sufi sheikhs had tremendous influence particularly on nomads, the contemporary statesmen found it useful to establish good relationship with them. In that respect, they played a mediator role between political authority and rural population. Early Ottoman *begs* such as Osman and Orhan, attributed great importance to get opinion and approval of that kind of spiritual leaders, such as Edebali, in their political affairs. Because the approval of such sufi sheikhs meant a kind of legitimization in the contemporary public mind. However, their mediator role was not limited only the mediation between the state and rural population, but they also served some kind of mediation between Christian and

Muslim folk masses. As a result of this mediation, they contributed much to the spread of Islam. Moreover, some contemporary sources tell us about the activities of warrior dervishes⁶. While talking about the construction of the Ottoman state, therefore, one cannot ignore these dervish groups who had in one way or another spread their influence among almost all strata of the contemporary society. In this study, it will be my aim to analyze the role of dervishes in the early conquests of the Ottomans and the establishment of the Ottoman rule in the newly conquered lands throughout the fourteenth century.

The westward migration of Turks obviously constitutes a long and significant chapter not only of the history of Turks themselves but also of the history of the Middle East and Europe in general. In the context of this work, the focus will not be on the whole issue, but rather on the last stages of this migratory movement which followed the route South of Caspian Sea through Khorasan and Azarbaican to Anatolia from tenth to fifteenth century. Turks, on their way westward, confronted Islam in the tenth century and most of them gradually accepted Islam. Conversion to Islam did not mean to be totally skinned of all of their old beliefs and habits. This process was first analized in a comprehensive manner by Fuat Köprülü in the second decade of the twentieth century. In his work *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, he points out this sociological reality and then explains the conversion of Turkish mass to Islam. According to Köprülü, in this conversion process the leading role was played by first Turkish *mutasavvıfs*, the sufis who dedicated themselves to the religion and experienced a mystic life. Ahmed Yesevi, who was the master of these sufis, has a primary place in the conversion of Turkish nomadic mass to Islam. According to Köprülü, Yesevi's teaching of Islam among

⁶ See, for example, Bedri Noyan, ed., *Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi*, Ankara, 1999.

Turkish population, which was a basic formulation of Islamic doctrines in a simple manner which can be understandable and acceptable in a nomadic, illiterate, and newly converted population which had strong traditions shaped the fundamental pillars of the beliefs of the Turks.

After the Turkish victory of Manzikert in 1071, the Turkish invasion into Asia Minor became more intense. In a couple of decades Turkish raiders reached Nicea. But permanent Turkish settlement in the western Anatolia took place during the last century of Anatolian Seljuks. In fact, at the zenith of their power Anatolian Seljuks chose to establish good relationships with Byzantium and there emerged a relatively stable borderline between the two states. Although there were occasional raids especially from Seljuk sides by Turkoman troops, this was not a state policy of Anatolian Seljuks and did not cause a significant border shift. But after the Mongol invasion of Anatolia, Anatolian Seljuks lost the control and became the vassal of the Mongols and Turkoman population in the western frontier of Anatolian Seljuk lands began to attack Byzantine lands; these Turkomans gathered around certain tribal leaders or Seljuk commanders and created a number of semi-independent political entities in the western part of Asia Minor. The men supply of these *begs* were nomadic Turkomans whose members were ever increasing by the newcomers from the East. Among them were many *dedes* or *babas*, spiritual leaders of those nomadic people and adherents of Yesevi tradition in Anatolia. These *babas* and *dedes*, who were guiding nomadic mass in religious issues, apparently had tremendous influence on pastoral life. Their vital position and indisputable role will be the main issue of this work.

What kind of beliefs were these *dedes* and *babas* preaching in Anatolia during the thirteenth and fourteenth century? What kind of version of Islam was it? Or, was it something else, which pretended to be “Islam”? Here at this point one finds himself at the heart of the problem of heterodoxy in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Western Anatolia among Turkoman population. As Franz Babinger pointed out long ago, Islam in Anatolia was influenced by several factors, which were never seen in any other Islamic land.⁷ Especially during twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, as any other institutions of the society, religion was also open to all kinds of influence. During this period, Islam in Anatolia was on its way to take its final shape under several influences. Babinger firstly discussed this interesting topic in 1921. In his short article Babinger attempts to draw a general picture of Islam in Anatolia during the time of Seljuks and puts forward several arguments which can be summarized as follows: 1) The Shi’ite influence on the beliefs of Anatolian Turks was dominant. He argues that the Anatolian Seljuks were Shiite and until their taking of the Caliphate from the Memluks, the Ottoman Palace was under the influence of the Shi’ite-Persian culture, 2) There was also considerable Christian influence on the beliefs of the Seljuks to the extent that some sultans even converted to Christianity, 3) Dervishes, who were disciples of Ahmed Yesevi and preaching his teachings, played a significant missionary role and were influential in every strata of the society from laymen to the palaces, 4) The religion was open to influence of several other beliefs and inherited many elements from Asian religions, which were old religions of Turks before Islam, Christianity and several local religions and sects, 5) It was not a deeply cultivated religion. It was rather popular and

⁷ Franz Babinger, “Anadolu’da İslamiyet; İslam Tetkikatının Yeni Yolları”, in Franz Babinger and Fuat Köprülü, *Anadolu’da İslamiyet*, ed. Mehmet Kanar, İstanbul, 1996, pp. 11-12

easily acceptable among nomadic masses, thus easily spread into the pasturelands of Asia Minor⁸. The *babas* and *dedes* among nomads preached a rough formulation of Islamic theology molded with dense *sufism*, which was fairly understandable for illiterate and uneducated herdsmen.

Although his ideas concerning the Shi'ite and Christian influences on Turkish Islam during this period is open to criticism, Babinger's other arguments relating to the eclectic nature of the religious beliefs of the Turks gradually became the mainstream in historiography. Soon after Babinger, Fuat Köprülü published an article on the same topic. Köprülü rejected Babinger's idea that suggest Seljuks' being Shi'ite. He underlined the importance of elements that were coming from old religions of the Turks such as Shamanism, Budism, etc. in the wide-spread form of Islam among especially Nomadic Turks. According to Köprülü, one should differentiate between the *sufi tarikats*, which emerged under the strong influence of Arap-Iranian culture in the central lands of Islam and *sufism* among Turkish nomads which was close to any foreign influence and strongly connected to their traditions. He tends to see the latter as a form of extreme shi'ite interpretation that was far away from theological discussions and woven with dense sufism, which was suitable both to convey their old beliefs and habits, especially coming from Shamanism, and to spread among illiterate nomadic population with an exiting alloy of legends. Köprülü also draws attention to the leading role, in shaping of the beliefs of Turkomans, of the Kalenderis and Haydaris, a deviation from Sunni Islam with some pantheist beliefs, condemned practices, and rejection to obey some religious orders.⁹

⁸ See Babinger, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet".

⁹ See Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet".

After Köprülü, Irene Melikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, the latter following and widening the ideas of the former in most place, can be seen as the foremost two scholars who brought important contributions to the field. They both emphasize the *syncretic* nature of Turkish heterodoxy. Melikoff seems to pay more attention to Shamanist elements in the beliefs of Turkomans during the period in question. She considers this form of Islam, from many points of views, as a continuation of Shamanism among nomadic people who were strongly depended on their traditions. But there was considerable influence of other Asian religions and Christianity.¹⁰ Ahmed Yaşar Ocak and many other scholars also share these ideas. Ocak sees Babai revolt as a critical event, which provided historical background for Turkish heterodoxy, which was preached, spread, and shaped by the dervishes that fled after Babai revolt. According to Ocak, a) these beliefs were not the result of long theological discussions, but they were natural consequence of socio-economic conditions, b) it is a *syncretic* theology, c) it is not a cultivated, systematic theology.¹¹

By the end of the fifteenth century, several non-sunni elements were brought together under the umbrella of Bektashi order. F.R. Hasluck published several articles on Bektashis in the first half of the 20th century. His research on Bektashi centers and *tekkes* in the Balkans and Anatolia opened new horizons in the field for scholars. On the other hand he showed very interesting interactions and similarities between the religion of

¹⁰ Proföör Melikoff's researches in this field really opened a path for modern historians. Her synthesis is result of a log field studies on the Islamic areas, where dominantly populated by heterodox groups, as well as her vast historical knowledge. See Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş; Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, çev. Turan Alptekin, Cumhuriyet Yayınları- İstanbul, 1999; idem, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar: Alevilik Bektaşilik Araştırmaları*, çev. Turan Alptekin, İstanbul, 1993.

¹¹ See Ocak, "Babailer İsyânından Kızılbaşlığa: Anadolu'da İslam Heterodoksisinin Doğuş ve Gelişmesine Kısa bir Bakış", *Belleten*, LXIV, 239, 200, p. 156. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak is the scholar who produced great amount of valuable works in this field. His several studies will be cited in the following chapters. The

frontier Turkomans and their Christian neighbors both in Asia Minor and the Balkans¹². But the first descriptive and comprehensive scholarly work on Bektashi Order is the doctoral dissertation of John Kingsley Birge¹³. Machiel Kiel's contribution, especially on Sarı Saltuk cult and heterodox heritage in Balkans should also be mentioned here¹⁴. Lastly, one should refer to two scholars, V.L. Menage and Speros Vryonis, Jr., both of whom have published illuminating articles on the Islamization of Anatolia and the Balkans.¹⁵

The list of historians that have valuable contributions to the field could be made longer. But it is beyond the scope of this study. So in the light of the scholarly works mentioned above, the general picture of Islam in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Western Anatolia could be drawn as follows: 1) It was a rough, uncultivated, and unsystematic version of Islam, which was far away from theological discussions and shaped by socio-economic conditions. 2) Most of the old traditions of Turks existed after their conversion to Islam under Islamic shelter. Although it was not so evident among the higher echelon of urban society, among nomadic people there were many elements coming from Shamanism found place in their beliefs and practices. 3) Old Turkish beliefs were not the only source that shaped this heterodox form; it was also open to

reader can find a collected list of Ocak's articles and books in the part "Selected Bibliography" at the end of this study.

¹² See F. William Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, Oxford, 1929; *Bektaşilik Tedkikleri*, ter. Ragıp Hulusi, İstanbul, 1928; *Anadolu ve Balkanlarda Bektaşilik*, çvr. Yücel Demirel, İstanbul, 1995.

¹³ John, Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, İstanbul, 1937.

¹⁴ Kiel, Machiel, "A Note On The Date of The establishment of The Bektashi Order In Albania" in *Bektachiyya. Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, eds. Alexandre Popovich and Gilles Veinstein, İstanbul, 1995.

¹⁵ See V.L. Menage, "The Islamization of Anatolia", *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzian, New York, London, 1979, and Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971; *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, Malibu, 1981.

influences from Christianity and other religions. So its *syncretic* nature should always be kept in mind.

In order to appreciate the true function of sufi dervishes in the society of early Ottomans, one should definitely consider the general landscape in that episode. What were the general characteristics of society, culture, economy, politics, and economy? And, in this context, what were the leading factors that made Ottomans the most powerful among other principalities. Such questions have been the subject of several investigations among Ottomanists since the beginning of the last century. The turning of a small and seemingly unimportant principality at the Byzantine border into a great world empire, which controlled vast part of the Old World for centuries, in one and a half century have become one of the most exciting and attractive topics in Ottoman historiography. The core of the question remained always the same: what was the fundamental dynamic force or forces behind this great success?

As part of the answer, several theories and ideas have been put forward and discussed among historians.¹⁶ Although the literature constitutes a great deal of variety in content, it was analyzed under certain headings. The first proposition came from an American scholar and his work soon became the mainstream among western historians. Herbert Adams Gibbons published his work under the name of *The Foundation of The Ottoman Empire- a History of The Osmanlis up to the death of Bayezid I(1300-1403)* in England in 1916. He explains the formation of the Ottoman state as an achievement of a

¹⁶ In this work I want to start discussions from a semi-scholar work, H.A.Gibbons book, and exclude the old Turkish-nationalist thesis, which could not go beyond being of the continuation of the manufactured ideas of early Ottoman Historians, from the frame of discussion since they could not manage to get a scholarly form. In those nationalist circles the problem is seen as a unique historical event, which was merely isolated from world history. The explanation could not get rid of dense influence of nationalist feelings and made in terms of holy guidance. The compilation of that kind of ideas can best be seen in a

group of nomadic people, which was migrated from the east with the crucial help of the native Anatolian Greeks. This presumption led Gibbons to produce his idea of 'mixed race'. According to Gibbons, Osman was pagan when he first came to Bitynia and his name was Ataman, a Turkish name coming from Central Asia. In the course of time the tribe of Osman and local Greeks living in that region got into close interaction and started a process, which led to produce a new race i.e. *Osmanli*. By this way the elements of Byzantine heritage and Greek civilization entered into the mechanism, which was actually the main source that provided a suitable ground to build an empire. This explanation is based on the premise that it is not conceivable to accept that a nomadic tribe can found such a world empire. Gibbons supports his assertion by arguing that, the Ottomans developed so rapidly both in military and demographic terms. He rejects the possibility of Turkoman immigration as the main reason for this rapid increase and explains it by referring to the intermingling of local Greeks and Turkomans under the umbrella of "Ottoman". Gibbons goes further and asserts that Ottomans converted to Islam during the time of Ataman who himself took the name Osman, which is the name of the third Chaliph of Islam. This conversion supplied the spiritual energy for their constant raids towards Christian neighbors. To sum up, Gibbons finds the material in Greek civilization and the energy in the dynamism of a newly converted society, since they would be striving to preach and to spread their new religion, in the establishment process of the Ottoman Empire.

Though Gibbons' thesis has been vulgarized widely in general history, it was not so long that criticisms raised especially by philologically-based historians such as M.

verse of Namık Kemal, who was one of the foremost nationalist poets in the last decades of Ottoman Empire; " We created a world empire from a small tribe of four hundred tents".

Fuad Köprülü¹⁷, Paul Wittek¹⁸, and Friedrich Giese¹⁹. Gibbon's idea of mixed race and conversion attracted severe criticism and was not accepted as a whole among scholars specializing in the field. Meanwhile, this book maintained its important place in Ottoman Historiography because of two reasons; one is related to its function that Gibbons was the first who formulated the problem in a compact manner and attracted the attention of modern historiography to the problem. The second comes from the fact that, although his ideas were severely criticized among modern historians, Gibbons, at the same time, started one of the two main streams, in the historiography related to the early periods of Ottoman state, which pays much more attention to the Byzantine elements and their role in the formative period of the Ottoman State and tends to interpret the problem in a frame which is very loosely connected to Islam, Islamic terms and other Islamic states. Gibbon's approach later on found adherents among various scholars such as George G. Arnakis, Colin Imber, Rudi Paul Lindner, with significant revisions.

However, the hottest debate on the emergence of the Ottomans took place on the role of the idea and practice of "ghaza" in that process. It was first underlined by Köprülü as an important factor that was effective during thirteenth and fourteenth century western Anatolia. Köprülü was inspired by Ashikpashazade, a fifteenth century chronicler, in classifying contemporary society, which is defined in Aşıkpaşazade's *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman* as four groups; *Gaziyan-ı Rum*, *Ahiyan-ı Rum*, *Abdalan-ı Rum*, and *Bacıyan-ı Rum*. In his pioneering work *The Origins of The Ottoman Empire*, Köprülü

¹⁷ M. Fuat Köprülü, *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, trs. Gary Leiser, New York, 1992.

¹⁸ Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, London, 1965.

¹⁹ Friedrich Giese, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Kuruluşu Meselesi", in Oktay Özel and Mehmet Öz, eds., *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, Ankara, 2000.

briefly analyses these four groups. According to Köprülü "This group, which Ashikpashazade calls *gaziyan-ı rum* and other sources call by such titles as *alps* and *alperens*, was a social organization that existed not only at the time of the collapse of the empire of the Anatolian Seljuks, but also during the very first conquests in Anatolia".²⁰ The special meaning of the term "ghaza" in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Anatolia is traced back to two sources: one is pre-Islamic Turkish tradition, and the other is related to Islamic tradition. Before they converted to Islam Turks used the title *alp* to mean "hero, warlike". After they embraced Islam they continued to use this title sometimes alone and sometimes together with *ghazi* in religious sense. Köprülü says that in the realm of Islam, the term "ghazi" was first used to refer to a special group in the time of Abbasid caliph Al-Nasir, who mingled warriorship with sufi brotherhood, namely *futuwwa* organization, and created a form of Muslim cavalry having high ethical values as well as social status.²¹

Köprülü never sees, though he appreciates its importance, "ghaza" as the only or prime factor that led the Ottomans to a world power. It was Paul Wittek's hand that the word "ghaza" gained a special meaning and became the *raison d'être* of the Ottoman power. Wittek explained his "ghaza formulation" in a series of lectures, at The University of London, which was published soon after, in 1937.²² Wittek proposed that the meaning of "ghaza" in the 13th century Anatolia did not merely refer to Islamic notion "war against infidels", but it had gone beyond and pursued more specific meaning. After vigorous conquests of Islam, Byzantine Empire managed to stop Muslims and a borderline appeared in Syria. According to Wittek, continuous wars in the

²⁰ M.Fuat Köprülü, p.89.

²¹ Köprülü, p. 93.

frontier region produced special conditions and led to a special military organization in the districts on both sides of the frontier. He calls these districts on both sides as "marches" and points out that marches differed from hinterland in many respects. The community of Ghazis at the marches was a peculiar corporation dedicated to "holy war" and pursued chivalrous ethic of *futuwwa*. The principal economic basis was booty from raids to infidel lands, i.e. the other side. On the Muslim marches, already in the ninth century Turkish elements became dominant. In terms of culture and religion, marches became the center of diversity and heterodoxy. There was even a serious tension between hinterland and marches.

Nearly half a century later that Turks poured into Anatolia after the victory of Manzikert in 1071, and a relatively stable boundary was established in western Anatolia between Anatolian Seljuks and the Byzantine Empire. Actually it was, according to Wittek, not so much a frontier line but rather a border zone, a fairly wide strip of no-man's land.²³ There were ghazis in Seljuk side and Akritai in Byzantine side. If one thinks of the Turkish migrants on constant move under the Mongol pressure in the central lands of Islam and Seljuk government's policy towards them, which was to direct them towards frontier regions in order to protect cities and settled people from their harassment, it would not be difficult to see how rich the men supply of these ghazis was. Halil İnalcık, one of the foremost modern Turkish historians, considers ghazi groups in the frontier as war-bands, which were waging holy war against the foes of religion but could still act as mercenaries even in Christian armies²⁴. He draws attention to a pre-

²² See Paul Wittek, 1965.

²³ Wittek, p.23.

²⁴ Köprülü also says that those war bands with distinct costumes and ethical principals, whose members participated in brigandage, robbery and bullying in the large cities whenever there was an opportunity,

Islamic Turkish tradition of *nökerlik* or comradeship. İncalcık emphasizes the importance of the economic dimension of ghaza however. Since there were many jobless and landless Turkomans whose numbers had been on constant increase in these marches, booty from raids became very attractive for these rootless immigrant people. The continuous raids for slaves and the opportunity for employment as mercenaries appears to have brought about a specialization and social differentiation in the Turkoman frontier society.²⁵ Ghazi leaders became more and more powerful in the course of time since they gathered a great number of warriors around them. Ghazi leaders were generally tribal leaders who did not necessarily belong to the same clan. The distinction and dominant position of the war leader in the clan was further enhanced by the "coming under his flag" of ever increasing numbers of *garibs* or rootless wanderers of various origins. These were always warmly welcomed by the leader and became "his people", his clients, personally attached to him and called by his name: Aydinli, Saruhanli, and Osmanli.²⁶

On the other hand, Köprülü, Wittek and İncalcık all point out the role of dervishes, functioning as preacher and providing religious sanctity to the power of ghazi leaders, in the advance of ghaza ideology in the frontier. According to İncalcık, the Holy War ideology, which supplied moral and motivational support, as much as the success of raids reinforced ties between the bands to produce a cohesive group centered around the leader. It was dervishes who embodied the ghaza ideology and preached among the

existed before Anatolian conquest of Turks in Transoxiana, Khurasan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa. And they served as volunteers or mercenaries in domestic struggles or on the frontiers. See Köprülü, p.91.

²⁵ See Halil İncalcık, "The Question of The Emergence of The Ottoman State", International Journal of Turkish Studies 2/2, 1981.

²⁶ İncalcık, pp. 75-76.

warriors the virtue of fighting on the way of God.²⁷ Wittek, underlines the heterodox character of those dervishes and points out that these spreaders of heretical doctrines were less welcomed in Seljuk towns. But in the marches they found security and warm reception. As religious and, at the same time, political leaders of the population of their respective areas they represented the spirits of resistance against Mongols and at the end, were forced by the course of events to flee. They carried religious enthusiasm into those dense masses who were prepared for any daring enterprise. At the frontier, they became respected religious figures in the ghazi milieu and functioned as theologians in sanctioning activities of the ghazis.²⁸

The "ghaza ideology" of Wittek later became a canon in the field. Among historians who do not reject the ghazi character of Ottomans (Köprülü, İnalcık, Kafadar²⁹, and Tekin,³⁰ etc.) the main criticism towards Wittek had been his attitude of reducing a multidimensional, complex historical event into the issue of ghaza. Although the important place of Holy War in the political and military developments of the time, one should take into account other factors and analyze ghaza in the context of a historical complexity.

On the other hand, especially in the 1980s, strong criticisms, which reject the ghazi thesis and assert that such ideas were formulated later, raised against Wittek's argument. According to historians such as Arnakis, Colin Imber, Rudi Paul Lindner, Gyula Kaldy-Nagy, Ronald C. Jennings, Colin Heywood, there is not enough historical evidence that can prove such a Holy War ideology. They question the authenticity and

²⁷ İnalcık, p.

²⁸ Wittek. P.31.

²⁹ See Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1995.

reliability of Wittek's two main evidence, which are Ahmedî's poet and the inscription on the wall of a mosque in Bursa, and point to early Ottomans' practices, which were difficult to fit in the concept of Holy War. There is information about the Ottomans fighting other Muslim principalities and making alliances with Christians, which seems quite pragmatic actions rather than being acts on the way of God.³¹

Wittek, in his search to discover underlining stimulus for the Ottoman success, he first analyses tribal connections and blood ties. His result is that the genealogy of Osman recorded in fourteenth century chronicles cannot be true. Rather they are fabrication of later generations in order to legitimize their authority and to claim supremacy over other Turkoman dynasties. And he concludes: "The unity of the Ottoman state therefore can not be found in natural tribe connections, but must have been built upon another basis", which was the Holy War ideology.

Four decades after Wittek's thesis, Rudi Paul Lindner appeared as the first serious critique of his assertion and proposed an opposite explanation that the unity of the Ottoman State cannot be based on the ghaza ideology, but on tribal basis. One must immediately point out, however, that Lindner's description of tribe is fairly different from that of Wittek. Lindner, under the light of new anthropological research, put

³⁰ See Şinasi Tekin, "XIV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış Gazilik Tarikası 'Gaziliğin Yolları' Adlı Bir Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Metni ve Gaza/Cihat Kavramları Hakkında", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13, 1989.

³¹ For broader reading on this subject see George G. Arnakis, *Hoi protoi othomanoi*, Athens, 1947 (I have not been able to consult this work); Colin Heywood, "A Subterranean History: Paul Wittek (1894- 1978) and the Early ottoman State", *Die Welt Des Islams- International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam*, vol. 38, 1998; Colin Imber, "What Does Ghazi Actually Mean?", "Paul Wittek's De La Defaite d'Ankara a la Prise de Constantinople", "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth", "The Legend of Osman Gazi", "Canon and Apocrypha in Early Ottoman History", in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law*, Istanbul, 1996; Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottoman in Medieval Anatolia*, Bloomington, 1983; Lindner, "Stimulus and Justification in Early Ottoman History", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review Offprint*, vol. 27, 1982; Lindner, "What was a Nomadic Tribe?", *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 24, 4, 1982; Gyula Kaldy-Nagy, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İlk Yüzyıllarında Kutsal Savaş (cihat)", Ronald C. Jennings, "Gazi Tezi Üzerine Bazı Düşünceler", both in *Söğüt'ten İstanbul'a*, eds. Oktay Özel and

"profit" to the center of the tribal organization in pastoral life, which was known as blood ties during the time of Wittek. By his new description of "tribe", Lindner opened up a new dimension for the studies in the field. He develops a different picture of nomadic society and to explain Ottoman advance in terms of tribal developments. His attempt to give answer to the question of what a nomadic tribe was as follows: in the process of building a tribe common profit was played more decisive role than kinship. The latter was fabricated later in a tribe to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group and to establish psychological ties between members of the tribe. In such an explanation, the leadership of the tribe gains importance. Since the members come together around common interest, as long as the leader manages to secure the profit of the members, the number of newcomers to join the tribe will increase thus the tribe will become more powerful. According to Lindner, Osman was a very successful leader. He says; "as a tribal chief, Osman acted as a fulcrum or as mediator, protecting the rights of ethnically and ecologically diverse groups. Acting to keep the piece and to help his tribesmen prosper, the chief renders himself indispensable; and if he succeeds, his tribes grows"³². Lindner, under the scarcity of clear evidence, argues that the zealous, and exclusionist structure of ghaza, the Holy War, cannot explain Ottoman expansion. To him, the inclusive structure of tribal organization as a political entity should be more appropriate to explain this expansion.

In Lindner's formulation of tribe, Osman, and later Orhan, gathered around themselves even Christian population and reinforced the powers of their tribes. As for

Mehmet Öz, Ankara, 2000; Linda T. Darling, "Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context", *Studia Islamica*, Paris, 2000.

³² Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*, Bloomington, 1983, p.25.

the men supply of Osman and Orhan, on the other hand, Köprülü, Barkan, and İnalcık underline the population pressure from east under the Mongol pressure. According to İnalcık, dense Turkish immigration heavily affected demographic, ethnic, social, cultural, and political situation at the turn of the thirteenth century Anatolia. He combines ghaza ideology, inclusive tribal organization, and Turkish immigration successively and summarizes the stages of the formation of Turkoman principalities as follows: " (1) it began with the seasonal movements of Turkoman nomadic groups into Byzantine coastal plains; (2) it was intensified by the organization of small raiding groups under ghazi leaders, mostly of tribal origin, for booty raids or for employment as mercenaries; (3) it continued with the emergence of successful leaders capable of bringing together under their clientship local chiefs to conquer and then establish principalities in conquered lands; and finally (4) with the involvement of these ghazi principalities, with their definite political and economic aims, in the regional struggle for supremacy in the Aegean and in the Balkans, the previously undirected thrust of the war bands became focused on new goals"³³.

It seems that the discussion about the foundation of the Ottoman State will continue. Since there are not enough historical sources it is really difficult to assert a definitive proposition. Among modern historians it is Cemal Kafadar, who recently attempted to combine all voiced ideas and to draw a general picture.³⁴

If one would bring together the main theories hitherto put forward about the early Ottomans, it is possible to take the following elements to construct a picture which includes all elements of several theses that are not conflicting to each other: there are

³³ İnalcık, "The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State", p. 5.

³⁴ See Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

three main elements that can not be excluded from the frame: *ghaza spirit*, *tribalism*, and *population pressure* from east due to the Mongol invasion. In terms of the aim of the present study, it is evident that when Turkoman nomadic masses fled from Mongol pressure and invaded Asia Minor, among them were the sufi dervishes and sheikhs, as called *Abdalan-ı Rum* by Ashikpashazade. And their roles, positions, and functions in their society were significant in many respects. They represented, first of all, religious authority in the pastoral world. Moreover, their mediating roles between ghazi or tribal leaders and the Turkoman masses made them indispensable and crucial figures in the scene of history. In this work, after a brief summary of the historical background of Sufism that these *abdals* represented in Western Anatolia and in the Balkans, and of its doctrines and beliefs, I will discuss military, political, religious, and social roles of these dervishes during the formative years of the Ottoman power throughout the fourteenth century mainly through the prism of *velayetname* literature.

PART ONE:

SOCIETY AND RELIGION

I. FRONTIER SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY ANATOLIA

A. Political Structure

Historians should consider the influence of geography, culture, economy, and politics on religion as well as the influence of beliefs on the formers. To study the role of *abdal*-dervishes in the early Ottoman society in a comprehensive manner one needs to draw the general picture of the region during the period under examination because of the close interrelation between religious beliefs and other social institutions and the multidimensional lifestyle and functions of dervishes in their society.

It was Fuat Köprülü who first strongly emphasized the need for reconsideration of the foundation of the Ottoman State as part of a more comprehensive historical process, which includes the decline of Anatolian Seljuks and Byzantine Empire, Mongol pressure from east, and from other Muslim States of the region, rather than taking it as an isolated, single, and unique event.¹ Sharing Köprülü's view, it is I think more than necessary to review the economic, social, political, military, and religious conditions of

the thirteenth century Anatolia in attempting to discuss the emergence of the Ottomans as a regional power together with the factors operated in this process.

It is perhaps appropriate in this context to start by recalling of the fact that the Ottomans were one of the frontier principalities which emerged in Western Anatolia in the second half of the thirteenth century. After the zenith of their power under the rule of Alaaddin Keykubat, Anatolian Seljuks experienced a serious popular revolt led by a *sufi sheikh* Baba Ilyas in 1240. This revolt did not only shake the state but also unveiled the fact that Anatolian Seljuk State was not as powerful as it was seen. As a consequence of the Babai Revolt, Mongols invaded Asia Minor. They defeated Seljuks at Kösedağ in 1243, and became the real suzerain of Anatolia. Instead of totally destroying Anatolian Seljuk State and finishing Seljuk Dynasty, Mongols made the Seljuks their tribute-paying vassals.

However, the rule of Mongols in Anatolia, particularly the western parts, saw a strong resistance by the Turkish population of the region. They had been living, in practice, under the rule of their *beys*, who were usually leaders of a tribe already in the days of Seljuks. While the Seljuk State in Anatolia continued to decline in the later part of the thirteenth century, new Turkish emirates began to crystallize in Anatolia. The earliest and strongest of them was that of the Qaramanids, which emerged in western Cilicia. Another important *beylik* formed in the western frontier of Anatolia was the Germiyanids, which came into existence in the second half of the thirteenth century around Kütahya. Fourteenth century sources portray Germiyanid *beylik* as a very strong and important political entity in western Anatolia. The same sources also mention a number of other *beyliks* recognized Germiyanid's sovereignty, and even Byzantium paid

¹ Fuat Köprülü, *The Origins of The Ottoman Empire*, trs. Gary Leiser, New York, 1992, pp. 1- 14.

annual tribute. The Aydınoğlus in Ionia, the Karasids in Mysia, and the Sarukhanids in Lydia can be named among the Turkoman *beyliks* that were subject to Germiyanids at least in their early periods. Moreover if we add the *beyliks* of the Hamids and Esrefids in Psidia, the Jandarids in Paphlagonia, and the Ottomans in Bythinia to the list we would more or less complete the picture of the most of the political formations in the second half of the thirteenth century in western Anatolia².

It is important to point out the fact that, these *beyliks* were not new political entities that took form immediately on the ruins of the Seljuk State at the beginning of the fourteenth century. But, these *beyliks* became more independent political units after the Mongol invasion. By taking advantage of the laxity and tolerance of the Mongol Ilkhanid government in Iran, these principalities emerged gradually as local powers in the second half of the thirteenth century. Due to the remoteness to the center of Ilkhanid government, they found opportunity to behave independently in a certain degree. They were, in fact, sub-vassals of the Mongols through still-formally-alive Seljuk government. But this had never gone beyond theory. Though they were officially under the control of the central authority of the Ilkhanid government and obliged to pay annual tribute to them, in practice, they pursued semi-independent policies, which primarily concerned their own benefits, and avoided to pay tax whenever they found opportunities. Some of them, for example the Germiyanid, Menteshid, Aydinid, Karasid, and Ottoman *beyliks*, were founded and expanded by conquering territories from Byzantine Empire, which was already in decline. In that perspective, it is sufficiently clear that the location of a *beylik* had decisive role, although not determinant, in determining its future. The

² Köprülü, p.38

advantageous ones in this respect were, of course, the *begliks* that were located in the marches.

In the second half of the thirteenth century, at a time of turmoil where there was not a strong political unity and stable government the people under a certain beg did not necessarily belong to the same tribe. The social composition of the populace was made mainly of newly-migrated Turkoman nomads belonging to different clans. Although one can speak of certain borderlines between the lands of principalities, it was not rigid. The social and ethnic structure, religious and economic conditions were more or less the same in the territories of all principalities. They were from the same ethnic root³, namely Turks, they were speaking the same language, they believed in the same religion, and they had similar cultural traditions. The only considerable difference between two *begliks* was their rulers. These conditions preserved a very dynamic and flexible ground to a society, here semi-nomadic Turkoman groups who were already mobile and vigorous to discover new lands for both their families and herds. Thus, these tribal leaders who were successful in conquering new lands and in preserving the benefits of their people, easily gathered a significant number of warriors, around themselves mostly from the neighboring principalities. Ibn Battuta, an Arab traveler who toured western Anatolia in the 1320s, depicts vividly this dynamic society and the landscape of political fragmentation during this time.⁴

³ Here I will not deal with the local Greek population, mainly living in villages, since their contributions to the contemporary political developments were not considerable.

⁴ Ibn Battuta was a qadi, Islamic judge, and narrates his voyage through lands of several Turkoman begs. There are some important points in his narration, which include valuable clues about the structure of polity, society, culture, and religion among contemporary Turkish Muslims. For more information see Ibn Battuta, *İbn Batuta Seyahatnamesinden Seçmeler*, haz. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, Ankara, 1999.

Osman, the *bey* of a small principality on the Byzantine border at the beginning, emerged as a successful leader who lodged frequent raids into Byzantine lands and reached considerable achievement. Osman Ghazi is mentioned for the first time in Byzantine sources as the leader of these vigorous raids by Turkomans into the Byzantine territory at the most advanced section of the territory at the turn of the fourteenth century.⁵ Since the booty from infidels was a legal right for the “warriors of Islam” according to the Islamic law, and constituted the main source of income for rootless Turkoman raiders who soon turned to be “warriors for the faith”, it was not too difficult for Osman to find men supply for his regular raids into Byzantine lands in Bythinia. Barkan states that the scholars, who investigate the Ottoman success, should first consider the massive Turkoman immigration from East under the Mongol pressure⁶. Köprülü and İnalcık also underline the significance of this migratory pressure on all political and social developments of the thirteenth and fourteenth century Anatolia.⁷

Although the main source of men supply for Ottoman troops was provided by nomadic Turkomans, it should be noted that Osman, in the meantime, managed to establish a certain degree of good relationships with local Christian population, which were not so happy with the suppressive administration and heavy taxes of Byzantine government. Especially villagers were in close contact with the Turkomans. Since Osman did not collect heavy taxes from his subjects and promised protection from the raids of Turkoman nomadic tribes; Byzantine soldiers, many Greek villagers found Ottoman suzerainty more attractive than being Byzantine subject.

⁵ İnalcık, “The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State”, p.74.

⁶ Barkan, “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”, p. 284.

⁷ See Köprülü, *The Origins*; İnalcık, “The Question of the Emergence”; idem, “The Emergence of the Ottomans”, *Cambridge History of Islam*, vol.I.

Another important topic that should be considered here is the ghaza, the holy war against infidels. Islamic World experienced two crucial attacks in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. First was the Crusades, and the other was the invasion of pagan Mongols. For Islam, to defend itself became a matter of life and death.⁸ This defensive situation increased the popularity of *jihad*, war against infidels. In every corner of the Islamic World, *mücahids* and *ghazis*, holy warriors, became the most respectful figures in the society. It was obviously demonstrated in that even centuries later Ottoman sultans used the title '*sultanü'l- mücahidin*' and some other titles which had similar meaning.

In the second half of thirteenth and first half of the fourteenth century in the western part of Asia Minor, the westernmost frontier region of the realm of Islam, the idea of war against infidels was still alive in the public mind and highly credible in the eyes of Muslim population. Therefore, for a *bey* as the leader of successive ghaza raids in this period could open the doors to men flowing into his territories, thus strengthening his fighting forces. Between 1330 and 1345 the most fruitful ghaza exploits in the marches were achieved by Umur Bey of the Emirate of Aydınogulları. Umur Bey extended ghaza to naval engagements in Aegean Sea. But after the death of Umur in 1348 in an attempt to recapture İzmir from Christian forces, the new *bey* of Aydın, Khidir, gave up the policy of ghaza, choosing to make peace with Christian states in order to enjoy the benefits of trade. According to İnalçık, the leadership of *ghaza* then passed to the Ottomans, who occupied the front line of the marches⁹. Then the *ghazis* started to gather around the banner of the Ottomans. Especially Osman's decisive victory in 1301

⁸ Halil İnalçık, "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış", *Osmanlı*, ed., Güler Eren, Ankara, 1999, p.40.

⁹ İnalçık, "The Emergence", p. 271.

against Byzantine Imperial army in Baphaeon¹⁰, his fame spread further in the Islamic World and *ghazis* flowed into his lands. Ottomans therefore became indisputable leader of *ghaza* in the western frontier of the realm of Islam, which brought them enormous prestige. Cantacuzenus, the Byzantine Emperor who chronicled the events of his time, records that a *bey* embarking on a military expedition would willingly accept in his troop warriors coming from neighboring principalities.¹¹ They did not only use this prestige to attract warlike elements from other Muslim lands, but also used it as a tool in legitimizing their suzerainty over other Turkish dynasties. Whether the Ottomans sincerely believed in Holy War and were pure *ghazis* or they used the Holy War ideology in a pragmatic way is open to dispute.

B. Ethnic and Cultural Foundations

The appearance of the Mongols caused new wave of migration from the East. This increased to a considerable degree the concentration of the Muslim Turkish population especially in Anatolia since it was the westernmost area of Islamic realm, which also provided relatively safer atmosphere for those exposed to the Mongol danger. Contemporary sources refer to the fact that the Mongol Invasion did not only force the nomadic elements to move westward. Along with them, not an insignificant number of villagers, rich merchants, artisans, intellectuals, and wandering dervishes also moved to Anatolia either to find a suitable place to settle or to provide their service to *beys* or

¹⁰ For a broader reading about this battle see İnalçık, "Osman Ghazi's Siege of Nicaea and The Battle of

emirs who offered them the most. Western Anatolia in general attracted them mainly because of its geographic position. Furthermore, the Seljuk state in Anatolia at the time was a flourishing wealthy Muslim country with favorable living conditions.¹² But after the Mongol invasion and the consequent collapse of the Seljukid Dynasty, most of the intellectuals, artisans, religious scholars, and other important figures of city dwellers immigrated to the western cities, which were under the control of Turkoman *beys*. In his *seyahatname*, Ibn Battuta records many examples of Turkoman *beys*' patronage of *ulema*, *fukaha*, and *suara* under their dominions.

Merchants, artisans, intellectuals and people from similar classes settled in Anatoilan cities and flourished Islamic culture in those cities. In the religious circles in cities the mainstream was *sunni* Islam under the influence of scholars from the heartlands of Islam, namely *ulema*. But as for the nomadic tribes, central government followed completely different policy, forcing them to move to western frontiers. Actually this was advantageous for both sides: while the Seljukid administration wanted to protect the urban population from the disturbance of nomads, the Turkoman tribes, on the other hand, found immense pasturelands for their flocks in the western Anatolia, where there was no strong political authority limiting their movements. According to İnalcık, "the search for good pasturelands for their herds in marginal areas and the opportunity for booty raids into neighboring Christian lands led many of the Turkoman tribes to the mountain ranges in the remote frontier zones (*udj*). Pressed hard by the Turkoman demands for *yurt* (a delimited area with summer and winter quarters) the Seljukid central government hastened to drive them out toward the frontier areas, where

Bapheus", *Essays in Ottoman History*, Istanbul, 1998, 55-86.

¹¹ İnalcık, "The Emergence of the Ottomans", p.272.

they formed a large Turkoman belt in the northern, southern, and western mountain ranges of Asia Minor".¹³

In fact, the population was not merely composed of Turkish elements; there were also groups of other elements, which came to Anatolia from different areas of Muslim world for such reasons as the lust for adventure, profit, and fighting for Islam. But the majority of Arabic and Persian elements, which were generally highly educated, settled down in big cities and entered into high aristocracy. The majority of the Muslim population in the marches however consisted of nomadic Turkoman tribes from several clans of Oguz, which were highly dynamic and warlike.

The way of life in the principalities of marches clearly differed from that of the hinterland. In the marches the culture was dominated by Islamic conception of Holy War, ghaza, which also meant raids for booty. In the borderline there occurred frequent clashes between the two sides. Ceaseless warfare produced warrior groups led by ghazi leaders who were often blessed by sheikhs. Since the role of sufi sheikhs in weaving ghaza ideology in the marches will be analyzed in the second part of this study. Thus, I will not go into detail here.

Society in the marches was very mixed. It included highly mobile nomads, refugees from central authority, heterodox elements, adventurers, and jobless immigrants. In contrast to the highly developed conservative civilization of the hinterland, marches were the center of mysticism, tolerance, flexibility, heterodox beliefs, and romantic legends. Frontier culture was based on oral traditions rather than written literature and the minds of people were being shaped by narration of legendary

¹² Köprülü, "The Origins", p. 45.

¹³ İnalcık, "The Question of the Emergence", p. 72.

tales, which were usually stories of chivalrous heroes, and hagiographies called *vilayetname* or *menakıbnâme*, in which the life and miracles of saints were told. People were bound mostly by tribal or customary law. In short, the culture in marches was intensely mystical and eclectic in nature and not yet become frozen into final form; and it was highly dominated by the *ghaza* ideology. This can be clearly observed in the fifteenth century Ottoman chronicler's depiction of early Ottomans. One of them, for example, *Oruj* narrates:

Ghazis and champions striving in the way of truth and the path of Allah, gathering the fruits of *ghaza* and expanding them in the way of Allah, choosing truth, striving for religion, lacking pride in the world, following the way of the *Shari'a*, taking revenge on polytheists¹⁴, friends of strangers, blazing forth the way of Islam from the East to the West.¹⁵

But one should immediately note at this point that in the process of the formation of Turkoman *beyliks*, many relatively bigger cities emerged which became local centers of Islamic culture by immigration of urban elite, such as intellectuals, artisans, merchants, and religious scholars, from former important Seljukid cities, such as Kayseri, Konya, Amasya etc. After the *ghazi beys* established control of the rich plains and conquered international commercial ports, their emirates developed commercially and culturally, and assumed the character of little sultanates, which gradually adopted the higher forms of Islamic civilization.¹⁶ That can be seen in the accounts of al-Umari and Ibn Battuta. Ibn Battuta admires the beautiful markets, palaces, and mosques in these cities in the 1330s. Like other Anatolian Seljuk cities, these inflected by the influence of Persian and Arabic culture especially in religious terms in the course of time. The arrival of *madrasa* graduates from the major Muslim cities in Iran, Egypt, and

¹⁴ In that time they conceived Christians' trinity as polytheism.

¹⁵ Oruj, *Tavarikh-i Al-i Osman*, ed. F. Babinger (Hanover, 1925), p.3.

Crimea and members of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid bureaucracies from central and eastern Anatolia slowly led to the creation of cultural institutions in the march *beyliks* and to the establishment of administrative apparatus. As the marches advanced, the life in the villages and cities behind them also flourished, the population steadily increased, and economic activity expanded.¹⁷

C. Society, Economy, and Religion

The thirteenth and fourteenth century Anatolia experienced both confrontations, and peaceful interrelations between two civilizations: Byzantine and Turkish-Islamic civilization. The inhabitants were mixed in Anatolia. On the one hand there were old habitants of these lands who belonged to a declining civilization and were the subjects of Byzantium. On the other hand, there were the newcomers, the Turks and to a lesser extend the Mongols who gradually settled in Anatolia since the eleventh century. The number of the latter increased in the course of time at the expense of the former.¹⁸

Mustafa Akdağ states that in the thirteenth century the economy of Seljukid Anatolia based on three main sectors: agriculture, industry, and trade¹⁹. We can safely add to this list animal husbandry, which constituted the core of economic activities of nomadic tribes and the booty raids, which in itself became a very profitable activity

¹⁶ İnalcık, "The Emergence of the Ottomans", p. 272.

¹⁷ Köprülü, p.83.

¹⁸ For a comprehensive reading on the general landscape of Anatolia during the reign of Seljuks one can also look at Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, İstanbul, 1971; idem, *Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk İslam Medeniyeti*, Ankara, 1965; idem, *Selçuklular ve İslamiyet*, İstanbul, 1971.

¹⁹ Mustafa Akdağ, *Türkiye'nin İktisadi ve İktimai Tarihi, cilt I*, Ankara, 1999, p. 24.

particularly for the so called ghazis in the marches. Villages, which were inhabited predominantly by Christian peasants were the centers of agricultural production. On the other hand, the big cities represented the centers of trade and industry. Following the approaches of Köprülü and Akdağ, one may analyze the social composition of the society in the marches under three categories: 1) city dwellers, 2) villagers, and 3) nomads.

City Dwellers

Following the first penetration of the Turks into Anatolian peninsula after the victory of Alparslan in Manzikert, in 1071, not only the nomads spread in Anatolia, but also those who had experienced urban life entered and settled in cities, some of which later became centers of Turko-Islamic culture. During the reign of Anatolian Seljuk dynasty some important cities such as Konya, Kayseri, Sivas, experienced considerable development and flourished in terms of high Islamic civilization. These cities not only attracted Turkish immigrants, but also received many intellectuals, artisans, religious scholars, and bureaucrats from major cities of the heartland of Islam.²⁰

After the defeat of the Seljuks at Köseadağ in 1243, the Mongols began to destroy the urban life in Anatolia and this led further westward move of the notables, intellectuals, artisans, etc. Their new cities in the West, which were under the control of frontier *beys*, not only provided a suitable shelter for them but they were also open to new opportunities. These cities gradually replaced the position of former Seljuk cities in central and western Anatolia.

²⁰ Köprülü, p. 54.

The Muslim population of these cities was composed of four main groups: 1) statesmen, 2) *ehl-i ilim*, scholars, 3) merchants, and 4) artisans. One can add to these the *sufi* circles. The wealth and prestige of these groups differed. At the top the pyramid was the sultan/*bey* and his household, or his deputy if the city was not the capital. Most of the statesmen and bureaucrats participated in the governmental machine were Persian or educated in Persian tradition. It was those people who were of *gulam* origin, and trained for state affairs in the palace that occupied the important offices. Their loyalty to the sultan was indisputable.²¹

Religious scholars graduated from *madrasas*, which were usually founded by the sultans/*beys* themselves or by their relatives, were the main actors of intellectual life in the cities.²² The imperial patronage of the Seljuks and later of frontier *beys* attracted many scholars- *ulema* and *fukaha*-, artists, and poets to their palaces. They flourished intellectual life, literature, art, and culture in these cities. By this way, aspects of classical Islamic civilization was also transported to Anatolia. In the *madrasas* classical Islamic theology was taught by *sunni ulema*.²³

Since Anatoila was on the main trade roads between the East and the West, the commercial life was also highly developed and merchants constituted an important part of urban society. Anatolian Seljuks attached much importance to both regional and international trade and established caravansaries on the important trade roads in order to encourage and protect commercial activities.²⁴ They also situated garrisons along trade roads in this respect. But, as many other institutions, the trade was also damaged and

²¹ Akdağ, *Türkiye'nin İktisadi ve İçtimai Tarihi*, cilt I, pp. 48-54.

²² See Claude Cahen, *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu*, çev., Erol Üyepazarcı, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 207-222.

²³ Akdağ, pp. 17-19.

²⁴ See Cahen, pp. 119-124.

rapidly declined under the Mongol invasion. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the center of trade in Anatolia shifted towards west, to the Aegean costs. Since frontier *beys* could provide better conditions for such activities, this in return also contributed to the general development of the western cities.²⁵

Artisans constituted other important group among city dwellers of Selcukid Anatolia as in all Medieval Islamic cities. Each artisan group had their special professional organization among themselves.²⁶ The main principals and the rules of these guilds, in fact, go back centuries earlier. Each guild was organized under the leadership of a master who had been chosen by members of the guild among the most respectful and prestigious masters. In the Medieval Anatolian Muslim cities the guild corporations were fused by *sufi* teachings of *futuvva* brotherhood, which is known in Anatolia as *Akhi* corporations.²⁷

Non-Muslim population of the cities generally continued their industrial and commercial activities as had been before the Turkish invasion. Indeed, small industry was in the hands of local Christians. Although Turks and other immigrants brought their production techniques with themselves, there was much for them to learn from their new landholders.²⁸

²⁵ Akdağ, pp. 27-30.

²⁶ Cahen, pp. 150-154.

²⁷ Akdağ, pp. 15-16.

²⁸ For more reading about non-Muslim population see Cahen, *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu*, pp. 160-173.

Villagers

Towards the end of the twelfth century, when the first Turkish raiders appeared in Anatolia, it was not heavily populated; centuries-old warfare first between Byzantium and Iran, and then Byzantium and Muslim states had already reduced the population. The anarchy and dangers were a natural part of the lives in villages and this forced peasants to move to better protected cities or to areas nearby. Once the Turkish rule was gradually established, new rulers protected the non-Muslim farmers as a source of revenues. On the other hand, some Turks settled in villages that already existed while some others formed new villages in suitable places. Turkish peasants brought much of their farming culture to Anatolia. Along with these peasants, the Seljukid state always sought to settle nomadic tribes for both financial and administrative reasons.²⁹

As already mentioned, the principal way of earning life in a village was agricultural activity. In addition to a number of farms they owned, the majority of villagers were wage laborers. Though not a rule, one can speak of religious and ethnic homogeneity in villages; since they were usually inhabited by the people belonging to the same clan of the same tribe and preserving their ethnic and religious unity.³⁰

Nomads

The considerable portion of Turkish elements that immigrated to Anatolia through centuries was nomads or semi-nomads who had a life between summer and winter pastures. They lived primarily off raising herds of animals and also off agriculture in order to meet their own needs. They were skillful in the art of carpet weaving and also

²⁹ Köprülü, *The Origins*, pp. 54-55.

³⁰ Köprülü, p. 54.

good in transportation. Although the summer and winter quarters of those tribes were well-defined they often damaged the villages and cultivated lands on their route. The semi-nomadic characteristic of early Ottomans and their relations with settled neighbors are explained in many passages of fifteenth century chronicles. Ashikpashazade writes:

There was an infidel who was called Aya Nichola. In Inegol, when Osman and his tribe went to summerland or winterland he damaged their prosperity. Osman complained about him to Bilecik *thekfur* and said; we want from you that when we go to summerland let us consign our possessions to you. He accepted that. Then when Osman went to summerland he put on his properties on ox and sent them with some ladies to thekfur's fortress, in which he protected it. When they returned from summerland Osman presented cheese, carpet, and sheep to Bilecik *thekfur* and took their belongings back.³¹

The organization in nomadic societies was simply tribal. They obeyed rules of their tribal traditions and were loyal to their tribal chief. States collected taxes from nomadic groups usually in kind. In times of war they had to join the army under the leadership of chiefs called *il-basis*. These undisciplined masses recognized no social structure outside the tribal system, which were not always compatible with the concept of state. They would not hesitate to rebel and provoke anarchy whenever central authority weakened, and attack, pillage, or destroy defenseless villages or caravans.

As for the religious structure of nomads: "Although these Turkish tribes were generally Muslim, they were free from all fanaticism and adherent more to a simple form of their old native traditions, which had the external luster of Islam than to the obligations of a religion which for them was very obscure and impracticable. In fact, they were under the moral influence of extremist 'Alawi or heterodox Turkmen *babas*, {"father", honorific title especially used in dervish circles}, who were nothing but an

³¹ Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, in *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, ed. Nihal Atsız, İstanbul, p. 94.

outwardly Islamized continuation of the old Turkish shamans".³² So there was a clear distinction between the religious practices of nomads, whose beliefs rested upon oral traditions and tales, which were narrated from generation to generation through centuries. Settled people, on the other hand, followed generally the classical *madrasa* Islam based on written culture and deep theological discourses. But the real difference came from the diverse economic and social conditions for both sides rather than from theological discussions.

³² Köprülü, p. 51.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TURKISH MYSTICISM

A. Turks and Islam: The First Contacts

The life style and beliefs of sufi dervishes, which is the subject of this thesis, show some differences from so called orthodox Islam presented and promoted by religious scholars. This difference often manifested itself in open contradiction as clearly seen in the example of two great sufis of the thirteenth century, Mawlana and Hadji Bektash Veli. One is the founder of a sufi order widely spread among highly educated urban elite while the teaching of the latter has lived among especially less-educated or illiterate sectors of the society mostly in rural areas. It is well-known that Mawlana did not like Hadji Bektash and other sufis from the Khorasan Malamatiyya tradition. In the first half of the twentieth century, Fuat Köprülü called those sufi orders that were not compatible with the Sunni Islam as "heterodox", meaning that they were following the non-orthodox path in some certain respects.¹

Here comes to mind the following questions: How conceivable is it to talk about heterodoxy in the thirteenth century Anatolia? If it is, to what degree did it differ from the orthodox *Sunnism*? How and under which circumstances did it come into existence? And what were the main characteristics of their beliefs and ways of life? To study the role of sufis in the process of the early Ottoman conquest and establishment of their rule in the new lands, one will have to answer these questions.

¹ See Fuat Köprülü, "Türk İstilasından Sonra Anadolu Tarih-i Dinisine bir Nazar ve bu Tarihin Menbaları", in Franz Babinger and Fuat Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet*, ed. Mehmet Kanar, İstanbul, 1996.

Modern sociological and anthropological works show that when a group of people converts to a new religion, they never totally give up their old culture and traditions. Rather, in the first step, the newly converted population gives up only the beliefs and traditions that openly contradict with the basic principals of the new religion². Many old beliefs and elements of their culture, however, continue to live under the shelter of the new religion. In the course of time, the old traditions took form in the mould of new beliefs. But the process, naturally, never comes into existence at the same speed and same quality in every strata of society.

The same happened when the Turks converted to Islam. Contemporary writers record that in the beginning of the tenth century Oğuz Turks in Maverannnehir, who newly converted to Islam did not yet digest the new religion yet. For example Ibn Fazlan, an Arab traveler who was traveling as deputy of Abbasid *khalif* in this period, says that the Islam among the Oğuz Turks did not go beyond the word of unity (*kelime-i tevhid*).³ In fact Turks' first encounter with Islam occurred in the eighth century in Maverannnehir and they all converted more or less in the eleventh century.⁴ However this was the case rather for the higher apparatus of their society. The molding of vast Turkish masses with Islam would last for centuries.

Islamic message was first brought to Turkish population by Arab colonization, Sogdian traders, and sufi orders that belonged to Iranian mystical school via the centers of Kharezm, Khorasan, Maverannnehir, and Fergana.⁵ But the major role was played by Iranian sufis coming from Khorasan Malamatiyya, which not only played an important

² Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Bektaşî Menakıbnamelerinde İslam Öncesi İnanc Motifleri*, İstanbul, 1983, p.18.

³ See Ibn Fazlan Seyahatnamesi, trs. Ramazan Sesen, İstanbul, 1975, pp. 30-31.

⁴ Fuat Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, Ankara, 1981, p.14.

⁵ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*, İstanbul, 200, p. 31.

part in the conversion of the Turks, but also prepared the ground for all heterodox sufi orders, which would in one way or another be influential in the religious life of especially nomadic Turkish population in the future.⁶ The Arabic element was seen chiefly at the political and military level. Therefore, it would not be exaggeration to state that the Turks adopted Islam by way of Iranian sufis. It is because of this that we find Persian culture dominant in the major cities of Turkish-Muslim states. At this point one should also add the role of highly advanced Iranian bureaucracy at the service of both Arabs and Turkish states, such as Abbasids, Seljuks and Ottomans.⁷

Islam spread among Turkish masses under the sufi form. To examine the reasons behind it, one should look at the *tasavvuf*, its emergence, and its structure in the Islamic world. Those who study the history of Islam would immediately notice that Islam developed, since its second century, in two main directions, or more adequately, in two forms. One was produced by orthodox canonists and professional theologians who had been teaching in the mosques before the establishment of *madrasas* to defend principal Islamic doctrine against heretic currents, especially against *bâtini* sects in the eleventh century, as a path that with its rigid, scholastic theology and inflexible religious law. On the other hand, even from the second century of Islam, the principle of *zühhd* and *takvâ* of the Prophet and his followers advanced into a religious way of life that emphasized asceticism and mystical approach to obtaining the direct knowledge of God.⁸ This sufi way was far more flexible, tolerant, and open to foreign influences, that were strictly held out of the sphere of sharia by certain canonical laws. Therefore, in the development

⁶ See Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*, pp. 12-23.

⁷ Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*, p.193.

⁸ See Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*, pp. 51-58.

of sufi schools in the Islamic World one can obviously see the elements from Asian mystic religions, Judaism, Christianity, as well as the Old Greek philosophy.⁹

In its trajectory through centuries, Islamic Sufi traditions developed three main characteristics, each of which was centered around a different region of Islamic world: one was the South school, which spread in Endülüs and North Africa around Muhyiddin ibn-i Arabi's teaching of *vahdet-i vücūd*, the unity of existence, the second emerged in the Middle-East (Egypt, Suriya, and Iraq) that underlined *zühd* or asceticism, and virtue, and finally the third school developed in the region of Middle-Asia and Iran (Maveraunnehr, Khorasan, Azerbaijan), where the main source of inspiration for the followers was basically divine love and *cezbe* or ecstasy.¹⁰ This Iranian sufism has important place both in the conversion of the Turks and their future religious life especially in mystic brotherhoods. This will be briefly discussed below; but at this point, I would like to show how and why sufi form of Islam was widely accepted among Turkish masses rather instead of the canonical *madrasa* Islam.¹¹

First of all, this historical development was directly related to the level of education and literacy. Among illiterate people, mainly the nomadic tribes, it was far more easier to understand and accept the teaching of sufi dervishes that presented them

⁹ See Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*, p. 15; Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*, p. 164.

¹⁰ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar*, İstanbul, 1996, p. 128.

¹¹ However, the reader should not disregard that almost all Turkish-Muslim states accepted orthodox sunni Islam. Although they regarded especially sophisticated elite sufi leaders, who did not diverge from orthodox path so much, in state affairs, the *ulema* always became decisive factor. For the reason why early Muslim-Turkish states officially preferred orthodox-sunni interpretation, Ocak puts forward three factors: 1) when Turks encountered Islam in Maveraunnehir, sunnism had already been established in the region, 2) the sunni Islam had developed an advanced tradition and system which was more convenient for governmental apparatus, and finally 3) the important Muslim states when the Turks became Muslim were officially sunni. In order to get a legitimate place in the eyes of those powerful Islamic states, they needed to adopt sunnism.(see Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*, p. 37).

the most complicated religious doctrines in simple and basic forms.¹² On the other hand, under the flexible nature of the sufi form it was equally easy for them to maintain old traditions. One should remember at this point the strength of high degree of their traditions, *töre*, in their lives, which they did not want to and could not do away with that easily. This is why the flexible nature of sufi Islam made it possible for these people to adopt so called heterodox variants of Islam. Thus, Turkish nomads did not give up many of their traditions that lived under the shelter of various Islamic forms for centuries. The mystic character of Turks' old religions also contributed to their tendency towards sufi Islam and sufi orders.¹³

In the history of Islam, in spite of the long struggle between canonical law, i.e madrasa Islam, and mystic orders, it would not be adequate to simply classify *madrasa* Islam as orthodox and Sufi circles as heterodox. There have always been mystic orders, which defined themselves in the sphere of sharia by accepting and practicing all orders of Holy Qur'an, such as Nakshibendiyye, Khadiriyye, and Khalvetiyye. But, on the other hand, we have many mystic orders that maintained certain foreign elements under Islamic skin with the help of great tolerance and flexibility of sufi interpretations of the basics of Islam. The spectrum of that kind of mystic orders was fairly wide; stretching from the orders that was the mixture of paganism, neo-Platonism, and some beliefs of mystic Asian religions, whose relation with Islam was not more than superficial, to sincere beliefs whose adherents were trying to apply the principles of Qur'an into their

¹² This is best seen in the case of Ahmet Yesevi, the patron saint of Asia. Although he was a well-educated men in religious sciences and knew Arabic and Persian language, Ahmet Yesevi preferred to write his poems, which aimed to teach fundamental principals of religion, in basic contemporary Turkish rather than in Arabic or Persian like Kutadgu Bilig, which was written by Yusuf Has Hacip to serve the sultan. Because, Yesevi aimed to spread Islam among the lower strata of Turkish population. As a result he became the fundamental stone of Turkish popular mysticism and his decisive influence has never disappeared. For more information about Ahmet Yesevi and his influence see Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*.

life but in the forms which they considered fit. Therefore, as Köprülü points out, one should keep in mind these two kinds of mysticism in the history of Islam, one is in the orthodox circle and the other has some part out of this circle.¹⁴ While the former developed among highly educated urban population under the strong influence of Arabic and Persian culture, the latter lived and developed more at popular level, especially among nomads, by including traditional elements –i.e. pre-Islamic- into it.

B. Orthodoxy versus Heterodoxy

What is then the root of the orthodox- heterodox dichotomy in the religious life of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries-Anatolian Turkish population? On what ground should one examine this difference? It seems that to answer such questions, one should look at social and economic factors more than anything else.

From the beginning, Islam spread among the Turks through two channels: one was among urban, literate, elite population, and the other was among rural and nomadic population. When literate urban Turks met Islam in Maverannnehir and Khorasan they heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic culture, and soon adapted their lifestyle into this Islam. They learned Arabic and Persian language and had the opportunity to study the original sources of religion. We should remember that among urban elite circles of the Turks right up to the fourteenth century the language of literature was Persian and the language of religious sciences was Arabic. This shows clearly how Muslim cities,

¹³ Ocak, *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*, p. 30.

even if they were dominantly populated by Turks, were under the influence of Arabic and Iranian culture. So both madrasas and *tekkes* or sufi lodges in urban areas were established on the basis of written original sources and developed in the classical tradition that led by big *ulema*, and *meşayih*, who is the leaders of mystical brotherhoods, in the traditional centers of Islam.¹⁵

On the other hand, in rural areas the situation was completely different. It was not realistic to teach the new religion to illiterate and uneducated nomadic people a sophisticated way and through complicated theological discussions. Rather they were able to understand and would welcome Islam which was presented to them only in the form that they could comprehend; it usually manifested itself as crude explanations of the basics of the new religion mainly through mystical manner, and it would leave room for their old traditions and habits in a loosely defined and interpreted version of Islam¹⁶. This was materialized mainly through the sufis of Khorasan who will be dealt with below.

To study Turkish heterodoxy in the thirteenth century Anatolia, one should therefore investigate the conditions of the early episode and the peculiarities of Turkish conversion. It should be noted at this point that the dynamic factors which created two different religious interpretations in the Turkish world did not originate from theological discussions and doctrinal difference between the two. Rather they should be searched for in distinct social and economic conditions of urban and rural population. The differences in this respect heavily influenced the characteristics of the accepted religion among

¹⁴ Franz Babinger and Fuat Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslam*, ed. by Mehmet Kanar, İstanbul, 1996, p.47.

¹⁵ See Cahen, *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu*, pp.146-159; Akdağ, *Türkiye'nin İktisadi ve İctimai Tarihi*, cilt I, pp.12-20.

¹⁶ See, Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", pp. 61-65.

different social classes. For example, the urban population easily adapted itself to the new culture, while in rural areas the traditional forms and norms of life continued much more boldly under the umbrella of the new religion. The result was two types of Islam, each developed on different socio-economic and cultural grounds. Ocak, rightly, analyzes this variation at three levels:

- 1) Political level: The *sunni* Islam have become the religion of the central authority with the exception of the Savefids, while heterodox Islam have been the religion of social groups that were not happy with central authority.
- 2) Social level: Sunni Islam was widely spread in city centers among educated people. However, heterodox Islam developed in rural areas among illiterate people.
- 3) Theological level: The *sunni* Islam has advanced, systematic, and well-defined written theology, which is based on Qor'an and *Sünnet* (The words and the practices of prophet Mohammad). On the other hand heterodox Islam has principally non-systematic, mythological, *syncretic*, and oral theology.¹⁷

The difference grew bigger to the extent that by the thirteenth century, the urban population in Anatolia already created the phrases " *Etrak-i bî idrak*" (Turks with poor intelligence capacity) and " *Etrakin dini zayıftır*" (the religion of the Turks is weak) about nomadic Turkomans. It is striking to see that in city centers, people from Turkish ethnic roots were so mingled with the elements of Arabic and Persian culture that they used the term "Turk" for only rural population. Though these urban centers had a sizable Arab and Iranian inhabitants and they also played an important part in the production of such terms and phrases for the Turkomans, this historical evidence clearly shows how much the Turkish culture was subordinated by Arabic and Persian culture.¹⁸ The tension between two groups eventually turned to popular insurrection of rural population in 1340, which was led by a dervish and shook the very foundation of Anatolian Seljuk

¹⁷ Ocak, *Türk Süfliliğine Bakışlar*, p.18

¹⁸ See Turan, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*; Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*, pp. 190-191.

State. The place of this insurrection in the historical development of Turkish popular mysticism will be briefly dealt with below.

The main source and ground of Turkish popular sufism was Khorasan Malamatiyya. As mentioned above, Khorasan was one of the three centers in the Islamic World that produced main streams of mystical life. Malamatiyya sufism, which borrowed elements from pre-Islamic Budist and Maniheist mystic culture, developed in this region as a response to Kufe and Basra schools, where classical sufi interpretation depended on asceticism, through out the ninth century. Malamatiyya school developed in big cities of the region such as Hemedan, Nisabur, Belh, and Kabil by great mystics like Hafs-i Haddad(d. 874), Hamdun-i Kassar(d. 884), Baba Tahir-i Uryan and Ebu Said-i Ebu'l- Hayr(d. 1040).¹⁹

The distinctive feature of Malamatiyya school was its refusal of ascetic sufism that searches for the way to divine reality in the fear of God's torment and presumes much more pray. Malamatiyya, on the other hand, puts in the center the ecstasy and love of God, who created human as *eşref-i mahlûkat*, the most respectable of the creatures, and pursued the aim of giving up all worldly desires. The basic principle of this mystical way was blaming all worldly desires and getting rid of them.²⁰ It was fundamental with them that they withdrawn from the world and take no care for the morrow.²¹

The Malamatiyya School produced a fairly tolerant and open-minded sufi interpretation that became the spiritual source for many mystic orders. Kalandariyya must be mentioned at this point. It was Köprülü who first paid attention to the *kalandars* and considered Kalandariyya movement as one of the most notable events in the

¹⁹ See Ocak, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar* and *Türkler, Türkiye ve İslam*.

²⁰ Ocak, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar*, p. 134.

religious history of Islam.²² After Koprulu, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak published a comprehensive monography about Kalandariyya, in which he deals particularly with their activities and extreme heterodox religious practices in the Ottoman Empire.²³

The word kalandar is Persian origin and means " a dervish who has withdrawn from the world and wandering about like a vagabond; a man who has renounced all worldly things and who has seen the truth."²⁴ We have vivid descriptions concerning kalandar's outward appearance especially in Turkish sources, in which they are depicted as clean-shaven, with shaven eyebrows and heads, wearing a conical hat of woven hair and a yellow or black shawl, and carrying a drum and a standard ('*alam*).²⁵

The Kalandariyya movement initially confined to individuals and to eastern Islamic world. It later spread westward in the thirteenth century especially by the activities of Cemaleddin Savi (d.1223), who systematized the general principles that were nothing more than a corpus of ideas and structured the movement. He was called in some sources as the founder of Cavlakiyya branch of Kalandariyya.²⁶

Tahsin Yazıcı depicts the distinctive features of the doctrine of Kalandariyya movement as follows: ' 1) The shaving of head, eyebrows, and face in order fully to reveal the beauty of the face. 2) The wearing of a khirka; a blanket or a cotton sash rounds the waist. 3) The wearing round the neck and on the arms of iron rings called haydariyya. 4) Austerities and seclusion were not considered important, and they were lax in following the obligatory precepts of and practices of Islam, usually refraining

²¹ John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, Istanbul, 1937, p. 32.

²² Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet*, p. 49.

²³ See Ocak, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Marjinal Sufilik: Kalenderiler*, Ankara, 1992.

²⁴ See Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmus-u Turkî*, Istanbul, 1318, ii, 1081.

²⁵ Tahsin Yazıcı, " Kalandar" in *EI*².

²⁶ See Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Katib, *Fustat al-adala*, ed. Osman Turan, in *Fuad Köprülü Armağanı*, Istanbul, 1953.

from engaging in worship. 5) They usually subsisted on charity, owing nothing but a few personal possessions, and did not marry.²⁷ In accordance with the tenets of their order these dervishes were committed to lives of constant travel and wandering.²⁸

There appeared some other sufi orders, which widely spread among turkish masses, in Khorasan and Maverannnahr in the twelfth century that fed mainly from Khorasan Malamatiyya and, although not so marginal, resembled Kalandariyya. Among these were the Vefaiyye founded by Seyyid Ebu'l- Vefa Bagdadi (d. 1105) in Iraq, the Yeseviyye, founded by Ahmet Yesevi (d. 1166-67) in Khorasan, and the Haydariyye, founded by Kutbeddin Haydar and a branch of Yeseviyye. The doctrinal structure of these sufi orders were strikingly similar and whenever they contacted in a region they did not hesitate to merge. The leading figures of the mystic life in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Anatolia were dominantly adherents of these sufi orders. In the following section I will examine the continuation of these orders in Anatolia.

C. Coming to Anatolia

The Turk' first penetration into Asia Minor began half a century before the battle of Manzikert in 1071. Forces of Oguz Turks, however, had already entered Asia Minor as early as 1037 when they defeated on the shores of Lake Van a Byzantine force.²⁹ And later came the invasion of Erzurum by Ibrahim Inal (d.1063) in 1048. But these were raids for booty rather than a well-planned conquest. The chief invasion of the country by

²⁷ Tahsin Yazıcı, " Kalandariyya" in *EI*².

the Turks, however, came immediately after the battle of Manzikert, which ended with the defeat of the Byzantine Army led by Romanus Diogenes.³⁰

Although Alp Arslan did not have any political and military intention towards Asia Minor, the consequences of Manzikert became one of the decisive events in the history of Anatolia. Because after breaking up the Byzantine defense system, Turkish invaders did face no effective resistance in Asia Minor. After the victory of Manzikert, Alp Arslan entrusted the affairs in Anatolia to one of his commanders Kutalmışoğlu Süleyman and his four brothers; they crossed the Euphrates and in an incredibly short time traversed the length of Asia Minor and established a state in Nicea (1075-1086).³¹

The victory of Manzikert certainly gave impetus to the westward movement of Turkish tribes of Central Asia. In the first half of the thirteenth century, a second wave of migration into Asia Minor occurred under the Mongol invasion. So the demographic configuration of Anatolia was dramatically changed by these Turkish immigration. What was the intensity of migration and how it effected the demographic composition of Anatolia? Fuat Köprülü indicates in his *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire* that by the thirteenth century Anatolia was in large part Turkish, a population made up principally of these Turkoman nomads. At the turn of the fourteenth century, when we consider the number and geographic distribution of Turkoman Principalities founded upon the decline of Anatolian Seljuks in the second half of the thirteenth century, it is obvious that by about 1300 the whole Asia Minor had largely been Turkified.³²

²⁸ Birge, p.32.

²⁹ Birge, p.22

³⁰ For more reading on the conquest of Anatolia by the Turks see M. Halil Yinanç, *Türkiye Tarihi, Selçuklular Devri: Anadolu'nun Fethi*, İstanbul, 1994.

³¹ See Yinanç, *Anadolu'nun Fethi*.

³² See Köprülü, *The Origins*.

When Mongols pushed Turkish population forward, they, naturally, brought with themselves their culture, religious beliefs and practices. In this mass flow, also a large number of dervishes came to Anatolia.

It would not be exaggeration to assume that almost all of those dervishes were adherents of sufi orders coming from Khorasan Malamatiyya. Historical evidence that we have shows that most of the leading figures of contemporary mystic life in Anatolia were linked to one of the following sufi orders; Yeseviyye, Vefaiyye, Haydariyye, and Khalandariyya. For example Baba Ilyas was a Vefai sheyh, Hacı Bektas-i Veli was Haydari³³, and Sheyh Edebali was a *halife* of Baba Ilyas. As mentioned earlier, they all emerged on the Malamatiyya spirit and there were no significant differences between fundamental beliefs and characteristics of these orders.

The scholarly research has shown that in the Islamization and Turkification process of Asia Minor, even of the Balkans later, the significant role played by these sufi dervishes can not be underestimated. Being representatives of a syncretic and tolerant interpretation of Islam, they were able easily to contact with local Christians and to establish cultural bridges that made it possible for cultural and religious elements to flow in both directions. Moreover, in all stages of Turkish westward movement, we see them among the pioneers in newly conquered or invaded lands; they were among those who established first relations with native people. Due to their flexible approach to religious matters, the formation of big psychological and social barriers between two different societies was prevented. It can be presumably generalized that Turkish side of the border zones had always intensely populated by nomadic groups and heterodox dervishes, who were closely interrelated, while in the hinterland the majority of population was

composed of people belonging to *sunni*-orthodox way of religion.³⁴ In time while the borderline gradually shifted, the sphere of orthodoxy expanded and heterodox groups moved westward.

When looked at Anatolia in the first half of the thirteenth century, the picture of religious life consisted of *sunni-madrasa* Islam and elite sufi orders, which were confined to urban *sunni* circles and of popular mystic orders among rural population, which were based rather on oral tradition and legends of supernatural mystic saints(*evliya*). This duality, in fact, was a reflection of the polarization of two different lifestyles: rural versus urban. Towards the mid-thirteenth century, the rural population found themselves so alienated under the policies of the Seljuks that they did not hesitate to rebel under the flag of a Turkoman sheyh Baba Ilyas in pursuit of an ultimate goal, which was to demolish the devil state of the Seljuks and to establish the just-state of Massiah, that was Baba Ilyas³⁵. The social, economic, cultural, and religious components of this insurrection is well-discussed Ocak in his *Babailer İsyani*.³⁶ According to Ocak, the source of tension between the Seljuk state and the Turkoman masses must be examined in the complicated sociological controversy in the contemporary society. It cannot be discussed by one-dimensional reductionist approach. There were many factors at work in the course of events. But what was certain that the religious appearances of both sides show certain differences.

³³ Ocak, *Türk Süfliliğine Bakışlar*, p. 158.

³⁴ See Wittek's analysis in *The Rise of The Ottoman Empire*.

³⁵ See Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Babailer İsyani, Aleviliğin Tarihsel Altyapısı*, İstanbul, 1996. This is still the best and , arguably, the only scholarly monograph about the Babai Revolt.

³⁶ See Ocak, *Babailer İsyani*,

This is still the best and , arguably, the only scholarly monograph about the Babai Revolt.

Upon the defeat of Baba Ilyas and his army by Seljukid forces, Babai dervishes sought refuge in the marches. Although we do not know the number of Babais in western lands, one can safely argue that the Ottoman territories attracted considerable amount of them. This is primarily because of the fact that the Ottoman lands in North-Western Anatolia was the most suitable one for these dervishes and, secondly, the Ottoman dynasty established good relations with these sufis. Indeed, until the first half of the fourteenth century, many dervishes or *halifes* of Baba Ilyas flew into the Ottoman lands. Ashikpashazade records that Sheyh Edebali, who was described in some sources as the father-in-law of Osman, Hadji Bektash Veli, the patron saint of Bektashi Order, were all *halifes* of Baba Ilyas. Ashikpashazade also mentions some other dervishes such as Geyikli Baba of Babaî-Vefaî order.³⁷

There were other sufi orders that either emerged in or entered into Anatolia during the thirteenth century, such as Mevleviyye, Nakshibendiyye, Rufaiyye, etc; they were important part of the religious history of Anatolia. But since they lived rather among urban population showing *sunni* character, I will not deal with them here in detail; I rather focus on the dervishes active in the formative years of the ottoman principality. Indeed, during the early period of the Ottoman State, i.e. until the second half of the fourteenth century, we do not see members of these *sunni* orders in the Ottoman land. They rather chose the regions, where we see well-established urban life and order. Such orders as Mevleviyye and Nakshibendiyye developed in such centers with higher socio-cultural atmosphere where the form of written (*kitabi*) Islam was dominated. However, the frontier lands were much more favorable for the dynamic and

³⁷ Aşıkpaşazade, p. 235, 237, 122.

entrepreneur heterodox dervishes.³⁸ The more they kept the distance from the power of the Seljuk state they felt safe.

In the following chapter I will give a brief description of the beliefs and doctrinal structure of these sufi orders and in the second part of this study I will analyze the activities of dervishes in the westernmost frontier region of Islam and their role in the process of the establishment of the Ottoman rule in the newly-conquered territories throughout the fourteenth century.

³⁸ Ocak, “Osmanlı Sufiliği ve Tarihi Alt Yapısı”, in Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu(ed), *Osmanlı Medeniyeti Tarihi*, vol. I, Istanbul, 1999, p. 123.

III. DOCTRINES AND BELIEFS

A. General Characteristics

Orally-based

Before attempting to explain the predominant characteristics of the heterodox interpretation of Islam that was alive in rural areas at the turn of the fourteenth century in Western Anatolia, I would like to underline the fact, which heavily influenced all mystic orders of that kind, that this version of Islam came into existence, lived, and developed among illiterate rural population, particularly among nomadic tribes, through centuries and merely based on oral culture and traditions. That is why none of these popular sufi orders had certain, strict rules which lived long without any deformation or change. Since there had never been enough written sources, teachings of great sufis had been preached by his adherents in diverse regions basically depending upon oral tradition, which was mainly the narration of miracles and supernatural deeds of the saints to convert “infidels” into Islam. The collection of miracles and legendary lives of saints, the *Menakibnames*, were written centuries later.

Inevitably, every *halifes* of a sheikh preached his own interpretation in different regions. Since there was no written canonical book or pamphlet that would form the mainstream, there appeared in the course of time a very wide-spectrum of beliefs and practices of dervishes belonging to their circles. This is clearly observable among *Alawi* groups, who are the inheritor of this culture today. There are many differences in practices and doctrines between several *Alawi* groups living in different regions.

Therefore, one should always remember this flexible, open to change, and non-scholastic nature of the doctrines and beliefs of non-*sunni* popular sufi orders.

Syncretic

As mentioned above, rural population believed in the frame of narrative tradition and lived their religion through it, which was carried out by *babas* and *dedes*; they never went deep into the theological bases of their religious beliefs. Rather they learned the religion from orally narrated stories of saints. For the people of rural society it was the best way of learning Islam to listen the miraculous deeds of saints and the best way of being a good Muslim was to take the deeds of these saints as examples. The pillars of the beliefs, the doctrine, and the theology in that kind of religious understanding are not well-defined, thus the center of the 'circle' was not fixed. Thus by sincere beliefs and Muslim colors on them, it was not impossible to take some foreign elements into the 'circle' and even to shift the location of the center.

The history of Turkish heterodoxy can be read exactly as that kind of story. Under the skin of Islam at the outer surface, the content has experienced a dynamic voyage through time and space. Many elements from pre-Islamic religions that Turks had adopted, such as Shamanism, Buddhism, Hinduism survived under Islamic appearance.¹ When they came into contact with Christians and Jews in Syria and

¹ See Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Babailer İsyanından Kızılbaşlığa: Anadolu'da İslam Heterodoxisinin Doğuş ve Gelişim Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış", *Belleten*, LXIV/239, 2000; idem, *Türkiye, Türkler ve İslam*; idem, *Türk Sufiliğine Bakışlar*.

especially in Anatolia, these heterodox mystics took over some elements from them as well.²

Non-systematic

The second predominant feature of these popular sufi orders was that they came into existence not as a result of long theological discussions. As partly mentioned above, that was rather a result of social, economic, and political conditions' in the course of time. Therefore, the beliefs and theological bases were unsystematic and not well-cultivated. Rather it was much more mythological and based on oral theology.³

Tolerant

One other dominant feature of the heterodox sufi orders is their fairly tolerant theological and doctrinal structures. This tolerance is, of course, closely related to their *syncretic* nature. Indeed, the latter can be considered as a result of the former. And these orders owed their tolerant structure to primarily its oral culture. However, although they have many non-Islamic customs and beliefs in practice, the dervishes that were at work in early fourteenth century-Anatolia seem to have been sincere in their deeds as Muslims. This is clearly reflected in many *velayetnames*. The main difference with *sunni* Muslims, who introduced themselves as true believers and accused heterodox groups as heretics, derived from different understanding of religion of urban and rural societies.

² See Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, "Co-Existence and Religion", *AO*, 15, 1997; Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "XIII. ve XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu'da Türk-Hristiyan Dini Etkiıaşımleri ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges) Kültü", *Belleten*, 214, 1991; Nevra Necipoğlu, "The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia (Eleventh- Twelfth Centuries)", *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5, 1999-2000.

³ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, " Babailer İsyanından Kızılbaşlığa: Anadolu'da İslam Heterodoxisinin Doğuş ve Gelişim Tarihine Kısa Bir Bakış" in *Belleten*, LXIV/239 (200), p. 156.

By the way, most of the beliefs and practices that are apparently against *sharia* (the canonical law of Islam) entered into popular sufi orders by the *hurufi* movement founded by Fazlullah Astarabadi in the second half of the fourteenth century, and by *Shi'ite* influence, which was particularly influential on Turkish heterodoxy since the late fifteenth century. Thus, during the time under study we do not yet have any open challenge of heterodox Islam to *sunni*-orthodox Islam neither in doctrine nor in practice.⁴

Entrepreneurial

The dervishes active in the Ottomans territories and other principalities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were not mystics like the adherents of Kufe and Basra schools, who were spending their time with praying in hospices without getting involved in this-worldly works. But dervishes in Anatolia were fighting infidels by “wooden swords”, defeating many enemies with a dozen of disciples, conquering fortresses, and spreading Islam in the Infidel lands.⁵ There is no doubt that they had a dangerous and adventurous life. In his famous article Barkan points out their entrepreneurial nature and shows how they established *tekkes* in abandoned lands, which soon became economic and cultural centers and in many cases turned into villages.⁶

The early sources record that Geyikli Baba, who was presented as a Vefai dervish and follower of Baba Ilyas in the same source, fought together with his disciples against Byzantine troops and even conquered some regions around Bursa. Abdal Musa and Seyyid Ali Sultan, who will be analyzed in the following chapters, perhaps

⁴ For more reading see Irène Mélikoff, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar*, çev. Turan Alptekin, İstanbul, 1993.

⁵ Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet*, p.63

constitute the best examples of dervishes of this kind. Abdal Musa and his disciples(*murids*) were present in the wars of Orhan against Byzantine troops in the early period of his life. He then crossed western half of Asia Minor and settled near Teke, where he founded his hospice and had many disciples there. Although not mentioned in chronicles, we know about Seyyid Ali Sultan from a *velayetname* dedicated to his miraculous success and some archival records about Kızıldeli Tekke founded by him. According to the *velayetname* he came to Bythinia from Khorasan with his 40 companions and conquered cities, fortresses in the Balkans. This description serves a good example of the struggle-like and warrior character of these dervishes.

Flexible

One of the fundamental characteristics of all popular sufi orders that were wide-spread in Anatolian countryside during the thirteenth century was their stress on the 'divine love' and ecstasy. Hadji Bektash, for example, is defined in the fourteenth century chronicles as a *meczip* (ecstatic) dervish.⁷ In such sufi orders the lover (*aşık*), who was being baked by divine love of God, could in ecstasy sometimes go beyond the 'line of *Sharia*'.⁸ But it should be noted that, this exuberance was never a challenge to canonical orders of *Sharia*. It can be interpreted as the disappearance of everything except the love of God in the mind and heart of *sâlik* (traveler), who was passing stages one by one towards God. This kind of practice of religion was apparently open to widest interpretation that does not limit itself with the strictly defined boundaries of the *Sharia*. For these Sufis, the content, that was the love of God, was much more important. This is

⁶ See Barkan, "Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri"

⁷ See Ashikpashazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p. 237.

best reflected in a verse of Yunus Emre, who was a famous sufi dervish and a poet lived in the second half of the thirteenth century and in the first half of the fourteenth century:

Yunus der ki ey hoca (Listen to me the teacher of religion),
İstersen bin var hacca (No matter even if you go to pilgrimage thousand times),
Hepisinden iyice (But, the better is),
Bir gönülü yapmaktır (To gain a heart).

The loose attitude of dervishes mostly manifested itself in praying and in taking alcohol and opium. It can be argued that their neglect of some basic principles of Orthodox Islam became more prominent under the Hurufi influence towards the end of the fifteenth century. Actually, before Hurufi movement, some *Kalenderi* groups, such as Barak Baba and his followers⁹, were extremely careless towards canonical orders and taking opium had already existed in Anatolia. But it seems that they always remained marginal.

In the case of a missionary, conqueror, or a colonizing dervish in the early period of the Ottomans there was not so much exuberance. In the *velayetnames* of Hadji Bektash, Abdal Musa, Hacım Sultan, Seyyid Ali Sultan, and many others they all are depicted as good Muslim performing *namaz*. However it is not clear from the information given in these *velayetnames* whether or not they prayed five times a day as ordered by the Canon. Hadji Bektash is mentioned in Eflâki's *Menakbü'l- Arifin* as a good Muslim but not so much careful in praying. From this expression it can be deduced that he was not oppose to praying, but his religious privileges were different. Similarly, Geyikli Baba, who was labeled as a saint in sources, is said to have been a drinker and sultan Orhan sent him *rakı* as gift.

⁸ See Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", pp. 49-52.

⁹ In Seljuk sources we have vivid description of Barak Baba.

As a conclusion, in the period under examination the sufi dervishes must have regarded themselves as good Muslims and believed that they were practicing the divine reality through their mystic way by dealing with the content rather than peel of religion. Their careless attitude towards certain principles of the canonical law does not seem to be a conscious challenge to *Sunni* Islam.

B. The Doctrine

The theory of *Velâyet* constitutes, with some differences in its interpretation, the nucleus of the doctrines of all Muslim sufi orders.¹⁰ The ultimate goal of a *salik*, the pursuer of divine reality through stages (*menzil*), is to reach the stage of *velayet*, in which he would directly communicate with God in a mysterious way. The word "*veli*" in Arabic, meaning "close friend (*dost*)" refers in the mystical literature of Islam to people who love God, gain God's friendship, and is loved by God.¹¹ The most prominent property of a *veli* that proves his *velayet* is his *keramets* (supernatural powers), which he uses both to reinforce the faith of his followers and to gain the unbeliever's heart. Before attempting to analyze the theological bases of the doctrine of *velayet*, I would like to deal very briefly with the roots and the development of this theory, which was predominant among Turkish mystics in the period under investigation.

It is, with no doubt, an Islamic term. The *tasavvuf* emerged in the second century of Islam growing upon the Islamic conception *zuhd* and *takva* (asceticism). According to that conception some prominent religious figures in Islamic realm concerned *zühhd* and

¹⁰ For the phenomena of *velaya* see Halil İnalcık, "Dervish and Sultan" in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, Bloomington, 1993.

¹¹ Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, Ankara, 1997, p.1.

takva, which presumes to clear all worldly concerns from heart except the love and the fear of God, as the best way not only to reach the divine reality but also to spiritually experience it, consequently, acquiring the divine approval of God. If one could control all his worldly desires and erase from his heart tendency towards this world he would reach the point of *velayet*.¹²

But this is not the complete story. As every field of life, the contribution of pre-Islamic beliefs to the theory of *velayet* is visible in the Turkish version of heterodox Islam. Although there are many similarities, *veli* descriptions in *sunni* and heterodox orders are not the same. In addition to the Islamic conception, the heterodox *veli* image can be traced back to Shamanism. The shaman, who was able to foresee the future , change the weather, cure illness, fly, and not burnt in fire, shows striking similarities with the image of *veli* depicted in *velayetnames* (hagiographies).¹³ As Islamic *velis* shamans were retiring into seclusion before their practices as shaman. Ocak in his *Menakıbnameler* draws attention to the contribution of Turks' *atalar kültü* (ancestor cult) and *aziz kültü* (saint cult) from Budism in the development of *velayet* doctrine among Turkish population.¹⁴

There comes the question: What were the fundamentals of sufi doctrine of *velayet*? How was it perceived by *abdals* and sufi dervishes? Let us first have a closer look at Küçük Abdal, a disciple of famous heterodox sheikh Otman Baba and the author of *Vilayetname-i Sultan Otman*. İnalçık, in his analysis of this *vilayetname*, refers Küçük Abdal as "being well informed about the sufi doctrine" who wrote an introduction with illuminating comments about *velayet*:

¹² For more information about the meaning of "veli" see Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*.

¹³ Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, p. 11.

This is the age of *velayet* (*devr-i vilaya*)... *velayet* is the shepherd of prophethood. Whoever is subject to the appearance of *velayet*, he is the promoter of it in the outer and inner worlds, because prophethood is entrusted to *velayet*. Anyone who is against *velayet* and the holder of *velayet* becomes a denier of prophethood, and therefore an infidel.

Below heaven God has his *evliya*; nobody knows who they are except God himself. Now a *veli* is the man who controls everything in this world but needs nobody.

Velayet becomes absolutely pure and clean. He is the khalif of God in the universe... He extinguishes his human limitations in the state of union with God... At this stage a true dervish desires nothing but *al-hakk* (the Truth, the Divinity). He enjoys a total freedom from worldly ties.

Kutb-al Aktab, that is, God's emissary is that man who makes happen anything he wishes...and for it needs no means or help... The *kutbiyya* is the highest stage (*makam*) that man can reach... extinguishing all his human limitations a *kutb* is in a constant state of entasis. He sees everything in the universe in his own being... he is on the throne of *kutbiyya* in the center of the assembly of souls. A *kutb* contemplates *al-hakk* all the time. The two worlds become a paradise for mankind for his sake.¹⁵

The idea of *kutbiyya*, the highest stage of *velayet*, is the basic belief in the radical forms of the Islamic sufi doctrine, in particular, in the *Kalandariyya* and *abdalism*.¹⁶ The *kutb* is a man who is in constant state of contemplation of God (*müşahede*). "Living in a constant state of ecstasy (*cezbe*), they are obviously above of all worldly things. This is the highest stage in the path of a sufi. The sign of prophethood is forever manifest with them. They are in control of everything in the universe. They are not known to people nor recognizable in their appearance. In each age lives one *kutb* who is a successor to the Prophet in calling people to the truth (*hakk*)."¹⁷

According to *Makâlât* the famous book attributed to Hadji Bektas, the patron saint of Bektashi Order, the path towards *kutbiyya*, is divided into four parts by four gateways: 1) the *şeriat* (orthodox religious law), 2) the *tarikât* (teaching and practice of

¹⁴ See Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*, pp. 10-23.

¹⁵ In İnalçık, " Dervish and Sultan" in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, Bloomington, 1993, pp. 19-20.

¹⁶ İnalçık, "Dervish and Sultan", p.21.

the secret religious order), 3) the *mârifet* (mystic knowledge of God), 4) the *hakikat* (immediate experience of the essence of the reality).¹⁸ Birge explains these gateways by an analogy; if we take sugar as example, one can go to dictionary to learn what the meaning of sugar is and how it is used. That is the *şeriat* gateway to knowledge. One can get more information by direct handling and seeing it. This is *tarikât* gateway to knowledge. To actually taste sugar and to have it enter into oneself is to go one step deeper into an appreciation of its nature. That represents *mârifet* gateway to knowledge. If one could go still further and become one with sugar so that he could say "I am sugar" that is what is meant by *hakikat* gateway to knowledge.¹⁹

Hadji Bektash, in *Makâlât*, divides people into four groups: 1) *âbitler* (worshippers) who are the people of the *şeriat* law, 2) *zâhitler* (ascetics) who are the people of *tarikât*, 3) *ârifler* (gnostics), the people of the *mârifet* or mystic knowledge, 4) *muhipler* (lovers) that are the people of *hakikat*, divine reality. So *abdâl* should go ahead and pass through those four gateways successively; this is possible only if he gives up all but God (*masivaallah*) and finds himself absorbed within the love of Divine Truth.

It should be noted that in this divine journey what is as much important as killing of his worldly desires is the role of *mürşid*, that is the sheikh who guides *abdâl* through his spiritual journey and shed light on his way. Because of his vital role in spiritual experience of *sâlik*, the *mürşid* has always been the central figure in all mystic orders.

¹⁷ İnalçık, "Dervish and Sultan", p.21.

¹⁸ See Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, *Makâlât*, ed. Esat Coşan, İstanbul, 1986. It is a subject of debate among historians whether this small book really belongs to Hadji Bektash. There is not clear evidence for that argument. Because of that some historians prefers to approach to this idea in suspicion. But whether it really belongs or not, it is widely accepted among *Alawis* as the work of Hadji Bektash.

¹⁹ Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, p.102.

As strongly emphasized by Ahmed Yesevi²⁰ all *mürits*, the disciples of sheikh, must have absolute loyalty to their sheikh.



²⁰ Ahmet Yesevi, the great sufi of Turkistan who has considerable influence on all Turkish popular sufi orders, established following duties as fundamental principals of his way:

- 1- The *mürit* must completely surrender himself to his sheikh. No one can be considered above him.
- 2- The *mürit* must be intelligent so that he will be able to understand the symbols and signs of his sheikh
- 3- He must accept and obey all the words and approve all the acts of his sheikh.
- 4- He must be quick and clever in the service of his sheikh.
- 5- He must be faithful in word and steadfast in keeping his vow lest when the mood of his sheikh change he be repelled. He must never fall into doubt or uncertainty.
- 6- He must be loyal and firm in his covenant of allegiance.
- 7- The *mürit* must be prepared to give up all his possessions to his sheikh.
- 8- He must keep the secrets of his sheikh and guard himself from divulging them.
- 9- He must show respect for the sheikh's counsel and advice and never be neglectful
- 10- In his pursuit of his sheikh's way he must be ready to sacrifice his life and his head. He must be the friend of his sheikh's friend and the enemy of his enemy. In order to satisfy any need of his sheikh he must be ready to sell himself as a slave.

It is clear from these sentences that how much authority and power the sheikh had on his *mürits*. See Köprülü, *İlk Mutasavvıflar*, pp.110-111.

PART TWO:
VELAYETNAMES AND THEIR PORTRAYAL OF
DERVISHES

I. VELAYETNAMES AS A SOURCE FOR HISTORY

One of the most important problems that historians specializing on early period of Ottoman history confront is the scarcity of reliable primary sources. Since Anatolia experienced a time of turmoil and political fragmentation in the second half of the thirteenth century and almost entire fourteenth century, there was no powerful state with written laws and advanced bureaucracy. This became possible only with the Ottomans' establishing their absolute suzerainty over other Anatolian principalities and by the concentration of *ulema* and bureaucrats in the Ottoman capital. Therefore, for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we have almost no official records of the Ottoman State, except a couple of *vakfiyyes*, the documents issued by the sultan, which give certain individuals the right of ownership of some land in return for some public and religious duties, and a few inscriptions.¹

Greater part of our knowledge of the early Ottomans derives from the fifteenth century chronicles. Indeed, in the second half of the fifteenth century in particular there appeared a considerable explosion in Ottoman Historiography. Many historians began to write about the past of Ottomans either depending on their own

¹ See, for example, İ. Hakkı Uzuncarşılı, "Gâzi Orhan Bey Vakfiyesi" in *Belleten* V/19, pp.277-88. In this article Uzuncarşılı gives an analytical criticism and assessment of a Vakfiye in Topkapı Palace Archives dated 1348.

observation or on some narrations told by older generations. Critical editions of most of these written sources, the chronicles, are now available for modern historians. Since there is comparably rich literature on the sources² I will not dwell on them in length.

It is also well known that there is a number of contemporary Byzantine and Western sources related to the early Ottomans. Among them especially the Byzantine chroniclers such as John Cantecuzenos, Nikephoros Gregoras, and Pachymeres provide valuable information. But they unfortunately do not mention any of the dervishes, which is the subject of the present study. One explanation of this might be the fact that these chroniclers were from higher class of society and defenders of Christianity against “infidel” Muslim invaders. So their ignorance about events at popular level, which included high degree of Islamic propaganda, is understandable. The same applies more or less to other western sources.³

However, there are other foreign contemporary sources, which are of high importance for us. The most prominent of these are two Arab travelers, Ibn Battuta and al-Umari, who wrote about Anatolia in the period under investigation⁴. The former is particularly important in that he wrote directly from his own observations. In his travel book *Rihlet Ibn Battuta* we find vivid depiction of contemporary

² For a comprehensive reading about the fifteenth century chronicles see Halil İnalcık, “The Rise of Ottoman Historiography”, *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, Oxford, 1962; V. L. Menage, “The Beginning of Ottoman Historiograph”, “, *Historians of the Middle East*, eds. Bernard Lewis and P. M. Holt, Oxford, 1962; Colin Imber, “Introduction”, *The Ottoman Empire 1300- 1481*, ISIS Press- İstanbul, 1990; Halil İnalcık, “How to Read Ashıkpashazade’s History”, *Essays in Ottoman History*, İstanbul, 1998.

³ For a brief description of Western, Greek, and Eastern sources in early Ottoman History see Imber, “Introduction”; “Canon and Apocrypha in early Ottoman History” in *Studies in Ottoman History and Law*,

⁴ For more reading see Imber, “Introduction” and “Canon and Apocrypha”, İsmet Parmaksizoglu (ed.), “Önsöz” in *Ibn Battuta Seyahatnamesinden Seçmeler*, Ankara, 1999.

Anatolian society.⁵ Although he gives valuable information about *Akhi* corporations and about *begs*, as himself being a *qadi* or judge, representing *sunni* Islam and *Sharia*, he does not mention the popular sufi orders, which we know existed in every corner of Anatolia during the time of his travel.

In addition, we have some religious and popular sources, which can be grouped under three categories: 1) Epics of the deeds of Saints (*evliya menkabeleri* or *velayetnames*), 2) historical romances (*destan*), 3) religious (*ilmi*) and literary works.⁶ The second kind of sources are the heroic epic stories that narrate primarily the victories of certain heroes in fighting against infidels or supernatural beings. *Danismendname*, *Battalname*, and *Saltukname* are the best examples of these historical romances. The third group includes religious guidebooks (*ilm-i hal*), which teach basic principles of religious beliefs as well as some literary works. As for the *velayetnames*, which is the principal source of this study, they are the books written to tell the reader about the miraculous deeds of popular saints.

Here at this point it is I think important to give a brief analysis of *velayetnames* as historical sources. But, before doing that, I will draw attention to a particular problem related to the primary historical sources in the field of heterodoxy. Our knowledge about heterodox orders and their histories mainly based on oral traditions and on some *velayetnames*. There is not much work relating to doctrinal discussions. Ocak points out that all Turkish states in Anatolia accepted and practiced *Sunni* Islam. In such an environment, heterodox groups under constant pressure of Sunni Islam through state power did not and/or could not produce written

⁵ This highly important historical source was translated into Turkish, English, French and several other western languages. See, for example, Ibn Battuta, *Ibn Battuta Seyahatnamesinden Secmeler*, ed. Ismet Parmaksizoglu, Ankara, 1999; Ibn Battuta, *Travels of Ibn Battuta*, ed. Gibb.

⁶ For a brief description of these historical sources see Köprülü, *The Seljuks of Anatolia; Their History and Culture According to Local Muslim Sources* trs. by Gary Leiser, Salt Lake City, 1992, pp. 38-64.

works. Therefore, behind the problem of the scarcity of written contemporary sources, one sees a two dimensional problem: first of all, they could not produce much written works, and secondly, even if they produced some, they could not easily reach us through centuries in such an environment dominated by Sunni Islam and its state power.⁷ Besides all negative circumstances we luckily possess many *velayetnames*, the number of which may well increase in time. But at this point one still faces with the problem of their reliability as a source for history.

***Velayetnames* as a Historical Source**

The first historian who appreciated the value of *velayetnames* as a historical source was Fuat Köprülü. In his famous article “*Anadolu Selçukluları Tarihinin Yerli Kaynakları*”⁸ Köprülü drew attention to the historical information in *velayetnames* that would shed light especially on popular sufi orders. However, he immediately warned historians that they should use these sources in a critical manner. As an example, he discusses the historical value of Eflâkî’s *Manakibu’l- Arifin* and puts forward how valuable it is for the history of Medieval Anatolia. He says “ I wish only to emphasize strongly this point: to date, the use of this *menakip* book has been limited primarily to the study of genealogy and political history. It is, however, an unrivaled source for religious and social history. No other historical source can be compared with it in describing the daily life, organization of cities and villages, characteristics of nomads, relations among social classes, religious movements, economic conditions, dress, and costumes of Anatolia in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries”⁹. According to Köprülü, after one has a good understanding of the nature

⁷ Ocak, *Bektî Menakıbnamelerinde İslam Öncesi İnanç Motifleri* İstanbul, 1983, p. 3.

⁸ Fuat Köprülü, “Anadolu Selçukluları Tarihinin Yerli Kaynakları” , *Belleten*, 27 (1943), pp. 421-425.

⁹ Köprülü, *The Seljuks of Anatolia*, p.39.

of such literary works, it is still possible to derive some information from them on intellectual and social history provided that they are passed through the filter of rigorous criticism.¹⁰ Köprülü also used *menakibnames* as a primary source in his monumental work *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*, in which he showed next generations how to use *menakibnames* methodologically.

After Köprülü, *menakibnames* seem to have been largely ignored in Ottoman historiography. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak mentions only two master theses and one doctoral thesis, both unpublished.¹¹ Apart from these, some historians, such as Birge¹² and Melikoff¹³, used *velayetnames* in a critical manner. But the only monograph, which describes and discusses in detail the *menakibnames* as historical source, is written by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. His book *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Menakıbnameler* was published in 1983. In this work he first analyses the emergence of the concept of ‘*veli*’ in the Islamic World and ‘*veli cult*’ among the Turk. He then discusses how and in which manner *velayetnames* were created and how they can be best used in historical researches. In the second part of the book, Ocak gives tables of patterns that occurred in Turkish *Menakıbnames*.¹⁴ In fact there is not much that I can add to Ocak’s analysis. Rather I aim here to analyze very briefly the nature of the *velayetnames* or *manakıbnames* that constitute the main source of the present study and discuss briefly the problems they pose for historians.

¹⁰ Köprülü, p.40.

¹¹ A. Recep, *Türk Edebiyatında Evliya Menkıbeleri* İstanbul, 1935; Altan Sunar, *Evliya Menkıbeleri*, İstanbul, 1939; Orhan Köprülü, *Tarihi Kaynak Olarak XIV. ve XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu’da Bazı Türkçe Menakıbnameler*, İstanbul, 1953, *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tıbbi semineri Kutuphanesi*, nr.512..

¹² Birge, *Bektashi Order*

¹³ Irene Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş: Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, çev. Turan Alptekin, Cumhuriyet Yayınları-İstanbul, 1999.

¹⁴ Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Kültür Tarihi Kaynağı Olarak Menakıbnameler* Ankara, 1997.

General Characteristics

The term *Velayetname* and *Menakibname*, which are generally used interchangeably, have been known since the ninth century in Islamic world for the legendary stories that tell *keramets* (miraculous deeds) of prominent mystic leaders. The word “*keramât*”, plural form of *keramet*, was also used sometimes instead of ‘*velayetname*’. Dervishes had been used to tell about the virtue and *keramets* of their sheikh to each other in the aim of keeping their ‘spiritual life’ good and of making the propaganda of their sheikh and order. The stories were expanded in time circulating from mouth to mouth, passing from generation to generation. Even in the life period of a *veli*, a halo of tale surrounded actual personality of him; this was to make the *veli* more prestigious in the minds of his dervishes and public. Therefore, the story of the *keramet* of a *veli* was initially formed orally. There is no doubt that the story was not totally imaginary. Rather, it was the exaggeration of a simple deed of the sheikh by *mürits*. In the course of time, especially after the death of the sheikh, these *keramets* of him were retold and circulated among dervishes. After some time passed, the stories were compiled and written down generally by a *mürît* of the same order. The *menakibnames* that we have today are the product of more or less the same procedure described.

Why did dervishes need to produce such works? What were their aim in producing such books? Some of the reasons that immediately come to mind are as follows: First of all, one should remember the powerful position, both worldly and spiritual, of the sheikh in a sufi order and absolute loyalty and love of *mürits* towards the sheikh, which was mentioned earlier. From the point of view of the dervishes, telling the story of the deeds of their sheikh and praising him provided dervishes some kind of spiritual taste and made them advanced in the way towards the God. It

was also a way of propaganda of their order to spread the miraculous deeds of their sheikh. This propaganda had two directions; one for the personal satisfaction of the dervishes in the inner cycle, and the other for gaining more adherents from the outer cycle. Furthermore, as mentioned above, these popular orders did not produce doctrinal works, which would define the principles and fundamental pillars of the 'way'. There are several reasons for this. In the personalities and acts of figures that were described in the *velayetnames*, sufi dervishes kept alive the fundamental principles and traditions of their order through centuries. Thus they are not simply legendary tales of some religious figures that were produced by fanatical adherents, but some kind of guidebooks for popular sufi orders that passed on their traditions and basic principles from generation to generation. At the end of Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi, for example, after narrating miraculous lives of Seyyit Ali Sultan and Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi, these two saints are presented as good examples and it was advised: "At that point how did these saints reach these stages (*makam*)? First of all, they did not eat anything forbidden by religion and did not lie. They never engaged in adultery. They never permit themselves to have worldly desires...."¹⁵ Although, this last face of *menakıbnames*, that is being a guidebook for the adherents of the order, particularly makes them valuable as a source for the history of such orders, there still exists serious problems with *menakıbnames* that decrease the reliability of historical information that is deduced from this kind of sources.

Problems of Utilization

The first problem emerges in determining the author and the date of compilation of the *velayetnames*. We have, unfortunately, only a few *velayetnames* whose authors

¹⁵ Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi, ed. Bedri Noyan, Ankara, 1999.

are known today. But for a great majority of them, the author is not mentioned or it is simply impossible to confirm the name mentioned as the author. The same problem is valid in determining the date of compilation. There is no date of compilation in most *velayetnames*. In order to determine the date, the best way for historians is to analyze language used in the text and, by comparing linguistic characteristics of the past centuries, to try to get an idea about the approximate date of compilation. Moreover, by comparing historical events and figures mentioned in the text with other sources it is also possible to reach a reasonable conclusion. As for the writers of *velayetnames*, if it is not clearly recorded in the *menakibname*, which is the most frequent case, the only way for the researcher is to pick the names in the *menakibname* and by searching in *tezkire* books, the catalogues in which writers and poets were recorded, to try to establish a logical hypothesis.

As for the date of the compilation of *Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli*, for example, historians have different opinions. Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı attributes it to the period between 1481 and 1501.¹⁶ However, Birge draws attention to the fact that although the influence of *Hurufism* on the Bektashi Order is known, we do not come across any hurufi element in the *Velayetname*. Thus, Birge concludes that the *Velayetname* should have been written before adherents of Fazlullah Astarabadi came Anatolia towards the end of the fourteenth century. He also emphasizes the lack of some ceremonies in the Bektashi Order, which were systematized and entered into the order by Balım Sultan, and takes this as a proof for the assumption that the *Velayetname* must have been written before Balım Sultan, the real founder of the Bektashi Order.¹⁷ The situation is not much different for other *velayetnames*. Two

¹⁶ Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı (ed.), *Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli*, pp. XXIV-XXV.

¹⁷ Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, p.50.

prototypes of them, *Kızıldeli (Seyyit Ali Sultan) Velayetnamesi* and *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi* will be analyzed in the next chapter.

The problem with *velayetnames* is not restricted only to the lack of clarity in the date of compilation and to the identity of the author. We have other problems concerning the contents. The most obvious of such problems is the anachronism, which applies for almost all of them. In the *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan (*Kızıldeli*), for instance, Seyyit Ali Sultan and his forty companions are described to have come to Anatolia to help Bayezid I, the fourth Ottoman sultan who reigned between 1389 and 1402. They then joined the conquests in the Balkans. According to the descriptions in the *velayetname*, these events seem to have taken place during the reigns of Orhan and Murat I. There are other examples of anachronism in our source. For example, at beginning of the narration Seyyit Ali Sultan and other *erenler* are described to have come first to the hospice of Hadji Bektash, got his approval and prayed for their holy mission.¹⁸ But we certainly know today that Hadji Bektash died in the second half of the thirteenth century, nearly a century earlier than the historical events mentioned in the *velayetname*. Such examples make historian think that what is told in the *velayetnames* is fictitious, thus unreliable. But is it really so? Is there any way to approach these sources that would make it possible for us to derive a logical and acceptable historical knowledge from the inconsistent flow of events told by them?

The answer should be partly ‘yes’. In spite of totally ignoring these sources by considering them as nothing more than a bulk of fiction fabricated by some dervishes, it could still give us some clues towards the windows of historical truth when looked at the events from the eyes of the contemporary dervishes.

¹⁸ See Bedri Noyan(ed.), *Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi*, p.80.

Remembering the essential place of supernatural deeds (*keramât*) in the mystic world, it would be easier to interpret their dismissive attitudes towards worldly ties such as time and space. The most famous *keramets* of sufis emerge usually as *bast-ı zaman* and *tayy-i mekân*¹⁹ in all sufi orders. Though still high degree of suspicion and rigorous criticism is needed, it is possible to lay the ground for discussion, which would eventually contribute to our historical knowledge.

Indeed, inconsistency in the texts of the *velayetnames* goes beyond the time confusion only. They are, before all, full of legendary figures having extraordinary powers and their supernatural acts. Again in the mystical frame this is predictable and no scholar considers this kind of events as real. Therefore, what a historian could do then is to put miraculous stories themselves aside and to attempt to analyze general characteristics of *keramet*; trying to see what theme is stressed in the story, identifying the places and people mentioned etc. He/she would then gather valuable information about that particular milieu, about the worldview of dervishes their beliefs and attitudes towards events and people, and about their lifestyle. It should be remembered, however, that a *velayetname* reflects the worldview and understanding of the compiler and of his time more than those of the heroes of the *velayetname*. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the *velayetnames* do not have reliable information about the historical figures mentioned in them. What is important here is that historian should see the contribution of the writer or compiler in the story told. Furthermore, he or she should also decompose the original truth and later additions to the story. Or he/she must be conscious of the fact that the rays of truth reach us

¹⁹ These terms has been used in Islamic Sufi literature with the meaning of “doing much more thing in a fairly limited time by enlarging it, and being in two or more places at the same instant”. The doctrinal background is as follows: if one person obstructs his worldly desires and deals with pray and thinking about the Great Creator (*ibâdet ve tefekkiür*) in all time, he would get closer to the God. While he passes stages on the path towards God he simultaneously gets rid of the restrictions of universal physical laws into which all ordinary people are confined.

through the semitransparent glass of compilers or even of the first hand narrators, the dervishes themselves.

Lastly, the wide spread symbolism in almost all *velayetnames* is well-known. The events and personalities are described by symbolic characters, which had certain meanings in the Turkish sufi tradition. Thus, only if one can understand the meaning of symbolic phrases and words used by contemporary *abdals*- i.e what did these symbols really mean for *abdals* in their own society?- he would be able to pick historical truths in the 'tale-field' of *velayetnames*.



II. TWO PROTOTYPES: ABDAL MUSA AND SEYYIT ALI SULTAN- TWO VELIS AND TWO VELAYETNAMES

A. ABDAL MUSA

Abdal Musa is considered as one of the most important saints of the Bektashi Order. He held the eleventh of twelve stages (*post*), which is *ayakci postu* (footservant stage), in the order. He is a saint who has been reminded as “*Anadolu’nun gözcüsü Abdal Musa Sultan*” (the watchman of Anatolia Sultan Abdal Musa) in the Bektashi literature. *Alawi* society, who performs religious ceremonies (*cem*) in Friday nights in winters and immolates in the name of Abdal Musa even today shows great respect to Abdal Musa.¹ In the *Bektashi-Alawi* literature there are many *nefes*es (poems) in which he is praised and mentioned as a great saint. Today there is a tomb belongs to him in a *tekke* (hospice), which is called by his name and is said to have been founded by himself in Elmalı. The Tekke of Abdal Musa is cons’dered as one of the four biggest *tekkes* of Bektashis.

Judging from its respectful position in the eyes of the present day *Alawi-Bektashis*, one thinks that either Abdal Musa himself or the tradition established around his name must have had a noteworthy place in the history of Turkish heterodoxy particularly in Western Anatolia. However there are only few sources of information about him, like the short passages in early sources such as *Ashikpashazade*, *Şakayık-ı Numaniye*, *Tacü’t-Tevarih*, *Güldeste* about him. On the

¹ Bedri Noyan, “Abdal Musa Hakkında”, *Abdal Musa Sultan ve Velayetnamesi*, ed. Adil Ali Atalay, Istanbul, 1997, p. 35.

other hand we possess a short *velayetname* dedicated to Abdal Musa. Velayetname of Kaygusuz Abdal, who is the most prominent disciple of him, also provides some valuable information about Abdal Musa. Moreover, we have archival records about the Tekke of Abdal Musa including the possessions of the *vakf* (religious endowment) that was later founded around the *tekke*. Lastly, Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* contains a passage about Abdal Musa and this *tekke*.

To build a sound history of Abdal Musa on this limited material is not an easy job and needs great care. Among modern historians, Fuat Köprülü was the first who attempted to do that and wrote a relatively comprehensive article about Abdal Musa.² In this article, Köprülü used above-mentioned sources except for the Velayetname of Abdal Musa, which has yet to be discovered. However, concluded from his analysis of the sources that there should be a *velayetname* about Abdal Musa. Despite this, Köprülü's article is still the best study on the subject; it provides us with a frame that cannot be enlarged until the discovery of new sources. Putting aside some nonscholarly works, Abdurrahman Güzel's study on the Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi³ deserves a special mention here. In his study, Güzel did not only publish the *velayetname* but he also provides us with a complete analysis of it, attempting to draw legendary and historical picture of Abdal Musa. Furthermore, Güzel published the Velayetname of Kaygusuz Abdal⁴, which gives us, as mentioned above, some information about Abdal Musa. Apart from these, one should also mention the passages in Birge⁵ and Melikoff⁶ relating to Abdal Musa. But they do not go beyond the known frame. Lastly, we have some works dealing with the Tekke of Abdal

² Fuat Köprülü, "Abdal Musa", *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi*, V.I.

³ Abdurrahman Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, Ankara, 1999.

⁴ Abdurrahman Güzel, *Kaygusuz Abdal Menakibnamesi*, Ankara, 1999.

⁵ Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, pp. 46,51,55.

⁶ Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş Efsanesinden Gerçeğe*, pp. 279-284.

Musa such as Ahmet Refik⁷, Mustafa Ugurlu⁸, İlhan Akçay⁹, and Sinasi Tekindag¹⁰, which were mainly based on archival sources. Relying mainly on these works I will attempt to present a general picture of Abdal Musa's historical life. But before doing this, it would be useful to mention briefly about his *velayetname*.

The Velayetname of Abdal Musa

Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi is the shortest *velayetname* among known *velayetnames* today. We have few copies of this *velayetname*. Abdurrahman Güzel possesses one original copy in his private library. This text is composed of 42 pages and at the end of it there is a note that gives the date of the copy and the name of the copier (*mustensih*). According to this note it was written in 1630 by a certain Veli Baba. This manuscript constitutes the main text used in this study. Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergun has published another copy of the *velayetname*.¹¹ Ergun says that he obtained this copy from Naci Kum in Isparta. The copier of this text is again Veli Baba, but the date of the copy is not recorded. Furthermore, Adil Ali Atalay also published a book, *Abdal Musa Sultan ve Velayetnamesi*¹², which was based on the copy of Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergun. This book includes the famous article of Köprülü on the topic, an article of Bedri Noyan, and some other notes.

As for the date of compilation and the name of the author, there is unfortunately no record in any of these copies. Linguistic evidence however suggests that the original *velayetname* must have been written either in the fifteenth or in the

⁷ Ahmet Refik, "Fatih Zamanında Teke İli", *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası*, 2(79).

⁸ Muatafa Ugurlu, "Abdal Musa Zaviyesi Vakıfları", *Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, V.I Ankara, 1985.

⁹ İlhan Akçay, "Abdal Musa Tekkesi", VII. *Türk Tarih Kongresi*, pp. 360-373.

¹⁰ Sinasi Tekindağ, "Teke Eli ve Teke Oğulları" in *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, sayı 78, İstanbul, 1977.

¹¹ Sadeddin Nüzhet Ergun, *Türk Şâirleri Ansiklopedisi* V.I, pp. 166-169.

¹² Adil Ali Atalay, *Abdal Musa Sultan ve Velayetnamesi*, İstanbul, 1997.

sixteenth century.¹³ Considering the details about place names and historical figures, the author must have lived in the fifteenth century, closer to the lifetime of Abdal Musa rather than sixteenth century. Furthermore, nonexistence of *hurufi* influence in the *velayetname*, which spread in Western Anatolia among heterodox groups especially after the second half of the fifteenth century and heavily influenced the doctrine of the Bektashi Order, further supports this assumption. *Velayetname* introduces Abdal Musa from its very beginning as a *halife* of Hadji Bektash. In addition, the legend of Abdal Musa spread and lived among Bektashi dervishes. So, if the author was a Bektashi dervish from the sixteenth century, he would inevitably mingle the *keramets* and teachings of Abdal Musa with the characteristics of *hurufi* doctrine.

Place names mentioned in the *velayetname* are Teke, Elmalı, Finike, Tekke village, Aydın, and Denizli. The topographic descriptions in the *velayetname* are fairly similar to the present day topography of the regions. As for the historical figures mentioned in the *velayetname*, when stripped off from the legendary exaggerations and supernatural acts of Abdal Musa, these figures are not described differently from their ordinary pictures known from other sources. Güzel gives historical analysis of these figures.¹⁴

The subject of the *velayetname* is about to the miraculous acts of Abdal Musa. At the very beginning Hadji Bektash's divine announcement reveals Abdal Musa as his *halife*. Then comes the narration of an event that relates to the relation between Abdal Musa and 'infidel' sailors. According to the *velayetname*, the relationship between Abdal Musa and the Bey of Teke was not friendly. Negative

¹³ Ocak, *Bektaşî Menakıbnamelerinde İslam Öncesi İnanç Motifleri*.10; Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, p.61.

¹⁴ See Güzel, *Velayetname*, pp.84-99.

attitude of the Bey of Teke to Abdal Musa and his *abdals* is described in the following pages. But, Abdal Musa expectedly won the struggle with his *keramets* and the Bey of Teke was killed in a mysterious way.

Here at this point, I would like to draw attention mainly to two parts of the *velayetname*. One relates to famous Ghazi Umur Bey and the other to another important Bektashi saint, Seyyit Ali Sultan. The summary of the passage relating to Ghazi Umur Beg will be given below. In this legendary narration, as I will examine in the following chapter, one can pick certain historical evidence that could shed light on the relationship between *Gaziyan-ı Rum* and *Abdalan-ı Rum*¹⁵. On the other hand, though hidden behind the clouds of legendary tales, there is valuable information about Seyyit Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli), which is not available in any of the other sources, in the same *velayetname*. As will be discussed in the related section, although there has been a *vakf* and *tekke* in the name of Kızıldeli in Dimetoka, existence of which was proved by Ottoman archival documents since the time of Mehmed I, and he is said to have played an important role in the conquest and Islamization of the Balkans, we have very limited sources about Seyyit Ali Sultan. The *velayetname* of Abdal Musa is thus important in determining the history of Seyyit Ali Sultan as well.

Historical Life of Abdal Musa

In the very beginning of the *Velayetname*, Abdal Musa is introduced as a *halife* of Hadji Bektash. It is written from the mouth of Hacı Bektash: “ Oh saints, let me born

¹⁵ These terms are borrowed from Ashikpashazade. In a passage mentioning Hadji Bektash, Ashikpashazade divides the immigrant people in the Western Anatolia into four groups: 1) *Gaziyan-ı Rum*, 2) *Ahiyan-ı Rum*, 3) *Abdalan-ı Rum*, 4) *Bacıyan-ı Rum*. (See Ashikpashazade, *tevarih*, p.237). These groups were first analyzed by Köprülü. (See *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 88-110). After him scholars inclined to discuss contemporary society in terms of this classification. Indeed, the principal actors of my topic in this study correspond to the group described as “Abdalan-ı Rum” by Ashikpashazade.

in Gencali as a young moon, and let my name be Abdal Musa. Whoever wants me will find me in him". According to *velayetname* Abdal Musa was born just after the death of Hadji Bektash.¹⁶ The copy of the *velayetname* that constitutes the main text for this study was written in 1630 by a certain Veli Baba. But date of the first compilation is not known. Güzel argues that the tradition of Abdal Musa must have emerged in the fifteenth century. Ocak, by analyzing the linguistic evidence, agrees with Güzel. Thus, if accepted that this *velayetname* was first compiled in the fifteenth century, one can safely conclude from the above expression in the *velayetname* that in the fifteenth century Abdal Musa had already been accepted as one of the most prominent *halifes* of Hadji Bektash. Balım Sultan was yet to establish the final structure of the Bektashi order.

On the other hand, if one trusts Ashikpashazade, Abdal Musa was certainly a disciple of Hadji Bektash. He records that Hadji Bektash was an ascetic and passionate (*budala*) saint and was far away from being a sheikh. His only adherent was a woman, Hatun Ana. According to Ashikpashazade, Hadji Bektash passed his divine secrets onto Hatun Ana. When Abdal Musa became the *mürîd* of Hatun Ana, he also obtained these secrets. Ashikpashazade also mentions the origin of the relation between Bektashis and the Janissary corp. It seems that Abdal Musa fought in the army of Orhan in the conquest of Bursa. He says: "There was a dervish called Abdal Musa who was the *muhib* (adherent) of Hatun Ana. The reign of Orhan came and he joined Ghazas". During these ghazas Abdal Musa joined the Janissaries. Upon his return to his townsmen with a hat that he obtained from the Janissaries, he was asked what it was. He answered: "This is called *elif tac*". According to Ashikpashazade, this is the origin of the 'Bektashi hat'. Ashikpashazade also adds

¹⁶ *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, ed. Abdurrahman Guzel, p. 140.

that whoever argues that there was a relationship between Hadji Bektash and *Al-i Osman* (the Ottoman Dynasty) he is liar.¹⁷ Ashikpashazade gives no more information about Abdal Musa.

In the *velayetname*, Abdal Musa's sheikh was given as Hacım Sultan¹⁸, who himself was a *halife* of Hacı Bektash.¹⁹ We also come across records in *Şakayık* and *Güldeste* about Abdal Musa. According to *Şakayık*, Abdal Musa was a *Yesevi Halife* and joined the conquest of Bursa with famous Geyikli Baba, the name deriving from his control over wild stags. *Şakayık* also records the following story about the relation between Geyikli Baba and Abdal Musa: Abdal Musa sent a piece of cotton with a fire in it to Geyikli Baba. Geyikli Baba, in return, sent a cup of stag milk to Abdal Musa. His comment was that the control of wild animals is harder than the control of fire in cotton. That is why, Geyikli Baba was at a higher stage.²⁰ Köprülü says that Abdal Musa did not need to enter into a competition with Geyikli Baba in showing *keramet*. According to him, this passage in *Şakayık* and some other sources such as *Tacü't-Tevârih*, which was possibly derived from *Şakayık*, must have been later addition from Bektashi *menakibnames*.²¹ Abdurrahman Güzel, however, does not agree with Köprülü on this and argues that there is no need to deny this story.²² Whatever the case may have been, it seems certain that Abdal Musa and Geyikli Baba were contemporary to each other and both were present in the conquest of Bursa.

¹⁷ See Aşıkpaşazade, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p.238.

¹⁸ He is known as an outstanding *halife* of Hadji Bektash Veli in Alawi-Bektashi tradition. We have a *velayetname* belonging to him. In this *velayetname*, Hacım Sultan is introduced as a companion and relative of Hadji Bektash, both of whom were sent from Khorasan to Anatolia by Hoca Ahmet Yesevi. See Mustafa Erbay, ed., *Kolu Açık Hacım Sultan Velayetnamesi* Ankara, 1993.

¹⁹ At the end of the *velayetname* there is a poem of Abdal Musa in which we see following verse:

“Yedi deniz bizim keşkölümüzde
Hacım umman oldu biz ol göldenüz”

See *Velayetname* p. 152.

²⁰ Mecdi, *Şakayık Tercümesi* V.I, pp. 33-34.

²¹ Köprülü, “Abdal Musa”

²² Güzel, *Abdal Musa Menakibnamesi* p. 16.

As for the birthplace of Abdal Musa, *Belig* reports him among forty saints that came from Buhara. He also mentions Abdal Musa's participation in the conquest of Bursa.²³ Güzel deduces from a verse in the *velayetname* that Abdal Musa in fact came from Hoy, a city in Azerbaijan.²⁴ If this is true, Abdal Musa and Geyikli Baba were not only contemporary to each other, but they were also fellow countrymen, since Geyikli Baba's birthplace is also given as *Hoy* in *Tacü't-Tevarih*.²⁵

When we combine all these sources, one can conclude that Abdal Musa was a sufi dervish from *Horasan Erenleri*²⁶, and was born in the closing years of the thirteenth century in Hoy, and was one of the *halifes* of Hadji Bektash Veli. In the first half of his life he lived in the Ottoman territories and preached the fame of his sheikh Hadji Bektash. He was not only an *abdal*, but was also a ghazi, and played a significant role in the conquest of Bursa, which is mentioned in chronicles of the following century. Therefore, it would be best to describe him as "ghazi-dervish" of the time. As a ghazi, participating ghaza raids along with warriors, he preached Hadji Bektash tradition and his *keramets* among ghazis. His activities among early Ottoman warriors must have provided the ground for the Bektashi Order to be the official order of the Janissary corp.²⁷

However, Abdal Musa did not live in the Ottoman territories all his life. Towards the middle of the fourteenth century he moved south, passing through Aydın, Denizli, Yatağan, and Finike he came to Tekke/Elmalı, where he founded his *tekke* and had his disciples. The *velayetname* records some events, which are mingled with legendary tales that took place in several parts of Western Anatolia and Teke

²³ Bursa'lı Belig İsmail, *Güldeste-i Riyaz-i İrfan*, Bursa, 1302, p.213.

²⁴ Güzel, *Velayetname*, p.16.

²⁵ Hoca Saadettin, *Tacü't-tevarih*, V.II, İstanbul, 1279, p.406.

²⁶ The term used in almost all contemporary sources referring to dervishes who belonged to Khorasan sufi tradition.

²⁷ See, Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", p. 65.

region. The most remarkable of these events is perhaps his meeting with Umur Ghazi, the *bey* of Aydınoğulları who engaged vigorous naval expeditions in Aegean Sea in the first half of the fourteenth century. According to the *velayetname*, Abdal Musa with his disciples came to a coastal region and he said his disciples that a group of ghazi would come soon and that they should cook a meal for them. They prepared a cauldron of meal and, soon after, forty thousand ghazis appeared from the sea. First, the ghazis were astonished about the amount of meal and said it was not enough. But when they started to eat they saw that the amount of food remained the same. Then their leader Ghazi Umur Bey approached Abdal Musa, asking him to accept them as his disciples (*mürit*). Abdal Musa, consequently, put a red hat (*börk*) on his head and gave him the title of “ghazi”.²⁸ If Abdal Musa really met Umur Beg, he must have passed through western coast before 1348, the year of the death of Umur Beg. If so, he must have reached Teke region around the middle of fourteenth century.

One other important source about Abdal Musa is *Velayetname* of Kaygusuz Abdal. Kaygusuz Abdal was the most famous student (*talebe*) of Abdal Musa. His original name was Alaaddin Gaybi and he was the son of the Bey of Alaiye. Long passages in the beginning of Kaygusuz Abdal *Velayetnamesi* explain how he became the *mürit* of Abdal Musa²⁹. The *velayetname* of Abdal Musa also mentions Gaybi (Kaygusuz Abdal) as a *mürit* of Abdal Musa. Some events concerning the relations

²⁸ Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, p. 148.

²⁹ According to the legend, once Alaaddin Gaybi, the son of the Bey of Alaiye, went to hunting. In the forest he saw a beautiful stag and put his arrow to his bow. Gaybi shot the stag but it did not die. The stag began to run away and Gaybi followed him until it entered into a hospice. Gaybi came to the gate of hospice and said to dervishes ‘there was a wounded stag here, it was my hunt, give me it’. But dervishes denied his request and said they had not seen any stag around. At the same time Abdal Musa was listening the conversation from inner site. He wanted Gaybi in and said to him: “ can you recognize your arrow if you would see?”. Gaybi said: ‘of course’. Then he held on his shoulder and showed the arrow. At that instant Gaybi kissed Abdal Musa’s foots and appealed to Abdal Musa to accept him as a *mürit*. From then after Gaybi became Abdal Musa’s disciple and later took on the nickname “Kaygusuz”. See Güzel, *Kaygusuz Abdal Menakibnamesi*, pp.90-108.

between Abdal Musa and Teke, Alaiye Beys are recorded in both *velayetnames* and show a great degree of similarity. It can be deduced from these accounts that, after a long life with recruiting and training dervishes in his *tekke*, Abdal Musa died either towards the end of the fourteenth century or in the early years of the fifteenth century in Elmalı. Güzel dates it to a time between 1380 and 1410.³⁰ Today the tomb and the *tekke* of Abdal Musa are still open to visitors in the village of Tekke of Elmalı. However, some sources such as *Güldeste* and Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* record a tomb in Bursa, arguably belonging to Abdal Musa. Some historians, therefore, argue that there were two Abdal Musas. But, as Köprülü explained, the presence of two tombs should be explained by the Turkish *sufi* tradition that tends to produce two or more tombs for a popular sheikh in different parts of Anatolia.³¹

Evliya Celebi describes the *tekke* of Abdal Musa as follows:

Here is a village with one hundred households...The people of this village do not pay any taxes. But it is their job to repair the *tekke* and to meet the needs of dervishes living in that *tekke*. In the south wind of *tekke* there is the grave of Adal Musa... He is from Khorasan and from *Fukara-i Hadji Bektash* (the adherents of Hadji Bektash)...More than three hundred dervishes live in that *tekke*. They are *ehl-i sunnet* (orthodox Muslim). There are forty dervishes serving in the kitchen of the *tekke*... there is a place to perform *namaz*, which is covered with a dome.... There are always visitors here. The kitchen fire has been kept alive ever since the foundation of the *tekke*... there are more than ten thousand sheep, one thousand water buffalo, ten *katar* camels, seven *katar* mules, more than one thousand cows, seven mills, vineyards, gardens, and groves belonging to this *tekke*.³²

It seems from the description of Evliya Celebi that the Tekke of Abdal Musa had rich possessions at the time of his visit. Süleyman Fikri Erten mentions the *tekke* in the early twentieth century in his work *Antalya Livası Tarihi*: “The Tomb of Abdal Musa is in the village Tekke, which is in the south of Elmalı. However there is no inscription on it and there is no record about it in the *Evkaf* (endowments)

³⁰ Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, p.50.

³¹ Köprülü, “Abdal Musa”, Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*.

³² Evliya Çelebi, *Seyahatname*, V.IX, p. 274.

office.³³ The oldest record, that is known today about the Tekke of Abdal Musa was published by Ahmet Refik: “ The Tekke of Abdal Musa, which is from the subjects (*tevabiin*) of Finike, is not found in the register. But it has been endowment since the ancient days. At that time, the time of Mehmet II, with the approval of our *padişah* (emperor) Saki Mehmet holds its belongings”³⁴. From later periods of the Ottoman Empire, there are many archival records about the Tekke of Abdal Musa, which gives the amount of possessions of the *tekke* and number of dervishes living in it.³⁵

B. SEYYIT ALI SULTAN (KIZILDELI)

Seyyit Ali Sultan is considered one of the great saints in the Bektashi circles. He is also called as ‘*Kızıldeli*’, with the name of the river near which he founded his hospice. Ocak points out that his hospice, which is called as ‘*Kızıldeli Tekkesi*’, in Dimetoka is respected as one of the four important tekkes of Bektashis.³⁶ Bedri Noyan rates this tekke among the first five.³⁷ There are many *nefes* praising the glory of Seyyit Ali Sultan in the Bektashi literature.³⁸ He held the second of the traditional

³³ Süleyman Fikri Erten, *Antalya Livasi Tarihi, V.I*, Istanbul, 1338-1340, p.193.

³⁴ Ahmet Refik, “Fatih Zamanında Teke İli”, *TTEM*, 2(79), Istanbul, 1340. p.73.

³⁵ For some of those records see Güzel, *Velayetname*, pp.156-194.

³⁶ Ocak, *İslam Öncesi İnanç Motifleri*, p. 13

³⁷ Bedri Noyan (ed.), *Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi*, Ankara, 1999, p.13.

³⁸ Among them the following verses of Virani, famous Bektashi poet, for example shows how Seyyit Ali Sultan has been praised in the Bektashi world:

Biz Urum abdalıyız serdarımız Kızıldeli
Çeşmimizde şüle-i envarımız Kızıldeli
Bülbül-ü şeyda biziz, gülzarımız Kızıldeli.
Dinimiz, imanımız, ikrarımız Kızıldeli.
Nur-u Ahmed, Hayder-i Kerrarımız Kızıldeli.
Kande baksak dembedem didarımız Kızıldeli.

.....
(see Noyan, *Seyyit Ali Sultan Velayetnamesi*, p. 7)

twelve stages (*post*) of Bektashis, which is *aşçı postu* (the cook stage)³⁹. He is also praised as “ *Rum ilinin Gözcüsü Seyyit Ali Sultan*” (the watcher of Rumeli) in Bektashi *gülbanks*. Anyhow, it is certain that he has been a significant figure in the Bektashi Order and in heterodox milieu since at least the sixteenth century. His personality still has great respect in Alawi-Bektashi society.

Despite his important place in the Bektashi Order, we have very limited historical sources about him: some archival records concerning his *tekke* and two *velayetnames*. While the fourteenth century chroniclers such as Ashikpashazade, Oruç, Neşri, and Anonim Tevarih, remain silent about him, we have records in Ottoman *Tahrir* registers and in a file called *Musa Çelebi Dosyası*, which is housed in *İstanbul Başbakanlık Arşivi*; this is about the *tekke* founded by him. There also exist two *velayetnames* that are known today, both containing information about Seyyit Ali Sultan. One of them is directly attributed to him and explains how Rumeli is conquered by Forty Heroes who had come from Khorasan following the divine order of prophet Muhammad given in a dream. In this *velayetname* Seyyit Ali Sultan is depicted as a warrior-saint who used his divine power to conquer lands from ‘infidels’ to broaden the realm of true religion Islam. This constitutes an excellent prototype of ghazi-dervishes who were actively involved in early Ottoman expansion towards Byzantine lands.⁴⁰

The *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan seems, at first sight, having no reliable historical information due mainly to the obvious anachronisms that one sees throughout the work. I will analyze this below. But, when discussed in a larger frame and compared with the course of events accounted in the chronicles, it becomes clear

³⁹ See Birge, *The Bektashi Order*, p. 178; Melikoff, *Hacı Bektaş*, p. 259.

⁴⁰ See Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*.

that it was not a fiction at all. Many events described in the *velayetname* is found in these sources in a very similar fashion.

The second *velayetname* that contains information about Seyyit Ali Sultan is that of Abdal Musa. This *velayetname* mentions Seyyit Ali Sultan twice and presents him as a disciple of Abdal Musa. When put together the depiction in this *velayetname*, the narration of Seyyit Ali Sultan *Velayetnamesi*, and the archival records about the *tekke* and compared with the process of the conquest of Rumeli as described in chronicles, it is possible to draw a vague picture of Seyyit Ali Sultan, which I will attempt below.

But before that, I would like to draw attention to modern works that devote some pages to Seyyit Ali Sultan. As mentioned earlier, Seyyit Ali Sultan went unnoticed in the chronicles. Among modern scholars it was Birge who first paid attention to Seyyit Ali Sultan in his work on the Bektashi Order.⁴¹ Ömer Lütfi Barkan, using two *tahrir* registers referred to the *tekke* of *Kızıldeli* in his famous article “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”⁴². Later Tayyib Gökbilgin published some archival sources in his book *Edirne ve Paşa Livası*.⁴³ Suraiya Faroqhi also published an article about the economic conditions of *Kızıldeli Tekke* in later periods.⁴⁴

The most comprehensive study belongs arguably to Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr. In his article “*Osmanlı Tahrir Defterlerinde Seyyit Ali Sultan: Heterodox İslam'ın Trakya'ya Yerleşmesi*”⁴⁵ she analyzed eight *tahrir* registers starting from the *tahrir* of Mehmet II in 1456 and an archival file named as ‘*Musa Çelebi dosyası*’.

⁴¹ Birge, *The Bektashi Order*.

⁴² See Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler. İstila Devrinin Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler” in *VD*, II, 1942, pp. 279-386.

⁴³ Gökbilgin, *Edirne*, pp. 183-187.

⁴⁴ Suraiya Faroqhi, “Agricultural Activities in a Bektashi Center: The Tekke of Kızıl Deli, 1750-1830”, *SF*, 35, 1976, pp. 69-96.

⁴⁵ Irene Beldiceanu-Steinherr, “Osmanlı Tahrir Defterlerinde Seyyit Ali Sultan: Heterodox İslam'ın Trakya'ya Yerleşmesi”, *Sol Kol: Osmanlı Egemenliğinde Via Egnatia* İstanbul, 1999, pp. 50- 72.

Beldiceanu compares and analyses the information that the *tahrir* registers provide about the *Tekke* of Kızıldeli and attempts to trace the historical development of the legend of Seyyit Ali Sultan, reaching some conclusions about his historical personality. To add to the list, one should also mention the remarks by Bedri Noyan, who himself was a Bektashi *dede*, in his publication of the *velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan.⁴⁶

The Velayetname of Seyyit Ali Sultan (Kızıldeli)

As already mentioned, a scholarly publication of the *velayetname* is still to come. Bedri Noyan's work contains the transcription of the text and an introduction. It is based on a copy of the *velayetname* that he obtained from Ali Naci Baykal, a *mürşit* of him. There are in fact few copies of this *velayetname*. Apart from that of Noyan, there exist a copy in *Cebeci Halk Kütüphanesi*, with number 1189. Linguistic evidence reveals that the oldest copy is likely to be the text that is available in the *Tekke of Kaygusuz Abdal* near Cairo; this was copied and used by Birge. There is also a copy in the *Tekke* of Hadji Bektash. I will use Noyan's copy in my study since it is relatively complete among these copies and easily accessible.

The author of the *velayetname* is not certain. By considering a name exists in a poet in the *velayetname* its author is supposed to be *Cezbi*. But it is not impossible that this name might be a later addition into the text. Linguistic character of the text resembles the fifteenth century or the first half of the sixteenth century⁴⁷. The author uses phrases as "the narrators says as following", which shows that he was not a direct observer or a participant of the events that he presents. When taken together with the death of Seyyit Ali Sultan, which was definitely not before the first

⁴⁶ Noyan, *Velayetname*

⁴⁷ Ocak, *İslam Öncesi İnanç Motifleri*, p.13.

decade of the fifteenth century⁴⁸, one can argue that the author lived, at least, after the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

There appears to be a substantial difference between the Cairo copy that Birge used and other copies. The events are explained in all copies but the Cairo copy as occurred during the reign of Beyazid I between 1389 and 1402. In the Cairo copy, the events are placed in the reign of Orhan between 1326 and 1362. But, besides this significant difference in the names of sultans, the texts are more or less the same. When the historical names and the events that are reported in the *velayetname* are taken into consideration, which are the figures and events of the time of Orhan, one would reasonably conclude that the *velayetname* tells us the events of the reign of Orhan.

However, the *velayetname* poses some serious problems as a historical source. Seyyit Ali Sultan and his forty companions were, according to the *velayetname*, living in their hospice devoted themselves to praying in Khorasan. On the other side, the Ottoman Sultan (Orhan according to the copy of Birge, Beyazid I according to other copies) was embedded into thoughts. He was trying to find ways to conquer Rumeli, but could not find any reasonable way to achieve his goal. Both sides saw prophet Muhammad in their dream who had directed them towards the conquest of Rumeli. Seyyit Ali and his forty companions came to Anatolia and first went, again in accordance with prophet's direction, to the hospice of Hadji Bektash to get his approval. Hadji Bektash accepted them and, by appointing Seyyit Ali sultan as the leader of the Forty Heroes, sent them to the Ottoman sultan.

⁴⁸ In an archival register it is recorded that Seyyit Ali Sultan achieved a vakf from Beyazid I in the year of 804 (11 August 1401- 31 July 1402). See *TT* 470, p.625. This shows that he was alive in 1401-1402.

Then they came to the sultan (Orhan or Beyazid I). Following the plan that they agreed on, they conquered Gallipoli, İpsala, Dimetoka, Edirne, Şumnu, Silistre, and some other fortresses in the Balkans. When compared with the descriptions by the chroniclers, the events told by the *velayetname* are very similar to the conquests that occurred during the reign of Orhan and Murat I. To give an example, the *velayetname* reports the death of Suleyman Ghazi, the son of Orhan, as occurred after the conquest of Bolayır and this conforms with the accounts of the chroniclers but only difference being the cause of his death.⁴⁹ We know the date of the death of Suleyman, which was 1357. One can then place Seyyit Ali Sultan and his companions' activities roughly in the second half of the fourteenth century, the end of the reign of Orhan and the reign of Murat.

Consequently, the sultan that they helped in the conquest of Rumeli could not be Bayezid I. So the Cairo copy must be the original one and as Beldiceanu points out the replacement of Orhan with Bayezid I must be a misinterpretation of the *tahrir* register mentioned above, in which Seyyit Ali Sultan is reported to be given a *vakf* by Beyazid I.⁵⁰ But still there is another problem. We certainly know that Hadji Bektash died in the second half of the thirteenth century, which means that Hadji Bektash was not alive when Seyyit Ali Sultan and his companions came to Anatolia. So how could they meet Hadji Bektash? If this was not a later addition of Bektashi dervishes, to praise their patron saint, the only possible explanation might be to look at the doctrine of the *bast-ı zaman*⁵¹ prevailed in dervish milieu. According to this belief, it would be possible to go beyond the limits of the secular life if they could advance enough in the path towards God. For a dervish believing in

⁴⁹ See Ashikpashazade, *Tevarih*, p. 126; Nesri, *Kitab-ı Cihannuma*, V.I, eds. Faik Reşit Unat and Mehmed A. Köymen, Ankara, 1995, p. 187. Oruç, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Nihal Atsız, p. 38; F. Giese (ed.), *Anonim. Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, trs. Nihat Azamat, Istanbul, 1992, p.19.

⁵⁰ Beldiceanu, p.62.

⁵¹ See "Doctrines and Beliefs" in this study.

this doctrine, it was not totally absurd to accept that *evliyas* (saints) from different time periods could meet.

In addition, when excluded some supernatural powers that Seyyit Ali Sultan and Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi are said to have performed in the conquest of fortresses⁵², the rest of the narrative appears to be quite reliable. Compared with the chronicles, the events reported in the *velayetname* show great similarity. The primary difference observed relates to heroes. The *velayetname* stresses the role of saints while chroniclers tend to connect all victories to the dynasty in the conquest of Rumeli.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to a distinct feature of this *velayetname*. When considered the intents and the manner, the *velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan resembles rather historical romances (*destan*).⁵³ The heroes, that are Seyyit Ali Sultan and his companions who are supposed to be saints, fight in battlefields, conquer fortresses, give fear into the hearts of ‘infidels’, and finally convert ‘infidels’ by force. During the conquest of the Fortress of Murtad, for instance, the fight of Tahir, one of these forty heroes, with an infidel is told. Tahir hits the infidel and made him laid down. He then sits down on the chest of the infidel and invites him to the true religion, Islam. Upon the infidel’s acceptance and his conversion to Islam Tahir frees him.⁵⁴ These types of events are frequent in the *velayetname*. What this particular story implies is that if this infidel did not accept to change religion, our warrior dervish would kill him with no hesitation. The heroic characteristic of the *velayetname* makes it resemble *Saltukname*, *Battalname*, and *Danismendname*, which are dedicated to the heroic life of warriors.

⁵² The supernatural power (*keramet*) was seen as one of the significant signs of being *veli* among sufis. Because of that one should see that kind of narration as normal when studying of a text, which was circulating among dervishes and was being read as guide-book.

⁵³ See “Velayetnames as a Source for History” in this study.

⁵⁴ See Noyan, *Velayetname*, p.95.

Historical Life of Seyyit Ali Sultan

As already mentioned above, it is really difficult to determine the historical life of Seyyit Ali Sultan, which is hidden behind dense clouds of legends. Any attempt to draw the picture of real life of Kızıldeli cannot go beyond a loose frame, in which fairly large spectrum of possibilities is still valid. With the material at hand today, it seems that one cannot write the life story of Seyyit Ali Sultan in a certain degree of clarity. What will be attempted to do below is, then, to establish as clear picture of this saint-patron as possible within these limits.

Bedri Noyan gives the birth and death dates of Seyyit Ali Sultan as 1310 and 1402 respectively. He also says that he was from *Horasan Erenleri* and his father was Seyyit Hüseyin Ata.⁵⁵ Although Noyan does not specify his source, his proposal about Seyyit Ali's date of birth appears to be reasonable. As mentioned above, it is certain that he was given a *vakf* by Bayezid I in return for his performance in the conquest of the Balkans. So he must have died sometime after 1402. He is described in the *velayetname* of Abdal Musa as a disciple of Abdal Musa and was present at the meeting with Umur Ghazi. Kızıldeli joined the campaign of Umur Ghazi following the order of his sheikh Abdal Musa.⁵⁶ It is certain that Umur Ghazi was killed in 1348 in a war with papal army. If we rely on the *velayetname*, towards the middle of the fourteenth century Seyyit Ali Sultan was a disciple of Abdal Musa. So during this time his age can be supposed as something between 25 and 45. Then his date of birth must be somewhere in the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

As for the tradition developed around his name, he was a dervish from Khorasan tradition (*horasan erenleri*). It does not necessarily mean that he came from Khorasan. Although this possibility is valid, he might well have been from

⁵⁵ Noyan, *Velayetname*, p.3.

⁵⁶ Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, pp. 148-149.

somewhere else. The tradition tells us that he came to Anatolia from Khorasan.⁵⁷ What important here, however, is the time of his coming to the Ottoman territory and the kind of activities he involved in there.

If we follow the *velayetname*, his coming to the Ottoman land must have been around the middle of the fourteenth century. Because they came to Anatolia in direct connection to the mission of the conquest of Rumeli, which started in 1352. On the other hand, we have two passages in the *Velayetname* of Abdal Musa that might shed light on the issue. According to these passages Abdal Musa sends him with forty companions to the *Tekke* of Hadji Bektash with the mission that he would repair and upkeep the *tekke* and the tomb of Hadji Bektash. He went to the *tekke* and completed his mission. Here, Hadji Bektash is mentioned as dead and Kızıldeli met Sarı İsmail, a halife of Hadji Bektash.

Velayetname of Abdal Musa also reports the meeting of Abdal Musa with Umur Ghazi and here we once more see Seyyit Ali Sultan. Abdal Musa gives a 'wooden sword' and sends him with Umur Ghazi to conquer Rumeli. Abdal Musa says to Seyyit Ali Sultan and Umur Ghazi: "Now go directly to *Boğaz Hisarı*. Surrender it, you will take it. After conquering Boğaz Hisarı, I gave you *Rumeli*. Let nobody stand on your way."⁵⁸ In the rest of the *velayetname* we do not see Seyyit Ali Sultan. In the end, Abdal Musa sends his prominent disciples to several places. Though the *velayetname* mentions names of some *halifes*, including Gaybi (Kaygusuz Abdal), we do not see Kızıldeli among them⁵⁹. One interpretation might be that Abdal Musa must have left Seyyit Ali Sultan in the campaign of Umur Ghazi.

⁵⁷ Noyan, *Velayetname*, p.79.

⁵⁸ Güzel, *Velayetname*, p.149.

⁵⁹ Güzel, *Velayetname*, pp.151-152.

These two passages show striking conformity with the narration of the *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan. First of all, both *velayetnames* note Kızıldeli's connection with Hadji Bektash, though former gives it in an anachronistic way. As I have mentioned earlier, this can be seen another example of the declaration of faithfulness to the Hadji Bektash tradition. From that point of view, both *velayetnames* incline to introduce Seyyit Ali Sultan as a dervish loyal to Hadji Bektash.

Some archival evidence contributes further to the discussion. In Musa Çelebi Dosyası, there is a document dated Gurre-i Rebiyülahir 1024 (30 April 1615), which includes the following phrase: "*Karye-i Büyükviran ma'a Babayi cemaat-i Kızıl Divane Sultan*".⁶⁰ The village of Büyükviran mentioned here, as recorded in all other *tahrir* registers, is in fact the village where the tomb of Seyyit Ali Sultan is situated. But the striking word in that phrase is "Babai", which refers to the famous Turkoman sheikh Baba Ilyas.⁶¹ As well-known, Baba Ilyas was killed at the end of the revolt and his disciples who managed to escape from Seljukid forces fled to Western Anatolia. Hadji Bektash, whose brother Menteş was murdered during the revolt, is also described as a *halife* of Baba Ilyas in the chronicles.⁶² So when put together these two records, it is possible to conclude that Seyyit Ali Sultan was a sufi-sheikh who grew among the Babai dervishes in Western Anatolia. We know that Babai dervishes gathered and became melted under the umbrella of the Bektashi Order towards the end of the fifteenth century. When taken into account the time in which these *velayetnames* were written, that is the second half of the fifteenth

⁶⁰ See Beldiceanu, "Seyyit Ali Sultan", p.63.

⁶¹ See Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı*.

⁶² See Ashikpashazade, *Tevarih*, p.237

century or the sixteenth century, it becomes clear why the *velayetnames* connect Seyyit Ali Sultan to Hadji Bektash rather than Baba Ilyas.

Other interesting passage in the *Velayetname* of Abdal Musa concerning Kızıldeli comes just after the former one. Here, he is, with Ghazi Umr, commissioned by the conquest of Rumeli by his sheikh Abdal Musa. There is again a striking harmony between the information given in two *velayetnames* about Seyyit Ali Sultan. Although his place of origin and the person who charged him are given differently, the core theme, the conquest of Rumeli, is exactly the same. If one *velayetname* did not use the other, which is of small possibility since the general frame of narration is completely different in two *velayetnames*, this conformity can be seen as a strong evidence for the close connection between Seyyit Ali Sultan and the Ottoman conquest of Rumeli. Moreover, the name Ghazi Umr is also important at this point. We know that Ghazi Umr of Aydın, launched naval expeditions in the Aegean Sea and raids in the Balkan lands. Here it comes to mind that Seyyit Ali Sultan and his dervishes (*erenler*) came to Rumeli in the campaign of Ghazi Umr and, after him, continued their raids there under the Ottoman forces. In the *velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan, the passage that describes them as come from Khorasan by the order of the prophet given in their dreams, must be the fabrication of the author who appears to have attempted to portray them as holy people.

There is one more figure worth mentioning, Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi, in the *velayetname*. He occupies as much volume as Seyyit Ali Sultan in the *velayetname*. Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi was one of the Forty Heroes and appointed by Hadji Bektash as the *kadiasker* of the group. Seyyit Rüstem does not only fight along with Seyyit Ali Sultan but also develops war strategies, which are accepted by the Ottoman Sultan as well as the policies in state affairs. The *velayetname's* description of him shows

similarities with the figure mentioned in the chronicles as Kara Rüstem. The *velayetname* tells us that one day Prophet Muhammed appears to Bayezid I in a dream and said 'there is the right of state in booty, so take it'. When he asked about the ratio the prophet told him to consult Seyyit Rüstem on that matter. Bayezid I then sent a man to Seyyit Rüstem. Seyyit Rüstem also had similar dreams and the prophet told him that they should take one fifth of the booty for the state. In the end Seyyit Rüstem Gazi settled down in Gallipoli and began to take one fifth of the booty coming from the raids in the Balkans.⁶³

In the chronicles, this event is reported in a slightly different fashion. There was a *danismend*, a man from the *ulema* class, called Kara Rüstem who came from Kramanili. He said: 'according to the order of God one fifth of the booty must be taken for the treasury of the state'. The sultan and his statesmen then accepted this suggestion and settled him in Gallipoli for doing this job.⁶⁴ But, according to the chronicles, this happened during the reign of Murat I, which seems to conform to the historical realities. Rüstem is mentioned once more in the chronicles, this time as a man again from the *ulema* class who initiated bad habits in the Ottoman palace life with Çandarlı Halil.⁶⁵ Although the *velayetname*'s version needs some comment, it seems possible that the sources in this case refer to the same person. According to the *velayetname*, Seyyit Rüstem obtained a *vakf* from Bayezid I after a series of conquest and established his *tekke* there.⁶⁶

Unfortunately there is no information about the life of Seyyit Ali Sultan after the conquests. But this gap in the picture can be partly filled by the help of the archival evidence mentioned above. Seyyit Ali Sultan must have followed the

⁶³ See *Velayetname*, pp. 85-87.

⁶⁴ See Aşıkpaşazade, p. 128; Anonim, pp. 24-25; Neşri, p.197; Oruc, pp.41-42.

⁶⁵ See Aşıkpaşazade, p.240; Anonim, p. 33; Oruc, p. 52.

⁶⁶ *Velayetname*, pp. 107-116.

tradition like Seyyit Rüstern and settled down in Dimetoka, the town conquered by him and his companions. It is clear from the *tahrir* registers that he obtained a *vakf* from Bayezid I near the river Kızıldeli in Dimetoka and established his *tekke* there. His tomb has been preserved in the village of Karabükü, which was also part of his *vakf*.



III: DERVISHES IN ACTION

A. DERVISH IN GHAZA

I have already discussed in the introduction the concept of ghaza and its role in the early Ottoman Empire. As I have mentioned there, despite the severe criticisms of some historians such as Arnakis, Imber, and Lindner, when looked at the contemporary sources one can not totally ignore the concept of ghaza in this process. But the topic still needs further investigation. To what extent did the early Ottomans sincerely believe in fighting for God in their military expansion? Or, put it differently, did they simply use this concept in a pragmatic way to attract warriors under their banner and to legitimize their actions?

The concept of ghaza or *jihad*¹, to fight in the name of the God and to defend Islamic lands towards infidels, was already wide spread before the Ottomans and was one of the key concepts used by statesmen and military leaders in the Islamic World. This was actually a spirit emerged as a result of bitter attacks that Islam confronted both in the East and the West in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In these centuries Islam as a political entity experienced a struggle for death or life after its rapid and massive territorial expansion. As is well known, the Christian World organized the Crusades and the First Crusader Army in fact managed to defeat

¹ The meaning of the terms ghaza and jihad has been the subject of debate among historians. Sinasi Tekin differs these two words as describing ghaza for the meaning of offensive wars and jihad for the meaning of defensive wars for religion.(See Şinasi Tekin, " XIV. Yüzyılda Yazılmış Gazilik Tarıkası ' Gaziliğin Yolları' Adlı Bir Eski Anadolu Türkçesi Metni ve Gaza/ Cihad Kavramları Hakkında", *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13, 1989). On the other hand Colin Imber argues that the term "ghazi" entered popular usage in the ottoman realm in the first quarter of the fifteenth century by replacing the Turkish term "alp". According to Imber, ghaza was used by Ottomans as synonym of jihad and become more common in Ottoman Turkish than jihad since Persian permeated to Turkish during this time (see Colin Imber, " What does Ghazi Actually Mean?"). In this study I used the term ghaza mean holy war irrespective of whether it is offensive or defensive. But in practice, it is clear that the Ottoman wars occurred during the fourteenth century were dominantly offensive.

several Muslim armies and reached Jerusalem, where they established a Christian state. On the other hand, the Mongol Empire of Chingiz emerged as a great threat to Islamic States. The pagan Mongols marched on Baghdad and the Muslim states of the Middle East experienced disastrous chain of defeats. Mongols did not only destroy these Islamic states but also demolished many institutions that the Islamic civilization had created.²

Therefore, during this period, the concept of fighting for religion and, by this way, defending Islam and Muslims gained prominence in the contemporary Islamic society. The virtue of fighting on the way of God and martyrdom for this ideal was preached in the religious circles more frequently than ever. In the Quoranic concept, jihad was stressed as a religious duty in the sermons. Thus, the idea of holy war firmly established itself in the minds of Muslims.

The immigrant Turkish mass that poured into Anatolia and later moved further westward, were naturally familiar with and perhaps sincere carriers of such an idea, which was crystallized, strengthened, and structured by religious leaders. Among Turkoman nomads and villagers, who constituted the men supply for the troops of the Turkoman *begs*, were also *babas* and *dedes* as representators of heterodox Islam. They had enormous prestige in the eyes of both the Turkoman mass and the *begs*. Wittek points out the important role they played among ghazis in his *The Rise of The Ottoman Empire*. He explains the function of the sheikhs and dervishes who had fled from Iran and Turkestan to Anatolia under the Mongol invasion as follows: "As spreaders of heretical doctrines they were less welcome in the Seljuk towns, where, moreover, they would not have been safe from Mongols. But in the marches they found security and a warm reception. They carried religious

² See Inalcık, "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış", *Osmanlı*, ed., Güler Eren, Ankara, 1999, p.40.

enthusiasm into those dense and excited masses, who were prepared for any daring enterprise. Here at the frontier, and in the milieu of the Ghazis, this enthusiasm soon took on the forms of a fanatic resolve to war against the infidel.”³

Here, let us remember Ashikpashazade’s classification of contemporary society. In a passage related to Hacı Bektas, he says there are four groups in *diyar-ı rum* that are accounted among immigrants: *Gaziyan-ı Rum*, *Ahiyan-ı Rum*, *Bacıyan-ı Rum*, and *Abdalan-ı Rum*.⁴ This chapter will discuss the relations between the *ghazis* and *abdals*. More specifically, it will deal with the contribution of *abdals* to the ghaza activities in the marches. At first sight, it is clear enough from the sources that their contribution to ghaza consisted of two dimensions. Firstly, one should keep in mind that the mystics that we talk about here were not secluded hermits engaged in continuous pray in hospices, but they were dynamic and energetic dervishes who did not hesitate to dare enterprises in foreign lands and engage in when needed⁵. Thus, although they devoted themselves to teach the religion and their sufi order to the folk masses in the way that they had learnt from their sheikhs and to train new disciples in hospices, it seems that they also fought among ghazis against the ‘enemies of the religion’.

Secondly, their major contribution to the concept of ghaza came into existence presumably in the process of shaping the doctrine of ghaza and in the propaganda of it among Turkoman masses. Since ghaza was a religious term, which means to fight on the way of God, the men who held the right to talk about its content at a certain degree of authority were naturally religious men. When we remember the fact that the main men supply of ghazi bands were Turkoman nomads

³ Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 31.

⁴ Ashikpashazade, p. 237.

⁵ See Köprülü, “Anadolu’da İslamiyet”, p. 63.

and villagers and that of these dervishes had indisputable authority on the religious life of these social groups the role of dervishes as 'opinion-makers' in the spread of the concept holy war becomes clearer. Therefore, it would not be wrong to assume that it was these dervishes who kept the spirit of the ghaza alive among Turkomans. Especially after the bitter defeat of Baba Ilyas by the Seljukid army, the followers of Baba Ilyas, the Babaîs, spread particularly around western Anatolia. Ottoman territories on the borderline with Byzantine Empire provided a natural shelter and offered various opportunities to these dervishes.

A careful analysis of contemporary sources shows that although several sunni orders, such as Rifaiyye, Sühreverdiyye, Mawlawiyya, had already existed in Anatolia, we do not see them in western marches including the Ottoman lands in the first half of the fourteenth century. On the other hand, during the same process, religious scholars, *ulema*, began to move into the Ottoman capital city, Bursa, by the middle of the fourteenth century. It is known that the emergence of *ulema* in the Ottoman capital as a powerful entity was a simultaneous and interrelated process with the establishment of well-organized and advanced administrative machine in the Ottoman state. In this process, we see members of the *ulema* as effective historical figures in the Ottoman History particularly from the reign of Murad I on in the second half of the fourteenth century. Especially Çandarlı family, in fact a member of the *ulema* class, hold the post of grand vizier for long time and played important role in the early Ottoman History. But their role was limited mainly to the establishment of state institutions according to Middle-Eastern state tradition and religious laws. Such *ulema* appeared in the Ottoman lands, according to historical sources, only after the middle of the fourteenth century. However, *Babai* dervishes

were active all over the Ottoman territory during the period, i.e. before the middle of the fourteenth century.

Thus, it can be argued that in the first half of the fourteenth century, the people who were fighting for the Ottomans were mainly rootless, immigrant Turkomans. The religious leaders who were shaping the beliefs of contemporary society were principally *babas* and *dedes*, whose majority were followers of Baba Ilyas and adherents of the *Vefai* order. Geyikli Baba, one of these *babas*, for example, introduces himself as “*Baba İlyas müridiyim. Seyyit Ebu’l- Vefa tarikindenim*” (I am a disciple of Baba Ilyas and from the order of Vefaiyye) to a messenger sent by Orhan.⁶ Ashikpashazade and other chronicles describe Hadji Bektash and Sheikh Edebali as *halifes* of Baba Ilyas and Vefai dervishes.

Let us now discuss the issue with specific examples. *Şakayık* records that Abdal Musa and Geyikli Baba fought in the conquest of Bursa by the troops of Orhan.⁷ It seems that there were more dervishes who joined the soldiers of Orhan and later Murad I. Abdal Murad and Kumral Abdal (Kumral Dede) are two of them that we know their names from the chronicles. Actually war was not the primary goal and dominant element of the life style of dervishes. As mentioned earlier, their main aim was seen as some kind of religious propaganda. Forced to move westward, they were wandering in the new lands until they found a place to establish a *tekke*. During this constant move around, many disciples from among mainly the rootless Turkomans began to gather around a certain sheikh; this was facilitated greatly by the manifestation of the supernatural powers of the sheikh. The ultimate objective of the wandering was to find a suitable place to settle down to engage in a mystic life. This

⁶ Ashikpashazade, p. 122.

⁷ Mecdi, *Şakayık Tercümesi*, V.I, pp. 33-34.

was possible mainly by the support and approval of the ruler who usually granted them a piece of land. In the early history of the Ottomans there are many cases that first a sheikh and his disciples perform a certain service to the beg or sultan, which often took the form of fighting in his army against ‘infidels’. Then the ruler gives the sheikh the right of ownership of a certain land, on which the sheikh founds his hospice as pious endowment or *vakf*. Barkan showed many examples of this process by analyzing the Ottoman *tahrir* registers in his famous article “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”.⁸

The cases of Geyikli Baba, Seyyit Ali Sultan, and Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi serve a good example of this process. We have already mentioned Geyikli Baba’s participation in the conquest of Bursa. It is highly likely, though having no historical evidence that he also participated in some other raids of Orhan or of his commanders. Ashikpashazade does not mention any ghazas of Geyikli Baba. But, a passage in his history, gives us the later stages of the process. According to Ashikpashazade, Orhan once wanted to inspect the dervishes in his lands. He was told that there was a dervish in the Keşiş Mountain near Inegöl who could control and manage wild stags. Durgut Alp, one of the commanders of Orhan, was one of the disciples of this dervish. Orhan sent a man to Geyikli Baba and asked who he was. He introduced himself as a disciple of Baba Ilyas and a member of Vefai Order. Orhan invited him to give some presents but he declined it by saying that the time had not come yet. Later, when the time came, Geyikli Baba came down from the mountain and met Orhan who offered him Inegöl as a *vakf*. But Geyikli Baba again declined the offer⁹

⁸ See Barkan, “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”.

⁹ For the principle of poverty (*fakr*) among sufis see Inalcık, “Dervish and Sultan”, pp.-27-28.

and said 'let that opposite mound become the courtyard of dervishes if you would give.' Then Geyikli Baba prayed for Orhan and his dynasty.¹⁰

We further see two examples of 'ghazi dervish' in the cases of Seyyit Ali Sultan and Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi. According to the *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan, they were not only the participants of the ghazas against infidels but also the leading figures of ghaza raids. In the beginning of the *velayetname*, it is said that 'this *velayetname* explains how Rumeli was conquered' by dervishes (*erenler*).¹¹ Here one can easily see that the major role in the conquest is given to the dervishes and although their personalities being respected, the main role of the Ottoman sultans does not go beyond the approval and ratification of the acts of the dervishes by simply applying their strategic plans. The *velayetname* gives the honor of the conquest of many fortresses and cities in Rumeli such as Bolayir, Ipsala, Dimetoka, Edirne, and Şumnu, to dervishes. The *velayetname* does not tell us about what in the end happened to Seyyit Ali Sultan. However, Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi asks, according to the *velayetname*, for a piece of land for himself from Bayezid I, from an area he conquered. Bayezid I accepts his request and gave him lands around the Mountain Megairi.¹² Seyyit Ghazi then went into seclusion there for years and eventually founded his hospice for his adherents who began to gather around him. The *velayetname* states that Seyyit Rüstem and his disciples constructed a mill and engaged in farming in this hospice.¹³

On the other hand, we know from archival records that Seyyit Ali Sultan also obtained land from Bayezid I around Dimetoka, where his *tekke* is still open to

¹⁰ Ashikpashazade, p. 122.

¹¹ *Velayetname*, p. 78.

¹² See *Velayetname*, pp. 107-108. The author says in the *velayetname* the hospice of Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi was still there.

¹³ *Velayetname*, p. 111.

visitors. According to the *velayetname*, Dimetoka was in fact conquered by Seyyit Ali Sultan and his companions.

Although it would be wrong to take the story at its face value, it is still reasonable to accept that Seyyit Ali Sultan, Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi and other dervishes mentioned in the *velayetname* of Kızıldeli must have really joined the ghaza raids in Rumeli among the ghazis. At the end of the conquest they were given lands by the Ottoman sultans in return for their helpful activities, which were later turned into *vakfs*. They then founded hospices in these lands that were later developed into economic and social centers later.

The role of the dervishes in the ghaza activities of the early Ottoman history is much greater than the frame put forwarded above. As principal religious leaders of the frontier Turkoman society during, especially, the first half of the fourteenth century, mystic sheikhs and their disciples were shown great respect by the society in large. The influence of these sufi sheikhs particularly on nomadic people was enormous.¹⁴ And it was these people that formed the backbone of the early Ottoman troops in raids and battles.

On the other hand, one who investigates the fundamental characteristics of the teachings of this dervish milieu would immediately recognize that, in addition to the mystic discourses, which constituted the main body of the teaching, there is a considerable amount of elements in this literature that refer to heroism and fighting on the way of religion. One evidence that immediately comes to mind is the description of rituals that took place during the certifying ceremony, in which the sheikh authorizes his disciples to guide people. In such ceremonies, together with

¹⁴ The reader should member here the fact that during this early period other religious groups such as *madrassa ulema* and sufi orders with *sunni* tendency did not occupy a considerable place in the religious life of the frontier society during this episode.

some other presents, the sheikh usually gives a wooden sword to his disciple and send him to a certain area in order to guide people there into the true path. The disciple, who would become a sheikh soon after taking his *icazetname*, would not hesitate to fight with enemies of the religion by his wooden sword, which is believed to be keener than the steel on the mission.

When focusing on the motives behind ghaza raids, *doyum* (the satisfaction) of ghazis constituted main source of motivation. Therefore, directly proportional to the satisfaction of ghazis, the number of warriors fighting under the banner of a certain ghazi leaders, one of whom was Osman, increased. One can approach *doyum* as a phenomenon that had two dimensions: one is worldly satisfaction (booty) and the other being spiritual satisfaction. The latter might have been as important as the former since it would sanctify to a certain extent the wild practices of ghazis. Through this state of mind that they perhaps not only felt the spiritual satisfaction but their acts, ghaza, also became indisputably prestigious in the eyes of folk masses. It is obvious that booty from ghaza raids served a fairly good way of living for those Turkoman mass as well as the dervishes themselves. This aspect of *doyum* is, however, outside the scope of this study. My aim here is to discuss the motivating role of dervishes among ghazis by preaching their mystic teachings, which included the spread of Islam, by force if needed. Indeed, the meaning of 'ghaza' in the religious literature was nothing more than this.

To recapitulate, there were many rootless and jobless migrant Muslims in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century Anatolia, and among them were dervishes propagating mystic Islam. These rootless migrants are called in the sources as 'garibler'. They were poor and ready to participate in any raids which would provide them booty. Dervishes' successful propaganda must have prepared the minds of the

masses and served an additional religious-mystic motivation for them to get involved in raids. One of the significant successes of Osman and Orhan was obviously their ability to establish good relations with dervish circles and bring these *garibs* under their banner as holy warriors. As Oruc stated, Ottomans were the sultans that loved *garibs* (*Bu Osmaniler garipleri sevicilerdir*).¹⁵

The early period of the life of Abdal Musa serves another example of this kind of activities of dervishes. As discussed earlier, before his arrival in Teke, he was present at the war during the conquest of Bursa. Ashikpashazade, in explaining the relation between Janissary corp and Hadji Bektash, records: “Abdal Musa came to ghaza in the time of Orhan. He walked among janissary (i.e. he joined them). And he asked a hat from a janissary. Than the janissary took off his hat and gave it to Abdal Musa...”¹⁶. Actually this explanation needs some correction. The Ottomans established first standing army by the one fifth of the slaves taken during raids in the time of Murad I. This is how the Janissary corp was established. However, it is too early to talk about the Janissaries in the reign of Orhan. Nevertheless, this anachronism cannot hinder the historical fact behind this record that Abdal Musa fought among the soldiers of Orhan and established friendship with them. As a *halife* of Hadji Bektash, he did what he was supposed to do and preached the mystic teaching of his order, based on the Vefai-Babai tradition. One should remember that Geyikli Baba also introduced himself as a dervish from the same order and he also participated in the conquest of Bursa.¹⁷ This partly explains why and how Bektashism became the order that the Janissaries officially associated themselves with. Under the active propaganda of the dervishes from several heterodox circles,

¹⁵ Inalcik, “Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış”, p. 41.

¹⁶ Ashikpashazade, p. 238.

¹⁷ This implies that there were many other dervishes in this conquest. The others were simply not mentioned in sources.

later combined and mingled under the umbrella of Bektashism, that the Hadji Bektash cult must have spread among this military group.¹⁸

Another striking example of the relationship between the ghazis and the *abdals* in the *velayetname* of Abdal Musa has been already mentioned. According to the *velayetname*, Abdal Musa and his disciples came to a coastal place. Abdal Musa told his disciples that some ghazis would come from the sea. They prepared only a cauldron of meal for this 'forty thousands men'. But Abdal Musa immediately showed a *keramet* that made the meal enough. After seeing this miracle Umur Beg, the leader of the ghazis, came to Abdal Musa and appealed for his spiritual help (*himmet*). Then Abdal Musa wanted a red hat (*kızıl börg*). After putting it on the head of Umur Beg he said 'let your title be ghazi from now on'¹⁹.

Keeping in mind that this is the dervishes' version of the event, what is clear in this story is that there was a natural sympathy on both sides. Moreover, the *velayetname* ranks the sheikh of *abdals* higher than the leader of ghazis and as a religious authority, Abdal Musa in this example gave the title 'ghazi' to Umur Beg. The tradition of sanctioning of the ruler by a prominent religious figure continued with some differences throughout the Ottoman history. This resembles the Papal sanction of the Christian rulers before they became king in the Middle Age.

B. DERVISH AS LEGITIMIZER

Before discussing the role of dervishes as legitimizer in the history of early Ottomans, one should remember the important place of religion in public life both in

¹⁸ See Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", p. 65.

¹⁹ Abdurrahman Güzel, *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, p.148.

Islamic and Christian World throughout the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly the influence of religion on the society was much more apparent in the Middle Ages than in modern societies today. As modern Historians who lived in a secular world, which is fairly different from the religion-based civilization of the Middle Ages, we must always keep in mind this fundamental difference.

Thinking of the fourteenth century Western Anatolia and the Ottoman territory, one will see the religion and religious institutions had prominence in both public life and in the private life of individuals. Therefore, religious figures had important and effective role in the society. Thus, the question of the role of dervishes between the state and the rural society should be analyzed in this perspective. The sources of this period, such as chronicles, *velayetnames*, and epics particularly emphasize the decisive role of religion and religious people in a large spectrum stretching from the life of the laymen to the palaces of sultans. Baba Ilyas, for example, constitutes a striking example of the degree of power that religious authorities had on the contemporary society. As a popular sheikh, Baba Ilyas was able to gather substantial account of warriors around him and shook the authority of Anatolian Seljuks in Anatolia, in the thirteenth century.²⁰

On the other hand, the state authority, as in today, needed some ideological tools and mechanisms first to legitimize itself and then to establish its control over its subjects. In the fourteenth century Western Anatolia, popular sufi orders proved to be the best ideological tool for the state in order to establish its authority especially on the rural society. One of the successes of early the Ottoman sultans must be sought in their policy towards several religious groups. Starting from Ertugrul Beg, the father of Osman, the Ottoman dynasty appears to have always pursued the policy of

²⁰ See Ocak, *Babailer İsyanı*

establishing close relationship with *Abdalan-ı Rum*, as defined by Ashikpashazade. Through this relationship, which proved profitable for both sides, that the Ottomans managed to introduce themselves as the legitimate rulers of those lands. Actually this was achieved largely by the involvement of the sufi leaders who fled from the state pressure of Anatolian Seljuks and found a warm reception in the Ottoman lands. In parallel to the vigorous religious propaganda of the dervishes, the energetic military policy of Osman against his Christian neighbors made it easier for both sides to establish such a relationship that suited their mutual interests.

The positive propaganda of dervishes about the Ottoman dynasty increased the popularity of the house of Osman among Turko-Muslim population of Anatolia. Through this propaganda, the credibility of the Ottomans rose especially in the eyes of rural population, among whom the dervishes had enormous power as religious leaders. Let us remember the fact that during this period the great majority of the Anatolian society was rural.

Osman and Orhan, as “ghazi” leaders, needed as many warrior elements as for their struggle against the neighboring local lords as well as the Byzantium. Their main source of men supply was Turkoman tribes of Anatolia. We know that these Turkoman warriors from different tribes and regions began to gather around the House of Osman especially after the turn of the fourteenth century, particularly after the death of the most vigorous ‘ghazi leader’ of the Western Anatolia, Ghazi Umur Beg, who waged naval expeditions against Christians in the Aegean Sea.²¹ The reason of these warriors’, called in the sources as “ghazi”, turning their attention to the Ottomans was that upon the death of Ghazi Umur Bey, Aydinids left the ghaza and changed their policy more towards trade in Aegean costs while the Ottomans

²¹ See Inalcik, “The Emergence of the Ottomans”, p. 271.

were emerging as important leaders of those warriors that the later sources described as “champions of ghaza”, against “infidels”, i.e. holy warriors. It seems that the Ottomans never found it difficult to find men supply for their troops. Moreover, after crossing to Rumeli, there were considerable number of Turkomans flowing from the other parts of Anatolia to the Ottoman territories and significant portion of these people were transported to the newly conquered lands and settled down. Of course the vigorous activities of dervishes, which are vividly described in many *velayetnames*, had significant part in the mobilization of the warrior elements of the rural Turkomans of Anatolia towards the military expansion of the Ottomans in the Balkans.

The close relationship between the dervish milieu and the Ottoman dynasty can be best observable in the case of sheikh Edebali²², who is described in some sources as the father-in-law of Osman and the spiritual founder of the Ottoman state. It seems from the sources that Edebali was a respectful religious man in his society. Osman was among those people who regularly visited him and asked his opinions about several issues ranging from political to military affairs. It is obvious enough that showing respect to such religious figures that had great influence on the public

²² Sheikh Edebali had been known for long time as a akhi leader among historians. But this was a misinterpretation of sources. In Ashikpashazade's history he is described as a rich man but devoted himself to Sufism. There were always visitors in his house.(Ashikpashazade p. 95). The confusion among historians came from the record in Ashikpashazade that depicts his brother's son as akhi (p.110). Nesri describes the brother of Edebali as akhi as well(Kitab-I Cihannüma, p. 131). From these historical records some historians concluded that Edebali was also an akhi sheikh. But there is one other passage in the *Tevarih* of Ashikpashazade that mentions Edebali among *fukaras* (p. 235). He uses the same term for Muhlis Baba, Ashik Pasha, Geyikli Baba, Abdal Murad, Abdal Musa, who were known certainly as Babai-Vefai sheikhs (p. 235). Moreover in the former sentence Ashikpashazade does not call Edebali as akhi but he calls his brother's son as akhi. On the other hand, in *Menakıbu'l-Kudsiyye fi Menasibi'l-Ünsiyye*, which was written around 1300 by Elvan Çelebi, a descendant of Baba Ilyas, Sheikh Edebali is given as one of the *halifes* of Baba Ilyas (Ahmet Yaşar Ocak and İsmail E. Erünsal published a critical edition of this valuable source in İstanbul in 1984). Thus, we can safely conclude that Edebali must be a Babai-Vefai sheikh form dervish milieu. For a comprehensive analysis of this problem see Ocak, “Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşunda Ahilik ve Şeyh Edebali: Problematik açıdan bir sorgulama”, *İkinci Uluslararası Ahilik Kültürü Sempozyumu Bildirileri*, Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları- Ankara, 1999.

view and having good relationship with them provided Osman and his dynasty a kind of sanctity in the eyes of the contemporary society.

Actually the tie of Osman with Edebali, however problematic it is for modern historians, was not limited to the issue of showing respect by periodic visits. Ashikpashazade states: “Once Osman fell asleep –possibly in the hospice of Edebali- and had a dream. In his dream the moon appeared from the chest of Sheikh Edebali and moved into the chest of Osman. There, a tree appeared and its shadow covered the World...”²³. In the following morning Osman told Edebali about his dream and he interpreted this dream as follows: “My son! Congratulations, God gave you and your descendants sovereignty. Let it be holy! And my daughter Malhatun will be your wife”. During this conversation, a disciple of Edebali called Kumral Dede was present there. He said: “Hey Osman! the sovereignty was given to you. The thankfulness (*şükran*) is then needed for us”. Osman replied: “ I will give you a town when I become a sultan”. But the dervish was contempt with a village and Osman gave his sword and a cup to dervish as a sign of this contract²⁴.

We find the same story in other chronicles. In Oruc and Anonym *Tevarih* (Giese’s edition) this dream was referred to Ertugrul. Edebali offered his daughter to Ertugrul’s son, Osman. But the main characters remain the same.²⁵ Such dreams, however, are frequent in the Turkish state tradition as a tool of legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. It symbolizes the divine approval of the rule of the dynasty involved. A spiritual figure was always needed to interpret the dream and to manifest the holy mission of the dynasty. It is known that according to Turkish state tradition the power alone was not enough to legitimize one’s sovereignty; some sort of sanction

²³ Ashikpashazade, p. 95.

²⁴ Ashikpashazade, p. 95.

²⁵ See Giese, *Anonym Tevarih*, p. 10; Oruç, p. 25.

(*kut*) was also needed for a ruler in order to make himself legitimate.²⁶ Thus, what we see here in the Ottoman context is another example of the same symbolic element, which is probably a later addition to the chronicles as fabrication.²⁷ Here, Dumézil's *hypothesis of three functions* comes into mind. As an anthropologist historian Dumézil puts forward the following explanation for the structure of medieval states. The fundamental functions in a medieval society can be categorized under three groups: the suzerainty/holiness, achieved by ruler dynasty and religious men; the war, achieved by soldiers; the economy that was mainly based on agriculture.²⁸ If we accept this general frame, our dervishes, holy men, well suite to the first group.

But there is more historical information on this issue. According to the chronicles, Edebali was the father-in-law of Osman. So from the very beginning there was a blood tie between the dervish milieu through Edebali and the dynasty.²⁹ The dervish side, as sultans of the spiritual world, symbolizes the divine support to the ruler. Indeed this support meant much more than seen at first sight. It was important not because of the individual support and pray of a significant sheikh but because of its significant influence on the folk masses. In return, the ruling sultan bestows land to dervishes as *vakfs*, in which they could found a hospice and continue their mystic life. It should be noted that even in their role in *ghaza*, dervishes' function as warrior was not as important as their influence on the warriors.

²⁶ See İnalcık, "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış", p. 52.

²⁷ See İnalcık, "Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış", p.41; Barkan, "Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri", p. 287.

²⁸ See, Sencer Divitçioğlu, *Osmanlı Beyliğinin Kıruluşu* İstanbul, 1999, p. 40 and pp. 123- 130.

²⁹ Actually, the modern historians are suspicious about many information that Ashukpashazade provides. More specifically, it is not clear yet whether Edebali was really Osman's father-in-law, as Ashukpashazade states, or this is also a later fabrication like the dream. İnalcık, for example, argues this is the edition of Ashukpashazade, who, as a descendant of Baba İlyas, tends to exaggerate the role of Babai dervishes in the early years of the empire. However, whatever the truth was, such stories in the chronicles certainly reflect a tradition. See, İnalcık, "How to Read Ashukpashazade's History".

When looked at the sources, one would see that the role of Edebali was not limited by his interpretation of the Osman's dream in the early history of Ottomans. It seems that he was a respectful adviser to Osman. Osman consulted him and paid attention to his opinions on any political and, particularly, religious matters. Once, for instance, Osman and his fellowmen wanted to perform Friday Prayer but could not decide whether it conformed with the religion or not.³⁰ They went to Edebali and asked for his opinion on the issue.³¹ At the end, well suited to the traditional procedure, Osman gave some *vakf*-lands to Sheikh Edebali around Bilecik³². Ashikpashazade states that Osman gave the *timar* income of the Bilecik to his father-in-law.³³

We see one other interesting example in the *velayetname* of Abdal Musa. As mentioned earlier, Abdal Musa and his disciples prepare some meal for the 'ghazis' coming from the sea. Abdal Musa expectedly shows his miracle in this case again and makes one cauldron of meal enough for number of warriors. Abdal Musa forces the warriors to accept his spiritual authority through this extraordinary act. At the end, the leader of the 'ghazis', Umur Beg, falls into the spiritual control of the sheikh, Abdal Musa, and requests Abdal Musa to accept him and his companions as his disciples. It is after this request that the sheikh honored Umur Beg with the title 'ghazi' and bestowed spiritually him some part of 'infidel' land, Rumeli³⁴. Here, we

³⁰ According to some *fikh* schools in Islam, the Friday Prayer cannot be performed in the territories that is under the sovereign of infidels. Since Osman and his friends were in marches, this was discussed. Moreover, the other side of the issue was more important: According to Islamic tradition performing the Friday Prayer, in which the *hutbe* was preached in the name of certain sultan, was one of the signs of the independence of certain ruler.

³¹ Ashikpashazade, p. 103.

³² The official record about the *vakf* of Edebali in the Ottoman Archives as follows: " Karye-i Kozagaç ki vakfdır Osman Beğden mezkur Edeoğlu Mahmud Paşa tasarruf ederdi, şimdi oğlu şeyh Mehmed tasarruf eder." (Maliyeden müdevver no: 16016, sh. 13).

³³ Ashikpashazade, p. 105.

³⁴ Such spiritual bestowments were interpreted as divine announcements which reveals the fact that the *beg* involved will conquer the bestowed lands. If the contemporary warriors really believed such

see two sided legitimization: firstly, when the sheikh gave the title 'ghazi' to a certain beg, he would be the legitimate leader of the ghazis in the eyes of, at least, the people under the influence of this sheikh and his order. This would apparently conclude with the flowing of the warrior elements among Turkomans under the banner of the *beg* in question. Secondly, the spiritual bestowal of the sheikh, Abdal Musa in this specific example, not only increased the motivation of the warriors to conquer this certain territory, but also created the belief suggesting that the beg, as the legitimate ruler of the land to be conquered, would inevitably conquer this land. One can easily recognize the similarity between this the case of the dream of Osman.

The example of Seyyit Ali Sultan and Seyyit Rüstem also resemble the same legitimization process used by the rulers. According to the *velayetname*, the Ottoman sultans consult Seyyit Rüstem about almost all important military and political issues. Seyyit Rüstem, on the other hand, did not produce his opinions by himself but decided according to the divine orders of the prophet that were given through dreams. When looked at the description of the decision mechanism closely, one would immediately realize that this procedure sanctioned the decision since the origin was the prophet. Contemporary rulers must have attributed great importance to he propaganda of such ideas among Muslim population.

One should, however, remember that the sources mentioned above need great care and must be used critically. The information that they present can not be accepted at face value, and only after a careful and comprehensive analysis that they could yield reliable historical knowledge beyond the narrations. As for our specific question, we must, first of all, keep in mind that these works are all the products of dervish milieu. So here comes into mind the other side of the legitimization, which

divine announcements of the holy men, the sheikhs, one would immediately notice how important role that it played in the motivation of 'ghazis'.

pivots dervishes. The *velayetname* of Abdal Musa and Seyyit Ali Sultan are produced in the fifteenth or in the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman State assumed significant power. In such a time, dervishes living in the Ottoman land might have added such passages in the *velayetnames* to stress the role of sufi circles in the foundation process of the state. Ashikpashazade, as a descendant of Baba Ilyas and a member of dervish milieu, shows, for instance, apparent tendency to exaggerate the role of Babai dervishes in the early period of the Ottoman state³⁵. The same attitude is also apparent in the *velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan.

C. DERVISH AS PREACHER

The early Ottoman conquest in Asia Minor and Trace shows some differences from the later conquests in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. When general characteristics of the process are considered, one would immediately notice the fundamental difference: the early conquests, which involved certain degree of colonization and conversion caused some fundamental changes in the culture and social structure of the region while later conquests were rather annexation of large territories which usually took place after a decisive military victory.

This second kind conquest of Ottomans is for the most part analyzed by Halil İnalcık in his seminal article “Ottoman Methods of Conquest”. In this article, İnalcık, divides the conquest process into two main stages: In the first stage Ottomans established some sort of suzerainty over the neighboring states. In the second stage, the central authority of the Ottoman State ascertained direct control over these vassal

³⁵ For a broader analysis of this issue see İnalcık, “How to Read Ashikpashazade’s History”.

states and established *timar* system in these new lands. This process also involved certain degree of assimilation. The Ottomans never totally eliminated local aristocracy when they set up the *timar* system upon a newly conquered territory. Rather they let the local aristocracy enter into the Ottoman system as *timar* holder.³⁶ Therefore, the local aristocracy holding high offices in the governmental machine of the Ottoman State were gradually assimilated and later conversion to Islam gradually became the prerequisite for their participation in the Ottoman administrative system. However, the Ottoman administration never pursued a policy of forced conversion of its non-Muslim subjects. Nevertheless, being Muslim was always profitable in the Ottoman lands both in terms of economic advantages and social prestige. Halil İnalcık has shown that in some districts in the Ottoman Balkans in the fifteenth century, as many as half of the timariots were Christian, and that by the next century they were very few- not, apparently, because they had been dispossessed but because over two or three generations they had embraced Islam.³⁷ This was one kind of Islamization of the Balkan population, which took place at the level of local aristocracy. Since this type of conversion was mainly based on some worldly interests and did never extend beyond a narrow circle in the higher echelon of the society, Islam almost totally withdrawn from these territories after the collapse of the Ottoman rule.

But the conquest in the early episode took a different form. First of all, during the early period, there was no such a powerful state that would annex large territories after a victory in battlefields. This was rather a gradual and partially spontaneous process and Turkomans who were searching for a new life for them played an

³⁶ For more reading see İnalcık, "Ottoman Method of Conquest", *The Ottoman Empire (Collected Studies Series; CS87)*, London.

³⁷ *Studia Islamica* 2, 1954, pp. 113-117.

important part in this process. We have already seen that the dervishes were also active in this kind of expansion in the Balkans. What is important and different from the later conquests in this process was that in addition to military occupation there was a invasion of the culture of conquerors enhancing every strata of the subdued society. If went into more detail one would see that in this case the situation was completely opposite to the process explained above: now the strata of society that converted first and helped the Ottoman expansion was lower one while the aristocracy was in resistance to the invaders.

The initial Islamization of Bythinia and Rumeli took place mainly in the first stage of the conquest during the fourteenth century. Ménage in his article "The Islamization of Anatolia" writes: "In the middle of the eleventh century, the population of Asia Minor was predominantly Greek-speaking and Christian; in the early sixteenth century it was predominantly Turkish-speaking and about 90 percent Muslim".³⁸ In the same article he underlines that the dominant figure in the life of the Turkish nomads and of the settled peasantry was not the orthodox *alim* but the Turkish 'holy man' under a variety of names: *şeyh*, *baba*, *abdâl*, *ışık*, *torlak*, *kalender*.³⁹ The leading role of sufi dervishes in the spread of Islam in Anatolia and the Balkans has also been pointed out by some other prominent historians such as Köprülü, Babinger, Hasluck, and Barkan.⁴⁰

Why and how did the dervishes play such a pioneering and decisive role in the Islamization of Anatolia belonged to dervishes? One part of the answer is that there were almost no religious groups in the marches other than the dervishes. Another explanation might be the fact that the flexible, tolerant, syncretic, and

³⁸ V.L.Ménage, "The Islamization of Anatolia", in Mehemia Levtzian (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*, New York, 1979, p. 52.

³⁹ Ménage, "Islamization", p. 60.

⁴⁰ See Köprülü, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", p. 63; Babinger, "Anadolu'da İslamiyet", p.17; F.R.Hasluck, *Bektaşilik Tetkikleri* çev. Ragıp Hulusi, Ankara, 200; Barkan, "Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri".

latitudinarian features of their beliefs made it easier for them to get into contact with Christian population. Speros Vryonis explains the success of dervishes in religious propaganda by the following features of their beliefs: 1) They had an emotional rather than a legalistic approach to the religious life, evolving essentially mystical rituals that would appeal to the lower as well as to the upper classes. 2) Although they had great appeal for the masses, they enjoyed the economic support of the rulers and administration. 3) In contrast to the formal state apparatus, it was their zeal to bring the religious way to the inhabitants of Anatolia, both Christians and Muslims. 4) And finally, one should note the tolerant and latitudinarian character of dervish preaching wherein religious syncretism allowed the accommodation of Christian beliefs and practices, thus facilitating the passage of Anatolians from affiliation with Christianity to formal affiliation with Islam.⁴¹

Compared to the legalistic approach of the *madrassa ulema*, the emotional approach of dervishes to religious affairs mingled with an intense mystic interpretation was more understandable and applicable for the rural population, who were for the most part illiterate. The so called “miracles” of sufi sheikhs, their teaching and propaganda not only attracted the Turkish nomads and peasants but also Christian neighbors. In a passage in Eflaki’s *Menakıbü’l- Arifin*, for instance, we see that while a monk even remained Christian he could become a disciple of Mawlana.⁴² When one considers the latitudinarian nature of the teachings of these dervishes, which provided room for the new converts to maintain most of their old beliefs and customs under Islam, it becomes clearer how easy it was for the folk to push and go beyond the line between two religions.

⁴¹ Speros Vryonis, Jr., “Religious Change and Continuity in the Balkans and Anatolia from the Fourteenth through the Sixteenth Century”, *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, Malibu, 1981, p.136.

⁴² Eflaki, II, 67-68.

Actually the Christianity prevalent among Byzantine rural population in Asia Minor and the Balkans during the early conquests of the Ottomans shows similar peculiarities with the heterodox Islam of the dervishes. Vryonis states that the Balkan folk Christianity in the late medieval period represents a syncretism of magic, animism, monotheistic dogma, polytheistic practices, monism, and dualism.⁴³ This was a practical way of living religion among folk masses, who were neither able nor intend to understand and follow the discussion of theological doctrines, based mainly upon the mysterious and supernatural practices. The case was not so much different for the Turkomans of Anatolia during the same period. There is a remarkable example in the *Velayetname* of Abdal Musa that shows the close relations between the dervish milieu and the Christians. The *velayetname* reports that while building up their hospice, dervishes of Abdal Musa found some gold in a cup. Abdal Musa said: 'Do not touch this gold; the owners of it are some infidels in a ship. Go and tell them to take their property'. When dervishes reported Abdal Musa's order to the 'infidels', they astonished and thought that if this man is a real *veli*, he would provide us drink and food made of pig when we reach there. Abdal Musa, through his supernatural power, understood their secret wish and ordered his dervishes to make the meal (from pig meat) ready and buy some wine from an infidel. On the other hand, the infidels intended to bestow this gold to the hospice of Abdal Musa. But the *velayetname* also reports the opposite attitude of the *beg* of Alaiye. When heard about the gold and Abdal Musa's attitude, the *beg* of Alaiye got angry and said: 'Oh! While I'm the governor of Muslims why did he give it to the infidels but not to me!'.⁴⁴ One can easily observe the different attitudes of dervishes and local begs

⁴³ Vryonis, "Religious Changes and Patterns in the Balkans, 14th- 16th Centuries", *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, Malibu, 1981, pp. 159-160.

⁴⁴ Güzel, *Velayetname*, p. 141.

towards Christians. The dervishes and lower social classes under their influence had closer contact with Christian population than the urban elites.

In the rural districts, Ménage says, the creedal gap between the ill-instructed Christian and the ill-instructed Muslims became progressively narrower and it became easier for Christians to convert to the “Islam of the *babas*”. Already diluted by the tolerance of pagan Turkish beliefs and customs, Islam was further diluted by the adoption of popular cult centers of the Christian (and pre-Christian) sacred sites- tombs, springs, trees, etc.- and the accretion of Christian feast days, saints, and even rituals.⁴⁵ Cases of split religious personalities are known from contemporary sources and correspond to the double sanctuaries, for both Christians and Muslims, now living together in Anatolia, and also the equation of certain Muslim and Christian saints that appear in dervish religiosity (i.e., Charalamabos- Hadji Bektash, and George- Hızır).⁴⁶ These double sacred places and religious personalities clearly prove how Christianity and Islam become close to each other in the rural areas mainly due to the existence and activities of heterodox dervishes.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the missionary character of the sufi doctrine that made dervishes to strive by the zeal to preach their Islamic beliefs can easily be seen in almost all *velayetnames*. Hadji Bektash, the patron saint of the Bektashi Order and one of the foremost figures that strongly influenced contemporary sufi life, is said to have been sent by Ahmet Yesevi to enlighten (*irşad*) the Asia Minor (*diyâr-ı rum*) in

⁴⁵ Ménage, “Islamization of Anatolia”, p. 66.

⁴⁶ Vryonis, “Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor”, *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*, Malibu, 1981, p.66.

⁴⁷ For more reading on the similar rituals, double sacred places and religious figures of Christians and Muslims see F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, Oxford, 1929, II; Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, “Co-Existence and Religion”, *AO*, 15, 1997; Ahmet Y. Ocak, “XII. ve XV. Yüzyıllarda Anadolu'da Türk- Hristiyan Dini Etkileşimler ve Aya Yorgi (Saint Georges) kültü”, *Belleten*, 214, 1991; Nevra Necipoğlu, “The Coexistence of Turks and Greeks in Medieval Anatolia (Eleventh-Twelfth Centuries)”, *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 5, 1999- 2000, pp. 58- 76.

the *velayetname* attributed to him.⁴⁸ Hacım Sultan, one of the *halifes* of Hadji Bektash, was sent by his sheikh to *Germiyan ili* to guide the people of that district into the right path.⁴⁹ Abdal Musa fought in the first half of his life for religion and then established his hospice to teach first of all his disciples in the hospice and then other people.⁵⁰ According to the *velayetname*, towards the end of his life Abdal Musa sent his disciples to several regions to teach true way of religion.⁵¹ Similarly, Seyyit Ali Sultan and his forty companions came to the Ottoman lands in order to conquer Rumeli, thus to spread Islam in the infidel lands.⁵² It is possible to add more names to the list. Almost every *velayetname* introduce its hero with a mission to enlighten some region. This mission includes preaching Islam among infidels and convincing them to convert as well as teaching their interpretation of Islamic way of life among Muslim rural masses.

The conversion of an 'infidel' was usually followed by a miraculous act of a sheikh. Abdal Musa, for example, turns a cup of wine of an infidel into honey by his supernatural powers. After seeing that, the infidel becomes Muslim.⁵³ There are more similar cases in the *Velayetname* of Seyyit Ali Sultan. In all, Seyyit Ali or one of his companions shows his mysterious powers during the fight and overcomes his enemy. Before killing the enemy he offers Islam. If the infidel accepts Islam, then the dervish frees him. If he does not, the punishment was clear: death by the sword of the ghazi-dervish.

We see three main stages of conversion available in almost all cases: at the first stage the convert was subject to the convenience of conversion. This was carried

⁴⁸ See Uzun Firdersi, *Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş Veli*, ed. Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, İstanbul, 1958; Derviş Burhan, *Velayetname-i Kolu Açık Hacım Sultan* ed. Mustafa Erbay, Ankara, 1993, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Derviş Burhan, p.28.

⁵⁰ See "Abdal Musa" in this study.

⁵¹ See Güzel, *Velayetname*, pp. 151-152.

⁵² See Noyan, *Velayetname*, pp. 78- 80; "Seyyit Ali Sultan" in this study.

⁵³ Güzel, *Velayetname*, pp.145- 146.

out usually through a miraculous act of certain sheikh (or sometimes done by force as in the case of Seyyit Ali Sultan). Then the convert apprehend the true path by the help of the sheikh and decided to accept Islam. And finally, his performing of *şehadet*, ablutions, circumcisions, and adoption of a Muslim name were accomplished. These were the standard steps in the departure from the Christian community and entrance to the Muslim congregation. Usually, the process was accompanied by celebration, music, and parades.⁵⁴

D. DERVISH AS COLONIZER

The role of dervishes in the colonization of newly conquered lands by Islamic-Turkish elements during the early period of the Ottoman Empire was discussed in length by Ömer Lütü Barkan in his article “Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri”⁵⁵. In this study, which became a classic in the field, Barkan, using *tahrir* registers about *vakf* lands bestowed to dervishes by the Ottoman sultans, showed the pioneering role of dervishes in turning the newly conquered territories into Muslim-Turkish lands.

In fact, there is not much to add to the comprehensive analysis of Barkan. However, what I would like to do here is to give a brief description of the process that Barkan broadly discussed in order to complete the picture concerning the role of dervishes in the fourteenth century Ottoman frontier society. In addition, I will also give examples from *velayetnames* that show striking conformity with the formulation put forward by Barkan.

⁵⁴ Vryonis, “Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor”, p. 67.

⁵⁵ See Ömer Lütü Barkan, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu Olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler: İstila Devrinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve Zaviyeler”, *VD*, II, 1942.

According to Barkan, sufi dervishes did not only provide believer warrior supply for the Ottoman army but also had very important function in the reshaping of the new social structure and political entities in the new lands by preaching religious and social ideas among folk masses.⁵⁶ Indeed, the significant contribution of the dervishes to the conquest, Islamization and Turkification of newly conquered lands, as discussed in the previous chapters, is apparent. However, their role in the early conquests of the Ottomans was not confined only to the military and religious affairs. These dervishes also played a considerable part in the establishment of cultural, economic, and even political institutions in the new territories.

The procedure was as follows: the process begins with a certain sheikh and his disciples' providing some services to the ruling dynasty, here the Ottomans. This can be direct participation in the fight against the enemies (as in the case of Seyyit Ali or Geyikli Baba) or some religious manifestations, which serve as a means for legitimization in the public mind (as in the case of Kumral Abdal and Edabali) of the Ottoman rule. Then the sultan gives some lands from newly conquered territories, usually abandoned, to the sheikh and his disciples in return for their service. And finally, dervishes establish their hospice on this bestowed land and continue their mystic life there with agricultural, economic, social, and cultural activities.

However, sultans gave these *vakf* lands to dervishes with certain public duties. First of all, these *vakf* lands were abandoned. So dervishes are expected to reclaim these lands by establishing hospices. They turned useless fields into agricultural and economic centers. Around most of the hospices founded by dervishes in such lands gradually emerged a village settlement. In this way many villages came into existence, which were populated predominantly by Muslims.

⁵⁶ Barkan, p. 283.

According to *vakf* registers, the state gave the right to administer the *vakf* to a certain sheikh and his descendants provided that they should serve the needs of travelers passing through (*ayende ve revendeye hizmet ideler*). In the case of not fulfilling their duties, the sultan had the right to take the *vakf* back to give it to another sheikh.⁵⁷

The life of Seyyit Ali Sultan and Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi, according to the *velayetname*, serve two excellent examples of the procedure described above. They first came to Rumeli in order to help the Ottoman sultan in the Holy War against “infidels” and to enlarge the realm of Islam. They fought and conquered lands and fortresses. At the end they were given lands as *vakf* in a certain region in the newly conquered territories, which had in fact been conquered by themselves. And finally, they established their hospices, where they continued mystic life accompanied with some economic, social, and cultural activities. The *velayetname* states that, for example, Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi found his hospice in a region, which was bestowed to him by Bayezid I. As time passed, some people began to gather around him as his disciples. They established a mill, for which the water was provided, according to the *velayetname*, by a miracle of Seyyit Rüstem Ghazi. The hospice gradually became an economic and social center in the region.⁵⁸ The situation was more or less same for Seyyit Ali Sultan. However, the *velayetname* does not mention any *vakf* in his name, the detail of which is found in the *tahrir* registers⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ See, “İnalçık, “Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış”, p.49; Barkan, pp.192- 293.

⁵⁸ Noyan, *Velayetname*, pp. 110-114.

⁵⁹ See “Seyyit Ali Sultan” in this study.

CONCLUSION

The first century of the Ottoman history is still full of discussion and of conflicts of opposite hypothesis. It seems, from the general frame the question and from the spectrum of the ideas put forward that this discussion will continue for a while. However, what is imperative for the historian's craft that every participant brings some contribution to the discussion whether slight or significant and shed light to the question. Today, we certainly know more about the early Ottomans compared to the scholars of the first half of the last century. Through its long trajectory, many historians contributed to the discussion. But among them, Köprülü, Wittek, İnalcık, and Imber must be seen as the most prominent.

Historians have sought the dynamics behind the Ottoman success in the fourteenth century and attempted to draw a realistic picture which was partly dealt with in the introduction. Presently, what is accepted among almost all scholars involved in the discussion that the issue should be analyzed as a multidimensional problem of history. The reductionist attitudes, such as Wittek's, can hardly find adherents among modern scholars.

When approached the question as a complex historical issue, one would immediately notice sociological, economic, military, political, cultural, and religious components. In such a frame, the role of dervishes in the early Ottoman history has been referred to by many historians such as Babinger, Köprülü, Wittek, Hasluck, Barkan, and İnalcık. But the issue is still far from being satisfactorily explained. In this thesis I have tried to focus on these dervishes and analyze their role from various perspectives.

The early conquests of the Ottomans in Bythinia and in the Thrace must be analyzed not only in political and military terms, but also in its social, religious, and cultural contexts. As already known, the Ottomans pursued the policy of “*istimalet*” in the newly conquered Christian lands¹. According to this policy they never forced Christians neither to convert nor to accept the cultural and moral norms of the conquerors. But after two centuries after the conquests, the significant portion of these lands was populated by Muslims. This was not because the Christians were killed or forced to migrate but, due partly to their conversion to Islam. The immigrant Turkomans from Asia Minor had also considerable part in the religious and ethnic change of the region. Furthermore, this was not only the change of religion, but, at the same time, the Bythinia region and the Thrace had gradually experienced a fundamental transformation in social, cultural, and demographic structures.

In such a transformation, which is more visible in the lower strata of the society, the state power alone was not enough. At this point, we see dervishes on the scene. They played a catalyzing role not only between the state authority and the rural population, but also between the Christian and Muslim society during the fourteenth century.

¹ See İnalcık, “Osmanlı Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış”, p. 42.

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