

Extremist Shiites

The Ghulat Sects



Matti Moosa


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To
Hans, Mark, Petra, and Jessica
With Love

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Pagan, Christian, and Islamic Elements in the Beliefs of the Ghulat

REFERENCES HAVE BEEN MADE throughout this study to pagan, Christian, and Islamic elements in the beliefs of contemporary extremist Shiite sects, and especially to such Christian elements as the celebration of festivals, the private and public confession of sins, and the partaking of a ceremonial meal resembling the Lord's Supper. In this chapter we shall discuss the sources of these elements and show how they found their way into the worship and rituals of extremist Shiite sects, particularly the Kizilbash Kurds of Turkey.

It would be easy to dismiss the members of these sects as heterodox Shiites who have deviated from orthodox Islam, but the fact remains that they maintain many religious beliefs and rituals not only alien but blasphemous to orthodox Islam. Thorough investigation surprisingly reveals a Christian origin for some of these beliefs. Al-Sarraf, who discussed the confession of sins and the ceremonial meal observed by the Shabak, states that these practices are of Christian origin, but fails to explain how such non-Islamic rituals came to be practiced by the Shabak. Although he avers that these rituals are common among such other groups as the Bektashis, Kizilbash, Nusayris, and Ahl-i Haqq (Ali Ilahis), he admits to puzzlement as to how they found their way into the worship of these extremist Shiites.¹

We have pointed out throughout this study that the contemporary Ghulat are mostly of Turkoman, Persian, Kurdish, or Arab origin. Despite their common belief in the deification of Ali, their names, languages, and locations vary widely. The Ahl-i Haqq are found mainly in Western Iran; the Shabak, Bajwan, Ibrahimiyya, and Sarliyya-Ka-

kaiyya live in Iraq; the Nusayris live in Syria and Lebanon; and the Bektashis, Kizilbash (Alevi), Çepnis, and Takhtajis in Turkey.² Generally, the names of these sects indicate a religious rather than an ethnological identity. The study of their religious tenets reveals a syncretism of Islamic Shiism, Sufism, and Christianity, along with traces of animistic and heathen superstitions. But one should be careful not to confuse these sects with the greater body of Shiites, especially the Twelvers, who do not deify Ali. These sects are extremists whose apotheosis of Ali is the cornerstone of their belief. Their belief in a trinity of God, Muhammad, and Ali (or Ali, Muhammad, and Salman al-Farisi in the case of the Nusayris) and in metempsychosis also separates them from Twelver Shiism and from orthodox Islam.

There is a great deal of fluidity and divergence in the religious practices of the Ghulat sects, due perhaps to the ignorance of their religious leaders, their lack of substantial body of religious literature, and the utter secrecy with which they guard their beliefs. Nevertheless, the investigation of these beliefs shows that they derive partly from heathenism, partly from Shiite Islam, and partly from Christianity.

Writers have observed idolatrous practices among these groups, especially the Kizilbash. Dunmore writes that whenever the Kizilbash find a piece of black wood, they worship it, saying it is a relic of some holy man or of a horse.³ Herrick considers them heathens because they revere their religious leaders to the point of worship. He reports some of these idolatrous practices, for example, their practice of bowing before wands cut from a certain tree and kept in the house of their shaykh, or religious leader.⁴ In this sense the Kizilbash are no different from the Ahli Haqq, who deify their shaykhs.⁵ J. G. Taylor speaks of a rock that is the object of idolatrous worship by some Kizilbash in the district of Dersim (Tunceli), in the upper Euphrates valley. He also reports that some Kizilbash worship fire, the sun at its rising and setting, and the sources of rivers, practices he believes are remnants of old Armenian paganism.⁶ Taylor thus implies that the Kizilbash Kurds of Dersim are of Armenian origin; this, as shall be seen shortly, has a great bearing on the presence of Christian elements in the worship of extremist Shiite groups. Similar traces of paganism among the Kizilbash have also been observed by Grenard, who reports that they worship the sun and the moon, and subscribe to the cults of the goddesses Anahit, Artemis, Aphrodite, Astarte (Ishtar), and others.⁷ This has also been observed by G. E. White, who points out that in ancient Anatolia, the female principle in the divine nature was primary, while the male principle was secondary, accounting for the worship of goddesses.⁸ Devil worship is reported among a

branch of the Ahl-i Haqq as well as among the Yezidis of northern Iraq. It may be more accurate, however, to say that the Ahl-i Haqq and Yezidis do not worship Satan as a deity, but honor him from fear of his evil power. Like the Yezidis, some Ahl-i Haqq honor Taus Malak, the peacock angel that they believe guards the gates of paradise; they are therefore known as the Tausis, or peacock sect.⁹ Pantheistic beliefs are also reported among some of the Ahl-i Haqq. S. G. Wilson, a longtime missionary in Persia, states that some Ahl-i Haqq (whom he calls Ali Ilahis) maintain that "not only prophets and Imams, but also all of God's creation (including angels), emanate from Him and are an integral part of His essence. This belief is closely associated with the doctrine of metempsychosis and the ultimate absorption of all things in the infinite."¹⁰ Although specific pagan practices are not reported among the extremist Shiites of northern Iraq, it is certain that the Shabak share with their neighbors the Yezidis a veneration for some holy shrines (the shrine of Hasan Fardosh in the village of al-Darawish, east of Mosul, Iraq, for one) in addition to celebrating of some Yezidi festivals.¹¹ The Ghulat also believe in the transmigration of souls, a doctrine which has a major place in the belief systems of the Ahl-i Haqq (Ali Ilahis), the Kakaiyya, and the Nusayris.

On the Shiite side, we may note the exalted position these groups give to the Imam Ali, whom they deify. They consider him part of a trinity along with God and Muhammad or among the Nusayris, with Muhammad and Salman al-Farisi. They exalt Ali above the Prophet Muhammad, who they maintain was the forerunner of Ali. To them Ali is God incarnate. He is the divine being that dwelt in the biblical prophets Abraham, Moses, and David, and even in Christ. As an expression of their worship of Ali, they offer him prayer and sacrifice.¹² To the Nusayris Ali is God Himself, the Lord of Lords, the creator of mankind and the source of the livelihood of His creation. The author of the Nusayri *Kitab al-Mashyakha* (Manual for shaykhs) states that Ali/God created Muhammad from the light of His unity and from the power of His eternity. This book contains traditions in which Muhammad himself attests to the divinity of Ali, demonstrating that Ali is superior to Muhammad.¹³ The extremist Shiites also exalt the Imams, considering them infallible, sinless, and divine.

Such hyperbole is totally foreign to orthodox Islam. In fact, to orthodox Muslims, the majority of the Shiites, and especially the Ghulat, are heretics. The Ghulats' total disregard for religious duties and obligations moreover, drive them still farther from orthodox Islam. They do not pray or perform the ablution (purification by washing) before prayer.

They do not fast during the month of Ramadan or make the pilgrimage to Mecca. They do not recognize the Quran as the only sacred book—they have their own sacred books—or accept Muhammad as a prophet. Some of them prohibit divorce, a practice sanctioned by the Quran. They have a religious hierarchy of elders, or shaykhs, who they believe are the descendants of Ali and are infallible regarding religious matters.¹⁴

The most striking phenomenon about the extremist Shiites is the Christian elements in their belief and rituals; those elements are noted by almost every writer who has come in contact with them. Most of the writers focus on the Bektashis and Kizilbash of Asia Minor and on smaller groups like the Takhtajis and Çepnis; Sir Charles Wilson was the first to classify the Shabak and Bajwan as Kizilbash, who have many things in common with the Ahl-i Haqq of western Iran.¹⁵

Christian elements are prevalent in both the beliefs and the rituals of the extremist Shiite groups. The Nusayris celebrate Christmas and other Christian festivals, and their catechism affirms their belief in the Holy Eucharist. Some extremist Shiites believe that Jesus is the Son of God or even God Himself, although they maintain that He appeared under the name of Ali. They believe that as God is Christ, so Ali is the one who spoke through Moses and the prophets. To them Jesus is also the Word of God and the Savior of men, who intercedes with the Father on behalf of sinful humanity.

Like the Christians, they maintain that God comprises a trinity, although unlike the Christian trinity, the three persons of their trinity do not seem to be equal. Some of them baptize their children, but in the name of Ali. They believe that Mary is the mother of God, and that her conception of Jesus was an act of divine will. Like the Roman Catholics and all the Eastern Churches, they maintain that Mary was a virgin before and after she gave birth to Christ. They celebrate a rite resembling the Lord's Supper, partaking of a cup of wine which they call the Cup of Love; Those guilty of sin are not allowed to partake of this cup. They confess their sins to their pirs and once a year hold a ceremony of public penance.

The religious hierarchy of the Ghulat is quite similar to that of Christianity. They observe several Christian holidays and honor several Christian saints. Finally, some of them accept the Bible rather than the Quran as a sacred book.¹⁶ Nutting, who attended an open prayer meeting of some Kizilbash in Turkey, writes that at the end of their worship, men and women kissed one another in the most modest manner. This practice resembles the Christian kiss of peace, performed during the celebration of the liturgy by the Eastern Churches to this day. Nutting

also found other practices among the Kurdish Kizilbash which he believed had a Christian origin. Among these were phrases and concepts contained in their songs and hymns proclaiming such Christian truths as the duty of humility and the necessity of forgiving injuries inflicted by others.¹⁷

Before baking their bread, the Kizilbash women around Marsovan, Turkey, mark every loaf with the sign of the cross.¹⁸ Christian traits among the Kizilbash of the Hermus valley in the neighborhood of Sardis were noted by Sir William M. Ramsay. He states that while the men of these villages bore Muslim names, the women had such common Christian names as Sophia, Ann, and Maryam. The villagers drank wine and were monogamous. They accepted Christian holy books and were visited by an itinerant religious official, a kind of priest, called a Karabash (one who wears a black headdress). Ramsay's informant told him that these villagers were Christians with a veneer of Muhammadanism.¹⁹

Their beliefs and practices have led many writers to regard extremist Shiites as crypto-Christian or, as Grenard puts it, "Islamic Protestants."²⁰ Some writers have maintained that these extremist Shiites are closer to Christianity than to Islam.²¹ S. G. Wilson states that one of the beliefs of the Ahl-i Haqq of Persia is that as a god incarnate, Ali manifested himself in Christ. Therefore, Ali and Christ are identical; like Christ, Ali becomes the Redeemer. For this reason the Ahl-i Haqq receive Christians as their brethren and listen to the gospel. Wilson further relates that one time, when he attended the celebration of the Persian New Year, a part of the end of the celebration was omitted, and at that point he was invited to read from the Injil (gospel).²²

F. M. Stead relates that once, when he was preaching the gospel to the Ahl-i Haqq in Western Iran, they asked him, "Why do you come to us with this message? We are already near you in belief. You should go to the Muslims, who are far removed in faith."²³ This corroborates the statement of de Gobineau, who wrote in the middle of the nineteenth century that the Muslims of Persia consider the Ahl-i Haqq close to the Christians, for just as the Christians believe that Jesus is God incarnate, the Ahl-i Haqq believe that Ali is the manifestation of God.²⁴ Such evidence illustrates how far these deifiers of Ali are from orthodox Islam and how near they are to Christianity. G. E. White, for many years a missionary in Turkey with many friends among the Kizilbash (whom he calls the Shia Turks), rightly states that there is much truth in their claim that "less than the thickness of an onion-skin separates [them] from Christians."²⁵

Our study of the extremist Shiite sects of northern Iraq shows that their rituals, like those of the Bektashis and Kizilbash, contain un-

mistakably Christian elements. There is no evidence that these rituals were introduced by the small Christian communities in Iraq (namely, the Assyrians or Nestorians), whose members were converted to Catholicism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and were renamed Chaldeans by the Church of Rome. To determine the effect of Christianity on the extremist Shiites of northern Iraq, we should look for evidence instead among the Shiite heterodox groups of Turkey, especially the Bektashis and the Kizilbash. These groups, Turkoman by origin, lived in Anatolia and held the same religious beliefs as the Shabak and related sectaries in Iraq. But how were these extremist Shiites in Turkey influenced by Christian beliefs and rituals?

To answer this question, it is necessary to trace the spread of Christianity among the Turks and Mongols. In the apostolic and post-apostolic eras, Christianity spread into Central Asia and China, taking especial hold among the Turks and Mongols. There is ample evidence in Greek, Latin, and Syriac sources to attest to this historical fact. From Bardaysan (154–222), Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339), and St. Jerome (347–420) to the Syrian Maphrian Bar Hebraeus (1226–86) and the Venetian traveler Marco Polo (1254–1324), we learn about the spread of Christianity among the Scythians, Parthians, Chinese, Turks, and Mongols.²⁶

It is difficult, however, to determine the extent to which Christianity influenced these people, especially the Turks, among whose beliefs Christian elements persisted even after their conversion to Islam. One could dismiss the whole question by saying that after the Byzantines were defeated at the battle of Malazgirt in 1071 and the hordes of Muslim Turkoman tribes rushed from Persia to Iraq to dwell in Asia Minor, there ensued a mass conversion of the Christian population to Islam. One can also speculate that the Ghazis—zealot Muslim religious warriors motivated by the Islamic tenet of Jihad (holy war) against the Christian “infidels”—were instrumental in spreading Islam in Asia Minor and establishing a number of Muslim Turkish states. There is evidence that the leaders of these Ghazis, the Danishmend, were Armenian converts to Islam,²⁷ which explains the emergence of crypto-Christian communities like the extremist Shiites. On the surface this may be true, and there is no denying that cases of forced conversion among the population of Asia Minor can be cited. But there is no evidence of forcible mass conversion under the Seljuk Turks.

As the Ottomans consolidated their power toward the end of the thirteenth century, a large number of conquered people converted to Islam, and a new army, the Janissaries, was recruited from captured

Christian children. Many of the Christians retained their religion and were recognized as independent ethnic or religious communities under the millet system.²⁸ From a purely economic point of view, mass conversion of these rayas (subjects) was not in the interest of the Ottomans, because as soon as the rayas became Muslims they were exempt from the taxes imposed on non-Muslims according to Islamic law. There were, however, Christians who converted to Islam but retained most of their religious practices in secret. They are most likely the same people from Trebizond and the neighboring mountains mentioned by W. J. Hamilton. He calls them "Greek Turks" or "Turkish Greeks" and says that they profess to be Muslims and, observe such Muslim religious duties as circumcision and attending the mosque, but are secretly Christians.²⁹ According to Ramsay, these crypto-Christians "have now ceased to be under the necessity of practicing this sham Mohammedanism."³⁰

Rev. Horatio Southgate also refers to these people in describing a visit to the district of Trebizond in 1841. He states that in the city of Trebizond, there are several hundred people of Greek origin called Croomlees who are outwardly Muslims, but secretly Christians. They baptize their children, receive Holy Communion, and welcome priests to their homes, but in public they profess to be Muslims and wear the white turban of the Turks. Southgate also writes that in the vicinity of Trebizond there are many Muslims of Greek descent; indeed, they make up the majority of the Muslim population between Trebizond and Gumuşhane.³¹

Vital Cuinet mentions the crypto-Christians of Trebizond in the district of Rize, who, though Muslims by faith, have preserved some Christian rituals, such as baptism.³² Many of these crypto-Christians speak not Turkish but Armenian, indicating their Armenian origin. Southgate states that in the district east of Trebizond live some thousand Muslim families of Armenian origin who still speak the Armenian language.³³ The influence of Armenian Christianity on the extremist Shiites, particularly the Kizilbash, will be explored later. Suffice it to say here that incidents of conversion to Islam did exist. The conversion to Islam of the crypto-Christians of Trebizond, however, was recent (the seventeenth century), and they were most likely converted to Sunnism rather than to Shiite Islam.³⁴

Tracing the history of the transition from Christianity to Islam in Asia Minor is difficult and complex, due mainly to the dearth of information available about the Christian cults in Asia Minor at the time of the Turkish conquest, except for the heterodox Paulicians in Armenia and eastern Anatolia, who shall be discussed later. There is, however, ample

evidence of religious interrelations between Christians and Muslims and of the usurpation of many Christian sanctuaries and saints by Muslims.³⁵ Like the orthodox Muslims, the Bektashis, Kizilbash, and Mevlevis appropriated a number of Christian sanctuaries, saints, and burial grounds, but in their dealings with the Christians of Asia Minor they followed a policy of tolerance, in order to win the Christian peasantry to their fold.

It should be remembered that the difference between the Bektashis and Kizilbash is less in their teachings than in their organization,³⁶ and if we realize that the Shabak and other related sects in northern Iraq are of both Bektashi and Kizilbash origin, we can safely state that what applies to the Bektashis and Kizilbash regarding their association with Christianity applies also to the Shabak and related sects. One difference is that while the Bektashis and Kizilbash in Asia Minor continued to revere Christian saints and sanctuaries, the Shabak and related sects, who since the sixteenth century had lived as an isolated group in northern Iraq, lost faith. Their neighbors were either Sunnite Muslims or Yezidis, and the Shabak and related sects found themselves drawn more toward the Yezidis than to the Sunnite Muslims, with whom they had sharp religious differences. This explains their sharing of some shrines and festivities with the Yezidis. From the defeat of the Byzantine army at the battle of Malazgirt (1071) until the rise of the Ottomans to power at the end of the thirteenth century, Christians and Turks lived side by side. The establishment of the Seljuk state of Rum in 1077 may be regarded as the beginning of a long association between Muslim Turks and Christians. The Seljuk sultans of Rum were patrons of the liberal arts, literature, and science, and left behind them the most beautiful architecture in Asia Minor. Many of them were familiar with Christianity and treated their Christian subjects with tolerance.³⁷

The Seljuks may also have been influenced by the Crusaders from Europe, who in 1096 marched through Asia Minor on their way to the Holy Land to wrest Jerusalem from Muslim hands. In 1190 Frederick Barbarossa captured Konya, the capital of the Seljuks, forcing Konya to furnish him with guides and provisions. Six years later, the Seljuk Sultan Rukn al-Din Sulayman (reigned 1196–1206) coined money in imitation of Christian money. The opponents of the Seljuks, the Danishmends of Malatya (Melitene) and Sivas, even minted coins with the image of Christ on them. Many of the coins minted by Rukn al-Din Sulayman had a portrait of a horseman carrying a mace on his shoulders, in imitation of the coin minted by Roger of Antioch one hundred years earlier.³⁸

The Seljuk Sultan Ala al-Din Kaykubad I (reigned 1219–36) became

acquainted with Christianity during his eleven years of exile in Constantinople. One of his predecessors, Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhosraw I (reigned 1192–1196 and 1204–10), who was obliged to take refuge in Lesser Armenia, Trebizond, and Constantinople, fell in love with a Greek woman while in the Byzantine capital, a lady of noble birth, the daughter of Manuel Movrozomas.³⁹ At one time Ghiyath al-Din was accused of apostasy by his more strict Muslim neighbors of Aleppo.⁴⁰ It is even said that Ghiyath al-Din's son Izz al-Din Kaykaus I (reigned 1210–19), while in Constantinople, was admitted to the Sacraments.⁴¹ Many Seljuk sultans married Christian wives and had Christian mothers, some of whom had great influence on the Seljuk court. One of these women was the Georgian Princess Russudana, wife of Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhosraw II (reigned 1236–45). Kaykhosraw's II intention to stamp a portrait of his wife on his coin met with public opposition, and he was forced to abandon the idea.⁴² His partiality toward the Christians also enraged his Muslim subjects. His chief judge accused him of loving and admiring the Byzantine [Christian] way of life. Angered by the audacity of the judge, Ghiyath al-Din had him killed instantly.⁴³

In the latter part of the thirteenth century, the prevalence of Christian elements among the Turks of Asia Minor caused Anthimus, Patriarch of Constantinople, to believe that Izz al-Din Kaykaus II (1246–83) had secretly converted to Christianity, and that there were many converts among the Bektashis and the Ismailis. It is not certain whether Izz al-Din Kaykaus II was converted to Christianity, but there is no doubt that his youngest son, Malik Constantine, lived in Constantinople, converted to Christianity, and married a Greek woman.⁴⁴ At Konya, headquarters of the Mevlevi (Mawlawi) order of dervishes, Christians (both Greek and Armenian) and Jews were treated with tolerance. Scholars and physicians among them were welcomed at the court of the Seljuk sultans, as were their Muslim counterparts. Some Greeks and Armenians converted to Islam for convenience, in order to seek favor with the Sultans or to protect their property, but they continued to adhere to certain Christian practices which eventually became part of the Seljuk tradition. With the state of Lesser Armenia to the east and the Greeks and the Crusaders to the west of their sultanate, and with many Christians living amongst them, the Seljuks could hardly have escaped Christian influence.⁴⁵

Such tolerance was perhaps one factor giving rise to the dervish orders of the Mevlevis (Mawlawis) and the Bektashis. The period of the Seljuk state of Rum at Konya, especially during the rule of Ala al-Din Kaykubad I, was marked by great upheavals in art and literature and the fusion of Christian and Muslim cultures. In fact, the rise of the Seljuks of

Rum to power coincides with the rise of the state of Lesser Armenia in 1180. For 300 years this state fought on all fronts against the Byzantines, Arabs, and Seljuks.

The impact of Armenian legends and beliefs is most evident among the Kizilbash Kurds and the Ahl-i Haqq, as shall be seen in the following chapter. Under the Seljuk sultans of Rum, especially during the thirteenth century, constant warfare, the mingling of population and ideas, and especially religious tolerance were the major factors in the emergence of the dervish orders, whose religion combined pagan, Christian, and Muslim beliefs.⁴⁶ It was during this period that numerous holy men and mystics from Bukhara, Khurasan, and other parts of Persia, driven by Mongol pressure at home, left for Anatolia. Most notable among them were the mystic poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, who left Bukhara and arrived in Konya in 1233, and his friend Shams al-Din Tabrizi (d. 1246), who arrived in the same city in 1244. There they founded the Mevlevi Order. Rumi was tolerant toward Christians and even had Christian disciples.⁴⁷

The Bektashis were one of the dervish orders which flourished at this time; unlike the Mevlevi (Mawlawis), they began to propagate their beliefs among different people, including the Christian peasantry. Under Ala al-Din I, Konya became the focus of ideas and a culture wholly derived from Persia. Many of these dervishes were probably already Shiites or influenced by Shiite beliefs. There is evidence that in Asia Minor, missionaries from Konya preached Shiism to the common people. The objects of Shiite propaganda were the Takhtajis of Lycia and the Alawi (Kizilbash) Kurds of Diyarbakr. According to Hamd Allah Mustawfi (1340), the inhabitants of Senusa, near Amasia, were fanatic Shiites.⁴⁸ Other streams of Shiism flowed from neighboring Syria. We have noted earlier that a certain Baba Ishaq, originally from the town of Kfarsud on the Syrian border, preached extreme Shiite beliefs to the Turkoman tribes and instigated an insurrection by these tribes against the Seljuk Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhosraw II (reigned 1236–45).⁴⁹

The rise of the dervish orders may also be attributed partially to the rise of the Ottomans to power near the end of the thirteenth century and their establishment of a theocratic state based on the Islamic Sharia. Although Turkoman in origin, the Ottomans were nevertheless distinct from the rest of the Turks of Asia Minor in character, outlook, and political ambition.⁵⁰ The Ottomans were the ruling class, and their objective was to build a strong empire. They were political pragmatists, more concerned with their destiny as a military elite than with the religious duty of converting non-Muslims, which motivated the Turkish Ghazis. To the Ottoman rulers the non-Muslims, whether of Greek,

Armenian, or any other origin, were taxpayers, and their conversion to Islam would deprive the state of substantial revenue. This is why the Ottomans based their state not on race but on religious denominationalism (the millet system), offering the Christian communities the freedom to manage their own cultural and religious affairs as long as they accepted the status of *rayas* (subjects) and paid the Jizya (poll-tax).⁵¹

Most significant, however, is that the Ottomans adopted orthodox Islam according to the Hanafite school as the formal religion of their state. The reason may be that they found in orthodox Islam a workable judicial and administrative system able to meet the needs of the new state. The Islamic Sharia served also as a convenient solution to the problems caused by the many different religious groups in the Ottoman state. Non-Muslims had to pay the Jizya and Kharaj (land-tax) to receive protection from the state. Thus, the relationship between the non-Muslim subjects and the state was more concerned with economics than with allegiance. The elaborate and intricate judicial system of Islam was based on the Quran and the interpretation of jurists, the Ulama (men learned in religious science). They were the guardians of the Sharia and its application to the lives of the Muslim believers. The chief of these Ulama was Shaykh al-Islam, who advised the Ottoman sultans on the operation and actions of the government, to ensure that they were in conformity with the tenets of the Quran and the Sharia. The juristic opinions of Shaykh al-Islam ranged from determining the fast of Ramadan to the declaration of war on a foreign state. The reverence of the Ulama and their sultans for the Islamic Sharia was boundless, since, according to Islam, its source was God, not man. Hence, to the Ulama, the Sharia was divinely instituted, and no mortal could tamper with it. The Ulama, the upholders of the Sharia, became a separate caste, and along with the ruling class and the military were the backbone of the Ottoman state. One of the results of their adherence to Islamic orthodoxy was that the Ottomans came to employ more and more Arabic words and usages, which caused their language to diverge increasingly from the old Turkish. According to Ziya Gökalp (d. 1924), it was the official language of the Ottomans, but not of the Turkish masses.⁵² In fact, at one time some sultans wanted to adopt Arabic, the language of the Quran, as their formal tongue. By the fourteenth century, the dichotomy between the Ottomans and the Turkish masses began to widen, and it continued to do so until the fall of the empire in 1918. According to some authorities, from the beginning of their political career in the latter part of the thirteenth century, the Ottomans called themselves only Ottomans, never Turks. They also considered themselves different from the Turks.⁵³

The American missionaries Eli Smith and G. H. O. Dwight, who traveled through Turkey at the beginning of the nineteenth century, observed that the Turkomans were generally called Turks by the Ottomans, who abhorred the name Turk and preferred to be called Muslims (Muslims).⁵⁴

To the Ottomans, "Turk" was a name that belonged to the people of Turkestan and the nomadic hordes who roamed the steppes of Khurasan. They considered themselves civilized Ottomans, and could not understand why Europeans called them Turks. As a sophisticated ruling class, the Ottomans looked down upon the Turkish peasantry, calling them Eşek Turk (the donkey Turk) and Kaba Turk (stupid Turk).⁵⁵ Expressions like "Turk-head" and "Turk-person" were contemptuously used by Ottomans when they wanted to denigrate each other.⁵⁶

The Turkish peasantry, although Muslim, was little affected by the Ottomans' Islamic orthodoxy, with its intricate scholastic theology, its religious schools, the juristic opinions of the Ulama, and the Arabic terminology that inundated the Ottoman literary language. To the masses, the Ottomans were as alien as the Greeks. The strict and complex orthodoxy adopted by the Ottomans appealed little to the Turkish peasant who, although Islamized, was still influenced by the shamanistic origin of his culture. Their God was Tanri, the old pagan deity who symbolized love and beauty. According to Halide Edib, the Muslim preacher who threatened the masses with hellfire and the torture of Ifrits (demons) was less popular among the masses than those who talked of Tanri as the symbol of beauty and love. It is against this background that many dervish orders and heterodox sects emerged in Asia Minor, in reaction to strict Islamic orthodoxy. Among these were the Kizilbash, the Mevlevis (Mawlawis), and the Bektashis, whose simple spiritual teaching and emphasis on mystical love and universal brotherhood appealed tremendously to the Turkish masses.⁵⁷ To them, true religion was the internal enlightenment of the heart, rather than a formal application of ritual. This is why they rejected the religious dogmatism and ritualism of the orthodoxy sponsored by the state.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Bektashis were actively competing with other orders to win the majority of the populace to their fold. There is evidence that they encroached upon the tribal sanctuaries and holy places of other orders. This encroachment extended to Christian sanctuaries, churches, saints, and tombs.⁵⁸ In order to win the Christian peasantry to their fold, the Bektashis opened their own holy places to the Christians.⁵⁹ At the beginning of the fifteenth century

Badr al-Din, son of the judge of Samawna, led a socio-religious rebellion which was connected with the Bektashi sect. There is evidence that in the wake of this rebellion, Christian converts to Bektashism were enthusiastically welcomed, and the equality of Christians with Muslims in their worship of God was so emphasized that leaders of the rebellion proclaimed that any Turk who denied the truths of the Christian religion was himself irreligious.⁶⁰ Thus, in time, the simple and illiterate folk of Anatolia, both Christian and Muslim, came to honor the same saints, visit the same shrines, and share common burial grounds. For example, the Haji Bektash lodge near Kirşehir is visited not only by members of the Bektashi order, but also by Christians, who, on entering the shrine, make the sign of the cross. For this reason, local tradition associates the tomb of Haji Bektash with the Greek Saint Charalambo, and the Bektashi dervishes who guard the shrine seem to encourage this association. It is said that many Bektashi dervishes consider Haji Bektash to be the incarnation of St. Charalambo, whom they honor so much that they do not hesitate to kill any Muslim who blasphemes him or Christ.⁶¹ The Haji Bektash lodge has also become the religious center for all Bektashis, Kizilbash, and other extremist Shiite sects in Asia Minor. To these extremist Shiites, the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf in Iraq were too far to visit as a religious duty; they found it more convenient to perform the pilgrimage to the Haji Bektash lodge.⁶² A similar shrine is in the village of Haydar al-Sultan, near Angora (Ankara), where a Muslim saint is buried. He is identified as Khoja Ahmad (Karaja Ahmad), presumably a disciple of Haji Bektash. His wife Mene was a Christian from Caesarea. Local tradition indicates that this tekke stands on the site of a Christian monastery. The inhabitants of the village are Kizilbash, indicating that the differences between the Bektashis and Kizilbash are minor.⁶³

30. See this fatwa in the newspaper *al-Sha'b*, 31 July 1936, reproduced in Munir al-Sharif, *Ai-Alawiyyun Man Hum wa Ayna Hum*, 59.
31. Munir al-Sharif, *al-Alawiyyun Man Hum wa Ayna Hum*, 59–60.
32. Shaykh Mahmud al-Salih, *al-Naba al-Yaqin an al-Alawiyyin*.
33. Muhammad Rida Shams al-Din, *Ma al-Alawiyyin fi Suriyya* (Beirut: Matbaat al-Insaf, 1956), 53–54.
34. Arif al-Sus, *Man Huwa al-Alawi*, in Uthman, *al-Alawiyyun*, 131.
35. Abd al-Rahman al-Khayyir, "Yaqzat al-Alawiyyin," reproduced in Uthman, *al-Alawiyyun*, 173–89, especially 179.
36. Ahmad Sulayman Ibrahim, "al-Alawiyyun bayn al-Muslimin wa al-Islam," reproduced in Uthman, *al-Alawiyyun* 190–91.
37. Shayk Muhammad Hasan Yasin, "al-Alawiyyun Shi'iyyun," reproduced in Uthman, *al-Alawiyyun*, 191–210.
38. See the anonymous *al-Alawiyyun Shi'at Ahl al-Bayt: Bayan Aqidat al-Alawiyyin*, (Beirut: n.p., 1392/1972), 8–10. Judging by the introduction, it is probable that this monograph has been compiled by the learned Shiite Hasan Mahdi al-Shirazi. This proclamation first appeared in the newspaper *al-Qabas*, 27 July 1937.
39. *Al-Alawiyyin Shi'at Ahl al-Bayt*, 10–32 and note 1 containing the signatories of the proclamation.
40. Maoz, "Syria under Hafiz al-Asad: New Domestic and Foreign Policies," *Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems* 15 (1975): 10–11; and Gubser, "The Alawites of Syria," 44.
41. Kelidar, "Religion and State in Syria," 18; and Moshe Maoz, "The Emergence of Modern Syria," 30; and Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 114.
42. Gubser, "The Alawites of Syria," 43–44.
43. *Ibid.*, 44.
44. Alisdare Drysdale, "The Assad Regime and its Troubles," *Middle East Research and Information Project Report* 110 (November–December 1982): 8 and al-Din, *al-Nusayriyya*, 190.
45. See the prayers of the Nusayris addressed to Sulayman al-Murshid and his sons Mujib and Saji as gods. These prayers consist of the following Suras: (1) Surat al-Sajda, (2) Surat al-Fath, (3) Surat al-Ma'rifa, (4) Surat al-Du'a, (5) Surat al-Iqtibas (6) Surat al-Itiraf and (7) Surat al-Iqrar, in Mujahid al-Amin, *al-Nusayriyya (al-Alawiyyun)*, 67–71.

37—Pagan, Christian, and Islamic Elements in the Beliefs of the Ghulat

1. Al-Sarraf, *al-Shabak*, 118–121.
2. F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 1:124–25.
3. Dunmore, report dated 24 October in *Missionary Herald* (1854): 56.
4. Herrick, report dated 16 November 1865, 68; and Grenard, "Une Secte Religieuse," 519.
5. Stead, "The Ali Ilahi Sect," 186–87; and Samuel Graham Wilson, *Persian Life and Customs*, 234–35.
6. J. G. Taylor, "Journal of a Tour," 297 and 320.
7. Grenard, "Une Secte Religieuse," 518–19.
8. White, "Survivals of Primitive Religions," 151–52. Cf. H. J. Van Lennep, *Travels*

in *Little Known Parts of Asia Minor*, 1:293 and 295; and David Marshall Lang, *The Armenians: A People in Exile* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 161.

9. Stead, "The Ali Ilahi Sect," 185–86. White associates the Devil's worship, which he calls "bondage through fear of evil spirits" with the "bondage through fear of the evil eye." See White, "Survivals of Primitive Religions," 158.

10. Samuel Graham Wilson, *Persian Life and Customs*, 240.

11. Al-Sarraf, *al-Shabak*, 116.

12. Samuel Graham Wilson, *Persian Life and Customs*, 240.

13. See *Kitab Ta'lim al-Diyana al-Nusayriyya*, Arab MS. 6182, question 1 and its answer, fol. 2, Bibliothèque Nationale, which affirms that Ali is the creator of mankind; and extracts from *Kitab al-Mashyakha*, in Lyde, *The Asian Mystery*, 111–16, 124, 233–42, and 271.

14. On all of these points, see Dunmore, report dated 24 October in *Missionary Herald* (1854): 55–56; Parson, *ibid.*, 54 (1858): 23–24, Nutting, *ibid.*, 56 (1860): 345–47, Herrick, *ibid.*, 62 (1866): 68–69; M. F. Grenard, "Une Secte Religieuse," 512–19; Taylor, "Journal of a Tour in Armenia," 319–32; G. E. White, "The Shia Turks," *Faith and Thought, Journal of the Transaction of the Victoria Institute*, 42 (1980): 236; Horatio Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour Through Armenia, Kurdistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia*, (New York, 1844) 2:140–41; and F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford, 1929), 1:144–58.

15. See previous chapters of this book on the Ahl-i Haqq, and Charles Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers*, 68.

16. On all these points, consult the authorities cited above in footnote 14.

17. See Nutting, report dated 30 July 1860, 345–46.

18. White, "The Shia Turks," 230.

19. Ramsay, *Pauline and Other Studies in Early Christian History* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1906), 180; and *idem*, "The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor: Some of its Causes and Effects," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 7 (1917), 20.

20. Grenard, "Une Secte Religieuse," 513.

21. Trowbridge, "The Alevis, or Deifiers of Ali," 353.

22. Samuel Graham Wilson, *Persian Life and Customs*, 238, 240.

23. Stead, "The Ali Ilahi Sect," 189. Cf. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 2:140–42. Southgate considers the Ali Ilahis of Kerind as the remnants of ancient pagans in Assyria and Mesopotamia.

24. De Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie*, 339.

25. White, "Survivals of Primitive Religions," 161.

26. For the spread of Christianity among the ancient Turks and Mongols, see Cheikho, "al-Nasraniyya bayn Qudama al-Turk wa al-Maghul" (Christianity Among the Ancient Turks and Mongols), *al-Mashriq* 26 (1913): 747–72; and Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document* (Manchester: The University Press, 1925), printed with additions in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 9, no. 1 (July 1925); and Barthold, *Zur Geschichte des Christentums in Mittel-Asien bis zur mongolischen Eroberung*, trans. from the Russian into German by Rudolf Stübe (Tübingen und Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), 1–73.

27. Wittek, "Zur Geschichte Angoras im Mittelalter," 339.

28. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 1:121.

29. W. J. Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia with Some account of their antiquities and geologies*, (London: J. Murray, 1842), 1:240.

30. Ramsay, *Impressions of Turkey*, 242.

31. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 32 n. 1
32. Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, 1:121.
33. Southgate, *Narrative of a Visit*, 31 n.1.
34. F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 2:469–72.
35. *Ibid.*, 1:8–97.
36. Jacob, “Die Baktaschijje,” 15.
37. Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, 1:31.
38. Birge, *Bektashi Order*, 28.
39. F. Sarre, *Reise in Kleinasien—Sommer 1895. Forschungen zur Seldjukischen Kunst und Geographie des Landes* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1896), 39–41; and Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 66.
40. Clement Huart, *Konia, la ville des Derviches Tourneurs. Souvenirs, d'une Voyage en Asie Mineure* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1897), 214–16.
41. Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, 1:45–47; E. Pears, *The Destruction of the Greek Empire and the Story of the Capture of Constantinople by the Turks* (London: Longman, green, 1903), 56; and Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 2:370–71.
42. Yacoub Artin Pacha, *Contributions à l'Étude du Blazon en Orient* (London: B. Quaritch, 1902), 149.
43. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, 114.
44. *Ibid.*, and Wittek, “Yazijioğlu Ali on the Christian Turks of Dobruja,” *Bulletin of the British School of Oriental and African Studies* 14, part 3 (1952): 639–68.
45. Rice, *The Seljuks in Asia Minor*, 114.
46. Birge, *Bektashi Order*, 28–33.
47. Al-Aflaki, *Manaqib al-Arifin*, 20–22, 44–45, and the preface by Idries Shah, 9; Ramsay, *The Revolution in Constantinople and Turkey: a diary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909), 202; Sir Charles Elliot, *Turkey in Europe* (London: E. Arnold, 1900), 185; and Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 370–72.
48. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 146.
49. On Baba Ishaq, see chapter 2 of this book.
50. Herbert Adams Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Frank Cass, 1968), 29; and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 1:12–13.
51. For a more comprehensive treatment of the ruling and the subject classes in the Ottoman administration see Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, chapter 5, 1:112–67.
52. Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, trans. Niyazi Berkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 105.
53. Gibbons, *The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire*, 29 and 80–81.
54. Eli Smith and H. G. O. Dwight, *Missionary Researches in Armenia including a Journey Through Asia Minor and into Georgia and Persia with a visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormiah and Salmas* (London: George Wightman, 1834), 83.
55. Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism*, 105; Halide Edib, *Turkey Faces West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 28–30; and Ramsay, *Impressions of Turkey*, 99.
56. Ramsay, “The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor,” 54.
57. Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism*, 107; and Edib, *Turkey Faces West*, 37.
58. F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 2:568.
59. Eugène Marie Melchior, Vicomte de Vogüe, *Histoires Orientales*, (Paris: Colmann-Levy, 1911), 198.
60. Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire Ottoman*, 2:181–83; Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 2:568; Inalcik, *Ottoman Empire*, 188–90; Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic*

People, 274; Babinger, "Schejch Bedr ed-Din," 1–106; and Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutesavvıflar* (Istanbul: Matbaa-Yi Amire, 1918), 234.

61. Cuinet, *La Turquie de Asie*, 1:341; and F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 1:83–84 and 2:571–72.

62. White, "The Shia Turks," 235.

63. Crowfoot, "Survival Among the Kappadokian Kizilbash," 305–15.

38—Armenian Elements in the Beliefs of the Kizilbash Kurds

1. Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, 1:855; F. Von Luschan and E. Peterson, *Reisen in Lykien* (Wien: Gerold, 1899), 2:198–213; and Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 1:142.

2. Molyneux-Seel, "Journey in Derism," 66; White, "Alevi Turks," 690 ff; F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 142–43; and Faruk Sumer, "Cepni," *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden and London: E. J. Brill, 1965), 2:0.

3. Dunmore, report dated 22 January 1857, 219–20; Ball, report dated 8 August 1857, 395–96; Nutting, report dated 30 July 1860, 345–46; Herrick, report dated 16 November 1865, 68–69; Livingston, report dated 30 March 1869, 59–246; Jewett, report dated 16 December 1857, 109; Winchester, report dated 28 November 1860, 71; Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 1:170–71; and White, "The Shia Turks," 225–36. For the beliefs of Kizilbash who live between Sivas and Erzerum, see J. G. Taylor, "Journal of a Tour," 304.

4. Molyneux-Seel, "Journey in Derism," 44, 49.

5. Southgate, *Narrative of a Tour*, 2:140–42; and Stead, "The Ali Ilahi Sect," 184–89.

6. Charles Wilson, *Handbook for Travellers*, 62. Cf. Walpole, *The Ansayrii and the Assassins*, 3:226, where the author states that there is a tradition that the Kurds are Armenians who were converted to Muhammadanism.

7. Charles Wilson, "Notes on the Physical and Historical Geography of Asia Minor," *Royal Geographical Society* 6 (June 1884): 313.

8. J. G. Taylor, "Journals of a Tour," 318; idem, "Travels in Kurdistan, with Notices of the Sources of the Eastern and Western Tigris, and Ancient Ruins in their neighborhood," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 35 (1865): 29–30; and Molyneux-Seel, "Journey in Derism," 44 and 67.

9. E. B. Soane, *Grammar of the Kurmanji or Kurdish Language* (London: Luzac, 1913), 5; and Ivanow, *Truth-Worshippers*, 9 n.1.

10. Moses Khorenantsi, *History of the Armenians*, trans. Robert W. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978), 79–80; and J. G. Taylor, "Journal of a Tour," 318.

11. Taylor, "Journal of a Tour," 319.

12. Elsworth Huntington, "Through the Great Canon," 186–87.

13. Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mujam al-Buldan*, 1st. ed. (Cairo: Matbaat al-Saada, 1323/1905), 1:190.

14. See *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, 1325–1354*, trans. H. A. R. Gibb, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 2:437.

15. E. Scott-Stevenson, *Our Ride Through Asia Minor* (London: Chapman and Hall limited, 1881), 218.

16. F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, 1:516.

17. Molyneux-Seel, "Journey in Derism," 67.

18. For example see Kannenburg, quoted in Jacob, *Die Baktaschijje*, 36.

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