

Historicising Alevism: The Evolution of Abdal and Bektashi Doctrine

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ABSTRACT: The history of Alevi piety is embodied in the large body of works known under the title of 'Alevi-Bektashi literature', a neglected corpus that is in fact vital for our understanding of the development of vernacular religious traditions in Anatolia and the Balkans. This article presents an overview of the historical evolution of Alevi doctrine between the 14th and 17th centuries, via the study of the literary works written by authors belonging to two major constituents of Alevism: the dervish groups of the Bektashis and the *Abdāls* of *Rūm*. The study contains a doctrinal analysis of the works of six *abdāls* (all of them also Bektashis except for Yemīnī) ranging from the 14th to the 17th centuries, at which time the *abdāls* had been fully integrated into the Bektashi order. These works are: The corpus of *Ḳayğusuz Abdāl* (fl. late 14th - early 15th century) consisting of eleven works; the *Dīvān* of *Şādīḳ Abdāl* (the end of the 14th c. - 15th c.); the *Faẓilet-nāme* of Yemīnī (d. after 925/1519); the *Deh Murğ* by *Şemsī* (d. after 919/1513), the *Dīvān* of *Muḥyiddīn Abdāl* (16th c.); and the *Risāle* and the *Dīvān* of *Vīrānī* (late 16th - early 17th c.). The research demonstrates that, contrary to the generally accepted view, 'extremist' and Twelver Shi'i beliefs existed in the Anatolian Turkmen milieu long before Safavid propaganda. In fact, the doctrine of Muḥammad -'Alī was already established in these circles in the late 14th century. On the other hand, antinomian tendencies, expressed by open criticism of exoteric notions of Islam, were a major marker of *Abdāl* and Bektashi piety since their early days and remained so in the 17th century.

KEYWORDS: Alevism, Abdāl, Bektashi, Sufism, Shi'ism, Anatolia, Balkans

Introduction

In modern Turkey, Alevism is both a religious denomination and a social identity of around ten to thirty percent of the population.¹ Since the early twentieth century, the name, ‘Alevi’ has been used as an umbrella term for the socio-religious communities historically referred to as Kizilbash (*kızılbaş*).² They are found mainly in Anatolia, Thrace, and, to a lesser extent, Bulgaria and Albania. Although Alevism contains elements of Shi‘i thought and piety, it is important to refrain from simply categorizing it as Twelver Shi‘ism, not only because of its unique origins and mode of emergence, but also because of its heterogeneity of belief and practice. This article consists of an overview of the historical evolution of Alevi doctrine from the fourteenth century onwards through an analysis of works written by authors belonging to two major historical constituents of Alevism: the Bektashis and the *Abdāls* of *Rūm*. First, I will focus on the works and doctrines of an early representative from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, *Çaygusuz Abdāl*. This will be followed by an overview of five of his successors ranging from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, namely *Şadık Abdāl*, *Yemīnī*, *Şemsi*, *Muhyiddīn Abdāl* and *Vīrānī*.

The Bektashis and the *Abdāls* of *Rūm* were dervish groups that later merged into what became the official Ottoman Bektashi Sufi order from the sixteenth century onwards. When the Bektashi order was abolished in modern Turkey with the ban on Sufi orders in 1925, its center shifted to Albania, where Bektashis constitute twenty percent of the Muslim population. While the order is referred to as the *Babagān* branch of Bektashism, adherents to the family of *Ḥacı Bektaş* (eponym of the order) known as *Çelebis* constitute a second group, still active in contemporary Turkey. Whether or not *Ḥacı Bektaş* had children or only a spiritual lineage is the main point of contention between the two groups.

Throughout its history, the Bektashi order was closely linked to the Alevis in both doctrine and practice. Each of the authors discussed in this article is currently a major *velī* (friend of God or saint) in the Alevi pantheon. This article aims to demonstrate that, contrary to the generally accepted view, Twelver Shi‘i beliefs existed in the Anatolian Turkmen milieu long before Safavid propaganda. In fact, the doctrine of *Muḥammad-‘Alī*, as well as the veneration of the Twelve Imams and the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the Prophet’s family) were already present in these

circles at least by the fourteenth century. These findings support Andrew Peacock's recent discussion in his *Islam, Literature, and Society under the Mongols*, where he emphasises the Shi'i presence and sectarian tensions in the process of the Islamisation of Anatolia, which were traceable in the discourses on unbelief in the literature of the Mongol period.³ The Islamisation of Anatolia was a gradual process, which took place between roughly 1100 and 1400, via the settlement of Turkish migrants and also the conversion of local Christians.⁴ Our new timeline regarding the spread of Shi'i doctrines among Turkmen populations shows us that we need to treat the spread of Shi'i doctrine and Islamisation as simultaneous and linked processes.

Abdāl and Bektashi history

Since the 1990s, perhaps in parallel with what is called the Alevi revival, Alevism and Bektashism have been the focus of increased scholarly attention, resulting in a body of scholarship with a scope ranging from the late medieval to the modern period, focusing on both Anatolia and the Balkans, in a diverse array of academic fields.⁵ Most recently, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump's monograph entitled *Kizilbash-Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia* has portrayed a complex picture of interrelations between Sufi-dervish groups, Safavids and the Kizilbash that led to the formation and subsequent transformation of the Kizilbash social organisation.⁶ In his latest monograph named *Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu* [The Birth of Bektashism], Rıza Yıldırım has aimed to construct early Bektashi history through a focus on the formative figures of Hacı Bektaş (d. before 697/1297), Seyyid 'Alī Sulṭān (d. after 815/1412) and Balım Sulṭān (d. before 925/1519).⁷ Scholars have also underlined the relationship of the *futuwwa* (Islamic chivalry) tradition in Anatolia to Bektashi and Kizilbash texts, rituals, and most recently, Kizilbash documents.⁸

One aspect of Alevi-Bektashi history that continues to remain in the shadows is that of the historical evolution of Bektashi and Alevi doctrine. On Bektashi doctrine, our main source continues to be J. K. Birge's *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, written in the early twentieth century.⁹ While of unquestionable value, this work offers a general overview of Bektashi doctrines without treating their historical transformation. Moreover, its focus lies on practice more than on theory. On many occasions, doctrinal aspects are deduced from the data on practices. As such, the work does

not rely on an in-depth doctrinal study of the primary sources: the works written by the dervishes themselves.

Due to the lack of focus on works by early Bektashis and *abdāls*, descriptions of the evolution of Bektashi doctrine have kept a basic assumption: That the adoption of Shi'i beliefs by the Bektashis dates to the sixteenth century, as a result of interpenetration with the Kızilbash.¹⁰ The so-called 'Shi'itisation' of the Bektashis thus brought in both *ghulāt* (extremist) and Twelver Shi'i beliefs. The study of Kaygusuz Abdāl's works will demonstrate the error in this timeline by showing that elements of both 'extremist' and Twelver Shi'i belief existed among *abdāls* and Bektashis as early as the fourteenth century.

This period in Anatolian religious history was not marked by a fully established orthodoxy.¹¹ The evolution of the Ottoman polity into an Islamic state concerned with defining and enforcing a 'Sunni orthodoxy' was a process that continued up to the early sixteenth century.¹² Moreover, as examples of popular understandings of Islam, folk stories and hagiographies exhibited confessional ambiguity up until the fifteenth century, manifesting what have retrospectively been considered as contradictory elements of Sunni and Shi'i origin.¹³ However, these elements were mostly limited to lamentation over the Karbala tragedy and a particular reverence for the Prophet's family, both of which can be contextualised under a kinship-oriented understanding of Islam. As such, the 'extremist' and Twelver Shi'i doctrines manifested by the early Bektashis and *abdāls* should be understood as a phenomenon that is distinct from the confessional ambiguity of the period in question, although the latter no doubt affected the multifarious teachings of these dervish groups.¹⁴ The discursive strategies created by Bektashis and *abdāls* within this environment and how these played a part in the evolution of Alevi doctrine are important areas to consider. In this regard, Andrew Peacock's discussion of the evidence of sectarian tensions in the literature of the period is particularly relevant, reminding us not to take confessional ambiguity at face value. Indeed, there may have been a certain need for dissimulation (*taqiyya*) in certain contexts,¹⁵ which may be one of the reasons we encounter confessional shifts within the work of one author.¹⁶

Despite recent critiques, the prevailing Turkish and, to some extent, western scholarship on the religious beliefs of historical Alevs and their origins continues to cling on to the methodological framework

and narrative first devised by Mehmed Fuad Köprülü.¹⁷ According to this narrative, due to their distance from the urban centres and their unfamiliarity with Arabic and Persian, the Turkmen tribes who constituted the first Alevis were only partially Islamised. This partial Islamisation is the reason why they had a syncretic belief system that subsumed their pre-Islamic beliefs under a superficial layer of Islamisation. Köprülü sees those dervish groups credited with semi-Islamising these Turkmen tribes as nothing but shamans in Islamic garb, and these were the forerunners of the Bektashis, the dervish group identified by its relationship to the Alevis in belief and practice.

I do not ascribe to this paradigm. In fact, when the works composed by members of these dervish groups as well as their religious networks are examined, one may easily argue that Turkmen tribes were thoroughly Islamised.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Köprülü was correct on one fundamental matter: the important role of dervish piety in the formation of Alevi beliefs and practices. Studies have identified dervish piety as displayed by the early Bektashis, the *Abdāls* of *Rūm*, and other dervish groups as an integral part of what officially became Bektashism in the sixteenth century.¹⁹ In addition, it has been demonstrated that the lodge of the *Abdāls* of *Rūm* in Karbala, identified as a Bektashi lodge in the mid-eighteenth century, served as the primary centre of authority for the Alevi milieu, in both religious and legal terms, until it was replaced by the Bektashi lodge in Kırşehir, Anatolia in the nineteenth century.²⁰ In her recent monograph, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump underlines our need to reconceptualise the Kizilbash milieu, not as a collection of tribes but as groups coalesced around 'communal Sufi affiliation'.²¹ In showing the *Wafā'i*, *Abdāl* and Safavid affiliations of various Kizilbash/Alevi *ocağs* (saintly family lineages), Karakaya-Stump defines the early Kizilbash milieu as 'a complex and dynamic network of overlapping dervish and Sufi circles, and *sayyid* families, all with their own tribal and non-tribal clientele'.²²

The particular form of piety displayed today by Alevism and Bektashism began to develop from the twelfth or thirteenth century onwards in parallel with the Islamisation of Anatolia and the Balkans and consolidated socially and doctrinally in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The *Abdāls* of *Rūm* played a central role in this process. The meaning of *abdāl* was originally limited to a group of saints in the Sufi spiritual hierarchy. It was only later, from at least the fourteenth century

onwards that it came to denote a type of dervish.²³ Ahmet Karamustafa defines the *Abdālān-ı Rūm*, or *Abdāls* of the land of *Rūm*, as a loosely-affiliated group of antinomian, that is, socially subversive Sufis who were part of a new movement of renunciation that emerged in the later middle period in the Islamic lands, from 1200 to 1500.²⁴ This movement of renunciation developed as a reaction to the institutionalisation of Sufism from the twelfth century onwards, which went hand in hand with Sufism's increased worldliness, as evidenced by the Sufi orders' web of relations with the ruling political and cultural elite. Antinomianism involved rejecting social norms and was linked to a practice of absolute poverty. This new form of piety and asceticism developed in contradistinction to mainstream Sufism, although it continued to rely on Sufi doctrine, in particular that of sainthood.²⁵ It was thus deeply linked to the rise of the cult of saints. The antinomian dervish presented himself as the model of sainthood, whose authority came directly from God and thus required no social norms and rules for its acquisition. As such, the dervish's antinomian relationship to society was complemented by some level of acceptance by society, wherein this new form of sainthood was recognised.

The conversion to dervish piety was not limited to a certain class. Although antinomian dervish movements became, for the cultural elite, a symbol for vulgar religion, the truth was that many people of respectable social status, such as rulers and Sufis, also joined the ranks of the antinomian dervishes. From the sixteenth century onwards, the establishment of regional empires such as those of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals led to the transformation of these dervish groups. In their need for tighter organisation, they either joined the ranks of previously existing Sufi orders or transformed into orders themselves. The Bektashis were one such group, which developed into the official Bektashi order in the sixteenth century. Other such groups were the *Ḳalenderīs*, *Ḥaydarīs* and the *Cāmīs*, whose origins were outside of Anatolia and who spoke vernacular Persian. The appearance of the Bektashis as the umbrella group for other dervish groups in Anatolia and the Balkans was most likely a result of the official acceptance of the Bektashis due to their relationship with the Janissaries, the elite infantry units in the Ottoman army. The emergence of the *Bektāşīyye* as an order became an opportunity for antinomian dervish groups to acquire some respectability and avoid persecution by the state.

In this process, The *Abdāls* of *Rūm* became one of the constituents of Bektashism, if not the major constituent. As evidence suggests, prior to the sixteenth century, the *abdāls* were a larger and more prominent group than the Bektashis.²⁶ Some hagiographies suggest that before the fifteenth century, *abdāl* may have been a term used for all Anatolian dervish groups that spoke Turkish,²⁷ while by the time of Mehmed II, they had become more distinct in their beliefs and practices. On the other hand, despite the portrayal of the heresiographical literature of the sixteenth century²⁸ and despite rivalry between *abdāls* and *bektāşīs* in some hagiographies,²⁹ the difference between these groups was not always clear-cut, and many authors were affiliated to both groups.

The history of Alevi piety is embodied in the large corpus of works known under the title of 'Alevi-Bektashi literature', with its own multitude of genres, terminology and symbolism, as well as its own aesthetic conventions. Though largely unstudied and unedited, and primarily in manuscript form, this corpus remains an invaluable untapped source for our understanding of the development of vernacular religious traditions in Anatolia. Yet, studies on Anatolian dervish movements have generally been based on outsider accounts: Ottoman documents, heresiographies, and Western travelers' reports. This article aims to examine the dervish movement of the *Abdāls* of *Rūm* through sources written directly by these dervishes, a corpus of a wide variety of genres such as *mesnevīs*, treatises, poetry collections, epic works, and prose works of fiction. I focus on the doctrinal aspects of these literary works, which is a largely neglected topic. In the scarcity of textual studies in the field, I decided to ground my research in what I consider the seminal corpus of Alevi-Bektashi literature: that of *Ḳayğusuz Abdāl*, the first known *abdāl* and *bektāşī* to produce any major literary work.

Ḳayğusuz Abdāl and Shi'ism

A venerated Alevi saint to this day, *Ḳayğusuz Abdāl* (fl. late fourteenth-early fifteenth centuries) was the most prominent and prolific representative of the *Abdāls* of *Rūm*.³⁰ *Ḳayğusuz*'s relation to *Ḳayğusuz*, the eponym of the Bektashi order, can be traced through his master *Abdāl Mūsā*, who was a follower (*muḥibb*) of *Ḳayğusuz*'s spiritual daughter, *Ḳayğusuz Ana* (or *Ḳadıncık Ana*). *Ḳayğusuz* adhered to the dervish practice of extensive traveling, thus propagating his message in a large geography.

The following map shows the places he visited, in addition to his master's lodge in Alanya in the south of Turkey and his own lodge in Cairo.



Figure 1: aygusuz Abdāl's travels

aygusuz Abdāl's open declaration of his preference for composing in Turkish, as well as his antinomian view of Sufism, put him squarely within the antinomian Sufi traditions of Anatolia. In several of his works, he presents vivid portrayals of his public image, which ranges between accusations of innovation and elevation to the rank of a saint. Apart from the *Maalāt* which is problematically attributed to acı Bektaş,³¹ aygusuz Abdāl's works are our earliest definitive testimony to the doctrines of the Bektashis, as well as to those of the *Abdālān-ı Rūm*. In fact, aygusuz Abdāl's corpus includes several key elements of what later becomes the religious doctrine of the Bektashis and Alevis:

1. Poetry in praise of 'Alī ibn Abī alīb
2. Passages expounding the theoretical foundation for the veneration of 'Alī
3. References to and passages expounding the doctrine of Muhammad-'Alī, the central doctrine in Alevism. The doctrine posits the essential unity of Muhammad and 'Alī as a single entity. In the present day, it is also expressed as a trilogy: that of God, Muhammad and 'Alī.

4. References to the Twelve Imams
5. Veneration of the *ahl al-bayt* (the Prophet's family)

Together, these doctrinal references are the earliest in Alevi-Bektashi history, and establish Kaygusuz Abdāl as a foundational figure for Bektashism and Alevism.

Kaygusuz Abdāl wrote over 530 individual poems, three long *mathnawīs*, two short *mathnawīs*, one book of verse (*Gūlistān*), two works of prose (*Delil-i Budalā* and *Vücūd-nāme*), three works in verse and prose (*Kitāb-ı Mağlaṭa*, *Dil-güşā* and *Serāy-nāme*).³² While all the works are in Turkish, the *Dil-güşā* includes a long section in Persian and the poetry collection has over thirty poems in Persian. A previously unknown manuscript, dated 920/1514, located in the National Library in Ankara contains 476 individual poems by Kaygusuz Abdāl.³³ As a result, we now know that he wrote over 530 poems instead of the previously accepted number of 130. Many of the findings in the current article come from this newly discovered poetry collection.

While the *Kitāb-ı Mağlaṭa* is the only work in Kaygusuz Abdāl's corpus in which the doctrine of Muḥammad-ʿAlī is developed, couplets interspersed in his *Dīvān* and *Serāy-nāme* give us hints as to what this doctrine might have been in the oral teaching. Most of these couplets are in praise of Muḥammad and ʿAlī, referred to frequently as 'Aḥmed-i Ḥaydar'³⁴ and 'Aḥmed ü Ḥaydar'.³⁵ The couplets praise ʿAlī's acts (*iş*),³⁶ manliness (*mürüvvet*),³⁷ and character (*hüy*).³⁸ They describe him with the following epithets: the key to all sciences (*cümle 'ilme miftāḥ*),³⁹ with true speech (*ḳavli çin*),⁴⁰ faithful to his word (*ḳavline şādıḳ*),⁴¹ always diligent (*dā'im uyanıḳ*),⁴² a good horseman (*şeh-süvār*).⁴³ In the same couplets, Muhammad is praised for his moral nature (*hulḳ*)⁴⁴ and described as the possessor of science (*şāhib-i 'ilm*)⁴⁵ and the cupbearer to the lovers who know God (*Ḥaḳḳı bilen 'aşıḳlara sākī*).⁴⁶ Of interest is the fact that the reference to horsemanship put aside, there are no references to chivalry and holy war in Kaygusuz Abdāl's depictions of ʿAlī, although these were prominent aspects of such descriptions in the *abdāl* works of the sixteenth century.⁴⁷

In his entire corpus, Kaygusuz Abdāl makes two references to the Twelve Imams,⁴⁸ two references to the *ahl al-bayt*,⁴⁹ and one reference to the concept of *tabarrā* (dissociation from the *ahl al-bayt*'s adversaries).⁵⁰ Other than the poetry by the Hurūfī poet Nesīmī (d. 820/1418 [?]),⁵¹ who was neither a Bektashi nor an *abdāl*, but later became elevated to the status

of a saint in Bektashism and Alevism, these are our earliest attestations in Turkish to the given doctrines of Shi'i origin. The fact that aygusuz only made minor allusions to these doctrines could be explained by two possibilities. The first is that the doctrines were not fully developed in the *abdāl* circles at the time. The second possibility is that they were reserved particularly for oral tradition, due to a certain political sensitivity.

aygusuz portrays his relationship to Muhammad-Alī and the Twelve Imams in various ways according to the hierarchy of spiritual levels. For the lay adherent, he is a *muibb* (lover)⁵² and a *gūlām* (humble servant)⁵³ of Muhammad-Alī, as well as an adversary to their enemies. For the disciple, he is in service of (*izmet*) Alī,⁵⁴ who is always beside him in his path (*hem-rāh*).⁵⁵ He is in aspiration towards (*mūstāk*) Muhammad and has gained felicity because Muhammad-Alī's gaze has fallen upon him.⁵⁶ For those familiar with the experience of oneness (with reference to the doctrine of the Oneness of Being which forms an integral part of aygusuz's doctrine), aygusuz says that one's own self is the place where he should look for Alī and the Twelve Imams.⁵⁷ This is because the Perfect Man is ontologically equivalent to Muhammad and Alī,⁵⁸ who can only be experienced in the pre-eternal present of oneness.⁵⁹ aygusuz's teachings range from telling the lay adherent to follow Muhammad-Alī to instructing the advanced disciple to become one with them.

Unlike the rest of his corpus, aygusuz Abdāl's *Kitāb-ı Maqlata* (The Book of Prattle) betrays a complex web of teachings related to Muhammad and Alī.⁶⁰ The *Kitāb-ı Maqlata* tells the story of a dervish who, in a dream, finds himself in an empty desert, which is a metaphor for the world of multiplicity (*kesret ālemi*). The dervish is filled with fear of the idea of not knowing where he is, which path to take, and to whom he should ask for guidance. Yet, when he suddenly awakens, he experiences the oneness of being, that is, the unity of his selfhood with the selfhood of God who is the only true being. In the *Kitāb-ı Maqlata*, dream narratives are written in prose, while moments of wakefulness are articulated in couplets (although towards the end, the line between dream and wakefulness becomes increasingly blurred). The oscillation between the sleeping and waking states thus mirrors the formal oscillation between prose and poetry, both oscillations signifying a change of awareness between the two aspects of truth which are multiplicity and unity.

In the *Kitāb-ı Maqlata*, aygusuz identifies the intellect with Prophet Muhammad. He states that Muhammad is the sultan of the market of

the intellect (*'aql bāzārī*) and 'Alī is the sultan of the market of love (*'išk bāzārī*).⁶¹ Kaygusuz sees the capacity of love as the esoteric dimension of the intellect. While Muhammad is the guide for laypeople at the first spiritual level referred to as *şerī'at* (religious law), 'Alī serves as the guide for the initiates at the higher spiritual level or gate, called *tarīkat* (the path), which involves the uncovering of the esoteric.

The protagonist of the *Kitāb-ı Mağlaṭa*, the dervish, enters the service of 'Alī and becomes his disciple. 'Alī explains to him how to acquire a vision of God by looking at creation and how to interpret Qur'anic episodes such as that of Joseph.⁶² 'Alī is the Imam par excellence and the dervish sees 'Alī blinking at him in the eyes of the prophets he meets on his spiritual journey.⁶³ 'Alī reveals to the dervish that the prophets are nothing but manifestations of 'Alī's spiritual being. When the dervish begins to grasp his own divinity, 'Alī hides himself in the dervish's heart.⁶⁴ Such a teaching is parallel to the notion of the Secret (*sirr*) in Shi'ism, where, to quote Muhammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 'the historical imams are the holders and transmitters of a Secret, the content of which is the metaphysical Imam'.⁶⁵ As such, for the dervish, accessing this secret content is equal to self-identification with it, that is, with the metaphysical Imam. Prior to this identification, as the dervish's interior guide, 'Alī also instructs the dervish to beware of Satan.

In Kaygusuz's depictions of Judgement Day in the *Kitāb-ı Mağlaṭa*, Muḥammad acts as intercessor and guide leading all created beings to the presence of God.⁶⁶ On the Day of Judgement, when all sins have been pardoned, all beings pronounce the Shi'i profession of faith: '*Lā ilāha illāllāh Muḥammadun rasūlullāh 'Alīyyun waliyyullāh* (There is no God but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God. 'Alī is the friend of God)'.⁶⁷ As he reaches perfection and thus attains the pre-eternal present identified with Judgment Day, the dervish realises that all created beings that used to exist were nothing but Muhammad himself.⁶⁸

At the end of the *Kitāb-ı Mağlaṭa*, the dervish reaches a banquet attended by all created beings in the presence of God.⁶⁹ There 'Alī appears as sultan presiding over the banquet. When the dervish converses with him, he realises that 'Alī, in fact, is his own self. Here we see the divination of 'Alī in the work. In a similar fashion, in the *Vücūd-nāme*, Kaygusuz says: '*Muḥammed Muştāfā [...] iṣāret buyurdu ki hāne şāhibinün ismi üç ḥurūf iledür. Biri 'ayn ve biri yedür.* [Muhammad Muştāfā signalled that the owner of the house has a name with three letters. One of these is 'ayn and the other is yah].⁷⁰

While ‘Alī is God himself, Muhammad is the first created being who contains all of existence within himself. From the perspective of oneness, or to rephrase, from the perspective of the time and space of oneness to which the dervish frequently returns, Muhammad is the only created being, the Perfect Man in and for whom the universe was made manifest. Both the creator and the created are depicted as infinite divine light.

Abdāl authors

Now let us turn to the legacy of Kaygusuz Abdāl and his contemporaries who transmitted their teachings orally. Analysis of subsequent *abdāl* literature reveals great doctrinal heterogeneity in a variety of genres intended for diverse audiences. Among the *abdāls* who drew upon the legacy of Kaygusuz Abdāl is Şemsī, author of the *10 Birds (Deh Murğ)*, composed 919/1513) in Turkish.⁷¹ Şemsī was popular as both a poet and storyteller in the gatherings that took place in wealthy homes.⁷² This popularity brought him into the presence of Selīm I, to whom the *Deh Murğ* is dedicated. This dedication in itself is rather extraordinary considering Selīm’s antagonism to Shi‘i elements in his realm. It also indicates that in this period some of the *abdāls* of Rūm were bards. This phenomenon must have been common enough that by the seventeenth century the word *abdāl* had become part of the pennames of Alevi bards such as Pīr Sulṭān Abdāl, although such figures were not necessarily affiliated with the *abdāls* of Rūm.

Şemsī’s short *mesnevī* of 1053 couplets consists of a series of monologues put in the mouths of ten different birds, identified with ten different social groups.⁷³

- 1) *baykuş (büm) = şūfī, zāhid*
- 2) *karğa (zāğ) = kıssa-ḥ’ān, şā’ir, remmāl*
- 3) *tūḫī = monla, dāniş-mend*
- 4) *keres = Rūm abdālī, kalender, bektāşī*
- 5) *būlbül = Naḳşibendī, gūyende, şehri*
- 6) *hūdhūd = ḥaḳīm*
- 7) *kırlağıç (piristū) = sāhib-nūcūm (müneccim)*
- 8) *tāvūs = bāzırgān, tācir, bazzār*
- 9) *keklik = dibḳān, Oğuz oğlanları, Türk oğlanı, yurd oğlanı*
- 10) *leglek = şeyḫ-i Hindūstānī, namāz maḥmūdī, gāziler gibi, ḥaccāc, ehl-i dil, ‘arīf*

- 1) owl = sufi, ascetic
- 2) crow = storyteller, poet, fortune teller
- 3) parrot = religious scholar
- 4) vulture = *abdāl* of *Rūm*, qalandar, bektashi
- 5) nightingale = Naqshbandi, singer, city-dweller
- 6) hoopoe = physician
- 7) swallow = astrologist
- 8) peacock = merchant, peddler, marketplace dealer
- 9) partridge = villager, peasant, the son of *Oğuz*,⁷⁴ Turkmen, tent-dweller
- 10) stork = Indian sheikh, with praiseworthy daily prayer, like a holy warrior, frequent undertaker of pilgrimage, a man of love, gnostic

The vulture represents *abdāls*, grouped together with *bektāšīs* and qalandars. The *abdāls* are portrayed as followers of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Imām Ḥusayn, and the Maḥdī. They practice *tawallā* (love of the *ahl al-bayt*) and *tabarrā* (dissociation from the *ahl al-bayt*’s adversaries). They mourn during ‘Āshūrā’. They consume cannabis and alcohol, disregard religious duties, and consider this world to be the only place of salvation.⁷⁵ These characteristics are reminiscent of Kaygusuz Abdāl’s self-portrayal. Like Kaygusuz Abdāl, the *abdāls* of the early sixteenth century were also under attack for their beliefs and practices considered as innovation. At the end of the work, Şemsī addresses the audience directly and states that his purpose in writing the work was to amaze the audience with a gulp from the gourd (*cur‘a*) of dervishes (*erenler*).⁷⁶ These couplets are a repetition of the same words put in the mouth of the vulture, a symbol for the *abdāls* of *Rūm*, earlier in the text.⁷⁷

The fifteenth-century poet Şādiḳ Abdāl⁷⁸ focuses on the sainthood of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, designating him as the face of God and the esoteric dimension of all saints, while leaving out specific references to Muhammad or doctrines related to him. Yemīnī’s sixteenth-century *abdāl* work, the *Faḫīlet-nāme*, on the other hand, presents ‘Alī as an epic hero and warrior, whose battle prowess often leads to the conversion of unbelievers.⁷⁹ The work establishes Muhammad’s superiority over ‘Alī on several occasions, while also focusing on their essential unity. Whereas Yemīnī’s treatment of prophecy (*nubuwwah*) and friendship with God (*walāyah*) shows Shi‘i influence, elements such as the three caliphs’ admiration of ‘Alī suggest that Yemīnī was looking for common ground with a Sunni audience as well. While Şādiḳ Abdāl’s fifteenth-century *Dīvān* makes no reference to

the Shi'i practices of *tawallā* and *tabarrā*, these concepts are prevalent in Yemīnī's text. Considering their minimal appearance in Ẓayğusuz Abdāl's texts as well (only one reference to *tabarrā*), we can say that these concepts did not become central in *abdāl* doctrine before the late fifteenth century. Both Şādīk Abdāl and Yemīnī criticise the hypocrisy of religious scholars, Sufis, and ascetics. This thus seems to be a common trend that originated early on, as it is a central element of Ẓayğusuz Abdāl's work.

Within our corpus of *abdāl* works, Muḥyiddīn Abdāl's (fl. 16th century) extant *Dīvān* is the most varied in content.⁸⁰ Muḥyiddīn successfully pieces together doctrinal aspects of Hurufi, Twelver Shi'i, and Wujudi origins. His doctrinal plurality is also visible in his confessional position, which contains elements of Sunni, Hurufi, and Alevi dogma, as well as various Sufi themes. References to the ummah and the Qur'an are frequent in his poetry. Muḥyiddīn underlines the importance of the five pillars of Islam, as ordained by God to the ummah via Muhammad.⁸¹ In addition to the importance of the discovery of the true self within the Sufi path, Muḥyiddīn also focuses on the relationship between disbelief (*küfür*) and faith (*īmān*), in line with the treatment of the topic in Yūnus Emre's *Dīvān* (which can be linked to the Hallajian tradition). On the other hand, the cult of Bektashi or *abdāl* saints does not play a major part in Muḥyiddīn's poetry. One example of this is his lack of references to Yūnus Emre and Ẓayğusuz Abdāl, who were both major influences on his poetry, some phrases being directly copied from and thus openly referencing their works.⁸²

Vocabulary belonging to Alevi-Bektashi ritual and doctrine in Muḥyiddīn Abdāl's *Dīvān* include *tabarrā* (dissociation from the *ahl al-bayt*'s adversaries),⁸³ *muşāḥib* (brother of the hereafter),⁸⁴ and *tercümān* (Alevi-Bektashi prayer), in addition to the *āl-i 'abā'* (People of the Mantle), the Fourteen Pure Impeccables (*çārdeh ma'şūm-ı pāk*),⁸⁵ and the seventeen belt-wearers (*onyedi kemer-best*).⁸⁶ Such examples demonstrate that Alevi-Bektashi liturgy and social organisation had crystallised by the sixteenth century, and that the *abdāls* played a major role in this process. They thus add to our knowledge on the role of *abdāls* in the social organisation and doctrinal formation of the Kizilbash milieu, as demonstrated by Karakaya-Stump in her *Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia*.

Another major Hurufi figure who is among the most venerated Alevi poets in our day is Vīrānī (fl. late sixteenth - early seventeenth century), identified as both *abdāl* and *bektāşī*.⁸⁷ He is the author of a treatise in

Turkish known under various names, such as the *Risāle-i Vīrānī Baba*, the *Risāle-i Vīrān Abdāl* and the *Faḡr-nāme*.⁸⁸ He also has a Turkish *Dīvān*.⁸⁹ Like his predecessors, Vīrānī is critical of hypocrite Sufis, ascetics (*zāhidler*), and religious scholars. He also puts emphasis on the importance of abandoning the world. On the other hand, he cannot be said to disregard the *sharī'a* completely, as he makes numerous references to daily prayer and fasting. While Vīrānī's *Risāle* expresses the unity of prophecy and sainthood via the unity of Muhammad and 'Alī, the *Dīvān* is devoted largely to the veneration of 'Alī, whose deification has now reached an extent unforeseen in the previous authors.

This short discussion demonstrates the heterogeneity of the *abdāl* movement, which, due to its structure of loose affiliation, left greater room for the expression of individual temperament and belief. This diversity is also the result of the wide array of literary tools and genres available to the members of the movement, depending on their education, social circles, selected audience, and temperaments.

The evolution of *abdāl* doctrine

The two tables in the appendix compare the works of six *abdāl* authors. The first table contains a list of doctrinal elements and gives us an opportunity to see how some of them evolve. A close look at the table reveals that many of these aspects are also prevalent in Bektashism, to which all authors except for Yemīnī express their affiliation. It is important to note that such tables often contain a simplification of doctrine, due to their very nature. Thus, although 'the doctrine of Muhammad-'Alī' is present in all authors, its interpretations can differ widely. For instance, while Yemīnī frequently underlines Muhammad's superiority over 'Alī in his *Faḡilet-nāme*, in Vīrānī's *Dīvān* we come across a deification of 'Alī. Moreover, the lack of a certain element in one author's work does not necessarily reflect the absence of the doctrine in the author's milieu. Authors' individual temperaments and intended audiences play a major part in the establishment of the content and style of their work. This may seem obvious, yet, most of the current research on Bektashi and Alevi thought tends to disregard the necessary balance between communal and individual thought, which are always in an intricate interplay.

Nonetheless, Table 1 does contain some indications as to the historical trajectory of *bektāṣī* and *abdāl* thought. It shows us that the doctrine of

Muhammad-‘Alī, as well as the veneration of the Twelve Imams and the *abl al-bayt* were already present in these circles in the fourteenth century. It is thus time for us to discard the still common theory that these doctrines entered Bektashi and Alevi milieus with Safavid propaganda. ‘Extremist’ and Twelver Shi‘i beliefs already existed in these milieus as early as the fourteenth century. It was only their increasing prevalence and centrality that led to what has been termed as a subsequent ‘Shi‘itisation’. Islam as it was appropriated by Turkmen tribes and Christian converts in Anatolia and the Balkans was already tinged with Shi‘i belief.

Furthermore, the table demonstrates that antinomian tendencies, expressed via an open criticism of exoteric notions of Islam, were a major aspect of *abdāl* and *bektāšī* temperament from the earliest days of these groups and continued to be so up to the seventeenth century. In fact, there are four major doctrinal markers common to all six authors indicating that they may have been viewed as core attributes of *bektāšī* and *abdāl* identity. These are: the doctrine of Muḥammad-‘Alī; the veneration of the Twelve Imams; the veneration of the *abl al-bayt* (Prophet’s family) and criticism of ascetics and religious scholars as official representatives of religion (antinomianism). This list also demonstrates the well-known account that *abdāl* piety constituted a synthesis of dervish and Shi‘i piety (both Imami and *ghulāt*).

The table further underlines that the doctrine of the oneness of being (*wahdat al-wujūd*) is a doctrinal marker that can differ widely or be entirely absent according to the personal temperament of the author. Among the six authors, Ḳayḡusuz Abdāl and Muḡyiddīn Abdāl are the only authors to treat this doctrine extensively. Ḳayḡusuz’s entire corpus can be read as a unique contribution to the development of this doctrine in late medieval Anatolia. In fact, Muḡyiddīn’s treatment of the topic is a direct result of Ḳayḡusuz’s major influence on him. The table also shows us that Ḳurūfī thought became part of *bektāšī* and *abdāl* doctrine from the fifteenth century onwards, while the veneration of the Fourteen Pure Impeccables (*çārdeh ma‘šūm-ı pāk*), the children of the Imams who were martyred in their youth, probably became widespread in the sixteenth century.

Table 2 contains a list of *abdāl* and *bektāšī* practices mentioned in the texts. While some of these practices may have been followed only by *abdāls* and some only by *bektāšīs*, I purposefully refrained from separating the two categories, due to their lack of separation in the works of the authors. As my analysis has shown, an understanding of ‘*bektāšī*’

and 'abdāl' as distinct affiliations was not always meaningful. Yet for instance, the fact that Yemīnī does not mention Ḥacı Bektāş anywhere in his text, in addition to multiple textual evidence from the period (such as the portrayal of rivalries between *abdāls* and *bektāşīs* in Otman Baba's hagiography), indicates to us that we should at the same time refrain from conflating the two categories.

Although this article focuses on doctrine, we may also underline some important points regarding the evolution of practice, as outlined in Table 2. We see that *the four blows*, that is the practice of removing the eyebrows and hair on one's head and face which originated with the qalandars, continued to be a widespread practice among *abdāls* up until the seventeenth century. While the institution of companionship (*muşāhiblik*) already existed in the fifteenth century, the ceremony of the 'ayn-ı cem', the central Alevi rite, was crystallised in the sixteenth century, together with the prayers that constituted part of its content. We know this also from research on *buyruk* manuscripts, religious texts preserved by Alevi *sayyid* families.⁹⁰ We observe from the table that several antinomian practices, such as the consumption of alcohol and begging, continued to be markers of *abdāl* and *bektāşī* piety throughout pre-modern Bektashi history. *Bektāşī* and *abdāl* clerical costumes were probably not fully developed during the time of Şadıķ Abdāl, who only mentions the Bektashi cap. However, they appear fully crystallised at the time when Vīrānī composed his work.

This short sketch of the evolution of *bektāşī* and *abdāl* doctrine, despite its preliminary nature, is an important starting point for our understanding of Alevi and Bektashi doctrine and practice in their historical evolution. This complements recent studies based on documentary evidence that bring to the forefront the web of relations between *ocaķ*-centered Kizilbash groups and dervish groups. Recent research has highlighted Ottoman Sunnitisation and the related persecution of Alevis as major causes for the consolidation of Alevi doctrine and social structure, resulting in an endogamous society.⁹¹ In this regard, we can also observe the impact of Ottoman Sunnitisation on the gradual increase in the so-called 'heterodox' aspects of *abdāl* and Alevi piety, as evidenced by Tables 1 and 2. This, however, would not easily allow us to speak of an *abdāl* confessionalisation in the same way that scholars have asserted about a Kizilbash confessionalisation. The doctrinal plurality in the corpuses of Muḥyiddīn and Vīrānī are evidence

of this. Indeed, the continuity of doctrinal elements that we observe in the two tables coexists with Sunni doctrine in much of this literature. The reason is most likely that *abdāls*, in defining themselves first and foremost as *abdāls*, remained antinomian Sufis, firmly established in their relation to Sufi theology and the intertextuality that it entailed. For this reason, it can be argued that even in the seventeenth century, they remained in a state of confessional ambiguity. Perhaps the doctrinal heterogeneity evidenced in all of *abdāl* literature was a deliberate part of their antinomianism.

Table 1: Aspects of bektāšī and abdāl doctrine

	Ḳaygusuz Abdāl 14 th - early 15 th c.	Şadıḳ Abdāl late 14 th -15 th c.	Şemsi 15 th - early 16 th c.	Yemini 15 th - early 16 th c.	Muḫyiddin Abdāl 16 th c.	Viranī late 16 th - early 17 th c.
The doctrine of Muhammad-‘Alī	X	X	X	X	X	X
The veneration of the Twelve Imams	X	X	X	X	X	X
The veneration of the <i>abl al-bayt</i> (Prophet’s family)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Criticism of ascetics and religious scholars (antinomianism)	X	X	X	X	X	X
The concept of the pole (<i>quṭb</i>)	X	X		X	X	
The oneness of being (<i>waḥdat al-wujūd</i>)	X				X	
The doctrine of the four gates (<i>dört kapı</i>)	X				X	X
The veneration of Hacı Bektaş		X	X		X	X

	Kaygusuz Abdāl 14 th - early 15 th c.	Şadık Abdāl late 14 th -15 th c.	Şemsī 15 th - early 16 th c.	Yemīnī 15 th - early 16 th c.	Muhyiddīn Abdāl 16 th c.	Virānī late 16 th - early 17 th c.
The veneration of Bektashi saints		X		X		X
References to miracles by Bektashi saints		X				X
Holy war (<i>ghazā</i>)		X	X	X		
The veneration of the Fourteen Pure Impeccables (<i>çārdeh ma'şūm-ı pāk</i>)					X	X
<i>Tawallā</i> (love of the <i>abl al-bayt</i>) and <i>tabarrā</i> (dissociation from the <i>abl al-bayt</i> 's adversaries)			X	X	X	X
Ḥurūfī thought				X	X	X
Expectation of the Mahdi			X	X		X
Relative unimportance of ritual obligations	X	X	X			
Negating the existence of the afterlife	X		X			
Incurring blame	X				X	X

Table 2: Bektāṣī and abdāl practices

	Kaygusuz Abdāl 14 th - early 15 th c.	Şadık Abdāl late 14 th -15 th c.	Şemsī 15 th - early 16 th c.	Yemīnī 15 th - early 16 th c.	Muhyiddin Abdāl 16 th c.	Virānī late 16 th - early 17 th c.
The four blows (<i>chabār ǧarb</i>)	X		X	X		X
' <i>Ayn-i cem</i> ' ceremony						X
<i>Tercemān</i> / <i>ǧūlbeng</i> (Alevi- Bektashi prayer)					X	X
Companionship (<i>muşāhiblik</i>)				X	X	
Seventeen belt-wearers (<i>onyedi kemer-best</i>)					X	
Mourning and/or blood- shedding during Muḥarram	X		X			X
Not wearing special dress	X	X				
Wearing the Bektashi cap		X				X
Carrying paraphernalia such as axes and horns						X
Smoking hashish	X		X			X
Consuming alcohol	X		X	X		X
Walking bare feet			X	X		X
Tattoo of the Dhu'l-faǧār (the sword identified with 'Alī)			X			
Nakedness except for an animal hide			X			
Begging	X		X	X		
Refusal to accumulate wealth	X			X		X
Pilgrimage to holy Shi'ī sites				X		

Notes

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1 On Alevism in the modern period, see Elise Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity* (London: Routledge, 2013); Mehmet Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci: Kimlik Siyasetinin Kısıtlılıkları ve İmkânları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017); Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), among others.

2 Name for Alevis abandoned in the twentieth century for its pejorative connotations, which originated from the red cap worn by these groups.

3 See A. C. S. Peacock, *Islam, Literature and Society in Mongol Anatolia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 188–217.

4 For overviews on the subject, see *ibid.*, 1–28; A.C.S. Peacock, Bruno de Nicola and Sara Nur Yıldız, Introduction, *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 1–20.

5 Only a small selection from the accumulated literature on Bektashism can be mentioned here. For an edited volume on a wide array of topics related to Bektashi history, see Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (eds.), *Bektachiyya: Études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1995). For the economic and social mechanisms of Bektashi lodges and their relationships with the central government, see Suraiya Faroqhi, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien (vom späten fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis 1826)* (Vienna: Verlag des Institutes für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 1981; revised trans. Istanbul, Simurg, 2003). For the function of Bektashi hagiographies in creating networks and patron relations, as well as the role of these in the construction of lodges, see Zeynep Yürekli, *Architecture and Hagiography in the Ottoman Empire: The Politics of Bektashi Shrines in the Classical Age* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012).

6 See Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kızılbaş/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020). For collection of Karakaya-Stump's articles on the subject (most of them in translation), see Ayfer Karakaya Stump, *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık: Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarihyazımını Yeniden Düşünmek* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015).

7 See Rıza Yıldırım, *Hacı Bektaş Veli'den Balım Sultan'a: Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019). Due to the author's extensive focus on Seyyid 'Alî Sultân's Balkan milieu, in the author's account the role of this milieu in the formation of Bektashism largely overshadows the roles of Abdâl Musâ and his successor Kaygusuz Abdâl, both of them dealt with in only a few pages.

8 See respectively Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *İslam ve Türk İllerinde Fütüvvet Teşkilâtı ve Kaynakları* (Istanbul: İstanbul University, 1952); Rıza Yıldırım, "Inventing a Sufi Tradition: The use of the *Futūwa* ritual gathering as a model for the Qızılbaş *djem*," in John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (eds), *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the mystical in*

the Muslim world, 1200-1800 (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 164-182; Karakaya-Stump, *Kızılbaş-Alevi*, 93, 122-123.

9 See John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac, 1937).

10 For a concise example of the erroneous dating, see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, 'Alevîliğin Tarihsel Sosyal Tabanı ile Teolojisi Arasındaki İlişki Problemine Dair', in *Tarihî ve Kültürel Boyutlarıyla Türkiyede Alevîler Bektaşîler Nusayrîler*, ed. İsmail Kurt and Seyid Ali Tüz (Istanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1999), 385-398. Also see Irène Mélikoff, *Sur les traces du soufisme turc: Recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1992), 31-32, 58-59, 155. Ocak revised his dating in the newest edition of his *Kalenderîler*; see Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Kalenderîler: XIV-XVII. Yüzyıllar* (Istanbul: Timaş, 2016), 275. Here he underlines the importance of the fifteenth century in the formation of Bektashi doctrine, evidenced by the existence of Şadık Abdal's *Divân*, which I will elaborate on further on in the article. For an overview of the early scholarship on the Sunni-Shi'i divide in late medieval Anatolia, see Yıldırım, *Bektaşîliğin Doğuşu*, 17-29.

11 See Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 71-76. Kafadar's use of the term 'metadoxy' to express this period's case of being beyond doxies has become the central paradigm in speaking of this period.

12 See Derin Terzioğlu, 'How to Conceptualize Ottoman Sunnification: A Historiographical Discussion', *Turcica* 44 (2012-2013): 301-338. Also see Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change and Communal Politics in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). For recent scholarship on Ottoman Sunnism and Sunnification, see Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds.), *Historicising Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Vefa Erginbaş (ed.), *Ottoman Sunnism: New Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

13 See Claude Cahen, 'Le Problème du shi'isme dans l'Asie mineure turque préottomane', in *Le Shi'isme imâmite: Colloque de Strasbourg (6-9 mai 1968)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 115-129; Rıza Yıldırım, 'Sunni Orthodox vs Shi'ite Heterodox?: A Reappraisal of Islamic Piety in Medieval Anatolia', in *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock, Bruno De Nicola and Sara Nur Yıldız (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 287-307.

14 See Zeynep Oktay, 'Layers of Mystical Meaning and Social Context in the Works of Kaygusuz Abdal', in *Literature and Intellectual Life in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Anatolia*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock and Sara Nur Yıldız (Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2016), 73-99. This confessional ambiguity is also a result of Mongol/Ilkhanid impact, leading to the Shi'itization of Sufism and to the increasing role of *sayyid* families. For an overview of the former, see A. Bausani, 'Religion under the Mongols', *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 538-549; for the latter development see Judith Pfeiffer, 'Confessional Ambiguity vs. Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate', in *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th century Tabriz*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 129-168.

15 See Peacock, *Mongol Anatolia*, 211.

16 For more on this, see Oktay, 'Layers'.

17 See Köprülü, *Early mystics in Turkish Literature*, ed. and trans. Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff (London-New York: Routledge, 2006); Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, 'Anadolu'da İslamiyet: Türk İstilasından sonra Anadolu Tarih-i Dinisine bir Nazar ve Bu Tarihin Menbaları', *Darülfünun Edebiyat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 2 (1922): 281-311, 385-420, 457-486, translated into English by Gary Leiser under the title *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion (Prolegomena)* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993); Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, 'Bektaşiliğin Menşeleri,' *Türk Yurdu* 16-2 / 169-8 (May 1925), reprint, Ankara, 2001, 9:68-76; Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, 'Abdal Musa,' in *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Burhaneddin Basimevi, 1935), 60-64, reprinted with notes and additions by Orhan F. Köprülü in: Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, 'Abdal Musa,' *Türk Kültürü* 124 (1973): 198-207; Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, *Influence du Chamanisme Turco-Mongol sur les ordres mystiques Musulmans* (Istanbul: Zelliitch freres, 1929). The same paradigm was further developed in the works of authors such as Irène Mélikoff and Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. For an insightful discussion into Köprülü's legacy with a focus on Mélikoff and Ocak, see Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 251-268.

18 See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Early Sufism in Eastern Anatolia', in *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi-Nimetullahi Publications, 1993), 175-198; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia', in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 329-342. The focus on the pre-Islamic heritage in modern scholarship is also due to the fact that this scholarship relies heavily on hagiographies, and not nearly as much on works by the 'saints' themselves.

19 See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 61-84; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Kalenders, Abdals, Hayderis: The Formation of the Bektāşīye in the 16th Century', in *Süleymân the Second and His Time*, ed. Halil İnalçık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993), 121-129; Yıldırım, *Bektaşiliğin Doğuşu*. For the various connotations of the word 'bektāşī' in different networks and time periods, see Rıza Yıldırım, 'Bektaşī Kime Derler?: 'Bektaşī' Kavramının Kapsamı ve Sınırları Üzerine Tarihsel Bir Analiz Denemesi', *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 55 (2010): 23-58.

20 See Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, 'The Forgotten Dervishes: The Bektashi Convents in Iraq and Their Kızılbash Clients', *International Journal of Turkish Studies* vol. 16 no. 1-2 (2010): 1-24. For an overview of Bektashi history, see Thierry Zarccone, 'Bektāşīyye,' *Encyclopedia of Islam, THREE*, Kate Fleet, et al. (eds.), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_24010 First published online: 2014; Hamid Algar, 'Bektāşīya,' *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. IV, Fasc. 2, 118-122.

21 See Karakaya-Stump, *Kızılbash-Alevis*, 26. Karakaya-Stump borrows the term from Devin DeWeese. For the latter see Devin DeWeese, 'Yasavi Şayhs in the Timurid Era: Notes on the Social and Political Role of Communal Sufi Affiliations in the 14th and 15th centuries', *Oriente Moderno* 76, no. 2 (1996): 173-188.

22 Karakaya-Stump, *Kızılbash-Alevis*, 221.

23 For a concise discussion of the dissemination of *Abdāl* groups in various areas of the Islamic realm, particularly Central Asia, see Orhan F. Köprülü, 'Abdal: Edebiyat', *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988), 61.

24 For a detailed study of this renunciant movement, see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*. For a more concise account, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Antinomian Sufis', in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 101-124. Christiane Tortel's argument for the gypsy origins of these dervish movements does not hold up to scrutiny for the case of Anatolia, as already underlined by Fuad Köprülü in the early twentieth century. See Christiane Tortel, *L'Ascète et le bouffon: Qalandars, vrais ou faux renonçants en islam ou l'Orient indianisé* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2009); Mehmet Fuad Köprülü, 'Abdal,' in *Türk Halk Edebiyatı Ansiklopedisi: Ortaçağ ve Yeniçağ Türklerinin Halk Kültürü Üzerine Coğrafya, Etnoğrafya, Etnoloji, Tarih ve Edebiyat Lüğati* (Istanbul: Burhaneddin Basimevi, 1935), 23-56.

25 For the relationship between sainthood and new renunciation, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'The Antinomian Dervish as Model Saint', in *Modes de Transmission de la Culture Religieuse en Islam*, ed. Hassan Elboudrari (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1993), 241-260.

26 For a discussion of this matter see See Ahmet T. Karamustafa, 'Anadolu'nun İslamlaşması Bağlamında Aleviliğin Oluşumu,' in *Kızılbaşlık, Alevilik, Bektaşilik*, ed. Yalçın Çakmak and İmran Gürtaş (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 43-54.

27 See *Velâyetnâme: Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli*, ed. Hamiye Duran (Ankara: Diyanet Vakfı, 2007).

28 See the portrayal of *bektâşîs* and *abdâls* of *Rûm* as two distinct groups in: Vâhidi, *Menâkıb-ı H'oca-i Cihân ve Netice-i Cân* in Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Vâhidî's Menâkıb-ı H'oca-i Cihân ve Netice-i Cân: Critical Edition and Analysis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 1993), 126-132 (*abdâls* of *Rûm*) and 159-166 (*bektâşîs*). See pp. 7-8 and 10 respectively for summaries in English.

29 See various episodes in the hagiography of Otman Baba: *Otman Baba Vilâyetnâmesi: Vilâyetname-i Şâhî Göçek Abdal*, ed. Şevki Koca (Istanbul: Bektaşî Kültür Derneği, 2002). For an overview of rivalries between various Sufis and dervishes in this period, see Resul Ay, 'Sufi Shaykhs and Society in Thirteenth and Fifteenth Century Anatolia: Spiritual Influence and Rivalry', *Journal of Islamic Studies* vol. 24 no. 1 (2013): 1-24.

30 On details of his life, see Zeynep Oktay, *Mesnevî-i Baba Kaygusuz* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2013), 5-10; Oktay, 'Layers of Mystical Meaning', 73-74.

31 For references to the so-called Arabic version of the *Makâlât* see M. Es'ad Coşan, *Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli ve Bektâşîlik* (Istanbul: Server İletişim, 2013), 16-18. For editions of the *Makâlât* in Turkish see Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli, *Makâlât*, ed. Esad Coşan (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1996); Hünkâr Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli, *Makâlât*, ed. Ali Yılmaz, Mehmet Akkuş and Ali Öztürk (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2007); Hacı Bektâş Veli, 'Makâlât', ed. Ömer Özkan and Malik Bankır in Gıyasettin Aytas (ed.), *Hacı Bektâş Veli Külliyyatı* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektâş Veli Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 473-767. None of these editions rely on the earliest manuscript of the work.

32 For information on the content of Kaygusuz Abdal's works as well as their available editions, see Oktay, *Mesnevî-i Baba Kaygusuz*, 11-16.

33 See Kaygusuz Abdal, *Divân*, Ankara, Milli Kütüphane Mil Yz A 7621 (dated 920/1514). References to the *Divân* will be from this manuscript unless otherwise indicated. This is the second oldest manuscript of Kaygusuz Abdal's corpus, after the Berlin manuscript (Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. Oct. 4044) dated 907 (1501/1502). For a detailed description of the Berlin manuscript, see Oktay, *Mesnevî-i Baba Kaygusuz*, 57-58.

- 34 See aygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, fol. 166b, 177b, 180b, 223b.
- 35 Ibid, fol. 166b, 209b.
- 36 Ibid, fol. 182a.
- 37 aygusuz Abdāl, *Serāy-nāme*, Berlin Staatsbibliothek Ms.or.Oct. 4044, fol. 24b [aygusuz Abdāl, *Saraynāme*, ed. Abdurrahman Gzel (Ankara: Trkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2010), 206-207].
- 38 aygusuz Abdāl, *Dil-gşā*, ed. Abdurrahman Gzel (Ankara: Trkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2009), 104-105.
- 39 aygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, fol. 131b.
- 40 aygusuz Abdāl, *Serāy-nāme*, fol. 20b [aygusuz Abdāl, *Saraynāme*, 190-191].
- 41 Ibid, fol. 39b [266-267].
- 42 Ibid, fol. 21a [192-193].
- 43 Ibid, fol. 29b [226-227].
- 44 aygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, fol. 182a, 187a; aygusuz Abdāl, *Serāy-nāme*, fol. 20b, 24b [aygusuz Abdāl, *Saraynāme*, 190-191, 206-207]; aygusuz Abdāl, *Dil-gşā*, 104-105.
- 45 aygusuz Abdāl, *Serāy-nāme*, fol. 39b [aygusuz Abdāl, *Saraynāme*, 266-267].
- 46 Ibid, fol. 63b [362-363].
- 47 See below for further details.
- 48 See aygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, fol. 136a, 137b.
- 49 Ibid, fol. 129a, 139b.
- 50 Ibid, fol. 166b.
- 51 Nesīmı's poetry focuses on Hrfı teachings, the doctrine of the Oneness of Being, and the praise of the Twelve Imams. The latter aspect, in addition to his martyrdom, has led to the Alevi adoption of Nesīmı, who consider him as one of their seven great poets. His poetry is vastly different from that of aygusuz Abdāl. Wherein the former is a direct continuation of classical Persian poetry in style, the latter bridges the gap between folk and classical traditions.
- For the earliest example of the Alevi-Bektashi liturgical poems named the *dvāzdeh imām* (Twelve Imams), see Nesīmı, *Dīvān*, in Hseyin Ayan (ed), *Nesımı: Hayatı, Edebi Kişiliđi, Eserleri ve Trkçe Divanının Tenkitli Metni I-II* (Ankara: Trk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2014), 542.
- 52 aygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, fol. 166b.
- 53 Ibid, fol. 129a, 131b.
- 54 Ibid, fol. 182a.
- 55 Ibid, fol. 131b.
- 56 Ibid, fol. 223a.
- 57 Ibid, fol. 136a.

58 Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, Berlin Staatsbibliothek Ms.or.Oct. 4044, fol. 309b.

59 Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Serây-nâme*, fol. 26b, 39b [Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Saraynâme*, 214-215, 266-267].

60 See Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Kitâb-ı mağlaṭa*, Berlin Staatsbibliothek Ms.or.Oct. 4044, fol. 263b-288b. The work has been edited a number of times with serious errors; see Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Kitâb-ı Miğlâte*, in Abdurrahman Güzel (ed.), *Kaygusuz Abdal'ın Mensur Eserleri* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1983), 82-130; also Bilâl Yücel, 'Kaygusuz Abdal'ın Kitâbu Mağlata'sı', *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Makaleleri* 2 (2002), 83-117. For the most recent critical edition, see Zeynep Oktay, 'The Perfect Man in Alevism and Bektashism: Kaygusuz Abdāl's *Kitâb-ı Mağlaṭa*', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Paris, École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2017.

61 Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Kitâb-ı Mağlaṭa*, fol. 266a-b.

62 See *ibid.*, fol. 267a.

63 *Ibid.*, fol. 267a.

64 *Ibid.*, fol. 266b.

65 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, 'Introduction', in *L'Ésotérisme shi'ite: Ses racines et ses prolongements*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2016), 5.

66 Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Kitâb-ı Mağlaṭa*, fol. 273b.

67 *Ibid.*, fol. 273b.

68 *Ibid.*, fol. 274b-277b.

69 *Ibid.*, fol. 286b-287b.

70 Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Vücüd-nâme*, in Abdurrahman Güzel (ed), *Kaygusuz Abdal'ın Mensur Eserleri* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1983), 144-145.

71 See Şemsî, *Deh Murg*, in İdris Güven Kaya (ed), *Derviş Şemsî and His Mesnevi Deh Murg* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 1997), 73-176. Two of the work's manuscripts identify the place of composition as 'Alâ'ye (*Ibid.*, 53). Other than his few poems that appear in the biographical dictionaries, Şemsî is also supposed to have a *Dīvān*, which is not extant today. Latîfî identifies Şemsî as *ışık* (Latîfî, *Tezkire-i Latîfî* [Istanbul: Kitâb-hâne-i İkdâm, 1314], 209-210), which is a synonym for *abdāl*, and 'Âşık Çelebi refers to him as *kâlelder*; see 'Âşık Çelebi, *Meşâ'irü'ş-şu'arâ*, ed. Meredith Owens (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial, 1971), 250a-250b. While these words denote a temperament in line with that of Şemsî, he himself prefers the terms *dervîş* and *abdāl* when referring to himself.

72 *Ibid.*, 250a-250b.

73 In the beginning of the work, Şemsî lists these birds and groups, see Şemsî, 84. The list below includes the titles in this list as well as other versions of them within the text.

74 A Turkic coalition of tribes which were the ancestors of the Turkmens. For the Turkmens, see Ali Karamustafa, 'Who were the Türkmen of Ottoman and Safavid lands? An overlooked early modern identity', *Der Islam* Vol. 97 No. 2 (2020): 476-499.

75 See Şemsî, 115-118.

76 *Ibid.*, 171.

77 Ibid, 118.

78 Şâdık Abdâl was a follower of Seyyid 'Alî Sultân (d. after 815/1412), famous holy warrior and dervish who played a major role in Ottoman conquests in Rumelia. Şâdık Abdâl speaks reverently of Kağgusuz Abdâl and identifies Kağgusuz Abdâl's master Abdâl Mūsâ as the pole (saint of highest spiritual rank) of his time, the living secret of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib; see Şâdık Abdâl, *Şâdık Abdâl Dîvânı*, ed. Dursun Gümüšoğlu (Istanbul: Horasan Yayınları, 2009), 64, 66, 105-106, 110, 162. Şâdık Abdâl's *Dîvân* consists of sixty-six poems in the order of a *müretteb* (regularly arranged) *dîvân*, wherein the order of the poems follows the alphabetical order of the last letters of the rhymes.

79 See Dervîş Muhammed Yemînî, *Fazîlet-nâme*, ed. Yusuf Tepeli (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2002). Yemînî wrote his *Fazîlet-nâme* in the year of 925 (1519). In this work, Yemînî identifies the pole (*kutb*) as Otman Baba (d. 883/1478), leader of the *Abdâls* of Rûm in the late fifteenth century. He also identifies Otman Baba's disciple Akyazılı Sultân as the pole who succeeded him. We thus know that Yemînî was a member of Akyazılı Sultân's *abdâl* circle. Yemînî states that he translated his work from a prose work in Persian by a certain Şeyh Rükneddîn. The work narrates 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib's excellent qualities in nineteen chapters, while also including individual poetry dispersed within the text, mostly to the praise of 'Alî b. Abî Tâlib and the Twelve Imams.

80 See Muhyiddîn Abdâl, *Dîvân*, in Bayram Durbilmez, 'Muhyiddîn Abdâl Dîvânı (İnceleme - Tenkitli Metin)', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Elazığ, Fırat University, 1998, 260-475.

81 See *ibid.*, 387, 412, 451.

82 For the influence of Yunus Emre, see *ibid.*, 260, 294, 295, 375, 396. For the influence of Kağgusuz Abdâl, see *ibid.*, 266, 290, 294, 303, 449, 456.

83 See *ibid.*, 266, 274, 280, 330, 356, 357.

84 See *ibid.*, 268. This is a chosen companionship between two couples in the Alevi social system, which is a requirement for all adult members of the community.

85 See *ibid.*, 289. The Fourteen Impeccables in Bektashi and *abdâl* doctrine are children of Imams who were martyred in their youth, several of whom were killed in the Battle of Karbala. Although their names differ in the texts, a common list can be found in Birge's *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. See Birge, 147-148. For the relation of the Fourteen Pure Impeccables to Hurûfî thought, see *ibid.*, 151-152.

86 According to Alevi lore, the ceremony of the forty (*kırklar cemi*) is the mythical account of Muḥammad's ascension in which he comes across an assembly of forty saints led by 'Alî. It constitutes the archetype of the *cem*' ceremony on earth. The seventeen belt-wearers are members of the ceremony of the forty who wore pieces of Muḥammad's turban as belts during the heavenly ceremony. See Esat Korkmaz, *Alevîlik ve Bektaşîlik Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar, 2005), 392. For references to the seventeen belt-wearers, see Muhyiddîn, 452. For another reference to *kemer-best*, see *ibid.*, 291.

87 Virânî refers to himself often as 'Urum Abdâlî' (*Abdâl of Rûm*). He identifies the leader of his group as Akyazılı Sultân and shows high esteem for Kağgusuz Abdâl. On the other hand, Faḡl Allâh Astarâbâdî, the founder of the Hurufiyye, appears to be the most central figure in his work. When we take into account Virânî's proclaimed reverence for Hacı Bektaş and Balım Sultân, the founder of the official Bektashi order, we can say that Virânî was an *abdâl*, a *hurûfî*, and a *bektâşî*. The content of his work is indicative of a mixture of these three affiliations.

88 See Vīrānī Abdāl, *Risāle-i Vīrānī Abdāl*, in Fatih Usluer (ed), *Hurufi Metinleri I* (Ankara: Birleşik Yayınları, 2014), 143-231.

89 See Vīrānī, *Âşık Viranî Divanı*, ed. M. Hâlid Bayrı (Istanbul: Maarif Kitaphanesi, 1959).

90 See Yıldırım, 'Inventing a Sufi Tradition', 166.

91 See Karakaya-Stump, *Kizilbash/Alevis*, 256-319.

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Kaygusuz Abdāl. *Dīvān*. Ankara, Milli Kütüphane Mil Yz A 7621/2 (dated 920/1514), fol. 114b-235a, 312a-325b; also Kaygusuz Abdāl, *Dīvān*, Berlin Staatsbibliothek Ms.or.Oct. 4044 (dated 907/ 1501-2), fol. 70b-71a, 120a-121b, 134a-139b, 211a-211b, 261a-262b, 288b-341b, 345a.

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