
Rumi and Haji Bektash Veli as Mediating Leaders in the Islamization of Anatolia 1100CE–1350CE

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Introduction

As an instructor of the history of Christianity serving a population of graduate students preparing for protestant ministries, I have sought to broaden my teaching to incorporate more components of the history of Judaism and the history of Islam. We who are not scholars of either Judaism or of Islam must become better students of both, since our era shows what happens when our joined and connected stories become segmented and separated. Discussions of religious identity, hybridity, and dual belonging generally focus on the religious responder, and on the experience of dual belonging. This paper explores the role of Muslim guides, mediators, and interpreters who created spaces for hybrid religious thought and practice in what is now central Turkey, before the imposition of a more precise Sunni orthodoxy.

This essay will focus on the period between 1100 c.e. and 1350 c.e., tracking transformations from predominantly Greek Christian to predominantly Turkish Muslim identity in territories which were nearly completely Christian (whether Greek, Syrian, or Armenian) in the eleventh century, while in the first available Ottoman tax records from the beginning of the sixteenth century, 92% of the taxable households were Muslim. How best to describe this political, religious, and cultural transformation?¹ This essay will examine two Muslim leaders who facilitated the transition from Christian Asia Minor to Muslim Anatolia. We will see broad expressions of Islam flourishing in areas where Christianity receded. Non-dogmatic, more inclusive, and universalizing forms of Islam made space for Christians reeling from disruptions and dislocations caused by the collapse of the Byzantine government. Even without major changes in affiliation or conversion, dual identities emerged under the leadership of successive waves of Turkish and Persian tradesmen, teachers, dervishes, nomads, fighters and raiders. Broad Islam flourished before the successive “Sunnification” projects of subsequent centuries. Sunni orthodoxy continues to contest Alevi identity and legitimacy.

1. See Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986 [1971]). See also Oktay Özel, “Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th and 17th Century,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36 (2004):183-205. While beyond the scope of this essay, the population transfers in the twentieth century are also part of this topic.

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Mediating, interpreting, and adaptive leaders created social spaces where hybrid identities could by turns resist, adapt, avoid, and disguise, as well as enact and enforce the precision and control of Sunni orthodoxy, depending on the need and the context. Rumi’s broad Sufi vision and Haji Bektash Veli inclusive folkways each created inclusive cultural spaces, and each effectively incorporated old traditions with new to render viable composite religious identities. We do well to recognize these interesting examples of hybridity and cultural flexibility within a religious tradition rarely credited with either. Hybrid communities serving as an intermediate stage toward some more recognizable (Sunni) orthodoxy (Rumi), with some retaining some distance from (Sunni) orthodoxy (Bektashi).² Of course, these groups survived into the modern nation of Turkey, and still account for perhaps 20% of the population, though the numbers are intensely contested.³ Because

2. See John Taylor, “An Approach to the Emergence of Heterodoxy in Mediaeval Islam,” *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (April 1967), 197-210. Irène Mélikoff has called the Bektashi and Alevi groups “an Islam on the margin of Islam.” See Mélikoff, “Un Islam en Marge de l’Islam: L’Alevisme,” in *Au Banquet des Quarante: exploration au coeur du Bektachisme-Alevisme* (Istanbul: Les Editions Isis, 2001), 15.

3. See David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London: RoutledgeCurson, 2003). See also *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives* edited by Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Institute, 1998). See also Hülya Küçük, *The Role of the Bektāshīs in Turkey’s National Struggle* (Boston: Brill, 2002). For a more general overview, see Philippe Fargues, “The Arab Christians of the Middle East: A Demographic Perspective,” in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future* edited by Andrea Pacini

these non-Sunni groups were strong supporters of the twentieth-century Kemalist secular nationalist project as, in part, a shelter from the Sunni majority, any contemporary discussions of the relation of Mosque and State should consider those groups judged by the Sunni majority to be unorthodox or even non-Muslim.⁴

The collapse of Byzantine control

The transition of any region from one cultural system to another is a complex process. How Hellenistic Asia Minor had become predominantly Christian within the Roman Empire is a good case in point.⁵ The subsequent transformation of Christian territories to Islamic Turchia is yet more complex, but can be divided into distinct but overlapping periods from 750 c.e. until the emergence and consolidation of Ottoman power by 1300 c.e.⁶ While our focus is on the period between the Battle of Manzikert (1071) and the rise of the Ottomans, this era is part of a much longer conflict between Rome and the Parthian and Persian empires, the origins and growth of Islam, and the place of Baghdad and of Persia as cultural and administrative centers and sending sites.

Following astounding Arab military successes in the century after the death of the Prophet in 632 c.e., Byzantine and Arab military leaders eventually faced a boundary along the Taurus Mountains.⁷ The inability of either side to press effectively beyond this boundary limited further Arab advancement, but also ended Byzantine control in what had been significant imperial territories in Syria and Palestine. Between the eighth and eleventh centuries, Byzantine power waxed and waned, but gained its most extensive borders since Emperor Heraclius under Basil II (d.1025) with extensive Balkan holdings, protected at its eastern boundaries by a series of fortress cities.

In the decades after Basil II, Byzantium faced uprisings in its Balkan territories to the east, and incursions by Mongols,

Turkmen, and Persians in the west. In response, Byzantine culture grew more militarized, more reliant on mercenary armies, and less resilient. Byzantium proved unable to respond adequately to the growing threats to its eastern borders as Turkman raiding parties pressed into Armenia, and Turkish-Arab forces contested Syrian settlements. While court quarrels robbed the eastern territories of defense, nomads and fighters captured city after city with little opposition, and sometimes aided by Greeks or Armenians joining with the Turkmen.⁸ The fortress city of Ani fell in 1065, and Kayseri (ancient Caesarea) fell in 1067. The stockade city of Manzikert received troops led by Byzantine Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes (d. 1071) who came east to bring the battle to the Seljuks, but ineptitude, betrayal and defeat led to the capture of the emperor by the Seljuk Alp Arslan (d. 1072), confirming that Greek control over the central and western Anatolian territories was over.



Creative Commons license, www.wikipedia.com, "Danishmendids."

The collapse of the eastern borders left the large central inland territories open to the rapid westward movement of an array of raiding parties, nomads and herdsmen, and traders. By 1081 Seljuks were in control of Nicaea (for a while), and the Greek government in Constantinople faced an ever growing array of challenges.⁹ The collapse of Byzantine power took many forms: the inability to control grazing lands, the inability to protect trade routes, the abandonment of ecclesial properties, the appropriation of church incomes, the repeated movement of soldiers, leaving unprotected territories and vulnerable population centers. Enlarged monastic and privately held estates had grown at the expense of small farmers in the middle decades of the eleventh century, and these large estates were quickly abandoned in the years after Manzikert, leaving land to new tenants or to those willing to accept new Turkman dominion in exchange

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 25-47.

4. For a clear discussion of differences between Islamic and Islamist projects, see Alev Çinar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9-18.

5. See Frank R. Trombley, "Paganism in the Greek World at the End of Antiquity: The Case of Rural Anatolia and Greece," *Harvard Theological Review* 78:3-4 (1985), 327-352. See Raymond Van Dam, *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

6. Excellent maps available at: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~vika/TeachPort/islam00/maps.html>

7. See the work of Walter E. Keagi, including *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and *Muslim Expansion and the Byzantine Collapse in North Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

8. For a good overview with current bibliographies, see *Byzantine History* edited by Jonathan Harris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

9. See Halil Inalcik, "Osman Ghazi's Siege of Nicaea and the Battle of Bapheus," in Elizabeth Zachariado, editor, *The Ottoman Emirate (1300-1389)* (Rethymnon: Crete University Press, 1993), 77-99.

for security.¹⁰ Constantinople had ruled Anatolia but could no longer establish alliances or fortify its borders, and religious borders crumbled along with the political.¹¹ Byzantine efforts to find allies by invoking Christian identity failed, whether in pressuring Armenian and Syrians to accept the ancient creedal formulations as a precondition to military aid, or in the appeal to the Latin west for military assistance by the tentative acceptance of Latin doctrines. What they were sent were waves of unruly western crusaders and deal-makers more eager to establish Latin holdings than to re-establish Greek control, culminating in the occupation of Constantinople and the establishment of a Latin principality in 1204.

Within Islam

Developments within Islam provided new forms of governance for the ever-growing empire. Leadership of the high culture Islamic world had shifted from Damascus to Baghdad with the emergence of the Abbasids (ca. 750 c.e.), broadening Islamic identity beyond strictly Arab ethnicity. While Baghdad ruled the Islamic world, new dynasties emerged absorbing Mongols and Turkmen pressing west from the Asian steppes. Saffarids and Samanids in parts of Persia and Afghanistan (860s c.e.-1000 c.e.), the Ghaznavids in Persia, Transoxania, and northern India (970s c.e.- 1180s c.e.), the Shi'a Fatimids in North Africa and Egypt (909 c.e.-1171 c.e.) each sponsored and pursued an elaborate process of Islamization, each with specific sequences, pacing, and patterns.¹²

While Arab preachers exhorted young men to continue the struggle against the Byzantines and against the pagan nomadic Turkmen, it would be Turkmen and Persians, rather than Arabs, who would carry the message of the Prophet into Anatolia.¹³ The origins and rise of the Seljuks precedes our timeframe except to note the rise and reign of Seljuks in portions of Persia following the battle of Dandanakan (1040) and in Baghdad after 1055.¹⁴ When

10. S. Vyrionis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism...*, tracks the church closings, episcopal consolidations, and appeals for relief to destitute jurisdictions by close reading of surviving archival church records. For an introduction to contrasting models of Turkmen administration, see Joel Shinder, "Early Ottoman Administration in the Wilderness: Some Limits on Comparison," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 4 (November 1978), 497-517.

11. See Hugh Kennedy, *When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World: The Rise and Fall of Islam's Greatest Dynasty* (New York: De Capo Press, 2005).

12. See Nehemia Levtzion, "Conversion to Islam in Syria and Palestine and the Survival of Christian Communities," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi. [Papers in Mediaeval Studies 9] (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 289-311. See Daphna Ephrat, *Spiritual Wayfarers, Leaders in Piety: Sufis and the Dissemination of Islam in Medieval Palestine* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008). See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "Sufi and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 1 (1999), 27-46.

13. See Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 40-42 and 100-102.

14. See Peter B. Golden, *Central Asia in World History* (New York:

Seljuk territories were diverse in composition, and open to Turkman and Persian cultural forms. These Seljuk territories were repeatedly overrun by European crusaders forces, but Seljuk presence and influence would become a permanent part of Anatolia even in the competing principalities and the anarchic zones.

pushed westward, Seljuks pressed north to challenge Georgia, west along the Byzantine and Armenian territories, and southwest into Syria and Palestine. As the Byzantine territories broke into smaller principalities and anarchic zones, Turkmen nomads and raiders led the way in waves that brought Seljuks far into Christian Anatolia, reaching western Anatolia by the late 1070s. Seljuks successfully gathered and defeated smaller territories into one of two main groups: those associated with the Great Seljuks who looked to Baghdad and Isfahan as the cultural and political capitols; and those gathered in central Anatolia, among them the Danishmend dynasty, or the Sultanate of Rum, based in Konya. What kind of Islam did Anatolian Christians encounter?

Seljuk territories were diverse in composition, and open to Turkman and Persian cultural forms. These Seljuk territories were repeatedly overrun by European crusaders forces, but Seljuk presence and influence would become a permanent part of Anatolia even in the competing principalities and the anarchic zones. While individuals, families, clans, and mercenary armies might shift or combine alliances or identities, it was Turkman sultanic rulers who could offer some protection to Christian populations from nomads and raiders, and who would provide Islamic institutions and presence.¹⁵ Hellenistic and Turkman culture and bloodlines blended, with blended or hybrid religious traditions playing important roles in negotiating transitions for individuals and families and regions now integrating composite identities within broadly Islamic categories, rather than within broadly Christian categories.¹⁶ By the beginning of the thirteenth century, Anatolia

Oxford University Press, 2009).

15. For a discussion of Muslim converts to Christianity in Constantinople and the complexities of ensuring satisfactory orthodoxy, see Craig L. Hanson, "Manuel I Comnenus and the 'God of Muhammad': A Study in Byzantine Ecclesiastical Politics," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays* edited by John Victor Tolan (New York: Garland, 1996), 55-82.

16. See the classic work of Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum: Eleventh to Fourteenth Century* translated and edited by P.M. Holt (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education

was composed of mixed populations of Greek communities and regions, Armenian enclaves, Turkman settlements and towns, and blended cities under Turkman emirs. Some groups of newcomers fleeing Mongols, along with some Christian allies, revolted against the Seljuks in the (1239-1241) uprising associated with Baba Resul. While successful in putting down the revolt, the Seljuks were weakened by the uprising, their territories fragmented, and were eventually reduced to a Mongol dependency. Historians note the blended realities of Anatolia in these years, forming hybrid cultures common to borderlands and lands subject to incursion and political/cultural fracturing.¹⁷

From the closing decades of the thirteenth century, Osman Sayed II (1258-1326) ruled territories including the towns of Domaniç and Söğüt. Osman and his descendents and allies consolidated power at the expense of the Byzantines and by defeating or negotiating among the other beylik states that had emerged (or re-emerged) following the Seljuk decline. Nearly destroyed by the incursion by Tamerlane in 1402, these Ottomans regrouped, and secured the alliances and the resources necessary for their own expansion and consolidation. From their base at Bursa, Ottoman forces occupied Greek and Balkan territories, and on to parts of North Africa and Palestine, all made complete and seeming inevitable in the conquest of Constantinople under Mehmet II in 1453.¹⁸ As the Seljuks had before them, Ottomans adopted Sunni orthodoxy, though historians note that local leaders were sometimes distant from the strictures and structures of the Jamâ'î-Sunni, and that local populations adopted Islam by blending traditions and conforming when and where necessary.¹⁹

Limited, 2001 [1988]). See also Speros Vryonis Jr., "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975), 41-47. See Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* vol. 2, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974 [1958-1961]).

17. Sanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* v. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 9. "In the transitional stage from Byzantine to Turkish hegemony, Anatolia combined elements of the High Islamic civilization of the great caliphates with the radically different hybrid culture peculiar to border provinces (uc) or marches. The authority of the sultan was represented by an emir, or commander of the frontier province, who was both an administrative and a military commander and often was a member of one of the leading families of Konya. In contrast to this official organization, on the local level the real centers of power in the marches were the Turcoman tribes. The commanders, called beys, led the struggle against the infidel and were therefore gazis, or fighters for the faith of Islam. Despite Seljuk claims to the contrary, these march beys were independent of the Seljuk march emirs..." Please note the sobering warning of Colin Imber's review of Shaw in *The English Historical Review* 93, no. 367 (April 1978), 393-395, listing errors in language, sources, interpretation, and typography.

18. See Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); See also, Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizons: a History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Picador, 1998).

19. See the still useful work of F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, edited by M.M. Hasluck. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929). For a more recent presentation of convenient conversion in crusader Palestine, see Adam Knobler, "Pseudo-conversions and Patchwork Pedigrees: The Christianization of Muslim Princes and the

This (too) brief outline of the transition from Christian to Muslim control of Anatolia sounds clearer and more direct in the summaries of historians than in the lived experience of the people of Anatolia. Living through the successive waves of nomads and raiders and seekers, the collapse of Greek governmental and ecclesial structure led to deep Greek/Christian vulnerabilities. Consolidating towns into walled cities, establishing stockades and policed trade routes, or securing alliances through marriage could gather dwindling resources, and strategies of side switching, concealed identity, hybridity, or conversion were some of the many ways of relating with Islam. Christians had to find their place in a predominantly Muslim context. Sultans and emirs sponsored holy men and fraternal lodges and created an Islamic Anatolia that offered stability, security, welcome, and possibility.

Interpreters and guides

Contemporary historians are exploring the place/function/role of Islam and Islamic institutions within Seljuk and Ottoman identity and statecraft.²⁰ Seljuk and Ottoman regimes faced many obstacles to effective rule over an Anatolia so dynamic and diverse in identity, interest, and intention. In coping with the resident Christian populations, charismatic Muslim leaders and holy men created a capacious middle ground. Seljuk and Ottoman practice was to transform significant Christian churches into mosques, and to recruit Christians for service: for elite families for court and administrative service; for poor families or family members for military service. While some individuals and groups faced forced conversion, such cases were exceptional. Conversion to Islam was a multi-generational process.²¹ A middle way was provided by dervishes and their patrons, and by wonder-working folk heroes.

Islamic settlers in Anatolia

It is uncertain when the first Turkman tradesmen entered Anatolia. Nor is it agreed how prominent ghazi warriors were in the opening of Anatolia. Down the length of the eleventh century, crucial cultural shifts occurred as nomadic Turkmen began to settle outside Byzantine towns. Inter-marriage, economic opportunity, and land tenancy helped settle Turkman populations, bringing some into Byzantine towns, and others into close relation with Byzantine towns and farms. Whether taking occupied land, or occupying abandoned properties and finding a place in Greek settlements and towns, the shift from itinerate trader to occasional

Diplomacy of Holy War," in *Journal of World History* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1996), 181-197.

20. One good pathway into current debates is Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003).

21. For an introduction to the literature on conversion under Islam, see Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi, editors, *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990). See also S. Vryonis, Jr., "The Experience of Christians under Seljuk and Ottoman Domination, Eleventh to Sixteenth Century," in *Ibid.*, 185-216.

resident signifies an important phase of cultural engagement, especially as settled areas provided sites for groups of young Muslim men gathered into guilds for business or self-protection or for religious formation. Some of these guilds developed as *futuwwah* brotherhoods – groups of young men whose identity centered on religious notions of conduct, nobility, hospitality, and faithfulness. Historians debate the extent to which these brotherhoods expressed a popularized appropriation of Shi'a piety looking to Ali as exemplar. Not solely a religious order (*ṭariqah*), nor solely oriented toward commerce or police work, these lodges blended many social roles, and were perhaps closer to the *phratia* traditions known to the Cappadocians, the *collegia* of the Romans, or perhaps the *javanmard* clubs of the Sassanid Empire.²²

The origins of these futuwwah groups are obscure. Like Sufism itself, futuwwa brotherhoods have probable pre-Islamic roots and counterparts, and both traditions developed from unattached or wandering individuals to well-defined group organizations under the leadership of a charismatic teacher and in alignment with local governors. These groups nurtured close friendship, disciplined lives, and study. Futuwwa groups were found throughout the Islamic world, serving as centers of fellowship, religious formation, education, hospitality, and recruitment with some futuwwa groups including non-Muslim members. The futuwwa groups in Baghdad were reformed during the caliphate of al-Nasir (1180-1228 c.e.), but futuwwa groups had already spread along trade routes into towns throughout Anatolia, Armenia, and Georgia. Oriented to the notions of kindness, generosity and courage reflecting some particular Shi'a traditions, these futuwwa lodges, or *tekkes*, welcomed visitors, traveling dervishes, and family acquaintances, and were centers for reflection, study, conversation, and spiritual formation.²³ The *akhî*, young members of the tekke, provided a local Islamic presence, capable of a flexible response according to local need, whether in supporting local commerce, enacting community, or providing order in response to lawlessness. With the collapse of Byzantine government and church organization, the formation of a trade guild, the establishment of a lodge, or the founding of a *khâniqâh* could provide crucial stability and community where both were lacking. While some teachers were idiosyncratic and individualistic, others would attract followers, students, supporters, and endowments (*waqf* plural: *awqâf*), to support the tekke. In desperate times, the tekke could also supply warriors– the *ghâzî* (a fighter for the faith), relating/responding to jihad or opportunity or need. How flexible these roles, between *akhî* and *ghazi*, remains an intriguing question. Tekkes could develop into mosque centers, providing space for education,

22. See Reeva Spector Simon, "Futuwwa," in *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (New York: Thomson/Gale, 2004). See also Claude Cahen and Fr. Taeschner, "Futuwwa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* new edition (1965) II, pt.2.

23. See Raymond Lifchez, editor, *The Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); See also Ethel Sara Wolper, *Cities and Saints: Sufism and the Transformation of Urban Space in Medieval Anatolia* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

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engagement and withdrawal, social life, and deeper discipleship.²⁴ Some tekkes were exclusive, while others became sites of welcome for all, including Christians, and some were funded by *awqâf* secured from Christian villages and endowments.²⁵

Wandering and willing: dervishes in Anatolia²⁶

In the late twelfth and early thirteenth century many remarkable dervish masters arrived in central Anatolia and attracted adherents by a message that reflected aspects of Sufi, Shi'a, Sunni, and folk traditions, and perhaps some incorporation of Christian practice. It remains a source of great debate whether this blending is best considered an intermediate stage toward Sunni orthodoxy, or whether this blending was its own formation of non-normative or "heterodox" forms of Islam. What is clear is that dervish and dervish-oriented communities presented a variety of practices, and would allow for varied levels of conformity to Sunni standards.²⁷ At a time of political transition, the dervish masters presented a demanding and compelling message that could appeal across many religious boundaries, and which could contain and incorporate various traditions and practices.

The earliest dervish masters are impossible to track with accuracy, but evidently they attracted followers from among the *akhî* futuwwa groups in central Anatolia, along with Christians, and others, in the process of formation of recognizable *ṭariqah* orders.²⁸ Most agree that the dervish traditions served as

24. See J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). When Ibn Battuta visited in the 1330s, the level of organization was well developed. See Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: In the Near East, Asia and Africa, 1325-1354* translated by Samuel Lee (New York: Dover, 2004).

25. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* v. 1, p. 10.

26. See D.B. Macdonald, "Darwish," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* new edition (1965) II, pt. 1.

27. Trimingham, 103, suggests a three-stage process: itinerant masters teaching gathered groups of devotees; development of schools of rule, method, and doctrine; and the formation of saint-cults and shrines.

28. Reza Aslan, *No God but God* (New York: Random House, 2011), 199-200, neatly summarizes this important moment of

proxies, recruiters, and (sometimes) as expeditionary corps and intermediaries among non-Muslim groups.²⁹ We will focus on two of these masters and the traditions associated with them, noting in each a broad tendency or trajectory: one ever-more aligned with(in) Sunni orthodoxy and Persian and Arabic literature, while relating to non-Sunni groups; the other more aligned with folk traditions and Turkish language groups and non-Muslims, maintaining a substantial distance from Sunni orthodoxy.

The first and most famous, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī (1207-1273 c.e.), is known to the world simply as Rumi, since he lived a large portion of his life in the Sultanate of Rum. The 800th year of his birth, commemorated by UNESCO, burnished his western reputation as a bridge-building cosmopolitan from the thirteenth century. In the United States market, Rumi is among the best-selling poets, presented in English translations and paraphrases.³⁰ Western readers have responded to the rich resonance of Rumi's words, full of yearning and desire, and in his expression of confounded confessional categories as part of the deepest mysteries of identity. Western readers have not been as attentive to Jalāl al-Dīn's context and the Sunni religious frame of his worldview. Rumi was born in Balkh (now part of Afghanistan) in the opening years of the thirteenth century and was taught by his father Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (d. 1230 c.e.). After visiting Damascus and Mecca, and after years in other cities in Anatolia, Rumi and his father and family settled in Konya. Later in his life Rumi commented:

... The first Cause... has brought us from Khurasan and sent us to Asia Minor... so that we might generously spread the philosophical stone of our mysteries over the copper of the existence of its inhabitants, in such a manner that we shall transform them alchemically, and they shall become confidants of the world of gnosis and companions of the mystics of the entire world. 'It is this that he said: 'You brought me from Khurasan to the land of the Greeks that I might mingle with them and lead them to the good doctrine.'³¹

encounter of Sufi masters with the tekke lodges of the futuwwa brotherhoods.

29. For the Sunnis, these groups were anarchic, heterodox challenges to the Ulema; but from the perspective of Sunni and non-Sunni groups, compliance and conformity with the Ulema might have its own dangers.

30. See "What Goes Round... The Popularity of Rumi in US," *Arabesques* (2007) at: http://www.arabesques-editions.com/journal/american_literature/0710710.html. See the sharp and needed critique of the mistranslations by Coleman Barks at: http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/corrections_popular.html#8, with reference to the often quoted (mis)translation: "What is to be done, O Moslems? for I do not recognise myself. I am neither Christian nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem," in the text by Nicholson, which by Nicholson's own admission was not in the Persian texts he translated, became transformed by Barks as: "What is to be done, O Moslems? for I do not recognise myself. I am not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu, Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion or cultural system."

31. Shams al-Din Ahmad (Aflaki), *Les saints des derviches tourneurs*, edited and translated by C. Huart, I (Paris, 1918), 190,

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After the death of Rumi's father, Rumi taught in Konya until his own death in 1273. The life of Rumi moved in unexpected ways following his encounter with Shams-i-Tabrizī in 1244. Moved toward a much deeper experience of love and longing, Rumi's poetic career was launched. Rumi's message was rooted in his reverence for the Prophet and his attentiveness to the Qur'an. Broadening, though without falling prey to universalism, Rumi reached out to others from a place securely *within* his Sufi Sunni identity. His followers formed the Mevlevi order after his death, still stressing broadening themes, though with a growing accommodation to Sunni norms. The Mevlevi order continued popular allegiance among groups more closely affiliated with the governing Seljuk, then Ottoman regimes. A description of Rumi's funeral is marked by extensive cross-confessional affiliation:

After they had placed his body on the litter, all the great and humble uncovered their heads... and raised such a tumult that it resembled that of the great resurrection. All wept, and most of the men marched in the procession, uttering cries and tearing their clothes... The members of the different communities and nations were present, Christians, Jews, Greeks, Arabs, Turks, etc. They marched forward, each holding on high their sacred scriptures. In accord with their customs, they read verses from the Psalms, the Pentateuch, and Gospels and uttered funeral lamentations. The Muslims were not able to restrain them

quoted in S. Vryonis Jr., "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975), 64.

either by blows from clubs or from swords... There arose an immense disturbance, the news of which reached the sultan... and his minister. [Accordingly] they summoned the chiefs of the monks and priests and demanded what possible connection this event could have with them, since the sovereign of religion [Rumi] was the director and imam of the Muslims. They replied: 'In seeing him we have comprehended the true nature of Christ, of Moses, and of all the prophets... such as we have read in our books. If you Muslims say that our Master [Rumi] is the Muhammad of his period, we recognize him similarly as the Moses and Jesus of our times. Just as you are his sincere friends, we also are one thousand times over his servants and disciples. It is thus that he said: 'Seventy-two sects hear from us their own mysteries. We are as a flute which, in a single mode, is in tune with 200 religions' ... 'Our Master is the sun of truth which has shone upon mortals and accorded them favor; all the world loves the sun which lights their abodes.' Another Greek priest said: 'Our Master is much like unto bread which is indispensable to all the world. Has a hungry man ever been seen to flee from bread?'³²

Our second example appealed more directly to Turkman culture as it had developed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Haji Bektash Veli (ca. 1209 c.e.–1270/71 c.e.) is commonly traced following in a line of legendary dervish master teachers, from Arslan Baba, through Ahman al-Yasavi (1103 c.e.–ca. 1166 c.e.). Haji Bektash Veli may have been involved with the Baba Resul uprising of the 1240s, a movement of Turkman and Christian resistance to Persian cultural hegemony. By the time of the *Vilâyetnâme*, probably composed before the end of the fifteenth century, Haji Bektash Veli was more of a wonderworker than a political threat. He had a distinct but broadening appeal, subversive of standards of Sunni orthodoxy, and he was a celebrated popular figure. In recollection, it was said he rode wild animals, talked with the birds of the air, and even would appear among the birds.³³

No small accomplishments! In contrast to the recognizable Sunni Sufi universe of Rumi, the world of Haji Bektash Veli is filled with dragons, lions, and fire. He is depicted in paintings commonly (as with Saint Jerome) with once-wild beasts tamed by his charisma. He preferred mountains to mosques as prayer sites, surrounded by burning Juniper trees providing trance-inducing fumes. In the *Vilâyetnâme* Haji Bektash Veli is presented as irreverent in facing challenges, tests, and doubters whether he could resurrect a dead child (and whether he would raise the child of a poor man or the child of a rich man), resist the efforts

32. Ibid., 68-69.

33. See the discussion in Irène Mélikoff, *Sur les traces du soufisme turcs: recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie* (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1992), 47.

The code of ethics attributed to [Veli] is universalist and rigorous, while he is presented to have disregarded Islamic dietary restrictions, made use of wine, ignored the round of daily prayer, considered facing Mecca a superstition, relied and honored women in his community, and dismissed the Hajj as an unneeded formality.

of a Christian monk to convert him, or deflect the interference and undue attention of a sultan. His irreverence was iconoclastic, self-mocking, and subversive—generating an entire literature of observations of Bektashi outsider commentary in increasingly Sunni Ottoman territories. The code of ethics attributed to him is universalist and rigorous, while he is presented to have disregarded Islamic dietary restrictions, made use of wine, ignored the round of daily prayer, considered facing Mecca a superstition, relied and honored women in his community, and dismissed the Hajj as an unneeded formality. As if this were not enough, he is presented as disdainful toward literal readings of Qur'an and of venerating the twelve Imams, with special honor accorded Ali. Bektashi and Christians shared worship sites, invoked common saints, retold common miracle stories, refuted common accusations, cited Christ and the Prophet in similar terms, and associated Christ vaguely with Ali in similar redemption narratives. Complaints regarding the full participation of women in Bektashi gatherings and in devotional and mystical literature within the Bektashi tradition codified them as unacceptably, but happily, heterodox.³⁴ Bektashi retained a space in popular culture. As G.G. Arnakis writes:

The Bektashi approached the masses of the Turks more effectively than any other religious group – a fact that can be attributed to their broad human sympathy and to their simple Turkish speech – which contrasted very favorably to the erudite incomprehensible Arabic of Sunni theologians.³⁵

The Bektashi would continue to play a central role in Imperial

34. Though dismissive of its subject, R. Tschudi's article still contains much useful information, "Bektāshīyya," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition (1960), vo. 1, pt. 2.

35. G. G. Arnakis, "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire: Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 4 (October 1953), 244-245. Now see Erik S. Ohlander, "Introduction," in *Sufism in an Age of Transition: 'Umar al-Subrawardi and the Rise of the Islamic Mystical Brotherhoods* (New York: Brill, 2008).

Ottoman relations with Christianity, as the sanctioned outsiders and as guides and spiritual mentors of the elite military corps, the Janissaries, composed of Christian boys forcibly converted to Islam, but not the Islam of Sunni Orthodoxy.³⁶

A brief observation and conclusion

University of Chicago historian Fred Donner suggests that early Islam is best characterized by a dynamic and variable identity, especially in its years of greatest expansion. The variability of early Islam identity aided reception among Jewish and Christian groups and others, especially to those oppressed by political and religious masters.³⁷ Donner's observation applies to other eras, too. This same dynamic variability characterizes Islam in Anatolia in the period of this study. The dervish expansion into Anatolia presented an attractively variable religious identity during a time of social dislocation and confusion. Wandering dervishes and the communities they founded invited wandering and wounded Anatolians by offering Muslim identity and protection without requiring precise standards of Sunni orthodoxy.³⁸ In a time of great political transition, the universalizing and hybrid message of the dervishes provided an attractive gateway into Islam. Whether through the universalizing breadth of Rumi from deep within his Sunni Sufi tradition, or with the "Islam on the margins of Islam" of the Bektashi, such groups gained new adherents and ready participants.

Contemporary discussions of hybridity acknowledge the limitations of single or essentialized identity, and the reality of multiple identities distanced from precisionist orthodoxy or majority consensus.³⁹ The Islamization of Anatolia took centuries, passed through distinct periods of conservation, conversion, reconversion (especially in the nineteenth century), transformation, and out-migration (especially in the twentieth century). Comparative studies of the process of Islamization

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must be grounded in the specifics of each region, whether India, the Maghrib, Palestine, Spain, Nubia, or contemporary Europe. So also the specifics of each Anatolian region requires closer reading. The literature on Islamization is daunting, but in a time of simplistic explanations of the past relations of Christianity and Islam, it is important to cite Anatolia as exemplifying the fact that neither Islam nor Christianity is (or ever was) monolithic.⁴⁰ Even in a "clash of civilizations," some hybrid groups offer messages distinct from the precise standards and narratives of orthodox majorities. The Anatolian example of the encounter of Islam and Christianity included Muslim groups and traditions that facilitated change in affiliation and identity. Armenian, Nestorian, and Greek Christians came into transformative encounters with strict Sunni Islam, to be sure, but also with Mevlevi, Bektashi, and other Sufi and dervish traditions. The story of the Islamization of Ottoman Anatolia includes those who learned of Islam from universalizing Sufi Sunnis such as Rumi, and from overtly hybrid popular folk leaders such as Haji Bektash Veli. These intermediaries and guides, these friends of God, helped facilitate the transition from Christian Asia Minor to Muslim Anatolia.

36. See Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries* (London: Saqi Books, 2006 [1994]).

37. Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). See also Fred M. Donner, "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community," unpublished paper, presented to the Islamic Studies workshop, University of Chicago, January 30, 2007.

38. Paul Coles notes some important distinctives, "This basic division (Shia/Sunni) of allegiance was complicated by the rise and proliferation from the eighth century onwards of mystical (Sufi) orders, brotherhoods and congregations who 'walked familiarly with God' and objected to the encasement of the Moslem [sic] faith in an amour of orthodox learning and law. It was blurred still further by the emergence of heterodox religious groups which were receptive to Shi'ism." See Paul Coles, *The Ottoman Impact On Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 63. Though he must be read with caution, see the useful essay by Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History," in Martin Kramer, editor, *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 21-44. For the best current work, see Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007 [2006]).

39. See Carl Starkloff, *A Theology of the In-Between* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002). See also Homi Bhaba, *Location of Culture* 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2004).

40. See Tim Kelsey, *Dervish: the Invention of Modern Turkey* (London: Penguin, 1996), xi.