AHMED RIFKI (1884-1935): A FRANCOPHONE BEKTASHI IN THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

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ABSTRACT

Ahmed Rıfkı (1884-1935):

Francophone Bektashi in the Late Ottoman Empire

This research is an intellectual history of the Bektashi Sufi order in the late Ottoman Empire. The focus is on the first two volumes of Ahmed Rıfkı's four-volume book *Bektaşî Sırrı* (1909), which sparked a lively debate on Bektashism. The background of Ottoman modernization in general and of the Second Constitutional period (1908-13) as a revolutionary period in particular had influenced and shaped the work itself and debates around it.

The author Ahmed Rıfkı (1884-1935) was a literary man who lived off authorship and editorial jobs in political and humor press. He had a hybrid educational background including both traditional Islamic education (madrasah) and culturally modern Westernized training including a Francophone highschool. His educational and professional background contributed in the making of his mental world as a moderate modernist. He defended a modernization founded on a synthesis of Sufism, Islamic scholarship and modern science which was consistent with his background and the very context.

This thesis will argue that Ahmed Rıfkı's vision was partly in line with the Hamidian Islamism and that his project was to make a modern Islamicate society of citizens out of the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire and to make Bektashis one of the major components of it. This main argument will be discussed in terms of Ahmed Rıfkı's conceptual framework, social and political project, and historiographical approach.

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For historical researches, it is an issue to reach primary documents. Despite the pandemic which would have made it even harder, it was easy for me to get scanned copies of the primary sources, i.e. *Bektaşī Sırrı I-II* and *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāifü'l-Eşrār* at the library of my ex-university, Boğaziçi. I am thankful to the rare books cataloging librarian Sevgi Atila Cünüş who was really helpful. Not to pass

over as a graduate, I would appreciate Boğaziçi University constituents who did say "We don't accept! We don't give up!" and, dramatically, still do so.

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic, Persian, and Turkish words which listed in IJMES Word List appear in this text as they are in that list and without italics, e.g. **hadith**, **madrasa**, **Qur'an**, **sharia**, **sheikh**, **sunna**. If not on the list or part of direct quotation from original texts, it is transliterated according to the IJMES Translation System and in italics, e.g. ***lübb-i şerī'at***, ***medrese***, ***Zuḥal***.

Arabic and Ottoman texts and book titles are fully transliterated according to the IJMES Translation System, e.g. ***Bektaşī Sırrı***, ***Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfiu'l-Eşrār***, and ***Küre-i Arżda Nüfūs-ı İslām***.

Arabic, Persian, and Turkish names and terms are used in the established English forms, e.g. **Bektashi**, **Haji Bektash Veli**, **Ibn Khaldun**, **Imam Jafar**. However, if it is a personality related to the Ottoman dynasty or one who lives in either Ottoman or post-Ottoman Anatolia and İstanbul, modern Turkish usage is employed, e.g. **Abdülhamid**, **Ahmed Rıfkı**, **Baha Tevfik**, **İştirakçi Hilmi**.

For place names, modern Turkish forms are used, e.g. **Aksaray**, **İstanbul**, **İskeçe**.

All dates are written according to the Gregorian Calendar. If the quoted text gives a date based on Islamic or Julian Calendar, it is quoted as it is and the Gregorian equivalent is added in square brackets, e.g. "**tenth [16th] century**," "**after the year 1000 [1591/2]**."

INTRODUCTION

This research is an intellectual history of Bektashism, an Islamic Sufi order, in the late Ottoman Empire. The focus is on the first two volumes of Ahmed Rıfkı's (1884-1935) four-volume book *Bektaşî Sırrı* (1909), which sparked a lively debate on Bektashism. The Bektashi order was banned in 1826 as the Janissaries, the Ottoman military organization affiliated with Bektashis, were abolished. The context which conditioned the author, his work and debates around it was Ottoman modernization in general and the Second Constitutional period (1908-13) as a revolutionary period in particular.

Ahmed Rıfkı sets an example of modern late Ottoman individual both in terms of his social standing and views. In terms of social standing, he is a full-time professional writer which was not very usual. Besides, his way of affiliation with the Bektashi order is largely obscure, other than a few pieces of information that he might have connections with some prominent Bektashis of his time such as Edib Harabi (1853-1916) and Selman Cemali Baba (d. 1940s).[1] Originally characterized by strong attachment to the spiritual master and to the community itself, individualizing one's ties with the Bektashi Sufi order to such extent and still speaking for them should be considered a novelty of its time. Such peculiarities apply for Ahmed Rıfkı's intellectual position also.

Ahmed Rıfkı tried to formulate a moderate modernist response to the contamporaneous problems of his Bektashi community and the Ottoman Empire. Mentally conditioned by a hybrid educational background consisting of both Francophone and traditional Islamic elements, he tried a trilateral synthesis of Sufism, Islamic scholarship and modern sciences in which the core was supposed to be the initial one rather than attempting to adjust religion itself to the modern times. Pursuing consistence with and indeed

[1] Hayriye Topçuoğlu. 2001. "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi*, No. 20 (Winter): 87-142, 108.

reinforcing the imperial project of building a modern Islamicate[2] society of citizens, it was suggested as a Bektashi interpretation of such policy and a response to the moral and intellectual crisis of Sufism at the time.

Ahmed Rıfkı was a prominent late Ottoman intellectual who managed to intellectually represent the Bektashi community to an extent. Though failing to survive into later decades, he formulated a strong intellectual position which beared traces of and contributed to the making of the Ottoman mental world of his time that was conditioned by the very fact of transition. Therefore his work will be analyzed in linguistic and conceptual context, also referring to social and political one.

Significance of Sufi Circles in the Ottoman Society

Sufis think and act not only at a spiritual level, but also at a material one which makes them part of worldly processes and struggles. Nile Green defines Sufism as an Islamic "tradition of powerful knowledge, practices and persons" which originated as a mystic experience based direct personal encounter with the divine and later gained a rather popular dimension.[3] Sufi circles possess control over three kinds of power, that is discursive, miraculous and economic power and a composition of all three contribute to their strength and significance.[4] Therefore, they should be regarded not only as religious orders, but also as interest groups which might have a social and project of their own or who might seek somewhat humbler material interest of their own. Sufis might occasionally be subject to accusations of heresy, but in the Ottoman case, they had been exceptionally fortunate until the 19th century and were a powerful institution.

The good fortune of the Ottoman Sufis relied on the state policy which had roots in the foundation of the state itself. As the Ottomans defeated the Mamluks in the Battle of

[2] The term Islamicate is proposed as an alternative to Islamic, based on the fact in most cases, what the latter refers to is not being Islamic in terms of faith, but of belonging to Muslims, and that entails a great variety of features which are not necessarily faith related. See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam – I*, 57.
[3] Nile Green. 2012. *Sufism: A Global History*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Green, 1-3.
[4] Green, *Sufism*, 6-7.

Marj Dabiq in 1516 and thus conquered Damascus and the rest of Syria – slightly prior to conquering Egypt and ending the Mamluk power itself – the Ottoman ruler Selim I (r. 1512-20) found (or possibly invented) the tomb of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) and made it a large religious complex. Selim I had two aims which were "to vivify the controversial Sufi's reputation that was highly neglected" and to reinforce his authority and that of the Ottoman state.[5] Allowing and indeed encouraging allegedly heterodox Sufi sects in general, overlapping of Sufi oriented and imperial agendas was an Ottoman experience. The Bektashi Sufi order was particularly important in the Ottoman context for several reasons.

First of all, Bektashis, a Sufi order with Turkoman origin and Shiite influence, are a specifically Ottoman Sufi order that coalesced into an institution within the Ottoman Empire. Bektashis who regard Haji Bektash Veli (d. 1271?), the initiator of the Bektashi path, as the Sufi Master (*Pīr*) and Balım Sultan (d. 1516), who had established it as an independent Sufi order by systematizing the divine practices, as the Second Master (*Pīr-i Ṣānī*) believe in Muhammad's (571-632) prophecy and Caliph Ali's (599-661) divine status as the esoteric embodiment of God's truth. Bektashis accept the Qur'an and follow the models of the Ahl al-Bayt, i.e. Muhammad's family and descendants, Haji Bektash Veli and Balım Sultan as the primary sources of their faith. Finally, they emphasize Imam Jafar al-Sadiq's (d. 765) Sufi interpretation of Islam. Their spiritual center, the location of Haji Bektash's shrine complex, is in the town of today's Hacıbektaş in the Turkish province of Nevşehir. It used to be called Sulucakarahöyük, but was later named after Hacı Bektash Veli who settled and founded the order there.[6]

[5] Cankat Kaplan, 2019. "An Anti-Ibn 'Arabī (D. 1240) Polemicist in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul: Ibrāhīm al-Halabī (D. 1549) and His Interlocutors." MA Thesis, CEU, 2-3; Michael Winter, 1998. "The Otttoman Occupation," In *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. I, edited by Carl F. Petry, 490-516. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 498-499.

[6] Dursun Gümüşoğlu. 2017. "Giriş." In *Bektaşî Sırrı I-IV*, by Ahmed Rıfkı, 15-64. İstanbul: Post Yayın Dağıtım, 25.

There are two dimensions of division within the domain of Bektashi faith and community. One of them is the division between Alevi (or Kizilbash) and Bektashi identities. Entangled with the Bektashi community, Alevis appreciate Haji Bektash Veli too, but the set of divine rules which they follow diverges from that of Bektashis in several topics including inter alia the procedure of initiation, form of prayers and role of familial bonds. Nevertheless, their faith systems and practices significantly resemble with one another and contemporarily, both the academic literature and laymen jointly define them as the Alevi-Bektashi tradition.[7] The other division is among the Bektashis themselves, between Chelebi and Babagan Bektashis. Chelebis believe that they are descendants of Haji Bektash Veli and emphasize acquiring the spiritual legacy through biological lineage. Babagan Bektashis, on the contrary, believe in inheriting the spiritual legacy through path lineage. Notwithstanding tensions between them, those two sects coexist. Whilst it is Chelebis who are authorized to manage the endowments around the spiritual center (*āsitāne*) in the town of Hacıbektaş, it is Babagans who are officially in charge of the spiritual life.[8]

Bektashis had been among the prominent Sufi orders of the Ottoman spiritual life. John Kingsley Birge, a leading twentieth-century Orientalist shares a couple of estimates by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bektashis on the number of adherents, which are over 7 million, although this is likely an exaggeration.[9] Though method of calculation was unknown, those estimates reveal that Bektashis at those times believed, or perhaps pretended to believe, they were numerous and influential. Aside from their population,

[7] Ahmet Gökbel. 2019. *Ansiklopedik Alevi Bektaşi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, ix-xiii.
[8] Gümüşoğlu, "Giriş," 31-32.
[9] John Kingsley Birge. 1965. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac & Co. Ltd, 15. In the latest census when the volume was published, that is 1906, the Ottoman population was calculated 20,897,617 of whom 15,518,478 were Muslims. Therefore, the figures cited by Birge entails an implication that half of the Ottoman Muslim population were Bektashis, and that was probably an exaggeration. See Standford J. Shaw. 1978. "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, No. 3, (October): 325-338, 334.

Bektashis were particularly important for the Ottoman state due to their role in the Ottoman expansion and strength in the military organization.

Secondly, Bektashis were among the Sufi circles who had been an integral part of the official strategy at the outset of the Ottoman state, that is expansion towards West. Starting from the 13th century, Bektashism spread in the Christian Balkans and thereafter the Bektashi community played crucial role in the Ottoman expansion in that region. As one of the actors who played part "in the formation of Ottoman society in Asia Minor and in the Balkans," Bektashis contributed to Islamizing Christian peasants in both regions and it was not only political and military, but also cultural influence which made them effective in the Ottoman expansion and establishment in the Balkans.[10] In his discussion of the role several Bektashi dervishes played in the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans, Nikolay Antov defines "the intentional blurring of the boundaries between spiritual and worldly (i.e. political and military) authority," thus emphasizing a synthesis of soft and hard power on behalf of Bektashis.[11] The idea of synthesizing two kinds of power is consistent with the position of Bektashis who not only played a role in cementing the social base of the Ottoman power, but also possessed a significant domain in the Ottoman military organization.

Third reason for the importance of Bektashis is their strength and influence on the the Guild of Janissaries, that is the central military organization of the Ottoman state. Not only Janissaries were known as Bektashis, but also their rituals and practices beared traces of Bektashism. Janissaries sang *gülbang*s, that is poem-like Bektashi prayers, which saluted Haji Bektash Veli. There used to be a Bektashi baba, i.e. Sufi sheikh, official at the headquarters. The Guild of Janissaries also had alternative names such the Bektashi Community (*Ṭā'ife-i Bektaşīye*), the Bektashi Band (*Gürūh-u Bektaşīye*), the Bektashi

[10] G.G. Arnakis. 1953. "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12, No. 4, (October): 232-247.
[11] Nikolay Antov. 2017. *The Ottoman "Wild West:" The Balkan Frontier in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 66.

Layer (*Zümre-i Bektaşīye*) or the Guild of Bektashis (*Bektaşī Ocağı*).[12] However, the Bektashis' power was not irreversible.

General Outline: The 1826 Turn and Post-1867 Developments

The year 1826 was the starting point of severe problems for Bektashis which would have lasting impacts on their organization, functioning and access to resources. In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-39) decided to abolish The Guild of Janissaries, aiming to modernize the Ottoman military. The Janissaries responded to this decision with a revolt, but they were suppressed brutally. As some Bektashi dervishes were reported to have involved in the Janissary revolt, Sultan Mahmud II took rigid measures against the Bektashi order itself. The judiciary and administrative measures against Bektashis had an obviously religious tone, including defamations which had included sectarian slander and even takfir due to their belief system considerably possessing Shiite elements.[13] The religious background had shaped the language, severity, and duration of the anti-Bektashi campaign.

The Bektashi order was banned by the Sultan in 1826 and this entailed some consequent measures. The Bektashi *waqf*s (endowments) and *tekke*s (lodges) were closed down, their assets being auctioned by the state.[14] Many Bektashi dervishes were either executed or exiled to various parts of Anatolia, particularly to regions where the largely anti-Bektashi ulama, i.e. Sunni Muslim scholars, were influential. Ahmed Rıfkı named it The Great Event (*Vaḳʿa-i ʿAẓīme*).[15] From the Ottoman official point of view, it was referred to as the Auspicious Event (*Vaḳʿa-i Ḫayrīye*) for that it paved the way to establish a new and modern military organization compatible with a rather centralized state structure. Allowing Mahmud II to be designated as the second founder of the Ottoman state, it was a

[12] Gümüşoğlu, "Giriş," 40-41.
[13] Fahri Maden. 2019. *İstanbul Bektaşileri*. Ankara: Gazi Kitabevi, 7-8.
[14] Gümüşoğlu, "Giriş," 15.
[15] Ahmed Rıfkı. 1328/1912. *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*. İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 53.

milestone in the Ottoman modernization which had been a central goal for the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ottoman rulers and administrators.[16]

Religious tone of the anti-Bektashi campaign served as the language of the imperial policy of centralizing the state structure. Christine Philiou suggests to explain the dismissal of phanariots, i.e. the Orthodox Christian Ottoman bureaucrats with a Greek cultural identity, following the Greek insurgencies in 1821 through the choice of increasing reliance on Sunni Muslim subjects of the empire and links the plight of the former with the abolition of the Guild of Janissaries and the Bektashi order. From her standpoint, it is a matter of getting rid of centrifugal elements and establishing a rather centralized state with the Islamic establishment.[17] As part of the drive for a centralized modern state structure, strict measures against Bektashis were accompanied by less strict ones regarding all of the Sufi circles in the Ottoman Empire.

The year 1826 marked a transition in the Ottoman Sufi life in general which meant constantly increasing control by the central government over economic resources and administrative procedures. The shift towards constantly increasing central control materialized in the emergence of two institutions 40 years apart, which are the Ministry of Imperial Endowments (*Evḳāf-ı Hümāyūn Nezāreti*) in 1826 and, the Assembly of Sheikhs (*Meclis-i Meşāyiḫ*) in 1866, that respectively controlled the economic resources and administrative procedures. Though not as dramatically as in the case of Bektashis, the shift represented a profound change in the Ottoman Sufi world.

Ministry of Imperial Endowments which was founded in 1826 centralized the management of Sufi endowments and regulated distribution of their incomes. Originally founded for the management of the confiscated Bektashi endowments and imperial

[16] Kemal Beydilli. 2012. "Vak'a-i Hayriyye," In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XLII*, 454-457. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.
[17] Christine M. Philiou. 2010. *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*. California: University of California Press, 74-81.

endowments established by the Ottoman Court itself, it exerted control over the endowments of all Sufi orders and seized some of their income in the name of the central government. The seized income was used for military, industrial and several other purposes.[18] Deniz Parlak remarks that this trend became stronger after the 1908 Revolution, enabling the central government to close down many endowments and leaving both the economic resources and institutions such as mosques, religious schools and endowments to the central authority.[19] That trend certainly reduced the Ottoman Sufi orders' financial resources and limited their control over their own assets.

The other institution which served the increasing central control over Sufi life was the Assembly of Sheikhs, founded in 1866 under the Ottoman Sheikh al-Islam to administratively and religiously control Sufi lodges. The Assembly included representatives of Sufi orders and transferred authority over Sufi lodges to the Sheikh al-Islam. The Assembly's administrative control over lodges indeed complemented the Ministry's financial control over endowments.[20] Muharrem Varol regards the foundation of the Assembly as "a consequence of actual states which came out of the state's way of treating lodges through a period of almost a century."[21] The urge for rapid centralization resulted in a persistent trend of increasing state control over non-central and non-governmental circles and none of the Sufi orders could not escape that.

Though purge starting from 1826 made it hard for the Bektashi order to survive, things became somewhat easier in the following decades. Nonetheless formally still prohibited, Bektashism had the opportunity to revive. Bektashi *tekke*s were re-established, yet under the banner of other Islamic Sufi orders. Relying on Sultan Abdülmecid's (r. 1839-

[18] Muharrem Varol. 2013. *Islahat Siyaset Tarikat: Bektaşiliğin İlgası Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tarikat Politikaları (1826-1866)*. İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 93-96.
[19] Deniz Parlak. 2020. *Laikleşme Sürecinde Camiler*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 111-114.
[20] Bilgin Aydın. 2003. "Meclis-i Meşâyih." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XXVIII*, 247-248. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.
[21] Varol, *Islahat Siyaset Tarikat*, 239.

61) relatively positive approach and the support provided by his mother Bezmialem Valide Sultan (d. 1853), Bektashis gained legitimacy and oppression over them considerably eased. As from 1867, that is during the reign of Abdülmecid's successor Sultan Abdülaziz (r. 1861-76), publications on Bektashism by the Bektashis themselves flourished and this prompted public debates on the order.

Anti-Bektashi Muslim scholars, unhappy with the Bektashis becoming legitimate once again, leveled aggressive critiques of Bektashism, denouncing them as infidels. Harputlu İshak Efendi's (1803/1801-1892) *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfiu'l-Eşrār* (Discoverer of the Secrets and Expeller of the Evils), published in 1871, discredited Bektashism claiming they had been associated with Hurufism, a then non-existent esoteric movement condemned to be heretical, and consequently became heretics themselves. Ahmed Rifat Efendi responded to this founding work with his *Mirātü'l-Makāsıd*, which was the first written history of Bektashism, explicitly revealing the fundamentals of the Bektashi faith for the first time. This pair was followed by a few more contributions including both for and against Bektashism throughout the 1870s.[22]

As the modernizing Ottoman Empire was transforming from a population of imperial subjects to a modern Islamicate society of citizens – the term will be elaborated on in the next chapter – Bektashi circles, as political and social agents, became party to political, social and cultural conflicts and established new alliances. Towards the turn of the 20th century, some of the Bektashi *tekke*s became home to Ottoman intellectuals and radicals, thus the constitutionalist revolution in 1908 had become a chance for Bektashis to maintain their legitimacy. The 1908 Revolution created a lively and fruitful intellectual atmosphere where diverse political and cultural movements such as feminism, socialism, materialism, Turkism, and Islamism had also flourished. They made publications and launched critical

[22] Maden, *İstanbul Bektaşileri*, 33-35.

debates which was going to shape the courses of those movements in the 1920s and 1930s.[23] Bektashism was being widely discussed in such a context, and Ahmed Rıfkı's *Bektaşī Sırrı,* published in 1909, initiated a new wave of debates, this time including not only pros and cons of Bektashism, but also some debates among Bektashis themselves. This was largely due to the transformation of the Bektashi community itself, which was a consequence of the profound social and cultural changes during the course of Ottoman modernization.

Ahmed Rıfkı: His Life Story, Intellectual Career and Moderate Modernist Interpretation

As a prolific intellectual of his time, Ahmed Rıfkı represented a moderate modernist interpretation of Bektashism. His *tekke* affiliation remains unknown and that suggest his social interaction with the Bektashi community itself might have been rather limited. That makes it hard to figure out whether his views had many followers, but it is rather clear that his work was influential since it was widely discussed.

Ahmed Rıfkı was born in Istanbul's central neighborhood of Aksaray to an established family. His father Ahmed Rıfat Efendi was a wealthy man who had mansions and gardens in Aksaray who served as *defterdar* (provincial treasurer) during the reigns of Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909). Ahmed Rıfkı received good education of hybrid nature including both traditional Islamic education and culturally modern Westernized training. On one hand, he studied at the imperial capital's central Islamic schools (madrasa) and was taught Persian and on the other. He was trained at modern schools such as the co-ed Turkish private school *Şemsü'l-ma'ārif* (The Sun of Education) and the French private school Saint Benoit.[24] Ahmed Rıfkı's educational path reflects the

[23] Şükrü Hanioğlu. 2008. *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 183-186.

[24] Hayriye Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 89. This source reports Ahmed Rıfkı's friend Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu saying that he studied middle school at a private school in Aksaray, which he does not provide the name of, and that he received highschool education at Şemsü'l-ma'ārif Saint Benoit. however, Şemsü'l-ma'ārif provided training at primary and middle school levels and it was established near Aksaray at Ahmed Rıfkı's time. The private school where Ahmed Rıfkı received middle school education was

dual nature of the making of his cultural identity which was common among the Ottoman intellectuals of his time.

Known with diverse names such as Derviş Ruhullah, Sakallı Rıfkı (the Bearded), Rıfkı Baba and A. Rıfkı, Ahmed Rıfkı had a very active literary life between 1908-1913 when he lived off of his writing and wrote in various fields such as the faith and history of Bektashism, humor, novel, poetry, and politics. He was intimate with prominent literary and political figurs such as Refik Halit Karay (1888-1965), Refii Cevat Ulunay (1890-1968), Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu (1894-1973), İştirakçi Hilmi (the Socialist) (1885-1922), Baha Tevfik (1884-1914), and Ali Kemal (1867-1922). However, after 1913, he faced various difficulties for the rest of his life due to his political views. He was anti-CUP[25] and anti-Kemalist, and his politics caused him to be exiled to Anatolia between 1913-1920 and then to leave Turkey after 1922. He died in exile in the city of İskeçe (today's Xanthi) in the Western Thrace, northeastern Greece.[26] His political views might have culminated in an undeserved neglect of his writings and ideas.

Ahmed Rıfkı engaged in various intellectual and political activities in the vivid atmosphere of the post-1908 period. They served both as contributors of the making of Ahmed Rıfkı's modern mindset as an educated elite of Bektashi path, and as reflectors of his way. These activities were mainly his active presence in humor literature, in socialist politics and press and in the Freedom and Entente Party which held liberal opinions and became the center of anti-CUP opposition in the post-1908 context.

probably Şemsü'l-ma'ārif and Çapanoğlu was confused. See Esma İgüs. 2008. "II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Eğitim Sistemi, Eğitim Yapıları ve Askeri Rüşdiyeler." PhD diss., Yıldız Technical University, 87.

[25] The exact date Ahmed Rıfkı turned against CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) which was the vanguard of the 1908 Revolution and defacto ruling party of the revolutionary period is unknown, but it is likely that it was as early as 1909 since journalist Burhan Felek (1889-1982) reports that he saw Ahmed Rıfkı giving a speech to the crowd which gathered near Sublime Port to protest the assassination of Hasan Fehmi (1874-1909), a liberal and anti-CUP journalist. See Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 91. As indicated below, however, the first volume of his *Bektaşī Sırrı* (1909) tends to be rather positive towards CUP.

[26] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 87-90.

He worked for various humor magazines between 1908-1913, the details of which will be discussed below. It should be noted down that he was keen in catching up with the sense of humor of his time and that was indeed a profoundly Westernized one. Along with Hacivat-Karagöz which he liked very much, he was able to perform Western-inspired jokes and humor elements too. For example, once in 1910, the magazine *Yeni Geveze* (The New Chatterer) announced that its editor-in-chief, that was Ahmed Rıfkı, was going to read out a poem of humor at the Station Club of Sirkeci at 12 o'clock. His readers gathered in the club to wait for him to read out the poem. The time expired, but he read no poem. The audience got angry, but he then announced that it was April Fools' Day. It was the April 1 issue of the magazine.[27] April Fools' Day is a Western cultural habit and originally French. His Francophone educational background might have played a role in his sense of humor. His political making also bears some Francophone traces.

Active participation in political parties was a medium of conditioning subjects as modern citizens. Citizens thus started to participate in public debates and both shaping and implementation of policies. Besides, it caused political and ideological polarization among citizens along with sectarian, ethnic and denominational ones. It was the same in the Ottoman society and in the case of Ahmed Rıfkı, active participation in political press was a plane where his Francophone background kept working.

Ahmed Rıfkı was member to the Ottoman Democratic Party which was founded by İbrahim Temo in 1910, and when the party decided to repeal itself to join the Freedom and Entente Party (1911) which was becoming the focal of the anti-CUP opposition, he preferred to join the Ottoman Socialist Party. He authored several articles and poems in *İnsāniyet* (Humanity) and *İştirāk* (Socialism) which were explicitly media outlets of the Ottoman Socialist Party. He suggested a party anthem called "The Red Flag" and authored

[27] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 94.

socialist poems with titles "Blanḳi" and "Na'ra-i Ī̇ḳāẕ" (Yell for Warning), the latter being devoted to Jean Jaurés who was the founder of the French Socialist Party.[28] The name of the magazine *İnsāniyet* was undeniably inspired by Jaurés's *L'Humanité* also. Ottoman Muslim socialists of the time were very much inspired by the French socialists and this was consistent with Ahmed Rıfkı's Francophone background. Topçuoğlu argues that Ahmed Rıfkı's socialist writings which were rather sentimental lacked intellectual depth and that therefore socialism was not a long-term endeavour for him.[29] His writings in magazines are not part of this research, but this point could be discussed in terms of his literary performance in *Bektaşī Sırrı* and his later political career.

This thesis focuses on the first two volumes of the book which were published in 1909 and 1912. In terms of intellectual depth in general, the series lays out a coherent and strong intellectual framework which draws on both Sufi and modern Western conceptions, using both flexibly, but accurately. As for socialist thought in particular, Topçuoğlu's point would make more sense since he does not much employ socialist conceptions. Only at the end of the second volume, he defines an antagonistic and evolutionary philosophy of history which has a limited Marxian influence. His conceptual framework is rather liberal and Sufi inspired, borrowing little from Marxism. As opposed to rather radical modernists who advocated liberally restructuring of Islamic practice to adjust it to modernity and to invent a "Religion for a Turk" which would serve the Turkish nationalist cause as defined by Ziya Gökalp,[30] Ahmed Rıfkı had a moderate modernist approach, prioritizing Sufi conceptions and values themselves and rather seeking to adjust Islamic sharia and modernity to them. As for his later political career, he is known to have abandoned socialism in favor of liberalism and joined the ranks of Freedom and Entente Party. Therefore, Topçuoğlu's point on Ahmed Rıfkı's socialism being rather temporary might be reasonable.

[28] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 91-94.
[29] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 93.
[30] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 186-187.

Freedom and Entente Party was the focal of both anti-CUP and anti-Kemalist politics. Ahmed Rıfkı was consistent in his distance from the radicalized interpretations of the Ottoman modernization project and in his appreciation of Ottomanism. Nonetheless, he had very intimate socialist friends such as İştirakçi Hilmi and Baha Tevfik and his amity with the latter was significant for his professional literary career too. Baha Tevfik and he worked together in humor magazines such as *Eşek* (Donkey), *Eşref* (The Most Honorable), *Züğürt* (The Pinched), *Kibâr* (The Gentle) and *Zekâ* (Intelligence) and Hayriye Topçuoğlu regards their intimacy as one of the probable reasons for Ahmed Rıfkı to have interest in socialism.[31]

"My father lived in splendor, but died in misery" said Fatma Tabende Doğu, Ahmed Rıfkı's daughter, in a personal interview with Topçuoğlu.[32] That was a concise account of his life, though incomplete. It was not simply an individual tragedy, but an instance of an upheaval which had fermented through a couple of decades, and then broke out in the last one.

A man of the pen from an upper-class Muslim family, he received a good education and was raised with a cultural formation of dual character. He was versed in traditional Islamicate culture and acquired a Francophone educational background, which was common for men of his social class. His misfortune laid not in his background, but in his political choice of remaining loyal to the political ideals of Ottomanism. The post-1913 collective trauma of the Balkan War and the triumph of the Kemalist Revolution might have turned a new leaf in the modern Turkish history, but alternative visions existed and they were possibly viable. Ahmed Rıfkı held such an alternative vision of Ottomanist modernization and his legacy is looking forward to be investigated.

[31] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 93.
[32] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 135, fn. 20.

Literature Review

Ahmed Rıfkı is exceptionally overlooked both in English and Turkish academic literatures, and the lack of interest in him might have stemmed from his unique religio-political position. There is no independent academic work on Ahmed Rıfkı in English and Turkish and literature on his work is not very rich either. Aside from a few treatises on his poetry and humor, Hayriye Topçuoğlu's biography,[33] Dursun Gümüşoğlu's article on his responses to critiques on Bektashism[34] and introduction to *Bektaşi Sırrı* in modern Turkish letters,[35] and Ahmet Taşğın, Nurhan Aydın and Abdulkadir Yeler's article on Hazım Agah Efendi's letter to him[36] are the only Turkish works we have. In the forty-four-volume *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Encyclopedia of Islam) by the Centre for Islamic Studies with 15,226 items includes no item of Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı* or his work on Bektashism.[37] In Turkey's all public libraries for manuscripts and in the National Library, there is only a poetry notebook by Ahmed Rıfkı.[38] This much neglect might be a consequence of his rather unique religio-political position, which left him isolated and led to his exile.

This thesis will argue that Ahmed Rıfkı's vision was in line with the Hamidian way of Islamism, which was a project aiming to make an Islamicate society of citizens out of Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Ahmed Rıfkı was pushing for making Bektashis one of the major components of the Ottoman Islamicate society of citizens and this stance left him with few allies. Following the Hamidian reign, Bektashis were indeed politically divided between the mainstream camps of anti- and pro-CUP (and later -Kemalist). In the

[33] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 87-142.
[34] Dursun Gümüşoğlu. 2018. "Bektaşilik Aleyhine Söylenelere Ahmet Rıfkı'nın Cevapları." In *IV. International Symposium of Alevism and Bektashism (18-20 October Ankara) Book of Proceedings*, 581-605. Ankara: Hacı Bayram Veli University, 581-605.
[35] Gümüşoğlu, "Giriş," 15-64.
[36] Ahmet Taşğın, Nurhan Aydın, and Abdülkadir Yeler. 2020. "Hazım Agâh Efendi ve Osmanlı Devleti Hâkimiyeti Son Dönemi Irak'ında Bektaşi Tekkelerini Anlattığı Mektubu." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velî Araştırma Dergisi*, No: 96 (Winter): 263-292.
[37] TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi. "Search." Accessed 25 May, 2021. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/arama/?p=t&q=
[38] Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı. "Simple Search: A. Rıfkı." Accessed 25 May, 2021. http://www.yazmalar.gov.tr/basit-arama?q=a.+r%C4%B1fk%C4%B1

post-Ottoman era, members of the Bektashi community did not possess a significant influence among dissidents. When things became easier for Ottomanist and anti-Republican activities in modern Turkey – that is, around 1950s – Alevis and Bektashis had already become predominantly Republican nationalists which made it inevitable for Ahmed Rıfkı to sink into oblivion.

Relying on the Greenian approach to Sufism as a "tradition of powerful knowledge, practices and persons" and with a focus on the context of Ottoman modernization, this thesis will approach Ahmed Rıfkı as both a subject and agent of the modernization process who is trying to adapt to Ottoman modernization and respond to anti-Bektashi challenges. Chapter One will focus on Ahmed Rıfkı's conceptual framework based on a synthesis of modern sciences, Islamic scholarship and Sufism and argue that it represents a moderate modernist view in which Sufism constitutes the core. That argument will be elaborated on with discussions on Ahmed Rıfkı's approach to the institutions associated with modern sciences, Islamic scholarship and Sufism; on his approach to the Scientific Revolution; on his employment of modern liberal concepts and on his social and political project which is to build an Islamicate society of citizens in which Bektashis would be a major component.

Chapter Two will focus on Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography. It will be argued that his politically motivated historiographical approach prioritizes maintaining a safe and central position for Bektashis and that it is shaped by his moderate modernist intellectual tendencies. Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography will be discussed in terms of its quest for an explanatory and analytical history at modern standards, definition of an evolutionary and antagonistic history with Marxian influence and argumentation that Bektashis are indeed Muslims.

CHAPTER ONE:
MODERATE MODERNIST CONCEPTION OF BEKTASHISM

The Ottoman Second Constitutional era was both a period of harsh political struggles and of lively intellectual debates which had political, social, and cultural implications. It was influential in the establishment of modern political ideologies and clarification of social and cultural views within the Ottoman domain. Though failing to maintain having followers in the post-Ottoman era, Ahmed Rıfkı's intellectual endeavor was among the significant interventions to the making of the overall mental world of the time.

As a moderate modernist, Ahmed Rıfkı drafted a synthesis of modern and traditional elements whereby Sufi conceptions indeed enjoyed primacy. In social, political, philosophical, religious and historiographical domains, he employed both Western and specifically Islamic notions and conceptions not only intensely, but also accurately. The intellectual framework he offered bears a coherent integration of supposedly incompatible elements such as liberalism, proto-Republicanism, Islamic theology, Sufism, Ottomanism, Islamism, market economy. Leaving the historiographical dimension to the next chapter, Ahmed Rıfkı's conceptual framework will be discussed at conceptual and political levels.

1.1. Ahmed Rıfkı's Trio: *Mekteb, Medrese, Tekke*

Interactions among different intellectual disciplines within the Ottoman society is a central issue in Ahmed Rıfkı's work. He defends a synthesis of modern sciences, Islamic scholarship and Sufism and formulates it through institutions corresponding to them, that is, respectively *mekteb* (modern school), *medrese* (Islamic school) and *tekke* (lodge). This ordering of the categories belongs to him and for him, it is a sequence from inferior to superior. Given the hierarchy of those three categories in Ahmed Rıfkı, I would prefer to proceed from superior to inferior. Prior to that, the question of dualities within the Islamic culture itself which he relates to his trilateral synthesis will be discussed.

Ahmed Rıfkı writes that Islamic intellectual life has always been diverse, which is not a problem per se and in order to specify, he starts with the divergence between Asharites and Maturidites. He then moves to the simultaneous emergence of madrasas and lodges and argues that those two constituted distinct parties which spread among Muslim societies.[39] This is a description of the continuity of ever-changing divergences within the Islamic history, and Ahmed Rıfkı discusses it to underline that it is resolvable. He distinguishes between sharia as the implementation of divine orders (*evāmir-i ilāhīyi icra*) and tariqa as the essence of sharia (*lübb-i şerīʿat*), stating that it is a necessity to combine those two since they do not contradict, but supplement one another.[40]

Ahmed Rıfkı introduces the three groups in the late Ottoman society and appreciating the diversity, he complains about the separation among them for which he finds Sultan Abdülhamid II guilty. He defines the three groups as intellectuals (*mütefekkir*), scholars (*ehl-i ʿilm*) and the enlightened (*münevver*) and identifies them with three different institutions, that is respectively *mekteb* (modern school), *medrese* (Islamic school) and *tekke* (lodge) as forementioned.[41] Ahmed Rıfkı observes that becoming a perfect human(*insān-ı kāmil*) requires uniting (*tevḥīd*) sharia with tariqa and piety (*taḳvā*) with love (*ʿışḳ*), and then concludes that it is the Hamidian autocracy (*istibdād*) who made the separation to strengthen the oppression.[42]

The significance of Ahmed Rıfkı's point is in listing the modern intellectuals as the third category within the distinctions in the Islamic intellectual history. The emergence of such a group is not regarded as a threat to Islam or degeneration, but as a recent example of a common phenomenon in the Islamic history. Taking the distinctions as given, what he designates as trouble is separation. By the way, Ahmed Rıfkı's suggestion of synthesis is

[39] Ahmed Rıfkı. 1325/1909. *Bektaşī Sırrı – I.* İstanbul: Bekir Efendi Matbaası, 50-51.
[40] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 46.
[41] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 46.
[42] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 46-47.

not at odds with the course of Islamic intellectual history. Classification of disciplines had been an issue in intellectual history at least since Aristotle and Islamic thought was no exception. Various prominent Muslim thinkers including al-Farabi, Ikhwan al-Safa, Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun discussed classification of scholarships and all had acknowledged the presence of non-Islamic intellectual traditions among Muslim communities.[43] Applying this approach to the recent emergence of modern sciences was nothing extreme at all, but that had a political significance too. It had a clear anti-Hamidian purpose and function.

Possibly due to the repercussions of the 1908 Revolution, that is, a year earlier than the publication of the first volume, Ahmed Rıfkı elaborates on the links between his synthesis of three main intellectual disciplines and his critique of the Hamidian autocracy. He discusses why Sultan Abdülhamid II was afraid of these three groups and argues that each represented a distinct kind of threat to autocracy. He starts with the *mekteb*, saying the Sultan "repressed the sciences and skills learned in *mekteb*s" for that science would be dangerous for the autocracy which needs to rest on ignorance. Then he moves to *medrese*, saying the Sultan confined the Islamic scholarship education to a limited field for that Islamic scholarship would champion justice, liberty and fraternity (*'adālet, ḥürriyet, uhuvvet*), but the autocracy would prefer oppression instead. He finally moves to *tekke*, saying the Sultan persecuted them since the *tekke*s maintain union (*ittiḥād*) among their participants and that this is dangerous for an autocratic rule.[44] This is a definitely political argument which attributes certain anti-autocratic roles to each group and thus lays the ground for a union among them. Ahmed Rıfkı's terminology is also part of the political initiative since he attributes three of the four main themes of the 1908 Revolution to Muslim

[43] See Omar A. Farrukh, "Ikhwān al-Ṣafa," 289-310, Ibrahim Madkour, "Al-Fārābi," 450-468. In *A History of Muslim Philosophy – I*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963; Al-Ghazali, "Munkidh min al-Dalal (Deliverance from Error)," accessed June 8, 2021. http://www.ghazali.org/books/md/gz101.htm; and Ibn Khaldun, "Chapter VI: The Various Kinds of Sciences." In *Al-Muqaddimah*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Routledge&Kegan, 1978. Library Genesis.
[44] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 47-48.

scholars (the missing one being equality, i.e. *müsāvat*) to convince them of the benefits of constitutional rule. Moreover, he identifies Sufis with the union that was included in the name of the ruling revolutionary party, i.e. Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) or *İttiḥād ve Terakḳḳī Cem'iyeti*. The final move was probably intended to gain support from the ruling party itself.

Ahmed Rıfkı argues that separation both harms the desired unity and reduces the intellectual qualification of each category because of being unfamiliar with the other intellectual disciplines. He argues that participants of those institutions failed to learn from the disciplines of one another and that this meant a considerable gap in their education. He claims that the Constitutional rule might correct that mistake and explains that *mekteb*s might start teaching kalam, fiqh and Sufi doctrine while *medrese*s could teach natural sciences and that *tekke*s may return to teaching Islamic scholarships such as hadith and tafsir.[45] This point is significant for it goes beyond arguing for a union of distinct categories, and defines the need for a blending of them. Ahmed Rıfkı thus introduces a cultural policy of overcoming the cultural duality among the members of the upper classes and what he suggests is a synthesis of the elements of different cultural traditions. Moreover, his wording and terminology bears some further relevant implications for troubles in *tekke*s and for the proper role and place for modern sciences within that synthesis.

Ahmed Rıfkı complains about men ignorant of sharia being involved in *tekke*s in the late 19th century and observes that "due to the abandonment of training of sublime fields of knowledge such as tafsir and hadith which were once obligatory and to the offhand manners of dervishes, *tekke*s have become spaces of mirth (*ṭarab*)."[46] This phrase an acknowledgement of two problems with the situation in *tekke*s at the time. Bearing persecutions in post-1826 era and accusations of heresy in their minds, Bektashis cared

[45] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 48-49.
[46] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 49.

being versed in Islamic scholarships. Various Bektashi sources including *Bektaşī Sırrı* itself emphasize that Bektashi *baba*s who were interrogated by Ottoman officials responded all questions accurately and showed no sign of refusal (*rafż*) or heresy (*ilḥād*).[47] Having lost such a feature posed the first problem implied in that phrase. The second one was *tekke*s becoming "spaces of mirth (*ṭarab*)." The word "mirth" evokes distance from the expected spirituality and religiosity in favor of worldly pleasures and simply fun, and it resonates with the moral critique of attributing moral decay and debauchery to the Bektashi lodges at that time. Moral critique of Bektashi lodges was one of the major themes of Yakup Kadri's novel *Nur Baba*, which was to be published a decade later than the second volume of Ahmed Rıfkı's work.[48] Bearing in mind that what *Nur Baba* did was not bringing up a totally new issue but was stating an already common view, Ahmed Rıfkı's acknowledgement of the problem and effort to propose a new way makes sense.

For the neglect of modern sciences in *medrese*s, Ahmed Rıfkı indicates that in the contemporaneous age, it is obligatory to learn about "three auxiliary natural sciences" (*hikmet-i ṭabīʿīye-i mevālīye-i s̱elās̱e*).[49] The term *mevālī(ye)* which is translated as "auxiliary" bears various meanings in the Arabic language and Islamic culture. It is the plural of *mevlā* which might mean either master(s), successor(s), auxiliary(ies) or freedman(men). The latter usage is frequent in the Islamic history and it refers to non-Arab Muslims who are either freed ex-slaves or converts who became Muslims through the medium of an Arab man or tribe. The *mevālī* were regarded inferior to Arab Muslims.[50] The latter one, standing for freedmen, is the most probable use of the term in that part of the book, implying inferiority of modern sciences to Islam as of ex-slaves and non-Arab

[47] Gümüşoğlu, "Giriş," 53; Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 67.
[48] Brett Wilson. 2017. "The Twilight of Ottoman Sufism: Antiquity, Immorality, and Nation in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Nur Baba*." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49, no. 2 (May): 233-253. https://doi:10.1017/S0020743817000034, 243-245.
[49] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 48.
[50] İsmail Yiğit. 2004. "Mevâlî." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XXIX*, 424-426. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.

converts to Arab Muslims. Such interpretation is parallel with his Bektashi views on the hierarchy of types of knowledge.

Despite profound differences in their linguistic frameworks, Ahmed Rıfkı's classification of types of intellect is quite similar with that of Haji Bektash Veli. Ahmed Rıfkı cites Haji Bektash Veli saying that God has lighted up the darkness via three substances which are the moon, the star, and the the sun and identifies them respectively with reason (*'aḳl*), scholarship (*'ilm*), and wisdom (*ma'rifet*).[51] He then comments that moon rises but then disappears and that scholarship is read, but is then forgotten. He concludes that it is the wisdom that is persistently unforgettable.[52] It would not be hard to apply these views to the trio of modern sciences, Islamic scholarships and Sufism or *mekteb, medrese* and *tekke*. It is significant that Ahmed Rıfkı's way of ordering the categories is the same as Haji Bektash Veli's, that is, from the inferior to the superior. Moreover, Ahmed Rıfkı formulates his views in a way which emphasizes that it is like "*contemporary sciences* are in accord with the rules and philosophy of Islam [emphasis added]," not vice versa.[53] It is probably a conscious way of putting it to imply that it is not Islam, but the modern sciences which is required to make sure being in accord with the other.

A synthesis of the modern, the religious, and the Sufi is the core of Ahmed Rıfkı's thought. What he proposes is a way to prevent distinctions to culminate in separation by training men of modern sciences, Islamic scholarships and Sufism who are versed in all of these fields and thus creating an Ottoman cultural domain inclusive of all in unity. He demonstrates such synthesis by employing modern scientific and political concepts in a religious debate, in unity.

[51] The word *ma'rifet* derives from the root of *'arefe* (عرف) which means to get to know. In contemporary daily Turkish, *ma'rifet* rather connotes talent and skill, but it also bears meanings such as acquiring knowledge and wisdom. In the Sufi context, it means acquiring divine and spiritual knowledge and wisdom through personal spiritual experience. See Süleyman Uludağ. 2012. *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü* İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayıncılık, 236.
[52] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 29-30.
[53] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 49.

1.2. Scientific Revolution as a Prototype

Ahmed Rıfkı systematically refers to Scientific Revolution and modern sciences in his religio-political discussions, implicitly defining the former as a prototype for his intellectual endeavor. On the 49th page of the first volume of *Bektaşī Sırrı*, Ahmed Rıfkı starts a new section titled *Mebḥaṣ*, that is, "Chapter," which covers the last 110 pages of the volume. On that section, he mainly responds to Harputlu İshak Efendi's critique, or rather rebuttal, of Bektashism. Leaving his tone and manner of debating to the last section of this chapter, his conceptual framework will be discussed in this and following two sections. This section will rather focus on his modern scientific references.

Having a modern educational background including a French school, Ahmed Rıfkı's mental making is significantly modern and Western-oriented and that saliently shapes his discourse. His way of reasoning and consequently his discourse uses scientific and mathematical expressions. In his comparison between various Islamic scholar works against materialism or Christianity and *Kāşifü'l-Esrār*, he says "there is a distance of millions of kilometers between their beneficial (*müfīd*) works and the malicious (*fâsid*) work of Hoca İshak Efendi's."[54] Defining the divergence between different religious works with such a numerical notation was indeed a novelty. Though there had been significant developments in mathematical sciences and in their usage in daily basis for religious purposes in the Timurid Iran between 14th and 16th centuries[55], it had not affected the Sufi literature very much. The Ottomans had started to import some elements of the European higher educational system and consequently of the modern natural and mathematical sciences by the late 18th century[56] and only that resulted in daily usage of accurate numerical notations.

The traditional Bektashi Sufi approach to the problem of distance was not a matter of mathematical accuracy. It rather relied on analogies with the unapproachability of the sky

[54] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 145.
[55] Tobby E. Huff. 2003. *The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 53.
[56] Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science*, 365.

and celestial bodies such the moon and the sun.[57] This had predictable outcomes such as belief in seven floors of sky from the Moon (*Ay*) to the Saturn (*Zuḥal*).[58] As those great distances became calculable and coverable, it became possible for them to be part of a religious discourse.

Ahmed Rıfkı's above quoted passage mentioning "a distance of millions of kilometers" between works of Hoca İshak Efendi and other Muslim scholars reflects the very nature of the synthesis he suggests palpably since it is both mathematicized and traditionalist. The Islamic scholarly works he admiringly contrasts with *Kāşifü'l-Esrār* are, as forementioned, rebuttals of materialism and Christianity. Unconventionally using accurate numerical notations relying on modern mathematical sciences – along with other modern and scientific elements – in favor of anti-materialist and anti-Christian polemic in the name of Islam was a concise implementation of the Rıfkian synthesis. One of the anti-Christian scholarly works he refers to might be Rahmatullah Kairanawi's (d. 1885) (known as *el-Hindi*, i.e. the Indian, in Turkey) *İżhārü'l-Ḥaḳḳ* (Manifestation of God) which was specifically a rebuttal of Protestantism, that is, the faith of the British colonial power in India. Harputlu İshak Efendi acknowledges to have drawn on *İżhārü'l-Ḥaḳḳ* for his *Żiyāü'l-Ḳulūb* (Light of Hearts) which was similarly an anti-Protestant polemic against the American Protestant missionaries within the Ottoman domain at the time.[59]

In some instances, Ahmed Rıfkı's modern scientific references could bear implications controversial for an Islamic and Sufi framework. In his response, Ahmed Rıfkı underrates Harputlu İshak Efendi's claim to take the lid off a 500-year-long cloak of secret in Bektashism, saying "this would have meant a service greater than discovering

[57] See Esra Akbalık. 2016. "Alevi-Bektaşi Şiirinde Ay ve Güneş Sembolizmi." *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 26, no. 1: 1-13, 1-5; Amil Çelebioğlu. 1991. "III. Kültür ve Edebiyat" in the item "Ay," In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi IV*, 186-191.186-191.
[58] Gökbel, *Ansiklopedik Alevi Bektaşi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 495, 835, 920.
[59] Enver Demirpolat. 2003. "Harputlu İshak Hoca'nın Hayatı ve Eserleri." *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*. no. 9: 397-412, 402; Şinasi Gündüz. 2005. "Misyonerlik," In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XXX*, 193-199. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 197.

America."[60] That is a quite modern and Western reference and it transgresses the boundaries of zealot (*zāhid*) and Sufi Islamic frameworks in a couple of ways.

Definition of a great service varies for various Islamic traditions. It would be spreading the religion (either by word or by sword) and thus extending the domain of Muslim power for early Muslims[61], ruling in the name of God for al-Ghazali (d. 1111)[62], learning the religion in Qur'anic terms and following it with absolute obedience with no rationalization for Malik bin Anas (d. 795)[63], restoring the Sunnah and the obligatory prayers for Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) who emphasizes the sharia[64] or "to free the soul from the tyrannical yoke of he passions (…) in order that in the purified heart there should ony remain room for God" for Sufis.[65] Within the Sufi framework, discovering America is too worldly to be assessed a service and for instance within the early Muslim one, it is not Islamic at all. Its historical significance rather lies in its contribution to the rise of the Christian Europe which had come to predominate the once-superior Muslim Ottoman Empire and to the emergence of a Western-dominated world order which relied on supposedly universal, humanistic, and libertarian values. What Ahmed Rıfkı had celebrated was probably that new value system, not Christian predomination, but those two were nevertheless associated with one another. With a modern and Western-oriented mental making, what he recalled as an important discovery of great service was such a non-Islamic one, but he could still integrate it into a religious discourse. That was not the only non-Islamic and non-Sufi element that he achieved to integrate into his interpretation.

[60] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 114.
[61] Hasan Aydın. 2016. *İslam Kültüründe Felsefenin Krizi ve Aydınlanma Sorunu*. İstanbul: Bilim ve Gelecek Kitaplığı, 21-22.
[62] Zerrin Kurtoğlu. 2013. *İslâm Düşüncesinin Siyasal Ufku: Siyaset Sorunu Açısından Din-Felsefe İlişkileri*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 29.
[63] Abdul Hye, "Ash'arism," 220-243. In *A History of Muslim Philosophy – I*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963, 221-222.
[64] Muhammad Farman. "Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi," 873-883. In *A History of Muslim Philosophy – II*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, 878.
[65] Al-Ghazali, "Munkidh min al-Dalal (Deliverance from Error)."

In Ahmed Rıfkı's discourse, achievements of the Scientific Revolution serve as a prototype of revealing the truth about Bektashism. Reminding the Turkish proverb "Liar's candle burns till nightfall," he draws an analogy between the notion of flat earth and the myths and prejudices about Bektashism. Celebrating the scientific society who had proved that the Earth is globular, he moves to the ancient notion of Four Elements (*'anāsır-ı erba'a*), that is, fire, water, earth and air being the four pure and basic elements in the universe, and then salutes the new chemistry (*kīmyā-yı cedīd*) around ninety basic elements instead of four. Finally he cites the notion of earth centered universe and reminds that it is also false.[66] Usage of successive examples from the course of the Scientific Revolution reveals a couple of features of the function of modern scientific references in Ahmed Rıfkı's discourse.

Accurate and flexible integration of modern scientific terminology into a religious framework being already discussed, two further points deserve to be elaborated on. Firstly, the examples by Ahmed Rıfkı are all milestones which indisputably mark magnificent breakthroughs in the European history which had bestowed the Europeans predomination over the rest of the world. Identifying his position with them provides him with the opportunity to identify anti-Bektashi views with reactions against the enormous leaps within the history of the Scientific Revolution. Secondly, the second example of the new chemistry cancelling the notion of Four Elements is a complicated issue for Ahmed Rıfkı since the latter is part of the Bektashi faith. Ahmet Yaşar Ocak indicates that *Maḳālāt* (Discourses), that is a founding opus for Bektashism which is believed to be authored by Haji Bektash Veli himself, elaborates on the belief in *'anāsır-ı erba'a* as the set of basic elements out of which God created human beings. Enjoying both Qur'anic and pre-Islamic foundations (either Turkic or Mongolian), miracles (*kerāmāt*) with commanding the fire is a major

[66] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 141-142.

theme in Bektashi Sufi literature of hagiographies and sacrality of fire and consequently hearth is central to Bektashi faith and rites.[67] Along with identifying with the Scientific Revolution which is assumedly at odds with Sufi faith in miracles, it is worth noting that miracles were indeed central in Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography. Further discussion of the place of miracles in Ahmed Rıfkı's thought would be left to the next chapter.

1.3. Modern Liberal Concepts

Ahmed Rıfkı draws on modern political concepts successfully in his response to Harputlu İshak Efendi's fierce critique of Bektashism and that changes the nature of the discussion. As a moderate modernist, he employs modern terminology both accurately and flexibly to integrate them into a religious discourse and makes Western and Sufi conceptions overlap one another. He sounds like a modern liberal proto-republican who sticks to the tradition but also tends to transgress its boundaries in his critique of ancien régime and his phrasing is politically-motivated in a considerably degree.

Ahmed Rıfkı emphasizes the need for *ittiḥād* and argues that "separation among the people of Islam is what makes Muslims miserable."[68] Here is a probably calculated, yet not simply pragmatic, usage of the name of the ruling party as discussed above. The term *ittiḥād* means union and it connotes both national unity and unity among people of same faith. In a theological debate, he reminds the requirements of a proto-national unity in the Ottoman society while declaring the need for the unity of Muslims and saluting the ruling party. His salutation goes on with the other term in the ruling party's name.

Ahmed Rıfkı acknowledges the existence of unbelievers among the Bektashi community and argues that infidels could be anywhere and therefore it cannot justify defaming Bektashis, saying "Bektashis have constituted the progressive (*teraḳḳīperver*)

[67] See Ahmet Yaşar Ocak. 2002. *Alevî ve Bektaşî İnançlarının İslâm Öncesi Temelleri*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 237-243; Güldane Gündüzöz. 2015. *Bektaşi Kültüründe Yemek Motifi*. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 50-52.
[68] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 57.

individuals with enlightened ideas (*münevverü'l-efkār*) of this domain (*mulk*), of this land (*vaṭan*) for 600 years and comparing them with this drifter, infidel man would be a big mistake."[69] The term *teraḳḳī* is obviously a radical one and Ahmed Rıfkı associates Bektashis with progressivism by using it. This usage is in the same line with associating Bektashis with freedom of thought (*ḥürriyet-i fikrīye*) as Ahmed Rıfkı does later in the same volume.[70] By the way, it is part of the name of CUP. Excessive usage of the terms in CUP's name reveals that Ahmed Rıfkı was optimistic about CUP in 1909. The second volume which was published in 1912 is rather critical of them. This issue will be discussed in the third chapter.

This passage includes modern and radical terminology, but it also reflects the cultural synthesis that Ahmed Rıfkı suggests. Other than *teraḳḳī*, the passage defines Bektashis as ones with enlightened ideas (*münevverü'l-efkār*) and that is a word play. Other than its radical and pro-Enlightenment content, the term *münevver* has a religious connotation in Sufi tradition. Sufis believe that the God's (*Allah*) sacrality emanates from Him in the form of light (*nūr*).[71] Therefore, the term *münevver* indicates not only the French Enlightenment, but also the Sufi faith in divine love. Emphasis on the 600 years of the Ottoman state is consistent with that. That is not simply anachronistic in terms of extending Enlightenment back to the 14th century, but a word play where Enlightenment in modern and Sufi terms are identified with one another. The same applies for the simultaneous usage of the terms domain (*mulk*) and land (*vaṭan*) also.

The terms *mulk* and *vaṭan* which Ahmed Rıfkı uses together belong to divergent cultural environments and bear contradictory connotations. *Mulk* is originally Arabic and refers to power or possession. It is a central concept in Ibn Khaldun's thought and it

[69] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 66.
[70] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 78.
[71] See Joseph E.B. Lumbard. 2007. "From *Ḥubb* to *ʿIshq*: The Development of Love in Early Sufism." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3: 345-385.

designates a power that is capable of maintaining its authority via force and which is to be obeyed to. It presupposes loyal subjects, not citizens.[72] On the contrary, *vaṭan* is a rather modern term and it is the root of the modern Turkish word for citizen, i.e. *vatandaş*. Ottoman modernization was on its way, assumingly making citizens out of the subjects. Ahmed Rıfkı's synthesis is an endeavor to reconcile loyalty to the *mulk* of the Ottoman dynasty with the notion of citizenship of the individuals on the modern Ottoman *vaṭan*.

Ahmed Rıfkı indicates that "Showing the licit (*Ḥaḳḳ*) as if superstitious (*bāṭıl*) without a proof or record is a hypothesis unacceptable for the human conscience (*vicdān-ı insānīye*) and the Islamic way (*şi'ār-ı İslāmīye*)."[73] He later adds that overcoming the reasons of disagreement and separation would be "a necessity for Islam and humanity (*insānīyet*)."[74] As a man of consistence in views and terminology, he restates similar comments towards the end of the first volume, saying "It is a malice (*fesād*) to harm national unity (*ittiḥād-ı millet*) and humanitarian and Islamic morals (*ādāb-ı insaniyet ve İslāmiyet*) by deceptively combining Hurufism and Bektashism."[75] Terminology within the passages cited in this paragraph demands further discussion.

Defining a necessity with regard to humanity and Islam separately presupposes a category of humanity autonomous in respect to, if not independent of, Islam. This is a non-orthodox approach and the source of inspiration might be humanist philosophical interpretations. It is discussed above that ordering of the terms could matter in the Bektashi Sufi discourse where terms are generally ordered from inferior to superior. Given that rather Western and humanistic terms (respectively *vicdān-ı insānīye* and *ādāb-ı insaniyet*) precede the Islamic ones (respectively *şi'ār-ı İslāmīye* and *ādāb-ı İslāmīyet*) in both passages, he might have placed the Western and humanistic terms and notions behind the Islamic ones as

[72] Ahmet Arslan. 2014. *İbni Haldun*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 170-183.
[73] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 80-81.
[74] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 95.
[75] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 134.

he consistently did. Nonetheless, Western and humanistic elements have a place in Ahmed Rıfkı's thought. By the way, that should be no surprise to learn that starting from 1910, he would start to write for a magazine called *İnsāniyet* (Humanity)[76] which seems to be named after Jean Jaurés's socialist *L'Humanité*. Six years earlier than *İnsāniyet*, Jaurés (1859-1914), founder of the *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvriére*, i.e. French Section of the Workers' International (1905),[77] started to publish the newspaper *L'Humanité* (1904) where he declared that "all socialists work for humanity's fulfillment."[78] Leaving a broader discussion of socialist influence in Ahmed Rıfkı's thought to the next chapter, his usage of the term *vicdān* alike needs a focus.

Vicdān stands for the term conscience which had played critical role in the making of a secular morality in the European Renaissance. Tobby E. Huff defines conscience with regard to St. Paul's usage as "an interior winess and judge of one's past actions and motives, which can be a source of comfort or remorse" and adds that it is not only a feeling, but also "a far more complex agency of the soul that is capable of discernment."[79] This is a rather worldly definition which leaves considerable space to human will and action. Ahmed Rıfkı uses it along with the expression "the Islamic way" (*şi'ār-ı İslāmīye*), suggesting that the term *vicdān* does not necessarily have a religious background. His Francophone educational background and modern mental making would have helped him to develop a rather secular understanding of morality along with an Islamic and Sufi one. On occasion, his Francophone references may become rather direct and explicit.

Ahmed Rıfkı discusses the question of tolerance both with a direct and explicit French reference and a repeated emphasis on the priority and superiority of Islam. He says "*Müsā'afe* which is designated 'tolerance' by the French and 'freedom and independence of

[76] Topçuoğlu, "Bektaşî Ahmet Rıfkı, Hayatı ve Eserleri," 93.
[77] Marxists Internet Archive. "Jaurés, Jean (1859-1914)." Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/j/a.htm#jaures-jean
[78] Jean Jaurés. "Our Goal." Accessed June 10, 2021. https://www.marxists.org/archive/jaures/1904/04/18.htm
[79] Huff, *The Rise of Early Modern Science*, 106.

opinion in religious and conscientious matters' (*mesā'il-i dīnīyye ve vicdānīyyede hürriyet ve istiḳlāl bi'r-re'y*) by us is a main road of progress (*teraḳḳī*) and civilization (*temeddün*) only opened by our religion."[80] As the definition "freedom and independence of opinion in religious and conscientious matters" suggests, his usage of the term "tolerance" is perfectly accurate use of in a Francophone (or Western in general) sense, but this does not prevent him from insisting on the priority of Islam. His insistence is not baseless, but in coherence with his moderate modernist synthesis and literary strategy of blurring the boundaries of conceptual contexts to identify supposedly Western conceptions with supposedly Islamic and Sufi ones.

Ahmed Rıfkı distinguishes not only Western and Islamic, but also the zealot and Sufi Islam. He argues that any tariqa is in support of union (*sā'ī-i ittiḥād*) and in service of progress (*ḫādim-i teraḳḳī*) and adds that "the essence (*lübb*) of Islam, the secret (*esrār*) of Qur'an, and the truth of religion (*dīnin ḥakīkati*) is within tariqa." He then stresses that Islam is also in service of progress (*ḫādim-i teraḳḳī*) and in support of renovation (*sā'ī-i teceddüd*).[81] This part is significant for Ahmed Rıfkı's thought in two dimensions.

Firstly, he explicitly puts that Islam's essence is tariqa and that is an expression of his hierarchy of Islamic traditions. Secondly, he makes the terms *teraḳḳī* and *teceddüd* overlap one another. It is not their lexical meanings (respectively progress and renovation), but conceptual contexts which are divergent. The initial term (*teraḳḳī*) is simply progress in modern and modernist sense. The latter (*teceddüd*) has both modernist and Islamic connotations which are indeed irrelevant to one another.

Modernist usage of the term *teceddüd* refers to renewal in terms of emancipation from the limits and boundaries of the tradition which is indeed a reflection of the notion of progress. Its religious interpretation is part of the kalam concept of *teceddüd-i emṣāl*

[80] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 113.
[81] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 140.

(renovation of symbols), that is, constant disappearance and reappearance of the substance (*cevher*) and accident (*'araż*) which constitutes a matter being the mechanism behind the matter maintaining its very existence.[82] Employing a term's modernist and theological usages concurrently and interchangeably by means of ambiguity, Ahmed Rıfkı makes modern and specifically Islamic concepts overlap and designates a specific Islamic interpretation, Sufism, as the sponsor and basis of modern progressive understanding as well as the very essence of Islam. Such flexible integration of Western and modern notions and terms into a religious framework is a feature of Ahmed Rıfkı which is not peculiar to him. It had become considerably common among Bektashis starting from the late-nineteenth century.

The twentieth-century Orientalist Frederick William Hasluck refers to the unnamed son of the sheikh of the Bektashi lodge at Rumeli Hisar, the sheikh being Nafi Baba (d. 1912) and the son Mahmud Cevad (1864/65-1921), who explains the difference between Kizilbashes, i.e. Alevis, and Bektashis as the former being "Catholics" and the latter "Protestants." Indicating that Mahmud Cevat was a Robert College graduate, i.e. an American Protestant missionary school founded near Rumeli Hisar in 1863, Hasluck interprets that comparison in terms of Bektashis being the agents of a kind of Reformation whereas Kizilbashes were adherents of a "superstitious" and "backward" faith.[83] Hasluck's interpretation reveals the degree of Westernization and modernization in the mental makings of a group of early twentieth-century Bektashis. It should not be surprise to see that Mahmud Cevat shares a similar educational and cultural background with Ahmed Rıfkı. Mahmud Cevat was one of the first Muslim students of Robert College[84] and both he and

[82] Cağfer Karadaş. 2011. "Teceddüd-i Emsâl." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XL*, 239-241. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.
[83] Frederick William Hasluck. 1929. *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans, I-II*, edited by Margaret M. Hasluck. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 162-163.
[84] Günay Kut and Edhem Eldem. 2010. *Rumeli Hisarı Şehitlik Dergâhı Mezar Taşları*. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 59.

his father could read and write English and French along with *elsine-i ṣelāṣe* (three languages), i.e. Arabic, Persian and Turkish as the conventional lingua francas of Ottoman Muslim notables.[85]

The obvious weight of modern liberal notions inspired by cultural Westernization among a group of early twentieth-century Bektashis including Ahmed Rıfkı had not only an intellectual, but also a political dimension. Ahmed Rıfkı proceeded further and developed an unnamed, but rather thorough political project, which is making a modern Islamicate society of citizens out of Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Aside from his manifest anti-Hamidianism (which is hardly fake), Ahmed Rıfkı's vision has similarities with the Hamidian Islamism. This will be discussed in both theoretical and political terms.

1.4. Bektashism as a Component of Islamicate Society of Citizens

> Some mistakes seem like they are neither mistakes nor neglects, but good deeds (*ṣevāb*) and thus mislead the public opinion (*efkâr-ı 'umūmīye*).[86]

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed a rapid modernization in the Ottoman domains which had engendered a modern society and inevitably a modern notion of public. Notion of public was not only discussed or defended, but also experienced as a social fact which mattered in political debates and struggles. That was why Ahmed Rıfkı expressed concern about the alleged misleading of the public opinion and, at another distance, why he defined it "a perfect politics" (*mükemmel bir politiḳa*) when Ahmed Cemaleddin Efendi (1864-1921), i.e. the then leader of the Chelebi branch of Bektashis whom Ahmed Rıfkı opposed to, "started to place ads to win the public opinion and convince them he is descendant of Haji Bektash Veli."[87] Excluding the significant polemic between those two and the controversions over *Bektaşī Sırrı*, it should be noted that public opinion

[85] Ali Ata Yiğit. "Bektaşi Babası Mahmud Cevat ve Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti Tarihçe-i Teşkilat ve İcraatı Adlı Eseri." In *I. International Symposium of Hacı Bektaş Veli (7-9 May 2010) Book of Proceedings – I,* 253-263. Çorum: Hitit University Hacı Bektaş Veli Research and Application Center, 256-257
[86] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 140.
[87] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II,* 30-31.

mattered in religio-political issues in general. Printed press was functional in addressing a broader public and disseminating the official religious views through "hitherto inaccessible areas such as Van in eastern Anatolia in the 1890s."[88] Fostering the construction of an Islamicate public within the Ottoman Empire, this had a great impact on religio-political matters and was related to the broader context of the course of the Ottoman modernization.

Referring to Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, Selim Deringil defines the Hamidian Islamism as "entirely a reaction against classical Ottoman Islam" and essentially a modernist movement. It was part of a general late nineteenth-century trend of empires borrowing from the nationalists and implementing nationalist-like policies resembling the French nationalism which aimed at transforming "peasants into Frenchmen."[89] That trend was a consequence of the European empires' quest for survival in the age of nationalism.

Deringil contextualizes the process with regard to the European empires' increasing need for some kind of "national" foundations to maintain legitimacy and consequently encouraging their subjects to get beyond passive compliance and becoming rather mobilized and participant citizens which later had led to "proto-nationalism."[90] Indicating the centrality of military conscription and state (mass) education in the late nineeenth-century Ottoman modernization, Michael Provence discusses the revolutionary potential of the process and Abdülhamid II's endeavor to contain it "to acculturate the citizen-soldier to conservative ruling-class hegemony" via "a state identity based on Islam, anti-imperialism, and (…) invented traditions intended to cement loyalty to the state and its sovereign."[91] Regarding the endeavor for containment, Deringil observes that 1878 marks a fundamental shift from "ostensibly supra-religious" Tanzimat (1839-76) Ottomanism to a rather Islamic

[88] Selim Deringil. 1999. *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*. London: I.B. Tauris, 49.
[89] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 67.
[90] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 44-45.
[91] Michael Provence. 2017. *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 15.

one intending "a new basis of solidarity among its Islamic subjects."[92] What Abdülhamid II desired was in no way a nation-state, but an Islamicate society of citizens, that is, a nation-like modern society of citizens rather than a population of passive subjects where Islamic identity would be supposed to have a critical role. Primarily interested in the place and role of Bektashis, Ahmed Rıfkı's vision represents a comprehensive interpretation of the Ottoman modernization which is partly congruent with the Hamidian vision.

Given that the Ottoman experience of modernization was part of a broader process of European modernization(s), its agents, including Ahmed Rıfkı, were familiar with the contemporaneous political debates. He could employ a wide array of concepts and notions which made up a liberal framework comparable with its European counterparts at the time. It is rather obvious in his polemics.

Towards the end of the first volume, that means the conclusion of a more than hundred-page-long critique of Harputlu İshak Efendi's *Kāşifü'l-Esrār*, Ahmed Rıfkı lists freedom of conscience (*serbesti-i vicdān*), freedom of press (*serbesti-i maṭbūʿāt*) and freedom of labor (*serbesti-i saʿy ve ʿamel*) among the necessities of the time and suggests to "continue to debate maintining temperance (*iʿtidāl*)" and "avoiding personal offenses."[93] Towards the end of the following volume, he returns to that point upon a reader's letter. Ahmed Rıfkı cites Nureddin Efendi, the reader in question, who had blamed Ahmed Rıfkı for having written his book "without complete freedom of press," observing warnings of "not to go too far" – though without specifying the alleged "warner" – and responds to him regrettingly. Emphasizing the virtues of following no other principle than honor and consience (*nāmūs ve vicdān*) and insisting that he had followed nothing but the orders by his conscience (*vicdānının evāmiri*), he keeps reproving Nureddin Efendi for resorting to

[92] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 46-47.
[93] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 158.

personal offense along two pages.[94] The notions Ahmed Rıfkı lists suggest a framework of modern liberal social and political structure, and his regret at Nureddin Efendi's accusations an early evocation of Saidian notion of intellectual "as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" who follows "a kind of consciousness that is skeptical, engaged, unremittingly devoted to rational investigation and moral judgement."[95] Recalling the observation that Ahmed Rıfkı experienced the notion of public as a social fact which mattered in political debates and struggles, his discussion of post-1826 developments bears even more radical tendencies.

Upon a comprehensive discussion of the 1826 edict by Sultan Mahmud II on the abolition of the Bektashi order and confiscation of their assets, Ahmed Rıfkı concludes that it includes contradictory (*mütefāvit*) and illogical (*manṭıḳsız*) precepts and declares to leave the decision of whether acknowledging and accepting (*telaḳḳi ve ḳabūl*) or rejecting and cancelling it (*redd ve ibṭāl*) to the readers.[96] Assuming imperial subjects to possess the right to decide on the validity of an imperial decision is a proto-Republican manner founded on a notion of active citizenship. Such radical interpretation is partly due to concern about the contested place of Bektashis within the Ottoman society of citizens. Prior to going there, Ahmed Rıfkı's position on the Islamic tone of the post-1878 course of the Ottoman modernization will be discussed.

Ahmed Rıfkı's repeated emphasis on *ittiḥād* is not only a matter of saluting the ruling party, but a reinterpretation of the Ottoman proto-nationalism aiming at an Islamicate society of citizens. He describes what Harputlu İshak Efendi does in *Kāşifü'l-Esrār* as a malice (*fesād*) through engendering separation (*tefriḳa*) and dissidence (*muḫālefet*) among the ummah and harming national union (*ittiḥād-ı millet*) "through intriguingly combining

[94] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 148-150.
[95] Edward Said. 1996. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures.* New York: Vintage Books, xvi, 20.
[96] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 107-108.

Hurufism and Bektashism."[97] That description clear enough, Ahmed Rıfkı nevertheless contextualizes it within a broader framework of his social and political vision. He defines bigotry (*ta'aṣṣub*) as the enemy of science (*'ilm*), perfection (*tekāmül*) and progress (*terakḳḳī*) and observes that it increases separation (*tefriḳa*). Consequently, he suggests to overcome bigotry "to progress, remain united (*mütteḥid*), live under an eternal fraternity (*uḫuvvet*), enlighten (*tenvīr eylemek*) the future (*ātī*) and to maintain hereafter (*istiḳbāl*)."[98] These passages make it clear that Ahmed Rıfkı is in line with a rather Islamicized proto-nationalist project and that his cause is to make sure Bektashis along with other Sufi communities are defined as legitimate and major components of the Islamicate nation-like society. He rather specifies that saying "Islam definitely opposes ignorance (*cehl*)" and "Bektashism only seeks ways of generalizing the Constitutional rule (*ta'mīm-i meşrūṭiyet*) via intellectual freedom (*serbest bir tefekkür*) and free research and effort (*āzād bir tetebbu' ve sa'y*)," and though his source or method of calculation remains unclear, tries a show of force claiming "number of adherents (*sālikler*) exceeded six million by the tenth [16th] century"[99] – which is a million less than the estimations for 19th and 20th centuries which Birge cites as mentioned above. His reason to support the Constitutional regime is not a rejection of that Islamicized notion of citizenship, but to maintain better conditions for Bektashis within it. Moreover, Ahmed Rıfkı's vision resembles with the Hamidian Islamism in one more dimension, that is, the intention for Ottoman patronage in the broader Muslim world.

"Given that the Muslim World (*'ālem-i İslām*) would tomorrow unite under the flag of tawhid (*rāyet-i tevḥīd*) and thus reverse the whole destiny (*muḳadderāt*) of the world of civilization (*cihān-ı medeniyet*), of politics (*siyāset*), and of cognition and contemplation (*idrāk ve tefekkür*)," says Ahmed Rıfkı, "presence of such degree of separations, and even of

[97] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 134.
[98] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 105.
[99] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 138-139.

the Shiite and Sunni parties is a disgrace (*mu'ayyebāt*)." Then taking comfort in the assumption that all Muslims believe in tawhid regardless of the sects they have been divided into throughout their 1300-year-long history, he proposes to gather power of oneness of 360 million (*üç yüz altmış milyonluḳ ḳudret-i vaḥdāniyet*) through a policy of entente and union (*ī̈tilāf ve ittiḥād*) and thus support the future's united Islamic life (*ātī̈nin ḥayāt-ı müttehide-i İslāmī̈yesi*).[100] Bearing in mind that this discussion is part of Ahmed Rıfkı's more than hundred-page-long critique of *Kāşifü'l-Esrār*, it lays the ground for putting a bigger blame on Harputlu İshak Efendi, that is, disrupting the unity of the Muslim World.

Putting such blame on Harputlu İshak Efendi suggests that an Islamic union within the Ottoman domain depends on the inclusion of Bektashis and that unity of the Muslim World on an Ottoman initiative. It is obvious that what Ahmed Rıfkı means by the term *'ālem-i İslām* is not limited to the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The cited passage includes three undisputable evidences for that: i. Meaning of the term is definite and it connotes the Muslims throughout the globe; ii. He mentions a "1300-year-long history" which applies to the religion of Islam, but not the 600-year-old Ottoman state; iii. He mentions a power of 360 million which is far more than the Ottoman population[101] and therefore suggests the world Muslim population. The accurate number and Ahmed Rıfkı's source or calculation method unknown, in his *Küre-i Arżda Nüfūs-ı İslām* i.e. Muslim Population on the Earth (1922), Mübarek bin Galib (1871-1938) cites the estimates on global Muslim population by German, French, English and Italian newspapers, magazines and pamphlets which range between 200-340 million.[102] Though his estimation increasing to 400-450 million by 1912[103] makes it more complicated, it should be noted that Ahmed

[100] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 96-97.
[101] As forementioned, the latest census when the volume was published, that is 1906, had calculated the Ottoman population 20,897,617 and by the next census in 1914, it would decrease to 18,520,016. See Shaw, "The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914," 334.
[102] Mübarek bin Galib. 1339/1922. *Küre-i Arżda Nüfūs-ı İslām*. İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 4.
[103] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 136.

Rıfkı's notion of Muslims' union possibly under Ottoman patronage was already tried during the Hamidian era.

Under Abdülhamid II's reign, Ottoman emphasis on the claim of caliphate intensified and that had a political purpose. The Ottoman state had adopted the Hanefi school of fiqh as the official belief (*mezheb-i resmīye*) and instrumentalized "the Hanefi interpretation of caliphate, whereby a strong and able ruler was to be recognized as the legitimate sovereign of all Muslims … even if he was not from the original sacred Arab clan of Qureish."[104] Theologically reinforcement of the claim of right to caliphate was accompanied by the employment of certain Sufi leaders in Africa "to use Muslims of French or British allegiance as a potential fifth column."[105] To set an example, Mostafa Minawi cites the Hamidian administration's alliance with the Sanusi Order for "expanding Ottoman suzerainty deep into the Sahara and the Lake Chad basin after 1885."[106] Notwithstanding its foreign policy had coincided with Ahmed Rıfkı's suggestion – and indeed left a legacy[107] – Hamidian Islamism, or rather the Islamicized interpretation of Ottoman modernization in general, possessed a set of features which made way for structurally excluding Bektashis.

The Great Event (*Vaḳʿa-i ʿAẓīme*) of 1826 was nothing temporary, but the founding moment of an anti-Bektashi policy. Notwithstanding pressure on Bektashis eased after Mahmud II's reign, a kind of anti-Bektashi consensus started to take shape, then developed

[104] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 48.
[105] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 65-66.
[106] Mostafa Minawi. 2016. *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 28.
[107] Legacy of Hamidian religio-politics partly devolved on Kemalists and thus lasted at least during the Turkish War of Independence (1919-23). Definition of Turkish nationality coincided with "non-Arab Muslim Anatolians" in the eyes of Europeans and non-Muslim Ottomans as well as Kemalists themselves – and consequently became the norm for the post-war population exchange. As for the claim of right to caliphate, it resulted in wide and great Muslim Middle Easternn sympathy towards Turkey as "the last Muslim independent state able to cope with European Imperialism." See Nathalie Clayer, Fabio Giomi, and Emmanuel Szurek. 2019. "Introduction – Transnationalising Kemalism: A Refractive Relationship." In *Kemalism: Transnational Politics in the Post-Ottoman World*, edited by Nathalie Clayer, Fabio Giomi and Emmanuel Szurek, 1–37. London, I. B. Tauris, 8-10.

and endured. The emergent anti-Bektashi consensus had both administrative and religious dimensions.

Narrating the reopening of the first Bektashi lodge in the post-1826 era, Ahmed Rıfkı says "Thanks to the zeal (*himmet*) of Halil Revnaki Baba who used to live in Samatya, Sancakdar at the time and is now buried (*medfūn*) right across the tomb of Seyyid Nizameddin outside Silivrikapusu, and to the effort (*gayret*) of Ahmed Baba, Merdivenköyü and other lodges (*tekye*) started to open."[108] Given that the locations where Halil Revnaki Baba (d. 1851) lived and was entombled, that is respectively Samatya and Silivrikapusu, were within the walled city, he was typically Istanbulite. However, the first lodge which was defacto allowed to reopen was at the Anatolian side, that is, outside the walled city and though contemporarily part of the province of İstanbul, outside the capital at the time.[109] This had both symbolic and material significance.

Merdivenköyü lodge, the first to be allowed to reopen, was settled within the Kadilik of Üsküdar. Kadilik of Üsküdar, along with those of Eyyüb and Galata, was one of the *bilād-ı s̱elās̱e* (the three cities) that would later join the walled city to constitute contemporary İstanbul. Notwithstanding all gathered under the label of İstanbul by time, *nefs-i İstanbul* (core of İstanbul) was the walled city itself. Even in the Republican Turkey, the 1927 and 1965 censuses counted the population within *nefs-i İstanbul* and Grand

[108] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 115. Ottoman Turkish term for lodge was written above as *tekke* and it is here replaced with *tekye*. Both terms are used in Ottoman Turkish, but the initial one is more common. In direct quotations, the word is cited as it is in the original text, but when paraphrased, it is written as *tekke* or simply lodge.

[109] As an Ottoman administrative unit, Kadilik of İstanbul was established after the conquest, within the walled city. It was the official capital which was also named as *Dersaadet* (the Gate to Bliss), and rest of the contemporary İstanbul was divided into three districts which were designated *bilād-ı s̱elās̱e* (the three cities) and granted *mevleviyet* which was the highest rank of kadiliks. *Bilād-ı s̱elās̱e* were respectively Eyyüb which expanded from the outside of the city walls to Çatalca and Silivri, Galata which expanded from Beyoğlu (Pera) to Rumelikavağı, and Üsküdar containing the whole Anatolian side of contemporary İstanbul and neighboring towns such as Kandıra, Gebze and Karamürsel. See Mehmet İpşirli, 2001 "İstanbul Kadılığı." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XXIII*, 305-307, 305; and Mehmet İpşirli. 1992. "Bilâd-ı Selâse." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi VI*, 151-152, 151.

(*Büyük*) İstanbul separately.[110] Besides, it was not only symbolic, but also a material issue especially for the Üsküdar Kadilik due to the conditions of transportation at a time when there was no bridge crossing the Bosphorus – and Merdivenköyü was near Erenköy, a spot relatively distant from Bosphorus. There is instance that it mattered to Ottoman bureaucracy. When İsmail Ferruh Efendi (d. 1840), Ottoman ex-ambassador to London, was tried because of his involvement in the Scholarly Society of Beşiktaş (*Beşiktaş Cem'iyet-i 'İlmīyesi*) which was then suspected of Bektashi affiliation, he was sentenced to banishment. His destination was first decided to be Tire (near Smyrna), but on the basis of his past service and then ongoing translation of a Qur'an exegis, it was changed to Kadıköy as a favor.[111] That means, Kadıköy which was a central location of the Üsküdar district – even more central than Merdivenköyü indeed – could serve as a place of exile.

Hasluck provides a piece of information about the degree of Bektashi presence in early twentieth-century *Dersaadet*, making things slightly more complicated. Without specifying the date, though evidently between 1899 and 1916 when he had occasionally been to İstanbul, Hasluck reports to have obtained a list of Bektashi *tekke*s in Istanbul at the Rumeli Hisar lodge. Based on the list, he names seven lodges on the European side (Yedikule, Topkapu, Karyağdı, Sütlüce, Karaağaç and Rumeli Hisarı) and two on the Anatolian (Çamlıca and Merdivenköyü), designating them "Bektashi *tekke*s existing at the capital."[112] Given that two of the lodges on the list were within *Dersaadet* (namely Yedikule and Topkapu), it is possible to conclude that exclusion of Bektashis from *Dersaadet* was not a definite policy.

Following the Great Event, or the Auspicious (*Ḫayrīye*) one in official terms, the Consultancy Assemblies (*Meşveret Meclisleri*) where Islamic scholars (*'ulemā*) and some

[110] Halil İnalcık. 2001. "Türk Devri" in the item "İstanbul." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XXIII*, 220-239, 220, 237.
[111] Maden, *İstanbul Bektaşileri*, 14.
[112] Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, 516-517.

sheikhs from non-Bektashi tariqas gathered to decide on the cases of Bektashi *baba*s witnessed comments on not only political, but also religious issues. Several Bektashi *baba*s were criticized on faith-related issues such as neglecting prayers and fasting or saying illicit words on religious matters along with the claims of supporting the rebellious Janissaries. Fahri Maden concludes that the prohibition of Bektashism was at first a political decision, but later gained a religious dimension whereby their faith was regarded as problem.[113] In the later decades, the Ottoman Empire adopted the policy of enforcing an official religious view (*meẕheb-i resmīye*) which entailed various elements such as "correction of beliefs (*ṭaṣḥīḥ-i 'aḳā'id*)" of deviants (*fıraḳ-ı dālle*)[114] and monopolizing official sacrality through controlling all publication and dissemination of Qur'an.[115] Though not essentially targeting the Bektashi community, *meẕheb-i resmīye* policies created an environment which would indeed fortify and maintain the anti-Bektashi consensus.

In order to respond the perpetual threat upon themselves, some Bektashi sections established new alliances. Nafi Baba's favor of making the Rumeli Hisar lodge home to the gatherings of Young Turks was an example of it.[116] Nevertheless, the Ottoman Bektashi community needed an intellectual intervention with a historiographical dimension to avoid the threat. Ahmed Rıfkı made a rather polemical and controversial try.

[113] Maden, *İstanbul Bektaşileri*, 7-8.
[114] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 49.
[115] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 53-54.
[116] Maden, *İstanbul Bektaşileri*, 168-172; Kut and Eldem, *Rumeli Hisarı Şehitlik Dergâhı Mezar Taşları*, 60-61.

CHAPTER TWO:
MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INTERPRETATION

> History itself is not a narrative. In its entirety, it is as chaotic, uncoordinated, and complex as life. History is about making sense of that mess, finding or creating patterns and meanings and stories from the maelstrom.[117]

The nineteenth-century European empires including the Ottomans needed a kind of "national" foundations to construct new nation-like identities as discussed above and that demanded a selectively utilization of elements from past, or to "reinvoke the values and customs of the past to serve an ever more complicated present (Gluck, 1985, 204)."[118] In response to an official uniform Islamic view which systematically excluded Bektashis, Ahmed Rıfkı suggested an alternative approach which likewise selectively uitilized elements from past to give a place to Sufism and to favor Bektashism in particular. Making use of the past creatively, he developed a politically motivated historiographical approach. Given that Muslimhood of Bektashis was in question, he underlined it and that they were being excluded of the Ottoman power structure, he emphasized their place in the Ottoman tradition. His polemics were influential in the shaping of his historiographical framework.

As the author of *Kāşifü'l-Esrār* which was an offensively rebuttal of the Bektashism, Harputlu İshak Efendi was among the pioneers of hostility towards Bektashis, though not an initiator. When the Bektashi order was prohibited, he was a fresh madrasa graduate in his 20s. When it was towards the last quarter of the 19th century, he drafted a theological interpretation of the Bektashi-excluding policies which had already become a consensus through individual and piecemeal executions. As a respected Islamic scholar who also held significant bureaucratic posts, he possessed the potentials to influence both the intellectual climate and the Ottoman administration and he had probably felt the need to do so in order to maintain the anti-Bektashi consensus, possibly in a rather intensified manner. Ahmed

[117] John H. Arnold. 2000. *History: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 13.
[118] Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 67.

Rıfkı's polemic with Harputlu İshak Efendi made up a considerable part of *Bektaşī Sırrı* and it might have been influential in the shaping of the former's framework.

2.1. An Explanatory and Analytical Denominational History

Linking birth of new historical curiosities with myths, Jacques Le Goff tells that the medieval Western noble families, nations, and urban communities which decided to give themselves a history would probably "begin with mythical ancestors who inaugurate the genealogies, with their legendary founding heroes." Reminding the patriarchs' genealogies in the first books of the Bible, Le Goff mentions – quoting Guenée who cites after Georges Duby – an abundant genealogical literature in the 11th and 12th centuries particularly in France sponsored by lords "in order to enhance the reputation of their lineage, and more precisely to aid their matrimonial strategy and enable them to contact more adventageous alliances."[119] Familiar with the French background which Le Goff, as a historian, professionally dealt with, Ahmed Rıfkı calls for a denominational history which would meet modern historiographical standards and complains about its absence. In accordance with his synthesis of modern sciences, Islamic scholarship and Sufism, its repercussions become obvious in his views on the objectives of history as well as on historical theory and methodology.

At the very beginning of the second volume and under the title of "The History of the Tariqa," Ahmed Rıfkı comments "Should adherents of each order had written lives of the saints (*kümmelīn-i evliyā'ullah*), the honorable sheikhs (*meşāyīẖ-i muḥtereme*) starting from their own master (*pīr*), there would have been a history of that order" and that the successors would have earned from sheikhs' "perfections of knowledge (*kemālāt-ı 'irfānīye*) and scholarly miracles (*kerāmāt-ı 'ilmīye*)."[120] Evoking Le Goff's view on the relation of myth and history, he thus emphasizes both. In the absence of denominational histories, what

[119] Jacques Le Goff. *History and Memory*. Translated by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 134, 144.
[120] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 4-5.

is missing is both a historiographical corpus and a knowledge and understanding of the miracles of Sufi saints. That is an observation regarding Sufi orders in general which implies discontent of the absence of genealogies of Sufi orders which would have provided a lot of information along with a relevant historical mentality.

Ahmed Rıfkı later specifies his point for the Bektashi order itself, emphasizing the urgent need for a special history of it. Naming various notable figures within the Bektashi past such as Resul Baba, Mürsel Baba, Balım Sultan, Kaygusuz Veli, Seyyid Ali Sultan, Eryek Baba, Turabi Ali Baba and Halil Revnaki Baba along with Haji Bektash, Ahmed Rıfkı states that their their miracles (*kerāmāt*) and extraordinarinesses (*ḫāriḳulʿādāt*) are known to nobody but Bektashis themselves. He concludes that "those high miracles (*kerāmāt-ı ʿālīye*) circulate only among the adherents of the tariqa for that a special history belonging to the tariqa itself had not been written."[121] Complaining that absence of historical records along with a special history makes his own work less competitive[122], Ahmed Rıfkı weaves a narrative adorned with myth, or rather, miracles to contribute to a special history of the Bektashi order. His narration of Kaygusuz Sultan (d. 1444), a prominent Bektashi dervish, which includes various miracles by both Kaygusuz and Abdal Musa, a possibly fourteenth-century Sufi saint, such as travelling around in the form of a bird, healing a blind man, etc. exemplifies it.[123] Besides, Ahmed Rıfkı employs miracles not only in the construction of narratives, but also in the very texture of his writing. To give an example, in his accounts of prominent Sufi poets such as Nesimi (d. 1417) and Kemal Ümmi (d. 1475), Ahmed Rıfkı mentions their births with supernatural terms with Sufi connotations, respectively "to emerge" (*ẓuhūr etmek*) and "to come into existence" (*vücūda gelmek*).[124] *Ẓuhūr* is the synonym of *tecellī* which means the divine features to become

[121] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 82-83.
[122] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 135.
[123] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 132-135.
[124] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 39, 43.

visible within substances *vücūd* is both the absolute existence of God and human body as the city of God.[125]

Ahmed Rıfkı's historical view bears Khaldunian influence, which is relevant to his intellectual synthesis. That helps him formulate an analytical historical account and integrate contemporaneous Western historiographical tools into his own framework. This is traceable throughout the second volume which he devotes to drafting a total history of the Bektashi order.

"The path our predecessors (*eslāf*) follows in history writing," says Ahmed Rıfkı, "is only outlining the issue in question via a couple of rhymed (*müsecca'*) and jewelled (*muraṣṣa'*) words which make no good, but expressing no opinion on the gist (*rūḥ*), essentials (*esās*), or impacts (*müʾeṩserāt*) of the events."[126] This passage, the very first sentence of the volume, recalls Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* not only in terms of mode and ambition, but also of the role it attributes to history. It implies that history should be a rather explanatory discipline which is quite similar with the Khaldunian complementary discipline of *umran* that focuses on social, economic, political and administrative conditions to expand historical knowledge and insight.[127] Though being regarded a literary genre in the ancient Greek culture which influenced Muslim scholars very much and a religious discipline rather than a philosophical (or proto-scientific) one by Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun classified history as a philosopical-rational discipline and approached it accordingly.[128] Probably by dint of his approach, Ibn Khaldun continued to enjoy a common interest of Western-oriented Ottoman intellectuals and evidences of it revealed how the Khaldunian influence coincided and entangled with cultural Westernization. That would provide insight to the making of Ahmed Rıfkı's intellectual mindset.

[125] Gökbel, *Ansiklopedik Alevi Bektaşi Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 861, 914.
[126] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 3.
[127] Arslan, *İbni Haldun*, 37.
[128] Mehmet Dağ and Hasan Aydın, "İbn Haldûn: Hayatı, Tarih Felsefesi ve İlm-İ Umrân (Uygarlık Bilimi)," *Bilim ve Gelecek*, June, 2017, No. 160: 16-35, 16.

In 1864, *Mecmua-i Fünûn* (Journal of Sciences) makes a call for donating books to establish a new library, whereby out of the 126 books donated, only two of them were non-European, that is, the Ottoman legal code and Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah. The list included works of Bacon, La Fontaine, Helvétius, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith.[129] Besides that instance, Şükrü Hanioğlu mentions a radical break in the writing and conception of history in the second half of the 19th century. The Academy of Sciences charged the conservative bureaucrat Ahmed Cevdet Paşa (1822-95) to write the history of the period between 1774 and 1826 to complete Joseph von Hammer's *Geschichte des Osmanichen Reiches* (History of the Ottoman Empire) which would take 30 years (1854-84) to be completely done. Diverging from the former examples by Ottoman historians, Ahmed Cevdet wrote in a modern fashion to "contextualize documents, historicize developments, and analyze events in the mode of von Hammer." Referring to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Hanioğlu comments that "Ahmed Cevdet Pasha must have studied the works of Buckle, von Hammer, Macaulay, and Taine,"[130] which was an acknowledgement of the indispensibility of Western sources to have a stronger historiography. As a coincidence, *Muqaddimah*'s full translation from Arabic to Ottoman Turkish was published in 1860 in İstanbul, and the translator was Ahmed Cevdet Pasha.[131] To summarize, second half of the 19th century witnessed a rapid cultural Westernization among Ottoman intellectuals, a Western and modernist turn in Ottoman historiography, and Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* succeeded to persist during a wave of Westernization and probably reached a larger audience through translation. Khaldunian, Western and modern influences in Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography might be the consequence of such a background.

[129] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 95.
[130] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 98.
[131] Nurullah Ardıç. 2012. "Genealogy or Asabiyya? Ibn Khaldun between Arab Nationalism and the Ottoman Caliphate." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 71, No. 2, (October): 315-324, 318.

As in several other elements of his thought, Ahmed Rıfkı does not confine himself to defending an explanatory and analytical history, but implements it. To account for the sectarian diversity among Muslims in the 14th century, he suggests that in the middle of endless competition among post-Abbasid small states (*ṭavāʾif-i mülūk*) "number of sects increased as many as the abundance of governments,"[132] historicizing developments in the Cevdetian sense. He later observes that "if one views the books published during Abdülhamid's reign to grasp the atrocity (*meẓālim*) and crimes (*cināyāt*) he committed, it would be seen that they all back his absolutist rule (*idāre-i muṭlaḳa*)" and concludes that this is because authors of the time were government supporters and that they expressed "not the public opinion (*efkār-ı ʿumūmīye*), but the private opinion (*efkār-ı ḫuṣūṣīye*) and the autocratic opinion (*efkār-ı müstebidāne*)." From that point, he infers that one should not confine onself with the Ottoman books, but also review the European books on the Ottoman Empire and grasp the very truth through combining the Ottoman "bias (*ṭarafgīrlik*)" and the European "adversary (*ʿaleyhdārlıḳ*)."[133] The lattest one is an example of contextualizing documents in the way Ahmed Cevdet did and of integrating the notion of public opinion into a historical inquiry which was discussed in the previous chapter.

In his quest for an explanatory and analytical historiography, Ahmed Rıfkı does not hesitate to treat the Sufi historical literature critically. Observing that the contemporaneous Sufi literature in general is weak, he concludes that the Bektashi corpus represents no exception, saying "Nonetheless the work named *Velāyetnāme* (Hagiography) which is considered to be written after the period of the Master (*Ḥażret-i Pīr*, that is, Haji Bektash Veli) had laid open and declared (*basṭ ve beyan itmiş*) the parables (*menāḳıb*) and miracles (*kerāmāt*) of the Master the Supporter (*Ḥażret-i Pīr-i Destgīr*), it is strongly believed that it

[132] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 9.
[133] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 93-94.

is submerged in some false ascriptions (*isnādāt*) and exaggerations (*mübālagāt*)."[134] Despite evoking Leopold von Ranke and his famous phrase "only to say, how it really was,"[135] this passage has rather Khaldunian influence. It is obvious that the quoted sentence does not exclude the miracles per se, but exaggerations and errors. That is in line with Ibn Khaldun's approach to miraculous narratives, that is, not to exclude them on a purely "scientific" basis, but critically engage with them via the science of umran to make a based historical inquiry.[136] That means a historian may regard miraculous narratives valid as long as he could validate them rationally. Ahmed Rıfkı's approach to this topic is rather Khaldunian than Rankean.

Though the term "comparative history" could only gain a relatively wide currency by the 1920s through a couple of pioneering studies and commentaries by its implementors such as Marc Bloch's "Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européenes" (Toward a Comparative History of European Societies)[137], comparative studies had a longer history. In terms of comparison in modern scholarship, Peter Burke traces it back to two of the fathers of sociology, that is Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Max Weber (1864-1929).[138] In fact, notion of comparison in general was much older and Ibn Khaldun whom Ahmed Rıfkı was quite familiar with was among its representatives. Walter J. Fischel underlines that the Ibn Khaldun defines Arab historian al-Masudi's (896-956) approach as "a model for future historians to follow" for he had "set down the state of the world among all regions and races, as well as customs and sectarian beliefs of their adherents as they have developed."[139] To emphasize it, this is not comparative history in modern sense, but an appreciation of the notion of comparison in general and it is part of Ahmed Rıfkı's historiographical approach.

[134] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 6-7.
[135] Arnold, *History*, 36.
[136] Dağ and Aydın, "İbn Haldûn," 21-22.
[137] William H. Jr. Sewell, 1967. "Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History." *History and Theory* 6, No. 2: 208-218, 208.
[138] Peter Burke. 1993. *History and Social Theory*. New York: Cornell University Press, 22-23.
[139] Walter J. Fischel. 1961. "Ibn Khaldūn's Use of Historical Sources." *Studia Islamica*, No. 14: 109-119, 116-117.

Ahmed Rıfkı defines the problematic he would deal with throughout two volumes via a comparison. In the very beginning of the first volume, he mentions Freemasons, "a mysterious moral society (*esrārengīz bir cemʿiyet-i aḫlāḳīye*)," and the Italian Carbonari which he describes as "the revolutionary and progressive political form (*iḫtilālī, inḳılābī bir şekl ü siyāsīsi*) of Freemasonry" that the public could never learn much about. Then he adds a few more secret societies from a couple of countries such as Children of Siva (*Siva Evlādları*) from India and Hichyun from Russia, remarking that they indeed charmed the intelligent and wise sections of those countries, but encountered overwhelming gossips among the public. As expected, he concludes that the Bektashi order which "started with the emergence (*ẓuhūr*) of the Ottoman state and has continued (*teselsül edegelmişdir*) until the present day" was the Ottoman secret society which experienced the very same circumstances.[140] Applying comparison among diverse contexts from the Muslim Ottoman Empire to the Orthodox Russia, the Catholic Europe, and the colonized India reveals a quest for universality and the first two examples Ahmed Rıfkı provides correspond to a rather worldly and political dimension and demand further discussion.

Ahmed Rıfkı indicates that Carbonari was not a religious, but a political organization. Though universalism and modernism would be the first themes to come to mind, its political connotation in the post-1908 Ottoman context. Ahmed Rıfkı wrote that in the revolutionary Second Constitutional period, and Carbonari was a revolutionary secret society which had inspired leaders of CUP, the ruling party.[141] Through the example of Carbonari, he resembles Bektashis with the ruling party itself. As for Freemasonry, the stories of early Freemasonry in Turkey and Bektashism were rather entangled. Masonic lodges had been active throughout the Ottoman domains since the earliest decades of the 19th century and many Young Turks including CUP members had joined them. The early

[140] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 3-5.
[141] Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael. 2011. *Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East: Continuity and Change.* New York: Routledge, 26.

twentieth-century Turkish Masonic communities had Bektashi Sufi members among them, and some zealot Muslim circles also indicated the proximity of those two spiritual traditions. When Turkish Masons claimed to be good Muslims in the 1950s, the clerics responded that even if they are, they would be classified as a branch of Batınism, a religious interpretation which refused to submit to the ostensible (*ẓāhirī*) meanings of Qur'anic verses in favor of the inner (*bāṭınī*) truth.[142] Ahmed Rıfkı's frequent mentionings of the importance of the notion of *bāṭın* in the Bektashi faith[143] might be interpreted as a manifestation of the proximity. Besides, some sources suggest that there had been Masonic Ottoman Bektashis since the late 18th century.[144]

Ahmed Rıfkı applies the notion of comparison to the question of religions in general, and compares diverse religious traditions including Islam. He defines two main reasons for the establishment of religions in general, namely to determine the human duty of divine service and to follow a moral purpose. He then classifies two types of religions, namely Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic which he terms "first" and "second." He does not employ value-laden terms in his discussion of those two types, except stating that the first group (Abrahamic) had come from the God (*cenāb-ı ḥaḳḳ*), but the other one had diverged from the essential religion. He uses no extra biased term (including "superstition," i.e. *bāṭıl*) and acknowledges that non-Abrahamic religions follow a similar moral purpose with the Abrahamic ones.[145] Almost equalizing Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic faiths implies Enlightenment influence and it might have gone beyond the Islamic framework. Particularly in methodological sense, Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography borrows very much from the Enlightenment philosophy.

[142] See Thierry Zarcone. 2014. "Freemasonry and Islam." In *Handbook of Freemasonry*, edited by Henrik Bogdan and Jan A.M. Snoek, 233-257. Leiden: Brill.
[143] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 54.
[144] Kut and Eldem, *Rumeli Hisarı Şehitlik Dergâhı Mezar Taşları*, 47.
[145] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 15-16.

2.2. *Cidāl-i Ḥayāt Ḳānūnu*: An Evolutionary Philosophy of History

> Bigotry (*taʿaṣṣub*) offends scholarship (*ʿilm*) everywhere, ignorance (*cehl*) lays a drawback (*ḥāʾil*), a trap (*tuzak*) to intellect's (*ẕekāʾ*) peaceful path (*şehrāh*) … as Bektashism progressed and gained support, some circles disapproved of it. They considered ways to annihilate it and took precautions against it. In the end, they did it.[146]

Ostensibly a regret for the misfortune of Bektashis, the epigraph indeed bears an expression of an evolutionary philosophy of history. Ahmed Rıfkı suggests a dichotomy whereby there is bigotry and ignorance on one side, and scholarship and intellect on the other, locating Bektashis on the latter side. The subpart "Some Elucidations" (*Baʿzı İ̄żāḥāt*) where the quoted passage is set would be described to lay out the philosophy of history defined there and the way it is implemented. Notion of Law of Struggle (*Cidāl-i Ḥayāt Ḳānūnu*) would be the key to it.

The subpart in question is the conclusion of the two-volume series where Ahmed Rıfkı productively uses a rather conceptual language to formulate an evolutionary philosophy of history. Being followed by Hazım Agah Efendi's letter on Bektashi lodges in Iraq, it covers the last 15 pages (from 135 to 150) written by Ahmed Rıfkı himself, that means, it makes the author's last word. In terms of mode, it resembles with the first volume which has a conceptual language rather than the second volume which is an event-based, though not chronological, history of the Bektashi order. Usage of modernist terms such as union (*ittiḥād*), progress (*teraḳḳī*), and renovation (*teceddüd*) marks the shift in tone.[147] In terms of content, it concludes the series with a formulation of an antagonistic philosophy of history with obvious Darwinian, Spencerian and Marxian influence which turns out to be the basis where he builds his historical narrative on.

Claiming to offer a wholistic explanation of not only human history but also the nature itself, Ahmed Rıfkı builds his philosophy of history on a Darwinian notion of antagonism and interprets the Islamic history within that framework. Ahmed Rıfkı argues

[146] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 139.
[147] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 140.

that the history and evolution (*tekāmül*) of the Bektashi order corresponds to a philosophy of history, and then defines one which focuses on the impediments to the emergence of new paths at the outset. "The Law of Struggle (*Cidāl-i Ḥayāt Ḳānūnu*)," says Ahmed Rıfkı, "makes impact on anything, that is substances, animals and humans, likewise it makes impact even on prayers of sects, philosophical paths and religious orders." Reminding the challenges by Qurayshians and Jews in the beginning, he celebrates Islam for "following the evolutionary chain (*zincīr-i tekāmül*)" and finally reaching out to 400-450 million people.[148] Aside from the claim of a global Muslim population of 400-450 million which was 360 million in the first volume, Ahmed Rıfkı's philosophy of history based on the Law of Struggle should be discussed in terms of Darwinian and Spencerian influence on it.

Ahmed Rıfkı's emphasis on struggle and analogy with the nature reveals the influence of Darwinian and Spencerian evolutionary approach on his thought. Notion of struggle, which is at odds with the conventional Islamic and Christian doctrines which praise perfect balance,[149] is indeed core of the model proposed by Charles Darwin (1809-82) who explains evolutionary change as "the product of the combination of variation between individuals, heredity, selection and struggle for existence."[150] As for analogy with nature, his proposition of the Law of Struggle as a wholistic model which explains substances, animals and human history alike recalls Herbert Spencer's (1820-1903) social evolutionary model. Spencer both assumes parallels between the natural and social evolution and a continuous progressive "transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous."[151]

[148] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşīʾ Sırrı – II*, 136.
[149] Salimuzzaman Siddiqi and S. Mahdihassan, "Chemistry," 1296-1316; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Natural History," 1316-1332. In *A History of Muslim Philosophy – II*, edited by Mian Mohammad Sharif. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966, 1309, 1325, fn. 24.
[150] Blackledge, "Historical Materialism: From Social Evolution to Revolutionary Politics," In *Historical Materialism and Social Evolution*, edited by Paul Blackledge and Graeme Kirkpatrick, 8-35. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 13, (Richard Lewontin. 1995. *Human Diversity*. New York: Scientific American Library, 149).
[151] Blackledge, "Historical Materialism," 9, (Alex Callinicos. 1999. *Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 101).

Though considerably Spencerian in his emphasis on parallels between nature and society, Ahmed Rıfkı's evolutionary view might be rather divergent from Spencer's.

Confusion with Ahmed Rıfkı's usage of the term evolution (*tekāmül*) stems from his lack of precision in Spencerian sense and an equivocacy. Spencer has a precisely progressive evolutionary scheme where transformation of the homogenous into heterogenous, or of the primitive into complex whereby the more developed definitely wins at the end, and consequently, the prevailing ones are necessarily the stronger and the more developed ones. Ahmed Rıfkı's observation Islam "following the evolutionary chain and finally reaching out to 400-450 million people" might be considered compatible with such framework, but it lacks precision. Ahmed Rıfkı does not provide a definite explanation of the evolutionary process whereby its direction is necessarily progressive in the Spencerian sense. Given his frequent emphasis on the notion of progress (*terakḳḳī*), for Ahmed Rıfkı it is desireable, but not inevitable. Besides, he mentions a couple of orders such as Akbariyyah, Madaniyyah and Rushaniyyah which could not maintain their existence, but does not provide an evolutionary explanation of their failure.[152] Given that he also regards Bektashis as losers, but does not define it as their own fault, it becomes clear that his approach to evolutionary mechanisms is not totally Spencerian. As for equivocacy, the term he uses for evolutionary chain, that is *zincīr-i tekāmül*, has a Sufi connatation. The Ottoman Turkish term which stands for perfection in the Sufi sense is the same as the term for evolution, that is *tekāmül*. Moreover, the term *zincīr-i tekāmül* is also part of Sufi terminology, implying path to perfection, that is the spiritual experience to become a mature person (*insān-ı kāmil*). Ahmed Rıfkı, as he does in various occasions, employs a terminology whereby Western and Sufi conceptions may overlap one another.

[152] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 136.

Notion of evolution based on antagonism would remind the reader Karl Marx, and Marxian influence on Ahmed Rıfkı becomes obvious in his dialectical reading of the Bektashi history. Following a statement that the way (*erkān*) and morals (*ādāb*) set by Haji Bektash Veli worked for one and a half century, Ahmed Rıfkı suggest "not only way and morals, but everything is an inducer of and subject to change (*tebeddülāt*) and that principle practices and events rely on transitions (*taḥavvülāt*) and revolutions (*inḳılābāt*)," Balım Sultan who is also called the Second Master (*Pīr-i Ṣānī*) renewed and perfected all of it. He prooceds with examples from other Sufi orders and mentions Naqshbandis among whom "every 100 years a renovator (*müceddid*), that is renewer (*yenileşdiren, yeniletici*) emerges."[153] This is a dialectical approach in Marxian sense, that is, in Trotsky's words, dialectic as "the conversion from quantity to quality," and "the general formula for all evolutionary processes (Pomper 1986, 88)."[154] His conception of religion and religious traditions is not static, but dynamic whereby they are subject to constant change and renewal. His terminology bears traces of both a traditional religious mentality and a Marxian one.

Ahmed Rıfkı's conception of renewal represents a synthesis of the Sufi tradition and Marxist theory. The term he uses for Naqshbandi renewers, which is *müceddid* (renovator) derives from the same root as the word *teceddüd* which is already explained to have an Islamic connotation. Though Ahmed Rıfkı uses that term within the boundaries of the Naqshbandi context, it is obvious he was indeed addressing an audience not very familiar with Islamic conceptions. It is his terminology what reveals it. The term *müceddid* is an originally Arabic term which is very well known among religious circles. As he specifies it via originally Turkish words *yenileşdirici* and *yeniletici*, it becomes clear that that part addresses an audience who needs the term *müceddid* to be specified for them. However, the

[153] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 137.
[154] Blackledge, "Historical Materialism," 30.

second term he uses for Bektashis, that is *inḳılāb* (revolution), is definitely modern and non-religious. It is the term which is used for the 1908 Revolution itself. As mentioned above, Ahmed Rıfkı had been member to socialist parties int the early 1910s and wrote socialist articles and poems in socialist magazines and that explains his familiarity with and sympathy to Marxist concepts and ideas.

Ahmed Rıfkı is not a Marxist, but a Marxian intellectual who borrows considerably from Marxism, and integrates Marxian elements into a rather moderate modernist framework based on a synthesis of *mekteb*, *medrese* and *tekke*. His antagonistic understanding of history does not engage in class antagonism which is central to Marxism, but in an antagonism between the bigoted pious and the enlightened Sufis. Consequently, his notion of revolution is not a socialist, but a Sufi and a hardly political one. Though his philosophy of history is substantially influenced by Marxism, his social and political project is a moderate modernist one, that is, to make Bektashis a major component of a modern Islamicate society of citizens. This is why he should be designated a Marxian, but not a Marxist.

The subpart "Some Elucidations" provides an antagonistic and evolutionary philosophy of history which Ahmed Rıfkı builds his history of Bektashism on. Relying on a central antagonism between the bigoted and the enlightened, he drafts a history which serves to locate Bektashis at the very center of the Islamic and Ottoman traditions. Harputlu İshak Efendi who provides a theological interpretation of the anti-Bektashi exclusivist approach becomes his target.

2.3. Question of Muslimhood: Are Bektashis Heretics?

Making of Ahmed Rıfkı's historiography relies on a political project, that is to make Bektashis a major component of the Ottoman Islamicate society of citizens, and takes shape depending upon an intellectual endeavor to demonstrate how well Bektashis fit into it. That

demands a discussion on both Muslimhood and Ottomanhood of Bektashis. Ahmed Rıfkı therefore needs to proceed by polemic with opponents of Bektashism, particularly Harputlu İshak Efendi who was a pioneer of anti-Bektashi hostility. Outlining Ahmed Rıfkı's views on the Muslimhood and Ottomanhood of Bektashis requires an account of the ideas Harputlu İshak Efendi expresses in *Kāşifu'l-Esrār*.

The core of *Kāşifu'l-Esrār* is insistence on the heresy of Bektashis and İshak Efendi employs arguments and literary strategies relevant to that aim. His arguments revolve around heretical or simply non-Muslim elements in Bektashi rituals and their association with Hurufism, that is a then non-existent esoteric interpretation based on the belief that letters, syntax and gematria (*abjad*) had a secret divine meaning. Hurufis were declared as unbelievers in the fourteenth-century Iran, and their founding father Fazlullah-i Hurufi (d. 1394) was executed. They experienced a similar fortune in the late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ottoman domain.[155] Associating Bektashis with Hurufism was so central in İshak Efendi's argument that he devoted two of the three chapters of *Kāşifu'l-Esrār* to Hurufism and only the first chapter to both Bektashis and Hurufis.[156] As for literary strategies, he resorts to either connotations of heresy and Hurufism of Bektashis or to Christian religious terms in defining their faith and divine practice.

İshak Efendi speaks to the point with his arguments, and as for literary strategies, he is still straightforward, but his tone might sound indirect if one fails to penetrate the conceptual context. To give an example, İshak Efendi argues that Bektashis as well as Hurufis deem Fazlullah-ı Hurufi superior to Prophet Muhammad and Caliph Ali who are two most central individuals in Shiite faith, and then concludes: "These are not Shiites, but a distinct community of polytheists [*ṭā'ife-i münkirīn*], and since they could not attract Jews

[155] Hüsamettin Aksu. 1998. "Hurûfîlik." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi XVIII*, 408-412. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.
[156] Harputlu İshak Efendi. 1291/1875. *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāifü'l-Eşrār*. İstanbul: Yahya Efendi Matbaası, 3.

or Christians, they attracted ones tended to fancy of desire [*nafs*] among followers of Islam."[157] This is nothing but a straightforward and internally consistent takfir. The literary strategies are alike and this should be laid bare through a discussion of the conceptual context.

From the beginning of *Kāşifu'l-Esrār,* İshak Efendi employs a highly allusive language aiming at takfir of Bektashis. Following basmala and an additional Islamic expression, he starts the first sentence of the book as such: "And then it should be obvious that the primary of the communities (*ṭavā'if*) which are busy with deceiving (*iżlāl*) the Muslims is the community (*ṭā'ife*) of Bektashis…"[158] The term *ṭā'ife*, or *ṭavā'if* in the plural form, which is an originally Arabic word bears various meanings such as cult, party and community. Taken narrowly, it refers to religious communities and more particularly to non-Muslim religious minorities. Along with explicitly charging Bektashis with deceiving Muslims, the terminology intends to question the Muslimhood of Bektashis at the outset. Questioning goes further through the observation that Hurufis whom Harputlu İshak Efendi identifies with Bektashis attribute godhead (*ulūhiyet*) spiritual leader Fazlullah-ı Hurufi.[159] The originally Arabic word *ulūhiyet* derives from the root of *ilah* which means god in general and is the root of *Allah*, that is the monotheistic god of Islam. Attributing *ulūhiyet* to a human being is literally polytheism in Islamic faith.

Another literary strategy of Harputlu İshak Efendi is employing Christian religious terms in defining Bektashi faith and divine service which is a rather implicit way of expressing the alleged non-Muslimhood of Bektashis. In a discussion of the meaning of sixteen belts that Bektashi faith associates with sixteen prophets and each one's distinct tradition (*sunnah*), Harputlu İshak Efendi argues that Bektashis prefer to term *tebe'-i bend*

[157] Harputlu İshak Efendi, *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfi'ü'l-Eşrār*, 9.
[158] "Ve ba'd ma'lūm ola ki ehl-i İslām'ı iżlāl ile meşgūl olan ṭavā'ifin en başlıcası ṭāi'fe-i Bektaşīyān olub…" Harputlu İshak Efendi, *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfi'ü'l-Eşrār*, 2.
[159] Harputlu İshak Efendi, *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfi'ü'l-Eşrār*, 6.

(the belt associated with Jesus) as *zünnār* among themselves. In Ottoman Turkish, the word *zünnār* stands for refers the liturgical belt worn by Christian clergy. Having thrown Muslimhood of Bektashis through a connotation of Christianity, he takes it further stating that Bektashis indeed believe in Trinitarian principles of Christianity (*eḳānīm-i s̱elās̱e*).[160] Ahmed Rıfkı, in response, devised counter strategies to stress Muslimhood of Bektashis.

Ahmed Rıfkı writes history in a purpose-driven manner, making Bektashis a legitimate and major component of the Ottoman Islamicate society of citizens, and determines the historical problematics he would deal with accordingly. He does not hesitate to transgress methodological norms in favor of normative conclusions which would work, such as the impossibility of a non-Bektashi to refute Bektashism since it is a secret society and therefore "statements from outside would remain limited"[161] or dismissing the possibility of finding a single Bektashi who might believe in reincarnation (*tenāsüḫ*) for that "it is a superstitious (*bāṭıl*) sect."[162] In order to stress Muslimhood of Bektashis, Ahmed Rıfkı employs two strategies which are to link Bektashis to early Muslims and particularly to Caliph Ali, and to underline the antagonism between the alleged bigoted pious and the enlightened Sufi, suggesting that it is the latter who represents the Islamic values.

In order to highlight the Islamic roots of the Bektashi order, Ahmed Rıfkı discusses its origins, emphasizing the links with both early Muslims and mainstream Sufi orders in the Ottoman domain. Stating that Bektashism and Naqshbandism "had emerged from the same root, as two branches from the Turkic Sufi master Ahmed Yesevi (d. 1166)",[163] he links Haji Bektash Veli with Imam Jafar al-Sadiq who is one of the Twelve Imams in Shiite faith[164] and consequently with Caliph Ali through spiritual lineage.[165] Ahmed Rıfkı hereby

[160] Harputlu İshak Efendi, *Kāşifü'l-Esrār ve Dāfi'ü'l-Eşrār,* 8.
[161] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 57-58.
[162] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II,* 87.
[163] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 7.
[164] Mustafa Öz. 1993. "Ca'fer es-Sâdık." In *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi VII,* 1-3. İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı.

makes two significant points in terms of responding to Harputlu İshak Efendi's arguments. Firstly, linking Bektashism with Imam Jafar and consequently with Caliph Ali implies an incontestable Islamic root and character. Secondly, his emphasis on common roots with the Naqshbandi order has a significance within the Ottoman context due to their respected and influential position. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, Naqshbandis were both the mainstream Ottoman Sufi order and one of the components of persecution against Bektashis. Naqshbandi sheikhs both joined the Consultancy Assemblies where Bektashis were judged and took charge of the Bektashi lodges which were not destroyed as discussed above. Thus Ahmed Rıfkı both stresses the legitimate and Islamic roots of Bektashism and reminds the Naqshbandi community about their common background.

For Ahmed Rıfkı, place of Sufism in Islamic history is rather a question of zealot-Sufi antagonism which is characterized by the moral and intellectual superiority of the latter over the former. He illustrates his point through associating all of the persecuted throughout Islamic history making sure to place Bektashis among them, belittling the zealot who oppresses the Sufi and finally, questioning the faith of the zealot. For him, this approach serves as a comprehensive framework of the Islamic history.

Depending on the context, mentioning the stories and spiritual contributions of a group of prominent historical Sufis figures along with oppression by the bigoted might become a narrative strategy to favor a specific group, and Ahmed Rıfkı does that for Bektashis. After listing a couple of founding figures of Bektashism including Haji Bektash Veli, Kaygusuz Veli and Seyyid Nesimi whom he names "the blissful martyr" (*şehīd-i sa'īd*) and their works, he concludes that "Bektashis follow not path other than that of Sufis (*ehl-i taṣavvuf*)." He then adds that the bigoted who regard exaggeration of the notion of the unity of existence (*vaḥdet-i vücūd*) as heresy had persecuted Mansur al-Hallaj, Muhyiddin

[165] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 33-34.

Ibn Arabi, Seyyid Nesimi and Sheikh Bedreddin Simavi like they did for Bektashis.[166] The list Ahmed Rıfkı makes is strategically meaningful since all except one, i.e. Sheikh Bedreddin, are historic figures of Sufism who had been attacked by the bigoted Muslim scholars during their lifetimes (two of them, that is Mansur al-Hallaj and Seyyid Nesimi, were executed), but enjoyed an official appreciation by the Ottoman political and scholarly establishment. Associating them with the rebellious Sheikh Bedreddin and the excluded Bektashi order is Ahmed Rıfkı's strategic move to rehabilitate them. Towards the end of the volume, he extends the list with names from all Abrahamic religions such as Joseph, Moses, Yahya (John the Baptist), Zechariah, Jesus, Hasan and Husayn (*Ḥasanein*) and the virtuous women (*muḥadderāt*) of Ahl al-Bayt and mentions their misfortunes, concluding "it is always the reverend personalities (*ẕevāt-ı muḥterem*) who is made subject to calamity (*belā'*), catastroph (*felāket*), misunderstanding (*sū-i ẓann*), and cheating (*ḥīle*)."[167] Integrating elements from all Abrahamic religious traditions into the narrative would reinforce the strategic move towards rehabilitating Bektashis.

Ahmed Rıfkı deems the pious (*zāhid*) morally inferior to the Sufi and consequently questions the faith of the former. For both points, he draws on anecdotes and couplets of Nesimi who is indeed a legendary figure in Sufi literature. Ahmed Rıfkı narrates Nesimi's execution which was decided because of his verses based on *vaḥdet-i vücūd*. "This man's blood is filthy," says the mufti and declares that if Nesimi's blood touches an organ of somebody else, that organ should be amputated. While mufti is repeating those words, blood of Nesimi who is being flayed splashes on his hand, and he claims to have said it metaphorically. Ahmed Rıfkı cites the couplet that Nesimi is claimed to have composed at that moment: "If you were to cut the finger of a zealot, he would back-paddle to escape

[166] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 11-12.
[167] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 150-151.

from God / Then see this sluggard lover (*miskīn ʿāşıḳ*): he is slayed, but it doesn't hhurt."[168] Message of that anecdote and couplet goes well beyond regret to unfairness, implying a great moral superiority regarding the Sufi who simply is not afraid to die for one's faith and dignity. That point makes it easier for Ahmed Rıfkı to comment on the faith of the pious which he does. Questioning whether belief confined to the ostensibility (*ẓāhir*) is faith at all, he decides it is not, and quotes a couplet by Nesimi whereby he designates the pious who messes with worldly pleasures and confines religion to the *ẓāhirī* an infidel (*kāfir*): "Pavilion of the world is the infidel's house of idols / He has no faith, he prostrated to his Latta."[169] Moralist reading of the question of pious-Sufi antagonism lays the ground for explaining the misfortune of Bektashis on an essentially moral ground.

Ahmed Rıfkı's view on the place of Bektashis in the Ottoman history is clear, that is, an undeniably contributive and central one. According to him, Bektashis had always served the Ottoman state, starting from Haji Bektash Veli's assistance to the foundation of the Guild of Janissaries upon the request of Orhan Beg (r. 1324-1362) who was the second ruler of the Ottoman state.[170] Modern age was not considered to be different. "Services that Bektashis have provided for this esteemed land (*vaṭan-ı muʿazzez*) is undeniable," says Ahmed Rıfkı, adding that, as defenders of liberty and possessors of free thought, Bektashis also contributed to the establishment of Second Constitutional rule.[171] His approach to the Ottoman establishment and to Constitutional rule as a revolutionary period was discussed above as part of his moderate modernist synthesis. Here is another issue, that is, such a perfectly positive illustration leaves no other option than a moral critique of anti-Bektashi policies.

[168] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II,* 41.
[169] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 52.
[170] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 24.
[171] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I,* 115.

Nonetheless Ahmed Rıfkı develops a conceptual framework, religio-political project and philosophy of history of his own, his historiography considerably relies on a moralist reading of history. Among a great variety of factors which had culminated in the persecution of Bektashis, he mostly resorts to a moral critique. In the case of Harputlu İshak as a pioneer of hostility towards Bektashis, his motive becomes desire "to gain reputation via public outcry and offense"[172] and his intervention "political manipulation and a hypocritical pen."[173] For Janissaries, the problem is that "after the year 1000 [1591/2], it dared to involve in some inappropriate business" and that "disobedience and irregularities emerged."[174] As for the problems with the Bektashi community itself, the Chelebi Bektashis who are another sect than Ahmed Rıfkı's Babagan become the scapegoat who immorally organize insurrections and cause malice.[175] That is not necessarily a flaw though since he has no claim to represent a purely objective and impartial position. He is rather a politically motivated Sufi intelectual who pushes forward for a rather Bektashi friendly interpretation of Ottoman modernization.

[172] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 99.
[173] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – I*, 134.
[174] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 53.
[175] Ahmed Rıfkı, *Bektaşī Sırrı – II*, 32.

CONCLUSION

Ahmed Rıfkı authored both a comprehensive and innovative reinterpretation of Bektashism. It is comprehensive in terms of abundance and diversity in content and unique in terms of a combination of intellectual depth, perspective and author's subjectivity. Rather comprehensive accounts of a modern(ist) reinterpretation of Sufism were priorly penned by Orientalists, but not by an insider. Besides, the Ottoman Bektashi community was no stranger to a new type of adherents who are familiar with Western cultural traditions, but such a synthesis of the Sufi and Western cultural traditions was a novelty.

Bektaşī Sırrı offers the reader two main critiques (of Harputlu İshak Efendi and Chelebi Bektashis), entangled with a rich conceptual framework and an alternative historiography. Though it is not easy to distinguish those elements since Ahmed Rıfkı had tightly knitted them, this research has mainly focused on Ahmed Rıfkı's critique of Harputlu İshak Efendi and the latter's conceptual framework. Components of his historiography were rather selectively treated, and his critique of Chelebi Bektashis was only mentioned in passing.

The chosen topics represent the core of Ahmed Rıfkı's work since his conceptual framework is not only an intellectual one, but also an expression of his social and political project and of his interpretation of the Ottoman context itself. His trilateral synthesis of Sufism, Islamic scholarship, and modern sciences provides the reader with a value system whereby the Sufi conception which represents the core is complemented by Islamic scholarship and they are reinforced by the modern sciences. That is a concise expression of his moderate modernist social and political project whereby the Bektashi community becomes a major component of the Ottoman society of citizens, and Sufi values constitute the core of "national" values and sentiments. In determining the topics to exclude, both nature of the topics and subjective preferences played a role.

Despite having managed to devise a variety of conceptual and methodological tools, Ahmed Rıfkı occasionally resorts to a moralist and normative reading of history and consequently a moralist critique of historical phenomena. As put towards the end of the previous chapter, it is not necessarily a flaw for a politically motivated intellectual who has no claim to have an impartial position, but it might result in a lack of rich discussion of some topics . To give an example, persistence in explaining the weakening of the Janissary corps with the moral decay among Janissaries does not offer much to discuss. In the topic of historiography, this research rather focused on elements which enable a thorough discussion. For the exclusion of the critique of Chelebi Bektashis, the reason is not the moralist reading Ahmed Rıfkı slips to, which he indeed does, but that it deserves to be dealt with in the context of polemics around *Bektaşī Sırrı*.

İsmail Kasap and Yusuf Turan Günaydın who have Latinized and edited Ali Ulvi Baba's (1864-1954) *Bektaşîlik Maḳālātı* which is a critique of *Bektaşī Sırrı* list a few more critiques of this work, and the listed authors are Cemaleddin Efendi who is already mentioned in this research, Balabani Ziyaeddin Hüsni (d. 1928), Ahmed Safi (1851-1926) and Münci Baba (1864-1924).[176] This list possesses a diversity of both Babagan and Chelebi Bektashis and also other Sufi orders. Ahmed Rıfkı's unconventional way had commenced a long-lasting and rich polemic which is not within the scope of this research. Ahmed Rıfkı's critique of Chelebi Bektashis is the moment he incites the first and most famous polemic around the book and therefore, I decided that this topic should be treated within a discussion of the polemics themselves.

Ahmed Rıfkı authored the book in a very lively intellectual atmosphere and received much interaction. Nevertheless, it was highly neglected in the following decades. Problems and agendas of Turkey had profoundly changed and his rather unique religio-political

[176] İsmail Kasap and Yusuf Turan Günaydın. 2006. "Önsöz." In *Bektaşîlik Makâlâtı*, by Ali Ulvî Baba, 5-6. İstanbul: Horasan Yayınları, 6.

identity, that is, an Ottomanist Bektashi in the post-Ottoman era, brought him isolation. His political isolation caused an intellectually undeserved oblivion which prevented the public to witness the potentials of his work and immediate polemics around it.

This research offers a discussion of Ahmed Rıfkı's intellectual contribution to the post-1908 era and it might provide a starting point for further research and discussion. Research on Ahmed Rıfkı could be deepened with a focus on his other intellectual activities such as humor and political literature or with a contextualizing of him as an example of a rather isolated Bektashi Sufi with probably little community interaction or his place among the exiles of the post-war Turkey.

For polemics around the book, a rather contextual and long-term analysis of the debate and later life courses of the debating parties could be made. To give an example, his main opponent Cemaleddin Efendi becomes a pro-Kemalist in the post-WWI era and joins the Turkish parliament established in Ankara in 1920 under a Kemalist leadership to lead the War of Independence. It might be possible to trace the roots of completely dissimilar later life courses in their earlier polemic through a contextual analysis. Such a research might contribute to grasping the potentials of intellectual interventions and polemics of the post-1908 era.

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