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SACRED RITUALS AT A *CHEPNI* VILLAGE IN WESTERN ANATOLIA

Sinan Çaya¹

¹Marmara University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

This article basically contains some information translated from a (Turkish-originated) French scholar's ethnographic work. It is about the descendants of previously-nomadic Turkoman tribe of Chepni, in Western Anatolia. Those people preserved most of their authentic social structure even after becoming sedentary. Their social dynamic impetus itself drives its force from the venerated Anatolian version of Shiism. Since the vast majority of Anatolian soil belongs to the Sunnite interpretation of Islamic tradition; Chepni and similar closed communities had a hard time throughout the Ottoman history.

Keywords: *Chepni, Turkoman, Qizilbash, Shiite, Belief, Creed, Nomad.*

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Contribution/ Originality

This study is one of very few studies which investigate the Qizilbash communities of Anatolia in contemporary times. Such scientific works are indeed not many in number even in Turkish, the language of the mentioned people. It is a fact that the Sunnite majority despised those people or at best ignored their spiritual aspects. No doubt this negative general attitude have dissuaded a tendency to investigate the communities, on the part of social scholars themselves. Word of mouth was widespread — (usually in a discrediting manner, too— but one can not claim that stuff which had been printed on sheer paper amounts to substantial volumes. The work may be considered a review article based on the book in French: GOKALP (1980). *Têtes rouges et bouches noires, une confrérie tribale de l'ouest Anatolien*, Société d'Ethnographie, Paris. A number of auxiliary sources are also employed.

1. INTRODUCTION

Man's horror-filled look and intolerance at all those other men who are different in thinking, feeling, or believing; have constituted an enormous conflict throughout the history. In this context; stereotypes, exaggerated attributions have grown to the detriment of the differently-perceived ones.

Today, the educated brain; with the consciousness of the relativity in creed and culture; can turn a much more mild and understanding glance at those who are not merely like himself, in some respects.

The valid system of psychological and ethical values at a certain society may display differences from one place to another. For instance, in some Eskimo groups a killer is not penalized but, on the contrary, preserves his place in the clan.

In some Indian tribes; a mother adopts the killer of his son instead of desiring vengeance. Many actions condemned today were in acceptance in antique times (Morali-Daninos, 1956). As a matter of fact; through practice; acquired cultural conditioning imparts pleasant or unpleasant meanings onto sensorial data. For example, for some Asiatic vegetarians, the European-carnivorous is emitting an unbearable stench of carrion (Morali-Daninos, 1956).

I vividly remember that in my Lycée-One class; our literature teacher, famous poet Behçet Kemal Çağlar narrated a Russian short story, probably from Dostoevsky: Two lost hunters end up in a hospitable tribe. They get amazed at the polite offers they receive. The men even rival with one another in offering their wives! Then; one of the hunters, who does not know the language of the tribe, indulges in seeking drinking-water for himself.

He finally finds some in a forlorn corner and drinks it openly. Then hell breaks out! "How come you dare drink water!" The two hunters escape with difficulty from the wild crowd. Behçet Kemal ended the narration with the sentence: "So, in that particular society, drinking water was one of the secret needs".

This relativity may be easily extrapolated onto different attitudes of different sects. Conflict or discrepancy among sects of one religion does not pertain to Islam alone, either. As a protagonist in a historical novel of Kongar (1990) "in each religion; the animosity, grudge and hatred among given sects can be deeper than that felt against another entire religion; as explicitly revealed by Byzantium Duka Notaras' historical saying 'I would see a Turkish turban in Constantinople rather than a cardinal's conical hat' ".

One interesting aspect of the issue is that; most of the time, it is sheer other-than-religion-related grounds, which is in reality present beneath such disagreements or discords. This idea is also pronounced in Kongar (1990) by one of his characters: "In actuality; many of the wars waged in the name of religion are mere murders for the sake of personal potency and money-greed; the best representation of which can be seen in the crusades".

In an article by Bacque-Grammont and Jean-Louis (1978) the Ottoman-Uzbek relations are evaluated from this perspective:

Letters between the Sultan and the Khan were bursting with an anti-Qizilbash solidarity and unity; but in reality; the relations were reined with a strong anxiety of caution. The clamping of the shah's land by those two [Sunnite] powers could never be synchronized. Yes, communication difficulties and distances between Istanbul and Bukhara were substantial; but still, a joint military operation could have been possible.

Another significant observation is the following: Uzbeks; who were used to carry out annual raids or even attacks of wider scope into the Safavid-Khorasan territory; were always strangely shy to go on with those activities in large scale, just when the Ottomans were realizing their own campaigns against the Shah. If the clamp had come into being, leading to the sharing of the Safavid land; in that case; the two Sunni states would have become neighbors.

The Sultan would have leaned against a bubbling, anxiety-causing master of fight in large landscape, in the eastern boundaries. Now; the Ottoman army, invincible in regular battling, would have hesitated on such a land and with such warfare techniques, cumbered by its own great numbers and heavy armament.

On the other hand; a complete Ottoman victory in Persia would have furnished a more terrifying adjoining state than that of the Shah, for the Uzbeks. Moreover; this would have been a state, who, along with the new eastern gains, had grown even richer and more militarily-mighty.

In that case; Uzbeks, who had long been the representatives of Sunnite faith in the region; would have been downgraded to the satellite role nearby that big power, in a manner very similar to the Crimean Tartars.

So; things are not limited to pure religious, sectarian issues. (Different topic led us into other sub-topics). The wise inference to make for us would be what? Religions, sects, denominations, orders are diverse. Cultures are manifold.

Would it be rational to isolate oneself from all creeds and cultures? Never ever! The individual will occupy his own place amid the multicolored marbling. Man is a social being. It was said that he who is unbiased shall also find himself disposed of (Bitaraf olan bertaraf olur). One should feel attached to a side or to a cause, with ties of affiliation.

One will have a religion and a sect, to begin with. As a late president of Turkey, Cemal Gürsel, truly expressed it—he wasn't an elected president but he was a by-product of a military coup—a nation without a religion is not much different than a herd of animals (Stewart, 1966).

Moreover, an individual will internalize a certain culture to which he will think he is attached to. The following case-history is illuminating: In my senior undergraduate class, a group of students managed to arrange the training of the folklore club chorus by Ruhi Su, in person. On Saturdays we were practicing under the famous man's instructions in the Red Saloon of

Bosphorus University. On one occasion, Ruhi Su included a Zeybek ballad into the repertory. (Ah, bir ataş ver cigaramı yakayım: o, give me a fire and let me lit my cigarette). However; he made two corrections in pronunciation, adapting the peasant sayings into the urban ways: Ateş instead of ataş and sigara instead of cigara.

“Let it be different to sing that song at Bosphorus University” he explained. A chorus member, a fanatical leftist civil engineering junior, insisted on the authentic words. He dared to argue with the great man, who, preserving his patient smile, stood his way equally firmly: “Com’on, let us recite the ballad within the framework of our own culture. Why did we get all that education, then?”

One should belong somewhere and simultaneously one should not have the illusion that his way comprises or should comprise all other peoples. Other value judgments which we cannot possibly change are out there in existence, as a social reality; and the best attitude regarding their acknowledgement, is mutual respect for such values.

As the Muslim scholar Al-Biruni (973-1048) says; people nourish miscellaneous creeds and thoughts and civilization arises from among those various mixtures (Turhal, 1989).

2. SELECTED GENERAL KNOWLEDGE FROM THE MAIN SOURCE, ALTAN GOKAP'S WORK

Here in question is a special religious conviction and related practices; which; even though in possession of roots descending all the way to Safavid Persian Shiite tradition; is essentially a rebuilding based on the Anatolian populations and the special circumstances of the Ottoman history.

An important distinction between the Persian Shiite tradition and the Anatolian one is the fact that in Persia, Shiite creed got established as a state belief and comprised the majority; whereas the Anatolian version had always pertained to a minority, at times in open clash with the official power, who was regarding itself as the guarantor of the Sunnite way.

It is written that the data of the book comprising the main bibliography of this work were collected via visits to peasants and cotton-pickers in the Sofular village of the county of Söke of the province of Aydın and other villages spread out on the meander valleys nearby. Sheer ethnographic information is said to be completed with more restricted observations in Manisa and Narlıdere (İzmir) and embellished with the sayings of informants from Balıkesir.

Moreover, the author of the main bibliography affirms that the existence of some Qizilbash groups among Turkish guest-workers in France provided enhancement of the knowledge about certain aspects of the Chepni beliefs as well as verification of some points.

The Book essentially deals with formerly nomadic Kandemir-Chepni people. Their immediate neighbors or other communities of the Big Meander plain call them “Chepni” by reference to their tribe or Qizilbash by reference to their allegedly heretic or heterodox allegiance to the Shiite sect. In the common meaning of the majority of Anatolian people, the word

Qizilbash contains connotations insinuating incest practices in the form of holy rituals as well as sexual partnerships, as a deviant current. In a more general way; the word may designate Turkomans (*) living in Persia, former Soviet territories and Afghanistan.

Chepnis deem themselves as part of a huge and dissipated group and trace their roots to Persian Khorasan, where they supposedly lived 'a golden age' previously.

The Chepnis of the Sofular village were obliged to become sedentary people on the Beş Parmak [Five Fingers] mountains overlooking the Meander Valley, in 1927, on former summer territories of their own; due to the fact that meadows kept transformed into farming areas (*).

Chepnis owe their main riches to their herds, which could peacefully graze on the meadows until 1920s. From 1945s onwards, the Meander Valley came to be an object of an economic competition on national scale: Incorporation of other lands onto the existing big land pieces; the introduction of cotton planting; the financing necessity which oppressed the small field owners and converted them into paid pickers.

[In his trilogy "Au-delà de la montagne", consisting of *Le Pilier* (in French in 1966), *Terre de fer*, *Ciel de cuivre* (in French in 1977), *L'herbe qui ne meurt pas* (in French in 1977) Yashar Kemal talks about an entire village whose people walk to cotton fields from their high homes, collect cotton for wages for weeks and return on foot. This is a very parallel situation occurring in South Anatolian Cukurova].

Aegean nomads' reaction to those happenings was to retreat into "spare villages" which were wild land belonging to the state treasury in the bosom of thick forests, where no other kinds of subsistence activity would be convenient even if sedentarily-established. So, they remained far from farming. Instead; they developed special strategies for survival.

Meadows lacking around, they were forced to sell out their animals. With the received income they bought some olive groves in the region. They also got transformed into paid-pickers like landless peasants, by choice. This was to enable them to preserve their former social system

* *Turkomans, Qizilbash* creed and *Bektashi* orders appear to be somewhat interrelated. Turhal (1989). affirms that *Bektashi orders grew mainly between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this interval; the orders of half-shamanic Turkoman religious figures called "fathers" got incorporated into the current of Bektashism, which thus got re-molded and gained further popularity. Ülken and Hilmi (1953). states that Bektashism owes its Anatolian popularity to the merging of closed orders like those of Kizilbash, Tahtaci, Sarach and Chepni.*

* In his novel titled *La légende des mille taureaux* in its the French version, Yaşar Kemal gives the sad story of one of last nomadic Turkoman tribes on the Taurus mountains during the single party regime of the early Republic. It becomes more and more difficult for the tribe to find winter camp places. Nobody wants them around in winter time, claiming that the herds cause damage to cultivated areas. The tribe has to pool gold pieces and pay for the winter shelters. The community's population begins to shrink as some families desert the tribe in midnights. The number of tents keep declining.

The Ottoman late central authority tried a forced sedentarization at *Cukurova* long before that, on grounds like better taxation and easier conscription for the army. As Eren (1982). notify us; in 1865, *Firka-I İslahiye (The Reformatory Division) under the command of Derviş Pasha got confronted by insurgency of Kozanoğlu. The epic Poet Dadaloğlu recited his poems in this era.*

and put into function the remaining basic elements belonging to that system, without much difficulty.

Chepnis' collective memory narrate their historical breaking point as the Chaldiran battle in 1514, when Shah İsmail Safevid's army got crushed by Yavuz the Grim. The former had unified Shia-Qizilbash elements in Iran at the head of a Turkoman dynasty, the latter was the Sultan of an expanding empire and an advocate of Sunnism.

[According to the Chepnis] with the advent of the Republic and laicism, the suppressing power of the former Ottoman state mechanism had yielded place to a controlled but intense animosity. Violence began to be replaced by verbal attacks and calumnies. As a retaliation to the demeaning Qizilbash term, Chepnis coined the word Ağzı-karalar (black-mouthed ones, i.e. those employing bad wording).

In history; the common denominator of the Ottoman suppression emerged as the religious insurgencies managed to be flamed (*) by charismatic leaders. Nevertheless it will be a mistake to reduce the socio-economical, ethnical, regional factors of various periods into sheer —but still undeniable— religious dimensions, alone.

Mahmud Kashgarî in his famous dictionary [Diwan Lugat at-Turk] defines Chepnis as one of the 24 tribes of Oghuz. One might as well say that nowadays; besides Avshars, Bayats, Begdilîs and Chepnis; it is not any more possible to encounter any other community preserving the claim of affiliation to Oghuz and clinging to the ethos of nomadic life.

3. RELIGIOUS RITES AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE (**)

In a society where Islam segregates the worlds of females and males, the mere utterance of the word Qizilbash is a reason for scandal: Girls answering suggestive looks with their own looks, incest elevated onto a religious ritual format, friends' eatery sessions culminating in sexual orgies, the right of the religious figure called "grandfather" (*) to enclose a bride for the first night and what else! In the mainstream society where the two genders are insulated from each other; such declarations stemming from pure imagination must constitute the representation of the grudge against Qizilbashism.

Of course such a grudge is also coupled with an accompanying fear. Very few Sunnites can dare pass a night deliberately among a Qizilbash community. Qizilbash literature itself bursts

* It is possible that provocations had been effective in causing rebellions. Turhal (1989), puts it that way: *Religious and political propaganda against state authority among nomads was never lacking. Thus, from time to time, insurgencies came into being, leading to bitter results both for the state and the Turkomans.*

* "Droit de cuissage" in the original French text. Hachette dictionary defines the concept as *the right of some medieval seigneurs to keep the serf's wife for the first night*. In a knight movie starring late actor *Chalton Heston* (The War Lord) this theme was elaborated.

with anecdotes about strangers who end up in horror among candle-blowers (**) at night time. Chepnis themselves point out to that issue with knowing smiles on their lips: "Once the night falls, not even coyotes dare approach us!"

The basic convictions of Sunnites regarding the above-mentioned topics must stem from the man-woman relations within the Chepni community as perceived by the outsiders. But; another element contributing to the legends and fairy-tale materials can be attributed to the loyalty of the Qizilbash to the principle of secrecy.

Indeed the rule of concealment (takiyye) is a strong code and involves the oath taken by all members of the community while professing the creed (ikrar alma), in the form of keeping control of his hands, groin and tongue [the rhyming organs el, bel, dil] .i.e. He / she will not steal anything; will not indulge in non-permitted sexual intercourse ("bel" / waist, refers to sperm also) and will never reveal secrets (*) by the tongue. Control of one's tongue encompasses avoidance of carrying one person's words to another, thereby agitating mutual enmity between the two. An individual who is disrespectful for those three forbids can find himself ostracized from the community for good.

What really urges the imagination guesses of strangers is nothing but those mysterious elements associated with the annual collectivity rituals (ayin-i cem). Somebody not belonging to the tribe definitely cannot follow the ceremony. The corresponding Bektashi cem, on the other hand, can be followed by others under certain conditions and taking nasip (luck or blessing) may even be possible.

The Bektashi cem, for that matter, is an individual commitment, whereby one is free to take his loyalty back. The Qizilbash cem is the irreversible version of it, where one is engaging into the collectivity with his social identity. He cannot draw back. Separation is possible only if he is excluded by the community. Here; the survival of the entire community is more conspicuously associated with the ritual.

Cem ceremony consists of interrogation, faith professing of conjoint couples and services. Interrogation is applied to persons who disobey the community norms. Faith professing of

** The author, in a footnote, affirms that the phrase *candle-blowing* is used by the opponents of the community to describe the blowing out of the candles illuminating the ceremonial room, by releasing a rooster inside, to kick around and cause winds.

* This secrecy has its deep historical roots: *During the reign of Emevi (Umayyad) caliphs Shiites were tolerated like other religious minorities and left alone. This tolerance came to an end with the advent of Abbasids (despite the aid they provided in capturing the caliphate from the Emevis in 750). In 850 caliph al-Mutawakki treated them especially harshly. He destroyed their shrines, Tomb of Ali in Najaf and Tomb of Hussain in Karbala. In front of the escalating animosity, Shiites found the way of dissimulation / taqiya. In other words they reflected their true beliefs in distorted forms to outsiders Farah Caesar (1968).*

Author Gokalp states that when the informants are shown book-knowledge about the Qizilbash and Bektashi rituals, they display extreme astonishment. They are so amazed that all this information has somehow been reduced on printed paper! Their tongues are also untied thanks to those printed pages.

conjunct couples (*) is the richest and most significant stage. Services constitute the closing stage and represent the Council of the Forties (*).

3.1. The Interrogation

Interrogation is a real tribal court of justice the night before the cem ceremony. The whole year's conflicts are put into account here. It represents the sacred justice and the unification of the hearts. In principle, unless the hearts are one and all, no worship is possible. Here, an oath is regarded as an evidence by itself. The religious figure called the "grandfather" asks his defense from the suspect. If the suspect denies the accusation he must take an oath. Then the "grandfather" puts a chalice of raki (anisetteschnaps) in his hand. Thus is called "dolu" (full). Then comes the blessing prayer of the "grandfather". The crowd invokes Allah's name in chorus. The suspect gulps the drink at one sip and breaks the chalice. He is now acquitted and fit to participate in tomorrow night's cem. If the suspect stammers in his defense or refuses to take an oath, he may be found guilty and subjected to sanctions, the biggest one being capital punishment. Sexual intercourse with a partner outside the order or the tribe is adultery and deserves death penalty, for instance.

It is narrated that a female in 1930s (soon after giving up the nomadic life style) had an affair with a male from the neighbor village and gave birth to an illegitimate baby just at the night of the interrogation. The "grandfather" deemed the crime a filth contaminating the whole community. Then a group strangled the young woman and killed the baby by swinging it from its feet and banging its head on the walls. This is the last reported case of adultery.

The next heavy penalty is being suspended from the village temporarily or permanently. This is called being fallen. Then comes corporal punishments, which are nevertheless regarded as light, since they enable one to return to the society of the loyal ones. Somebody guilty of an insult has his tongue touched with a red hot iron piece. If the offence is bigger he may be forced to walk on embers. Standing for some time with a stone tied to his neck or simple bastinado [the age-old oriental punishment: beating the feet soles with a stick while the culprit is lying on his back] are other methods which are resorted to. Usually corporal punishment is accompanied with fines (money payment). The wide spectrum of methods should not give the impression that they are applied frequently.

* This stage elevates the involved persons from natural membership onto official membership within the community [Fiğlali Ethem \(1991\)](#).

* [GOKALP \(1980\)](#), with reference to Irène Mélikoff (1917-2009), illuminates the reader about the Council of Forties: *This is the group of saints who have achieved the Truth. Their exact composition is unknown. When one disappears by death, one from among the lower-status three-hundreds is promoted to his position. The legend of forties is valid in Anatolia for Sunnis, as well. If somebody just vanishes people consider that he might have joined the Forties. A Thracian city is called Kırklareli (The Hand of Forties). For the Qizilbash; Ali, Bektash, Salman the Persian and Hazrat Khidr (or Khizir) (Alaihuissalam) belong to the Forties.*

3.2. The “Âyin-i Cem”

This ceremony is falsely associated (*) with Anatolian Christianity as a common symbiosis. Qizilbash people are in a dilemma in the sense that on one hand, they stick to the norms of silence and on the other hand they definitely refute slanders attributed to their ceremony. The cem ceremony has two stages: The initiation of the new disciples and the twelve services.

The initiation of the new disciples starts after sunset in the assembly-house (cemevi). The “grandfather” in charge of the ceremony lives in that house for some time. The initiation transfers the subjects involved from their unaware and profane states into resurrection. The acceptance involves the blessing and initiation of two married couples, simultaneously.

The husband determines his crony or pal or buddy or comrade (musahip), who is usually a childhood friend. Men unworthy of trust, especially those who have a hard time keeping a secret, are determined by the community much before they reach adulthood. They are referred to by the insulting term “kayıtı pıytak” meaning “slippery”.

Two comrades are introduced to the “father” outdoors, who bridles them with a tie called “tiğbend” (*), usually a scarf or shawl or a big virgin [not used for nose-cleaning] handkerchief. He then leads the two men by their harness until the threshold, from where he shouts towards the inside: “I have lamb offerings to the saints; are they acceptable?” (In a little while the two “lambs” will be transformed into “rams”). Those inside reply: “Let Hak [Allah] accept them!”.

At this point the “father” leads them inside. The new disciples; as a sign of supplication; prostrate themselves just inside the open door, facing the “father” standing outside. [A Sunnite person would never prostrate before another being. Only Allah is worthy of prostration]. Then the two men walk on all fours until the duty-man who shall distribute their licks. The duty-man reminds the three immutable rules of the order. To possess control of one’s hands, groins and tongue, all the time.

The new disciples profess their consent and are submitted to the testimony of the Twelve Imams (**). The two new disciples then lye down. Their backs are against each other. Their heads

* Gokalp says this; but, many authors defend the opposite view, as they see Bektashism and Qizilbash creed as a mixture of celestial beliefs. For instance; according to Gibb (1962). *Bektashism is interrelated with Shiaism on one hand and Christianity, on the other hand. Wine, bread and cheese sharing is a kind of communion and there is the practice of confessions to superiors* [religious figures called fathers].

* It is interesting to note that the whole terminology employed at the ceremony is in sheer Turkish. Öztelli (1973). explains: *Turks, after conversion into Islam, mixed some of their former religion [Shamanism] with their new faith. Bektashism and Alevitischeered emerged in this manner. Praying pieces (gülbenks) directed to Allah by “grandfather”; chants, hymns (ilâhiler, nefesler), ballads with religious themes are all in Turkish.*

** Let us furnish the following summary about the Twelve Imams from Choueiri Youssef (1990). who himself refers to Mughniyya 1979: *The Shiite people believe in imams descending from Hazrat Ali (who is also the fourth caliph of Sunnites) and his wife (the Blessed Prophet’s daughter) Fatima. Imam is the divinely chosen leader, for them. The First Imam is Hazrat Ali, himself. He was succeeded by his sons Hasan (died in 669) and Hussain (martyred in 680). Then came nine more infallible (!) imams. The last one got lost in 873 while a child. The legend circulates that he stays*

touch the feet of the duty-man. Now it is time for the two wives to get initiated. The two women undergo a similar rite de passage. But they are transmitted to the duty-man by the wife of the “father” (bacı). The addressing towards the spiritual altar is also different. Instead of “I have lamb offerings to the saints; are they acceptable?” the bacı asks: “I have gains for the saints; are they acceptable?”

Eventually the wives lie down, each facing the other’s husband. Now the opposite genders wrap each other strongly (fraternal wrapping or kardeş sargısı). The four lying individuals are covered a rug about 1 m² in size, woven from the wool of previous sacrificed animals and decorated with red embroidery around the frames. This cover is called “ıstar”.

Meanwhile the “grandfather” engages in long prayers, at the end of which the conjoint couples slowly get up as if awakening from a long dream (*). The “grandfather” touches his scepter to the back of each four persons three times. Then he holds the cane horizontally above their heads. Passing beneath the scepter seals the end of the ritual. This is called “erkândan geçmek”. “Erkân” is the name of this cane; but the word figuratively refers to “order” or “rule”. It is a 75-cm-long hornbeam stick without nodules (*).

3.3. The Service-Crew

The ritual is never done collectively. If there are more conjoint couples, they undergo the procedure two by two. The second phase of cem involves the sacred duty of services, which are entrusted to persons with different titles. The titles are:

- Kurbançı (he who sacrifices the animal).
- Cook (he who cooks the sacrificed animal).
- Lokmacıbaşı (inside-Morsel-preparers, two females who take les abats / die Innereien of the sacrificed animal and roasts them over embers).
- Sofracı (The Food-Table-Attendant, he who distributes the prepares the trays for the table guests).

hidden (is in ghayba). He is in wait of return, with his drawn sword, to stop all cruelties and make the justice prevail. Sunni caliph is chosen by the notables of Muslims, theoretically. Shiite imam comes from the holy lineage.

* Maybe it can be asserted that some recruitment methods by the new American cults involve similar social dynamics with the Qizilbash minorities. Baron and Byrne (1987). provide us with an exemplary procedure: *Cults are deviant groups with ideas totally different from the mainstream society. Accordingly; they must carry out dramatic changes in prospective members’ attitudes and beliefs. Humiliation and abasement are frequently used. It is told that Charles Manson and Jim Jones demanded deviant sexual acts from cult members in front of audience. Once the individual obeys this, it becomes even more difficult to question the group.*

* The author makes a comparison with the Bektashi scepter, which contains three kots, the trilogy of Allah, Hazrat Mohammad and Hazrat Ali. The author; with reference to C. Orhonlu (1963); affirms that *the trilogy is also valid for Qizilbash, where the degree of Mohammad is lower —never! jamais!— than that of Ali.*

—Saka (Literally, the water-bearer, he who equally distributes the raki / anisette-Schnaps, previously procured by the new disciples, to the table guests sacrifices the animal).

—Delilci (Literally, the Evidence-holder, he who keeps the unique light (delil, also evidence) source in the room going. This is an oil lamp whose fuel comes from the fats of former sacrificed animals and whose wick comes from the wool former sacrificed animals).

—Kanber (Original Kanber was a servant of Hazrat Ali. Among Chepnis, this is the rhapsode or the bard, the saz-player poet. He usually recites the poetry of historical poets like Pîr Sultan Abdal, Kaygusuz Abdal and Shah İsmail Hatayi (*).

—İbrikçi (The jug-holder or ewer-holder, he who provides water and towel to the table guests after the banquet for rinsing their mouths. He identifies with Salman the Persian in the dining table (*) of the Forties).

—Faraş (Literally the Dustpan, he who sweeps the ceremonial room, whereby, the previous sins of the initiated persons are also symbolically swept away.

— Kapıkulu (**) (Houshold gate-keeper, he who establishes the connection between indoors and outdoors. Nobody can leave the room before the ceremony is over. If somebody happens to die, nobody touches or interferes. Lactating babies are left in an adjoint house, beforehand).

—Gözcü (The Picket or lookout, he who keeps the order in the ceremonial room. He behaves tactfully and prevents undesired behavior displayed by overtly drunk persons. In hierarchy; he comes third after the “grandfather” and the “father”. He commands obedience by his substantial charisma).

3.4. The Flow of the (12) Services

After the achievement of the initiation of the conjoint couples involved; the 12 services follow (so named because of the above-mentioned 12 title-holders, not because of 12 stages

* The *Safavid*-ruler who got beaten by *Yavuz* the Grim at Chaldiran plane in 1512, was a poet with the pen-name *Hatayi*. Interestingly; his opponent, the Ottoman Sultan, despite his well-known harsh character, was also a poet. In one of his famous couplet; The Sultan says: “While lions were getting crushed in the raging, claw-like hands of mine; the destiny made a slave of me before a gazelle-eyed delicate beauty, alas!” (Translated by S.Ç.).

Öztelli (1976). specifies that *the Bektashi and Alevitischeorders are outstanding hearths for raising folk poets. In such tekkes, the saz and the poetic verses gained an almost celestial standing.*

* On p. 186 of his work, Gokalp gives an account of the *Qizilbaş* version of the dining table of the Forties: *The Blessed Prophet stops by their dining table on his way back from the heavens —the sacred ascent, “Miraç” journey, which he realized with the escorting of the Archangel Gabriel— and here Salman gives him one grape imploring the Blessed Prophet to distribute its juice around. The Blessed Prophet carries out the request. When one of the Forties touch his lips to the juice all Forty get love-drunk on the spot and start the holy dance, “semah”.*

** In the Ottoman Empire the Janissary Corps were the *Kapıkulu* (Houshold) soldiers, the hard core of the army. On the way to a campaign, provincial fief cavalry kept joining them, further swelling the numbers.

following one another). Carrying out the 12 services represents staging (mise en scene) the Food Table of the Forties.

The mixed company of spectators [who had undergone the same initiation years before] were arranged in rows based on age. As soon as the newly initiated ones take their places among them; the “grandfather” makes the announcement. “Let us become a mixture of wheat and barley grains!”. All people present (comrades, souls, “canlar”) renounce their sitting positions to take up a new order: Now, a male is next to a female. They are not actual pairs or even conjoint pairs who are side by side. Age does not matter, either. The circle is too firm; they are knees to knees. They hold one another’s hands and wrap their arms around one another while a praying is recited. Then a collective prostration to Allah Almighty takes place. According to Gokalp, it is this extreme intimacy of a mixed company which induces all suspects as to orgies and similar claims outside.

Once this particular session is also over, the rhapsodes play their instruments and recite ballads. This instigates the commencement of the holy dance, semah, attributed first to prophet-daughter-Fatima at the Table of Forties. Two females, one female or three females accompanied by one male perform the semah, the arms resembling a perch stork’s or eagle’s wings, while the bodies turn from right to left. It is not for watching by others; the heads are crestfallen, eyes closed and everybody meditates. The dancers show no open ecstasy. The trance is experienced implicitly. The dancers represent butterflies attacking a source of light, i.e. believers who crave for joining God by way of death. Semah is a worship by itself. All participants have empty stomachs until the end of Semah dance.

The saka distributes the raki to the standing crowd, after the dance. Right hands capture the glasses, with the thumb protruding upwards and four fingers concealing the content; while left hands are on the hearts. Once the glass are filled, left hands join the right hands. The raki is gulped at one stroke. Each should drink up his / her share. The drink represents the blood, flowing inside the body and staying invisible.

Then it is the turn of the two female inside-morsel-attendants to serve les abats / die Innereien of the sacrificed animal, which are roasted while all the rest of the meat is boiled. The “grandfather” gets the heart of the animal.

Then the Food-Table-Attendant brings the big round trays around which small groups engage in eating the boiled meat. This completes the rituals. After midnight; the crowd usually go on with eatery, drinking, conversing, song-playing-and-listening on the Fondness Square; a gathering which, nevertheless, is not-to-be identified with being profane, at all.

The sacred touch extends out to circumscribe those late activities, as well. Open spaces have significance within this culture. Besides the Fondness Square (Muhabbet Meydanı for after annual cem gatherings and Monday and Friday night gatherings throughout the year); Chepnis have the following other open spaces.

—The Comrade Square (Mihman Meydanı for welcoming visitors).

- The Fallens' Square (Düşkünlük Meydanı, the collecting place of the ostracized ones).
- The Spouse Square (Eş Meydanı, which, the newly-initiated conjoint couples step down as man-and-wife pairs).
- The Mourning (*) Square (Karbala Meydanı, where on the tenth of the lunar month of Muharram, the historical martyrs are commemorated)

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

—“Elsisiz, belsiziz, dilsiziz amma

Erkekçe gezeriz âlemin ortasında!” —

— (Yes, true: Without hands, groins and tongues we are

Yet, in mid-world, strolling we do, in a manly manner) —

Trans. by S.Ç.

A Qizilbas person's most impressive event is his full acceptance into the community, which seals his togetherness-in-fate. The reciprocity of the ritualistic happenings emphasizes the immense role of society for a Qizilbash. This is obviously a tribe where an individualistic person or a maverick has no place whatsoever and where being committed to a cause comes first. One for all and all for one concept is best epitomized by those people of hearts. The rituals are bursting with ancient symbols.

Gokalp reveals the fact that informants display an incredible fury when insinuations are made to possible incestuous (*) relations during those rituals. Referring to the so-called rumors of putting the lights out during the hurly burly of the âyin-i cem (the “candles out” attribution from the Sunnite mouth), Gokalp also says the following words:

Despite the rule that one should not recognize his then-partner; the rumors went that some stoop to pull out a piece of cloth or a button for future diagnoses. Among Irène Mélikoff's collections, a document (Hijri calendar 979, Gregorian year 1571) refers to a woman, who complains that her husband, Black Recep from Kastamonu, is a Qizilbash, participating in candles-out-parties where wives are mutually offered.

* [Hazrat] *Ali's elder son Hasan, following a short period of caliphate, retired from active life and died in Medina. Ali's younger son Hussain took up arms against the Umayyad-Caliph Yazid. But, near Karbala; he got assassinated almost with all his household. This tragic event represents the essence of the Shiite-Etiquette Nasr and Seyyed Hossein (1975).*

* If such a thing ever occurs in a ritualistic manner —not that a conviction about its truthfulness is to be inferred— even then; the event is by no means the same thing as a casual, deviant, sickly individual act of incest. It appears that the latter does happen in many societies, in complete concealment, only the top of the iceberg being reflected mostly in novels rather than scientific works. As Dr. *Şahika Yüksel* confirmed it in her national psychology presentation in Ankara in 1986 (a September issue of the daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* gave the topics of the congress); *incest is not as rare as it is thought; within a family, forbidden intercourses are performed mostly between father-and-daughter or grandfather-and-granddaughter; and the raped female child feels obligated to keep the incident as a secret.*

The nomadic domestic animal-raisers' pragmatic, even opportunistic interpretation of the spiritual matters has many components.

The nature, which has immense and direct impact upon their lives, is one. The need for alliance is another (The blood-brotherhood in Anatolia seems associated with Qizilbash ways and means, as Gokalp point out). The bitter historical wounds (Imam Ali being allegedly usurped from the caliphate from the very beginning; oppressions by the sovereign powers throughout the Middle-Eastern history) all-together, is still another.

Those people are more Turkish than any other community within the modern republic now; and they constitute one of the most vivacious colors of the Anatolian human-marbling, as far as their culture (or subculture) is concerned.

From the Poem THE SAINTS' FOOD-TABLE (by Semih Seren)

.
Have you ever visited The Nightingale Mountain, along with Virgin Mary;
Love of God in your heart, roses on your lap?
Have you ever listened to the Holy Qur'an,
Within the Mosque containing the Holy Cardigan?
Or the Bible in Hagia Sophia or in Saint Anthony, for that matter?
.
Would you like to erleben Mevlana, a little bit?
A little bit of Haji Bektash, a little bit of Yunus Emre-the Great?
.
Did you get the baptizing-cauldrons washed with rose-water?
Do you know Surat Al-bakara; by the way;
What about the ayat "There is no coercion in religion"?

(Trans. By S.Ç.)

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