

JANISSARY AND SAMURAI:
EARLY MODERN WARRIOR CLASSES AND RELIGION

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Thesis Abstract

Erdal Küçükyağın, “Janissary and Samurai:
Early Modern Warrior Classes and Religion”

In 1826, a longheld Ottoman military institution, the Hearth of Janissaries was abolished, many of the janissaries were killed others were persecuted. Bektashi Order was also affected by this incident called “*Vaka-i Hayriyye*” because it was the official order of the Hearth.

This thesis is an attempt to clarify the content of the relationship between the Bektashi Order and the Janissary Corps. In my study, I attempt to shed a light on the mental frameworks, attitudes and motivations of the Janissaries as an early modern age warrior class. My focus is the janissary brethren, *Yol* (The Path) and the role played by Bektashism in shaping the identities of individual janissaries as *Yoldaş* (comrade) through education, promotion, training, worldview and traditions of the Hearth.

A comparison with the Japanese samurai reveals some striking similarities as well as differences between these two warrior classes in the early modern ages. An amalgam of Buddhism and Shintoism, particularly Zen and the God of War, Hachiman had played a similar role to Bektashism in shaping the identity and worldview of the Samurai.

Tez Özeti

Erdal Küçükyağın, “Yeniçeri ve Samuray:
Erken Modern Savaşçı Sınıflar ve Din”

1826 yılında uzun zamandır varlığını sürdürmekte olan bir Osmanlı askeri kurumu, Yeniçeri Ocağı ortadan kaldırılmış, çok sayıda yeniçeri öldürülmüş ve diğerleri takibata uğramıştır. Bektaşî tarikatı da Ocak’ın resmen bağlı olduğu tarikat olması nedeniyle “Vaka-i Hayriyye” ismi verilen bu olaydan etkilenmiştir.

Bu tez, Yeniçeri Ocağı ile Bektaşî tarikatı arasındaki ilişkinin içeriğini açıklığa kavuşturmaya yönelik bir denemedir. Çalışmamda, bir erken modern çağ savaşçı sınıfı olarak yeniçerilerin düşünce yapılarına, tavır ve motivasyonlarına ışık tutmaya çalışmaktayım. Çalışmamın odak noktasını yeniçeri yoldaşlığı yani “Yol” ve Ocak’ın eğitim, terfi, dünya görüşü ve gelenekleri yoluyla Bektaşîlik’in yeniçerilerin Yoldaş kimliğinin oluşmasındaki rolü oluşturuyor.

Japon samurayları ile yapmış olduğum karşılaştırma iki erken modern savaşçı sınıf arasında ayrılıklar olduğu kadar çarpıcı benzerlikler olduğunu da ortaya çıkardı. Samurayların kimlik ve dünya görüşlerinin oluşmasında da Budizm ve Shintoizm, özellikle de Zen ve Savaş Tanrısı, Hachiman inançlarından oluşan bir amalgam Bektaşîlik’e benzer bir rol oynamaktadır.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: WHY DID THE OTTOMANS CHOOSE THE BEKTASHI ORDER AS THE OFFICIAL ORDER OF THE JANISSARIES?.....	10
Babai Rebellion	11
An analysis of Babai Rebellion.....	18
An Alternative Interpretation of the Babai Rebellion.....	43
CHAPTER III: THE JANISSARIES.....	48
Foundation: Murad I	49
Janissary Corps: A Tool for Superiority over Allies.....	52
Devshirme: A Process of Turkification.....	54
<i>Ocak</i> : The Hearth of Janissary Corps.....	59
The Military Organization.....	70
Start of the Decline: Murad III.....	79
CHAPTER IV: BEKTASHI PRACTICES OF THE JANISSARIES.....	87
Hacı Bektaş: The Sage of the Hearth.....	94
Bektashi <i>Yol</i> , The Path.....	99
The Janissary and Celibacy.....	111
The Janissary Brethren.....	112
The Janissary and Reverence for Ali.....	116
The Janissary and the Holy Cauldron.....	121
Punishment: Keeping in the Path.....	123
<i>Yol</i> , as a System of Military Promotion.....	126
<i>Et Meydanı Tekkesi</i> (The Lodge at the Meat Arena).....	138
<i>Çavuşlar</i> (Sergeants) and <i>Başçavuş</i> (Head Sergeant).....	143
CHAPTER V: JANISSARY AND DEATH.....	150
<i>Seğirdim</i> , Running Towards Death.....	154
Janissary and Martyrdom.....	157
Dying before Death.....	161
CHAPTER VI: THE JANISSARY AND THE SAMURAI: A COMPARISON..	176
The Samurai.....	180
Identity of the Master.....	182
Identity of the Foe.....	186
Lineage.....	190
Stratification.....	193
The Sword.....	201
Bushido: Way of the Warrior.....	204
Warrior's Dilemma.....	209
Death.....	213

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION.....	226
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	234

LIST OF FIGURES

Areas of Ertuğrul's initial settlement.....	28
<i>Ağa Kapısı</i> (Gate of the Commander General).....	62
Areas the devshirme boys were hired out.....	65
<i>Eski Odalar/</i> Old Barracks.....	67
Units of the <i>Ocak</i> and their functions.....	71-76
Personnel composition of regiments and squadrons.....	76
Personnel of Janissary Corps (by time).....	77
Distribution of (active) personnel (1702).....	78
A Janissary flag.....	117
Procession flag of the Janissary Corps.....	120
<i>Pençe</i> (Hand) symbols on <i>Orta</i> banners.....	120
A Janissary Cook.....	130
<i>Seğirdim /</i> The Race.....	132
The Runner Cooks.....	132
A <i>Kara Kullukçu</i> squad.....	134
<i>Kara Kullukçu</i> running.....	136
A <i>Tekkeli</i> officer.....	142
<i>Başçavuş /</i> Head Sergeant.....	145
Process flow of <i>Et Meydanı Tekkesi</i>	149

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to clarify the content of the relationship between the Bektashi Order and the Janissary Corps. On 15 June, 1826 the cannon rounds fired at the gates of the Janissary headquarters by Kara Cehennem Pasha were marking the end of a longheld Ottoman institution. Chroniclers like Es'ad Efendi (Üss-i Zafer) and Şirvanlı Fatih Efendi (Gülzar-ı Fütuhât) give vivid eye-witness accounts of that and the coming days. One can not help but realize the tone of delight of the writers on the outcomes of the unfolding events. The Hearth of Janissaries were crushed by their own patron, Sultan Mahmud II, by raising the Holy Flag of Jihad which in normal circumstances would mean to declare a total war against the infidels. It seems as if the attacking forces thought they were fighting against unbelievers. With the participation of the *ulema* and the *medrese* students the event was assuming a religious character. Thousands were killed, others were persecuted. The next day, a council of ulema held a meeting with the leaders of various sects and an astonishing decision was reached; all the members of the Bektashi sect would be persecuted, their leaders would be sent to exile to the towns famous with their orthodox citizens and all the lodges of the Bektashi Order would be confiscated and transferred to the control of other sects. The event was called “*Vaka-i Hayriyye* (The Good Incident)”.

It was the end result of the accumulation of mistrust mostly due to their resentment to numerous attempts to change their organization. Starting from the

early seventeenth century with *Kitab-ı Müstetab*, followed by Koçi Bey's or Koca Sekbanbaşı's there were a number of treatises searching for way to restore the system to the then conceived Golden Age of Sultan Suleyman's reign. Even the author of the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan* (The Book of Law of the Janissaries; completed in 1606) was complaining about the way the system was disintegrating. The Ottoman Empire were was in a phase of continuous decline, retreating in almost all the fronts and a scapegoat was needed. Janissaries, with their unlawful, arrogant behaviour; their insistence on continuing their undisciplined, outdated military tradition; their quick reaction against any move (without any regard to the initiator of the move, be it any governmental authority or the Sultan himself) threatening their interests (almost like a political party in the modern sense) were the perfect candidate. Moreover, their attachment to the Bektashi Order which was considered by the orthodox ulema to have shi'ite tendencies, had placed them right in the middle of a intersectorian struggle between the heterodoxic and orthodoxic movements.

That struggle was not new and (it seems) it is not yet over. Having its roots in the thirteenth century Seljukid Anatolia (i.e. the Babai Rebellion). the clash between centripetal and the centrifugal forces continued with minor intervals. For instance, we learn from Ricaut that the Kadızadeli movement in the sixteenth century hated the Bektashis because they said Hacı Bektaş had ordered the Bektashis that they did not have to comply with the praying principles of Islam, although he testifies that the same Bektashis were among the most careful about daily worship. Once one comes to realize this incessant struggle, the tone of delight behind the testimonies of Es'ad Efendi and Şirvanlı Fatih Efendi starts making perfect sense.

Now, why is this important for the discussion in my thesis? It is important because it seems that our knowledge on the Janissaries is distorted by this struggle. Aside from the exceptional work of İ.H. Uzunçarşılı (*Kapıkulu Ocakları*) and a modest work of Ş.Koca (*Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*) and somewhat popularized narratives by G.Goodwin (*Yeniçeriler*), R.E.Koçu (*Yeniçeriler*) and D. Nicolle (*The Janissaries*) there is almost no study which helps us understand the true nature of the Hearth of Janissaries with careful scrutiny. The Alevi writers seem to be confused on the issue of Janissaries because although they sympathize with the Bektashi cause, they seem not to know what to think about the Janissaries since the memories of the sixteenth century and how the Hearth was instrumental in crushing the Celali uprisings are still vivid. That maybe why the Janissaries and their deeds are referred but not elaborated in their works. R. Çamuroğlu's book "*Yeniçerilerin Bektaşiliği ve Vaka-i Şerriye*", in spite of (or shall we say "as") what its title implies is more political than historical.

On the other hand, most history books tell about the "decay" of the Hearth and simply ignore the importance of the functions of the Janissaries when they did function (For the arguments on the "decay", see Veli Şirin's *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye Ordusu ve Seraskerlik*, pp.21-28). But then, how will a student of military history or to be precise the student of a military institution and social order, understand who the Janissaries really were? For how long will we let the Janissaries, as an integral part of the Ottoman political and military system, under the debris of our political stances. I simply want to know who they were, how they were trained, what kind of ceremonies they performed, what tactics they applied, which weapons they used, what rules they adhered to, how they were promoted.

Unfortunately, we learn from Uzunçarşılı (*Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.1, p. 432) that almost all the records kept on and kept by the Janissaries were burned right during the “Good Incident”. Their headquarters, both the Old and the New Barracks were demolished and the final remnants of the buildings were taken down in the construction boom of the sixties. The only piece of social memory in the area of Şehzadebaşı where the Old Barracks were is the “Acemoğlu Hamamı” (The Bath of the Novices) which recently was turned into a part of a hotel building. The Tomb of Osman Baba right in the entrance of the large complex was transferred to an unknown place again in the late sixties when the street was enlarged.

So what I had to do was to literally get the bits and pieces of information together and try to create a graspable full picture of the Janissaries’ military organization. My assumption was; if the system had “decayed” as claimed, there must have been a mature state from which it had “decayed”. If there existed such a state, then I could try to extract the rules, principles, processes and procedures in order to define the system. R.Murphey’s assumption that Janissaries were a horde fighting for mere looting and pillaging (though it may have been a factor of motivation like all the warriors of their time) was not convincing. If that was the case, how can we explain the logic behind the Ottoman war machine which continuously kept advancing until the late sixteenth century. On the other hand, I must acknowledge Murphey’s honesty in realizing that something is missing in order to understand the Ottoman military power. In the section on “Troop motivation and the role of ideology and religious inspiration” of his book “Ottoman Warfare 1500-1700 ” he sets forth the problematic: “*The field of investigation relating to the mental frameworks, attitudes and motivations of the voiceless masses (including soldiers) who left only fragmentary literary evidence of their most cherished inner*

feelings remains yet scarcely perceived, let alone adequately explored, new frontier of Ottoman studies.”

In my study, I attempt to shed a light on the mental frameworks, attitudes and motivations of the Janissaries as an early modern age warrior class. My focus is the janissary brethren, *Yol* (The Path) and the role played by Bektashism in shaping the identities of individual janissaries as *Yoldaş* (ones who share a path) through education, promotion, training, worldview and traditions of the Hearth. In doing that, I tried to utilize the scarce primary sources including *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan* (both the version published by A.Akgündüz and the copy of the manuscript I received from the Süleymaniye library) ; chronicles of Aşıkpaşazade, Oruç, Neşri, Enveri, Kemal, Tursun Bey, Selaniki and treatises of Katip Çelebi and İbrahim Müteferrika. Konstantin Mihailovic’s memories edited by K.Beydilli was an invaluable source. Travelogues of the western travellers like Galland, Broquiere, Ricaut, Dernschwam, Busbecq, Lady Montague were also instrumental in grasping the atmosphere in which the Janissaries lived. As for Bektashism, J.K.Birge, I.Melikoff’s writings together with the primary sources of Bektashism like “*Makalat*” or hagiographies (*Vilayetname*) of Hacı Bektaş, Abdal Musa, Otman Baba, Eb’ul Vefa and the manuscript of “*Erkanname*” (Book of Conduct) of Balım Sultan helped me to perceive the Bektashi worldview. Views of M.F. Köprülü, A.Gölpınarlı, M.Akdağ, H.İnalçık, C.Kafadar, A.Y.Ocak set the framework of the period of my study.

I started with the following questions: “What was the content of the relationship between the Hearth of Janissaries and the Hearth of Hacı Bektaş?”, “Why was the Bektashi Order adopted as the official *tarikât* of Janissaries?”, “How were the principles of the Order exercised by the soldiers? (Initiation, *gûlbang* prayers etc.)”, “What was the Order’s impact on the fighting spirit of the Janissaries

on the battleground?”, “What was the role of the Order in motivating the individual soldier to sacrifice himself for his *yoldaş* or in determining his understanding of death?”, “Was there a code of chivalry?”, “Was there a brotherhood denominator (i.e. Freemasonry, Ahilik, Futuwwa...) functioning within the Janissaries? If yes, what was its content?” In order to answer those questions I felt I had to find out the military organization of the Hearth, its recruitment and promotion systems, and the structure of its units with their functions.

Hopefully, the answers to the above questions can be found in my thesis. Bektashism constituted the backbone of the Hearth and *Yol* (The Path) shaped the inner world, the spirit of the individual Janissary. Hacı Bektaş supplied the Ottoman warrior a justification for his duty to exert violence as a part of his profession and an easy-to-understand way to transcend his natural fear of death.

As a second part of the thesis, I used the Japanese Samurai as a reference point. Though just like the Janissaries, abolished and crushed by their master in late nineteenth century, there is a wealth of information on the Samurai as a warrior class. Unlike the janissaries whose master was the Sultan himself, the samurai were employed by the Shogun (military dictators) and not the Emperor, the religio-political head of state. The janissaries main enemy was the foreign armies while the samurai was mainly occupied with domestic disturbances (the only exception being the Mongolian attacks in 1274 and 1281). The identity of the foe, is a factor that helps shape the tactics, training, combat techniques etc. and has direct influences on the incomes of the warriors in the early modern age. Winning a victory, as in the case of the samurai defenders against Mongolians, might cause problems if the enemy did not bring and wealth (especially land that can be distributed as fiefs) to share among the fighters. The attitude towards lineage was one of the basic

differences between these two warrior classes. The samurai took pride in their pedigree while the janissary saw no relation of genealogy with one's talents and merits. Social mobility was easier for the Ottomans (and in particular the janissaries) when compared with the Japanese case. On the other hand, there are striking similarities when their attitudes towards their swords, the concept of "Way of the Warrior", their ways of handling the "Warrior's Dilemma", and their spiritual endeavour to surpass death in order to meet death unflinchingly as proud warriors.

I chose the samurai for my comparison because located geographically in so remote an area, having flourished in a completely different cultural and religious environment and having no contact whatsoever with the janissaries, they seemed so totally different from the janissaries. I thought if I could find similarities in the spiritual formations and conceptions of religion of the janissaries and the samurai, then my study could be instrumental in opening the way to make such comparisons with other warrior classes (like the orders of chivalry for example) which were closer geographically, culturally and religiously and even had contact with the janissaries. A better understanding the Janissary Corps, I believe will contribute to our knowledge on the early modern warrior classes.

In order to do my comparison, I first tried to give a general view of the evolution of the Samurai that contrasts with the janissary while relevant factors were warrior class character, loyalty to a master, valuation of bravery, worldview derived from religion. Especially because of the impact of their religious beliefs on their quest to overcome the guilt of killing, which I call "The Warrior's Dilemma". It is a dilemma because every religion declares killing as sin, yet warriors are destined to commit that sin as a part of their duty. They, then are desperately in need of justification of their acts and be blessed for what they do. They also need a way to

surpass death or find a way to die as honourable soldiers embracing death unflinchingly. In Japan, this necessity seems to have approached the limits of “obsession and had created a sort of “Cult of Honour” which crystallizes in the ceremony of Seppuku and a uniquely Japanese literature of “Death Poems” (*Jisei*). Dealing with the reality of death, that is where religion; Zen and the cult of Hachiman for the Samurai and Bektashism for the Janissary which have common features that appealed to the warriors for these religious traditions also provided the education and the worldview of the warrior way of life.

In my study of the samurai, I was able to utilize secondary sources which offer a wealth of information on Japanese history and samurai culture. The works of G.Sansom, J.W. Hall, L.Hearn, W.G. Beasley, C.Totman, H.Bolitho, W.G.Aston helped me understand the historical framework of the evolution of the warrior class in Japan. C.Bloomberg’s “*The Heart of the Warrior, Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan*”; E.Ikegami’s “*The Taming of the Samurai, Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan*”; W.W.Farris’ “*Heavenly Warriors, The Evolution of Japan’s Military, 500-1300*”, K.Kasaya’s “*Bushido to Nihon Nōryokushugi*” were invaluable sources for conceiving the structure of the samurai system. Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s “*Hagakure*”; Miyamoto Musashi’s “*Go Rin no Shō*”; together with translations and valuable comments of T.Cleary in “*Code of the Samurai, A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinshu of Taira Shigesuke*” and “*Soul of the Samurai, Modern Translations of Three Classic Works of Zen & Bushido*” were primary sources that gave insight to samurai’s spiritual world. R.Tsunoda, W.T. Barry, D.Keene’s “*Sources of Japanese Tradition*” bearing the translations of important documents of Japanese history, also accompanied my study. For religious beliefs of the samurai

the works of N.Inazo, K.Nukariya and D.Suzuki were my sources. Having all these elaborate works helping me in studying the samurai and his spiritual world, I still have to acknowledge the limitations of an extensive comparison. I believe each of the samurai ceremonials (which otherwise appear to be secular) must be put under scrutiny under the light of religious doctrines and tradition they had adhered to. Only then the subtle symbolism and religious nature of those ceremonies may reveal themselves. But, this constitutes the topic of a wider and deeper study.

My work will start with problematizing the preference of Bektashism by the Ottomans as the official order for the Janissary Corps. Then I will go on to give a general picture of the Hearth (including its recruitment/promotion procedures, numbers of personnel, its military organization, its units and functions) from its establishment by Murad I to the start of its decline during the reign of Murad II. Next is a chapter on the Bektashi practices of the janissaries and the impact of the Order on traditions and institutions of the janissary brethren. Bektashism and Bektashi concept of *Yol* (The Path) was the backbone of the whole system of education, training and promotion. We will see how *Seğirdim* Race held every morning in the New Barracks had evolved into an integral part of the promotion system. In my final chapter on the janissaries I will focus on how the janissaries as Bektashi warriors conceived death and how the Bektashi ideal of “Dying before death” helped the janissaries in their spiritual endeavor to transcend death.

For a better understanding of both Ottoman as well as the world military history in the early modern age, the mental frameworks and social history of a military order, namely the Janissaries and the Bektashi Order as the basis of their system, deserve further attention and reconsideration.

CHAPTER II

WHY DID THE OTTOMANS CHOOSE THE BEKTASHI ORDER AS THE OFFICIAL ORDER OF THE JANISSARIES?

Before starting to evaluate the relationship between the Janissary Corps and the Order of Bektashi Dervishes, the most critical question “Why did the Ottomans choose the Bektashi Order as the official sect for their private guards?” should be answered. Without the answer to this question the rest of the arguments are destined to float in vagueness and will BE desparately lacking a firm basis. Why they had not chosen Mevlevism¹ for instance, or Melametism² or Haydarism³, or Hurufism⁴, or Yesevism⁵ or Nakshibendism⁶ ? Or why not Babaism⁷, for example? What makes Hacı Bektaş so special for House of Osman so that they preferred him to the others?

As a start, it is logical to assume that they had chosen the Way of Bektaş simply because they themselves were Bektashis or at least they had some sort of affinity towards Hacı Bektaş. Otherwise how could one explain the reason why the Sultan’s *has* (personal) servants had to be Bektashis? Before going any further into the religious beliefs of the Janissaries, it is necessary to establish the basis for our argument. And the lead comes with a particular popular movement of the thirteenth

¹ Mevlevism: An order based on the teachings of Mevlana Celalüddin Muhammed of Belh (d.1273). [Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki, *Türkiye’de Mezhepler ve Tarikatler*, (Istanbul, İnkılap, 1997), pp.273-277]

² Melametism: An order that exists since ninth century. Members also called Khorasanites. [Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki, *Tasavvuf*, (Istanbul, Milenyum, 2004), pp.168-171]

³ Haydarism: An order based on the teachings of Kutbüttin Kayder (d. 1221). [Gölpınarlı, *Türkiye’de Mezhepler ve Tarikatler*, p. 254]

⁴ Hurufism: A sect founded by Şihabüddin Fazlullah (d.1394). [Ibid., pp. 146- 161]

⁵ Yesevism: An order established by Hacı Ahmed Yesevi (d.1166-1167). [Ibid., pp. 198-199]

⁶ Nakshibendism: An order founded by Muhammed Bahauddin of Bukhara (d. 1389) [Ibid., pp. 215-217]

⁷ Babaism: An order which spread in Anatolia in the thirteenth century. The order was adhered to the teachings of Sheikh Ebu’l Vefa (d. 1107) and accepted Baba İlyas (d.1240?) as their second sage. [Ibid. p.64]

century central Anatolia, an event that marked a turning point in the destinies of all the parties involved: The Babai Rebellion. I believe once the mystery of this rebellion is solved, we may have a better understanding of the relationship of the House of Osman and Hacı Bektaş.

Throughout this chapter the possible reason (s) will be searched in the details of the thirteenth century and this particular incident in order to discuss the question why the Ottomans preferred to choose the Bektashi tradition as the religious order of the Janissary institution.

Babai Rebellion

In 1239, a rebellion broke out in a small town in southeastern Anatolia, Kefersud, spreading and gaining power quickly as it moved to the neighboring regions. The initial snowball to this avalanche was dropped by a dervish called Baba İshak, a typical shaman-like character who had managed to convince the many Turkoman tribesmen that he was the prophet of God, Baba Resul. Backed by continuously increasing numbers of followers, İshak headed towards Adıyaman, Maraş, Malatya, Kayseri, Sivas and Amasya. His army clashed several times with the Seljukid forces but each time he was able to defeat them and via this series of victories he got stronger and more self-confident. Finally, he was killed in Amasya and his followers, still trying to hold on, confronted a greater army of the Seljukid Sultan, brought from the Uç of Erzurum and reinforced with Frankish mercenaries, Georgians and other Seljukid Emirs, in the plain of Malya (present day Seyfe Plain in Kırşehir). The rebellion was finally brought to an end and the two and a half months of turmoil was over.

This critical uprising had *happened* just after the death of Alaeddin Keykubad and in the wake of a Mongolian attack which was going to virtually put an end to the legitimate suzerainty of the Anatolian Seljuks at the battlefield of Kösedağ in 1243. Gıyaseddin Keyhusrev II, the son of Alaeddin was able to rule for only eight years (1238-1246) and had witnessed these two great threats to his state.

In appearance, the rebellion seems to be yet another act of disobedience against a central authority caused by discontentment on the side of the nomadic Turkoman tribes and a resentment against the dirty tricks of politics staged in the capital, Konya. The Turkomans were sick and tired of being despised by the ruling elite as being savages, and were demanding the rightful and honourable status they thought they deserved in the state which was originally established by Turks themselves. The periphery had found or rather created a charismatic leader to lead them against the center, the nomads against the settlers.

This being said, the detective's file for an investigation of history could as well be closed but focusing on the incident and asking further questions promises to reveal some interesting historical information on the foundations of the Ottoman Empire and its relations with the Bektashi Order.

A closer look at the parties which were involved in the incident allows us to make a distinction between the Rebels and the Allied Seljukid Forces. This study will enable us to identify the Rebels as the Baba İshakids, some of the nomadic Turkoman tribes, and proto-Karamanids with the mysterious involvement of Nureddin, the father of Karaman (the founder of Karamanid dynasty) and their opponents the Allied Seljukid Forces; Christian battalions of Georgians and Franks, the Ahis and the Seljukid Emirs (including the proto-Ottomanids in the leadership of

Ertuğrul and the Germiyanids under the leadership of Muzafereddin). Moreover, we will identify yet another Baba, “Baba İlyas”, who in some sources is referred as the spiritual tutor of Baba İshak, and in some others as identical to Baba Ishak.

Hopefully we will come to understand the nature of his relationship with İshak. Baba İlyas, (unlike what the tradition tells us) seems not to be the real leader of the rebellion but was against it (together with his other disciples such as Hacı Bektaş and Ede Bali) from its start to its demise.

In the light of this new interpretation of the incident, I suggest that the tribe led by Ertuğrul (for convenience we will call them “Proto-Ottomanids”) must have established close relations with both Hacı Bektaş and the *Ahi* network during the Babai Rebellion (if not before). If such a connection can be established convincingly, I believe the reason of the choice of Bektashism for the janissaries will be understood.

Our analysis of the Babai Rebellion will be focused critically on the rebellion as an event in its own circumstances and its participants, and not the religious ideologies of the rallying parties. In other words, we will try to isolate logical facts on who did what within the rebellion and their relations with each other. Our aim will be to derive the possible role of Ertuğrul within the rebellion and to reach the traces of the earliest connection between the House of Osman and the Bektaşî circles. This is an attempt to understand the meaning of the incident and not to praise or condemn one or the other side.

The Sources on the Babai Rebellion

The sources that are available are rather limited in number but quite sufficient for establishing a panorama of the period. A closer inspection of these sources reveals an ongoing ideological war between the “orthodox” and “heterodox” sets of beliefs and the writers of the sources take their sides accordingly.

One of the main sources giving information about the rebellion is “*Selçukname – El Evamirü’l-Alai’iye Fi’l – Umuri’l-Ala’iye*”⁸ by İbn Bibi, which covers the years between 1192 – 1280. Although there are some inconsistencies and some confusion about certain dates within the text, İbn Bibi, as a contemporary source gives us valuable information about the rebellion and the view of the Seljukid court.

Another contemporary writer, a Jacobite bishop living in Antiochia, Gregory (Bar Hebraeus) Abu’l-Farac⁹ (1226 – 1286) enhances our understanding of the incident in his “*Mukhtasar Tarikh Al Duwal*”, the first volume of his extensive “Syriac Chronicle”. With a special emphasis on the role of Arab fighters during the rebellion, his writings reflect the Arab point of view.

Simon of St. Quentin (fl. 1247), was a Dominican diplomat sent by Pope Innocent IV (Papacy 1243 – 1254) to Mongolian leadership in Anatolia and Persia. He had accompanied a failed diplomatic mission to the camp of Baycu Noyan (fl. 1230 – 1260) and had written his memoirs after his return. His writings had managed to survive in the “*Speculum Historiale*” of Vincent of Beauvais (ca. 1190 – 1264?) although the original text was lost. He seems to have compiled contemporary

⁸ İbn Bibi, *El Evamirü’l-Ala’iyye Fi’l-Umuri’l-Alaiyye, Selçukname*, vol.I-II, (ed.) Öztürk, Mürsel, (Ankara, Kültür Bk., 1996)

⁹ Gregory (Bar Hebraeus) Abu’l-Farac, *Abu’l Farac Tarihi*, (trans.) Doğrul, Ömer, Rıza, (Ankara, TTK, 1945)

information about the rebellion and emphasizes the role of the Latins and Franks in crushing the uprising¹⁰.

An important source is “*Menakıbu’l Kudsiyye Fi Menasıbi’l-Ünsiyye*”¹¹ (1358/59). This *menakıbname* is critical for our analysis because it is a hagiography of Baba İlyas written by his great grand son, Elvan Çelebi(fl. 1359). Thus he is able to give us inside information and the view of the Babais themselves. It must be noted here that Elvan Çelebi clearly severes Baba İlyas from the narrative of the rebellion and denies any connection or whatsoever of Baba İlyas with the outbreak. He condemns Baba İshak for what happened to the innocent people (the deceived rebels).

Some additional information on Baba İshak and Hacı Bektaş can be gathered from Ahmet Eflaki’s (d.1360) book “*Menakıbu’l Arifin*”¹² completed in 1358. His views reflect the Mevlevi attitude towards the participants but interestingly, just like Aşıkpaşazade, Eflaki prefers not to mention the rebellion. His attitude towards Hacı Bektaş shows signs of an ongoing rivalry between the two orders. “Saltukname” (1480) of Ebu’l Hayr-i Rum is quite creative in adopting the story of the events in 1239-40 and integrating it to the Sarı Saltuk legend. Ebu’l Hayri Rum had collected the oral traditions on Babais with the order of Cem Sultan (1459 – 1495) and giving A key role to his protagonist, Saltuk, he places it in a Sunni – Shia dicotomy context.

Another descendant of Baba İlyas, Ottoman chronicler Derviş Ahmed (1393 – 1502), popularly known as Aşıkpaşazade¹³, has also given some hints which help

¹⁰ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, (Istanbul, Dergah Yay., 2000), pp. 228-228 referring to Simon de Saint Quentin, *Histoire des Tartares (Historia Tartarorum)*, Jean Richard (ed.), (Paris, 1965), pp.62-65

¹¹ Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu’l Kudsiyye Fi Menasıbi’l-Ünsiyye, Baba İlyas-ı Horasani ve Sülalesinin Menkabevi Tarihi*, (ed.) Erünsal, İsmail E.; Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, (Ankara, T.T.K., 1995)

¹² Ahmet Eflaki, *Ariflerin Menkabeleri*, v.I-II, (ed.) Yazıcı, Tahsin, (Istanbul, M.E.B., 2001)

¹³ Aşıkpaşazade will be abbreviated as APZ within this text when necessary.

construct a meaningful view of the incident in the thirteenth century in his “*Tevarih-i A’li Osman*” (1484)¹⁴. Unable to hide his emotions, Aşıkpaşazade adds an anti-Bektashi tone in his writings possibly because he was witnessing a rise in the popularity of Bektashism and the Order of Bektash had won a privileged position in the eyes of the Ottoman sultans. He must have been aware that the Bektashi Order had inherited the Baba İlyasid heritage, so Aşıkpaşazade’s great grand father (therefore himself as a direct descendant) should have been enjoying such prestige and not the followers of Hacı Bektaş.

Yet another early Ottoman chronicler Edirne’li Oruç Bey in his “*Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*”¹⁵ (possibly written during the early years of Bayezid II’s reign [1481 – 1512]), also mentions the Babai Rebellion. He keeps his balanced and distanced attitude which dominates the whole of his work and conveys to us what he knows about the incident in a rather compact manner. The shortness of reference does not at all reduce the importance of his writings for our argument and thanks to him we are able to identify a mysterious character who had played a key role in the rebellion.

Şikari (d. 1584) in his “*Kitab-ı Tevarih-i Karamaniyye*”¹⁶ depicts a totally different worldview and exposes the Karamanid version of Anatolian history. His approach is rather astonishing for a student of Ottoman history accustomed to Ottoman chroniclers’ narratives but gives the researcher the ability to cross-check the available information. He praises the deeds of the Karamanid dynasty and reproaches the Ottomans.

¹⁴ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları’nın Tarihi*, (ed.) Yavuz, Kemal; Saraç, Yekta, (Istanbul, K Kitaplığı, 2003); Aşıkpaşaoğlu, *Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi*, (ed.) Atsız, Nihal, (Istanbul, M.E.B. Devlet Kitapları, 1970)

¹⁵ Edirneli Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, (ed.) Atsız, Nihal, (Istanbul, Tercüman, 1972)

¹⁶ Şikari, *Karamannâme-Zamanın Kahramanı Karamanîlerin Tarihi*, (ed.) Metin Sözen, Necdet Sakaoglu, (Istanbul, ÇEKÜL, 2005)

In his “*Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*”¹⁷, Kemalpaşazade/Ibn Kemal (1468 – 1534) possibly having read Elvan Çelebi’s *menakıbnâme* like Oruç Bey, delivers his version of the story of the Babais in connection with the Karamanids. He obviously sympathizes with the Babais and while condemning Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II, he shows the Babais as victims.

Modern Scholarly Views on the Rebellion

The controversial event of the mid-thirteenth century Anatolia has attracted attention from the modern historians too. With all its mystery and its impact on the series of happenings it triggered, it inspired many researchers in their quests for understanding the reasons underlying the rise of the Ottomanids. M. Fuad Köprülü, in his “*Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar*”¹⁸ points out the importance of the Babai movement as follows:

...we have the opinion that it should not be a mistake to regard this Babai incident as an important start for the rafz and itizal movements opposing the Ehl-i Sunnet belief in Anatolia, the occurrence of a number of events after Bedrüddin Simavi continuing till our times and the formation of groups like Kızılbaş and Bektashi.

A. Yaşar Ocak also shares the same opinion and underlines the significance of the event and its importance in understanding Anatolian social and religious history.¹⁹ It is not possible to fully conceive the rise of the Ottomans without understanding the thirteenth century and the Babai incident in particular. For Ocak, the event had a decisive impact on the developments to come. Irene Melikoff refers to the rebellion and states that although short lived (two and a half months) the

¹⁷ İbn Kemal, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, ed. Turan, Şerafeddin, (Ankara, TTK, 1983)

¹⁸ Köprülü, Mehmet Fuat, *Türk edebiyatında ilk mutasavvıflar*, (Ankara, Akçağ, 2003), pp. 206-207

¹⁹ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, (İstanbul, Dergah Yay., 2000), p.33

Babai Rebellion had shaken Anatolia together with the very foundations of the Seljukid state, and the social order, leaving the empire vulnerable against the approaching Mongolian attacks.²⁰ Cemal Kafadar, on the other hand, also refers to the incident as a severe challenge to Seljukid authority just before the unforeseen external factor of invincible Mongol armies that destroyed the firm consolidation of Seljukid power in the first four decades of the thirteenth century.²¹ Reha Çamuroğlu stands by the heterodoxy against the central Seljukid authority in his “*Tarih, Heterodoksi ve Babailer*”²², calling the Babai Rebellion as the clash between “the aggressive universe of the Seljuks” and “the syncretizing universe of the Babais” although the “aggressors” in this case are generally assumed to be the Babais. Osman Turan points out to the implicit political targets of Baba İshak, underlining his manoeuvres to establish alliance with the Khawarizmians. Turan calls the revolt as a terrible religio-political movement which had shaken the order of the Seljukid Sultanate to an extent never witnessed before.²³ Claude Cahen, regards the incident to be worthwhile to analyze in as much detail as possible especially when its repercussions are taken into consideration.²⁴

An analysis of the Babai Rebellion

Baba İlyas-ı Khorasani, a Vefai²⁵ dervish like Hacı Bektaş, was one of the many followers of Ahmed Yesevi sent to Anatolia to teach Islam. He had arrived and settled in the village of Çat²⁶ in Amasya during the reign of Alaeddin Keykubad

²⁰ Melikoff, Irene, *Hacı Bektaş – Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, (Istanbul, Cumhuriyet, 2004), p.63

²¹ Kafadar, Cemal, *Between Two Worlds – The Construction of the Ottoman State*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), p.5

²² Çamuroğlu, Reha, *Tarih, Heterodoksi ve Babailer*, (Istanbul, Kapı, 2005)

²³ Turan, Osman, *Selçuklular Zamanında Türkiye*, (Istanbul, Ötüken, 2004), p.440-446

²⁴ Cahen, Claude, *Osmanlılardan Önce Anadolu*, (Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı, 2002), p.94

²⁵ An Islamic order of heterodox nature following the teachings of Tacü'l Arifin Ebu'l Vefa (1026 – 1107)

²⁶ The village of İlyas in present Amasya Turkey

I. and had started his *irşad* activities. According to Elvan Çelebi, his great grand son, he had very close relations with the Seljuk Sultan, Alaeddin Keykubad I (1220 – 1238)²⁷. Then one day in 1239 (within a year after Alaeddin was killed by poison) the rebellion labeled as the Babai Rebellion, broke out.

Strangely enough it was not initiated by Baba İlyas himself but one of his followers, Baba İshak who lived in Kefersud.²⁸ With his wonders, Baba İshak had gathered many Turcoman nomads around him and as a reaction to the mistreatment of the newly come nomads by the Seljukid rulers, especially by Sultan Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II himself, and his vizier Saadeddin Köpek. The rebellion grew rapidly. Ibn Bibi, a contemporary Seljukid court historian, in *Selçukname* refers to Baba İshak:

...He (Harici Baba İshak) was fast-handed and masterful in the arts of deceit and magic. In the beginning, he was occupied with calling the villagers who had little contact with the city dwellers, and the Turkish groups (*tevaif-i etrak*) who were deceived by any small shiny words said by an ignorant *fakih* or a so-called mufti, who knew nothing as objection in their beliefs and who never opposed anything they said. He was always weeping, his looks sad, and his body was thin. He used to talk with a faint voice...²⁹

In *Menakübü'l Arifin*, the same Baba İshak appears as the messenger of Hacı Bektaş to Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi. The episode ends with a deep admiration of the wonders of Mevlana and Hacı Bektaş is impressed and decides to submit to him and his dynasty.³⁰

²⁷ Elvan Çelebi, *Menakubu'l Kudsiyye Fi Menasibi'l-Ünsiyye, Baba İlyas-ı Horasani ve Sülalesinin Menkabevi Tarihi*, ed. Erünsal, İsmail E., Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, (Ankara, T.T.K., 1995), pp.30-31

²⁸ Small town of Doğanyol, Malatya in present Turkey

²⁹ Ibn Bibi, *El Evamirü'l-Ala'iyye Fi'l-Umuri'l-Alaiyye, Selçukname, vol.I-II*, ed. Öztürk, Mürsel, (Ankara, Kültür Bk., 1996), p.49-54

³⁰ Ahmet Eflaki, *Ariflerin Menkabeleri*, v. I, (ed.) Yazıcı, Tahsin, (Istanbul, M.E.B., 2001), pp. 597 (A typical anecdote underlining the ongoing rivalry between the two sides.)

Baba İshak was another successor of Baba İlyas together with Aynu'd Devle Dede, Sheikh Osman, Bağdın Hacı, Sheikh Balı, Sheikh Ede Bali, Emirçi Sultan, and Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli.³¹ He was sent by Baba İlyas to the region of Hısn-ı Mansur (Adıyaman) to preach his teachings. But once the rebellion had started he becomes unwilling to obey Baba İlyas' commands to stop. He even kills two messengers sent by Baba İlyas.³² As Köprülü notes, in appearance, he was leading the rebellion for the sake of Baba İlyas but in fact he was after his own ambitions.³³

Elvan Çelebi openly declares the rebellion as a mischief of İshak³⁴ and writes how his great grand father was hopelessly trying to convince him to end the riot before it gets too late.

*Kal'adan bu haber gelür şeyhden
Ben giriftar olmadum bil sen*

This message comes from the castle
Know you I am not a captive

....
*Hiç işitmedi ceng ider İshak
Halka meydanı teng ider İshak*

Never did he hear, fighting was İshak
Takes the people to dire battle that İshak

....
Hem işitmedi hak sözün İshak

Did not hear the word of righteousness
İshak

Hakda görmedi hak yüzün İshak³⁵

In God did not see the face of
righteousness İshak

In general, Elvan Çelebi thinks Baba İlyas was treated unfairly and was blamed for reasons he never deserved. For him, instead of being a rebel against the system, Baba İlyas was the victim of an intrigue if not of conspiracy, the reasons which he does not write probably simply because he had no idea. So, gradually one starts to feel a duality within all what is happening through the lines, a conflict of desires and

³¹ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, p.168-186

³² I.b.i.d., p.130

³³ Köprülü, Mehmet Fuat, *Türk edebiyatında ilk mutasavvıflar*, pp. 206-207

³⁴ "...Ol ulu fitne, fitne-i İshak", Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*, p.139

³⁵ Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*, p.52

a course of events that lead to catastrophe for many of the believers who followed Baba İshak.

After the start in Kefersud, the rebellion had expanded towards Adıyaman, Maraş regions. Soon the number of the rebels reached thousands and they attacked Malatya. They proved their ability to fight in a coordinated manner when they routed the troops of the Seljukid governor, Alişiroğlu Muzafereddin.³⁶ In a second attempt to stop them, Muzafereddin was defeated again and the Babais got even stronger and more confident. They then attacked Sivas and succeeded to take the castle and kill the Seljukid elite inside. Their new target was Amasya via Tokat. Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev had run away to his palace in Kubadabad in fear, assigning the subaşı of Amasya, Armağanşah to suppress the rebellion³⁷. Armağanşah did a very critical move and instead of facing the bulk of the enemy rightaway he chose to go directly to Amasya, catch Baba in his convent and hang him on a tower of the Amasya fort. He probably had expected his move to lull the rebels and force them to surrender. The impact of the news of the death of Baba, or Baba Resul as they used to call him, was quite the opposite. His believers were saying that Baba would never be killed by any human on earth and were fighting even fiercer. Armağanşah was also killed on the battlefield and the Sultan was forced to call the main body of his troops in Erzurum.³⁸

The rebels were waiting in the Malya plain in Kırşehir for a final and decisive battle. The Seljukid army was reinforced with Frankish mercenaries. Emir

³⁶ Muzafereddin is the founder of the Germiyanid dynasty. C. Kafadar states that the land in western Anatolia was given to the Germiyanids as a reward for their valor in suppressing the Babai rebellion.; “... Tensions between Osman’s tribe and the House of Germiyan must also be due to the fact that the latter served the Seljuks in the suppression of the 1239-41 revolt led by the Babai dervishes...”, Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, p.124. It is also worthwhile to mention here that Baba İlyas had a caliph called Alişir. If they are the same person then it becomes easier to conceive the efforts of Muzafereddin in Malatya.

³⁷ Interestingly enough Armağanşah is shown as one of the major disciples of Baba İlyas by Elvan Çelebi in *Menakıbu’l Kudsiyye*, p. 33

Necmeddin Behramşah Candar, Zahirreddin Şir, son of Gürcü and Fardahla, the commander of the Franks were present. They were backed by reinforcements of many other eminent emirs.

The fight in the plain of Malya was indeed decisive and final because the rebellion was crushed at last. The emirs on the Seljuk side had a moment of hesitation when the battle started and the Frankish mercenaries on the frontline were the first to attack. The others entered the fight only after they witnessed that the Babais were humans after all. It was a total defeat. Almost all the followers of Baba İshak were killed.

The Sultan was very happy to hear that everything was over, he sent many *hil'ats* and precious presents to the participant emirs. Ibn Bibi tells what happened next:

...(The Sultan) ordered them (the emirs) to let their troops go back home and to come by themselves to receive their *hat* (written authorization) and wonderful presents....repeat the tradition of kissing the emperor's door (a symbolic sign of obedience)....They found happiness by kissing his holy hand. They received *hil'ats*, goods, lands and presents without limits.³⁹

Now, the question is, where can Ertuğrul be while all this was happening? On which side can he possibly be, regarding him being an emir of the Seljuks?

The Proto-Ottomanids

Can the House of Osman be somehow related to the Order of Bektaş starting with his father? If it does, what might the connection be? Can Ertuğrul be the connection? Once this connection is revealed, it is expected to become easier to understand the choice of Murad I amongst many other alternatives of religious sects.

³⁹ I.b.i.d., p.53

Even though he is an early Ottoman chronicler, Aşıkpaşazade denies such a connection by ruling out any kind of relation or whatsoever between Hacı Bektaş and any of the Ottoman sultans.⁴⁰ He does not mention Bektaş's name in his list of saints who had lived during the reigns of each Ottoman sultan. Then he asks a question to himself about Bektaş hence treats him separately. Obviously APZ was trying to isolate Bektaş from the others and undermine the Order which was rapidly gaining grounds against its rivals in the period APZ wrote his chronicle. He relates Hacı Bektaş to the *Bacıyan-ı Rum* (and not *Ahiyan* or *Gaziyan* or to *Abdalan-ı Rum*) via Hatun Ana, turns the legend about the *ak börk*⁴¹ of the janissaries upside down and tells that a follower of Hatun Ana (thus Bektaş), Abdal Musa, had received a (old and used) *börk* from the janissaries. He calls the Bektashis liars and with a tone of despicion he adds that the many Bektashis were drug addicts, wore ear rings and walked nude. He says they had many evil habits and that the people do not understand if they (Bektashis) are holy or evil.⁴²

He claims that Ertuğrul had come into Rum together with Baba İlyas (APZ's great great grand father)⁴³ but strangely does not mention the rebellion even once. He remains silent about the deeds of Ertuğrul saying no fights or quarrels occurred during his time. Surely he must have known about the rebellion that shook Bilad-ı Rum to its foundations in the thirteenth century, but he does not mention it. Can it be that he was hiding (choosing no to mention) the event simply because he thought it was not beneficial for him to do so? Can it be that he wanted to evade any explanations that might have promoting connotations for the followers of Bektaş,

⁴⁰ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, pp.298-99

⁴¹ Börk: Tall rectangularly shaped headgear made of white felt.

⁴² APZ, pp.571-572

⁴³ Aşıkpaşazade starts his chronicle by introducing himself. Following is the very first paragraph of his chronicle: "... *I, fakir, am Dervish Ahmed Aşiki, the son of Sheikh Yahya. And Sheikh Yahya is the son of Sheikh Selman who is the son of the grand sultan Aşık Paşa. And Aşık Paşa is the son of Muhlis Paşa, the illuminator of horizons who is the son of Baba İlyas, the successor of Seyid Ebul Vefa, the leader of his times.*"

after all he and his ancestors should have been enjoying the prestigious position among the countless sects and not the Order of Bektaş? Possibly yes, because one can feel the intensity of his disappointment in the lines following his views on Bektashism.

*Ömrün bin yıl olsa da aldanma sakın
Bu cihan fitne dolu felek de gaddar*

Don't be fooled if you live a thousand years
This world is full with mischief, fortune is relentless

....
*Ecel yeli çok şefkatlidir
Hayallerini kırıp ümit bırakmaz*

The wind of death so dear
Tears down your dreams, leaves no hope

*Ne zor bir dönemde bulunuyorsun Aşiki
Geçer sonbahar asker gaziyi basar⁴⁴*

In what a difficult time you are, you Aşiki
Soldiers raid gazis as the autumn passes by

But can that be the truth we are looking for? Or is there something more profound within the leadership of Ertuğrul to proto-Ottomanids?

Ertuğrul: A Seljukid Emir?

Historians working on the foundations of the House of Osman have generally treated Ertuğrul (1198-1281) as merely the father of Osman and Osman has almost always been the focus of attention. On one hand, it may be regarded as inevitable when the bits of information available on Ertuğrul is considered. But on the other, it is also inevitable to imagine that the acts and deeds of Ertuğrul throughout the thirteenth century must have had a decisive effect on the destiny of the Ottoman dynasty. He was more than the father of Osman. He was a (though minor during his lifetime) tribesleader who was in search for a place to settle, and as any tribesleader once settled he had to find creative ways to keep what he had, protect his clan and expand his territories whenever possible. As we shall see below, he had managed to

⁴⁴ I.b.i.d., p.299

find his way out through one of the most dangerous periods in history in one of the most dangerous regions of the world. In order to be able to do that, he had to establish a firm relationship (a tradition which he would leave to his descendants) with the only legitimate authority present, the Seljukid capital. For the sake of our argument, we will treat Ertuğrul with a separate identity and ask what if we assume him to have been a Seljukid Emir or an *Uç Beyi* (Frontier Lord)

The legendary founder of the Ottoman dynasty, father of Osman, had arrived into the land of Rum at around 1223 with his father, the so-called “Süleyman Shah”.⁴⁵ He was leading his nomadic tribe westwards away from the irresistible pressure of the Mongol armies. His voyage had its start in Horasan region⁴⁶ and had come to a seven year halt at a relatively safe area in *Bilad-ı Rum*, Erzincan and Ahlat. Then, probably still hearing the news of the yet growing threat from the east he decided to move down to Aleppo. He reportedly died in an accident and was drowned in the waters of Euphrates River leaving back four sons⁴⁷ Sungurtekin, Gündoğdu, Dündar and Ertuğrul. The sons were at a crossroads. They had to make a decision and to choose where to lead their tribe. Obviously there was a dispute about both the leadership and the place to go, the tribe split into two and Ertuğrul stayed in Rum with his brother Dündar while the first two preferred to turn back to their homeland, Horasan, a rather peculiar move regarding the reasons why they had left in the first place.

⁴⁵ Hammer, Joseph von, *Osmanlı Tarihi-I*, (Istanbul, M.E.B., 2005)

⁴⁶ Oruç declares the town of their origin to be “Mahan” which happens to be in the Kirman Province of Persia under the reign of Kirman Seljukids. They possibly had migrated to Mahan with the bulk of Oğuz tribes under the leadership of Melik Dinar (d. 1195) who had lost control over his territories (Merv and Serahs cities) and was forced to migrate by Sultanshah (d. 1193) of Khawarizm Kingdom.; Merçil, Erdoğan, *Kirman Selçukluları*, (Ankara, TTK, 1989), p. 114

⁴⁷ Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma – Neşri Tarihi*, v.1, (Ankara, TTK Yay., 1987), p.61. Oruç Bey and Aşıkpaşazade refer to only three sons excluding Dündar.

On the other hand, it is logical to assume that the brothers had in fact made their minds up to return since we see Ertuğrul staying in the vicinities of Sürmeli and Pasin plains (close to Erzurum) which happened to be an area east in the direction to Horasan . The dispute then, might as well have occurred in around *Arz-ı Rum* (Erzurum), the Gate of Anatolia and Ertuğrul might have chosen to stay back. In any case, whether the legendary Kayı or not, the father of Osman and his followers had entered into a new phase in their search for a place to settle.

The hesitation seems to have come to an end rather ambiguously for after several years or a decade of rest in Pasin, Ertuğrul decides to move west again. A move that was going to change the destiny of the House of Osman for ever. Then there comes the awkward story of Ertuğrul coming across a fight between some Tatars and Seljukid Sultan Alaeddin I and taking the side of the weaker party in a heroic manner, he helps Alaeddin to win the battle.⁴⁸

He gets his reward and receives Söğüt, Domaniç and the Armenian Mountains. Strangely enough, both APZ (end of 15th C.) and Oruç (end of 15th C.) remain silent on such an incident. Their version of the story, (almost identical) omitting the clash between the Tatars and the Sultan tell us that Ertuğrul was granted the land simply by sending Sarunatı, a brother of Osman and wishing a place to reside:

...one day (Ertugrul) sent his son, Sarunatı to Sultan Alaeddin to demand land to settle. Sultan Alaeddin accepted (this wish) and he was happy to welcome them.⁴⁹

...and he (Ertuğrul) sent his son Saru Yatı to Sultan Alaeddin and said: “Show us a land. Let us go and fight for the sake of Islam (gaza).” He brought the message of his father to Sultan Alaeddin. Sultan got so happy that they came.⁵⁰

Whether the clash did really take place or not is only of secondary importance.

What is significant for a student of Ottoman history here is the attitude of the late

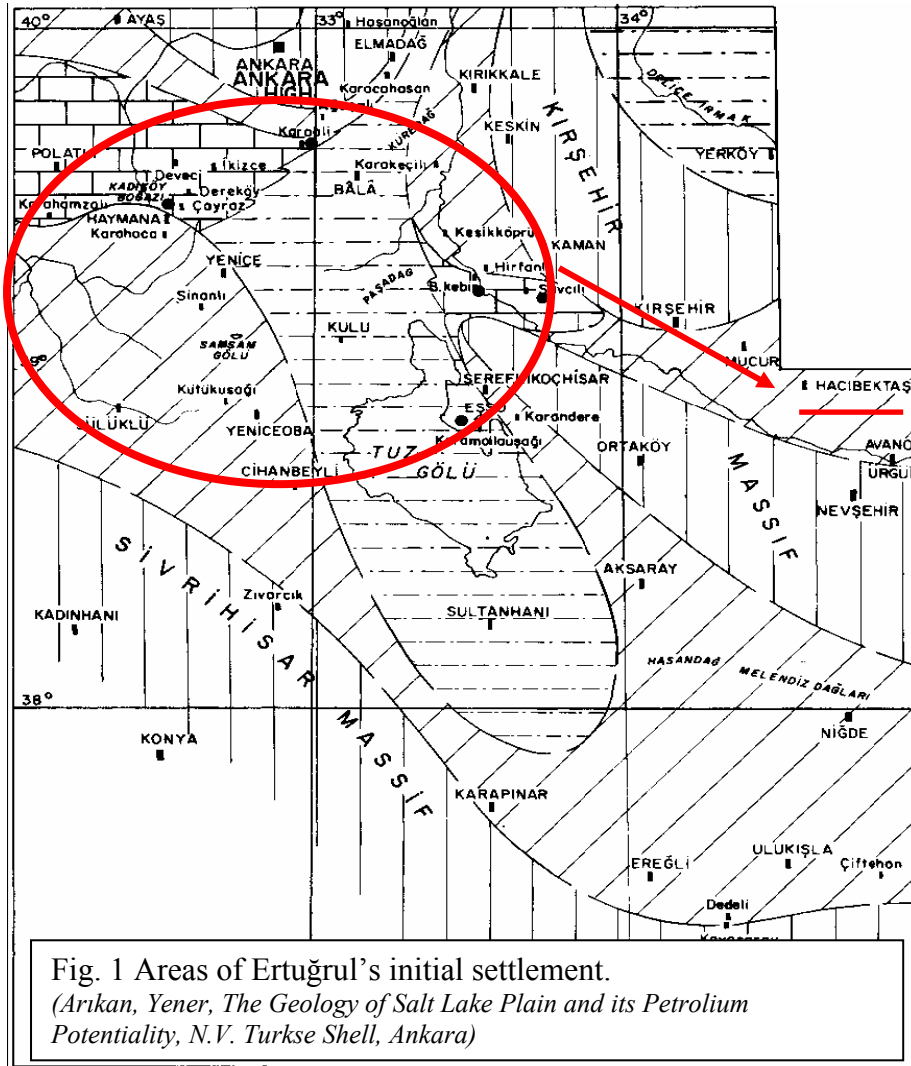
⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 63

⁴⁹ Edirneli Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, (Istanbul, Tercüman, 1972), p.22

⁵⁰ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, (Istanbul, K Kitaplığı, 2003), p.323

15th century Ottoman chroniclers towards the Seljukid- Pre-Ottoman relations. The Chroniclers do not seem to feel any hesitations in establishing a hierarchical relationship between the two and even giving the upper hand to Alaeddin. One way or another Ertuğrul was granted the land he was yearning for, had become a sort of an *Uç Beyi* (Frontier Lord) for the Seljuks. He started living around Ankara and his lands were expanding towards the town of Söğütçük, and Domaniç and Armenian mountains. We learn from Oruç, too, that their initial settlement was between the mountains Karacadağ and Paşadağ in the region of Ankara.

The closeness of the areas where Ertuğrul had settled to the theatre of Malya plain and to Hacı Bektaş needs no further interpretation. They were so close to the region and to Konya that this proximity leaves us room to assume that like the other emirs whose lands were given by the Sultan, Ertuğrul could also be involved in the rebellion on the Seljukid side especially regarding the consistent respectful attitude of Ottoman chroniclers towards the Seljukid Sultans.



This respectful attitude towards the Seljukid capital is important because it reflects the general approach of the Ottoman history writing tradition. An approach which manages to survive throughout the centuries to come. Although simple, this fact is going to prove out to be handy for our forthcoming analysis on the reasons of Ottoman preference of Bektashi Order as the official sect of the Janissaries.

The reaction of Osman to the arrival of *alem* and *tabl* from the Seljukid sultan (possibly sometime around 1298) gives us the clue for the nature of the relationship between the Ottoman dynasty and the Seljukids right from the very beginning. Aşıkpaşazade tells us about the incident and then tries to give his version of why the

Ottoman sultans had the habit of standing up whenever *nevbet*⁵¹, the ceremonial drums in honor of the Seljukid Sultan was hit⁵². Osman sends many presents to Alaeddin with his niece Aktemur. Alaeddin is happy and gives Aktemur a sancak⁵³ and many other presents. Osman becomes a *Sancak Beyi*. When Osman sees the arrival of the sancak from Alaeddin he stands up. This marks the start of an Ottoman tradition of standing up whenever the drums are beaten late in the afternoon. APZ tries to explain the reason for such a gesture by giving his two theories: a) Beating of drums means the call for gaza and now that the Ottomans are gazis they stand up, b) Ottomans are possessors of *çerağ*, *sofra*, *alem* and *simat*⁵⁴ and as a sign of their generosity as table-holders, when the drums are beaten to call the poor for food, they stand up.

APZ's comment falls short in explaining the phenomenon. He explicitly tries to attribute the gesture to their (Ottoman sultans') own reasons but it is inevitable to assume that Osman must have stood up in order to express his respect to the sancak and his gratitude to the Seljukid Sultan Alaeddin. The respect for the Seljuk Sultans had obviously found its way through the centuries and reached Mehmed II, only to be abolished by him. The significance of the gesture comes from the fact that (whether it was done consciously or not) the Ottoman sultans kept the memory of their ancestors' respect for the Seljukid capital.

⁵¹ Playing of a band of drums in order to remind the listeners of sth. important, a gaza, or as in this case the existence of the Seljukid sultan.

⁵² Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, pp.62-63

⁵³ Standart; the symbol for legitimate governorship of a particular piece of land

⁵⁴ Candle, table, standart and feast: symbols of sultanly power

Although the sultans had left the habit of standing up since Mehmed II⁵⁵, Koçi Bey's testimony shows us that the tradition of *nevbet* in the late afternoon was surviving in 1631, the year in which he had submitted his *risale* (article) to Sultan İbrahim⁵⁶

Thus we can assume that Ertuğrul had good relations with the capital Konya and possibly he was one of the frontier lords (an Emir?) of the Seljukid State and he probably used to participate in the expeditions of the Seljukid Sultan together with his tribesfolk. At least that's what Mustafa Nuri Pasha, a late nineteenth century Ottoman historian proposes.⁵⁷ If that was the case, then the answer to the question of Ertuğrul's involvement could be revealed: He must have been there. He must, (in all the probability) have been standing on the side of the Seljuks (as a minor emir though, for his name was not mentioned in Seljukid records) and fight against the Babais. Actually a rather interesting support for this view comes from another late Ottoman historian, Şakir Paşa:

... With the claim of prophethip and a duty of correcting the world, a tramp called Baba İlyas Horasani had appeared in around Amasya. And because he and his followers, the Babais had brought blood and fire to the area they stayed, Gıyasü'ddin secretly appointed Ertuğrul to expell and discipline them. Ertuğrul had then raided, busted and destroyed them in Çat, near Amasya...⁵⁸

Köprülü discredits the above information given by Şakir Pasha both because Pasha does not refer to any evidence and also because no other primary source mentions any relation between this incident and Ertuğrul's part in it. Köprülü seems utterly right in his statement at first sight, but one must not refrain to reconsider the

⁵⁵ "... Sultan Mehmed'den sonra nevbete ayağın turmak kesildi. Zira, Sultan Mehmed bir bölük müside turmak ne lazımdur deyu ayağın durmayub feragat itdi. Amma necbet-i şahi kesilmedi. Ol kanun üzere kaldı.", Neşri, pp.107-109

⁵⁶ Koçi Bey, *Koçi Bey Risalesi*, (Istanbul, Vakıf yay., 1939), p.93

⁵⁷ Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netayic ül Vukuat*, (ed.) Çağatay, Neşet, (Ankara, T.T.K., 1992), p.4 (...*Ertuğrul Gazi, Söğüt ovasında oturmakta iken Uc yani sınır beylerinden olup Selçuklu Devleti Emirlerinden sayılması, bölgesinin Bizans sınırında olması dolayısıyla Selçuklu Sultanları sefere çıktıkça ağaları ve yardımcıları ile birlikte onlara katılırdı...*)

⁵⁸ Köprülü, op.cit., p. 206, quoting Şakir Paşa, see footnotes

issue within its context. Even if we do not accept the possibility that Şakir Paşa had a source that is unknown to us, the contemporary historians, can we really ignore the possibility that he had come to that rather striking conclusion with the very same sources we use, today. Furthermore, one has to take into account that at the time of the rebellion, Ertuğrul was a young clan leader who had arrived into Rum about a decade ago and was not yet worth mentioning in written histories.

The next question is: “Does Hacı Bektaş have anything to do with all this?”

Could Hacı Bektaş Be Involved in the Rebellion?

The general assumption that Hacı Bektaş had remained out of the rebellion is not convincing. Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, just like Baba İlyas-ı Horasani had migrated from Khurassan region at approximately the same time period. Even if there is no evidence that they come together, it is well-known that they had some sort of close relationship. Hacı Bektaş is shown as one of the main caliphs of Baba İlyas by Elvan Çelebi within his *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*. But strangely enough in contrast with the information on their close relationship, we are expected to believe Hacı Bektaş does not participate in the rebellion and prefers to stay in his lodge in Suluca Karahöyük.⁵⁹ This decision is a phenomenon because it is known from various sources that he had come to Rum with his brother Menteş and Menteş was reportedly killed in the course of the clashes in Sivas during the rebellion. About this incident Aşıkpaşazade notes:

...Hacı Bektaş had come from Horasan. He had a brother called Menteş. Together they left (Horasan) and came. They came directly to Sivas and from there to Baba İlyas. They arrived at Kırşehir and from there they came to

⁵⁹ The town of Hacı Bektaş in present Turkey.

Kayseri. His brother Menteş went to Sivas back from Kayseri. His death was destined to come there, he was martyred by them.⁶⁰

The word Aşıkpaşazade chooses for Menteş's death is rather interesting. He says Menteş was martyred (şehit) but he does not mention by whom. The general assumption is that he was a rebel himself and must have been killed by the Seljukid forces but was that so? Aşıkpaşazade's narrative does not supply any basis for that claim. On the contrary, once the fact that Baba İlyas was totally against the deeds of Baba İshak (as discussed above) is understood, it becomes equally possible to assume that Menteş might as well be martyred by the Babai rebels. At least, this is an alternative interpretation of the same documents available.

Moreover, Suluca Karahöyük is located at the end of the Malya Plain⁶¹ where the final battle took place. It was fought at a location called "Kendek", close by the present town of Hacı Bektaş. Elvan Çelebi gives the name of the spot and relates it to Hacı Bektaş:

...
Şol ki Kendek'de ceng-i sultani

...
Server-i leşkeran ol şehbaz

Hacı Bektaş diyü gelir avaz
Kendek'e çık seni selamet bil
*Bereket Hacı'yı ziyaret kıl*⁶²

That's the way how
The sultanly battle was in Kendek
That chief of men-at-arms, that
hero
Comes the cry Hacı Bektaş oh!
Go up Kendek and safe you are
Pay a visit to Haji, the plenty

The historians studying the era leave this point untouched. Could he possibly have stayed away from all this turmoil especially when we remember that he was one of the main caliphes of Baba İlyas, his brother was killed in one of the clashes and the battle was occurring very close to him?

⁶⁰ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, p.298

⁶¹ The plain of Seyfe in present Kırşehir. Note that "seyfe" means "sword".

⁶² Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*, pp.169-70

A closer look at the information given by Elvan Çelebi gives some striking clues that may enhance our understanding of the foundations of the House of Osman. A familiar name appears from among the lines of his epic poetry.

*Hacı Bektaş şol sebebden hiç
Göze almadı tac-ı sultanı* That's why Hacı Bektaş never
Yearned for the sultan's crown

*Ede Bali vü bundağı huddam
Gördiler Hacıdan bu seyranı*⁶³ The servants there and Ede Bali
Saw this attitude of Haji

Thus the information we can extract from the lines of Elvan Çelebi is that Hacı Bektaş was the chief of the men-at-arms and that he had not yearned for the sultan's crown.⁶⁴ As we can see, there is no indication that he was not involved in the incident and he is depicted as a commander of troops.

Elvan Çelebi leaves us with yet another important character of early Ottoman history: Ede Bali. He also seems to be involved in the Babai Rebellion.

Could Ede Bali Be Involved in the Rebellion?

Ede Bali is the key person for the establishment of the Ottoman dynasty. He is the legendary figure who was the first to realize the potential power in Ertuğrul and Osman likewise. He comments on the dream of Osman (Ertuğrul in Oruç Bey) and promises a bright future for the generations to come. He supports his trust in Osman by marrying his daughter Malhatun with Osman. He is known to be a well-to-do person with considerable wealth but a dervish at the same time. Quite an unusual combination but obviously he was respected both for his worldly and his spiritual powers. His brother Hasan was an Ahi which is one of the reasons for some

⁶³ Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*, p.169

⁶⁴ Öz also shares this view that Hacı Bektaş was not after Sultan's throne; Öz, Baki, *Bektaşilik Nedir?*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 1997),p. 58

historians to regard him an Ahi also. He is thought to be the connection of the Ottomans with the Ahi organization. Whether he was or not matters only secondarily within this context, what matters is that; he was a rich man during the time of Alaeddin Keykubad I (reignavit. 1220 -1237) and the time of Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II (reignavit. 1237 – 1246), thus the times of Ertuğrul and Osman. As a start, we can pretty safely say that as a Seljukid subject he must have had good relations with Konya in order to be able to accumulate wealth. Thus, even if he was not an Ahi himself he (in order to be able to keep his wealth) had to have close relations with the Ahi organization and the tradesmen and artisans who were the members of the organization.

To marry the daughter of Ede Bali was a very strategic move for Osman. Via this marriage he was able to attain Ede Bali's support and with it the immense support of the Ahis, thus the artisans in Anatolia, and the dervish followers of Sheikh in addition to the people who had possibly gathered around him for his wealth. Aşıkpaşazade describes Edebali:

...(in his dream, Osman) he saw a dear sheikh who was among them. Many of his wonders were witnessed and the people were bound to him deep in their hearts. He was a dervish but it (this fact) was hidden in him. His worldly wealth, his properties, his sheep were many. He was the bearer of *çerağ* (candle) and *alem* (standard) of dervishes. Never was he lacking visitors, never was his house empty of passers by. Osman Gazi also were visiting this grand man every now and then. Osman Gazi saw a moon rising out of this grand man's chest and entering into his...⁶⁵

Ede Bali interprets the motif of "moon" as the symbol of sultanly power and interestingly, it emerges out of Ede Bali. It may not be reflecting what really happened that night (after Osman took refuge in a house in his *yayla*) but the dream episode gives the feeling that Ede Bali was the source of legitimacy for Osman's

⁶⁵ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, p.57

ambitions. Now we may assume that the same Ede Bali was around Hacı Bektaş during the Babai Rebellion.

Oruç says Sheikh Ede Bali was a prestigious man living in Konya.⁶⁶ C. Hakkı Tarım thinks he was born in Kırşehir basing his argument on the “Amasya Tarihi” of Hüseyin Hüsameddin Efendi.⁶⁷ He claims that Ede Bali was born in a small village, İnaç in Kırşehir and notes that the city was a part of the region Karaman Minor during his time. He also believes that Ede Bali was raised as a *Fakih*, a learned scholar of Islam, a view which is categorically rejected by A.Y. Ocak.⁶⁸ Ocak argues that Ede Bali should be regarded as a dervish type heterodoxic sheikh rather than a member of the *ulema* educated in a proper medrese. Aşıkpaşazade also mentions Ede Bali as a dervish in his list of *ulema* and *suleha* and not as a man of Islamic scholarship.⁶⁹ In Oruç, Ede Bali is shown as living in Konya when Ertuğrul rushes to have him interpret his dream (the very same dream episode generally attributed to Osman). He was an eminent sheikh with many wonders and was respected by Sultan Alaeddin.

... There was a prestigious man in Konya who interpreted dreams. They called him Sheikh Ede Bali. He had perfection. He knew the science of dreams very well. He was a man whose miracles were witnessed. He was rich. He was famous in those lands. Even Sultan Alaeddin had believed in him.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, this information can not be confirmed by Seljukid sources.

Obviously, the importance given to Ede Bali by the Ottoman sources was not shared by the Seljukid history writers and his name was not mentioned in any of the known sources⁷¹. But this is only a minor fact which does not change the main line of the

⁶⁶ Edirneli Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p.24

⁶⁷ Tarım, Cevat Hakkı, *Tarihte Kırşehir-Gülşehir ve Babailer, Ahiler, Bektaşiler*, (Istanbul, Yeniçağ, 1948), p.88

⁶⁸ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, p.171

⁶⁹ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, p.296

⁷⁰ Edirneli Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p.24-25

⁷¹ Unless he had a different name that is presently unknown. Changing names was not an uncommon practice as we shall see in the case of Nureddin later in this chapter.

discussion on his importance for the Ottomans. Ede Bali gives us the connection to Hacı Bektaş thanks to Elvan Çelebi.

Could Ahi Be Involved in the Rebellion?

Another strategical move for the proto-Ottomanids (and the early Ottomanids) was to establish strong relations with the Ahi. This organization of local artisans existed in almost all towns and cities, big or small, and had been operating a chain of *tekkes* or *zaviyes* throughout Anatolia. It was a business-based organization in principle, but via their “*Seyfe*”(sword) branch, they could act as police force or an army whenever they deemed necessary, which made them the largest political network in the Seljukid Sultanate of Rum.⁷²

It is widely accepted that the Ottomanids had received the help of the Ahi organization via Ede Bali. The support of the Ahi was so critical in the early stages that Murad I himself had become an Ahi Sheikh. It is important to remember that he is the same sultan who received the castle of Ankara from the Ahi of the city without any fight in 1361⁷³ and also he is the one who built the first monumental building in the tekke complex of Hacı Bektaş. The inscription on the gate of the Meydan Evi clearly states the connection leaving no room for doubts: “*Melik-i Meşayih sülale-til Evliya Ahi Murad (H.769)*”⁷⁴ that is “Murad the Ahi, the king of sheikhs, descendant of saints (M. 1367-68)”.

⁷² Ahi Organization will be discussed later in detail, as a factor of influence on the Janissary brotherhood

⁷³ “*Dirler ki ol vakit kal'a-i Engürüyye Ahiler elinde idi. Sultan Murad Gazi yakın gelicek, Ahiler istikbal idüb, kal'ayı teslim itdiler. Çünkü Sultan Murad Gazi şehre girdi, üzerine akçalar nisar itdiler...*”, Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihan-nüma*, v.1, pp.191-193

⁷⁴ Tarım, Cevat Hakkı, *Tarihte Kırşehir-Gülşehir*, p.12

As a matter of fact, he is the very same sultan who established the Janissary corps. That's why it becomes even more important to reveal any involvement of Ahis in this rebellion.

Although they are not mentioned in the *Menakıb*, the Ahis surely must have participated in the incident for a number of reasons. First of all, they constituted a highly organized society of local artisans and tradesmen who at times of a political vacuum could act in a semi-autonomous manner. The *Seyfi* (swordsmen) branch of the Ahis functioned as an armed police force or as an army when needed. Secondly, as small shopowners they were basically city dwellers or an integrated part of urban life, that is to say they are expected to try to keep stability even in the absence of a central authority. Thirdly, their leader at the time of the rebellion was Ahi Evran and he was residing in Kırşehir, the city in the vicinities of which the final battle was fought. Fourthly, Ahi Evran had very close relations with Hacı Bektaş. *Vilayetname-i Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli* points to their friendship: “ Hacı Bektaş and Ahi Evran were very fond of each other. Ahi Evran one day during a chat they had, said that whoever accepts us as his sheikh, Hacı Bektaş is his sheikh (too).”⁷⁵

Taking the reasons mentioned above into consideration, it is logical to assume that they had joined the Seljukid forces against the Babais during the fight, that is on the side of a political alliance where Ertuğrul, Hacı Bektaş and Ede Bali must have been standing.

Then who was standing with Baba İshak except the hordes of nomads and villagers who believed he really was a prophet? After all, the rebellion obviously was planned beforehand and had started on a previously fixed date in a coordinated manner. The date or the password is exposed by Elvan Çelebi.

⁷⁵ Hacı Bektaş Veli, *Vilayetname*, (Istanbul, Karacaahmet Sultan Dergahı Yay., 2001), p.86

<i>Çünkü tarih-i Ahmed-i Muhtar Hilz⁷⁶ oldı görün ne fitne kopar</i>	When the date in the Hicri calendar Hilz had come, see what a mischief breaks out
<i>Çeharşenbe muharremin onı Hükm-i Allah resm-i gerduni</i>	The month of Muharrem, the day Wednesday Judgement of God, the way of the world
<i>Bu müridler günine irdi ğamam Uşbu tarih çünkim oldı tamam⁷⁷</i>	Into these followers day entered the clouds Once that date reached and completed

Ocak evaluates this password (خلظ) and concludes that with the addition of an unreadable ٰ (elif) to the front, the date according to the *ebced* calculation, becomes 12 August, 1239, Wednesday.⁷⁸ Moreover, the rebels were not led directly towards the Seljukid capital but were following a zig-zag route heading up north (Maraş – Kayseri – Sivas – Tokat – Amasya – Kırşehir), the lands where they evidently could expect assistance and acceleratngly increasing participation.

Obviously, Baba İshak was not merely a fast-handed illusionist, he was acting as a commander with military logic and according to a pro-active action plan. That means whether Baba İshak was not the person everybody thinks or he was getting political, financial and most of all military assistance from some allies who were willing to offer it in return for their own purposes. Who could they be?

Could the Proto-Karamanids Be Involved in the Rebellion?

Before moving into the Larende, Ermenak region to the south of Konya, the proto-Karamanids were residing in Sivas, a city standing right on the route of the

⁷⁶ This keyword “Hilz” does not seem to have a proper meaning in dictionaries. The closest words are “Halt” (حلط) meaning “mixing, saying bad words”, and “Hilt” which is written the same way (حلط) meaning “each one of the elements – waste, love, blood, saliva – in the human body, according to ancient medicine. (Develioğlu)

⁷⁷ Elvan Çelebi, *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye*, p.28

⁷⁸ I.b.i.d., p. XLVIII

Babais. In fact, Şikari, the Karamanid historian tells us that Nureddin, (the father of Karaman – the founder of the Karamanid dynasty) had moved back to Sivas after becoming a follower of Baba İlyas.⁷⁹ It seems that the Babais did not have big difficulties in capturing the Sivas Fort. Ibn Bibi tells that the citizens made an attempt to resist the aggressors but they could not hold on and so was the city taken by an advance unit of Babais who were fighting without any fear of death. The treasures of the eminent people were looted and the *iğdişbaşı* (the commander of the city guards' garrison), Hürremşah was killed.⁸⁰ Considering the assault weapons needed for a siege of a city the size of Sivas, the quickness of the conquest, and the cavalry nature of Turkoman tribal warfare (fast but lacking in infantry maneuvering capability which is absolutely necessary for siege warfare), there are all the reasons for us to assume they had received considerable assistance from inside. Or it was already theirs and Ibn Bibi prefers not to mention it and Şikari completes the story.

The role of the Karamanids in the Babai Rebellion is “the” mystery that needs to be focused on since without them it is not possible to get a full picture of the thirteenth century Anatolia. Asking the following question promises to give some still interesting clues in our attempt to shed light on the foundations of the Ottoman state to be: Did the Karamanids have anything to do with the rebellion?

The tone of criticism and the almost despising attitude towards Osman's deeds by Şikari in his “The History of the Karamanids” is rather unusual for a student of Ottoman history. This controversial approach gives an alternative vision of the rising Ottoman dynasty from the point of view of its rivals.

⁷⁹ “...Andan sonra Ermenâk'e gelüb mesken edindiler ve oğlu Karaman'ı yerine beg edüb kendü Sivas'a geldi. Baba İlyâs derler idi, bir ulu şeyh var idi. Âna bi'at edüb sofu oldu.”; Şikari, p.107

⁸⁰ Ibn Bibi, v.2, p. 51

Osman was the head shepherd of Keyhüsrev bin Keykubad Alaeddin. Osman used to keep all his (sultan's) sheep and cattle, horses and camels and mules, (so that) the infidels would not take them. When Karamanoğlu Mehmed Beg made Alaeddin flee and took all his properties, Osman came and showed his truthfulness. Ivaz Mehmed Beg gave him alem (standard) and kılıç (sword) and declared him as beg.⁸¹

There is no but one mentioning of Karamanid-Ottoman contact during Osman's time in the Ottoman sources, that is Enveri in his "Düsturname".

Understandibly he gives the upper hand to Osman:

<i>Nura Sofi-oğlu Mir Karaman Eyledi Osman'a hizmet bir zaman</i>	Mir Karaman son of Nura Sofi Served Osman for a while
<i>Almış idi ilini anun Tatar Vardı Osman cümle kıldı tarumar⁸²</i>	Tatars had taken his lands Osman arrived and destroyed them all

No matter which side was superior during second half of the thirteenth century, both sides seem to keep their enmity until Mehmed II finally destroys the Karamanid dynasty. As a matter of fact, the rise of the Karamanids coincides to a large extent with the rise of the Ottomanids, as the story of Nureddin, the father of Karaman coincides with the story of Ertuğrul.

Şikari, conveying the information he got from a still earlier chronicler Yarıcani, describes the origin of the Karamanids as yet another nomadic tribe (Oğuz) coming from the east to the Rum. Saadeddin, father of Nureddin was a beg from Şirvan and had settled around Sivas.

Many tribes they were. About ten thousand tents. They were nomads. Their winter residence was in Kayseriyye of Sivas. In summers they used to go to the lands of Acem. They were called the Oguz clan...(following the death of Saadeddin) Turcomans and Oguz tribes came together and chose Nureddin as their leader so that no one should disobey his words.⁸³

⁸¹ Şikari, *Karamannâme-Zamanın Kahramanı Karamanîlerin Tarihi*, (ed.) Metin Sözen, Necdet Sakaoğlu, (Istanbul, ÇEKÜL, 2005), p.154

⁸² Enveri, *Düsturname-i Enveri*, (ed.) Öztürk Necdet, (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2003), pp.22-23

⁸³ Şikari, p. 103

Then they complain to Nureddin that they were sick and tired of moving around , they wish a place to settle. The only way to attain such a place (in this case the city of Herakle, Sivas) was to take it by force. Take they do and their move seems to have disturbed Sultan Alaeddin in Konya. It was an open action of disobedience but Şikari prefers to solve the matter in a rather calm fashion. He makes Nureddin answer peacefully to the threatening and questioning letter sent by Alaeddin and makes Nureddin say:

...we are not rebels against the Sultan. Whatever he wishes is our command...⁸⁴

If we are to believe in Şikari, Nureddin somehow gets rewarded for what he did and he even receives the sister of Ca'fer Beg, the emir of Kayseriyye (the father of Ertena – the founder of the Ertena Beyliği) and marries her. She gives birth to a son in Sivas, whom they give the name; Karaman. The boy was going to become a big trouble for the Seljukids and his descendants were to evolve into a continuous threat for the Ottomanids for the centuries to come.

The Mystery of Nureddin (Father of Karaman)

Although the discussion about the Karamanids may seem to divert from the main topic of this study and we might seem to be distancing from our initial topic, Babai Rebellion, we will soon see that the story on this side will also converge to the very same incident. Nureddin is the connection and now let's see how:

...(Nureddin) made his son beg instead and he returned to Sivas. There was a grand sheikh called Baba İlyas. He (Nureddin) obeyed him and became a

⁸⁴ I.b.i.d., p.105

sofi... For seven years he stayed in caves. Then he stepped into the sainthood.
⁸⁵

After becoming a sofi, Nureddin changes his name into “Nure Sofî”. The strange thing is that Elvan Çelebi who is well informed about the relations of his grand grand father and his follower does not mention the name “Nure Sofî” even once. Ocak, in his evaluation on the political side of the Babai rebellion concludes that the rebels were aiming to invade the Seljukid capital and take the crown of the sultan. He seems to be confused about Nure Sofî, underlines the contradiction but then again he seems to be convinced that there should be some sort of relation between the Karamanids and the Babais. Ocak also, adds an interesting statement to his comment by saying that the Karamanids had fought against the Seljukid forces together with the Babais.⁸⁶

Ocak is right in saying that Elvan Çelebi does not mention Nureddin in his *Menakıbu'l Kudsiyye* but what Ocak misses to see is that though he is not mentioned with the name Nure Sofî, he still was mentioned in the *menakıb* but only with a different name: “Köre Kadı”⁸⁷. In many lines Elvan Çelebi conveys us the feelings of deep hatred against this man and at times he refers to him as simply *kör* (the blind). This point is crucial because Ocak in his introduction to the *menakıb* which he had prepared with Erünsal notes that information relating it to Oruç Bey.⁸⁸ Now let us see what Oruç has to say on the subject:

...one of his(Baba İlyas') caliphs, *Kör Kadı*, had become the caliph for İç-el in the time of Baba İlyas. A five year old son of that Kör Kadı was left. They

⁸⁵ I.b.i.d., p.107

⁸⁶ Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, p.146-7

⁸⁷ The word Köre/Küre written كوره means “mine” which also reminds Ibn Bibi's remark about Nureddin being a coal-miner/dealer; “... (The father of Karamanids) was a Turkoman coal dealer. He always used to carry coal to Larende from the nearby mountains and earn his family's living...”, Ibn Bibi, v.2, p.202

⁸⁸ Ocak notes that Abdülbaki Gölpinarlı shares this view and that a closer inspection of a manuscript reveals the similarity between the writings of “Köre” and “Nure”; *Mevlana Müzesi Yazmalar Kataloğu*, III, 418

called his name; Karaman. Muhlis Paşa(son of Baba İlyas) brought that boy and enthroned him.⁸⁹

Once the *menakıb* is re-read by interchanging the names the whole meaning and the information attainable from the book changes substantially. For only then we can reach the biggest clue to solve the mystery. It is only then that we can understand Nure Sofî is depicted as the main enemy of Baba İlyas. According to Elvan Çelebi *he* is the source of all the *fitne*(mischief) together with Baba İshak who had actually ignited and led the rebellion from the beginning in Kefersud.

An Alternative Interpretation of the Babai Rebellion

After collecting a number of details that might seem minor otherwise, we are finally ready to bind them together and grasp the meaning hidden behind the curtain of mystery. Under the light of the above information, the following interpretation of the events in those two and a half months in 1239 - 40 gives us how the parties could be involved in the rebellion and how all that relates to the establishment of the Ottomanid state.

We know that although Baba İshak might have once been a disciple of Baba İlyas, he was leading the rebellion without his consent and he was not responding to the calming calls of his *mürşid*. This leaves us with two sides in the conflict. One being the Baba İlyasids and the other Baba İshakids. The rumours that Baba İlyas was forgiven by the Seljukid Sultan and lived several years more in Sivas as an appointed *kadı* is another detail that supports this view.

⁸⁹ Edimeli Oruç Bey, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, p.28

The antagonist in the traditional version of the story of Babai Rebellion is the Seljukid government who had mistreated the Turkomans. Thus, the whole argument was traditionally based on the conflict between the “bad” centripetal and “good” centrifugal forces of the thirteenth century Anatolia. But the course of events show us that whether good or bad, there were two sides in conflict: *Some* of the Turkoman nomadic tribes and the central Seljukid government of Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II. We have to put the note “*some*” because Ertuğrul was the leader of a nomadic tribe too and like many other tribe leaders, he possibly had not supported the rebellion. So where does Ertuğrul fit within this picture?

We now know that Ertuğrul was settled around Ankara in the Haymana, Karacadağ, Paşadağ region (again not so far from the scene of the final battle in Kırşehir) and must have been present at the Malya plain as a Seljukid *uc beyi* or emir (though a minor one). Thus it appears logical to assume that he must have been standing on the Seljukid side against the Babais and was on the side of Baba İlyasids (and not the Baba İshakids).

We also know that despite the fact he was closely related with Baba İlyas; Hacı Bektaş had not taken part in the rebellion. It has to be noted that although he had not participated in the rebellion, it does not mean that he had not continued to support Baba İlyas. He simply did not agree with the methods and the intentions of Baba İshak and his followers. Once this is understood it becomes easier to give a meaning to the battlefield of the finalé. The rebels were stopped at a location close to Suluca Karahöyük by the Seljukid forces which possibly included the followers and/or tribesfolk of Hacı Bektaş.

Who was on the other side? The connection of Nureddin/Nure Sofi/Köre Kadı gives us the Karamanid involvement in the incident. The route which the rebels took

also coincides with the initial areas of Karamanid domain: Maraş, Sivas and Kayseri. Their invasion of the Seljukid capital in the Cimri incident in 1277⁹⁰, is also told to be related with Muhlis Paşa, a son of Baba İlyas. It is regarded to be an act of revenge on the side of Muhlis Paşa but it may as well be that his name was used by the Karamanids for acquiring legitimacy for their claims, a tool which they obviously had used in the case of Cimri himself.

Then there is the involvement of the Ahis in the rebellion. The tradition tells us that they were on the side of the fighters against suppression. At this point, this legend also seems to be destined to remain as a “legend” because considering them as settled tradesmen and artisans, it is only natural to expect them to take the side of economic and political stability.

So according to the above set of arguments, an alternative version of the story of the Babai Rebellion can be constructed as in the following narrative:

Baba İshak was a disciple of Baba İlyas but somehow (possibly because of mistreatment of Turcomans or resentment against Harezmi migrations or his personal ambitions or Karamanid propaganda etc.) rebelled against Konya. But he did not attack to Konya rightaway because he was acting according to a plan which was to strengthen his army with reinforcements from the proto- Karamanid regions. He did get strong enough to defeat Seljukid forces several times until he reached Amasya. There, after uniting with Nure Sofi, the father of Karaman (the founder of the Karamanid dynasty), the rebels would be ready to head towards the capital.

⁹⁰ In 1277, a man claiming to be a Seljukid prince Izzeddin Siyavuş was enthroned in Konya by Karamanoğlu Mehmed Bey when he captured the city. Only six months later this man leaves his throne in favour of Mehmed Bey himself. The incident was called “Cimri Incident” after the nickname of Siyavuş. Elvan Çelebi tells that Muhlis Paşa, his grandfather had seized power in the Seljukid capital for six months in the year of Mevlana Celaleddin’s death, 1273. A.Y.Ocak drives the conclusion that these two incidents are the same. [Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Babailer İsyanı*, (Istanbul, Dergah Yay., 2000), pp. 164-168]

Baba İlyas and his other followers including Hacı Bektaş, were against the rebellion and they united with the main body of Seljukid forces from Erzurum, the forces of Seljukid emirs including Ertuğrul's tribe (as the emir of one of the closest regions), Ahis (regarding Kırşehir to be Ahi Evran's homeland and his relations with Hacı Bektaş) and some Frankish mercenaries from the Latin Kingdom in Constantinople. At the very least they did not support the rebellion. The Seljukid army confronted the rebels in front of Suluca Kara Höyük or Kendek in the Malya plain and the rebellion was finally crushed.

The emirs were called to Konya and were granted new lands together with many precious presents and *hil'at* in return for their loyalty and services. Ertuğrul was there and possibly had received the lands around Söğüt, Domaniç and Armenian Mountains only then. The other possibility is that he had received those lands in the time of Alaeddin Keykubat (as told in chronicles) but had not moved with all his tribe to the area yet. The logical possibility is that Ertuğrul must have decided to move to the area after the Köseadağ battle in an effort to go to the safest thus farthest place possible (from the Mongolians) which was the westernmost area on the frontier with the Nicean "Empire".

Now the mystery seems to be solved. Ertuğrul had close relations with Hacı Bektaş, Ede Bali, the Ahis and the Seljukid sultans at the same time. This information makes it easier to understand the reason why they had chosen the Order of Bektaş for their *hassa ordusu*, (Army of Royal Guards) known as the janiassaries of history.

The answer to our initial question is that Bektashism was not a matter of choice for the Ottomanids . It simply was the natural outcome of the events in the mid-thirteenth century and starting with Ertuğrul, the proto-Ottomanids and the early

Ottoman sultans were members of a semi-nomadic heterodoxy which was later to be called Bektashism. Via Hacı Bektaş, they were connected to the Baba İlyasid version of Vefai sect and they had fought to protect both their faith and their Sultan against the rebels, and were on the side of Hacı Bektaş.

It would be too far fetched to claim that there already existed a *tarik* (an order) that can be called “Bektashism” during the thirteenth century. It would be more apt to regard it as a *tarik* (a religious path) that was formed, shaped, and helped to flourish (and at times used) by the Ottoman sultans to become the backbone of their legitimacy.

Once this is understood, it becomes easier to give a meaning to the attitudes of the Ottoman dynasty towards heterodoxy until the sixteenth century. It may also give clues for understanding the roots of Karamanid-Ottomanid conflict for the generations to come but that is beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER III

THE JANISSARIES

This chapter will analyze the Janissaries as a warrior class which had traditions of solidarity and rules that determined the janissary way of life in as much depth as possible in order to understand what they really were like. Viewing the Janissaries as a warrior community with its own set of rules has two aims. First, it questions the negative image of the Janissary as “a bunch of bandits who impeded modernity” that has become part of the critical perspective of historians favoring the reforms of the 19th Century. Second, the present chapter also tries to avoid the romantic idealization of the Janissaries by those historians who idealize them as the invincible soldiers of the Ottoman expansion during the Golden Age of Ottoman conquest. Our method will be to consult primary sources wherever possible, and to combine bits and pieces of information while trying to recreate a larger picture of the Janissary Corps at the end of the 16th Century. It literally is like solving a jig-saw puzzle since the information on them was burned and destroyed by the *ulema* supporters of Mahmud II right after the “*Vaka-i Hayriyye*” (The Good Incident) in 1826 when the whole system was crushed. The Janissary system was left lying under a debris of biased stories on what a “bunch of bandits” had done to the innocent people and the members of the dynasty.⁹¹ The aim of this study is to reveal out the very principles of a military organization with its functioning units which was instrumental in building and defending the Ottoman Empire for centuries.

⁹¹ See “*Gülzar-ı Fütühat*” by Şirvanlı Fatih Efendi (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2005) or “*Üss-i Zafer*” by Es’ad Efendi (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2001) for contemporary views on janissaries.

The starting point for solving the puzzle is simple: “if there was a deviation in the later periods, there must have been a set of rules from which such deviation took place”. We will concentrate on the time period between the very founding of the janissary corps and the end of the system of recruiting janissaries exclusively via devshirme, namely the reigns of Murad I and Murad III.

Foundation: Murad I (1359-1389)

The earliest sign of a necessity for an infantry regiment had appeared during the reign of Orhan Bey (1326-1359). The issue was reportedly brought to the attention of the Sultan by his brother Alaeddin Pasha. Alaeddin had resigned from his rights for the emirate and had decided to become a dervish. His proposal for establishing an infantry class (in order to use in siege warfare, the importance of which must have been felt because of accelerating conquests of towns and cities) though, is an indication that he was not totally unaware of political affairs. He was proposing to establish an *Azap*⁹² force:

“Oh! Brother, praise be to Allah, now again thy army has increased, the army of Islam has become strong, the army of Muhammad has attained majesty in the eyes of all and from day to day has increased. Now do thou also make in the face of the world a formal act that thereby it be known in the world.” Orhan Gazi said “Oh! Brother, whatever thou sayest, do, so be it!” Ali Pasha said “Oh!brother, let all thy army put on a red cap: put thou on thyself a white cap and let thy dependent slaves put on a white cap: let this be a sign in the face of the world.” Orhan Gazi accepted this word. He sent someone and obtained authority in Amasia from Hacı Bektaş of Khorasan (Allah have mercy on him) and had a white cap brought. He first put it on himself and afterwards his dependent slaves put on the white cap. The wearing of the white cap has remained from that time. At that time the kings and chiefs were in accord with their brothers, they respected and honoured each other, they used not to kill each other down to the time of Yıldırım Khan; afterwards in the time of Khan

⁹² An infantry regiment which was recruited temporarily during the expeditions. The troops were returned to their homelands and their original occupations until the next call.

Yıldırım, the killing of brother by brother came in. And in Anatolia in the time of Orhan Gazi there came in the enrollment of *yaya* (foot soldiers).⁹³

The early Ottoman chroniclers including Aşıkpaşazade, Neşri, Kemal, Oruç, and the anonyms agree that the Janissary Corps was established by Murad I after the conquest of Edirne (1361). *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan* (The Book of the Laws of Janissaries) also favors that view. A man from Karaman, Kara Rüstem arrives to the Ottoman lands and seeing the livelihood of the activities of *akıncıs* raiding into the depths of lands of Serf (Serbia), Ungurus (Hungary) and İflak (Wallachia) via the *uc* (marches) in Rum İli and returning with incredible numbers of captives in their custody, he was astonished. Possibly, he could not believe his eyes when he saw that all the captives were sold by their new masters and the money was accrued by the *akıncıs* themselves. There was no authority to tax, no customs duty, no order but chaos. He must have thought that an order was needed and he could have benefited by offering his services to the local ruler. He finds his way to Çandarlı Halil who was the *kadı* of Bilecik and pronounces for the first time the necessity to tax the *akıncı* in favor of the sultanate.

Again he (sc. Murad I) sent Lala Şahin to Zagora and Philippopolis. He gave him a raid. The *gazıs* conquered the part round İpsala, each one of those *Begs* became in his own place an *Uç-Beg*. Finally they conquered Ipsala. It was in the year of the Hijra 763. And there was a *danişmend* called Kara Rustem; he had come from Karaman. He came to Çandarlı Kara Halil who was *Kadı'asker*. He said to him, "My Lord, as to this booty which there is, coming from the raid, why dost thou not seize it for the chieftainship? Thou art causing loss." The *Kadı'asker* said, "Indeed! What should we do?" Kara Rustem said, "These prisoners that the *ghazıs* bring, according to the commandment of God one-fifth should go to the king: why dost thou not take it?" The *Kadı'asker* said to Murad Khan Gazi, "Oh! King, since it is the commandment of God, why shouldst thou not take it?" Said he "Take", and so gave command. They went and put Kara Rustem over the *Akıncıs*. "Since it is the commandment of God, so be it", they said. Kara Rustem set himself at Gallipoli. He took 25 akches per prisoner. This innovation was through these two persons. They charged

⁹³ Oruç Bey, p.34; Aşıkpaşazade, pp.364-65 (APZ does not miss the chance to despise the foot soldiers by telling a story on how the term "*enük yaya*" had started to be used for the new force whence one of them had stolen a dog of a villager and was caught.)

Evrenos Beg also that he should take 25 akches per prisoner coming from a raid and one prisoner out of five. Thus they arranged it and carried it out. They collected the youths and divided them among the Turkish folk in Anatolia: they set them to ploughing and to menial tasks, and they learnt Turkish. After three or four years had passed, they brought them back and made them at the Court into *Yeniçeri* and made them wear the white cap. This was the original foundation of the *Yeniçeri*: since that time they gave them the name *Yeniçeri*.⁹⁴

It was a brilliant idea for the gradually strengthening House of Osman and understandably Murad I must have jumped on this proposal. It was in around 1362 that Murad I. ruled a *Pencik Kanunu*, meaning “One-of-Five Law”, and introduced a new type of tax-in-kind system which gave him the right to collect one of the five captives brought back from the expeditions. Soon this became the main source for recruitment of soldiers.

But at this point, according to the narrative sources, we are asked to accept that neither Murad nor his father Orhan had any knowledge of such a system which the Seljukids and many other Islamic sultanates had been exercising for long. The system Kara Rüstem was proposing was “*Hums*” an Arabic word used for one over five formula, “*pencik*”, in sharing the booty acquired from infidels. Neşri (who wrote “*Kitab-ı Cihannüma*” in 1492) tells us that even Ertuğrul was using the method in his raids and while keeping his (and his band’s) share of the booty, he was sending one fifth to the Seljukid capital.⁹⁵ Neşri reports that Osman had also been respecting the old tradition of “*hums*”:

...conquering the fort of Karaca-Hisar (Osman) killed the infidels captured its governor, gave its properties to the gazis, and sent Aktemur, the son of his brother, to Alaeddin II together with the *hums*...⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Palmer, J.A.B., *The Origin of Janissaries*, John Rylands Library Journal, pp.448-481, Oruç Bey, p.41-42; Aşıkpaşazade, pp.382-83

⁹⁵ “...*kal’ayı feth idüb tekvurunu tutub kal’ayı yağma idüb hums’in ihrac idüb baki mal-i ganimeti guzzata kısmet itdi...*”, Neşri, p. 69

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.87

It is equally possible to assume that the Ottoman sultan knew the method but had waited until he got strong enough to exercise it, that is after conquering a rather strong, fortified and major city like Hadrianopolis.

Janissary Corps: A Tool for Superiority Over Allies

Until Edirne the status of the sons of Osman was *primus inter pares* when compared with the other *akıncı* beys. There were a number of strong families or clans (Like Mihaloğulları or Malkoçoğulları) which were serving the Ottomans via their own benefits. They were acting semi-autonomously with separate treasuries, separate armies, separate land and at times separate purposes. They could decide when and where to raid almost in complete freedom. Establishing a tax on the main source of income of those *gazis* was a move primarily against their interests. A move which had caused many controversies and had ignited a silent resentment against the will of the House of Osman which was eventually to hit Bayezid I like a “lightning” in the battlefield of Ankara when he was left all alone against the armies of Timur(1402). He was “betrayed” and all the *beys* had deserted him to his defeat and misery. The wings, the *pişdar* (front lines), *artçı* (the rear forces), the cavalry, even his own sons had left the arena and the only force that stayed was the *kalb* (the heart); the Janissaries; Sultan’s private guards, the christian-born fighters who were acquired by the above mentioned Penchik method from some of those deserters. It is also interesting to see that the Serbians had fought until the last moment.⁹⁷

House of Osman had paid the price of its efforts to establish a hierarchy among its beys by being pushed into almost complete destruction and eleven years of turmoil

⁹⁷“...*Vilkoğlu kafir çerisiyle iyi ceng itti.*”, I.b.i.d., p.351; “...*Vilkoglu küffar çerisiyle acayib cengler itdiler.*”, Aşıkpaşazade, p.411; “...*Andan Yıldırım Han'ın kendi leşkери dahi hayin olub kaçdılar.Zira incinmişler idi. Heman İflakoğlu kim kafir idi çerisi ile ol ceng itdi.*”, Anonim, *Osmanlı Tarihi 1299-1512*, (ed.) Öztürk, Necdet, (Istanbul, Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2000), p. 49

(1402-1413 *Fetret Devri*). It was going to recover its authority though, a gradual process starting from Mehmed I and lasting until the conquest of Constantinopolis, in 1453, thus to Mehmed II.

The founding of the Janissary corps was a move against the other *beys* firstly because they were full-time professional soldiers whose salaries were paid by the sultan himself and who took orders from only the sultan. Actually, the sultans were registered as the first janissary of the first *Ağa Bölüğü* (Squadrons of the Commander General) of the army. A few days after the distribution of the tri-monthly salaries, he used to visit the Royal Chamber within the Janissary Headquarters (a lodge within the barracks of the 1st Squadron of *Ağa Bölükleri*) in janissary outfit and receive his own salary of 40 akches. Then he would grant it back to the *Ocak* with an addition of a handful of golden coins. There also was a special room called “*Kasr-ı Hümayun*” (Royal Kiosk) in the Chamber of the 61st Division of the Left Handed Guards⁹⁸ This organic relationship of the sultans with their private bodyguards, although symbolical it maybe, had a mysterious nature to it. Secondly, the janissaries were infantry as opposed to mobility of the traditional cavalry of the frontiers. Thirdly, the Janissaries were *kul* (semi-slave servants) as opposed to the free men of the *akıncı* hordes. Fourthly, the Janissaries were not ethnically Turkic and not muslims by birth as opposed to the *gazi* lords and their retainers.

Ottoman sultans were clearly trying to create a focus of power, a fortification of armed personnel around them. It must have been regarded as a hostile act and conflict of interests had once again caused centrifugal forces to start working against centripetal forces. Reminiscences of this ongoing conflict can be read among the

⁹⁸ Ahmet Cevat Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri-i Osmani*, (Istanbul, Kırk Ambar Matbaası, 1882), p.74; Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları – v.I.*, (Ankara, TTK, 1988), p. 242, p.427

lines of the early Ottoman chroniclers who tend to condemn the deeds of Çandarlı Halil and Kara Rustem as acts of mischief violating old traditions.⁹⁹

The Ottoman sultans also increasingly tended to marry non-Turkish, non-muslim women thus building a second line of defence around them. They were assigning the devshirme boys which they educated in *Enderun* (Inner Palace Academy) to the important posts throughout the empire and wed them to ladies raised in their own harem. A method of forming and keeping their own network within the state. This policy should be regarded as a continuation of the founding of the Janissary corps.

100

Janissaries were a tool to suppress, outnumber and to threaten the allies of the House of Osman as well as its enemies.

Devshirme: A Process of Turkification

The system of Devshirme was a direct follower of *Pencik*. In fact, as Hakan Erdem points out referring to the testimony of a mid-fifteenth century janissary, the main difference between Devshirme and *Pencik* janissaries was that the Devshirme could leave their inheritance to whomever they wished while the *Pencik* could not. Thus unlike the captive *Pencik*, the Devshirme were taken from among the “free” subjects of the Ottoman state¹⁰¹

Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân gives the description of the boys to be selected (the selection criteria) for devshirme: Non-muslim, non-Turk, non-Turkish-speaking,

⁹⁹ “...*Kara Rüstem, danışmendler ve nefislerine uyanlar geldiler. Türlü türlü fetvaya ve hiyleye başladılar...*” Oruç Bey, p.52-53

¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, there is no ground for the claim that their acts (as such) were ethnically conscious. Thus, they were not after “suppressing the Turks” (or any other ethnicity) but aiming to continue their grip on political and military power against their counterparts.

¹⁰¹ Erdem, Y. Hakan, *Osmanlıda Köleliğin Sonu, 1800-1909*, (Istanbul, Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), pp. 24-25

non-artizan, non-circumsized, non-orphan, unmarried healthy sons of townsmen or villagers and definitely not of shepherds, of middle heigth and nice posture.¹⁰²

Then, the designers of the new system (whether it was Murad I or Çandarlı Halil or Kara Rustem) had to solve a difficult problem: “How could they create fighters of Islam from non-muslim youngsters?” They needed a “Turkification process”. We see that they had decided to solve the problem by sending the collected boys to the Turks (hiring out to the Turk/*Türke vermek*) to learn the language, the traditions and to strengthen their capacity to bear difficulties. *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* calls this as “*Belaya mutad olmak*” (to get used to the troubles) so that they could stand in the battlefield (which was “the” trouble itself) without whining.

*Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*¹⁰³ also describes the Turks to whom these boys could be hired out:

...And the Aghas of Rumeli and Anatolia shall hire the boys (except the ones selected for the palace and royal gardens – Bostan) given to them, out to the Turks.... And they shall not hire them out to the danişmends (clergy) or the qadis (judges). Because they do not have farms or fields so that they (the boys) can serve and get used to troubles.... And they shall not hire them out to the citizens of Islambol. If they stay in the city their eyes will get open. They will not stand difficulties.... And it is not lawful to hire them out to the artisans....
104

Here we get some clues on who “the Turk” might be. They are the farmers who live in villages and who do not have any occupation other than agriculture. They are non-clergy, non-*kadı* and non-artisans. From the fact that each year two officers were sent to check them and collect 80 akches as controlling fee, for each boy from the persons they were hired out to, we understand that “the Turks” may not also be nomads who were continuously mobile and difficult to track and find. Thus, “the

¹⁰² Akgündüz, Ahmet, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tahlilleri- Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, (İstanbul, FEV Vakfı, 1990-92),pp.136-37

¹⁰³ *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* will be referred as KY from now on.

¹⁰⁴ KY, p.145,260

Turk” seems to have been the Turkish speaking villagers.¹⁰⁵ After all, the purpose of hiring the devshirme boys out to Turks, was to “make them Turks”.

The next difficulty they had to overcome was the issue of religion. There was no doubt that the new army of the sultan should be muslim. Considering the tireless efforts of the early chroniclers to depict Osman as a proselytizer with saintly qualities, the backbone was ready. As Gazis, the Ottoman sultans had the capability of changing Christians into good muslims. (as in the case of Köse Mihal). Then they must have realised that they needed a systematic tool for converting those Christian boys (*Penchik oğlanları*) into muslims. There comes the Bektashi Order of the Dervishes.

Bektashism, though not an established order yet, was important not only because the sultans must have had some sort of affinity (if not followers themselves) to the order possibly starting with their grand father Ertuğrul (as discussed in the previous chapter), but also because it was the perfect tool they were looking for. (Not that they were searching but that it was there and it was perfect). It was perfect for a number of reasons:

- a) The Proto-Ottomanids had close relations with the Order via Edebali,
- b) Ahis (Ahiyan-ı Rum) were merging into the order,
- c) The Order was becoming the focus of attraction for the dervishes from other orders, thus orders like Kalenderism, Haydarism, Vefaism were melting into it (Abdalan-ı Rum),
- d) Hacı Bektaş was highly prestigious among the frontier lords and their subjects,
- e) And last but not the least as Irene Melikoff had rightfully pointed out: The Order was open to non-muslims, as well as to non-Turks (or Turcomans). This is a

¹⁰⁵ This view is confirmed by Oruç in his passage on the founding of *Yeniçeri* quoted above: “...: *they set them to ploughing and to menial tasks, and they learnt Turkish.*”

critical point because it is the thin line which separates the traditional nomadic Islam from the semi-nomadic heterodoxy, thus Alevism from Bektashism. One can only be born to be an Alevi while anyone can “become” a Bektashi.¹⁰⁶

The Ottomans were inclined to settle down right from the beginning. One of Osman’s first deeds was to establish Yenişehir and try to settle his clan.¹⁰⁷ The settling down of the early Ottomans was not a total settlement though. Their lifestyle was more a bridge between the urban life and nomadism, “semi-nomadism” as we shall call, than being completely urban. They were building towns and cities (in most of the cases capturing them) or contributing to the flourishing of the urban areas by constructing religious, educational complexes and buildings serving the wandering dervishes and travellers (*ayende ve revende* – the goers and commers)¹⁰⁸. On the other hand, they were continuously mobile themselves whether for expeditions or for recreational purposes.¹⁰⁹

This duality in their lifestyle must have made them experts of creating and keeping a balance “between two worlds”, namely urban and nomadic lives. So was Bektashism. Hacı Bektaş himself had travelled a long distance from Khurassan region to Central Anatolia and virtually had settled down in a village called Suluca Karahöyük to the south of Kırşehir. The place he had chosen to settle was not a city like Konya or Amasya, comparatively bigger cities of those times but it was not in the mountains away from the cities either: It was somewhere in between.

Thus, Bektashism was offering a version of Islam, tolerant, easy to grasp, not necessarily rural but not same with the high Islam offered by *ulema* (orthodox

¹⁰⁶ Melikoff, Irene, *Hacı Bektaş – Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, (Istanbul, Cumhuriyet, 2004), p.220

¹⁰⁷ Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, (ed.) Yavuz, Kemal; Saraç, Yekta, (Istanbul, K Kitaplığı, 2003), p. 342

¹⁰⁸ See Öney, Gönül (ed.); Ünal, Rahmi, H. (ed.), *Erken Osmanlı Sanatı, Beyliklerin Mirası*, (Istanbul, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yay., 1999)

¹⁰⁹ The chroniclers’ tradition tells the story of how Osman used leave his (and his tribe’s) belongings to the custody of the *tekvur* of Bilecik whenever they went to *yayla* in summers and they brought cheese, cream and rugs as presents on their return. (Aşıkpaşazade, p.331)

scholars of Islam) and most of all it was open for new admissions via initiation.

During the expansion period they Ottoman Sultans openly supported the growth of Bektashism.

In the previous chapter, we have seen that Ertuğrul, the father of Osman must have had close ties with Hacı Bektaş and Ede Bali, both members of the Baba İlyasid realm. (Who was the disciple of whom, is only secondarily important for our argument) Ede Bali was alive during the reign of Osman and by giving his daughter to Osman he was offering his full support. There were many dervish followers of Ede Bali and Ahi around, ready to act according to his will when the fact that he had the title of Sheikh is considered. Orhan was the son of Mal Hatun (or Rabia in Oruç), the daughter of Ede Bali, thus Ede Bali was his grand father. He must have been raised in an environment full with wandering dervishes and adventurers. His interest in semi-nomadic heterodoxy can only be regarded as natural and the *imaret* and *tabhaneli zaviyes* (T shaped buildings for *namaz* and *sema* prayers which also could serve for accommodation of dervishes) that he built are solid signs of that interest.¹¹⁰

It maybe difficult to imagine an Ottoman sultan preparing a place for *sema* prayers of the heterodox dervishes but as a matter of fact he was not the only one who showed signs of sympathy towards heterodoxy. Orhan's son, Murad I was an eminent Ahi sheikh and he had built the main building of the Hacı Bektaş complex.¹¹¹ A famous episode tells how Yıldırım Bayezid (regnavit.1389-1402) was furious at the qadis and *ulema* and their misdeeds.¹¹² Mehmed I's Green Mosque in Bursa also has architectural features of again *tabhaneli* mosques. Murad II is known

¹¹⁰ *Erken Osmanlı Sanatı*, p.108

¹¹¹ Farouqi, Suraiya, *The Tekke of Hacı Bektaş: Social Position and Economic Activities*, International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol.7, No.2, (Apr. 1976), 183-208

¹¹² Neşri, p.337

to abdicate from the throne in favour of his son Mehmed II and in his memoirs an ex-Janissary Constantine Mihailovich (ca. 1463) tells us that the Sultan had preferred to become a dervish in a Kalenderi convent in Manisa.¹¹³ Mehmed II had given one of the most important buildings of Constantinopolis to the Qalandars, the Kalenderhane Mosque, at the very center of the city, just nearby his palace and in the middle of the areas he granted to the Janissaries and to the Ahis. Bayezid II's nickname was "*Veli*" pointing out to his sainthood and he was the one who had assigned Balım Sultan (?-1516), the legendary dervish from Kızılca Sultan convent in Dimetoka,¹¹⁴ to the *tekke* of Hacı Bektaş in order to re-organize the order. Things were going to change with the reign of Selim I (reign 1512-1520).

In my opinion, early Ottoman history may not be understood thoroughly without its heterodox character in the religious sphere. Ottoman history may even be re-written as the story of a continuous rivalry between orthodoxy and heterodoxy especially after Selim I (1512-1520).

Here it must be noted that *abdals*, *kalenders*, almost stark naked dervishes were a natural part of the daily life and they were accepted as such by the citizens.¹¹⁵ The need to call them "heterodox" is a rather new habit of present day scholars who have distinct categories for what is orthodox and what is not. If there was any such distinction it must have started with Yavuz Sultan Selim I and his rivalry with Shah Ismail. But still, Shi'ism was an influence increasing only gradually and the infusion was rather slow (at least at the level of the common people).

¹¹³ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003), p.45

¹¹⁴ Balım Sultan is regarded to be the second founder of the sect according to the Bektashi tradition.

¹¹⁵ See the deeds of Otman Baba; Koca, Şevki (ed.), *Odman Baba Vilayetnamesi – Vilayetname-i Gö'çek Abdal*, (Istanbul, Bektaşî Kültür Derneği, 2002)

Ocak: The Hearth of Janissary Corps

Originally, the system of devshirme depended on the conquests of the *akıncıs* from the *uç* they were residing, into the territories of the infidels. At the beginning, the tax-in-kind was designed for collecting one of the five captives of the captives brought back by the *akıncıs* as booty from their expeditions into the *darü'l harb*.¹¹⁶ Thus, the Turkification process¹¹⁷, devshirme was not meant to be applied to all of the non-muslim subjects of the sultanate.

This rule was not bent or broken until the period of turmoil into which the Ottomans were pushed by Timur after the 1402 Ankara battle. The rapid expansion was brought to a halt and the need for recruiting new soldiers was on the rise due to the civil war (1402-1413) in contrast with the decreasing number of captives. The extent of the penchik law was expanded to include the non-muslim communities within the Ottoman realm. And it remained.

Selection

Yeniçeri Ağası (Commander-general of the Janissaries) was personally responsible for the selection, recruitment, transportation, safety and distribution of the devshirme boys. Based mainly on the church registration records, the boys were gathered from their villages by specially assigned officers according to the above mentioned criteria.¹¹⁸ The devshirme officer, Ağā, used to visit personally each of the villages from which the collection was to be made. As a rule, the boys between

¹¹⁶ The war-zone

¹¹⁷ On “becoming a Turk” see; Kafadar, Cemal, *Between Two Worlds – The Construction of the Ottoman State*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996), p.19

¹¹⁸ Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı, *Kapıkulu Ocakları – v.I*, (Ankara, TTK, 1988), p 16

the ages of 8-20 were collected from every 40 households. Registration forms were filled for each of the boys in accordance with the procedure of *Sürü Bağlama* (Binding the flock).

The following information was written into the *Eşkal Defteri* (Ledger of Appearances): a) The name of the local magistrate (where the flock was bound), b) the features and appearances of the boy, c) the name of his *kaza* (town of origin), d) the name of his village, e) name of his father¹¹⁹, f) name of his mother, g) name of his home (address), h) his own name (both non-muslim and muslim names), i) signs on his body, j) Name of his flock, k) the place where the flock was bound, l) the name of the *sürücübaşı* (the flock-rider), m) Number of his flock (among the other flocks), n) name of the *bölük* (company the registration officer belongs to).

The boys were then gathered in flocks (*sürü*)¹²⁰ of 150 - 200 members each , changed their clothes to *kızıl aba* and *külâh* (the red clothes and conical hats) and get ready for their first long distance on foot. The *Ağa* in charge had to stamp the forms before the *Sürücübaşı* could depart for Istanbul.¹²¹ The Ledger was prepared in two copies, one staying with the *Ağa* while the other was given to the Flock-rider.¹²²

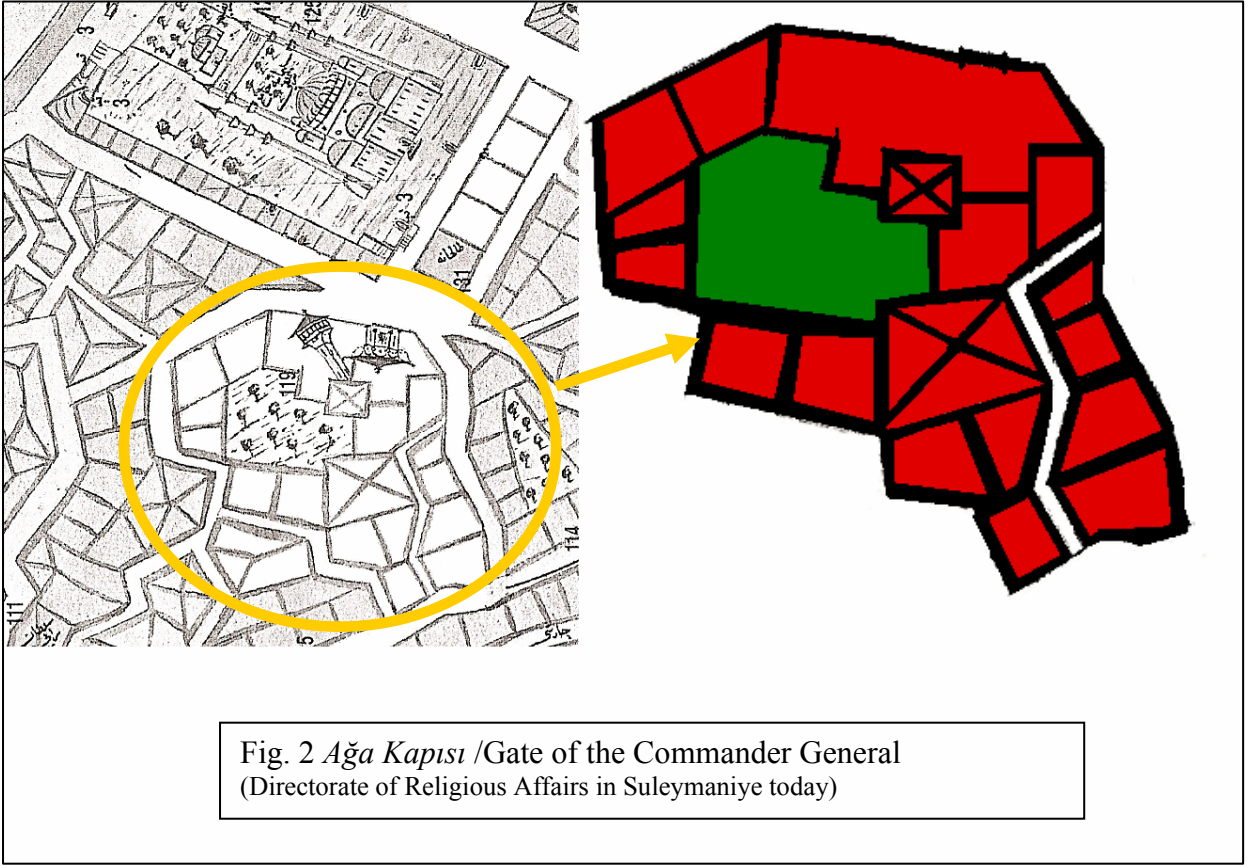
¹¹⁹ A muslim name was assigned for the father of each boy. It was a derivation of a fixed root, Abd (meaning the subject of God) and addition of one of the adjectives used in describing God, the name then would become “Abdulmennan, Abdulcebbar et. al.” Generally “Abdullah” was used for convenience., Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (Istanbul, Nazenin, 2000)

¹²⁰ Traditionally *Turnacıbaşı* (Head Keeper of the Cranes) was assigned for flock-binding. It is interesting to note that the flocks were arranged in a style called “turna katarı – Flock of Migrating Cranes”.

¹²¹ KY, p. 140

¹²² Uzunçarşılı, p. 17

After reaching the capital (Edirne before Istanbul), the boys could rest for a few days before being presented to the *Yeniçeri Ağası*. Then they were brought to the



Ağa Kapısı (Gate of the Office-Residence of the Commander General¹²³). There they had to pass one by one in front of the *Ağa* while he was standing on top of a staircase. A doctor was present and they were checked and compared with the information in the Ledger of Appearances. Most important duty of the doctor was to control if they were already circumcised or not because if they were, it was regarded as the violation of the fundamental rule of *devshirme*: to be non-muslim. Such a violation would cause the punishment of the Flock-Riders and their officers and result in the cancellation of the *devshirme* rights for the whole of that particular flock in which the violation was detected. Then, the group as a whole, was dropped from “*Yol*”, The Path of the Janissary and its members were sent to serve in *Tophane*

¹²³ The Gate of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in Suleymaniye district, Istanbul of present day Turkey

(Cannon Factory) or in *Cebehane* (Ammunition Factory) which in turn meant the loss of the rights and privileges of being a Janissary.

The next step in the process (unless no violation was detected) was circumcision. Raising their *şahadet parmağı* (forefingers) they were converted to Islam and circumcized. They were then let to rest for another few days until new lists showing their next destination were prepared. They must have experienced an enormous culture shock.

Hiring out to the Turk

Some were spared for the private service of the Sultan and taken into the *Enderun* in the Palace. Some others were assigned to the *Bostancı Ocağı* (The House of the Royal Gardeners) and the rest was to be hired out to the Turk and leave Istanbul for several years until they were called back¹²⁴. The boys coming from Rumeli were given to the custody of the *Anadolu Ağası* (The Commander of Anatolia) while the ones from Anatolia were given to the *Rumeli Ağası* (The Commander of Europe). This was a precaution to discourage their flight back to their homelands by the Sea of Marmara and the straits.

Depending on the vacancies of the *Acemi Ocağı*, for three to eight years, they were literally “hired out” to Turkish farmers. A fee of 80 akches were taken annually from the farmers so that the boys should not claim themselves as the *kul* (servant) of the Sultan himself and evade serving their temporary masters¹²⁵. The idea was to oblige them to obey their masters during their stay and to get patient in the face of

¹²⁴ The only exception to the rule was Bosnians. They had accepted Islam in large numbers during the reign of Mehmed II and impressed, the Sultan ordered that devshirme should continue but the Bosnian boys should be directly taken into *Enderun* or *Bostancı Ocağı* without being hired to the Turk.

¹²⁵ A *Kethüda* (High Commissioner) was assigned for this job. He and his retainers were responsible for keeping track of the boys, catching the fugitives and bringing them back to their masters. *Kethüda* used to work in coordination with the *Yeniçeri Serdarları* (Local Janissary Guardians).

difficulties while serving in the fields. In turn, they were expected to be raised in accordance with Turkish customs and religious practices. The areas they were distributed to, had to be highly populated with Turks. Moreover, they had to be non-urban areas away from the danishmends and artisans but certainly not too remote to be out of the central control mechanism. Thus, the boys could not be hired out to the highly mobile Turkmen nomads. That leaves us with the areas between the towns and the country side. Uzunçarşılı mentions some of such areas, namely; Bursa, Karaman, Kütahya, Afyon, Ankara, Balıkesir, and Muğla.¹²⁶ Rycout¹²⁷ gives the names of yet some other places a bit more precisely:

....in Anatolia they are sent to the private properties of the Janissaries: *Kahya Bey's* ranch in Kütahya, the lands of *İstanbul Ağası* in Ankara and Karahisar, or to the timars of the *Turnacıbaşı* (Head Keeper of the Cranes) or *Yayabaşıs* (Infantry Masters) in Mentеше, Sultanönü, Karesi et al.¹²⁸

It is interesting to note that with the addition of Antalya, Kayseri and Tokat to these, the list perfectly matches with the areas where the Bektashi tekke and zaviyes were highly active. It maybe farfetched to claim that the boys were sent to the Bektashi tekkes (which is a possibility not to be cast out¹²⁹) but such a fact may enhance our understanding of the religious atmosphere within the areas the boys were raised. Although, Suraiya Farouqi prefers to undermine the relations of the Janissaries with the tekkes of the Bektashi Order (due to insufficient data presently available) , she also can not evade emphasizing the character of in-between-ness apparent in the location of the convents. Furthermore, she underlines the unifying

¹²⁶ Kapıkılı Ocakları, v.1, pp. 24-26

¹²⁷ Paul Rycout (1628 – 1700) was the secretary to the Earl of Winchilsea, Ambassador Extraordinary for Charles II to Sultan Mehmet IV (1648-1687). Following his return from the mission to Istanbul, his memoires were published in London in 1668. The original title was “*The present state of the Ottoman Empire : Containing the maxims of the Turkish politie, the most material points of the Mahometan religion, their sects and heresies, their convents and religious votaries. Their military discipline, with an exact computation of their forces both by land and sea. Illustrated with divers pieces of sculpture, representing the variety of habits amongst the Turks.*”

¹²⁸ Ricaut, *Türklerin Siyasi Düsturları*, Uzmen, Reşat M. (transl.), (Istanbul, Milliyet Yayınları, 1996), p.212

¹²⁹ Barkan, Ömer Lütfi, “*Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir İskan ve Kolonizasyon Metodu olarak Vakıflar ve Temlikler, I, İstila Devirlerinin Kolonizatör Türk Dervişleri ve zaviyeler*”, Vakıflar Dergisi II, Ankara 1942, p.303

function of the Bektashi tekkes for the countryside and the urban areas especially when the religious practices of nomads and villagers are concerned.¹³⁰



Acemi Ocağı (The Hearth of Novices)

In any case, the boys were to receive a call from the capital meaning that they could finally get into the “*Torba*”(The Bag)¹³¹ They were brought back to Istanbul¹³². Once the paperwork finished and they were transferred to the authority of *Istanbul Ağası* (Commander of Istanbul) who happens to be the *Acemi Ocağı Ağası* (Commander of the Hearth of Novices).¹³³ Entering into the Novice Barracks they had to cue up in order from older to younger, and then run one by one before the *Odabaşı* (Chamber Master). Their arrival at the Novice Barracks marked a new phase in their lives in which they were to work hard in the galleys carrying cargo in and out of Istanbul. They were used in any kind of circumstances where muscular work was needed (like the construction projects of royal mosques or transportation

¹³⁰ Faroqhi, Suraiya, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik*, (Istanbul, Simurg, 2003), p.139 (Translation of the original title “Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien”)

¹³¹ Literally meaning “The Bag” but in Janissary terminology it is to be admitted into the Acemi Ocağı (The Hearth of the Novices) and be enlisted as a direct candidate to become a Janissary.

¹³² Some were taken to Gallipoli, the first Novice Barracks established by Murad I. Its importance gradually faded away after the conquest of Istanbul.

¹³³ A remark undelining the origin of the boys was added to their files: *An Tı Amed* (from Anatolia), and *An Mim Amed* (from Rumeli), Uzunçarşılı, p.38

of wood, ice, stones, horses et al.). They were also held responsible for the security of the capital in times of expeditions while the Janissaries were out of the city. The Novices had to wait patiently for their turn to become a “real” Janissary but it was only possible whenever a janissary died or retired out of injury or old age. In times of frequent wars, for some lucky ones the waiting period ended in a few years but for some others, they had to wait several years more in order to be able to enter into the Janissary Headquarters.

After many years of patient hardwork, the boys could finally become professional warriors, a member of the fearsome war machine which had terrorized their opponents on the battlefields for centuries. The christian-born boys were finally ready to become defenders of islam, and form the very *Kalb* (heart) of the Ottoman army. With the receipt of vacancies in the number of personnel of *Ocak*¹³⁴ due to retirement (*amelmande*) or death (*mürde*), *Acemi Ağası* (Commander of the Novices) used to send the appropriate number of novices waiting for their turn to the *Ocak*. Vacancy in the *Ocak* was the primary criteria for novice assignment, the length of the waiting period was irrelevant. This was “*Kapıya Çıkmak*” (Going up to the Gate), or “*Bedergah Olmak*” (Becoming a Member of the Dervish Lodge)..

Odalar (The Headquarters)

The Janissary Headquarters in Istanbul was divided into two: *Eski Odalar* (Old Chambers/ Barracks) and *Yeni Odalar* (New Chambers/Barracks). The Old Barracks were built by the orders of Mehmed II right after the conquest of the city. *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* tells how the spot (in Şehzadebaşı) was chosen:

... When Islambol was conquered a squadron of the janissary comrades entered (into the city) through the Unkapanı gate (on the Golden Horn side)

¹³⁴ Pronounced as “Audjaq”

and walked up under the leadership of Mahmud Pasha, the Vizier. They arrived at the spot where the Old Chambers stand now and by placing their flag there they succeeded to capture the place where the Chambers were to be erected... In the beginning the squadrons were few and the capacity of the Barracks was enough... when the construction was over a way to distribute the chambers was discussed... (they decided that the problem should be solved with a race.) The chamber was given to the personnel who could enter into it before others. That is why there is no order for the (number of) chambers.¹³⁵

Each janissary squadron had a chamber. The chambers were designed as independent units containing certain facilities to serve the squadron. Each chamber had a kitchen, a larder, a treasury room, a washing room, a dormitory, latrines, a sofa and a pergola. The floors were covered with brick-tiles on which straw mats and woolen rugs were spread and the entrances were decorated with marble columns. The symbol of the squadron was marked on its door.

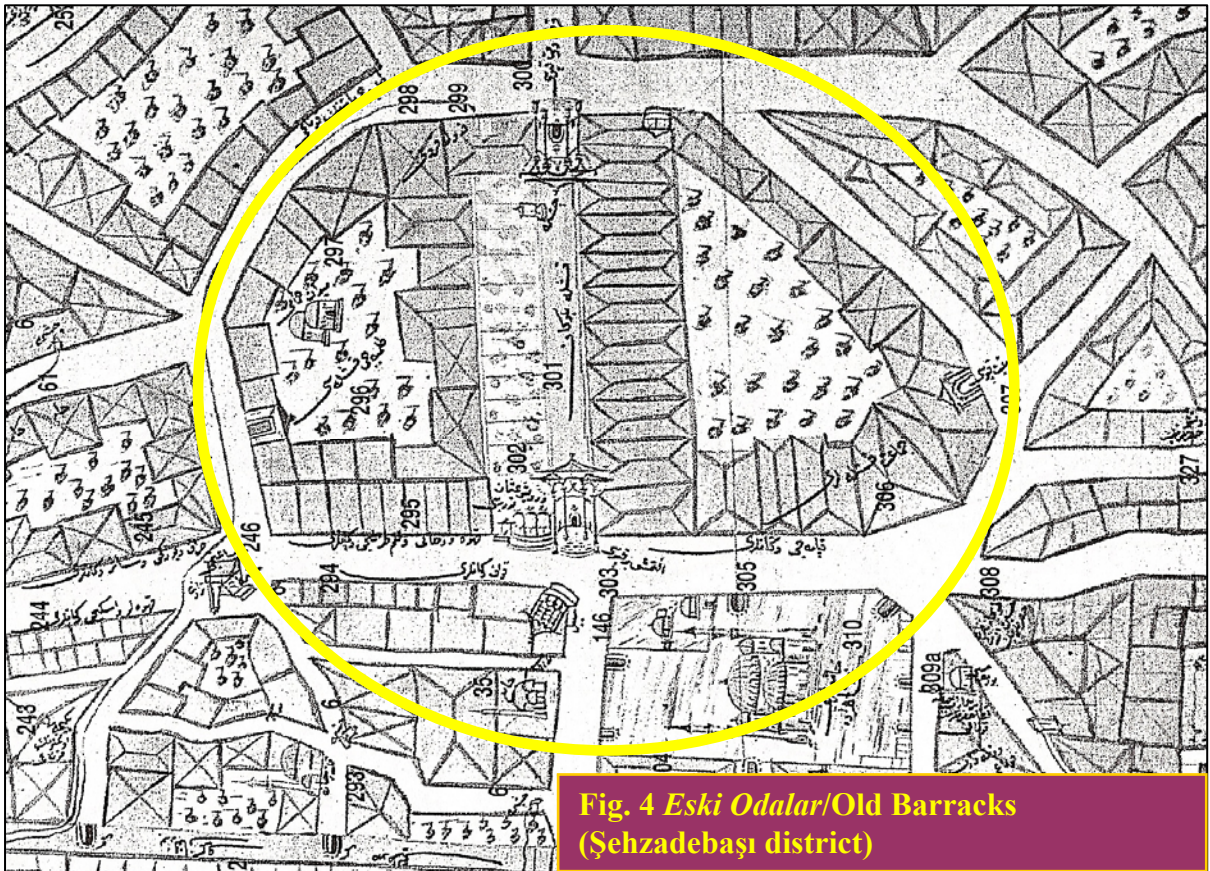


Fig. 4 Eski Odalar/Old Barracks (Şehzadebaşı district)

¹³⁵ KY, p. 233

In the *Eski Odalar*, there were 47 (plain)¹³⁶ rooms with fireplaces, 55 rooms with sofas and fireplaces¹³⁷, 20 pergolas, 1 *tekke*, and 26 stables for the usage of 26 squadrons. Entrance could be made through three gates: *Birler Kapısı* (Gate of the Ones), *Kırkdört Kapısı* (Gate of the Fourty Four), and *Meyyit Kapısı* (Gate of the Dead).¹³⁸

Yeni Odalar was also built by Mehmed II but compared to the *Eski Odalar*, its scale shows a substantial change in the demand for the services of Janissaries and reflects the imperial vision Mehmed II had in mind. 368 plain rooms with fireplaces, 69 rooms with sofas and fireplaces, 130 pergolas, 4 *tekkes*, 158 stables plus 90 training rooms and 20 villas. This grandiose building complex was designed for the usage of 144 squadrons. The barracks was surrounded by a wall with seven gates on it: *Adet Kapısı* (Gate of Tradition), *Ağa Bölüğü Kapısı* (Gate of the Ağa's Squadron), *Solaklar Kapısı* (Gate of the Left-handed Guards), *Meydan Kapısı* (Square Gate), *Çayır Kapısı* (Meadow Gate), *Karaköy Kapısı* (Gate of Karaköy – a district to the direction of which this gate was opened)¹³⁹.

Once called, the boys were to enter into the Headquarters through one of these gates, whether to the *Eski* or *Yeni Odalar* depending on the *Oda* of the *Orta* (regiment) they were assigned to. It was a Janissary tradition (for the *Baş Çavuş*) to slap the back of their necks as a sign of welcome and a warning for complete obedience.¹⁴⁰ Another tradition was to make them run to their chambers. The one who managed to reach his *oda* first was called an “*Eski*”(veteran) compared to others, thus anybody reaching the chamber would automatically become superior in rank

¹³⁶ Plain, in the sense that the beds and the sheets were brought down from shelves, put on the floor and prepared for sleeping. During day time the room used to be empty for functions other than sleeping.

¹³⁷ These rooms must have been used as officers' rooms, Uzunçarşılı in p. 246 referres to a document about a restoration made on some chambers (Başvekalet Arşivi, M.Cevdet Tasnifi, askeri vesika, No: 12050) and adds new information –existence of zabitan/officers' rooms - on the design of the chambers

¹³⁸ Uzunçarşılı, pp. 239-42

¹³⁹ Op.cit.

¹⁴⁰ Uzunçarşılı, p.38, pp.207-208

than the one behind him. We learn from KY that tricks showing the intelligence of the boy were allowed:

...and whoever runs and reaches the sofa of the chamber and realizes that the other *yoldaş* (comrades) are going to enter into the chamber (before him) he then could quickly throw his hat. If his hat were to enter before the others (although he might not be physically superior) the owner of that hat would become *eski*. But he is not allowed to throw it after entering into the *sofa*.¹⁴¹

This was their first step into the ranking and promotion system of the *Ocak*. They were no more novices but were called *Kara Kullukçu*¹⁴², janissary rookies now. The novice could now be called “*Yoldaş*” (Comrade)¹⁴³. The Law Book of the Janissaries discreetly exposes the difference between a *Yoldaş* and others by using the word for the rookies right after their admittance into the *Ocak*.

Based on meritocracy, *Yol*, The Path in front of an ordinary *Kara Kullukçu*¹⁴⁴ had the following steps(in ascending order): *Küçük Müteferrika* (Junior Private), *Orta Müteferrika* (Middle Private), *Baş Müteferrika* (Head Private), *Odabaşı* (Chamber Master), *Baş Odabaşı* (Head Chamber Master), *Yayabaşı* (Infantry Master), *Baş Yayabaşı* (Head Infantry Master), *Deveci* (Camel Keeper), *Baş Deveci* (Head Camel Keeper), *Haseki* (Imperial Guard), *Baş Haseki* (Head Guard), *Turnacıbaşı*(Head Keeper of the Cranes), *Seksoncubaşı* (Head Keeper of the Wallachian sheepdogs), *Zağarcıbaşı*(Head Keeper of the Zagar Dogs), *Kethüda Bey*

¹⁴¹ KY, p.173 (Obviously the entrance of sofa was regarded as a borderline for the chamber. The hat could not be thrown after passing the border.)

¹⁴² The word “*Kulluk*” means “service” and constitutes the main reason why the rankless janissaries were generally called “*Kara Kullukçu*”(Black Servitors). On the other hand I believe “*Kara Kollukçu*” should be the correct reading due to the fact that their main occupation was to serve the *Karakol* stations. But in this text, I will continue the tradition to use the “*Kara Kullukçu*” form in order not to cause misunderstanding.

¹⁴³ The closest possible interpretation is “comrade” but the word literally means “Partner in the Path”, “the one who shares a path” or “brother-in-arms”. Note that when “comrade” is used within this text, it will have no Marxist connotations whatsoever.

¹⁴⁴ Normally each *Oda* had one *Kara Kullukçu*, but the chambers of the *Başçavuş* (Head Sergeant) could have four of them due to its large number of personnel. They were named according to the services they used to do: *Kandilci* (Candle Handler), *Papuçu* (Shoe Handler), and *Pazara Giden* (Shopper).

(General Chief of Staff), *Sekbanbaşı* (Field Marshall).¹⁴⁵ These were called “*Ocak Ağaları*” (Officers of the House), “*Sanadid-i Bektaşiyân*” (Elite of the Bektashis), “*Katar Ağaları*” (Officers of the Flock) or “*Ağayan-ı Bektaşiyân*” (Officers of the Bektashis).¹⁴⁶

As will be discussed in the next chapter on the Bektashi practices of the janissaries, the only short-cut to high office was to become a *Seğirdim Aşçısı* (Runner Cook) by showing high performance in the *Seğirdim* Races held every morning in the headquarters. After receiving a training on Bektashi and military principles a Runner Cook could first become a *Çavuş* (sergeant) member of the chief-of-staff and rise through the above mentioned ranks after becoming a *Baş Çavuş* (Head Sergeant) starting from the level of *Haseki* directly.

The Military Organization

Yeniçeri Ocağı (Hearth of Janissary Corps) or *Yaya Beyler* (Infantry Masters) originally was founded with 1000 personnel, organized in 10 regiments , each containing 100 janissaries. Each regiment , led by a *Yayabaşı* (Infantry Chief/Captain), or *Çorbacı* (Soup Giver) was called an “*Orta*” or “*Cemaat*” . Another organization, *Sekban Bölükleri* (Sekban Squadrons)¹⁴⁷ was integrated into the Janissary Corps in 1451. The *Sekbans* were organized in 34 infantry and 1

¹⁴⁵ KY, p.265

¹⁴⁶ The obvious connection with the Order of Bektaş will be analysed within the next chapter among with other relations.

¹⁴⁷ . Uzunçarşılı had mistakenly established an etymological relation between the words “*Sekban*” and “*Seymen*”. In my view, this mistake was copied by other historians possibly based on his writings. Akgündüz was so confused with the meaning of the word that he gives its meaning as “The one who tears down the enemy front lines!”, (KY, p.210) The correct etymology should be Seg+Ban meaning “The Dog Keeper” in Persian. Considering their initial duty of assisting and accompanying the Sultans in their hunting parties, the origin of the term now becomes clear. (Actually, this view is discussed by Uzunçarşılı in p.162, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.1; it is confirmed by KY, p.212)

cavalry squadrons (average 50 personnel each) and the 65th *Orta* became “*The Sekbanlar Ortası*” (The Division of the Sekbans). At the end of the 15th century a reorganization was made and a new division was established. It was called “*Ağa Bölükleri*” and it was composed of 61 infantry squadrons (again average 50 personnel each¹⁴⁸).¹⁴⁹ With the inclusion of the *Ağa Bölükleri*, The Hearth of Janissaries were now of two main categories:

- i- *Ağa Bölükleri*: Bölük/Squadrons for the direct service of Ağa in his administrative work as Chief-of-Staff,
- ii- *Cemaat Ortaları*: Orta/Regiments having particular military functions as a whole. “*Ağa*” and his “*Cemaat*” were forming an integral unity.¹⁵⁰

The following table shows a general view of the *Ocak* with its units and their missions:

UNITS OF THE <i>OCAK</i>		
ORTA	REGIMENT	MISSION
1- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry. (Only the second division has a duty of keeping dogs in addition to camels)
2- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN		
3- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN		
4- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN		
5- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN		
6- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN		
7- YAYA ORTASI	Seventh Infantry	Ordinary assignment
8- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
9- YAYA ORTASI	Ninth Infantry	Ordinary assignment

¹⁴⁸ Dernschwam, Hans, *Istanbul ve Anadolu'ya Seyahat Günlüğü*, (Ankara, Kültür ve Turizm Bk., 1987), p. 90

¹⁴⁹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, p. 168; (Uzunçarşılı was also confused with the terms Orta and Bölük The difference between *Orta* and *Bölük* is that *Ortas* have 100 personnel while the *Bölüks* only 50. Sekban Ortası and Ağa Bölükleri Ortası were two irregular ortas containing many bölüks in them.)

¹⁵⁰ Uzunçarşılı uses the two terms “Orta” and “Cemaat” interchangeably as if they may have the same meaning. But a closer study reveals that “Cemaat” is a term containing all the “Orta”s.

10- YAYA ORTASI	Tenth Infantry	
11- YAYA ORTASI	Eleventh Infantry	
12- YAYA ORTASI	Twelfth Infantry	
13- YAYA ORTASI	Thirteenth Infantry	
14- HASEKİ ORTASI	Imperial Guards	Close body guards for the sultan. On friday prayers stand right beside the sultans, two on the right and two on the left.
15- YAYA ORTASI	Fifteenth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
16- YAYA ORTASI	Sixteenth Infantry	
17- ÇERĞECİ ORTASI	Tent Guards	Guard the entrance to the tent of the sultan on the battlefield. Construct a specially designed tent in front of the sultan's, only through which he could enter.
18- YAYA ORTASI	Eighteenth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
19- YAYA ORTASI	Nineteenth Infantry	
20- YAYA ORTASI	Twentieth Infantry	
21- YAYA ORTASI	Twenty First Infantry	
22- TÜFENKÇİ ORTASI	Rifle Shooters	Responsible for rifle fire power during battles.
23- YAYA ORTASI	Twenty Third Infantry	Ordinary assignment
24- YAYA ORTASI	Twenty Fourth Infantry	
25- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
26- YAYA ORTASI	Twenty Sixth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
27- YAYA ORTASI	Twenty Seventh Infantry	
28- İMAM-I HAZRET-İ AĞA ORTASI *	Regiment of the Agha's Imam	Leads the corps in the prayers. Responsible for the Orta Mosque in the middle of the Headquarters.
29- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
30- YAYA ORTASI	Thirteenth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
31- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty First Infantry	
32- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Second Infantry	
33- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry

34- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Fourth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
35- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Fifth Infantry	
36- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Sixth Infantry	
37- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Seventh Infantry	
38- YAYA ORTASI	Thirty Eighth Infantry	
39- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
40- TEKKE ORTASI	Tekke (Regiment of the Dervish Convent)	Responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Bektashi Lodges within the headquarters. (1 in the Old, 4 in the New Chambers)
41- YAYA ORTASI	Fourty First Infantry	Ordinary assignment
42- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
43- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN		
44- YAYA ORTASI	Fourty Fourth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
45- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
46- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN		
47- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN		
48- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN		
49- HASEKİ ORTASI	Imperial Guards	Close body guards for the sultan. On friday prayers stand righ beside the sultans, two on the right and two on the left.
50- YAYA ORTASI	Fiftieth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
51- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty First Infantry	
52- KATRANCILAR ORTASI	Tar Specialists	?
53- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Third Infantry	Ordinary assignment
54- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Fourth Infantry	
55- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Fifth Infantry	
56- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Sixth Infantry	
57- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
58- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Eighth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
59- YAYA ORTASI	Fifty Third Infantry	
60- SOLAK ORTASI	Left Handed Guards	Private Guards of the Sultan. They accompany the sultan to anywhere he goes, half of them on the right

61- SOLAK ORTASI		and half of them on the left. The ones walking on the left are expected to keep ready to shoot with their bows with their left hands. On the battlefield they surround the sultan and do not let anybody including his closest assistants without prior consent or invitation. 4 regiments 100 personnel each.
62- SOLAK ORTASI		
63- SOLAK ORTASI		
64- ZAĞARCI ORTASI	Keepers of the Zagar Dogs	Breeds Large hunting dogs for sultan's hunting parties. 35 keepers accompany the sultan on horse (435 personnel 35 cavalry and 400 on foot)
65- SEKBANLAR ORTASI	Sekban Squadrons	Originally a separate organization designed for hunts. After integration into the <i>Cemaat Ortas</i> it became an exceptionally big <i>Orta</i> . 35 Squadron with various functions led by <i>Sekbanbaşı</i> /The Chief Sekban (1 Squadron cavalry, 34 Squadrons infantry)
66- HASEKİ ORTASI	Imperial Guards	Close body guards for the sultan. On friday prayers stand right beside the sultans, two on the right and two on the left.
67- HASEKİ ORTASI	Imperial Guards	
68- TURNACI ORTASI	Keepers of the Cranes	Keeps cranes and dogs for hunts. Responsible for collection of devshirme boys.
69- YAYA ORTASI	Sixty Ninth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
70- YAYA ORTASI	Seventieth Infantry	
71- SEKSONCU ORTASI / SAMSONCU ORTASI	Keepers of the Wallachian Sheepdogs	Keeps sheepdogs for sultan's hunting parties. Sheepdogs were presented to Mehmed II by the Ottoman vassal for Wallachia. (Possibly by Vlad Drakul, the famous Dracula)
72- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Second Infantry	Ordinary assignment
73- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Third Infantry	
74- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Fourth Infantry	
75- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
76- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Sixth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
77- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Seventh Infantry	
78- CEMAAT-I ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry

79- YAYA ORTASI	Seventy Ninth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
80- YAYA ORTASI	Eightieth Infantry	
81- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty First Infantry	
82- ZENBEREKÇİ ORTASI	Arquebusiers	Originally kept and shot the mechanical bow-like weapon, arquebuse. Later, with the advancement of rifle technology, the name was kept but rifles were used instead.
83- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty Third Infantry	Ordinary assignment
84- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty Fourth Infantry	
85- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty Fifth Infantry	
86- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
87- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN		
88- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty Eighth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
89- YAYA ORTASI	Eighty Ninth Infantry	
90- YAYA ORTASI	Nintieth Infantry	
91- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
92- TÜFENKÇİ ORTASI	Rifle Shooters	Responsible for rifle fire power during battles.
93- YAYA ORTASI	Ninty Third Infantry	Ordinary assignment
94- İMAM ORTASI*	Regiment of the Agha's Imam	Imams responsible for prayers reside. Danişmends and mülazıms volunteered and chosen from among the janissaries were educated. (This regiment was originally the seat of the representative of Hacı Bektaş. Murad III gives it to the imams instead)
95- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
96- YAYA ORTASI	Ninty Sixth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
97- YAYA ORTASI	Ninty Seventh Infantry	
98- CEMAAT-İ ŞÜTÜRBAN	Camel Keepers	Keeps camels for transportation of battle equipment and weaponry
99- HUKESANLAR ORTASI	Bektashi Dervishes	Dervishes of the Bektashi Order. Accompany the Ağa in ceremonies praying loudly. Also before and during the battle they encouraged the janissaries with religious preachings.

* The Regiment of the Agha's Imam was subject to change. The regiment he resided was called "İmam Ortasi".

100-YAYA ORTASI	Hundredth Infantry	Ordinary assignment
101-BEYTÜLMALCI ORTASI	Chief Accountant	Keeps the financial records of the whole Ocak. Responsible for procurement and supply of the janissaries' daily needs both in times of peace and war.
+ 1 AĞA BÖLÜKLERİ	Squadrons of the Commander General	61 Squadrons having administrative functions each.

Fig.5 Units of the *Ocak* and their functions

At the peak of their power (around the end of the 16th century), the Janissary Corps were composed of 100 regular *orta* regiments (A total of 10,000 personnel with 100 troops each¹⁵¹), 1 *Sekban Bölükleri Ortası* (A total of 1,750 personnel with 35 squadrons 50 troops each¹⁵²), and 1 *Ağa Bölükleri Ortası* (A total of 3,050 personnel with 61 squadrons 50 troops each) adding up to a sum of 14.800 men.

		ORTA/REGIMENT	BÖLÜK/SQUADRON	NUMBER OF PERSONNEL
AĞA		-	61	3.050
CEMAAT	YAYA	100	-	10.000
	SEKBAN	-	35	1.750
TOTAL				14.800

Fig. 6 Personnel composition of regiments and squadrons

In most of the cases due to a variety of duties assigned to their members, like *koruculuk* (security keeping in important buildings), *yasakçılık* (security keeping in remote villages where the forces of the local sipahis could not supply enough safety for villagers), *serdarlık* (guarding castles), or for some other reason, it was not possible to retain the pre-planned number of personnel within the ortas, but this was the rule.

A study of the number of personnel of the *Ocak* throughout the Ottoman history, shows that the above mentioned rule was first violated during the reign of Murad III,

¹⁵¹ Özcan, Abdülkadir (ed.), *Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi*, (Istanbul, Eren, 1994), p.43

¹⁵² Uzunçarşılı, p.168; Dernschwam, Hans, *Istanbul ve Anadolu'ya Seyahat Günlüğü*, (Ankara, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1987), p. 90

right after his accession to the throne in 1574. A radical increase was witnessed when he ordered that the artisans who had participated in the festivities held during the circumcission ceremony of his son, Prince Mehmed, be admitted into the *Ocak* directly without passing through the tiresome devshirme process. According to traditional historians, It was a major blow on the system.

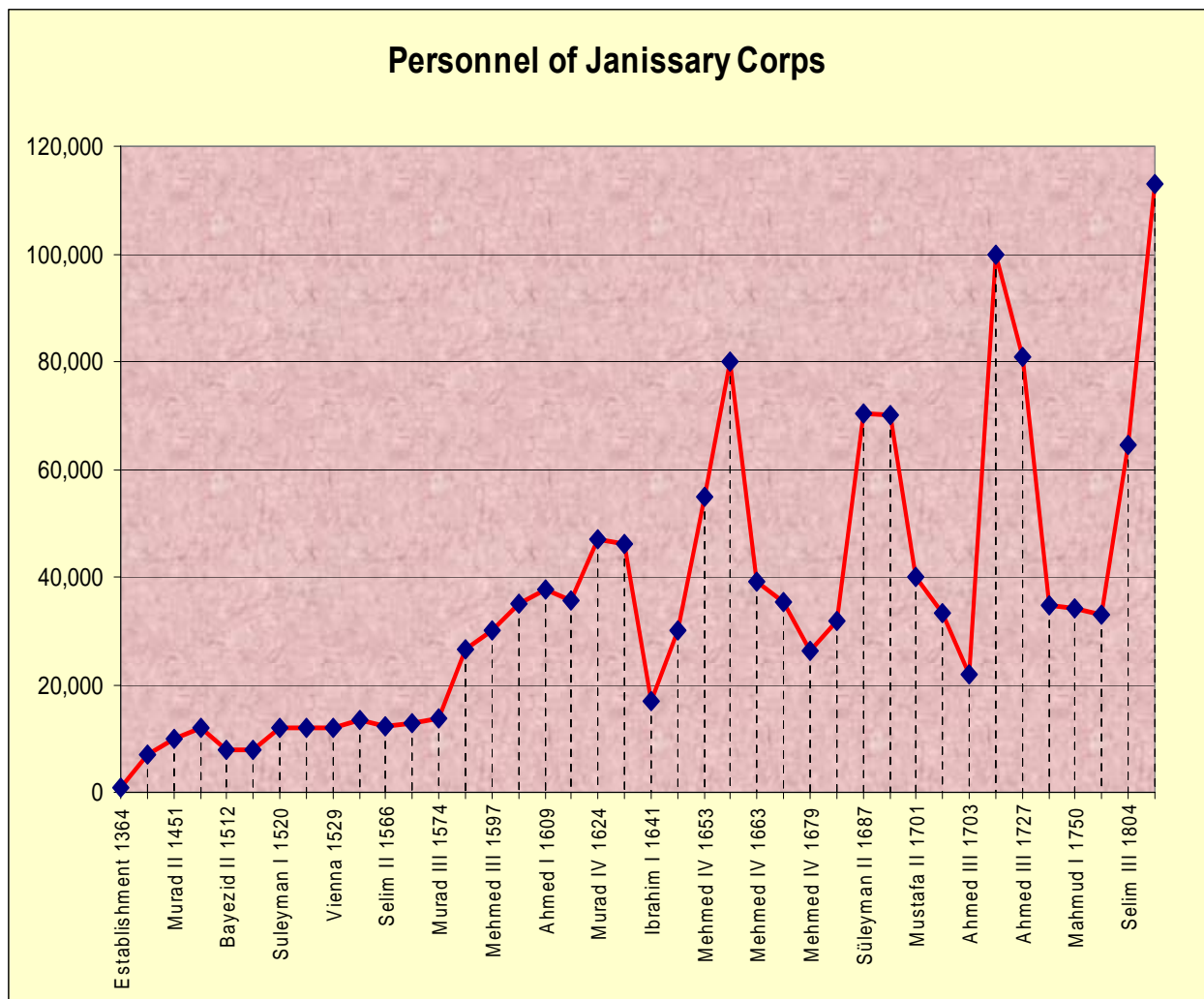


Fig. 7 Personnel of Janissary Corps (by time)

A closer look at the above data shows the scale of the increase in the personnel numbers during the reign of Murad III. It had risen from 13,599 troops (at the year of Murad's accession, 1574) to 26,600 troops (at the accession of Mehmed III, 1595). This corresponds to a 95% increase in 20 years of Murad's reign. The number of the

personnel continued to increase steadily during the reign of his son, Mehmed III (1595-1603) reaching 35,000 in 1598. Thus we understand that within the last quarter of the 16th century, mostly due to the “violation” of the devshirme law, the *Ocak* had experienced a major shift in scale.

It is generally believed that the number of personnel had increased steadily throughout the centuries after the collapse of devshirme system, sometimes reaching incredible numbers over hundreds of thousands. If so, one is compelled to ask howcome only over a 6,000 janissaries were found and executed during and after Vaka-i Hayriyye? How could it ever be possible to crush a “crowd of bandits” with say 200,000 members so easily?

A quick look at the distribution of the personnel on active duty and in retirement in 1702 shows us that a considerable part of such numbers may belong to the retired or the dead, *esami*/ salary rights of whom were traded. Therefore I believe , contrary to the general assumption, there could never be so many janissaries on active duty in the end.

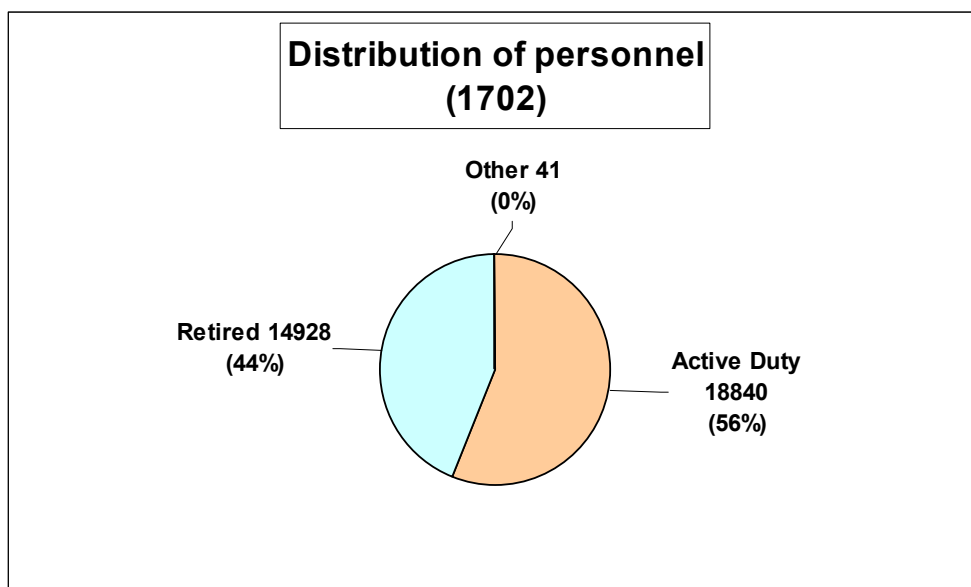


Fig. 8 Distribution of (active) personnel (1702)

Start of the Decline: Murad III (1574 – 1595)

Although the main target of this study is not to reveal how the *Ocak* was spoiled but to concentrate on and extract the very rules from which such deviations were exercised, a few words need to be said about the reign of Murad III. He had inherited an almost perfected system of janissary corps and an able Grand Vizier, Sokullu Mehmed Pasha from his father, Selim II but on the other hand his reign was full with challenges for a sovereign. His decision to allow ordinary artisans to be admitted into the janissary corps without passing through a cumbersome process of *devshirme*, was going to change everything. It was a sign that he had chosen his side in the ongoing rivalry between the sunni orthodox ulema and the non-orthodox *devshirme Ehl-i Örf*. No doubt, he was aware of the consequences of his act.

Hearing the decision, Ferhat Pasha, the Ağa of janissaries had anticipated the will of the Sultan would lead to the collapse of the whole janissary corps when he resisted against Murad III's decision. He was courageous enough to oppose the Sultan's will openly, but his courage ended with his dismissal from office and a new Ağa was assigned rightaway. Not surprisingly, the new Ağa, Yusuf Pasha executed the Sultan's orders. KY conveys the incident with a slight tone of sympathy for Ferhat Pasha:

... "My Sultan! It is unlawful to register these to the Ledger of Appearances. Now, if these are registered by sultanly orders, the *devshirme* (system) will be spoiled. If (once) aliens enter into them (the janissaries) others will also do....*Nizam-ı Alem* (The World Order) will be destroyed." he said. Ferhat Pasha was knowledgeable on each and everything about the *Ocak* but in front of the sultan, when his enemies uttered : " When a *yayabaşı* (Head of Infantry; Captain) collects it is allright. But when it comes to the Sultan of the World, it is not right! (How ridiculous!)" , the sultan got furious and ordered again that

they should be admitted into the devshirme. Ferhat Pasha again said: “My Sultan! I do not have consent for taking these into the *Ocak*. Because whoever enlists them will be unlawful. And I do not want the *Ocak* to be damaged under my jurisdiction.” Sultan Murad then furiously said: “ Who can dare do anything unlawful in my reign? I say it and it is The Law!” and discharged Ferhat Pasha from office. He made his servant Yusuf Pasha the (new) *Ağa*.¹⁵³

Murad I had founded the organization, Murad II had strengthened it and now Murad III was putting a bomb to the very foundations of the janissary army. His act was going to trigger a series of events leading to a gradual disintegration of the whole devshirme system. But why had he done that? Might he have done it because he was furious when a minor fight between the Sipahi and the janissaries occurred and a Sipahi was killed during the last days of the festivities?¹⁵⁴ After all, it is well known that he had decided to cancel the rest of the festival program. Or might he have done it simply out of his deep sympathy for the artisans who participated in the festivity procession?

His act seems to be more than a mere short-sighted reaction against an immediate issue. Instead, it was the first step of a number of consistent pre-emptive strikes against janissaries and their Bektashi Order, a conscious political move against non-orthodox members among his subjects. His determination to overrule the Law shows that he was convinced an action was necessary and he was ready to proceed. Proceed, he did.

In 1591, a large scale mosque was ordered to be built in the middle of the *Et Meydanı*, Meat Arena of the New Barracks instead of a small “mescid” (unlike Arabic or Persian, the word points to a small praying space).¹⁵⁵ The mosque was to be called “Orta Camii” (Middle Mosque) later on. Then he assigned an imam for each orta and bölük, the salaries of whom were going to be paid from the collective

¹⁵³ Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 155

¹⁵⁴ Hammer, Joseph von, *Osmanlı Tarihi-II* (Istanbul, M.E.B., 2005), p. 179

¹⁵⁵ *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.I, p. 252

funds of the Ocak. Still pushing further, he ordered Quran reading sessions to be held every night in every chamber of the janissaries. Possibly being irritated by the Alevi, Tahtacı, Kızılbaş, Kalenderi uprisings in Anatolia, Murad III was gradually positioning himself with the ulema on the side of the sunni orthodox view.

In fact, the Sultan seems to be surrounded by a number of scholars like Hoca Saadeddin (Sultan's personal tutor), Kadızade Ahmed Şemseddin Efendi (Sheikh-ul Islam between 1577-1580), Kürdizade Abdurrahman (Imam of the Palace), Bostanzade Mehmed Efendi (Sheikh-ul Islam between 1589- 1592 and 1593-1598), and Sheikh Şüca (Preacher of the Palace, The Royal Oracle) and their pages.¹⁵⁶

The first target of this clique was Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, the talented *Sadrizam* of Suleyman I, and Selim II (in office between 1565- 1579).¹⁵⁷ On one hand, they were encouraging the Sultan to exert his own authority, on the other they were paving the way to destroy the Sadrazam. Within five years after the enthronement of Murad III, members of the Sokullu network were eliminated one by one. Then finally in 1579 the siege was completed and they were able to take the main obstacle out of their way.

First step was Nişancı Feridun Bey. He was deranked and assigned to a lower post, sanjak beyi of Belgrade. He was immediately replaced with a Reis-ül Müderissin, the Headmaster of the religious school founded by Mehmed II.¹⁵⁸ Then Arab Mehmed Pasha was killed in Cyprus. The next blow was to Michael Cantacuzenos. He was imprisoned then killed with accusations of being harsh on people under his authority (26 January 1578). A few months later his beloved nephew Mustafa Pasha, the respected governor of Budin was executed (10 October 1578), and a man from

¹⁵⁶ Hammer, p. 175

¹⁵⁷ Akdağ, Mustafa, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası, Celali İsyancıları*, (Ankara, Barış, 1999), p.255

¹⁵⁸ An unconventional way of assignment. Traditionally a scholar was not meant to do a Nişancı's duty.

the close circle of Murad III, Üveys Pasha was assigned in his place. Sokullu must have felt that his turn had come.¹⁵⁹

The final attack came within a year (1579). Sokullu was assassinated during a Divan-ı Hümayun meeting by a Bosnian man disguised in dervish clothes. The assassin was claiming that he was angry for the mistreatment of his timar lands. But like the committed, self-sacrificing assassins of Hasan Al-Sabbah, it was not possible to take any other words out of his mouth, even under torture. The man was executed the next day and the Sokullu era was finally over.¹⁶⁰

The “*Ulema Clique*” was now ready to implement its own agenda. Following actions show that abolishing the devshirme system was only a part of a wider power game played against the non-orthodox components of the Ottoman Empire¹⁶¹:

- 1- The Observatory built by Sokullu in the Tophane region (1575) where the famous astronomer Takiyüddin El-Rasıd (1526-1585) was recruited to do research, was destroyed in 1580.
- 2- Drinking wine was banned. (The government was forced to step back following an uprising by the *sipahi*.)
- 3- All the christian churches were decided to be turned into mosques. (The government stepped back due to pressure from European states.)
- 4- The “loose” women were to be deported out of Istanbul all together. Sheikh-ul Islam Kadızade and Sheikh Şuca personally attended the search for loose women street by street and brought them in front of judges.(15 June 1577)
- 5- Many privileges were given to the *İlmiye*, religious scholars’ class. They became superior to all the *beylerbeyi* (except Anadolu and Rumeli beylerbeyi).

¹⁵⁹ Hammer, p. 154-156

¹⁶⁰ Hammer, p. 156

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p. 143-200

6- Sultan started a tradition of presenting clothes for summer to the *kibar-ı ulema*, elite scholars.

7- The irregular “*Arpalık*” paid to the Sheikh-ul Islam were turned into *Vazife* (Duty) regular payments.

Furthermore, uprisings of the medrese students in Anatolia started increasing after the death of Sokullu.¹⁶² His strict policies were abandoned and the government decided to negotiate with the rebels.

On 23 August 1582, the *sofıa*, students were offered a treaty. The treaty was declaring that a general amnesty was granted for all the crimes committed by the rebel students; no further persecution was to be done against them and provided that they express their repentance they would be given *dirlik*, regular income.¹⁶³ The treaty did not end the uprisings, it did not even slow them down. Two years later the treaty was renewed and still further privileges were given to the rebellious medrese students. Government officials were prohibited to interfere with the affairs of the members-to-be of the *ilmiye* class, the students in the *medrese*. The criminals were to be punished by their own appointees, the *kemerbaşı* (Belt-holder).¹⁶⁴

Such events must have been pushing the janissaries to a corner where they were also forced to take their side. Their initial reaction was in the form of silent resentment. We find them insisting on going to Erzurum via Bolu and not via Konya (which is a far more longer destination by the way) with the rest of the army when the expedition against Iran started on 5 April, 1578. Mustafa Pasha preferred to visit

¹⁶² Akdağ, p.266

¹⁶³ “... *Amma şunlar ki yarar olup, şuğuldan feragat etmiş olalar, ol makulelerden delaletlerine tevbe ve istiğfar edenlere arz veresiz ki Asitane-i Saadetime getirüp ibraz eylediklerinde istihkaklarına göre riayet olunup gönüllü gediğine ve sair münasip olan dirliğe ahkam-ı şerife verile...*”, Ibid, p.272; with reference to Mühimme Defteri 48, p. 77

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 275

Konya and the tomb of Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi having his fortunes told with the help of Mesnevi.¹⁶⁵ No doubt the hearth of janissaries must have preferred to visit Hacı Bektaş instead.

The real explosion of the accumulating unrest occurred when the first devaluation was done and the salaries of the janissaries were paid with devalued coins in 3 April 1589. For the first time in the three hundred years of Ottoman history, the army entered into sultan's palace with weapons in hands seeking compensation for injustice. They demanded the heads of the Rumeli Beylerbeyi Mehmed Pasha and Defterdar whom they claimed responsible and Murad III did give them what they wanted. This event marks the start of a new way of declaring their discontentment, which was to evolve into a habit of rioting by refusing to eat the food offered by the Sultan or holding their cauldrons up. They had decided to take their own side, the janissary brethren. Rioting became their method of reacting to any injustice towards their members, the *yoldaş*.

Soon they rebelled again. On 2 August 1591 the janissaries raided into the house of İbrahim Pasha, governor of Diyarbakır, whom they blamed for beating a fellow janissary to death. İbrahim was imprisoned in Yedikule.¹⁶⁶ Eight months later they rebelled a third time. They managed to change their Ağa and the Sadrazam (23 March 1593). Within four years they had rebelled for three times. Mutual trust between the Ottoman dynasty and their servant guards was fading away.¹⁶⁷

Led by the ulema, Murad III was alienating himself and his dynasty with the non-orthodox subjects of his empire, a process that would reach its peak with Mahmud II in "Vaka-i Hayriyye", 1826.

¹⁶⁵ Hammer, pp.161-62

¹⁶⁶ Hammer, p. 199

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.200

In conclusion, the Janissary Corps was an institution established by Murad I as a tool to suppress his allies like Mihaloğulları, Malkoçoğulları or Evrenosoğulları families, the frontier lords. The establishment of such a professional army by taking one of the five captives brought back by the *akıncı* raiders, was an obvious act to change the status of the House of Osman as *primus inter pares* among other magnates living in the frontier lands in alliance with the Ottomans. This tax-in-kind was a step towards centralization and it was met by those centrifugal forces with open discontentment who left Bayezid I all alone on the battlefield against Timur. The House of Osman was threatened to its foundations and for more than a decade it struggled to survive. It had come very close to extinction.

After Mehmed I's reunification of the state, the method of collecting captives as *Penchik* for the Janissary Corps was used together with a uniquely Ottoman system of collection the Christian boys, subjects of the sultanate. This new system was called *devshirme*. It gradually became the main source of recruitment for the Janissary Corps. The boys were sent to some areas in inner Anatolia to live for several years with Turkish families in order to learn the language, traditions and religion. Then they were called to the capital (first Edirne then Istanbul) to enter into the *Hearth of Novices*. As slave-servants they were trained so as to endure the hardships of war. In two or three years' time, generally they would receive the right to enter into the *Hearth of Janissaries* and finally become the members of the *janissary brethren*. Admittance into the *Hearth* meant to enter into the *silsile* (promotion Path) as a *Kara Kullukçu* and depending on their own talents they could rise up to the rank of *Kethüda Bey*. Appointment of *Yeniçeri Ağası* (the Commander General) was reserved to the Sultan himself.

The system with all its procedures, had reached its maturity at the end of the sixteenth century until the reign of Murad II who decided to change the system right from its foundations. He proclaimed that Turkish speaking muslim artisans were allowed to become janissaries without passing through a proper devshirme process. His decision was met with bold opposition of the then Commander General, Ferhat Pasha but he was dismissed and replaced by another Pasha who implemented sultan's orders right away. This move by Murad III, though seems naive at first sight; was the calculated first step of a general policy (designed by an "ulema clique") against heterodoxic components of the empire. Janissaries were caught in between two forces fighting for supremacy in a seemingly spiritual battle over a conflict of political interest.

CHAPTER IV

BEKTASHI PRACTICES OF THE JANISSARIES

In this chapter, we will try to show how the janissaries adhered themselves to the Bektashi Order and that the Bektashism was an intrinsic characteristic of the Hearth. Janissaries' The relationship of the janissaries with the Bektashi doctrine had by far exceeded the boundaries of being superficial. Bektashism had its deep impact on both visible features of janissaryhood like the *glbang* prayers, *peymane* style salutations, symbols on the regiment and squadron banners, and the Holy Cauldron, but also on invisible innate qualities like reverence for caliph Ali and his double-edged sword, *Zulfikar*, a deep conviction for the Forces of the Unknown, and above all else, the set of values set forth by the Bektashi *Yol* (The Path). We will see how the *Yol* had been instrumental in shaping both the spiritual worlds of individual janissaries and the organization of the Hearth as a military institution together with its initiation procedures, traditions, ranking and promotion systems. A closer scrutiny of the Hearth under the light of the Bektashi doctrine and its related terminology, will hopefully help us to reach a better understanding of the nature of the janissary brethren and the logic behind this institution.

That the janissaries were members of the Bektashi Order is well known. They were the followers of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli. A statement in the *Kavanin-i Yenieriyân* bears out this issue:

...The laws and rules of standing and sitting down [of conduct] of the above mentioned group [the janissaries] in their chambers and elsewhere are

according to the rules of the dervishes of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli. Their rule is celibacy. And not to wear a beard until they get *ih_tiyar* (old)...¹⁶⁸

Many details show us how Bektashism had become an inseparable part of their identity. Some are noted below.

A famous janissary, Mimar Sinan (1490-1588) was taken into devshirme and had entered into the acculturation process during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520). After learning carpentry in the Hearth of the Novices, he had participated in the Iran and Iraq expeditions with the sultan and was admitted into the *Ocak* after the army arrived at Istanbul. During the reign of Sultan Suleyman he was first promoted to be an “*Atlı Sekban*” (Cavalry squadron of Sekbans), then to be “*Zemberekçibaşı*” (Captain of Arquebusiers’ 82nd Division), and to be “*Haseki*” (Captain of one of the four divisions of Imperial Guards, 19,49,66,67th Haseki *Ortas*) before he was assigned as the imperial architect. Sinan confesses that it was difficult for him to leave “The Path” even for a post like the Head Architect of the Sultan.¹⁶⁹ He was proud to be janissary and his pride can be traced in his lines:

<i>Padişahın kadim-i çakeriyiz</i>	Since ancient times, we are Sultan’s slaves
<i>Kal’a hıfz etmenin dahi eriyiz</i>	We are the soldiers to protect castles
<i>Eskiden kuluyuz yeniçeriyiz</i>	We are janissaries, his old servants
<i>Yanar oda girer semenderiyiz</i> ¹⁷⁰	We are salamanders entering into flaming fires

Sinan gives his testimony on the Bektashi nature of the janissary corps and confirms KY in his “*Tezkiret-ül Bünyan*”:

¹⁶⁸ KY, p.171. (...*Ve zikrolunan taifenin odalarında ve sair yerlerinde durmada ve oturmada kanun ve kaideleri Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli ’nin fukarasının kullandığı kaide üzerinedir. Kaideleri mücerred olmaktadır. Ve tamam ihtiyar olmayınca sakal koyvermemektir.*)

¹⁶⁹ Sai Çelebi, Mimar Sinan, *Tezkiret-ül Bünyan, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, Yıllık 4*, (İstanbul, 1990), p. 69

¹⁷⁰ Op.cit.

*Olub yeniçeri çekdim cefayı
Piyade eyledim nice gazayı*

I became a janissary, I suffered
I walked in many holy wars (as an infantry)

*Yolumla sanatımla hizmetimle
Dahi akran içinde gayretimle*

With my Path, my art and my service
And my efforts among my equals
(brothers)

*Duruşdum ta ki tıfliyyet çağından
Yetişdim Hacı Bektaş Ocağı'ndan*¹⁷¹

Stood together since my childhood
I was raised in the Hearth of Hacı Bektaş.

Another janissary poet, Benli Ali (17th century) praises the heroic deeds of his comrades, the Bektashi in Algeria and writes:

*Cezayir'in kahramanı
Kafire vermez amanı
Severler Al-i Osman'ı
Hacı Bektaş koçağıdır.*¹⁷²

Heroes of Algeria
Never stop attacking the infidel
They love the House of Osman
They are the fighters of Hacı Bektaş.

Mevacib Defteri, The salary ledgers of the jannissaries used to start with a statement declaring that the janissaries were the followers and dervishes of Hacı Bektaş. The following example is from 1644.¹⁷³

“Hail to the Janissaries of the Grand (Imperial) Convent! The children and the dervishes of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! May Allah bless his secrets and may Allah’s light shine on his grave until the day of religion (Apocalypse)! In the times of Salih Ağa, the Commander General of the Janissaries of the Grand Convent and the Clerk of Janissary Corps Mehmed Efendi, the salary of masar in the year 1644...”¹⁷⁴

Yet another (and earlier, 1623) *Mevacib Defteri*, salary ledger starts with a similar but longer version of the above prayer.¹⁷⁵ After praying for Allah and Prophet

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 67 (His tomb lies at a cross-roads behind Suleymaniye and in front of *Ağa Kapısı*, the palace of General Commander of Janissary Corps. His choice reflects his deep bonds with the *Ocak*.)

¹⁷² Elçin, Şükrü, *Akdeniz’de ve Cezayir’de Türk Halk Şairleri*, (Ankara, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1988), p. 120

¹⁷³ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.450.

¹⁷⁴ “...Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergah-ı Ali lazale aliyen kuçekan-ı Dervişan-ı Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Kaddaes-Allah-ü Sırrıh-ül-aziz ve nevrulla-ü markadehu ila yevmiddin. Der zaman-ı Salih Ağa-i Yeniçeriyân-ı Dergah-ı Ali ve katip-i Yeniçeriyân Mehmed Efendi der vacib-i masar sene 1054 (M. 1644)...”

¹⁷⁵ Kapıkulu Ocakları, V.1, pp.433-35;

“Euzu-billahi mineşşeytanirracim, Bismillahirrahmanirrahim
Dua idelim evvel Allah-ü teala hazretlerinin birliğiyçün, hatemmünnebiyyin Hazreti Muhammed-ül-Mustafa'nın sallallah-ü teala aleyhi vessellem pak münevver mutahher aziz ve şerif latif ruh-ı şerifleriyçün
Aliçün, evladiyçün, Ashabıyçün, çiharyar-ı güzün tebeu tabiin eimme-i müctehidiyn ervahıyçün,
Gelmiş geçmiş enbiya ve evliya ve ulema-i izam ve meşayih-i kiram selametiyyçün,

Muhammed, the prayer refers to Caliph Ali, a sign showing the priority given to Ali compared with the former three, by the janissaries, and sanctifies Ali together with his children, his circle of friends, *Çiharyar-ı güzin*¹⁷⁶ and *Tebe-i Tabiin*¹⁷⁷. Then again Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli is mentioned in the following manner:

(Let us pray) For the holy spirit of the Pole of the Universe, The Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! May Allah Bless his secrets!... May His secrets and His High Will be upon us and upon you...

Here, Hacı Bektaş is exalted as “the Pole of the Universe” and “The Sultan”. This pattern repeats itself in most of the janissary prayers consistently. The inscription on the first page of the very same ledger gives us clues on how the janissaries see themselves: “ ... *The children, the dervishes, the gazis, the muhibs*¹⁷⁸ *of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli...*”¹⁷⁹

The janissaries also used to call themselves “*Ocağ-ı Bektaşiyân*” (The Hearth of Bektashis), “*Taife-i Bektaşiyê*” (Followers of Bektaş), “*Güruh-ı Bektaşiyê*” (Group of Bektashis), “*Zümre-i Bektaşiyân*” (The Bektashi Society); the system of their promotion as “*Silsile-i Tarik-i Bektaşiyân*” (The Promotion in the Path of Bektashis); their officers as “*Ağayan-ı Bektaşiyân*” (Officers of the Bektashis),

Kutb-ı alem Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli kuddise sırrühü-ül aziz hazretlerinin Ruh-ı şerifleriçün; Rıdvanullahi teala aleyhim ecmain Sırları ve himmet-i aliyeleri üzerlerimize ve üzerlerinize hazır ve nazır olmaklığıçün; Salatin-i maziyyin için, hala izzetlu ve saadetlu Padişah-ı alempenah hazretlerinin Ömr-ü devleti yevmen feyevmen ziyad ber ziyad olmaklığıçün;

Asakir-i islam her nereye müteveccih olurlarsa mansur ve muzaffer olup ada-yı din hor ver hakir olmaklığıçün; Ağa hazretlerinin selametlığıçün ömrü devleti yevmen feyevmen ziyad ber ziyad olmaklığıçün; Ve bu sadırdan gelmiş geçmiş katibiyn-i maziyyin için; hala Efendi hazretlerinin selametlığıçün; Ömrü devleti yevmen feyevmen ziyad ber ziyad olup, tevabii ve levahiki ile daima sıhhatte ve selamette olmaklığıçün;

Ve bu makamdan gelmiş geçmiş halifelerimiz ervahiçün ve hala halifelerimizin gönülleri muradıçün. Devam-ı din ve devlet için def-i bela için, reddi kaza için ve rıza-yı Habibullah için ve Rızaullah için Celle ve Ala, Fatıha!”

¹⁷⁶ The four caliphs; Ebubekr, Omar, Osman, Ali.

¹⁷⁷ The ones who met the ones who personally had met Prophet Muhammed. Secondary sources of hadith.

¹⁷⁸ Muhib: Lover (In the mystical sense) Please note that the same word is used for the members of the fourth Gate.

¹⁷⁹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p. 435

(“*Ya Hayy, Ya Ali, Ya Baki, Ya Muin!*”

Defter-i ...Yeniçeriyân-ı dergah-ı ali lazal aliyyen, Ya Ali, Ya Baki! Küçkan-ı Dervişan-ı Gaziyân-ı Muhibban-ı Hazret-i Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Kaddes-allahü sırrah-ül-aziz ! Der vacib-i Masar sene 1033 ...”)

“*Sanadid-i Bektaşiyân*” (The Elite of Bektashis), or “*Rical-i Dudman-ı Bektaşiyê*” (Post-Holders of the Tribe of Bektashis).¹⁸⁰

Ricaud (an British diplomat who stayed in Istanbul for five years during the reign of IV. Sultan Mehmed [1648- 1687]) tells us that Hacı Bektaş had millions of followers and that all the janissaries of the Ottoman State were Bektashis.”¹⁸¹ Then he adds:

“*Yatağans* (Ottoman mid-sized swords) in their hands and shouting “Hooo!”, the Bektashi dervishes walk on the side of the Yeniçeri Ağası during ceremonies held in public. These men are addicts of entertainment. Morally lowest of the janissaries imitate them and quickly become their disciples. Now they are so many in number that it is no more possible to throw either their bodies or their deficiencies...”¹⁸²

Although his words have a critical tone for the Bektashi dervishes, his testimony gives us a solid proof of the impact of Bektashism on the janissaries. He says that (though he calls them “morally lowest”) some janissaries used to become the disciples of those dervishes. Putting together the two points he makes, we understand that all the janissaries were Bektashis but only some were disciples of dervishes who finally become dervishes themselves. This perfectly matches with the Bektashi practices of the Path. According to practices of the Bektashi Order, an individual who is interested in becoming a Bektashi, (thus entering into the Path), is called an “*Aşık*” (Lover). Then he applies for initiation becoming a “*Talip*” (Applicant). After the initiation ceremony (İkrar Ayini) he/she becomes a Bektashi or a “*Muhibb*” (Lover). The next phase is to become a dervish, then a *Baba*, and finally a *Dedebaba*.¹⁸³ Each phase is interlaced with a number of symbolic duties

¹⁸⁰ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.150

¹⁸¹ Ricaud, p.163

¹⁸² Ricaud, p.164

¹⁸³ Gümüüşoğlu, Dursun (ed.), Yıldırım, Rıza (ed.), *Bektaşî Erkannamesi, 1313 Tarihli Bir Erkanname Metni*, (Istanbul, Horasan Yay., 2006), p.33 (Note that the Chapter title is “Bektaşî Yolu ve Erkan Üzerine” – On The Bektashi Path and Rules of Conduct)

and services but basically it is the spiritual aptness or readiness of the Bektashi that determines his/her transition through phases. So it is important to note that not all the Bektashis have to be dervishes and live a secluded life dedicated to praying.

The dervishes used to reside in the 99th *Orta* which was called “*Hukeşanlar Ortasi*”(Regiment of the Hooing Dervishes). Uzunçarşılı reveals some details on this regiment: “.... *Most of the members of this praying regiment used to live in the New Barracks. Their duty was to pray every morning and evening for the success and well-being of the army.*” He then confirms Ricaut and tells that during ceremonies in public, eight of them used to walk in front of the Yeniçeri Ağası, in green robes, their fists pressed on their stomachs. Dervishes were shouting “*Hoo!*” following their leader’s loud cry “*Kerimallah!*”.¹⁸⁴ In a footnote Uzunçarşılı quotes the Chronicle of Izzi offering yet another testimony on the nature of this regiment:

... the 99th Regiment since old times, belongs to the followers of His Holiness Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli.... Since ancient times, it is the residence of dervishes and a soothing place for the poor and the wounded hearted...¹⁸⁵

A representative of Hacı Bektaş (*Hacı Bektaş Vekili*) used to stay in this regiment and had a say in all the matters related to the *Ocak*.¹⁸⁶ For example in 1655, we see the Sheikh of Hacı Bektaş opposing the appointment of *Sekbanbaşı* Mehmed Ağa as the *Yeniçeri Ağası*. He had not given his consent to that appointment basing his argument on the law that stated *Ağa* should be appointed from *Enderun*, the close circle of the Sultan and not from the *Ocak* itself. Three days later the ruling was drawn back and Çukadar Bosnian Mehmed Ağa from the Palace was assigned as the

¹⁸⁴ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.159

¹⁸⁵ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, pp.159-160(..... 99. Cemaatin ortası öteden beri Cenab-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Kuddise Sırrehülaziz hazretlerine mensub olub ez-kadim mesken-i dervişan ve cay-i direng-i fukara-i dilrişan olmağla...)

¹⁸⁶ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.159 (Uzunçarşılı notes that some other sources give the information that 94th *Orta* was the regiment of the Hacı Bektaş Vekili. Interestingly enough, 99th *Orta* was given to the dervishes in 1591 during the reign of Murad III. 94th *Orta* suddenly becomes the regiment of İmam-ı Hazret Ağa (The Imam of the *Ocak*). Knowing the orthodox nature of the acts of Murad III, one can not evade thinking this was yet another move of the “Ulema Clique” as explained in Chapter II) .

General Commander of the Janissaries.¹⁸⁷ A year later in 1656, the Sheikh is reported to protest the Kadiasker Abdürrahimzade when he happened to punish a janissary. Punishing of a janissary by a non-janissary was unlawful and a vicious act according to the laws of the *Ocak*. Eventually, the *Kadiasker* was dismissed from office.¹⁸⁸ Obviously, the authority of the Representative of Hacı Bektaş was not limited to religious affairs.

The bonds with the central Lodge in Hacı Bektaş and the *Ocak* was so strong that whenever the Baba (in fact *Dedebaba*)¹⁸⁹, the spiritual leader of the Order passed away, the new *Dedebaba* used to visit the *Ocak* in Istanbul. A ceremonial procession was held and he was taken to the *Yeniçeri Ağası*. Possibly after a number of *gülbang* prayers were read for the well-being of the new *Dedebaba* and him sending his holy prayers for the success of the janissaries, he would be crowned by the Commander General. The whole ceremony in *Ağa*'s palace must have taken place in the *Tekkeli Köşk* (Villa with Lodge) which had a large sofa where *Ağa* used to host the *Sadrazam*.¹⁹⁰ Then again the procession would go to the office of the *Sadrazam* where he would be presented a robe. He would stay in the janissary barracks until his return to his Lodge in Hacı Bektaş.¹⁹¹ It is not difficult to imagine that his visit

¹⁸⁷ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.178, <... Piran-ı Post-nişin-i Bektaşiyiye ağa-i cedit için ocaktan Ağa olmağa rıza vermemenin yevm-i salisde azl ile yerine Harem-i Hümayun'dan Çuhadar Boşnak Mehmed Ağa tayin olundu... (Silahdar Tarihi, c.1, s.32)>

¹⁸⁸ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.361

¹⁸⁹ To analyze the rivalry between the *Babagan* (Bektashi branch regarding Hacı Bektaş as celibate, thus having no biological children [*Beloğlu*]; for them Hacı Bektaş only had children of the Path, [*Yoloğlu*]) and *Çelebi* (regarding themselves descendants of Hacı Bektaş, thus *Beloğlu*) branches is beyond the scope of this study. But considering the celibate nature of the janissaries as a rule, *Babagan* claims seem to be valid at least in the case of the janissaries. *Çelebi* branch seems to be organized as an Alevid *Ocak* which traditionally is not accessible by non-Alevids. On the contrary, the main feature of Bektashism of janissaries is that it is open to membership via initiation which made devshirme possible. Thus, Bektashism as exercised by the janissary corps seems closer to *Babagan* branch than it is to the *Çelebi*.

¹⁹⁰ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.391

¹⁹¹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.150

was a big event for the janissaries, but especially for the four *Tekke* Lodges (one in the Old Barracks, four in the New Barracks)¹⁹² and the dervishes mentioned above.

Out of respect, *Ağa* would stand up whenever the name of Hacı Bektaş was pronounced during a *gülbang* prayer. He could then sit down but all the rest of the janissaries and the officers would be praying standing up.¹⁹³

Janissaries were Bektashis. This is a fact. But was it only a superficial bond as most of the historians interested in the subject claim?¹⁹⁴ If not, how did they practice Bektashism and to which extent was Bektashism influential in creating a chivalric fraternity among janissaries? Now that they called themselves *Yoldaş*, what could the *Yol* be? Let's start with who Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli was.

Hacı Bektaş: The Sage of the Hearth

Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, the legendary founder and the patron saint of the Janissary corps was a sage coming from the region Khorasan in Eastern Persia. He was born in 1209/10 in Nishaboor. Khorasan, in the 13th Century, was one of the main centers of Islamic scholarship. Bektaş was raised in a famous school of thought by Lokman-ı Perende (The Flying Lokman) who in turn was a disciple of Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1167?), the founder of the first known sect of Turkic origin. Bektashi tradition regards Yesevi as a miraculous personality who could travel in time and space freely, and a magus who had the ability to change his appearances into

¹⁹² See Chapter II, The Headquarters

¹⁹³ Marsili, Graf, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Zuhur ve Terakkisinden İntihatı Zamanına Kadar Askeri Vaziyeti*, (Ankara, Büyük Erkanıharbiye Matbaası, 1934), p.85; *Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi*, p.45

¹⁹⁴ Birge, p.87 (" Recognition of the authority of Bektaş as the Sage and superficial acceptance of some (of his) teachings, does not seem to be successful in spiritualization of Janissary way of life...); Farouqhi, p.138-39 (on possible exaggration of such a link); Öz, Baki, *Bektaşilik Nedir?*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 1997), pp.141-142

animals. A famous episode in *Vilayetname*¹⁹⁵ tells how *Horasan Erenleri* (the Saints of Khorasan) had become cranes¹⁹⁶ and flew to invite Ahmed Yesevi for a meeting. While they were on their way, Yesevi himself had also turned into a crane in order to join them.¹⁹⁷

According to the hagiography, Bektaş follows and eventually surpasses his tutors in his talent for showing miracles. He gets the title of *Hacı* (pilgrim to Mecca) by appearing suddenly in front of his master Lokman-ı Perende. *Vilayetname* describes how he received his *icazetname* (diploma) from Ahmet Yesevi:

... There was an elifi tac¹⁹⁸ of length of a zira¹⁹⁹ on Ahmet Yesevi's head. This crown was given to prophet Muhammed by God together with a hırka (sweater), çerağ (candle), sofrâ (table) and a seccade (praying rug)²⁰⁰ (the symbols were then transferred to Murtaza Ali, to İmam Hasan, to İmam Hüseyin, to İmam Zeynel Abidin, to İmam Muhammed, to İmam Ca'fer Al Sadık, to İmam Musa-ı Kazım, to İmam Aliyy-al Rıza) İmam Rıza had given them to Hoca Ahmet Yesevi, the grandest of 99.000 Turkistan sages. They (the sacred relics) all stayed in his tekke. He had not given them to any of his disciples. If anybody asked, he would say " Their owner will come (one day)" (Then one day his disciples gathered to force Yesevi for a decision. And he said:) Whoever prays on top of a heap of corn grains may get them.... (Hacı Bektaş appears and placing the rug on the heap he prays. All the holy objects fly and take their places on and around Hacı Bektaş)... Hoca shaved Hünkar (the Sovereign) according to the rules of conduct, gave him the sacred relics, and his diploma. He said, "Oh, Bektaş! You have received your complete share of God's gifts. Congratulations you are the Kutbu'l Aktab (Focus of the Foci) now, you will have a reign of forty years...."²⁰¹

Ahmet Yesevi then assigns Hacı Bektaş as the leader of the sages of Anatolia and sends him to Sulucakarahöyük (present day Hacı Bektaş, a small town to the south

¹⁹⁵ Hagiography of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli containing his miraculous deeds. Also known as "Menakıbnâme-i Hünkar Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli". Present version was copied by Ali Çelebi from an earlier version in 1624. (J.K.Birge, based on the absence of later teachings, states that the original *Vilayetname* must have been written before 1400)

¹⁹⁶ Melikoff, Irene, *Hacı Bektaş – Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, (Istanbul, Cumhuriyet, 2004), p. 42. "Semah", the Bektashi ritual dance is a symbolical representation of cranes dancing.

¹⁹⁷ Ali Çelebi, *Hacı Bektaş Veli- Vilayetname*, (Istanbul, Karacaahmet Sultan Dergahı Yay., 2001), p.32

¹⁹⁸ A hat made of felt in the shape of the first letter, "Elif" of Arabic alphabet. This is the hat of the janissaries. "Tac" means "crown" and is generally used to mean "hat".

¹⁹⁹ Zira: An old unit of length equivalent to 75 to 90 cm.s depending on its usage. The distance between the elbow to the end of the middle finger. (Develioğlu, Ferit, *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lugat*, (Ankara, Doğuş, 1978)

²⁰⁰ Symbols of sainthood.

²⁰¹ Ali Çelebi, *Hacı Bektaş Veli- Vilayetname*, (Istanbul, Karacaahmet Sultan Dergahı Yay., 2001), p.33

of Kırşehir). After travelling in the Middle East for several years he finally reaches his destination in the shape of a dove. He is not welcome by the Sages of Anatolia but soon he is able to impress and to frighten them. Hacı Bektaş thus becomes their master.

The hagiography continues with many other episodes showing how he performed his duty of spreading and protecting Islam among the peoples of Anatolia. In each story, Hacı Bektaş is challenged by powerful personalities but he manages to overcome all those challenges and receive the obedience of the challengers. Each story seems to be designed to function as another brick in an architecture of legitimacy on top of which Hacı Bektaş stands. All the local rulers, and other eminent, popular saintly figures are carefully placed within his domain in an attempt to prove that he had rightfully received the title “*Kutb ’ul Aktab*”, Focus of the Foci.

The Bektashi oral tradition gives information on the chronology of events in his life with a method showing clear Hurufi influences. The method was used to teach the life of Hacı Bektaş to his followers and it is based on a calculation of the numerical values of the arabic letters in some formulas in guise of words²⁰²:

1- *Mürüvvet*: مروت Gives 646(H.)/1248 (A.D.), the year of his birth.²⁰³

2- *Reft*: رفت Gives 680(H.)/1281 (A.D.), the year he had arrived at Anatolia at the age of 44.²⁰⁴

3- *Müddeti ömrü Muhammed’dir cemali*: محمط Gives 92, the years he had lived.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Birge, John Kingsley, *Bektaşilik Tarihi*, (Istanbul, ANT Yay., 1991), pp. 36 -38

²⁰³ “Mürüvvet”: (mim = 40) + (re = 200) + (vav = 6) + (te = 400) = 646 (H.)

²⁰⁴ “Reft”: (re = 200) + (fe = 80) + (te = 400) = 680 (H.)

²⁰⁵ “Muhammed”: (mim = 40) + (ha = 8) + (mim = 92) + (dal = 4) = 92

Gives 337 (A.D.), the year of his death²⁰⁶

This tradition is interesting since it supports Enveri's view that Osman (1299-1326) had met Hacı Bektaş and Oruç's view that Orhan (1326-1359) had received permission from Hacı Bektaş before establishing a new army and deciding their outfit (*Azaps*, the infantry force before janissaries). The above *Hurufî* explanation perfectly fits with the reigns of Osman and Orhan Beys. If this information was correct then Aşıkpaşazade would have been proven wrong in saying "there was no relation whatsoever between the Osman or his sons with Hacı Bektaş"²⁰⁷ but new information, in turn, shows that Aşıkpaşazade was right.

Hacı Bektaş died in 1271. There is now a consensus among scholars on this issue. According to a note in a *Vilayetname* copied by Ciritli Derviş Ali in 1765, Gölpınarlı has claimed that Hacı Bektaş was born in 1209/10 and died in 1270/71 at the age of 63.²⁰⁸ In fact, this claim gets even stronger when evaluated together with some additional information given by Birge. In a document prepared by a certain Sheikh Suleyman Veli, he is referred to as "*The lands close to merhum (Late) Hacı-Bektaş-ı Veli...*". This document dates back to 1295.

Another record from 1297 contains the expression "... *And the village of Hacı Bektaş, Kuddisa Sırruhu (May Allah Bless his Secrets)...*" which is a proof that a

²⁰⁶ First addition, "Bektaşîye": (be = 2) + (kef = 20) + (te = 400) + (elif = 1) + (şın = 300) + (ye = 10) + (he = 5) = 738 (H.); second addition, "Asvab-ı rihlet": (elif = 1) + (sad = 90) + (vav = 6) + (elif = 1) + (be = 2) + (re = 200) + (ha = 8) + (lam = 30) + (te = 400) = 738 (H.) Both sums are 738.

²⁰⁷ APZ, p. 572 (... *Ve her kimse kim Hacı Bektaş, Al-i Osman'dan kimse-y-ile musahabet itdi, dirse yalandur, şöyle bilesiz.*)

²⁰⁸ Melikoff, p. 95; Gölpınarlı, Abdülbaki, *Menakıb-ı Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli – Vilayetname*, (Istanbul, 1958), pp. XIX-XX

village was named after him (only possible after a person's death) and that epithet “*Kuddisa Sirruhu*” was already used then (only used after a saint's death).²⁰⁹

Hacı Bektaş had come to Anatolia with his brother Menteş. Menteş was killed in Sivas during the clashes of the Babai Rebellion.²¹⁰ In contrast to the general view of scholars (including Melikoff, Ocak, Birge, Köprülü et al.) Menteş was killed while trying to defend Sivas against the rebels. This caused Hacı Bektaş to take part in the final battle of the rebellion where Baba İshakids were crushed.²¹¹

He was a contemporary of Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, Baba İlyas, Ahi Evran, Sheikh Edebali and Ertuğrul. If we are to believe in Aşıkpaşazade, he had lived all his life in seclusion. Köprülü confesses that he had been mistaken to believe Aşıkpaşazade and accept Hacı Bektaş as “merely” a *mezcup derviş* (an esoteric dervish in complete seclusion) and that a closer study of his life reveals that he was an able sage with a profound knowledge of Islam. No doubt, the content of Hacı Bektaş's “Makalat” (Words) must have changed his opinion.

Makalat, the basic book of Bektashism is believed to be written by Hacı Bektaş during his life time (until 1271). The original text was in Arabic and it was translated into Turkish by Said Emre (Molla Saadeddin)²¹² in the 14th century. It sets the fundamental principles of Bektashism.

Makalat does not lend itself to any categorization as Sunni or Shi'ite. It is a philosophical text combining the Greek and Buddhist traditional conceptions of the universe in Islamic terminology. After a brief introduction, Hacı Bektaş starts his *Makalat* by setting the main principle of Bektashim, The Four Elements: “... *God*

²⁰⁹ Birge, p.45

²¹⁰ APZ, p.571

²¹¹ See Chapter I “Why did the Ottomans choose...”

²¹² A disciple of Hacı Bektaş according to Vilayetname.

*has created humankind out of four substances: Firstly, soil; secondly, water; thirdly, fire; fourthly, wind...*²¹³

Based on the above mentioned concepts, Hacı Bektaş describes four main gates a Bektashi, should pass through but only after stepping each of its 40 levels. Together with a supplementary set of other principles, they form the very basis of the Bektashi *Yol* (The Path) which can only be entered by an “*İkrar*” (Testimony) ritual.

Bektashi *Yol*, The Path

In a “*Sual ve Cevabname*” (Book of Questions and answers) quoted by Birge, we find valuable information on how the *Yol* is conceived by the Bektashis. The answers to the questions set the framework of the Path. Questioning was a method to deem if a person was a real Bektashi or not. Thus, members were expected to be well informed on the issues and concepts raised within the questions.²¹⁴

Q: How many are the fundamental orders of the *Yol*?

A: Six. *Marifet* (Skill), *Sahavet* (Generosity), *Sadakat* (Loyalty), *Yakin* (Knowledge), *Tefekkür* (Thought), *Hakkı özünde bilmek* (Knowing God in one’s self)

Q: What is the prayer of the Path?

A: To cook the things to be taken to *Mürşid*, The Sheikh. (Meaning to prepare the applicants before taking them to *Mürşid*)

Q: What is the ablution of the Path?

A: To cling to *Mürşid*’s robe by quitting all bad habits and attaining qualities worth of praise.

Q: What is the fasting of the Path?

A: To refrain from lying or to say anything harmful.

Q: What is the pilgrimage of the Path?

A: To enter into the heart of *Mürşid*.

Q: What is the *Zekat*²¹⁵ of the Path?

A: Destitute and impermanence.

213 Hacı Bektaş Veli, *Makalat ve Müslümanlık*, (Ankara, Ayyıldız Yay., 1998), p. 17 (Note that the names of the four elements are exactly the same as the Greek classical elements wherein all things exist and whereof all things consist. This idea was put forward by Ionian Empedocles in the 5th Century B.C. It also is similar to the – yet earlier- Buddhist version of the concept of *Mahābhūta*, The Great Elements. At times “void” or “quintessence” is added as a fifth component to this principle – as in Zen in Japan)

²¹⁴ Birge, pp.230-34

²¹⁵ One of the five principles of Islam. To give away one over forty of one’s properties and money as alms (to poor) once in a year in order to attain the cleanliness of one’s earnings. (Develioğlu)

The questioning continues and the questioned person declares he had given his testimony (*ikrar*) in the arena of heroes, in front of the Sage (meaning Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli), and in the council of Muhammed Ali²¹⁶. He also declares that while he was giving his testimony he was in *Dar* (The Gallows)²¹⁷, his face was on the floor and his eyes watching the Path of the saints. During the *ikrar* ceremony he had left death behind and thus transcended death. His answer to the final question (Whose child are you?) can be regarded as the summary of the whole set of Bektashi beliefs:

In *Şeriat* (Law) my father was Adam and my mother was Eve; in *Tarikat* (Order) I am the son of *Yol*, the Path; in *Marifet* (Skill) I am the son of perfection; in *Hakikat* (Truth) (I proclaim) “My father is the sky! My mother is the soil!”²¹⁸

In fact, the Bektashi here refers to the very basis of Bektashism. *Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, *Marifet* and *Hakikat* are the gates on the Path set forth by Hacı Bektaş himself in his *Makalat*:

4 Kapı 40 Makam (4 Gates 40 Posts)²¹⁹

A- *Şeriat Kapısı*: (The Gate of Law): *Abids*²²⁰ belong to this group. Their origin is wind.

- 1- To start believing,
- 2- To learn sciences (*ilm*, religious knowledge),
- 3- To do *namaz* prayers, to give *zekat*, to go to Haj, to go for *Gaza*, to clean oneself,
- 4- To earn (one’s living) rightfully (*helal*), to regard interest as forbidden,

²¹⁶ Note the combined usage of Muhammed and Ali.

²¹⁷ A certain spot in the Bektashi arena of rituals dedicated to Hallac-ı Mansur (d. 922)

²¹⁸ Birge, p.234

²¹⁹ Makalat., pp. 17-30

²²⁰ Abid: Servant slaves, ones who pray. (Note that this is the very word which lies at the root of the muslim names given to janissaries taken for devshirme, Abdullah, Abdülmennan etc.)

- 5- To marry,
- 6- To know what's forbidden in sexual life,
- 7- To be aligned with *sinnet* (Prophet Muhammed's acts and words) and the *cemaat* (other muslims)
- 8- Compassion,
- 9- To be clean (food and clothes),
- 10- To keep away from harmful things.

B- *Tarikat Kapısı* (The Gate of Sect): *Zahids*²²¹ belong to this group. Their origin is fire.

- 1- Repentance,
- 2- To become a disciple,
- 3- To have one's hair cut, wear (appropriate) clothes,
- 4- To fight (with self-indulgence),
- 5- To serve,
- 6- To fear,
- 7- To hope,
- 8- To become a guide (for the right path),
- 9- To become a Holder of a Post, Holder of a Society, Holder of Affection,
- 10- Love, Light of Purity, Fakirdom (Neediness).

C- *Marifet Kapısı* (The Gate of Skill): *Arifs*²²² belong to this group. Their origin is water.

- 1- Manners,
- 2- Fear,
- 3- Fasting,

²²¹ Zahid: One who leaves all pleasures and concentrates on praying.

²²² Arif: Man of knowledge.

- 4- Patience and contentment (with what one has),
- 5- Shame,
- 6- Generosity,
- 7- Science,
- 8- Destitute,
- 9- Skill,
- 10- Knowing one's self

D- *Hakikat Kapısı* (The Gate of the Truth): *Muhibs*²²³ belong to this group. Their origin is soil.

- 1- To become the soil,
- 2- To refrain from criticizing any of the 72 nations,
- 3- Not to refrain from doing whatever one has in his/her powers (for good),
- 4- To be trustworthy for any created thing on earth,
- 5- To face the Owner of the Estate/Universe (*Mülk*) who has The Unison (*Vahdet*),
- 6- To speak of the secrets of The Truth,
- 7- Travel,
- 8- Secret,
- 9- Begging (for God),
- 10- Witnessing (*Müşahade*). Reaching God.

A Bektashi is the follower of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, and his teachings crystallizing in “4 Gates 40 Posts” principle in his Makalat. A Bektashi may become a Bektashi only after participating in an initiation ceremony called “*İkrar Ayini*” (Ritual of Testimony) and continues his spiritual journey through circles towards the center, *Kutb’ul Aktab*, the Focus of the Foci. A Bektashi participates in “*Ayin-i Cem*”

²²³ Muhib: A lover (of God).

(Ritual of Meeting) reading *gülbang* prayers (a variety of prayers in Turkish used in different occasions). As we shall see below, Janissaries were no exception to the rule.

The *Yol* of the Janissary

Yol, The Path as a Bektashi term implies the spiritual journey of the individual passing through the gates described above. It is Bektashism itself. Janissaries used to call each other “*Yoldaş*” (Comrade)²²⁴. KY discreetly exposes the difference between a *Yoldaş* and others by using the word for the novices right after their admittance into the *Ocak*. That is to say no one is a real *Yoldaş* before being a legitimate janissary.²²⁵ At first sight, for the ones who are not acquainted with the terminology, the word *Yol* may seem to imply the steps towards higher posts with higher wages and higher authority. Considering the nature of being a janissary who had to walk all their lives’ long as foot soldiers, the term was indeed quite appropriate. So *Yol* was indeed used as a military term for describing the system of promotion among ranks. But once one gets to know what it represents for the Order of Bektaş, *Yol* has more to offer, a parallel meaning which serves to a better understanding of Janissaries’ religious life.

Yol, as the Path for spiritual formation

The *Yol* was intertwined with a set of rules based on tradition and Bektashi ethics. Obedience to these rules and acting in accordance with them, determined if a janissary was worth to be a *Yoldaş*/Comrade. Once a person was accepted as a

²²⁴ The closest possible interpretation is comrade but the word literally means “Partner in the Path”, brother-in-arms.

²²⁵ KY, p.173 (Before this point KY refers to them as “*Oğlanlar*” –The boys)

Yoldaş he could enjoy the privileges and rights of belonging to a powerful social group in which he could live safe and secure. He would be sure that he would be protected by his brothers-in-arms not only during battles but also in any dispute with non-janissary members of the society regardless of the status of the other party or righteousness of his claim.

Following are the laws of ethics defining the *Yol*, found in the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân*, Book of Law of Janissaries:

*Adab-ı Tarik (Ethics of the Path)*²²⁶

- 1- A janissary is superior to anybody who enters the *Ocak* after him!²²⁷
- 2- A younger janissary is obliged to serve the elder!²²⁸ He may not deserve respect from others unless he serves in his chamber as *Kara Kullukçu*!²²⁹
- 3- A janissary must be trustworthy. All the promises should be kept!²³⁰
- 4- A janissary shall not be punished by a non-janissary or his closest direct commander!
- 5- A janissary may not receive the death penalty!²³¹
- 6- A janissary shall not steal!²³²
- 7- A janissary may not wear a beard until he grows old!²³³
- 8- A janissary shall be celibate!²³⁴

²²⁶ KY, P. 263 (...orta sofaya çıkıp otura, adab-ı tarik nedir göre ve sefer oldukça hizmetle vara.)

²²⁷ KY., p.173

²²⁸ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003),p. 97; (This includes waking up before the elders of the chamber.)

²²⁹ They can not become even an *Odabaşı*, Chamber Master.

²³⁰ KY, p.171 (...Sözü söz ola, namına eğri demiyeler...)

²³¹ Symbolically his name is erased from the records before the penalty is executed.,

²³² "...bir akçeye hıyaneti olan aralarında sığmaz, hakkından gelinir", KY,p. 194

²³³ KY, p.198

²³⁴ KY, p.171

- 9- A janissary may not exercise any trade or craftsmanship!²³⁵ He may not exercise craftsmanship!²³⁶
- 10- A janissary acts with the consciousness that the *Ocak* is the arms and wings of the Ottomans!²³⁷
- 11- A janissary is the sworn brother of the other janissaries!
- 12- A janissary may not acquire wealth!²³⁸
- 13- A janissary is expected to prove to be a hard-boiled fighter!²³⁹
- 14- Anybody who takes refuge into the *Ocak* will receive protection!
- 15- A janissary will be taken care of even if he is retired due to old age or injury!
- 16- A janissary must obey the orders of his commanders even under captivity!²⁴⁰

*İkrar: Initiation into the Path*²⁴¹

Initiation into the Path means to become a *Yoldaş*, Comrade. Passing through a predesigned ritual and exercising a set of acts with symbolic meanings the candidate receives the right to be a legitimate member of the group which he wishes to enter. In a way, initiation is the legitimization of the very existence of an individual among the members of a particular society. Membership generally comes with a package of both privileges and responsibilities. The candidate is expected to accept these by his own free will. Bektashism is no exception to the rule.

Therefore the main problem to be solved regarding the initiation of a janissary into the Bektashi order is its timing. When could they be asked for testimony and

²³⁵ Allowed only after retirement.

²³⁶ I.b.i.d., p.196-197

²³⁷ KY., p.251

²³⁸ Marsilli, Graf, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Zuhur ve Terakkisinden İntihatu Zamanına Kadar Askeri Vaziyeti*, (Ankara, Büyük Erkan-ı Harbiye Matbaası, 1934),p. 73

²³⁹ KY, p.203 (...erlik ve dilaverlik eyliyeler)

²⁴⁰ Marsilli, p. 72

²⁴¹ Birge, p. 196

participate in an *İkrar Ayini* as a *Talip*, a newcomer? We know that right after arriving at Istanbul, the devshirme boys were turned into Muslims by declaring the unity of God with their forefingers. They also were circumcized. Theoretically, the boys were no more Christians and they were accepted as Muslims. This was a simple and quick process, hardly to be called a ritual. Thus, most boys must have been accepting Islam only superficially. Then they were sent to inlands to live with their temporary host families. As explained in the previous chapter, one of the main ideas behind hiring out to the Turk was to have them learn Islam. Could they be initiated into the Order of Bektaş while living with those Turkish families? Probably not, because they still were ignorant of basic Islamic terminology let alone a deeper understanding of Bektashi philosophy. They also must have had difficulties in understanding Turkish which is the language used in Bektashi prayers. On the other hand, it is logical to assume the religious environment they were in, to be close or at least not contradicting with Bektashism in order to guarantee a smooth transition. Obviously, if the boys were raised in an environment which was hostile to Bektashism and Bektashis than entering into the *Hacı Bektaş Ocağı* (The Hearth of Hacı Bektaş) would become a problematic process.

Then comes the Hearth of Novices. Although this Hearth was, in lots of ways, similar to the Hearth of Janissaries the novices were still not allowed to carry the janissary insignia or wear the janissary outfit. Being commanded by the janissary officers, the novicehood seems to be a period for getting acquainted with the janissary and Bektashi principles. They still were not regarded as proper *Yoldaş*. This timing is important because it indicates the junction point where Bektashism meets with janissaryhood and the process of becoming a member of the brethren starts.

We are left with the *Ocak* itself. The janissaries must have been initiated after entering into the *Ocak* but when exactly? Right after entry or later? This timing is important because it marks the entry into the Path. *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* comes up with the following answer:

And after a comrade in accordance with the Law, performs these services (of *Karakullukçu*), the Law (is that) he brings a sheep for the feast of the comrades, they hang it to the hook (for hanging meat) in the sofa of the *Orta*. That night, they cook the sheep and eat it. Then with prayers and praises (to God) they permit the comrade to wrap a *dülbend*²⁴² around his plain *arakiyye*²⁴³.²⁴⁴

Uzunçarşılı rightly relates the terms “to serve” and “to be given the right to wrap a *dülbend* around one’s hat, *arakiyye*” to the traditions of islamic sects. He says that such habits must be regarded as natural when the connection of the *Ocak* with Bektashism is considered.²⁴⁵

Indeed, the author of KY was pointing to an *İkrar Ayini*, Ritual of Testimony held within the sofa of the chamber where the novice was granted recognition by older comrades. He was admitted to be a respectable janissary and was entitled to the corresponding privileges. The sacrificing of a sheep is the Bektashi symbol used in the ritual as an analogy to the candidate himself. *Talip*, The Applicant presents himself as the sheep to be slaughtered and thus receives spiritual death before the physical. The ritual is a process within which the Applicant is reborn as a human being who has left death behind.²⁴⁶ Following is the description of an initiation ceremony of a janissary according to Bektashi tradition:

²⁴² Dülbend: A thin piece of cloth made of cotton with colorful patterns.

²⁴³ Arakiyye: A hat made of wool. Mostly worn by dervishes.

²⁴⁴ KY, p.175

²⁴⁵ KO, v.1, p.285

²⁴⁶ Birge, p. 234 (... on my waist (I have) the belt of guidance (through the Path to God), on my tongue (I have) the testimony, on my feet (I have) the service, behind me there is “death”, before me (I have) my share (of God’s gifts).)

Talip brings in a sheep which will be sacrificed and served during the feast held after the ceremony. The wool of the sheep is cut, spun and a cummerbund called “*Tığbend*”(Sword-belt) is made out of it. This string is to be used during the ceremony.²⁴⁷ A *Talip* has a *Rehber*, Guide²⁴⁸ with him, who will prepare and guide him through the whole ritual.²⁴⁹ While the elders enter into the *Meydan* (The Arena) one by one and take their places in the room, the Guide prepares the applicant in a room nearby (both spiritually –by explaining him the steps and the meaning of the ceremony and teaching him the rules of conduct - and physically – by helping him to take an ablution with water). During the ablution all the prayers are read by the Guide in the name of the Applicant.²⁵⁰

Then the Guide brings the Applicant to the door of the room. In the entrance, they both kneel down on the floor and kiss the threshold. The threshold is considered to be holy based on a hadith, “I am the city of knowledge, Ali is the Gate to it!” by Prophet Muhammed. This is one of the most popular hadiths among the Bektashi circles and it is generally placed on top of the entrances.²⁵¹ Therefore it is almost a sin to step on the threshold while entering a room.

Before the Guide and the Applicant enter into the room, *Mürşid*, the Sheikh addresses the participants: “ What kind of a soul is this newcomer?”, and they reply “Eyvallah!”²⁵² Talip enters into the room barefooted wearing a white shroud and a cummerbund (made out of the sheep he brought previously) hanging down his neck,²⁵⁴ with his Guide and after three steps they salute and stand in front of the *Mürşid* in *Peymançe*²⁵⁵ fashion.²⁵⁶ This particular spot is called “*Dar-ı Mansur*” or “*Dar*” in

²⁴⁷ Melikoff, p. 261-62

²⁴⁸ As for the janissaries, this Guide must have been the *Müteferrika* of each chamber, a rank just above the *Karakullukçu*.

²⁴⁹ Birge, p. 204

²⁵⁰ Birge, pp. 205-206

²⁵¹ Birge, p.122

²⁵² An affirmative remark showing the newcomer is appreciated.

²⁵³ Gümüšoğlu, Dursun (ed.); Yıldırım, Rıza(ed.), *Bektaşî Erkannamesi*, (Istanbul, Horasan, 2006), p.60

²⁵⁴ A symbolic gesture implying spiritual death of the Applicant.

²⁵⁵ *Peymançe*: Literally meaning “little vow” in Persian. In Bektashi circles the word points to certain way of saluting a person as a sign of deep respect. Arms crossed on chest with the right on top while two feet put together and the right toe placed on the left toe.

²⁵⁶ Birge, p. 206

short.²⁵⁷ Then the Guide directs the Applicant towards the *Mürşid* who gives the following advices:

“Oh the Applicant! Why and how did you come to this place? You have heard the Godly (words), you have known the Godly (deeds), you have seen the Godly (visual signs) and (that’s why) you have come! You, the soul! You wish to join the flock of Muhammed-Ali and our masters the Twelve Imams! You wish to enter into the high conduct of our Sage, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! This Path is dire! This is the Path of melamet!²⁵⁸ It (This Path) is an iron pea (painful to swallow)! It is thinner than hair and sharper than sword! It is a shirt of fire! The Saints have said: Don’t you come! Don’t you come! (But if you do) Don’t you turn (back)! Don’t you turn! Whatever the comer owns (must be sacrificed), the life of he who returns (must be taken)! Will you act in accordance with the advices and the orders of the saints (who have reached God)?”²⁵⁹

The Applicant says “*Allah! Eyvallah!* I do accept!” *Mürşid* orders the *Çerağcı*, Candle Handler to wake the candle of the newcomer up.²⁶⁰ He takes the main candle, *Delil* (The Proof) from the *Mürşid* and lights the other candles up. After finally lighting the candle of the Applicant, the Candle Handler salutes the Applicant and *Mürşid* and stands still. Here *Mürşid* reads a prayer the end of which is as follows:

.... Allah! Allah! May God let the candles of the candle owners shine brightly! May the sacrifices of the sacrificers be accepted (by God)! May God and the Saints accept our prayers, salutations, our services and our conducts! May the goodness of the masters of the universe, The Threes, The Fives, The Sevens, The Fourties; the secrets of Ali-the-Chosen; the moment of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli; the candles of the laws of the saints be eternal! For the moment and the cycle of the saints and the truths and for their grandeur, Hooo!...²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ Dar: Abbreviation of “Darağacı” (Tree or platform of strangling). In mystical poetry it is used to point to Hallac-ı Mansur (d.922, strangled for claiming “I am God!”) Technically it is the very center of the Bektashi Arena. (Birge, p.256)

²⁵⁸ Willfully exposing one’s self to accusations, criticisms of others. Readiness to bear difficulties.

²⁵⁹ Birge, p. 207

²⁶⁰ In Bektashi terminology waking up a candle means to light it up. On the contrary, to send it to sleep is to extinguish it. Candle is a highly sanctified object.

²⁶¹ Birge, p.210

Then the Candle Handler puts off and gives the Proof back to the Sheikh. Sheikh says: “ In our Path we need a guide. Stand up and kiss the hand of your Guide²⁶²”.

Applicant does as commanded. The Guide leads him to the door and taking his *arakiyye* (the white felt hat) gives it to the Sheikh. Then he brings the Applicant back to Mürşid who once again whispers the following to the right ear of the

Applicant:

I request forgiveness and compassion (from God). (Repeating) I request forgiveness and compassion (from God). For all my sins I request forgiveness of Allah, the Great. For all my crimes which I have committed consciously or unconsciously. . . . Whether known or unknown (by others) I repent for all of my sins. My God! You are the one to know the hidden, to cover the shameful, and to forgive the sinful (acts).

Oh the Applicant! Believe in Allah, Muhammed, Ali and the Twelve Imams! Know you the unity of your sect! Know your real Mürşid is Ali, your Rehber is Muhammed! Do not lie! Do not eat haram (what’s forbidden for somebody, somebody else’s money or holdings)! Do not slander! Do not be lustful! Have full control of your hand, your tongue and your belly (loins)! Do not have arrogance or grudge! Do not be envious (of others)! Cover whatever you see, but do not tell what you have not seen! Do not take anything which you have not put yourself! Do not stretch your hand out to places beyond your reach! Do not say a word where you are not listened! Watch the lessons in life! Talk with softness! Behave gently to the young and with respect to the old! Purify your testimony! Know the existence of God in your essence, be informed of the secrets of saints! Your Mürşid is Ali, your Rehber is Muhammed! Your sect is Caferism, your society is rescued (from Hell)! Your Sage is Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! Keep your essence permanent in this Path as this (as told to you above)! Hooo for the earlier, Hooo for the later!...²⁶³

Then with prayers *Mürşid* places *Talip*’s *Tac* (crown/his own *arakiyye*²⁶⁴ hat) back on his head and takes the cummerbund from his neck, wraps it around his waist binding it with three knots. The three knots are symbols corresponding to “*Elbağı*” (Handband implying the promise not to steal), “*Dilbağı*” (Tongueband implying the

²⁶² Kissing a hand and pressing it to one’s forehead is a gesture of respect shown to the other person. (Generally of the elders)

²⁶³ Birge, p. 213

²⁶⁴ Note that *arakiyye* is the same hat we have seen above for the *Karakollukçu*.

promise not to lie), “*Belbağı*” (Bellyband implying the promise not to do adultery or not to fail to one’s lust).²⁶⁵

The Arena is cleaned with a broom by a *Süpürgeci*, Broom-Handler²⁶⁶ and the ceremony ends with a feast in which the sheep sacrificed by the Applicants is served. With minor differences this must have been the ceremony a janissary was expected to pass in order to become a real (and Bektashi) member of the *Ocak*. A rookie janissary could now be regarded a *Yoldaş* walking together with his brothers on the *Yol*.²⁶⁷

The Janissary and Celibacy

Mücerredlik (Celibacy) is a tradition of Bektashi dervishdom. Celibacy for the Bektashi dervishes was quite a convenient tool for preventing janissaries to worry for the ones they should leave behind (wife, children or other relatives) each time they had to go for a battle. The method was keeping them bondless especially when the fact that they were converted into muslims and Turks, thus aliens to their own families. The idea was to keep them as an isolated group ready to fight without any second thoughts. KY tells that the Headquarters were built for that reason and the rule of celibacy was strictly applied until the reign of Sultan Selim. Then Selim

²⁶⁵ Birge, p. 214

²⁶⁶ Broom (*Süpürge/Çarub*) Handler is one of the services in *Meydan*. His gestures mark the start and the end of the rituals. Broom is the symbol of both spiritual and physical cleanliness. The Broom symbol had become an ornament for the officers of the *Ocak* which they carried on their hats. (... *Ve çorbacıların giydiği börk üzerinde olan süpürge sorguç kim vardır, anı Yıldırım Bayezid Han –aleyhirrahmetü ve ’r-rıdvan- hazretleri zamanında Karamanoğlu hain olub üzerine varub feth olundukda Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli –Kaddesellahu sırrehul aziz – hazretlerinin merkad-ı şeriflerin ziyaret etmeğe birkaç yayabaşı varub ziyaret etdiklerinde devekuşu yününden bir demet süpürge edüb merkad-ı şeriflerini anıla süpürürler idi. O çorbacıların birisi teberrüken ol süpürgeyi alub başına giydikde bir mertebede ziyet verdi kim, sair çorbacılar dahi ol yünden getirüb ol süpürge numunesinde bağladub ol üsküfün üzerine geçürdiler. Ol andan bu ana değin dahi giyerler....*; KY, p.171)

²⁶⁷ In fact this was not the only time a janissary had to participate such a ceremony. We learn from KY that there were at least two other ceremonies that marked certain stages in janissary’s life. (KY, p.175) (...*Ve nice yıllar dahi hizmet edüb eski olduktan sonra sakalın koyvermeye dahi bir koyun asarlar, kanun budur. Nice zaman dahi bu minval üzere hizmet etdikden sonra eski olub orta sofaya odabaşıyla eğer yemek yemeğe ve eğer sair hizmete geldikde ihtiyar yoldaşlar yollu yolunca oturdukda anda dahi bir koyun asmadan ortaya çıkub oturmak kanun değildir. Asar, dahi geçer oturur...*)

allows the brother of his second vizier, Yunus Paşa to marry but for a long time it was strictly limited to retired janissaries²⁶⁸ and it was only possible with the personal permission of the Sultan himself. A Spanish observer, a certain Pedro, who had lived in Istanbul between the years 1552-1556 refers to the celibacy of the janissaries in his memories²⁶⁹:

None of the janissaries get married.... They can not marry because they are janissaries. They only can be assigned as a commander or a Sipahi, cavalry or another post. Only then they can be relieved of the life in the barracks....

In fact, this tradition had survived until the end and the janissaries had to be unmarried if they wished to get promoted.²⁷⁰ Still, marriage was regarded as a deviation from the initial design of the corps even though the sons of married janissaries were also allowed into the *Ocak* as “*Kuloğlu*” (Son of a janissary). Yet this change was criticized by the author of KY, although himself a *Kuloğlu*, he also complains that other (“real”) janissaries were calling them as “*Saplama*”²⁷¹ and he wants to be freed of that nickname. His complaint is a proof that *Kuloğlus* were made to feel that they were still not welcome in 1606, the year KY was written.²⁷²

Marriage was first allowed by Sultan Selim I.(1512-1520), restricted to the elderly in the beginning and thus the law of *Mücerredlik* (Celibacy)²⁷³ was damaged, tradition still favoured celibates until the end. Ricaut’s testimony gives us the information on the situation in the seventeenth century:

... It can be stated that the Sultan trains his *Kapıkulu* (Servants of The Gate) soldiers with an intelligent method but in hard conditions. Just like monks in monasteries... Although it is not prohibited, most of the janissaries do not

²⁶⁸ KY, pp. 154, 157,173

²⁶⁹ Kurutluoğlu, A. (Transl.), *Türkiye'nin Dört Yılı, 1552-1556*, (xxx, Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, Istanbul),p. 106

²⁷⁰ Ricaut, *Türklerin Siyasi Düsturları*, (Istanbul, Milliyet Yayınları, 1996), p.213

²⁷¹ Someone who enters a cue disrespecting the others waiting, someone who acts unrightfully and gets something (i.e. a privilege) which he does not deserve.

²⁷² KY, p.263 (...*ta kim yeniçeri oğulları “saplama” namından halas olalar...*)

²⁷³ A Bektashi tradition for the DedeBaba post, the leading spiritual position within the Order.

marry. But if once they marry, the way to increase their wealth and to rise to higher posts will be obstructed... ²⁷⁴

The Janissary Brethren

The only unprecedented side effect of celibacy method was that it served to strengthen the bonds among the individual janissaries, a closely knit society which was to react instantly to any sort of conflict with non-janissary outsiders (at times including the sultans). A brethren was created. A brethren like other warrior fraternities in the world, it had its own symbols, rules of conduct (*erkan*), manners (*adab*), its own ranks (*silsile*), its own rituals and code of honour.

Following *gülbang* prayer used in the “*Kılıç Kuşanma Merasimi*” (Ceremony of Putting on a Sword) was quoted in “*Erkanname*” (The Book of Bektashi Conduct) by Balım Sultan (d.1519)²⁷⁵ and it introduces yet other Bektashi terminology used by the janissaries:

Bism-i Shah! Allah, Allah! Hooo!

Yolum yolunuz, kolum kolunuz, dolum dolunuz, dinim dininiz!

My Path is your Path, my arm is your arm, my chalice is your chalice, my religion is your religion!

Başım yolumuzda, canım uğrunuzda, malım törenizde kurban!

Here I sacrifice; my head for Our Path, my life for your sake, my possessions for your law!

Dilim tercüman, erenlerden ferman, tuz-su-ekmek gördüm! Yoldan ayrılırsam tuttuğunuz kılıç, boynuma doğrak, mürdüm. Gerçekler demine, Pir gayretine. Ya Ali HUUU...

My tongue is (my) interpreter (I testify that), (I received) orders of elders, I saw salt'n water'n bread! If I ever depart from Our Path, let the sword you hold, cut my head and let me be dead! For the moment of truths, for serving the Sage. Ya Ali, Hooo!

Allah, Eyvallah!

(Then the janissaries all together)

Ey Muaviye ümmeti,

²⁷⁴ I.b.i.d., p.214

²⁷⁵ Balım Sultan is the legendary second founder (Pir-i Sani) of the Bektashi Order. He was assigned by Sultan Bayezid-ı Veli (Bayezid II, 1481-1512) to organize the Order and was sent from Seyyid Ali Sultan convent in Dimetoka to Hacı Bektaşlı convent in 1501. The inscription on the gate of the tomb of Balım Sultan dates his death to the year 1519. (Birge, p. 65)

Oh Muawiya's²⁷⁶ ummat!
Ey düşman-ı Muhammedi!
Oh the enemies of Muhammed!
Siz küfrâni, biz şükrâni,
You, the blasphemous, we, the thankful (to God)!
Siz bir taraf, biz bir taraf!
You, on one side, we, on the other!²⁷⁷

This *gülbang* was read during an oath ceremony. Emel Esin argues that it is a janissary version of a long-lasting Oguz tradition of taking an oath among warriors. Kaşgari states that whenever the Turks took an oath, they used to take their swords out of their scabbards and holding them towards the man across, they used to say “Let this enter as blue and come out as red!”²⁷⁸ Obviously meaning if the oath was violated by any of the participants, his blood was to be shed by sword. In the legend of Dede Korkut, while declaring his obedience to Alp Kazan, a warrior Beyrek was saying “*Let me be cut by my own sword, let me be slashed like the ground, let me be blown (away) like dust!*”²⁷⁹ Yazıcızade also refers to such a ceremony that occurred after the conquest of a fortress and tells that while taking an oath, the fighters would form a circle and drink wine from a chalice (*dolu*).²⁸⁰ Yazıcızade does not clarify if those fighters were janissaries or not but still his testimony shows us that the practice was not uncommon among the Ottoman warriors.

The *Seyfi* (Swordsman) branch of futuwwa brethren uses salt and water instead of wine in taking an oath of allegiance and only then a candidate may be granted his sword.²⁸¹ They base this tradition to Prophet Muhammed who is told to have given a

²⁷⁶ 1st Umayyad caliph (661–80), one of the greatest Muslim statesmen; son of Abu Sufyan, a Koreish tribesman of Mecca. He submitted to Islam the year of the surrender of Mecca and became Muhammad's secretary. Under Umar he became the governor of Syria. He struggled with Ali over the government of the empire and led in the deposition of Hasan. (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001-05 Columbia University Press)

²⁷⁷ Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (Istanbul, Nazenin, 2000), pp.54-55

²⁷⁸ Esin, Emel, *Türk Kozmolojisine Giriş*, (Istanbul, Kabalıcı, 2001), pp.134-5

²⁷⁹ I.b.id., p.144

²⁸⁰ I.b.i.d., p. 142

²⁸¹ Sarıkaya, p. 55

sword to caliph Ali, his son-in-law, the first and foremost heroic character in Islam. The author of the oldest known *Futuvvetname* (The Book of Brethren) in Turkish, Çoban El Burgazi (13th century) gives more information on how a swordsman was to receive his sword: “.... *The condition for a swordsman is to testify (ikrar) and then to stand still. Then his duty is to drink salty water. Only then his belt is wrapped around his waist.*”²⁸² Burgazi adds that the basis of swordsmanship was to serve, as caliph Ali had served Prophet Muhammed and had become the patron saint (*Pir*) of the swordsmen.²⁸³

An interesting detail in Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyan show us that when they learned they were assigned to the 34th Orta (The Sekban), the janissaries used to utter “ *We have eaten salt and bread together. Let it be helal!*”²⁸⁴,²⁸⁵ Although at first sight this expression seems simply to be a complaint to fellow janissaries for being assigned to an unpopular *Orta* (It was an exceptionally large division, difficult to come out for high posts) but at the same time it is a solid reference to the oath of allegiance by the janissaries themselves. In one of his poems, a janissary poet Kul Deveci refers to this tradition as follows:

<i>Kul Deveci söyler sözü özünde</i>	Kul Deveci says (his) words in essence
<i>Namerdin tuz ekmek dursun dizinde</i>	May the salt&bread get stuck in cowards' throats!
<i>Gazi Murad Paşa ol cenk yüzünde</i>	Gazi Murad Pasha was the one in that fight
<i>Haykırıp coştuğun seyran eyledim.</i> ²⁸⁶	Screaming and gushing I watched merrily.

In fact, Uzunçarşılı also notes this old rule of janissaries, taking an oath of allegiance: “(During an uprising in 1703, the janissaries in Edirne)... *promised* (to fight against the fellow-janissary rebels in Istanbul) *and in accordance with their*

²⁸² I.b.i.d., p. 57

²⁸³ Op.cit.

²⁸⁴ A ironical usage of a farewell remark, roughly meaning “Alas! I had bad luck. Bless me!”, KY, p. 180

²⁸⁵ An interesting habit since we know that Mimar Sinan was initially a sekban.

²⁸⁶ Boratav, Pertev Naili, *Halk Edebiyatı Dersleri*, (Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı, 2000),p. 122

*rules they took an oath on salt, bread, Qur'an and sword, put on a large tray...*²⁸⁷

John Kingsley Birge too, refers to this tradition of oath taking and says that the each janissary had to vow his dedication to the Path of Hacı Bektaş, the *Yol*.²⁸⁸

The Janissary and Reverence for Ali

The main feature of the above oath is the open declaration of hatred against Muawiya and his followers. In fact, this is one of the main principles of Bektashism called “*Tevella ve Teberra*”; meaning to love Ali and his beloved and to hate and keep away from his enemies. By saying “You on one side, we on the other!” the janissaries clearly define the side they adhere to: Ali.

Traditionally Bektashis are expected to do the following conversation when they meet another Bektashi for the first time:

- At the Gate, what do you stand on?
- On (my) testimony.
- What is the meaning of “The Gate&(its) Threshold”?
- The Gate is Imam Ali, its top is Muhammed, the two sides are Hasan and Huseyin.
- What is the sign in the midst of the sages?
- (The sign is) “*Tevella*” and “*Teberra*”.²⁸⁹

The concept of “*Tevella ve Teberra*”²⁹⁰ reveals itself in the emphasis put on Ali (598 – 661) and the hatred expressed against the followers of Muawiya. Known as the “*Esedullah*” (Lion of Allah) or “*Şir-i Yezdan*” (Lion of the Creator) and “*Seyf üd-din*” (The Sword of the Religion) among many other epithets, Ali is the prominent figure for the fighters of Islam, the idol of the warrior classes throughout the centuries. He is “The Ultimate Hero” and “The Gate to the Knowledge”²⁹¹. This exaltation of Ali’s legendary heroicism crystallizes in the slogan “*La feta illa Ali, la*

²⁸⁷ *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.I, p.289

²⁸⁸ Birge, *Bektaşilik Tarihi*, p. 86 (footnote no. 2)

²⁸⁹ Eyuboğlu, İsmet Zeki, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 2000), p. 153

²⁹⁰ To love Ali and the ones who love him, to hate the ones who hate Ali.

²⁹¹ Based on a hadith of prophet Muhammed saying: “I am the city of knowledge and Ali is the Gate to that city.”

seyfe illa Zulfikar!” (No hero but Ali, no sword but Zulfikar!)²⁹² and Janissaries used to carry this slogan on their banners.

A janissary flag (possibly from the eighteenth century) displayed in Hacı Bektaş museum, Kırşehir, contains the following poem on it:

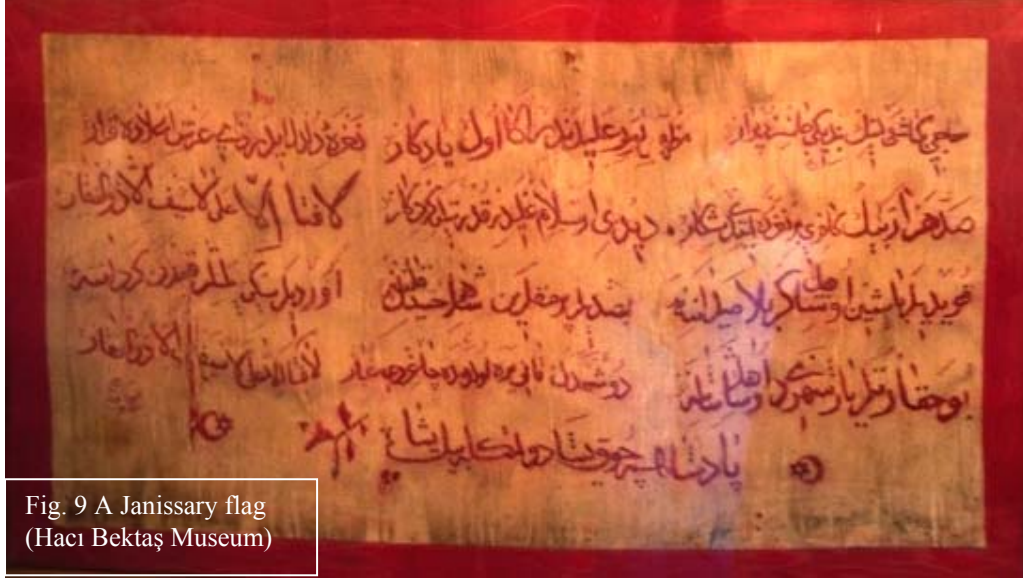


Fig. 9 A Janissary flag (Hacı Bektaş Museum)

<i>Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli'nin bindiği cansız duvar</i>	A wall without a soul, rides Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli
<i>Mazhar-ı nûr-ı Ali'dendir ona ol yadigâr</i>	Is a remembrance from the Holy Light of Ali.
<i>Nare-i düldül iderdi arş-ı âlâda karar</i>	Battle cry of Duldul, in the zenith of the sky, would stay
<i>Sed Hezare bin Kafiri bir narada etti şikar</i>	Hundred thousand times a thousand infidels, with one cry, made his prey
<i>Dedi arslanım Ali'dir kudretine girdiğâr</i>	Saith (God)“That’s my Ali! Embracing his power,
<i>Lâ fetâ illa Ali, Seyfe illa Zülfikâr</i>	No hero but Ali, no sword but Zulfikar!”
<i>Koydular başın o şahın Kerbela meydanına</i>	They put the head of that Shah on Qarbala field
<i>Bastılar parmakların Şah Hüseyin'in kanına</i>	Pressed their fingers on Shah Huseyin’s blood
<i>Urdular miskin pelitler kıymadan gerdanına</i>	Without pity, dirty enemies slashed his throat
<i>Bu hakaretler yaraşmazdı o şahın şanına</i>	Such insults would not fit that Shah’s glory
<i>Düşmeden kanı yere ol demde çağırdı gübar</i>	The moment before his blood dropped on the ground, the dust called
<i>Lâ fetâ illa Ali, Lâ seyfe illa Zülfikâr</i>	No hero but Ali, no sword but Zulfikar!
<i>Padişahım çok yaşa, devletinle bin yaşa.</i> ²⁹³	Long Live my Sultan! With your state, you live a thousand times!

In Bektashi doctrine, caliph Ali has a special place. He is a semi-godly figure sometimes reaching extremities with subtle implications that point to his godly

²⁹² *Feta* is an Arabic word for “hero”. Note that it is the very root of the word in “*futuwwa*” (Brethren of Heroes).

²⁹³ Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (Istanbul, Nazenin, 2000), p.28

nature. Such extremities sometimes crossing the line of Shi'ism²⁹⁴ constitute the main cause of dispute with the sunni orthodox doctrine.

Caliph Ali, as a historical personality was born in 598. He was the son of Prophet Muhammed's uncle, Ebu Talip and as a child, Ali was adopted by him. He then becomes one of the first believers of Muhammed, marries Fatima, one of the daughters of the prophet.²⁹⁵ He had two sons, Hasan and Huseyin who were to be killed by Muawiya in the famous incident of Qarbala. This killing is the seed of the great split between the two sects of Islam; Sunna and Shi'a. An event still remembered and moaned by the Shi'ite by torturing themselves, even today.

Ali was famous for his military might, his virtues and his talent in rhetoric among his contemporaries. Although he was the son-in-law of prophet Muhammed and reportedly the most popular candidate for successorship, he could become the fourth caliph in 656 only after Ebu Bekr, Omar and Osman. He had to deal with many rebellions and clashes during his reign, especially with Muawiya, the ruler of Syria. He was killed in 661 and buried in Nejef, a town in present Iraq, close to his headquarters in Qufah.²⁹⁶

Surpassing his historical personality, he has become a mythical figure generally depicted as riding his miraculous horse, "Düldül" and holding a magical double-edged sword, "Zulfikar". In *Cenknames* (Legends on famous battles), he fights with infidels, dragons, magicians and all kinds of evil characters, always comes out as the victor but as a hero, if they repent, he is ready to forgive his opponents. On the battlefield, he frightens the enemy with his battle-cry like the roar of a lion. In an

²⁹⁴ Shi'a: An abbreviation of two Arabic words, "Shiat Ali", meaning the followers of Ali. But note that reverence of Ali does not necessarily mean Bektashism is Shi'ite. (See Melikoff, pp.83 – 86; Chapter titled " Is it possible to talk about Shi'ism in the 13th Century Anatolia?")

²⁹⁵ Birge, John Kingsley, *Bektaşilik Tarihi*, (Istanbul, ANT Yay., 1991), pp.151-52

²⁹⁶ I.b.i.d., p. 152 (There is a dispute on the site Ali was buried. Some Shi'ite believe his tomb is in Mazar-ı Sharif, Northern Afganistan instead of Nejef)

early Ottoman *Cenkname* (Dasitan-ı Muhammed Hanefi) written by Dursun Fakih (before 1326, conquest of Bursa), the son-in-law of Sheikh Ede Bali and re-inscribed by Nurullah Hoca (ca. 1790), Ali rushes to rescue his son (Muhammed Hanefi, an imaginary third son) from the infidels:

<i>Ali bir kez nara urdu ki katı</i>	Ali yelled such a battle-cry that
<i>Kışnedi ol sahrada Döldül atı</i>	Neighed his horse, Duldul in that desert
<i>Kafir işitdi Ali'nin avazın</i>	Infidels heard Ali's cry
<i>Heybetinden necesi düşdi yüzün</i>	Of its grandeur (that) many sulked (with anxiety)
<i>Necesiün akıl gitdi bir zaman</i>	Many lost their minds for a while
<i>Necesi atdan yıkılıb virdi can²⁹⁷</i>	Many dropped dead from their horses...

Obviously, these *Cenknames* were very popular among the janissaries and caliph Ali was a perfect idol for them as the fighters of Islam. In fact, we find an early proof for this relationship in the fifteenth century, within the pages of the testimony of an ex-janissary. Constantine Mikhailovich gives his eye witness account of the preaching meetings he participated. His memoire shows the bridging function of these preachings between christianity and islam. He was amazed and perplexed to hear that the dervishes were praising Christ. On the other hand, we learn from Mihailovich that Caliph Ali already in the fifteenth century had his central role in the religious lives of janissaries.

...Infidels (this case the muslims) regard Ali as a prophet like Muhammed. They tell that he was a man of power and fortitude. It is said that he had a sword called "Zulfikar". They say , it was so extraordinarily sharp and hard that Ali would tear anything he hit into pieces like a spider net even if they were (made out of) iron or steel. They also say that his wife, Fatima was a magician and that she had given all that sharpness to that sword.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Mattei, Jean-Louis, *Hiz. Ali Cenknameleri*, (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2004), pp. 90-91

²⁹⁸ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003), p.5

He continues to convey us what he had heard about Ali from others. He was told that on his death bed Prophet Muhammed had said to believers “ *Obey my Ali!*”. This bit of information shows janissaries had the Bektashi idea that Ali deserved the caliphate more than Ebu Bekr, Omar and Osman. Thus, Muawiya had stolen caliphate from Ali and he was the mastermind behind the conspiracy of eliminating Ali (murdered in a mosque during prayer), and his sons; poisoning of Hasan (624-670) and the assassination of Huseyin (625-680) in Qarbala.

In the Bektashi tradition, Muhammed, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Hüseyin form a united group called “*Pençe-i Al-i Aba*”, the holy family of five.²⁹⁹ *Pençe* (The hand) with its five fingers becomes a sacred symbol for Bektashism³⁰⁰ and it is the hand (together with zulfikar) that we find on the “*Alay Bayrağı*” (Procession Flag) of the janissaries.³⁰¹ Some of the ortas were carrying *Pençe* symbol on their banners.

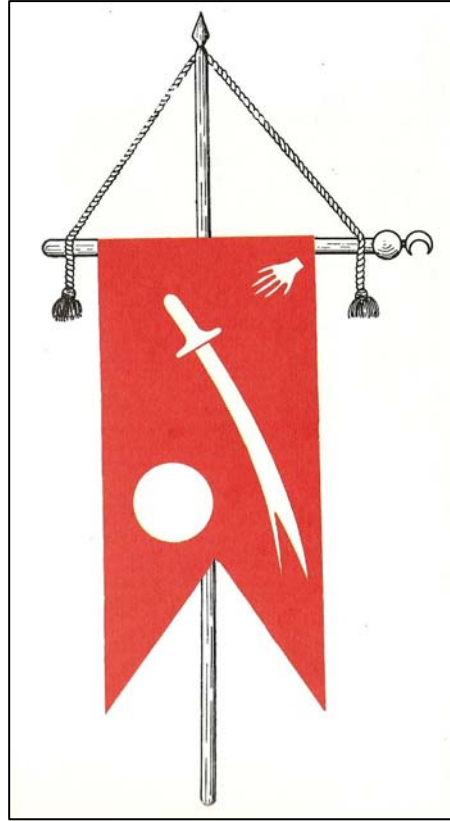


Fig. 10 Procession Flag of the Janissary Corps [bearing three symbols: A hand (*pençe*), the *Zulfikar* (sword of Ali) and a circle (possibly

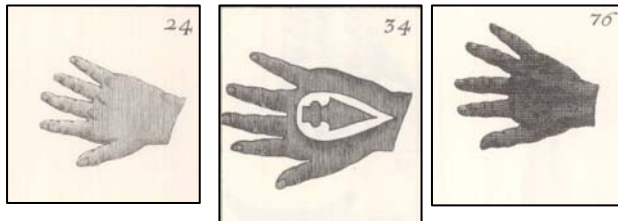


Fig. 11 *Pençe* (Hand) symbols on *Orta* banners (Banners of 24th, 34th, and 76th *Ortas*)

²⁹⁹ Note the word “*pençik*” (one in five) used for the devshirme system also refers to the Persian number five, *penç*. This similarity makes it possible for the janissary to regard himself a member of the Holy Five, a perfect tool for identifying with Ali.

³⁰⁰ It is the right hand of *Mürşid* touching the back of the *Talip* (Applicant) in between his two shoulders during the initiation ceremony. (Melikoff, p. 358)

³⁰¹ Kurtoğlu, Fevzi, *Türk Bayrağı ve Ay Yıldız*, (Ankara, TTK, 1992), drawing 102

Mikhailovich's testimony reveals the importance attributed by the janissaries to their swords. A sword is a living thing with a soul and Ali speaks to it:

...After Muhammed's death, out of his deep and true grief, Ali went up to the mountains and steep cliffs. When he started to hit the rocks there, he saw that his sword was disappearing in (penetrating) the rocks. Ali realized this miracle of his sword which he had never seen before, and (to his sword) he said "Stop *Zulfikar*! Stop so that Allah is not offended."³⁰²

Mikhailovich also notes a peculiar habit of janissaries. He says that especially during combat they used to carry a talisman, called "*Hamail*". It was a little book, with a *Zulfikar* mark on it. They believed that the magical power of *Zulfikar* would protect them from all kinds of evil and harm. Whenever they took an oath on a *Hamail*, they would keep their promise for sure.³⁰³

The Janissary and the Holy Cauldron

Each Oda/Chamber used to have a "*Kazan/Cauldron*" kept in the kitchen of their barracks³⁰⁴. In addition to its function as a pot for preparing food³⁰⁵, the cauldron was regarded as the source of holiness attributed by Hacı Bektaş to the *Ocak*. Considered together with the literal meaning of the term "*Ocak*" as the fireplace, the hearth where the cauldron is placed, the significance of the cauldron can be conceived better. In fact, the Cauldron was so important for the Janissaries that they used to hold their meetings on critical issues sitting around it forming a circle.³⁰⁶ The popular expression "*Kazan kaldırmak*" (Raising up the cauldron) associated with the janissaries was a sign of their discontent and their resentment to the state policies, a

³⁰² Beydilli, p.5 (35, 36, 39, 40, 51 and 93rd Ortas were using Zulfikar as their symbol, Marsigli)

³⁰³ Beydilli, p.5

³⁰⁴ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p.236

³⁰⁵ Janissaries had two meals daily, consisting of a soup early served in the morning as breakfast and rice and meat dishes as dinner.

³⁰⁶ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.236

sign marking the start of a riot. The lines of Keçecizade İzzet Efendi quoted by Esad Efendi in his book “Üss-i Zafer” (1826) where he tells the story of the “*Vakay-ı Hayriye*” from the victor’s point of view, conveys us how The Cauldron of the janissaries was associated with riots. Without being able to hide his feelings of relief, Keçecizade utters³⁰⁷:

<i>Koyup kaldırmadan ikide birde</i>	So often was it raised up and put down (that)
<i>Kazan devrildi söndürdi ocağı</i>	The Cauldron overturned, the hearth died down

The *Ortas* used to take their cauldrons to the battlefields putting them right in front of their tents. Losing the Cauldron of the *Orta* was a disaster. It was even worse than losing the *Orta* banner to the enemy. It was the total loss of pride and prestige of that particular *Orta*. So much so that, the members and officers of that regiment or squadron were expelled, deranked, assigned to lower duties and could never return back. So *Kazan* was the final line of defence. Janissaries believed that no assault should start without the presence of their cauldrons.³⁰⁸

In addition to the cauldrons belonging to each division or squadron, there was a special one called “*Kazan-ı Şerif*” (The Holy Cauldron) which was believed to be given by Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli to the Ocak. At the very beginning, Hacı Bektaş had prepared a soup for the janissaries and had served it with his own hands. Janissaries used to believe that if ever *Kazan-ı Şerif* was moved from its place and a bucket of water was poured, the world would turn up-side down.³⁰⁹ An inscription on a Holy Cauldron displayed in the museum of Hacı Bektaş may give an idea on the importance attributed to the *Kazan-ı Şerif* by the janissaries:

³⁰⁷ Esad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer*, (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2005), p.70

³⁰⁸ I.b.i.d., p. 57 (“...*bi-inayetillahi ta’ala içlerinden bazıları guya meydana kazan çıkmaksızın huruc etmek münafi-i ka’ide-i dudmân-ı Bektaşiyye’dir diye....*”)

³⁰⁹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p.259

<i>Hacı Bektaş pirimizdir yürütür cansız duvarı</i>	Hacı Bektaş our Sage, makes lifeless walls walk
<i>Orduya etti dualar himmetidir bişumar,</i>	He prayed for the army, his power is endless
<i>Şanlıdır Yeniçeriler daima şöhret şiar,</i>	Glorious are the janissaries, always renowned
<i>Pençeli bayrağı bir de Kara Kazan yadigar³¹⁰.</i>	A flag with <i>Pençe</i> and a Black Cauldron, (are) his remembrances

Uzunçarşılı notes that regardless of the severity of his crimes, anybody could take refuge in the holiness of *Kazan-ı Şerif*, and receive protection of the *Ocak*.³¹¹

Although this is yet another information showing the importance of the Holy Cauldron, it still must not be regarded as a grant of total amnesty for any criminal, since we know that any crime committed by the janissaries was not left unpunished. Thus it would be too farfetched to claim that the *Ocak* would grant its full protection to any murderer or thief. If one is not to claim that the janissary headquarters was a safe haven for all kinds of criminals, logic compels us to assume that the *Ocak* must have been offering a guarantee for a fair trial and certainly not flight.

Punishment: Keeping in the Path

For a janissary, committing a crime meant to be a deviation from the *Yol*. Thus, punishment was exercised in order to bring him back to the Path and as we will see it had become a sort of a ritual where this nature of the punishment was expressed by the *Odabaşı*, Chamber Master when he used to shout “*Aşk olsun Yola!*” (In the name of the Love of the Path!) before starting bastinado. Smaller crimes were punished by the Cooks by fettering and imprisoning the criminal with shackles in the kitchen of the Chamber. The kitchen owing its holiness to the *Kazan* of the chamber, seems to be the spiritual center of the chamber and it was then called a “*Meydan*”.

³¹⁰ Devşirmeler, p.x

³¹¹ Op.cit.

The word “*meydan etmek*” was equivalent to “opening a court” where punishment was given rightaway. Janissaries used to gather in the kitchen, around their Cauldron whenever they wanted to discuss affairs related to their chamber. In critical issues, it is known that they held their meeting in complete darkness in order to attain complete freedom of speech. Then they were allowed to speak and criticize any issue without the danger of being identified. In fact, the punishment of criminals with higher crimes in which imprisonment by the Cook was not considered enough, was also held in the kitchen but with a slight difference: Bastinado.

Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi (The Law Book of Eyyubi Efendi), possibly written during the reign of Mehmed IV (1648 – 1687) contains the very law of punishment of guilty janissaries:

... If ever a janissary commits a crime, and (his crime) deserves punishment, firstly, his *Odabaşı* (Chamber Master) reports it to his *Çorbacı* (captain). After (his) permission for *Meydan*³¹² meaning punishment is received, they hand the criminal *yoldaş* over to his Cook, and they fetter him. After the evening prayer and dinner finishes, all the elderly and his *yoldaş* are invited to the *meydan* and the criminal is brought. And *Odabaşı* addresses his comrades with advice-like words, and then he says “*Aşk olsun yola!*”³¹³ to his *yoldaş*. They bring the criminal to the middle of the *meydan*, they lay him down facing the floor. Two elderly *yoldaş* hold his hands tight and another one his feet, while *vekilharc* (Chamber Accountant) and *bayrakdar* (Bannersman) are holding candles, *Odabaşı* takes a stick and hits him for 40 or 80 times depending on his crime....³¹⁴

KY tells us that in most of the cases, the judgement was kept a secret from the criminal and as soon as he (completely unaware of what was going to happen) entered into the kitchen, he would be captured and brought down on the floor by his comrades for punishment.³¹⁵ This shows that the judgement by the elders was already made before the *Meydan* was opened. Bastinado was executed in darkness

³¹² Meydan, Arena for punishment is performed within the kitchen of each oda. The usual method of punishment was *falaka*, bastinado.

³¹³ A close interpretation would be “In the name of the love of the Path!” but it may also mean “Shame on you!”

³¹⁴ *Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi*, p. 47

³¹⁵ KY, p. 176 (...*Ve te'dip olunmak lazım geldiğinde evvela kanun olan budur ki aşçının bir suçunu saklarlar (!?), evvel ol meydana gelir veyahud hemen bir suçu bahane edüb dahi aşğa alırlar.*)

while only two candles were held by two elders (for the executioner to see where he was hitting) and the criminal was facing down. This again seems to be a method designed to protect the privacy and the pride of the punished among his comrades by hiding his identity.

The feet of the criminal would be hit for 40- 80 times depending on the severity of his crime. The limit for the number of bastinado hits that could be executed in one night was 80. For more punishment, the next night had to be waited. The maximum of this type of punishment was 80 hits for three consecutive nights. No punishment was done in Ramadan or on Friday nights. Janissary tradition states that on those nights, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli had not given his consent for punishment of the janissaries.³¹⁶

Busbecq notes an interesting habit of janissaries. Following the execution of bastinado, the punished had to thank his punisher by kissing his hand and pay a certain amount of money for each hit.³¹⁷ On the other hand the punisher was expected to take good care not to be harsher than necessary. It was forbidden to raise the stick higher than shoulders when hitting.³¹⁸

He adds that for some other crimes the janissaries were sent to exile (in such cases their status were turned into “*merd-i timar*”(man of fief) or “*merd-i kal'a*” (man of castle)) and had to live a miserable life stripped of their honour and privileges. He says it was worse than death for a janissary.³¹⁹

Death penalty was handled separately. The basic assumption was that a janissary could not commit a crime that deserved death penalty. That's why whenever a janissary was found guilty of such crime he was expelled from the Ocağ and his

³¹⁶ Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi, p. 47

³¹⁷ Busbecq, p.108

³¹⁸ KY, p. 176

³¹⁹ Busbecq, p.108

name in the Ledger was crossed. Once his name was crossed, theoretically the man was neither a *Yoldaş* nor a janissary anymore and thus he could be executed as an ordinary man.³²⁰ Such a criminal was first imprisoned by the Middle-Sergeant and then handed over to *Asesbaşı* (Police Chief). *Asesbaşı* would take him to the dungeon of Baba Cafer in Eminönü³²¹ where he would be executed at midnight. His body would then be taken by a boat and dropped into the sea.³²² Until the late sixteenth century, a cannon round was fired to mark the death of a janissary, but then this habit was abandoned.³²³

In times of war, this punishment was executed by a squadron of executioners, “*Cellatlar*”. They had a special tent called “*Leylek Çadırı*” (Tent of Storks). The criminals but especially the ones who tried to flee from the battlefield (such an act was regarded to be the severest crime, homicide) were taken there to receive punishment.³²⁴

Yol, as a system of military promotion

Hunting lies at the basis of the *Ocak*'s military organization. *Zağarcıbaşı*, *Seksoncubaşı*, *Turnacıbaşı* and *Sekbanbaşı* all have various breeds of dogs kept under their commandment for hunting purposes. This shows us that hunting, as a sports closest to fighting battles, was used as a prototype, a model for establishing the Hearth of Janissary Corps. Furthermore, taking the oldest method and basic logic of promotion (the earlier is superior) into consideration, we can derive that *Zağarcı* regiment must have been the first unit established by Murad I since it is at the top of

³²⁰ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.357

³²¹ This building can still be seen to the west of the Galata bridge in Eminönü, Istanbul. It is used as a luxury jewellery store, “Stork’s”.

³²² In the sixteenth century this mission was done by the castle guards of Rumeli Hisarı, European Fortress.

³²³ Eyyubi Efendi, p.48

³²⁴ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.362

the division *silsile* (line of ranks). Likewise, the fact that *Sekban* Squadrons were a separate unit until the time of Bayezid II , shows us that *Sekbans* were yet another organization established earlier for hunting. This is confirmed by the information given by KY:

...*Sekbanbaşı* is the chief of officers in the *Ocak*. He commands all the others.... In the old times, the General Commander of the *Ocak* used to be the *Sekbanbaşı*...³²⁵

The concept of hunting was clearly at the very basis of the janissary corps as a military organization. But this still is only a half of the picture. There must have been a spiritual side to the organization of the *Ocak*, a separate or parallel axis which made it possible to establish and keep the close brotherhood ties among the individual janissaries. There must have been something special in the system, a way to maintain the discipline and to create able warriors of high valour and competency that had a dreadful image among the enemy lines and were thought to be unstoppable once their assault had started with cries of “Hoooo!”³²⁶

The whole system of promotion (*Silsile*) was based on meritocracy. The Path for higher ranks was all open equally to any janissary and he could rise in ranks depending on his loyal hardwork and especially the performance at the battlefield.³²⁷ There existed a solid system of surveillance managed by a network of *Çavuş* (sergeants). The rule was to detect any courageous or cowardly act and to reward or punish it as quickly as possible.³²⁸ *Çavuş* were so important that they will be held separately within the section on “*Çavuş* and *Başçavuş*”. The new boys were given to the custody of the *Aşçıbaşı* (The Head Cook) of the chamber. Their duty was to assist the cook in his daily work to manage the chamber. He was their direct

³²⁵ KY, p.214-15

³²⁶ KO, v.1, p.375 (“Hûl”, a traditionally used Bektashi term meaning God.)

³²⁷ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003), p.112

³²⁸ Ibid., p.105

commander and no one but he could punish them for small crimes or decide to hand them out to the *Çavuş* for higher crimes.

The Path in front of an ordinary *Kara Kullukçu*³²⁹ had the following steps (in ascending order): *Küçük Müteferrika* (Junior Private), *Orta Müteferrika* (Middle Private), *Baş Müteferrika* (Head Private), *Odabaşı* (Chamber Master)³³⁰, *Baş Odabaşı* (Head Chamber Master), *Yayabaşı* (Infantry Master), *Baş Yayabaşı* (Head Infantry Master), *Baş Deveci* (Head Camel Keeper), *Haseki* (Guard), *Baş Haseki* (Head Guard), *Turnacıbaşı* (Head Keeper of the Cranes), *Seksoncubaşı* (Head Keeper of the Sekson Dogs)³³¹, *Zağarcıbaşı* (Head Keeper of the Zagar Dogs), *Kethüda Bey* (General Chief of Staff), *Sekbanbaşı* (Field Marshall).³³² These were called “*Ocak Ağaları*” (Officers of the House), “*Katar Ağaları*” (Officers of the Flock), “*Sanadid-i Bektaşiyân*” (Elite of the Bektashis), or “*Ağayan-ı Bektaşiyân*” (Officers of the Bektashis). As we shall see below, becoming a *Çavuş* was the only short-cut to this Path.

As mentioned before, the system of promotion for Janissaries can best be called “meritocracy”, that is to say, ideally all the steps were open for any Janissary depending on his own efforts.³³³ Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, an Austrian ambassador to the court of Sultan Suleyman I, refers to this meritocratic nature of promotion within a letter he wrote on September 1, 1555:³³⁴

(During a visit to Sultan’s headquarters) ... Within this huge crowd, there was no single person who owed his prestige to anything other than his own personal courage and talents. A man is respected depending on his services and

³²⁹ Normally each *Oda* had one *Kara Kullukçu*, but the chambers of the *Başçavuş* could have four of them due to its large number of personnel. They were named according to the services they used to do: *Kandilci* (Candle Handler), *Papuççu* (Shoe Handler), and *Pazara Giden* (Shopper).

³³⁰ An *Odabaşı*, Chamber Master, was the commander of 10 troops in his chamber. (Dernschwam, Hans, *Istanbul ve Anadolu’ya Seyahat Günlüğü*, (Ankara, Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1987), p. 90)

³³¹ *Sekson* or *Samson* dogs were traditionally believed to be presents from the vassal of Wallachia to Mehmed II (Possibly famous Drakula (ca. 1431-1476) or his father Vlad Drakul)

³³² KY, p.265

³³³ Kapıkulu Ocakları, p.287

³³⁴ Busbecq, Ogier Ghislain de, *Türk Mektupları*, (Istanbul, Doğan Kitap, 2005), pp.50-51

the duties he carries. That's why there was no struggle for superiority. Everybody has a post assigned in accordance with what he can do.... In Turkey, anybody has the opportunity to change the conditions he was born in and to determine (his own) fate. The people who hold the highest positions under the Sultan, are generally the sons of (mere) shepherds. More than being ashamed of this, they even are proud of it. The less they feel they owe to their ancestors or to the environment they accidentally had been born into, the bigger is their pride. They do not accept that talents pass by birth or by inheritance. For them, talents are partly God's gift and partly the product of (a combination of) the training and morality they receive and the effort they show, the motivation they feel. As the talent in music, arts, mathematics and geometry does not pass from father to son, they think character is not hereditary either, that a son does not necessarily resemble his father and (his) qualifications are godsend. Therefore among Turks; prestige, service and administrative positions become the rewards of talent and virtue.... Our methods are very different (than theirs). We have no room for merit. Everything depends on birth and nobility only may open the road to high positions....

In some cases, a janissary might even be promoted to other high ranks such as “*Sancağ Beyliği*” (Lord of a Sanjak) if he could manage to become the first to climb up a fortress and place a *sancağ*/banner on top of the walls. That in turn, meant leaving the Path (which as Architect Sinan's testimony points, was not desirable for a janissary) . Or in some other cases, they could continue their careers in certain posts which required technical skills such as *Katip*/clerks, *Imam*/clergy or *Aşçı*/cooks or *Solak*/ guards or *Sipahi*/ cavalry. The ones who proved their fighting ability by the reports of the *Çavuş* on the battlefield could be entitled to early retirement. Veterans were also given the right of retirement and they could continue to receive their tri-monthly salaries and benefit from any rise in wages together with the janissaries on service. The clerk of the English Ambassadour to the court of Mehmed IV.(1648-1687), Ricaut in his memoires, says that the janissaries compared with the best infantry in Europe, were by far living in wealth than any of their counterparts.³³⁵

³³⁵ Ricaut, *Türklerin Siyasi Düsturları*, (Istanbul, Milliyet Yayınları, 1996), p.213

One condition for promotion was to be unmarried. Contrary to the general belief, many of the janissaries had continued living a bachelor life in order to be able to get promoted. *Yol* was open for all janissaries as long as they could remain bachelors. That is to say that there must have been other criteria for promotion than military prowess. The answer to this question will hopefully help us get closer to our subject matter; the nature of relationship between the Janissary Corps and Bektashism. And the connection comes with an invisible but essential part of the corps, a generally unnoticed group of functionaries: Cooks –Guardians of the Path.

Aşçı (Cooks): Guardians of The Path

The function of the Cook in this respect, deserves closer attention. In case a rookie janissary committed a small crime, he was imprisoned in the kitchen of the chamber by the Cook. The guilty *yoldaş* was given to his custody because right from the day a novice became a janissary he was under the tutelage of the Cook. As a *Karakullukçu* the newcomer used to serve his chamber and get his moral education from *Aşçı*. Thus, the Cooks used to have direct authority on the janissaries right from their early days in the headquarters. So the Cooks were not simply the chefs to prepare meals but were respected officers functioning as the guardians of the islamic, Bektashi moral values. Ricaut's observation confirms this view:



Fig. 12 A Janissary Cook (*Aşçı*)

...*Aşçı* was not merely an officer who buys and supplies food to the janissaries. To monitor the janissaries and to punish them whenever they commit a crime were among his duties.³³⁶

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 214

The eye of the Cook was not something a janissary could afford to neglect. *Aşçı* could have direct influence on the careers of the individual janissaries. The secret of their power as shown below, lies in the selection and training process through which they had to pass in order to become an *Aşçı*, Cook.

Seğirdim, Running on the Path

Every morning a phenomenal event used to take place in the Meat Arena of the New Barracks. The event was a mixture of a ritual and an athletic race. It was called “*Seğirdim*” (The Run). The fastest runners, “*Seğirdim Aşçıları*” (The Runner Cooks) were chosen from each *orta* and *bölük* for the race. The target was the reward itself: A sheep in the hands of a christian butcher standing all alone at the other side of the Arena, about 300 meters away. The winner was the one who could reach and touch the sheep first. He then could take the sheep back to his *orta* or *bölük* for an extra feast for his *yoldaş*. Two of his comrades used to carry him on their shoulders and no doubt he was welcomed as a victor, an admired champion.³³⁷ Until here the event seems simply to be an athletic race. Soon we will see that there was more to it. (Below: the map showing the *Seğirdim* race held in the Meat Arena, the New Barracks)

³³⁷ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p.247-251

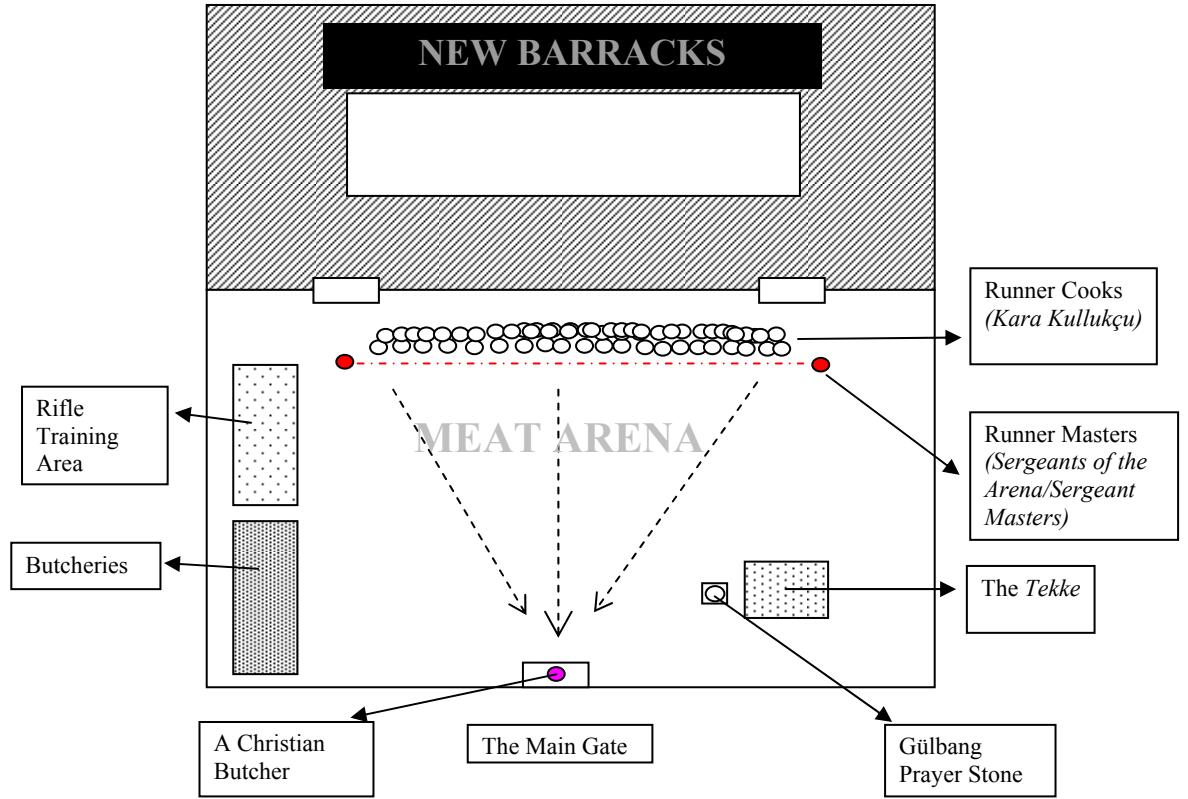


Fig. 13 *Seğirdim* /The Race

Seğirdim Aşçıları (The Runner Cooks)

The race was only the end of a longer ceremony which used to start right after the sunrise. A group of runner cooks called “*Usta Çavuşlar*” (Sergeant Masters) or “*Seğirdim Ustaları*” (Runner Masters) used to get together in front of the “*Meydan Tekkesi*”³³⁸ (Lodge of the Arena) in the Meat Arena.³³⁹ Three of these Runner Masters with the highest ranks were called “*Casuslar*” (The



Fig. 14 The Runner Cooks (A squad running to fetch meat)

³³⁸ Uzunçarşılı describes this tekke as having a large hall (possibly for semah rituals) with apt decoration, two marble gates with inscription above, a stone of date (of its construction), and a lantern in the entrance. This must be one of the four tekkes in the New Barracks mentioned above. (Possibly the biggest)

³³⁹ Op.cit.

Spies) and the oldest of them was “*Meydan Şeyhi*” (Sheikh of the Arena). KY gives us information about their role in the Race:

...And there are three veterans of the cooks. They call them “*Casuslar*” (The Spies). One of them is from the *Ağa* Squadrons, he is the oldest (superior). Another one is from the Infantry Masters (thus from the *Cemaat* divisions) . And the other one is from the Old Barracks (possibly from the *Sekban* squadrons to complete the picture)... And these control the (Runner) Cooks. In the *Seğirdim* (The Race) they line them up. If one of them (The Runner Cooks) moves any further these hit them with their sticks (*turra*). This is their Law.³⁴⁰

These “Spies” led by their Sheikh had the duty and the authority to keep order during the event. At the same time, they used to send a procession of Runner Masters, *Seğirdim Alayı* to fetch the daily meat of the headquarters. With their mules, the Running Procession, *Seğirdim Alayı* used to run to the slaughterhouses in the Yedikule district, and return as quick as possible. It was strictly forbidden to pass from the front or the back of this battalion, again pointing out to the holiness of the food for the janissaries.³⁴¹ *Seğirdim Alayı* would start after the following prayer read aloud by the Sheikh:

Bism-i Şah Allah, Allah
Nefer-i Hümkâran
Lokma-i nâlân
Maide-i pirân
Afiyet-i devran
Aşk ola dudûman
Muzafferan-ı Hakan
Yolala Çeriyân
Yolunuz açık, seğirdiniz mübarek ola!
Destuuur!

In the name of the Shah (Ali) Allah, Allah
(You!) The soldiers of sovereigns
(For) Lokma³⁴² of the moaners
(For) Feasts of the sages
(For) Goodness of the Cycle³⁴³
May the Love (of God) be to our officers
(May) The victors of the rulers
May the fighters proceed
May your Path be open, your Run be holy!
Go!³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 201

³⁴¹ A tragic incident is noted by Uzunçarşılı. An old imam had “accidentally” passed and had obstructed the way of the running battalion. He was captured and beaten by the Runner Masters. Another imam and a servant of a bureaucrat who happened to be around tried to rescue the old imam. Then they, too became the targets of the janissaries. The situation was reported to the Sekbanbaşı (proving the army was out of Istanbul for an expedition) and he had said that he had no authority since the man was from the ulema. Finally, in fear of a riot, Sekbanbaşı resigned and the violators of the janissary law were killed and thrown into the sea.

³⁴² Lokma: A type of friedcake prepared in the the memory of a deceased person.

³⁴³ Cycle: Times, wheel of fortune, fate. Bektashi tradition regards Time as cyclical concept instead of being linear.

³⁴⁴ Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele, Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (Istanbul, Nazenin, 2000), p.56

As soon as the Running Procession returned and entered into the Meat Arena, the meat was unloaded and given to the eight Christian butchers (*tomruk*) to be prepared for an even distribution among the divisions and squadrons. Only one sheep was separated from the whole load and one of the Christian butchers had to stand in the inner side of the gate to the headquarters, holding it. Apparently like many other aspects of Janissary life filled with gestures of symbolic nature, the choice of a Christian seems to have a deeper meaning to it. Imagining the situation of the butcher standing all alone while hundreds of young janissaries rush towards him with all their might, one can not evade thinking that it was a deliberate choice, and a Christian with the “thing” he holds



Fig. 15 A *Kara Kullukçu* squad (on the run to a *Karakol* station carrying food to their comrades)

in his hands was turned into an object of desire. A small demonstration of combat assault (which also was called *Seğirdim*). Let’s listen to Ahmet Cevat Pasha and his *Tarih-i Askeri-i Osmani*, for details:

...The Runner Masters and troops (Runner Cooks of each regiment or squadron) used to take their places and get ready on the other side of the Headquarters. And this way, all the personnel of the headquarters who were not absent due to a special assignment, would be present for watching the event. Then *Başçavuş* would stand on the high *Gülbang* Stone, on which he always used to do the *gülbang* prayers, and by crossing his arms on his chest in accordance with the Bektashi praying tradition, he would pray loudly. Then he would shout “Get ready you *Ağas*! Meat has arrived! Do not say we know it or know it not! When you see your masters, turn your aprons over. Come on my sons, come on!”³⁴⁵ The moment he finished his words, the runners ready to

³⁴⁵ The word he uses is “*Haydi Babam Haydi!*” which literally means “Come on my father! Come on!” but since it is a remark only to be used by older to the younger, “Come on my sons” is a more appropriate translation.

catch the sheep would leap at the same moment and altogether. The one who would touch the meat in the hands of the butcher was the winner. It was just like conquering a castle and two other runner cooks would raise him (the winner) on their shoulders, walk around the Arena celebrating his victory and take him back to his Barracks. This was according to old tradition and true law of these (janissaries)...³⁴⁶

Uzunçarşılı attributes this speech to the *Meydan Şeyhi* instead of *Başçavuş* and gives a longer version of his preaching: “ *Do not pass from the fronts of the pergolas! Do not go into the markets and the streets (so that) the people should not think that you are Pazara Giden (Market Goers). Whenever you see an officer, keep away! Pull down your gaiters! Turn your aprons over! Come on my sons come on!*”

³⁴⁷

Obviously, these were orders or advices concerning the respect to be paid to the officers. What’s interesting for us in this expression, is that it gives a hint for the identity of those Runner Cooks. *Başçavuş* says that the Runner Cooks should be careful not to be seen like or mixed up with “*Pazara Giden*”(Market Goers) by the citizens. This is important because we know that the “*Pazara Giden*” were the lowest rank new comers who serve in the Chambers and go for shopping in the markets. That is to say, the Runner Cooks are young but old enough to try to evade to be regarded as *Pazara Giden*. This information leaves us with the “*Kara Kullukçu*”.

So now we come to know who “The Runner Cooks” were: *Kara Kullukçu* of each *orta*.

³⁴⁶ Ahmet Cevat Paşa, *Tarih-i Askeri-i Osmani*, (Istanbul, Kırk Ambar Matbaası, 1882), p. 208

³⁴⁷ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p. 249

Kara Kullukçu (The Black Servitors)

In fact, twice a day, *Kara Kullukçu* janissaries were running also while they were carrying food in cauldrons to their comrades in various districts of Istanbul working in *Kolluk* or *Karakol* police stations.³⁴⁸

They were accompanied by the “*Baş Kara Kullukçu*”³⁴⁹ of their chambers.

This must have been a kind of training for the *Seğirdim* race.



Fig. 16 *Kara Kullukçu* running (a squad on the run to a *Karakol* station carrying food)

Another instance we see *Kara Kullukçu* running is during the *ulufe* (Three monthly payments) distribution ceremony in the Topkapı Palace. That day the janissaries would gather in the second courtyard of the Palace waiting in silence for the ceremony to proceed. The money in leather bags were gathered in separate heaps for each *orta* and *bölük*. Then food from the imperial kitchens was served. Janissaries would (ideally) start eating with a signal (shaking the lower edge of his robe) from *Başçavuş*. Whether the janissaries would eat or not was critical because if not, it was regarded as a sign of resentment which meant a trouble was ahead. If they did eat, everybody was relieved and a candy called “*Akide*” (literally meaning good promise) was presented to the janissary officers and sheep were sacrificed. After the meal was over, the janissaries would return back to their positions near the second gate. Then *Başçavuş* would come forward, standing up on a high platform in front of the *Divan-ı Hümayun* (Imperial Council Hall), cross his arms on his chest (right hand on his left shoulder and vice

³⁴⁸ Note that the same term is used for local police stations in present day Turkey.

³⁴⁹ Also called “*Kepçeci*” (Ladle user)

versa) in the above mentioned Bektashi fashion (*Peymançe*³⁵⁰) and with a loud voice would send the following prayer:

Allah, Allah, İllallah! Heads naked, chests open, swords (with) red blood, many heads are severed in this arena, no one (comes here) to ask! Eyvallah, Eyvallah! Our wrath, our sword (is) destruction for (our) enemy, our service (is) obvious for the Sultan! “The Threes”, “The Sevens”, “The Fourties”, (this) prayer for Muhammed, lights of the prophets, beneficence of Ali; (to) our sultan, the sovereign Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! For His Moment, for his Cycle let us say Hoo! Hooo!³⁵¹

All the janissaries would shout the last “Hoo!” together with *Başçavuş*. Then he would shout “The First Ağa Squadron!” and *Kara Kullukçu* of that squadron would reply “Here!” Right after this response *Başçavuş* would say “*Haydi!*” (Come on!). The members of the squadron would then start a race towards the salary bags, trying to grasp as many as they could. The more they could carry back, the more prestige they would have.³⁵² *Uzunçarşılı* regards the runners here as ordinary janissaries but obviously they must have been the same *Kara Kullukçu* novice runners that we have seen running in *Seğirdim* and to the *Karakols*. Once every three months they had the chance to show their talents in front of the highest bureaucrats of the empire and if lucky to the Sultan. It must have been regarded by the *Aşçıbaşı* (as their trainers) as a chance to show off. The chance of being noticed must have been bigger during the “*Galebe Divanı*” (Supremacy Council) ceremonies³⁵³. It is also difficult to imagine even a single division with hundred personnel in the second courtyard, not to mention all the 196 divisions and squadrons and their personnel altogether.

³⁵⁰ *Peymançe*: Literally meaning “little vow” in Persian. In Bektashi circles the word points to certain way of saluting a person as a sign of deep respect. Arms crossed on chest with the right on top while two feet put together and the right toe placed on the left toe.

³⁵¹ *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.I, p. 420-22 (“Allah Allah İllallah! Baş Üryan, sine püryan, kılıç al kan, bu meydanda nice başlar kesilir olmaz hiç soran! Eyvallah, eyvallah! Kahrımız, kılıcımız düşmana zıyan! Kulluğumuz Padişaha ayan! Üçler, yediler, kırklar, gülbang-ı Muhammedi, nur-ı nebi, kerem-i Ali pirimiz, sultanımız, hünkar Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli! Demine devranına “Hu!” diyelim. Hu!”)

³⁵² *Op.cit.*

³⁵³ The Cabinet meeting and ulufe payments coincided with the visits of the foreign ambassadors in order to impress them. Every officer and bureaucrat had a special cloth for this occasion.

We find these *Karakullukçu* running in yet another important occasion: “*Baklava Alayı*” (Procession for Baklava dessert). On the fifteenth day of Ramadan, following the Sultan’s visit to the chamber of Holy Relics, a special dessert prepared in the imperial kitchen was given to the janissaries for celebration. The dessert was served on large trays and accompanied by their Master Cooks, they were taken by a team of *Karakullukçu* from each Orta. The trays were placed on colorful sticks and each were carried to the barracks by two *Karakullukçu*.³⁵⁴

So we now know that some of the *Kara Kullukçu* were chosen by their Head Cooks to become “Runner Cooks” and that they were running in several occasions. What’s important here is not the fact that they were running but the reason for the whole phenomenon. What made running so important for the janissaries? Why was being a Runner Cook so attractive? The answer is “career”. In fact, *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* gives us a clue about this phenomenon: “... *To be a Cook is the rank for them (Karakullukçu).... They become Head Cooks via The Path...*”³⁵⁵ and below comes the connection between the careers of *Karakullukçu* and running.

Et Meydanı Tekkesi (The Lodge at the Meat Arena)

In order to understand what is happening, we have to focus on the Runner Masters/ Sergeant Cooks of the *Tekke* in the Meat Arena. Aside from their function as organizers of the meat procurement for the Janissary corps, once in every six months they used to prepare a certain kind of pie called “*Kahi*”³⁵⁶ and present it to the Sultan and Vezir-i Azam and one of them would become “*Çerağ*” (Candle) and

³⁵⁴ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, pp.257, 421.

³⁵⁵ KY, p.174 (... anlarda aşçılık mansıbdır.... Bunlar yolca Aşçı Başı olur...)

³⁵⁶ Kahi: A type of pie with three edges, a sort of simit (savory roll covered with sesame seeds), Develioğlu. (Possibly derived from the same root “*Kuhulet*”, the word “kahil” –written the same way with the addition of an L – meaning a person between the ages 30 to 50, a mature person); Kah is also the name of a town in Khorasan, H.B.Kunter, *Kitabelerimiz*, p.435

was given the right to grow a beard. Wearing a beard meant to be free. Based on this fact Uzunçarşılı wrongly concludes that they were retired.³⁵⁷ Actually, the janissaries were not allowed to wear a beard until they got old but that did not necessarily mean to get retired. Uzunçarşılı also knows this because he mentions this fact in a number of places in his book, *Kapıkulu Ocakları*. So the reason for his misinterpretation must be his lack of acquaintance with the Bektashi, Ahi and especially Futuwwa³⁵⁸ terminology.

The term “*Çerağ Çıkmak*” (To come out as a candle) indeed points out to a particular ceremony in the futuwwa tradition, called “*Çerağ çıkarma*” (To bring out as a candle). “*Çerağ*” in Bektashi tradition is the symbol for the enlightenment of the soul and awakening. The candle is awakened and put to sleep (or let rest) as a living being does. It is a candle but it is not simply a candle.³⁵⁹ It is a source of light from which other candles can be lit. Razavi tells the details of this ceremony in his “*Miftahu’d – Dekaik fi Beyani’l Fütüvve ve’l Hakaik*” widely known as “*Fütüvvetname-i Kebir*” (The Great Book of Brotherhood) which he completed in 1524.³⁶⁰

We learn from the book that the ceremony was held for granting a disciple a sort of diploma, a license to operate autonomously and train his own disciples.³⁶¹ It was the marking of his masterhood in his field of specialization (in this case cooking).

The graduation ceremony, “*Sahib-i Tarik olmak*” (Becoming the Owner of a Path) is described in detail in a *Fütüvvetname* cited by Sarıkaya.³⁶² Each of the prayers to

³⁵⁷ I.b.i.d., p. 250 – 51; (...*bunlar topladıkları parayı hariçte sermaye yaparak geçinirlerdi.*), (...*meydanda teknil-i tarik edip çıkıncaya kadar...*)

³⁵⁸ Muslim brotherhood organizations and their philosophy. *Ahi* organization is a version of this tradition for the artisans.

³⁵⁹ Birge, John Kingsley, *Bektaşilik Tarihi*, (Istanbul, ANT Yay., 1991), p. 256

³⁶⁰ Sarıkaya, Mehmet Saffet, *XIII-XVI. Asırlardaki Anadolu’da Fütüvvetnamelere Göre Dini İnanç Motifleri*, (Ankara, Kültür Bk., 2002), pp. 181 - 87

³⁶¹ Sarıkaya, p.187

be read, advices to be given to the candidate, and the actions of the actors within the ritual are listed with vivid details. At one point *Nakib*³⁶³ brings the candidate in front of the elders and requiring consent for the graduation, addresses them:

.... The desire of this believer brother of yours in coming and standing in front of the elders, is to enter into the *Silsile* of you, the elders; having his waist tied, to join your *Katar* (flock); to become a *Sahib-i Tarik* (Path-owner); to become a *kul* (slave-servant) of the Gate of the King of heroes (Şah-ı Merdan/Caliph Ali) and to be a server of the dynasty of lovers. What are your orders for this lover? ³⁶⁴

Then he asks if the elders give permission for the candidate to be an “*Ehl-i Şedd*”³⁶⁵ (Cummerbund Holder). They agree and his cummerbund is tied around his waist. The graduate is accepted among the elders with all the privileges and responsibilities. He can now guide and lead others.

Obviously, the choice of terminology used for the system of promotion of janissaries, “*Silsile*” and the higher rank officers as “*Katar Ağaları*” can not be considered as mere coincidence. For the janissaries, to become a Path-owner meant to enter into the “Officers of the Flock”. Only then they were allowed to wear a beard, a symbol indicating that they were free men and allowed to marry. This is to become an “*İhtiyar*” (elder) as described by KY: “*Their rule is celibacy. And not to wear a beard until they get ihtiyar (old)*... ³⁶⁶

³⁶² Sarıkaya, Mehmet Saffet, *XIII-XVI. Asırlardaki Anadolu’da Fütüvvetnamelere Göre Dini İnanç Motifleri*, (Ankara, Kültür Bk., 2002), pp. 195-99

³⁶³ Nakib: The oldest dervish or dede who assists the Sheikh in a *Tekke*. (Develioğlu)

³⁶⁴ Fütüvvetnameler, p. 196

³⁶⁵ Şedd: A woolen or cotton belt tied around the waist of a member of a sect as an indication of his membership and level. A royal order sent to the *Yeniçeri Ağası* in 1728 shows the connection between the Cummerbund and the laws of Ocağ is acknowledged. (.... *Neferat-ı mezkure ortalarıyla memur oldukları sefer ve muhafazalarda dilirane hareket ve levazım-ı adabı riayet idegelüb beş on sene ortasında hizmete şedd-i miyan ve ocağın ayin ve kavaninine tahsil-i vukuf ve irfan etmiyenlerin yamaklık ile serhadde gitmeleri hilaf-ı kanun iken*), (Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.328)

³⁶⁶ KY, p.171. (...*Ve zikrolunan taifenin kaideleri mücerred olmaktadır. Ve tamam ihtiyar olmayınca sakal koyvermemektir.*)

But the problem here is that the Runner Cooks, even after years of service in their own regiments were still not old enough to get retired and become “*Amelmande*” (retired). Then what could they possibly be doing after such a graduation?

The six months cycle for the ceremony shows that it was a quite rapid process and in every six months four Master Cooks were getting graduated from the *Tekke* school.³⁶⁷ With every graduation, a new Runner Cook was called with a special decree written and signed by *Yeniçeri Ağası*, the General Chief of Staff, in person. No matter which part of the empire the cook might be serving with his regiment or squadron, upon receiving the call, he would immediately depart and go directly to the *Tekke*. After his arrival a follower was assigned to him who would start to wait for his own turn to come³⁶⁸. At times, one would protest when his call he thought was late and knowing how even a minor injustice against one of their comrades could ignite an unrest among the janissaries, the government was forced to handle such claims with care since it might easily lead to unwanted consequences.³⁶⁹

The process shows how the service in *Meydan Tekkesi* seems to be very important for the careers of the Cooks. It was important because if once one could enter into the *Tekke* in the Meat Arena, the way to high office was wide open before him. Following his graduation by preparing a “*Kahı*” pie, he could start his career as a sergeant and depending on his skills, gradually could rise up to become a *Kul Kethüdası* (via the steps: *Başçavuş – Haseki – Turnacıbaşı – Seksoncubaşı – Zağarcıbaşı – Kul Kethüdası*). This must have been a short-cut to high offices compared with the ordinary route of promotion of *Katar Ağaları* (Officers of the

³⁶⁷ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p. 638-39 (The law on the presentation of pie to the Gate of Pasha by *Seğirdim Aşçıları*) Note that *Karakollukçu* together with *Aşçı* and *Katib-i Muhzır* are also listed as receiving money from the Sadrazam)

³⁶⁸ Yet another proof that the Runner Cooks were young enough to become apprentices.

³⁶⁹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v. I, p. 251

Flock): *Eski – Başeski - Odabaşı – Çorbacı - Deveci – Baş Deveci – Haseki – Turnacıbaşı – Seksoncubaşı – Zağarcıbaşı – Kul Kethüdası.*

In fact, we do find some bits of information about a certain “*Tekkeli*” officer. Cevat Pasha in his “The Ottoman Military History” defines this rank as follows:

His (*Tekkeli*’s) hat was similar to *Kethüda Bey*’s but he had a *sorguç* (an ornament on hats showing certain ranks) and he wore it completely on his forehead. He wears red boots and his robe was the same as the ones (described) before. But the part (of his robe) from his elbow to his wrist had to be manufactured with red fabric. Although there is no information in history on *Tekkeli*, they must have been officers of the *Ocak* because we know that even today the reception halls of the Sheikh-ul Islams are called “*Tekkeli Köşkü*”³⁷⁰ (The Villa of the *Tekkelis*)³⁷¹



Fig. 17 A *Tekkeli* officer

Tekkeli keeps his mystery throughout the pages of Uzunçarşılı’s monumental two volume “*Kapıkulu Ocakları*”. He only mentions this officer once at the end of the second volume.³⁷² He seems to be confused to find such an officer among the visual representations of the officers. He notes that the figure was a *Tekkeli* and that he was an officer of The Hearth but there is no further explanation.

Although more research is needed to enlighten the mystery of the *Tekkeli* officers, it seems logical to assume that there was a connection between the *Tekkeli* and the *Tekke* in the Meat Arena. *Tekkeli* officers must have been the lieutenants trained in the *Tekke* to become commanding officers, thus candidates for *çavuş*.

A surprising note in *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* gives us a clue on how the graduates of the *Tekke* could be proceeding their lives after graduation: The oldest (meaning the closest to graduation) three of the Runner Masters were called “*Casuslar*”

³⁷⁰ Misread by Uzunçarşılı as “*Tekeli Köşk*” (Villa with Goats) On the other hand, this word may imply the existence of a *Tekke* Lodge within the building and may or may not have any relation with these *Tekkeli* officers.

³⁷¹ *Tarih-i Asker-i Osmani*, p. 122 (Note that the palace of the *Yeniçeri Ağası* was given to the Sheikh-ul Islams by Mahmud II after *Vaka-i Hayriyye* in 1826. Thus Cevat Pasha is mentioning the very same place.)

³⁷² *Kapıkulu Ocakları*, v.II, Lev. X

(Spies).³⁷³ This means they could be assigned to be spies and sent to various parts of the empire as well as foreign land. This view is supported by Ricaut's testimony on the *Çavuş*'s linguistic abilities.³⁷⁴ When considered together with the freedom of mobility the Bektashi tekkes offered in the Balkans, one can imagine how the ability to speak local dialects and the ability to act as a dervish could be used to operate under cover. (After all, running fast and fitness could also be an asset for a spy.)

We understand that the graduates of the *Tekke* could also be assigned to be *Solak* (Left-handed Guards of the Sultan).³⁷⁵ A nice posture, masterhood in using bows and running fast while escorting the sultan during processions were the basic conditions for this elite duty.³⁷⁶

Therefore, I conclude and claim that *Et Meydanı Tekkesi* was functioning as the “General Staff Academy” of the janissary elite, but most of all, a school where the Runner Cooks were turned into charismatic sergeants, the *Çavuş*.

Çavuşlar (Sergeants) and *Başçavuş* (Head Sergeant)

Once recruited as a *Çavuş*, the janissary faced new challenges. They had to earn the respect of the janissaries both in times of peace and war. Sergeants, the *Çavuş* formed the backbone of the whole system of janissary corps. They functioned as messengers, couriers, orderlies, spies, escort guards (for the foreign diplomats)³⁷⁷, punishers (for the janissary criminals), combat reporters (on the battlefield) and preachers (of the Bektashi principles). They were the eyes, the ears, the mouth and the arms of the High Commandment via their direct commander *Başçavuş*. They

³⁷³ KY, p. 201

³⁷⁴ Ricaut, p. 221

³⁷⁵ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p.218 (...(*Solaklar*) bilhassa 16. asırda Seğirdim Aşçıları arasından alınırlardı.)

³⁷⁶ Op.cit. (They (*Solaks*) were selected from among the brave, strong, tall, experienced and respected janissaries with rhetorical talents...)

³⁷⁷ Galland, Antoine, *Istanbul'a Ait Günlük Hatıralar*, v.I, (Ankara, TTK Yay., 1987), p. 65;

were feared and respected by the janissaries. Whenever a janissary had to be punished for a severe crime a *çavuş* was called to the chamber and attended the execution.³⁷⁸ For heavier crimes that deserved death penalty, the criminal was given to the custody of the *Orta Çavuş* and was taken to the Baba Cafer dungeon (as described above, “Punishment”). There they were choked and their bodies were thrown into the sea. A cannon fired after the execution, used to mark the end.³⁷⁹ Law enforcement was a part of their duties.

Sergeants had the duty of conveying the orders of the high commandment to the division and squadrons both in peace and war times including the very battles. During peace, they used the *Orta Camii* (Central Mosque) for such duties and in the battle field they used to run around among the fighting battalions shouting the orders while encouraging and detecting the individual fighters’ performances. Their reports to *Başçavuş* reached *Kethüda Bey* and the janissaries could receive rewards right away depending on *Çavuş*’s verbal reports. That meant a huge influence on the fates of janissaries. Thus, the *Çavuş* had to be trustworthy, respected and charismatic personalities in order to maintain their authority. Himself a janissary, Constantine Mihaillovich (c. 1463) gives us valuable information on the functions of the *Çavuş* on the battlefield:

....Then the Sultan, in order to detect who acts heroically and how each of them (the janissaries) behaves, sends some men from his *Kapı Kulları* (Servants of the Gate) on fully shielded horses. Each holds a stick or a mace in his hand and with it he encourages and instigates them to fight. These are called the “*Çavuş*”. Wherever these go, at the place they are, it is like the Sultan himself had come. That is because everybody is so afraid of them. Whomever they praise, it is his felicity, but whomever they speak ill of to the Sultan, it is his disaster. Their commander is “*Çavuşbaşı*”³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 176 (KY notes that a *çavuş* could be called only for severe crimes. A *çavuş* could attend punishments in all the chambers except the *Kethüda Bey* and *Başçavuş* squadrons.)

³⁷⁹ Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi, p. 48

³⁸⁰ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003), p.102

When promoted they would become *Küçük Çavuş* (Junior Sergeant), *Orta Çavuş* (Middle Sergeant) and finally *Başçavuş*, the Head Sergeant. Becoming a Head Sergeant meant to enter into the *Katar Ağaları* (Officers of the Flock) and the next step (when a Head Sergeant got promoted) was to become a *Haseki*, a post which led the way up to the High Commandment depending on one's performance.

Başçavuş was the commander of all the *Çavuş*. He used to reside in the 5th Ağa Squadron and had around 130 *Çavuş* under his commandment.³⁸¹ He was the most influential officer after the *Kethüda Bey*.



Fig. 18 *Başçavuş* / Head Sergeant

The source of his power can best be understood by the following list of his duties and rights:³⁸²

- 1- To arrest and detain *Yeniçeri Ağası*, the General Commander in accordance with the sultanic orders. Also accompany him to his final destination if the *Ağa* was sent to exile.
- 2- To wait on top of a staircase in front of the *Ağa*'s palace during the *Ağa Divanı* (Council of the General Commander), receive the applications of the janissaries who wish to file lawsuits for each other. To report the cases to *Kethüda Bey* to be discussed during the council. To bring the issues to the attention of the *Ağa* in the *Kethüda Bey*'s absence. (To act as a vice-*Kethüda*)
- 3- To do the prayer before the start of the *Ağa*'s council.

³⁸¹ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v. I, pp. 206-208

³⁸² I.b.i.d., pp. 184, 206-8, 228, 233, 256, 333, 397

- 4- To distribute 15.000 “candles” among the chambers every Wednesday³⁸³. He would be accompanied by the *Orta Çavuş* (Middle Sergeant) and *Küçük Çavuş* (Junior Sergeant). They would wear a special hat called “*Selimi Serpuş*”.
- 5- To communicate the orders of the *Ağa* to the janissaries via their *Çorbacı*/Captains with a meeting in the *Orta Camii* (Central Mosque).
- 6- To attend the rifle shooting trainings in the Meat Arena. (Again he would wear the *Selimi Serpuş*)
- 7- To signal the *Kara Kullukçu* to start running to to fetch the salary bags, during the *ulufe* distribution ceremony.
- 8- To organize and keep the order of marching janissary corps both during ceremonies and in war-zone. (Together with the Middle Sergeant and the Junior Sergeant.)
- 9- To maintain the command-and-control system during the battles with the 130 sergeants under his command. *Çavuş* had the duty of conveying the tactical orders to the officers on the battlefield as soon as possible.
- 10- To welcome the *Ağa* on his return from the Imperial Council. Middle Sergeant would salute the *Ağa* and *Başçavuş* would do the prayer.
- 11- To register each novice entering into the *Ocak* and slap the back of their necks as a welcome sign and a warning for complete obedience.
- 12- To celebrate the sultans in *bayrams* (religious festivals) standing before the *Baş Deveci* and the Imam of the *Ocak* in the cue.
- 13- To control the butcheries in the Meat Arena.

³⁸³ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p. 206. Wednesdays must have had a special meaning since distribution of candles was done particularly on that day. The ceremonial nature of that distribution is clear because the Sergeants had to wear a special ceremonial hat, *Selimi Serpuş* (normally worn by the Viziers). Interestingly, we also find two specially designed halls called “*Yaz Çarşamba Dairesi*” (Wednesday Chamber for summer) and “*Kış Çarşamba Dairesi*” (Wednesday Chamber for winter) within the palace complex of *Yeniçeri Ağası*. These halls were used to host Sadrazam, Chancellor during his visits to *Ağa*. (Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.1, p.391) Why then was the day Wednesday so important? The answer comes from Melikoff: Wednesday was the day for the Bektashis to hold *Ayin-i Cem*, meetings. (Melikoff, Irene, *Uyur İdik Uyardılar*, (Istanbul, Demos, 2006)), p. 135

14- To command the *Çorbacı* in their rifle shooting demonstration during the annual visit by the sultan. The demonstration was done for showing the abilities of the officers.

15- To keep one of the salary ledgers.

16- To do the prayer and give the start command in the *Seğirdim* race of the Runner Cooks.

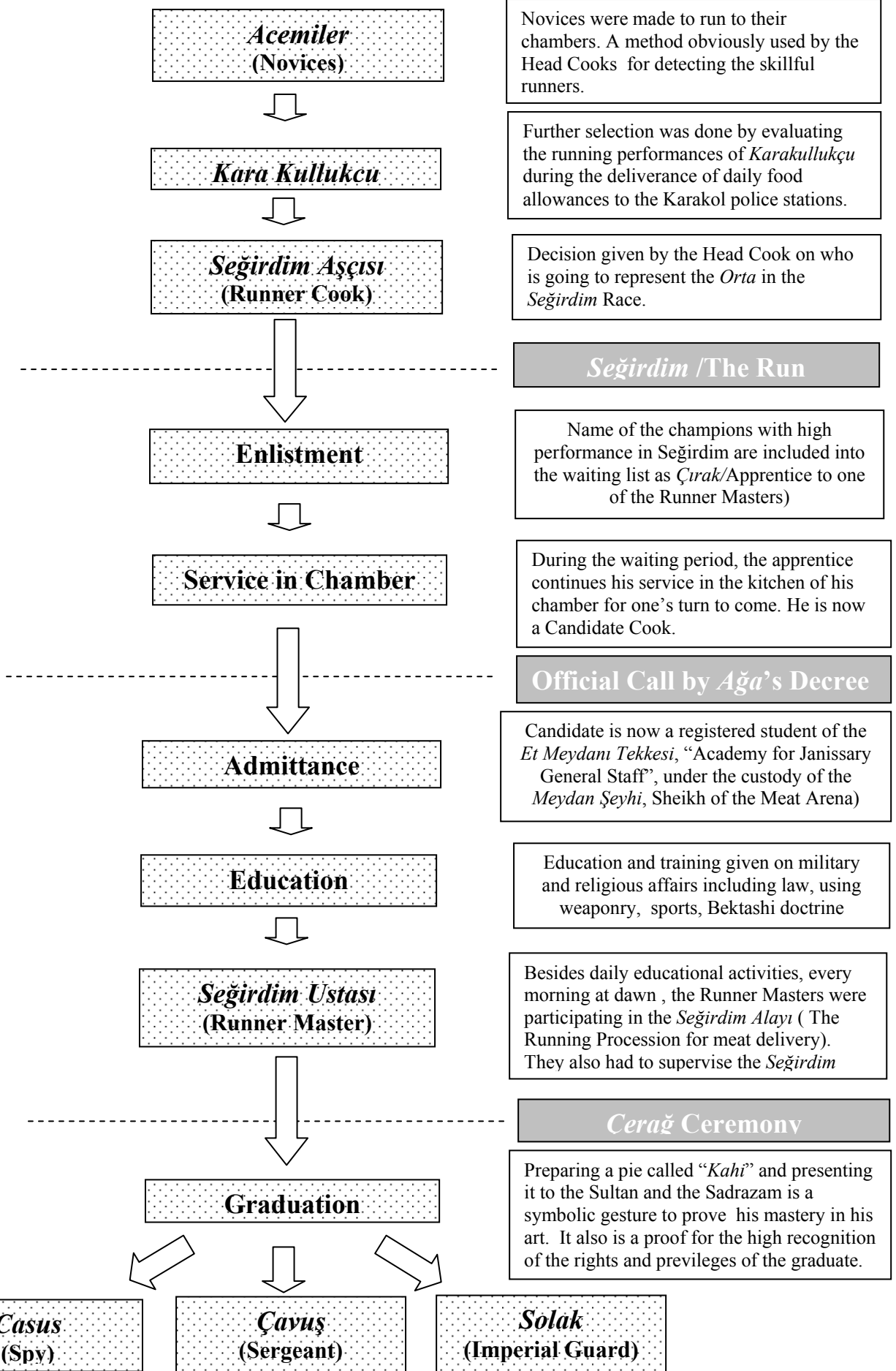
As we can see, the duties of *Başçavuş* can be summed up in three categories; namely military, law enforcement and religious. These then can be assumed as the three fields in which a *Çavuş* was expected to be knowledgeable. This must be the formation given to the Runner Cooks after they were admitted into the *Et Meydanı Tekkesi*.

In conclusion, thus, by isolating an event which otherwise might have been seen as a mere athletic race, we have revealed out a system of selection, recruitment and training of the future chief-of-staff. The *Tekke* in the Meat Arena under the leadership of *Meydan Şeyhi*, Sheikh of the Arena, and the supervision of *Başçavuş*, was functioning as a “Cadet Academy”, an “Academy of War” or “General Staff Academy” in which the students were educated in various areas like law, firearms, cooking, sports and most of all the Bektashi doctrine. The candidates were selected among the *Kara Kullukçu* of each *orta* or *bölük* who were trained by their direct commander, the Head Cook.

The entrance exam to the Academy was the *Seğirdim* Race performed every morning in the Meat Arena. An old method used right from the very entry of novices into the *Ocak*. The champions were enlisted as apprentices to a Runner Master in the *Tekke* and once their Master received his graduation diploma, the apprentice was called to the *Tekke* instead of him. Graduation or “coming out as a candle” meant to

receive the right to wear a beard and to become a free man. The graduates were assigned to a challenging duty like being a *Çavuş/Sergeant*, a *Casus/Spy*, or a *Solak/Left-Handed Imperial Guard*. In any case, they were entitled to advance on the path of promotion via a faster lane. After all, the rule was simple: “The faster is the better!”.

Fig. 19 Process flow of *Et Meydanı Tekkesi* /
Academy for Janissary General Staff



CHAPTER V

JANISSARY AND DEATH

Death and violence were, no doubt, the main issues for the early modern warriors whose lives were intermingled with suffering and pain caused by continuous warfare.³⁸⁴ In this chapter we will focus on how the janissary as a Bektashi warrior dealt with the clear and present danger of death. We will try to find the answers to the following questions: How did the janissary deal with the notion of death and and overcome the “Warrior’s Dilemma”³⁸⁵? To which extent might the religious beliefs (in our case Bektashism) be instrumental in creating a warrior’s brethren, where the group ascends over the individual³⁸⁶, which in turn functioned as an important component of troop motivation? What was the role of Hacı Bektaş’s teachings on martyrdom in janissary’s resolution on the issue of death? We will see how the janissary visualized the end of his Path, (*Yol*) in accordance with the Bektashi doctrine and what it meant for the janissary to become a “Reacher” (*Eren*)³⁸⁷. We will try to understand how he, as an initiate who experienced his symbolic death

³⁸⁴ See Geoffroi de Charny’s (the leading French Knight of his age and author of “Livre de chevalerie” [Book of Chivalry] penned for royal chivalric society, the Order of the Star of King John of France [1350-64]) concern in death and suffering. (“...[the great deeds of prowess] have been accomplished only through suffering great hardship, making strenuous efforts, and enduring fearful physical perils and the loss of friends whose deaths they have witnessed in many great battles in which they have taken part; these experiences have often filled their hearts with great distress and strong emotion...”; Chivalric Violence and Religious Valorization, Kaeuper, Richard W., *International Symposium: Courtiers and Warriors Comparative Historical Perspectives on Ruling Authority and Civilization*, (Kyoto, International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2003), pp.489 -508)

³⁸⁵ Warrior’s Dilemma: The conflict (of the warrior) between the necessity to kill as a part of his profession and his need to still be blessed for his violent act which normally is regarded to be sinful by every religion. Every warrior needs to reach a resolution that legitimizes the violence he exerts on the battlefield.

³⁸⁶ American Military Psychiatry and its role among the Ground Forces in World War II, Paul Wanke, *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.63, No.1, (Jan.1999), pp.127-146

³⁸⁷ The term “Reacher” is used in the meaning of “the one who attains (sainthood)”. Though it may sound artificial, I believe no other word covers this concept.

during his initiation into the Order, (thus “died before death”), would regard himself as already dead when standing on the battlefield.

Rhoads Murphey asks similar questions as to which extent might religion have functioned as a motive in Ottoman army. Although he relates his argument to a research on the French soldiers in the Revolutionary army and notes that “rather than a sense of patriotic duty or revolutionary zeal, they were inspired by regimental loyalty, feelings of comradeship created through a sense of shared labour, shared danger and an understanding of the need for mutual support to make the common enterprise work”³⁸⁸, curiously enough, for the Ottoman army, especially the janissaries he desperately tries to prove that they were motivated by material gains. After stating his disbelief in any kind of religious ideal a janissary might have adhered to, Murphey finally concludes that their main concern might not possibly have been the earning of such deferred and intangible rewards (namely promise of paradise in the afterlife as a reward for martyrdom in Allah’s cause), but first to ensure their survival at the end of the battle and then secure whatever tangible rewards and special bonuses they were entitled to.³⁸⁹ While it would be too simplistic to imprison the discussion on the factors behind the Ottoman expansion to Gaza and Jihad concepts, I believe it is equally simplistic to reduce it to mere “loot”, “booty”, and “pillage” explanation. It is essential at least to establish a bridge with what Murphey finds plausible for the French Revolutionary soldier and the case of the janissary. Without undermining the motive of material gains (as in any other army in early modern ages), we have to focus on the sense of solidarity among the fellow soldiers and the mechanisms that create it, as Murphey himself rightly have underlined. In the case of janissaries, there comes Bektashism.

³⁸⁸ Murphey, Rhoads, *Ottoman Warfare 1500- 1700*, (London, UCL Press, 1999),p. 143

³⁸⁹ Murphey, p.151

Bektashi ideology was obviously functioning as a bridge between the macro-politics based on religiosity (sometimes served sometimes usurped by the sovereigns) and the personal and psychological necessity for a tool for coping with the dire situation on the battleground. Mere desire for personal gains (though instrumental in understanding the phenomenon partially) falls short in conceiving the logic (not only the sentiment) behind the coordinated efforts of *Orta*, regiments and *Bölük*, squadrons.

The Hearth of the Janissaries formed the heart (*Kalb*) of the Ottoman army.³⁹⁰ While marching towards their final destination and on the battlefield they used to surround the Sultan at the very center. This was a precaution both to protect the Sultan and to prevent him from fleeing or even stepping back. Such a move by the Sultan would have disastrous outcomes. A few janissaries were assigned to hold his horse tight and prevent it to run away with instinctive fright. Afterall, at the battlefield every single detail was a matter of life and death. Here is a vivid description of a battle³⁹¹ by an a Hungarian chronicler, Janos Thuroczy (c.1435 – c. 1489)³⁹²:

.... When the signal to begin battle had been given, like what might be called an unbroken wall, they approached at a slow pace, seizing every part of the plain situated within the Hungarians' range of vision. When it reached the distance of the flight of a single arrow, there was a sudden beating of drums on both sides, creating a terrible sound that was followed by the blare of trumpets blowing one against another. And all the battle-lines on both sides bent forward their many lances, charged with all their vigor and strength, and rushed headlong into mutual slaughter as the whole plain emitted a kind of groan from so much movement. There was the loud din of lances breaking; many on both sides were precipitately knocked down from their horses, falling wounded amongst the combatants, and the whole air resounded with the terrible cries of dying. The men on both sides were pressed together and one

³⁹⁰ KO, v.1, p. 375

³⁹¹ Battle of Rigomezje, October 17, 1448. The battle was fought between the Hungarians under the commandment of Janos Hunyadi (c. 1387- August 11, 1456) and the Ottomans led by Murad II (1421-1451).

³⁹² Thuroczy, Janos; Frank Mantello (transl.), *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, (Indiana, Indiana University, 1991), pp. 153-155

side did not know how to give ground to the other. Because there were so many men crowded together, one force was unable to strike at another for so long as an hour.... The entire day was given over to the intensity of the struggle, and when countless numbers of men on both sides had been slain, and the whole battlefield was covered with fresh corpses, night came and with its shadows interrupted the armed frenzy of the two foes....

Tens of thousands of men with sharpened blades in their hands, waiting for about an hour until being able find any enemy fighter to hit. Two tremendous crowds pressed hard into each other after a crushing collision and individual soldiers trapped in it. Though vigorously cinematic as Thuroczy's lines may be for the modern reader, waiting for one's turn to face an enemy amidst a frenzy of clashing metal and screams of the wounded, while the front line is slowly approaching, seems better described by the word "perilous" than it is by "heroic". How could an individual handle such a deep trauma even if he survived? How could he be coping with the fact that he was to be killed in a few minutes' time in the first place?

Janissaries, like other warriors of their times had to face and cope with the reality of death. Battles in the early modern ages were still fought mainly by primitive weapons; swords, spears, halberds and axes. Carriable rifles were only gradually used and in some cases, warriors like janissaries, (although they did have one each) were not very enthusiastic to shoot with them. They were heavy to carry long distances, they had rather short ranges and it was quite cumbersome to load them. Loading was a time consuming effort and it was just simpler and more heroic to wield the good old swords. The standard weapons of a janissary were a rifle and a *yatağan* sword. In the 17th century, the quality of the rifles given by the state was so poor that the individual janissaries were forced to buy better guns from the markets in town. Training was also becoming more and more insufficient and the novices who wanted to master shooting with rifles or pistols had to spare some of

their own salaries to do shooting exercises in the polygons in Istanbul.³⁹³ The nature of their relationship with their weapons is important because it was the last thing standing between a janissary and death at the battlefield.

Seğirdim, Running Towards Death

When the janissaries received the order to start their assault (*Seğirdim*), the *mehter* band would start playing with all their might and the drums would start beating heavily with faster rhythms. Then the banners would be raised and a *gülbang* prayer was read all together. It is called the “*Gülbang-ı Ceng*” (also called *Gülbang-ı Muhammedi*)³⁹⁴. This *gülbang* gives us clues on the psychological status of the warriors at the front. They were facing the clear and present danger of death and their prayer was intertwined with Bektashi terminology:

Bism-i Şah Allâh Allâh!
Derviş-i dervîşân, makbûl-u makbûlan!
(You) The dervish among dervishes! (You) The beloved among the beloved!
Baş üryân, sine püryân, dide al kan!
(Your) Heads naked, chests open, eyes (in) red blood!
Yezide kan kusturan!
(You) The unmerciful destroyers of Yezid!³⁹⁵
Göğüs kalkan, arslan pençesinden kelle kurtaran!
(Your) Chests are (your) shields! (You are) The ones to save heads from lion’s claws!
Bu meydanda nice başlar kesilir, olmaz soran!
In this arena many a heads are (/will be) cut off! No one (comes) to ask!
Müvizât-ı Fahr-ı Cihân,
(For) The miracles of the Wisdom of the World (Prophet Muhammed),
Kerem-i Şâh-ı merdan,
(For) The generosity of the King of Heroes (Caliph Ali),
Bi-hürmeti abdalân!
With all our respect for Abdals³⁹⁶!
Pirimiz, Hünkârımız, tâc-ül ârifin, gavs -el vâsiline Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Şah-ı Horasan!

³⁹³ Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân, p. 266 [... *Gönlünde (talim yapmak) olan dahi varub çarşılarda olan talimhanelerde akçe ile atarlar. Anda ise akçesiz atdırmazlar....*]

³⁹⁴ Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler, pp. 97-98

³⁹⁵ By making him to vomit blood.

³⁹⁶ *Abdal*: Ascetic dervish who dedicates his life to God.

(For) Our Sage, our Sovereign; the crown of the men of knowledge; the leader of the Saints of Truth; Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, the King of Khorasan!

Hınzırdır, mel'undur, münâfıkdır Yezid'le Mervân. Le En Allâhü Yezide ve âlâ kavm-i Yezid. Rahmed ber can-ı şehid!

Damned, accursed, evildoer are Yezid and Mervan! Damn Yezid and Yezid's dirty tribe!

May the souls of the martyrs be blessed!

Allâh yoluna, Muhammed kavline, Ali uğruna, oniki imam katarın, Pir gayretine!

For the Path of God! For the word of Muhammed! For the sake of Ali! For the flock of twelve imams! For the endeavors of the Sage!

Dem-i Pîr, kerem-i evliyâ, gerçeklerin demine!

(For) The moment of the Sages, the generosity of the saints! For the moment of the truths!

Hû diyelim,

Let's say Hoo!

Hûûûû...

Hooooo!

Together with the “Hooo!” the janissaries would start running against the enemy lines like an “unbroken wall” as Thuroczy vividly describes it. Moments before facing his death, the janissary sees himself as a dervish among dervishes and the beloved among the beloved. He believes he deserves the love of God because he fights for the sake of Allah, Muhammed, Ali, the twelve imams and the Sage that is Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli. Once again we find him allied with Ali against his enemies. This attitude is consistent with the Bektashi notion of “*Tevella and Teberra*” that is “Loving the lovers of Ali and hating who hates Ali”. It can clearly be seen among the lines uttered in the “Sword Girding Ceremony” as discussed in the previous chapter: “*Oh Muawiya's³⁹⁷ ummat! Oh the enemies of Muhammed! You, the blasphemous, we, the thankful (to God)! You, on one side, we, on the other!³⁹⁸*”

At the peak of tension, the janissary declares his consciousness of the violence he is about to be exposed. “In this arena” he says, meaning the battlefield, “many a heads

³⁹⁷ 1st Umayyad caliph (661–80), one of the greatest Muslim statesmen; son of Abu Sufyan, a Koreish tribesman of Mecca. He submitted to Islam the year of the surrender of Mecca and became Muhammad's secretary. Under Umar he became the governor of Syria. He struggled with Ali over the government of the empire and led in the deposition of Hasan. (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2001-05 Columbia University Press)

³⁹⁸ Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (Istanbul, Nazenin, 2000), pp.54-55

are cut off” but nobody will come to ask for the fallen ones. By stating his awareness of this fact, he implies that as a devshirme he is rootless having no bonds tying him to this world. No parents, no relatives, no wives or children. On the other hand, the phrase “(Your) Heads naked, chests open, eyes (in) red blood!” is an open reference to the initiation ceremony (*İkrar*) into Bektashism, where he had symbolically died only to be born once again. Note the similarity of the choice of words in a poem by Şahi, in the 16th Century describing the initiation: “*Üryan büryan olub meydana geldim/All naked I came to the Arena..... İçeri aldılar dökdüm yaşımı / They took me in, with tears in my eyes...*” The words “*Üryan* and *püryan*” is a reference to the state in *Ayin-i Cem* ritual where the newcomer, stripped off his past experiences and sins, stands in front of God and the Fourties. Janissary in his *gülbang* adds “ eyes in red blood” phrase which is parallel to Şahi’s “They took me in with tears in my eyes” since “bloody eyes” is an analogy to weeping in repentance.

Following the Bektashi tradition, a janissary would say death is behind him, that is to say he had transcended death.³⁹⁹ He would deeply believe that Ali with his Zulfikar, the Fourties, the Reachers, the Sages, the Saints clad in their armour were to appear on the battlefield whenever he was in need. He would also believe that if he was killed on the battleground, the Divine Beauty would be manifested to him and he would be exposed to a miracle which would carry him rightaway to the last step in the 4 Gates, 40 Posts: The *Müşahade*. There he would reach his destination, reunite with God and nothing but the eternal moment (*Dem*) would remain.

³⁹⁹ Birge, p. 234 (... *arkamda ecel önümde nasip var.*)

Janissary and Martyrdom

Hacı Bektaş expresses his open support for Holy War. The ideology of *Gaza* as set by the founder of the sect reveals how suitable Bektashism was for a class of warriors whose main occupation was to kill.⁴⁰⁰ He supplies them with a legitimate basis for the violence the janissaries were to exert and face on the battlefield.⁴⁰¹ In *Makalat*, Hacı Bektaş praises and exalts the martyrs as follows:

...Oh the believers! Know that some infidels are the enemies of religion. Some (others) are enemies of the body. And many others are the enemies of (your) goods. And the enemy worse than the infidels is the *Iblis* (Devil) because he diverts a man/woman from obedience (to God) and makes him/her deserve Hell. It is a must to fight and destroy him whenever it is possible.

If you kill an infidel, you shall become a *gazi*. If the infidel kills you, you shall become a *Şehid*. The level of the *Şehids* is five levels superior to the prophets. Firstly, whenever the prophets die they wash them. *Şehids* are not washed. Secondly, (for burial) they take the clothes of the prophets off. The clothes of a *Şehid* are not to be taken off.

Thirdly, they put a *kefen* (white shroud) on the prophets. They do not put (it) on *Şehids*.

Fourthly, prophets are granted forgiving in the other world. *Şehids* receive it right away. They are taken to paradise.

Fifthly, prophets are visited once a year. *Şehids* are visited a thousand times a year.⁴⁰²

By placing the warriors way over prophets and promising them the paradise, no doubt, Bektashi ideology must have had a soothing effect on the janissaries who were trained to become killing machines. The need or duty to exert violence and to expect to be forgiven for their acts (violence in normal circumstances – like all the other peaceful religions – is condemned and must be considered outrageous) is a

⁴⁰⁰ See the conditions for First Gate, Third Post. *Gaza* is listed among the basic principles of Islam like *Oruç*, *Namaz*, *Zekat* and *Haj*. Also see *Makalat*, p. 18, (...Abidlerin taatleri... Nefir-i amm olıcak, gaza eylemekdir...)

⁴⁰¹ In yet some other parts of *Makalat* one can realize that its author was familiar with military terminology. In many places (esp. In exemplifying the spiritual difficulties a human being faces) words like, *Subaşı* (Captain, commander), *Dizdar* (Castle-Guard), *Bekçi* (Guardian), *Kale* (Castle), and *Çeri* (Soldier) are used.

⁴⁰² *Makalat*, p. 31

common conflict for any warrior (including the samurai or the chevalier) which they had to cope with or (if possible) overcome.

Physical death marks the end of the journey throughout the Path (which had started with initiation into the Order) and via stripping off one's earthly existence at the state of death, the soul converges towards the state of spiritual death, thus unison with God. This conjunction is assumed by the Bektashi to be a miracle. The janissary as a *Şehid*, Martyr expects to witness that miracle and reach the final destination.

In Bektashism, *Müşahade* (Witnessing) is the final level of the 4 Gates 40 Posts on the Bektashi Path. It is an Arabic word which comes from the root “*Şuhud*” (to witness). In fact, this is the same root for “*Şehid*” (Martyr). Therefore, the final level also becomes a description of martyrdom in Islam that is to witness or experience “The Divine Beauty”. It is “The Unison with God”.

Janissaries seem to be well aware of this concept. In their Prayer of War⁴⁰³, they call the battleground as “the arena of martyrdom”, a place where the Divine Beauty is manifested: “(Our) Hands in blood, tongues in blood, chests naked, hearts opened! In the arena of martyrdom the Divine Beauty is manifested to the ones proceeding on the Path to God, to the martyrs of Gaza!⁴⁰⁴”

For a janissary, like any other Bektashi, *The Yol*, leading to *Müşahade*, starts with an initiation where the applicant is asked to abandon his self and be born again by giving his testimony. A 16th Century poet, Şahi, describes the process of initiation perfectly in the following lines:

Kurbanlar tıĝlanub glbandı çekildi
Gaflet uykusundan uyana geldim
Drt kapu sancaĝı anda dikildi
ryan bryan olub meydana geldim

Sacrifices are slain gulbands are read
I woke up from the sleep of ignorance
The banner of the Four Gates erected there
All naked I came to the Arena

⁴⁰³ The full text of “the Sefer Duası/Prayer of War” will be discussed below.

⁴⁰⁴ Yeniçeri Ocaĝı ve Devşirmeler, pp. 96-97 (Sefer Duası/Prayer of War. Prayer in full is cited below.)

*Evvel eşiğine koydum başımı
İçeri aldılar dökdüm yaşımı
Erenler yolunda gör savaşımlı
Can-ü baş koyarak kurbana geldim*

First I put my head on its threshold
They took me in, with tears in my eyes
In the Path of the Reachers see my ordeal
Offering my soul, my head, I came as a
sacrifice

*Ol demde uyandı batın çerağı
Pirin huzuruna çekib geldiler
El ele el Hak'ka olsun dediler
Henüz masum olub cihana geldim*

That moment the candle of mystery
awakened
Pulled I was to the Sage's front
Hands to hands, hands to God they said
Just born, an infant I came into the world

*Pirim kulağıma eyledi telkin
Şah-ı velayet'e olmuşuz yakın
Mezhebim Cafer-i Sadık'ul metin
Allah dost eyvallah peymanı geldim*

My Sage whispered into my ear
To the King of Sages (Ali) I was near
My sect (is of) Cafer-i Sadık, the strong
I came to vow, God is (my) friend

*Özüm darda yüzüm yerde durmuşum
Muhammed Ali'ye ikrar vermişim
Sakahüm hamrini anda görmüşüm
İçib kana kana mestane geldim*

My essence on gallows, face on the
ground
I have given my testimony to Muhammed
Ali
There, I have seen *Sakahüm*⁴⁰⁵ wine
I drank (it) slaking my thirst, I got dizzy

*Yolumuz on iki imama çıkar
Murşidim Muhammed Ahmed-i Muhtar
Rehberim Ali'dir sahib zülfikar
Kulundur Şahi'ya divana geldim.⁴⁰⁶*

Our Path leads to the Twelve Imams
My tutor is Muhammed Ahmed-i Muhtar
My guide is Ali, the owner of Zulfikar
(I) Şahi, as thy slave I came to thy council.

Şahi, in his poem gives a compact explanation of his initiation into the Order. He states that after his initiation he had become like “an infant who was just born into the world”.

A janissary used to receive his initiation after his apprenticeship period as a *Karakullukçu* (Black Servitor) ended. The ceremony marked the beginning of his life as a “real” janissary or *Yoldaş*, Comrade. He was granted acceptance from the elders of the Hearth and was allowed to wrap a *dülbend* around his *arakiyye*. In order to do that, he was asked to bring in a sheep to be sacrificed (as in any other

⁴⁰⁵ This is a reference to Qur'an (76/21, Al-İnsan: ... *And their Lord will give them a pure beverage to drink.*)

⁴⁰⁶ Eyuboğlu, İsmet Zeki, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 2000), pp.198-199

Bektashi initiation) symbolically slain in his stead.⁴⁰⁷ Following the initiation, he assumed the title *Yoldaş* together with its privileges, rights and its responsibilities. His journey on the Path used to start with this ceremony.

The symbolic death of the janissary in the *Ikrar* ritual is not at all an end but a start. He is brought to the arena, a band made out of the sheep's (which he had brought earlier with him and which was already slaughtered and its wool spinned) wool hanging down from his neck, made to stand on the *Dar* (Gallows) spot, and the band was finally wrapped around his waist. Wearing a white shroud throughout the ceremony, he himself resembles a sacrificial lamb ready to be sacrificed. Then as a sign of rebirth, a candle is lit for the newcomer. It is the symbol of the impermanence, the transitoriness of his existence. It is the reminder of the temporary nature of human existence as a whole. That is why “*Çerağ*” (candle) receives deep respect from the Bektashis and terms like “*çerağı uyandırmak*” (to wake a candle up) or “*çerağı dinlendirmek*” (to put a candle to sleep) are used. To give one's testimony and become a Bektashi is to experience the divine darkness (to step into *Gaib*, The Unknown) which surrounds or embraces the fragile light of the candle.

Hence, when the janissary says “*We have given our testimony for the unity of God, we have given our heads on this Path.... We are ecstatics since past eternity! We are moths in the Divine Light!...*”⁴⁰⁸ he knows what he is talking about. Choosing of the word “moth” is an analogy to its weakness, fragility, and impermanence. But by placing it in (not around) the Divine Light, the Bektashi janissary declares he is

⁴⁰⁷ KO, v.1, p.285

⁴⁰⁸ KO, v.1, p.154 (From a sofa tezkiresi, document given to a new janissary.) (... *Mü'miniz kalû beladan beru. Hakkın birliğini eyledik ikrar, bu yola vermişiz seri, Nebimiz vardır Cenâb-ı Ahmed-i Muhtar, ezelden beru mestâneleriz, Nur-ı İlahide pervaneleriz. Bir bölük bu cihanda divâneleriz. Sayılmayız parmakla, tükenmeyiz kırılmakla, taşramızdan sormakla, kimse bilmez halimiz. On iki imam, on iki târik cümlesine dedik belî. Üçler, yediler, kırklar, nûr-ı nebî, Kerem-i Ali, pirimiz Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli...*)

already at the “*Müşahade*” stage, the last post of the Path thus have surpassed physical death. This is “Dying before death”.

Dying before Death

Ibn-i Arabi (1165, Murcia – 1240, Damascus) the renowned founder of sufi tradition in Islam, evaluates death as returning back to God and divides ways of return into two: Namely “*İhtiyari Rücu*” (Voluntary Return) and “*Mecburi Rücu*” (Compulsory Return). Compulsory Return is the physical death of the human body while Voluntary Return refers to reaching spiritual perfection while physically still alive and on this earth.⁴⁰⁹ Similarly, Bektashism defines “Dying before death” as a means of returning to God (voluntarily as Ibn Arabi puts it) by refraining from excessive desires, from what is temporal and worldly.⁴¹⁰ It is to dedicate oneself to truth and to the Path, *Yol* leading to unification with God that is *Müşahade* or *Şahadet*. For a Bektashi walking on the Path, “to die before death” means to pass through three stages⁴¹¹: a) *Terk-i Dünya* (Abandonment of the world): World is not permanent, that is why the individual must not be deeply attached to it. Any material gains for personal pleasures are abandoned in this stage; b) *Terk-i Ukba* (Abandonment of the other world): Paradise in afterlife is important only as a source of hope for human beings. One has to pass through it and leave his hopes for a happy afterlife behind him heading for his final destination; c) *Terk-i Terk* (Abandonment of abandonment): This stage is to reach perfect maturity. One leaves all his worries and doubts which had brought him to this stage. Divine light becomes

⁴⁰⁹ Chittick, William, *Hayal Alemleri – Ibn Arabi ve Dinlerin Çeşitliliği Meselesi*, (Istanbul, Kaknüs yay., 1999), p.129

⁴¹⁰ Eyuboğlu, İsmet Zeki, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşılık*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 2000), p.387

⁴¹¹ Eyuboğlu, p. 166

the only thing that remains. He experiences God within himself and reflects what's in him.⁴¹²

Birge declares that in Bektashi poetry and other related literature there are surprisingly few references to death and afterlife.⁴¹³ Then he adds that the only idea that the Bektashis stress is “returning back to God”, “reaching the actual destination of their journey”. In the very short section on death in his book, he desperately tries to utilize the scarce information he has and tries to give an explanation via other sects of Islam. Birge had possibly overseen the fact that although Bektashism does not refer much to the term of “*Ölüm*” (Death) itself, when one shifts his research to other concepts employed in its stead by the Bektashis, a wealth of information pours in.

Death for a Bektashi is referred by expressions like “*sır olmak*” (To become secret)⁴¹⁴, “*sırta kadem basmak*” (to step into secrecy), “*göçmek*” (to migrate)⁴¹⁵, “*kalıbı değiştirmek*”⁴¹⁶ (to change the mold) or “*kalıbı dinlendirmek*”⁴¹⁷ (to rest the mold). The body of physical existence is a mold, a matrix for the Bektashi, in which the soul resides throughout its journey on this earth. The journey takes place on the Path described above through the four gates and forty posts and its final destination is “*Müşahade*” (Witnessing God) a point where the “mold” is left for rest while the soul reaches perfection. The Bektashi term for the ones who have reached this level is “*Erenler*” (Reachers/The ones who reached /The saints) or “*Gaib Erenleri*” (Reachers of The Unknown). As can easily be detected in the *gülbang* prayers, the saints are called in for help to the muslims whenever they are in need. They are not

⁴¹² These concepts are have striking similarities to the 無 (mu), and 空 (ku) in Zen Buddhism which will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁴¹³ Birge, p. 148

⁴¹⁴ Eyuboğlu, İsmet Zeki, *Bütün Yönleriyle Bektaşilik*, (Istanbul, Der Yay., 2000), p.389

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., p.381

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 383

⁴¹⁷ Op. Cit.

regarded to be dead in the modern meaning of the word. They form a half-godly pantheon of the threes, sevens, and fourties.

Resting one's mold or changing one's mold⁴¹⁸ is to leave one's body behind and transcend time and space. The soul gets rid of the burdens of the body and turns back to where it had originated from: *Aşk*, The Divine Love⁴¹⁹. It reaches the Unknown (*Gaib*), the Secret (*Sır*) and itself evolves into secrecy. Kul Nesimi (16th Century) points to this transcendence:

<i>Gah çıkarım gökyüzüne</i>	At times I rise to the skies
<i>Seyrederim alemi</i>	I watch the world
<i>Gah inerim yeryüzüne</i>	At times I land on the ground
<i>Seyreder alem beni</i> ⁴²⁰	The world watches me

Unlike the mold in which it resides, the soul for a Bektashi is immortal and it migrates in time, space and other dimensions unknown to humankind. This principle (*Tenasüh/ Métempscose*) makes it possible for the soul to continue its existence in other bodies in other environments throughout its migration. Thus a Bektashi would not be surprised when somebody says “Muhammed is Ali is Hacı Bektaş is Abdal Musa is me...”⁴²¹

Reaching the end of The Path

A mysterious Şiri (possibly the nickname of Bektaş Çelebi, d. 1761) masterfully pictures an abstract universe in which time, space together with other worldly dimensions are fused into each other to reveal the Bektashi Truth:

⁴¹⁸ A certain Derviş Tevfik refers to this phenomenon as “stripping off one's existence and getting rescued (... *Varlığımdan soyunup kurtar kendini...*)”, Eyuboğlu, p. 549

⁴¹⁹ Note that the word for love, *Aşk* in Arabic letters is written exactly the same as *Işk* and often used interchangeably in Bektashi poetry. This possibly had led to confusion among the later readers and in many cases the words seem to misread.

⁴²⁰ *Dönüyordu*, p. 61

⁴²¹ No matter how illogical or science-fiction this may sound to the modern reader, it is similar to the secret Neo finds in his quest against Agent Smith in the movie *The Matrix*.

<i>Cihan varolmadan ketm-i ademde</i> ⁴²²	Before the world existed in the primary matrix
<i>Hak ile birlikte yekdaş idim ben</i>	With God I was one
<i>Yarattı bu mülkü çünkü o demde</i>	Because He created this estate at that moment
<i>Yaptım tasvirini nakkaş idim ben</i>	I made its picture artist I was
....	
<i>Şu fena mülküne çok geldim gittim</i>	Many times I have visited this estate of vanity
<i>Yağmur olup yağdım ot olup bittim</i>	As rain I fell, as grass I grew
<i>Urum diyarını ben irşad ettim</i>	I was the one who tutored the land of Rum
<i>Horasan'dan gelen Bektaş idim ben</i> ⁴²³	Coming from Khorasan, Bektaş I was

Throughout his poem Şiri travels in time and migrates in physical appearances of (or witnesses) Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Zacharias, David, Moses, Christ, Muhammed, Ali, Hacı Bektaş and finally appearing as Şiri himself (as the person writing this particular poem at that particular time). A perfect example of the Bektashi concept of “Göçmek” (Migration) and “Don değiştirmek” (Transfiguration).

By transfiguration Şiri declares that he had visited the earth many times in many appearances, but where was he returning to? The answer to this question lies in the very first line of the above poem: *Ketm-i Adem*, the Primary Matrix. This term stands for the very first matter from which the human kind is believed to be created of. That is the origin, the start of everything for man. At a point, just on the verge of being created, God addressed the man, asking for its⁴²⁴ testimony:

...And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves: “Am I not your Lord?” They said:” Yes, assuredly. We testify!” ...⁴²⁵

⁴²² *Ketm-i Adem*: The place where the essence of all the creatures (*Cevher-i Ahzar* – The Green Core) originated when God wished to create the worlds of souls and shapes. (Develioğlu)

⁴²³ Birge, pp. 139-42; Baha Said Bey, *Türkiye’de Alevi- Bektaşî, Ahi ve Nusayri Zümreleri*, (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2006), pp. 321-23

⁴²⁴ “It”, instead of “He/She” is used since the debate is about a primordial state where no difference as such between two sexes yet existed.

⁴²⁵ Qur’an 7/172-173. This verse is known to be the revelation of the doctrine of primordial covenant, by which every soul, before its birth, was made to declare its recognition of the Divine Existence and Unity. (*The Holy Qur’an with its English Translation*, Istanbul, İlmî Neşriyat, 2000)

For Bektashism, this primordial state of human kind was no different than God Himself, since it is believed that He had created man out of His own essence. Thus, *İkrar* (Testimony) is a clear reference to that state where it was one with God. Here, God asks “*Elestü bi-Rabbikum?*” (Am I not your Lord?) and in Bektashi tradition we find the word “*Elest*” to be a keyword for unison.⁴²⁶

<i>Vahdet badesile mestiz ezelden</i>	Dizzy since eternity with the drink of unity
<i>Elest kadehinden tadanlardanız</i> ⁴²⁷	Are we, the tasters of the chalice of <i>Elest</i>

Based on a hadith (Everything will return back to its essence!) Bektashism completes its conceptualization of death. The Cycle of Existence ends up at a point where all had started. As we have seen throughout this study, the Cycle, *Devran* is a frequently used motif in janissary *gülbangs* in the form of “... *Demine, devranına hu diyelim*” (Let’s say Hooo for his Moment for his Cycle...). The poems related to *Devran* constitute a distinct category called “*Devriye*” in Bektashi literature.⁴²⁸ The main theme of *Devriye* is the unification of the Created with its Creator.

The Cycle of Existence (*Varoluş Dairesi*) is conceived as a continuity between the *Kavs-i Nüzul* (The Descending Curve) where the soul differentiates from the divine essence as it comes out of the primary matrix and increasingly is distanced from its primordial form, and the *Kavs-i Uruc* (Ascending Curve) where it yearns to overcome the differentiation and return back to its origin that is God, the very source of *Aşk*, the Divine Love (or equally *Işk*, the Divine Light)⁴²⁹ As we can see, the body or the form is reduced to be a mere tool, a medium utilized during the course of that journey on the Path.

⁴²⁶ Birge, p. 129

⁴²⁷ Op.cit.

⁴²⁸ Melikoff, p.303

⁴²⁹ Birge, pp. 132-34 (Note that these two words; *Aşk* and *Işk* are written exactly the same: عشق)

Differentiation through a consciousness of self, had caused a sense, an illusion of duality (in the meaning of separateness from God) in man leading him to assume he is a separate entity than God. This kind of consciousness in turn has blurred the man's vision of the much referred *Gerçek* (Fact) or *Hakikat* (Absolute Truth) and has made him regard the illusion as real and the real as illusion. Once he (once again) understands that anything and everything surrounding him (including himself) in this world are nothing but various representations of the Divine, he may have a glimpse of the perfection he had at the start. A Bektashi refers to this state as "Getting dizzy" by drinking the *Sakahüm* (Qur'an, 76/21, Al-Insan:... *And their Lord will give them a pure beverage to drink.*) wine. Now compare this with the janissaries' " ...*Since eternity we are the dizzy, we are the moths in the Divine Light, in this world we are a group in madness ...*"⁴³⁰ Wine, in *Ayn-i Cem* rituals has meaning beyond being an alcoholic beverage and functions as a reminder of this dizziness felt during an experience of witnessing the Divine. It is the symbolic representation of *Ketm-i Adem* (Primary matrix), a condition in which self thus duality thus illusionary world did not yet exist.

Once the self (consciousness of which is the source of duality) is conquered, the Bektashi reaches his final destination and becomes a "Reacher" (*Eren*) or as it is called in *tasavvuf* (Islamic mysticism) as a whole "The Perfect Man" (*İnsan-ı Kamil*). In that state, he sees God everywhere, in every living or non-living thing.⁴³¹ For Bektashism, this is the state Mansur el-Hallac (d.922)⁴³² was revealing when he uttered "*Ene'l Hak!*" (I am God!). He was punished for this bold statement by his fellow Muslims but he remains to be one of the central figures for Bektashism. So

⁴³⁰ "...*Ezelden beru mestâneleriz, Nur-ı İlahide pervaneleriz. Bir bölük bu cihanda divâneleriz...*", *Kapıkulu Ocakları – I*, p.154

⁴³¹ Birge, p.128

⁴³² Eyuboğlu, p. 242; Birge, p. 128

much so that the *Dar* (Gallows) spot where in *Ayn-i Cem* the newcomer is asked to “die before death”, is in fact called *Dar-ı Mansur* in his memory.

Balım Sultan on this subject is quoted to say: “ ...*My word declares I am God, Dar is our escalation...*”⁴³³ While Yunus Emre refers to it as: “ *In eternal past my thought, my word was ‘I am God’, Mansur of Bagdad was not born yet.*”⁴³⁴

If ever one reaches this level, nothing but “*An-ı Daim*” (The Eternal Moment) remains. “*An-ı Daim*” is “*Dem*”, the eternal moment.⁴³⁵ *Dem* is a common motif that is repeated in most of the Bektashi prayers, *gülbangs* of the janissaries being no exception. For a modern mind, programmed to conceive time as a linear and progressive concept, *Dem* may be difficult to assess. There is no past or future or rather they are included in the moment and everything happens within this very moment. The moment thus time, is also a revolving cycle, “*Devran*”.⁴³⁶ It is this understanding of time that makes it possible for the threes, the sevens or the fourties to reappear when needed. Phenomena like “*don deęiřtirme*”, transfiguration (as in Hacı Bektaş turning into a dove when arriving at Anatolia⁴³⁷), “*tenasüh*”, journey of spirits or reincarnation (as in Abdal Musa⁴³⁸) are natural outcomes of this principle. With a high level of consciousness on the impermanence of physical existence, just like a candle light, Bektashi regards death only as a transformation of the mold within which the spirit resides temporarily.

⁴³³ Eyuboęlu, p.242 (... *Enel Hakk'ı söyler sözüm, Mirac'ımız Dar'dır bizim...*)

⁴³⁴ Eyuboęlu, p.243 (... *Ezelde benim fikrüm Ene'l Hak idi zikrüm, Henüz dahi toęmadın ol Mansur-i Bağdadi.*)

⁴³⁵ Çamuroęlu, Reha, *Dönüyordu*, (Istanbul, Doęan Kitapçılık, 2000), p. 37, 66

⁴³⁶ Dönüyordu, p. 58

⁴³⁷ Melikoff, p.42

⁴³⁸ Güzel, Abdurrahman (ed.), *Abdal Musa Velayetnamesi*, (Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1999), p.140 (... *Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli... eyitdi: “Ya erenler, Genceli'de genç ay gibi doğam, adum Abdal Musa çağıduram” didi. “ Beni isteyen anda gelsün bulsun.” Didiydi. Hüskar Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli vefat idicek Abdal Musa zuhura geldi....*)

The “Reachers”, Forces of the Unknown

As in the Prayer of War, in their *gülbangs* janissaries frequently asked for the helps of the Sages to whom they attributed various powers. For example Prophet Muhammed owns the power of the Word (Qu’ran), Ali owns the Zulfikaar, Ebu Muslim owns the sword⁴³⁹ while Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli owns the power of *Nefes* (The Breath).⁴⁴⁰ The breath is assumed to be the source of power for the ones who have access to its secret.⁴⁴¹ Them, together with many others who have reached *Gaib*, The Unknown constitute the forces of the Unknown, an invisible army having in their powers to appear with all their might whenever a Muslim is in a dire situation and calls for help.

Bektashi ideology, dictates that in every age there live three hundred saints to whose power the believers owe their safety. They are called the *Abdal*⁴⁴² or *Veli* (as in Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli). *Abdalan* or *Evliya* are alive like other human beings. They themselves may or even may not be aware of the meaning of their existence but they respond to the calls of Muslims with their powers just whenever a need occurs. If one of them “migrates”, “rests the mold”, another one excels to his/her position, keeping the number constant. One of them is called “*Kutup*” (The Pole/The Focus).⁴⁴³

⁴³⁹ This sword is different from Zulfikar. It is the symbol for worldly military might while Zulfikar having its own will is the reminder of supra-natural power.

⁴⁴⁰ “...*Sahib-i Kûr’an Muhammed Mustafa ve sahib-i Zülfikar Aliy-yel Mürteza ve Sahb-i Seyf Eba-Müslim-i Horasani ve Sahib-i Nefes Hüinkâr Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli El Horasani Efendilerimizin Himmet-i rûhaniyeleri, üzerimizde hâzır ve nâzır ola!*”, See below for full text.

⁴⁴¹ The word *Nefes*, (breath) is also used for poetic prayers is yet another reminder of this impermanence. Human breath is the sign of livelihood for living things but at the same time it is transient, evanescent and temporal.

⁴⁴² The term is also used in Aşıkî’s chronicle in reference to a group active in 15th Century Anatolia; Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları’nın Tarihi*, (ed.) Yavuz, Kemal; Saraç, Yekta, (Istanbul, K Kitaplığı, 2003), p.571 (...*Ve hem bu Rum’da dört taife vardır kim misafürler içinde anılır. Biri Gaziyan-ı Rum ve biri Ahiyan-ı Rum ve biri Abdalan-ı Rum ve biri Bacıyan-ı Rum...*)

⁴⁴³ Birge, 136 (Note that Birge tends to establish a kind of hierarchy to the favour of the dervishes and evliya but one must not forget that the concept of hierarchy is demolished purposefully by the Bektashi tradition as in the story of the Fourties. Hierarchy is consistently evaded in Bektashism. The power the Evliya –Saints possess is a part of their nature and not a matter of superiority to others.)

Furthermore, in janissaries' *gülbangs* as well as in many Bektashi prayers we come across mysterious supra-natural beings whose powers are requested. *Üçler* (The Threes), *Beşler* (The Fives), *Yediler* (The Sevens) and *Kırklar* (The Fourties). They are also called "*Rical-i Gayb*" (Sages of the Unknown). Obviously these sages are of angelic nature, they belong to the Unknown and their real qualities are unintelligible to human beings. They form a kind of mystic pantheon.

"The Fourties" (*Kırklar*) constitute the center of the pantheon. The arena where the rituals are held is called "*Kırklar Meydanı*" (Arena of the Fourties) or "*Kırklar Meclisi*" (Council of the Fourties). The feast following the rituals of *Ayn-i Cem* is called "*Kırklar Sofrası*" (The table of the Fourties). Melikoff calls the Arena of the Fourties or *Ayin-i Cem* as the recreation of an afterlife ceremony in this world.⁴⁴⁴ Though physically they may not be present in this council, The Fourties are believed to exist and participate in the rituals via the physical representations (the molds) of the participants. The Fourties are invisible but it is in their power to come and rescue the warriors of Islam whenever they are in need.⁴⁴⁵ Here is an example where they are shown taking part in a battle:

*Cebesini giyip kılıç kuşanıp
Alem dibinde durur Rical-i Gayıb⁴⁴⁶*

Clad in armours, girding their swords
Under the banner stand, Sages of the
Unknown

A closer look at the Fourties may give us a better understanding of the nature of the janissary brethren.

⁴⁴⁴ Melikoff, p. 258

⁴⁴⁵ Melikoff, pp. 48-50., Melikoff discusses this belief to be possibly based on early Turkic systems of belief. Referring to S.Tolstov she mentions his theory binding this concept to Indo-Iranian tradition while she also mentions the Legend of Manas where 40 heroes or 40 girls appear with similar missions.

⁴⁴⁶ Kul Deveci (17th Century); Boratav, Pertev Naili, *Halk Edebiyatı Dersleri*, (Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı, 2000),p. 122; (*Rical-i Gayb*: Saintly persons –though invisible - who live in every age and try to lead the people in accordance with God's orders. Develioğlu)

Kırklar, the Fourties are a group of supra-human sages with mystic powers. Their identities are unknown with the exception of Ali (the Caliph) and Selman-ı Farisi. In fact they belong to the unknown. Tradition has it that a group used to get together in the house of Ali to listen to his preachings.⁴⁴⁷ Once Prophet Muhammed wanted to enter into the house and knocked the door. A voice from inside asked him who he was and he replied that he was the Prophet of God. Door was not opened. Then he tried again but this time answering “I am the servant of the poor!” he managed to be let in. Inside, he asked the group who they were and they answered “We are the Fourties!”. Realising there were only thirty nine people he mentioned it. The Fourties said “We are forty, forty of us is one.” One of them slit the arm of Ali and the Prophet saw that the arms of the rest had started bleeding too. Then a drop of blood dripped down from the ceiling. They said “That is Selman-ı Farisi, he is away for some endeavour.” They put a bandage on the arm of Ali and the bleeding on their arms stopped. Then Ali served wine to them.⁴⁴⁸

This myth sets the framework for the Fourties. It is interesting to note that Prophet Muhammed was forced to be humble in order to be accepted into the council of the Fourties. Their supernatural powers are manifested by the bleeding incident, but most of all they were quoted exclaiming “We are forty, forty of us is one!”. This remark on one hand is the declaration of their solidarity but on the other (by bleeding together when Ali was hurt) it is a subtle implication that all the forty constitute Ali himself. That is the principle of unity of plurality (*Vahdet-i Vücut*) and Ali is depicted as the personification of omnipresence. It is also important to underline the equality (in a non-hierarchical sense) among the members of the group. Ali may seem to be the protagonist in this story but he does not (regarding the

⁴⁴⁷ In some versions the meeting place is a mosque built by Prophet Muhammed in Madinah. (Eyuboğlu, p. 313)

⁴⁴⁸ Eyuboğlu, p.313, Birge, 264

requirement of humbleness) claim any superiority to others. He is described as serving wine to others. A janissary poet Kara Hamza (17th Century) asks for the help of Ali by referring to that incident:

<i>Gaibedir kırkların dolusun sunan</i>	Serving chalices to the Fourties of the Unknown
<i>Pervane gibi odlara yanan</i>	Like a moth burning in flames
<i>Zülfikar kuşanup Düldül'e binen</i>	Girding Zulfikar, riding Düldül
<i>Tanrı'nın aslanı Ali gel yetiş</i> ⁴⁴⁹	God's Lion, Ali! Come rescue me!

Once again, we are faced with the metaphor of a moth standing for the fragility of physical existence of the human being that is the mold. In this case, the moth symbolizes Ali (just like any other sentient being), the lover desperately attracted towards his beloved though reaching will inevitably lead to destruction of the self. There comes a moment when the moth becomes the flame and thus the lover, the beloved. That is exactly what is meant by unity of plurality.

Hence, it is no coincidence that the janissaries refer to the Threes, the Sevens and the Fourties in their *gülbangs*.⁴⁵⁰ Led by (even identical with) Ali, the Fourties formed a perfect representation of a brotherhood of warriors. Via the Fourties each individual janissary had the chance to identify himself with the ultimate hero of Islam. Here is an example of such identification:

<i>Biz açınca Resul'ün sancağını</i>	When we open the Prophet's flag
<i>Şehit olan görür Cennet bağını</i>	Martyred (ones) see the garden of paradise
<i>Gaziler çekerler gaza tığını</i>	Ghazis wield gaza swords
<i>Mevla'nın arslanı Ali bizd'olur</i> ⁴⁵¹	God's Lion Ali is among us.

The following “*Gülbang-ı Ceng*” (Prayer of War) was read by the janissary army every evening before dawn during expeditions, following the afternoon prayer

⁴⁴⁹ Elçin, Şükrü, *Akdeniz'de ve Cezayir'de Türk Halk Şairleri*, (Ankara, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yay. , 1988), p.122

⁴⁵⁰ Birge, p. 136; Koca, Şevki, *Öndeng sonun Gürgele Bektaşî Kültür Argümanlarına Göre Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler*, (İstanbul, Nazenin, 2000), p. 102 (...Üçler, beşler, yediler, kırklar, üçyüz altmışlar Ve bin birler demine...., Mehter Gülbangi); Kapıkulu Ocakları, p. 154 (...Üçler, yediler, kırklar, nür-ı nebî, Kerem-i Ali, pirimiz Sultan Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli...., Sofa Tezkiresi)

⁴⁵¹ Kul Mustafa (17th Century); Boratav, p. 119

(*ikinci namazı*) . Eyyubi Efendi notes the particular law on this “*Sefer duası*” (Prayer of War) practiced by the expeditionary janissaries in their headquarters. All the officers of the Hearth would come out of their tents and form a tremendous circle. All the troops would stand in front of their tents and all the members of the whole army (including non-janissary segments) would stand up and participate in the ceremony. *Yeniçeri Katibi* (Janissary Clerk) would step forward and (in front of the *Yeniçeri Kethüdası*, Janissary Chief-of-Staff) read this prayer aloud for the success of the Ottoman army. Eyyubi Efendi tells us that “Allah, Allah!” cries of the chorus of tens of thousands of troops would last for half an hour.⁴⁵²

Bism-i Şâh, Allah, Allah

Mümine farz-ı âyın Cenk-i Cihad

The first duty of a believer is fight for Jihad

Hüdâ'ya şükür bihad

Endless thanks to God (the guide to the true Path)

La ilahe illallâh el-melikel Hâkkun Mübin, Muhammed Resulallâh!

(We believe in) No God but Allah! *The King of God's clarity (is) Muhammed the prophet of God!*

Sadık-ı Vad'ül emin

(We are) Loyal to the promises of the Trusted One (Prophet Muhammed)

Ve ma'erselnake rahmeten lil alemin,

Inna fetahnâleke fethen mübina,

Ve yensurullâhi nasren aziza!

Ey, padişah-ı mülk-i İslam aleyke ayn-ullah!

Oh the King of the land of Islam! The eye of God is upon you!

Sensin Haris-i Din-i Mübin.

You are the devotee of the clear religion (Islam).

Leşker-i İslamın uğru açık ola!

May the fortunes of the soldiers of Islam be wide open!

Rical-i devletimizin ömrü, ikbâli mezid ola!

May the lives and felicities of our dignitaries prolong!

Yeniçeriyân ve Sipahiyân ve bütün Ordu-yu Gaza'nın

Let the Janissaries', the Sipahis' and let the whole of (this) Gaza army's

⁴⁵² Eyyubi Efendi; Özcan, Abdülkadir (ed.), *Eyyubi Efendi Kanunnamesi*, (Istanbul, Eren, 1994), p. 46 (*Kanun-ı Dua-i Fi's-sefer: Seferde giderken ve düşmen vilayetine girildikde, hergün ikinci namazı kılınıktan sonra kethüda bey çadırından çıkıp iskeme üzerinde oturur. Yeniçeri Ağasının içağaları ve ademleri ve dairede olan ocak ağalarının taifesi ayak üzre dizilip bir azim daire olur. Ve her odanın taifesi dahi çadırları önünde dizilip ve orduyu hümayunda ve sair asakir-i islama dahi ayak üzre kalkıp ol mahalde ocak yazıcısı kethüda bey yanına gelüp dua eder ve muntazır olan kimesne bir nefesden, Allah Allah sadasıyla nısf saat mikdarı dağlar ve sahralar velvele-endaz olurlar. Üç defa Allah Allah sadasından sonra padişah-ı alempenah hazretlerine ve vüzera-i izama ve ağavata ve cümle asakir-i islama dua-i zafer ve nusret olunup “hu” denildikten sonra herkes yerli yerinde oturur. Bu kanun yeniçeri ocağı sefer olunca icra olunur....*)

Sözünü üstün, kılıcını keskin eyleye!
Words be superior, swords be sharp!
Nur-u şan ve satveti ziyade ola!
May the light of their fame and their crushing power increase!

İşte furkan-ı Adalet! İşte seyf-i Şeriat!
Here is the Book of Justice! (Qur'an) Here is the Sword of Law!

Tahtıgâh-ı Mülk-i İslamın ola, ta yevm-ü haşre dek medid!
May the capital (city) and the lands of Islam expand until the day of apocalypse!
Fahr-ı Âlem efendimiz pâk ve mübarek, mukaddes rûh-u pür fütûhları hoşnud olub,
May His Majesty, the wisdom of the universe (Prophet Muhammed)'s pure, divine,
(And) holy spirit - full with conquests- , be pleased,
Gaza-i Ekber'in eylesin taziz ve said!
(And) Honour and sanctify this Great Gaza!

Allâh-u Ekber, Allâh-u Ekber, Allâh-u Ekber!
God is Great, God is Great, God is Great!
Erenlerin topu, küffarın bağrında patlaya!
May the cannon(s) of the saints explode on infidels' chests!

Îlâ-i kelimetullah, Cihad-ı fi-sebilillâh ve Ehl-i Beyt-i Resulullah!
Praising the unity of God, (by) Fighting Jihad in the name of Allah and the (divine) family of the Prophet!
Uğrunda ser verip ser alan, pala sallayan
(By) Giving lives and taking lives, (and by) brandishing scimitars,
Gaziânın rûhları mübarek ve muazzez ola!
May the souls of Gazis Be blessed and sacred!
Sahib-i Kûr'an Muhammed Mustafa ve sahib-i Zülfikar Aliy-yel Mürteza ve Sahib-i Seyf Eba-Müslim-i Horasani⁴⁵³ ve Sahib-i Nefes Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli El Horasani Efendilerimizin, Himmet-i rûhaniyeleri, üzerimizde hâzır ve nâzır ola!
May the spiritual might of our masters: The owner of Qur'an, Muhammed Mustafa; The owner of Zulfikaar, Ali-el Murtaza; The owner of sword, Ebu Muslim-i Horasani and The owner of (holy) breath, The Sovereign Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, be ready and be upon us!

Eli kan, dili kan, sine üryân, ciğeri püryân,
(Our) Hands in blood, tongues in blood, chests naked, hearts opened!
Meydan-ı Şehâdet'de Allah yoluna revân...
In the arena of martyrdom (battlefield), to the ones proceeding on the Path to God
Gazâ-i Şühedâ'ya Cemal-i Hâk görünür â'yan...
To the martyrs of Gaza, the divine beauty is manifested!
Kahrımız, kılıcımız düşmana ziyan!
Our wrath, our sword (is) destruction for (our) enemy!
Ya Rahim, Ya Rahman, Ya Reccânâ, Ya Deyyan!
Oh (God) the Forgiver, the Compassionate, the Incarnator, the Rewarder, the Punisher!

⁴⁵³ Ebu Muslim-i Khurassani (ca. 700-755): Leader of the muslim armies against Chinese forces in the battle of Talas (751)

Resûl-i Kibriyâ Ahmed-i Muhtar Muhammed Mustafa
 For the prophet of the exalted ones, Ahmed-i Muhtar Muhammed Mustafa!
Âl-i evlâdî hamse-i ve Ehl-i Kesâ-yı İmdadî Ruhaniyetlerine,
 For the family and the children of (holy) five and the rescuers of the forlorn! For
 their souls!
Hünkâr-ı Evliya Esseyid Muhammed Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli Kaddesıllahü sır-ül azîz
Efendimizin, Himmet-i velâyetine,
 For the saintly endeavors of His Majesty, The Sovereign of saints, Esseyid
 Muhammed Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli! May God bless his secrets!
Ve Dest-girimiz Balım Sultan! Ve güzeşteğân-ı pirân âyn-ı inayetine!
 And for our helper Balım Sultan! And for the past sages, the sources of goodness!
Şah-ı Şühedâ Sultan-ı mükerrerem, Hüseyin-i Kerbelâ'yı Müçteba sırrına...
 For his secrets, The King of Martyrs, The Sultan of the blessed, Hüseyin of Qarbala,
 the Chosen!
Nûr-u Nebî, Kerem-i Alî, Kerâmat-ı velî,
 For the (holy) light of Prophets, the generosity of Ali, the miracles of the Sages,
Pirimiz, Hünkârımız, Kutb'ül Arifin, Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli demine,
 For our Sage, our Sovereign, the pole for the men of knowledge, for the moment of
 Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli,
Üçler, beşler, yediler, kırklar dem-ü devrânına
 For the moments and the cycles of the threes, the fives, the sevens, the fourties!
Hû diyelim,
 Let's say Hooo!
Hûûûûûû.....
 Hooooo! ...⁴⁵⁴

In this prayer we see the janissaries declaring not only their devotion for protecting
 and fighting for Islam (“...*Mümine farz-ı âyin Cenk-i Cihad*”) but also their
 readiness to die for it. They call for the help of Prophet Muhammed, Ali, Ebu
 Muslim-i Horasani, Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli, Balım Sultan and Huseyin of Qarbala. They
 also express their belief in the presence of the powers of the past prophets, the Sages,
 and the threes, the fives, the sevens, and the fourties on their side. They give a
 description of the moment of death at the battlefield which constitutes a clear
 evidence to their awareness of the Bektashi notion of martyrdom as explained by
 Hacı Bektâş-ı Veli in his Makalat: They say that at the point when the fighter meets
 with his death on the battlefield, covered with blood all over (“...*Hands in blood,*
tongues in blood, chests naked, hearts opened!”) a miracle in which God was to

⁴⁵⁴ Yeniçeri Ocağı ve Devşirmeler, pp. 96-97

manifest his divine beauty to the martyr, was awaiting him (“...*To the martyrs of Gaza, the divine beauty is manifested!*”). That point is the final destination for the ones walking on the Path to God (“... *to the ones proceeding on the Path to God*”). In conclusion we can say that Janissary, as a devshirme warrior was conscious of his loneliness, his rootlessness. So the Hearth had become his home and his comrades his family. Bektashism was the amalgamate between the individual janissary and his group, the Hearth. The Order was welcoming and exalting the individual as a unique revelation of perfection within his own existence. *Yoldaş* were sharing their Path on the way towards unison with God starting with their participation in the Initiation Ritual (*İkrar*) and becoming natural brothers of the newcomer. Hence, it seems the janissary standing on the battlefield was deeply attached to the idea that he was already dead. Physical death only meant to be able to arrive at his destination faster.

Although it is difficult for us, modern researchers, to judge to what extent individual janissaries felt attached to the Bektashi ideals, one thing is clear: Texts of janissary *gūlbang* prayers show strong connection to the Bektashi doctrine and the Order had assumed a vital role in shaping both the spiritual and the institutional formations of the janissaries. The Bektashi Path had evolved to become a process providing the individual janissary *Yoldaş* with an identity and the Bektashi ideals were guiding him on the Path to surpass his physical death. Bektashism had undeniably become a chivalric brethren of warrior solidarity, a remedy for his deep feeling of loneliness.

CHAPTER VI

THE JANISSARY AND THE SAMURAI: A COMPARISON

The Janissary Corps like any other group of retainers in history, in the simplest meaning of the word, is an institution of the ruler's personal army of guards established to claim superiority over other potential rulers (and their families) and to make sure that it stays that way. We find *Hippeis*⁴⁵⁵ in ancient Sparta, *Companions* of Philip and Alexander in Macedonia⁴⁵⁶, *Mameluks* of the Abbasid and Ayyubid caliphs, *Ghulams* of the Seljukid sultans, Knights of various Orders in the crusaders' era etc. Neither the samurai nor the janissaries were exceptions to the rule. Besides many dissimilarities between the two types of men-at-arms with virtually no contact or whatsoever, they shared at least one common denominator: Being the professional personal guards of their respective masters, the defenders (and at times the demolishers) of the status quo.

The janissaries were crushed and abolished by their master in 1826 (*Vaka-i Hayriyye*) while the samurai met the same fate in 1877 (Battle of Shiroyama). Both were remnants of a bygone era of the early modern warriors and neither their weapons, their tactics, nor their clothing or traditions were apt to the sweeping new methods and weapons of a new era. All the characteristics of their kind which once had made them indispensable for their employers had become obstacles in front of "modernity" and thus their services were no more demanded.

⁴⁵⁵ Connolly, Peter, *Greece and Rome at War*, (London, Macdonald Phoebus, 1981), p. 41

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.70

There can be many other aspects of the two warrior classes to be discussed further in detail. Separate analysis on their incomes, or their fighting techniques or their weapons or their organizations et al. can be made and I believe it is necessary. In this study, I will confine myself to the religious and spiritual issues. As warriors of so remote areas and so different cultures, they of course have fundamental differences. For example, one is basically infantry while the other is mounted. The Janissary used to take pride in being a *Yoldaş*. This term was both a strong emphasis put on walking on the Path with comrades and an indication of their pride in being a member of a military institution with all its privileges and responsibilities. For the Janissary, his group was a part of his identity which in turn had led to expertise in group warfare. Samurai, on the other hand, was mainly a mounted warrior who glorified one-to-one combat as a means to prove his personal valor. This is an idealization though, because the battles in the early modern ages were fought in groups therefore the authorities aware of the tactical necessity to act in disciplined units had to warn the samurai not to leap forward before their lines.⁴⁵⁷

Even such discrepancy in fighting techniques (infantry and cavalry), leads to a large difference between their tactics, recruitment and training. But on the other hand, contrary to their general image, the janissaries did have a cavalry unit within the *Sekbanlar* Regiment (A squadron of mounted soldiers) and the institution of *Kapıkulu Sipahileri* (*Sipahi* Knights of the Servants of the Gate) was initially founded as an integral part of the janissary Hearth, thus only the janissaries could become *Sipahi* Knights. Likewise, not all samurai were cavalry, many of them were

⁴⁵⁷ Ikegami, Eiko, *The taming of the samurai : honorific individualism and the making of modern Japan*, (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1995), p.144 [An order in 1600 states: "If an individual advances in secret, ahead of other troops (*sente sakikoshi*), and distinguishes himself contrary to orders, he will be executed... "]

foot soldiers called “*ashigaru*”. Hence, real life makes it even more difficult to make an extensive comparison between warrior classes in the early modern ages.

Japanese samurai based government and warrior class rule is termed as a type of feudalism by modern historians. Even Marc Bloch had written on Japanese feudalism in his book on feudal societies. Going into the details of this ongoing debate is beyond the scope of this study but it is important for our discussion to mention that with the spread of the *shōen* (manor) system, the typical lord (*tono*) – vassal (*kenin*) relationship had created local power houses of daimyo, first appointed then supported the Shogun. As John Whitney Hall puts it :”The fief-holder, by exercising localized military rule, thus laid the basis for a system in which social distinction and the capacity to exercise public powers coincided with the holding of private tenures of land.”⁴⁵⁸ Thus in Japan not only the Shogun as the ruler of the country, but also the provincial lords employed armed guards. This fact had caused a large population of samurai (unlike the janissaries, not necessarily connected directly to the central authorities) to be active in all around the country. Around 1600, this population had reached the level of 8% of the 25 million total population of Japan. This scale, by definition corresponds to the whole of *Askeriyye* (military) class in Ottoman Empire (less the non-military segments of the class) which included every non-productive element (Janissaries, Sipahi, fief-holders, governors, ulema clergy and all other bureaucrats with their adherents) in the Empire who worked for the Sultan. Thus, population-wise the samurai had by far exceeded the janissaries which amounted to the level of 40,000 troops around 1600.

The biggest challenge of such a comparative research is (unlike the samurai) the scarcity of contemporary information on janissaries. Unfortunately, we do not have

⁴⁵⁸ Hall, John Whitney, *Japan From Prehistory to Modern Times*, (Tokyo, Tuttle Co., 1983), pp. 77-78

first hand information (with a few exceptions) written by the janissaries themselves on their *Yol* or on their Hearth. Theoretically (and hopefully) one expects such information to be somewhere in the archives waiting to be discovered by historians. Alternative scenario is a dim one because documents related to the Hearth were burned when the Hearth was finally crushed and abolished in 1826.

In this chapter, we will concentrate on the samurai and try to shed light on the common features as well as the differences between the two warrior classes. The discussion will be based on several factors which I believe play a vital role in shaping a military class of early modern ages. Identity of the master in Japanese case is not the Emperor but the Shogun. This constitutes a fundamental difference between the janissaries and the samurai. The main enemies of the respective warrior classes are also different. While the janissary had to confront continuous threats from foreign powers, the samurai was mostly concerned with domestic disturbances, the only exception being the Mongolian attacks at the end of the 13th Century. A change in the identity of the foe soon had its impact on the samurai system. Next main difference was their attitudes towards lineage. The two cases are almost in complete contrast to each other since lineage was so important for the samurai that they had to be prepared to recite their pedigree before combat when such necessity occurred. Janissaries on the other hand took pride in being rootless. Ottoman system in its classical era, was based on a conscious rejection of nobility and dependance on personal talents and merit. A related issue is the stratification of the society. Though there are similarities in the two societies in terms of social strata, mobility greatly differed. As opposed to the Japanese case, (with constraints of religious conversion for the non-muslim subjects) mobility between social groups was possible and this appears to be a determinant factor in warrior identity.

Next is a similarity found almost in all early modern warrior classes, the reverence for the sword. The sword seems to excel other weapons in its symbolic meaning for the warriors. Excalibur, Zulfikar and Kusanagi together with many others function as icons of warrior dignity. Another similarity is in the concept of “the Way” or the “Path”. Early modern warrior tended to see his life as a path leading the inevitable end of death. Religion, especially in the form of orders or sects which supplied them with appropriate means to deal with the danger and violence they had to face on battlefield had played an important part in their lives. They had to find a way to reach a resolution for their sinful acts of violence which I call “The Warrior’s Dilemma”. For the Janissaries Caliph Ali and Hacı Bektaş had supplied them with the much needed justification while it was Hachiman who did the same for the samurai. Finally the attitude of the samurai towards death is discussed in order to show the similarities with the janissaries which was discussed in the previous chapter. Hopefully, we will be able to take a step further in locating the janissary among his contemporaries, the early modern warriors.

The Samurai

Samurai is the word commonly used for the Japanese warrior. In the dictionaries, one may indeed find its meanings as “warrior” or “man of resolution and ability”. But interestingly, the pronunciation “samurai” is neither the Chinese nor the Japanese reading of the character. The character for samurai (侍) lends itself either to the Chinese style reading as “*ji*” which means “attendant” and “servant” or the Japanese reading which gives *habe(ru)* meaning “to attend upon”, “to wait upon” or

“to serve”.⁴⁵⁹ Although it is difficult to find the exact date for its initial usage or the circumstances as to why this character was assigned, it is possible for us to track the roots of the word samurai in the Japanese language.

A phonological survey brings us to another ancient word *samura(u)* or *samura(fu)* or *sabura(fu)* which means “to serve for a superior or a master”. The word initially is known to be used in a poetry anthology *Kokin Wakashū*, (Collections of Ancient and Modern Times; c.920) compiled under Emperor Daigo’s (897-930) orders, during the early Heian period. It was also used in Kamakura period (1185-1333) with the same meaning. When combined with the sound “*rai*” (来) in the word “*kerai*”(家来) (servant, one who serves a household, one who has come into a family from outside) we reach a possible original formulation of the word samurai (候来). At one point, the character (侍) seems to be assigned for the warrior.⁴⁶⁰

The first usage of the word in an official document indicating warriors, is in 1180 when at the start of the Gempei War (1180-1185) between two clans Taira and Minamoto, general Minamoto Yoritomo ordered one of his associates, Yoshimori to establish an office for the administration of his armed followers. The term he coined was “*Samurai-dokoro*” (Office of Samurai).

[Fourth year of Jishō, 1180] , eleventh month, 17th day.... Wada Tarō Yoshimori has been appointed president of the *Samurai-dokoro*. Yoshimori had requested the office in the eighth month during the flight from Ishibashi Mountain when His Lordship’s safety was uncertain. Now his Lordship has given his consent and has issued instructions today to reserve this office for Yoshimori...⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁹ Halpern, Jack, *New Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, (Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1990)

⁴⁶⁰ On the other hand “侍” is composed of two distinct components, namely “人” that is *hito* (man) and “寺” that is *tera* (temple). The meaning of the character then becomes “the man of the temple” subtly indicating how the samurai might possibly be associated with religion in the minds of the people who first assigned the character for the warriors. This kind of association is important because the preferred combinations of the complex Kanji characters are also the indicators of the meanings attributed to a certain word. Likewise, the word for “time” is 時 and it is made out of two components; “the sun” (日) and “the temple” (寺), indicating the function of the temples for measuring and announcing the time. Note that the mosques and the churches also had similar functions throughout the history.

⁴⁶¹ Lu, p. 108

Yoritomo was soon to prove that he was an able general and a statesmen. After winning his struggle with the rival Taira family he had himself declared as the *Sei-tai Shōgun* (General Subduing the Emishi) by the emperor and instead of moving into the capital Kyoto he chose to stay at his headquarters, Kamakura. This was a major breakaway of the Kanto (central Japan) warrior from the Court domination.⁴⁶² Yoritomo declared Baku-fu (military government) as the new political system and became the first dictator of Japan. He appointed vassals (*gokenin*) to areas largely owned by the *kuge* (nobility) or the members of the rival Taira clan previously. He also assigned many of his loyal soldiers as constables (*shugo*) and stewards (*jitō*) to every province. These officers were held responsible for overseeing the cultivation of land under their jurisdiction and they had the duty of raising soldiers for the Shogun whenever necessary. A kind of command & control system of military nature was under construction and the warriors were systematically taking the provincial headquarters over.⁴⁶³ Yoritomo's system was to set the example for later shōguns who ruled the country with their military might. The era of the warriors had started.

Identity of the Master

The comparison between the janissary and the samurai first needs to take into account the relationship of the two warrior classes to their rulers. The main striking difference between the Ottoman and Japanese cases begins with the identity of the master or the employer of the armed forces. In the Ottoman Empire, similar to many imperial and monarchial political traditions in Europe and Asia, the Sultan himself

⁴⁶² *Heavenly Warriors*, p. 312

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 313

as the sole ruler of the state, employed and paid the salaries of the janissaries. He also held the monopoly of rewarding and punishing the janissaries. His counterpart in Japan, in contrast to expectations, is the Shōgun, the military ruler of the country and not the Emperor, the official religio-political head of the Japanese state.

During the 12th Century, Minamoto Yoritomo had grabbed sovereignty from another warrior family who had taken it from the Fujiwara (yet another noble family) and not from the Emperor. In fact, all throughout the Japanese history, with only a few exceptions, the Emperor was and remained a symbolic figure, stripped off his political or any sort of military power. He was shown respect for his divine bloodline and was used as the source of legitimacy by the regents (*Kampaku*) in the pre-Yoritomo era or by the shōguns (and at times by regents to shōguns) in the post-Yoritomo era. The emperors almost never were allowed to rule by themselves. This is a uniquely Japanese system because in normal circumstances one would expect the emperor to exert his own authority over his subjects. While the topic is too complex to explain here fully, there are a number of standard explanations as to why the Emperors could not exert authority over their subjects and yet formally continued to hold this important position as the traditional head of the Japanese state. The most prevalent explanation is the religio-political argument that stresses the importance of the imperial clan as the descendants and high priests of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, the supreme being of Shinto, the national faith which co-existed with Buddhism.⁴⁶⁴ Thus this special Shinto identity of the imperial lineage served from the beginning as an ideology to legitimize the Japanese state that could not be challenged by other political actors even though the Emperors may have lost real power in time to other important families.⁴⁶⁵ A second and related argument

⁴⁶⁴ Sansom, G.B., *Japan A Short Cultural History*, (1991, Tuttle, Tokyo), p. 48

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.270-71

would be that the imperial clan continued to be the rulers of a clan-based political and social environment from the 7th Century to even modern times.⁴⁶⁶ However, an important question would be what could the military reason be for such a peculiar system to develop in Japan?

The answer to this question underlines the basic structural difference between the Ottoman and Japanese experiences. Unlike the Ottoman dynasty, the Japanese emperors had somehow neglected to establish a personal army of bodyguards strong enough to suppress any other threat that could come from other powerful families. In other words, the imperial clan had allowed other clans or families flourish, accumulate wealth and to become strong enough to challenge their authorities and seize political power whenever they found the opportunity. Although this accepted or forced weakness might have made it possible for the imperial family to become the longest lasting dynasty on earth, we find that the shōguns had not fallen into the same mistake and never forgot to reinforce themselves with armed *gokenin* (men of the house) who were to evolve into the samurai.

In contrast with the Japanese example, the Ottomans were keen to eliminate any possible surge from their local magnates. By establishing the Janissary Corps, and having a professional army around them, they were able to threaten their allies and enemies alike whenever necessary. The devshirme system and keeping the Turkish families away from the political mechanism was a part of this consistent policy of preventing any particular person to rise up to power by establishing networks independent of the central state. Even the enthroned sultan's right to kill his brothers for the sake of the empire can be viewed within this framework. It was a sign of determination on the side of the Ottoman dynasty to show their subjects that if they

⁴⁶⁶ Hall, John Whitney, *Japan From Prehistory to Modern Times*, (Tokyo, Tuttle Co., 1983), pp.28-34

could kill their own brothers for power they could do anything to anybody who might claim any sort of right to the throne. One can not help but imagine what would the Japanese history be like if the Emperors were that determined to keep their political power and had formed an institution similar to the janissaries at an early stage of Japanese history.

In Japanese history the social institution that came close to such a group of bodyguards was the institution of the *Kebiishi*. In the early stages of the Heian period (794-1185), during the reign of emperor Saga (reigned 809-823), a new structure of professional armed forces was established with the name “*Kebiishi - chō*” (Office of Investigators) under the institution of Imperial Guards.⁴⁶⁷ As of A.D. 870 the investigators had assumed the role of being the sole authority for the process of handling crimes of violence from investigation, arrest to the execution of the punishment.⁴⁶⁸ On the other hand, their jurisdiction was confined to the capital and although they seem to have tried to extend their authority to the provinces, security in the countryside remained largely dependent on the authorities of the local landlords. Interestingly, most of the disturbances were caused by the Buddhist temples and monasteries. Realizing the importance of military power, the abbots had formed their own standing armies of warrior-monks and besides fighting inter-sectarian wars, they, every now and then found the courage to invade the capital. Once during Yorimichi’s regency (1027-74), coming down from their monasteries in Mount Hiei, they attacked the palace of the Fujiwara regent himself.⁴⁶⁹ In such cases, the Fujiwara (though possibly unwillingly) had to call for help from the two warrior houses whether Taira or Minamoto. As the priestly turbulence and the

⁴⁶⁷ Bloomberg, Catharina, *The Heart of the Warrior – Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan*, (Kent, Japan Library, 1995), p.10

⁴⁶⁸ Sansom, G.B., *Japan A Short Cultural History*, (1991, Tuttle, Tokyo), p. 212-13

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 265

interference of local warriors continued, the Investigators, *Kebiishi* was gradually reduced to a weak, bureaucratic organization, virtually useless. Their powers of jurisdiction, if left any, could only be exercised at the discretion of Taira or Minamoto generals. Obviously, the *Kebiishi* was no match for the warrior-monks let alone the armies of Taira or Minamoto. The chance to consolidate political power in the hands of the emperor was lost and the following events led to the rise of Yoritomo and his *Baku-fu*.

Identity of the Foe

A second point of comparison would be the nature of the foe or enemy of each respective warrior class. All throughout the period between the establishment of the Hearth in the late fourteenth century until the end of the *fütühat* (policy of continuous expansion via conquests) in the mid seventeenth century, the main enemy of the janissary was the foreign forces. Although at times they were instrumental in crushing domestic uprisings, they were mainly occupied with invasion and warfare against western or eastern foes. Positioned geographically between two continents the Ottomans had to stay alert against possible intruders from all sides. This was not the case in Japanese history. The only time they experienced a foreign threat was during the two invasion attempts in 1274, and 1281 by the Mongolian army and navy of Khubilai Khan (1215-1294), the grandson of Genghis (1162-1227) who became the conqueror and ruler of the Chinese world. The Mongolian invasion attempts were confronted with bravery and seemingly unified the local landlords around the Shōgunate for a brief period of time but soon the alliance dissolved and the country fell into an age of domestic disturbances. The Mongolian invasion attempts showed two things:

- 1- That the Japanese armed forces and their tactics were inadequate to handle a confrontation with foreign foes who employed large scale group warfare methods,
- 2- That a victory may cause big trouble for the fighting sides when the enemy does not have any land to distribute among their allies.

In that sense, for a better understanding of the evolution of samurai military class, the Mongolian attacks in 1274 and 1281 are worth to study further. For the first time in history a foreign power was trying to invade the Japanese archipelago. The size of the attack which started 5 October 1274⁴⁷⁰ must have been beyond their wildest dreams. After making preparations for their blitzkrieg for over a year Mongolian military forces suddenly appeared at the shores of Kyushu island with 450 ships, 15,000 Mongolian troops and 15,000 Korean sailors and auxiliaries.⁴⁷¹ A contemporary eye-witness account gives us a vivid description of the situation:

The Mongols disembarked, mounted their horses, raised their banners, and began to attack.... (one Japanese) shot a whistling arrow to start the exchange. All at once the Mongols down to the last man started laughing. The Mongols struck large drums and hit gongs so many times... that they frightened the Japanese horses and mounts could not be controlled.... Their general climbed to a high spot and when retreat was in order, beat the retreat drum. When they needed to race forward, he rang the attack gong. According to these signals they did battle.... Whereas we thought about reciting our pedigrees to each other and battling man-to-man in glory or defeat as was the custom of the Japanese armies, in this battle the Mongols assembled at one point in a great force....⁴⁷²

This striking example shows the differences between the fighting techniques of the two opponents. The Japanese were used to fight man to man while the Mongolians had developed extensive methods and tactics of maneuvering large numbers of troops with drums and gongs. The Japanese side seems to be unaware of such tactics

⁴⁷⁰ *Heavenly Warriors*, p. 329

⁴⁷¹ *A Short History* ..., p. 315

⁴⁷² *Heavenly Warriors*, p. 331

and the witness bitterly utters that the samurai were desperately trying to recite their pedigree in an attempt to show their valor in battle. In the following two weeks, the Mongolian army proceeded with lightning speed into the inner areas of Kyushu island without facing a serious difficulties but on 20 October 1274 they suddenly vanished. They had returned back as fast as they had come. Kamakura Baku-fu was determined not to get caught unprepared if the Mongols returned but they had to wait for seven years for the next assault.

In June 1281 after the first wave of 40,000 troops, traditional chronicles claim that the main body of the Mongolian army of 100,000 troops arrived at the coasts of Japan on the boards of 4,000 ships. Though one has to be sceptical about the numbers given for the attacking forces, the size of the attackers were no doubt overwhelming and they had started to push forward towards the mainland but their speed was slowed down by sporadic attacks of the Japanese defenders. Though brave efforts were made the enemy was on the verge of getting ready for a large scale attack when Japanese historians of the day a miracle occurred and a typhoon exploded in the shorelines of northern Kyushu. The Mongolian armada was devastated and most of their army vanished in the waters. Remnants were cleared by the defenders. According to the traditional lore, it was the *kamikaze*, the “Divine Wind” which had rescued Japan.⁴⁷³ An edict issued by the Shogun shows how the officials were convinced that the victory was won by the help of Hachiman (God of War):

28 February 1284

Chief Priest, Usa (Hachiman) Shrine

Enclosed is the patent signifying the donation of the stewardship of Muratsuno Beppu in the province of Hyuga. We had offered a stewardship in the first year of Kenji (1275, after the first Mongolian attack) for the purpose of repulsing enemies, as a result of which all enemy ships were wrecked or sunk in the fourth

⁴⁷³ Ibid, p.333

year of Kōan (1281, the second Mongolian attack). Now, because it is rumored that enemies may come to attack us again, we would like to make a donation similar to the one given before. We request that you say your prayers with the utmost sincerity. On the order of the Shōgun, (signed) Governor of Suruga Province (Hōjō Naritoki), Governor of Saga Province (Hōjō Tokimune).⁴⁷⁴

It was some sort of a victory. Battles were fought, (though with the help of nature) the enemy was routed. One would expect that the prestige of the Kamakura Shogunate, the military government would rise but the unfolding events showed the contrary. The Shogunate started to lose power rapidly and the process ended in 1333 when the Hōjō regents to the Shogun were overthrown by another warrior clan.

The reason for this outcome underlines the second main difference between the Ottoman and Japanese cases. In the early modern ages, the source of wealth in any country was the ownership rights of land. Neither Japan nor the Ottoman state were exceptions to this rule. The sovereigns could exert their authority as long as they could reward their soldiers and vassals by distributing the wealth especially the newly captured land among them. This was the critical dilemma of the Japanese rulers. Unlike the Ottomans, the land under their command was limited to the boundaries of the islands surrounded with seas. When fighting with the Eastern Barbarians, the Emishi or with other local landlords it was easy to seize their land and distribute it among their soldiers and officers but what would happen in the case of a foreign foe who had nothing but weapons in their hands. Mongolians had left no wealth to confiscate and distribute among the victorious combatants. The samurai had risked their lives for the safety of the state and like after all such clashes they were convinced that they should receive compensation for their efforts. But the government was in dire economic situation due to heavy burden of preparations for war and it simply did not have the resources to satisfy those otherwise legitimate

⁴⁷⁴ Bloomberg, p.27

claims. That's why, though successfully expelled, the Mongolian attacks had brought the end of the Baku-fu. The legacy of Yoritomo had waned and the country had entered into an era of turmoil. First it was divided between Northern and Southern dynasties (1336-1392), and then a period of widespread civil warfare called *Sengoku* (1467-1590) followed.⁴⁷⁵ This age of decentralization and destruction gave birth to new warrior families who managed to survive until the traditional social structure and together with its hierarchies were demolished.

Lineage

A third factor that invites comparison between the janissary and the samurai is the contrasting role of lineage in the status of belonging to a warrior class. Does a person deserve respect simply because he is the descendant of a past hero who had proved his prowess by great deeds? Does heredity play any role in determining a man's valor or his capabilities? How does accumulation of wealth and honorary titles via transferring them to forthcoming generations through inheritance affect social structures? These are questions to be further studied, but without falling into the pit of the discussions on hereditarianism we have to realize that there was a fundamental difference between the Ottoman and Japanese (and for that matter the European) experiences regarding the issue of nobility as a core issue of distributing wealth and high offices. Ottoman system consistently prevented any sort of nobility to grow and kept the Ottoman family as the sole exception to this rule. All the land belonged the Sultan's person and this right gave him the ability to reshuffle the cards for each generation. Thus each generation was expected to fulfill their duties, prove their loyalty to the Sultan and worthiness for the titles of their fathers. The officials

⁴⁷⁵ Hall, Nagahara, Yamamura (ed.), *Japan Before Tokugawa – Political Consolidation and Economic Growth 1500 - 1650*, (Princeton, Princeton Press, 1981), p. 9

chosen from among the devshirme and raised within the schools in the Imperial Palace were sent to various parts of the empire as governors but only after marrying them to the (also slave servant) girls raised in the Harem institution. This seems to be a precaution to make sure that they would not get married to the daughters of local magnates and establish deeper alliances. The system was reinforced by a method of rotation in office. The officials were assigned to other posts before being able to live long enough in a particular area and become a part of local networks instead of the central government. The Janissary Corps stood at the core of this system.⁴⁷⁶

In Chapter III, we have seen how a European visitor, Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (an Austrian ambassadour to the court of Sultan Suleyman I) to Sultan's palace saw the meritocratic nature of the Ottoman social system and how he distinguished its difference with the European experience. In his letter dated September 1, 1555, he summarizes his views:

....In Turkey, anybody has the opportunity to change the conditions he was born in and to determine (his own) fate. The people who hold the highest positions under the Sultan, are generally the sons of (mere) shepherds. More than being ashamed of this, they even are proud of it. The less they feel they owe to their ancestors or to the environment they accidentally had been born into, the bigger is their pride. They do not accept that talents pass by birth or by inheritance. For them, talents are partly God's gift and partly the product of (a combination of) the training and morality they receive and the effort they show, the motivation they feel. As the talent in music, arts, mathematics and geometry does not pass from father to son, they think character is not hereditary either, that a son does not necessarily resemble his father and (his) qualifications are godsend. Therefore among Turks; prestige, service and administrative positions become the rewards of talent and virtue.... Our methods are very different (than theirs). We have no room for merit. Everything depends on birth and nobility only may open the road to high positions....⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Imber, Colin, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650*, (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp.319-20

⁴⁷⁷ Busbecq, Ogier Ghislain de, *Türk Mektupları*, (Istanbul, Doğan Kitap, 2005), pp.50-51

The Ottoman system seems utterly different when compared with the Japanese case. Although there was room for meritocracy in the Japanese samurai system as Kasaya Kazuhiko claims in his book “Bushidō and Japanese Meritocracy”⁴⁷⁸ the very essence of the system, that is “the attitude towards lineage” was different. Genealogy had great importance for the samurai. Before engaging in combat, he had to be ready to utter the list of his ancestors to his opponents in an attempt to prove his valor. This was called “*Ujibumi wo yomu*” (to read the lineage of one’s clan).⁴⁷⁹ Thus the eye-witness account describing the Japanese warrior’s attitude when confronted with the Mongolian invaders gives clues on the traditional rule and not the exception. In *Hōgen Monogatari* (Military epic of the 14th century; completed ca. 1320) a warrior was quoted to declare his noble descent:

...I am an ignorant person but I am not without what might be called a family line. My name is Unohichiro Minamoto no Chikaharu. I am the son of Shimosuke Gon no Kami Chikahiro, the grandson of Nakatsukasa no Jo Yoriharu, who was a descendant of the fourth generation in a branch line from Yamato no Kami Yorihika, the younger brother of Settsu no Kami Yorimitsu, who was the seventh descendant of Rokuson-ō, the tenth in descent from Seiwa Tennō. I have been living for a long time in Oku Gori in Yamato Province, but have not yet lost a reputation for military art. I am on my way to visit Sutaku-In in obedience to the commands of the Sadaijin. As men of Minamoto clan never serve two masters, even though you are the Emperor’s messenger, I shall not take sides with the Court...⁴⁸⁰

During the Sengoku period of the 16th Century, the times of complete anarchy it was possible for the ordinary men without any proper lineage to rise through the established social strata and earn a name for himself among the *daimyō* (which literally means Great Name). The three unifiers of Japan, namely Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu were all from minor families, but once they consolidated their power they soon started taking measures to obstruct social

⁴⁷⁸ Kasaya, Kazuhiko, *Bushidō to Nihon Nōryokushugi*, (Tokyo, Shinchōsha, 2005), p.14

⁴⁷⁹ Bloomberg, p. 109

⁴⁸⁰ Op.cit.

mobility and in all cases claim to lineage or the lack of was an important political factor in their careers.

Stratification

Hence, the topic also requires a discussion of the different social systems in Ottoman and Japanese societies, or rather their respective means of social organization. It could be argued that in both societies, people were members of a social groups of warriors, peasants, craftsmen, and so on. In other words, the Warriors, the peasants, the craftsmen and the tradesmen existed within the Ottoman system (like the rest of the world in early modern ages) but especially during the classic age (1300-1600) inter-class social mobility was possible.⁴⁸¹ However, in the multi-ethnic, multi-religious environment of the empire, where social class differences were defined and reinforced by religious denominational communal organizations, namely “*millet*, the necessity of conversion into Islam was standing as a barrier for the non-muslim subjects of of the empire. Although until the late 15th Century, non-muslim elements could still be seen in the various segments of the marching Ottoman armies, as Tımarlı Sipahi (fief holder knights)⁴⁸² as the millet system crystallized, it gradually became difficult for the non-muslims to serve as members of the *askeriyye* (military) class.

The Ottoman Sultan reigned over his subjects with an elaborate network of servants to whom he vested parts of his authority. The political power was concentrated in the center and it was applied via this network led by Sadrazam and

⁴⁸¹ İnalçık, Halil, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Klasik Çağ (1300-1600)*, (Istanbul, YKY, 2006), pp.74-75; for the changing of status of the janissaries from the warrior class to the clergy, see Kapıkulu Ocakları, p. 439 (... *Danışmendler ve mülazımlar ilmiye mesleğine intisab etmiş yeniçeriler olup sefere gitmezlerdi. Danışmend henüz mülazım olmamış ve fakat yüksek tahsil yapmakta olan talebe demek olup mülazımlığa yani dersten mezun olmağa namzet idi. Bunların yolları müderrislik ve kadılık idi. Mülazım olup bir hizmete tayin olununcaya kadar ocaktan yevmiyelerini alırlardı. 17. asrın başlarında mevcutları 200e yakındı.*)

⁴⁸² İnalçık, p.19

his *Divan*, Council. Appointed directly by the Sultan, the *Yeniçeri Ağası* (Janissary Commander General) was a member of that council representing the *askeriyye* class. This class includes everyone in direct service of the Sultan, namely the non-productive segments of the society be it professional soldiers like the janissaries or the clergy or all kinds of bureaucrats together with their families, relatives, slaves and servants.⁴⁸³ As for the inner mobility within each class, that is the ability to attain higher incomes or posts depending on one's talents and performance; the way was theoretically open for the members of each class to rise up the ladder of his own career. Thus, one could easily find a shepherd's son, a devshirme boy who had assimilated into a Turkish cultural milieu ending up at the post of Sadrazam.⁴⁸⁴

This was not the case in Japan. While the differences among the Ottoman and Japanese social environments are numerous, the relevant issue for the question concerning the janissary and the samurai, is the strikingly different role that lineage and warrior status held in each case. A warrior had to stay a warrior until his death only to be replaced by his son. Therefore, if he was a minor samurai (*komono*) his son replacing him was destined to remain a minor samurai, and as Cameron Hurst puts it, samurai in Tokugawa period were born into a rigidly stratified society with little chance for mobility.⁴⁸⁵

Following the Sengoku period, the samurai finally had the chance to redesign the social strata in accordance with their own interests and located their class at the very center of the Japanese society⁴⁸⁶ *Shi-nō-kō-shō* (warriors-peasants-craftsmen-

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.75

⁴⁸⁴ Kapikulu Ocakları, v.I, p. 26

⁴⁸⁵ Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The Bushio Ideal, Cameron Hurst III, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Understanding Japanese Values. (Oct., 1990), pp. 511-527

⁴⁸⁶ Samurai Status, Class, and Bureaucracy: A Historiographical Essay, Douglas R. Howland, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 2. (May, 2001), pp. 353-380

tradesmen in descending order)⁴⁸⁷ formed the new hierarchical social system in Japan. If Minamoto Yoritomo was the founder of the samurai system, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98) was the one who almost perfected it. “Almost” because a finishing touch was done by his successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616).

In a letter to the Governor-General of the Philippines(1597), Hideyoshi expresses his ambition to invade China and to rule all over East Asia. His words bear the tone of a conqueror or an emperor rather than the military dictator of Japanese archipelago:

...Through profound planning and forethought and according to the three principles of benevolence, wisdom and courage, I cared for the warriors on the one hand and looked after the common people on the other; while administering justice, I was able to establish security. Thus before many years had passed, the unity of the nation was set on a firm foundation, and now foreign nations, far and near, without exception, bring tribute to us. Everyone, everywhere, seeks to obey my orders.... Though our own country is now safe and secure, I nevertheless entertain hopes of ruling the great Ming nation. I can reach the Middle Kingdom aboard my palace-ship within a short time. It will be as easy as pointing to the palm of my hand. I shall then use the occasion to visit your country regardless of the distance or the differences between us....
488

His plan was to subjugate the kingdoms in Korea and China, station his government in Beijing and rule the world from there. But it soon proved that it was too farfetched a dream. After a few months of successful penetration into Northern Korea, his forces were checked and stopped by local defenders using guerilla tactics. The Japanese army was forced to retreat back to the Pusan port where they had entered the continent and wait for the negotiations to end. At the time of his death in 1598 the conflict was still unresolved.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Op.cit. (Note that *shi* stands for *bushi* (warrior, 武士) or *buke* (warrior households, 武家); *nō* (農), the farmers; *kō* (工), the artisans; and *shō* (商), the tradesmen.)

⁴⁸⁸ Sources of Japanese Tradition, pp. 325-26

⁴⁸⁹ Totman, Conrad, *Early Modern Japan*, (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993), p. 48

This is important because Hideyoshi was acting in accordance with his imperial vision. In line with the Empire builders and conquerors contemporary to his age, the Ottomans, Habsburgs, Qing Manchu conquerors or Babur Shah (1483-1530). His overall strategy was based on the improvement of the status of the samurai and he was well aware of the fact that he could keep his own supremacy by strengthening his allies among the domain lords, the *daimyo*. He issued an edict prohibiting the peasants and laymen to carry weapons in addition to inflicting restrictions on their travel. So gradually both vertical (in social status) and horizontal (in terms of moving from one place to another) mobility became very difficult. The Japanese society was reorganized with the supervision of warriors in almost a military fashion. His first move was against the peasants. Following is an extract from the edict of 1588:

- 1- Farmers of all provinces are strictly forbidden to have in their possession any swords, short swords, bows, spears, firearms, or other types of weapons.... The heads of provinces, samurai who receive a grant of land and deputies must collect all the weapons described above and submit them to Hideyoshi's government.
- 2- The swords and short swords collected in the above manner will not be wasted. They will be used as nails and bolts in the construction of the great Image of Buddha. In this way, farmers will benefit not only in this life but also in the lives to come.⁴⁹⁰

In 1591, Hideyoshi decided to stiffen the social strata in an attempt to evade any surge by passionate samurai like himself. As a self-made man coming from almost lowest levels, he knew how much trouble ambition could cause. His second move

⁴⁹⁰ Lu, David, J., *Japan – A Documentary History*, (New York, East Gate, 1997), p.191

was against the samurai. The Edict on change of status may as well be regarded as directed towards the samurai class:

1- If there should be living among you men who were in military service including those who served Hideyoshi, higher ranking warriors of the daimyo (samurai), those who took their order from samurai (*chūgen*), lowest ranking warriors (*komono*) and those who performed miscellaneous chores for samurai (*arashigo*) – who have assumed the identity of a townsman (*chōnin*) or farmer after the Ōshū campaign which took place the seventh month of last year, they must be expelled.

2- If any farmer abandons his wet and dry fields and engages in trade or offers himself for hire for wages, not only he is to be punished, but also his fellow villagers. If there is anyone who neither serves in the military nor cultivates land, it is the responsibility of the deputies and other local officials to investigate and expel him....

3- No employment shall be given to a military retainer – be he a samurai, or *komono*, the lowest rank of warrior – who has left his former master without permission. In employing a retainer, you must investigate thoroughly his background, and insist on having a guarantor. If the above already has a master and that fact is discovered, he shall be arrested for not following this provision, and shall be returned to his former master. If this regulation is violated, and the offender is willfully set free, then three persons shall be beheaded in place of the one, and their heads sent to the offender's original master. If this threefold substitution is not effected, there is no alternative but to punish the new master...⁴⁹¹

This edict must have been a huge contribution to the powers of the *daimyo*. The authority of the local landlords – most of which had risen with Hideyoshi in the late warring-states period – was recognized and legitimized. Swordsmen were now forced to whether offer their services to their masters in total subjugation or face expulsion from any place they might escape with an open threat of harm to anyone who might be willing to host them.

But then in less than four years (1595) Hideyoshi sent a harsh blow to the *daimyos* this time. His next target was the daimyos. A new edict restricting the freedom they used to enjoy, was addressed to them.

⁴⁹¹ *A Documentary History*, p. 194

1- The daimyo, when contracting marriage among their houses, must first receive approval (of Hideyoshi), and then proceed to complete the arrangement.⁴⁹²

2- The *daimyo* and *shōmyō* (lesser lords) are gravely warned that it is strictly forbidden to enter into contract or swear an oath among themselves.

.....
5- Those who are permitted to use a palanquin are: Tokugawa Ieyasu, Maeda Yoshiie, Uesugi Kagekatsu, Mōri Terumoto, Kobayakawa Takakage, old court nobles, priests in charge of Zen monasteries, other famous monks, and those who took the tonsure. All others, even if they are *daimyo*, can not use a palanquin. However if the daimyo are young they may go on horseback. If they are over fifty years of age, and if the distance to be travelled is over one ri, they may be permitted to use a palanquin. When ill, they may be permitted to use a palanquin....⁴⁹³

This edict is an open declaration of superiority of Hideyoshi over other warlords. He was no more the *primus inter pares* but the sole owner of the absolute sovereignty. By regulating marriages and forbidding any sort of oath taking among the *daimyo*, he was aiming to prevent possible alliances against his authority. The *daimyo*, with the exception of five strong families were being stripped off their privileges in a step by step manner. Obviously, if he could live longer, Hideyoshi might have targeted the authorities of the remaining five houses but in 1598 he died.

Unlike the Japanese emperors, Hideyoshi was acting as can be expected from an absolute ruler. In this sense, he can be argued to be the first Japanese political ruler whose efforts are somewhat comparable to the practices of Ottoman rulers and institutions. Hideyoshi was able to increase central authority controls over the various subjects of the realm within the political and social reality of Japan. Eventhough the actual measures with which he accomplished centralization are different from that of the Ottomans, Hideyoshi was gradually building defence lines around himself, taking necessary steps to prevent possible alliances among his

⁴⁹² This reminds us of the janissaries who in most of the period we are concerned still had to receive the Sultan's personal permission to get married even if they were *ihitiyar* (old).

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 195

potential rivals, demanding complete obedience from all his subjects, showing to his warriors new frontiers with virtually limitless land to receive and filling up the holes in the system through which individual warriors (like himself) with prowess might rise to power. Obviously, his next move would be against the remaining five houses including his successor Ieyasu's.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) was the one who found his way up to the mantle of Hideyoshi as the hegemon of the country. After defeating his rivals at the famous battle of Sekigahara on October 21, 1600 he received written alliances of most of the vassals. The only exception was Hideyori, the son of Hideyoshi. Ieyasu decided to show his outward respect to this heir-apparent until he could consolidate his wealth and power. Then in 1615 he attacked the Osaka castle and crushed the harsh resistance of Hideyori's adherents with an iron fist.⁴⁹⁴

The unification of the country was over. The Great Tokugawa Peace (1603-1667) had started. With Ieyasu the political system where the Shogun dominated the court, the local administrators⁴⁹⁵ and the clergy had reached its maturity and prevailed until 1867. In hindsight, historians note that centralization forces took place in Japanese history within the warrior based feudal traditions of the country.

Isolating itself from the rest of the world (*sakoku* – the chained country), for two and a half centuries Japan was to be ruled by the Tokugawa from Edo (modern Tokyo). Warriors constituted the core of the new system (*baku-han*). The social order resembled the military organization of an army quite similar to the Ottoman case. The following excerpt from an edict of laws governing the military households (*Buke Shohatto*) gives the general outline of the nature of this new era. It was

⁴⁹⁴ Hall, p.165

⁴⁹⁵ The daimyo were organized in three categories: *Shimpan*, *Fudai* and *Tozama*. *Shimpan* were the “related families” connected to the Tokugawa line by blood. *Fudai* were the “House daimyo” who were the close collaborators of Ieyasu esp. during the Sekigahara battle. Their loyalty was considered absolute. *Tozama* were the “outer lords” who had received *daimyo* titles from Nobunaga or Hideyoshi. (Hall, pp. 166-67)

promulgated in 1615 (a year before Ieyasu's death) by the successor of Ieyasu, Hidetada whom he was wise enough to appoint before his death. It reflects the contemporary views on samurai and the bushidō (way of the warrior)⁴⁹⁶:

- 1- The arts of peace and war, including archery and horsemanship, should be pursued single-mindedly.
- 2- Drinking parties and wanton revelry should be avoided.
- 3- Offenders against the law should not be harbored or hidden in any domain.
- 4- Great lords (daimyo), the lesser lords (shōmyō), and officials should immediately expel from their domains any among their retainers or henchmen who have been charged with treason or murder.
- 5- Henceforth no outsider, none but the inhabitants of a particular domain, shall be permitted to reside in that domain.
- 6- Whenever it is intended to make repairs on a castle of one of the feudal domains, the (shogunate) authorities should be notified. The construction of any new castles is to be halted and stringently prohibited.
- 7- Immediate report should be made of innovations which are being planned or of factional conspiracies being formed in neighbouring domains.
- 8- Do not enter into marriage privately (i.e. without notifying the shogunate authorities)
- 9- Visits of the daimyo to the capital are to be in accordance with regulations.
- 10- Restrictions on the type and quality of dress to be worn should not be transgressed.
- 11- Persons without rank shall not ride in palanquins.
- 12- The samurai of the various domains shall lead a frugal and simple life.
- 13- The lords of the domains should select officials with a capacity for public administration.

Hence, the society was organized in accordance with the type of relations each class had with the samurai.⁴⁹⁷ For example, the farmers were the second highest

⁴⁹⁶ Sources of Japanese Tradition, pp. 335-338; A Documentary History, pp.206-208

class since they were to support the samurai with food and income. The artisans were next because they were manufacturing all kinds of handicrafts (including weaponry) used by the samurai. The tradesmen were the lowest since they were regarded as filthy humanbeings wanting profit without producing anything.⁴⁹⁸ With the absolute domination of the samurai over these strata, the age of *Bushidō* (The Way of the Warrior) had commenced.

The Sword

Sword for the warriors, had assumed a deeper meaning than being just a weapon. Like the famous Excalibur of King Arthur, both the Ottoman janissaries and the Japanese samurai had attributed supernatural power to the sword. For the Janissaries it was the Zulfikar, the double-edged sword of Caliph Ali and for the samurai it was the *Kusanagi no tachi* (The Grass- Mower Sword)⁴⁹⁹. This is the sacred sword found by Susanoō, brother of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Susanoō had vanquished a dragon terrorizing people and cut it from head to toe.⁵⁰⁰ There in one of its tails he came across this magical sword which later became one of the three imperial regalia⁵⁰¹ of the Japanese Imperial family.⁵⁰² The episode was recorded in Nihongi (compiled until 697):

(After descending from Heaven Susanoō no Mikoto meets an old couple who were lamenting over their daughter. He learns that a dragon had devoured

⁴⁹⁷ Ikegami, pp. 151-163

⁴⁹⁸ Samurai Status, Class, and Bureaucracy: A Historiographical Essay, Douglas R. Howland, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 2. (May, 2001), pp. 353-380. [Interestingly, three other pillars of the society; namely the monks (*sōryō*, 僧侶), the nobility (*kuge*, 公家) and the outcasts (*hinin*, 非人)⁴⁹⁸ were excluded from this classification.]

⁴⁹⁹ Also called “*Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi*” (Sword of Gathering Clouds of Heaven)

⁵⁰⁰ Note that this universal legend of a hero slaying the dragon was also a part of the Bektashi tradition. The incident was attributed to Sarı Saltık, a wandering saint with miraculous deeds who had cut the dragon from head to toe with his wooden sword. [Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Sarı Saltık – Popüler İslam’ın Balkanlar’daki Destanı Öncüsü*, (Ankara, TTK, 2002), pp.46-49]

⁵⁰¹ Three Imperial Regalia: A small bluish green stone (*magatama* or *gyoku*), a mirror and a sword)

⁵⁰² Bloomberg, pp. 63-64

seven other daughters of the couple and he was coming for the last. Susanoō decides to eliminate the dragon and marry the girl.).... Therefore Susanoō no Mikoto on the spot changed Kushinada-hime (the girl) into a many toothed close-comb which he stuck in the august knot of his hair. Then he made Ashinazuchi and Te-nazuchi to brew eightfold sake, to make eight cupboards and so to await its coming. When the time came, the serpent actually appeared. It had an eight forked head and an eight forked tail; its eyes were red like the winter cherry; and on its back firs and cypresses were growing. As it crawled it extended over a space of eight hills and eight valleys. Now when it came and found the sake, each head drank up one tub and it became drunken and fell asleep. Then Susanoō no Mikoto drew the ten-span sword he wore and chopped the serpent into small pieces. When he came to the tail, the edge of his sword was slightly notched, and he therefore split open the tail and examined it. In the inside there was a sword. This is the sword which is called Kusanagi no Tsurugi. In one writing it is said: “Its original name was Ama no Mura-Kumo no Tsurugi.”.... Susanoō no Mikoto said: “This is a divine sword. How can I presume to appropriate it to myself?” So he gave it up to the Gods of Heaven.⁵⁰³

It was so important for the Imperial family as the Emperor’s military talisman that there was a moment of crisis for Japan when the “Grass Mower” was considered to be lost at sea during the battle of Dan no Ura (The Kanmon Straits in Shimonoseki, at the meeting point of Honshu and Kyushu islands) in 1185. There were many rumours that it was recovered or Emperor Sujin had had its replica made or that it was lost forever.⁵⁰⁴

The importance attributed to the swords was not limited to *Kusanagi* though. It was a tradition to give a name to the special swords made for eminent personalities and assume they had a soul. A swordsmith’s work of forging a blade was considered to be a sacred process. He would undergo a ritual purification including a fast of seven days before starting to his work. He would then purify his workshop in accordance with Shinto principles and close the smithy with a *shimenawa* (straw rope used surround a Shinto sacred area). Dressed in the fashion of a Shintoist priest he would start the forging of the sword. He would invoke the spirits and deities (esp. Inari, the

⁵⁰³Aston, W.G. ,(trans.), *Nihongi- Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* , (Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1985),pp. 52-53 (Two other versions of Susanoō slaying the dragon can be found in pp.55-58)

⁵⁰⁴ Bloomberg, pp.64-66

goddess of swordsmiths) with his prayers. The names of the deities invoked would generally be inscribed on the blade requesting their protection for its owner.⁵⁰⁵

For the samurai his sword is the work of gods and it is animated by the spirits.⁵⁰⁶ For instance in Heike Monogatari (Epic containing the deeds of the Taira during the Gempei War), Minamoto Yoshitomo after a defeat is told to have prayed all night in the temple of Hachiman. He was asking to the God why he had abandoned him and why his sword had lost its soul.⁵⁰⁷

For the Janissary, likewise Zulfikar had a soul, a will of its own. Constantine Mihailovich, himself once a janissary, tells us that they used to carry small talismans bearing the Zulfikar symbol on them. Mikhailovich's testimony reveals the importance attributed by the janissaries to their swords. A sword is a living thing with a soul and Ali speaks to it:

...After Muhammed's death, out of his deep and true grief, Ali went up to the mountains and steep cliffs. When he started to hit the rocks there, he saw that his sword was disappearing in (penetrating) the rocks. Ali realized this miracle of his sword which he had never seen before, and (to his sword) he said "Stop *Zulfikar!* Stop so that Allah is not offended."

They believed Zulfikar would protect them from harm on the battlefield.⁵⁰⁸

Zulfikar motif was used as the symbols on the banners of a number of janissary regiments and squadrons as well as on the main procession flag of the expeditionary Ottoman army as a whole.⁵⁰⁹

Thus, the sword more than any other weapon appears to have a symbolic meaning for the early modern warrior.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., pp.52-55

⁵⁰⁶ The Japanese Book of the Ancient Sword, Ethel Mumms Whatford, Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 26 (1905), pp.334-410

⁵⁰⁷ Sansom, G.B., *Japan A Short Cultural History*, (Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1991), p. 272

⁵⁰⁸ Beydilli, Kemal (ed.), *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, (Istanbul, TATAV, 2003), p. 5

⁵⁰⁹ Kurtoğlu, Fevzi, *Türk Bayrağı ve Ay Yıldız*, (Ankara, TTK, 1992), pp. 76, 78, 79, 83, 84, 86-88, 92, 94, 95, 97

Bushidō: Way of the Warrior

Religion appears to have vital importance in shaping the spiritual worlds of the early modern warriors. For the European Knights it was Christianity, for the Janissaries it was Islam and in the case of the samurai it was an amalgamate of Shintoism and Buddhism. Yet a closer scrutiny on the content of their respective beliefs reveals the fact that the warriors were attracted to certain Orders rather than adhering to the orthodox or popular conceptions of those religions. For instance, we find the Order of the Garter (established in 1348)⁵¹⁰, Order of the Teutonic Knights (established in 1199)⁵¹¹, Order of the Hospitallers (established around 1100)⁵¹² etc. in Europe most of which were established during the crusaders' era. In the Ottoman Empire, Bektashism had evolved to become the official order for the professional soldiers as discussed in the previous chapters. In Japan, we come across a composite set of beliefs not coined yet as an Order with distinct characteristics and modes of conduct. Instead, the term "Bushidō" (Way of the Warrior) or "Budō" (Way of the Martial Arts) was (and is) commonly used for representing the combination of beliefs, principles, and rules of conduct of the Japanese warrior as well as their habits and traditions. This seemingly secular usage of the term stripped off its religious connotations conceals the deep impact of religion in the lives of individual samurai.

⁵¹⁰ Elizabeth I and the Order of the Garter, Raymond B. Waddington, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol.24, No.1, (Spring 1993), pp. 97-113

⁵¹¹ Crime and Punishment among the Teutonic Knights, Indrikis Sterns, *Speculum*, Vol.57, No.1 (Jan.1982), pp.84-111

⁵¹² The Aragonese Crown and the Knights Hospitallers of Rhodes 1291-1350, Anthony Luttrell, *The English Historical Review*, Vol.76, No.298 (Jan.1961), pp.1-19

Kasaya Kazuhiko, with reference to Nitobe Inazō's work "*Bushidō*"⁵¹³, gives the keywords to Bushidō as honesty (*shōjiki*), courage (*yūki*), love of humanity (*jinai*), courtesy (*reigi*), integrity (*seijitsu*), honor (*meiyo*), loyalty (*chūgi*), self-denial (*kokki*), honourable suicide (*seppuku*), vengeance (*katakiuchi*), and Japanese sword (*nihontō*).⁵¹⁴ Joseph Herbert summarizes the unwritten code of the samurai as "Loyalty to one's lord, wisdom, courage and benevolence, disdain of saving one's life (in certain situations), impassivity under duress, and above all the maintenance of personal honour".⁵¹⁵ Cameron Hurst, on the other hand (again basing his argument on Inazō) extracts seven principles of Bushidō: "Justice, courage, benevolence, politeness, veracity, honor, loyalty".⁵¹⁶ These or similar words may be used for any group of soldiers, at any period of time, at any geographical location depending on the level of admiration one has for that particular group. In other words, these heroic characteristics may be attributed to Roman legions or to Spartans or the crusaders or to the Ottoman janissaries by their supporters. For example, the type of heroicism depicted in the following episode in *Heike Monogatari* (a thirteenth century epic on the Gempei War) is the archetype of a medieval hero:

... many of their men who had fled Rallied again, so that they soon had a following of three hundred horse. 'With this band our last fight will be a great one,' shouted Kiso joyfully, 'who leads yon great array?' 'Kai-no-Ichijō Jirō, my lord.' 'And how many has he, do you think?' 'About six thousand, it seems,' 'Well matched!' replied Yoshinaka, 'if we must die, what death could be better than to fall outnumbered by valiant enemies?' 'Forward then!'⁵¹⁷

⁵¹³ Nitobe, Inazō, *Bushido, the Soul of Japan*, (The Project Gutenberg Ebook, Released in April, 2004, EBook No:12096)

⁵¹⁴ Kasaya, Kazuhiko, *Bushidō to Nihon Nōryokushugi*, (Tokyo, Shinchōsha, 2005), p.16

⁵¹⁵ The "Heike Monogatari": Buddhist Ethics and the Code of the Samurai, Herbert S. Joseph, *Folklore*, Vol.87, No.1. (1976), pp. 96-104

⁵¹⁶ Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The Bushido Ideal , G. Cameron Hurst III *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Understanding Japanese Values. (Oct., 1990), pp. 511-527.

⁵¹⁷ Herbert, op.cit.

Now compare this with the final words of Oruç Reis (Younger brother of Barbarossa, The Red Beard Hayreddin Pasha, captain of Ottoman armada in early sixteenth century) when getting ready to leap out of his fortress into the crowded enemy lines:

My sons! Death is more beautiful and honorable than living. Hero dies but his name prevails. Whoever comes to this world (sooner or later) will drink the syrup of death. With you, let us leave a name that will become a legend on earth and stay until the apocalypse. Hopefully, we will meet in Heaven.⁵¹⁸

Such shows of courage in the face of death were no doubt highly valued by the early modern warriors as a sign of one's valor. But in most cases where similar accounts were recorded, I believe, the descriptions reflect the views of the author depending on the sympathy he feels to the fallen ones. In most cases we find idealized attitudes of heroes contributing to the ethos of the warrior. So for the historian, the mechanism behind such appreciation or exaltation of heroic deeds is more important than the deeds themselves. That's where religion enters in.

Bravery was an integral component of Bushido according to Yamamoto Tsunetomo together with two others: Loyalty and filial piety.⁵¹⁹ Loyalty to one's master appears to be the common motif in most narratives on Bushidō. It was so important that at times, in an attempt to prove their loyalty, would follow their masters to death (*junshi*). The famous samurai Yamamoto Tsunetomo who had left his ideas on the Way of the Warrior in his book *Hagakure* defines being a retainer as “nothing other than being a supporter of one's lord, entrusting matters of good and evil to him, and renouncing self-interest”.⁵²⁰ At another point, he goes even further and says “ If one were to say what the condition of being a samurai is, its basis lies

⁵¹⁸ Seyyid Muradi, (ed.) Ahmet Şimşirgil, *Gazavat-ı Hayreddin Paşa*, (Istanbul, Babıali Kültür yay., 2005), p.65

⁵¹⁹ Yamamoto, Tsunetomo, *Hagakure – The Book of the Samurai*, (Tokyo, Kodansha, 2005), p.53 (...in terms of one's lord, loyalty; in terms of one's parents, filial piety; in martial affairs, bravery...)

⁵²⁰ Yamamoto, Tsunetomo, *Hagakure – The Book of the Samurai*, (Tokyo, Kodansha, 2005), p.31

first in seriously devoting one's body and soul to his master.”⁵²¹ His view is supported by Taira Shigesuke (1639-1730) in his book *Bushido Shoshinshu* (Bushido for Beginners). Shigesuke declares that a samurai should never forget that he had devoted his body and life to his overlord.⁵²² On the other hand, he sees filial piety as an inseparable part of the notion of loyalty.

Parents and employers, familial duty and loyalty – these differ only in name, for there is no difference in the sincerity of the heart.... There is no such thing as someone who is disrespectful to his parents yet faithful to his employer. If someone is so immature as to be remiss in familial care for his parents, who are the origin of his body, there is no way he can be moved by the kindness of an employer, who is not his flesh and blood, to be completely loyal.⁵²³

This kind of approach to filial piety is missing in the case of the janissaries at least until the seventeenth century when they were allowed to get married and a new group called “*Kuloğlu*” (Sons of the servants) started taking their fathers' places in the Hearth. Still, we know from the author of the *Kavanin-i Yeniçeriyân* that the *Kuloğlu* for a long time were not regarded as true janissaries and were given a nickname “*Saplama*” (one who enters a cue from sideways without respecting the rights of others). So as long as the system of devshirme survived, the Ottoman case appears to be the opposite of the Japanese in terms of filial piety. In fact, the whole idea was that the janissary warrior should be rootless. It is the consciousness of this fact that takes its place in the *gülbang* prayers of the Hearth.⁵²⁴

Loyalty and filial piety can indeed be considered as almost a unified concept because it was functioning as a way to expand the boundaries of the individual samurai towards both his past and his future generations. A cowardly act thus, could easily stain his lineage and haunt him and his descendants even after death.

⁵²¹ Hagakure, p. 111

⁵²² Cleary, Thomas, *Code of the Samurai – A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinshu of Taira Shigesuke*, (Boston, Tuttle, 1999), p. 69

⁵²³ Ibid., p.9

⁵²⁴ Kapıkulu Ocakları, v.I, p. 420-22 (...in this arena [battlefield] many a heads are cut off, no one comes to ask...)

Furthermore, his allegiance was believed to extend to three lives that is his past existence, the present one and the next life (*shūjū sanze no katame*).⁵²⁵ Tsunetomo's views show how this lineage issue had evolved into a convenient tool to guarantee total subjugation for the masters.

Lord Naoshige said, "An ancestor's good or evil can be determined by the conduct of his descendants." A descendant should act in a way that will manifest the good in his ancestor and not the bad. This is filial piety.⁵²⁶

With knowledge of these basic principles of Bushidō at hand, can we say that it constituted a sort of an Order as in the Janissaries or the Knight's case? We indeed come across samurai traditions like oath-taking⁵²⁷, initiation (*genpuku*), mastery in weaponry, pride taken in being a member of a privileged group and cult of honour which are common in military orders worldwide. Bushidō contains inner ethical principles as discussed above, it has its own codes of conduct and ceremonials.

Another common characteristic of such societies is the notion of "journey on a path". Via initiation, the initiates enter in a path on which they proceed towards mastery of the set of ideals of the group. Interestingly, just like *Yol* (The Path) of the janissaries, samurai's Bushidō as its name pinpoints, is such a way. In Bushidō, the final destination of that journey seems to be "having no mind" and relatedly "fight as if having no mind" which is a sign showing the impact of Zen on the Japanese warrior.

⁵²⁵ Bloomberg., p. 92

⁵²⁶ Hagakure, p.103

⁵²⁷ An edict dating back to 1232 promulgated by the Kamakura shogunate under the Hōjō regency shows how an amalgam of beliefs was firmly established and how Hachiman had taken his central place in the Japanese pantheon. The edict starts with a reference to the gods and ends with an oath for the samurai vassals: *(1. The shrines of the gods must be kept in repair; and their worship performed with greatest attention....2. Temples and pagodas must be kept in repair and the Buddhists services diligently celebrated... If even in a single instance we swerve from either to bend or to break them (laws set by this edict), may the gods Brahma, Indra, four Deva Kings, and all the gods great and small, celestial and terrestrial of the sixty odd provinces of Nippon, and especially the two incarnations of Buddha in Izu and Hakone, Mishima Daimyōjin, Hachiman Daibosatsu and Temman Dai Jizai Tenjin punish us and all our tribe, connections and belongings with the punishments of the gods and the punishments of the Buddhas; so it may be. Accordingly we swear a solemn oath as above. First year of Jōei (1232), seventh month, 10th day); Lu, David, J., Japan – A Documentary History, (New York, East Gate, 1997), pp.109-116*

Warrior's Dilemma

Related to the above discussion, the Warrior's Dilemma is a term which refers to the conflict experienced by the warrior when he has to do the act of killing. How could he ever be blessed for his action which normally is the highest crime according to any religion. Every warrior especially the ones unlike the modern soldiers who do not necessarily have to face their opponents during combat, in the pre-modern times had to face this dilemma and arrive at a resolution. In the case of Janissaries, Hacı Bektaş had supplied them with the legitimate basis necessary for the violence they had to exert. Caliph Ali, on the other hand was the perfect hero who had resorted to his sword when necessary. With his magical sword Zulfikar, he was conceived as the almighty invincible warrior and a distinct *Cenkname* (epic war tales mostly in verse) literature of telling the stories of his epic deeds had developed.⁵²⁸ The legends of warrior saints like Seyyid Battal Gazi⁵²⁹ and Sarı Saltuk⁵³⁰ were also instrumental in shaping the warrior identity of the janissary.

For the samurai, Hachiman, God of War appears to play an important role in solving this conflict. As can be expected, the worship of Hachiman coincides with the start of the warrior rule, that is Minamoto Yoritomo and the first military government he established in Kamakura. Within his short rule, Yoritomo was able to construct a new hearth of warriors, organized samurai around the cult of Hachiman.

⁵²⁸ See Mattei, Jean-Louis, *Hız. Ali Cenknameleri*, (Istanbul, Kitabevi, 2004)

⁵²⁹ See Köksal, Hasan, *Battalnamelerde Tip ve Motif Yapısı*, (Ankara, Başbakanlık Basınevi, 1984)

⁵³⁰ See Ocak, Ahmet Yaşar, *Sarı Saltık – Popüler İslam'ın Balkanlar'daki Destani Öncüsü*, (Ankara, TTK, 2002)

During the construction of the Hachiman temple he forced his vassals not only to contribute the project with materials and labour but also with menial work themselves.⁵³¹ As of 1190 Tsurugaoka Hachiman-gū had become a governmental institution. Once in a year, the vassals were expected to participate in the most elaborate ceremony, “*hōjō-e*” held in the shrine as a part of their *gokenin-yaku*, (duty of house members). *Yabusame* (demonstration of arrow shooting skills on horseback) was a part of this ceremonial and it had soon become a method of controlling the behaviour of the *gokenin*.⁵³²

There are over 30,000 Hachiman shrines in today’s Japan, a number next only to Inari, the god of rice cultivation. There are three main centers of Hachiman cult: The oldest shrine is at Usa (Kyushu, the oldest); Iwashimizu (Kyoto, erected around 850); Tsurugaoka (Kamakura, built around 1180). As the God of War, Hachiman is important for our study on the religion of the samurai but interestingly his powers are not limited to war. Hachiman is worshiped as:

- a) a folk deity of continental origin,
- b) a deity of metallurgy,
- c) the reincarnation of Emperor Ōjin,
- d) guardian of Tōdai-ji temple,
- e) guardian of crossroads,
- f) a bodhisattva,
- g) the protector of the nation,
- h) the god of war,
- i) the tutelary deity of the Minamoto clan,
- j) a god of oracles,

⁵³¹ Miyazaki, Religious life of the Kamakura bushi. Kumagai Naozane and his Descendants,

⁵³² Op.cit.

- k) the protector of the imperial line,
- l) the wind in the pine trees,
- m) the deity whom women bring their infants to be cured of intestinal worms.⁵³³

His name “Hachiman” (an alternative pronunciation is “*Yahata*”)⁵³⁴ meaning “Eight Banners” is quite a weird name to be given to a god. The material manifestation of the god is a fly-whisk made of horse-hair called “*hossu*”. This symbol is almost identical to the Central Asian “*tuğ*”, a sign of military power used by the warring battalions which was also made out of horse hair. This implies a possible Central Asian or at least continental origin of Hachiman.⁵³⁵

Jane Marie Law in her article on the *Hōjō-e* rite (for releasing sentient beings) explores how a religious system such as the Hachiman cult processes the guilt, horror, denial and disquiet arising after acts of large-scale violence and how the very process of appeasement serves an ideological function.⁵³⁶ She gives us information how the god himself offers a divine example for the ideal solution of the warrior’s dilemma who vows not to kill or even harm any sentient being according to the Buddhist precepts but who as a warrior still has the duty to kill.

The ceremony was performed every two years (once a four year after the Meiji Restoration) since the early beginnings of the cult. It is, in essence a shamanistic ritual in Buddhist disguise. According to legend, a certain Hayato tribe living in Kyushu had launched a revolt against the central government in the year 720. They attacked the strongholds of the Yamato clan in Kyushu and a successful counter

⁵³³ Violence, Ritual Reenactment and Ideology: The Hōjō-e (Rite for Releasing Sentient Beings) at USA Hachiman Shrine in Japan, Jane Marie Law, *History of Religions*, Vol.33, No.4., (May 1994), pp.325-357

⁵³⁴ It is difficult to understand why the *Kanji* characters are not read as “*Hachihata*” or “*Yaman*” as one normally would expect. The contemporary pronunciation is of Motoori Norinaga who transcribed the imperial edicts of *Shoku Nihongi*.

⁵³⁵ Bloomberg, Catharina, *The Heart of the Warrior – Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan*, (Kent, Japan Library, 1995),p. 24

⁵³⁶ Jane Marie Law, Violence, Ritual Reenactment and Ideology: The Hōjō-e (Rite for Releasing Sentient Beings) at USA Hachiman Shrine in Japan

attack was done by the Yamato forces led by the warrior priests (shinpei or shingun) of the Hachiman shrine. It is depicted as a holy war in which Hachiman was called upon to protect the nation by subduing the enemy. A bloody war was waged and most of the Hayato were eradicated. Though an absolute victory, the victors could not enjoy their success because soon a deadly plague spread and the seas were infested with snails, a natural phenomenon having deep impact on fishing. The disasters were attributed to the defeated Hayato and the Hōjō-e ritual was started in order to appease the spirits of Hayato killed in the battles.⁵³⁷

An ancient text on the procedure of the Hōjō-e rite (*Usa-gū Hōjō Engi*) gives a justification for the violence exerted by Hachiman and still acknowledges the need for retribution:

....I, the God, as the retribution for killing many of the Hayato, on separate years will do a Hōjō-e.... The rite began with the Great Bodhisatva Hachiman. Even though he kills, because he has an enlightened status and does good, there is a lot of merit in his killing. The internal proof is that there is no hiding in the bright light, and the rays cross each other.

The ritual includes the releasing of snails and fish from a temporary platform built of the sea and the shamanistic dances of puppets possessed by the gods (boys around 12-13 years of age wear ancient costumes representing deities). The ceremony ends with the symbolical struggle between gods in a sumo match.

By time, other famous wars like the Mongolian attempts of invasion were associated with Hachiman and included into the rite. Consequently, there is enough room for claiming that “kamikaze” was not the wind of any god but “the Wind of Hachiman” especially when considered together with his manifestation via “the wind in the pine trees”.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ Op.cit.

⁵³⁸ Also see the letter sent to the Hachiman shrine by the shogunate for thanking and granting new donations. The letter is quoted under the topic “Identity of the Foe” above.

Thus Hachiman had evolved from a local deity of oracles into the protector of the nation. But a big contradiction arises when his two features are come together: Hachiman as Great Bodhisattva and Hachiman as the God of War. Hachiman's solution for the "Warrior's Dilemma" was rather comforting for all his *bushi* followers: "Even though he kills, because he has an enlightened status and does good, there is a lot of merit in his killing." In Hachiman, the samurai could find the divine justification for his acts of violence, after all the god himself killed and because he meant good, there was a lot of merit in his killing. It is then no surprise that he became so popular among the members of the warrior class.

Death

Death for a warrior is "the" issue in his self-identity since as a professional soldier whose duty was to fight battles (to take lives and to give lives in janissary terms) he has to deal with the idea of death more than any individual in his society. Like the Warrior's Dilemma, a resolution on this issue was also essential for the psychological well-being of the warrior and his ability to continue his peace-time routine soundly. Janissaries had reached their resolution via the Bektashi concept of "dying before death" and had found a way in the Bektashi Order which enabled them to transcend the reality of death. With a profound acceptance of the transitoriness of the world of appearances, the Bektashi janissary was walking on his Path towards unison with God. Via Zen, samurai happens to arrive at a similar conclusion.

A uniquely Japanese method called *seppuku* (suicide by disembowelment) is a way of showing the samurai's resolution on death. Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford had witnessed one and in his book "Tales of Old Japan" he gives a detailed

description of a *seppuku* ceremony which he had to participate as a witness

(February 1868):

Bowing once more, the speaker allowed his upper garments to slip down to his girdle, and remained naked to the waist. Carefully, according to custom, he tucked his sleeves under his knees to prevent himself from falling backwards; for a noble Japanese gentleman should die falling forwards. Deliberately, with a steady hand, he took the dirk that lay before him; he looked at it wistfully, almost affectionately; for a moment he seemed to collect his thoughts for the last time, and then stabbing himself deeply below the waist on the left-hand side, he drew the dirk slowly across to the right side, and, turning it in the wound, gave a slight cut upwards. During this sickeningly painful operation he never moved a muscle of his face. When he drew out the dirk, he leaned forward and stretched out his neck; an expression of pain for the first time crossed his face, but he uttered no sound. At that moment the *kaishaku*, who, still crouching by his side, had been keenly watching his every movement, sprang to his feet, poised his sword for a second in the air; there was a flash, a heavy, ugly thud, a crashing fall; with one blow the head had been severed from the body.... A dead silence followed, broken only by the hideous noise of the blood throbbing out of the inert heap before us, which but a moment before had been a brave and chivalrous man. It was horrible...⁵³⁹

Although all sorts of precautions were taken in order to prevent the person to change his mind and start behaving berserk, thus missing his chance to meet his death honourably, at the final moment, it is the will power, even the choice of the condemned to do the final act of suicide. He would do it with an incredible endurance to pain and obviously without any regret. This is “to die *isagi-yoku*”, that is, in Daisetz Suzuki’s words “to die leaving no regrets”, “with a clear conscience”, “like a brave man”, “with no reluctance”, or “in full possession of mind”.⁵⁴⁰

The Tokugawa samurai scholar, Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659 -1719) starts his book *Hagakure* with his concern in death that formulated the intellectual premises of the way of the warrior, Bushido, in early modern Japan.⁵⁴¹ There is constant and

⁵³⁹ Mitford, Algernon Bertram Freeman, *Tales of Old Japan*, (Project Gutenberg eBook; Release Date: July 24, 2004, Number:13015), pp.209-214

⁵⁴⁰ Suzuki, p.98

⁵⁴¹ Suzuki, Daisetz T., *Zen to Nihon no Bunka /Zen and Japanese Culture*, (Tokyo, Kodansha, 2005), p.76 (*Hagakure*, (Hidden Behind the Leaves) is a compilation of anecdotes, moral sayings, memories and considerations of a renowned Tokugawa samurai who had chosen to live in seclusion like a monk after all the action in his youth. Yamamoto was the loyal retainer of Nabeshima Naoshige, the feudal lord of Saga in Kyushu.

consistent reference to the importance of death in the life of a samurai which almost approaches the limits of obsession.

The Way of the Samurai is found in death. When it comes to either/or, there is only the quick choice of death. It is not particularly difficult. Be determined and advance.... This is the substance of the Way of the Samurai. If by setting one's heart right every morning and evening, one is able to live as though his body were already dead, he gains freedom in the Way...⁵⁴²

He regards the acceptance of death for a retainer as a precondition for being a samurai and demands transcendence over it. He defies all kinds of calculation or reasoning whatsoever when it comes to sacrificing one's life⁵⁴³ and advocates the merit of immediate action against careful considerations of the outcomes of one's acts⁵⁴⁴. For him, the way a man meets his death functions as a turnsole paper in making a clear distinction between a warrior and a non-warrior, and a samurai must undergo a noncessant self-training in order to get ready for that moment:

...Meditation on inevitable death should be performed daily. Every day when one's body and mind are at peace, one should meditate upon being ripped apart by arrows, rifles, spears and swords, being carried away by surging waves, being thrown into the midst of a great fire, being struck by lightning, being shaken to death by a great earthquake, falling from thousand-foot cliffs, dying of disease or committing seppuku at the death of one's master. And everyday without fail one should consider himself as dead.⁵⁴⁵

His book, together with Miyamoto Musashi's (1584-1645) "*Gorin no shō*" (The Book of Five Rings) is regarded as one of the main texts laying the foundations for the Way of the Warrior (*Bushidō*). Musashi also emphasizes the importance of the notion of death for a samurai by saying "Generally speaking, the Way of the warrior is resolute acceptance of death."⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴² Yamamoto, Tsunetomo, *Hagakure – The Book of the Samurai*, (Tokyo, Kodansha, 2005), p.25

⁵⁴³ Hagakure, p.73

⁵⁴⁴ Hagakure, p.101 (... *The Way of the Samurai is one of immediacy, it is best to dash in headlong...*)

⁵⁴⁵ Hagakure, p. 283

⁵⁴⁶ Musashi, Miyamoto, *Gorinshō*, (Tokyo, Shinjinmono Shuraisha, 2005), p.75; (an English translation of this book by Victor Harris can be accessed from <http://samurai.com/5rings/> or from <http://www.miyamotomusashi.com/gorin.htm>)

Similar ideas on death are expressed by yet another samurai, Daidōji Yūzan (1639-1730) in his book “*Budōshoshinshū*” (Primer of Bushidō):

The idea most vital and essential to the samurai is that of death which he ought to have before his mind day and night, night and day, from the dawn of the first day of the year till the last minute of the last day of it. When this notion takes firm hold of you, you are able to discharge your duties to their fullest extent; you are loyal to your master, filial to your parents, and naturally can avoid all kinds of disasters. Not only is your life itself thereby prolonged, but your personal dignity is enhanced. Think what a frail thing life is, especially that of a samurai. This being so, you will come to consider everyday of your life your last and dedicate it to the fulfilment of your obligations. Do never let the thought of a long life seize upon you, for then you are apt to indulge in all kinds of dissipation, and close up your days in dire disgrace. This was the reason why Masahige is said to have told his son Masatsura to keep the idea of death all the time in before his mind.⁵⁴⁷

These writers, themselves seasoned samurai, lived around the Mid-Tokugawa period within which the country enjoyed over two and a half centuries of peace called “Pax-Tokugawa”. To be and to remain a warrior in times peace while increasing bureaucratization was limiting the chances of changing one’s status, was the main dilemma the samurai faced. They were on the edge of being reduced to mere bureaucrats with swords girdled on their waists and they were in search for the meaning of their role in the society. That’s how the term “*Bushidō*”, The Way of the Warrior was born or rather invented as a term summarizing the rules of conduct of the Bushi in the never ending warfare of the golden ages of the samurai when they were expected to and did prove their valour on the battlefield. Tokugawa samurai had both the time and the necessary intellectual background to analyze and reveal the qualities of their class.

Daisetz Suzuki in his book “*Zen and Japanese Culture*” (1938) refers to a saying in Japan; “*The Tendai is for the royal family, the Shingon for the nobility, the Zen for*

⁵⁴⁷ Suzuki, p. 80 (Yūzan’s book in English can be found at <http://fowler.winterstorm.org/texts/Budoshoshinshu/>)

the warrior classes, and the Jōdō for the masses.”⁵⁴⁸ He explains the reasons as follows:

The Tendai and Shingon are rich in ritualism and their ceremonies are conducted in a most elaborate and pompous style appropriate to the taste of the refined classes. The Jōdō appeals naturally more to plebeian requirements because of the simpleness of its faith and teaching. Besides its direct method of reaching final faith, Zen is a religion of will-power, and will-power is what is urgently needed by the warriors, though it ought to be enlightened by intuition.⁵⁴⁹

Besides the urgent need of will-power, a number of reasons why Zen had become intertwined with the way of the warrior can be considered. Firstly, it had entered into Japan right at the time Minamoto Yoritomo had succeeded to suppress his enemy, the Taira clan and the age of the warriors was to begin. Eisai (1151-1215), the founder of the Rinzaï sect of Zen after years of study in China had arrived at Japan in 1191, the year which we have seen that Yoritomo had established the Hachiman temple in Tsurugaoka as a governmental institution. Dōgen (1200-1253), Eisai’s disciple and the founder of the Sōtō Zen sect also had gone to study in China and returned back to Japan in around 1228.⁵⁵⁰ For Yoritomo and his successors the Hōjō regents, Zen must have constituted a brand new alternative mode of Buddhism as opposed to the already established sects like Tendai or Shingon. Secondly, Zen was advocating “intuition” against “erudition” in a way which offered salvation to the ones without proper knowledge of Buddhist sutras. Its teachings were transmitted via paradoxical parables called kōan which were easier to understand for the generally uneducated members of the samurai class, than the elaborate conceptual prayers of its

⁵⁴⁸ Suzuki, Daisetz T., *Zen to Nihon no Bunka / Zen and Japanese Culture*, p.64

⁵⁴⁹ Op.cit.

⁵⁵⁰ Dōgen was also considered to be a philosopher with radical ideas on the concepts of time (flowing in all directions) and impermanence of things. [Metaphysics in Dōgen, Kevin Schilbrack, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 50, No.1 (Jan.,200), pp.34-55]

alternatives.⁵⁵¹ Thirdly, Zen was promoting “action” instead of “passivity”. A human being should move with the nature as a part of it. Change is absolute for Zen, and change is to be attained by action. Perfect match for the samurai as men of action.⁵⁵² Fourthly, Zen opposed rationality and favoured irrationality. For Yamamoto Tsunetomo this is exactly what is needed for a warrior. ‘A warrior should not calculate the consequences of his action’ he says, and quit reasoning. An attitude which must have proved handy for the samurai facing his death in battles. Fifthly, Zen had no conflicts or whatsoever with other faiths (especially native Shinto) because there was no pantheon of gods or deities to negate or claim superiority to each other. Sixthly, Zen monks and monasteries consistently kept away from both acquiring wealth through tax-free estates and from politics interfering with the deeds of the ruling classes. Zen monks stood aloof in an age of turmoil when many Buddhist institutions launched numerous revolts to protect their interests. Zen managed to keep its silence which was the ideal attitude expected from the men of religion. Finally, but most importantly, Zen had a peculiar way of dealing with the reality of death which was the central issue in a samurai’s life as seen above. Zen simply was denying any distinction between life and death and asserting that life embodies death and vice versa.⁵⁵³ Zen was teaching the evanescence of human life and was offering a way of transcending death via meditation (Zazen). John Steffney summarizes the notion of death as conceived by Zen beautifully:

He who can say that he is already dead as he is already alive undergoes not a “rebirth”, but a “break-through” – a “break-through” beyond the dichotomous matrix

⁵⁵¹ Nukariya, Kaiten, *The Religion of the Samurai – A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan*, (Tokyo, 1913, scanned at www.sacred-texts.com, September 2000), p.44 (“*The Scripture is no more nor less than the finger pointing to the moon of Buddhahood. The Scripture has no holiness whatever. The Scripture is religious currency representing spiritual wealth.*”)

⁵⁵² Poetry, Metaphysics, and the Spirit of Zen, Harold E. McCarthy, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.1, No.1. (Apr., 1951), pp.16-34

⁵⁵³ Symbolism and Death in Jung and Zen Buddhism, John Steffney, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.25, No.2. (Apr.,1975), pp.175-185

of ego-consciousness and the life-death polarities that are inclusive in that matrix. In this “break-through” there is no need to worry about death, for death is not something that will come, but what one has been all along, that is, dead only in the sense that one has always been alive.⁵⁵⁴

Zen underscores the cultivation of a fearless tranquility in the face of death.⁵⁵⁵ Under the influence of Zen’s teachings a special type of poetry called “jisei” (death poems) has flourished in the early modern Japan. Jisei was the final words of a person written in verse, in simplest as possible form reflecting the inner harmony of the individual with the nature surrounding him. Here is an example written by Toyotomi Hideyoshi who had spent his life in battles as an eminent samurai:

<i>Tsuyu to oki</i>	Like dew I came
<i>Tsuyu to kienan</i>	Like dew I disappear
<i>Waga mi kana</i>	My life?
<i>Naniwa no koto wa</i>	All about Osaka
<i>Yume no mata yume</i>	Is a dream within a dream. ⁵⁵⁶

Another samurai, Ota Dokan (1432-1486) uttered the following on his moment of death while bleeding, after being hit by an assassin:

*Had I not known
that I was dead
already
I would have mourned
my loss of life.⁵⁵⁷*

⁵⁵⁴ Op.cit.

⁵⁵⁵ Zen in the Art of Funerals: Ritual Salvation in Japanese Buddhism, William M. Bodiford, *History of Religions*, Vol. 32, No.2. (Nov., 1992), pp.146-164

⁵⁵⁶ Sources of Japanese Tradition, p. 325

⁵⁵⁷ Hoffman Yoel (compiler), *Japanese Death Poems: Jisei*, (Rutland Vt., Tuttle, 1986), p.48

Another one is from Uesugi Kenshin (1530-1578) a feudal lord in the period of warring states (*sengoku*). He had written two poems, one in Chinese, the other in Japanese:

(*Jisei* in Chinese)

Even a life-long prosperity is but one cup of sake;

A life of forty-nine years passed in a dream

I know not what life is, nor death.

Year in year out – all but a dream...

(*Jisei* in Japanese)

Both Heaven and Hell are left behind;

I stand in the moonlit dawn,

*Free from clouds of attachment...*⁵⁵⁸

There is a romantic pathos hidden in these line which the Japanese call “*aware*”. *Aware*, the poignant sadness at the passing of things, comes from a silent acceptance of temporality of things. *Aware* evokes a melancholy appreciation of the “beauty in death”⁵⁵⁹ Another popular word to describe it is “*horobi no bigaku*”, that is the “beauty of destruction”, the word contains sentiments of admiration. Zen concepts: Harmony (*wa*), respect (*kei*), purity (*sei*) and tranquillity (*jaku*) can be seen as motifs in these poems while they also form the basis of the tea ceremony.⁵⁶⁰ The crescendo of the ceremony assumes with the first sip of *koicha* (dark tea) the main guest takes from the cup he is presented. Ideally a moment of shared tranquility follows showing the host his efforts were appreciated and his message was transferred.

Jeniffer Anderson claims that *Chadō*, The Way of the Tea exists to make this

⁵⁵⁸ Suzuki, p.94

⁵⁵⁹ From Rice Cultivation to Mind Contemplation: The Meaning of Impermanence in Japanese Religion, Steven Heine, *History of Religions*, Vol. 30, No.4. (May,1991), pp.373-403

⁵⁶⁰ Japanese Tea Ritual: Religion in Practice, Jennifer L. Anderson, *Man*, New Series, Vol.22, No.3. (Sep., 1987), pp.475-498

moment plausible.⁵⁶¹ For the untrained eyes, the death poems as well as the tea ceremony may seem too simple and a bit mysterious. Suzuki's definition of Zen's mystery may help to reassess those views:

Zen is radical realism rather than mysticism. If Zen is a form of mysticism, it is its own kind of mysticism. It is mystical in the sense that the sun shines, that the flower blooms, that I hear at this moment somebody beating a drum in the street. If these are mystical facts, Zen is brim-full of them.⁵⁶²

Muju Dōgyō (1226-1312), a medieval writer, praises the Zen monks and their attitude towards death. "*It is because they routinely meditated as if they would soon die*", he says, "*and monks of other Buddhist schools can not be compared to Zen monks in their mastery of death.*"⁵⁶³ This attitude crystallizes in the funeral rites performed by the Zen monks. Zen funerals had become popular among the laymen as well as the nobility and the warriors simply because unlike other sects or even the C'hang sect in China, such services were offered to anybody without any discrimination of their classes.

In these ceremonials, the deceased was ordained as a monk posthumously. His head was shaven, he was dressed in a monk's robe and a document of lineage bearing his name in connection to Buddha was given. Buddhist precepts were asked and his natural silence was interpreted as affirmation. Since there was no distinction between life and death, there also was no distinction between the living and the dead. Secret kōan initiation documents (*kirikami*) assert that the dead are ideal Zen monks simply because they have left behind all the bounds of worldly distinctions.⁵⁶⁴

Then the priest takes the attention of the audience, the living, to the dead body lying in their front and delivers a short sermon:

⁵⁶¹ Op.cit.

⁵⁶² Poetry, Metaphysics, and the Spirit of Zen, Harold E. McCarthy, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol.1, No.1. (Apr., 1951), pp.16-34

⁵⁶³ Zen in the Art of Funerals: Ritual Salvation in Japanese Buddhism, William M. Bodiford, *History of Religions*, Vol. 32, No.2. (Nov., 1992), pp.146-164

⁵⁶⁴ Op.cit.

The cages of life and death are but phantom relations. When these phantom relations perish, suddenly (one) returns to the source. One morning: wind and moon. One morning: perishing. An eternity of long emptiness; an eternity of solidity. The late “.....”, aware of the great matter of Life and Death, took refuge in the Great Ascetic (i.e. Buddha), converged on the place beyond knowledge, and marched through the gateway to perfect nirvana.

Then he pauses and asks a question directed to the audience:

“Marching through” indicates what?

He waves the torch in his hand to draw a cycle in the air. (circle being the symbol of Zen) Then he gives the answer to the question while throwing down the torch to light the fire for cremation of the corpse:

Where the red fire through the body, there sprouts a lotus, blossoming within the flames.⁵⁶⁵

“Lotus-in-the-flames” (*kari-ren*) is a symbollic expression of ultimate conquering of death.⁵⁶⁶ Yet in another funerary sermon we come across this expression:

Right now, try to perceive what is in front of your eyes. Look! The dangling flower is opening – the lotus within the flames.... (The cycle of) life-death and nirvana are like last night’s dreams. Enlightenment and affliction are as empty as the billowing smoke. At this very moment, the grand sister sheds her tainted form. Ultimately, to where does she travel?

Again throwing down the torch on the wooden stakes on which the deceased lies he gives the answer:

The origin of lakes and streams lies in the ocean. The moon sets but does not leave the sky.⁵⁶⁷

The priests assert that the deceased will not ascend to the Heaven nor descend to the Hell which in turn leaves a room for Shintoic belief that the spirits of the ancestors do not leave the world after death. Zen, without trying to change “the other” and without allowing to be changed by “the other” seems to have found a

⁵⁶⁵ Op.cit.

⁵⁶⁶ Bodiford, op.cit. (“ In other sermons the cremation might be compared to a mud cow entering the ocean (*deigyū nyūkai*; i.e., the dissolving of all dualistic distinctions) or to a wooden horse dancing in a fire (*mokuba kachū*; i.e., false delusions being destroyed without a trace”)

⁵⁶⁷ Op.cit.

perfect way of co-existing. With Zen, the samurai could transcend and meet his death unflinchingly as an honourable warrior just like he yearned for. Yamamoto Tsunemoto in Hagakure: *“There is a saying of the elders that goes, ‘Step from under the eaves and you are a dead man. Leave the gate and the enemy is waiting.’ This is not a matter of being careful. It is to consider oneself as dead beforehand.”*⁵⁶⁸

In conclusion, we can say that both warrior classes experienced what I like to call “The Warrior’s Dilemma”. On the one hand, as professional soldiers it was their duty to kill others when ordered so and on the other hand their religion was compelling them not to kill or harm any living thing let alone the humans. Both carried blades and mastered in using weapons like spears, bows and arrows, halberds and the like. Both had to face and cope with the death of their comrades in battles and both were forced to find a spiritual safe haven from the violence they were exposed in wars. No matter how heroic are the battle scenes depicted by the epic sagas of ancient poets, individual fighters must have desperately searched ways to save them from the traumas of the actual battle. That is where religion enters in.

The Japanese samurai found his answer in the unique amalgam of Shintoist Hachiman cult and the Buddhist Zen teachings. Hachiman helped them to get rid of their feeling guilt because the god himself had fought many battles and killed many. Hachiman was declaring “ Even though he kills, because he has an enlightened status and does good, there is a lot of merit in his killing.” This was an open justification of girding swords and brandishing swords. If they could attain an enlightened status somewhat similar to Hachiman and if they were sure they were doing good (i.e. for their nation, for their masters, for their clans et.al.) there could be a lot of merit in killing.

⁵⁶⁸ Hagakure, p.285

Zen on the other hand provided the samurai with a means to reach salvation against all the crimes they commit when seen in religious esp. Buddhist terms. The Buddhist precepts was compelling the initiates to vow not to kill so samurai by nature could as well assume themselves expatriated from religion. Zen was offering a way in between. Zen was advocating transcendence via change via action via will. A Zen priest could encourage a samurai to assume action if the man had already made his decision. Human action is not a part of nature it is the nature itself; as death is not a part of an individual's life it is the individual himself. Death is nothing more or nothing less than the cycle of life and death. Fear of death arises out of ego, out of human selfishness to protect his physical body of harm. By meditation Zen proposes that the self can be disposed and a state where death loses its significance may be reached. That is the state of nirvana (or *ku*) or sudden awakening (*satori*). Paradoxical parables (which in another context may seem completely meaningless) are used to spark intuition in the diviner. Zen defies erudition and the Scripture including the Buddhist. For Zen the real Scripture is the nature itself.

These teachings had deeply influenced the samurai starting from the Kamakura period when Zen had entered into the country. With the samurai had finally found a way to meet their death as honourable warriors. Many even were so cool in the face of death that they could write their last words in brilliant verse moments before death, even before committing seppuku without any sign of fear. Transcending death as Yamamoto Tsunetomo puts it, was only possible by considering oneself dead before death.

The institution of ceremonial suicide did not exist in the Ottoman case. *Seppuku* was (and remains) particular to the Japanese warrior culture. On the other hand we know that the janissary also faced "Warrior's Dilemma" and like samurai, he also

found a way to cope with it. The solution in janissary's case came from Hacı Bektaş himself (who interestingly had transformed into a dove at one point in his life just like Hachiman). He praises and exalts the *şehid* (martyr) who dies on the battlefield for the sake of Islam. Like Hachiman, Hacı Bektaş also offers a justification for the violent deeds of the janissary. He states that the level of a *şehid* is far higher than the prophets.

Similar to Zen, Bektashism defines a way to transcend physical death by rescuing oneself from the bonds and limitations of self. This is called “dying before death”. Individual is required to leave his self out of the room during initiation and he is surrounded by symbols in proof of the death of one's self . In *gülbang* prayers, janissary likens himself to a moth representing the fragility, temporariness, evanescence of existence. Just like Zen, Bektashism implies a return of the soul (*tamashi* in Japanese) to the origin after bodily death.

The two sets of beliefs; the japanese religion as an amalgam of Buddhist and Shintoist elements and the Bektashi order of Islam as exercised in the Ottoman Empire have some common features. Further study promises further similarities to be revealed when one considers that Buddhism was and remained the dominant religion shaping the spiritual atmosphere in Central Asia as late as the fifteenth century. Recent excavations show that many Buddhist scriptures were written in archaic Turkish, similar mainly to Uigur dialect. After all, Hacı Bektaş was born and raised in the religious climate of Khorasan which was an attractive place for all kinds of wandering monks including the Buddhist. There is quite a possibility that some elements of non-orthodox Islam were borrowed from Buddhist practices. But as I said, this is an area that deserves deeper study.

Unlike the samurai in Japan, janissaries were not granted the place they deserved in the social memory of the citizens of modern Turkey. This, I believe is a regrettable fact which can only be overcome by further study on Ottoman military history.

Finally I can state with confidence that respective sects that the samurai and the janissaries adhered to were chosen because they offered solutions to some specific needs of both warrior classes. Namely, “The Warrior’s Dilemma” and their desperate search for a way to overcome the immediate reality of death.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis I have tried to shed light to the question of “what kind of an influence did religion have on the members of the warrior classes in the early modern ages?” I had to limit my study to the janissaries, the elite guards of the Ottoman Sultans and use the samurai as a reference point in order to position the janissaries among their contemporaries. Samurai gave me the ability to extend the scope of my study, reveal some common characteristics of the two geographically unrelated men-at-arms, and to make a meaningful comparison with my main subject, the janissaries. Unlike the samurai-Zen relations the janissary-Bektashism connection was not a topic studied in length previously. So most of the times I had to find my own way out of the primary sources. It is enjoyable though, one feels like a detective of history trying to put bits and pieces together in order to draw a full picture of the subject in question.

My first question was “Why did the Ottomans choose Bektashism as the official order of the janissaries?” I believe I was able to arrive at a convincing solution to this question: They must have chosen it because they must have already had close relations with Hacı Bektaş and his followers during the time of Ertuğrul, father of Osman. Ertuğrul, possibly had participated in the Seljukid expedition against the Babais (Baba Ishakids and not the Baba İlyasids) and stood on the side of allied forces arranged by Gıyaseddin Keyhüsrev II. The rebels were crushed at the Malya (or Seyfe) plain close to Hacı Bektaş and there was little or no possibility that Hacı

Bektaş stood aloof during the whole incident. This conclusion helped me to better understand the initial contact and the affinity between the House of Osman and Hacı Bektaş because otherwise it was difficult for me to grasp the reason why would anybody choose (indeed “choose” because as born-Christian slave-servants, the devshirme boys could not have any freedom of converting by their own will into any sect of Islam) an order which he had no relations or whatsoever, for his bodyguards? It simply is irrational. On the other hand, although my reason compells me to claim that the founders of the Ottoman dynasty should have been Bektashis themselves, I am aware that there is need of further study to prove that.

My second target was to clarify the whole process of the formation of the janissary corps from the very establishment phase to the start of the decline. This is approximately a period between the reigns of two Murads; namely Murad I and Murad III covering a time span of a bit more than two hundred years. I was after a conceivable model of the Hearth of Janissaries, with its rules, laws and military organization at the end of the sixteenth century after which it is said to have started to decline. Conscious of the impossibility of yearning for a “perfect” picture, I tried to get as close as possible to a detailed description of the Hearth because I was assuming that if something (in this case a social organization) is said to have “degraded” it must have had a “non-degraded stage” (or say maturity) at some point so that we can talk about a degradation. During my research I have come to the conclusion that as could be expected, there was a reason for the revolts and rebellions and the unrest caused by the janissaries especially in the later centuries and the sultans themselves were not always innocent. The janissaries found themselves in between a fierce and continous fight between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. I realized that instead of taking one or the other side, they had chosen to

remain on their own side, the janissary brethren. They increasingly tried to protect their own interests against all sides, the sultan being no exception.

Thirdly, I wanted to elaborate the relations of the Hearth with Bektashism. Was it merely a superficial bond or did they have deeper attachments to the order? How or to which extent was Bektashism instrumental in the establishment of a janissary brotherhood? Although there are no written documents (at least not found yet) describing how they conceived that relationship, I found out that the term *Yol*, The Path had a deep impact in the janissaries' life and Bektashism lied at the core of the concept. I collected the *gülbang* prayers and tried to analyze them with Bektashi terminology. I also tried to extract the features and principles of *Yol* and came to the conclusion that the *Yol* implies a spiritual Path which ends up in the ultimate Bektashi goal of unification with God and it also was influential on the career patterns of the janissaries. I felt myself lucky when I discovered the function of a Bektashi institution, *Tekke* at the Meat Arena in the New Chambers. It was functioning as a school for the general-staff candidates chosen from among the Runner Cooks who used to compete for a lamb every morning at sunrise. *Et Meydanı Tekkesi* (Lodge in the Meat Arena) was the Cadet Academy of the Hearth of Janissaries and religious education based on Bektashi doctrine was a way to offer individual janissaries to take a short-cut for further promotion depending on their own talents and moral behaviour.

Next was a question that a student of military orders may not evade: "How did janissaries, as professional fighters cope with the reality of death?", "What was their attitude towards death?" The answers could again be traced among the Bektashi beliefs. Bektashism was offering a clear cut solution to the clear and present danger of death. "Dying before death" was the core of Bektashi teaching and each janissary

as a Bektashi had to pass through an initiation ceremony where he was asked to admit that he was dead already and by overcoming his self he could transcend physical death. He could become a “reacher” by reaching the end of the Path. He would then evolve into a member of the group of a semi-godly saints just like the threes, the sevens, the fourties; the Forces Unknown (*Gaib Erenleri*). On the battlefield he believed that they would come to his assistance whenever he felt the need. Moreover he would attain the highest status known to Muslims (in Hacı Bektaş’s teaching) that is to be a *Şehid* (martyr). Becoming a *Şehid* was also a shortcut to the end of the Path when compared to the laborious way of the dervishes who had to pass through four gates and forty posts in order to reach the same point. Hacı Bektaş was providing all the justification and the spiritual motivation a warrior needed.

On the other hand, I realized that the janissaries were uttering their hatred to Caliph Muawiya and his adherents while declaring their affinity to Ali and his descendants. A Bektashi concept widely known as *Tevella* and *Teberra*. The fact that it was possible for the janissaries to do such a declaration which has Shi’ite connotations at the heart of the army of the Ottoman sultan, who claimed caliphate over the sunni muslims deserves more attention. Such traditions must have caused increasing tension as the sultans increasingly tended to line himself with the sunni ulema especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the Hearth was crushed in 1826. The details of this tension are beyond the scope of this study but obviously the Ottomans for a long while seem to have no trouble in hearing those statements in the *gülbang* prayers read publicly. The question implies that the notion of Sunni-Shi’ite sectarian conflict which becomes an important theme in much later periods is probably read back into earlier periods of Ottoman history

when the boundaries between such theological and sectarian differences were not that clear.

Then I tried to understand the evolution of the Japanese samurai as a warrior caste. The historical process showed me that the samurai (similar to the janissaries) were also the guards of certain families which had proved their valor and military prowess before others and thus had accumulated wealth in terms of arable land. The Imperial family was the first such family (like the Ottoman dynasty) but different than the Ottomans they could not establish a strong professional army of their own providing strategic advantage over their equivalents. Or rather they had lost control over such military organization and could not suppress their allies. Other families like Soga, Fujiwara, Taira, Minamoto, Hōjō, Oda, Toyotomi or Tokugawa had almost always been stronger than the Imperial family and until the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the Emperor was confined to ritualistic duties and spiritual power. But interestingly, the Imperial lineage did not lose its importance as the fountain of legitimacy. None of the military rulers of the country ever thought to give an end to the Imperial dynasty and declare his own emperorship. Instead, they tried to marry their children with the emperors so that their descendants could have legitimate rights to the throne.

I explored the attitude of the samurai towards the notion of death. I found out that an amalgam of two main religions Buddhism and Shinto were at work in Japan but in the particular case of the samurai; Hachiman as the God of War (a Shinto deity) and Zen as type of Buddhism offering individual salvation were appealing to the spiritual necessities of a warrior. Honorable death was more than a wish for the samurai, almost an obsession. How he died would determine how a samurai lived. So a distinctive cult of honour seems to have flourished among the Japanese warrior

class. I found a detailed eye-witness account of a seppuku ceremony which was a solid proof of silent determination to meet one's death unflinchingly could be observed. It was a traumatic experience for the foreign witnesses.

I am convinced that the God of War, Hachiman was the god behind the *Kamikaze* (Divine Wind) which helped repel the Mongolian threat of invasion in the thirteenth century. Hachiman had managed to survive more than a thousand years as the protector of the nation without losing its identity as a native Shinto god (though disguised in Buddhist clothes or titles at times). Hachiman was popularized by Minamoto Yoritomo, the first of the military rulers who had started the age of the samurai and declared it to be the tutelary deity of his family. Hachiman in turn offered justification for the duty of the samurai to exert violence and kill human beings when deemed necessary. He himself had annihilated, eradicated a whole clan called Hayato in Kyushu and proclaimed that violence was acceptable (even meritorious) when done by the enlightened and only for the good.

On the other hand, Zen was solving the issue of facing death unflinchingly, a status every samurai was after. It of course was because their conviction of bravery in the face of death but also because if they showed signs of hesitation or any traces of fear when the moment came, their descendants as well as their ancestors would take their part from the shame he caused. Yet Zen was teaching that death was an integral part of the cycle of life and death. One would turn back to the origin where he came from just like rivers turn back to oceans. So the Zen monks were admired for their way they met their own death without any fear or whatsoever. Their attitude illuminated the path for the samurai.

I based my comparison of the janissaries with the samurai on topics like the identity of their masters, the identity of their foes, their attitudes towards lineage,

stratification, veneration of the sword, the way of the warrior, warrior's dilemma, and death. I found out that despite many differences due to structural and institutional differences and the divergent cultural atmospheres they had developed into, there also were some striking similarities which hopefully may constitute a step forward in enhancing our knowledge of the spiritual worlds of the early modern warriors. These similarities enhance our understanding of their communal mentality in terms of social history.

Finally, I can say that religion, in the early modern ages had an important function in the lives of warrior classes. Religious concepts and practices served to find a solution for "The Warrior's Dilemma" and for overcoming the fear of physical death. And in the case of the Janissaries, their version of the Bektashi faith provided the concepts that helped face the problematic of this dilemma.

In conclusion, the janissaries were a warrior brethren with special values, institutions of education and in the larger sense a world view particular to their order. They were not mere hordes after material gain as is argued by Murphey although like any military force of their age, material gain would be part of their motivation in battle. However, nor were they a large class a large class of warriors with strong bonds of filial piety and lineage as in Japan. The Janissary constituted an elite imperial corp of "Rootless Samurai" loyal to only the Ottoman Sultan, who saw themselves as a warrior brethren with their own Path and worldview. The topic invites further research on the janissaries that would take into account the elite brethren orders of the European knights who were geographically and historically closer to the janissaries in the early modern age.

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