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# *A Zazaki Alevi Treatise from Diyarbekir\**

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MUSTAFA DEHQAN

## **Abstract**

*The overwhelming importance of Kurdish, both language and literature, in Turkish Kurdistan has tended to push into the background all other languages, though some of them are spoken by large and important populations. Zazaki and its literature is one of these that has received far less attention than it deserves, many educated people outside of Turkish Kurdistan being hardly aware of its existence. In this article I have presented the content of fragments from a new Zazaki source. Fragments fortunately preserved in the binding cover of an old book, which seems to give us at least one of the neglected sources from which the Zazaki writers drew, and to carry us back into the memories and the doctrines of the Zazaki community. It has great value as a document of the history of Alevism in Eastern Anatolia.*

That Alevism must have been an important factor in Kurdistan's history in the Zazaki-speaking area is reflected in the fact that the literary heritage of the Zaza community has preserved valuable, and sometimes unique, evidence of its most formidable opponent's history and doctrine. The nature and weight of Zazaki and related sources deserve a special investigation that refers to the local history of the Alevi sect and which may shed some light on the much-disputed character of that religion and its followers. This article, however, does not pretend to give another account of Zazaki language and literature<sup>1</sup>, nor does it intend to deal with the problem of Alevi doctrines and their history.<sup>2</sup> Rather, its main aim is to present a newly-found Zazaki manuscript in which the Alevis and their religion are briefly described. Of course the difficulties of such a manuscript and its contents should not be underestimated; I have been confronted with so many questions and problems that it would probably have been more appropriate to insert a question-mark after the title of this article. Let me, therefore, only describe the manuscript and some of those theological problems in order to give an impression of the specific subjects involved in the study of the present Zazaki text that originated in the Zazaki-speaking area of Eastern Anatolia.

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<sup>1</sup>On the Zazaki language, see, for example, L. Paul, *Zazaki: Grammatik und Versuch einer Dialektologie* (Wiesbaden, 1998).

<sup>2</sup>For Alevi doctrines, in general, see P.J. Bumke, "Kizilbasch-Kurden in Dersim (Tunceli, Türkei): Marginalität und Haresie", *Anthropos* 74 (1979), pp. 530–548; and M. van Bruinessen, "'Aslini Inkar Eden Haramzadedir!' The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevis", in: K. Kehl-Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele, and A. Otter-Beaujean (eds.), *Collected Papers of the International Symposium "Alevism in Turkey and Comparable Sycretistic Religious Communities in the Near East in the Past and Present" Berlin, 14–17 April 1995* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 1–23.

## Manuscript

The Alevis treatise described in this article is one of the many unstudied texts in the tradition of Zazaki religious literature. It is described by the author as his

Book on ‘Alī, the important incarnation of God, and the doctrines of writer’s ancestors, the great *Qizilbāshs*<sup>3</sup> (i.e. Alevis).

The present work is, to my knowledge, known in only one Zazaki manuscript that I located in the possession of Mehmet Yildiz, a Kurdish uneducated bookbinder, in Diyarbakir. The provenance of the manuscript is not entirely clear. Mehmet claimed that the manuscript was previously in the possession of a Dersimi Zaza who migrated to Diyarbakir, and when he died it was sold to Faruk Efendi, a Turkish dealer whose shop in Istanbul was for years the meeting place for collectors. Faruk expected to sell it to Istanbul University, but his death in Diyarbakir brought that project to an end. Finally the manuscript was purchased by the cousin of Faruk from whom Mehmet has bought the manuscript.

The manuscript is written in the Arabic script in the Zazaki language by a non-professional scribe, and begins with the *basmala*. It is written in a type of *naskh*, and does not have a title page with the name of the work. On the last folio of the first section of the manuscript, the scribe gives the date 1212 AH (1798), and on the last folio another piece of handwriting gives the date 1246 AH (1831). There are some other, later, dates in the text. According to its palaeographic features, the scribe and the text both suggest the same dates for the production of the manuscript: end of eighteenth–beginning of nineteenth century. The treatise consists of 32 folios. The size of the folio is 22 × 18.5 cm; the text takes up both sides of the folio, with 14 lines on each side; the size of the text is 16 × 12 cm. The pagination is late and Oriental. The paper is of European manufacture (London) with a watermark. The watermark reads “W. Lemoine”. The date of manufacture of the paper is 1784 (watermark). All of the manuscript is written with black ink; there is no any *shanjarf* word. The binding is somewhat late of brown leather. The author was Isa Beg b. ‘Alī, who held the title Sultan Efendi and was also known as Sultan. Although born in Diyarbakir, he had lived in Istanbul from his early years. We know nothing more about him except that he was the author of an Islamic History (*Tā’rīkh*), which comprised at least three volumes.<sup>4</sup>

From the characteristics of the manuscript it is important to note several graphic features. Judging from the handwriting and the dates, the copy of this work was made by several scribes. The principles of writing several words are different not only for different scribes, but sometimes are not even the same for the same scribe. The letter *wāw*, for example, is frequently written as *lām*, for example in the word *vate*, and *hā* is written instead of the letter *jīm*, for example in the word *ciab*. There are many crossed-out words, and letters written above the lines, which were omitted or did not fit in the line. There are also many Turkisms in the text; that is, Turkish words, sentences, phrases, and lines of verse.

<sup>3</sup>The opening words of the treatise. It is a pleasure to thank Şahin Xêrô for checking my translation here and elsewhere and to thank Turan Kaya for making the manuscript available to me.

<sup>4</sup>To my knowledge, Efendi’s History is lost and only cited in the present manuscript. See fol.9v.

As for the place of origin, the main scribe was evidently of Zazaki background and training, even if living in non-Zazaki regions.<sup>5</sup> There are some mistakes in the Turkish, and sometimes the Zazaki, sentences of the manuscript and the scribe seems not to have been perfectly educated in Turkish. Possibly the scribe did not care about his Turkish reputation, which could indicate that his priority in producing this manuscript was more commercial than aesthetic, and he wanted to carry out his work as quickly as possible. The fact that manuscript was written by someone who was self-confessedly not a professional scribe raises the possibility that the Zazaki text of the manuscript may also have been poorly copied. Such an expectation proves fully justified, and a number of corrections need to be made in the Zazaki text.

### Arguments

Sultan Efendi's treatise on the Alevism is in two parts (*maqāla*); the first on the Alevi community and the second on the Alevi doctrines. For convenience these will be designated I and II respectively, the Arabic numeral following being the number of the chapter (*bāb*). At the beginning of the treatise, the two chapters of the first *maqāla* are announced (*jew* and *düdiy* [sic]), but the text itself is not divided accordingly into numbered chapters. At the head of the second *maqāla*, two chapters are announced and the text is so divided. But in no extant folio does the numbering of the chapters run smoothly – some folios have an extra title “*al-faşl*” and two folios are out of phase. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the chapter numbers, folio numbers, and some headings were added after the text was written.

The first *maqāla* includes subjects that were written over a period of some two months, and which reflect the principal Alevi areas of Eastern Anatolia in which the author has taken an interest. The first folios deal with the Shiite terms, *ghālī* and *ghulāt*, which, generally speaking, were not given a satisfactory explanation in the Islamic period; in this discussion, the author attempts to prove that the terms originally bore the meaning of “Alevi”, as a true follower of ‘Alī [sic]. Some folios deal with the historical background of the Alevis. The author discloses information with regard to the Alevi position in the Ottoman Empire, both at the time of Sultan Selīm III (1789–1807)<sup>6</sup> and after that. He also presents the origins of the Alevi tribes, Ottoman legal traditions concerning Alevi tributes to the Ottomans, and their economic situation. The following folios are devoted to the Alevi community in Dersim. After a precise analysis of the Alevi tribes and families settled in that region, the author arrives at the conclusion that the Alevi community comprised a considerably larger population than is generally ascribed to it the Ottoman official records. Some members of the Alevi congregation were merchants, since Dersim was a main station on the business road to Europe. They were, therefore, men of wealth who commanded a certain position in society. But a considerable number of Alevis must have belonged to the rank and file of the Dersimi population. The final folios of the first part of the manuscript deal with the history of Alevis during the years in which the author lived and worked. The most important section

<sup>5</sup>According to the writings of the second section, he was eleven years in Aleppo. See fol. 25v. According to these brief allusions, as we shall say, it might be accepted that he was under the influence of Shiite communities in Aleppo. For Shiite groups in Aleppo and northern Syria, see Muhammad Ghalib al-Tawil, *Ta'rikh al-'Alawiyyin*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1966), and M. Mossa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (Syracuse, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>For general information regarding the period of Selīm III, see G. Gawrych, “Şeyh Galib and Selim III: Mevlevism and the Nizam-ı Cedid”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4 (1987), pp. 91–114.

of the final folios of the first section is a discussion of the statistical information regarding the social situation of the Alevi gathered by Sultan Efendi: Alevi sanctuaries, Alevi warriors in the Ottoman army, Alevi traders, and Alevi villages and their population.

The focus of the second chapter of the first *maqāla* is on ‘Alī and his role within Alevism. At the outset it is necessary to recall that Efendi’s work is essentially a history of the Alevi community within the bounds of the Ottoman Empire. Since, for Efendi, the Muslim Ottoman Empire served as a place from which a “deadly message” came (he was referring to the Ḥanafī teaching of the Ottoman *mufītīs*), the role of ‘Alī was certainly not already well established there. The all-pervasive influence of Efendi has meant that the existence of a second religious tradition, represented by ‘Alī, has consistently been neglected or marginalised by Ottoman *mufītīs*, both medieval and modern. First of all, he gives a general account of ‘Alī’s life including many legendary tales. Efendi names as his source for all this a Turkish document kept in the religious archives of the Alevi. From this account he then provides a Turkish verse translation of a legend in which ‘Alī is the unique God. There are also verse texts which provide descriptions of ‘Alī’s life, wars, pious acts, travels, etc. The origins of these stanzaic poems with formalised dialogues go back to the precedence contests of Alevi literature in Turkish.

It is interesting that the author also has translated some parts of the ‘Alī’s *Nahj al-Bilāgha* into Zazaki. On the evidence of the manuscript, Sultan Efendi translated no less than nine sentences of ‘Alī’s advice from Arabic into Zazaki, and seven into Turkish.

The first and the second sections of the second *maqāla* are both dedicated to the Alevi doctrine in general. However, special emphasis is placed on the *çirax-sônduran*<sup>7</sup>, *pîrs*, *dedes*, and *seyîds*<sup>8</sup>, *uxwet* (“holy brotherhood”)<sup>9</sup>, ‘Alī *bayrami* (the feast of ‘Alī) and *Xizir bayrami* (the feast of Khidr)<sup>10</sup>, and on Usman Farali, an Alevi priest, and his prominent role in the development and structure of Alevi asceticism and forms of Alevi sainthood. There are passages in the first and the second part of the second *maqāla* that seem to indicate that the author lent towards pursuing a sectarian religious purpose. This is best illustrated by the almost programmatic fol. 28.v.:

Relations between *Qizilbāshs*, *Yezidis*<sup>11</sup>, *Shamsis* [the followers of sun]<sup>12</sup>, pagans, and Christians have been studied by the Ottoman *mufītīs*. Since they have so much in common in a shared culture, there rose the particular need for *Qizilbāsh* leaders and priests to draw strict demarcation lines to serve the self-definition of the various groups. The understanding of this process will

<sup>7</sup> On the *çirax-sônduran*, see V. Fontanier, *Voyages en Orient* (Paris, 1829), p. 168.

<sup>8</sup> On the *pîrs*, *dedes*, and *seyîds*, see S. Haykuni, “Dersim”, *Ararat* 2–3 (1896), pp. 84–87, 132–134, especially p. 86.

<sup>9</sup> On the holy brotherhood, see G. S. Asatrian and N. Kh. Gevorgian, “Zaza Miscellany, Notes on Some Religious Customs and Institutions”, in: *A Green Leaf, Papers in Honour of Prof. Jes P. Asmussen, Acta Iranica* 28 (Leiden, 1988), p. 507.

<sup>10</sup> On the feast of ‘Alī and the feast of Khidr, see K. E. Müller, *Kulturhistorische Studien zur Genese pseudoislamischer Sektengestalten in Vorderasien, Studien zur Kulturkunde* 22 (Wiesbaden, 1967), pp. 29–30, and Asatrian and Gevorgian, *op. cit.*, p. 503, n. 25.

<sup>11</sup> On the Yezidis, in general, see P. G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism, Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition* (Lewiston, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> There is no detailed reference to the Shamsis. For very brief information, see M. van Bruinessen and H. Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir, the Relevant Section of the Seyahatname* (Leiden, 1988), p. 31 and the literature there.

certainly disturb the incorrect view of *Qizilbāsh* doctrine as a form of heretical Islam, the origins of which go directly back to Arabia and its Arab community.

The author, thus, defends the credibility of the Alevi religion by comparing it with the other contemporary religions, especially those religions to be found in Kurdistan, and highlighting what he considers to be the superior qualities of Alevism. In this manner, it seems that he hopes to demonstrate that the Alevi religion alone has an unimpeachable, notably heterodox, claim on 'Alī and human religious allegiance. The working out of this apologetic argument is built on the philosophical premise that human reason can discover the existence of the creator God<sup>13</sup>, and then concludes that mankind was the highest expression of created values. The perfection present in human beings has in some way to be reflective of the qualities of the God who created them. Accordingly, one should be able to discern the true religion, and the true messenger of God, by determining which one of the many claimants to this role credibly described God and his requirements for his creatures.

This process of discernment has two complementary phases. On the positive side, it is necessary to test the doctrines of the several religions against what we may know of our own perfections by the rigorous use of our minds. On the negative side, one should determine that there are no unworthy, imperfect traits in any specific faith-system that may be alleged as factors to motivate a person to profess that particular religion independently of divine endorsement. Needless to say, the Alevi intellectual with whom we are concerned here, attempts to demonstrate that Alevism alone of the contemporary religions – i.e. Sunni Ḥanafism, Christianity, Yezidism, and Shamsism – is worthy of credence from these perspectives.

In their own times, both this author and other thinkers who annexed their religious poems to the treatise defended the Alevi faith against non-Alevis who had earlier written attacks against the Alevis (*Qizilbāshs* or *Ghālīs*).<sup>14</sup> Relying on the achievements of earlier generations, the author here constructs his own treatise in terms of the theodicy that had already been elaborated. But he also adapts the arguments to suit the requirements of his own controversy with the non-Alevis. In the process, for example, differences between non-Alevi and Alevi approaches to religious questions become apparent. Nowhere is this more evident than in the discussion about how one may discern the true religion.

According to the controversial passages of this author, Muslims and Yezidis were very influential groups in “*Qizilbāsh* regions”. Alevis, who (unlike Yezidis and some other Gnostic groups) wanted to keep 'Alī and the Alevi doctrines as part of their own religion, were obliged to reinterpret the role of 'Alī and the other Alevi doctrines in such a way that Ottoman *mufītīs* and Alevi priests formed a real unity. In other words, the author claims that Alevi religious leaders had to come to terms with the official Islamic tradition and heritage through fitting Alevism into an Islamic context. This idea is expressed in more detail in fol. 26 r., where he issues the following warning in his farewell discourse to his flock:

If *Qizilbāsh*'s religion preserved a great many Islamic traditions in its literature, this is not a proof of a substantial Islamic part in the formation of the *Qizilbāsh* doctrine, but only of a *Qizilbāsh* urge to adapt and assimilate Islamic traditions to its own ideological concepts. Beware, therefore,

<sup>13</sup>See especially fol.29v.

<sup>14</sup>Compare Ḥ. Ḥujjatī, “Raddīya wa Raddīya Niwīsī”, in *Encyclopaedia of Shi'a VIII* (Tehran, 2001), pp. 204–207.

of the Ottomans and Yezidis and do not be friends of them, lest thou be responsible with those whose hands are full of the blood of the 'Alī.

The treatise contains also a considerable amount of other polemical material. For instance, the author attacks a number of Yezidi interpretations by demonstrating Yezidi corruption of the Islamic texts or the Satanism.<sup>15</sup> He inveighs frequently against the allegorical mode of Muslim interpreters. Certain basic questions in the Sunni-Shiite controversy, chief among which is the identity of the "*imāmat*", are frequently raised.<sup>16</sup>

There are some phrases where it seems that the author has been strongly influenced by Islamic philosophy. He frequently alludes to philosophical matters as an aid to exegesis on the one hand and in an attempt to popularise such studies on the other. He was no original philosopher, however, and his phrases are adaptations of those of his predecessors.

In summary, it can be stated that the essential and central aim of the author (described allusively and tendentiously in II. 21r.-32r.) as an Alevi intellectual is to provide "an answer to the critics". Hence, he advises his readers to study Alevi original doctrines and to conceal their "true religion" from the Sunni Muslims. He argues that 'Alī always cast down the arrogant and impious; that 'Alī had ordained the defeat of Ottomans, and had revealed his intention to do so in the Alevi prayers that predicted the outcome of the impending war; and that the Alevi community would exist until the end of time. Again he gives a polemical twist to his words by adding that 'Alī, "the most complete sign of God", would put the apostates to shame:

And he [i.e. 'Alī] will restore to the sanctuaries the treasures which Ottoman *mufīr*, the wicked, had taken from them. He will purify the kingdom of the Ottomans from the stink of the sacrifices of Ḥanafism, and he will overthrow their tables and will destroy their mosques, he will banish their erroneous doctrines, will destroy their houses of assembly, and will remove their treasures to the treasures of the *Qizilbāsh* community<sup>17</sup>.

In the present Zazaki treatise, along with the Zazki and Turkish poems that it inspired, the apocalyptic sections are an important feature and they occupy a prominent space in the text. The prominence of the apocalyptic genre, however, is not surprising given the fact that within Shiite heterodox communities apocalypse was an important literary reaction to the challenge of Sunni Islam.<sup>18</sup> In these sections the accent is on the *ex eventu* prophecy of the conditions of life for Alevi under the Ottoman Empire until the projected coming of the *Mahdī*, who is said to be the "manifestation of 'Alī". The author's discussion of the doctrine of the Incarnation ("*naskh*") is a brief single section in the treatise. He does not attempt to prove the doctrine here. Rather, he assumes that it is the evident teaching of the Alevi scripture that in 'Alī God has manifested himself to His creatures in a human form. Sultan Efendi devotes some sentences to ridiculing those who believe less noble things about 'Alī as a God, but who, at the same time, declare that there is no any difference between

<sup>15</sup> On the role of Satan in Yezidi religion, see M. Dehqan, "Qit'īi Gūrānī darbāra-yi Shaytān", *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 8 (2004), pp. 47–64, especially p. 50ff.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, fol.22r. and fol.26r.

<sup>17</sup> Fol.25r.

<sup>18</sup> See al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghumma* (Qumm, 1961), iii, pp. 227–343; and Najm al-Dīn Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-'Askarī, *al-Mahdī al-Maw'ūd al-Muntaẓar 'inda 'Ulamā' Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Imāmīyya* (Beirut, 1977).

210 ‘Alī and God. He also explains away differences among Alevis themselves over the various  
211 manifestations of the divine Incarnation or “those who differ with us”.<sup>19</sup>

212 Finally, the author protests that, since the times are evil, Alevis have to speak in symbols.  
213 Alevis are different from “Ottoman religion”, and Alevis must be able to adopt different  
214 policies with different groups, even though these may well cause them many severe problems.  
215 It is clear that the structure of the author’s symbolism owes much to the usages that were  
216 cultivated in the Shiite school system. One can trace the development of this symbolism to the  
217 *taqiyya*, ‘action of covering’, that denotes dispensing with the ordinances of religion in cases of  
218 constraint and when there is a possibility of harm, in which the doctrines regarding ‘Alī would  
219 have been transmitted to the next generations.<sup>20</sup> According to the author, belief is expressed  
220 by the “symbol of heart” and the “symbol of tongue”. Observing the first symbol is always  
221 necessary. But if someone is certain that an injury will befall him, his property or one of his  
222 co-religionists, then he is released from the obligation to fight for the faith with the tongue.

### 223 Authorship

224 It is well-known that there is a large amount of forgery in the religious writings of Kurdistan,  
225 and that even authentic works by Kurdish sheikhs have attracted interpolations and additions  
226 by other hands. Although the treatise presently under scrutiny is a very important text, it  
227 should still be classified as a specimen of this kind of literature rather than as an authentic  
228 Alevi work.<sup>21</sup> The key to its oddity, in any case, seems to lie in the fact that it was both an  
229 Alevi and a non-Alevi answer to the Ottomans. Since there is a clear distinction between  
230 two sections of the treatise, we only may be able to categorise the first section as an Alevi  
231 authentic work. But did Sultan Efendi write the whole of the text, both the Alevi and non  
232 Alevi sections?

233 There are two accounts of how Efendi came to write it. The first unambiguously envisages  
234 his contribution as consisting of the first *maqāla* alone, while the second apparently regards  
235 it as consisting both the first and the second *maqālas*. In fact, it is clear from the contents  
236 of the two parts that they cannot have originated together, and, while both are ascribed to  
237 Sultan Efendi as separate works, the attribution to him of the second part must be rejected.

238 From the manuscript itself, it is plain that the first section was written by a professional  
239 Alevi intellectual with a considerable gift for presenting his subject to laymen, and there  
240 is no reason to believe that the intellectual in question was not Sultan Efendi. His style is  
241 certainly an Alevi style including Alevi terms and items. Much of the work is based on other  
242 Alevi writings; the first *maqāla* could in fact be characterised as a selection of passages from  
243 Zazaki oral literature. And what it has to say about Alevi scripture and society is almost  
244 always precisely what one would expect to find. The ideal to which Alevis should seek to  
245 conform is entirely Alevi in conception and illustrated with reference to Alevi figures and  
246 subjects alone, no non-Alevi discussions being invoked in this part. The first *maqāla*, in the

<sup>19</sup>Fol.30v.

<sup>20</sup>On the *taqiyya*, see I. Goldziher, “Das Prinzip der taqiyya im Islam”, *ZDMG* 60 (1906), pp. 213–226.

<sup>21</sup>For some Alevi authentic works, see, for example, C. Öztelli, *Bektaşî Gülleri* (Istanbul, 1985); M. Düzgün, M. Comer, and H. Tornécengi, *Dêrsim de Diwayî, Qesê Pi-kalîkan, Erf u Mecazî, Çibenoki, Xeletmayênî [Dêrsim’de Dualar, Atasözleri, Mecazlar, Bilmeceler, Şaşırtmacalar]* (Ankara, 1992).

other words, is a treatise written in the Alevi style and spirit on the basis of Alevi works by someone who can be identified as the author of this work.

In contrast to the conciseness of the first *maqāla*, the discussion of the second *maqāla* is diffuse and aphoristic. Here much use is made of Shiite theology and so it is not exactly Alevi. In fact, it seems to be a work written for a different set of readers in a somewhat different style and spirit. On turning to second *maqāla*, one is struck by the fact that author and addressee alike are suddenly referred to in a manner different to that of first *maqāla*. There is no mention of Sultan Efendi. One would have expected at least some expression of good wishes for his success at the end of the treatise, on a par with those that come at the end of first *maqāla*; but the second simply peters out with a defective poem. It is, thus, clear that the first and the second *maqālas* cannot have been conceived as parts of the same work. In principle, of course, both could still be authentic works by Sultan Efendi or another Alevi intellectual, but this possibility can be ruled out on other grounds.

The stylistic contrast between the two *maqālas* of the treatise is glaring. Where the first is a very simple text including legends, anecdotes, aphorisms and poetry loosely strung together in no particular order, the second is a well-organised text including many theological problems and some sophisticated discussions. For another thing, the discussions and poems of the second *maqāla* are almost always not the Alevi fundamental points, such as the apocalyptic notes regarding the *Mahdī* who is absent in the Alevi doctrines, and they display no interest in the Alevi community. In fact, the author of the second part voices a wide variety of opinions that are completely at odds with those of Sultan Efendi. He does, it is true, share some views with him, such as in relation to Incarnation, but it is expressive of an altogether different ethos. It fails to reflect the preoccupations of Alevi because its author, it would seem, has preoccupations of his own, and these preoccupations are sometimes as thoroughly non-Alevi as those of Efendi are Alevi.

What then can we say about the author? He was certainly a Shiite, more precisely a Shiite who was under influence of *imāmī* and *Ghālī* sects. The first part of the work has come to be attributed to Sultan Efendi, as an Alevi intellectual, but there is nothing to give clues to the authorship of the second part.

## Conclusion

Our Zazaki Alevi treatise, in any case, turns out to be a source for Alevi sociological and theological history, and one may conclude by asking whether this discovery warrants any reconsideration of previous, often harsh, judgments on the subject. As has been seen, much depends on whether or not one accepts the writer's claims and, especially, the date of the treatise, which is the earliest Zazaki text that we have. If one accepts this – and to me there seems to be no valid reason why one should reject it – then the treatise represents a source of great importance for early events of Alevi religion and community. But, even if the writer's arguments are not accepted at face value, the treatise is no late compilation, for it is found in a manuscript that has been dated to the eighteenth–nineteenth century, and so it should be placed at least on a par with the panegyric we have for other Zazaki texts.

Needless to say, by no means all the issues raised by this new text have been discussed here, but it is hoped that enough has been said to demonstrate its considerable interest and



(I believe) importance. This would seem to be the best that one can do in the way of guesswork. Going beyond guesswork would be preferable, of course, but it is only in connection with the author's life that the sources afford us a glimpse of a real personality at work, and they only show us enough to make us realise how little information was transmitted.

### Appendix: A Selection of Zazaki Words

The following section contains examples of Zazaki words where the written style and the language of the present text are used in somewhat different ways. There are glossary entries for each of the Zazaki words listed in Latin alphabet, though not in accordance with the order in which they occur in Arabic script of the manuscript. Because the list is concerned with actual written usage, the words are given in both Latin transliteration and Arabic script. The list only includes those Zazaki words that the author used in a different sense or pronunciation in the manuscript.

In order to achieve a uniform style and standard the Bedir Khan system is used to transliterate the Zazaki words included in this glossary.<sup>22</sup>

**aka/ak** اكا/اک 1. egg, the hard-shelled reproductive body produced by a bird and not exclusively by the common domestic chicken, 2. person, sort

**aqûl** اقول wise

**asîn** اسین iron

**askar** اسکار 1. soldier, 2. troop

**beqî/beqîçe** بقى/بقیچه garden

**birader/bira** برادر/برا brother

**bôl/bûl** بول/بول very, very much

**böq-** بوق 1. to sleep, 2. to neglect

**camî/came** جامع/جامه mosque

**cüab/cüap** جواب/جواب answer, reply

**çarûş** چاروش bazaar

**çene** چنه why?

**çiçi** چیچی what, used as an interrogative expressing inquiry about the identity, nature, or value of an object or matter

**çîyendo** چی یندو/چیندو somewhat

**darûk/dar** داروک/دار tree

**diz/doz** در/دوز thief

**dîk/dîyek** دیک/دییك cock

**dôst** دوست/دست friend, one that is of the same nation, group, or community

**dûjmin** دوژمن enemy, one seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound an opponent

**ecemî** اجمی Persian

**ewrû** اوروو/اورو 1. now, 2. today

**ezin** ازن like, one that is similar

**fa'ide** فائده importance

<sup>22</sup>On the Bedir Khan system, which is widely used in the Kurdish-language scholarly literature, see J. Bedir Khan et R. Lescot, *Grammaire kurde (dialecte kurmandji)* (Paris, 1970), pp. 3–7.

- 328 **feqir** فقير/فقير little, small in importance or interest
- 329 **gül** گول 1. flower, 2. religious speech of 'Alī
- 330 **haz** هاز love, strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties
- 331 **hekîm** حکيم philosopher, wise
- 332 **her/hera** هر/هرا all, complete
- 333 **heywan** حيوان human
- 334 **hir-** هر to buy
- 335 **ita/ite** ايته/ايته here
- 336 **keynî** کينى girl
- 337 **kô/kûc** کو/کوج where?
- 338 **kêy/kêya** کي/کيا 1. house, 2. the building or chamber where Alevi assembly meets
- 339 **kir** کر/کير 1. deaf, 2. deaf-mute
- 340 **kô/kû** کو/کوو mountain
- 341 **kötik** کوتک dog
- 342 **lacî** لاجى boy
- 343 **mardim** ماردم man, someone
- 344 **masîk** ماسيک fish
- 345 **mişt** مشت morning, the time from sunrise to noon
- 346 **mûs-** مووس to learn
- 347 **mirtal/mirtar** مرتال/مرتار shield, a broad piece of defensive armor carried on the arm
- 348 **nasîn** ناسين knowledge
- 349 **nôbinô** نينو possibility
- 350 **nônibinô** ننينو impossibility
- 351 **niwazîl** نوازيل 1. illness, 2. stupidity, a stupid idea or act
- 352 **pawin-** پاون- to wait, to look forward expectantly
- 353 **pî/pîy** پي father
- 354 **pîl** پيل strong, having moral or intellectual power
- 355 **rôçîn** روچين light, something that makes vision possible
- 356 **serd** سرد darkness
- 357 **se'at** ساعات time
- 358 **sira** سرا where?
- 359 **stor** ستر/ستور horse
- 360 **şarab** شاراب wine
- 361 **şew** شو 1. night, 2. darkness
- 362 **şimşêr** شمشير 1. sword, 2. pen
- 363 **tine/tinya** تنه/تنيا unique, being the only one
- 364 **tize** تزه new
- 365 **vazir** وازر yesterday
- 366 **ver** ور before, sooner or quicker than
- 367 **waya** وايا sister
- 368 **waz-** واز- to like, to want
- 369 **wac** واج there, in or at that place
- 370 **xoca** خوجا master, having chief authority



