

Unity in Diversity

Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam

Edited by

Orkhan Mir-Kasimov



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2014

© 2014 Koninklijke Brill NV ISBN 978-90-04-25903-4

CONTENTS

List of Contributors	ix
Préface	xv
<i>Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi</i>	
Introduction: Conflicting Synergy of Patterns of Religious	
Authority in Islam	1
<i>Orkhan Mir-Kasimov</i>	

PART ONE

LANGUAGES, CONCEPTS AND SYMBOLS

La transgression des normes du discours religieux : Remarques sur les <i>shaṭaḥāt</i> de Abū Bakr al-Shiblī	23
<i>Pierre Lory</i>	
Religious Authority & Apocalypse: <i>Tafsīr</i> as Experience in an Early Work by the Bāb	39
<i>Todd Lawson</i>	
La transmigration des âmes. Une notion problématique dans l'ismaélisme d'époque fatimide	77
<i>Daniel De Smet</i>	
Promised One (<i>maw'ūd</i>) or Imaginary One (<i>mawhūm</i>)? Some Notes on Twelver Shī'ī Mahdī Doctrine and its Discussion in Writings of Bahā' Allāh	111
<i>Armin Eschraghi</i>	
To the Abode of the Hidden One: The Green Isle in Shī'ī, Early Shaykhī, and Bābī-Bahā'ī Sacred Topography	137
<i>Omid Ghaemmaghami</i>	

PART TWO

POST-MONGOL TENDENCIES:
MYSTICISM, MESSIANISM AND UNIVERSALISM

The Kūfan <i>Ghulāt</i> and Millenarian (Mahdist) Movements in Mongol-Türkmen Iran	177
<i>William F. Tucker</i>	
Intercessory Claims of Šūfī Communities during the 14th and 15th Centuries: 'Messianic' Legitimizing Strategies on the Spectrum of Normativity	197
<i>Devin DeWeese</i>	
<i>Ummīs</i> versus Imāms in the Ḥurūfī Prophetology: An Attempt at a Sunnī/Shī'ī Synthesis?	221
<i>Orkhan Mir-Kasimov</i>	
The Occult Challenge to Philosophy and Messianism in Early Timurid Iran: Ibn Turka's Lettrism as a New Metaphysics	247
<i>Matthew Melvin-Koushki</i>	
Timurid Experimentation with Eschatological Absolutism: Mīrzā Iskandar, Shāh Ni'matullāh Walī, and Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī in 815/1412	277
<i>İlker Evrim Binbaş</i>	

PART THREE

FROM MYSTICISM AND MESSIANISM TO CHARISMATIC KINGSHIP:
OTTOMANS, SAFAVIDS AND MUGHALS

L'idéologie d'État concurrencée par son interprétation : les Melāmī-Hamzevī dans l'empire ottoman	307
<i>Paul Ballanfat</i>	
Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia	329
<i>Ahmet T. Karamustafa</i>	

The World as a Hat: Symbolism and Materiality in Safavid Iran	343
<i>Shahzad Bashir</i>	
Persian Nuḡṭawīs and the Shaping of the Doctrine of “Universal Conciliation” (<i>ṣulḥ-i kull</i>) in Mughal India	367
<i>Abbas Amanat</i>	
Messianism, Heresy and Historical Narrative in Mughal India	393
<i>A. Azfar Moin</i>	
Index	415

KAYGUSUZ ABDAL: A MEDIEVAL TURKISH SAINT AND THE
FORMATION OF VERNACULAR ISLAM IN ANATOLIA

Ahmet T. Karamustafa

The archaeology of the religious lives of Turkish speakers in late medieval and early modern Anatolia is in many ways still in its infancy. Even though significant strides were taken in this area during the late Ottoman and early Republican eras, the field suffered from the unquestioned hegemony of a single paradigm during the course of the entire twentieth century, which—we can now see with the benefit of hindsight—stifled new and innovative research. This paradigm, was, of course, the one put into place by M.F. Köprülü, according to which Anatolian Turkish religiosity had to be understood primarily in the light of the pre-Islamic cultural history of Turks in Central Asia. Köprülü's approach privileged continuity over against change in the religious thought and practice of Turkish speakers both in the *longue durée* (from pre-Islamic to Islamic periods) and in geographical and cultural expanse (from Central and Southwest Asia to Anatolia and the Balkans).¹ The Köprülü paradigm was, at least initially, a step forward in at least the sense that it brought the Turkish vernacular into full view and focused the scholarly gaze squarely on Turkish speakers, but in the long run it had several unfortunate consequences, which, for those who have labored under its influence, include an inability to conceive the religious lives of vernacular speakers as dynamic, ever-changing webs spun by actual human beings who lived at the threshold of continuity and rupture, of the new and the old. Speakers of Turkish (not to mention other vernaculars spoken in Anatolia) were not, however, mere repositories of culture but actual architects of it, and in the half millennium long history of their Islamization between the tenth and fifteenth centuries and beyond, it is their dynamism and agency, not their presumed preservation of “archaic” lifeways, that need to be explored and explained. It is high

¹ For a critique of the Köprülü paradigm, see the Foreword by Devin DeWeese in Köprülü, *Early Mystics* viii–xxvii. For an extensive study of Köprülü's approach to religion, see Markus, *Writing Religion*. For the sake of simplicity, modern Turkish orthography is followed throughout, with only a few exceptions.

time, therefore, that we turn our gaze directly to vernacular Islam and begin to write its history in a comprehensive fashion.

What is nowadays called the Alevi-Bektaşî tradition in Turkey fits squarely into the broader category of vernacular Islam.² This is most emphatically not a unitary tradition, and the outlines of its early history, especially before the sixteenth century, are fuzzy at best and obscure at worst.³ Nevertheless, it is a safe assumption to make that Turkish speakers benefited from multiple sources in fashioning their religious thought and practice, and my aim here is to direct attention to one of those well-springs they drew from, namely dervish piety as represented by a nebulous group that historians of Anatolia refer to as *abdalan-ı Rum*, following the example of the chronicler Aşıkpaşazade (d. 889/1484).⁴ Whether or not the *abdals* of *Rum* may have been interconnected as a loose social grouping through master-disciple relationships, regional attachments, distinctive practices and the like remains largely a matter of conjecture, but when seen through the lens of the Turkish vernacular, it seems likely that what led contemporary observers such as Aşıkpaşazade to subsume them under a single heading was their linguistic practice: as opposed to other dervish groups like the Qalandars, Ḥaydarīs, Jāmīs, and Shams-i Tabrīzīs, who most probably spoke Persian (at least during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), the *abdals* of *Rum* spoke Turkish. The richest historical sources for this Turkish dervish piety are, of course, hagiographical texts that begin to proliferate during the second half of the fifteenth century, and this sizeable hagiographical corpus still needs to be tapped by researchers for what they can reveal to us about Alevi-Bektaşî.⁵ Much rarer are the actual, direct voices of the *abdals* themselves in the form of their own textual compositions, and it is against this backdrop that the towering figure of Kaygusuz Abdal comes into view as a prolific *abdal* author and poet who left behind a vast textual legacy.

The rich and complex corpus of Kaygusuz Abdal (d. first half of the fifteenth century) remains understudied, no doubt partly because his works—in prose, verse as well as prosimetrum in the form of monologues,

² For an excellent summary of the current state of scholarship on Alevis, see Dressler, *Alevis*.

³ The most detailed documentation of early Alevi history is Karakaya-Stump, *Subjects of the Sultan*.

⁴ For a thorough survey of “dervish piety,” see Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*; *abdalan-ı Rum* are discussed on 70–78.

⁵ The key study that set the bar for later works on hagiography is Ocak, *Menakıbnameler*.

inner dialogues, visions, sermons, and didactic epistles—do not easily lend themselves to literary and historical analysis. A close scrutiny of this corpus suggests that Kaygusuz Abdal was instrumental in the development of a distinctly “provincial” and “latitudinarian” religious discourse in Turkish that explicitly and consciously situated itself *against* the perceived “metropolitan” and “authoritarian” discourses and practices of the Muslim scholars and Şūfis who lived in large urban centers and who operated largely within the orbit of the learned traditions couched in classical Arabic as well as Persian (which had emerged as the second “classical” Islamic language during the eleventh and twelfth centuries). This religious discourse in the Turkish vernacular—the discursive and performative tradition of *abdal* piety as exemplified in the work of Kaygusuz Abdal—must have been one of the sources, if not *the* main source that nourished the formation of “Alevism.”

The historical life of Kaygusuz Abdal is almost totally enveloped in obscurity.⁶ His hagiography, which was clearly compiled at least a generation or two after his death, does not contain much reliable information on his life, and, in any case, the overall features of this sacred biography are simply too generic for it to be viewed as a viable source for Kaygusuz Abdal’s vita.⁷ His proper name does not appear in his own works (or, for that matter, in his hagiography); instead, he consistently refers to himself with the epithet Kaygusuz Abdal, which can be rendered as “the dervish without concerns” or “the care-free dervish.” Certain clues in his literary output strongly suggest that he was a disciple of Abdal Musa, an equally elusive dervish of the late fourteenth century.⁸ In terms of the obscurity of our knowledge of his life, Kaygusuz Abdal is only typical of most other dervish figures of early Anatolian Islam; however, unlike practically all other dervishes/*abdals* of the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, Kaygusuz Abdal uniquely left behind a large number of written works in both prose and verse. These include: *Budalaname* (The Book of Dervishes), *Kitab-ı Maglata* (The Book of Prattle), *Vücutname* (The Book of Being), *Dilgüşa* (The Exhilarating), *Sarayname* (The Book of the Mansion), three long *mesnevis* (1017, 367 and 338 couplets), four short *mesnevis* (under 100 couplets), one long work in verse *Gülistan* (The Rose Garden), which is

⁶ A comprehensive summary of previous scholarship on him can be found in Azamat, Kaygusuz Abdal.

⁷ Güzel, *Kaygusuz Abdal (Alâeddin Gaybî) menâkıbnâmesi*.

⁸ Güzel, *Abdal Musa velayetnamesi*.

extant only partially as well as one hundred to one hundred and fifty individual poems.⁹

Dost senin yüzünden özge / Ben kible-i can bilmezem
Pirin hüsnün severim / Bir gayrı iman bilmezem

Bana derler ki şeyatin / Senin yolunu azdırır
Ben şu zerrak sufilerden / Gayrı bir şeytan bilmezem

Sufi-yi salus nedendir / Hüsne münkir geçindiği
Ne aceb bela geliptir / Şu ki ben dosttan bilmezem

O şah-i hüsnün aşkına / Özümü viran kılmışam
Kaygusuz Abdal'dır adım / Cübbe vü kaftan bilmezem¹⁰

Friend, I don't know a sacred direction other than your face
I love the beauty of the guide, I have no other faith

They tell me "Devils lead you astray"
The only devils I know are the deceitful Şūfī!

Why is it that the hypocritical Şūfī pretends to reject beauty?
Strange trials afflict us, yet I don't blame the friend for them

I rendered myself into a ruin for the love of that king of beauty
My name is care-free dervish, I am a stranger to cloak and gown

Kaygusuz Abdal has a fascinating literary and poetic voice, which needs to be analyzed for its own sake. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will focus only on those aspects of his thought that enable us to situate him, and by extension the category of popular Muslim saints commonly identified in our sources as *abdāl* or *derviş*, vis-à-vis another large category of Muslim mystical leaders, who appear as *sufi* and/or *mutasavvif*. These latter are referred to as *sufi* and/or *mutasavvif* in sources that were sympathetic to them, but they are designated as "the deceitful, hypocritical Şūfī," or simply as *sofu* in sources that were highly critical of them. Indeed, the word *sofu*, essentially the form of the Arabic word *Şūfī* when it is subjected to Turkish vowel harmony, comes to mean "religious hypocrite, bigot" in Turkish (paralleling the evolution of the word *zāhid* in Persian from "renunciant" to "hypocrite"). It is the fault line that separates *abdāl*/

⁹ Compact listing in Azamat, Kaygusuz Abdal 76; summarized in Güzel, *Kaygusuz Abdal* 89–151.

¹⁰ Gölpınarlı, *Kaygusuz Abdal, Hatayi, Kul Himmet* 33–34; the English translation that follows is mine.

derviş from *sofu* that I wish to examine here on the basis of Kaygusuz Abdal's works.¹¹

Kaygusuz Abdal is explicit and unrelenting in his criticism of those Şūfī masters who separate themselves out from the common folk through the use of such mechanisms of cultural marking as special dress codes and carefully chosen accoutrements. The mantle, cloak and robe, the turban and shawl, the rosary, prayer rug and water jug all become unacceptable to him when they are codified and deployed as markers of piety. All ostentatious acts of piety, such as artificially slow and calm articulation in everyday speech, keeping the head low as a show of modesty, frequent sighing, and deliberate pouching of lips so as to be perceived as fasting, are instead sure signs of hypocrisy. In a delightful turn of phrase, Kaygusuz Abdal refers to such practitioners of false piety as *kibriya müşrikleri*, "the idolaters of haughtiness," who (and I'm quoting here) "fancy themselves to be Hüseyin-i Şibli, Cüneyd-i Bagdadi, Bayezid-i Bistami and Hasan-ı Basri and claim to perform miracles. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Their exteriors are bright, their interiors are dark. All of them are garrulous gluttons and hypocritical opportunists. [...] Thinking that people have chosen them as their guides, they puff themselves up with pride! God forbid, God forbid, carcasses cannot become guides! Liars don't become saints just as beggars don't become rich."¹²

There is, of course, nothing surprising about such direct and clear criticism of "false Şūfīs" or "Şūfī-pretenders;" indeed, as is well-known, by the fifteenth century there was already a long and distinguished roster of internal critics of Şūfism that included such household names as Sarraj, Hujwiri, Ghazali, and Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar Suhrawardi. Seen from this vantage point, Kaygusuz Abdal does not appear to be either original or remarkable. After all, he may simply have been yet another Şūfī who rose to the challenge of distinguishing the authentic item from fraudulent copies, which, such critics complained, permeated Muslim communities. Yet, such an interpretation of Kaygusuz Abdal's views on Şūfism is somewhat off target, which is a fact that does not become obvious until Kaygusuz Abdal's censure of "the idolaters of haughtiness" is viewed within the larger context of his thought.

¹¹ I am using Kaygusuz Abdal's corpus as published by A. Güzel, but these published versions need to be improved by reliable critical editions.

¹² Kaygusuz Abdal, *Kaygusuz Abdal'in mensur eserleri* 68–69 (*Budalaname*).

As an entry into Kaygusuz Abdal's oeuvre, let us turn to the startlingly dream-like *Kitab-ı Maglata* (The Book of Prattle).¹³ Ostensibly, this is a work in which Kaygusuz Abdal spills out, as it were, in unedited format his fantastic visions that describe his adventures in the sacred realm and in sacred time. In these visionary experiences, Kaygusuz Abdal meets prophets ranging from Adam to Muḥammad, both singly and in congregation, experiences the very beginning and the end of time (that is, the creation and the day of judgment), and has frequent encounters with Satan. This latter often disguises himself as a well-appointed *shaykh* or a *zāhid*, but Kaygusuz Abdal always detects and identifies the Devil, proceeds to wrestle with him and invariably defeats and exposes the incorrigible "inciter to evil." All this makes for brisk and entertaining reading, and in the process, one develops the distinct feeling that Kaygusuz Abdal was every bit a visionary as any other visionary mystic before him, in the same league with figures like Rūzbihān Baqlī and Ibn al-ʿArabī.

Yet, a careful perusal of this book of "gibberish" reveals it to be a striking interiorization of salvation history: Kaygusuz Abdal's visions are not excursions into an external albeit "mythic" time and space à la Mircae Eliade or into a cosmic imaginal world (*ʿālam al-mithāl*) à la Ibn al-ʿArabī; instead, they are forays into the spiritual body of the cosmic human being, the meganthropos, of which each human individual is an authentic replica. As Kaygusuz asserts in his *Dilgüşa*, God is literally immanent in human beings: "Truth satiates the world / The world is suffused with truth" (*Hakk cümle ʿālem içinde doludur*),¹⁴ and what may initially appear to be an actual history of creation, prophetic intervention and apocalypse is really the story of personal spiritual development for each human individual. The different prophets are human virtues, and Satan and his associates (like Pharaoh and Nimrod) are human vices. And Satan in the guise of *zāhid* (or we can say *Şūfī*) is that aspect of the human person that simultaneously generates and falls prey to ostentatious piety as well as ritualism and legalism: "The veil between you and truth is yourself" (*Hakk ile senin arandaki hicab sensin!*).¹⁵ God's presence in the human is covered over by Satan and his accomplices like property, real estate, gold, silver, spouses, offspring, friends, companions, relatives, good name, and food which all lead one to rejection of the Truth. But there is hope: the correct

¹³ Kaygusuz Abdal, *Kaygusuz Abdal'ın mensur eserleri* 82–130.

¹⁴ Kaygusuz Abdal, *Dilgüşa* 105.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 105.

strategy is love and acceptance since, Kaygusuz Abdal tells his readers, "The creation belongs to those who accept, not to those who reject!" (*halk kabul edenindir, inkar edenin degildir*).¹⁶ Ultimately, the sure solution and the safe path to adopt is to turn oneself over to the guidance of an expert spiritual director, *mürşid-i kamil*.

In effect, then, Kaygusuz Abdal undertakes a complete interiorization of God, Satan, other cosmic actors such as prophets, angels, and saints, cosmic entities as well as sacred history: "These books, prophets, this world, the other world, truth, falsehood—these are states of human beings" (*Bu kitaplar, peygamberler, dünya, ahiret, hakk, batıl demek insanın kendü halidir*).¹⁷ Such a divinization of the human has serious social consequences. Kaygusuz Abdal collapses the spiritual into the physical and designates the resulting unified world as the proper arena for human worship of the divine. The divine is, of course, but the hidden aspect of the human, and the goal of worship is simply to uncover that truth hidden within each and every human being. Who, then, is the true believer? Who qualifies as the "representative" (*halife*) of God? Kaygusuz Abdal provides the following description: "[the divine representative is] vigilant of the truth, bashful of the Prophet, sincerely loyal to friends of God; s/he refrains from unrighteous behavior, looks with the intent to draw a lesson, talks with wisdom, sees God wherever s/he looks; s/he is a reliable friend, companion and neighbor; s/he doesn't rebel against those in authority, nor does s/he ever abandon hope of truth; s/he takes the road proper for his/her destination and travels with appropriate caution; s/he speaks with knowledge to those who are unlearned but remains silent in the presence of those who know."¹⁸

It is striking that there is no mention of ritual obligations in this description nor of obedience to the *sharī'a*; in fact, nowhere in any of Kaygusuz Abdal's works is there any indication that he considered prescribed rituals or legal prescriptions and proscriptions of any kind relevant to the endeavor to uncover the divine within the human. Other evidence contained in his output suggests strongly that Kaygusuz Abdal also interiorized the *sharī'a* by reducing it to his own moral imperatives outlined above; he appears to have adapted its ethical dimensions to fit his own vision but rejected its strictly legal aspects altogether, most likely

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 49

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 111.

¹⁸ Kaygusuz Abdal, *Sarayname* 46.

because he viewed the exoteric *sharīʿa* as but a tool of ostentatious piety wielded by *Şūfis*! Remarkably, there is no reflection of either legal scholars or religious officials in his writings, which leads one to think that like most of the *abdals* in Asia Minor and the Balkans, he lived in rural, provincial contexts away from the gaze and reach of the urban legal establishments. This impression is borne out by the clear preference that his works display for vernacular Turkish, even though Kaygusuz Abdal was most clearly a learned person fluent in Persian, proficient in Arabic, and fully adept in versification in *aruz* (the majority of his independent poems are in *aruz*, not in syllabic meter which was more characteristic of poetry in the vernacular).

In the light of this quick survey of Kaygusuz Abdal's thought, his censure of "false *Şūfis*" that we started with takes on a new significance. Clearly, Kaygusuz Abdal was not just another internal critic of *Şūfism* who sought to brush aside *Şūfi*-pretenders and outright impostors by their criticism in order to bring to view its genuine golden core. In Kaygusuz Abdal's eyes, even such a critic, if he also socially "marked" himself as a *Şūfi* through distinctive dress and "ostentatious" piety, would still have qualified merely as a *sofi*! To put it somewhat differently, Kaygusuz Abdal viewed *Şūfis* as a whole with extreme suspicion at best, and ultimately he rejected them as "idolaters of haughtiness" who attempted to raise themselves to positions of social power above the rest through ostentation, hypocrisy, and deception. Collectively and individually, they formed clear testimony to the victory of the Devil and his associates who operated within each and every human being, and who could only be wrestled down to ignominious defeat under the guidance of perfect spiritual directors. These latter, the perfect directors, trained people to develop their rational faculties through emulation of Muḥammad (who, Kaygusuz Abdal explicitly states, stands for reason) and learn to practice acceptance and love through the example of 'Alī (who, Kaygusuz tells us, personifies love).¹⁹ The "care-free dervish" clearly saw himself and his *derviş* lineage as the true bearers of the heritage of Muḥammad and 'Alī. The *abdals*, it seems, thought that they captured the true core of Islam, crucially shorn of its legalistic and deceptive accretions, and held it up to the general population in its pure, uncorrupted state. And in so doing, they deliberately refused to set themselves apart as 'elite specialists' through special dress, accoutrements or

¹⁹ Kaygusuz Abdal, *Kaygusuz Abdal'ın mensur eserleri* 87 (*Kitab-ı Maglata*).

ritualistic observance; their only capital was their wise words in the vernacular and their personal life examples.

The *abdals* of *Rum* were speakers of the Turkish vernacular, and it should by now be patently clear that they were thoroughly Islamized. Not only did they see themselves as the “true” Muslims; what we know about their thought (as best exemplified in the writings of Kaygusuz Abdal) constitutes ample evidence that they drew heavily and expertly on the very core of the Şūfī tradition. Yet, their Turkish vernacular Şūfī prism on Islam most crucially excluded *sharīʿa*-centered discourses and practices—including much of urban Şūfism—from its purview, primarily because this “metropolitan” Islam, as packaged and purveyed by elite religious specialists who set themselves up as the final arbiters of correct belief and behavior, came across to the *abdals* as authoritarian, and, even more importantly, as a vile distortion of the key message of Muḥammad and ‘Alī. It seems that for the dervishes (at least as reflected in the works of Kaygusuz Abdal), the ‘*ulamā*’ were all but invisible; instead, they directed their ire and criticism to the Şūfis. The *sofus*, as the *abdals* called them, were mere impostors and frauds, who were pushed to ostentatious and false display of piety through pure pride and greed and who used their—often imperfect and faulty—knowledge of Arabic and Persian as a tool to exploit the public. The *abdals*, by contrast, sided with the Turkish speaking rural masses and chose to “blend in” with regular people by avoiding special dress, urban speak and *sharīʿa*-based recipes for social conduct and ritual. Their vernacular latitudinarian form of Islam, though it had its roots thoroughly imbedded in Şūfism, was set up in complete opposition to the “fraudulent” Islam of urbanite Şūfis.

One can only speculate about the origins of *abdal* piety. In an earlier work, the present author viewed the formation of dervish piety in general (inclusive of all itinerant dervish groups) as a reaction to the rapid institutionalization of Şūfism during the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries in particular.²⁰ It now seems appropriate to recalibrate that interpretation by adding the vernacular factor to the equation. The fissure between institutionalized Şūfī paths that took shape around the nuclei provided by authoritative, and increasingly also authoritarian, Şūfī masters on the one hand and loose dervish groups that assembled around the example of libertine itinerant Şūfī masters on the other hand can now be seen to include, at least partially, a linguistic rift. As a Muslim urban high

²⁰ Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*.

culture in Persian took shape during the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and Şūfī discourses and practices gradually assumed a secure place in Persian-speaking elite culture, the growing elitism of “respectable,” “established” urban Şūfīs generated a latitudinarian reaction among Persian vernacular speakers in the form of dervish piety, as exemplified in Qalandars, Ḥaydarīs, and Jāmīs, who all spoke vernacular Persian.²¹ This social reaction was simultaneously reflected in elite literary culture in the form of the *kharābāt* complex in Persian poetry.²² More or less the same process was at work at a slightly later period among Turkish speakers in Anatolia: as an urban elite culture in Turkish took shape from the thirteenth through the fifteenth centuries, the vernacular reaction (or, to be precise, one particularly prominent strand of this reaction) to Anatolian Muslim elite culture took the form of *abdāl* piety. In this process of vernacularization, *sharīʿa*-centered discourses and practices of Islam became a casualty, and they were largely ignored or discarded.²³

To return to the Alevis: it appears highly likely that the formation of Alevi communities in Anatolia occurred through a process of Islamization in which especially nomadic and newly settled Turkish speakers constructed distinctive discursive and performative lifeways informed by the example of *abdals* and dervishes like Kaygusuz Abdal. To recapitulate, the emergence of Alevis dates back to the earliest phase of the simultaneous Islamization and Turkification of Anatolia roughly from the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century. The influx of large numbers of western Turks, most of them pastoralist nomads, into the peninsula triggered a long process of de-Hellenization that went hand-in-hand with increasing Turkification. Although some Turks that came to Anatolia had already “Islamized” for several generations, others were not yet all that familiar with Islamic traditions. The same applied to the indigenous Kurdish populations of Eastern Anatolian highlands whose exposure to Islam up until that point had been minimal and sporadic. Many Turkish nomads and some Kurds of this period, it seems, fashioned permutations of the form of Islam already developed and deployed by *abdals* that was centered on a divinization of the human (which might be called “theistic

²¹ Khatīb-i Fārisī, *Manaqib-i Jamāl al-Dīn-i Sāvī*.

²² Karamustafa, *Formative Period* 164–66.

²³ Another prominent strand of the vernacular reaction is represented by Yunus Emre, who was equally critical of ostentatious display of legalistic piety and Şūfī institutionalization, though he himself stayed within the orbit of the *sharīʿa*. See Karamustafa, *İslam tasavvuf düşüncesinde Yunus Emre'nin yeri*.

humanism”) through veneration of ‘Alī (hence the name Alevi, which however is mostly a modern label) and characterized by a distaste for the trappings of “established” Islam, including its institutional and legal manifestations.

Significantly, this ‘Alī-centered Islam, though definitely tinged with Shī‘ism in a broad sense, did not harbor a class of scholars who based their authority on their mastery over learning expressed in classical Arabic and elite Persian or elite Turkish. In the absence of legal and theological scholarship that characterized urban Islamic environments, Alevis of the countryside developed their identity around teachings imparted to adherents through communal rituals, generically known as *cem*, in the form of gatherings that featured music, dance, alcoholic drinks, and shared food. Such rituals as well as regulation of communal affairs were overseen by a class of hereditary ritual specialists and communal elders known as *dede* (grandfather), many of whom claimed descent from ‘Alī. Over time, especially under the Ottomans, the ‘nascent’ Alevi communities maintained a distinct distance from “established” Islamic scholarly discourses and canonical practices. The main interface between these communities who used the Turkish vernacular on the one hand and “established” Islam that privileged learning in Arabic and Persian on the other was the Bektaşī order of dervishes, whose leaders came to assume the position of *dedes* in some Alevi communities.

To conclude: communities today called Alevi/Bektaşī in Turkey took shape in the course of the long and complex process of Islamization of the Anatolian peninsula. Naturally, many cultural strands of different origins must have flown into the vortex that ultimately generated such communities, and it will take considerable time, energy and ingenuity to identify and reassemble at least some of the constituent elements that Turkish and Kurdish speakers have been fashioning into Alevi/Bektaşī traditions for well over a half millennium now. The present paper is intended as a contribution to this sprawling project of uncovering the cultural history of Alevi communities by identifying one key component of their traditions as *abdal* piety. *Abdal* piety, which emerged as a particular inflection in the Turkish vernacular of certain ideas and practices originating from “established” or “metropolitan” Islam in the form of a reaction to what *abdals* perceived as the hypocrisy and elitism of forms of Islam emanating from urban centers, found a receptive audience primarily among newly Islamizing nomads and recently settled “new peasants,” and it was re-fashioned by them into forms of religiosity that eventually came into view in the twentieth century under the name Alevis. Most Alevis today

do indeed consider Kaygusuz Abdal to be one of their “core” poet-saints, so it is only appropriate that we give the last word to that peerlessly care-free dervish:²⁴

Allah, Tanrı, yaradan gel içegör cur'adan,
 yar ile yar olagör çıksın agyar aradan.
 Bekle gönül bostanın susuğırı girmesin,
 key sakın uçurursun kandili minareden.
 Fil yükün karıncaya yükletme çekebilmez,
 la'l ü gevher kıymetin umma seng-i hareden.

Allah, God, Creator, come drink from the gourd
 Be intimate with intimates, let otherness disappear

Watch the garden of the heart vigilantly so that water buffalos don't enter it
 Be extremely careful or else you'll make the lamp of the light tower fly
 away!

Don't burden the ant with the elephant's load, it cannot possibly bear it
 Don't expect the flint stone to have the worth of the ruby or the pearl

Hacca vardım der isen kanda vardın hacca sen,
 kılavuzsuz kuş uçmaz bunca dağudereden.
 Hacca varan kişinin gönül yapmak işidir,
 gönül hakkın beytidir sakın sen emmareden.
 Sen özünü bil nesin hak sende sen kandesin,
 hakkı bilmek dilersen geç ağ ile hareden.

You claim to have gone on the pilgrimage, when could you possibly have
 gone there?

Even birds cannot cross so many mountains and ravines without a
 guide

A pilgrim's work is to reconcile hearts

The heart is God's house, protect it from that which commands to evil

Know yourself, know what you are, God is in you, where are you?

If you desire to know the truth, go beyond black and white

Dünya ahret demegil biliş ü yad demegil,
 uzak savaşa düşme geç kuru sehareden.
 Tıfillayın dembedem dambu dumbu söyleme,
 Mansur'layın olursun bilmezsen müdareden.
 İnsan nur-ı kadimdir hasta değil hekimdir,
 sen dahi insan isen anla bu esrareden.

²⁴ Gölpınarlı, *Kaygusuz Abdal, Hatayi, Kul Himmet* 37–40; the English translation is mine.

Don't say "this world" and "that world, don't distinguish friend from foreigner

Don't attempt to participate in a distant war, abandon this lifeless magician of a world

Don't talk gibberish like children all the time

If you don't practice humility you'll suffer the fate of Mansur [Ḥallaj]

The human is the eternal light, she is not sick, she is the physician

If you too are human, grasp this secret!

Aşık olan bu yolda can ile baş oynadır,
sen dahi aşık isen bakma gel kenareden.

Sen insanı sorarsan haktan ayrı değildir,
sıfatı zat-ı mutlak hırkası çar pareden.

Aklına akıl deme sözüne delil deme,
çünkü kurtaramazsın nefsin emmareden.

Kaygusuz'un hüneri helva vü biryan yemek,
andan özge hüneri umma bu biçareden.

Those who become lovers on this path put their lives on the line

If you too are a lover, don't just watch from the side, jump in!

If you're searching for the human, she is not separate from the Truth

Her attribute is identical with her absolute self, her cloak is made of the four elements

Don't call your intellect an intellect, don't consider your words to be trustworthy

Because you cannot liberate yourself from that which commands to evil

The only talent of Kaygusuz is to eat roast meat and sweets

Don't expect any other talent from this destitute soul!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Azamat, N.: Kaygusuz Abdal, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, xxv, 574–576.
Dressler, M.: Alevîs, in *EF*³, Brill online.
——: *Writing Religion: Turkish Nationalism and the Making of Modern Alevism*, Oxford, 2013.
Gölpınarlı, A.: *Kaygusuz Abdal, Hatayi, Kul Himmet*, İstanbul 1953.
Güzel, A.: *Kaygusuz Abdal (Alâeddin Gaybî)*, Ankara 1981.
——: *Kaygusuz Abdal (Alâeddin Gaybî) menâkıbnâmesi*, Ankara 1999.
——: *Abdal Musa velayetnamesi*, Ankara 1999.
Karakaya-Stump, A.: *Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kızılbaş/Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia*, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University 2008.
Karamustafa, Ahmet T.: *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550*, Salt Lake City 1994.

- : İslam tasavvuf düşüncesinde Yunus Emre'nin yeri, in *Yunus Emre*, Ocak, A.Y. (ed.), Ankara 2012.
- : *Sufism: the Formative Period*, Edinburgh 2007.
- Kaygusuz Abdal: *Dilgüşa*, Güzel, A. (ed.), Ankara 1987.
- : *Kaygusuz Abdal'in mensur eserleri*, Güzel, A. (ed.), Ankara 1983.
- : *Sarayname*, Güzel, A. (ed.), Ankara 1989.
- Khatib-i Fârisi: *Manaqib-i Jamāl al-Dīn-i Sāvī*, Yazıcı, T. (ed.), Ankara 1972.
- Köprülü, M.F.: *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, Gary Leiser and Robert Dankoff (ed. and trans.), foreword Devin DeWeese, London 2006.
- Ocak, A.Y.: *Kültür tarihi kaynağı olarak menākıbnāmeler: metodolojik bir yaklaşım*, Ankara 1992.
- Pinguet, C.: Remarques sur la poésie de Kaygusuz Abdal, *Turcica*, 34 (2002), 13–38.