

THE QUESTION OF THE EXISTENCE OF DUALIST LAYERS IN ALEVI/BEKTĀŞĪ
SYNCRETISM AND THEIR CENTRAL ASIAN, ANATOLIAN OR BALKAN
PROVENANCE

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Recent scholarly endeavours to reassess the methodology and terminology of defining and exploring Islamic “heresy”, “heterodoxy” and “syncretism” have tried to redress the balance in a field in Islamic studies which has attracted less attention and scrutiny than the corresponding areas in the study of Christianity and Judaism.¹ The present article does not intend to contribute to the theoretical discussion on the relevance and applicability of the terms “heresy”, “heterodoxy” and “syncretism” in the study of Islamic religious minorities, but to explore the state of knowledge and research on the existence of Manichaean and/or Eastern Christian layers or elements in Alevism/Bektāşīsm and its implications for the ongoing process of reappraisal of the phenomenon frequently defined as “Alevi/Bektāşī syncretism”² and some of the

¹ B. LEWIS, ‘Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam’, *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953), 43-63; J. L. KRAEMER, ‘Heresy versus the State in Medieval Islam’, in: S. R. BRUNSWICK (ed.), *Studies in Judaica, Karaitica and Islamica Presented to Leon Nemoy on his Eightieth Birthday*, Ramat-Gan, 1982, pp. 167-180; A. KNYSH, ‘“Orthodoxy” and “Heresy” in Medieval Islam: An Essay in Reassessment’, in: *Muslim World* 83 1 (1993), 46-67; J. B. HENDERSON, *The Construction of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Neo-Confucian, Islamic, Jewish, and Early Christian Patterns*, Albany, 1998, 19-20, 49-66, 125-129, 141-144; N. CALDER, ‘The Limits of Islamic Orthodoxy’, in F. DAFTARY (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam*, London, 2000, 66-86; M. DRESSLER, ‘Inventing Orthodoxy: Competing Claims for Authority and Legitimacy in the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict’, in: H. T. KARATEKE and M. REINKOWSKI (eds.): *Legitimizing the Order. The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, Leiden, 2005, 151-173; the various contributions to the special issues of *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 8 (3-4) (2008) and *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, December 2010, 37(3).

² The phenomenon of “Alevi/Bektāşī syncretism” has been explored most systematically in a number of studies of I. Mélikoff, most of which have assembled in her volumes of selected articles I. MÉLIKOFF, *Sur les traces du soufisme turc: recherches sur l’Islam populaire en Anatolie*, Istanbul: Isis, 1992, and *idem*, *Au*

characteristic patterns of conceptualizations and instrumentalizations of these purported dualist strata.

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

banquet des quarante: exploration au coeur du bektachisme-alevisme, Istanbul: Isis, 2001; see in particular I. MÉLIKOFF, 'L'islam hétérodoxe en Anatolie: non-conformisme—syncrétisme—gnose', *Turcica* 14 (1982), 141–154; *idem*. "Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi", in A. GALLOTTA and U. MARAZZI (eds.), *Studia Turcologica—Memoriae Alexii Bombaci dicata*, Naples, 1982, 379–395, repr. in *idem*, *Sur le traces du soufisme turc. Recherches sur l'islam populaire ena Anatolie*, Istanbul: Isis, 1992, pp. 41-61; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars: genèse et évolution du soufisme populaire en Turquie*, Leiden: Brill, 1998. Cf. A. Y. OCAK, *Bektasi menakbnamelerinde İslam öncesi inanç motifleri*, Istanbul, 1983; *idem*, '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, 1997, 195-205. The application of term 'syncretism' in studies treating Alevi/Bektāšī problematic has been discussed, for example in C. COLPE, 'The Phenomenon of Syncretism and the Impact of Islam', in KEHL-BODROGI, KELLNER-HEINKELE and OTTER-BEAUJEAN, *Syncretistic Religious Communities*, 35-49, here 45-48, and R. LANGER and U. SIMON, 'The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. Dealing with Divergence in Muslim Discourses and Islamic Studies', *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 48 (3-4) (2008) 273-288, here 287. On the impact of the works of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890–1966) on the application of the terms "heterodoxy" and "syncretism" in the study of Alevism and Bektāšism, see M. DRESSLER, 'How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference: 'Heterodoxy' and 'Syncretism' in the Writings of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890–1966)', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2010, 37(3) 241-260. On the related use of 'syncretism' in Yezidi-related discourses, see now R. LANGER, 'Yezidism between Scholarly Literature and Actual Practice: From 'Heterodox' Islam and 'Syncretism' to the Formation of a Transnational Yezidi 'Orthodoxy'', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2010, 37(3), 393-403.

Contemporary studies of Alevism and Bektāṣīsm are in a much better position as far as their access to relevant published primary material is concerned. The growth of the evidence-oriented research in this sphere of scholarly enquiry (especially in the last 30 years or so) has resulted in the publication and studies of principal source material such as the the Alevi doctrinal-catechistic book, the *Buyruk*, the *Maqālat*, (the “sayings” attributed to the eponymous founder of the Bektāṣī order, Hacı Bektaş Veli (c. 1300 ?), the *Menakıb-nāmes* and *Vilāyet-nāmes* of Alevi and Bektāṣī sacred personages and the religious hymns, *nefes*, as well as the results of much valuable oral traditions material assembled during the field-work of anthropologists and folklorists. Still, in a number of such recent popular and some scholarly publications on Alevism and Bektāṣīsm all this lately assembled and growing primary evidence (available in several languages) is duly ignored or used selectively. Instead of drawing on this invaluable material, such publications have tended to reiterate and/or paraphrase some of the interpretative schemas and generalizing theories of studies of and perspectives on Alevism and Belktashism dating from the earlier (or even earliest stages of) research on this problematic. Some of these inherited historiographic constructs and perspectives are concerned with the otherwise important problem of the interchange between Christian and Islamic heterodoxies (as well as popular beliefs and practices) and thus directly or indirectly also with the posited existence of Manichaeian and Eastern Christian dualist elements in Alevism and Bektāṣīsm.

The continuing attraction, re-use and reformulation of these rather fixed explanatory frameworks and assumptions regarding the provenance and evolution of pre/non-Islamic layers in Alevism and Bektāṣīsm undoubtedly result from the perceived relation of this particular problematic with certain larger areas of the historical study of the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods with intermittently actualized religio-political importance. Such areas include the relationship between Christianity and Islam and the dynamics of the processes of Islamicisation in the Balkans and Anatolia during these periods as well as the origins and nature of the non-Turkish Islamic communities in these regions. The proposed evidence and theories regarding Manichaeian and Eastern Christian

dualist strata in Alevism and Bektāšism need to be treated, therefore, in the larger framework of the main trends of research as well as inherited and newly advanced historiographic models in these wider areas of study, as they have also variously determined and shaped both scholarly and general approaches to the Alevi/Bektāšī problematic.

One of the most popular and continuously instrumentalized of already mentioned nineteenth-century historiographic models postulates mass conversions of Christian sectarian communities in the Balkans and Anatolia to Islam during the early Ottoman period. This model was applied in the nineteenth century to the versions of medieval Christian dualism in Eastern Christendom, Bogomilism and Paulicianism (and related currents, communities and individual heresiarchs)³ and subsequently re-used and remains in currency in various modern confessional and religious-political contexts. The model was based on the theory that Christian dualist heretical communities in Anatolia and the Balkans converted swiftly and in large numbers to Islam as a reaction against the persecution which they had suffered at the hands of secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the Eastern Orthodox world during the medieval the pre-Ottoman era. It was first most forcefully applied to early Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina which in the period preceding its conquest by the Ottoman armies in the second half of the fifteenth century was the scene of a severe religio-political collision between the adherents of the Bosnian Church (schismatic both from Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and generally known as ‘Patareni’ and ‘Krstjani’) and Catholicism. The Catholic suppression of the Bosnian Church (the much debated nature of its relationship with the Christian dualist movement in the Western Balkans remains outside the scope of this article), which reportedly included forcible conversions of its adherents or their banishment from Bosnia, led according to this line of reasoning to the collaboration of the Bosnian Patarenes with the Ottoman invaders and their large-scale acceptance of Islam.⁴

³ On the rise, historical development and teachings of the Christian dualist movements and trends in the medieval Eastern Orthodox world, see the anthology of translated primary sources in J. HAMILTON and B. HAMILTON, eds., Y. STOYANOV, assist. ed., *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c.650-c.1450*, Manchester and New York, 1998.

⁴ See note 6 below.

By the time of the last references to active dualist heretics in the Bosnian lands in the latter half of the fifteenth century Bosnia had been repeatedly described by Catholic heresiologists, travelers and observers as a land inhabited by ‘Manichaeans’. From the medieval period onwards the “Manichaean” paradigm continued to be applied to the medieval Bosnian Church in subsequent general and polemical contexts in Europe and inevitably exercised a major impact on early historiographic approaches to pre-Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁵ The late medieval stereotype of heretical and “Manichaean” Bosnia eventually re-emerged as a focus of confessional debate when medieval dualist heresy came to be implicated in the evolving Catholic-Protestant controversies and debates over the nature and genealogy of medieval heretical, dissenting and reformist groups. These Catholic-Protestant controversies over the nature of medieval heresy continued and were subjected to various re-interpretations in novel religio-political contexts during the nineteenth century which in Eastern Europe included the newly formulated Slavophile, Slavophile-influenced and nationalist historiographic approaches to and versions of medieval and modern political and confessional history. It was in such a political, intellectual and religious climate that the Bogomil/Manichaean thesis of the reasons for Ottoman Bosnia’s wide-spread Islamicisation evolved. It postulated the rapid and full-scale conversion of the hierarchy and adherents of the “Manichaean” Bosnian Church to Islam and came to be used in a variety of contemporaneous popular, nationalist and scholarly texts on Bosnia-Herzegovina, betraying contrasting and often conflicting agendas.⁶

⁵ On the provenance and evolution of the “Manichaean” paradigm of the Bosnian Church, see Y. STOYANOV, ‘Between Heresiology and Political Theology: the Rise of the Paradigm of the Heretical Bosnian Church and the Paradoxes of its Medieval and Modern Developments’, in G. FILORAMO (ed.), *Political Theologies of the Monotheistic Religions. Representation of the Divine and Dynamics of Power*, La Brescia 2005, 161-180.

⁶ For characteristic and emphatic nineteenth-century expressions of this line of argument, see, for example, A. EVANS, *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection, August and September 1875: with an Historical Review of Bosnia, and a Glimpse at the Croats, Slavonians, and the Ancient Republic of Ragusa*, London 1876, 1v; J. von ASBOTH, *Bosnien und die Herzegovina. Reisebilder und Studien*, Vienna 1888, 86-87; H. C. LEA, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, New York 1888, vol. 2, 307-313; J. J. I. von DÖLLINGER, *Beiträge zur Sektengeschichte des Mittelalters*, Munich 1890; repr. Darmstadt: 1968), vol. 1, 126-127, 242-250.

To make this conjectured process of transition from Christian dualism in Islam in Bosnian-Herzegovina even more sweeping, it was also applied to all other Balkan and Anatolian areas where Christian dualist communities were known to have existed in the medieval period.⁷ The predictable next step was to characterize all, or at least a substantial part, of the Slavonic-speaking Muslim communities in the Balkans descendants of the medieval Christian dualists envisaged to have embraced Islam in the early Ottoman period.⁸ Subsequent evidence-based and –oriented research has progressively demonstrated the untenability and ideological foundations and biases of this “Christian dualism to Islam” model, highlighting a variety of other religious, political and economic factors which determined the differing courses of the Islamization process in the various Balkan and Anatolian regions. But it has also shown remarkable vitality in being repeatedly resurrected, whether in its sweeping or less extreme forms, both in general and scholarly discourses, especially in periods of increasing external and internal focus on and preoccupations with past and present Balkan and Anatolian religious and political history.

At this early stage of research on the fortunes of Christian heterodoxy in the late Byzantine and Ottoman periods the hypothetical mass Islamization of Eastern Christian heretical communities was thought of as the principal venue for the entry of Manichean/Eastern Christian dualist traditions into Ottoman Islam. However, no direct or circumstantial evidence was sought or offered to prove such an influx and spread of non-Islamic heretical traditions. The subsequent gradually increasing awareness that early Ottoman Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia was not homogeneous, normative Sunnism but a rather heterogeneous phenomenon, with its array of syncretistic, antinomian and Shia-related and –influenced trends, was accompanied by a growing interest and research into Alevism and Bektāšism and their doctrinal and historical genealogies. Some

⁷ For typical early articulations of this viewpoint, see, for example, K. IRECHEK, *Istoriia na bŭlgarite*, tr. by N. A. RAINOV i Z. BOHADZHIEV, Tŭrnovo 1886, 2nd ed., ed. by V. N. ZLATARSKI, tr. by A. DIAMANDIEV and I. RAEV, Sofia 1929, 271, 289; A. TEODOROV-BALAN, ‘Bŭlgarskite katolitsi v Svishtovsko i tiahnata cherkovna borba’, *Letopis na bŭlgarskoto knizhovno druzhestvo*, 2 (1902), 101-211, esp. 123ff.

⁸ See, for example, IRECHEK, *Istoriia na bŭlgarite*, pp. 271, 289; more recently, S. SKENDI, ‘Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans’, in S. SKENDI (ed.) *Balkan Cultural Studies*, Boulder, Colo. and New York 1980, (first published in *Slavic Review* 26 (1967) 227–46), 233-257, here 240.

nineteenth-and early twentieth-century missionaries' and travelers' reports of their encounters with Alevism/*Kızılbaşism* and Bektāšism have drawn attention to the negative Sunni attitudes to the perceived "heresy" and antinomianism of these sectarian communities as well as what appeared to them Christian-related notions in their beliefs and cult observances.⁹ Highlighting what they recognize as Christian layers in Alevi and Bektāšī teachings and practices, the missionary account is particular in effect attempt to disassociate these communities from Islam in general and thus legitimize their proselytizing agenda among them.¹⁰ Scholarly, ideological and general interest in such presumed or reconstructed Christian layers in Alevism and Bektāšism was understandably high in the post-Ottoman Christian majority states, underpinning what could be defined as the indigenization approach to and instrumentalization of this problematic, a trend of research and analysis that was and remains periodically rather prominent in South-Eastern Europe. The indigenization approach attempted to anchor Alevi and Bektāšī identities in the local Christian (and generally non-Muslim folk) environment, deliberately ignoring or downplaying their historical affiliations with their co-religionists in Asia Minor and other Islamic religious minorities in the Near East.¹¹ Arguments in conjunction with suspect or fabricated evidence that Alevi and Bektāšī communities actually were descendants of Christian groups (orthodox or heterodox), forcibly Islamicized in the Ottoman period, understandably represented a highly charged topic in the historiographic, religious and general discourses in the Christian-majority post-Ottoman states.

⁹ For a select bibliography of such early missionaries' and travelers' reports, see Y. STOYANOV, 'On Some Parallels Between Anatolian and Balkan Islamic Heterodox Traditions and the Problem of their Co-Existence and Interchange with Popular Christianity', in G. VEINSTEIN (ed.), *Sycrétismes et hérésies dans l'Orient seljoukide et ottoman des XIIe-XVIIIe siècles*, Paris 2005, 75-119, here, 94-95, n. 44.

¹⁰ For recent scrutinies of the Protestant missionary approaches to and interactions with the *Kızılbaş*, see H.-L. KIESER, *Der verpasste Frieden: Mission, Ethnie und Staat in den Ostprovinzen der Türkei 1839-1938*, Zürich 2000, *passim*; *idem*, 'Muslim Heterodoxy and Protestant Utopia. The Interactions between Alevis and Missionaries', *Die Welt des Islams*, n. s., 41:1 (2001), 89-111; 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 2004, vol. 1, 328-353.

¹¹ See Y. STOYANOV, "Contested Post-Ottoman Alevi and Bektashi Identities in the Balkans and their Shi'ite Component", in L. RIDGEON (ed.), *Shi'i Islam and Identity: Religion, Politics and Change in the Global Muslim Community*, London 2012, 171-219, here 183-185

In some of the early applications of the indigenization approach the initially separate arguments regarding respectively the posited Christian origins of and/or elements in Alevism and Bektāṣīsm and the conjectured en masse conversion of Christian dualist groups to Islam in the early Ottoman era began to merge into a new theoretical construct, hypothesizing a Christian dualist pedigree for the Alevi and Bektāṣī communities as a whole. Since the formulation of this hypothesis the expanding scholarly evidence-based research has accumulated valuable material and observations for and against its premises, increasing in the process substantially our knowledge of Christian-Islamic co-existence and interchange in the Ottoman period. Scholarly study, however (especially in South-Eastern Europe and Turkey), has coexisted and occasionally overlapped with top-down political and religio-political projects executed by ideologues with little or non-existent grasp of the relevant problematic, intended to mould public opinion and “official” historiographies in accordance with the ideological directives of the respective political and religious establishments.

The advance in research and publications of primary and secondary sources on Alevi and Bektāṣī history and religious traditions as well as on the Ottoman period in the Balkans and Anatolia in general allow for a critical reappraisal of some of the early and still periodically reiterated argument for the hypothesized (and occurring nearly immediately after the Ottoman conquest) mass conversion of the Christian dualist communities to Islam. As already observed, the theory that Christian dualist sectarians converted to Islam as a reaction against their past and recent suppression by the established church has not been supported by the publication and analysis of the various sources for the religious and cross-confessional dynamics of the early, mid- or later Ottoman era. Recent research on Paulicianism in the Balkans in the early Ottoman era, for example, has completely disproved the earlier theories that the Paulicians went over rapidly and en masse to Islam in the wake of the Ottoman conquest - during the first two centuries of Ottoman domination in the Balkans their communities actually stabilized and even may have grown before they became a target of Catholic proselytism from the last

decades of the seventeenth century onwards.¹² But the Paulician communities which embraced Catholicism found themselves drawn in the continuous and intense Habsburg-Ottoman conflicts which unfolded in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, compelling some of these communities to flee from Ottoman territories. Amid these severe political and religious tensions and pressure faced by the Paulician communities which stayed in the Ottoman empire, some of them chose to embrace Orthodoxy or Islam, while others of the new Paulician Catholic converts went over to Orthodoxy, practiced dissimulation, or lapsed openly back to Paulicianism.¹³ Late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was not the only period that Paulician communities found themselves in political and religious conflict with an Islamic power – when in the ninth century Byzantine campaigns had forced Paulician groups to flee to areas under and bordering Arab Islamic powers in eastern Anatolia, these groups formed strategic alliances with these powers but also could be engaged in rivalry and confrontation with them. All these developments traceable through and demonstrated in the primary sources highlight the complicated nature of the religious and political processes in which Paulician communities found themselves involved vis-à-vis Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam from the early seventeenth century onwards and again, expose the obsolete and one-dimensional nature of the schema of swift and thorough absorption of Balkan Christian dualism into Ottoman Islam.

Another type of argument has also been advanced, attempting to theorize that such transition from Christian dualism and Islam was made possible and effected by the supposed rapport and correspondences between their religiosity and ethics. Such presumed “points of resemblance” between these two religious traditions were exemplified by the repudiation of the veneration of the cross, icons, clerical hierarchy and liturgical ceremonies and the sacraments of baptism and marriage.¹⁴ So far, however, no

¹² See now the summary of the evidence of the history of the Balkan Paulician communities during the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries and its up-to-date analysis in M. IOVKOV, *Pavlikiani i pavlikianski selishta v bŭlgarskite zemi XV-XVIII v.*, Sofia 1991. Some of the important documents related to the Catholic missions to the Paulician communities in the Balkans have been published in B. PRIMOV *et al.* (eds.), *Dokumenti za katolicheskata deinost v Bŭlgariia prez XVII vek*, Sofia 1993.

¹³ On these complicated religious processes, see now the survey of the evidence in IOVKOV, *Pavlikiani i pavlikianski selishta*, 66-102.

¹⁴ See, for example, ASBOTH, *Bosnien und die Herzegowina*, 87.

actual direct or circumstantial evidence has been offered to substantiate such claims which thus remain theoretical presuppositions which can begin to be considered only if and when such evidence is offered. Other arguments that Puritanism, the “simple fatalism” and “simplicity” of Islam¹⁵ had especial appeal to late medieval Christian dualists are even less convincing and hardly merit serious consideration. Of these suggested points of resemblance it is perhaps the parallels between Christian dualist and Islamic iconoclasm that would need a proper exploration in late Byzantine and Ottoman contexts but this needs to be preceded by a comparative survey of these attitudes and any records of their interaction in the above period which has not been attempted as yet.

As far as the attempts to pose parallels between Christian dualist and Islamic attitudes to normative Christian sacramentalism are concerned, these should take into close consideration the immediate historical and religious contexts of the relevant periods and areas under discussion, otherwise they appear ahistorical and exceedingly sweeping. Claims, for example, that the Paulicians’ negative stance on the established Armenian and Byzantine Churches’ sacraments led to an accord between their communities in eastern Anatolia and the various Turkoman groups who entered and began to settle in the region in the Seljuk period,¹⁶ need to situate this conjectured accord in concrete historical and religious environments and offer some evidence from the period during which this process was supposed to have taken place. Furthermore, generalizations about early and evolving Paulician non-/anti-sacramentalism may have to be revised in view of the continuing debate over the nature and theology of original Armenian and later Byzantine and Balkan Paulicianism (which has implications regarding their earlier and later ritual practices) and the indications that Bogomil sacramentalism may have influenced Paulician communities in the Balkans.¹⁷ In any case, arguments for non-/anti-

¹⁵ See S. RUNCIMAN, *The Medieval Manichee. A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy*, Cambridge 1946, 114; the “Muslim simplicity” argument has been reiterated more recently by SKENDI, ‘Crypto-Christianity’, 240.

¹⁶ See J. R. BARNES, ‘The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire’, in R. LIFCHEZ (ed.), *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1992, 34-35

¹⁷ See the discussion of the very plausible association of Balkan Paulicianism with the radical Balkan dualist church of Drugunthia and the importance of the rite of baptism in Spirit for both moderate and

sacramentalism as an alleged factor facilitating Christian dualist-Islamic affinity is definitely inapplicable to the other version of medieval Eastern Christian dualism in the Balkans and Anatolia: Bogomilism. Bogomilism developed what can be described as a sacramental system, parallel and opposed to that of normative medieval Christianity, in which the rite of spiritual baptism, *teleiosis*, was of central salvationist and eschatological importance, making it effectively a telling example of Christian dualist sacramentalism.¹⁸ Attempts, therefore, to describe Islamic non-sacramentalism as a feature which propelled late medieval Christian dualist sectarians to endorse and embrace Islam, rest on outdated and superficial knowledge and understanding of the history and theology of medieval eastern Christian dualism.

The above schemas of purported religious affinity between late medieval Eastern Christian dualism and Islam (leading to the assimilation of the Eastern Christian dualist communities into Ottoman Islam) as a rule completely ignore or avoid any even general discussion of the vital doctrinal spheres on which any such comparison-based argumentation should have been based. And it is in virtually all significant spheres of doctrine – cosmology, theology, anthropology, soteriology and eschatology (which in the case of Christian dualism were created and elaborated by a doctrinally-conscious religious elite and literati) – that Christian dualism and Islam (especially normative Sunni Islam) display a series of evident and emphatic incompatibilities and ultimately irreconcilable differences. These incompatibilities and conflicting doctrinal positions underlie Islamic polemics against Manichaeism, the most systematic and influential system of religious dualism which Islam encountered in the Near East.¹⁹ Proposing an

radical medieval dualist communities in Y. STOYANOV, *The Other God. Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy*, London and New Haven 2000, 197-201.

¹⁸ On the sacramental character of the Bogomil/Cathar version of Christian dualism, see J. van den BROEK, 'The Cathars: Medieval Gnostics', in J. van den BROEK *Studies in Alexandrian Christianity and Gnosticism*, Leiden 1996, 157-78; STOYANOV, *The Other God*, 170, 197-200, 274.

¹⁹ For an up-to-date survey of Islamic testimonia about Manichaeism's history and teachings in the Islamic world, see now J. C. REEVES, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamic Manichaeism*, Sheffield 2011. On the place of Manichaeism (real and perceived) in Islamic heresiography, see, for example, C. F. ERNST, *The Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany 1985, 117-132.

assimilation into Islam initiated by the Christian dualist elite, based on a conjectured religious affinity between Christian dualism and Islam, while ignoring all the crucial doctrinal evidence which belies this supposed affinity, is patently the wrong starting point and premise for a religious history investigation or theory.

Undergoing conversion from one religious tradition to another as a consequence of perceived religious affinities between the two traditions should not be confused, moreover, with a cross-confessional rapprochement for religio-political or socio-political reasons – as in the case of the Anatolian Paulician communities who, faced with Byzantine military and political pressure in the eight century, entered strategic alliances with the Arab Islamic powers in eastern Asia Minor. As in normative Christianity, cases in which individual or communal heterodox Christian conversion to Islam could occur for socio-economic and political reasons as well as instances of the simulated adoption of Islam (after which the new pseudo-Muslim continues to practice his true confession in secrecy) fall into an altogether different category of inter-confessional dynamics. Further investigation and publication of the records of the processes of Islamization in the Ottoman empire have already and will doubtless continue to throw much new light on such conversion patterns among orthodox and heterodox Christians. The study of the patterns and types of Christian conversion to Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia during and after the Ottoman conquests, however, has been for more than a century in South East Europe and to some extent Turkey, a field heavily contested by rival nationalist and confessional agendas and still rife with controversies and semi-taboo areas after all the decades of the respective regimes' manipulation and control of research and publications. It will need further de-ideologization, a process which been advancing slowly but steadily in post-Communist South-East Europe but still needs some way to go before the field can throw off this legacy and be able to integrate the theoretical and practical insights of some recent valuable comparative studies of post-Islamic conquest Islamization patterns in Asia and Africa.

This brief survey of the state of research (with a focus on some of the anachronistic but still intermittently and widely enough applied schemas of ethno-

religious and socio-political provenance) and knowledge of the fortunes of Christian dualism in the Ottoman era and its variously assessed links with the process of Islamization will provide the essential historiographic background to the following analysis of early and more recent approaches to Alevi/Bektāšī interrelations with normative and heterodox Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia. The various patterns and manifestations of Christian-Islamic interchange and syncretism attracted the attention of many of the early observers and explorers of the religious life of the late Ottoman empire.²⁰ The question of whether such movement towards religious interchange and syncretism developed also in the spheres of Christian and Islamic heterodoxy and heresy was also introduced in some of the early studies on Alevism and Bektāšism, variously betraying the impact of the contemporaneous influential schemas and conjectures regarding the history of Christian dualist communities in the Ottoman period. Characteristically, approaches to this question could blend elements of the already mentioned indigenization thesis (seeking to derive Alevi and Bektāšī beliefs and ritual practices from local Christian and pre-Christian traditions) with arguments for their continuity with pre-Ottoman Christian heretical and heterodox communities (forcibly or voluntarily converted to Islam).²¹

While such approaches were clearly related to contemporaneous ethno-religious attitudes to and lines of interpretation of national and religious history, the growing research and data on Alevi/Bektāšī problematic provided some interesting indications that some regions in the Balkans and Anatolia where medieval Christian heterodox and heretical communities were known to have resided in or been active, happened to be also hotbeds of Islamic heterodoxy during the Seljuk (in Asia Minor) and Ottoman eras, often

²⁰ The collection and examination of valuable material related to the interaction and syncretism of popular Islamic and Christian beliefs and cultic observances in the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia in F. W. HASLUCK, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, 2 vols., Oxford 1929, has been followed by a series of studies and publications of further primary source material demonstrating more cases of such syncretism and interchange or re-examining Hasluck's material and interpretations such as D. SHANKLAND, ed., *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: the Life and Times of F.W. Hasluck, 1878-1920*, 2 vols., Istanbul 2004.

²¹ See, for example, D. MARINOV, "Narodna viara i religiozni narodni obichai", *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniia, nauka i knizhnina*, 28 (1914), 423f. V. MARINOV, *Deliorman (Iuzhna chast). Oblastno-geografsko izuchavane*, Sofia 1941, 54f., 79-80.

assuming a religio-political character challenging the Seljuk and Ottoman rule and order. Both earlier and more recent studies of the religious currents and conflicts within Islam in Anatolia and the Balkans during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods came to point to a possible historical continuity between the prevalence of medieval Christian and later Islamic heterodoxies in more or less the same or nearby regions. It has to be said that in a number of other Balkan and Anatolian areas the presence of medieval Christian heresy has not been superseded by any analogous anti-conformist Muslim heterodox religious development but such could evolve in other regions where similar Christian precedents have not been attested. Furthermore, in the geography of Alevism and Bektāšīsm issues such as the centre-periphery dichotomy in the sphere of religious control and authority (and definition of orthodoxy and heresy) as well as the patterns of socio-economic migration and settlement arrangements of the various *Kızılbaş* and Baba'î tribal groups (often a result of their religiously-instigated rebellions and inter-tribal relations) need to be considered first before forging schemas of Christian-Islamic heterodox continuity over the span of several centuries.

The suggestion that Kizlibash groups may have reached a religio-political rapprochement with Anatolian or Balkan Christian heretical groups on the basis of their shared non-conformist and anti-establishment ethos²² remains a theoretical construct which would merit consideration only once it is supported by some concrete evidence. As the matters stand, even the most obvious first step of exploring whether the Balkan Paulician communities which are recorded to have undergone full-scale or partial Islamization may have had any contacts with Kizlibash groups has not been taken as yet.

Still, this is clearly a potentially rewarding venue of research worth pursuing, particularly regarding, for example, the territories of earlier medieval substantial Paulician settlements and activities in Cilicia and Cappadocia in central and eastern Asia Minor (more concentrated specifically in the Erzincan-Divriği-Sivas district) which became the centers of the Baba'î and *Kızılbaş* groups' activities and agitation during the

²² See, for example, MÉLIKOFF, "Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi", 59-60.

Seljuk and Ottoman periods.²³ Similarly areas in Thrace and Macedonia in the Balkans which also had been repeatedly acknowledged in the medieval period as focuses of Christian heresy and heterodoxy in the Ottoman era characteristically display dense Bektāshī network of settlements and cultic sites as well as active presence of Islamic heterodox groups. Localities in and around Philippopolis/Plovdiv in Thrace which were known for their sizeable Paulician communities in the medieval through the Ottoman eras, for example, became later also major focal points in the establishment and spread of Hurufism and its secretive network in the Balkans in the sixteenth century.²⁴ Similarly, the further study of any extant evidence that may potentially link the enduring presence of Christian heterodoxies and dualist heresy in the pre-Ottoman western Balkans and the Hamzevite movement and agitation of the Mālamī Shaykh Hamza of early Ottoman Bosnia-Herzegovina deserves attention and may bring some worthwhile results.²⁵ Still more potentially instructive data may emerge from further research on the various records of the rise, spread and rebellious activities of the early Ottoman-era trans-confessional and universalistic religio-political movement of Shaykh Badr al-Dīn (d. 1417/1420) and

²³ See, for example, F. CUMONT, 'Kizil Bash', in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James HASTINGS, with the assist. of J. A. SELBIE *et al*, vol. 7, Edinburgh and New York 1914, pp. 744-45, here 745; F. KÖPRÜLÜ, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion*, tr., ed. and intr. by G. LEISER, Salt Lake City 1993, 60n12, 72n46; M. MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites: the ghulat sects*, New York 1988, 435ff.; MÉLIKOFF, 'Recherches sur le composantes' 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), 1-7, here 6; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, 163-64; *idem*, 'Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis et les interférences avec d'autres mouvements gnostiques', in Veinstein, *Sycrétismes et heresies*, 65-75, here 69-71; A. Y. OCAK, 'Un aperçu général sur l'"hétérodoxie musulmane en Turquie', 198ff.

²⁴ On the concentration of Hurufism in Thrace and the Philipopolis area, see MÉLIKOFF, *Hadji Bektach*, 175, 237.

²⁵ On Shaykh Hamza, his movement and role in the history of *Malāmātiyya*, see T. OKIÇ, "Quelques documents inédits concernant les Hamzawites", in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of Orientalists held in Istanbul September 15 to 27nd 1951*, vol. 2, Istanbul 1957, 279-286; Colin IMBER, "Malāmātiyya", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 6, Leiden 1991, 227-28; H. T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World*, London 1993, 116-19; D. Čehajić, *Derviški redovi u jugoslovenskim zemljama sa posevnim osvrtom na Bosnu i Hercegovinu*, Sarajevo 1986, 185-208; H. ALGAR, "The Hamzeviyye: A deviant movement in Bosnian Sufism", *Islamic Studies*, 36:2 (Islamabad 1997) 243-261; Slobodan ILIĆ, "Hamzeviiskaia i hurufitskaia eres v Bosni kak reaktsiia na politicheskii krizis Ottomanskoj imperii vo vtoroi polovine XVI stoletii", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 28:1-2 (2000), 34-40.

its geography,²⁶ especially in the already mentioned Balkan areas of Christian heterodox presence and intermittent anti-clerical agitation.

Future research in these spheres certainly could enrich and transform our knowledge of the religious life and transmutations of the late Byzantine/Byzantine Commonwealth and early Ottoman periods in the Balkans and Anatolia but it is still severely hampered by the very insufficient work on the various extant and not insubstantial number of manuscripts belonging to or relevant to Hurufism and the movements of Shaykh Hamza and Shaykh Badr al-Dîn. Of these manuscripts some have been studied and published (or are approaching publications stage) but a great number of them remain little-studied or virtually unexplored. Before the necessary textological and historical-critical work on these manuscripts has been carried out it would be very premature to leap to wide-ranging conclusions, as has been the case with statements in some scholarly studies, declaring that in Ottoman Thrace Bektâşîsm was a successor to pre-Ottoman Christian heresies in the region,²⁷ that Bektâşîsm implanted itself and became well-rooted in Balkan areas where crypto-Christianity used to thrive²⁸ or even that the religio-political ideology of Shaykh Badr al-Dîn's movement represented a blend of Bogomilism and Muslim mysticism.²⁹ Such general statements should not precede but follow and result from systematic work on the diverse types of relevant evidence (internal and external manuscript sources, inscriptions, funerary stele, reliable oral histories, etc.),

²⁶ Earlier studies of Shaykh Badr al-Din and his movement include F. BABINGER, 'Schejch Bedr ed-Din, der Sohn des Richters von Simaw', *Der Islam*, 11 (1921) 1-106, and N. FILIPOVIĆ, *Princ Musa i šejh Bedreddin*, Sarajevo 1971; morfe recent studies include M. BALIVET, *Islam mystique et révolution armée dans les Balkans ottomans: Vie du cheikh Bedreddin, le "Hallâj des Turcs", 1358/59-1416*, Istanbul 1995; D. KASTRITSIS, 'The Revolt of Şeykh Bedreddin in the Context of the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413', in *Halcyon Days in Crete VII*, Rethymno (forthcoming). For arguments that heterodox Christian apocalypticism played a major role in the religio-political agitation in the Ottoman empire in the early sixteenth century, see K. ZHUKOV, 'K istorii religioznykh dvizhenii v vostochnom sredizemnomor'e v XIV-XV vv.: novaiia interpretatsiia vosstaniia Berkliudzhe Mustafy v Turtsii (okolo 1415 g.)', *Pravoslavnyi Palestinskii Sbornik*, 98 (35) (1998), 84-98.

²⁷ E. ZENKINES, *Ho bektasismos ste D. Thrake: symvole sten historia tes diadoseos tou Mousoulmanismou ston Helladiko choro*, Thessaloniki 1988, 249.

²⁸ SKENDI, "Crypto-Christianity", 249-50.

²⁹ P. KONSTANTINOV, *Istoriia na Bŭlgariia*, Sofia 1993, 42.

otherwise, given their sweeping nature, they could be rather injudicious and misleading on the theoretical and practical level.

When finally de-ideologized, the promising but frequently biased and doctrinaire study of crypto-Christianity in the Ottoman-era Balkans and Anatolia³⁰ can also be of considerable importance for the exploration of the interaction of Alevism/Bektāšism with normative, popular and heterodox Christianity. Generally, the steadily advancing research on the patterns of interchange and overlap in the spheres of cult and belief between the various local versions of Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, Caucasus, the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Anatolia from the medieval to the modern periods has provided significant material and valuable observations with a number of direct implications for the study of Alevism and Bektāšism. This is especially the case in the widely attested phenomena of shared sanctuaries, saints and saintly figures, feasts and various superstitious observances in popular Christianity and Islam in these areas, with such cross-religious borrowing and exchange being predictably and typically much more active and extensive at the popular rather than at the elite religious levels (although interchange at the latter level also took place on various occasions).

The study of Christian-Islam interaction and types of syncretism and symbiosis in the Ottoman period has been greatly enhanced by the expanding research on the role of dervish orders (including the Bektāšī order) in the process of Ottoman colonization in newly conquered territories during which they came to use or took control of Christian churches, saints' tombs and sites of veneration.³¹ Whether actual convergence with

³⁰ On the phenomenon of Crypto-Christianity in the Balkans and Anatolia, cf., for example, HASLUCK, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. 2, 469-74; R. M. DAWKINS, "The Crypto-Christians of Turkey", *Byzantion*, 8 (1933), 247-75; SKENDI, 'Crypto-Christianity'; S. DIMITROV, "Skritoto khristianstvo i isliamizatsionnite protsesi v osmanskata dŕzhava", *Istoricheski pregled*, 2 (1987), 18-34; K. PHOTIADES, *Peges tes historias tou kryptochristianikou provlematos*, Ekdote 1997.

³¹ See Ö. L. BARKAN, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğundaki bir iskân ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak vakıflar ve temelikler. I: İstîlâ devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk dervişleri ve zaviyeleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi*, II Ankara, 1942, 279-386; Irène MÉLIKOFF, "Un ordre de derviches colonisateurs: les Bektāšis", repr. in *idem*, *Sur le traces du soufisme turc*, 115-26; G. G. ARNAKIS, "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire. Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 12:4 (1953), 243-44; ZENKINES, *Ho bektasismos ste D. Thrake*, 77-129; J. D. NORTON, 'The Bektashis in the Balkans', in C. HAWKESWORTH,

Christianity was sought or not, one of the consequences of this course of action, among other things, was the emergence of dual/mixed veneration cultic sites in the Balkans at some of which such sharing arrangements and observances still continue.³² The miscellaneous evidence gathered and analyzed in previous and ongoing research on these phenomena has been of direct relevance to some of the characteristic earlier arguments for a Christian impact on Bektāṣī and Alevi ritual, types of initiatory and rites-of passage practices, veneration of saintly and charismatic figures, celebration of Christian-like festivals and (adopted) saints. Such Christian influences have been sought, for example, in the Bektāṣī reception ceremony, with its distribution of bread wine, bread and cheese to novices and what various observers have interpreted as a Bektāṣī practice of the confession of sins and absolution.³³ Some early Western accounts of encounters with *Kızılbaş* groups describe them as observing practices resembling the Eucharist, the Christian kiss of peace and the Agape.³⁴ Occasionally Christian influences have been also

M. HEPPELL and H. T. NORRIS (eds.), *Religious Quest and National Identity in the Balkans*, Basingstoke and New York 2001, 168-200, here 185-188.

³² For recent studies and some contemporary developments of this phenomenon, see S. DIMITROV, 'Küm istoriata na dobrudzhanskite dvoubredni svetilishta', *Dobrudzha*, 11 (1994), 76-94; E. I. GERMANOVA, 'Süborüt pri Demir Baba teke – proiava na religiozen i kulturen sinkretizüm', *Godishnik na muzeite ot Severna Bülğariia*, 20 (1994), 297-313; P. MAGNARELLA, 'St Nicholas in Christian and Muslim Lands', repr. in *Anatolia's Loom. Studies in Turkish Culture, Sociology, Politics and Law*, Istanbul 1998, 193-201; Ger DUIJZINGS, 'Christian Shrines and Muslim Pilgrims: Joint Pilgrimages and Ambiguous Sanctuaries.' Chapter 3 in *idem, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*. New York 2000, 65-85; D. RADIONOVA, 'Kum vuprosa za genezisa na dvoubrednite svetilishta v severoiztochna Bülğariia prez XIV-XIX vek', *Nauchni Suobshteniia na SUB, klon Dobrich, Istoriia*, 3 (2001), pp. 160-171; E. KONESKA and R. JANKULSKI, *Zaednichki svetilishta/Shared Shrines*, Skopje: Macedonia Center for Photography, 2009; Glen BOWMAN, 'Orthodox-Muslim Interactions at 'Mixed Shrines' in Macedonia' in Chris HANN and Hermann GOLTZ (eds.), *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, Berkeley 2010, 195-219.

³³ Cf. for example, G. JACOB, 'Fortleben von antiken Mysterien und Alt-Christlichem in Islam', *Der Islam*, 2 (1) (1911), 232-34; John K. BIRGE, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London 1937 (repr. 1994), 215-16; R. TSCHUDI, 'Bektashiyya', in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, 1960, p. 1162; H. RINNGREN, 'The Initiation Ceremony of the Bektashis', in C. J. BLEEKER (ed.), *Initiation: contributions to the theme of the study-conference of the International Association for the History of Religions held at Strasburg, September 17th to 22nd 1964* (Studies in the history of religions. Sulements to Numen 10), Leiden: Brill, 1965, 202-208, here 207; MÉLIKOFF, 'Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi' 42; *idem, Hadji Bektach*, 160, 180.

³⁴ G. NUTTING, 'Mission to Central Turkey: Oorfa: Letter from Mr Nutting, 30 July 1860', *Missionary Herald*, 56 (November 1860), 345-47; G. E. WHITE, 'The Shia Turks', *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, 40, 1908, 225-39, at 231; E. HUNTINGTON, 'Through the Great Canon of the Euphrates River', *The Geographical Journal*, 20 (1902), 175-200.

sought in Alevi and Bektāṣī hierarchies³⁵ and the establishment of the celibacy for the *babas* in the Babagân branch of Bektāṣism as a result of the reforms of Balim Sultan (d. 1519) seen in such views as betraying the impact of Christian monasticism.³⁶ Parallels with Christianity have also been sought in the distinctive Alevi/Bektāṣī “trinity” of Allah, Mohammed and Ali and what some have construed as a Christ-like exaltation of Ali in Alevism and some other related heterodox traditions.³⁷ Future exploration and synthesis (when ultimately accomplished) of the earlier and recently accumulated (and still growing) evidence of Ottoman-era Christian-Islamic interaction will offer a good base from which to assess the validity of these arguments and parallels as well as the attribution of these posited Christian traits in Alevism and Bektāṣism to the Bektāṣī association with the Janissaries and/or Bektāṣī missionary tactic to attract Christian converts with a more adaptable and recognizable system of belief and ritual.³⁸ In this context traditions recorded among some Bektāṣī groups³⁹ that their ancestors had been Christian should be assembled and their validity and provenance re-examined.

³⁵ See, for example, CUMONT, ‘Kizil Bash’, 744-45; M. MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites: the ghulat sects*, New York 1988, 422-23.

³⁶ Cf., for example, BIRGE, *The Bektashi Order*, 216; MÉLIKOFF, *Hadji Bektach*, 154-61; BARNES, ‘The Dervish Orders’, 36-37.

³⁷ On Alevi/Bektāṣī teachings concerning the “trinity” of God, Mohammed and Ali, see, for example, BIRGE, *The Bektashi Orde*, 132ff; MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites*, 50ff.; Frederick De JONG, “The Iconography of Bektashism. A survey of themes and symbolism in clerical costume, liturgical objects and pictorial art”, *Manuscripts of the Middle East*, vol. 4, 1989, 8-9; K. KEHL-BODROGI, *Die Kizilbaş/Aleviten. Untersuchungen über eine esoterische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Anatolien*, Berlin 1988, 135-38; NORRIS, *Islam in the Balkans*, 94ff.; Karin VORHOFF, *Zwischen Glaube, Nation und neuer Gemeinschaft. alevitische Identität in der Türkei der Gegenwart*, Berlin 1995, 64ff. For discussions of a potential Christian provenance of this trinity of God, Mohammed and Ali and what some see as a Christ-like exaltation of Ali in Alevi/Bektāṣī teachings, see, for example, M. E. GRENARD, “Une secte religieuse d’Asie Mineure: les Kyzyl-Bâchs”, *Journal Asiatique*, ser. 10, 3 (1904), 511-22; MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites*, 40-42; WHITE, ‘The Shia Turks’, 225-39; MÉLIKOFF, ‘L’Islam hétérodoxe en Anatolie’, *Turkica* 14 (1982), 142-154, here 151-153.

³⁸ Opinions on these issues still vary - see, for example, BIRGE, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, 215-16; TSCHUDI, ‘Bektashiyya’, 1162; NORTON, ‘The Bektashis in the Balkans’, 186-87; SKENDI, ‘Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan area under the Ottomans’, 249-50; D. HUPCHICK, *The Bulgarians in the Seventeenth Century, Slavic Orthodox Society and Culture Under Ottoman Rule*, Jefferson, N.C. and London: MacFarlan, 1993, 60-61; MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites*, 19-20, 48, 424-25, 430-31; MÉLIKOFF, *Hadji Bektach*, 153-54.

³⁹ M. FILIPOVIĆ, ‘The Bektashis in the District of Strumica (Macedonia)’, *Man*, 54 (Jan 1954), 10-13, here 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 Qizilbaş in Bulgaria: Remnants of the Safaviyya?’, in *Convegno sul tema: La Shi’a nell’Impero Ottomano (Roma, 15 Aprile 1991)*, Rome 1993, 203-16, here 207.

Virtually all of these purported Christian elements in Alevi and Bektāšī teachings and observances, however, relate to normative and popular but not heretical dualist Christianity which rejected the Eucharistic theology and sacrament of the established church, the use of wine in church ritual and generally among its adherents (in the case of Bogomilism), professed Docetic Christology (which could not be reconciled with the incarnationist tendencies among the Alevi and some *ghulāt* and *ghulāt*-influenced traditions), conceptualized trinitarian cosmological and theological speculations (in the case of medieval Eastern Christian moderate dualism) which are at complete variance both with normative Christianity and the Trinitarian-like notions in Alevism/Bektāšīsm (it is worth noting that medieval Christian radical dualism variant advanced dyadic rather than triadic systems of supernatural principles which are even more far removed from the theology of orthodox Christianity and even the most unorthodox forms of Islam). Therefore, if future re-assessment of the above arguments for Alev/Bektāšī interaction with Christianity (on the basis of the combined evidence of earlier and new research) confirms its impact on certain Alevi/Bektāšī beliefs and ritual observances, the source of such an impact would have been certainly not heretical dualist Christian groups but normative Christianity, especially its popular versions which as elsewhere variously included a number of pre-Christian traditions and superstitious practices.

Any future scholarly quest for mainstream and heterodox Christian-related/influenced notions in Alevism and Bektāšīsm also needs to take into consideration the characteristic mutability of Kızılbaşism/Alevism both in its belief and ritual systems which has over time integrated a variety of local traditions (deriving from folk versions of Islam and Christianity as well as pre-Christian and pre-Islamic traditions) in areas extending from the north-east Balkans to eastern Anatolia, where the religious processes can be indeed defined as “a permanent procedure of catalysis”.⁴⁰ This permanent “catalysis” often makes the detection and dating of such locally-obtained elements and differentiation from the earliest and core layers in Alevism (and to some extent in Bektāšīsm) a particularly challenging task. In an earlier investigation of the Ahl-e Haqq teachings and practices their belief system has been defined as “conglomerate-like”

⁴⁰ MÉLIKOFF, ‘Bektashi/Kızılbaş’, 6.

(comprising ancient animism and a solar cult, popular Mazdaism, Christian sectarian teachings, Islamic Shi'ite layers – Ismaili and Safavid-related).⁴¹ A similar approach has been attempted to stratify the components of Alevi/ *Kızılbaş* syncretism⁴² but the perceived emphasizing or deemphasizing of some of the strata of the “conglomerate” has attracted some criticism.⁴³ The contrasting and conflicting prioritizing of respectively, ancient Anatolian, pre-Islamic Turkic/Central Asia shamanistic, Shi'ite-related and Iranian (in Kurdish- and Zaza-speaking Alevi circles) layers in such a perceived Alevi conglomerate structure has also played a major role in recent and current Alevi identity politics in Turkey and among the Alevi diasporas in Western Europe and North America.⁴⁴ The study of the antiquity, precedence and religious significance of these or other elements and strata in Alevi/Bektāṣī syncretism has acquired thus some topicality and importance in Alevi-focused historiographic, confessional, popular, media as well as internal Alevi discourses which need to be considered critically and cautiously.

A number of studies have drawn attention, moreover, to the existence of a possible Manichaean layer in Alevi/*Kızılbaş* teachings and practices, usually construed as traceable to the exposure to and adoption of Manichaeism by Central Asian Turkic groups, most consequentially, the Uighurs, after the ruling elite of the Uighur empire converted to Manichaeism in 762 and it remained the official religion of the empire for more than a century. Parallels have been highlighted between the Manichaean prescription of the ‘Three Seals’ (the seals of mouth, hands and breast) and the Alevi/Bektāṣī triple rule: ‘*eline, diline, beline sahib olmak*’, (‘to be master of one’s hand, tongue and one’s loins’) and its other variants, attested both in Anatolia and the Balkans.⁴⁵ Arguments

⁴¹ V. IVANOW, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan: Ahl-i haqq Texts*, Bombay 1950, 31-75.

⁴² Various advanced in MÉLIKOFF’s studies of Alevism and Bektāṣīsm but most systematically in MÉLIKOFF, ‘Recherches sur les composantes du syncrétisme Bektachi-Alevi’ and *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, chap. 4.

⁴³ See, for example, the reviews of MÉLIKOFF, *Hadji Bektach*, respectively by H. ALGAR, in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 36 (4) (2004), 687-689, and M. van BRUINESSEN, in *Turcica* 31 (1999), 549-553.

⁴⁴ See the summary of research and these different and contrasting approaches to the components of this Alevi “conglomerate structure” in STOYANOV, “Contested Post-Ottoman Alevi and Bektashi Identities, 174-180.

⁴⁵ See C. ELSAS, ‘Religionsfreiheit für die türkisch-manichäisch-(pseudo)muslimischen Aleviten’, in H. PREISLER and H. SEIWER (eds.), *Gnosisforschung und religionsgeschichte. Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65 Geburtstag*, Marburg 1994, 80-94, at 85; MÉLIKOFF, ‘Recherches sur les composantes du

have been advanced that further analogies between Manichaeism and Alevism can be detected in the use of the notion and symbolism of light (especially in the sphere of prophetology), cosmogonic notions, ideas which have been seen as reflecting (at least partially) belief in reincarnation or metempsychosis, religious hierarchy and the practice of confession.⁴⁶ The analogies between the Manichaean and Alevi (or Bektāšī) religious hierarchy are inconclusive (the differences seem more pronounced than the similarities) and the same applies to the use of the symbolism and semantics of light in the cosmologies and prophetologies of the two systems. The cosmogonic tradition attested in at least several Alevi versions as the Alevi central creation story is interpreted sometimes as related to reminiscent of Manichaeism⁴⁷ and certainly has some dualist tendencies but does not have any genetic relation to Manichaean or Gnostic traditions. It is to be best understood in the context of certain distinct and inter-related Eurasian cosmogonic traditions some of which variously display a partial movement towards dualism and, apart from its relations with Ahl-e Haqq and Yezidi cosmogonic scenarios,⁴⁸ its potential links with *ghulāt* cosmogonic lore certainly merit further investigation. Regarding the “Triple Rule” one needs much more textual evidence from Central Asian Turkic Manichaean texts than the proponents of the thesis of Manichaean Turkic-Alevi/Bektāšī affiliation usually offer, given the increasing availability and publications of such

synchrétisme Bektachi-Alevi’, 56-57; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, 163, 181; *idem*, ‘Hasluck’s Study of the Bektashis and its Contemporary Significance’, in SHANKLAND, *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage*, 297-308, here 302; *idem*, ‘Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis et les interférences avec d’autres mouvements gnostiques’, in VEINSTEIN, *Synchrétismes et heresies*, 65-75, here 67. The triple rule is attested not only in the Anatolian Alevi/Bektashi traditions but also in those in the Balkans in the version: ‘*eline tek, diline pek, beline berk*’, see I. GEORGIEVA (ed.), *Bŭlgarskite aliani. Sbornik etnograficheski material*, Sofia 1991, 93 (reference to material gathered during a field work among Alevi groups in the Deli Orman area undertaken in the 1980s).

⁴⁶ See ELSAS, ‘Religionsfreiheit’, pp. 83-85; MÉLIKOFF, ‘Recherches sur les composantes du synchrétisme Bektachi-Alevi’, 57; *idem*, *Hadji Bektach*, 20-21, 163; *idem*, ‘Hasluck’s Study’, 302-305; *idem*, ‘Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis’, 65-68. Cf. the cautious analysis of potential Manichaean-Alevi/Bektāšī interaction in A. HAAS, *Die Bektāši: Riten und Mysterien eines islamischen Ordens*, Berlin: Express edition 1988, 147-150.

⁴⁷ See, for example, MÉLIKOFF, ‘Hasluck’s Study’, 303; *idem*, ‘Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis’, 67.

⁴⁸ On the place of this particular Alevi cosmogonic narrative in the context of these Eurasian cosmogonic traditions and the analogous cosmogonic lore among the Ahl- Haqq and the Yezidis, see Y. STOYANOV, ‘Islamic and Christian Heterodox Cosmogonies from the Ottoman period - Parallels and Contrasts’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 64/1 (2001), 19-34.

valuable Central Asian Turkic material.⁴⁹ Before such direct textual support from Central Asian Turkic sources is provided, the proposed “Triple Rule” connection remains a provisional and unsubstantiated theory. Further comparative textual study of the Central Asian Turkic Manichaean manuscripts and corresponding Alevi and Bektāšī material (in areas such as religious terminology and phraseology) is certainly worth pursuing and has not been attempted in any more systematic fashion as yet – again, any general conclusions regarding the conjectured Manichaean Turkic-Alevi connections/analogies need to stem from, not precede such comparative study.

One of the characteristic traits of the earlier and current proponents of the Alevi/Bektāšī-focused indigenization and “Islamic-Christian heterodox” continuity theses in South-Eastern Europe has been their general unawareness or deliberate disregard for the Shi’ite-related Islamic layers in Alevi/Bektāšī syncretism as well as the ongoing debates regarding its variously reconstructed Turkic shamanic and archaic Iranian strata and even the above arguments for its absorption of Central Asian Manichaean Turkic notions and religious vocabulary. This selective or defective approach to Alevi/Bektāšī problematic is accompanied by an inability to or lack of interest in applying the latest advances in research on heterodox religious minorities in the Middle East and the Levant and the important results of the increasing amount of work on their oral traditions and the refinement of oral history methodologies. Consequently, recent re-deployments of the Alevi/Bektāšī indigenization and Islamic-Christian heterodoxy continuity theses have been replete with major factual errors, ahistorical and anachronistic assertions and contentions, underpinned by simplistic and outdated methodologies.⁵⁰ Based to a large extent on recent fieldwork among Alevi communities in the Balkans, these publications

⁴⁹ On the latest state of research on Central Asian Turkic Manichaean texts, see the relevant Turcological contributions in the recently published *Der östliche Manichäismus – Gattungs- und Werksgeschichte*, Z. ÖZERTURAL and J. WILKENS (eds), Berlin and Boston 2011. The Series Turkica of Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum envisages the publication of 3 volumes of Turkic Manichaean sources.

⁵⁰ See, for example, R. LIPCHEV, ‘Bŭlgarski ezicheski i khristianski elementi v obredite, obichaite i poveriata na kŭzŭlbashite v Severoiztochna Bŭlagriia’, *Dobrudzha*, 2 (1985), 136-145; *idem*, ‘Bogomilski elementi, motivi i siuzheti v obichaino-obrednata sistema na bŭlgarskite aliani’, *Dobrudzha*, 6 (1989), 26-38; I. KASABOV, *Kŭzŭlbashite otvŭtre i otvŭn*, Silistra 2004, 97-125.

actually present some valuable findings but the authors have chosen to mould this material into preconceived schemas of a postulated impact of Christian dualism (Bogomilism) on Alevism in the spheres of organizational hierarchy, socio-political attitudes, angelology, diabolology, visionary mysticism and eschatology.⁵¹ Virtually all of the presented arguments for such parallels and continuities are either anachronistic or theologically and historically unsustainable⁵², but inevitably have their impact on local public discourses on Alevism.

Other recent reinstatements of the thesis of original Christian dualist layers in Alevism in Turkey have actually gone so far as to falsify relevant primary sources for the history and teachings of medieval Eastern Christian dualist heresies.⁵³ To concoct such a Christian dualist strata in Alevism fragments of medieval source texts have been misused and mistranslated to prove a supposed direct continuity between Anatolian Paulicianism and Alevism in the spheres of organizational hierarchy, general religious vocabulary, communal network, sectarian assemblies and other related areas.⁵⁴ What is more, all these recent and continuing reinventions of the early theories of the equation between Alevism and preceding Eastern Christian dualist heresies have direct implications for the ongoing competing discourses on the religious essence and affiliations of Alevism in Turkey, South-Eastern Europe and among the Alevi diaspora communities in Western Europe on whether Alevism should be defined as an authentic Islamic tradition, a secularizing current in Islam or an extra-Islamic confession.

⁵¹ See especially, LIPCHEV, 'Bogomilski elementi', 27, 28, 29-30, 31-32, 33-34; KASABOV, *Küzülbashite*, 43, 59, 60, 70, 85, 146-148, 151-52.

⁵² See the detailed analysis of these arguments for Christian dualist-Alevi continuities in Y. STOYANOV, "Early and Recent Formulations of Theories for a Formative Christian Heterodox Impact on Alevism", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, December 2010, 37(3), 261-272, at 268-272.

⁵³ These fabrications of primary source evidence have been carried out in three successive books of E. ÇINAR, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Yılı*, Istanbul 2007; *idem*, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, Istanbul 2007; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, Istanbul 2008, as well as in a pirated and duly falsified edition of the anthology of translated primary sources in HAMILTON, HAMILTON and STOYANOV, *Christian Dualist Heresies* published by Kalkedon Yayınları in Istanbul in 2010 but subsequently withdrawn from the market for violation of copyright.

⁵⁴ See, for example, ÇINAR, *Kayıp Bir Alevi Efsanesi*, pp. 144, 145, 158; *idem*, *Aleviliğin Kökleri*, 78, 140, 137, 142-143, 149. These falsifications of original textual evidence have been analyzed in H. AKSUT, H. HARMANCI and Ü. ÖZTÜRK, *Alevi Tarih Yazmında Skandal* Istanbul 2010, and STOYANOV, "Early and Recent Formulations of Theories", pp. 271-272.

Such debates regarding the Islamic or non-Islamic nature of Alevism are interestingly reminiscent of the scholarly controversies triggered by some scholars' recent assertions that the belief systems of the syncretistic religious minorities in Anatolia and the Near East have little or nothing in common with Islam, i. e. they are of a 'pseudo-Muslim' character.⁵⁵ The transfer of concepts such as "heresy" and "syncretism" from external scholarly to internal Alevi discourse to define Alevi religious identity has been observed in some recent studies of Alevism and Islamic heresiography in general⁵⁶ and this process may be also of relevance to the internal Alevi debates over the Islamic or non-Islamic character of Alevism.

The above ongoing attempts to verify the existence of Balkan and Anatolian dualist layers in Alevism respectively have also aimed to prioritize them as the historically and theologically original strata in Alevi teachings and practices. The outdated and arbitrary techniques used to mould and fix the evidence in rigid preconceived models of the first approach and the outrageous violation of textual sources to forge false historical and religious data ventured in the second approach have not offered any new primary sources-based or theoretical support to the case for the existence of such layers in Alevism – if anything it has weakened it and has compromised further such ideologically-warped treatments of the problematic. Such opportunistic reinstatements of obsolete nineteenth-century historiographic models should not, of course, prejudice the further scholarly quest for evidence of the potential interaction of

⁵⁵ Klaus MÜLLER, *Kulturhistorische Studien zur Genese pseudo-islamischer Sektengebilde in Vorderasien*, Wiesbaden 1967, chs. 2 and 3; ELSAS, 'Religionsfreiheit für die türkisch-manichäische (pseudo)muslimischen Aleviten', M. R. F. HAMZEH'EE, 'Methodological Notes on Interdisciplinary Research on Near Eastern Religious Minorities', in KEHL-BODROGI, KELLNER-HEINKELE and OTTER-BEAUJEAN, *Syncretistic Religious Communities*, pp. 119-39, at pp. 108-109; BARNES, 'The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire', pp. 34, 35.

⁵⁶ See the observations of this process in LANGER and SIMON, 'The Dynamics of Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy', 285-288; Janina KAROLEWSKI, 'What is Heterodox About Alevism? The Development of Anti-Alevi Discrimination and Resentment', *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 48 (2008), 434-456, here 455-456; DRESSLER, 'How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference', 258-259.

Alevism/Bektashism with Christian heterodoxies in the Ottoman-era Anatolia and Balkans.

Indeed the evolving study of Ottoman and post-Ottoman *Kızılbaşlık* and Bektāšism has continued to bring new material and observations to spheres which could shed a new light on the interaction of heterodox and popular forms of Christianity and Islam in the Ottoman era. The most promising of these spheres concern some telling points of analogies (and potential contact) between the cosmogonies, anthropogonies and satanologies of popular and heterodox Christianity and Islam in the Balkans and Anatolia⁵⁷ whose study will need a methodologically balanced and prudent approach. It will also need some methodological and terminological clarity given the ambiguous and potentially misleading methodological approaches and terminology in earlier and some current studies of the problematic. In the Middle Ages both the Eastern and Western Churches generally tended to condemn medieval dualist heresies as a resurgence of the old dualist rival of the early Church, Manichaeism, and accordingly drew on relevant patristic texts in their polemics against Christian dualism. Adopting such clear-cut definitions from medieval Christian heresiology can lead to very erroneous conclusions. When such medieval descriptions of Paulicianism as a “Manichaean heresy” are quoted uncritically and then Paulicianism is conjectured to have exercised an impact on Alevism, a fictitious Manichaean chain of transmission can be constructed and claims for “Manichaean” layers in Alevism/Bektashism accordingly advanced without any concrete evidence. Indeed differing readings of references to the Paulicians in Armenian and Byzantine sources have led to conflicting conclusions as to whether they were originally dualist or whether after initially adhering to Adoptionist but non-dualist teachings some Paulician groups embraced dualism later in their history.⁵⁸ Symptomatically, when proposing a potential Paulician impact on Islamic heterodox groups in Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia, Ivanov was referring mostly to

⁵⁷ Y. STOYANOV, ‘Islamic and Christian Heterodox Cosmogonies’; *idem*, ‘On Some Parallels’, 101-118; *idem*, ‘Early and Recent Formulations’, 269-270;

⁵⁸ See the summary of research and scholarly debate on the original nature of religious evolution of Paulicianism in Y. STOYANOV, ‘The Interchange between Religious Heterodoxies in the Balkans and Caucasus - the Case of the Paulicians’, in I. BILIARSKY, O. CRISTEA and A. OROVEANU (eds.), *The Balkans and Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea*, Cambridge 2012, 106-116.

a late eighteenth-century text of Adoptionist and non-dualist character, *The Key of Truth*,⁵⁹ whose provenance and authenticity have been questioned in recent scholarship. But this text, being representative of an Adoptionist and non-dualist current in Armenian heterodoxy, clearly cannot be used to substantiate a Paulician dualist impact on Alevism or any other Near Eastern Islamic heterodox groups which has been done on occasions.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Alevi/Bektashi teachings focused on man's ultimate aim to awake from the sleep of unconsciousness and be brought back to his divine origin is not sufficient to define Alevism/Bektashism as a Gnostic creed⁶¹ where indeed salvation is reached by knowledge (*gnosis*) about the origins of the inner self in the spiritual realm. Gnostic systems, however, develop also a theological and anti-cosmic dualism which is notably absent in Alevism/Bektashism but is one of the main characteristics of medieval Christian dualism.

The objective appraisal of the question of the existence of dualist layers in Alevism/Bektashism is thus of some importance not only to the field of the study of Islamic heterodoxy during the Ottoman period but also the current instrumentalization of the problematic in the dialogue and interchange between theological, scholarly and internal Alevi discourses on Alevism. It will also contribute to the further exploration of the variously classified religious syncretisms of the Mediterranean and the Near East (one such classification proposes the existence of “genuine”, “semi-“ and “spurious” syncretisms among Near Eastern religious minorities)⁶² and to the better understanding and characterization of Balkan and Anatolian Alevi and Bektāṣī belief and ritual systems in the framework of these wider patterns of syncretism.

⁵⁹Published by F. C. CONYBEARE, ed. and tr., *The Key of Truth: a Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia*, Oxford 1898. For arguments regarding its influence on Islamic heterodoxy in Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia see IVANOW, *The Truth-Worshippers*, 50-57, and MOOSA, *Extremist Shiites*, pp. 439-42.

⁶⁰ For such treatment of the *The Key of Truth*, see, for example, MÉLIKOFF, *Hadji Bektach*, 164, 194; *idem*, ‘Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis’, 74.

⁶¹ MÉLIKOFF, ‘Le gnosticisme chez les Bektachis/Alévis’, *passim*; *idem*, ‘Universalisme et gnosticisme dans les heterodoxies du proche et du moyen-orient’, *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 26 (2) (2002), 135- 154, *passim*; *idem*, ‘Hasluck’s Study’, 304-305.

⁶² As proposed in COLPE, ‘The Phenomenon of Syncretism’, 45-48.

