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Early and Recent Formulations of Theories for a Formative Christian Heterodox Impact on Alevism

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The possibility of an interchange and continuities between the pre-Ottoman Christian Balkan and Anatolian heterodoxies and heresies and Ottoman Alevism (*Alevilik)*/Kızılbaşism (*Kızılbaşlık*) and Bektashism has attracted some attention among Byzantinists, Balkanists, Ottomanists as well as anthropologists pursuing field work on popular Islam and Christianity in these areas but largely has remained a sphere which still needs an in-depth, systematic investigation. Given the diverse nature of the evidence which needs to be assembled, published and analyzed, progress in this specific area of study has been understandably slow and uneven. This, however, has not prevented the continuing creation and circulation of sweeping explanatory schemes linking pre-Ottoman and Ottoman heresies and heterodoxies in popular historiogaphies as well as in supposedly scholarly publications, variously betraying combinations of nationalist, political and confessional agendas. Such ideologized appropriations and exploitations of this under-explored field seem unsurprising, given its significant implications for such greater fields such as the interrelations between Christianity and Islam and process of Islamization during the Ottoman era, which assumed increasing relevance in the developing local Balkan historiographies of the late- and post-Ottoman period as well as in the contemporaneously evolving Ottoman studies in Europe.

Such early quests for a Christian heterodox/heretical provenance of *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism largely sought to detect and interpret Christian core elements in them in the context of explanatory schemas envisaging large-scale conversions of Christian sectarian communities to Islam during the early Ottoman period. According to some of these schemas the fortunes of the groups representing the two main forms of Anatolian and Balkan Christian heresy during and immediately after the Ottoman conquest of these areas, Paulicianism and Bogomilism (and related trends),[1] exemplify the most telling cases of such mass Christian conversion to Islam. Frequently, the main argument of the supporters of the theory of the speedy and thorough Islamization of the adherents of the Balkan-Byzantine Christian dualist movements is based on the assumption that it was a reaction against the secular and ecclesiastical measures and repressions repeatedly enforced against the dualist heretics in medieval Byzantium and the Balkan states in the pre-Ottoman era. The best known and most widely applied application of this theory argument concerns early Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina which underwent a sharp conflict between Catholicism and the followers of the Bosnian Church (known as 'Krstjani' and 'Patareni'), which included forcible conversions to Catholicism and the banishing of Bosnian

[1] On the history and beliefs of the Christian dualist movements and currents in the medieval Balkan-Byzantine world, see the primary sources assembled in J. Hamilton and B. Hamilton, eds., Y. Stoyanov, assist. ed., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c.650-c.1450* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

Patarenes, shortly before the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia and the assault on Herzegovina.[2] According to this line of argument these last waves of Catholic persecution of the followers of the Bosnian Church provoked the collaboration of the Bosnian Patarenes with the Ottoman conquerors and their mass conversion to Islam.[3] In spite of some controversial reports of

[2] This is not the place to discuss the difficult religious and historical problems posed by the association between Bogomilism (and later Catharism) with the origins and the evolution of the Bosnian Church, variously expounded in a number of, admittedly external, medieval sources. For the purposes of this article it is worth mentioning that the last references to dualist heretics in Bosnia date from the latter half of the fifteenth century and by that time Bosnia came to be routinely described by Catholic observers as a land inhabited by 'Manichaeans', see Y. Stoyanov, *The Other God. Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 225, 252-254.

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

Patarene or 'Manichaean' association with Ottoman military success in Bosnia (which should be treated with extreme caution) the subsequent studies of the extant evidence failed to substantiate this simplistic model of the Islamization of Bosnia. A succession of publications of the relevant primary sources has demonstrated the particular interplay between general factors (which are usually attested as facilitating Islamization processes in Islamic powers'-occupied lands) with specific local factors (like the lack of religious uniformity and rivalries between Catholicism, Orthodoxy and the Bosnian Church) which conditioned the quick spread of Islam in Bosnia.[4]

Byzantine Culture among the Slavs (Chicago, Ill : The American Society of Church History 1933; repr. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books 1968), p. 182.

[4] While the sources for the progress of the Islamization in Bosnia clearly indicate that it won converts from all its three Christian "denominations", Catholicism, Orthodoxy and the followers of the Bosnian Church, at various stages and at various speed, certain aspects and phases of the process still continue to invite debates and contrasting interpretations. Cf. J. V. A. Fine, Jr, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation. a Study of the Bosnian Church and its Place in State and Society from the 13th to the 15th centuries*, (Boulder: New York: East European Quarterly: Columbia University Press 1975; repr. London: Saqi, in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2007), pp. 375-87; S. Džaja, *Die 'Bosnische Kirche' und das Islamisieungsproblem Bosniens und der Herzegowina in den Forschungen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 1978); A. Zheliazkova, *Razprostranenie na isliama v zapadnobalkanskite zemi pod osmanska vlast XV-XVIII v.* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bŭlgarskata akademiia na naukite 1990), pp. 120-141.

In some early approaches to the problem of Christian heretics' fortunes in the wake of the Ottoman conquest the crude and arbitrary 'Bosnian' model of Christian heretics opting to convert to Islam as a reaction against their suppression by Christian secular and ecclesiastical authorities was projected, with even less direct or circumstantial evidence, to other Ottoman-occupied Balkan and Anatolian areas where Bogomil or Paulician groups were known to have existed.[5] This projection of the Bosnian Islamisation model onto the whole of the Ottoman Balkans gave rise to excessive generalizations that the heretical Bogomils thus became the ancestors of the modern Slav-speaking Muslim groups in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece, the

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[5] See, for example, K. Irechek, *Istoriia na bŭlgarite,* tr. by N. A. Rainov i Z. Boiiadzhiev (Tŭrnovo, 1886: Pechtanitsa na K. Tuleshkov, 1886); 2nd ed., ed. by V. N. Zlatarski, tr. by A. Diamandiev and I. Raev (Sofia: S. Slavchev, 1929), pp. 271, 289; A. Teodorov-Balan, 'Bŭlgarskite katolitsi v Svishtovsko i tiahnata cherkovna borba'*, Letopis na bŭlgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo,* 2 (1902), pp. 101-211, esp. pp. 123ff.; L. Miletich, 'Nashite pavlikiani', *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniia, nauka i knizhnina,* 19 (1903), pp. 2ff. 21. Even the otherwise very carefully researched and authoritative study of D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils. A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), pp. 265-267, employs to some extent the Bosnian model to construe the possible fortunes of the Bogomils in the early Ottoman era, while making, however, the necessary remark that 'their exact behaviour towards the Turkish invaders is unknown'.

Pomaks, a standpoint which is still being occasionally articulated in one or another version even in scholarly publications.[6]

As in the case of early Ottoman Bosnia, the subsequent progress of research on the early Ottoman Balkans has made this Islamization model unsustainable and outdated. It is, of course, worth noting that when in the ninth century Byzantine anti-Paulician campaigns forced Paulician groups to flee to areas under and bordering Islamic control in eastern Anatolia, these groups formed strategic alliances with the local Arab powers. But these alliances are not attested to have led to the Islamization of these Paulician communities. Indeed, it was also the case that Paulician groups could also enter into a conflict with Islamic powers, significantly when Paulician communities in Thrace and northern Bulgaria (after being converted earlier to Catholicism by a number of Catholic missions) were drawn in the seventeenth-century Habsburg-Ottoman political and military struggles and upon facing Ottoman reprisals, were forced to flee to Wallachia and Banat in Vojvodina. The reports of the Catholic missions also demonstrate that their progress in some cases provoked the hostility of Ottoman authorities. In the climate of rising religious tensions that surrounded these Paulician communities most retained their new

[6] See, for example, S. Skendi, 'Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan area under the Ottomans', in *idem*, ed., *Balkan Cultural Studies* (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 26, 1980), pp. pp. 233-257, at 240. For more cautious approach to the problem of the emergence of the Slav-sepaking communities in the Balkans in the context of the inteeaction and syncretism between heretical and folk varieties of Christianity, popular Islam and crypto-Christianity, see V. Mutafchieva, 'Bŭlgarskoto obshtestvo pod osmanska vlast do Vŭzrazhdaneto i do iztochniia vupros', in I. Bozhilov *et al*, eds., *Istoriia na Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: Hristo Botev, 1993), pp. 137-163, at 197-199.

Catholic confession, but some chose to lapse back to Paulicianism or embrace Orthodoxy or Islam in smaller, but still not insubstantial numbers.[7] Moreover, the evolving study of the sources for the history of Balkan Paulicianism in the first two centuries of Ottoman hegemony in the Balkans indicates that Paulician communities may have existed in self-isolation but enjoyed stabilization and possibly, even a growth.[8] This evidence also demonstrates the untenability of the theory that in the early Ottoman period the Christian dualist sectarians embraced Islam hastily and in large numbers.

A different set of arguments proposed by the early proponents of the theory of a Christian dualist influx into Ottoman Islam attribute this postulated influx to what they recognize as resemblances and overlaps between Christian dualist and Islamic religiosity, namely the rejection of the cross, icon-veneration, baptism, sacraments, ecclesiastical ceremonial and

[7] On this process, see now the summary of the evidence in M. Iovkov, *Pavlikiani i pavlikianski selishta v bŭlgarskite zemi XV-XVIII v.* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Okhridski" 1991), pp. 55-66. Documents related to the Catholic missions in the Paulician areas have been published in B. Primov *et al.* (eds.), *Dokumenti za katolicheskata deinost v Bŭlgariia prez XVII vek* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Okhridski", 1993).

[8] On the increasing number of references to Paulician communities or villages and their most likely evolution in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Iovkov, *Pavlikiani*, pp. 30-34, 40, 43, 63, 75.

hierarchy.[9] These arguments have remained only theoretical constructs not only because of the arbitrary and selective manner in which they were advanced, but also because decades of research since these assertions were first made have failed to uncover any direct or indirect evidence to substantiate them. Furthermore, the parallels in the sphere of shared iconoclasm and non-sacramental attitudes cannot compensate for the fundamental and ultimately irreconcilable theological differences between Christian dualism and normative Islam in a number of essential spheres of belief and ritual. It is also worth noting in this connection that while Paulicianism remained a non-sacramental movement, the crucial salvationist significance of the Bogomil spiritual baptism, the *teleiosis*, made their religiosity more or less a sacramental one,[10] essentially comparable to the normative Church, but in marked contrast with the non-sacramental stance of normative Islam.

[9] For an early articulation of this line of argument, see, for example, Asboth, *Bosnien und die Herzegowina*, p. 87. For a subsequent, restricted and mitigated version of this view (suggested but not argued forcefully), see S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee. A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), p. 114.

[10] On the sacramental or semi-sacramental natural of the medieval Christian dualist system of the type represented by the Bogomils and their western co-religionists, the Cathars, see the arguments to that effect presented in J. van den Broek, 'The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics', in J. van den Broek *Studies in Alexandrian Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 157-78.

More recent attempts to advance propositions on the basis of aspects of the early hypothesis that large numbers of Christian dualist sectarians may have accepted Islam in the early Ottoman era have failed to add any substance to the earlier arguments, remaining like their early versions conjectures based on inconclusive theoretical presumptions.[11] At the same time, the growing awareness that early Ottoman Islam did not exemplify only normative Sunnism but had a more heterogeneous character represented by strong syncretistic, antinomian and Shia-related currents, sustained a continued interest in the origins and role of apparent Christian-like and Christian-related elements in the belief and ritual system of *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism. These elements were noticed by a number of early observers and explorers of the *Kızılbaş* but their comments and analysis were not necessarily objective and free of ideological or religious agendas. Some nineteenth-and early twentieth-century reports of Western scholars, Protestant missionaries and travellers show awareness of the long-standing official Sunni anti-*Kızılbaş*

[11] See, for example, Skendi, 'Crypto-Christianity', pp.240ff; J. Perkowski, 'New Light on the Origins of Bulgaria's Catholics and Muslims', *Religion, State and Society*, 22, No 1 (1994), pp. 103-109, esp. p. 104; F. H. Littell, *Historical Atlas of Christianity*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 105. For a discussion of the interesting parallel process of the introduction of Bogomil "Bosnian"/"heretical past" arguments in Albanian historiographic discourses, seeking to account for the massive Islamicization of Albanian communities in the Ottoman era, see N. Clayer, 'The Issue of 'Conversion to Islam' in the Restructuring of Albanian politics and Identity', repr. in *idem*, *Religion et nation chez les Albanais: XIXe-XXe siècles* (Istanbul: Isis, 2002), pp. 366, 368, 370-371,

attitudes and stereotypes and while describing the *Kızılbaş* as "semi-Christian", "debased Christian," descendants of forcibly Islamicized Christians or "crypto-Christian,"[12] they effectively question or even discard their actual belonging to the Islamic tradition as a whole. In the case of missionary reports such forging of such original or semi- Christian identity for the *Kızılbaş* provided also the needed legitimation and justification of missionary work among such

[12] See, for example, Ball, "Letter from Mr. Ball, 8 August 1857", *Missionary Herald,* 53 (1857), pp. 394-95; Comte de J.A. Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie, 1855-1858* (Paris: Hachette), 1859, pp. 339ff.; G. Nutting, "Mission to Central Turkey: Oorfa: Letter from Mr Nutting, 30 July 1860", *Missionary Herald,* 56 (November, 1860), pp. 345-47; E. Huntington, "Through the Great Canon of the Euphrates River", *The Geographical Journal*, 20 (1902), pp. 175-200; M. E. Grenard, "Une secte religieuse d'Asie Mineure: les Kyzyl-Bâchs", *Journal Asiatique*, ser. 10, 3 (1904), pp. 511-22, esp. 513 ff.; G. E. White, "Survivals of Primitive Religion. Among the People of Asia Minor", *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute,* 39 (1907), pp. 146-66, esp. 161 ff.; *idem*, "The Shia Turks", *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, 40, 1908, pp. 225-39, esp. 231ff.; S. van R. Trowbridge, "The Alevis, or Deifires of Ali", *Harvard Theological Review*, 2 (1909), pp. 340-53; W. M. Ramsay, *The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor: Some of its Causes and Effects,* Repr. from *Proceedings of the British Academy,* vol. 7 (London: H. Milford, 1917), esp. 20ff.; F. M. Stead, "The Ali Ilahi Sect in Persia", *The Moslem World,* 22:2 (1932), pp. 184-89.

heterodox sectarian groups in the Ottoman empire.[13] Apart from aspiring to uncover what they saw as concealed Christian core layers in *Kızılbaşlık*, these first records of Western intellectual and theological encounters with the *Kızılbaş* also foreshadow the subsequent popular and scholarly interest in the provenance and raison d'etre of these posited Christian strata in *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism.

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

In the post-Ottoman Christian-majority successor states the new political and cultural élites' advanced differing and changing strategies for refashioning collective identities and dealing with the inherited multiconfessional polities in their territories. It is hardly surprising that the thesis of the original Christian identity of the Balkan *Kızılbaş* groups was to undergo various types of ideologization and periodically enjoyed an understandable currency in local scholarly and popular discourses. However, its characteristic most extreme exaggerations and sweeping generalizations were gradually shown to be extreme and sweeping countered by the unfolding, again locally (and against the background of European developments in the field), proper and less biased research on the various Alevi and Bektashi teachings and practices and the important evidence it was producing.[14] Inevitably the study of both *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism was variously incorporated into expanding and promising fields such as the evolution and main forms of Christian-Islamic syncretism in the Ottoman era,[15] the dervish orders' involvement in the

[14] See the surveys of the development of the local studies of the Alevi and Bektashi Balkan groups in religio-historical contexts linking them to their co-religionists in Anatolia and the Middle East in N. Gramatikova, "Changing Fates and the Issue of Alevi Identity in Bulgaria," in A. Zhelyazkova and J. Nielsen, eds., *Ethnology of Sufi Orders: Theory and Practice: Proceedings of the British-Bulgarian Workshop on Sufi Orders 19-23 May 2000, Sofia, Bulgaria*, **(**Sofia: IMIR:2001), pp. 564-622, at 567-581; L. Mikov, *Kultova arhitektura i izkustvo na heterodoksnite miusulmani v Bŭlgaria (XVI -XX vek) bektashi kŭzŭlbashi/alevii* (Sofia: AI "Marin Drinov", 2005, repr. 2007), pp. 21-33 *passim*.

process, the various attempts at rapprochement between Christianity and Islam and the phenomenon and local variants of crypto-Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia.[16] The existing interest in a potential Christian impact on Alevism and Bektashism, as articulated by some of the nineteenth-century European stances concerning the *Kızılbaş*, was reinforced by the increasing availability of newly published material and the emergence of more critical approaches to the problematic. Such a Christian impact came to be sought mainly in the fields of

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[15] The assembling and analyses of extremely valuable material related to the interaction and syncreticism of popular Islamic and Christian traditions in the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia in F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), has been succeeded by a number of studies exploring further cases of such syncretism and interchange or re-examining Hasluck's material and interpretations. For a helpful collection of such studies, see D. Shankland, ed., *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: the Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*, 2 vols., (Istanbul: Isis, 2004).

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

Alevi and Bektashi cult observances, forms of worship, initiatory ceremonies, celebration and adoption of Christian or Christian-like festivals and saints.[17]

Regardless of the increasingly apparent demise of the thesis that Balkan-Byzantine Christian dualist movements were assimilated *en masse* into Ottoman Islam, interest in the possibility of a Christian heretical/heterodox impact on Alevism and Bektashism maintained a fluctuating currency, dependent on occasions on the changing religious and political circumstances in the post-Ottoman, Communist and post-Communist Balkans and contemporary Turkey. As in the case with the arguments for an original Christian identity of the *Kızılbaş*, this scholarly and general interest was on occasions underpinned by an explicit or implicit aspiration to "indigenize" these communities/minorities in local, regional and national contexts.[18] But more

[17] For an overview of the arguments for Christian influences on *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektashism and postulated examples of such influences, see Y. Stoyanov, "On Some Parallels between Anatolian and Balkan Heterodox Islamic Traditions and the Problem of their Coexistence and Interaction in the Ottoman Period", in G. Veinstein, ed., *Syncrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seldjoukide et ottoman (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle). Actes du Colloque du Collège de France, octobre 2001* (Paris & Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), pp. 75-119, at pp. 94-99.

[18] For early articulations of the theory that the Alevis in the north-eastern Balkans were originally Christian heretics who were converted to Islam in the Ottoman era, see D. Marinov, "Narodna viara i religiozni narodni obichai", S*bornik za narodni umotvoreniia, nauka i knizhnina*, 28 (1914), pp. 423f.(with arguments that they were forced to undergo Islamicization); V. Marinov, *Deliorman (Iuzhna chast). Oblastno-geografsko izuchavane, (*Sofia: Self-published, 1941), pp.

scholarly valid and worthy vistas for exploration of this problematic also emerged, as some scholars began to draw attention to and explore the data indicating that certain Balkan and Anatolian areas which were reportedly during the Middle Ages hotbeds of Christian heterodox and heretical presence and agitation, during various period of the Seljuk (in Anatolia) and the Ottoman eras became also centers of Islamic heterodoxy and heresy, posing political and religious challenges for the Seljuk and Ottoman authorities. The possibility of actual historical links and continuity between the earlier manifestations of Christian heterodoxy and the later occurrences of Islamic heterodoxy which emerged in the same or adjacent areas came to be seen as a question which deserved proper investigation. Such questions are raised particularly in the case of the earlier significant presence of the Paulicians in central and eastern Anatolian regions like Cilicia and Cappadocia(especially in the Erzincan-Divriği-Sivas area) and the later appearance of the Baba'î and *Kızılbaş* groups and activities in the same or adjacent areas[19] as

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54f., 79-80 (with general arguments for a continuity between earlier Christian and latter Islamic sectarianism in the Deliorman area in the north-east Balkans).

[19] See F. Cumont, 'Kizil Bash', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, with the assist. of J. A. Selbie *et al***,** vol. 7 (Edinburgh : T. & T. Clark ; New York : C. Scribner's Sons 1914), pp. 744-45 at p. 745; F. Köprülü, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion*, tr. ed. and intr. by G. Leiser (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1993), pp. 60n12, 72n46; V. Ivanow, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan*: *Ahl-i haqq Texts* (Bombay: Maṭba'-i Qādirī, 1950), pp. 48-49 (referring to Upper Mesopotamia as a center of Paulician activities succeeded by the spread of the Ahl-e Haqq); M. Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: the ghulat sects* (New York:

well as the persistence of Christian heterodoxy and dualist heresy in pre-Ottoman Bosnia and the movement of the Mālamī Shaykh Hamza of early Ottoman Bosnia.[20]

Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 435ff.; I. Mélikoff, 'Recherches sur le composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi', in *idem, Sur le traces du soufisme turc. Recherches sur l'Islam populaire ena Anatolie* (Istanbul: Isis, 1992), pp. 59-60; *idem*, 'Bektashi/*Kızılbaş*: Historical Bipartition and its Consequences', in T. Olsson, E. Özdalga and C. Raudvere, eds., *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives (*Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 1998), p . 6; *idem, Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars: genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) pp. 163-64; *idem*, 'Universalisme et Gnosticisme dans les heterodoxies du Proche et du Moyen-Orient', pp. 20-21; A. Y. Ocak, 'Un aperçu général sur l"hétérodoxie musulmane en Turquie: réflexions sur les origines et les caractéristiques du Kizilbachisme (Alévisme) dans la perspective de l'histoire', in K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean, eds., *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 198ff.

[20] On the movement of the Mālamī Shaykh Hamza Cf. the approaches of Imber, 'Malāmatiyya', p. 227; Norris, *Islam in the Balkans*, p. 117; G. Veinstein and N. Clayer, 'L'empire ottoman', in A. Popović and G. Veinstein (eds.), *Les voies d'Allah. Les ordres mystiques dans le monde musulman des origines aujourd'hui* (Paris: Fayard, 1966), p. 336; S. Ilić, "Hamzeviiskaia i hurufitskaia eres v Bosni kak reaktsiia na politicheskiı krizis Ottomanskoi imperii vo vtoroi polovine XVI stoletiia", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 28:1–2 (2000), pp. 34–40.

To these areas one can add regions in Thrace and Macedonia which in the Middle Ages were known as continual centers of Christian heterodoxy or heresy and where in the Ottoman era there occurred a substantial concentration of Bektashi and other Islamic heterodox groups – a noticeable example is the enduring Paulician (and possibly Bogomil) presence in the area around Philippopolis/Plovdiv (which in the case of the Paulicians persisted through the Ottoman period), and the establishment and spread of Hurufism in the same area in the sixteenth century.[21] However, while remaining a field which certainly merits further investigation, with the present state of evidence and research these proposed continuities on the basis of geographic proximities remain conjectural. Consequently, claims made by some explorers of Bektashism that it 'absorbed Muslim as well as Christian sects'[22] or that in Thrace 'Bektashism was the successor in the Turkish period of the various Christian heresies that had previously obtained in Thrace'[23] need to be backed up by some kind of evidence to avoid being seen as sweeping and inconclusive conjectures. The problem of whether some of the various forms of Christian-Islamic syncretism in the Ottoman era extended also to the spheres of Christian and Islamic

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

[22] R. Tschudi, 'Bektashiyya', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1960), p. 1162.

[23] E. Zenkines, *Ho bektasismos ste D. Thrake: symvole sten historia tes diadoseos tou Mousoulmanismou ston Helladiko choro* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1988) p. 249.

heterodoxy and heresy can be approached only the basis of a thorough investigation of the diverse sets of religious, political and social circumstances which conditioned the formation of an environment particularly conducive to the interaction and syntheses of both learned and popular forms of Islam and Christianity. Such an investigation can properly assess claims that the claims that Bektashism was well established in areas where Crypto-Christianity 'prospered'[24] and traditions reported among some Bektashis that their ancestors had been Christian.[25] Relevant arguments for a comparable Christian heterodox impact on other non-orthodox Islamic religious groups in the Near East (such as the arguable Armenian Adoptionist Christology influence on some specific Ahl-e Haqq teachings)[26] can also be brought profitably into such discussions.

Significantly, concurrent with the intensification of the general and scholarly debates focused on Alevi identity (which have developed from the 1980s onwards in Turkey, the Alevi diaspora in Europe and the late Communist and post-Communist Balkans), some important

[24] Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity", pp. 249-50.

[25] See, for example, the reported tradition among the Bektashis of Strumica (Macedonia) that the Bektashi ancestors originated from the Constantinople Christians before its Ottoman conquest in M. Filipović, "The Bektashis in the District of Strumica (Macedonia)", *Man,* 54 (Jan 1954), pp. 10-13, at p. 11; on the oral traditions concerning the Christian origins of Alevis in the Deli Orman area, see F. de Jong, "Problems concerning the Origins of the Qizilbāṣ in Bulgaria: Remnants of the Safaviyya?", in *Convegno sul tema: La Shi'a nell'Impero Ottomano (Roma, 15 Aprile 1991)* (Rome: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1993), pp. 203-16, at 207.

[26] Ivanow, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan*, pp. 51-53.

advances in research on Alevi and Bektashi religious and cultic sites in the Balkans and Anatolia, anthropological fieldwork and work on Ottoman source material have shed further light on various aspects of the chronology, history and belief systems of the *Kızılbaş* groups and the Bektashi order during the Ottoman period. These advances made it possible to put the study of the interaction between Christian and Islamic heterodoxies under the Ottomans on a more solid and extensive base but regardless of and ignoring these developments, there also appeared attempts to resurrect the thesis of a formative Christian heterodox/heretical impact on *Kızılbaşlık* (and to some extent on Bektashism) in its early and uncritical version. As these attempts materialized in the shape of publications in academic journals and published dissertation, their approach and possible ideological underpinnings deserve closer attention and analysis.

These publications are concerned predominantly with Alevism in the Balkans and Turkey, although the issue of the interrelations of Christian heterodoxy and Bektashism has continued to attract some attention in post-Communist Albania in the context of the Bektashi revival which began in the early 1990s. Publications of this kind treating Alevism in the Balkans (mostly Bulgaria) focus in particular on the resemblances between the customs and feasts of Alevi communities in some regions and those of their Eastern Orthodox neighbours and highlight their predictable differences from the corresponding observances of local Sunni Muslims.[27] This approach clearly reflects and re-asserts the earlier methods of the indigenization

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

thesis which sought to locate the identity of Balkan Alevis in the local Christian environment of the relevant area and de-emphasize their links with their co-religionists in Anatolia and other heterodox religious minorities in the Near East, methods effectively intended to question their status as belonging to the Islamic tradition as a whole.[28] Apart from its obvious ideological agendas, such re-deployment of these earlier indigenization approach is either oblivious to or deliberately ignores the recent advances in the study of *Kızılbaş*/Alevi and Bektashi syncretism. These advances have convincingly shown, especially in the Alevi case, its fluid and heterogeneous character, highlighting also the untenability of research methods similar and related to the indigenization approach discussed above which focuses on what may be later and locally-derived elements in Alevism, but chooses at the same time to discount its core and demonstrably archaic layers, as manifested in the primary written source material and in the published results of more rigorous field-work explorations of Alevi oral history and rural communities ethnography.

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pp. 97-125 (this book represents the published version of a dissertation defended at the University of Veliko Tŭrnovo, Bulgaria).

[28] Apart from the references in n. 18, for forceful assertions of the indigenization thesis, see also A. Iavashov, *Teketo Demir Baba, bŭlgarska starina-svetinia* (Razgrad, 1934); E. Teodorov, 'Proizkhod na na niakoi predaniia i legendi v Ludogorieto', *Ezik i literatura*, 2 (1973), 45-57; *idem*, 'Prabŭlgarski elementi v obredi, obichai i viarvaniia na naselenieto v Severoiztochna Bŭlgariia', *Bŭlgarski folklor*, 3 (1981), pp. 5-13.

Similar ahistorical and anachronistic presumptions coupled with crude, simplistic methodologies underlie the arguments advanced in these publications to prove that the Alevis in Bulgaria descend from the medieval Christian dualist Bogomils. These arguments are based on a number of alleged analogies which are supposed to demonstrate that the Islamic heterodoxy of the Alevis derives from Bogomil Christian heresy. Some of these analogies such as the esotericism/secrecy[29] and pacifism/aversion to bloodshed[30] attributed to the Alevis and Bogomils are shared in a number of trends of earlier, contemporaneous and later Christian and Muslim sectarianism and thus are too general and inconclusive to be included even in a fairly uncritical consideration of such possible continuity between the two movements. For the same reasons even more general and thus utterly inapplicable in such framework are arguments based, for example, on perceived analogies between the significance of the numbers seven and twelve[31] and some notions of visionary mysticism in Bogomilism and Alevism[32] – such usage has important precedents in Islamic heterodox, mystical and initiatory traditions which form a natural and logical provenance for both traditions in Alevism.

Equally unaware of earlier and more recent discussions of the role of Islamic heterodoxy in Alevi and Bektashi syncreticism (not to mention other elements such as the much debated Turkish shamanic and Iranian layers) are all of the other arguments for correlations between

[29] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', p. 27; Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite*, pp. 43, 59, 85, 151-52.

[30] Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite*, p. 60.

[31] Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite*, p. 70.

[32] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', pp. 31-32.

Bogomilism and Alevism in spheres such as organizational hierarchy[33] and socio-political attitudes.[34] The arguments for an equivalence between the roles of Archangel Michael in Bogomilism and Gabriel/Cebrail in Alevism[35] are likewise theologically unsustainable – the archangels have very different, and on some occasions, contrasting place in the respective Bogomil and Alevi angelologies. The same applies to the attempted analogies between diabological/demonological notions in Alevism and the more developed satanology in Bogomilism[36] in addition to the just as fruitless efforts to identify general resemblances in the area of eschatological and cosmological beliefs[37] - all of which are based on a very few randomly presented notions of secondary importance to both Alevi and Bogomil systems but without even rudimentary references to their basic outlines. Among the most anachronistic arguments for continuity between Bogomilism and Alevism is the claim that the dancing scenes on the monolithic late medieval tombstones in Bosnia and Hezegovina , the *stécci*, (the theory of a link between these scenes and Bogomilism was discredited a few decades ago) are the prototype of the ceremonial *semah* dance among the Alevis.[38]

Partially based on recent fieldwork among Alevi communities in Bulgaria, these publications actually present some interesting findings and it is very unfortunate that the authors have chosen to force this material into preconceived schemas of a posited impact of Bogomilism

[33] Kasabov, *Kŭzŭlbashite*, pp. 70, 146-148.

[34] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', pp. 33-34.

[35] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', p. 31.

[36] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', pp. 28-29, 33,

[37] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', pp. 27, 29-30.

[38] R. Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', p. 28.

on Alevism rather than presenting it as a contribution to the steadily developing evidence-based study of Alevism in the Balkans which have enriched substantially our knowledge of its local versions, cultic sites and types of syncreticism. [39] In two cases, however, the material presented

[39] For studies presenting valuable new material and analyses of the history and beliefs of the *Kızılbaş* and Bektashism in the eastern Balkans, see, for example, I. Mélikoff, 'La Communauté *Kızılbaş* du Deli Orman en Bulgarie', repr. in *idem, Sur le traces du soufisme Turc*, pp. 105-15; I. Georgieva, ed., *Bŭlgarskite aliani, Sbornik etnograficheski materiali* (Sofia: UI "Sv. Kliment Okhridski", 1991); de Jong, "Problems concerning the Origins of the Qizilbāş; T. Zarcone, "Nouvelles perspectives dans les recherches sur les *Kızılbaş*-Alévis et les Bektachis de la Dobroudja, de Deli Orman et de la Thrace orientale" (*Anatolia Moderna-Yani Anadolu*, 4, 1992), pp. 1-11; N. Gramatikova, "Isliamski neortodokslani techeniia v bŭlgarskite zemi", in Rossitsa Gradeva, ed., *Istoriia na miusulmanskata kultura po bŭlgarskite zemi*. *Izsledvaniia*, vol. 7 (Sofia: IMIR 2001), pp. 199-270; *idem*, "Otman Baba – One of the Spiritual Patrons of Islamic Heterodoxy in Bulgarian Lands", *Études balkaniques*, 3 (2002), pp. 71-102; B. Aleksiev, *Folklorni profili na miusulmanski svetsi v Bŭlgaria* (Sofia: AI "Marin Drinov", 2005); H. Norris, *Popular Sufism in Eastern Europe: Sufi Brotherhoods and the Dialogue with Christianity and "Heterodoxy"* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), ch. 5; Mikov, *Kultova arhitektura*; *idem*, "Tipologichno shodtsvo mezhdu kulturnite traditsii na ahiite ot Anadola i heterodoksnite miusulmani v Bŭlgaria (bektashi i kŭzŭlbashi/alevii', *Bŭlgarski folklor*, 35:1 (2009), pp. 108-133; *idem*, 'Za institutsiiata dzhem/giol i tseremoniiata aiin-i dzhem pri heterodoksnite miusulmani v Bŭlgaria', in D. Madzharov i K. Stoilov, eds., *V sveta na choveka*. *Sbornik v chest na prof. d. i.n. Ivanichka Georgieva* (Sofia: UI "Sv. Kliment Okhridski", 2008), pp. 21-47.

in these publications has potentially important relevance to the study of the interaction between Christian and Islamic heterodoxies in the Ottoman Balkans. The first case concerns a recorded Alevi tradition from the Deliorman area, according to which it was Ali himself who created the human body from mud and endeavored to animate it but the soul was constantly slipping out of the body, as it derived from the devil.[40] This highly heterodox anthropogonic Alevi teaching is evidently related to another Alevi tradition recorded in the same area which narrates that after creating man from mud God unsuccessfully tried to animate the human body but against his intentions the soul was constantly leaving the body.[41] Then *şeytan*, the devil, entered the human body to demonstrate to the soul how to stay and move in the body and after that left the body. Consequently, each man has retained some 'satanic' elements which provokes him to do evil – in this anthropological dualism a *şeytan* continues to stand by the left shoulder of each man, inciting him to perform wicked deeds,[42] thus a number of Alevi ritual practices are intended to ward off this archetypally established influence of the *şeytan*.

While clearly drawing on some Islamic post-Koranic traditions, according to which Iblīs entered and went out of the clay-made body of Adam before God blew the spirit into it, these Alevi beliefs also display interesting analogies to the central Bogomil anthropogonic teachings, but presents, furthermore, some significant differences which do not allow categorization of the

[40] Records in Historical Museum, Silistra, Section 'Vŭzrazhdane', Inventory No. 193 (treated in Lipchev, 'Bogomilski elementi', p. 30).

[41] Georgieva, *Bŭlgarskite aliani*, p. 93.

[42] Georgieva, *Bŭlgarskite aliani*, p. 174.

two traditions as identical.[43] A careful examination of these parallels also needs to take into account some interesting parallels in the cosmogonic systems of Bogomilism and Alevism, shared also in popular Christian cosmogonies in South-Eastern Europe whose interaction with Bogomil and apocryphal traditions is attested in an impressive array of evidence.[44] An assessment of the direct and circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that these Alevi anthropogonic notions were shaped under outside influence which was exercised, however, most likely not by a Bogomil doctrinal tradition but by popular Bogomil-influenced popular anthropogonies which led to the emergence of dualist tendencies in these and related Alevi beliefs but not to a Gnostic-like dualist teaching.[45] This again highlights the importance of the needed research on the cosmogonic, anthropogonic and diabological traditions of the Balkan Alevi communities in the framework of potential other points of contact with heterodox and popular Balkan Christianity in the eastern Balkans, an area of study which will also need to integrate a comparative analysis of the corresponding relevant material in Anatolian Alevism, Bektashism and heterodox Islam in general.

The manner in which the above re-formulations of the thesis of a formative Christian heretical layer in Balkan Alevism have chosen to fit otherwise interesting evidence into a construction of religious history predetermined in accordance with the thesis' presuppositions thus invalidates their conclusions but does not invalidate the evidence itself. The same cannot be

[43] See the analysis of both traditions in Stoyanov, 'On Some Parallels', pp. 114-116.

[44] On this interaction, see Stoyanov, 'On Some Parallels', p. 82 (with bibliographic references in n. 13).

[45] Stoyanov, 'On Some Parallels', pp. 116-118.

said about some more recent re-assertions of this theory regarding Anatolian Alevism which have taken the far more adventurous step of actually altering the primary source material to back up the arguments. This has been accomplished in three successive books of Erdoğan Çınar in which the author misuses and mistranslates fragments of medieval source texts related to Anatolian Paulicianism, which are obviously seen as most suitable for his arguments for a direct continuity between Paulicianism and Alevism.[46] To substantiate this supposed continuity the author introduces in the translated source texts' fragments Alevi and Alevi-related terminology into the translated fragments of source texts in key areas such as the references to Paulician organizational hierarchy[47] and general religious vocabulary[48], the network of Paulician communities/churches[49], the description of their assemblies[50] as well as some other changes, omissions and additions in the texts intended to serve the same purpose. In addition, a number of geographic location in the original material are also amended (and some new locations added) to

[46] E. Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Yılı* (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayıları, 2007); *idem*, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi* (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayıları, 2007); *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri* (Istanbul: Kalkedon Yayıları, 2008).

[47] Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, p. 145, 158; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, pp. 142-143.

[48] Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, p. 158.

[49] Çınar, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, pp. 143, 149; *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, p. 158.

[50] Çınar, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, p. 144; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, p. 137.

bring into close proximity or show as identical the Paulician and Alevi centers and heartlands.[51] Çınar's outrageous violation of original evidence has been noted and exposed[52] but it has already inmanaged to add more controversies to the ongoing debates in Turkey on Alevi origins and identity, especially in its popular and media outlets.

In the case of Anatolian Alevism, Çınar's books represent probably the most systematic attempt to expound and verify the thesis that Ottoman Alevism was simply a new version of the Christian heresies of the medieval Balkan-Byzantine world, an attempt which also sought to revolutionize the problematic by falsifying original textual evidence and publishing the resultant fabricated mistranslations. Çınar's reinvention of the theory of the equation between Alevism and preceding Balkan-Byzantine Christian heresies has implications for several crucial areas of disputes over the competing definitions of the essence and religious affinities of Alevism in Turkey, with its characteristic and increasing plurality of discourses.[53] Significantly, these area include the debates (developing both in Turkey and among the Alevi diaspora communities in

[51] Çınar, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, pp. 78, 140, 143.

[52] H. Aksut, H. Harmancı and Ünsal Öztürk , *Alevi Tarıh Yazmında Skandal* (Istanbul: Yurt Kıtap, 2010).

[53] These discourses are summarized and analyzed, for example, in K. Vorhoff, ""Let's reclaim our history and culture!"— Imagining Alevi community in contemporary Turkey", *Welt des Islams* 38 (1998), pp. 220–252; *idem*, "Discourses on the Alevis in Contemporary Turkey", in K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean, eds., *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 94-110.

Europe) whether Alevism should be defined as an authentic Islamic tradition, a secularizing version of Islam or an extra-Islamic faith altogether. It combines, moreover, elements of the indigenization thesis (as advanced in the post-Ottoman Balkans but employed with a different socio-religious agenda) with what has been aptly defined as a "pre-continuity" approach,[54] continuously utilized in the Balkans from the late nineteenth century until today, in which a postulated pre-Ottoman heretical past becomes the basis for the re-legitimization of the identity of Slav- and Albanian-speaking Muslim communities (an approach, which, again, is revised in accordance with the different problematic and preoccupations of the existing Turkish discourses on Alevism).

The recent reformulations of the earlier thesis of a decisive Christian heretical/heterodox impact on Alevism in the Balkans and Turkey, demonstrate, therefore, that like the other early theory of the mass Islamization of medieval Balkan-Byzantine Christian heretics, it has retained its appeal and potential to be instrumentalized in new political and socio-religious contexts. At the same time, as already emphasized, the evolving study of Ottoman and post-Ottoman *Kızılbaşlık* has continued to bring new material and observations to spheres which can throw a genuine light on the interaction of heterodox and popular forms of Christianity and Islam in the Ottoman era. The most promising of these areas concern the already partially probed points of similarities (and potential contact) between the cosmogonies, anthropogonies and satanologies of popular and heterodox Christianity and Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia (which need a

[54] Clayer, 'The Issue of 'Conversion to Islam', p. 370 (discussing the case of Albanian Muslim identities).

methodologically balanced and cautious approach)[55] and the provenance of the syncretistic mystical theologies and apocalypticism of early Ottoman religio-political movements like that of Shaykh Badr al-Dîn.[56] But regardless of the progress of research in this field and the ready availability of evidence (related directly or indirectly) related to its problematic, published earlier or more recently, for the time being it seems certain that the thesis of the continuity between late Balkan-Byzantine Christian heresies and Ottoman *Kızılbaşlık* will continue to be employed and subjected to further ideologization and theologization in what can be defined as national majority- and minority-restructuring processes in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey.

[55] On the methodological considerations which need to be taken into account in the study of this problematic, see Stoyanov, 'On Some Parallels', pp. 90-92.

[56] For an interesting attempt to discern the impact of heterodox Christian apocalypticism in the religio-political agitation in the Ottoman empire in the early sixteenth century, see K. Zhukov, 'K istorii religioznykh dvizhenii v vostochnom sredizemnomor'e v XIV-XV vv.: novaiia interpretatsiia vosstaniia Berkliudzhe Mustafy v Turtsii (okolo 1415 g.), *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik*, 98 (35), (1998), pp. 84-98. Zhukov's cautious approach should be contrasted with some sweeping uncritical statements about the nature of the religio-political movement of Shaykh Badr al-Dîn – see, for example, the claim (unsupported by any evidence) that it represented a blend of Bogomilism and Mulsim mysticism in P. Konstantinov, *Istoriia na Bŭlgariia* (Sofia: Feniks, 1993), p. 42.