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DESTRUCTURING "WOMAN IN ISLAM"
WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF BEKTASHI AND MAWLAWI THOUGHT

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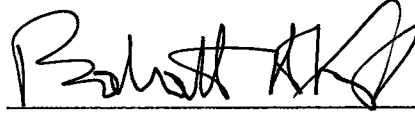
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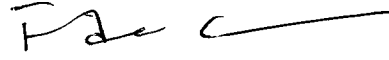
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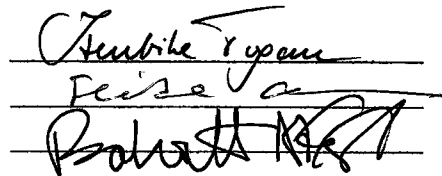
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ABSTRACT

DESTRUCTURING "WOMAN IN ISLAM" WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF BEKTASHI AND MAWLAWI THOUGHT

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This thesis is an attempt both to destructure the debates on "Woman in Islam" and to provide an alternative path to follow in discussing the issue. The Bektashi and Mawlawi thoughts provide the base upon which this alternative path is drawn. One of the various Islamic constructions of femininity, as well as its repercussions, is traced here in accordance with the stages that characterize the journey along the cyclical understanding of dervishes.

Keywords: Islam, dervishes, construction of femininity, cyclical thought, rhizome, jamal

ÖZ

BEKTAŞI VE MEVLEVİ DÜŞÜNCESİ KAPSAMINDA "İSLAM'DA KADIN" KURGUSUNUN PARÇALANMASI

Bilgin, Elif
Yüksek Lisans, Kadın Çalışmaları
Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. İsenbike Togan

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Bu çalışma, hem "İslam'da Kadın" tartışmalarını eleştirel bir biçimde ele almaya hem de bu alanda alternatif bir yaklaşım geliştirmeye yöneliktir. Burada, Bektaşî ve Mevlevî düşünceleri bu alternatif yolun temelini teşkil etmektedir. Çeşitli İslami kadınsılık kurgularından biri, ve bunun uzantıları, dervişlerin döngüsel anlayışlarındaki sınırsız yolculukları belirleyen aşamalar etrafında örülerek incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslam, dervişler, kadınsılığın kurgulanması, döngüsel düşünce, köksap, cemal

Can konađını arıyorsan,
CAN'sın
Bir lokma ekmek arıyorsan,
ekmeksın
Ŗu nükteyi biliyorsan,
iŖi biliyorsun demektir.
Neyi arıyorsan
O'sun sen.

(Mevlana)

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Oktay... Nazarım... Aşkın Her Dem Cemal
Olsun!

Finally, I owe a lot to Şafak; my mother and friend, whose personality has always inspired me to 'move on'.The theme of Jamal is *her* story.

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem: If several people, in the meeting hall of a lodge, met with young boys and performed a strange dance by beating their chests to the accompaniment of songs whose lyrics read, 'Heaven is but a house and a few girls. Give it to those who demand it. I need you, only you', and "You(God) are a great sultan, a soul within souls. I have seen you, not in a dream but clearly, with my own eyes." If the leader of the ritual, when questioned, replied, "What is wrong with it? Did not God create all, Good and Bad?", what would be your verdict?

The Answer: Since their meeting and actions are a clear case of prostitution, and since their description of heaven is blasphemous, their execution is permissible.

*

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Among the *fatwas* of Ebussuud Efendi, the famous Shayh al-Islam of the Ottoman Empire, from A.D. 1545 to 1574, -generally known as the Grand Mufti of Suleiman The Magnificent- the above mentioned fatwa is not only particularly interesting for modern readers at the very first glance, but deserves a greater attention given its enormous potentiality to shed light upon the various aspects of the history of religions in general and of the Ottoman Empire in specific.¹ Although

¹ The fatwas of Ebussuud Efendi have been regimented by M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ, in "Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16.Asır Türk Hayatı" (Istanbul, 1972) There are 1001 fatwas in this book, which comprise a wide range of topics, from both public and private realms. As such, the opinion of Ebussuud Efendi on 'what to do with heretics' and how to establish the true criteria to strictly separate 'correct' Islam from 'distorted' religion is certainly not confined to the fatwa that I have chosen here. Rather, among the 1001 fatwas given, it is possible to encounter at least 65 fatwas that directly deal with this theme, though under various subtitles with considerably different subjects of attention, such as "Sufis", "the Kızılbaş"(literally red-cap) or "Heretics"(Mürted) Apart from these, there are many other fatwas that dwell upon the same subject in a more indirect way.

obviously, it is neither possible nor desirable to draw a one-to-one correspondance between the binding authority of a legal and/or religious declaration and the way it is put into practice, I think it is still a valid method to use the former as a fertile ground to derive clues about the operation of the latter. To be able to do this, in turn, implies to detect the mechanisms through which a fatwa is extracted, as well as, the meanings attached to it in its own social context.

In the scope of this study, this particular fatwa will provide us with a further step. It will function as the motivating force behind the endeavour to arrive at one of the many Islamic constructions of femininity. But before epitomizing how this will be done, I will leave this question open for the moment, and will initially approach this theme by describing the path that will take me to it.

Thinking on the fatwa in question will bring along the formulation of several interrelated questions. We can start by asking first of all, "who were the people attacked in the fatwa in question?" "What was so 'wrong' in their meeting and actions?" "Where and how did they depart from the precedents of the worldview represented by the famous Shayh al-Islam?" Furthermore, "why was their ritual seen as a form of prostitution?" Last but not least, "why were they condemned to death?"

Questions may be carried out further and if one has the specific aim to draw the boundaries of a Muslim community or to define a 'Muslim identity', they may become much more confusing than ever. Let us suppose for the moment that we are in the position of a student

who is largely unaware of the problematique facets of the term "Islam". Furthermore, let us imagine that s/he is quite alien to a set of questions so much promoted and underlined by several scholars, among whom Edward Said is noteworthy. This is to say that within this conjuncture, the student in question does not feel the necessity of asking her/himself the following questions. "Is there such a thing as Islamic behaviour? What connects Islam at the level of everyday life to Islam at the level of doctrine in the various Islamic societies?" (Said, 1981, pXV) Rather than tackling with these uneasy questions, the student who is ready to take for granted the validity of an ineffable concept such as "Islam" and who is likely to pay no attention to the mutual relation between the formation of any discourse and the routes through which power is wielded, will find it quite difficult to overcome several obstacles that are likely to block his/her path.

At least a few of these obstacles can be envisaged when testing the validity and soundness of the key concepts at hand, in the light of the points raised within the context of our specific example. Now, if the Shayh al-Islam is taken as the voice of Islam and his fatwas as the principles of this religion, should we then, locate the people subject to the fatwa, somewhere outside 'the true Muslim identity'? If on the other hand, the people participating in the ritual explained in the fatwa are not excluded in such a way, where should we locate the followers and supporters of Ebussuud Efendi, who does not hesitate in finding the execution of the former both permissible and desirable? From all that has been said, the point that I am trying to push forward and the problem ready to face the student of Islam in general, and the given fatwa in

particular, can be stated as follows: How can the enormous gap between these two 'sides', that is to say the distance between the object and the subject of the fatwa, be explained and interpreted, within a comprehensive framework?

One may find at least two choices at this stage. One way can be to forget these questions completely and to label the various facets of the picture in front of us as 'not the main thing'. Logically, as long as the well-known distinction between 'what really matters' and 'what is marginal' permeates a study, not only the different actors attached to the fatwa, but the fatwa itself can be moderately pushed aside.

Yet, there is still a second way, which entails to take these questions seriously and which is certainly more obscure than the former, since it requires to review with a critical eye the conceptual tools that are so highly valued and legitimized in various intellectual circles. This is partly because the inadequacy of the general conceptual structure and of the key terms employed will come to the surface, as one moves further and further into studying varieties, pluralities and the so-called marginalities. And this is exactly where the scholar will have to recognize at pains that perhaps " the hardest thing to get most academic experts on Islam to admit is that what they say and do as scholars is set in a profoundly and in some ways, an offensively political context." (Said, 1981, pXVII)

The significance of these questions will be clarified when the fact that a large number of studies on Islam do not even bother to ask them, let

alone looking for the possible answers. In fact, the disturbing tendency in these studies is the recurrent ignorance of the dynamic varieties existing within the history of Islam and the deficiencies caused by a reductionist usage of this particular term. Needless to say, within the rigidly drawn confines of the traditional perspective, those Islamic understandings that do not conform to the taken-for-granted scheme, are bound to remain marginal and trivial. Herein we find the reason why,

A widely shared thought in the West is that there is neither a mystical nor a philosophical thing in the Qur'an, and that the gnostics and the philosophers owe nothing to the Qur'an. (Corbin, 1994, p21)

Interestingly, the main actors in the discussions on Islam, broadly known as the 'modernists' on the one side, and the 'traditionalists' on the other side, seem to share the same approach in carrying out their own arguments and in refuting those of the other camp, despite the enormous gap lying in between. Briefly expressed, both sides deprive the history of Islam from its manifoldness and dynamism, by continuously reducing it to a single or a dominant dimension, though certainly for different ends. Although this commonality should not be exaggerated out of all proportion, I still think that it deserves great attention and concern. Accordingly, one of the most persistent suggestions that will be promoted throughout this study is based upon the assertion that, this widely-shared reductionist approach, which has been for so long dominating the scene, should be abandoned for once and for all, if our purpose is to arrive at a better understanding of Islam where its dynamism and

manifoldness can be detected. Another way of posing the same point of emphasis is that,

One of the historical ironies of our times is that both the Western critics of Islam and the modernist Muslims and fundamentalists are agreed upon that there is nothing particularly mystical in either the Qur'an or the messenger. Sufism has therefore no place within the Islamic religion. (Danner, 1988, p54)

To claim that Islam is neither a homogeneous nor a static whole in itself, implies to acknowledge that it comprises various distinct understandings and ways of life deep inside. Although this point may seem to be quite simple at the very first glance, it is so frequently skipped that "a major cause of the distorted images of Islam in the West has been the mistaken assumption that all Muslims share identical beliefs and follow similar practices."² (Christopher, 1972, p70)

Of further interest in this regard is the cardinal point that, since there have been various 'ways' to follow for the Muslim individual, as well as distinct Islamic understandings, it is fundamentally important to attest that the basic Islamic texts are subject to different interpretations and rereadings. In my opinion, this point merits much attention since it has wide repercussions, one of which will be construed in this study. Therefore, it is time for us to challenge

² As a matter of fact, the Western images of Islam have been subjected to significant changes throughout history. In this regard, there have been several turning points, such as the Crusades, the Arab dominance in Spain, the power balances between Eastern and Western imperial structures, the rise of nationalism, world wars...etc, which radically altered the existing constructs about the East or the Muslim world and replaced them with new ones. A detailed analysis of these transformations can be encountered in Maxime Rodinson's, "Europe and The Mystique of Islam" (University of Washington Press, 1991).

this reductionist understanding, by fully realizing the multidimensionality of Islam, as well as the historical contexts in which its manifold aspects have tended to emanate.

Picking up where we have left off, that is to say the question of arriving at one of the many Islamic constructions of femininity, three salient points should be underlined to find out the necessary connections. Firstly, the reductionist understanding of the term 'Islam' that has been briefly touched upon up to here, is perhaps much more persistent in the realm of "Islam and Woman" than in any other. As such, it is upon this base that some wellknown and rather arduous questions such as 'the Islamic understanding of woman' or 'the position of women in Muslim societies' are being generally discussed. Secondly, what this general tendency fails to grasp is that both the categories of "Islam" and "woman" are too broad and too complex to be reduced to a monolithic, and even a coherent whole. Thirdly and more significantly for the ongoing argument, just like there are different understandings of Islam, there are also distinct gender understandings in Islamic formations. This is to say that there is no such thing as 'an Islamic understanding of woman.' This last point needs further explanation.

As a careful observation of the fatwa in question will reveal out, within the fold of Islam, there are distinct formations and traditions that may clash with one another, but are not going to be excluded from the 'House of Islam' for this reason. If the gap between the enunciator of the fatwa and the people that are condemned to death by him, is so enormous, don't we have sufficient evidence to suspect of the presence of a difference in their understandings

towards various vital themes. Furthermore, if the gap between the way they tend to think and live is so wide, why should not we derive from here a clue to trace their approach towards gender, women and femininity, to see if there are also notable differences, in this respect? More clearly, since the construction of these fundamental patterns and relations do not take place in a vacuum, the differences in the worldviews between the object and subject sides of the fatwa in question, may embody at the very same time a divergence in their approaches towards the notions of gender or sex.

Obviously enough, the acknowledgment of this point strongly depends on the necessity of refraining from both making sweeping generalisations and believing in the existence of a single Islamic understanding of gender or sex differences. Unfortunately for our argument, the literature on "Islam and woman" too often fails to take notice of this rather simple but vital point. The criticism of this deeply embedded tendency will constitute the subject of the second part of this study.

To review what has already been said up to here, it may be worthwhile to continuously keep in mind a point which may seem to be very simple at the very first glance, but which is indeed fundamentally important for the discussions to follow. My suggestion is that, "there is no single voice of Islam, nor any single reality which can be identified as 'Islam'" (Bowker, 1995, p70) Apparently, while some of these voices are loud and courageous, some are low and require to be approached so that they may be heard. Moreover, the voices themselves seem to have been subject to the changes introduced by every different epoch and have at the same time, actively participated

in the occurrence of these transformations. Understood in this way, the coexistence of various voices is indicative of the fact that the history of Islam has neither shown a tendency to follow a linear road nor conformed itself to a uniform pattern; but rather, there have been restless ups and downs, coloured to a large extent by whispering voices here and shouting voices there.

As to the voices that have been more loud and dominant, much has been written and said until today. Yet, those voices that are thought to be situated in the margins and/or tend to move in whispers have been, to a large extent, pushed aside. Likewise, while the gender or sex understandings of the former have been the subject of countless studies, those of the latter have not been given the place they certainly deserve in the ongoing studies. However, even the single observation that those voices in the second group have been disturbing, threatening and opposing the loudest voices of Islam from time to time, due to their alternative worldviews or interpretations of the main texts, makes them worth to bring into scrutiny and to pull them to the center of academic studies.

To be sure, it is in the studies with broad titles, that the prioritization of the loudest voices of Islam becomes all the more visible and striking. As I mentioned before and will try to elaborate in the ensuing settings, the title of "Islam and woman" is one of the most notorious among these. As such, the very simple fact that if and when the researcher in this realm identifies Islam with the worldview of Ebussuud Efendi, s/he will get a different answer than the one who will primarily dwell upon the understanding of the people subject to the fatwa

mentioned above, is largely neglected and perhaps belittled.

Given such a roughly sketched framework, it may be useful here to explain how this will shape the order of the study to follow. Towards this end, two points should be underlined; the first of which is related to the acknowledgment of the existence of various different Islamic understandings of women and femininity, and the second to the selection of one of these 'other' understandings to dwell upon. The first point has been briefly described up to here. As to the second, within the scope of this study, this theme will be situated within the context of Bektashi and Mawlawi understandings. These two orders have left a deep impact in Turkish history and have attracted a large number of people from various social strata and from both sexes.

In what follows, the depiction of where and how they deviate from the orthodox approach of Ebussuud Efendi, will provide the fertile ground where one of the various Islamic constructions of femininity will be analysed. As to the reason why I have preferred to deal with their construction of femininity, rather than with the position of women in these two dervish orders, this constitutes a theme that goes beyond the limits of this introduction and as such, will be elaborated in chapter two where I will present a critical approach to the existing literature on 'Islam and woman.'

Therefore, by using the fatwa in question as the motivating force behind this study, I hope to be able to demonstrate that the worldview of the people subject to the vituperative statements of the Shayh al-Islam, embody a different Islamic understanding or

practice than that of the latter. As I mentioned before, the elaboration of a certain fatwa can yield to raising a number of interconnected questions, that require a careful rereading of historical or religious texts, a familiarity with the terms employed and with the linguistic context in which they operate, as well as a careful synthesis of the present sources, to be answered adequately. This, in turn, will lead us directly to a hermeneutical reading, that will be forged ahead in the course of this study by the help of further insight provided at each particular section.

Therefore, in what follows, I will try to arrive at one of the Islamic constructions of femininity, by moving from the general to the specific. In other words, the scope will be narrowed at each specific leaping point. As I hope to be able to show later on, this does not stem from a simple and pure deduction; but from the specific nature of the material in hand. In much the same way, instead of delving directly into a discussion of what I prefer to name the 'heterodox Islamic construction of femininity', for lack of a better expression, I am going to prefer to take a much more oblique, and yet a safer path, by concentrating on those themes that may seem to be irrelevant at the very first glance, but will be closely connected to one another throughout the study. Since the risk of getting lost is significantly high while carrying such a task out, the subtitles will be narrowed at each leaping point.

Hence, the first chapter will provide us with a general scheme, in which an overview of the various formations residing in the history of Islam and an analysis of the existing roads or paths derived from the perennial teachings of the Qur'an, will be

presented. The dynamism and complexity inherent in the history of Islam will not only be recurrently underlined in this specific part, but will be reiterated from time to time, all throughout the study. This theme will be perhaps better depicted in the second chapter, where the main trends in the literature on "Islam and woman" will be evaluated. Herein, both a critique of the main trends and the search for alternative paths to follow, will be developed.

Then, in the third chapter, one of the Islamic formations constitutive of this dynamism and complexity will be brought under scrutiny, as an alternative path to follow. This is to say that the Bektashi and Mawlawi orders of dervishes will be selected and worked upon, in their own historical context and geographical area. This analysis will elucidate the processes of the proliferation and institutionalization of the two respective orders or tariqas. It should be noted that, the emphasis on these two processes will bring along the elaboration of a relatively early historical era. As such, the late Ottoman period will not be included in this analysis, mainly because it goes beyond the limits of this study.

Following this historical analysis, an expatiation on the cyclical understanding of these dervishes and a "hermeneutics of hermeneutics" will be developed. In this way, throughout the fourth chapter the selected poems will be perceived as works of interpretation that pave the way to an endless process of reinterpretation and reconstruction. The basic purpose here will be to illuminate the general framework that is characteristic of the cyclical Islamic understanding and praxis. To this end, several subtitles that will be of great help in discussing the

'cycle of the permanent moment' will be both separately and interrelatedly studied.

Only after having moved into the depths of this fascinating process, will it be possible to adequately concentrate on the construction of femininity inherent in Bektashi and Mawlawi thought and to evoke the implications or repercussions of this construction for Muslim women. This in turn will be the task of the fifth and last chapter of this study.

In concluding, I would like to add that perhaps the general atmosphere within the Islamic studies with broadly drawn titles would not have been so vehemently limiting and misleading if every researcher had chosen his/her own focus of attention on different terms, even at the expense of equating the subject in question with Islam or Muslims in general. What makes the situation even much worse than that is the widely spread and deeply rooted tendency to persistently identify a broad term such as "Islam" with either the scriptural or orthodox dimensions of this particular religion. Thus, there is considerable evidence that, in this way, distinct parts and formations that can be noticed even by rereading a single fatwa are totally ignored and pushed aside, so that the voice of the Shayh al-Islam covers almost all of the scene. To be more precise, the orthodox/sunni Islam in general is taken by the researchers as the main norm, while any difference that can be grasped, is seen as "a deviance from the mainstream." And this is exactly where some notorious distinctions such as "correct Islam versus distorted Islam", "elite Islam versus folk Islam", "scriptural religion versus popular religion"...etc. operate, albeit generally disguised under the cloak of scientific objectivity.

Nevertheless, I should also acknowledge that there are many other scholars who have not conformed to this reductionist trend. And it is the critical standpoints promoted by these scholars that have continuously guided me in carrying out this study. In the ensuing pages, then, I will sometimes directly refer to the works of some of these scholars. But more frequently, I will make short quotations from their writings, to be able to clarify the arguments forged ahead.

We must keep in mind that the history of Islam, just like the history of any other religion, is dynamic and rich of varieties. Nonetheless, perhaps more than any other religion it has been continuously isolated from its varieties when interpreted or studied. Given the fact that this misleading trend is highly operative in the discussions on woman, gender, sex and femininity, it is particularly in these realms that it should be radically questioned. To challenge the balance between the so-called "marginal issues" and "the core issue", as well as the neverending quest for alternative paths in studying Islam, seem to possess the necessary potential that such an outrageous effort may require at the very beginning. While the question of how and when this potentiality will be transformed into actuality remains to be seen, any minor initiation towards this direction can bring us new perspectives and perhaps, new answers to the same old questions.

Lastly, it should be noticed that there is no reason why to assume that the changes introduced into the academia in the last years should not influence the studies on Islam. Understood in this way, the relatively recent interest on the peripheries rather than on the center, the insistence upon the

significance of the themes at the margins have begun to find their repercussions in this area as well. Here I would like to bring to an end the argument that has been only roughly sketched in this introductory section and that is going to be further elaborated in what follows, by giving a rather long quotation that seems to summarize in the most intensive form the ongoing modifications in intellectual circles.

At the present moment marginality happens to be something of a fashionable theme. While there is nothing much to be said in favor of fashion for its own sake, there are two things to be said on this particular fashion's behalf. The political advantage in looking at peripheries and extremities is that power is exposed in what it drives from the center of life to the edges, and in what it incites as its own antitheses. But the generic advantage is compelling too: that peripheries and extremities are worth the intellectual detour simply for the shock and oddity of what is likely to turn up. (Cocks, 1989, p4)

CHAPTER 1

DECIPHERING THE IMPLICATIONS OF A FATWA

Having started our discussion with a fatwa of the famous Shayh al-Islam Ebussuud Efendi, and having decided to trace the actors involved in this process, the first part of this study will be dedicated to analysing the fatwa in question in detail. Therefore, in order to facilitate the following analysis and to provide an initiatory move towards the forthcoming settings, I have preferred to divide the first part of this study into three main areas. Firstly, I will focus upon the 'subject' of the fatwa, which will, in turn, demand to draw, at least a broad overview of the mutual relation between the *shari'a* and the class of learned men, that is to say the *ulema*. An epitome of the Ottoman learned men will also be presented here. Secondly, and in connection with the previous step, I will evaluate the 'object' of the fatwa. By doing so, I am not only planning to provide the reader with a familiarity with some of the basic concepts that will be of a primary value in the course of this study, but to draw attention to the existing deficiencies in our conceptual tools as well.

Before bringing this discussion to an end, I will also attempt to accumulate the information presented in the previous sections, that is to say, to evaluate the 'subject' and 'object' sides together. Thus, in the third part I will make a few comments about the way the two 'sides' have been interrelated. This brief survey will explore their relationships which were, certainly, not fixed or frozen at a specific historical turning point. Rather than that, we

are confronted with a dynamic history in which these actors have been restlessly subject to historical transformations and vicissitudes of power relations, and have played, at the very same time, a very active role in the shaping of these.

Therefore, the contents of the first part of the study will follow the typical order of the study itself, moving from a search for the existing connections between what may seem to be 'unrelated' elements at the very first glance, towards a possible coalescence of these at the very end. The basic premise here will be that "you do not need to invent connections. They are already existing." (Eco, 1992, p397)

1.1 THE SUBJECT OF THE FATWA

Zira onlar, dosdoğru şariat'tan ayrılıp,
pürüzsüz yoldan, şariat alimlerinin
geniş caddesinden çıkıp, gerçek tarikat
şeyhlerinin mesleklerinden saptıktan
sonra, hem fesada uğradılar, hem de
başkalarını fesada sürüklediler.
Hem sapıtılar,
hem de başkalarını sapıttırdılar.
(İmam-ı Birgivi)

My analysis of the fatwa in question will be situated in the historical context of a question which is certainly too broad and complicated to be fully treated here, but which must still be taken into consideration if there is to be any advance in our discussions. At the outset, I had maintained that to draw a one-to-one correspondance between a fatwa and the way it was put into practice could be rather

misleading for the researcher. Similarly, to be content with solely or mainly the legal/religious decisions without trying to understand from which historical contexts they tend to emanate can have greatly problematic aspects. This is exactly where the scriptural aspect of Islam per se, or of its perennial teachings should be analysed in the light of the information provided by the history of religions. One of the themes that this section will intend to explore concerns precisely this last point. Crucial to this endeavour is the notion of power, which is inextricably wed to the ongoing discussion, on the fatwa in question.

The point that I am trying to push forward here is that, the mechanisms through which the binding authority of a legal decision is being imposed, can and should not be separated from the operation of power relations at that particular time and place. This in turn implies to recognize and inspect the actors involved in these relations, as well as the points where their interests or predilections may or do clash. Accordingly, I want to argue that, unless these points are examined closely, it won't be possible to understand either the standpoint of the Shayh al-Islam or the veneer of opposition that covers his statements. Since the historical study of the political and religious dynamics operating behind the enunciator of the fatwa is obviously one of the tasks that this study intends to dwell upon, and since what I am about to try in what follows is to offer an understanding for the manifold aspects of Islam, the first step to take towards this direction will be to bring the 'subject' of the fatwa under scrutiny.

To analyze properly the fatwa in question

requires not only to focus upon the man who has issued the fatwa, that is to say the Shayh al-Islam, but also to elucidate the dynamics residing within a deeply-rooted religious institution and operating in an eschatological ground from which the necessary sources of legitimacy are continuously derived. Obviously enough, familiarity with the actors and concepts involved in the question in front of us will not mean much unless the analysis is deepened by expounding the relevant historical age and the changing relations between the various worldviews in which they take part and acquire a significant meaning.

For this purpose, in what follows, I will firstly set the stage for a broad overview of the paramount role played by the shari'a in Islamic societies. Then I will proceed towards the elaboration of the position occupied by a group of learned men, that is to say the ulema. As a third step, the study of the previously mentioned points will be carried out further, to see how these themes have been echoed in the Ottoman context. This will also form the example where the somewhat abstract usage of the main terms and the theoretical direction of the ongoing discussion will be reviewed in the light of the information provided by a concrete historical structure. All together, these three subtitles will constitute the study on the 'subject' side of the said fatwa.

1.1.1 The Shari'a

The concept of *shari'a* is usually translated into English as "Law" or "sacred law". In fact, "literally, it means 'the way to the water hole', but also includes the meaning of 'the right path', and

thus came to mean 'law'"(Denny, 1994,p195) Yet, as almost all the scholars working in this realm seem to agree, it is certainly much more than what this specific term is able to designate and inhabitate. This is mainly because, within the broad range comprised by the shari'a, one can come across a substantial body in which countless themes are discussed in detail and the corresponding rules for each are distinguished rigorously from one another. Hence the shari'a is able to provide an answer for almost every principle of action; from the regulation of gender relations in a Muslim society to the organization of the ritual prayers, from the depiction of punishments for criminal procedures to the definition of the ideal attitudes in daily lives. It should be remarked at once that, in such a way, "the shari'a covers all aspects of the public and private, communal and personal lives of the Muslims."(Lewis,1976,p25)

Since the shari'a has both the capacity and the legitimacy to strictly regulate the limits of "right conduct" in this world, every relation in which the individual Muslim takes part, finds its place there. To this regulation, the economic or social affairs of both the individual and the community at large, are completely included. The whole complex process acts, in the final analysis, if not to dominate every sphere of human life, at least to arise a claim and to embody the enormous potential to do so. This feature of the shari'a can be somewhat difficult to grasp for a Western reader from a Christian background; but it is easier to comprehend for those familiar with the teachings and internal organization of Judaism. In a sense, this is quite understandable given the fact that, "...Christianity is basically a faith, while Islam is mainly a shari'a."(Ayubi, 1991,p50)

When we turn our attention to Judaism on the other hand, we will soon find out that the situation here is different from Christianity in a considerable respect and is much more similar to the one present in Islam. This is to say that, "like the Jewish notion of Torah, *shari'a* is more than law; it is also the right teaching, the right way to go in life and the power that stands behind what is right." (Denny, 1994, p195) By the same token, the fact that, in both Islam and Judaism, the sacred law cannot be reduced to the regulation of mundane relations or conversely, to the arena of extraterrestrial matters, but is used in such a way so as to cover both realms simultaneously, attributes to it an utmost importance. In each particular case, the relations of a single individual with his/her community, with God, as well as with him/herself are resting on the sacred law's teachings and requirements.

It should be clear from what has been said so far that, "...the domain of the *shari'at* is larger than what one finds in western juridical systems." (Eliade, 1985, vol3, p113) In sum, the central point to keep in mind is that the *shari'a*, as the sacred or religious law of Islam, covers all the branches of legal structure and all the possible aspects of individual and communal life.

Up to here, I have indicated the overwhelming significance of the *shari'a* on theoretical grounds. Yet, the practical aspects of its power and the mechanisms through which it tends to be implemented should also be taken into account, if there is to be any advance in our understanding of its operation. It should be reminded that, "in part, the *shari'a* came to be stressed because it afforded an avenue for

authoritatively responding to people's questions." (Bulliet, 1994,p182)Hence the point we have left to consider is the crucial question of how and through which means the scriptual teachings are put into practice, as well as the sources that grant legitimacy to the operation of this manifold mechanism.

What is at issue here is the necessity of elucidating the structural mechanisms through which the shari'a tends to be implemented.Admittedly, this brings forward a noteworthy theme which concerns less the content of the written words, than their appropriation and application.This in turn delves directly into the widely held assertion that, the perennial requirements of the shari'a cannot be interpreted and understood by everyone in the same manner.It is certainly the case that, in world history, knowledge has never been abundant enough for everyone to consume and produce it alike.Very much to the contrary, the consolidation of the existing hierarchies or the establishment of new ones, had always gone hand in hand with the struggle for "the possession of knowledge."

Needless to say, the history of Islam is no exception to the ongoing argument.It is in this sense that, to juxtapose, to appropriate and to impose the teachings of the shari'a converge in acts of interpretation, whose doors are not open for anyone to enter in as s/he pleases.The control of these doors, in turn, is wholly intertwined with and highly dependent upon the authority and role of a group of people situated in the upper parts of the religious hierarchy.Here we can encounter two significant processes that continuously condition and feed one another.On the one hand, there is, posed in principle, the deeply-rooted distinction drawn between 'those who

know' (*alim*) or 'those who are learned', and the rest of the community of believers. On the other hand, 'those who know' restlessly endeavour to remain in that supreme position and to warrant this distinction not only by circumscribing the means that pave the way to knowledge, but also by inspecting the actions of those who may either potentially or actually disturb the operation of the whole mechanism. Consequently, the fact that the recurrent claim for the necessity to perceive and administer the teachings of the shari'a as best as possible rendered a disparity on the basis of knowledge, will lead us to the point where the group of learned men or the ulema, enter directly into the stage.

1.1.2 The Mutual Relation Between The Shari'a and The Ulema

The Arabic word *ulema* is the plural of the word *alim*, which means 'knower', from the verb for knowing, '*alima*. In time, the literal meaning of 'alim' has been transformed and used as an indicator of knowledge on religion in general and on the shari'a in specific. Not only the original meaning of the word itself, but also the position that the ulema have occupied throughout the history of Islam will reveal out the dynamic and mutual relation between the operation of power and the acquisition of knowledge.

This is to say that, the claim for being the 'possessors of right knowledge' or the one and only reference on religious teachings, has paved the way towards the ulema's quest for a monopoly of knowledge and has intensified their continuous struggle for power.

As I will try to demonstrate at various parts in this study, this is indicative of the endless endeavour for arriving at the status of and being recognized as the sole -or at least the most legitimate- interpretives of the Scripture.

When the issue is discussed from a different vantage point, there is nothing particularly suprising in what has been told above. After all, no text can be reduced to a single reading and the sacred texts are no exception. Be this as it may, my claim is that, it is especially in this realm, that is to say in the realm of the interpretation of the sacred words, where the most ardent divisions of opinion have been inculcated. Moreover, we must also consider here that this process is not something peculiar to the history of Islam. Rather, the restless struggle for possessing the ultimate 'truth' as grounded primarily in the application of the Scripture, can be disclosed easily in the history of religions in general, but especially in the history of the three great monotheistic religions. This is mainly why,

That Scripture was a kind of battleground both within and among the three religious communities should occasion no surprise. The words of God are by their very nature not only the source of every prayer and a guide for all worship and conduct; they provide as well, the matter of every brief and the court of last and authoritative appeal. (Peters, 1990, p406)

From the obverse side, this last point should be seized as an indicator of a centuries-old question on how to appropriate the main religious texts to the present situations. The power and authority of the Scripture cannot be attested by solely focusing

upon its contents. In fact, it is obvious enough that the sacred words can be perceived as the unquestionable commands of the Divine. Yet, although the grammatical structure of the sacred text is highly revealing in itself, this does not render the Scripture intrinsically powerful or authoritative per se. There is certainly much more than that, since power is basically articulated in the application, appropriation and imposition of the sacred words, in a given religious community. In a similar vein,

The canonization of the Scriptures has a hermeneutical as well as a textual or literary critical meaning, for what is important is not only the formation, collection, and fixing of the sacred texts but also their application to particular situations. (Bruns, 1992, p65)

As I will argue repeatedly in the forthcoming parts, and contrary to the main trend in Orientalist studies, the Islamic Scripture cannot and should not be reduced to a single dimension or to a unique reading. It is certainly the case that, different readings are closely wed to different interpretations that may and do clash with one another from time to time. It is in this sense that the questions of how to perceive and interpret the main texts have constituted a fertile ground, where the most vehement divisions of opinion have flourished and where the most fervent struggles for power have taken place. To be able to grasp this point however, one should take into account the cardinal role played by the sacred text, that is to say the Qur'an in our own case, both in its outer and inner aspects, throughout the history of Islam.

Turning back to where we have left off, in

pursuing the specific question of how the shari'a was implemented, it must be noted at once that, increasingly throughout the history of Islam, the people situated in the learned hierarchy have seen themselves and have been seen by others as the legitimate interpreters of the Law. This is certainly not to suggest that the recognition of the ulema's possession of knowledge has been unproblematic or that there have not been differing viewpoints competing with their authority. Obviously enough, there have been contradictory opinions regarding this matter, as well as various mechanisms that have restricted the role of the ulema, depending on the circumstances present at that specific time and place. Nevertheless, it is quite justifiable to argue that the power granted by having knowledge on the Scripture was a factor indicative of the ulema's supreme position in Muslim societies. On the whole then,

To obey the law means to obey God, who, as some scholars say, has revealed not Himself but rather His law, which is then interpreted by the 'ulama' or, in the Shia tradition, by the imams and their representatives, the mujtahids. That is why the 'ulama', who are able to interpret God's will are so important for the maintenance of the House of Islam; they stand for the right approach to everything in life, ... (Schimmel, 1994, p135)

As far as our evidence reveals, by issuing fatwas on various questions, by checking out to what extent these are adequately implemented throughout a certain geographical area and by not hesitating to punish those who do not conform to the prescribed rules, the body of learned men, has managed to occupy a very powerful position in most Muslim societies. Hence what is at issue here embraces the authoritative definition of 'right conduct' and the imposition of

this definition on the Muslim community. It is in this sense that the primary concern of the ulema has been the preservation of the adequate mechanisms and the pre-given boundary between 'right' and 'wrong', so that the implementation of the sacred law right to the letter could be guaranteed. Accordingly, here it will be significant to keep in mind that "the most characteristic activity of Islamic scholarship has not been, as in other religions, theology, but the study and explication of the Law."(Williams, 1962, p92) This is understandable given the internal character of Islam and the prominent place occupied by the shari'a in its history.

Thus far it has been shown that the shari'a is much more than the accumulation of sacred rules or laws, and the people in the religious hierarchy operate on this ground, being both delimited and nurtured by it. Consequently,

The law is a powerful force in Islam, ... and there soon emerged a class of men learned in the Law, upon whom the responsibility of shaping an Islamic conscience and Muslim orthodoxy finally rested. (Peters, 1994, p5)

Now that the mutual relation between the shari'a and the ulema has been slightly touched upon, we can proceed and probe the position of the class of learned men more carefully.

1.1.2.1 Ulema and Umma

One of the fundamental differences that separates Islam from the other two monotheistic religions is the nonexistence of a structural organization comprising a class of religious men, such

as the *rabbis* in Judaism or the priests in Christianity. As suggested, there is neither an ecclesiastical hierarchy nor a religious institution autonomously established. Islamic discourse formulates this point very clearly, by inculcating that no person, no institution or social group can play an intermediary role between the created and the Creator.

Another way of endorsing the same point of emphasis is that, the individual Muslim should enter into a direct relation with his/her God. There can be no discrimination in this respect, since everyone, regardless of the existing differences in social status, sex or race, is equal in the eyes of God and accordingly, responsible of his/her own actions.

Nevertheless, this is only one side of the issue, since the fact that there is certainly much more to notice will be clarified when the history of Islam is studied carefully. Evidently enough, the fundamental concern for rendering justice and equality all over the Muslim world has undergone significant changes in practice. As a matter of fact, as the interpreters of the shari'a, the group of learned men have gradually and increasingly occupied, a cardinal position in the society and have even managed to verify the boundaries of "true Muslim life", despite the overt emphasis of the Islamic discourse on the equality of all believers. This is mainly why,

While it is true that Islam has no priests or sacerdotal class, and that the Muslim is his own sacerdote, the fact of the matter is that there has always existed a well-informed and pious minority of authorities whose knowledge of the principles and practices of the religion placed them heads and shoulders above the others. (Danner, 1988, p122)

The most widespread and profoundly important function of the ulema has been the interpretation of the sacred law and the establishment of the adequate mechanisms to guarantee its implementation. As such, the shari'a rather than theology, the organization of communal life rather than the search for inner realities and the maintenance of the rigid categorizations of "right" and "wrong" rather than entanglement with nebulous issues or variegated forms of human existence, has been the primary concern of the ulema. It is this concern, sanctified by the religious sources, that has directed their premises and actions.

In this respect, the theoretical equality of all the faithful people in the eyes of God, which was so much stressed in the early period of Islam, has acquired different meanings and repercussions in the practices of the following centuries. As such, the learned men have managed to attain and to maintain a privileged position in the social and religious hierarchy. Expressed bluntly, "those who know" gradually increased their power and control over "those who do not know." In this respect, knowledge on religious matters, from which the ulema derived the necessary sources of legitimacy to fortify its prestigious position, constituted a fundamental criteria that continuously and actively participated in the reproduction of the disparity in question.

On the whole then, the original emphasis conceding that there shall or can be no intermediaries between the Muslim believer and God, and everyone is deemed to be equally responsible for his/her own actions, does not indicate that there is no visible hierarchy in the fold of Islam. The previous review

should leave us in no doubt that the fact that there is no organized class of religious people cannot be a sound reason for us to attenuate the power of the ulema.

While there is no priesthood or clergy in Islam, properly speaking, there is a class which has played a clerical role in Islamic society, and which has acquired social and religious prestige identical in kind to that exercised by the priests of other religions. (Williams, 1962, p94)

This having been underlined, now, I would like to include some other considerations.

To be sure, Islam places a great stress upon the shaping of public life and the establishment of a collective identity. Similarly and as it has been asserted repeatedly by the overwhelming majority of the scholars, Islamic ethics are first of all public in character rather than private or individual. It is in this sense that Islam is a communal religion, grounded primarily in a substantial body of social morals and teachings. Apart from the prescribed rules and principles of action, the life of the prophet is highly indicative of this distinguishing feature of Islam. Obviously, he did not solely reveal the signs and orders of God, but was highly engaged in the shaping of the Muslim community, as a political guide and religious leader. Moreover, unlike the Christian practice, Islam contains a detailed set of rules and mechanisms both to coalesce these and to assure their application. This is mainly why, I am going to argue that we must consider the role of the Muslim community and what is precisely being implied by this term, in carrying out any analysis on the manifold aspects of Islamic history. Therefore, when studying the position

of the ulema one cannot turn a blind eye to the concept of *umma*, that is to say the Muslim community at large.

Given the strongly communal character of Islamic thoughts and practices, the fact that the concept of *umma* is highly valued and customarily referred to, should occasion no surprise. Broadly speaking, in various Islamic discourses, the individual is first of all, a component part of the Muslim community which is in turn, expected and perceived to be based on solidarity. Admittedly it is incumbent upon the Muslim individual to pay respect and to perform the predefined duties towards the community to which s/he belongs. This concern is attested by countless points ranging from the preference of the realization of daily prayers in mosques, to the requirements to be fulfilled in religious festivals. It is as if the whole complex process functions in the final analysis, to reinforce the constructed bonds of solidarity. Of further interest in this regard is the point that "people are bound to the system through a concept of loyalty (*wala*) -loyalty to be to the *umma* rather than to the regime; to the idea rather than to the individual." (Ayubi, 1991, p23)

For our purposes at this specific part of the study, perhaps one of the most noteworthy themes of analysis is the notion of *ijma'*, or as it is usually translated into English, 'agreement'. Here, we can encounter an intersection point where the relations between the *umma* and the ulema can be disclosed. Before going into this however, it may be useful to tackle separately with the concept of *ijma*. As a matter of fact, it is used to refer to the consensus of the

¹ Both the notion of *ijma* and the transformations it has underwent have been the subject of a detailed analysis made by Ignaz Goldziher, in "Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law." (Princeton University, 1981)

learned people on a particular issue. The process of ijma is applied when the answer to a specific question cannot be encountered in the Qur'an or in the hadiths. As such, theoretically, ijma is one of the main sources that should be referred to in leading an Islamic way of life, although in the course of the history of Islam its power has gradually declined.

The reason why I have chosen this concept to discuss is the fact that in the early days of Islam, ijma was used in such an extended way so as to cover the consensus of not merely a group of learned men but of the whole Muslim community. In the course of time the employment of the concept has underwent a significant transformation on behalf of the ulema. This transformation, in turn, constitutes a noteworthy center around which revolve a number of considerations, disclosing the relations between ulema and umma.

Theoretically and originally, the consensus of the Muslim community was used as a cardinal precondition or a *sine qua non* for the subsistence of a just order. Understood in this way, the political or religious orders of the ruling elite, had to be congruent with the common decisions of the community. Posed differently, without the consensus of the Muslim community no order or act could be legitimately carried out. We shall see that the principle of ijma has played a determining role in the history of Islam, and although it was gradually surrounded to a group of learned men, at least theoretically only those decisions that had been approved by the umma had been as authoritative and legitimate as it was deemed. This raises a cardinal point of emphasis, the detailed elaboration of which goes beyond the limits of this study. Here I want to

call attention to the point that the notion of ijma plays a paramount role in the definition of what is "right" and "wrong", as well as in the justification of this distinction.

Thus at least in the early days of Islam, it was not solely the substantial body of scriptural teachings that have been shaping and guiding the community of believers; the other way round was also true, although certainly to a lesser extent. This point is highly supported by a hadith in which it is claimed that "their consensus cannot but be protected from error." As the hadith in question overtly points out,

Whatever is accepted by the entire Islamic community as true and correct must be regarded as true and correct. To turn one's back on the ijma' is to leave the orthodox community. (Goldziher, 1981, p50)

In the scope of this study the emphasis placed upon the consensus of umma is fundamentally significant in two respects. Firstly, given the supreme position of the ulema on religious matters, it seems necessary to elucidate their approach towards the common opinion of umma, which at least theoretically has a binding power in itself. Secondly and more significantly, following Hudgson, I am planning to employ the notion of the consensus of umma as one of the main sources that contributes directly to the construction of Islamic orthodoxy and indirectly to the surmise of Islamic heterodoxy. While I am going to evaluate the former point below, the latter will be delayed to the forthcoming sections.

The utmost significance of the consensus of the Muslim community has been mentioned before.

Nonetheless as it can be guessed easily, such an effective force could not but disturb the ulema. My point is that those at the upper levels of the learned hierarchy, despite the undoubtable power and authority they managed to hold in their hands, were nevertheless bound or at least delimited by the original employment of the notion of ijma. As a matter of fact, the ulema had to envisage two ways that could promise success in looking for a solution. On the one hand, they certainly had to take into account the opinions of the community at large if they wanted to base their position on a justifiable ground. On the other hand, they also had to encounter the means to curtail the power of the community. As such, they could neither totally eliminate ijma in its original sense, even if they had possessed the power to do so, nor leave it all alone.

This apparent contradiction seems to have been resolved by recalling the internal and abstract loopholes in the system, rather than by resorting to concrete measures of force. The solution was too simple and yet sound enough. In the last resort, there was no need to come at odds with the consensus of the Muslim community, at all. Obviously, the group of learned men had to find the means to be recognized as the legitimate interpreters of the sacred texts by the community at large. This recognition was supported by the power residing in being conceded as 'the possessors of knowledge.' It is certainly the case that, as such, the stage was set for the group of learned men both to secure their position and to arrive at a fertile ground that could provide them the legitimacy they needed. As long as the community at large supported the position of the ulema and believed in the necessity of being guided by them, the whole mechanism could be used to fortify the existing order.

Hence the recognition of the existing hierarchy by the umma meant both the reinforcement and justification of the position of the ulema. It should also be added that just like Weber² repeatedly pointed out, the 'inner support' of the people for the authority is a *sine qua non* in the maintenance of the social and political structures. "Commands, then, always carry a minimum of voluntary compliance; they are obeyed because of a belief in the legitimacy of the authority." (Swingewood, 1984, p193)

In our specific case, this implied to make grand changes on the operation of ijma, without either challenging or disparaging its authority or significance. Towards this specific end, the group of learned men interacted directly with the community and did not isolate themselves from the society. The structure and organization of Muslim societies facilitated the operation of this process. In accordance with this,

At last a formula was found and ijma' defined as the concordant doctrines and opinions of those who are in any given period the acknowledged doctors of Islam. They are the men with the power "to bind and to loosen"; it is their office to interpret and deduce law and theological doctrine, and to decide whether law and doctrine are correctly applied. (Goldziher, 1981, p52)

In this way, the process of ijma ceased to maintain its original sense and was transmitted to a different plane in which the ulema, as the learned men

² In this regard, Weber made a triple categorization, comprising charismatic, traditional and rational forms of legitimacy. Put briefly, in charismatic legitimacy the personality of the leader is the determining force; whereas in the traditional legitimacy the power of the ongoing traditions plays a dominating role and lastly, in the rational form a belief in the legality of the rules is of paramount importance. As such, the ideologies through which different forms of rule have been legitimized, was one of the main concerns of Max Weber.

of religion and the knowers of right conduct, managed to hold a controlling position.

In concluding, it should be underlined that in the final analysis, the mechanisms which granted legitimacy to the ulema were remarkably powerful indeed. These people do not seem to have suffered from any scarcity of the adequate channels to justify their position. In this respect, while the sharia has served as the fertile soil in which the ulema grew and strengthened, the almost 'wholeheartedly' acceptance of their superiority by the umma forged ahead the whole process on their behalf. At this point, the relevance of the before mentioned mutual relation between the ulema and shari'a finds its place, "...for as the hadith says, 'the ulama are the heirs of the prophets'; they are responsible for the maintenance of the Divine Law and the tradition." (Schimmel, 1994, p186) The attestation of this privileged position by the umma gave a great support to the group of learned men.

To conclude this part of the study, it may be useful to reiterate its main theme: the ulema derived their power and authority from various sources of legitimacy grounded not only in the sacred texts of the substantial body of shari'a, but also in the consensus of the Muslim community in general.

1.1.2.2 Ulema and the Ottoman State Mechanism

Thus far our analysis of the subject of the verdict has evolved around the cardinal theme of sharia, ulema and the Muslim community. By doing so we have been circling around but managing to avoid the question of how to accommodate the operation of the

whole mechanism with the requirements of the state structure. Now it is time to take up this question directly. Therefore, in what follows we will initially approach this topic by sketching the relations between the ruling elite and the religious elite, on an abstract plane; and then we will proceed towards the Ottoman example, which differs from the structures present in other Muslim societies in considerable respects. One of the basic points that I will try to push forward is that on the issue of ulema's being in the final analysis state employees, perhaps no other historical example that the Ottoman Empire is more revealing and pertinacious.

It must be obvious by now that in the scope of this study the subject of the fatwa has neither been automatically associated with the enunciator of the fatwa, that is to say the Shayh al-Islam, nor delimited to the discussion of the learned men of religious hierarchy. Quite to the contrary, from the very outset, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that since the ulema are not a separate class operating on their own and since the internal organization of Islamic structures will not allow such a development, it is of vital importance to enlarge our scope and to focus upon the sources that grant legitimacy to the ulema, as well as the mechanisms that manage to curtail their power. In other words the ulema can and should not be perceived as an autonomous hierarchical structure, but must be evaluated within the variegated forms of social, political and religious life in which they take part.³

³ One should also make a distinction here between the Shi'a practice and the Sunni practice, since not only their basic premises but the conclusions drawn from these have been quite different from one another. For an analysis on the former, Hamid Inayat's "Çağdaş İslami Siyasi Düşünce" (Istanbul, 1988) and Hamid Algar's "Religion and State in Iran" (Berkeley, 1969) can be helpful.

To begin with, an overwhelming majority of the studies on "Islam and state'" assume that Islam is simultaneously a state and a religion. This is to say that according to this widespread approach, in Islamic discourse both religion and politics are brought together and connected to one another in an inextricable way. Expressed broadly, in such a way, Islam is thought to be a political religion. Nevertheless following the steps of N. Ayubi, here I am planning to assert that such an understanding can be greatly misleading and fallacious. At the outset it should be pointed out that there is no such thing as an 'Islamic model of state.' Even a cursory glance at the existing structure in various Muslim countries can be revealing in this respect. Obviously enough, today, just like yesterday, the political organization of Islamic countries differ from one another in considerable respects.

Moreover, none of these structures can claim to be applying the spirit of the letter since in the main religious texts there is not much to be found on the question of an Islamic model of state. My point is that it is one thing to assert that Islam is a communal religion and a different thing to perceive it as a political religion. Although these two definitions can certainly be connected to one another through various channels they are still not the one and the same thing. The almost automatic identification of public life with politics is one of the most stubbornly persistent themes in western scholarship. Exactly at this point the bulk of feminist critiques challenging the dichotomic conceptualisation of public and private in which the former is almost mechanically equated with politics, while the latter is seen to be either completely immune from or indirectly related to this

realm can provide a very useful insight. This however proves to be a very large question that will surpass the scope of this study. Therefore it will be sufficient for me to underline that the fact that Islam is a communal religion cannot lead us to take for granted the well-known argument that it is at the very same time a political religion or a body of perennial teachings inhabiting in a pre-given political model.

A careful look at the history of Islam will derive information that can be highly supportive of the above made assertion. This is indeed one way in which we can attest how the state has appropriated religion rather than the other way round, in the past. As a matter of fact, there is nothing much surprising in this development since,

The 'monopoly' of a certain religion has always been one of the State's usual instruments for ensuring ideological hegemony. The historical 'Islamic' state inherited this tradition. (Ayubi, 1991, p4)

Of further interest in this regard is the approach promoted by Ibn Khaldun. In *The Muqaddimah*, he overtly indicates that, "dynasties of wide power and large royal authority have their origins in religion based on prophethood or on truthful propaganda." (Khaldun, 1967, p125) Here lies the key to the state's appropriation of religion in order to justify and guarantee its sustenance, as well as to reinforce its hegemonical power. This in turn, can be a useful ground for us to base our analysis of the relations between the learned men of religious hierarchy and the state structure in the Ottoman Empire.

At the very first glance, state and religion can be thought to be inseparable and

primordially bound together in the Ottoman practice. Nevertheless a close inspection of the historical facts will immediately lead us to attest that despite this apparent relation, in the Ottoman practice, the state has been much more dominant and prioritized in practice. To minimize confusion it can be helpful to start by an epitome of the two vital institutional realms that concern us primarily in this part of the study, namely the religious institution and the ruling institution. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that to restrict ourselves solely to the analysis of these two realms can be quite deficient as this quotation overtly construes:

Many historians have portrayed this system as comprising two rival institutions keeping one another in check: the 'Muslim institution', consisting of the ulema who ensured that the shariat was observed, and the 'Ruling Institution' containing the personnel who formulated and implemented government policies, waged war and maintained security. This traditional analysis tends to obscure certain important realities such as the constant struggle for power waged between rural and urban interests, and the often parallel struggle by certain tarikats and other unorthodox Muslims against the Sunni establishment. (Norton, 1990, p88)

This being so, we are confronted at the surface with two domains, one of which belongs to the religious elite and the other to the state elite. Expressed broadly, while it is incumbent upon the former group to guarantee the strict observation of the shari'a, it is largely up to the latter group to shape as well as to implement governmental policies. Yet as a cursory glance will rapidly indicate, such a theoretical division of tasks may not be telling much if our aim is to arrive at a closer inspection. The

fact that the theoretical boundary lines have been blurred from time to time, will support this assertion. Additionally, the relation between these two institutions seems to have followed a dynamic nature throughout their history, which makes it rather uneasy to lap into rapid conclusions or broad generalisations.

More significantly, the Ottoman Empire was notable with the stringent hierarchical structure of ulema, named as the *ilmiye*, that it comprised. This institution was so strong that,

For the greatest part of their history, the ulema of the hierarchy dominated the ritual life of Istanbul and the empire. So established were the ulema's prerogatives and their place in the rationale underlying Ottoman legitimacy that the *ilmiye* as an institution was not directly challenged until the end of the empire. (Zilfi, 1988, p29)

To the maintenance of this institution several actors actively participated, in accordance with the pre-given hierarchical lines. As such, "many ulama coopted into government service as religious officials -qadis, law professors, etc- ranked in a hierarchy under the head of religious establishment, the Shaikh al-Islam". (Bulliet, 1994, p178) Understandably, although at each specific rank the prescribed procedures and duties differed, in the final analysis, every particular element was connected to another within a carefully designed centralized network. As such, "the work of interpreting the *şeriat* fell to the *müftis*, while the *kadis* had to see it made effective." (Norton, 1990, p89)

Several times in this study I have stressed the fact that the learned men could not claim

a sacramental authority, should not lead the researcher to attenuate their power. Especially in the Ottoman example the ulema seems to have increasingly acquired a unique power in both the juridicial and educational structures. This is one of the reasons why they were able to play a determining role in shaping the right conduct of every Muslim all throughout the empire. As a matter of fact,

Through the schools and courts the ulema sought to define the religious duties of the believer, delimit the norms of human relationships and reinforce religious and cultural unity. The Ottomans did not leave such tasks to chance. (Zilfi, 1988, p26)

The strength and ability of the Ottoman structure in integrating religious hierarchy with the state mechanism should never be underestimated.

... the Ottoman state was unusual in Islamic history in the extent to which it integrated its religious scholars into the apparatus of the state through a system of colleges and career opportunities created and regulated by the state itself. (Parry, 1976, p6)

To perceive how the state apparatus had managed to take possession of religion or religious men, we should underline two fundamental points. First of all, it should be noted that the upper one moved along the learned men hierarchy, the more he became a state employee. And it is in this sense that we can observe a difference between the position of the ulema situated in Istanbul and those in various local places.⁴ Secondly and connectedly, those learned men at the top

⁴ The differences between local ulema and central ulema (Ulema-yı Rusum) have been elaborated by Şerif Mardin, in "Türkiye'de Toplum ve Siyaset" (Istanbul, 1990, p23)

of the religious hierarchy were more inclined to defend the interests of the state structure, than to apply the shari'a right to the letter, if and when these clashed.⁵ Furthermore, although the shari'a,

...profoundly marks the Muslims' outlook toward life, it is not quite accurate to say that the positive regulations of the shari'ah apply to every institution of human society. (Cragg,1980, p99)

The suggestion made here is that on various matters, including the international affairs, fiscal policies..etc., and depending on the functioning of power relations, from time to time, either the shari'a has been pushed to a secondary role or the teachings of the sacred law have been interpreted in such a way so as to support the requirements of the state structure.Repeatedly,

The ulama had thus carved out for themselves a certain 'space' as a moral authority ad an intellectual elite, at various time enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy vis-a-vis the ruler.However, the autonomy of the ulama, who were in the main state employees, was bound in the final analysis to be limited, normally manifesting itself only in emergency situations.(Ayubi,1991, p33)

⁵ A noteworthy example that can be given in this respect is about Birgili Mehmed Efendi(1523-1573), a strongly sharia-minded man who bitterly attacked Islamic mysticism and tariqas. After some time, his insistence upon the necessity of applying the shari'a right to the letter and rejecting everything that did not conform to it, began to threaten the existing order and especially the sustenance of those foundations known as vakifs. At the face of such a threat, Ebussuud Efendi felt obliged to refute and oppose him. As this example overtly demonstrates, the famous Shayh al-Islam, being the man at the top of the religious hierarchy, defended the interests of the state against every single idea, formation or movement that could be at least potentially threatening.As such when and if there was a choice to make between the requirements of the state and those of the shari'a, he chose the former. On this theme, see H. Yurdaydın's analysis in "Türkiye Tarihi" (İstanbul, 1989, volume 2,p156)

In concluding it is possible to claim that we are confronted with a political bargain in which each participating side had to make some concessions, though in differing degrees. The concessions made on the side of the shari'a were certainly larger in this regard. Nevertheless, this is not to deny that both the religious and the state elite were connected to one another in a mutual relationship. The existence of one particular side continuously entrenched the legitimacy of the other and vice versa. Therefore,

The fatawa of the Shaikh al-Islam legitimized the deeds of the sultan while the sultan's recognition that even his imperial will was subject to the constraints of the religious law legitimized the claim of the ulama that the shari'a was the sole cornerstone of Islamic society. (Bulliet, 1994, p183)

1.2 THE OBJECT OF THE FATWA

In the previous pages we have called attention to the determining force of the shari'a and the utmost role played by the ulema in its implementation and interpretation. Nonetheless, as a close inspection of the religious history of Islam will gradually reveal out, though the shari'a is attributed a common ground of emphasis all around the Muslim world, it signals to neither the final nor the mostly determining stage in the religious journey of the individual believer. The argument advanced here is quite simple: although the shari'a is by definition the main road, it is not the only road. Quite to the contrary, there have been and still are people who have preferred to keep following the narrow paths that have been derived from that mainstream. As suggested, the fact

that the shari'a means path or road does not indicate that it is the only possible route for the individual seeker to follow. Furthermore even though the mainroad and the narrow paths are deeply rooted in the same source of origin, that is to say the Qur'an and the Hadith, still the directions towards which they can lead the individual Muslim are considerably different from one another. For the moment however we will leave this question open.

To begin with, it should be remarked at once that, "there is nothing in the Islamic message or in any similar revelation, that leads one to conclude that it has to do only with the Law, and not with the Path; it has both facets." (Danner, 1988, p17) One of the most crucial points taught and verified by the history of religions is the partly tensious, partly harmonious, but almost always highly complex character of the relations between these two broad aspects. To grasp this complexity requires to focus upon that particular road known as the *tariqa*, which is as old as Islam itself.

1.2.1 The Tariqa

Confronted with more than one road to follow we need to underline at the outset that the Qur'an as the main source of Islam cannot be reduced to a single reading or interpretation. This constitutes one of the most significant reasons behind the deficiency of discussing the approach of Islam towards a particular theme, by looking solely or mainly at the related verses in the Qur'an. In fact, the argument that I will try to advance here is quite simple: every text, whether sacred or mundane, paves the way to various readings, although obviously these may and do not operate on equal grounds. This is to say that, while

some of these readings are more dominant and widely supported by different segments in a given society; likewise, some others have been pushed to the margins, so that they are made known to a limited number of people. Needless to add, these are not static positions. Quite to the contrary, they are endlessly subject to the changes and fluctuations introduced by the operation of power relations and the questions of legitimacy, at that particular time and place. As to the relations among the readings themselves, these may be conflictual -if not oppositional- from time to time and more harmonious at other times.

Although the readings and or interpretations of the sacred text are countlessly varying, at the expense of simplicity, they can be categorized under two titles: the exoteric (*zahiri*) reading and the esoteric (*batini*) reading. Broadly speaking, while the primary concern of the former has been to obey the existing commandments and rules by observing the demarcation line between 'dos and don'ts' the major focus of the latter has been upon the inner teachings and the mysteries within mysteries. Put differently,

Of these, the first explains all that is external, as well as what is secret, by means of the ordinary human intellect, or reason; they are called the *ashab-i-'ilm-i zahir*: and the second devote themselves to the ways of Mysticism, and to pointing out the paths by which a knowledge of the veiled and the hidden may be obtained; these are called the *ashab-i-'ilm-i batin*: the power of His names and attributes, in Divine and spiritual visions. (Brown, 1968, p17)

Further information about the said split in the approach towards the main text, can be

encountered in the writings of Ibn Khaldun, according to Ibn Khaldun, it is possible to draw two main fields, one of which is highly consistent of laws and regulations under the scrutiny of the religious elite, while the other covers a variety of mystique techniques shaped and conducted by the 'people'.

As a consequence, the science of the religious law came to consist of two kinds. One is the special field of jurists and muftis. It is concerned with the general laws governing the acts of divine worship, customary action and mutual dealings. The other is the special field of the "people" (that is the Sufis). It is concerned with pious exertion, self-scrutiny with regard to it, discussion of the different kinds of mystical and ecstatic experience occurring in the course of it, the mode of ascent from one mystical experience to another, and the interpretation of the technical terminology of mysticism in use among them. (Peters, 1990, p966)

It should be stressed that these two main fields of understanding, despite the enormous differences among them are based on a common ground. Retrospectively, the Qur'an and the hadith is of paramount importance for not only the legalists but the mystics as well. Thus the starting point lies almost always in the perennial teachings of the sacred text and of the prophet. This is to say that both the legalist and the mystics refer to the same sources, yet they acquire different meanings and messages from these. Likewise it can be claimed that the shari'a is the vital starting point for both groups. Nevertheless, while for the legalists the shari'a is bound to remain as the main issue"; for the mystics, this constitutes just a beginnary stage that should be transcended and left behind in the quest for union with the Divine. It is therefore not surprising at all, to find out how

much unsatisfied the latter are with the exoteric aspects of Islam or with the interpretations developed by the ulema. From this viewpoint, formal differences, rules and regulations as well as the pre-given definitions of 'right' and 'wrong' make little sense.

Evidently a mystical reading cannot be content with the interpretations promoted by the more sharia-minded Muslims. This is mainly why there is a continuous effort to go beyond the literal aspects of the Scripture. Furthermore in connection with the differences in their understandings, the aims that each group designates may considerably differ. Repeatedly, it should be pointed out that the esoteric reading pays little attention to the external aspects of the Qur'an or of religion in general. The maintenance of the rigid boundary between sin and virtue, *halal* and *haram*, is of a secondary value in this sense. Rather than prioritizing these features, the main focus of attention is upon the hidden meanings, covert messages or signs that can be seen everywhere around, if and when one knows how to look; as well as, upon the Divine essence lying behind the verses of the Quran. Since this point will be of paramount importance all throughout this study, here I would like to introduce solely some additional remarks to facilitate its clarification and leave the majority of this task to the forthcoming sections.

Given this brief survey, the definition of the *tariqa* can be situated here. In this way, the *tariqa* is the organized form of *tasawwuf*, or Islamic mysticism. Therefore, the *tariqa*, "...perceives the mystical contents of the Islamic message, while the shariah is concerned only with the commandments and prohibitions of the faith." (Danner, 1988, p89) Likewise,

While the *tariqah* seeks union with God in this life through spiritual knowledge and love,

which is what is meant by gnosis(marifah), the shariah seeks salvation(najah) through posthumous entrance into Paradise and the resulting beautiful vision of God. (Danner, 1988, p110)

Usually it has been maintained that the esoteric interpretation of the Scripture and the tariqas have emerged as a reaction to the ongoing developments within and the changing ambient brought forward by the rapid expansion of Islam in seventh and eighth centuries, as well as to the strictly limited understanding imposed by the ulema. In this sense, the roots of the tariqas are thought to have been deeply located in

...a reaction against the external rationalization of Islam in law and systematic theology, aiming at spiritual freedom whereby man's intrinsic intuitive spiritual senses could be allowed full scope. (Trimingham,1971, p1/2)

It is further asserted that contact with non-Arab cultures, as a result of the expansion of Islam to Persia, Egypt, North Africa or the Eastern lands introduced mystical elements. In brief, either as the outcome of borrowings from other societies or as a reaction to the ongoing developments, the earlier structure of Islam, underwent a significant change and Sufism appeared in the scene. Most of the scholars who support this approach have reiterated the point that the mystical elements were not originally embodied and to the contrary, they have been introduced in time. One way of underlining this point is as follows:

The distance between the Creator and the creature had to be bridged somehow, and Islam as conceived in an Arab brain had failed to do this. Contacts with other faiths and cultures

immediately began to supply what was lacking, and the spiritual life found in many new ways as Moslems learned of the immanence of God and the possibilities of fellowship with the Divine. (Cash, 1978, p100)

A counterargument to mysticism's posteriority, has been formulated by focusing primarily upon the life of the prophet. The argument behind this approach seems to be connected closely to the apparent differences between the life or role of the prophet in Mecca and then in Medina. When these are compared, it can be detected that in Mecca, various themes such as the attainment of inner realities, comprehension of the existing secrets and the transmission of these to the people, played primary role for the prophet; whereas in Medina he was first of all the leader of a community and highly concerned with organizing both the personal and the communal lives of the Muslims.

This is mainly why, "while the Meccan period introduced the mystical way into Islam, the Medinan period brought the Law into existence." (Danner, 1988, p111) Expressed broadly, in the first period Muhammad was much more inner-oriented and concerned with revealing, while during the latter period he was much more outer oriented and concerned with conducting. "There was, therefore, in Mohammad's teachings the germ of two widely different conceptions of God, which in the Prophet's life were never reconciled." (Cash, 1978, p100)

I am not going to dwell upon these divergent approaches any further, since it is not my aim here to analyse whether the esoteric aspects of Islam were preceded by the exoteric aspects or it was the other way round. I am not really interested in discussing which particular aspect emerged before, but

in recognizing their coexistence in the history of Islam. From this viewpoint, "..., the revelation of Islam, as well as the Sunnah of the Prophet, are subject to two dimensions of understanding, the esoteric mystical way and the exoteric way." (Danner, 1988, p85)

In the history of Islam, tariqas have played a major role and everywhere around the Muslim world one can come across a large number of people closely affiliated with these orders. My contention is that the analysis of the evolution of these orders, as well as the way they tend to evaluate religion as such, is of primary significance if our intention is to deepen our understanding of Islam. Such an effort will also be greatly helpful in refraining from reductionist readings and interpretations, since the dynamism and richness detected in the history of the orders can provide the means to question both the analytical tools and the standpoints that we are so much accustomed to take for granted in the existing literature. The information derived from the history of tariqas can contribute largely to the bulk of history of religions, as well as of the history of ideas. Generally speaking,

The tariqahs were loosely organized bodies of pirs and murids following well-defined and even hierarchically controlled 'ways' of mystical discipline, each with its rituals, its chiefs and its endowments. (Hodgson, 1974, p214)

Additionally, tariqas or religious orders, which have been established and developed all around the Muslim world and all throughout the history of Islam, departed significantly from one another, by acquiring manifold elements from the social and cultural ambients in which they grew. Hence, the

tariqas in Anatolia differed in considerable respects from the tariqas in Iraq, Syria, Egypt or North Africa.

Obviously enough we are faced with a major problem at the very outset. The magnitude of the number of orders that have emerged in the history of Islam present us a long list of nominal differences, in which the genealogy of each single tariqa can be traced separately, though there are undeniable overlappings. Given that the history of Islam records more than two hundred tariqas, without mentioning the branches and suborders that have been derived from these, there is certainly no valid formula that can be applied to every one of them, to study either its structural organization or its worldview. Similarly, the fact that a large number of people have been affiliated directly or indirectly with several orders at almost the same time serve to increase the existing confusion and complexity even further. Moreover, at the face of the differences among the orders as well as the changes they underwent in the course of time, it seems quite hard to interpret them within a coherent whole. It should be kept in mind that,

The Sufis are not a sect, they have no dogmatic system, the tariqas or paths by which they seek God 'are in number as the souls of men' and vary infinitely, though a family likeness may be traced in them all.
(Nicholson, 1975, p27)

Interestingly, this manifoldness is quite 'normal' for the Sufis themselves, since according to them, the more the number of human beings, the more variegated will become the paths to Truth or *Haqiqa*, as they call it. Consequently, no one could or should intend to bring this plurality to an end and to impose a certain understanding or 'way' upon the other. Since

the quest for the Truth is primarily an inner journey there is no valid reason to accept an authoritatively defined method. This theme will be construed from time to time all throughout this study.

1.2.2 The Dervishes

Cautious not to become
part of the "master narrative",
the dervish carefully carved out
his own space on the margins of
that narrative, ...
(Ahmet T. Karamustafa)

Just like the ulema are strongly tied to the shari'a, the group of people associated with the tariqa are usually named as dervishes or Sufis. From this perspective it is noteworthy that while "the ulama taught the shariah, the 'way' of daily life; the Sufis taught the tariqah, the 'way' of mystical life." (Hodgson, 1974, p219)

Be that as it may, it should be stressed at the very outset that while discussing this theme we are not limited with the employment of a single concept, since there are in fact several terms available to denote those people from nonorthodox backgrounds. Though not all of these terms are relevant to the scope or purpose of this study, some of them, such as the 'mystics', 'esoterics', 'Sufis', 'heterodoxy', ...etc., are especially noteworthy.

I will therefore begin the task of trying to understand those paths other than the shari'a by examining firstly and briefly the terms mentioned above so that the forthcoming analysis can be based on a

solid terminological ground. Still however it is clear that a comprehensive study of these terms will necessarily require a much more extensive work than the one that I will be able to present. Partially due to this point, but largely for the sake of clearness and comprehensiveness, as well as for the reasons that I will deal with below, I am going to prefer to use the term dervish much more frequently than the other terms, all throughout this study.

The concept of dervish originates from the persian noun 'der' which means 'gate' and 'vish' which means 'stretched'. It was sometimes used to indicate a mendicant or a homeless person going from door to door to beg for some food or a place to sleep at night. "So the dervishes were originally persons who voluntarily parted with their property to bestow it on the poor." (Ubicini, 1973, p87/88) This being so, it seems that the term has underwent a considerable change and has acquired new meanings later on. In such a way, as time went by, although the term maintained its original meaning, it has acquired additional connotations and implications, in accordance with the internal developments in the religious history of Islam. Thus, gradually, the term dervish was being more and more closely connected to the emerging religious orders, whose significance and development could be observed in almost every part of the wide geographical area where Islam was the dominant religion. As it is expressed in the Encyclopedia of Islam, "broadly through Islam, it is used in the sense of a member of a religious fraternity,..." (Encyclopedia of Islam, vol 1, p950)

Understood in this way, even though the term dervish does not necessarily refer to being a member of a certain religious order, since there are

also people who have preferred to follow a much more antimonian way of life, it is still overtly possible to claim that the dervishes had considerable affiliations with the organized aspects of Islam either by taking a part in their structures or by sharing with them a common standpoint. It may be useful to say that all throughout this study the term will be employed mainly in this context. Thus, in the following sections in which I am going to deal with the Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes, I will not solely refer to the people who have been the members of these orders but will include into my focus of attention those who have been sympathetic or akin enough either in practice or in theory, to the way of life promoted by the orders in question, as well. In this sense, the crucial criteria for me will not be 'membership' but 'affinity'.

This being said, we can now move further and explore some of the other terms that are being frequently employed in the existing literature on Islam. Among these, the concept of 'heterodoxy', which refers directly to those people or understandings that are not at ease with the orthodox or mainstream thought and indirectly to the notion of 'deviance from the main road', will immediately demand attention. This however is no easy task, since the term itself has been criticized for being somewhat nebulous -if not misleading- in the Islamic context. Without here attempting to explore the issue in full, I find it adequate to stop at this precise stage for a while and to focus upon the critiques, mainly because I do not think that the term in question is futile in the context of this study.

It is worth noting at the very beginning that the core of the critiques directed towards the usage of the term heterodoxy has been mainly derived

from a comparative analysis made between Christianity and Islam. The argument pushed forward by the critiques is that, since the term itself is essentially of a Christian origin and since its correspondance cannot be found in the Islamic structures or in the history of Islam, its employment is problematique. To clarify better this point I would like to make a quotation from Bernard Lewis, who is one of the most wellknown scholars in the literature concerned.

Such terms ... derive from Christian history and institutions and reflect conditions which have no parallel or equivalent in Islam. Islam, in its classical form had no priestly hierarchy and no ecclesiastical authority. /.../ Where there was no orthodoxy, there could be no heresy, since heresy means an error, a deviation from the truth as authoritatively defined. (Lewis, 1976, p27)

As this quotation implicitly demonstrates, the fact that a term of Christian origins, such as 'orthodoxy' or 'heterodoxy' does not have a satisfying correspondance in the history of Islam is used as the proof for the necessity of abolishing it. This is the cardinal point lying behind the argument that "in approaching Islam and Sufism, certain words commonly borrowed from Christianity will be avoided: 'orthodoxy', 'heresy', 'clergy', 'fundamentalism' and 'saint'." (Baldick, 1989, p7) As suggested, taking a comparative stand by drawing an outline of the internal organization of Christian religion and then by seeking for its correspondance in the Islamic context, has been the widely accepted road to arrive at the correctness and necessity of pushing aside the terms in concern.

On the other hand if and when we examine the essential features of the arguments brought forward we will immediately notice that the above mentioned criticism is directed mainly towards the term orthodoxy rather than heterodoxy. In this regard the differences between Christianity and Islam lead the scholars in question, to the conclusion that there is no orthodoxy in Islam, since there is neither a clerical class nor an undoubtedly recognized authority on religious matters, like the one present at Vatican.

It should be clear by now that the critique of the employment of the term heterodoxy is strongly connected to this point. This implies to say that since heterodoxy and orthodoxy are thought to be operative in a dichotomous relation and on completely opposite realms, the fact that one side of this binary classification is lacking will lead us to the conclusion that there is no legitimate possibility of talking about the presence of the other side. Put differently, according to these scholars where there is no authoritatively defined right there will be no wrong either. Similarly the argument that follows is that "since there is no orthodoxy, there can be no heresy." (Baldick, 1989, p7)

Having underlined the pre-given binary construction of the relation between the two main terms concerned here it may be appropriate to clarify better why it is being claimed that there is no orthodoxy in Islam. To be able to elaborate this point the quotation given below can be extremely helpful.

In fact by and large the criteria for being Muslim have been following the sharia and acknowledging the truth of a certain basic creed. Beyond that, a variety of positions concerning the details of the creed were possible and none could be said to be

"orthodox" to the exclusion of others.
(Murata,1992, p8)

Of further interest in this regard is the search for alternative conceptual tools in use. As a result of this quest, the assertion that there is no orthodoxy in Islam has lead some scholars to use the term 'orthopraxis' instead of orthodoxy. The argument behind this preference is that "religious practice in Islam is more important than clinging to dogmatic formulas."(Schimmel, 1992, p63)

Now, one cannot certainly turn a blind eye to these critiques. But before leaping into a conclusion that may be drawn from these, let us roughly sketch some further arguments. In this respect, perhaps it will be more useful to underline that, "as in most of the world's great religions there is a norm in Islam, a central position of orthodoxy occupied by the average Muslim." (Christopher,1972, p70) It is certainly a truism to say that there is no clerical organization in Islam. Yet apparently,

In some measure, the hadith came to fill the fuction of the absence of clerical establishment; and the ulama, ... weeded them, pruned them, and trained them to the trellises of their institutionalized educational networks. Ultimately, they turned the chaotic overgrowth into an orderly garden containing only known species of proven pedigree. The rest were discarded.
(Bulliet,1994, p180/181)

The gradual monopoly of knowledge on religious sources, as well as the general framework of power struggle in which this was located, conferred upon the ulema an undeniable authority and prestige. The bonds of solidarity were not enough to erase the

problems that this process was going to breed and as such,

Although Islamic orthodoxy was able to accommodate considerable range of differences, disagreements arose almost at the beginning of Muslim history that were too profound to be accommodated within the Sunni community. And so heretical or heterodox sects emerged to denounce the powers that were and to bear witness to the intertwining of political, religious, and socioeconomic strands in Islamic history."(Christopher, 1972, p70/71)

Hence, on the most fundamental level, we are confronted with various competing ideas about the employment of the basic concepts. Given this rather confusing picture and to prevent an alternation between counterarguments, I am going to articulate the usage of the term orthodoxy in the intersection of three main elements; namely, the state mechanism, ulema and to a lesser extent, the consensus of the Muslim community. It should be noticed that a similar route has been followed in the previous sections, when analysing the subject of the verdict in question.

Likewise it has been continuously pointed out that the position and the authority of the ulema was not constitutive of an autonomous source of power since they were in the final analysis state employees. Therefore the requirements of the state mechanism and its *raison d'être* should be integrated within the general scheme so as to play a constitutive role in the definition of the official boundaries between what is right and what is wrong. In addition to this, the consensus of the Muslim community as the third and to a lesser extent determining force should always be taken into account. Admittedly with the help of these three

main elements, it is possible to arrive at a hegemonic congruence, which in turn, will lead us to an orthodox understanding of Islam.

As such, within the limits of this study and in the direction that has been pointed before, these three domains which converge in the dominant definition of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong', will constitute the orthodox interpretation of Islam. By following such a route I am planning to refrain from not only a mechanical usage of the main terms but also from an ignorance of the internal characteristics of Islamic settings. Evidently, heterodoxy will be activated with the dynamics of this loosely drawn area and as such will not be fixed or frozen at a strict definition.⁶

As to the question of employing Christian or Western terms when carrying out an analysis on different historical cultural or religious contexts, it should be comprehended that this issue is not confined to the usage of a few terms, but requires to activate a whole process of questioning and challenging the overall linguistic structures that are existent in academic or intellectual circles. I do greatly appreciate such an endeavour, which implies to undertake a detailed analysis by focusing mainly upon the widely pronounced relation between language and power. Yet,

⁶ It should be noticed that such an employment of the main terms are reminiscent of the terminological construction established by Irene Melikoff. By introducing the notion of *ijma* into her analysis, Melikoff grounds the definition of orthodoxy in the attachment to the *sunnah* of the Prophet and Muslim community. (*sünnet ve cemaat itikadi*) The employment of the term heterodoxy is derived from this framework. Therefore, I have taken this construction from her and added an additional element to it. My point was that since the *ulema* were in the final analysis, state employees, state apparatus should also be integrated into this scheme. Thus, Melikoff's two main elements, *Sunnah* and *umma*, have been appropriated in triple form in this analysis as, those authorities on the *Sunnah* -that is to say the *ulema*-, the Muslim community and state mechanism. For further information, Irene Melikoff, "Uyur İdik Uyardılar" (İstanbul, 1993)

within the limits of this study, I will not be able to entangle with it and will prefer to employ the terms in question, within a delimited area, the boundaries of which have been described above.

Another concept of utmost significance is 'Sufi' which is frequently used in the existing literature. Although several ethymological origins have been designated for the term, the majority of the scholars seem to agree that the term stems from the woolen dress that the mystics used to wear. Thus, "it is almost certainly derived from the name for 'wool' and is due to the early ascetics wearing a wool in imitation of the monks." (Tritton, 1966, p96) In general, the term Sufi can be applied to a person who believes that it is possible to have direct contact and experience with God.

On the other hand, the consensus upon the ethymological origin of the term does not seem to have been present to the same extent, in the debates about the historical origins of the mystic movements. To the contrary this theme has been a matter of great dispute among the scholars. Broadly speaking, for a long time, the origin of Islamic mysticism has been explained and interpreted within a "theory of borrowings". This is to say that, the dynamic restlessly operative behind the mystic formations of Islam have been sought somewhere else and not within this particular religion itself.

From this viewpoint, the traditional approach asserted that the movement in concern was highly inspired by either preislamic or exislamic elements. Some went even further and maintained that these groups were in fact nonmuslims, who had been obliged to conceal their real identities under a veneer

of Islam. As for the sources from which the Sufis were assumed to have borrowed their worldviews, *inter alia*, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Neo-platonism, Buddhism and Indian Vedanta have been especially stressed. In addition to these, some other scholars have also attracted the attention of their readers to the influence of Jewish mysticism. To sum up,

Surprised at the profound dogmatic difference which lies between its present monism and strict orthodoxy, the early students of Islam thought Sufism could be explained as a doctrine of foreign origin, derived either from syrian monachism or Greek Neo-Platonism or Persian Zoroastrianism or from the Vedanta of India. (Encyclopedia of Islam, vol4, p684)

Here we should stress that what made the traditional scholars to attribute the emergence and presence of Sufism to largely -if not totally- to preislamic or exislamic sources, was precisely their reductionist or monolithic understanding of Islam. In other words, these scholars seem to have a rather homogenous and stable image of Islam. Both the categorical distinctions and the pregiven definitions they had in mind failed to grasp the existing complexity and dynamism of the history of Islam, as well as the different facets of this religion. Hence, when and if they encountered in this history, elements that did not conform to their own prescription the subject matters were almot automatically perceived as either foreign elements covered by a veneer of Islamic touch or as a deviation from the main norm.

The standpoint promoted by the traditional scholars seems to have marked the dominant trend in Western studies on Islam in the past and is still

influential today. It is exactly at this point where the studies made by R. Nicholson have played a major role in challenging the traditional view. In fact, he persistently claimed that this issue should be analysed within the history of Islam and should not be attributed to external factors, although the impact of these could not possibly be ignored. It is worth noting and emphasizing that, the assertions of Nicholson are highly supported by the original writings of the great Sufi masters and by the ways dervishes use to define themselves. When these are analysed one will find out that even the most unorthodox groups or most heretical people such as Hallaj-ı Mansur, have based their opinions upon the Qur'an and then upon the hadith. This is why the great scholar L. Massignon has repeatedly asserted that al-Hallaj was specifically a Muslim.⁷

In bringing this analysis to an end it should be once more underlined that, we have enough evidence to see Islamic mysticism "..., as did the Sufis themselves, as 'the inner doctrine of Islam, the underlying mystery of the Qur'an' (Trimingham, 1971, p2) To be sure, the evident fact that it might have been influenced by other religions and cultures, should not lead us to seek its intrinsic dynamics in a distant time or place than that covered by the history of Islam. Understood in this way, "suffice it to say that Sufism considers itself as the very heart of the Islamic religion, not as something peripheral or accidental to the vitality of the faith." (Danner, 1988, p84)

⁷ Al-Hallaj (d. 923) was a mystic preacher who sought union with God. As the direct manifestation of this quest he proclaimed "I am the Truth", or some scholars prefer to translate, "I am God". Understandably, this adversarial stance was the main cause of his persecution for heresy and condemnation to death in 923. The life and philosophy of Al-Hallaj, who has profoundly influenced Islamic mystic thought and practice, have been made the subject of a fascinating analysis by the learned French scholar L. Massignon.

Until so far, I have tried to briefly explain the main concepts that will be used from time to time in the ensuing pages. Certainly these concepts do not mean the one and the same thing; in other words, they cannot be employed correspondingly. Nevertheless, they share a common ground, which is of cardinal value in discussing both the Mawlawi and the Bektashi orders.

1.2.3 Qur'anic Hermeneutics

At this stage I would like to interrupt the narrative order of the study for a while and to move into a discussion of hermeneutics which will be only roughly sketched here and developed better in the ensuing chapters where we will directly focus upon the Bektashi and Mawlawi poems. Thus here I will solely make an introduction to the process named as "Quranic hermeneutics".

Given the countless paths that may be derived from its own history and the endlessly evolving theoretical discussions grounded on its dynamics, it is certainly not an easy step to attempt to define what hermeneutics is. To be able to minimize confusion and just for a start, "the simplest answer is that hermeneutics is a tradition of thinking or philosophical reflection that tries to clarify the concept of verstehen, that is understanding." (Bruns, 1992,p1)

The cardinal question that we are faced with at this stage can be formulated as follows: "What is the relation between the reader and the text?" or "How does the text and the reader interact in acts of understanding and interpretation?" The quest for an

answer to these questions can contribute to this study in two fundamental ways. First and foremost, such a quest may be helpful in construing not only the 'reader-text relation', but also the 'sacred text-devout reader' relation. I do certainly acknowledge that sacred scriptures cannot be automatically entailed into this perspective since, given the sanctified essence they entail, they are apparently much more than a 'text' in the eyes of their readers. Nevertheless, it is obvious enough that a sacred text is in the final analysis a text, and as such it is subject to varying rereadings and reconstructions.

Secondly and connectedly, the possibility of deriving distinct meanings from the one sacred text may likely function as both the cause and the outcome of different Islamic understandings. More precisely, in the course of this study it seems worth to expand on this theme, mainly because it can disclose how the perennial teachings of Islam have been construed and internalized by the nonorthodox formations. It is only upon this ground that we can consummate how and why a Bektashi or a Mawlawi dervish tends to interpret the Qur'anic verses -for instance a certain verse related to the position of women- in a different way than the orthodox-minded. Therefore, the brief survey that will be presented here and recalled from time to time in the following settings, will help us in seeing the plurality of the ways that the one sacred text can potentially feed. Furthermore and in a more abstract or indirect way, this process will also be helpful in rereading several Bektashi and Mawlawi poems that will be scattered in almost every chapter of this study. This in turn, will necessitate to take a further step and to delve into "a hermeneutics of hermeneutics".

To begin with, as the history of ideas clearly demonstrates, for quite a long time, the relation between the text and the reader has been perceived as a one-way road; the operation of which in turn, was deeply grounded in the sustenance of a recurrent division between a 'passive' and an 'active' side. From this perspective, the reader, as the knowing subject, was the active component; while the text was identified in such a way that lurked the possibility of detaining its power and influence upon the reader. Expressed more bluntly, the power of the text was not recognized. In time, this deeply embedded and widely spread approach has been challenged by several scholars converging a wide literature on linguistics, philosophy, hermeneutics...etc., in acts of reinterpretation. Gradually, the oneway road construct has been questioned and attacked, paving the way to a different understanding in which the relation between the text and the reader has been defined as circular.⁸

As a matter of fact, it has been a long time since the traditional approach, which used to denote an almost pre-given categorization of a subject and an object side in the relation between the text and the reader, has been vehemently attacked and opposed by various scholars. The studies promoted and the debates bred by these scholars have indicated the necessity of challenging the oneway road relation between the reader and the reading, as well as the active-passive duality that was so strongly attached to this relation within the traditional framework. The critiques on the other hand, brought along the recognition of the relation in question as a twoway road in which each side was both influenced by and effective upon the

⁸ Although this argument has been supported and promoted by various scholars, perhaps no one has been more insistent than Paul Ricoeur on the notion of circularity.

other. Another way of posing this is that, "the relation between the text and self is circular:the text gives self-understanding and self-understanding opens the reader to the text."(King,1985, p86)

From here a further step was taken by Hans-Georg Gadamer, following the hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger. Gadamer insisted upon the point that language was operative not in a social vacuum but within a certain tradition and so was our understanding of it. There was therefore no complete interpretation and no thing as a total understanding. These were rather always bound to be partial and incomplete. The emphasis upon the tradition has transformed the focus of attention from 'reader and text', to another plane where neither the reader nor the text were isolated from the general context in which they were operative. In such a way,

The happening most basically is not an encounter between interpreter and author or with a text, but "between" human existence and the unique historical situation in which it is already involved, where the subject-object model is no longer really applicable. (Kisiel,1985,p5)

Now if we confine our attention solely to these debates, it may be validly asked what is the use of introducing hermeneutics in a study on the Islamic heterodox construction of femininity. Nevertheless a more careful evaluation of the historical sources will rapidly indicate that this process, that is to say fecundating the rather complicated relation between the text and the reader, is neither confined to Western literature nor a product of contemporary philosophical debates. To the contrary, the history of hermeneutics

covers a wide range of practices from the Ancient Greek philosophers' debates to the Jewish concept of *midrash*, from the Sufi exegesis or readings of the main texts to the allegorical interpretation of Philo Judaeus. The range of practices included under this title, certainly depends on what we understand from the notion of hermeneutics itself. As I base my starting point on the above given rather loose definition, in my opinion, this range extends from the ancient to the modern literature and as such covers the esoteric rereadings of the main Islamic texts.

In this context it would be appropriate to bring into mind the fact that the sacred text has an utmost significance in Islam compared with Christianity. In other words, in the former case revelation is attached to the sacred book, that is to say to the Qur'an, rather than to the prophet. As such the Qur'an plays a cardinal role in shaping the life of every single Muslim, no matter what his/her personal understanding of Islam may have been. Understood in this way, the difference between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, or esoteric and exoteric approaches, does not lie in the significance they attribute to the Qur'an, which has an undeniable binding force on both sides. Here we should emphasize that, the difference lies rather in their rereadings and the possible conclusions they may draw out of these. It is in this sense that,

The Sufi notion of the primacy of the esoteric struck directly at the sacred law and theoretically at the role of the ulema. The exoteric -in textual interpretation and in the forms of ritual and devotion- was the realm of the ulema. (Zilfi, 1988, p35)

From a different vantage point, different Islamic understandings pay a similar attention to the Qur'an and take it as their main guide; yet, what they understand and derive from the sacred words, may differ in a considerable way from one another. Admittedly, while the exoteric reading of the Qur'an confines itself to the outer meanings of the words and to the semisacred distinction between do's and don'ts; the esoteric reading searches inner meanings, which are supposed to be hidden behind the outer aspect of the Qur'an. Once more we should bear in mind that, the do's and don'ts of the exoteric reading constitutes one of the fertile sources from which the orthodox Islamic discourse derives both its undisputable authority and the legitimacy it needs to be able to remain in that position.

To be sure, "the difference in approaches to the sacred constituted the daily bread of the dispute between mystics and legal scholars." (Zilfi, 1988, p34) As such, they concentrate upon different aspects of the sacred text and admittedly, they come out with different conclusions, which have a profound impact on the proliferation of distinct Islamic constructions of femininity.

The above mentioned distinction will lead us directly to a discussion of *tev'il* and *tefsir* and indirectly to the notion of Qur'anic hermeneutics. While the former tends to concentrate on inner meanings, the latter is confined to the outer aspect of the Qur'an. To illustrate how these rereadings may deeply differ from one another, let us see how some of the prerequisites of Islamic religion have been construed by the esoterics.

For instance, according to the batinis, to get clean is to be immune from the views of

every sect, to wash yourself(*gusül*) is to reiterate the promise, to have sexual intercourse(*cima*) is to refrain from telling the secrets to foreigners, the principle of distributing one out of forty of wealth and property(*zekat*) is to spread the inner doctrine. (Hangerlioğlu, 1994,p653)⁹

One further conceptual tool to expand on this theme may be derived from the Jewish practice. The key concept here is *midrash*, which in its literal sense, corresponds to 'interpretation' in ancient Hebrew language. In practice it was used to denote the process of interpretation of the sacred works by a group of rabbis rendering alternative readings and interpretations within and from a tradition. Therefore,

Midrash is not the work of the isolated reader but an endless give-and-take between the text and its exegesis and above all among the rabbis who gather together to expound and dispute. (Bruns, 1992, p111)

What is more significant for me is that mystical hermeneutics appropriated by both the Jewish and Muslim mystics, is first of all a hermeneutics of experience. Hence what is here asserted embraces the point that the quest for the Divine Reality, marking the relation between the sacred text and the mystic, extends to every single aspect of life. As such, the 'mysteries within mysteries' cannot be merely read, memorized or recited; they must be experienced deep in the heart.

⁹ On the different construement of the basic requirements of Islam, Bektashi teachings can be highly revealing in themselves. For instance, here, the fast of the Way is defined as "abstaining from lying"; pilgrimage is to manage "to enter to the heart of *mürşid*", ...etc. About the main ordinances of this order, please see J. Kingsley Birge, "The Bektashi Order of Dervishes" (London, 1965,p205)

Both the process of *midrash* and Sufi exegesis are too complex and too fascinating to be adequately treated here. Instead, I would like to conclude this survey by underlining four main points that may be derived from what has been told so far. These points in turn, may shed some light upon the arguments to follow. They may, in other words, be helpful in carrying this study further. Firstly, the Qur'an, just like the Jewish Torah, has an enormous binding power as a text, whose "...significance lies not only in what it contains or means, but also in its power over those who stand within its jurisdiction." (Bruns, 1992, p66)

Secondly, the sacred text is subject to distinct rereadings that may be broadly categorized in two main categories, namely the esoteric (*batini*) and the exoteric (*zahiri*). Additionally, it should be noted that these rereadings are carried out within and from a tradition, just like Gadamer put it, and therefore, they are grounded in centuries-old continuities. Thirdly, these basic approaches are not merely two distinct 'methods' diverging in 'where to look at' and 'what to derive', but also two fundamentally distinct ways of life. This is to say, "hermeneutics in these instances is not a *techne* of interpretation but a *praxis*, a form of life." (Bruns, 1992, p135).

Fourthly and lastly, the esoteric approach which tends to seek inner meanings, has the undeniable potential to interpret Qur'anic verses, as well as the prerequisites of Islam, in a different way, the features of which, will be detected in the last chapters to function as a bridge to the heterodox construction of femininity.

1.3 CONJUGATING OBJECT AND SUBJECT SIDES

Having dwelled separately on the 'subject' and the 'object' sides of the fatwa in question, here I would like to make a few additional considerations about their interrelations. The analysis developed so far is indicative of the point that "... the relations of Sufism with Muslim orthodoxy had not been without their difficulties. Indeed, there occasionally had been rather bloody clashes." (Swartz, 1981, p165)

To review what has already been said before, it should be stressed that the heterodox-minded dervishes have been a continuous source of threat in three fundamental respects. Understood in this way, their relations with the state apparatus, the religious elite and Muslim community have been problematic, though in differing ways and degrees. As to the first point, it should be reiterated that amongst other things, their 'oppositional ways', popular appeal and local formations disturbed centralized state machineries. This theme will be better elucidated in the third chapter, where we will focus upon the flourishing of dervish orders in the Ottoman Empire.

As to the relations of the dervishes with the *ulema*, much has been said to demonstrate where and why these two different understandings departed from one another. It should be once more emphasized that the alternative road drawn by the *tariqas*, evidently, had the potential to question the teachings, as well as to undermine the legitimacy and superiority, of the *ulema*. Summarized in these terms, "the tension between the two major aspects of Islam forms constant theme in Islamic cultural history." (Schimmel, 1994, pXIII/XIV) These

themes will be better clarified when discussing the penetration of dervishes into Asia minor and the proliferation of tariqas in the Ottoman Empire, mainly because

In the Ottoman Empire, religion often constituted at once a political posture and a spiritual creed. Deviations from the established religion automatically raised questions about political loyalties. (Zilfi, 1988, p33)

As to the approach of the Muslim community towards heterodox dervishes, these have been highly fluctuating, ranging from using ridicule as a weapon against the dervishes, to extolling Sufi sheikhs as saints. Despite this variety however, recalling the discussion on the umma, one can validly claim that the personalistic tendencies of the dervishes who put stress upon individual quest and experience, may but need not always conflict with communal bonds and communalistic tendencies. In brief,

The community of believers is central in normative Muslim thought, hence the aversion of some Muslims to the Western interest in exotic figures, such as Sufis and the like, as they do not represent the norms and ideals of the umma, ... (Schimmel, 1994, p201)

Nevertheless, it is of primary importance to note that what is concerned here, by drawing an 'object' and a 'subject' side, is not a dichotomic framework, in which there can be encountered two antagonistic forces. Rather than that, I have broadly drawn two distinct Islamic understandings, which do not only have a common religious ground, but also, too many intersection points both in theory and practice. In this way, the local ulema which had the potential to come at

odds with the central ulema, or those Sufis highly akin to orthodox conceptualization have not been given sufficient attention. Since my basic point of departure has been the fatwa in question, within these limits such a disregard does not pose a 'threat' to the arguments to follow. Yet, any generalisation that can be derived from this scheme can be misleading if it is extended to the history of Islam so as to formulate two oppositional poles in it. It is therefore, crucially necessary to refrain from such gross generalisations.

Last but not least, it should be reminded that these triple relationships -between ulema and dervishes, state and dervishes and the umma and dervishes- have never been static. Rather than that, they have been profoundly subject to historical transformations, and have also played an active role in the shaping of these. The observation of this dynamism and complexity is essential for the arguments to follow.

CHAPTER 2

DISCUSSING THE LITERATURE ON "ISLAM AND WOMAN"

Today, just like before, a subject that is commonly named as "Islam and Woman" seems to constitute one of the areas in which the most fervent -if not provocative- discussions are carried on. The debates revolving around this specific theme have both penetrated into the daily parlance of millions of people from different continents, nations, religions or classes, and constituted the subject of countless academic studies. This is to say that, the "Islamic understanding of woman" or "the position of women in Muslim countries" is being continuously construed and reconstructed within a wide range of settings, extending from the products of popular media to academic studies. Evidently, not all of these mechanisms have the same impact, in the sense that,

the vision found in popular works must have been, as is always the case, more influential in fashioning the image of the Muslims for posterity than that found in more reliable scholarly works.
(Rodinson, 1991, s11)

In addition to the richness of the sources continuously feeding the debates on "Islam and woman", the theme itself constitutes a salient point of reference in the ongoing discussions on "Modernism", "Westernization", "Fundamentalism", "Orientalism" ..etc. As such, we should bear in mind that, 'the social position of Muslim women', is in itself a theme far too laden with ideological premises and cultural prejudices. In much the same way, it is too often used

for other ends than the comparative expatiation of gender relations or the urge for woman's emancipation.

Obviously enough, this proves to be a too large and a too detailed question to be adequately elaborated within the scope of this study. In what follows then, a large number of subjects of inquiry will be deliberately excluded, either because they are not directly relevant to my basic purposes or because they deserve a greater focus of attention than the one I will be able to present within the limits of this study. Confronted with the necessity of drawing a circumscribed context, my own preference at this specific stage is rather than concentrating directly upon this perplexing issue and looking for the possible answers to the question of "what is the Islamic understanding of woman?", to evaluate the way it has been constructed in various discursive formations. Put differently, instead of delving directly into the relation between "Islam" and "women", I have chosen to analyse how and through which routes the theme itself has been construed in various theoretical approaches.

By following such a line of reasoning, I hope to be able to demonstrate throughout this analysis that the recurrent question of "what is the Islamic understanding of woman?" can be both the impetus and the outcome of reductionist approaches strongly replete with misleading points of reference. The previously made emphasis upon the various facets and dynamic history of Islam will be used here as a further source of support for the arguments to be developed. Following one of the key questions repeatedly asked by Edward Said in his studies, that is to say the question of "which Islam?", here we will additionally ask "which woman?". In order to illustrate the type of reevaluation that is being

suggested here, we should keep in mind that both "Islam" and "Woman" are too broad concepts, which cannot be perceived as a monolithic or a static whole in themselves. Whatever the causes of the advent of Islam for the socio-economic and religious position of women, there is considerable evidence that these have been manifold and subject to subsequent changes, both in time and in distinct geographical places.

To clarify these points, as well as additional ones, I am planning to proceed in two basic steps. Firstly, I will present a broad overview of the existing literature on "Islam and woman" and deal with the main divisions of opinion characterizing this particular area. The common points of fallacy that these standpoints seem to share with one another in some fundamental respects, will be considered somewhat covertly within this analysis, but more overtly in a separate part presented at the very end. Secondly, upon this background, in lieu of the criticized approaches, I will try to look for alternative paths to follow. Paths that will be indicative of the difficulty, as well as the deficiency of making sweeping generalizations regarding the uneasy subject concerned.

The argument that will be retrospectively advanced in this conclusionary part will be quite simple but significant in itself: Since there are various different understandings in Islamic history, likewise, there are different Islamic approaches to the questions of 'the position of women', 'the reproduction of gender relations' and 'the construction of femininity'; approaches which cannot and should not be reduced to a single dimension. After underlining that these three themes of fundamental value should not be perceived as the one and the same thing, despite their

apparent interconnectedness, I will cite the reasons for my personal preference to concentrate within this study, on the last theme. Obviously enough, this conclusionary remark will pave the way for the Islamic heterodox construction of femininity that will be disclosed in the fifth and last part of this study.

2.1 MAIN DIVISIONS OF OPINION ON "ISLAM AND WOMAN"

Images of women in other
societies can be prejudicial
to women in one's own society.

Laura Nader

Although the existing literature on "Islam and Woman" is replete with a variety of clashing opinions, each of which appears to address some distinct aspect of the subject concerned, broadly speaking, it is possible to sum up the ongoing debates in three basic categories. These categories in turn, both in and among themselves can be better construed by looking at the dualities that seem to construct a fertile base for the assertions pushed forward in each particular case. The most notorious among these dualities is the one embodying a rigidly drawn distinction between the so-called "before" and "after". More precisely, what is at issue here is the deeply-rooted and widely-spread theoretical separation made between "before Islam" and "after Islam".

Expressed bluntly, then, the three basic trends proliferating within the literature concerned can be united around the duality mentioned above in the following way: firstly, there are those who think that

"before" was better than "after", so that with the advent of Islam the social position of women deteriorated; secondly, there are those who assume just the opposite, in the sense that the emergence of Islam improved the previously existing gender patterns and relations; and lastly, we can cite those who tend to think in gradual terms rather than in sudden changes. Those scholars or studies that share this last approach, concentrate more upon the historical developments and transformations that have taken place after the advent of Islam.

Before going directly into the discussion of these three basic standpoints, it may be useful to remind the reader that these debates can be better understood within a historical continuity. This is to say that the present debates are not solely the product of our time; but are closely connected to the repercussions of deeply rooted and widely produced ages old discursive formations. Thus, whichever side is concerned it is likely to notice how arduously it was defended in the past by its own followers and supporters. We must also consider here that each distinct approach, no matter how oppositional they may seem to be at the very first glance, conditions the others reciprocally. Understood in this way, it may be quite striking to perceive how the conflicting and opposing ideas in this area, tend and manage to reproduce and revitalize themselves throughout history.

Apart from their connections to previous debates, another feature that the three oppositional standings share with one another is their linear construction of time and their understanding of history along 'breaks'. In other words, as the following summary will demonstrate, the main tendencies in this

area rely to a large extent on a conceptual and elementary distinction between 'before' and 'after'. Needless to add, they do certainly differentiate in the meanings and preferences they attach to this binary classification; yet the distinction itself is persistent in each. This is why, in my opinion, the area of Islam and woman is closely connected to an understanding of history that emphasizes 'breaks' rather than 'continuities'. To explore this issue it seems necessary to clarify what is exactly meant by the "before-after" duality.

2.1.1 The Recurrent Duality of "Before - After"

Generally speaking, in the literature on "Islam and woman", there is a stubborn distinction made between "before" and "after". The persistent usage of this duality is indicative of the point that the subject of analysis is dichotomously constructed and thought to be established through mutually exclusive terms. Within such a formulation, there corresponds a historical stage to the demarcation line that lies between the two sides, which are usually named as the "Age of *Jahiliyya*" (that is the preislamic period) and the "*Asr-ı Saadet*" (that is the 'Golden Age' identified with the time of early islam). This conceptualization is almost basic to the arguments that will be elaborated below.

First of all, on the one hand there are those who claim that "before" was better than "after" when women or gender relations are concerned. Among the historical supports that are used by the ardents of this theoretical position, perhaps the most important

one is related to the figure of Khatija¹, the prophet's first wife, who is thought to be the most notorious representative of the "before" stage. There is nothing surprising in this since,

The best documented sources regarding women deal with the wives of the Prophet, that is, with their relationship with Muhammad, since he was held to be the "fine example" for every good Muslim in all subsequent periods. (Walther, 1981, p19)

Likewise, Khatija's personal life constitutes a 'fine example' for preislamic women. As it is well known, she was a woman of considerable property, wealth and power. In these basic respects she differed profoundly from the women with whom the prophet married, after her death. Besides, the way Khatija chose to marry and to lead her marriage, do also provide fruitful sources for the defendants of the first argument to detect her power and independence.

Two points may be easily derived from what has been told so far. Firstly, Khatija's life and personality are used as predilections that pave the way to an analysis of the socioeconomic position of women in preislamic age. Secondly, in accordance with the binary classification of "before-after", there emerges the necessity of comparing Khatija, as the representative of preislamic age, with another woman, that can be taken as the representative of Islamic age. Obviously enough, this woman is no other than Aisha.

¹ It should be noted that the studies about the prominent women at the time of the prophet, are notably widespread in this literature. Apart from Khatija or Aisha, other close female relatives of the prophet, as well as the leading female figures of the Jahiliyya and of the post-Muhammedian era have been subject to much detailed work. By inspecting the personalities of these women and comparing them with one another, many scholars have tried to find out the existing conflicts or simply varieties in Muslim communities in relation to gender issues.

To review what has already been said, thinking history along 'breaks' requires to sustain a "before-after" duality, which in turn reflects into this context in the comparison made between the lives of Khatija and Aisha since "nothing could have been in greater contrast with the former union with Khadijah, than was Muhammed's marriage to the daughter of his greatest friend, Abu Bakr." (Waddy, 1980, p17) From a different vantage point,

the difference between their lives and in particular, the difference in the degree of control and autonomy they exercised with respect to marriage, encapsulate and foreshadow the changes that Islam would effect for women in Arabia. (Leila Ahmed, 1986, p666)

Thus, comparing the lives of these two women has given the defendants of the first tendency enough support to further their claims. After all, Khatija was the only wife of Muhammed until her death, she had her own property and wealth; she was much more older than her husband; she had the courage to defend the new beliefs against a hostile community at the expense of losing her social and economic position; she was continuously in the public realm and therefore 'visible'...etc., whereas no reminiscent patterns can be accounted in the life of Aisha. To the contrary, her marriage was consummated at a very early age and she remained as merely one of the wives of Muhammad, though she was undisputably the favourite. The social and economic power she maintained during her husband's life, was no similar to that of Khatija.

Certainly, the comparison drawn between

these two women is not the only theoretical source to derive information from, for the advocates of the first approach. An inspection of the preislamic times, throughout which women seem to have played cardinal roles as leaders, priestesses, soothsayers, and goddesses provides further support. One conclusionary remark derived from these is the preislamic period's being characterized by a matriarchal social structure that was to be completely replaced by a patriarchal order with the advent of the new religion.² In a similar vein it has been asserted that "... in the preislamic period there existed a matriarchal family system in which the lineage transcended through women." (M. Smith, 1991, p154)

We must also consider here that there seems to be no union of opinion on the precise term to be used to denote this age, since while some scholars argue that the Age of *Jahiliyya* was not matriarchal but matrilineal; still some others maintain that during this period there were so many conflicting practices and traditions that it is not possible to talk about either a matrilineal system or a patrilineal one. Nevertheless, they too, conclude that still, the general atmosphere had the potential to provide a better life for women, when compared with the practices and regulations introduced by Islam.

Another recurrent topic is related to selecting certain verses that directly refer to the biological, social or religious position of women. Among these, two verses are especially noteworthy for

² For further information, the analyses promoted by W. Robertson Smith, in "Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia", (Cambridge University Press, 1985) may be referred to. Also in this respect, see Naawal al-Sadawi, "Women and Islam", in "Women and Islam", ed. Azizah al-Hibri. (Pergamon Press, 1982)

the proponents of the first approach. One of these verses is 2:228 which tells how men are a step above women; while the other is 4:34 in which it is stated that men should be in charge of women since the former have been given precedence in the eyes of God. Herein we encounter the trace of a persistent tendency in the literature on "Islam and woman." For scholars less inclined to evaluate the position of Muslim women on their own terms, selected verses are almost always automatically used to strengthen previously drawn arguments. To this ubiquitous tendency I will return later.

Further proof for the decline in the position of women with the advent of Islam has been that, within the changes introduced by this religion, women were considered half of man, since there had to be two female witnesses at court instead of one male witness. Similarly, the blood money for a woman was supposed to be half of that for a free man. Another theme of fundamental value reinforcing the position of the proponents of the first approach is connected to the question of polygamy.³ In this respect it is pointed out that, although in preislamic cultural and social structure there were various distinct types of marriage contracts, with the coming of Islam, a man's right to marry up to four women, was acknowledged and legitimized. Additionally, the husband's right to beat his wife in cases of disobedience and misconduct (Sura 4:34) is also used as a strong argument to indicate the decline in the position of women.

³ The subject of polygamy has been the subject of fervent discussions all over the Muslim and the nonmuslim world. Since the precondition of polygamy is the maintenance of a just treatment of every single wife, and since, as it is stated in the Qur'an, nobody but the Prophet can be adequately fair in this regard, some scholars derive the conclusion that, all in all, the Qur'an discourages polygamy.

In sum, the first approach maintains that Islam did not improve the position of women, as it is asserted to be by the majority of Muslim writers, and that to the contrary, it brought along subjugation for women, who were from then on generally confined to the private sphere. Thus, the proponents of this approach end up saying that "before" was certainly better than "after" for women.

The second main way of arguing is almost just the opposite of the former. This time "after" is thought to be much more preferable than "before". It is obvious that this discourse is mostly conducted by various people from Muslim communities. They are supported by those Muslim or non-Muslim writers who tend to think between another very famous dichotomy: "primitive-civilized". Hence, according to the latter, since the new religion brought along a civilization that was lacking in the previous age, this constitutes in itself enough criteria to conclude that there was a considerable development in the position of women. Just like the previous argument, this one also derives information from the 'Age of Jahiliyya', in order to make pages-long comparisons.

Thus, several elements from the previous stage, such as the practice of female infanticide, the lack of women's right to inherit, ...etc., are presented here as the undeniable proofs of the validity of their standpoint. According to this view, since "in the pre-Islamic era there was no question of a woman being an heir", (Walther, 1981, p3) the new regulations brought by Islam did certainly improve the position of women and at the same time provide a social protection for them. As suggested, "it is considered one of the great innovations of the Qur'an over earlier practices

that women are permitted to inherit and own property."
(Smith, 1987,p239)

Here it should be stressed that in Islam, women could preserve and regulate their own wealth and property, as well as to maintain their own dowry, since there was no notion of 'joint ownership' in Islamic marriage form. Indicative of this point is the fact that in Islam, marriage is, first of all, a legal contract, in which the two sides may negotiate over each other's duties and rights. Apart from these material developments, believing women, just like believing men, were deemed to be fully responsible and accountable for conforming to the prescribed rules and teachings⁴. What is being embraced here is that both sexes were equal in the eyes of God. Moreover women, especially as mothers, were attributed an almost semisacred place and were highly respected. In sum, the overall conclusion drawn from these and some other similar points, is that "the Koran certainly ameliorated the woman's position compared to previous times."
(Schimmel, 1994, s197)

Just like the ones in the first approach, the proponents of the second main standpoint resort to selected hadiths and verses to strengthen their arguments. Among these hadiths, 'God made dear to me from your world women and perfume, and my consolation is prayer.' is especially noteworthy.

Another significant argument in this respect is related to the transformation brought by Islam from loyalty to a tribe to loyalty to the family

⁴ According to the tradition, Umm Salama, one of the wives of the Prophet told him that he was solely referring to men and not to women, in his speeches. The Prophet took this criticism seriously and from then on, he referred to both men and women, equally.

structure. John Esposito, who has elaborated this fact, asserts that this shift considerably raised the social position of women in Arabia, when and if compared with the previous case. Hence, according to him,

The marriage of dominion in ancient Arabia produced a situation in which a woman was subjugated by males; her father, brother or close male relatives when she was a virgin and her husband when she became a wife. As a matter of custom, she came to be regarded as little more than a piece of property. (Esposito, 1982, p14)

And just like the first tendency, this one too relies upon limited historical information for mainly two basic reasons. First of all, the Age of *Jahiliyya* seems to have been much more complex and confusing than it is presented in these arguments, no matter which side of the debate is concerned. After all, one thing is crystal clear: this age had neither a systematized nor a centralized cultural formation. This is to say that, all over the geographical area in question, it was quite likely to encounter differing -if not conflicting- practices. And secondly, despite the ideological and historical significance of the period, we still do not have enough clarity or information in front of us. That the researches focusing on this issue are generally stuck on an ideologically determined base, may certainly constitute one of the notable reasons behind this.

We must also bear in mind that certainly the picture is not as simple as it is presented above. There are also many other people who take intermediate positions and support each side in varying degrees. Nevertheless, both the recurrent criteria of

"before-after" and the quest for a better is shared by them. The verbs that are frequently used in this literature can also signal to this commonality. After all, almost all the key verbs that one can come across in these writings, such as 'to improve', 'to worsen', 'to emancipate', 'to subjugate'...etc., rely upon a previously drawn and a taken-for-granted distinction between "before" and "after". This is so expectable and understandable, given the fact that one of the basic questions asked in this area is "whether Islam improved or worsened the positions of women" As it is clear, when and if the motivating question is posed in this way, the quest for the "better", as well as the emphasis on breaks, will persist to exist.

2.1.2 "Us" and "Them": Accusing The Other

This will take us to the third main approach, which is somewhat different from the other two in its basic premises. Here, it is argued that Islam, at the time of the Prophet, provided a relatively egalitarian gender ideology and yet, as time went by, the position of women deeply worsened.

Hence, there is clear evidence showing that in the beginning of the Islamic era, women were freer in choosing their husbands, marriages were generally shared on equal grounds and females could and did claim a right to lead an independent life. (Smith, 1991, p166)

Two points are especially noteworthy within this approach. Firstly, it reserves a ground to dwell upon continuities. For instance, the active and

public role of women in the early age of Islam, is thought to have been linked to many of the practices that used to take place in the previous ages. Thus some of the defenders of this approach have been claiming that women in the early age of Islam had all the rights that the women of *Jahiliyya* period were accustomed to enjoy. The case in hand may be defined from another point of view by underlining, "...that the Quran retains the view prevalent in antiquity and in Ancient Orient of the essential superiority of men in relation to women." (Walther, 1981, p33) Now, although these two claims -that the benevolent atmosphere present at the early age of Islam had derived obviously a lot from the previous practices or that the understanding introduced by the new religion had much in common with the other beliefs that had appeared before it in the same geographical area- may sound to depart from one another, what is noticeable for me is their insistence on the fact that things do not change all of a sudden.

Secondly, one of the other notable features of this approach is that it takes into account not only the historical sequences but also the political, economic and social conditions surrounding the changes brought forward. This work is carried out especially when looking for an answer for the gradual subordination of women. The availability of large numbers of female slaves due to the rapid expansion of Islam in the years following the prophet's death; the activities and the intentions of the women-hating elements in Muslim societies; the patriarchal structures and practices existing in the communities with which the Muslims came into contact as the result of the invasions and wars; misinterpretations of the Qur'an and the hadiths brought forward by the political and religious leaders of the post-Muhammedian

ages...etc., are only some of the examples that have been used to answer the above mentioned question.

Meanwhile, the concerned change in gender patterns and relations has also been explained by underlining the existence of similar development in the other two major world religions. For instance, in a parallel way, Nadia Abbott assumes that the passivity and submissiveness that came to the surface in time, followed a similar pattern with the developments that took place in Jewish and Christian religions. As a consequence it is easy to notice that as the contents of the answers given to the gradual subordination of females vary, so do the subjects of analysis.

As I tried to indicate so far, the third main approach possesses some useful and fertile elements lacking in the first two approaches. Nevertheless it has its own deficiencies. After all, to assume that the position of women gradually worsened in time, implies to maintain that gender inequality was due to other reasons than the religion per se.

If women's rights are a problem for some modern Muslim men, it is neither because of the Quran nor the prophet, nor the Islamic tradition, but simply because those rights conflict with the interests of the male elite. The elite faction is trying to convince us that their egoistic, highly subjective and mediocre view of culture and society has a sacred basis. (Mernissi, 1991, plX)

In other words this claim is tantamount to saying that the subordination of women was something externally introduced and thus, not intrinsic to Islam itself. This is one of the reasons why we can see quite

a large number of Muslim intellectuals and academicians locating themselves within this third approach. Again, because of the same reason, within this formulation, we can find out the same persistence of an emphasis on "outsiders" which is quite widespread not only in the debates on the history of religions but also in almost every single area of social sciences. The last point needs further clarification.

The discourse on outsiders is widely spread and continuously being reproduced both in everyday language and in the products of intellectuals. Leaving the implications and motivating elements of this discourse aside, within the scope of this study, I would like to question the existence of a belief in origins or in an 'essence'. This emphasis can be quite overt and visible at some times; but it is usually much more hidden and difficult to notice since it is neatly covered by ideological cloaks. It is especially relevant for a study on the literature on "Islam and woman" mainly because of the ideological value of the area for quite a large number of people all around the world. As this point is a topic of a detailed study in itself, here it will be sufficient to demonstrate how it is related to this study.

..., in the advent of Islam, just like it is the case in the early periods of every great religious movement, women have played significant roles and contributed to the spread of this new religion. (Berkatay, 1994, s107)

One of the common points shared by almost all the participants of the debates on 'Islam and woman' is that no matter in which side they locate themselves, they still admit that there is something

disturbing, something to be criticized in the position of Muslim women. As I have elaborated until so far, the way this negativity is defined, as well as the explanations brought forward do differ considerably. Yet a persistent theme in this respect is the accusation of the "other", in defending the essence of the matter discussed. The debates that take place in contemporary Turkish intellectual parlance may provide an illustrating example for this.

As I will try to evaluate in the following pages, in Turkey one of the mostly repeated expressions is related to the decline in the social position of pre-Islamic Turkish women due to the impact of the new religion that has been adopted. In fact rather than Islam per se, Arabs or Persians and their patriarchal culture have been blamed and criticized in this respect. This is to say that, from this perspective, the original and pure Turkish social formation was based on a complete gender equality. Yet, as there appeared a contact with *foreign* elements, practices that were alien to the Turkish culture were gradually adopted, which in turn, worsened the position of the women in this society.

This stand is forged ahead to analyse the differences between 'center' and 'periphery', or 'urban life' and 'rural life'. Not surprisingly, it is often argued that, since the big cities in the Ottoman Empire were under the influence of foreign cultures -eg that the literary language was not Turkish and neither the customs or practices in the palace- whereas the rural area kept its old traditions and lifestyle, the situation of urban woman was worse than those of rural women. I do not intend to discuss the validity of this argument here. Rather my purpose is to underline how

much the usage of the main concepts in this literature relies upon previously drawn distinctions between 'foreign- original', 'inner-outer' etc., which are in turn strongly dependent on the separation made between "us" and "them".

It is striking to encounter a very similar argument, this time accusing the Turks or the Ottomans for the decline in the social position of Middle Eastern women. Crucial to the argument in concern is that "the Ottoman period brought the segregation of women to its height." (Waddy, 1980, p123) In a similar vein, some scholars maintain that,

At the end of the Mamluk period in Cairo there were numbers of educated women, some of them holding certificates permitting them to teach the Quran and even judisprudence. By the 19th century, after 300 years of Ottoman rule, women had been deprived of their right to learn. (Ibrahim, 1976, p11)

As this quotation implicitly indicates, once more we are faced with a positive essence, that was damaged and transformed by the others in time. In this way, the whole complex process functions in the final analysis, to reiterate how the benevolence and egalitarianism of the original or pure form of one's own society has been destructed by "others". From a different vantage point, if there is anything negative about the existing gender relations or patterns, its causes cannot be intrinsic. They should be searched 'somewhere else'. The identity of that 'somewhere' changes profoundly in accordance with the ideological position of the enunciator. In sum, although a large number of the participants in the debates on 'Islam and woman' accept that there is *something* wrong in the

position of women in Muslim countries, only a few are ready to discuss the possible reasons for this within both the dynamics of the religious history of Islam and the convolutions of one's own past. Rather, the widespread tendency is to put the blame on "others".

2.1.3 The Turkish Case

The discussions and inscriptions on "Islam and Woman" in Turkey take place both within the general divisions of opinion that I have tried to summarize until so far and at the very same time, distinguish from them in a considerable way. This rather precarious situation is related to the fact that, this time the ongoing debates are not only laden with the previously summarized tendencies but also with a strongly nationalist tinge.

To begin with, the theoretical departures on this theme in Turkey almost reflect the general points of departure that the area at large, implies. There is in other words, a repetition of the "before-after" dichotomy, but this time from a different historical point of departure. Hence, within the Turkish case, women's position is discussed within two main realms, one of which is Central Asia or preislamic culture, while the other can be named as the social structure established after the migrations have been completed and the Islamization process has reached its zenith. In relation to this, once again, there emerges a search for the 'better'. Hence the basic question is formulated as follows: "Were women in a better position in Central Asian belief system or did Islam improve their situation?"

The debates that have been motivated by a quest for an answer to this question have not only been endless but also vehement. Understandably, the main reason behind this picture is the overwhelming role of the ideological values that the area is largely replete with. Leaving this point aside, my intention is to demonstrate that in Turkey, both religious and social history have to a large extent been shaped by an understanding that relies upon 'breaks' rather than 'continuities'. Hence, the past is generally evaluated through categorical distinctions, the most important and determining of which are "preislamic period-after Islam", "premodernist period- modernization" and last but not least, "before Republic-Republican period". It is through this periodization marked by three main 'breaks', that not only historical writings and discussions are carried on, but also the social, economic and religious matters of considerable value are elaborated. It is therefore, not surprising at all to find out that questions related to women and gender are also being discussed within the same level of construction.

Very broadly, one of the recurrent patterns found in Turkey on "Islam and woman", can be stated as follows: As historical sources and especially the stories of Dede Korkut reveal out, Turkish women used to lead a life on equal grounds with men in pre-Islamic times. They did not veil and were not confined to the private sphere. They were not expected to be passive or emotional. To the contrary, almost all the features that were valued and appraised in a man -e.g. courage, strength, activeness...etc.- were also expected from a woman. Ziya Gökalp⁵ has even claimed that

⁵ Ziya Gökalp maintained that the Central Asian Turkish life was characterized by both its democracy and feminism. For further information, see his "Türkçülüğün Esasları" (İstanbul, 1976)

essentially, democracy and feminism were the main pillars of the old Turkish social structure. To make a long story short, according to this point of view, since both the social and gender relations of the Turks in Central Asia rested upon an egalitarian base, there was no question of women's being subordinated.

This conclusion has paramount implications. It embraces among other things, the acknowledgment of a decline in the position of women in the years to follow. Once again, differences of opinion emerge at this point. While some people blame Islam for such a significant change to occur; others believe that it is not Islam per se, but the Arabs and Persians, as well as the ruling elite who are mainly responsible. A well known example to the former point of view can be given from the writings of Necla Arat, who continuously maintains that,

In Islam, the main virtue of woman is obedience. Those who do not obey are punished severely... This is why, the period until the Republic was for women a period of obedience, passivity, silence, waiting to be rewarded in heaven after death and being continuously exploited in every single way. (Arat, 1986, p96)

Interestingly, the obverse side of this argument follows a similar line of reasoning which takes-for-granted the occurrence of a deterioration in time. Put differently, a counterargument stresses that gender inequality was not intrinsic to Islam and therefore the dynamics operating behind the changes in gender relations should be attributed to external factors.

Many writers claim that after Islam had been adopted by the Turks, women have

lost their previous freedom and activeness. It is not possible to renounce this opinion. Yet,..., the reason for this is not Islamic religion but its misapplications.(Akdemir,1991, p264)

According to this view, although there is complete equality between the sexes in the perennial teachings of Islam, as a result of the penetration of foreign cultures, the original teachings were greatly distorted and hence, gender inequality emerged. Another explanation brought forward in this regard is that women's subordination stemmed from the foreign elements with which the Turks came into contact and from whom learned the new religion. Summarized in these terms, patriarchal precedents are almost always the products of "others".

Understood in this way, it is my impression that within such a framework, "before" is identified with "us", whereas "after" is associated with "them". In each case, a possible solution is constructed as a 'return to the original situation', to that untouched and total purity.

Having integrated the epitome of the "Turkish case" within the general trends on the debates on "Islam and woman", it may be useful to present an overview of what has been told so far. For this purpose, I have selected five points of focus that can be helpful and illuminating in trying to find out the deficiencies inherent in the debates in this area. They are meant to present us a broad overview of the basic fallacies highly operating in the literature on 'Islam and woman'. We should also bear in mind that apart from the approaches construed so far, there are many others

that base their premises on distinct grounds and may therefore be not included in these trends. In other words, the works and methods of those learned scholars that tend to think and move differently, have been deliberately excluded both because my purpose has been to draw attention to the basic deficiencies in this literature and because they are unfortunately limited in number and power.

I. Linear understanding of time

If we examine the essential features of the literature on 'Islam and woman' we will note immediately that not only the verbs that are most frequently used throughout this literature but also the arguments brought forward rely upon a linear understanding of time. For things "to improve" or "to deteriorate", they must have been better or worse in the previous stage. This understanding, which obviously has an important role in the writings and discussions concerned, fails to grasp the fact that the history of Islam and history in general, does not seem to have conformed to such totalities or linear patterns.

Moreover, when assuming a linear time framework there is always the danger of making gross generalisations. To claim that things have improved or deteriorated for women, is usually to exclude bitterly the simple fact that, an improvement for a certain group of women may at the very same time signal to a worsening in the position of other women. And these differentiations cannot be possibly observed without taking into consideration, factors such as class, race, ethnicity, locality, ...etc.

Moreover the linear understanding of time

that successfully dominates the scene, does also play an active role in the usage of the contemporary concepts, as if these were relevant in all places and at all times. For instance when Maria Jaoudi claims that the great Sufi, Rabia was an early feminist simply because of the type of life she chose to lead, there may be a point in this; yet, the concept of feminism may be greatly misleading in this regard. (Jaoudi, 1993, p16)

More precisely, the persistent usage of terms such as emancipation, subordination feminism sexual object...etc., when carrying out a historical analysis may be quite misconducting. However the linear understanding of time in which everything is believed to evolve and operate towards a pre-given destination; where the past-the present and the future are hierarchically organized, while the history is supposed to conform to the general laws and patterns that are derived from this structure, fails to a large extent to grasp these points.

II. Discussing history within breaks

Since this point has been repeatedly mentioned in previous pages, suffice it to say that in the literature concerned, there is a persistent tendency to discuss history along breaks. This in turn requires to denote a specific break, which is in our case 'the advent of Islam', and to construct the binary structure of "before-after" upon it. In this way it is almost completely ignored that there is no sudden change from one category to another but a process of Islamization. As a matter of fact it would be better to say processes of Islamization, since it has meant different things to different people, acquired

variegated forms in distinct geographical places and historical periods, and lastly, lasted for centuries long. The repercussions of this theme in the metanarratives on the "Conversion of the Turks" and the "Islamization of Asia Minor" will be discussed in the following chapter.

III. Dichotomic conceptualizations

Binary classifications seem to have been highly operative in the literature concerned. The mostly used and reproduced among these are "before-after", and "us-them". These dual formations, keep shaping the conclusions drawn, sometimes in overt and easily noticeable ways, yet at some other times disguised under ideological cloaks. Furthermore such dualities do also strengthen the operation of a process of "otherization", which is typical of this literature, no matter what particular side is concerned. In brief, the sustenance of the distinction between "us" and "them" is closely dependent on the operation of a distancing mechanism, along geographical, national, ideological or religious lines.

IV. Ideological ends

As it has been previously maintained, the ongoing debates on "Islam and woman" are highly replete with ideological premises and ends. Another way of posing this is that, too often, this theme is not taken as a subject in itself but as a constitutive part of master narratives. In this way, "women were and are used in a game that is really more about politico-ideological questions, including relations with the West, than about women per se." (Keddie, 1991, p14) This in turn, has wide repercussions. It is also, the

very reason operating behind the scholars' partial rereadings, as it leads to turning a blind eye to those sources that may or do not strengthen their own assertions. Unfortunately for our argument, too many times, the interpretations brought forward about "Islam and woman" are strongly predetermined by cultural, religious or ideological biases. Moreover, the theme itself functions effectively in the reconstruction and maintenance of the processes of "otherization."⁶ .

Additionally, the sources breeding the literature on 'Islam and woman' need to be reviewed with a critical gaze since,

Most historical work relies chiefly on written sources which are heavily male oriented and a great mass of documents needs to be unearthed or restudied with women's questions in mind. (Keddie, 1991, p1)

V. Reductionism

Lastly and perhaps more significantly for this study, the main tendencies in this area generally discuss and formulate the basic problems, within the boundaries of a monolithic understanding of Islam. By

⁶ On this theme, Edward Said's "Orientalism" (New York, 1978) can be illuminating since it shows how and through which means the Western image of the East is being constructed and reconstructed. Laura Nader has developed this line of reasoning by introducing two additional themes; the first of which is the two wayroad in East-West relations, so that each side reproduces the image of the "other" for its own ends; while the second is the sustenance of gender ideologies through the process of "otherization". The utmost repercussions of the depiction of the "other" for reproducing images and developing means of controlling women have been analysed by L. Nader, in "Orientalism, Occidentalism and The Control of Women", (booklet reprinted from "Cultural Dynamics", 1989)

this I am trying to indicate that either the orthodox interpretation of Islam is taken as the norm or in a similar vein, through the studies on various verses of the Qur'an directly related to women, scriptural Islam tends to dominate the scene. Likewise, the intrinsic dynamics operating in the history of Islam are pushed aside and subjugated to an almost static whole.

This general tendency becomes all the more visible in the depiction of some core issues, such as the veiling and segregation of women. Admittedly, these and other themes of fundamental value are frequently isolated from the historical and geographical grounds in which they have emerged or flourished. As suggested, "the treatment of women and Islam has for a long time been dominated by ahistorical accounts of the main tenets of Muslim religion and their implications for women". (Kandiyoti, 1991, p1)

A very similar line of reasoning is also at work in the construction of the category of woman. In lieu of this approach I am going to claim that just like Islam may and did mean different things to different people, the changes it introduced or consummated for women have been manifold. This is to say, "differences in class, place, and time meant that there was never one set of Muslim women operating under one set of rules." (Keddie, 1991, p6)

Furthermore, this subject should be also considered from distinct angles, thus, enabling the reader to see that just like the advent of Islam transformed in different ways the lives of women, so did the latter influenced, in varying degrees and ways, the developments along the history of the former. The demonstration of this complexity merits attention

mainly because, generally, the term "Islam" is employed as if it did not embody women. Even the broad title marking the literature concerned is highly revealing in this sense. We are used to say, "Islam" and "woman" as if the two fall apart.

Needless to add, every study has to circumscribe itself in some way or another. As such, there is nothing astonishing or irritating in this tendency at the very first glance. However, as a careful observation will attest, what is really disturbing here is the continuous identification of this restricted area with "Islam" *per se*. This point of fundamental importance has been pushed to the front in the introduction, forged ahead in the previous chapter and will be recalled from time to time in what follows.

Therefore, it will be sufficient to expatiate once more that there is no single, static and comprising whole that may be labeled as the "Islamic understanding of women". If we want to delve deeper into this theme, we should bear in mind that,

Various other interpretations of the Islamic vision, however, from the start, developed and counterposed their readings to that of orthodoxy, even as it gained firm control and denounced alternative visions as heretical. (Ahmed, 1992, p95)

And it is exactly one of these various other Islamic interpretations, that I will forge ahead in the following chapters.

2.2 LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE PATHS

Outside observers may see only heavily veiled shapes and assume that these women's lives are completely controlled by their menfolk. When seen from the inside, however, the same women may give quite a different impression.

N.Keddie

In the previous section I have tried to present a brief summary of the basic fallacies conditioning, up to some extent, the literature on "Islam and woman". To notice these points seems to be of great value, given the fact that the conflicting tendencies in this realm are usually thought to be located along oppositional poles, thus lurking the possibility of detecting their common points of deficiency. In other words, to understand and analyze where and how the main arguments in this area have been stuck, may offer a fertile ground to search for alternative paths to follow.

In order to shed light upon what one of these alternatives may be and clarify my own position, I would like to attract attention to one common ground shared by almost all the active participants of these debates. Expressed bluntly, both the ones that believe in Islam's having improved the position of women and the ones in the opposite camp rely to a large extent on the same sources of analysis. Put in this way, "the striking point is that the proponents of both tendencies try to base their assertions about 'women in Islam' on the Qur'an and sunnet". (Akdemir, 1991, p271)

What is usually failed to notice here is that, although the meaning and message of a certain verse may seem to be crystal clear for the scholar analysing it, it might have been paved the way to different rereadings and in the religious history of Islam. It should be recalled that, one of the key assertions on which this study is based, is that there is no single way of reading and interpreting the Qur'an or the hadiths, as there is no single Islamic understanding. Hence the rather unquestioned usage of this term as if it were a homogeneous entity may be misleading for any study on this subject.

It should also be beared in mind that the question of how to interpret a certain verse or hadith is part of the contemporary debates between the "modernists" and "traditionalists".Especially, the debates about polygamy are indicative of the fact that a verse may pave the way to different rereadings, which are in turn, subject to historical transformations.

The Modernists have essentially contended that since the Qur'an requires justice to be done among co-wives, and since the Quran itself states categorically that this justice is humanly unattainable, the Quranic demand amounts to monogamy rather than polygamy. (Rahman, 1983,p47)

A combination of the analysis made so far, with the information and interpretations given in previous parts will lead us to the conclusion that there is no such thing as the Islamic understanding of women, gender or femininity. Rather, it is possible to encounter both today and in the past, the coexistence of various different constructions, and obviously, a much more complex panorama than the one usually drawn

in reductionist studies. "Then one must consider all the various elements that comprise the picture of Islamic womanhood." (Smith, 1987, p235) Turning back to the fatwa of Ebussuud Efendi, and to the actors involved in it, one fundamental question arises as follows: "Does the nonorthodox Islamic understanding of gender and sex differ from that of orthodoxy? And if so, where and how these depart from one another?"

These then constitute the very center around which several considerations basic to this study will revolve. In sum in what follows, my intention is to focus upon one of the Islamic understandings which departs considerably from the orthodox formations, both in its interpretations and in the way these are put into practice. By doing so I am not only planning to be able to discuss a theme that has been usually ignored but also to search for a different channel to elaborate the position of women in Muslim communities. After all studying the heterodox Islamic understanding of women and femininity may provide a fertile ground to notice both the deficiencies of a reductionist usage of the term Islam and the competing elements existing within such a complex and confusing area.

Hence, the point that I am trying to emphasize is that, while orthodox or scriptural Islam dominates the writings and discussions in this literature, since the very beginning and throughout history there have existed various other Islamic formations, each with a different gender construction. In this sense, to analyze where and how the teachings of nonorthodox Islam departed from those of orthodox in relation to gender and women, may certainly add a new dimension to the existing literature, which is suffering to a great extent from the deficiencies it

inhabitates in some of its basic premises.

As it has been mentioned before, the basic religious texts had never been interpreted or perceived in a single way. This point is of crucial value since it provides a fertile ground to start a discussion on heterodoxy. After all, as Leila Ahmed says,

The Sufi and the Qarmati movements also show that there were ways of reading the Islamic moment and text that differed from those of the dominant culture and that such readings had important implications for the conceptualization of women and the social arrangements concerning her. (Ahmed, 1992, p100)

Hence according to this point of view, to elaborate where and how these movements have departed from the orthodox mainstream, may also shed a light on the various and even conflicting Islamic attitudes toward women and gender questions, both in discursive practices and the social regulations. Furthermore, to see the differences in the interpretations of the *shari'a* may also be highly revealing in itself since, 'interpretation of Islamic law also involves the interpretation of the position of women.' (Mahdawi, 1985, p257)

The sharp discursive division between the heterodox understanding of women and that of the orthodoxy can be traced to the early age of Islam. Turning back to Leila Ahmed, we will find out how she concludes that since the very beginning Islam imposed two alternative ways of existence for women; one of which was to renounce the new religion completely and keep living without obeying its rules and principles; while the other was to accept subjugation or seclusion

without any objection. She further maintains that it is especially at this stage that the nonorthodox islamic formations have been capable to offer women a third, an alternative path to follow. This is to say that, for women who did not want to renounce their religion, but at the very same time did not voluntarily accept the gender relations and social rules brought in by the new system, nonorthodox establishments provided an alternative ground of existence. In a similar vein,

Much of the contribution made by women has been in the area of popular religion. It has consisted of the beliefs, myths, rituals, art and practices of ordinary people, most of whom were illiterate and socially marginal, as opposed to the religious beliefs, arts and practices of the educated and politically powerful. (Ferguson, 1995, sXI)

On the theme of an alternative life style, several other writers have made additional comments. For instance, Nikki Keddie brings forward the following remark: "Through the centuries, nonorthodox religious spheres have provided a forum for female power. Shiism has women mullas and Sufi (mystic) orders include powerful and creative women leaders and all had women followers." (Keddie, 1991, p10) In a similar vein, A. Schimmel who is somewhat more critical towards the issue, concludes that "women played a positive role in Sufism. Indeed it was Sufism which opened more avenues of life to women than 'orthodox' Islam... The true seeker transcends the limits of sex" (Schimmel, 1982, p146)

The subject of the outer form and female beauty has been elaborated by F.A. Sabbah who insistently claims that historically, Islam, as a world

religion has incorporated several discourses which differ and compete with one another. Among these discourses she finds the one of the Sufis of particular importance since this seems not only to depart from the mainstream teachings and regulations but also to threaten their legitimacy in an endless effort. "This is why, one of the unchanging elements of the Muslim society is the thousand-year-old struggle between passionate Islam and iġtihadī Islam. (Sabbah, 1992, p11)

Studies on the religious and social history of Muslim countries have also dealt with those dergahs or zaviyes that were established and regulated by women in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Muslim Spain..etc. In any case, "...it may be said that the mystic approach gave scope to men and women alike, whereas the orthodox ranks were closed to women." (Naskali, 1983,p241)

Meanwhile some other writers have attracted the attention of their readers to the role of female education within the nonorthodox sphere.

For though it is naturally the more ignorant among Moslem women who believe most implicitly in the wonder working powers of dervish shaikhs; it is on the other hand, only women who have received a good Turkish education who 'enter on the mystic path' and are distinguished by the title of Sufi hanum. (Garnett, 1979, p177)

Similarly historical sources reveal out that woman who have managed to climb the ladder of the various orders, were famous by their knowledge on religious and philosophical matters. As a closer scrutiny will make it clearer, much of that has been said on this subject is related to the female mystics,

such as Rabia or Fatimah bint-Adawiyya or Zainab, and to the role of females in islamic mysticism. Hence the invisible has been made visible in the personality of a sufi hanum. Nevertheless, though these studies have made remarkable contributions, it is my impression that they have been the famous virile women of their ages, a theme that I will explore later.

In sum, the analyses in this realm tend to evolve around four main subjects: individuals (e.g. Rabia)- institutions (e.g. the House of Zainab) - movements (e.g. Qarmatis)-discourses (e.g. erotic religious discourse). Generally speaking, the preferences linked to these four basic concepts have paved the way to different types of analysis.⁷

Though I think that each type of analysis will and does make a remarkable contribution, in what follows I will try to take a distinct path. Rather than choosing one of these four basic themes of analysis, I have preferred to focus upon the theme of "the construction of femininity". While this is a personal preference on the one hand, it can also be seen as having been imposed on me by the nature of the material, on the other hand. I can cite several reasons for this.

⁷ For a good example to the first type of analysis, which deals with individual women, see, M. Smith's "Bir Kadın Sufi: Rabia" (İstanbul, 1991). The second type of analysis which focuses on institutions, such as dergahs or zawiyas, can be found scattered in various books and articles. For instance, the House of Zainab has been investigated by J.C. Smith, "The House of Zainab" in "Women in Middle Eastern History" (ed. B. Baron-N. Keddie, London, 1991). The third type of analysis focusing on movements, is mirrored in L. Ahmed's writings and especially in "Women and Gender in Islam" (New Haven, 1992). Lastly, the elaboration of the distinct Islamic discourses has been carried out by several scholars, among whom F.A. Sabbah is notable. On this theme see, "İslamın Bilinçaltında Kadın" (İstanbul, 1992)

Firstly, although 'femininity' and 'woman' are obviously different phenomena, as I hope to be able to show in the fifth chapter, an analysis on the former can give us fruitful clues about the latter. Secondly, there is unfortunately, relatively little information about the position of women in Bektashi and Mawlawi tariqas, which makes it necessary to look for other routes to follow to understand the gender understandings of these dervishes. Thirdly, the evaluation of the construction of femininity can enrich the existing literature in various fundamental respects. While the exploration of all these points will be delayed to the last chapter of this study, I would like to bring this part to an end by underlining that, studies on the various Islamic constructions of femininity have a fascinatingly great potential to shed a new light on this realm.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ON THE BEKTASHI AND MAWLAWI ORDERS OF DERVISHES

In the arguments advanced so far, there has been a persistent emphasis on the richness and complexity that marked the history of Islam, and that should be evaluated within the intrinsic dynamics of this particular religion. This was certainly not meant to exclude the cardinal fact that, not all the component parts of Islamic history have operated on the same level and with a similar power. Nor was it to deny the impact of external influences, so much stressed by the "theory of borrowings"¹. Instead what has been suggested before, embraced the denial of the identification of Islam with a monolithic whole and the acknowledgment of the possibility of analyzing the observed complexity within the manifoldness of this religion.

Having decided to focus upon the understandings of the Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes, as one of the most fascinating facets within this manifoldness, and having chosen to discuss the construction of femininity upon this specific ground, it seems necessary to explain the typical order that

¹ The historical role of external influences in cultural and religious history is a matter of ardent debate. Interestingly, it is too often construed as a sexual act in which one side is thought to be primarily passive, while the other completely active. Within this framework, and in accordance with a dichotamic gender understanding, the culture that has been influenced by another is perceived as passive and feminine; while the influencer is seen as active and masculine. Moreover, the verbs that are selected to describe this process in the dominant parlance, such as "to penetrate", "to infiltrate"...etc., are also revealing in themselves. For a more detailed analysis of the construction of external influences within sexual discourse, see Cemal Kafadar's "Between Two Worlds", p25. (University of California Press, 1995)

this part of the study will follow. For this purpose however, I firstly need to draw attention to one of the most fundamental difficulties faced in the analyses on heterodox formations. This difficulty is closely tied to the question of how and where to locate heterodox thought or practice within the existing categorical boundaries.

To begin with, one of the main points that almost all the scholars in the concerned literature seem to agree upon is the difficulty of arriving at a consistent and meticulous analysis of heterodox thought or practice, whether it be in the realm of Islam or in the other major religions. The main reason lying behind this widely shared premise is strongly connected to the nonsystematized, heterogeneous and rather variegated nature of heterodoxy itself. Admittedly, the colloquially constituted realm of heterodoxy is replete with a wide range of practices and ideas, that may and do diverge from one another in considerable respects. It is in this sense that there is neither a single law and teaching nor a ubiquitous set of practices that can be labeled as characteristic of heterodoxy. Likewise it is highly difficult -if not impossible- to denote a beginning or origin and an end for it. Hence, closely related to the theme of heterodoxy are multiplicity, complexity and continuity.

This however constitutes only one aspect of the existing literature. Although a large number of scholars overtly emphasize these points, there is at the very same time a persistent tendency to fit heterodox or mystic formations within the traditional modes of analyses. Thus, we have arrived at a peculiar point at the very outset. For on the one hand, as it is generally acknowledged, heterodoxy is rather difficult

to analyse in a systematic way and to fit into the existing categories. Yet, on the other hand, both the well known binary classifications and the urge to trace the phenomena into a coherent whole remains stubbornly in a large number of the studies. This last point needs further clarification.

In the studies on heterodoxy, as well as in some notable domains such as sociology of religion or history of religions, we often come across to a categorical separation between "high" and "low" religion. Broadly speaking, high religion is identified with the scriptural, literary, urban and sophisticated aspect of religion, which is usually adopted in elite circles. Low religion on the other hand is generally thought to be the product of illiterate masses, intertwined with popular motifs and beliefs. Unfortunately, dervish thought and practice has been seen either as a deviance from the main norm or "...it has been subsumed under the larger and seemingly permanent category of "popular religion." (Karamustafa, 1994, p5) However, as several scholars have underlined, this two-tiered model of religion can be seriously misleading. As such,

The assumption of an unbridgeable separation between high, normative and low, antimonian religion serves to obscure rather than clarify the true nature of the deviant dervish groups and the process of their emergence in the aftermath of Mongul invasions. (Karamustafa, 1994, p9)

As is well known, a two-tiered model of religion is based upon the maintenance of certain categorical boundaries and the transition of these into dichotomic constructions. The most salient among these

boundaries are those that revolve around some basic concepts, such as class, geography, culture...etc. In a similar vein, the most notorious among the dualities in concern are "urban-rural", "high class-low class", "East-West", "modern-premodern"...etc. Now, to a dispassionate observer the boundaries which circumscribe the impact of heterodox formations might appear to be rigidly drawn. According to the class boundary for instance, heterodox praxis is normally assumed to be the product of low classes and even if a few people from the ruling class have acted otherwise, it is out of their sympathy.

Geographically, mysticism or dervish piety is generally thought to belong to the East. In respect to culture, it is thought to be a product of the illiterate masses. Although the tendency to fit heterodox formations into pre-given boundaries persists in this way, historical evidence leads us to a completely divergent path. To clarify this point let us see whether heterodox thought or practice conforms to the categorical distinctions in front of us.

As it will be pointed out from time to time throughout this study, there are serious similarities and overlappings between heterodox or mystic formations in a particular religion and in another. This is to say that, the terminology employed, the goals defined, the criticisms raised against orthodox understandings, as well as a whole body of practices and ideas promoted, are strikingly similar. As such, "to show where Islam differs from other faiths on its mystical side is extremely difficult." (Cash, 1928, p106) As for the mystic him/herself, we should note that "the difference between a Mohammedan and a Christian saint thus reduces itself

largely to a matter of names."(Hasluck,1973, p81) On this specific point, the difference between a Christian heretic and a heterodox Muslim dervish is more a question of style and nominality than of substance.²

As it will be demonstrated in what follows, this similarity becomes all the more obvious and noteworthy at some historical periods and in those lands with a mixed population, where fluidity tends to dominate the scene penetrating into various social strata, cultural and religious groups. One prominent example that fits directly into this scheme is twelfth or thirteenth century Asia Minor. Both the geographical location and the historical period concerned here is indicative of the fact that, in a land with a highly mixed population and during a period when categorical distinctions and nominal differences are neither institutionalized nor rigidly drawn, these overlappings are much more visible than ever.

In addition to this, it is certainly the case that all the major religions inhabit and breed heterodox formations. As such it is also a truism to say that heterodoxy cannot and should not be regarded as a branch of this or that specific religion. A similar point of emphasis has been indicated by Robert Graves, in the introduction he has written to *The Sufis*, by Idries Shah. Graves claims that "though commonly mistaken for a Muslim sect, the Sufis are at home in all religions." (Shah, 1964, pVII) And this is exactly the point that I am trying to push forward

² This similarity can be observed in the praxis of Armenian Paulicians, a heretic group persecuted in Eastern Roman Empire, who are thought to have probably collaborated with heterodox Muslim dervishes penetrating into Asia Minor. They opposed almost all the formal requirements of religion and this was likely to be one of the reasons why they were persecuted and suppressed bitterly in 9th century, by the forces of Eastern Roman Empire. Their ideas deeply influenced the formation of other similar movements, such as the Bogomilles.

here. To be sure, heterodox formations are at home in all religions and as such they recognize no national, religious or geographical boundaries. By this I am not trying to say that we can perceive the issue as if these formations occurred in a social or cultural vacuum. Just to the contrary, they are certainly both subject to the social-cultural-economic and religious circumstances of the environments in which they take place and an active producer of these at the very same time. Rather, what is being traced here is simply that heterodoxy does not fit easily into pre-given categories and manages to overflow rigidly-drawn boundaries.

In much the same way, although several heterodox formations tend to concentrate in rural areas more than in urban areas, or vice versa, it is not possible to conclude that heterodoxy is either an urban phenomenon or a rural one. As a matter of fact, "the faces of the Sufi orders differ widely; one finds rural and urban orders and teachings of the different tariqas appeal to every stratum of society." (Schimmel, 1994, p212) As to class boundaries, as far as our evidence reveals, heterodox movements or structures appeal to a large number of people from various social strata. In a similar vein, contrary to the standpoint of a large number of orientalists, heterodoxy or mysticism cannot be identified with the Orient. As the history of religions clearly reveals out, neither heterodoxy nor mysticism is merely an "Eastern phenomena."

These are only a few of the categorical distinctions present in a considerable number of the studies. What is common in the analyses that take them for granted, is an almost complete ignorance of the

internal information of heterodox thought or practice, as well as of the distinct circumstances operating at a certain historical age or geographical place. More precisely, what is common in these approaches is the total imposition of today's dominant categories upon the subject of analysis, without paying attention to the distinctive features of the latter.

Therefore, in lieu of this understanding I will suggest another. This involves a stance based upon the simultaneous recognition of two cardinal factors; the internal characteristic features of and the external ambient surrounding the subject studied. Turning back to the question posed at the very beginning, the third part of the study will follow this typical order. Firstly, the internal aspects of heterodox formations will be elaborated under the title of "rhizomatique principles." Secondly, the general ambient in which these have flourished and proliferated, will be dwelled upon.

3.1 THE RHIZOMATIQUE PRINCIPLES OF HETERODOXY

Without continuity, there is
no Sufism; without being and
becoming there is no Sufism;
without interrelation, there
is no Sufism.

(Khoja Anis)

In discerning the internal features of heterodoxy, instead of succumbing to the well known traditional methods of analysis, I have found it more appropriate and useful to concentrate on the concept of "rhizome." This compelling concept, which has been endorsed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, may

provide us a very elastic structure in which to base our arguments. I hope to be able to show that, this specific notion not only will be extremely helpful in understanding heterodox praxis but will also be indicative of the cardinal points where it diverges from orthodox mentality and structures.

Put simply, a rhizome is a subterranean stem sending forth roots and shoots. In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, this specific word has been transformed into a fascinating subject of analysis by Deleuze and Guattari. The authors, by comparing the rhizome with the tree, -and rhizomatic systems with arborescent systems- indicate how strongly the latter have been dominating and marking Western studies. Briefly stated, the characteristic features of the arborescent systems is that a tree, unlike rhizome, can be analysed with a systematic perspective and within a systematic whole; it can be identified with at least a definite beginning and an end; it furthermore possesses a point of centre or a centralized mechanism. Additionally, a tree, with all the branches and its internal composition, brings to the surface a hierarchical structure, in which every point attached to it, has an unequalitarian relation with its neighbours.

The rhizome, on the other hand, differs from the trees in various fundamental ways. To understand better how this is possible, let us proceed with a further description: "Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n-1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome" (Deleuze, 1993, p29) A combination of this quotation with the dictionary style definition given above, will lead us directly to the point that a rhizome gives birth to a large number of roots and/or

shoots moving in different directions and indirectly to the point that in such a way, it does not follow a pre-given, definite route. Leave it all alone and you will see that it has taken divergent paths, which are basically noncentralized and nonlinear.

A useful example in this regard can be derived from the observance of the way things work in the nature. For instance, let us observe the burrows. They may go everywhere and in all possible directions, having no linear route upon which we may expect them to move. Understood in this way, potatoes, couchgrass or weed are rhizomatique. Likewise burrows or ants are animal rhizomes. As a careful observation of these examples will gradually reveal out,

Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any points to any other point. The rhizome is reducible to neither to the One nor the multiple. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overflows. (Deleuze-Guattari, 1987, p21)

Evidently, the theme of rhizome is too complex and detailed to be fully treated here. Therefore, it seems more sound to interrupt the discussion at this precise point and to move further into the principles of rhizomatique movements to arrive at our basic purpose; that is to say, to the demonstration of the rhizomatique character of heterodox praxis. To analyse the question fairly, I will directly take the six main principles stated in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and will proceed step by step.

1-2: The Principle of Connection and Heterogeneity

According to the principle of connection "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Boudas, 1993, p29) Furthermore, the principle of connection extends to such a wide area and works at such a great speed that in the final analysis,

A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles. (Deleuze-Guattari, 1987, p7)

Having noted that, if and when we take a closer look at the history of religions, we will find out that the principle of connection is also at work for heterodox formations. In other words, heterodoxy, just like the rhizome, endlessly establishes connections with various elements, including what may seem to be nonheterodox at the very first glance. Once we notice this important principle, heterodoxy ceases to be a part of a rigidly drawn binary classification, in which it is to be situated at the opposite pole of orthodoxy. Rather than that, what we are confronted with is, a movement that may pervade into different institutions, places, social strata or religious formations.

Moving next to the second principle, that of heterogeneity, we may rapidly comprehend that it is perhaps much more easier to grasp than any other principle. The enormous difficulty of deriving a coherent set of principles from the history of heterodox formations has been indicated before. Repeatedly, heterodoxy has no uniform composition. In much the same way, the individual in these formations,

... may have subscribed to a wide variety of religious or theosophical beliefs, may have come from any walk of life, may have had multiple affiliations, and may have coupled his mystical insights and practices with any number of worldly vocations, combining the roles of Sufi and scholar, merchant, artisan, or political chieftain. Given all this variation, Sufism cannot generally be defined but may only be described case by case. (Lapidus, 1991, p256)

Moreover, the principle of heterogeneity functions implicitly in the sources feeding these formations.

Within its latitudinarianism, latent in it from the beginning, it allowed a motley of religious attitudes inherited by the new converts from their previous backgrounds, from animism in Africa to pantheism in India. (Rahman, 1979, p514)

Understood in this way and compared with the coherent set of elements feeding orthodox formations, those of heterodoxy show a fascinating variety, in which pantheism, gnosticism, heresies, esoterism, ...etc., may and do converge.

3. Principle of Multiplicity

This rhizomatique principle may provide help in discussing the totality or the general outlook of heterodox formations. Put briefly, what is concerned here is the state of being various or manifold. Thus, one may find multiple ideas and practices, which are not only operating side by side, but also endlessly multiplying. In connection with the previous principles, broadly speaking, here,

The point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. (Boundas, 1993,p31)

The principle of multiplicity can be applied to our case by noticing that our subject of analysis "... has always been much more than the sum of the fortunes of various orders. Neither location nor organization defines the limits of its reach." (Lifchez, 1992, p313)

4. Principle of Assignifying Rupture

"A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. (Boundas, 1993, p32) Likewise, the history of heterodox formations conforms to the principle of assignifying rupture. In the past, sometimes the orders were abolished by state officials or their properties have been confiscated. These have however never constituted an end in themselves; at each single stage, heterodox praxis has managed to tie back the 'broken' lines.

5-6: Principle of Cartography and Decalcomania

As Deleuze and Guattari state, perhaps one of the most fascinating and significant characteristics of rhizomatique formations is that there are always multiple entryways to lead us in. This is not surprising at all since "a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model." (Boundas, 1993, p34)

Herein, while cartography indicates the art of making maps; decalcomania can be explained as a specific technique to transfer pictures or designs printed on various material. Let us apply the same principles to our subject of analysis by underlining two interrelated points.

Firstly, there are multiple paths to follow in studying heterodoxy, and the constitution of femininity upon which this study is based, is merely one of these. In other words, just like there is no single door, but multiple doors through which one can enter into a map; there are many entrances in our specific case, as well. Secondly, the picture that we are confronted with does not impose upon us the necessity of looking for beginnings and ends. The process of transfer, if and when understood to operate endlessly, will make the quest for origins and ends, a trivial matter. This is to say that, we are to move within the middle-ground. In fact,

The urge to trace a historical phenomenon to definite beginnings, so well marked in the present phase of learning, is undoubtedly bound up with the need of the ordinary mind to have a beginning and if possible, an end for everything. (Shah, 1964, p50)

In brief, that the history of heterodox thought and practice largely conforms to rhizomatic principles, will both facilitate the development of further arguments by showing us the way at various parts in this study and help us in refraining from moving within strictly or dichotomously drawn classifications.

3.1.1 An Arborescent Imperial Dream

The arboreal image with its
firm roots and branches
protecting fountains and
gardens reflects the purpose of
Ottoman enterprise.

(R.P.Lindner)

One of the most famous narratives about the origins of the Ottoman Empire is about a dream; the dream of Osman. He was probably a guest at the home of a highly respected Sufi sheikh when he dreamt. As the legend goes, Osman sees a fascinating plane tree in his dream, growing bigger and bigger as if to reach the blue sky above, until it starts to lose its vitality and collapses at the very end. When on the next day, Osman wants his dream to be interpreted, he is told that the plane tree is the sign of a great empire that is to be established very soon and to carry his name thereafter. Just like the tree, the empire in concern will expand with a tremendous speed, after which it will start to decline and finally collapse. Summarized in these terms, the plane tree in the dream is thought to symbolize the Ottoman Empire.

In the history of religions, as well as in other areas, the analysis of dreams or dream interpretations may provide us an interesting insight. Unfortunately for our argument, this particular theme has not been given the place it deserves, in either religious or historical studies. "Modern historiography, of course, has had little patience with dreams and legends as explanation." (Kafadar, 1995, p9) One prominent example to the contrary is however, worth to mention here.

H.J.Fischer, in *Conversion to Islam*, makes a fascinating and unordinary analysis on the role of the Sufis whose one of the most cardinal functions, during the conversion process in Black Africa, have been interpreting dreams and developing common patterns of dream interpretation. In this analysis, the author bases his arguments upon one of the most compelling points of intersection between Islamic and African cultures, which is the great emphasis placed upon dreams. This commonality does not only seem to have provided a point of contact among different traditions, but to constitute one of the mechanisms that facilitated or smoothed the process of conversion, as well.

Understood in this way, dreams have played a striking role in conversion processes of various cultures. The dream of Osman tells us more. This time, dreams are given a consecrated place in the narratives in which a society constructs its origins and explains its genesis to its subsequent generations. This time, the story of a great empire that was to last more than 600 years, is embodied in a dream.

To clarify the argument developed here, we must notice that the dream of Osman was first of all, far too laden with a sedentary tinge. Closely related to the theme of an arborescent structure was that of sedentarization. The growth of the plain tree, implied to be firmly located at a particular geographical place and having roots there. This is to say that, only with sedentarization could the tree expand into such a wide area with all its branches and leaves. Similarly, only with the entrenchment of sedentary values could the empire to be established reinforce its base and promote its ideals.

Secondly and more significantly, the dream of Osman was at the same time, an imperial dream. Evidently, to grow bigger and bigger required to expand into different areas, to conquest and then to manage to absorb these³. In sum, it depended upon sedentary life, imperial structure, as well as the establishment of a centralized system marked with a keenly drawn hierarchy. As such any social element or movement that could not conform to this arborescent -arborescent in both ways, as reminiscent of the plane tree in the dream and as opposed to rhizome- picture, was to be seen as a source of threat to the existing order and to the promoted ideals of the Ottoman state. "So the Ottomans saw nomads as a potential threat to the sedentary dream, a threat enforced by both mobility and independence." (Lindner, 1983, p55) Apart from the nomads, the heterodox dervishes were also a potential source of trouble.⁴ "Ultimately, they sought for a leader and a dream of their own, ... Harassed by their sultan, they created a shah." (Lindner, 1983, s38) To be sure, this was the beginning of a controversy, which was to become sharper and sharper in the years to follow, never to lose its impact on the coming generations.

³ As a matter of fact, the gradual absorption of the conquered lands was characteristic of Ottoman policy. For further information, the analysis made by H. İnalcık, in "An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire" (ed. Halil İnalcık, Cambridge University Press, 1994) can be extremely useful.

⁴ R.P. Lindner analyses what could a 'rhizomatique dream' be like, by elaborating the dream of Dede Muhammed Rumlu, who was a dervish and a member of the Rumlu tribe. This Central Anatolian tribe gave nomadic support to the Savafids. The close connection between the nomads and the heterodox dervishes can be further attained by focusing upon Şahkulu who had later inherited the leading role in the formation to which Dede Muhammed Rumlu was affiliated. Şahkulu was to raise a heterodox revolt in Anatolia against Sultan Bayezid II. For further information, R.P. Lindner, "Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia" (Indiana University, 1983)

3.2 THE PENETRATION OF THE DERVISHES INTO ASIA MINOR

In the study of religion,
one must try to understand
the true nature of real beliefs,
their origin and significance,
more than external labels and
outward forms. These are
always below the surface.

(Fuat Köprülü)

Two themes of fundamental value seem to remain still poorly studied and discussed, despite recent attempts to the contrary. These themes are the "Conversion of the Turks" and the "Islamization of Anatolia". In this section we will try to delve into these themes, to understand better the background of the heterodox formations that have been the subjects of this study, as well as the general panorama in which they flourished.

This in turn, will lead us to the second point of emphasis stated at the outset; that is the necessity of dwelling upon the external circumstances. Without building such a historical background it does not seem sound enough to go further into the analysis of the Bektashi and Mawlawi orders of dervishes.

3.2.1 A Critical Look at the Metanarratives on 'Conversion to Islam'

"Every ideological movement
creates its own sacred history"
Maxime Rodinson

'Conversion to Islam' is a rather provocative theme, that is to a large extent, replete with not only ideological commitments, but religious and cultural prejudices as well. As such, "the question of why people convert to Islam has always generated intense feeling" (Lapidus, 1991, p242) in both the Muslim and nonmuslim world. Obviously the possible answers that have been given to this ubiquitous question strongly depend upon how one tends to perceive Islam itself. Here lies the key to the bulk of conversion literature. Put simply, the more negative one thinks about Islam, the smaller will become the possibility of construing the conversion, either as a voluntary or a peaceful process. Likewise, the more one extols Islam, the less s/he will be inclined to recognize any possibility of the application of coercive measures during the conversion process. From here it is an easy step to understand why and how a great number of earlier European scholars have preferred to think of the conversion process as largely shaped by sword and oppression; while many Muslim scholars have tended to believe and to insist in just the opposite. Apart from these deeply-rooted biases and ideological commitments,

It may be doubted whether the spread of Islam, at least in its early stages, was the result of studied calculation. Neither devout Muslim view that it was a purely religious movement engaged in a farsighted effort to save the world from error and corruption, nor the medieval Christian view that it was the outgrowth first of pure imposture and then of rapacity, will bear scrutiny. (Noss, 1990, p552)

Thus, no matter how they seem to be apart, both approaches are marked with a similar ignorance,

which is largely based upon a biased and rudimentary reading of the historical sources. As such, in both, almost all the historical data that do not fit directly into those ideological explanations that have been taken for granted, are either gently pushed aside or harshly attenuated.

What is more striking for me within the scope of this study is the fact that the dual mechanism summarized above, that is to say the presence of ideological biases and the rather poor investigation of the historical sources, are highly present in the literature in Turkey about the conversion of the Turks. As a matter of fact, the general trend in the existing literature in Turkey, both departs from and duplicates the early -and up to some extent the contemporary- western literature. It is different from the latter, precisely because, in Turkey, the dominant view construes a peaceful, and swift conversion to Islam rather than the role of the sword. Hence, here, the conversion process is evaluated on completely distinct terms than the early European literature.

Nevertheless, the literature in Turkey, duplicates the pejorative tendencies in Western literature precisely because the overwhelming role of ideological prejudices, as well as the rather poor analyses of the historical sources, are being no less pervading here than in the latter. Understood in this way, the dominant view on the conversion of the Turks presents us a well-embedded and deeply-rooted scheme with several points of obsession. Notorious among these is the recurrent claim that the conversion process took place in a relatively short term. The reasons for such a rapid conversion are in turn, explained through the

help of parallel assertions, which directly point out to the so-called similarity between the preislamic beliefs in Central Asia and the teachings of the new religion. Therefore it is being assumed that since the preislamic Turks were already akin to the teachings and pillars of Islam, it did and should not take them long to complete the conversion process.

In a similar vein, it has been further asserted that the principles of the new religion and especially the emphasis upon the jihad or *ghaza*, were in a great harmony with the prevalent living style in preislamic Turkish society, which is thought to comprise militarist values. This metanarrative is strengthened by other assertions expatiating that the Turks took part in the conversion process, in large numbers and almost wholeheartedly. In sum, according to this dominant and persistent construct, the Turks converted to Islam, completely voluntarily and within a rapid process, mainly because the new religion was both mostly appropriate to their lives and highly redolant of their previous faith. Even though these widely shared assertions, which I will not be able to discuss in detail here, have been juxtaposed so as to form a dominant paradigm, there have been serious criticisms raised by several scholars.⁵

Another significant point that has been often distorted by the dominant view is the enormous role played by heterodox channels in general and the

⁵ One of the most notable scholars who have criticized this construct has been A. İnan. He has challenged the dominant view about the rapidness of the conversion process by noting that solely the conversion of the Oghuz lasted no less than 200 years. Nevertheless, while explaining the possible reasons for this, he thought that the Turks had reacted against the Arabs and the Arab culture. He did not accept the simple fact that the Turks could not have felt sympathy towards the religion of a people with whom they fought, for whatsoever reason. For further information, T. Akpınar, "Türk Tarihinde İslamiyet" (İletişim yayınları, 1994)

dervishes or babas in particular, in the conversion of the Turks, as well as in the Islamization of Asia Minor. This is to say that, contrary to the dominant view, the Islamization of Turks has been carried out mainly through heterodox channels.

Offering enthusiastic Muslim a popular and colourful alternative to the teaching and example of the ulema and sometimes contributing to the education of the common people, they also played a significant social role by providing opportunities for people of different classes and backgrounds to come together in the tekkes where the tarikat meetings were held. (Clarke, 1990, p93)

What the dominant construct skips out then is the enormous role played by the Sufis in the conversion of Central Asiatic Turks to Islam. It should also be born in mind that,

Characteristic of Khurasani Sufism was its antimonian tendency -its hostility towards the 'ulama', whom it accused of the "murder of God's lovers"; its separation of faith from works and its hospitality to theosophical ideas common among the extremist Shi'a or otherwise rejected by orthodox Muslims. (Williams, 1962, p149/150)

When and if we widen our scope we can easily notice that in the religious history of Islam and throughout a wide geographical domain, Sufis have played an undeniable role in conversion processes. This is to say that, "In Anatolia, as the Inner Asia, India, and Africa, jihad-minded Sufi warriors and activist missionaries helped to establish Islam among a newly conquered peasant population." (Lapidus, 1991, p247) While carrying out this paramount role, Sufis or

babas have promoted and brought forward the elements of the previous faith, synthesized the existening beliefs in a particular place and have refused to operate within a narrowly defined right conduct.As such,

Through popular Sufism, Berber and African animistic beliefs and rituals have imposed their own form on Islam in Africa; the 'marabout' of the Berbers, the 'holy man' or 'religious leader' of the Negro Muslim is essentially a carry-over from the pre-Islamic cults of holy men and witch doctors of Negro fetishism.(Rahman,1979, p163)

All these are indicative of the conclusion that the early religious understanding of the Turks who had migrated into Anatolia was far from an orthodox veneer.This is mainly why, the conversion of the Turks, just like the conversion of many other peoples that are today part of the Muslim world, has been carried out mainly through heterodox channels.With these in mind we can now move further and try to elucidate the general panorama of early Ottoman religious life, in which Mawlawi and Bektashi orders flourished.

3.2.2 The Islamization of Asia Minor

It was characteristic of the frontier life that heresies of all sorts received welcome among the common people. Both Christian and Muhammedan heresies flourished.

(J. K. Birge)

Kalenderler'le düşüp kalkan
çocuğun babasına söyle.
Onun hayrından ümidini
kessin; geberip gitmesine
acımasın.

(Şeyh Sadi/Bostan)

Thirteenth century seems to have been a turning point in the history of Asia Minor in general and in the history of dervish orders in particular. As such, any analysis on these orders, as well as any question as to where and how they do depart from the teachings of the shari'a-minded, need to pay special attention to this specific period. More precisely,

For an adequate understanding not only of the Bektashis, but of the Mevlevi's and other dervish orders as well, it is of the greatest importance that due appreciation be given to the social and religious conditions existing throughout Asia Minor in that creative thirteenth century, when these orders had their birth. (Birge, 1965, p22)

Nonetheless, this is a rather difficult age to analyze, both because of the relative scarcity of the sources that have come down to us and because of the enormous complexity that is characteristic of its general panorama. Admittedly,

Anatolia, where Islam's spread followed the westward movement of the Turks from the thirteenth century until the Ottomans became a world power and regulated the religious life of the regions they controlled, was the scene of religious interaction and confusion, and it is not easy to tell what was happening there. (Trimingham, 1971, p68)

Although it is not easy to tell what was happening there, one thing that we can be sure of is that Anatolia, in thirteenth century, had been the scene of serious upheavals and great turmoils. There had been successive battles in this period, accompanied by mass killings, the disintegration of political

authority by Mongol domination after 1246, the deterioration of international trade and the great famine in 1299. Moreover, a large number of people, with quite different religious and cultural backgrounds, were continuously migrating into here. Needless to say, the intensity of the migrations had been increased by the Mongol expansion in the east. As a matter of fact, although Asia Minor had been penetrated by groups of Moslems long before the beginning of the thirteenth century, -especially after the battle of Malazgirt in 1071- the quickening of the migration process fell upon the following centuries. As such it is a truism to say that towards the end of the thirteenth century Anatolia was to a large extent Turkified. Yet, the power of the Mongols extended towards the west, and between 1243 and 1314 the Mongolian army marched nine times into Anatolia. Each march, needless to add, brought along further problems and intensified the already existing chaotic circumstances. One of the most fundamental features of this rather confusing panorama was that,

If the Seljuks gave the Turkoman tribes direction, it was more political than religious. Consequently, despite an orthodox veneer, the Islam of the Turkomans was heterodox. What little they took from Islam conformed to what was within the purview of their own religious experience. (Lifchez, 1992, p33)

Hence, as we will see in the following pages, the religious understanding of the Turkoman tribes, as well as the dervishes that had come along with them, departed in considerable respects from the religious understanding prevalent among the political authorities; just like the frontier or rural life, with all its variegated forms, tended to develop completely separately from life in the cities.

On the other hand, if we broaden our scope, we can find out that thirteenth century was a fascinating period in which mystical movements and formations flourished with an enormous speed, in various parts of the world. It was at this period that all throughout Europe, but especially in Germany, a reactionary movement was being organized against the rigid organization and teachings of the Church; a movement fostered by the establishment of Fransiscan and Dominican orders. Furthermore,

The thirteenth century which brought, with the invasion of the Mongols, the most tremendous shock to Asia and Europe was also the great period of mysticism, not only in Islam and in Christianity, but also in India where the Bhakti movement had great strides. (Iqbal, 1991, p9)

Although this commonality is certainly worth to be endorsed in great detail, here it seems sufficient for me to draw attention to the presence of a synchronous and an interrelated tendency towards mysticism in various parts of the world. Turning back to Asia Minor, we have to note that the newcomers, with their large quantity and distinctive features, completely changed the existing social and religious, as well as economic and political, comopsition here. Through this radical transformation, what were once Byzantine property had now passed into the hands of Turkish migrants; while the penetration of new religious and cultural motifs paved the way for the formation of a syncretism in what were once Christian lands. While this was a turbulent, as well as a relatively rapid process, which can be best "...explained by the peculiar conditions prevailing in Anatolia at this time" (Birge, 1965, p23), its complexity

was all the more intense and visible in the frontiers, where the distinct cultures merged into one another. These frontier societies, ⁶

... included highly mobile nomads, refugees from central authority, heterodox elements and adventurers. In contrast with the highly developed conservative civilization of the hinterland, with its theology, palace literature and the Shari'a, the marches had a mystical and eclectic popular culture, which had not yet frozen into a final form. They sheltered heterodox sects, bred a mystical and an epic literature and obeyed customary or tribal law. (Parry, 1976, p17)

It must have been obvious by now that among the newcomers, there were a large number of dervishes or Türkmen babas, largely influenced by the Yasawiyya tariqa in Horasan. The Yasawiyya tariqa, to which a large number of dervishes or babas were either directly or indirectly connected, allowed the participation of both women and men together to the prayers. There was no obligation for the women to veil. The influence of this tariqa spread from India in the east, to Asia Minor in the west.

It is particularly noteworthy that these babas had managed not only to retain their old, preislamic beliefs but to synthesize these with the teachings of the new religion. While they were more tolerant than the sharia-minded towards religious differences, as the sources clearly indicate, their perception of Islam was far from an orthodox touch. This significant point should give us a sufficient ground to

⁶ Paul Wittek has demonstrated that in the frontiers, people from distinct backgrounds shared a similar culture and life style, compared with the people living in the cities. For further information, Paul Wittek, "Rise of the Ottoman Empire" (London, 1938)

suspect the validity of the dominant literature on conversion process, which takes the dervishes as the missionaries of an orthodox zeal. Since these dervishes were far from an orthodox understanding, once more we have arrived at the necessity of challenging for once and all the basic premises of the master narrative on the conversion process and the Islamization of Anatolia.

In the studies about this period, the dervishes have been categorized into three groups. Within this framework, some of them were fighting dervishes who had actively participated in the wars with Byzantine; while some others could be labeled as missionary dervishes, who were primarily engaged in an active religious propoganda. A third category was composed of colonizing dervishes, who had preferred to settle down, establish their own tekkes and cultivate the surrounding lands.⁷

Apart from these categorical distinctions on their functions, the dervishes had varying faiths and different religious affiliations, being the members of various orders. In close relation with this variety, they had been given different names, like *Qalandariyya*, *Haydaris*, *Camis*, *Cavlaks*, *Baraklu* ...etc. Nevertheless, "despite differences ..., they all fall into the general category of *batını* (heterodox) mystics; they were nonconformists and unorthodox in their religion." (Başgöz, 1994, p30-31)

⁷ For information about economic activities in the tekkes the analyses of İ. Başgöz and S. Faroqhi may be referred to. In this way it may be seen clearly that some writers, such as İ.Z.Eyüboğlu, are completely wrong in identifying the dervishes or the tekkes as 'the parasites of the society, who do not produce anything at all.' See İ. Başgöz, " The Human Dimension in Yunus Emre's Transformation" in "Yunus Emre and His Mystical Poetry", (ed. T. Halman, Indiana University Press, 1994) and S. Faroqhi, "Peasants, Dervishes and Traders in the Ottoman Empire" (Variorum Reprints, 1986)

Among the newcomers, the Qalandariyya should be reserved a special place of emphasis not only because both in practice and theory they constitute a particularly interesting topic of research but mainly because they strongly influenced the emergence of heterodox formations in Asia Minor. The original meaning of their name is unknown. Likewise the great scholar F. Köprülü maintained that the majority of the dervishes penetrating into Anatolia were Qalandaris, whom he considers to be one of the most notable events in the history of Islam. Therefore, "... without investigating the Qalandariyya, the Anatolian heterodox formations cannot be properly understood." (Ocak, 1992, p308)

Unfortunately, the studies about the Qalandariyya, are strictly limited. Apart from this, the way they are portrayed in the majority of the existing historical sources is obviously negative and vituperative. The reasons operating behind this situation can be guessed easily. The Qalandariyya attracted a lot of reaction due to their antimonian ways, rejection of the teachings of both orthodox Islam and the social norms...etc. Thus, as the system was more and more consolidated and the orthodox-minded became more and more powerful, the reflection of the Qalandariyya in the written sources got a more negative character. In sum, "information about the Qalandariyya can be found scattered in various sources, and too often with a negative tinge." (Yazıcı, 1969, p787)

The traces of the Qalandariyya can be followed back to the tenth century and their presence can be observed within a wide geographical area extending from Horasan to Transoxiana (Maveraünnehir). Their penetration to Asia Minor has been somewhat late and it is only in the thirteenth century that we

may talk about their presence here in large numbers. These itinerant dervishes seem to have showed no interest in the orthodox teachings and in works of piety. Characteristic of these dervishes was their shaving of all the hair in their heads, including the eyebrows. They were always on move, not staying in a place longer than one or two days. They used to travel alone or in groups composed of maximum three or four dervishes. Once or twice in a year, they gathered together and organized a big feast, in which they danced for hours and hours around a big, holy fire.

One of the most salient features of the Qalandariyya were their antimonian ways, not only in practical, daily life, but in their understanding of religion and in their quest of God. More precisely they believed that every single individual had to search God alone and according to his/her own ways. There could be no general rule or pattern to impose on the people since this was an individual quest. The Qalandars also believed that God's beauty could be reflected on human beings' faces, of whatever sex. They thus admired and adored this beauty (*jamal*), whenever they saw and recognized it.

The Seljuq dominance in Anatolia lasted for approximately two hundred years. Starting from this period onwards, rebellions occurred periodically in Turkish history, tinged with the Turkoman tradition of opposition to sedentary values and central orders.⁸ This tradition became all the more visible under Ottoman regime. Especially, "two factors, mobility and

⁸ The Babai rebellion that took place in 1240 led by a dervish leader named Baba İlyas, and that nearly overthrew the Seljuq rule has been a turning point in this regard. Christian mercenaries were used to suppress this rebellion. It was a response to the misrule of Giyaseddin Keyhüsrev. The Babai rebellion has been analysed by A. Yaşar Ocak in his "Babailer İsyanı" (dergah yayınları, 1980)

independence, made the nomads a threat the Ottomans wanted to control".(Lindner,1983, p65)

In concluding, I would like to say that in time, there had emerged two distinct patterns of life in Anatolia. Life in the big cities tended to evolve in an orthodox direction in accordance with the gradual fortification of central mechanisms; "... while among the masses of the people the heretical Shii tendencies continued."(Birge,1965, p30) In sum,

On the one hand, under the influence of the Sufi movements, Shi'i and batini beliefs continued to spread vigorously among the nomadic Türkmen tribes in particular, as they had in the past, and, on the other hand, Sunnism was formally adopted in the large cities, and an accord or understanding was reached between the ulama and some of the Sufis. Sooner or later a clash was inevitable ... (Köprülü,1993,p31)

3.2.3 The Religious Panorama of Early Ottoman Life

Hulul ve ilhad fikrine
sahip olduklarını, ...
duyunca, Molla Fahrüddin,
...yakılmalarına fetva
verdi.Şeyh ve müridleri,
Namazgah meydanında
yakılan ateşe atıldılar.

(Osman Turan)

While the Eastern Roman Empire was on the eve of a collapse, the dream of Osman required an arduous task to preserve a balance between two widely

apart worlds, for it to be realized fully. This involved a rather precarious stance for the Ottomans in which they "...on the one hand, represented the principle of Islamic universality, and, on the other, the traditions of the Central Asian Turks." (İnalçık, Turcica, p58) In conformity with this dual mechanism, the Ottoman structure, entailed variegated elements, ranging from nomadic elements to sedentary values, from heterodox formations to sharia-minded ulema, whose coexistence was to raise troubles in the future.

Hence what is being asserted here embraces a general and gradual trend towards the destruction of previous balances and towards the valuation of some elements at the expense of the others. Within this process, what were once the valued and appreciated elements, began to be seen as a source of potential threat to the existing order. Among these so-called 'sources of trouble', the nomads should be reserved a special place. As a matter of fact, their allegiance to the 'tribe of Otman' underwent significant changes in time as the system required from them complete subordination to the sedentary, and therefore, arborescent values.

Another important element that was going to trouble the Ottoman dream was constituted by heterodox dervishes. Although, "during the Seljuq and early Ottoman periods, heterodoxy, was the evident characteristic of many representatives of Islam, especially in eastern and southern Anatolia" (Trimingham, 1971, p68), in time, heterodoxy, just like nomadism, began to disturb the imperial structure. It should be noted that this was a process that took a long time to evolve, as it can be seen from the fact that the early Ottoman sultans had different relations

with the dervishes than the later ones. One notorious example in this sense can be given from the relations between Orkhan and Geyikli Baba, who was a fighting dervish. Since the latter had so successfully taken a part in the conquest of Bursa, Orkhan decided to compensate him. The gift that the latter required from the sultan was two vessels of wine. These were the times in which the discrepancy between the dervishes and the rulers was not deep.

One particular event that took place during the reign of Mehmed the Conqueror is illuminating of the dominant trend in the relations between the dervishes and the rulers. As the historical sources reveal out at the time of Mehmed the Conqueror, Hurufi ideas were continuously spreading, so much that even the Sultan himself was interested in the perspective of these dervishes. Nevertheless, the sharia-minded ulema around the Sultan were greatly disturbed by this situation. They found the views of the Hurufis extremely dangerous. In the eyes of the ulema the Hurufis were heretics who should be immediately suppressed and if not, killed. And this is exactly what happened. Despite the interest of the sultan in the Hurufi teachings, the ulema managed to sentence them to death. In this way, the Hurufi leaders were burned in Edirne. This example is of paramount importance not only because it demonstrates the increasing power of the ulema in state affairs, but also the gradual change that took place in the relations between the dervishes and the rulers of the Ottoman Empire.

The dervishes continued to disturb the Ottoman order, mainly because they were involved actively in also all the major uprisings that the

state had to face. Once the dervish orders were established, as we will see in what follows, the tariqas constituted a menace both to the ruling elite and to the men of the learned hierarchy, because they preached an alternative road, as well as organized serious uprising against the existing regime. Even the ruling elite had to accept that "by the sixteenth century, Sufism was established as a fundamental element of Ottoman Islamic society." (Lifchez, 1992, p28)

To review what has been said so far, it was the Hurufi thought and practice that was persecuted at the time of Fatih; the Qalandars at the time of Bayazıd II; the Kızılbash at the time of Yavuz and Kanuni. In a sense the victory of Yavuz Sultan Selim "... over the Shi'a was also a victory for the Şeyhülislam and the ulema in their bitter struggle against the Shi'a tarikats" (Norton, 1990, p91) We may claim that at the turn of the sixteenth century and the emergence of the Safavid empire as a threat to the Ottoman power, the Shiite-heterodox elements in the society have been more 'threatening' and "othernized".

With these in mind, we reach a cardinal distinction that may be of great help in elaborating further the historical period concerned so far. What is at issue here is the gradual emergence of a dual mechanism composed of an urban, orthodox, sedentary and centralized structure on the one hand, and a rural, dispersed, heterodox and highly mobile formation on the other hand.

From the outset two seemingly antithetical patterns of Muslim culture developed in Anatolia: Sunnism, the orthodox Islam that the Seljuks bestowed on their cities and various synthetic heterodox sects that arose in the marches. (Lifchez, 1992, p3)

Understandably, one path will lead us to an arborescent system in which the Ottoman political structure culminated; while the other path will tend to evolve in a rhizomatic way, embodying heterodox and nomadic elements. The institutionalization of tariqas did not but widen the gap in between these.

3.2.4 The Process of Transformation: The Institutionalization of Tariqas

Dissent and protest in Islam,
be it economic or political,
individual or social,
could be expressed in
some kind of religious form,
i.e., in a sect, movement or order.”
İlhan Başgöz

Although a concrete statistical information has not been obtained, it is being assumed that towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, only in Istanbul there were more than 300 tekkes connected to 16 different tariqas, without counting their branches and offshoots. Strikingly, at that time the total population of Istanbul was less than one million. We cannot certainly be sure of these numbers but one thing that we can attest is the enormous spread of the tariqas over the centuries and their wide influence upon the imperial structure. In addition to this, another point of emphasis that we can validly derive is that the formal establishment and institutionalization of the tariqas took a relatively long time. And this is exactly the process that we shall try to delve into in this particular section. Turning back to the discussion on the rhizomatic principles of heterodoxy, it should not surprise us to find out that,

The difficulty experienced in treating the history of the orders derived from the need for expressing in a reasonably coherent fashion the development and organisation of a movement of the spirit which was not orderly; thus one gives the impression of a precision which did not exist. (Trimingham, 1971, p102)

Similarly, the boundaries that one may draw between specific orders do not seem to have been rigid or visible. There were serious overlappings. In early times it was not only possible for the individual Muslim to become affiliated with more than one order, but the orders themselves sometimes laid claim to the same geneology. The members of the orders on the other hand, did not have to belong to the Muslim religion all the time.⁹ Interestingly where the ulema tended to focus on uniformity, the Sufis did not. "Moreover, the Sufis tended to be as naturally tolerant of local differences as the Shari'a ulama tended to be naturally intolerant." (Hodgson, 1974, p220)

To begin with, it should be underlined that although both Bektashi and Mawlawi orders are connected to Haji Bektash and Mawlana respectively, as their founders, these holy men did not seem to have such an intention at that time. Only long after their death people have gradually come together around their principles or thoughts, favoured their lifestyle and step by step the tariqas came into existence. Obviously enough this was a gradual process. As such the period in which the tariqas came to be formalized and

⁹ Although there are countless examples in this regard, the position of a Greek in 20th century Istanbul, named as 'Yaman Dede' is especially noteworthy. He had become a prominent member of the Mawlawi tariqa, without changing his original religion. For further information "Bildiriler-Mevlananın 700. Ölüm Yıldönümü Dolayısıyla Uluslararası Mevlana Semineri" (İş Bankası Kültür yayınları, 1973, p252/253)

institutionalized cannot be taken back before the 15th century.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that not only the tariqas but Ottoman orthodoxy as well had to wait the arrival of the fifteenth century to consolidate itself. "It took the entire fifteenth century for the Ottoman orthodoxy to emerge..." (Lindner, 1983, p19) Once again we arrive at the cardinal point that in the early Ottoman era, strifes were not sharpened, varieties were not transformed into antagonisms.

The same point of emphasis can be applied to the interrelations of the tariqas themselves. This is to say that in the early Ottoman period the boundaries distinguishing one specific tariqa from another were not rigid and even visible. As it has been maintained before that was more a period characterized by penetrations, overlappings and decentralized forces. Indicative of this fact is the fundamental point that it has been for long widely possible to become member of more than one tariqa at once. In fact, especially in the early period people seem to have been affiliated to a large number of tariqas simultaneously. Put differently,

The various dervish orders were not, it would seem, originally designated as now, by the names of their respective founders, but by the principles they severally professed; but as each community grew in the course of time more distinct from the rest, the name of the Pir was adopted to distinguish its members. (Garnett, 1979, p19)

3.3 THE EVOLUTION OF THE BEKTASHI AND MAWLAWI ORDERS

That the dervish orders did not come into existence all of a sudden and to the contrary, required a long process to complete their evolution, has been repeatedly mentioned in the previous sections. Now it is time to see that the Bektashi and Mawlawi orders were no exception. Admittedly, neither Haji Bektash nor Mawlana had the intention of founding a *tariqa*. Since the process of the establishment of both *tariqas* was completed long after their death, they must be seen as moral founders rather than actual.

A further point to emphasize is that as the two respective orders evolved and set their distinguishing features, the boundary lines between them started to come more and more visible. Likewise, as time went by, the two orders evolved in different directions. The successive attempts of the Ottoman state to manipulate the orders by either nominating their leaders in the cities or interfering in their internal organization, should be also kept in mind in this respect. This significant change was reflected in the Bektashi order as a division between the *Chelebis* and *dedes* and the destruction of the balance in favor of the latter; for the Mawlawis the outcome was the gradual exclusion of the heterodox trends in the order.

Consequently two developments seem to be key in making for an understanding of the following pages. These may be categorized as the developments *between* and *within* the two orders. The first is the decline in the similarities, commonalities and overlappings between the two orders. The second is the profound transformation they underwent within

themselves. Nevertheless the completion of these two processes took a long time and within the period concerned in this study there is more reason to concentrate on their common grounds, among which we can name their construction of femininity. This being said, we can now move further into the analysis of these orders, which for the time being will be done separately, only to be connected in the following parts on the cycle of the permanent moment and the construction of femininity.

3.3.1 The Evolution of the Bektashi Order

Since there is much in the Bektashi faith that would shock the leaders of orthodox Sunni Islam, it seems altogether probable, however, that in a land avowedly Sunni, secrecy had always been necessary."

J.K.Birge

Although the order owes its name to him and he has been the subject of much adoration and respect in Bektashi literature, historical sources indicate that "... , the original Haji Bektash was no more than the eponymous ancestor of the Bektashi tribe,..."(Hasluck, 1973, p489) The same point can be applied to the hagiography of Haji Bektash. Understandably, this too was completed long after his death¹⁰ . Thus, "...the legendary biography of Hacı Bektaş was written after the fullscale development of Bektaşî legend and lore during the 8th/14th century,..."(Karamustafa, 1981, p25)

As far as historical sources indicate, the Qalandariyya had a deep impact on the evolution of the

¹⁰ Interestingly, as A.Y. Ocak indicated, our contemporary image of Haji Bektash is probably the product of a relatively late age. The original Haji Bektash probably made char darb, that is to say shaved all the hair in his head, just like the Qalandars.

Bektashi order. Apart from this, the order had been bred by various distinct sources.

The order grew out of saint-veneration and the system of convents into a syncretistic unity, combining elements from many sources, vulgar, heterodox, and esoteric; ranging from the popular cults of Central Asia and Anatolia, both Turkish and Christian Rumi, to the doctrines of the Hurufis. (Trimingham, 1971, p81)

Characteristic of the Bektashi tariqa has been their employment of the Turkish language and culture in every single aspect of their religious and social lives. They had close contact with the Turkomans¹¹ and continuously cooperated with them in almost every rebellion against the central order. Furthermore, the Bektashis have been generally located in the outskirts of villages or small towns.

This is due, no doubt, partly to the fact that their propaganda and influence largely touch rustic populations, and partly to the hostility with which they are regarded by the Sunni clergy. (Hasluck, 1973, p502)

In the course of the fifteenth century, Bektashi order proliferated rapidly and it spread throughout Anatolia and the Balkans. Their relations with the Ottoman state were somewhat peculiar. For on the one hand they embodied various elements and thoughts that directly threatened or disturbed the existing social and religious order. But on the other hand they were connected strongly to the janissaries

¹¹ The close relations between the Bektashis and the heterodox tribes in Anatolia have been made the subject of a detailed analysis by F.W. Hasluck, in "Christianity and Islam Under The Sultans", (New York, 1073)

which had a salient place in the military force of the Ottoman empire.

Given this rather precarious situation, the Ottoman ruling elite decided not to abolish the order but to manipulate it from inside; not to suppress it directly but to control its inner structure. This was certainly a very clever attempt on behalf of the Ottoman regime. This policy brought along a radical shift in the internal structure of the order. Its centre was shifted from Eastern Anatolia to Central Anatolia and from rural areas to the cities.

The urban Bektashi maintained their Shi'ism along with their heterodoxy and Christian rites but expressed these beliefs privately within the order and then only to the initiated. (Lifchez, 1992, p37)

These developments brought along a strife within the order, between the *Chelebis* who represented the older form, with its centre in the east, and the *dedes* who were to get stronger and stronger within the new formation. Nevertheless we have sufficient evidence to claim that the Ottoman policy did not deprive the Bektashi of its heterodox oppositionary character although it caused a negative transformation in this respect.

I would like to bring to an end this brief survey by underlining two additional points. Firstly, it should be noted that the Bektashis, have been always tolerant about differences in culture and religion. Likewise the order has been influenced by various religious, social and cultural sources. Another way of posing this is that,

Rural Sufis adopted a tolerant attitude towards Christians and facilitated the conversion of Greek and Armenian peoples to Islam. haji Bektash(d.c.1297) who was widely revered in Anatolia, preached a version of Islam which synthesized Sunni and Shi'i beliefs and Muslim and Christian religious practices.(Lapidus, 1988, p305)

Secondly, although this theme will be elaborated later, here it should also be stressed that, the Bektashis have almost always opposed the orthodox approach towards women. As a matter of fact, "a characteristic of both the Yasawiya and the Bektashiya was the participation of women in the ceremonies." (Rahman, 1979, p163) Understandably, this adversarial stance has been the likely cause for the well-known accusations about their sexual misconduct.¹² It is not surprising to find out then,

By the 17th century, the Bektashis were the most disreputable of the recognized brotherhoods, accused of sexual misconduct and linked to the unbelief and licentious behaviour on the point of Janissaries.(Baldick,1969,p115)

3.3.2 The Evolution of the Mawlawi order

The orthodox ulema have been classed those whirlings as

¹² A recurrent pattern in world history is the employment of a vituperative sexual discourse to criticize those movements or formations that either do not conform into the generally accepted norms or clash with the dominating segments of the society. These marginal or oppositionary elements have almost always been accused of sexual misconduct. It is striking to find out that this discursive pattern has shown little change over the centuries and in different geographical places.

"dancing" and have pronounced it forbidden, branding as infidels those who hold it permissible.

...

The real purpose of the ulema's prohibition is to protect the state, for in the past, states have suffered much from the Sufis.

Katip Çelebi

Any analysis on the Mawlawi order in particular and on Islamic mysticism in general, should pay considerable attention to Jalaleddin-i Rumi, better known as Mawlana, which literally means "our master". We should note at the outset that the problem of the scarcity of sources which had circumscribed in varying degrees the analysis of some of the subtitles in this study, does not seem to exist here, not only because Mawlana left behind an unequalled bulk of poems books and letters, but also because he has been the subject of much valuable research.

The great scholar Nicholson has even claimed that among the great Sufis, Mawlana was without a rival. Therefore, it seems more adequate to start this particular section with a brief summary of his life. It should be reminded that the information presented below should be located within the general and turbulent atmosphere of Asia Minor, that has been analysed so far.

Mawlana was born in the city of Balkh, near the Oxus, and it is from here that he and his family have migrated westward to Asia Minor. For the most part of his life, he has lived in Konia which was the capital of the Seljuqs, where the Mawlawi order was to be founded later on. Admittedly, he lived in an

extremely chaotic age and must have been greatly influenced by the turbulent circumstances that were present at his time. His father was a famous and highly respected Sufi pir. It is from him, and later on from other Sufi teachers that Mawlana is supposed to have received his primary education on religious matters.

Mawlana wrote in Persian, thus distinguishing the Mawlawi tariqa from the Bektashi whose prayers and poems were always held in Turkish. As the sources clearly indicate he was a highly respected man in Konya being appreciated both by the rulers and the people in the city, as well as in the surroundings. Nevertheless, the aura of respect and commitment that had been drawn around him should not lead us to think that the Mawlawi order had existed at that time for it took the order much more longer to develop. We must also consider here that,

Mawlana chose no particular costume as a mystic, since he did not consider himself to be the founder of an order. Neither he nor his adherents adopted a particular form of dress to distinguish themselves from other groups. (Lifchez, 1992, p257)

It is certainly the case that, the evolution of the costumes, ceremonies and principles of the Mawlawi order was a product of the following centuries, to be disclosed only when the organization of the order itself had been completed. Turning back to Mawlana it is noteworthy that his master work the Mathnawi has even been called as the "Quran of the Sufis". To be sure, "If the message of the Mathnavi is to be summed up quickly, it can perhaps be described as a summons to go beyond the routine." (Hodgson, 1974, p248)

As almost all the scholars seem to acknowledge, the great turning point in the life of Mawlana has been his encounter with Shams-i Tebrizi. The latter was a wandering and an antimonian dervish, probably from the Qalandariyya order. As such, he paid little -if any at all- attention either to external rules in social or religious life. As far as we know, he firmly believed that every individual was independent and highly self-sufficient in the quest for the Divine. Although we do not have much information about him., there is reason to expect from him to conform to the basic practices of the Qalandariyya, like practising the *char darb*, drinking wine, using intoxicants...etc.¹³ Shams seems to have been a fascinating dervish, highly skilled on philosophical questions, entirely heterodox in his understanding of religion and obviously radical in his rejection of the social and religious norms.

In his personal devotedness to Shams-e Tabriz, Rumi found a paradigm of his love of God: a participation, on a concrete level, in that free responsiveness to ultimate beauty in which he discovered the meaning of his life."(Hodgson, 1974, p245)

Although scholars have been inclined to concentrate more on Mawlana in their analysis of the relation between these two men, it would be misleading to reduce the paramount role played by Shams. Also, we should keep in mind that when they met, Mawlana was about 50 years old, highly famous and respected, and probably at the apex of his career. After his encounter with Shams his life was suddenly and completely altered. In a way, "just when Mawlana had reached the

¹³ The intimate relation between Shams and Mawlana has been conveyed by Eflaki, in "Menakib-al-Arifin", who was also a member of the Mawlawi tariqa.

end of everything, he became a new beginner." (Özatilla, 1973, p114) Although this theme cannot and will not be elaborated in detail here, we should note that in any case, Shams had a profound impact on Mawlana; and certainly vice versa. Mawlana's great affection and love towards Shams can be best understood by looking at the poems and letters that he has written after the disappearance of the latter. Shams was murdered; leaving behind, a deep grief and agony in Mawlana's life.

The personality and mysticism of Mawlana can be better understood by referring to his poems and diwans. Since this is not the adequate place to delve into such an enormous task, I should like to conclude by underlining some additional points. It is noteworthy that Mawlana valued the inner essence much more than outer differences; and mystical union with God over the external teachings or rules of Islam. As such, neither his views nor the heritage he left behind could be confined within the limits of this or that religion. As a matter of fact, as we shall see in the fourth chapter, "Rumi knows no religion but the religion of love which transcends all barriers of country, creed and colour." (Iqbal, 1991, p135/136)

The Mawlawis have been called as "the dancing dervishes" or more commonly, as "the whirling dervishes" in the West. Certainly, whirling or *sema* constituted one of the most important distinguishing features of this order. The origins and roots of the whirling has been the subject of some debate. Probably,

The whirling which most dervishes do not consider a form of dance, has some of the attributes of a Dionysian ritual with its roots in Anatolian culture. Its antecedents can also be found in the ancient Turkic shamanistic dances of Central Asia. (Halman, 1983, p34)

Although the origin of the whirling is not known, it is certain that "during Mevlana's lifetime the sema was not as elaborately organized as it was later to become. It was done at any time or any place, even without music." (Halman, 1983, p63) Hence we may claim that the aestheticization of the sema, the establishment of its rules and procedures took a much more longer time to be completed.

That the order has evolved and changed profoundly in time has been mentioned before. What remains to see is the direction and nature of this change. Several points can be of great help in carrying this task out. First and foremost, as the historical sources indicate there was little difference in the early period between the dervishes from various groups, such as the Qalandariyya or the Bektashis, and the Mawlawis.¹⁴

Another significant source that may be highly revealing in itself, is the character of the followers of Mawlana. A broad overview of these people will demonstrate that from the very beginning there were two main trends in the order. While one group followed the steps of Shams-i Tebrizi and leded an evidently heterodox life; another group were more conformist and akin to orthodox understanding. The history of the order, witnessed the gradual domination of the former by the latter.¹⁵

¹⁴ The *Trashname*, which is in Konia, conveys that the early Mawlawis made char darb, just like the Qalandars.

¹⁵ These two main trends have been analysed in detail by the greatly learned scholar A.Gölpınarlı in "Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik", (Istanbul, 1983).

A similar change can be also witnessed in the position of women. As I will demonstrate later on, in early times, women have been very active in the flourishing of both the internal structures and the distinguishing ideas of the Mawlawi order. In time, they have been gradually pushed to a secondary role, so that at the eve of late Ottoman period, there had taken place a visible decline in their position. All these are highly indicative of the direction that the internal transformations of the order tended to follow.



CHAPTER 4

THE CYCLE OF THE PERMANENT MOMENT

Having chosen the Bektashi and Mawlawi orders of dervishes as an alternative road to proceed towards one of the various Islamic constructions of femininity, in the third part of this study we had drawn the general panorama in which the two orders had flourished. In this way, the establishment, evolution and proliferation of the two orders in concern were situated and elaborated within a historical framework. The arguments pushed forward were strengthened by the analysis of the rhizomatique principles of heterodoxy, which were intended to provide guidance in shedding light upon the centuries-long convolutions characterizing the internal development of heterodox formations. Upon this background, now the stage seems to be set to shift the focus of attention from the historical development to the esoteric mentality of the two orders in concern. Understandably, since the construction of femininity does not take place in an intellectual vacuum, any study on this subject would be incomplete without tracing the general aspects of the worldview in which it is to be situated. For this reason, the central theme that will be initially elucidated in what follows, will be the "cycle of the permanent moment".

The main reason why this particular concept, rather than any other, has been placed in the forefront is that, as I hope to be able to demonstrate in the ensuing pages, it does not solely embody the time and place construct of the dervishes but is also, directly active in shaping their attitudes towards

almost every fundamental question. Likewise, it is a concatenation of diverse forces through which the construction of various themes, including that of femininity, can be exposed to view. Put differently, the cycle of the great moment both constitutes the very fertile ground upon which either the heterodox or esoteric approach to various cardinal themes flourish and in which all sight is primarily grounded, and at the very same time, embodies a cement that ties every single element in the universe, as well as the way they are perceived, within a comprehensive whole.

In order to juxtapose these points, I will initially approach this topic by considering how 'time' and 'place' are constructed in heterodox understanding. Following this introductory stage, I will begin the task of trying to expatiate how the cyclical understanding shapes and breeds the mystic approach toward some interrelated themes of paramount value. This is indeed one way in which we can arrive at a different evaluation of the role of the human being, of God and of their interrelation, than the one present in orthodox intuitive understanding. The arguments that will be derived from this particular section will be developed further in the fifth and last part of the study, where the following analysis will be tied to the construction of femininity by the Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes.

4.1 THE CONSTRUCTION OF TIME AND PLACE

In an instant, rise from time and space,
Set the world aside and become
A world within yourself.
Shabistari-Secret Garden

The contemporary debates on postmodernism and poststructuralism evoked a renewed interest in the notion of 'place', among the intellectual circles. In this way, there gradually emerged a bulk of literature debating both the necessity of reevaluating the notion of 'place' and its role in the reproduction of power relations. The conclusionary remarks that may be derived from the ongoing debates will not only help us to question the existing understandings of time and place, -in which generally, the former is perceived as dynamic and restlessly changing, while the latter is identified with an almost complete passivity- but to incite the criticism of their dichotomic constructions as well. Crucial to these debates are the redefinition of time-place, and the abolishment of the distance drawn among them by the developments paving the way to the consolidation of modernity.¹ In brief, the challenge of the pillars of modernity seems to go hand in hand with the critique of the time-place duality, that the modernist ideology pertinaciously entailed deep inside.

These being said, my argument is that, an analysis of the cyclical understanding of time and place may be integrated into the ongoing debates in two fundamental respects. First of all, the cyclical understanding has an immense potential to illustrate 'another way of thinking about time and place' than the one which we are used to take for granted. Secondly and in relation to this, here, the relations among these two basic concepts are neither formulated along mutually exclusive terms nor situated within a hierarchical construct in which one side is valued at

¹ That the separation of time from place has been both fostered and required by the development of modernism, has been demonstrated by various scholars, among whom Anthony Giddens is notable. In "The Consequences of Modernity", (Basic Blackwell-Polity Press, 1992) he delves into this question and elucidates how and why modernist ideology necessitates a dichotomous construction of time and place.

the expense of the other. To the contrary, within the cyclical understanding, time and place are strongly intertwined and dialectically related. To minimize confusion and to explain the dynamics of cyclical construct, it seems necessary to interrupt temporarily the narrative structure of this analysis and to focus upon the linear understanding of time, as well as the passive perception of place that went along with it.

The linear understanding of time, which we are accustomed to use and reproduce, relies heavily on the existence of three basic categories, namely the past, present and future, although the boundaries between them may seem to be somewhat blurred and confusing. A careful observation of the construction of time prevalent at different historical periods and geographical locations will concede not only that the linear understanding of time evolved slowly throughout the history, but that there have been (and still are) other constructions of time which differed significantly from it. The cyclical understanding of time adopted by the Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes, is merely one of these 'other' constructions.

Evidently, there has been a close connection between the understanding of time or time experience and civilization. At different stages in world history societies have adopted different understandings of time. On the whole then, "... the experience of a past, present and future also differs in societies at different stages of social development." (N. Elias, 1993, p144) Yet there is much more than "a change of time in time" to talk about, since "neither political space nor political time are natural resources. They are ideologically construed instruments of power." (J. Fabian, 1983, p144) Closely

related to this ideological construction, on the other hand, is a hierarchical organization of the past, present and the future.²

To begin with, the linear understanding of time which depends not only on the construction of three basic domains of past-present-future but also on the establishment of a hierarchical relation between them, can be grasped within the innovations introduced by the three major religions. After all, the distinction between 'this world' and the 'other world' required the occurrence of a radical change in the understandings of time, that were prevalent before the advent of Judaism. From here it was a necessary step to construct the past and the future, on radically different yet strongly interrelated terms. The discourse on the 'act of creation', together with the persistent emphasis on the 'day of judgment', functioned actively in shaping the innovations that were brought forward. Gradually, the idea of a future to judge and even to punish the past, by calculating the accumulation of the sins and virtues of human beings, began to dominate the scene.

As each of the three major religions emerged throughout history, the above mentioned time understanding increased its role at every subsequent stage; so that when Islam established its own mechanisms, it apparently, benefited a lot from the first two religions' constructions of time and

² One of the scholars who have focused upon the consequences of the hierarchical organization of past-present-future in both social and private life, has been F. Nietzsche. According to him, people like priests, nihilists and philosophers rely more heavily upon the past; while for people such as the artist, the noble and the sovereign individual, the future is much more prominent. From this perspective, Nietzsche makes a separation between 'slavish impulses' which are connected to the ones in the former group and "noble impulses" which belong to the latter group. He furthermore analyzes the implications of each particular situation on human lives. His personal preference in this regard is to challenge the existing hierarchical and linear understanding of time, with the help of an alternative construct that is based upon the concept of the "eternal recurrence."

added new dimensions to what it had inherited. If we examine the essential features of Islamic history, we will immediately notice that the linear construction of time occupied a central place in various Islamic discourses. Let us briefly allude some of the simplest examples that can be used in this regard. It is well known that Islam is recognized as the last religion; its prophet, as the last prophet, and the Qur'an, as the last sacred book. The fact that Islam, on the whole, appeared after the two other major religions has been used by a large number of Muslims, as the proof of its superiority.

Herein, the degree of revelation that God condescended to bestow to the world, has become more important with every prophet, beginning with Adam, so that it took its most perfect form in the Qur'an (F.Meier, 1970, p199)

Also, it is to be stressed that "...a verse of the Qur'an that was recited later in historical time, can change and declare invalid a verse or verses that appeared before it"³ (Çamuroğlu, 1993, p22) In this way, when and if there was a difference between two verses concerning the same issue, the one that had appeared later had the power to annul the previous one. What granted legitimacy to this specific process was obviously, the belief in a perfection in time, which was in turn strongly tied to the linear construction of time itself.

More precisely, the orthodox Islamic understanding relies more heavily upon a linear

³ This process is named as "nesh"; the verse that has been subject to the process is named as "mensuh". Interestingly, Islamic heterodox thought does not accept the validity of this process and disagrees with the orthodox argument. For further information, Reha Çamuroğlu, "Dönüşüm", (İstanbul, 1992, p22-23) can be referred to.

understanding of time, in which the zenith of the future, that is the day of judgment, plays a determining role. It is noteworthy that the day of judgment is both external to mundane time and inextricable from it. Likewise the act of creation which constitutes the very 'beginning' in itself but still lies 'somewhere' outside time serves to shape to a large extent, the order of the world and the construction of time. Just like Gramsci stated in his *Prison Notebooks*, within such a framework the order of the world is pre-given and predestined. Put in this way, "the world, nature, the universe were created by God before the creation of man, and therefore man found the world already made, catalogued, and defined once and for all..." (Gramsci, 1971, p441)

It follows from what has been said that the two main points of reference, the 'day of judgment' and the 'act of creation' are strongly connected to one another in a mutual relationship. Each one paves the way to the entrenchment of the other, while the narrative elicited and stipulated by this juncture grants ample legitimacy to the consolidation of an obviously hierarchical understanding of time. Needless to add, crucial to the functioning of this mechanism is the sacredness of the construct itself.

When we turn our attention to the construction of place in orthodox Islamic understanding we will find out that only the Creator is named as "placeless" (*lamekan*). As for the created, everyone and everything is accordingly thought to be bound by a specific spatial realm, the boundaries of which are pre-drawn. This involves a stance in which the human being is implicitly deprived of a spatial dynamism and indirectly confined to a passivity from birth to

death. For the moment however, I will leave this issue open. Only when we arrive at the cyclical understanding of place will it be possible to clarify what I am trying to offer here.

Now that the linear and hierarchical time construction in orthodox approach, as well as the passive spatial perception associated with the created, has been at least slightly touched upon, it is possible to move further into the discussion of the great cycle. The reason why I prefer to follow such a line of reasoning is not only to be able to explain as clearly as possible the cyclical construction of time and place, but to connect the debate to the distinct worldviews within Islam. This is to say that the difference between the linear and cyclical constructions, can provide a fertile ground to discuss the differences in the worldviews of orthodox and heterodox Islamic formations.

Yet, my contention is not that there is a one-to-one correspondance in the sense that cyclical understanding pertains to heterodox formations, whereas linear construction to orthodoxy. Rather than suggesting such an automatic identification and moving within strictly drawn dualities, I prefer to talk in relative terms. Henceforth, the two basic categories of linear and cyclical construct will be employed in order to signal to the varying degrees of intensification, that will evidently enable us to probe the existing differences, but never to take the issue as far as arriving at oppositional structures.

To begin with, the heterodox understanding of time is radically different than the orthodox understanding briefly summarized above. Now that it is

necessary to take this question directly, perhaps the first point that should be emphasized is that here, the triple organization of time is completely replaced by an endless process, a continuum. Most intriguing of all is that within this comprehensive framework, both past and future, yesterday and tomorrow, are kept out of sight, while the present is extended to cover the whole scene. Essentially, the dervish is always in the middle-point. Once more, this should remind us of the rhizomatique principles of heterodoxy. Where the tree imposes the verb "to be", the rhizome follows the open-ended pattern of "and...and... and..." In much the same way, the middle point in the perception of time is the moment.⁴ Repeatedly, it has neither definite boundaries, nor an easily drawn definition; neither an articulated beginning nor an end. This is mainly why,

People who believe, for instance that they are being rewarded for past actions and may be rewarded in future for future doings cannot be Sufis. The Sufi time conception is an interrelation - a continuum. (Shah, 1964, p84)

Various interpreters, less inclined to read the mystics on their own terms, may prefer to think of the narrative order of the events in the hagiographies as the 'distortion of reality'. The main reason for this is that, in these narrations, too often, events follow neither a chronological order nor a logical sequence. For instance, people who have lived at completely different centuries may come and travel together; a saint may appear here and there in time, or one may go to a very distant place in a few

⁴ The notion of moment corresponds to the concept of "dem" in Bektashi literature. The frequent expression of "Dem bu demdir; dem bu dem" is used to indicate that what matters is precisely this very endless moment, rather than yesterday or tomorrow, past or future.

seconds. However, what is being stimulated in these narrations is not the distortion of historical facts, but rather, a different understanding in which the categories of "before and after", as well as 'geographical distances', may, but need not always, lose their meaning. The quotation given below may provide further help in clarifying the emphasis upon the notion of moment and the rejection of a linear and hierarchical organization of time .

... there the past and the future and time without beginning and time without end do not exist. Adam is not prior nor is Anti-christ posterior. All these terms belong to the domain of discursive reason, they are not applicable in the non-spatial and non-temporal world. Therefore, the sufi's being the son of the moment, is to be understood only as a denial of the division of time into several categories, ... (A. Iqbal, 1991, p55)

Being the child of time, the mystic lives in and for an endless moment. Just like the Mawlawis wholeheartedly acknowledge,

To become a mystic,
feel no longing for the past. Gage
The affairs of bygone years...
and you shall turn a new page
You shall then be
the child of the time,
its youth, its old sage
And never lose the hour you are in,
the core of the age.

(Halman, 1983, p25)

These being said, we have still not yet worked out even the rough outlines of our problem. Thus, several points should be made if there is to be any

advance in our analysis on the cyclical understanding of time. First and foremost, it is important to notice that the construction is to a large extent dependent on the mobility and dynamism existing within the cosmos. What matters is an ongoing, restless change in which everything, with no exception, participates. This is to say that "at every moment what appears to be a time connected universe returns to God. There is continuous, instantaneous expansion and contradiction." (Bakhtiar, 1976, p17)

Secondly and in relation to this convolution, the human being is not confined to a pre-given place, from birth to death. Rather than that, there is a restless transformation in which both every single element along the cycle and the concept of 'place' itself is subject to an endless change. More significantly, a change in time, entails a change in place, and vice versa. As these two categories are closely intertwined, there is no possible way of identifying one side with dynamism and change, and the other side with passivity.

In the literature concerned, and especially in the Bektashi poems, we can easily come across the employment of certain concepts that are otherwise directly associated with the Divine Being, in order to praise and adore the human being. Put in another way, the attributes attached by the dervishes to the individual, are interestingly and almost exactly the attributes of the Divine Being. It should be noted regarding this matter that, this is not just pure coincidence, given the fact that according to the more shari'a-minded Muslims, these attributes solely belong to God and therefore cannot be used to denote any other being than Him. This is to say that, within this

framework, when compared with the Divine Being, the abilities and attributes of a human are strictly defined within pre-given limits. Closely related to this process is the classification of some outstanding adjectives and practices, so that the human being is deemed to possess only some of the divinely features and even then, up to some degree.

Thus, the employment of some cardinal concepts to denote the human being, such as "being the first and the last" (*evvel ve ahir olmak*) being placeless (*lamekan olmak*) and being the cause of creation, is an unexcusable mistake and an unbearable scandal in the eyes of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, when we examine the issue from the perspective of the mystics, there is nothing to be surprised in what we are confronted with, since

When we see in ourselves and in the universe not something 'other than God', *masiva*, but the reflection of God himself, we find the satisfying sense of oneness which is only an experience of realising Reality as it is.
(Birge, 1965, p110/111)

The human acquisition of Divine characteristics can be encountered in the poems of Yunus Emre.

I am the First and the Last
I am He who gave Noah the flood
I am the Seer, I am the Taker
and the Giver.

A striking term that I intend to bring to the surface here, is being *lamekan*, literally being placeless or without space. Once again, although, as it has been mentioned before, in orthodox opinion only God

can be timeless and placeless, whereas all other beings than God are bound with a specific time and place, hundreds of poems in the heterodox literature in general and in the Bektashi sources specifically, insist upon attributing these qualities to the human being.

Akla sığmaz genc-i pinhan olmuşum
La-mekan tahtında sultan olmuşum

Seyyid Nesimi

To review what has already been said, in the cyclical thought of the dervishes, both time and place are subject to a restless transformation and dynamism. There is neither a linear time construct, nor a fixed or pre-given place to sustain in such a framework. Rather, the human being, by moving all along the cycle, acquires a new form at every distinct stage. This surprising stance was a likely cause as well as an effect of the distinctive approach they developed towards almost every aspect of life and death. Now we should proceed into some of the most fundamental themes that have been largely shaped by and deeply rooted in the cyclical construct.

4.2 CONSTRUING SOME OF THE CENTRAL THEMES WITHIN CYCLICAL THOUGHT

The themes that will be discussed below are going to be situated within a framework comprising two main actors, the lover and the beloved, and a mutual relationship that ties them together in love. Together, all of the three themes concerned here directly reflect the previously mentioned

interconnectedness, which by and in itself, endlessly recomposes the relations between the various elements of the great cycle. Expressed bluntly, in cyclical understanding, the human being is or should gradually learn to become, more than anything else, a lover.

In much the same way, God is not a supreme, unattainable, incomparable deity beyond our comprehension, but the Beloved who is continuously desired and longed for. From here it is a relatively easy step to concede that what connects the human being to God is nothing but love. And this is exactly the concept whose implications I shall presume to sketch below.

4.2.1 The Theme of Love

Let the beauty we love,
be what we do.
There are hundreds
of ways to kneel
and kiss the ground.
Mawlana

One recurrent theme in dervish discourse is love. In fact, all throughout the literature in concern, concepts such as 'love', 'lover' or 'beloved' are frequently used and highly valued. The significance of this theme is so fundamental that the very existence of the world is explained through and connected to it. According to this formulation, God created this world to see His own beauty. Hence there was love in the very act of 'creation'. More precisely,

According to the Muslim cosmologists,
"David is said to have asked God, 'Why
didst Thou create the creatures?' He

replied, 'I was a hidden treasure and I wanted (literally "loved") to be known. Hence I created the creatures so that I might be known. (Murata,1992,p61)

It seems to me that two cardinal remarks can be validly derived from this interpretation. For on the one side, the world, together with all the things that it is composed of, functions just like a mirror that ceaselessly reflects the Divine Beauty, for those who know where to look and how to see. On the other side, among the created, only the human being has the greatest potential to 'know' God, since s/he is closest to Him, when talking in relative terms. Leaving aside for the moment how to transform this possibility into actuality and through what means to make this transformation most likely to be carried out, I would like to underline that the human being is above else assumed to possess a Godly essence.

Since I am planning to dwell upon the perception of this divinely essence existing in human beings in the ensuing paragraphs, here it will be sufficient to connote that love is not only directly connected to the story of creation of both the human being and the world at large, but it constitutes the essential reason behind the creative act itself. Even more, love is thought to compose the dynamic essence that brings everything into action and conditions every single move. In a quite constant way, "It is love which makes the world go round. The wheeling heavens are turned by waves of love. If there had not been love, there would be no existence." (Iqbal,1991,p65) As these points overtly indicate, from the cyclical perspective, love is the essential motivating force behind the dynamism of the whole cosmos.

An additional interesting tendency persistently present in this literature is the frequent usage of certain concepts such as the "religion of love", "the faith of love", "the religion of lovers"...etc. Before delving deeper into the discussion of love, for which the preparation up till now has been far from sufficient, we must underline two additional points. Firstly, that the emphasis on the religion or faith of love is so widespread and common in heterodox or Sufi parlance, that it cannot and should not be reduced to the understanding of one or two specific religious orders. Secondly, we should stress that the religion of love is seen as something apart from all other religions, something that goes beyond them. With these in mind, I would like to make some quotations in the readings provided by various mystics. It is especially among the writings of Ibn el-Arabi that we can easily find out the frequent employment of the terms in Question. By going one step further, it can be asserted that, on the notion of the religion of love perhaps no one is more insistent than him. Here are a few examples that can be illuminating in this regard.

I follow the religion of love
Now I am sometimes called
A shepherd of gazelles
And now a Persian sage
My beloved is Three
Three yet only one
Many things appear as three
Which are no more than one

Another example in which the employment of the concepts in question is much more overt and striking is:

I bind myself by the
religion of love
whatever direction
its steeds take:

love is my religion,
love my faith

(Bouhdiba, 1985,p131)

A very similar but more to the point expression can be found in the words of Mawlana.

The religion of love is
apart from all other religions
The lovers of God have no religion
but God alone

(Halman, 1983,p28)

It is as if when the religion of love is attained, all other religions, as well as the age old distinctions and deeply rooted tensions prevalent among their teachings or practices, are left behind and reduced to secondary importance. Yet, this is only part of the story since the valuation of love at the expense of the present religious differences is taken so much further that, even the central requirements imposed by a particular religion, which is Islam in our case, can be deliberately neglected and marginalized.

In this way, love is stipulated and elicited by the dervishes to serve to acquaint themselves with an inner reality that cannot be controlled or attained through formal rules and external requisitions. By the same token, countless examples inform us that almost all the dos and don'ts, strictly determined and regulated by the sharia can be ignored in the name of love. The message to 'those who seek truth in conventionalized religion' is apparent:

Until college and minaret have crumbled
This holy work of ours will not be done
Until faith becomes rejection

And rejection becomes belief
There will be no true believer
(Shah,1964,p219)

The connotation can be reinforced and the issue clarified by focusing upon the writings of Fariduddin Attar, who is certainly one of the most important persons in the history of Islamic mysticism. Among the stories he conveys, one particular story is especially relevant to the ongoing argument. It is about a Muslim man who falls in love with a non-Muslim woman. He loves her so much and so passionately that he does not hesitate in doing whatever she tells him to do, including taking care of her pigs. The integration of this animal into the narrative does not seem coincidental to me. Given the negative place attributed to the pigs in Islamic discourse, the animal in the story is an obvious sign of the Muslim man's driving away from his own religion. Yet, what is significant for us is that, in the overall organization of the Sufi interpretation of this story, once again we arrive at an endeavour to perceive the intention behind every act of the lover and the ignorance of the existing boundaries between different religions, for the sake of love.

Another interesting example far too laden with a strong tinge of subordinating formal religious impositions to love, can be derived from the Bektashi literature. In the quotation given below, love is so dominant and determining that, whatever the religion of the beloved, the lover is ready to convert to it and to keep this deviant position even in the day of judgment. This is the adversarial stance adopted by one of the greatest Bektashi poets, Pir Sultan Abdal.

Hangi dinden isen ona tapayım
Yarın mahşer günü bile kopayım

Eğil bir yol ak gerdanından öpeyim
Beri dur benli dilber beri dur
(Özmen,1995, p298)

In tracing this adversarial stance, one thing that we should not fail to take into consideration is that neither how to love nor whom to love can be determined by the authorities. Quite to the contrary, from this perspective, not only to learn to love and to be loved, but also to reach the beloved at the very end is completely an individual discovery, to which even the *pir* can make a partial contribution. At most, the role of the spiritual guide is limited to showing the way. Obviously enough, it is up to the individual to take the necessary steps and to walk along it. The success in overcoming the obstacles on the path and in coming to maturity is dependent upon one's personal endeavour.

More significantly, in the quest for the Beloved, orthodox teachings or the prescribed religious duties may all of a sudden lose their power and authority. This will bring us directly to the distinction made between "ordinary" people and "the lovers of God".⁵ In dervish parlance, for the latter, religious impositions are not a matter of concern, since they have gone much beyond the formal rules and have attained the essence lying behind the sacred commands. It is particularly noteworthy here, that a

⁵ Along with the various sayings of Mawlana that can be situated into this context, one specific example about his own life is worth to mention here. As it is conveyed by A.Gölpınarlı, the rulers in Konia wanted from Mawlana to preach in the Friday mosque. After a long and desparate search they found him in the tavern and convinced him to preach. When Mawlana came to the mosque, directly from the tavern, he came to the fore and said the following words:

"Ne hoştu dün gece. Sevgilinin vuslatına ermiştik. Müşteri yıldızı talih evimizdeydi, güneş kucağımızda. Bana her kadehi sundukça aklını başına al demedeydi. Müslümanlar, o haldeyken adamda akıl mı kalır, o yer aklın yeri mi?" (A.Gölpınarlı, Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik, p23)

very similar emphasis is also present in the heterodox formations of other cultures or religions.⁶

By this however, I do not intend to claim that no attention at all is paid to formal religious teachings. Once more we should recall that the expected behaviour that conforms to the sharia is a starting point for almost all the dervishes. Nevertheless it is only a stage, so that once it is left behind in the search for a higher reality, the internal dominates the external, while the demarcation line between "right" and "wrong" becomes vague and negligible. We shall recall here the four main stages analyzed in the fourth part of this study. To raise a valid point concerning the position of the heterodox dervishes, we should not skip the point that the sharia is not the ultimate realm but merely the introductory stage that is to be left behind in the long and arduous quest for the Divine. This in turn constitutes one of the reasons why, although the gap between heterodox and orthodox thought is undeniably enormous, we still should refrain from situating them within an oppositional structure.

At this stage I want to stop for a while and to argue against the orientalist standpoint that the mystical emphasis on the theme of love interwoven with 'secrets within secrets' is not unique to a certain geographical area, that is to say to the East. Although a significant proportion of scholars prefer to think that "Semites and eastern peoples in general, are lovers of verbal symbolism. The oriental extracts much from a few words" (Frithjof Schuon) a careful inquiry will demonstrate that neither the stress upon hidden meanings nor the understanding of love through

⁶ There are significant similarities here with the Beguines in Christendom, who were condemned by the Council of Vienne. One of their radical thoughts was that the perfect people did not need to obey the religious laws, since these were designed only for the imperfect.

these is confined to the Orient. To the contrary, the primary importance attached to the concept has influenced various groups and their understandings both in the east and in the west. It is in this sense neither an Eastern phenomena nor a typical characteristic of western cultures. One of the most telling features of these unbroken series is thought to have occurred during the Crusades. According to one commentary,

This love theme was later used in an ecstatic cult of the Virgin Mary, who until the Crusades had occupied an unimportant position in the Christian religion. Her greatest veneration today is precisely in those parts of Europe that fell strongly under Sufic influence. (Graves, 1964, p1X)

With the above mentioned points in mind, the analysis of the love understanding of the dervishes can be deepened. And this seems to be the best place recall the rhizomatique principles of heterodoxy mainly because nowhere it is more apparent than in the theme of love, that studying heterodox thought means, in a way, circling around junctures, penetrations, intersections and continuities rather than moving within strictly defined categories, clear-cut distinctions fixed ideas and breaks. It must have been evident by now that I have not been dealing with a subject that can be easily confined to a certain geographical location or to a pre-given historical periodization, although the limits of my own study have compelled me to do so.

At this specific stage, I would like to specify a question that has been neglected until so far but that must be considered now. Expressed bluntly, the

problem is as follows: Even if love is so highly valued and largely praised, even if it "...is the motive force of all creation"(Iqbal,1991,p62), is there still a difference made between various forms of love? By the same token, does it really matter to whom or to what, love is being evoked? And if so, is there a rooted preference made among them, so that one can talk about a "love hierarchy"? More explicitly, does the love of God require to forget or minimize love towards woman, man, nature, prophet⁷ ...etc?After all, up to here, it has been made apparent that love occupies a central place for the dervishes, in its abstract or scriptural form. Yet, what will be their approach when and if this abstractedness is replaced by concrete examples derived from the various aspects of human life? In other words, it is one thing to praise love per se and a quite different thing to put the ideas attached to it into practice. These then compose the obscure and rather confusing center around which revolve a number of considerations.

Two elements seem to be crucial in looking for the possible answers. First and foremost it will be necessary to remember how the cycle operates. Secondly the theme of the reflection of divine beauty should be integrated into this discussion. While the former will be belabored here, the evaluation of the latter will be shifted to the fifth and last part of the study.

⁷ This theme is derived from the life of Rabi'a, who was undeniably one of the greatest mystics in the history of Islam. She lived in Basra, in 8th century and profoundly influenced the later generations of Muslim mystics. According to an anecdote, one day, she saw the prophet in her dream. She told him that her love for God had so firmly dominated all that was in her heart, that there was no room left there for an additional love, even if it was for the prophet. For further information, Margaret Smith's fascinating study on Rabi'a can be extremely useful. ("Rabi'a the Mystic and their fellow-Saints in Islam", Cambridge University Press, 1984)

The circularity of the argument should be apparent. Certainly, given the fact that the heterodox understanding places a greater stress upon the process of unification rather than the mechanism of distancing and dividing, the evaluation of love towards different objects should rely upon the notion of interconnectedness rather than upon anything else. This in turn implies to notice how the love for a particular thing can be connected to the love of another object, although the two seem to be quite apart from one another at the very first glance.

Put in this way, in such a comprehensive vision, differences are external and superficial since deep inside there is a common ground in which everything is closely interrelated. Hence, just like externals, names and categories, as well as formal differences and theoretical divisions are altogether of a secondary importance for the heterodox dervish, especially when love is concerned. From this viewpoint,

Despite the differences between levels and conceptions, carnal love and spiritual love prolong one another and imply one another. Hence that stress laid on the complementarity of the sexes, on their harmony and understanding. /..../ From the human to the divine there is unity, continuity and ascendance. And it is called love, of which the various forms (physical, Udhrite, mystical) are merely stages of an irreducible totality. (Bouhdiba, 1985, p123/124)

What merits attention in each case is that different forms of love are interpreted by looking at the interconnectedness and complementarily existing in the order of the cosmos. These then function as the key terms.

Significantly, what is meant by the points pushed forward up to here is not that there is no difference made at all between love for the material and love for the divine or that all forms of love have been treated equally by the dervishes. The literature concerned is clear enough in telling that one should refrain from eliciting such a conclusionary remark. It's crucially important then to guard against similarly made automatic or broad generalisations. Essentially, to assert that the theme of love is primarily important for the dervishes does not necessarily signify that they all understand and perceive it in the same way.

As a matter of fact, given the complexity and the heterogeneity of the people in question, this is not surprising at all. Some place a relatively secondary stress upon love for the material world and all the things that may be associated with it, in the name of loving solely God; whereas some other see different forms of love as the distinct aspects of the same core. Similarly some others have a much more hierarchical evaluation in the sense that love for God is placed at the top, then the love for the prophet, then the love towards the saints of Islam, ...etc. At distinct phases of Islamic history and throughout a very wide geographical area, countless examples can be easily encountered for each specific approach.

As to the Mawlawis and Bektashis one can state that their constructions of love share a wide common ground, especially throughout the historical period covered in this study. In both, love is understood and defined in such a way as to denote everything that exists. In both, "every love relation is mutual, inspired by the beloved and answered by the lover." (Schimmel, 1994, p165) Again, in both, the

process of unification process operates so vigorously that the notion of complementarity plays the main role. From a different vantage point, this is to say that, since the parts in a cycle which is ceaselessly changing and moving are connected to one another, love for a specific subject is in a similar way connected to love for any other thing, even for God. In this manner, it should be obvious by now that just like there is nothing outside the great cycle, there is nothing that cannot be connected to love. It goes like this:

Our mother is love, our father is love;
We have born from love, we are love.
To love a human, is to love God.
All forms of love are a bridge
For Divine Love.

So much for the mutual relation between the perception of different forms of love and the operation of the great cycle, since it has been shown clearly enough how primordially and inextricably they are bound together.

4.2.2 The Lover

Man, is not he Creation's last appeal,
The light of Wisdom's eye? Behold the
Wheel of universal life as it were a ring,
But man the superscription and the seal.
Omar Khayyam

The previous analysis should leave us in no doubt that in cyclical thought, every particular thing in the cosmos, whether it is visible or not, is in some way or another connected to the grand whole. Our

second major theme along the cycle of the permanent moment will bring an additional dimension to this argument. We will initially approach this discussion by epitomizing the role attributed to the individual human being in cyclical thought.

What is significant for me is that within the recurrently mentioned complexity and mobility characterizing the cycle of the permanent moment, the human being occupies a very special position since it is primarily s/he who moves along the cycle and takes a different form a every single stage. The process of actualizing the divinely potential existing in every human is in turn, closely connected to this journey along the cycle. It is as if the whole cycle is designated and constructed for him/her. For this reson,

To the pre-modern mind, a rational universe implied purposiveness in all its parts and in its totality; the purpose, the *raison d'être* as it were, of all the elements, so ran the sufi doctrine, was the human being, in which they were combined to best advantage. This was the meaning of being human in our wondrous world. (Hodgson, 1974, p225)

With these in mind, we can start by asking how the human being is conceptualized and understood within heterodox thought. One way of answering this perplexing question is to pay great attention to certain crucial terms such as the cosmos, microcosm, essence...etc. When these are taken into account, one will notice that within this framework, "man is the microcosm who has enchanted the macrocosm, (the universe) in his small frame. There are hundred unseen worlds within him." (A. Iqbal, 1991, p6) It is worth underlining that here, we are confronted on the most

fundamental level by an interesting idea: The human being, rather than being the totality of the soul and body, is the replica of the universe and the possessor of divine essence. From a different vantage point, the human being is the main subject of the cycle. As it is clearly stated by a Bektashi poet:

This universe is a tree
Man became its fruit
That which was intended
Is the fruit
Do not think it is the tree
(Birge, 1965, p113)

In fact, the perception of the human body as the direct replica of the whole universe is among others one of the most fascinating characteristics of Daoism. Without ignoring either its nonhomogenous formation or the changes it has been subject to throughout its history one can validly assert that,

The Daoists were the ones to pursue the most extreme implications of this widely held theory. To them, the body was not merely constructed on the basis of the celestial model and norm, it was the universe, it contained the universe in its totality. (Levi, 1989, p105)

Now, the fact that there are no clearly drawn boundary lines between human being and nature or the cosmos is of particular interest for me. Within the endless dynamism and enormous complexity of the great cycle everything is interconnected in such a way that the conceptual frontiers are restlessly challenged. It is mainly for this reason that the Daoist cannot see him/herself apart from the nature or the cosmos at

large. Obviously enough, "the Taoist mystic, intoxicated with the vastness of the cosmos and identifying himself with it, felt himself to be infused with all the power of the universe itself." (Creel, 1970, p43)

This being said, it is time to take a careful look at the original literature in hand, especially at the Hurufi-Bektashi writings since this will reveal out a striking similarity with the Daoist approach towards the human and the cosmos, which are in turn, perceived to be mutually inclusive. One source of information that can be helpful in solving this puzzle out can be derived from the Bektashi poems that carry a heavy mark of the Hurufi understanding. The latter is a religious formation that religious to a large extent on the inner meanings of the letters (harf). In some sources it is defined as "an order that deduces religious meanings from letters" (Hançerlioğlu, 1994, p169) Nevertheless, a letter, according to the Hurufis, does not solely give clues about inner meanings and religious messages, but directly indicates the rather hidden relation between the human body and the organization of the whole cosmos. More precisely, "being" is explained and interpreted through letters and/or signs, to demonstrate the operation of interconnectedness.

Crucial to this understanding is the belief that nothing is accidentally written in the Qur'an, which is essentially the speech of God. Every word, every expression and even every letter or a comma that takes place in the holy book is a symbol of a higher reality. "The Divine Speech guides through its "signs" (ayat) or verses, just as the cosmos gives news of God through its signs, which are the phenomena of nature." (W.C. Chittick, 1989, pXV)

Interestingly, for the Hurufis, all the secrets of the universe are contained in the human being and especially the human face.

Hak, hakikat, Allah, her şey Ademin vücudunda tecelli etmektedir. İnsan oğlunun gözleri, kaşları, ağzı, başı, vücudu, kainatın bir zübdesi ve varlığının bir hülasasıdır. Hurufiler Ademe taparlar. Hurufilik Ademperestliktir. Hurufiler göre vücudu Adem, vücudu Hakkın tecellisidir. Bu alemde kutlu olan insandır. Bütün güzelliklerin güzelliği, mecalin güneşinden bir zerredir. (Şapolyo, 1964, p371)

From this interesting perspective the Hurufis, who have been throughout their history integrated within the Bektashi order of dervishes and influenced the Mawlawi order as well, do not pay any attention to the external meanings imposed by the religious commands, but seek the essence lying behind them. While carrying this task out, they have deliberately chosen several number and symbols to deepen their views and to reinforce their arguments. According to them, in the human face, there are seven basic elements: two for eyebrows, four for eyelashes, and one for hair. Within this formulation,

For the Hurufi, the word is the supreme manifestation of God himself; it is also revealed in the human face, which becomes the Koran par excellence, the writing through which God's secrets were made visible. (Schimmel, 1994 p412)

From here they take a further step and interpret the totality of the letters and numbers in such a way that, at the very end, they come to this

astonishing conclusion: since the name of God and the essence of the cosmos is written on human face, the Divine is manifested in the human being. A similar emphasis upon numbers and symbols is also used in their understanding of the conflicting nature of the human being. By following a familiar line of reasoning they attain to four basic words denoting the individual human being, which in turn can be directly linked to the four major elements: fire, water, earth and air. Hence they assert that human beings have four different natures. Obviously, the approach is one that is based upon interpretation rather than pure description and explanation.

Since this is not the adequate place to open to discussion such a rich literature, it will be sufficient to underline several additional points that are directly relevant to the composition of this study. As I tried to indicate, a cursory glance at the expressions of the Hurufis or Bektashis might present a widespread attachment to letters and words. Nevertheless, it is not the words or letters that matter, but the messages they yield and the secrets they attain to. What grants legitimacy to this approach is directly the Qur'an.⁸ While for a Muslim who relies more heavily on the external meaning of the Quran, a certain verse may designate what to do and what to refrain from, for a Hurufi, the accumulation of the letters in the concerned verse, may offer a totally different meaning or message. Apart from the letters, certain numbers too, have a great significance especially when they designate the human body to point out to a correspondance in the organization of the universe at large.

⁸ One particular verse that may be directly relevant to the ongoing argument is (41:53), in which it is said, "And we shall show you our signs on the horizons and in yourselves -do you not see?"

-Pes imdi, baş arş'a benzer.
Gönül uçmağa benzer.
-Ve hem yedi kat gök vardır.
Uş ten dahi yedi kattır.
Et, kan, damar, sinir, süğük,
ilik yedi kat göğe benzer.
-Hem dünyada ırmaklar vardır.
Amma, gözyaşı ırmaklara benzer.
(Makaalat, p35-36)

While each of these examples appears to address some aspect of the astonishing richness of the human being, it is sufficient for me to underline the great similarity between the Daoist and Hurufi-bektashi understandings. Obviously, in both "Decked out in its armorial bearings and images, characterized by colors, defined by numerical relations, the body is a space governed by the laws of the cosmos."(Levi, 1989,p123)

The ideas traced in this part of the study show that "God created the human being in His own form, and hence the human is the most perfect form in the cosmos; the goal of creating, the pinnacle of the cosmos"(Murata,1994,p184) Nevertheless it must be added that this is not a static position. To the contrary, the human being is supposed to continuously move and never to stay in a place longer than it is necessary. At every stage, one can acquire a 'new' form, depending upon the time and place concerned along the cycle.

From the perspective of the dervishes the goal of the search and the direction of the move should be towards oneself. What is interesting about this preoccupation is that, the human being is first of all, something worth to discover. There is a secret to be attained, a treasure to look for. Given that there is an enormous potentiality within the human being and a secret worth to look and strive for, the dervish is

supposed not to be content to stay in a fixed place along the cycle. Rather than doing this, the expected and praised behaviour would be to question every pre-given position and never to give up the search for the inner meanings. When and if this is done, all the external requirements imposed by different religions, as well as the boundaries drawn in between them, will become meaningless and vague. What matters is not the social or religious hierarchy established by nominal distinctions but solely the attainment of the divinely essence present in the human being. It is possible to follow some of the components of this understanding in the words of Mawlana.

I roamed the lands of Christendom,
from end to end
Searching all over, but
He was not on the cross
I went into the temples
where the Indians worship idols
and the Magians chant prayers to fire
Riding at full speed,
I looked all over the Kaaba
But He was not at that sanctuary
for young and old
Then I gazed into my own heart:
There, I saw Him...
He was there and nowhere else.
(Halman, 1983, p29)

A very similar, almost identical interpretation can be found in Yunus Emre, who openly maintains that: "When you seek God, seek Him in your heart/He is not in Jerusalem, nor in Mecca nor in the Hajj."

It should be pointed out that it is exactly here where there is a choice to be made. The human being can choose not to develop his/her inner

abilities and to stay where s/he is. When this is done, the treasure cannot be found, the beauty cannot be attained and the potentiality cannot be actualized. It is mainly for this reason that, "the Human soul is situated on a vertical axis. It can ascend by moving toward the spirit or descend by moving away." (Murata, 1994, p316)

As already underlined, the human being, according to the comprehensive understanding of the dervishes, is first of all both the outcome and the seeker of love. The key to find the inner treasure and to attain the secret inherent is strongly related to this theme. More precisely, one has to learn to have him/herself to be able to love God. From here it is an easy step to love all the other beings. (yaradılanı sev yaradandan ötürü) This is probably why, "the love of the Sufis did not end with love of man;" (Schimmel, 1992, p231)

Consequently instead of acting in harmony with the prescribed rules and duties, s/he is expected to take a journey towards him/herself. The individualistic trend in this formulation should be evident. This is one of the reasons why,

...the conflict between sufism and legalism can best be understood, not in terms of an intrinsic incompatibility between the exoteric religious law and esoteric mystical practice, but rather in terms of a deeper tension between personalistic and communalistic definitions of Islam. (Karamustafa, 1990, p1)

Rather than leading a life according to the direction designated by the religious commands in a Muslim community, the essential position is "to come to

know oneself", "to love oneself" and "to be oriented towards oneself". Meanwhile, if the right path is to be followed, under the guidance of the right teacher, the individual dervish will ascend along the cycle, and move towards the position of the "perfect human being" (insan-1 kamil), which constitutes one of the most important concepts in this discourse. It should be noted that, I prefer to say "perfect human being" rather than perfect man as it is used in the majority of the existing literature, mainly because there is no indication to one specific gender in the literature concerned. To the contrary, as I will try to elaborate later, the term is valid for both sexes.

4.2.3 The Beloved

I am He whom I love,
and He whom I love is I;
We are two spirits in one
body.If thou seest me,
thou seest Him;
And if you seest Him,
thou seest us both.
(Hallaj-1 Mansur)

From what has been claimed until so far, we have arrived at a picture in which the human being is almost completely isolated from the position of servant-*kul*.The latter, far from being a desired position, is a direct obstacle in front of attaining the union with God and making the desired journey along the cycle.It should therefore, be destroyed. The expressions in the Bektashi literature indicating this can be found sometimes in a very covert, almost hidden way, while at some other times they are much more

obvious and visible. All in all, it appears that the position of being a *kul* is undesired and even unbearable.

Rabbim seni neredede bulsam
Daim ben seninle olsam
Şayed sen hak ben kul olsam
İkilik girer araya
(Oytan, p58)

This constitutes one of the reasons why the heterodox understanding differs in a considerable respect from the orthodox one, just like "there is a distance, a gap that cannot be filled easily between the Bektashi understanding of human being and the sunni understanding" (Eyüboğlu, 1993, p220) Broadly speaking within the orthodox understanding the human being is first of all determined and evaluated by the degree of conformity to the prescribed rules and norms. Here, the fact that the individual belongs to the world of Islam requires from him her maximum conformity to religious, as well as social rules. This in turn implies to neatly distinguish right from wrong, both in personal and social lives.

Most obviously, the preservation of the social and religious, as well as the ethical distinctions depends heavily upon the maintenance of the distinction between god and human, creator and created. In fact, it is this very distinction which is continuously strengthened by other dualities and in turn provides a legitimate ground for them to exist. "What should be mystical then is the disappearance of the actors whereas the transaction between them prevail." (deCerteau, 1993, p99)

In closing, I would like to cast a brief glance over the rereadings of a famous story with the hope of clarifying, as well as reviewing, what has been claimed until so far. For this purpose, I have chosen the story of Joseph and Zuleikha, which is well known by a large number of people both in the Muslim and nonmuslim world. What matters for me here, is that the same story has been interpreted and told in various ways, with considerably different points of emphasis. One commonly hold interpretation is to denote Zuleikha as the seducer who desires to seduce Joseph, by using her beauty and feminine attraction. This female figure occupies such an interesting position in the existing discourse that,

Despite the extreme variety of the feminine myths and of the poetic fascination they exert, two types of woman have assumed symbolic value in Islam: Aysha, the 'virtuous' coquette, and Zuleikha, Joseph's enigmatic temptress: Aysha, so much a woman but always without reproach, and Zuleikha, driven mad by desire! (Bouhdiba, 1985, p20)

Certainly within this approach, she is not depicted as a positive character and the fact that Joseph is so decisive and honest that the woman identified with *fitna* cannot be able to seduce him, is largely appreciated and deeply respected.

On the other hand, the Sufi interpretation of the story of Joseph and Zuleikha is quite different in various respects than the one mentioned above. Here, Zuleikha is no longer a seducer or an evil woman, but first of all a lover. Similarly, Joseph is no longer an exemplary figure, but the beloved. The love of Zuleikha for the handsome Joseph is

enough in itself to explain the reason why she acted in that way and suffered so much. This in turn, constituted one of the most vital parts of the Sufi reading of this famous story, mainly because, regarding this matter, "In love pain and suffering is a must. Love is like a law suit, to suffer harsh treatment is like the evidence; when you have no evidence the law suit is lost!" (Iqbal, 1991, p67) This implies to say that, the deep pain caused by love, the increasing inaccessibility of the beloved and the greatness of the price that must be paid are motivating factors for the lover.

Before reaching a conclusion, it should be underlined at once that, the difference between the first and the second interpretations does not stem from the condemnation or glorification of the woman in question. Obviously, in the orthodox reading she does not represent an appreciated personality. Nevertheless,

...the Quran refrains from condemning in an irremediable absolute way the attempts by Zuleikha and her companions on Joseph's virtue. Side by side with the divine wisdom there is room for feminine guile. But one must be on one's guard against it and at any price avoid zina. (Bouhdiba, 1985, p26)

Therefore we must keep in mind that even the most orthodox Islamic readings do not portray a totally negative Zuleikha, an attitude that can also be found in the evaluation of the position of Eve.⁹ Rather

⁹ Unlike Christianity, in Islam, Eve is not held responsible for the first sin. Rather, both Adam and Eve are thought to be equally responsible. This constitutes a very significant point in itself, given the bulk of accusations and vituperative statements existing in the Christian literature to put the blame of the first sin upon, not only Eve, but every woman. For further information about this theme, A. Bouhdiba's "Sexuality in Islam" (London, 1985) and F. Berktaý's "Tek Tanrı Dinler Karşısında Kadın" (Ankara, 1994) can very useful.

than that, the distinction between the two approaches brings us straight into the question of focusing upon inner realities or upon external aspects. On the whole then, the varying comments brought forward about Zuleikha are the products of the gap lying in between these choices. This is due in part to the fact that, as I had tried to illustrate at various parts in this study, while the former approach concerns mainly with do's and don'ts, for the latter what matters primarily is the inner reality, the hidden intention lying behind the formal nominifications. Ultimately, when and if there is love in this inner realm, the question as to whether Zuleikha has behaved in accordance with the religious precepts or the rules drawn by the shari'a, is of secondary importance.

The suggestion made here is that, in this second interpretation the theme of love is primarily important, which in itself gives an end to the undesired character of the woman in question and turns her into an addicted to love and to the beloved. This involves, as the literature concerned openly reveals out, that Zuleikha was able to see the beauty of the beloved better than anyone else; that she was ready to suffer to this end and lastly, that because of these, she deserved to be glorified rather than condemned. "Thus, Zuleykha has become, in Sufi poetry, the symbol of the soul, purified by ceaseless longing in the path of poverty and love." (Schimmel, 1992, p429)

Among the poems that directly refer to these points, I would like to present one written by Ümmi Kemal, known as a *Kızılbaş* or a *Safevi* supporter in the Ottoman Empire. Although this will bring to an end my analysis on the heterodox understanding of love,

obviously the theme deserves a much more detailed study than the one presented here, given the enormous space it occupies in this literature.

But those who saw him
with sincerity of heart,
they affirmed him.
For his sake they
surrounded everything
-life and wealth.
Neither could Joseph's brothers
see beauty the way Zuleikha did
...
He who cannot penetrate
the secrets of the dervish
Will see nothing about him
but the mantle and the shawl
(Lifchez, 1992, p207)

Previously, I had mentioned the enormous potentiality existing in every human individual, that was directly connected to the divine essence and that required an enduring task to be realized. In various parts of this study it has been additionally indicated that the operation of this transformation depended heavily upon the transcendence of the stages on the path. Hence, as one moved further and further in the quest for God, the nearer s/he became to reaching perfection. Now we can return to this emphasis in order to remember that,

The divine form upon which man was created distinguishes him from all other creators and bestows upon him specific characteristics and excellence. The "perfection" achieved by the perfect man is to bring this form from potentiality into actuality. (Chittick, 1989, p275)

The stage of the perfect human being is

the zenith, the peak of a long journey made in the quest of God and inner realities. Arguably, it is the ultimate product of a hard work and a long transformation.

While every appearance shows some attribute of reality, Man is the microcosm in which all attributes are united, and in him alone does the Absolute become conscious of itself in all its diverse aspects. To put it in another way, the Absolute, having completely realized itself in human nature, returns into itself through medium of human nature; (Nicholson, 1975, p84)

A striking point in the discourse on the perfect human being is the obliteration of almost all the religious duties and norm at this ultimate stage. Essentially, when perfection is attained there seems to be no need to conform to the prescribed rules anymore. This however as I tried to demonstrate in the course of this study is a gradual process. One does not reach perfection suddenly and hence leave behind the impositions of the shari'a in an instant. Rather than that, and in accordance with the stages of the path, there is a slow but profound change.

Yet, when and if one arrives at that so strongly defined stage, everything takes a radically different form. There, nominal distinctions do not signify anything at all. Pre-given rules and principles have become meaningless; categories have been totally destroyed, and the existing plurality has been replaced by complete Oneness. This is why, "the goal of the Sufi is to become so at one with God, that "me" is no longer heard." (Jaoudi, 1993, p33) And this is also why the great Sufi Bayazid-1 Bistami declared,

For 30 years I sought God.
But when I looked carefully,
I saw in reality that God
was the seeker and
I was sought.

(Williams,1973, p220)

Repeatedly, leaving behind the stage of shari'a, the dervish, continuously endeavours to ascend along the cycle of the permanent moment, to become one with God. Relying upon the analysis made so far, it seems to me that the passage from the stage of shari'a to tariqa is marked by the following questions.

Is God the object of formal worship, or of love? Is the purpose of religion to unite, to comfort, to improve and to bring all races and peoples of the world together in love and brotherhood, or to divide, to tyrannize, to shed the blood of the innocent in futile wars, to mesmerize, to commit all kinds of crime in the name of Allah and to exploit our fellowmen?(Williams,1973, p48)

The cardinal theme of love and of union with God, will take us directly at the fundamental question of the two different aspects of God. And this will constitute the last turn in our discussion.

CHAPTER 5

THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMININITY ALONG THE CYCLE OF THE PERMANENT MOMENT

Having left behind four basic interconnected stages that have spontaneously, as well as intentionally, guided us the way to one of the Islamic constructions of femininity, now it is time to evaluate this theme directly. As such, the theoretical information and the interpretations developed in the previous parts will be from time to time reconstrued here, either in a covert or an overt way. Such a line of reasoning seems all the more necessary given the limitedness of the studies that directly concentrate on our subject of analysis. I should remind the reader that the literature on this particular theme is strikingly limited, obliging the researcher to trace bits of information scattered here and there in various sources. Mainly because of this, I will largely base my assertions upon both the existing literature and the analysis made so far; but will intend to seek additional connections where these may and do remain silent.

As it has been previously indicated, according to the cyclical thought, shared by both the Bektashi and Mawlawi dervishes, everything is interconnectedly located along the cycle of the permanent moment. In such a way, the great cycle embodies *everything*, from minerals to plants, from animals to human beings, and from angels to God. The existing interconnectedness is at the very same time, an indication of the divine essence that is present everywhere and in everything, although obviously

in changing degrees. Given such a comprising whole, evidently, the construction of femininity can be no exception to the ongoing rule and is therefore to be evaluated and discussed within the cycle itself. With this overt linkage we reach the last and perhaps the most interesting part of this study.

For this purpose in turn, in this chapter I will proceed in three basic steps. At the outset, I will discuss the two different aspects of one God, namely *jamal* and *jalal*, and the implications of the extolment of each aspect, from various points. This theme will be further fecundated by indicating how and why the more orthodox-minded Muslims favour the *jalal* aspect, while the heterodox dervishes emphasize the *jamal* aspect. Secondly, I will intend to locate the theme of Divine Femininity within the great cycle. Additionally, the indication of how "fear versus love" and the theme of "Divine Beauty" will be belabored here. At each particular subtitle, examples from both Bektashi and Mawlawi literature will be reread and reinterpreted to elucidate the ongoing arguments. Only when the cyclical approach towards the two cardinal aspects of God and the prioritization of *jamal* have been adequately clarified, will we be able to discuss the implications of this approach for women. This last part, will also show us some of the alternative paths open to women, in Muslim societies.

In this way, I hope not only to be able to demonstrate the construction of femininity in dervish understanding and take the last turn in our discussion of the discrepancy between various facets of Islam, especially between an orthodox and heterodox understanding, but also to trace the channels through which women have tended to play an active role,

exactly where the traditional boundaries told them to do just the opposite.

5.1 THE TWO ASPECTS OF ONE GOD:JAMAL VERSUS JALAL

Bu alemin devri iki
manevi çark üzerinedir.

...

Sağa dönen çark doğudur;
Yani Cemal'dir.
Kuzeye dönen ise batıdır;
Yani Celal'dir.

...

Doğuya dönenler hakikat-ı
Muhammediye'ye vasıl olurlar
(İdris-i Muhtelifi)

In the construction of religious discourses in general and in the 'creation narratives' in particular, names -whether sacred or not- occupy a salient place.¹ In the myths or folk tales of various cultures, "a name, mirrors the essence of the one to whom it is attributed;it possesses a magical power.To know the name of something is to get hold of its secret."(Berktaş, 1994, p36)Of further interest in this regard, is the strong relation between names and

¹ The paramount role of attributing names can be encountered in various cultures all around the world.Countless examples can be given in this respect, from the wellknown German folk tale 'Rumpelstilskin' where the precondition of power is to get to know the name of the dwarf, to the initiation rites in various cultures where one is not given a name until s/he proves her/himself. But, as far as our evidence shows, it is especially in the old Mesopotamian belief system that names or sacred names occupy an utmost place. For further information, F.Berktaş's published P.H.D. thesis can be referred to.F. Berktaş, "Tek Tanrılı Dinler Karşısında Kadın"(Ankara, 1994)

existence. It is as if without having a name one cannot possibly exist or the *sine qua non* of existence is to have at least one distinguishing name. From this perspective, a recurrent pattern in the history of religions is the direct identification of both the quantity and the quality of names with not only existence, but with power as well. Thus, any increase in the quantity and/or quality of the names attributed to a being, brings along a parallel increase in the latter.²

This age-old and widespread tradition of attributing sacredness to names, can be also witnessed in the Qur'an, and in various Islamic discourses. Although there are many examples that can be given in this respect, the one related to the creation act is perhaps much more noteworthy than others. Herein we can once more find out that, names are indicative of the recognition of being and power, and as such, without their presence, the act of creation could not have been possibly completed. Mainly because of this, immediately after creating Adam, God is believed to have taught him His names.

According to a saying of the Prophet, there are 99 of these "most beautiful" divine names, though other names are expressed or implied in the Koran and various prophetic sayings. (Chittick, 1989, p819)

² That 'the names of God' are highly indicative of His power and character, can be seen in the mythologies from various parts of the world. One example from India can be traced back to the 700 B.C. In the *Upanishads* the name of 'Atman' is at the same time 'Me', because at the very outset He was the only existing Being and there was no one and nothing except 'Me'. Thus, this particular name was used to prove his priority. Likewise in Babylonian creation stories, Marduq's having approximately 50 names is the direct indication of His unique power. Further information can be encountered in the fascinating analyses made by Joseph Campbell; especially in "İlkel Mitoloji" (İmge yayınları, 1992) and "Doğru Mitolojisi" (İmge yayınları, 1993)

These 99 names in turn, operate within a remarkably wide range, comprising the extremely different aspects of the Creator. All together they reflect the strikingly variegated aspects of the Divine Being. This is to say that every single name corresponds to a different aspect of the Creator, altogether composing the Divine Character. Although every single name denotes a distinct aspect, very broadly, it is possible to categorize the divine names into two prominent categories. According to these, while some names can be accumulated under the category of the "jamal" (beauty) aspect; some others are linked to the "jalal" (majesty) aspect. Let us now focus upon the meaning and content of these.

The *jamal* aspect of God embodies names such as, 'Beautiful', 'Pardoner', 'Near', 'Merciful', 'Forgiving', 'Compassionate', 'Loving', 'Gentle', 'Enricher', 'Life-giving', 'Bestower'...etc. What is common in all of these names is the overt indication and direct definition of God's mercy and compassion. The *jalal* aspect, on the other hand, portrays God in a very different way, since it embodies names such as 'Mighty', 'Inaccessible', 'Proud', 'High', 'Wrathful', 'King', 'Avenger', 'Slayer', 'Depriver', 'Harmer'...etc. In a similar vein, the common point that ties all of these names to one another is their common emphasis upon the majesty and wrath of God.

The distinction between the *jamal* and *jalal* aspects may be accounted for three salient implications; the first of which is directly related to the way Divine Being is perceived, the second to the way the relations between human being and Divine Being are constructed and the third, to the relations of the human being with everything lying in this

world. Below, these three implications will be briefly explained, only to be better clarified all throughout this particular chapter.

The first implication leads us directly to the point that the *jalal-jamal* categorization strongly determines the way God is perceived. My contention is that, "..., the one God is looked upon from two points of view." (Murata, 1992, p16) From this perspective, if the *jalal* aspect is placed on the forefront, God is supreme and severe. Moreover, within a predrawn eschatological hierarchy, He is undeniably at the apex. As such, He is like no other being. This is to say that, He cannot possibly be grasped, seen, heard or touched by ordinary human beings. He is distant, transcendent, incomparable and beyond the limits of human comprehension.

If, on the other hand, the *jamal* aspect is prioritized God is perceived in a completely different way. Those who prioritize the *jamal* aspect emphasize the similarity, nearness and tenderness of God. Some verses of the Quran are directly taken by these as the proof of their standpoint. Such as,

We indeed created man; and we know what his soul whispers within him, and we are nearer to him than the jugular vein. (50:16)

Wherever you turn, there is the face of God. (2:115)

In this framework, He is compassionate and merciful. Rather than being positioned at an unthinkable distance, He is drawn as near as possible. In brief "the first approach stresses God's incomparability, distance and otherness. The second stresses His similarity, nearness and sameness."

(Murata,1992,p9) Another way of saying this is that,

The created properties of these two sets of attributes provide a significant parallel with the two fundamental perspectives on the Divine Being ...; incomparability and similarity. (Chittick, 1989, p23)

As to the second point of emphasis, that of the construction of the relations between God and human beings, it should be noted that the distinction between *jalal* and *jalal* aspects have cardinal repercussions here. The prioritization of *jalal* and the perception of God as supreme, distant and severe, imposes upon the human being the acquisition of the role of *kul*, that is to say being the servant of God, and totally submitting to His will and power. Whereas the prioritization of the *jamal* aspect and the perception of God as near and similar, paves the way to a friendly relation, in which the two 'sides' are far from a patron-client structure, where one side is evidently supreme and the other subjugated to it.

In respect to God's distance and incomparability, human beings and all other creatures are His absolute servants and must submit to His will. But in respect to His similarity and nearness, human beings have another role to play. Since they were created in the divine form and with God's two hands, they alone find in themselves all the qualities of God and creation. (Murata, 1992,p16)

Evidently, the first scheme emphasizes fear; fear of God's power and severity; as well as fear of being punished in hell. Understandably, many verses

in the Qur'an point out to the torments of hell-fire which cannot be compared to any other pain in this world. As to the second understanding, here, fear is completely replaced by love. Yet, for the moment I will leave this issue open. Here it is sufficient to remind the reader of the analysis made in chapter three on the triple relation between love, lover and beloved.

As to the third implication, that of the relations of the human being with this world, two points are noteworthy. First of all the maintenance of the hierarchical relation between a severe and punishing God and the created, requires to strictly obey to the pre-given boundaries between *haram* and *halal*. To be compensated in heaven or eternally punished in hell depends strongly on this point. If on the other hand, God's *jamil* aspect is dominating this necessity and imposition is pushed to a secondary role, since God is first of all merciful and compassionate. In love, as it has been frequently indicated in the previous chapters, boundaries, external differences and nominal divergencies lose their meaning.

Secondly, the preservation of the eschatological hierarchy requires the preservation of the mundane hierarchy. As it has been explained in detail in the first part of this study, the maintenance of the distinction between right and wrong implies the nomination of a group of people to define, to impose and to guarantee its sustenance. Again the valuation of the *jamil* aspect is far from this framework because the love affair between God and the human being is above all a personal affair. It is a personal discovery through which the individual is alone and completely active in deciding what is right and wrong for him/herself.

5.1.1 Ebussuud's Jalal God

They fear their Lord above
them and they do what
they are commanded.
(Qur'an 16:50)

It must have been obvious by now that, the distinction between the *jamal* and *jalal* aspect of God, once more brings us directly to the difference between an orthodox and a heterodox understanding of Islam. In order to clarify this distinction we should note that, while the former stress the *jalal* aspect of God, for the latter it is the *jamal* aspect that is much more important and in the forefront. Let us belabor these separately.

We have demonstrated how the one God is approached in two distinct ways. To deal with this distinction, the analysis made by Murata, in *The Tao of Islam*, can be extremely helpful. Here, the author claims that the *jamal* aspects of God are reminiscent of the *yin* values, whereas the *jalal* aspect of *yang* values in Taoism. Since this terminology will be used from time to time throughout this analysis, it may be useful to introduce several brief remarks about the concepts employed.

In its literal sense, *Dao* or *Tao* means "way" or "road"³. "The *Dao* is emphatically a way of harmony, integration, and cooperation." (Noss, 1990, p253) This in turn is highly dependent on the complementary relation between *yin* and *yang*. As

³ A noteworthy pattern that recurrently emerges in the history of religions is the identification of various ways of life and lines of thinking as "roads" or "paths". The shari'a's meaning "the way to the waterhole"; the tariqa's meaning "path", are in this sense highly redolent of the literal meaning of *Dao*.

such, both sides need and feed each other. The relations between women and men, night and day, winter and summer, ...etc., are constructed within this pattern of complementarity. Yin is thus, the passive, cool, moist, dark and female principle in nature; while yang is associated with the active, dry, bright and male principle. Here it is important to bear in mind that, "the ideal is balance, not the victory of one over the other."⁴ (Reed, 1987, pl65) Moreover, just like the cyclical thinking of Muslim dervishes, Taoist construction too, is based on continuous returning and an endless motion.

What is more significant for me at this particular stage is the difference Murata draws between a Confucianist and a Taoist understanding. While for the former, the yang values dominate and characterize Divine Being; for the latter, it is just the opposite, that is to say the yin values that are in the forefront. And this is exactly the argument that I am trying to push here. Turning back to the structure of chapter one, my suggestion is that, while the subject of the verdict in question stresses the yang values; the object of the verdict extols the yin values. In this way, the two aspects of one God are also two different understandings. To clarify this, I want to elucidate several additional phenomena.

Up to here the idea has been advanced that the *jalal* aspect, so much promoted and valued by the sharia-minded, is highly dependent upon the

⁴ It should be noted that the Taoist construction of complementarity is radically different from the dichotomous classifications marking Western thought. In other words, the former is not a conflict dualism, where one side is to be valued at the expense of the other. In this sense, it is not a matter of "being either in this or that side". It should also be stressed that such an understanding is not unique to Taoist philosophy, but is highly shared in "Eastern" religions in general and in Asian religions specifically.

incomparability and aloofness of God. This is to say that here, God is distant, dissimilar and uncomparable. The distance in concern is a direct reference to the obvious hierarchy that exists between the Creator and the created. Within this hierarchy God punishes or rewards. Therefore the distinction between what is forbidden and what is permitted, between *halal* and *haram*, is directly situated along this hierarchical construct. Retrospectively,

Inasmuch as God is incomparable with all created things, He can only be understood in terms of the attributes denoting His distance, transcendence and difference. (Chittick, 1989, p23)

Needless to add, once God is distant and *jalal*, the human being is supposed to be an obedient servant and to "submit". "Such a conception of God connotes distance between the slave and his Lord." (Cash, 1978, p98) In such a way, the Muslim individual is supposed to obey to the prescribed rules and to refrain from everything that is being forbidden. This should remind us of the place of the *shari'a*. In sum, the valuation of the *jalal* aspect and the maintenance of the hierarchy between Creator and created, are located on the same axis with the one that grants legitimacy to the sharia and therefore to the *ulema*.

For the sharia-minded, as it has been evaluated in the first chapter of this study, the maintenance of the distinction between "right" and "wrong" (or "*helal*" and "*haram*") is essential. It is exactly in this distinction, where we can encounter the source of legitimacy that they need to preserve

their status. This distinction has a wider relevance and importance for our purposes here. Admittedly, this particular distinction is directly connected to the preservation of several other boundaries. The most notable among these is the boundary between the Creator and the created.

My point is that the imposition of the categorical distinction between what is "right" and what is "wrong", and therefore the legitimization of the social position of the ulema, are directly dependent upon the prioritization of a punishing, stern and authoritative aspect of God. Obviously enough, this is all the more evident for the central, bureaucratic ulema operating at the highest levels of the learned hierarchy. Expressed in these terms, conformity to the *haram-helal* distinction goes hand in hand with the construct of hell and heaven. This is to say that, as long as the human being refrains from what is forbidden and fulfills his prescribed duties, there is endless happiness and welfare in heaven. Likewise, the outcome of an improper way of life is eternal punishment in hell. The maintenance of this construct is inextricably wed to the power and authority of the Creator. Understandably,

The general perspective of Sharia and Kalam stresses God as ... majestic and severe. In response human beings must cower and tremble. In other words, they have to "submit" to God's will and become His servants. (Murata, 1992, p77)

It is fundamental to notice how each single boundary reinforces the sustenance of other boundaries, altogether composing an interlocked whole. Another way of formulating the same issue is by

looking at the operation of "distancing mechanisms." This is to say that the preservation of the distance between God and human beings strengthens the distance between the learned men and 'ordinary' people. In a similar vein, the distance between the two sexes and the rigidification of the boundary in between is strongly dependent on and a prerequisite of the functioning of overall framework.

Herein we can encounter the paramount role of the organization of 'place' in orthodox Islamic discourse. As it has been expanded in chapter three, in orthodox Islamic understanding, the location of every single being in his/her adequate static place is of fundamental importance. In this way women and men are given different areas, in which they may freely move but from which they should not try to get out. The preservation of the bipolar divisions implied the rigidification of the boundary in between. This in turn, functioned so as to serve the regimentation of the duties and responsibilities deemed for each single place. Understandably, any deviation from the pre-given place and any disobedience in regard to the recognition of the existing boundaries, is a deviation from right conduct and true Muslim identity⁵.

⁵ The ambiguity of the position of hermaphrodites can be highly revealing in this respect. A hermaphrodite, having both male and female sexual organs created a great problem and constituted a source of threat in the eyes of the orthodox-minded. In a world where divisions were rigid and the segregation of the two sexes was essential, an ungendered human was potentially dangerous. This is why Muslim jurists have insistently worked upon this issue to solve the problem of where should a hermaphrodite be located. This was an urgent matter since questions such as where and how should a hermaphrodite pray in the mosque, had to be replied at once.

It is also significant that, unlike the orthodox Christian standpoint, we do not encounter the devaluation and marginalization of the hermaphrodites because of their different bodies. The problem that occupies the mind of the orthodox-minded Muslims is rather, the establishment of the adequate mechanisms to situate these people within the given boundaries. For further information, Paula Sanders, "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law", in "Women in Middle Eastern History" (ed. N. Keddie and B. Baron, London, 1991)

5.2 THE DIVINE FEMININE OF THE CYCLE OF
THE PERMANENT MOMENT

The spirit of the fountain
never dies. It is called
the Mysterious Feminine.
The entrance to the
Mysterious Feminine
Is the root of all
heaven and earth.
Frail, frail it is,
hardly existing.
But touch it;
it will never run dry.
(Lao Tzu/Tao Teh Ching)

So far, the depiction of the *jalal* aspect of God and its extolment by the shari'a-minded has been epitomized. There is, however, a completely different understanding of God shared by the majority of the Muslim mystics. To begin with, while all of the 99 names are undeniably important for the mystic, it is a truism to say that, those names under the *jamal* category are more highly valued and appreciated. From a different vantage point, "The general perspective of Islamic spirituality, especially certain forms of Sufism, stresses, ... 'God's mercy precedes His wrath.'" (Murata, 1992, p9) To be able to analyze the reason why, once more we have to focus upon the cycle of the permanent moment.

Within the cyclical understanding of the dervishes there are two main arcs, one designating descent and the other ascent. The arc of descent indicates how and through which routes the human beings in specific and the universe in general came into being. It is in other words, the route through which things became as they are. As to the arc of

ascent, it the route followed by the mystic in his quest for God. Thus through the *arc of ascent* the human being gradually comes closer to the Creator, so much that at the very end the Creator and the human being become united. It should be beared in mind that this is exactly where categorical distinctions, such as "I" and "Thou", become obliterated. To the repercussions of this, I will return later.

As it has been demonstrated before, the goal of the Muslim mystic is to move along the cycle in order to reach God. The idea behind can be broadly stated as follows: At this particular place and time one has certain attributes and characteristic features, which should not be seen final or static. Otherwise, the cycle cannot be completed and thus, God cannot be reached. It is therefore essential to move along the cycle in quest of God. In doing so, one should gradually abandon his/her present position, character and hence, identity.

But the overall movement never reverses itself, since the cosmic roads know only one-way traffic. To return to "there" from "here", we have to take a different route than the one by which we came. (Chittick, 1989, p19)

This is to say that the mystic searching God cannot and should not take the *arc of descent*, but the *arc of ascent*. My suggestion at this particular point is that the journey along the *arc of ascent* has two cardinal outcomes, directly related not only to the construction but extolation of femininity. While the former outcome operates at the level of Divine Being, the second is relevant to the human being in the path. And this is what I shall presume to sketch here. To

this end, in what follows I will concentrate on three basic subtitles. The first theme will lead us to the construction of femininity at the Divine level. From here we will move to the analysis of "Divine Beauty", which can be essentially encountered in both the human being and the Divine Being. In this way, this survey will pave the way to the construction of femininity at the human level, which will be elaborated under the third subtitle of "Becoming Woman".

5.2.1 Fear Versus Love

Even the infidel comes to the fold of the faithful, but not the heretic dervish
The infidel has receptivity but not him.
He is out of the sphere of hope while the infidel is in the circle of the fear of God.
By God, the infidel is far superior to him.

Vahidi

In orthodox-Islamic discourse, as well as in the Qur'an, the theme of the *Day of Judgment*, occupies a cardinal place. There are a large number of verses in the Qur'an that describe in detail how this process will be carried out and how every human being will be judged. The outcome of this process will be for each individual, either eternal reward in heaven or severe punishment in hell.

While it is sometimes understood as a spritual judgment of the individual soul after death, many passages in the Qur'an clearly describe it as a world-transforming event to occur at the end of time, when the earth will be destroyed and all people will see their just

rewards as they are sorted into groups bound for either Paradise or hell. (Wilson,1991,p773)

Understandably, the construct on the Day of Judgment, goes hand in hand with the *jalal* aspect of God. Put differently, the sustenance of the former requires to depict God as severe, punishing, authoritarian and powerful; while the emphasis upon the latter implies to continuously remind every Muslim believer of the consequences of the life s/he leads in this temporary world. There is however, a radically different Islamic understanding which emphasizes the *jamal* aspect and in doing so pays little regard to the Day of Judgment. Thus,

The dread picture of the Almighty striking terror into the hearts of His slaves is relieved by the other note of God in His mercy calling forth from man love, devotion, and service. (Cash, 1978, p98)

The apparent contradiction between these two positions has been stated by Ibn Arabi, known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar (the Greatest Spiritual Master), in the following way:

What do the Avenger, the Terrible in Punishment, and the Overpowering have in common with the Compassionate, the Forgiving and the Gentle? For the Avenger demands the occurrence of vengeance in its object, while the Compassionate demands the removal of vengeance from the same object. (Chittick, 1989, p150)

Interestingly, the emphasis on the *jamal*

aspect leads to a completely different approach, in which both the punishing and severe aspect of God, and the Day of Judgment are strongly attacked. This approach comprises a wide range of practices and ideas ranging from ridiculing the *jalal* aspect of God to looking for the possible ways to destroy not only hell but heaven as well. This is mainly because, according to mystical thought, God should be loved for His own sake, rather than for fear of being punished in hell or for being rewarded in heaven.⁶

The Bektashi literature on the stern and punishing aspect of God, is highly replete with a rather ironic tinge. In countless poems, the image of a judging and punishing God is bitterly attacked and challenged. Herein we can encounter the most apparent heterodox protest against the premises and teachings of the orthodox-minded Muslims. Three noteworthy examples, can be extremely useful in clarifying the ongoing argument. The first poem belongs to Yunus Emre, the second to Kaygusuz Abdal and the third to Edip Harabi.

Thou hast set a Balance
to weigh evil deeds;
Thou has purposed to
cast me in the Fire.
A balance is suitable
for one who would be a grocer;
or one who would be a jeweller
or a seller of perfume.
Thou art the all Knower;
thou thyself knowest my condition;
what need is there
for weighing my acts? (Birge, 1965, p55)

⁶ According to the tradition, one day, the great mystic Rabi'a, started to run in the streets of Basra with a torch and a bucket of water in her hands. When asked the reason why, she replied that with the water she wanted to extinguish the hellfire and with the torch to put heaven in fire, so that both could be totally destroyed. Only then, she said, people could love God earnestly.

Thou hast created
a bridge of hair
Saying, let the slaves
come and pass over.
Rather, let us stand here.
If thou art a hero,
pass thou over, o God.
(Birge, 1965, p89)

Let go the Paradise,
the houri, the gilman,
With faithfulness attach
thy heart to God.
Go not to the mosque,
go to the house of idols.
Having found union with God,
with God rise, lie down.
(Birge, 1965, p91)

With these critiques of divine justice and eternal punishment in mind, we can once more remember the *fatwa* mentioned at the very beginning of this study. Altogether these three examples and the analysis made so far are indicative of what was so 'wrong' in the statements of the people made subject to the *fatwa* of Ebussuud Efendi. It should also be beared in mind that the critique of the stern aspect of God and the desire to abolish both hell and heaven is a common pattern in the mystic discourses of various religions.⁷ One further example from Catherine of Siena may be greatly revealing in itself.

If your truth and justice would permit it, I would love that hell should be wiped out; or at least that no soul should ever go there again. And if it were

⁷ Interestingly, the parlance of Christian mystic women, such as Margery Kempe, Marguerite Porete, Hadewijch, Mechthild of Magdeburg, strongly coincide with the discursive practice of heterodox Muslim dervishes. Understandably, almost all of these women have been either persecuted for heresy or severely attacked by the Church fathers; and some, like Marguerite Porete were burned. Their lives and oppositionary stance have been analysed in detail by Barbara Newman, in "From Virile Women to WomanChrist". (Philadelphia, 1995)

possible that, without losing love of you, I could be set upon the mouth of hell to close it, and so prevent any further souls from entering it; that is what I would like most of all.

(Newman, 1995, p123)

My suggestion is that the desire to extinguish hellfire or to 'close the mouth of hell so that noone can enter' is at the very same time a desire to replace fear with love, and therefore, *jalal* with *jamal*. Put differently, while the *jalal* aspect of God reminds fear, the *jamal* aspect is based upon love. It is in this sense that orthodox-minded Vahidi's expression of "circle of fear of God" is not coincidental. It is also in this sense that he is right; obviously enough, the dervish is not located in the "circle of fear", but in the "circle of love".

The expression of "circle of love" in turn, deserves further attention mainly because it demonstrates us that the relation it embodies is mutual. To explore this point we should keep in mind that the relation between the lover and the Beloved is not a one-way road, to which God can remain aloof. To the contrary, just like the lover is in search of the Beloved, the latter needs and desires the former. "In this way, every lover is a beloved and every beloved is a lover. Love needs and desires beauty, and beauty needs and desires love." (Bakhtiar, 1976, p93)

To review what has been said, the gap between heterodox thought and orthodox thought is parallel to the gap between love and fear, which is deeply located in the existence of two main Islamic approaches to the one God. As we shall see in what follows, this gap is also mirrored in the distinction

between the construction of femininity and masculinity. In proceeding towards this particular direction it should be beared in mind that, the need for love is so cardinal in the eyes of God, that it constitutes the very reason behind the act of creation. Repeatedly, God created this universe beause He wanted(loved) His beauty to be seen. Here lies the evident reciprocity and interconnectedness of love and beauty⁸ ; thus leading us directly to the theme of Divine Beauty.

5.2.2 The Divine Beauty

O Mother, make me mad with
Thy love! What need have I
of knowledge or reason?
Make me drunk with Thy
love's wine; O Thou who
stealest Thy bhakta's
hearts, drown me deep in
the sea of Thy love!

(The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)

Having demonstrated how the cyclical thought is *in love* with the *jamaI* aspect of God, we have arrived at the last turn in our discussion, whih is the construction of femininity. As a matter of fact, until so far, we have been continuously moving around this theme but managing to avoid to discuss it directly. But such a narrative order was necessary, since the depiction of the construction of femininity, both at the Divine and at human level, relies to a large extent on the interpretations made so far. For this reason, here, the construction of

⁸ Perhaps the best indication of the close relation between love and beauty can be found in the Bektashi expression, "Aşkın Cemal olsun!", which is translated into English by J.K. Birge, in the following way: "may your love be rewarded by the happiness of beholding the Divine Beauty."

femininity at Divine level will be forged ahead in two basic steps. Firstly, I will review the *jamal* aspect of God from a distinct perspective, and secondly I will delve into the theme of Divine Beauty.

An overview of the *jamal* aspect of God will reveal out that the adjectives used to define it are exactly those attributed to women in various cultures. For instance, being compassionate, tender, merciful, gentle, ... are highly redolant of feminine traits; while being stern, authoritarian, harsh, severe... are reminiscent of male values. From here it is an easy step to see that the adjectives attached to the *jalal* aspect are those of masculinity. It should be noticed that this kind of reasoning is common to a large variety of cultures; what changes from one to another is not the adjectives attributed to woman or to man, to femininity or masculinity, but the ways these adjectives are evaluated and perceived.

Turning back to the distinction Murata makes, between *yin-jamal* and *yang-jalal* aspects, we should bear in mind that the former is identified with female or femininity, while the latter with male or masculinity. In this way, the *jamal* or *yin* aspect portrays God as a compassionate mother, tender and loving. Whereas the *jalal* or *yang* aspect portrays God as an authoritarian father, ready to punish any disobedience whatsoever. What is more significant for our purpose in this study is that,

The complementarity of Divine Beauty and Majesty is often compared to the complementarity of the feminine and masculine principles, which are manifest in the universe and hidden in the mystic awaiting spiritual union. When the journey is described in terms of love, the

highest form sought, the Beloved, is the feminine principle which is symbolized by the Divine Name of Beauty.(jamal)"(Bakhtiar,1976,p66)

To begin with, the Arabic word *rahim* for "womb", is derived from the same origin as the word for "mercy", that is *rahman*. In other words, "they come from the root r-h-m, which also designates the mother's womb, and thus convey the warm, loving care of the Creator for His creatures." (Schimmel, 1994,p223) It is significant that the mercy and compassion of God are expressed by these words, thus constituting two of the names of God: *ar-rahman ar-rahim*, 'the All-Merciful the All-Compassionate'. It should also be remembered that these two names have a vital role in the lives of Muslims, since they precede every verse of the Qur'an and initiate every single prayer.

It must have been obvious by now that the two main terms denoting the *jamal* aspect of God, that is to say being *rahman* and *rahim*, directly correspond to women and indirectly to femininity. Although in general, the adjectives composing the *jamal* aspect are feminine in origin, the femininity of the former is nowhere more overt than in the employment of the terms *rahman* and *rahim*. One conclusionary remark that may be derived from the ongoing argument is that when God is seen as reachable, near and pardoning, the characteristic aspects of the Divine Being are feminine. In this respect, God's mercy is redolent of a motherly compassion.

When God's similarity with the creature is affirmed, ..., one might say that "She" is a compassionate mother who never fails to look out for the welfare of Her children. (Chittick, 1989,p24)

As to the *jalal* aspect of God, evidently here, the Divine Being is depicted as a punishing, authoritarian father, who sees and knows everything and will weigh the sins and virtues of His children in the Day of Judgment. In brief while the sharia-minded depict a masculine image of the Creator; for the heterodox-minded "God is not primarily a stern and forbidding father, but a warm and loving mother." (Murata, 1992 p9)

This being said the second main way that will take us to the construction of femininity at the Divine level, is the theme of Divine Beauty. To construe this, two points should be conjugated; the first of which is the prioritization of the *jamal* (beauty) aspect of God as the ongoing argument suggests and the second, the interconnectedness that ties every single element along the cycle to another. The conjugation of these two points will demonstrate that just like everything along the cycle shares a Divine essence, though in varying degrees, in a similar way, they share a Divine Beauty.

Understandably, among the "created" it is in the human being that this beauty becomes all the more apparent and intense. In other words, the Beauty of the Divine Being is thought to be mirrored in the face of human beings. The key to this thought is "that which is *batin* (hidden) in God is *zahir* (apparent) in man." (Chodkiewicz, 1993, p37) This will help us to understand why the human face is so much valued in heterodox Islamic discourse. Since it constitutes the bridge that ties the construction of femininity at the Divine level to the construction of femininity at human level, this particular theme merits more attention.

In my opinion, the theme of face or faciality should be given a considerable place in the

studies on Islam. It is well known that, unlike Christianity, in Islamic understanding, the face of the Prophet cannot be depicted and an attempt to the contrary is an unpardonable sin. Likewise, given the base that the *jalal* God is remote, unthinkable and unperceivable it would be a greater sin to think of Him with a face. Be this as it may, Islamic heterodox thought brings out a completely and radically different picture, in which the greatest taboos of orthodoxy are challenged. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this challenge is usually carried out through covert channels, interwoven with a mystical language that is hard to detect for anyone outside the dervish orders. In a land where the social and religious position of orthodoxy has attained an undeniable power, the reasons for this secrecy should be apparent to everyone.

In chapter three the cardinal place attributed to the human being in cyclical thought has been explored. Now we should add that, the heterodox dervish, firmly believing that "wherever you turn, there is the face of God" and that "God created this world to see His own beauty", sees all the existing things, as manifesting the divine beauty, although in different degrees and ways. Apparently, there is no limit to this thinking. Whether it is a woman, a man, a child, a flower or a raindrop that is concerned, the mirror that reflects this beauty can be perfectly attained. Nevertheless, since God says "We created the human being in the most beautiful stature" (Qur'an, 95:4) it is in the human face that not only the most consummated form of Divine Beauty, but the very secret of the universe can be found.

The desire to see and attain the face of God (*didar-ı Hak*) is so persistent and strong that it

may bring along the obliteration of all formal religious rules and prerequisites. Just like the religion of the heterodox dervishes is "the religion of love", the kible of the dervish is the face of the Beloved. Whatever the being in which Divine Feminine Beauty is attested, it is to be worshipped and extolled. Just like Mawlana indicates, the external aspects of religion are to be subjugated to the grandness and splendour of this process.

If the picture of our Beloved
is found in a heathen temple,
it is an error to encircle the Ka'bah:
if the Ka'bah is deprived
of its sweet smell, it is a synagogue;
and if in the synagogue we feel
the sweet smell of union with him,
it is our Ka'bah.

(Noss, 1990, p565)

The traces of this approach can be best attained in the Hurufi literature. Herein, it is believed that in the human face the name of Allah is written⁹. Since this is an extremely rich approach that cannot be discussed here, I would solely like to underline that, by resorting to a mystic interpretation of the Arabic letters and numbers, the Hurufis maintain that the human, being the supreme revaluation of God, should be worshipped.

The face of Reality (didar-ı Hak) is covered with the twenty eight and thirty two letters and these are manifested in the face of man representing the Beauty of God and the form of Merciful. (Birge, 1965, p158)

⁹ The Hurufi literature contains a fascinating line of reasoning in which every letter corresponds to a number, through which the secrets can be attained. This method is applied to an enormously wide range of issues, from attaining the real and hidden meaning of the Qur'anic verses to solving the puzzles of the universe.

Two further examples can be illuminating.

Thy Face is the Preserved Tablet
Thy word explains its meaning
The gnostic knows its inner sense
The ignorant(Sunni) falls into error.
(Birge, 1965,p115)

Thy face is the Pilgrimage,
the visit of the Sacred Places.
Thy face is the kible
Thy face consists of the
kernel of the Kuran.
(Birge, 1965, p185)

Accordingly, broadly stating, a Mawlawi¹⁰ or a Bektashi does not make a rigid distinction between the worldly beauty s/he is confronted with and that of the Divine Being. To the contrary, to see a beauty delights the dervish. Given the belief that God is neither remote nor unattainable, both the manifestation of divine beauty and the motivating force of life can be encountered here. It is not surprising to find out then that,

A woman with a charming beauty is according to a large number of people who take the *ijtihad* as their base, the reflection of Evil in human form, while for the Sufis she is the reflection of Allah(Sabbah,1992, p14)

These being said, it should be stressed that the manifestation of Divine Beauty is better attested in a woman or in a man that practices *char darb*, which entails to shave all the hair in the

¹⁰ The same pattern can be encountered in the intimate relation between Mawlana and Shams-i Tebrizi. As tradition conveys, Mawlana sees the reflection of Divine Beauty in the face of the latter. For more information see, A. Özattilla, "Hak Aşığı Mevlana Celaleddin"(Ankara, 1973)

head. Just like the feminine *jamal* aspect implies beauty and love, these are most intensely and visibly found in a woman than a man. Being devoid of a beard or moustache, the face of a woman directly reflects the Divine Beauty or God's *jamal* aspect. As I will demonstrate in what follows, the dervishes practising *char darb* do not possess an image of a virile man. The beauty that is reflected in their faces is a feminine beauty. Herein we come across to a theme common in almost all cultures; that is to say the identification of the notion of beauty with female or femininity. One of the most fascinating features in Sufi literature is connected to the symbolism of woman and to the construction of femininity along these lines of thought.

To the Sufis, the symbols found in women are Divine realities; for she is the place of a Divine manifestation. The symbolism of woman is most often found in Sufi poetry, where a highly technical language of love was formed. (Bakhtiar, 1976, p68)

To review what been said in this section three interrelated points should be underlined. First and foremost, the *jamal* aspect of God is simultaneously the feminine aspect of God, which leads us to the intricate relation between beauty and love. Secondly, the cycle of the permanent moment entails that the Divine Feminine Beauty can be manifested in everything and everywhere. Thirdly, nonetheless, it is in the human being and especially in the human face that it becomes all the more apparent and extolled. Among the human beings, it is in the face of females that the intensification and apparentness of Divine Feminine Beauty reaches its apex. This being said, I may now

proceed into the construction of femininity at the human level.

5.2.3 Becoming Woman

All becoming is minoritarian.
Deleuze

Do not let lascivious mirth
reduce you to your sex.
Conquer the woman;
conquer the flesh;
conquer desire.

Osbert of Clare
(mid-twelfth century)

Previously, I had contended that the cycle of the permanent moment was composed of two main arcs, one designating ascent and the other descent. What was left untouched then was the cardinal point that in dervish thought, the *jamal* names are identified with the arc of ascent, while the *jalal* names are directly associated with the arc of descent. More precisely, "The mystic invokes God through the Names of Beauty, because they symbolize ascent, whereas the Names of Majesty refer to the descent of creation." (Bakhtiar, 1976, p14) Therefore, in the quest for God, the *jamal* aspect of God is much more significant and valued.

All the Divine Names and Qualities are often described as aspects of one or the other; it is through the Names of Majesty that the world is created and the mystic returns through the Names of Beauty. (Bakhtiar, 1976, p67)

It is crucial to bear in mind for the development of the following argument that the goal of

the mystic is to ascend along the cycle of the permanent moment to be united with God. This ascendance on the other hand, entails to abandon gradually the identity that one possesses at this particular time and place. This gradual process goes hand in hand with beoming near and near to God.

Apparently, moving upwards along the cycle and beoming near to the Divine Feminine beauty implies to increasingly acquire the features that the latter possesses. More precisely, the journey along the arc of ascent requires the femininization of the heterodox dervish. And this is exactly the process I will name as "becoming woman".

To begin with, one recurrent notion that operates in dervish parlance is to "die before you die" (*ölmeden önce ölmek*) This is a turning point in the life of the dervish. From then on he is not what he was before. My suggestion at this point is that the stage that comes after this cardinal point is a process of femininization. To be able to grasp how this operates a brief survey of the internal developments in other religions can be extremely helpful. To this end, I shall briefly refer to Christian and Jewish mysticism, as well as Taoist understanding.

At this stage we should notice that the extolation of femininity and the identification of both love and beauty with women is a common pattern in the mystic formations of both Christianity and Judaism. The feminine persona of Divine Wisdom in the former is named as *Sophia*, and her descendant and counterpart in Jewish mysticism was called *Shekinah*. Furthermore, as far as our evidence reveals, the personification

of love as a female figure extends back to centuries before.¹¹ What is more significant for me here, is the process of applying the features of *Sophia* or *Shekinah* to women per se and the conclusionary remarks that have been derived from this line of reasoning. In the case of Judaism, *Shekinah* played a paramount role as it paved the way to a transition from the male and authoritarian God of Moses to the female and tender God of Jewish mystics.

Along with the tendency in the Kabbala to accent the interaction of male and female principles operating in the order of the world, there was a further step of introducing the feminine principle into the concept of divinity. (Noss, 1990, p433)

An important source that will be highly revealing in the Christian case is *De Nobilitate et Praecellentia Foeminal Sexus* (On The Nobility and Superiority of the Female Sex) which has been written in sixteenth century Renaissance Europe by Cornelius Agrippa.¹² The author, among other things, emphasized the reverence for occult virtues that were attached to female body, the feminine beauty as an act of worship and the applicability of the biblical verses

¹¹ This female figure was named as *Caritas* by 12th century Christian mystics. The same emphasis is mirrored in the philosophy of various groups, such as the Troubadors, Trouveres, Minnesingers. Interestingly, this theme has been integrated into Beguine literature, to whom reference was made before to indicate the heritage they received from the Armenian Pauliciens who had close relations with the Islamic heterodoxy in Asia Minor, as *La Mystique Courtoise*, in 13th century.

¹² C. Agrippa was a highly respected scholar at the University of Dole in Burgundy. After he wrote this book he was fired and severely persecuted. It was only 20 years later, in 1529, that he could find a way to publish his book again. He never gave up defending those women that were accused of witchcraft. In brief, he was a man who continuously and firmly opposed the gender ideology prevalent at his time.

describing Sophia to women. He further maintained that since woman was last to be created, she was the goal of the entire act of creation, and hence, she should be worshipped. Likewise, he claimed that man's desire for woman was tantamount to his desire for God. Last but not least, he believed in an androgynous God. Agrippa, and the Christian mystics who followed his footsteps and who were generally women, defended a "feminized Christianity", to use the term employed by B. Newman. Unfortunately, this movement was severely crushed by the Reformation.

My suggestion at this particular stage is that the main patterns found in Agrippa's book are reminiscent of the discursive practice of Islamic heterodoxy. Before expatiating this however, it may be useful to reread some of the main themes operative in the writings of one of the greatest Islamic mystics, Ibn al-Arabi¹³. His views merit additional attention since "the female element plays an important role in Ibn Arabi's system so that he even sees in woman the highest manifestation of the Divine." (Schimmel, 1982, p148)

Ibn al-Arabi devoted the last chapter of his *Fusus al-Hikam* (Bezels of Wisdom) to the hadith of the Prophet, in which it was said, "God has made dear to me from your world perfume and women, and my consolidation is in prayer." He maintained that the Divine Being was best reflected in woman than in man.

¹³ Ibn al-Arabi studied under two women, Fatima of Cordova and Shams of Marchena, in 13th century Spain. Among these Fatima of Cordova, probably more than 90 years old at that time, was a woman of extraordinary wisdom and power. For the biographical sketches of these two women see Ibn al-Arabi's "Sufis of Andalusia" (trans. R.J. Austin, Berkeley, 1971). The third woman that left a deep impact on Ibn al-Arabi's life was a Persian lady named Nizam, whom he met on his way to Mecca. The fourth woman that he continuously praised was his daughter Zainab, whom he saw as superior than men in theological matters.

Furthermore, just like Agrippa, he thought that woman was the most consummated form of divine beauty and man's search for God was at the very same time his search for the woman. According to him, "the longing of the gnostics toward women is the longing of the whole toward its part,..." (Murata, 1992, p181)

Interestingly, the poems he wrote to a woman named *Nizam*, were so strongly interwoven with a mystical language that it was not easy to tell whether they were written for the Divine Being or for a woman. This is why the *Tarjuman al-Ashwaq* was deeply suspected by the legalist Muslims in Aleppo and Ibn al-Arabi had to defend himself before a jury. Once more, "the open question here is, as so often, whether the beautiful beloved is human or Divine." (Schimmel, 1992, p34) And as the ongoing argument suggests, it is more often a question of whether a woman or God is being revered and praised. No matter which particular side is concerned, evidently, it is femininity that is being adored and looked for.

A very similar approach is mirrored in the expressions and philosophy of Mawlana. According to him, "all earthly beauty is but the reflection of Heavenly Beauty,..." (Iqbal, 1991, p239) This is why, as the tradition conveys, when he saw Shams, he said that what he once thought as God, he now met in person. More significantly for the ongoing argument, he, too, contended that since 'woman is the highest type of earthly beauty, it is in the female face that the Divine Beauty is best reflected. He even contends that "She is creative, you might say she is not created." (Iqbal, 1991, p103) More precisely,

You must know that God cannot
be seen apart from matter and
that He is seen more perfectly

in the human matter than in
any other, and more perfectly
in woman than in man.

The combination of a mystic language with
an erotic language that was found in Ibn al-Arabi's
poems, can be also witnessed in the Diwan of Mawlana
translated by R.Nicholson.

Show thy face, for I desire
the orchard and the rose-garden;
Open thy lips, for I desire
sugar in plenty. 'Vex me no more,'
thou saidst capriciously, 'begone!'
I desire that saying of thine,
'Vex me no more'. In one hand a
wine-cup and in one hand a curl
of the beloved; such a dance in
the midst of the market-place
is my desire.

The same emphasis is perhaps more overtly
reverberated in Bektashi literature. Here the Beloved is
usually named as *Canan*, obviously a feminine word. Apart
from the hagiography of Haji Bektash¹⁴, countless poems
can be illuminating for the ongoing argument. Here I
will give two examples, from Nesimi and Pir Sultan
Abdal. The first is a striking example of the
combination of the heterodox parlance with erotic
language, where it is hard to detain whether the poem
is written for a woman or for God. Interestingly, here,
while some verses remind the reader of the Divine, some
others directly bring into mind a female beloved. In
this sense, the poem presents us such a confusing

¹⁴ Tradition conveys that one day Haji Bektash and Sadeddin passed by two donkeys copulating. When Haji Bektash asked Sadeddin in which donkey's shoes he would like to be, the latter replied that he wanted to be in the upper place, that is in the male donkey's place. This answer annoyed Haji Bektash who said the following words. "Tohumun kurusun, hala softalık gönlün kurumamış. Altındakiyim deyip, vericilerden olsan ne olurdu?"

scheme that it is not easy to denote what exactly is the object of love concerned here. The employment of the term *fitna*, which is a direct indication of a female aspect of seduction, greatly intensifies the existing confusion.

The second example is a critical answer to those who maintain that women are inferior. Here, the poet attempts to demonstrate that there can be no gender discrimination in Bektashi path.

Canda olsan da anda gizlisin
Candan ayrı değilsin, olsa olsa
Canın ta kendisisin.
Kimse senden belirti vermezse de
Yer ve gök dolusu bütün belirti sensin.
Senin benden gizli olduğunu
Nasıl söyleyeyim?
Neye bakarsam onda gözükersün.
Yanağın güzellikte ayı uda boğar.
Demek sen, haber verdikleri
Ahir zaman fitnesisin.

(Özmen, 1995, p265)

Mücerredim deyü dava kılanlar
Murtaza Kırkların başı değil mi
İmamların anası, Kırkların aynası
Fatıma, Ali'nin eşi değil mi

Bilmem küstah mıdır adama tapan
Adamın başında güllere konan
Dişi kuş değil mi yuvayı yapan
Erkek aslan ise eşi değil mi

Anamız Havva'dır, atamız Adem
Anlardan ayrılmaz yüzümüz bir dem
Anamız Havva'ya hor bakan adem
İzzetin hışmından şaşı değil mi

One final theme that I will briefly explore here is the recurrent metaphor of bridal chamber. This is the point where the combination of *egos* and *agape*, that is to say erotic and spiritual love, as

well as the femininity of God, becomes all the more obvious. This conceptualization can be easily seen in Christian Gnosticism, where "the mystics' quest for God is often expressed in terms of love of bridegroom and bride,..." (Peters, 1990, p1022) As it is stated in Bernard of Clairvaux's meditation on the Song of Songs.

The Bridegroom is not only loving, He is love... God demands to be feared as Lord; to be honored as Father; as Bridegroom to be loved. Which of these is the highest, which the noblest? Love, we cannot doubt. (Peters, 1990, p1022)

As a matter of fact, "in the mystery of the bridal chamber the Gnostics claimed that they experienced supernatural union with Deity, an experience that could not be expressed in words." (Nigg, 1962, p38) In Islamic mysticism, and especially in Mawlawi thought, union with God is a wedding which should be celebrated.¹⁵ 'Being married to God' is an expression that is frequently employed in the poems of Mawlana.

Rescue this man from his moustache
Curling so proudly, while inside he
tears his hair. Married to God,
Married to God, but pretending not.
(Jaoudi, 1993, p64)

In concluding, it should be reiterated that femininity is constructed at two interlinked levels, one indicating the Divine and the other the human, in Bektashi and Mawlawi thought. While the former implies to extol the *jamal* aspect of God, the latter

¹⁵ This is why the day when Mawlana died, is called the *Shab-i Aruz*, meaning the wedding day. On this special day one is expected not to lament but to make celebrations. This is why the Mawlawis', dancing and singing at the funerals of their companions has aroused bitter criticism among orthodox circles in Konia.

comprises to get nearer and nearer to the Divine by acquiring at least a feminine tinge. All that has been said in this respect is redolant of Taoist thinking in which the yin and yang values should be harmonized and balanced. If one side is lacking or smaller in degree the Tao cannot be reached.

Furthermore, here too the female body and femininity are seen as the creative power of Tao. Hence, this constitutes the reason why Taoist men, in the search for inner realities, have imitated women and pretended to be female¹⁶. It should be noticed that, "this imitation goes beyond the use of women's traditionally passive social role as a model." (Reed, p173) In case of the dervishes in concern in this study, this means searching the feminine, that was lost and left behind in the *arc of descent*.

In sum, the construction of femininity along the cycle of the permanent moment, operating at two fundamental levels, has paramount repercussions. Among these, perhaps the most important are the challenge of the masculine, stern and authoritarian God and His replacement with feminine traits. Since everything in the great cycle is connected in an intimate way, this line of thinking does not stop here and is directly mirrored at the human level.

Therefore, the dervish in the *arc of ascent*, not only values and adores feminine qualities, but at the very same time, restlessly intends to

¹⁶ In Taoist thought it is frequently maintained that men should cultivate feminine qualities. This emphasis has led to a wide range of practices, from atrophy of male genitals to urinating in the position of females. Interestingly, Lü T'ung-pin goes even further and claims to be pregnant. As a matter of fact, pregnancy is a key model in Taoist philosophy for anyone who wants to attain immortality. On this theme, see B. Reed's "Taoism", in "Women in World Religions". (ed. A. Sharma, New York, 1987)

acquire these. This is mainly because otherwise, neither the consummation of beauty nor the transformation of the divine essence from potentiality to actuality, can be realized. These being underlined, now I will concentrate on the implications of this fascinating construct for Muslim women.

5.3 THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE JAMAL ASPECT FOR MUSLIM WOMEN

Having seen the construction of femininity at two fundamental levels, I would like to bring this chapter to an end by focusing on the implications of what has been told so far, in the lives of individual Muslim women. To this end, I shall take two further steps. Firstly, I will explore the relation between femininity and women, which are obviously different things despite their intimacy. It should also be noted that, the *jamal* aspect that has been elaborated so far cannot be seen as a characteristic emphasis present in the discursive practices of Muslim women. Likewise, it cannot be said that the *jalal* aspect is an internal feature of male parlance. In other words, though the notion of *jamal* God entails a feminine aspect, and correspondingly, *jalal* God implies a masculine aspect, these points should not lead us to conclude that the former is praised by Muslim women or the latter by Muslim men. The undeniable fact that a large number of women directly and deliberately praise the masculine aspect of the Divine, should remind us of the necessity to refrain from rapidly drawing such conclusions. These and other points make it necessary to explore the relation between femininity and women.

Secondly, in the light of the information provided so far, I will attempt to expatiate some of the alternative roads open to women in Muslim countries. This will help us to see how religious women have tended to move in or look for alternative paths, where the traditional roads have circumscribed them into pre-given areas.

It should also be noticed that, though I have not dealt with the contemporary state of nonorthodox Islamic formations, the story I have been talking about is not a past and bygone affair. Rather, its traces can be attested today at various parts of the Muslim world, though certainly in different ways, due to the impact of historical transformations.¹⁷ This is to say that, the realm that has been analysed in this study still continues to develop a distinct Islamic understanding than the orthodox one and still provides alternative roads for Muslim women.

5.3.1 The Relation of Complementarity

Just as the Dao encompasses
both yang and yin values,
holding them in balance,
so the wise human being of
either sex will internalize both.

(D. Noss)

¹⁷ One particular example that can be given from 19th century, is about Babism which emerged under the leadership of Mirza Muhammed Ali in 1826. He declared himself as the Bab (door) and the manifestation of the jamal aspect of God. He was executed in Tabriz and his followers severely persecuted. One of the most noteworthy supporters of Bab was a remarkable woman named as Kurret-ül Ayn. She was accused of heresy and burned. Her successors were later on to establish another branch within Babism, called as Kurretiye. On this theme see S. Özbudun's "8 Mart'tan 8 Mart'a mı?" (İstanbul, 1995, p38-56) Both Babism and the Bahai religion that was derived from it stressed the complete equality of the two sexes and attracted a large number of women.

While discussing one of the various Islamic constructions of femininity, I have deliberately refrained from merging several notions by putting the concept of femininity in the foreground. In other words, just like "sex, sexuality, sexual relations and sexual division are different phenomena" (Coward, 1983, p9) "femininity" and "woman" are not identical. Therefore, the analysis made so far has revolved around the construction of femininity, rather than around women or the position of women in Bektashi and Mawlawi formations. Nevertheless, my contention is that the conclusions derived from the former may shed some light on the operation of the latter. While this will be done in the second part of this particular section, here, I would like make some additional remarks about the notion of femininity.

In popular and/or dominant parlance, it is customary to construct femininity and masculinity within a mutually exclusive ground. From this widespread perspective masculinity is associated with strength, activeness, rationality, dominance, public realm..., while femininity is identified with weakness, passiveness, emotionality, submissiveness, private realm, ...etc. This categorization seems to show little change in various cultures. What changes radically, instead, is the values with which these are attached. In other words, the notion of passivity, for instance, is likely to be perceived in a different way by a Taoist when compared with a modern Western wo/man. While for the former passivity is a notion to be praised in a society dominated with yang values, for the latter it has a negative connotation. This is exactly why it would be a great mistake to automatically jump into the conclusion that where passivity is seen as a feminine trait, women are seen inferior. Therefore, it is

important that this cultural or philosophical differences be kept in mind.

As to the repeatedly mentioned question of the prioritization of femininity, it should be noted that it has widespread repercussions in almost every single aspect of social and individual life.

Maleness and femaleness are archetypal forces. They constitute different ways of relating to life, to the world, and to the opposite sex. The repression of femininity, therefore, affects mankind's relation to the cosmos no less than the relation of individual men and women to each other. (Whitmont, 1987, p123)

At this stage it is vitally important to underline that femininity and masculinity cannot be seen as falling automatically within the categorical distinction between woman and man. Cyclical thought expresses this point very clearly. Within this framework, both masculinity and femininity exist in each sex, though in differing degrees. While the former is more intense in males, the latter is more dominant in females. As suggested, "applied to men and women, the most we can claim is that somatically at least, male trends preponderate in men and female ones in women." (Whitmond, 1987, p142) This is mainly why, this is not a matter of either/or. Put differently,

Contrary to the popular dichotomization (male:strong; female, weak, and so on) there is the established fact that both masculinity and femininity coexist in each person....Realizing this, we are then able to make the deliberate move of selecting a different and more appropriate axis than strong/weak, dominant/submissive one, to envision the

masculine/feminine polarity co-existing
in and between all.(King, 1995, p181)

With these in mind, it should be noted that various cultures that are rich in feminine imagery are also repugnant with practices both emanating from and fortifying gender discrimination. The case of Hinduism which is a notable example in this regard, demonstrates that the richness in feminine symbols is not a direct indication of gender equality. The other side of this process does also merit attention. This is to say that the richness in masculine symbols is and cannot be a direct reference to the valuation of one sex at the expense of the other.

Failure to notice these cardinal points, "... makes us see discrimination against women, primarily, where we must deal with a repression of femininity in women and men." (Whitmont, 1987, p127) This is the basic reason why, in this study, I have deliberately refrained from asserting that the extolment of femininity in Islamic heterodox thought implied an automatic improvement of women per se.

Be that as it may, it is also a valid argument to maintain that one notable pillar of patriarchal ideologies is the repression and degradation of those aspects associated with femininity. As it has been contended before, the binary classification of male and female is usually, and especially in Western thought, constitutive of the devaluation of the features identified with the latter. Understandably, just like it is the case in every dichotomous construct, here too, the sustenance of each particular side serves to feed and strengthen the maintenance of the other. As such, "the devaluation

of femininity is an intrinsic feature of the dominant culture during the epoch of patriarchal ego development." (Whitmont, 1987, p121) Thus, for instance, it will not make sense not to attest how the misogyny of Saint Augustine or Aristotle is linked to their negative construction of femininity.

One further point that I would like to sketch is about "becoming woman." It is well known that today, just like in the past, a large number of women intend and manage to diminish their feminine image and to replace it with a masculine image. The history of religions demonstrates that this has been a method continuously applied by women in various religions, to exist within a "man's world". While in Islamic mysticism the most noteworthy example of this kind of women is Rabi'a, in the history of Christianity we encounter the theme of "virile women" (*femina virilis*). In other words, here, pious women are either deemed to be genderless or manlike.

The reverberation of this pattern is perhaps all the more obvious in Christianity where female is to male as body is to spirit; thus, demanding from those women that wanted to climb the ecclesiastical ladder upwards, the achievement of a sexless, pure and angelic position. Understandably, abandoning the mundane, bodily and thus feminine traits was tantamount to becoming male. Nonetheless, "the emergence of a few virile women in no way undermined the entrenched belief in female inferiority." (Newman, 1995, p5) This is indicative of the fact that,

Sex changes most often reflect culturally perceived notions of prestige associated with gender. In general, when women change into or disguise themselves as men they become heroic, but when men reverse their

gender it often leads to powerlessness and humiliation. (Young,1993,pXXV)

We are therefore confronted on the most fundamental level with two main strategies, that could be employed by religious women. The first strategy entailed to deny femininity and to become virile, which obviously made little change in the popular depiction of male superiority. The second strategy corresponded to the appropriation of femininity or the possibility of ascending for women, qua women. This is all the more striking given the ubiquitous fact that it is usually the other way round; that is to say women's desiring to become male but not men's attempting to become female. Understood in this way, while the former strategy implied a degradation of femininity, the second brought along its extolation by both men and women. My suggestion at this point is that, the maintenance of the second strategy constituted an attractive realm for women where the potential for alternative roads was undeniably great.

Lastly and retrospectively, as it has been indicated in the analysis of Ebussuud's *jalal* God, the theme of fear, authority, as well as the rigidification of the boundary line between the Creator and the created, served to the entrenchment of other categorical divisions. In this way, the distance between God and human beings, went hand in hand with the distance between 'the learned men' and the 'rest of the community', between *haram* and *helal*, ...etc. Likewise, the distance drawn between the two sexes was a *sine qua non* for the operation of the whole complex mechanism. It is therefore important to notice that the challenge of the *jalal* aspect of God possessed a paramount potential to challenge an intricate web of relations, institutions and patterns that directly and strongly connected to it.

5.3.2 Alternative Routes for Muslim Women

The role of women in the history of religions is generally either completely ignored or attenuated by the majority of the existing studies. It is as if women have not existed at all; or have merely submitted themselves to the pre-given religious norms and structures, so that in the final analysis, there is not much to talk about their participation and contribution in the history of religions. In my opinion the main reason lying behind this negative situation is the persistent tendency to discuss this particular realm within the traditional confines of a gender-blind academic structure. This is to say that it is not because these scholars are misogynist that the role of women in the history of religions remains invisible, but generally because of the character of the main themes analysed and the basic analytical tools used in those researches.

As such, once more we arrive at the well-known and previously mentioned distinction between 'core studies' and 'marginal studies'. In the realm of the history of religions, the former is constituted mainly of the analyses of theology, religious institutions, sacred books and commands, as well as the personalities of religious leaders. Unfortunately for our argument, all these particular themes are at the very same time areas from which women have been usually excluded. Given the cardinal fact that, in the main areas elaborated by the scholars women have almost never been active, there is nothing much surprising in the negligence of their role in the history of religions. Repeatedly,

Scholarship on the history of religions has tended to ignore the participation of women, most often unintentionally, by

focusing on literary sources such as scripture, myths, doctrinal works and the actions of religious institutions that denied women access. (Ferguson, 1995, pX)

This pattern is also highly existent in the studies on the religious history of Islam. In the introduction of this study I had claimed that Islam was usually understood as a monolithic, static whole in itself and its analyses were largely confined either to its scriptural or orthodox dimensions. Again, just like it is the case in other religions, in Islam these constitute the most notable areas where women's entrance and activity have been to a large extent barred. In brief, my suggestion is that theology or the areas included under the title of 'grand religion' were much more inclined to tell women to remain silent and passive, than the other areas that one may come across in the history of religions. Mysticism -or heterodoxy, gnosticism, esotericism...etc- is only one of these alternative areas where women could and did participate. As suggested,

Because most patriarchal cultures have barred women from possessing political power in religious institutions and have neglected the education of women, preventing them from contributing to religious literature, the participation of women in religion has been largely on the popular level. (Ferguson, 1995, pXI)

In recent years, feminist theologians or women's historians have insisted upon the necessity of looking for other subjects of analysis, than theology or religious institutions or sacred scripture, if we want to understand where and how women have been active and producing. The acknowledgement of this criticism

will lead us directly to the difference between theology and mysticism, or between authority and experience.

It is worth stressing that the overall composition of the realm of theology is strongly dependent upon how God is perceived and depicted. This is to say that the male dominance characterizing this realm is interrelated with the prioritization of the masculine God. The authority and power of the Creator over the created, is mirrored in the relation of the theologians or the learned men in our case, over the rest of the community.

Theology has traditionally been alien territory for women. This is not just because, as with many other disciplines, it was a male preserve. God-talk itself has remained a captive of the human predilection to conceive of the absolute in masculine imagery and terminology. (King, 1995, p121)

When we turn our attention to a feminine God, the whole situation changes radically. Here, fear is replaced with love, communalism with individualism, religious knowledge with experience and the outer forms with the inner realities. Each in turn possesses a significant potential in itself to open new routes to women. After all, like thirteenth century Lamprecht of Regensbury stated, "women were wiser mystics, because they were better lovers." (Newman, 1995, p137)

As it has been elaborated before mystical, cyclical or heterodox approach emphasizes the quest for the Divine Being, which is primarily seen as an individual quest. Since it is individual, no authority can shape or determine this quest. And this is exactly

where a golden opportunity lies for women. Where the authorities tell them to remain within the pre-given boundaries of external (*zahiri*) religion, they may find a way to inner (*batini*) realities. More precisely, where the *shari'a* expects them to conform to the prescribed rules and patterns, the *tariqa* gives a chance to question and even transcend these.

Likewise, where the communalistic tendencies within Islam subjugate the individual to the *umma*; the personalistic tendencies of cyclical thought encourages the quest of God as a personal discovery. Thus, while the former tends to strive for a communal homogeneity and thus, remains intolerant to any disobedience, deviance or nonconformity of whatsoever; in the case of the latter there are 'as many ways to God, as the number of people in this world'. This is mainly why mysticism has been so attractive for many women all around the world. "Women have always been prominent in the Islamic religion, especially with regard to Islamic mysticism." (Schimmel, 1982, p76) As suggested,

Spiritual growth has a special attraction for women from all world religions. It allows them to approach the deity, unencumbered with regulations imposed by male authorities. (Ferguson, 1995, p241)

It should also be beared in mind that just like the basic distinction between "I" and "Thou" is obliterated at the final stage in cyclical thought, where the lover and Beloved merge into one another, there all the existing categorical distinctions will disappear. Thus, there will and may be no question of sex. It should also be noticed that this is not an all-of-a-sudden change, but a gradual change. Thus, the

journey along the cycle brings along, at every subsequent step, the gradual decline of the binding power of the existing categorical distinctions. As the early mystics so recurrently emphasized,

The final stage and state of mystical attainment is the experience of divine knowledge and vision in which the mystic becomes one with the Beloved, and abides in the beloved forever. In such a relationship between the mystic and the beloved there is no room for the distinction of sex. (Naskali, 1983, p238)

Perhaps, the argument that is being pushed here is nowhere more apparent than in the expressions of one of the greatest Islamic mystics, F. Attar. As he contends. "In the Unity, what remains of the existence of "I" and "thou"? So how can 'man' or 'woman' continue to be?" (Naskali, 1983, p239)

It should also be reiterated that, the processes and deductions through which the extolment of femininity was from time to time applied directly to women, per se, did brought further advantages and undermined the dominant belief in the inferiority of women. Almost echoing Agrippa, Ibn al-Arabi maintained,

Whoever knows the worth of women and the moving mystery reposing in them will not refrain from loving them; indeed, love for them is part of the perfection of a man knowing God for it is a legacy of the Prophet and a Divine Love. (Walther, 1981, p19)

A final point that I would like to elucidate is directly related to the paramount role played by the tariqas in the history of Islam. Although

there were no monasteries in Islam, from the early years onwards, there were established a large number of convents or tekkes, where women could join. In fact, much more than simply joining into an already existing framework, women directly influenced the shaping of institutional and philosophical developments in this realm. While at some times and places they had their own tekkes and their own *mürids*; at some other times they operated on the same ground with men, in the same tekke, under the same *pir*.

While the case of the Mawlawis is generally redolant of the former¹⁸, the case of the Bektashis falls in the latter group, where there is no gender segregation neither in theory nor practice. As it has been indicated before, this constituted the greatest reason behind the accusations of sexual misconduct, that they had to face at each age.

As the ongoing argument suggests, three interrelated points should be underlined. Firstly, as we have seen in the analysis of the construction of femininity "among the Sufis, the Islamic mystics, women were more highly esteemed than in orthodox Islam." (Walther, 1981, p31) Although this may seem as a difference in degrees, it is still obvious that in such a way there emerged at least a potential on behalf of women, in the former case.

Secondly, not only the theoretical valuation of femininity but the interrelated mechanisms of love, personalism, and experience pave the way further, as basic channels through which women could

¹⁸ Mawlawi women, as Gölpınarlı conveys, were notable with the power they maintained in the order, and which they gradually lost. One remarkable example is Arife-i Hoş-Likaa, who was the *halife* of Mawlana in Tokat. She had a large number of *mürids* from both sexes, an undeniable authority and power.

and did move. In this way, where the learned hierarchy's or scriptural Islam's doors were strictly closed, the personalistic tendencies of the dervishes, as well as the emphasis on individual experience of whatever sex, invited many women into the mystic or heterodox formations.

Thirdly, the institutional aspect of the tariqas inhabited a significant potential for women¹⁹, where they could either establish their own semiautonomous tekkes or directly take part, along with men, in shaping the praxis of nonorthodox Islam. This is why some scholars have even contended that "mysticism was the only religious sphere where women could find a place." (Trimingham, 1971, p18)

In short, the argument pushed forward has not been that heterodox Islam provided gender equality, whereas orthodox Islam meant complete submission for women. There seems to be no valid source to indicate the presence of such a duality. This is mainly why, rather than leaping into such rapidly and easily drawn conclusions, the emphasis here has been on the depiction of the heterodox potential for Muslim women's activeness and self-development, by demonstrating the implications of merely one of the many Islamic constructions of femininity.

¹⁹ Both in the Ottoman Empire and in other parts of the Muslim world, there have been established women's tekkes, though these have been poorly studied and elucidated. One notable example is the House of Zainab, in Algeria. As far as our evidence reveals, she did not only struggle against the French army in Algeria, but against her Muslim companions who maintained that a woman could and should not be their leader. Despite these obvious obstacles she managed to lead the convent life and play a determining role in the tariqa, until her death. The House of Zainab has been studied in J.C. Smith's "The House of Zainab: Female Authority and Saintly Succession in Colonial Algeria", in "Women in Middle Eastern History" (ed. B. Baron and N. Keddie, London, 1991)

CONCLUSION

Deleuze stated that there was no difference between what a book talked about and how it was made. In my opinion, this is exactly the case with this particular study. In its overall organization, I have followed the internal steps of the subject that I have been talking about, that is to say the 'stages along the path'. More precisely, just like in Bektashi and Mawlawi thought of dervishes, there are interrelated stages that should be transcended to reach the so-long desired goal; here, too, the arrival of one of the Islamic constructions of femininity was preceded by four main chapters that moved from the general to the specific.

Evidently, this meant to draw a rather oblique path. Nonetheless, without the transcendence of these stages, or the elaboration of several fundamental themes located in each single chapter, the construction of femininity in cyclical thought could not have been appropriately expanded. My contention is that, every single chapter, as well as the subtitles that these contained, provided us with additional tools and their interconnectedness facilitated to perceive the intricate web of relations among which the construction of femininity tended to operate.

As to the question why I have moved from the general to the specific, such a route did not stem from pure deductionism, but from the theme of love, so cardinal in heterodox thought and practice. To clarify this point, again following Deleuze, we may ask,

What does it mean to love somebody? It's always to seize that person in a mass,

extract him or her from a group, in which s/he participates; then to find that person's own packs. To join them to mine, to make them penetrate mine and for me to penetrate the other person's. (Deleuze, 1987, p63)

And this is the way I have proceeded in this study. In the first chapter, the subject was seized in the general panorama in which it had been moving all throughout the centuries. This was the realm of the history of religions and the history of Islam. Just like the beloved is seized in his/her own 'pack', the people subject to the *fatwa* of the Shayh al-Islam were similarly seized in the concatenation of power relations, distinct Islamic understandings and various historical actors.

The arguments forged here were reinforced by a critique of the reductionist rereadings and reinterpretations of a too broadly drawn and unfortunately, too often taken-for-granted term of "Islam". The same process was applied to the literature on "Islam and woman", where the basic fallacies recurrently emerging in this area were brought under scrutiny. The remarks made here, did at the same time, provide a preparatory stage for the arguments and analyses to follow.

Then, having seized the focus of attention in the general ambient in which it operated, my next step has been to extract it from there. Thus, in the following chapter, I have begun to dwell separately on the theme derived. This process consisted of two main turning points; through which, firstly, the material and historical development of the Bektashi and Mawlawi orders were investigated and secondly, their mentality

was illuminated by resorting to a key notion, that is 'the cycle of the permanent moment.'

This is exactly where I have attempted to find the subject's own packs or pluralities. The most notable among these have been closely connected to the triple relation between "love-lover-beloved". While they altogether revolved around an evidently common ground, still, at the very same time, each one of them addressed the different aspects of cyclical thought. As such, the theme of love brought along the dynamism and interconnectedness of the cycle; while the theme of lover guided the discussion on the meaning of the human being in dervish parlance.

As to the theme of Beloved, it paved the way to the elaboration of an intimate construct that radically departed from the hierarchically drawn orthodox understanding of Creator and created. This last theme, did also function so as to build a bridge to the two distinct aspects of the one God. Understandably, each pack analysed and detected in this chapter, were on the one hand, the one and same thing and on the other hand, each was plural and distinct in itself, thus helping to depict the dynamic components of the subject studied.

This was the route which brought us to the last turn in our discussion, that is to say to the depiction of one of the various Islamic constructions of femininity. Retrospectively, here, I would like to reiterate some of the main points derived in previous pages, connect them to a few additional ones, so that the conclusionary remarks can be drawn.

To early European scholars or travellers,

men and women alike, Islam meant the direct oppression and the total subjugation of women. Although their interpretations have been subject to endless criticism in the following years, there is enough evidence that some of their basic premises are still operative today. This is not only the case in a limited area of some recent scholarship. That its traces can be easily encountered within the ongoing debates between "Modernists" and "devout or radical Muslims", is indicative enough of the presence of a much more wider tendency.

As I mentioned at the very beginning, despite the enormous gap lying in between these two views, there is also a common reductionist ground shared by them. In our case the direct outcome of this commonality is the continuous depiction of one and supposedly homogeneous Islamic understanding of woman or femininity. What is further interesting in this regard is that,

..., despite the ways in which other religions have enjoined some very unpleasant practices upon women, Islam is consistently represented as one of the religions most oppressive to women.
(Marcus, 1992, p55)

Given this deeply rooted vituperative approach, it is not surprising to find out how the 'defenders' try to prove just the opposite, that is how the Islamic religion extols the position of women. However, one of the main themes that has been recurrently attested in this study, was that, there is no such thing as 'an Islamic understanding of women or femininity'. Rather than that, just like in any other religion, here too, there are various different

constructs that may and do clash with one another in their basic premises and practices. What is especially significant for me at this point is the recognition of two factors, simultaneously.

Firstly, Islam is not a monolithic or static whole; but dynamic and heterogeneous, both in itself and in its relations with other formations. Secondly, despite this apparent complexity, it is equally important to underline that, not all of the elements inhabiting within the realm of Islam possess the same power or operate on the same ground. As suggested, we cannot possibly turn a blind eye to the power of Ebussuud Efendi, over the people subject to his vituperative statements and decisions.

My suggestion is that these two simple but fundamental points should be integrated into the existing literature on 'Islam and woman'. In this regard, the first point will indicate that there are distinct Islamic understandings and constructions of sex or gender. The second point will show that not all of these have an equal power and determining force for Muslim women and men, requiring to take into account the operation of power relations at a particular place or historical era.

It is precisely in this way, that the heterodox construction of femininity should be perceived as one among the various Islamic constructs. This is not to deny the significance of the wide gap lying between heterodox and orthodox Islamic understandings, that may be detected in almost every aspect of social and individual life. Nor is to exclude its enormous potential for women barred by the shari'a-minded, in their attempts to move into an

alternative sphere where they may develop their inner abilities. Rather, it is to remind us that, both heterodox thought and practice, as well as the cyclical construction of femininity, should be seen as one of the most fascinating and iridescent strands in an intricate web of Islamic formations.

Therefore, contrary to the early European observation, Muslim women had never in their history circumscribed in a single domain, left without any other alternative and severely oppressed there. Rather, where and if the activeness and mobility of women were restricted, they managed to find additional channels or used the already existing ones, as an alternative road, at least potentially.

This being said, there are still three more points that I have not discussed until so far, but without the elaboration of which this study cannot be brought to an end. Firstly, the cyclical extolment of femininity and the application of this process to women per se, should not lead us to perceive the apparent difference between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, as one in which the former is identified with gender discrimination and the latter with gender equality.

My suggestion at this point is to refrain from such automatically made deductions, since neither heterodox formations in general, nor the two *tariqas* concerned in this study, could have operated in a cultural vacuum and thus been immune from the dominant gender ideologies of the society in which they flourished. Without adding the utmost role of the historical transformations that they underwent in time to this vital point, we cannot grasp why and how the apparently advantageous position of women in early ages, was not sustained in the coming years.

Secondly, one may validly ask why heterodox parlance does not refer to God as "She", if they praise the *jamal* aspect of God so enthusiastically. After all, it should be underlined that although the more orthodox minded Muslims do not reject the *jamal* aspect of God in their extolation of the *jalal*; the dervishes concerned in this study were highly critical of the *jalal*, and therefore masculine face of God. This, however, is quite difficult to answer. Therefore, instead of giving a direct response to it, I would like to review several points.

We must first of all bear in mind that dervish parlance has been always interwed with hidden meanings and coded messages, that are difficult for an outsider to grasp. In a land where God's *jalal* aspect and all the themes that went with it tended to form a dominant construct, this method seemed all the more necessary. Therefore, their general method has been to express their ideas in an indirect, covert way. As they always contended, *Haqiqah* (Truth) could not be attained by everyone alike; and if this reality was provocative and unbearable for the orthodox-minded who were so powerful in the society, this necessity became all the more obvious and understandable.

In brief, this secrecy, along with the personalistic tendencies analysed before, as well as the fact that these points have been so poorly studied, makes it difficult for us to give an adequate answer. Therefore, all I can do here is to leave this question open-ended, until the issue will be studied from different angles in various other settings.

Thirdly and lastly, I would like to add that, though mystic women and men alike, radically

challenged the dominant paradigms of orthodox Islamic understanding, they are not likely to have done this for the sake of gender equality. More precisely, mystic or heterodox women struggled to ascend along the cycle, not because they were feminists or they wanted complete gender equality, but primarily because they longed for union with the *jamal* aspect of God.

Speculatively, it was the unbearability of the depiction of a remote, punishing and authoritarian God that functioned as the motivating force behind their position. Just like they were not feminists, they were neither atheists, as some people tend to suppose. Broadly stating, they understood and perceived the Divine Being in a completely and radically different way, where there could be no room for fear or distancing mechanisms.

This is exactly one of the points that some reductionist feminist or Marxist scholars persistently fail to notice. After all, they are more inclined to automatically accuse religious formations of oppressing their believers, than reading their subjects' views on their own terms.

Repeatedly, the heterodox praise of femininity, as well as the existence of alternative paths in here, was not made possible because these people rejected the perennial teachings of religion, but to the contrary, because they were so strongly attached to their own understanding of it. While they have been accused of heresy from time to time in the history of Islam and have been persistently seen by some people as 'non-Muslims under a cloak of Muslim identity', talking on their own terms, they were "true Muslims".

I therefore, want to bring this study to an end by once more retaining that there is no, and has never been, a single Islamic understanding of woman or femininity, just like there has never been a monolithic or static Islam per se. Where the way was blocked severely, there was always the possibility to look for other directions and to move along different channels.

What then is the Muslim view of women? It depends on whom you ask, and it depends on what you mean by the term. As in any tradition, there are many views. Until you define your terms, you will not be able to grasp the subtleties of the discussion. (Murata, 1992, p319)

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