

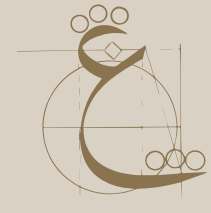


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07



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Revisiting the 1826 Bektaşî Purge: Political-Economy of Confiscating Endowment Lands*

BEKTAŞİ TEKKELERİNİN
KAPATILMASINI YENİDEN
DÜŞÜNMEK: VAKIF MÜLKLERİNİN
KAMULAŞTIRILMASININ
POLİTİK-EKONOMİSİ



HASAN FATİH ÖYÜK**

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes Mahmud II's famous purge of Bektaşî lodges after the Vākâ-yı Hayriyye (Auspicious Event) in the first half of the 19th century with a novel approach. In the current scholarship, the government's attempt to confiscate Bektaşî properties has been discussed mainly in the economic and fiscal contexts. Furthermore, the "ulema" was depicted as indifferent to the confiscation of the Bektaşî lodges in this narrative. Instead, this article sheds light on three essential aspects of the confiscation process. Firstly, it argues that many members of the ulema showed active and passive resistance to the abolishment of Bektaşî lodges, managing to limit certain policies of the central government over the Bektaşî lodges. The second argument of the paper is that the government took the ulema seriously throughout the process and created a careful religio-legal language to justify the procedure. Finally, it asserts that the Bektaşî purge of Mahmud II did not reach its immediate aim to abolish Bektaşîsm and create an additional financial resource for the newly established central army. However, this process became the starting point of a new government policy over religious endowments by redefining the central government's limits over the religious sphere.

Keywords: Bektaşî Order, Auspicious Event, Religious Endowments, Ottoman Ulema.



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ÖZ

Bu makale, II. Mahmud döneminin önemli olaylarından Vākâ-yı Hayriyye'nin ardından Bektaşî tekkelerinin kapatılmasını yeni bir bakış açısıyla inceleyecektir. Mevcut çalışmalar, Bektaşî tekkelerinin kapatılması ve mülklerine el konulmasını genel olarak ekonomik sebeplerle ilişkilendirmektedir. Yine bu tarihyazımında, merkezi ulemanın Bektaşî tekkelerinin kapatılmasına karşı kayıtsız kaldığı düşüncesi hakimdir. Bu bakış açısına nazaran, bu çalışma müsadere sürecinin üç temel yönüne ışık tutuyor. Öncelikle, ulemeden pek çok ismin hükümetin Bektaşî tekkelerine yönelik müdahalelerine aktif ve pasif olarak direniş gösterdiği ileri sürülmektedir. Bu direncin, merkezi hükümetin Bektaşî tekkeleri üzerindeki belli politikalarını sınırlandırmayı başardığı görülmektedir. İkinci olarak bu çalışma hükümetin de tüm süreç boyunca ulemayı ciddiye aldığı ve prosedürü meşrulaştırmak için dikkatli bir dini-hukuki dil kurguladığını iddia etmektedir. Son olarak, II. Mahmud'un Bektaşî tasfiyesinin, Bektaşîliği ortadan kaldırma ve yeni kurulan merkezi ordu için ek bir mali kaynak yaratma yönündeki amacına ulaşamadığını ileri sürüyor. Ancak bu süreç, merkezi hükümetin dini alandaki sınırlarını yeniden tanımlayarak, vakıflara ilişkin yeni bir hükümet politikasının başlangıç noktası olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeleri: Bektaşî Tekkeleri, Vaka-yı Hayriyye, Vakıflar, Osmanlı Uleması.

INTRODUCTION

The Auspicious Event of 1826 marks a pivotal moment in late Ottoman history, during which Sultan Mahmud II orchestrated a significant crackdown on the janissary corps in response to their rebellion. The decisive victory against the janissaries marked a new phase in Ottoman history, and it was considered a major success for the central government. Sultan Mahmud II's campaign, known as The Great Holy War (*cihad-ı ekber*), targeted not only the janissary corps but also other elements historically associated with them, notably the Bektaşis. After defeating the janissaries, the central government shifted its focus to the Bektaşis, as they were believed to have close ties with the janissary corps.

The government took rigorous actions against the Bektaşis lodges, with only a few being spared from intrusion. Many lodges were either demolished, converted into mosques, or handed over to Nakşibendi sheiks. A crucial aspect of this process was the confiscation of the lands that had been granted to the Bektaşis endowments over the centuries when they were allied with the dynasty.

Numerous scholars have delved into the central administration's intervention in Bektaşis lodges and their properties, but only a few pointed out the relationship between the confiscation of Bektaşis endowment lands and the establishment of the Ministry of Imperial Religious Endowments. Three months after the decision to confiscate Bektaşis endowment properties, the central government issued a new umbrella institution, the Ministry of Imperial Religious Endowments (*Evkâf-ı Hümâyün Nezâreti*), to take over the administration of imperial endowments.¹ With the establishment of this institution, the central government went over the legal limits on the administration of endowments for the first time in the Empire. Until this point, the *ulema* (the community of scholars) had an important role in the administration of the endowments that were bestowed to them through the legal authorities. However, many scholars studying the topic did not see a meaningful relationship between the confiscation of Bektaşis endowments and the establishment of the Ministry of Imperial Endowments.

One such scholar, John R. Barnes, dedicated a whole chapter in his dissertation to the confiscation of Bektaşis properties, basing his analysis heavily on Ottoman archives.² Although Barnes argued that the seizure of Bektaşis lands was a preliminary step in confiscating endowment incomes, he did not connect this confiscation to the government's subsequent exploitation of religious endowment administration. Instead, he related the confiscation of Bektaşis endowments to the need to create a new and modern army after the abolishment of the janissary corps. However, there are only a few reasons to assume that the government expected a high income from this confiscation movement. As will be seen in this article, the economic means of the Bektaşis endowments were very limited. Moreover, the study seems to be overlooking the agency of *ulema* during the process. Barnes does not show the *ulema*'s reaction to the government's interventions in the Bektaşis endowments. He seems to assume that the *ulema* were indifferent to this policy. This depiction creates a top-down hierarchical narrative that dominates his work.

1 Nazif Öztürk, "Evkâf-ı Hümâyün Nezâreti", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 12 June 2022).

2 John Robert Barnes, *Evkâf-ı Hümâyün: Vakıf Administration Under the Ottoman Ministry for Imperial Religious Foundations 1839 to 1875* (Los Angeles: University of California, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1980).

Suraiya Faroqhi, on the other hand, was among the first scholars who highlighted a direct relationship between the confiscation of Bektaşî endowment properties and the centralization of all endowments in the Ottoman Empire.³ According to Faroqhi, the confiscation of Bektaşî endowment properties can be interpreted as a rehearsal of taking over the administration of all religious endowments in the empire. She also argues that the government saw the confiscation of Bektaşî properties as a chance to see the *ulema*'s reaction to facilitate future takeovers of endowment properties.⁴

Another significant source on the destruction of Bektaşî lodges is Fahri Maden's dissertation, which draws upon archival documents and historical testimonies.⁵ While Maden provides a precise chronology of the confiscation process, the study does not fully explore the long-term implications of this event, which had a profound impact on the development of a new policy for managing religious endowments. Additionally, the legal aspect of the process is not adequately analyzed, with the focus primarily on the central government's financial expectations.

The role of the *ulema* and other sufi groups in abolishing Bektaşî lodges and the confiscation process is another crucial aspect. Uriel Heyd, for instance, argues that one reason for the central *ulema* to support the reforms of Mahmud II was their hatred of janissaries and Bektaşîs.⁶ Similarly, Niyazi Berkes sees the *ulema*'s support of the Auspicious Event as a result of their opposition to Bektaşîsm and their sympathy for Mevlevîs.⁷ According to Berkes, the Auspicious Event became a vital chance for the supporters of the Mevlevîs to remove Bektaşîsm from the current political structure. Likewise, for Avigdor Levy, the Bektaşîs were disliked among the *ulema* since they were "especially repugnant to the *ulema* leaders, both because they had put themselves outside the regular judicial system and because they were openly scornful of the *ulema*'s scholarly pretensions."⁸

On the other hand, scholars like Uzunçarşılı and Faroqhi show that the *ulema* did not support the abolishment of the Bektaşî lodges unconditionally and unanimously.⁹ A further focus on the events following the Auspicious Event and the reaction of *ulema* to the abolishment of the Bektaşî lodges do not point out *ulema* cooperation with the central government against the Bektaşîs. Instead, the evidence shows that a significant number of *ulema* and sufi groups showed their discontent with the abolishment of the Bektaşî lodges and put up their resistance in different forms.

The relationship between the Bektaşîs and the janissary corps has been debated among scholars since the early 20th century. While the Bektaşî-janissary proximity did not start with the foundation of the Janissary corps, the current literature agrees on a strong Bektaşî-janissary

3 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşîlik*, trans. Nasuh Barın (İstanbul: Simurg, 2003), 164.

4 Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşîlik*, 164.

5 Fahri Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013).

6 Uriel Heyd, "The Ottoman Ulama and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II", *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 41.

7 Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de çağdaşlaşma*, ed. Ahmet Kuyaş (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2005), 160.

8 Avigdor Levy, "The Ottoman Ulema and the Military Reforms of Sultan Mahmud II", *Asian and African Studies* 7 (1971), 23.

9 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından Kapukulu Ocakları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 1/566-576; Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşîlik*, 173-174.

alliance from the 16th century onwards, which was preserved until the Auspicious Event.¹⁰ British orientalist F.W. Hasluck was one of the earliest scholars who questioned the existence of a janissary-Bektaşî relationship before 1591.¹¹ John Kingsley Birge, on the other hand, criticized Hasluck's argument based on the former's inability to use Turkish sources.¹²

Following this discussion, the controversy regarding the janissary-Bektaşî proximity is still under debate. Scholars like Reha Çamuroğlu even prefer using the term janissary-Bektaşî, indicating inseparable integrity between the two parties.¹³ Similarly, Erdal Küçükyağcı asserts a very strong bond between the janissaries and the Bektaşîs and even associates this relationship with the medieval religious military orders.¹⁴ Fatma Sel Turhan, in her dissertation on the domestic disturbance in Ottoman Bosnia following the abolishment of the janissary corps, highlighting the complexity of the relationships, claims that the Bektaşîs and the janissary corps had "a strong mutual relationship."¹⁵ On the other hand, the author also points out that, in the case of Bosnia, such a relationship is not well documented.¹⁶ Accepting a rhetorical and ceremonial relationship between the two groups, İlber Ortaylı was suspicious of this mainstream view, unlike many others, indicating the insufficiency of available sources on the topic.¹⁷

In recent years, scholars like Fahri Maden and Muharrem Varol have managed to trace the janissary-Bektaşî relationship through some archival resources.¹⁸ Muharrem Varol argues that the Ottoman archival documents have enough evidence to show a direct proximity between the two groups.¹⁹ Cem Kara, in response to Varol, claims that the supposed 'organic relationship' might be an exaggeration. Some primary documents indeed assume a strong bond between two parties, but this does not necessarily offer the broader picture. At best, according to Kara, these documents can show how the central administration viewed the janissary-Bektaşî relationship in the first half of the 19th century.²⁰ In line with these discussions, Abdulkasım Gül's recent study argues that the proximity between Bektaşîsm and the janissary corps was established on a myth.²¹ According to Gül, it was mainly Bektaşîs who insisted on the janissaries' loyalty to the Sufi group to gain more political power. The author argues that no robust evidence suggests a strong network between the Bektaşîs and janissaries.

The discussions of the Bektaşî-janissary relations are relevant in understanding the confiscation of the Bektaşî properties. Right after the Auspicious Event, the Bektaşî lodges became

- 10 Kemal Beydilli, "Yeniçeri", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 12 July 2023); Fahri Maden, "Yeniçerilik-Bektaşîlik İlişkileri ve Yeniçeri İsyanlarında Bektaşîler", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 73 (2015), 175–177.
- 11 F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919).
- 12 John Kingsley Birge, *Bektaşîlik Tarihi*, trans. Reha Çamuroğlu (İstanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1991), 44.
- 13 Reha Çamuroğlu, *Yeniçerilerin Bektaşîliği ve Vaka-i Şerriye* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2006), 18.
- 14 Erdal Küçükyağcı, *Turna'nın Kalbi: Yeniçeri Yoldaşlığı ve Bektaşîlik* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2010), 110.
- 15 Fatma Sel Turhan, *Rebelling for the Old Order: Ottoman Bosnia, 1826-1836* (İstanbul: Bogazici University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2009), 82.
- 16 Turhan, *Rebelling for the Old Order: Ottoman Bosnia, 1826-1836*, 84.
- 17 İlber Ortaylı, "Tarihatlar ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi", *OTAM Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 6 (1995), 282.
- 18 Maden, "Yeniçerilik-Bektaşîlik İlişkileri ve Yeniçeri İsyanlarında Bektaşîler"; Muharrem Varol, *Islahat Siyaset Tarikat: Bektaşîliğin İlgası Sonrasında Osmanlı Devleti'nin Tarikat Politikaları (1826-1866): Yanya, Selanik ve Edirne Tatbikatı* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2013).
- 19 Varol, *Islahat Siyaset Tarikat*, 32–38.
- 20 Cem Kara, *Sınırları Aşan Dervişler: Bektaşîliğin Kültürel İlişkileri 1826-1925* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2023), 74.
- 21 Abdulkasım Gül, "Bir Efsanenin Gücü: Yeniçeri-Bektaşîlik Münasebetinin Tarihi Gelişiminin İncelenmesi", *Tarih Dergisi* 77 (July 2022), 107–163.

an open target for the government, claiming that some Bektaşis and janissary corps had close bonds. The government legitimized the abolishment of Bektaşî lodges by claiming a solid relationship between the two groups. This argument was further supported by Esad Efendi, who wrote a detailed account of the Auspicious Event after the abolishment of the Bektaşî lodges. In the following period, other Ottoman historians, like Cevdet Pasha, made similar claims for the connection between the Bektaşis and the janissaries.²² Though a rhetorical and ceremonial relationship between the two groups cannot be refuted, as in the example that the sheikh of the janissary corps was a Bektaşî leader or Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli was assumed as the *pir* of the janissaries, the current historiography might be overstating this relationship, by relying on Esad Efendi's 'accusations' against the Bektaşis.

This article offers diverse perspectives on the central government's decision to seize Bektaşî properties and its connection to the establishment of the Ministry of Imperial Religious Endowments. Firstly, it supports Suraiya Faroqhi's argument that the confiscation of Bektaşî lands and properties in 1826 was the initial attempt at directly managing endowments in modern Ottoman history and took it further. The paper argues the process was not driven by economic incentives, as the confiscation of properties with significant economic profits was excluded due to their religious and historical importance. Instead, the evidence shows that the central government aimed to redefine its limits over the endowment properties and the religious sphere.

Secondly, this paper argues that the cooperation of the *ulema* played a crucial role in abolishing the Bektaşî lodges and confiscating their properties. The central government took the agency of the *ulema* and other sufi sheiks seriously. This paper analyzes the language of the official documents to understand the government's strategies in persuading the *ulema* to cooperate. Lastly, it shows that some members of the *ulema* and pro-Bektaşî government members showed different modes of resistance against a total takeover of the Bektaşî lodges. This resistance paved the way for the Bektaşî groups to gain influence in Ottoman society after the death of Mahmud II.

1. The Auspicious Event and Bektaşis

The central government's negative stance towards the Bektaşî order predates the Auspicious Event. During Mahmud II's reign, certain Bektaşî leaders were under scrutiny by the state. The sultan believed that Bektaşis played an active role in the murder of Selim III in 1807 and at the Alemdar Event of 1808, in which reformist Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's government and Sultan Mustafa IV were overthrown.²³ In line with this perspective, historian Mehmed Esad Efendi (d. 1848) ardently supported the Sultan's policy against the Bektaşis and janissaries. Esad Efendi claimed that the Bektaşis were a significant factor behind the misconduct of the janissaries, asserting that the order directed the janissaries to act in favor of the Iranian state and foster sympathy for the Shah among the army.

Accusing the Bektaşî order of proximity to Shiism was prominent during this period. In a remarkable example, the *şeyhülislam* (the chief-mufti) of the time, Yasincizade Efendi,

22 Ortaylı, "Tarikatlar ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi", 282–283.

23 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 60.

reported to the sultan he had seen the famous Bektaşî sheikh, Haydar Baba, in Iran during his diplomatic mission. During this meeting, the *şeyhülislam* claimed that the sheikh proudly admitted his role in the Alemdar Event and the murder of Selim III.²⁴ Haydar Baba, living in Istanbul under the protection of some janissaries, was soon declared a ‘spy of Iran’ and exiled to his so-called patron country. In response, a group of thirty janissaries entered the office of the head of janissaries (*Yeniçeri ağası*) and demanded the return of their *sheikh*.²⁵ The *ağa* managed to calm this attempt by convincing them that he would deliver this message to the Palace so that they could negotiate. The government, however, did not step back from its decision by taking the risk of a janissary revolt. This small janissary reaction ended with the unexpected and suspicious death of Haydar Baba shortly after his removal from the capital in 1822.²⁶

The government decided to abolish the Bektaşî lodges a month after the Auspicious Event in July 1826. They called the leading figures of the religious domain of Istanbul for a meeting to discuss the future of this sufi group in the Babüssaade Mosque located in the Topkapı Palace, under the moderation of Şeyhülislam Kadızade Mehmet Tahir Efendi (d. 1838) and the grand vizier (*sadrızam*) Selim Pasha (d. 1831). In addition to the previous *şeyhülislams* and the essential names of the *ilmîyye* (the class of scholars), leading sufi figures of the capital were invited to the meeting, including famous sheikhs of Nakşibendi, Mevlevî, Celvetî, Halvetî, and Kadirî orders.²⁷ Most likely, the meeting aimed to see the reaction of the other sufi groups to the abolishment of the Bektaşî lodges. The sultan himself did not attend the meeting but secretly followed the discussions.²⁸

During the meeting, the *şeyhülislam* Kadızade Mehmet Tahir Efendi raised allegations of blasphemy to the Bektaşîs. The primary accusation was centered around *Alevilik* (Alidism), with claims that Bektaşîs showed disrespect to the Rashidun caliphs, rejected fasting and daily prayers, and consumed alcohol. Moreover, they supposedly recited the *kelime-i tevhîd* (the Islamic testimony of faith) in the name of Ali bin Abu Talib, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad and the fourth caliph.²⁹

However, for many sufi sheikhs, these accusations were unfounded as many of them shared similar theological and philosophical backgrounds. While the *şeyhülislam* accused the Bektaşîs of Alidism, he acknowledged that other sufis, such as the Celvetîs, also had similar practices and associated themselves with the Caliph Ali and Hacı Bektaş. He reassured the sufi leaders that there was no reason to consider these sufis outside the perfect ummah or criticize them. The *şeyhülislam*’s reference to the Celvetîs can be viewed as an honest admission regarding the problematic allegations against Bektaşîsm.³⁰ Numerous sufi groups,

24 Esat Efendi, *Vakâ-Nüvis Esâd Efendi Tarihi: Bâhir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlâveleriyle: 1237-1241/1821-1826*, ed. Ziya Yilmazer (İstanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2000), 130.

25 Başkanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), Hatt-ı Hümayun (HAT), 289/17328, 1241 (1826).

26 According to Muharrem Varol, the reaction of some janissaries shows the continuing roots between the janissary and Bektaşî groups. However, Abdulkasım Gül argues that this one janissary corp that backed Haydar Baba was not persuasive enough for the rest of the corps. Varol, *İslahat Siyaset Tarikat*, 37–38; Gül, “Bir Efsanenin Gücü”, 154.

27 Esat Efendi, *Vakâ-Nüvis Esâd Efendi Tarihi*, 648–649.

28 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 63.

29 “...ve Hazret-i Ali’ye kelime-i tevhidi telkin ve teallum...” BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

30 “...tarik-i Cehriye’nin cümlesi Hazreti Ali’ye mensub olan tarik-i nazeninden münşeb olmakla tarik-i Aliyye’nin cümlesi hak ve Hacı Bektaşın ve gerek sair tarikdan cümlesi ekamil-i ümmetten olub onlara kat’a diyeceğimiz yoktur.” BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

like the Celvetis, shared philosophical and theological similarities with the Bektaşis, making it challenging to distinguish between them.

It is noteworthy that Bektaşis' proximity to the janissaries was not brought to the table during the meeting. The general argumentation for abolishing the Bektaşî lodges was related to their so-called blasphemous beliefs and rituals. The sultan's commentary is the only part of the document that mentions the close relationship between the janissaries and Bektaşis.³¹ A similar account comes from Ahmed Lütü Efendi (d. 1907), who also pointed out that the janissaries would not have been genuinely destroyed without erasing the name of Bektaşis.³²

One reason to avoid a discussion on the relationship between janissaries and Bektaşis during the meeting could lie in the complexity of the argument. Some government members, like Sadrazam Selim Pasha, were also affiliated with the Bektaşî lodges.³³ He was not only a marshal against the janissary corps during the Auspicious Event but also one of the ideologues for the establishment of the Eşkinciyan corps, which caused a janissary rebellion that ended up in the Auspicious Event. Similarly, one of the *şeyhülislams* of Mahmud II, Mekkizade Asım Efendi, who was present at the meeting, was also known for his sympathy for Bektaşis.³⁴ Thus, we can see that the members and sympathizers of Bektaşî lodges did not automatically associate themselves with the janissaries. Similarly, though the lodge had critical importance regarding the rites and rituals of the janissaries, not all soldiers were affiliated with Bektaşism. There were followers of different sufi groups among the janissaries.³⁵

An important topic that was discussed during the meeting was the fate of Bektaşî dervishes. A former *şeyhülislam* and a well-known adversary of Bektaşis, Yasincizade Efendi, argued that Bektaşî sheikhs and dervishes could be executed *siyaseten* (by siyasa), with the decision of the political authority.³⁶ This way, it would not be necessary to assess all dervishes individually.³⁷ However, his opponents in the meeting claimed that Bektaşism could not be related to heresy, and thus, the accusations should be handled case by case by interviewing the Bektaşî dervishes. As an accomplishment, the moderate members of *ilmîyye* convinced the government not to label all Bektaşis as heretics.³⁸ Ultimately, the government had to question all Bektaşis separately, and if they were found guilty of blasphemy, they would be given an option to 'correct their beliefs.' This gave many dervishes a chance to escape from the

31 "bunca zaman beri ocağ-ı mülha eşkiyasının günâğün devlet-i aliyyemiz mülkünde mazarrat ve habaislikleri vuku'a gelmiş..." BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

32 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşiliğın Yasaklı Yılları*, 63.

33 Ahmet Lutfi, *Vakânuvis Ahmed Lütü Efendi Tarihi*, ed. Ahmet Hezarfen (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 1/125.

34 Mehmet İpşirli, "Mekkizâde Asım Efendi", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 6 January 2023).

35 Maden, "Yeniçerilik-Bektaşîlik İlişkileri ve Yeniçeri İsyanlarında Bektaşîler", 181.

36 "Yasincizade Efendi daileri bu makulelerin siyaseten icra olub ifal-i ikval habsiyeleri başahsa üzerlerine sabit olmak lazımdır değıldir dediler ise...", BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

37 The punishment of apostasy was under the umbrella of *hudud* penalties and was controlled by the Islamic law legislators. However, Islamic law also gave the political ruler the authority to make rulings that would not be against the corpus of sharia. Thus, Yasincizade's offer meant that the Bektaşî dervishes would not be charged with apostasy, requiring a stricter and more complex legal jurisdiction. Instead, by punishing through siyasa, the political authority would have taken a precautionary step in his power. See C. E. Bosworth et al., "Siyâsa," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2012); Apaydın H. Yunus, "Siyâset-i Şer'îyye," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 22 October 2023).

38 "Bektaşî olanların cümlesi al-el-umum mülhid ve Rafızî olmayıp içlerinde bazı hüsn-i hal ashabı dahi mevcud olduğı..." BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

gallows by 'imitating Sunnism', according to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha.³⁹ Moreover, this principle gave some dervishes a chance to 'shift' to Nakşibendiye and continue their lives as 'Nakşi dervishes'.⁴⁰

Another decision of the assembly that provided a certain degree of protection over the Bektaşism was the preservation of the Bektaşî lodges, which were older than sixty years, defined as *kadim*.⁴¹ Since the government was unwilling to reject the legitimacy of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli but wanted to reconstruct it, the lodges and tombs of famous Bektaşîs were decided to be preserved. This meant that the preservation of the most critical Bektaşî lodges, which had larger economic means, including the *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Tekkesi* in Kırşehir and *Abdal Musa Tekkesi* in Antalya. In the eyes of the government, the *ehl-i sünnet* identity of Hacı Bektaş was undisputed, and therefore, these lodges and tombs would be given to ehl-i sünnet sufis.

According to Esad Efendi, when the *şeyhülislam* asked the sufi sheikhs about their opinion of Bektaşîs during the meeting, the sheikhs abstained from giving any answers, claiming they did not know them.⁴² Similarly, most of the sheikhs avoided answering the question regarding the three Bektaşî leaders who were arrested during the Auspicious Event. While most claimed that they did not know these three names, Celveti sheikh refused to comment and stayed silent almost in a protest-like manner.⁴³ Apart from the partial support of the Halveti sheikh and the full support from Nakşibendis, many sufis showed their unwillingness to cooperate with the government regarding abolishing Bektaşî lodges.

Esad Efendi, in his *Tarih*, stated that the Nakşi sheikh of Balmumcu Lodge gave a list of names associated with Bektaşism while the rest preserved their silence. It should be noted that after the abolishment of Bektaşî sheikhs and dervishes, the lodges left behind were given to Nakşibendis. The most critical Bektaşî lodge of Kırşehir, which is believed to have been built by Hacı Bektaş himself, was left to the brother of the previous sheikh Hamdullah Efendi on the condition that the lodge would follow Nakşibendi traditions.⁴⁴ As it was decided during the meeting, all the lodges older than sixty years would be untouched and left to *ehl-i sünnet* sufis, which were later granted to Nakşibendis.⁴⁵ Therefore, the story of the Nakshi sheikh providing a list of Bektaşî names might have arisen later, particularly after the government granted Bektaşî properties to the Nakşibendis.

The preference of the Nakşibendi order is understandable, from the perspective of Mahmud II, when one considers their unconditional support for the government against the Bektaşî order and their 'sharia-minded' ideologies.⁴⁶ In addition to the most important Bektaşî lodge in Kırşehir, at least six other lodges in the capital that were considered *kadim* (ancient) were also left to the Nakşibendis with their lands and properties. It seems that the

39 Ortaylı, "Tarikatlar ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi", 284.

40 Faroqhi, *Anadoluda Bektaşilik*, 174.

41 BOA, HAT, 290/17351.

42 Talip Ayar, *Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Mehmed Esad Efendi'nin "Üss-i Zafer" Adlı Eserinin Transkripsiyonu ve Değerlendirilmesi* (Kayseri: Erciyes University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2005), 263.

43 Esat Efendi, *Vak'a-Nüvis Esad Efendi Tarihi*, 652.

44 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşiliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 256.

45 BOA, HAT, 290/17351, Ayar, *Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Mehmed Esad Efendi'nin "Üss-i Zafer" Adlı Eseri*, 265.

46 Kara, *Sınırları Aşan Dervişler: Bektaşiliğin Kültürel İlişkileri*, 77-78.

preference towards Nakşibendis did not need to be justified, nor was any discourse for their right to this possession constructed in the eyes of the rest of the sufi groups. The absence of objections from the sufi sheikhs may indicate their lack of interest in acquiring the Bektaşî lodges and properties. One reason for this silent approval of the Nakşibendi takeover might be related to their discontent with the confiscation. Moreover, the sufi leaders might have feared losing their public popularity, too.

The justification efforts came from Esad Efendi, who, in his *Üss-ü Zafer*, fabricated a relationship between Ahmed Yesevi and Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli to tie the Nakşibendism and Bektaşîsm to each other.⁴⁷ In *Vilayetname-i Hacı Bektaş*, which is dated to the late 15th century, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli was depicted as a pupil of Ahmed Yesevi, though two names were not contemporaries and lived at least a century apart from each other.⁴⁸ On the other hand, by the 15th century onwards, Nakşibendis commonly depicted Ahmed Yesevi as a sufi leader who was one of the founders of the Nakşibendi tradition.⁴⁹ Esad Efendi made a combination of Bektaşî claim to associate Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli with Ahmed Yesevi and Nakşibendi claim to relate Ahmed Yesevi to Nakşibendiyye, which transformed Hacı Bektaş as a Nakşibendi sufi leader.

It is important to note that Nakşibendi sufis were not necessarily the sultan's favorite. In an *hatt-ı hümayun* written in 1827, Mahmud II negatively stated his opinions regarding the famous Nakşibendi sheikh Halid-al Bagdadi, who was known as the founder of *Halidiyye*, the mainstream Nakşibendi branch in the Ottoman lands. According to the sultan, it was evident that Sheikh Halid's intention was malice and corrupt, though many thought the opposite by looking at their appearance.⁵⁰ Mahmud II and many other *ulema* and politicians also openly criticized Sheikh Halid during his lifetime. However, Sheikh Halid's legacy was restored years after his death to the extent that the mufti of Damascus issued a fatwa to punish those criticizing the sheikh.⁵¹

2. Mass Destruction vs. Minimal Destruction: The Purging of Bektaşî Order

The meeting regarding the fate of Bektaşî lodges created two different outcomes for both sides. On the one hand, *meşayih* (sufi sheikhs) and some members of *ilmiyye* managed to protect most Bektaşî sheikhs and dervishes by pushing the government to conduct individual interviews. On the other hand, the government believed that enough justification was created to confiscate the Bektaşî lodges and properties that belonged to these lodges, while no discussions were made regarding these properties. The government might have particularly avoided a discussion on the properties of the lodges due to the possibility of serious opposition that might grow during the meeting from other sufi sheikhs who depended on endowment properties to sustain their autonomy.

47 Ayar, *Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Mehmed Esâd Efendi'nin "Üss-i Zafer" Adlı Eseri*, 257.

48 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 13 July 2023).

49 Eyüp Baş, "Ahmed Yesevi'nin Bektaşîlik, Alevîlik Üzerindeki Etkileri ve Osmanlı Dini Hayatındaki İzleri", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 52/2 (2011), 28.

50 "Bu Bağdâdî Şeyh Halid'in niyeti fesattan ibaret olduğundan hulefâ ve müteallikatının dahi meramları fâsîd olduğu bilinmiş ise de çok adamlar bunların zahirlerine bakarak maazallah gün be gün tohum-ı fesatlarını fiile çıkarmâğa fırsat ararlar idi", BOA, HAT, 734/34837, 1242 (1827).

51 BOA, HAT, 892/39387, 1243 (1828).

The first target was the lodges in Istanbul, and then the policy would be expanded towards Anatolia and Rumelia.⁵² Let alone their properties, the government did not even know the exact number of the Bektaşî lodges in Istanbul by the time of the decision. Thus, the government's first task was to identify the number of lodges and their properties, first in Istanbul and then in other parts of the empire. While the Meclis-i Şura (advisory council) decision promised to preserve Bektaşî lodges exceeding sixty years old, the justification for this specific timeframe remains unclear. Implicitly, the government may have assumed the Bektaşî order became corrupt around that time, but no specific reasoning supports this claim.

The office of *şeyhülislam* prepared a list of nine Bektaşî lodges considered *mubdes* (invented), signifying that they were built in the last sixty years.⁵³ Later, Şeyhülislam Mehmed Tahir Efendi changed his opinion in favor of the preservation of the lodge in Merdivenköy, known as Şahkulu Baba Tekkesi, which was left to Nakşibendis as well.⁵⁴ The other eight lodges were demolished, and their sheikhs and dervishes were exiled to cities with plenty of *ulema*, like Kayseri and Amasya.⁵⁵ It seems that the government was concerned about a possible Bektaşî revival in different towns and wanted to keep them under control with the existence of orthodox *ulema*. The officers in these cities were informed about the wrongdoings of the Bektaşîs, like their disregard for the sharia and the four caliphs, and were asked to make sure that these dervishes performed their daily prayers in the mosques.⁵⁶

On the other hand, the number of the Bektaşîs expelled from lodges was only around forty.⁵⁷ Another dozen Bektaşîs living outside of the lodges in Istanbul were also exiled to the different cities of Anatolia. The number of Bektaşî lodges in Istanbul was already considerably lower than other orders.⁵⁸ Serpil Özcan gives the number of the Bektaşî lodges in Istanbul as twenty, constituting less than ten percent of the lodges in Istanbul.⁵⁹ Moreover, only three names were executed in Istanbul with the accusation of Bektaşîsm, who supposedly played an active role during the janissary revolt that resulted in the Auspicious Event. These numbers show that the state intervention in the Bektaşî lodges was limited and symbolic.

The sultan soon realized the destruction of the Bektaşî order was not proceeding as passionately as he expected and clearly expressed his disappointments to both Selim Pasha and Şeyhülislam Kadızade Mehmed Tahir Efendi. The sultan was pushing for more action towards Bektaşîs, warning his grand vizier that 'it seems you did not hear me well due to the wind that was crushing the windows'⁶⁰ and demanding 'not loosening it anymore to clear the Bektaşîs.'⁶¹ According to Ahmed Lütfi, Selim Pasha was affiliated with Bektaşîs and was not in favor

52 BOA, HAT, 290/17351, 1242 (1827).

53 BOA, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (TS.MA.e.), 711/70, 1242 (1827).

54 BOA, TS.MA.e., 711/58.

55 Esat Efendi, *Vak'a-Nüvis Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, 123.

56 Ortaylı, "Tarikatlar ve Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Yönetimi", 283.

57 Ayar, *Sahhâflar Şeyhizâde Mehmed Es'ad Efendi'nin "Üss-i Zafer" Adlı Eseri*, 267.

58 M. Baha Tanman, "İstanbul Tekkeleri", *Büyük İstanbul Tarihi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür A.Ş Yayınları, 2016), 8/412.

59 Serpil Özcan, *XIX. Yüzyıl İstanbul Tekkeleri ve Mekânsal Konumlanışları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Şehir University, Institute of Social Sciences, Master's Thesis, 2020), 106.

60 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 79.

61 "...bundan böyle gevşetilmeyip *şeyhülislam* ile haberleşerek Bektaşîlerin temizlenmesine ve ele geçenlerin hal ve keyfiyetlerini layıkıyla tetkik ederek, haklarında ne şekilde tedbir alınması bildirilirse, bunu hemen icra edesin", BOA, HAT, 341/19475, 1242 (1827).

A second fatwa was also prepared for the properties that were endowed by third parties:

“And if, again, Zeyd from the former sultans left some villages and arable fields to Amr and if Amr endowed these lands and its income to the sheiks of a lodge and its inhabitants and if, after a while, he [Amr] dies while the aforementioned had the possession of the income, and if the sheiks and inhabitants of this lodge would not deserve this income by being sinners and they are from the people of innovation, can the sultan of Islam take the use of this endowed lands?

Answer: He can.”⁶⁸

It is worth noting that using the term *fasık* (sinner) rather than *mülhid* (apostate) in the official order was intentional. By avoiding the apostate label, the *şeyhülislam* refrained from invoking the harshest punishment of execution, recognizing that the accusation of *fisk* was sufficient when ruled by a judge.⁶⁹

The decision to confiscate the Bektaşî lodges and their properties was driven by the central government’s apprehension about potential reactions from the *ulema* and sufi lodges. To ease the concerns of the *ulema*, the language of the order was carefully crafted to assure them that the confiscation was a necessary measure and that innocent and devout Bektaşîs would be exempted from harm. Moreover, the properties taken from the lodges were repurposed as medreses, mosques, and masjids, demonstrating a symbolic gesture towards the religious establishment.

The *şeyhülislam*’s justification for confiscating the Bektaşî endowment lands should be read relatedly. Scholars like Barnes and Faroqhi argued that the government’s major argument for confiscation was the illegitimacy of endowing *miri* lands to endowments.⁷⁰ This argument might be true for the further confiscation of endowment lands, but the two fatwas from the *şeyhülislam* regarding the Bektaşî endowment lands do not make any reference to the *miri* status of the lands. Instead, they focus on the trustees of these endowments. This decision seems meaningful when considering that the former argument would make almost all endowments in the empire void and cause the loss of a significant economic and political source of power for the *ulema*. Thus, at this stage, it seems that the central government did not want to threaten and provoke the *ulema* by signaling any further confiscation of endowment lands.

The document’s language shows that the central government was also aware of the possible reactions from the local *ilmîyye* members, especially judges and their deputies. Though the necessary legal justification was created through the hand of the office of *şeyhülislam*, the support of the local *ulema* was needed by the government for the smooth execution of the process. The government was careful since the properties of religious endowments were crucial for *ulema* and sufi groups. These endowments were the main force that kept the religious domain economically autonomous from the political authorities. Even Mehmed II’s ‘land reform’ was criticized harshly by the *ulema*, though it was, according to Oktay Özel, geographically and effectively limited and was more of a fiscal reform rather than a land reform.⁷¹ One

68 BOA, C. ADL, 28/1734, lef 3, 1242 (1827).

69 İbn Abidin, *Redd’ül Muhtar*, trans. Ahmed Davudoğlu (İstanbul: Şamil Yayınları, 1983), 9/290.

70 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 99–108; Faroqhi, *Anadolu’da Bektaşîlik*, 164.

71 Oktay Özel, “Limits of the Almighty: Mehmed II’s ‘Land Reform’ Revisited”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42/2 (1999), 226–246.

example is the famous chronicler Aşıkpaşazade (d. 1484), who blamed Rum Mehmed Pasha (d. 1474) and other statesmen for their ignorance of ‘the lands of the prophet.’⁷² In spite of the fact that the sultan’s ‘land reform’ against several religious endowments left a considerable legacy behind, the overall result was a failure for the central authorities, and Bayezid II reinstated these abolished endowments after his father’s death.⁷³

Overall, Mahmud II’s anti-Bektaşî policy caused another serious turn regarding the properties of religious endowments in the empire. The central authorities were aware of the possible reservations of the established local *ulema*. Once the confiscations started, all the endowments would be a potential source of income for the sultan’s treasury. However, even though the process entailed complicated relations based on mutual interest, no severe reaction was received from the local *ulema*. The central government ultimately had enough reason not to trust the established local authorities and announced that the process of confiscation in Rumelia would be executed by an officer sent from the center, namely Hacı Ali Bey, the *mirahûr-u evvel* (the chief supervisor of the imperial stables).⁷⁴ This suspicion seems founded, considering the local judges protected many Bektaşî lodges during the confiscation process in some instances.⁷⁵

One of the critical points highlighted in the official order was the preservation of shrines of the Bektaşî figures. The central authorities cleared that no shrine would be touched or left unguarded and promised to keep all the shrines protected even though the nearby lodges would be demolished.⁷⁶ The preservation of many Bektaşî shrines was left to Bektaşîs, even after the abolishment of the lodges. For example, the famous shrine of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli in Kırşehir was left to the protection of Bektaşî *dedes* though the head of the lodge was a Nakşibendi sheikh, appointed from Istanbul.⁷⁷ According to Maden, these people were excluded from any decision-making process and were only responsible for taking care of their shrines.⁷⁸

Hacı Ali Bey’s task to identify the properties of Bektaşî lodges and the confiscation was distracted by the rebellions rising in Bosnia after abolishing the janissary corps.⁷⁹ Several times, the sultan showed his frustrations regarding the confiscation process to the grand vizier and the *şeyhülislam*.⁸⁰ In a document, he wrote that nothing was heard from the man respon-

72 Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, trans. Kemal Yavuz - M. A. Yekta Saraç (İstanbul: K Kitaplığı, 2003), 255.

73 Aşıkpaşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*, 286–287.

74 BOA, C. ADL, 29/1734, lef 3, 1242 (1827).

75 Varol, *Islahat Siyaset Tarikat*, 68–69.

76 The preservation of Bektaşî shrines was also discussed in the meeting, during which the decision to confiscate the lodge buildings was made. When a debate started regarding the preservation of the Bektaşî shrines, someone in the meeting mentioned the glory and miracles of Karaca Ahmet, a famous Bektaşî figure believed to be a pupil of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, to highlight the importance of these türbes. Melekpaşazade Abdülkadir Efendi openly rejected the miracles of the sufi by stating, ‘If he is a saint, he will curse me’ (Veli ise beni çarpsın!). According to Esad Efendi, a reaction grew against the words of Melekpaşazade, who also made other negative connotations about Bektaşîs. Melekpaşazade’s attitude towards the miracles of saints is noteworthy since the belief in the Saint miracles (*kerâmet-i evliya*) is a requirement of belief in all the schools of the Islamic thought of Sunni and Shia Islam. Though he did not deliberately reject the possibilities of miracles, his wording seems to be received as offensive. Moreover, Melekpaşazade Abdülkadir Efendi was a high-ranking kadi. He should have known that such a critique of the saints could be received as Salafism. Ironically, Melekpaşazade was one of the names exiled later with the accusation of Bektaşîsm by the demand of Şeyhülislam. Esad Efendi, *Vakâ-Nüvis Esad Efendi Tarihi*, 650–651.

77 Fahri Maden, “Hacı Bektaş Veli Tekkesi’nde Nakşî Şeyhler ve Sırrı Paşa’nın Lâyhıası”, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 59 (2011), 161.

78 Maden, “Hacı Bektaş Veli Tekkesi’nde Nakşî Şeyhler ve Sırrı Paşa’nın Lâyhıası”, 160.

79 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 81.

80 “... şöyle böyle diyerek bunun icrası pek gecikti”, BOA. HAT. 290/17386, 1242 (1827).

sible for destroying the lodges in Anatolia, referring to Hacı Ali Bey, and the *tekkes* in Istanbul were left untouched after their abolishment.⁸¹ Hacı Ali Bey's first success regarding this issue was demolishing the *Kızıldeli Sultan Tekkesi* in Dimetoka in 1828.⁸²

The collection of the books in the lodges was also taken seriously by the central government institutions, especially by the office of *şeyhülislam*. The books were the first to be mentioned while informing the sultan regarding the situation in the Bektaşî lodges of the capital.⁸³ The primary aim was the eradication of the 'dangerous' books, and the books were not evaluated in terms of their economic value. Similarly, when Esad Baba, one of the few figures of Bektaşî resistance in Rumelia, was arrested, Hacı Ali Bey, the officer who oversaw the confiscation process, supposedly realized an inappropriately commented Qur'anic verse in one of the books in Esad Baba's possession. Ali Bey's interest in the theological aspect of the topic is remarkable since he was not a member of the *ulema*. Esad Baba was sent to Istanbul with the book to be judged, ending with his execution. Similarly, while overseeing the confiscation, the government officers carefully listed the books in the lodges together with the other belongings.

The sultan's complaints about the speed of the operation seem valid when one considers the first reports about the Bektaşî lodges of Anatolia and Rumelia came in 1833, five years after the official decision to confiscate the properties of the lodges.⁸⁴ After the central government started to understand the situation more clearly, the income taken from these properties started to be channeled to the *Mansure* treasury. In the beginning, the plan was to directly administer the lands of the Bektaşî lodges by the hand of the central government. However, the income was much lower than expected due to lower demand from the locals and corruption happening in the administration of the lands, according to Barnes.⁸⁵ Moreover, the government complained of fraud and corruption in the administration and sales of the Bektaşî tithes, causing a loss of profit.⁸⁶ The lower demands for the Bektaşî endowment lands might be seen as the reflection of the popular discontent about the confiscation of these properties. On the other hand, this impact should not be exaggerated since Faroqhi documented sales of Bektaşî endowment lands in Southwestern Anatolia to various actors, including *ulema* families.⁸⁷ After this experiment, the lands started to be farmed out for ten-year periods beginning in 1838.⁸⁸

Overall, the confiscation proved to be financially insufficient shortly after the beginning of the operation. Apart from the logistic and technical problems in administrating these lands, the properties and their values were not significant. The most significant confiscation happened in *Abdal Musa Tekkesi* in Antalya, by eight thousand *dönüms* (an area measurement of approximately thousand square meters) of arable lands, which should have constituted a considerable amount but still not the whole properties owned by this lodge.⁸⁹ The total confiscated Bektaşî endowment lands of the other Anatolian lodges summed less than the lands

81 BOA, HAT, 291/17406, 1241 (1826).

82 BOA, Cevdet Evkaf (C. EV), 356/18055, 1243 (1828).

83 BOA, TS.MA.e, 711/58, 1242 (1827).

84 BOA, Maliyeden Müdevver Defterler (MAD.d), 9771, 1248 (1832).

85 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 178.

86 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 177.

87 Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik*, 169.

88 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 177.

89 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Bir Bektaşî Merkezinde Tarımsal Faaliyetler: Kızıldeli Tekkesi 1750-1830", trans. Deren Başak Akman Yeşilel and Ergün Cihat Çorbacı, *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 53 (2010), 48.

taken from the Abdal Musa.⁹⁰ The situation was not much different in the Balkans.⁹¹ The amount of land and the number of valuable materials are quite insignificant in the confiscation records. Therefore, Faroqhi suspects that their true amount might have been concealed by local authorities.⁹² Furthermore, properties of the richest Bektaşî lodge of the empire, *Hacı Bektaş Tekkesi* in Kırşehir, were not touched but handed to the Nakşibendi order. The policy of preservation of the lodges older than sixty years did not change with economic incentives. The lands registered as private properties in the past were also exempted from confiscation and left to the inheritors as well.⁹³

Suraiya Faroqhi assumes the total income from the confiscations should be less than one million *kuruş* in an early study.⁹⁴ According to Maden, the thirteen-year confiscation process resulted in less than two million *kuruş* (cents) of income in total.⁹⁵ The economic value of this profit could be understood further when compared to the total revenue of the *Mansure* treasury. This treasury was specifically created to fund the newly established central army of Mahmud II after the abolishment of the janissary corps.⁹⁶ In 1840, the annual expenditure of the *Mansure* treasury was 18 million *kuruş*.⁹⁷ In the same year, the total income of the Ottoman treasury was around 420 million *kuruş*.⁹⁸ This shows that the thirteen-year operation hardly produced the monthly expense of the *Mansure* treasury to which the revenues of Bektaşî tithes were channeled. When the logistic expenses of a decade-long operation are considered, one might even speculate that the process could have caused a total deficit.

Thus, it can be concluded that the government did not prioritize the economic benefit as the main incentive for the confiscation of the Bektaşî lodges. It was shown above that, at the time of the confiscation decision, the central government did not even have reliable data about the number of the Bektaşî lodges in Istanbul. With no solid information regarding the Bektaşî lodges, it seems unlikely that the government hoped for a serious economic income from confiscating the Bektaşî endowment properties. On the other hand, this income still might have been seen as an additional economic resource for the *Mansure* army by the sultan.

4. Aftermath of the Abolishment of Bektaşî Lodges

Following the death of Mahmud II, the fortunes of the Bektaşî order underwent significant changes. Bektaşî sheikhs took over the old Bektaşî lodges, which had previously been handed over to the Nakşibendi order. Notably, the powerful and affluent *Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Dergahı* in Kırşehir was reclaimed by the Bektaşîs shortly after Mahmud II's death. Interestingly, the late sultan seemed to have reconsidered his antagonism towards Bektaşîsm and even contemplated pardoning the sheikh of the Kırşehir lodge, Hamdulah Efendi, in

90 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 368.

91 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 369.

92 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Bir Bektaşî Merkezinde Tarımsal Faaliyetler: Kızıldeli Tekkesi 1750-1830", 44.

93 BOA, HAT, 293/17453, 1241 (1826).

94 Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşîlik*, 177.

95 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 169.

96 Cengiz Orhonlu, "Hazine", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 27 November 2023).

97 Yavuz Cezar, "Tanzimat'ta Mali Durum", *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 38/3-4 (1984), 326.

98 Cezar, "Tanzimat'ta Mali Durum", 326.

1832. However, the situation surrounding the administration of the lodge posed complications, as the sheikh's brother had been tasked with its management under the condition of following Nakşibendi traditions and rituals. Hamdullah Efendi's exile was partly attributed to his problematic relations with the locals, as recorded in Ottoman documents.

It seems that Sheikh Hamdullah managed to retain political influence and charisma, which is evident through the official requests for his pardon made by the governor of Sivas, Esad Pasha. Ultimately, the efforts of Esad Pasha, who later was appointed to the governorship of Aleppo, proved persuasive, and the local administration in Kırşehir granted the Sheikh a substantial income from the endowment's income.⁹⁹ In 1840, Hamdullah Efendi was officially pardoned by the central government and was given a considerable amount from the endowment's income. He did not return to Kırşehir and spent the remainder of his life in Amasya.

As seen in the story of Sheikh Hamdullah Efendi, Bektaşî sheikhs and dervishes gradually became more visible in public towards the end of the rule of Mahmud II. Apart from Hamdullah Efendi, there were several other Bektaşî leaders and dervishes pardoned in this period.¹⁰⁰ Following the sultan's death, the order seized numerous opportunities to expand its influence and reclaim several important lodges that had previously belonged to them. Among these was the Kırşehir lodge, where Nakşibendi sheikh Mehmed Said Efendi had been appointed in 1826. According to the story, Mehmed Said Efendi showed respect and affinity to Bektaşî dervishes by marrying off his daughter to one, which eased his relations with the dervishes. Later, his son Arif became a Bektaşî dervish.¹⁰¹ The Nakşibendis, however, failed to maintain significant control over the affairs of the lodge, with Bektaşî dervishes taking over after Mehmed Said Efendi's passing.¹⁰² A similar pattern can be seen in other Bektaşî lodges, including the *Şahkulu Sultan Tekkesi* in Merdivenköy, which was reclaimed by Bektaşîs soon after Mahmud II's death.¹⁰³ Especially during the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, the ban on the order was informally lifted, though they formally functioned under the Nakşibendiyye.

After a decade of persecution, the Bektaşî order experienced a revival in the cultural, political, and social spheres. During the prohibition period, Bektaşîs sought different alliances, including with Freemasons, which led to the adoption of various Freemason traditions among the Bektaşîs.¹⁰⁴ This network-building contributed significantly to the order's prominence in the intellectual environment of the 19th century Ottoman society. However, despite this revival, the financial losses incurred during the prohibition period were never fully recovered. While the Bektaşî order demanded the restoration of old endowment properties during the reign of Abdülaziz, none of the properties seized by the central government were ever returned.¹⁰⁵

99 BOA, HAT, 501/24588, 1249 (1834).

100 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 205-206.

101 Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf: 19. Yüzyıl* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 487.

102 Mustafa Alkan, "Hacı Bektaş-1 Veli Tekkesine Nakşibendi Bir Şeyhin Tayini: Merkezi Bir Dayatma ve Sosyal Tepki", *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş-1 Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 57 (2011), 218.

103 M. Baha Tanman, "Şahkulu Sultan Tekkesi", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 10 January 2023).

104 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, "Bektaşîlik", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 21 February 2021).

105 Maden, *Bektaşî Tekkelerinin Kapatılması (1826) ve Bektaşîliğin Yasaklı Yılları*, 233.

Mahmud II's anti-Bektaşî policy did not lead to the eradication of the order. From an economic standpoint, the gains were not substantial, and the Nakşibendi order failed to replace the Bektaşî order effectively. Instead, the policy resulted in a shift in the central government's ability to penetrate the religious domain. The government exerted its authority to confiscate Bektaşî endowment lands, which were traditionally protected by Islamic law and guarded by the *ulema*. However, in return for their cooperation, the political power reassured the *ulema* and sufis about the limits of this intervention.

In the aftermath of the Bektaşî persecution, the central government expanded its control over the religious domain even more aggressively. The establishment of the Ministry of Imperial Religious Endowments in 1826 aimed to create a bureaucracy responsible for managing the financial and bureaucratic needs of the imperial religious endowments. Contrary to the Bektaşî endowments, these endowments were launched by the different members of the dynasty, which gave the sultan added legitimacy in establishing the Ministry.

Over time, this expansion led to the loss of economic power for the *ulema*, who had traditionally held authority over endowments. The Ministry of Religious Endowments assumed control over the majority of the endowments throughout the empire by 1835. As a result, the *ulema*, who had the primary status in administering endowments, lost their economic power. The expansion of the central institutions lasted over ten years, in which, by 1835, the Ministry of Religious Endowments took control of most of the endowments throughout the empire.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, all the endowments that the Ministry took were 'imperial endowments.'

The central government exempted eight categories of endowments from the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which were historically rooted and established. These exemptions were in three categories: (1) the endowments of the founding ghazis, (2) the endowments of the sufi orders, and (3) the endowments that were traditionally administered only by their trustees.¹⁰⁷ The endowment of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli was included in the second category and continued to be administered independently by the Bektaşî order. Bektaşîs not only revived their place in public but also managed to keep the most important financial source of the order, although a considerable amount of land was lost to the central administration over time.¹⁰⁸ In 1840, with the new administrative mentality of Tanzimat, it was decreed that all the properties of the lodges were to be governed by the central authorities, and the profit would be distributed apart from four sufi properties that were kept exempt.¹⁰⁹ As the story goes, the endowments and their institutions never had sustainable property income and were stuck in an economic crisis.

106 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 156.

107 Barnes, *Evkaf-ı Hümayun*, 167–168.

108 M. Baha Tanman, "Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Külliyesi", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Access 9 January 2023).

109 BOA, C.EV, 538/27168, 1256 (18).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems that the decision to abolish Bektaşî lodges and confiscate their endowment properties was not primarily driven by economic considerations. Instead, the available documents indicate the process as a product of the central government institutions' legalistic mindset. The sultan sought to establish a new state mentality that could penetrate even the most protected non-state domains like endowment lands. The association of Bektaşî lodges with the janissary corps posed a perceived threat to the central government's authority, prompting the project. However, in financial terms, the endeavor proved to be a failure, generating meager income for the treasury. Nonetheless, in the political context, modern state institutions demonstrated their increasing intrusiveness in various aspects of life. This intervention into Bektaşî religious endowments marked a new phase in Ottoman religio-politics, eroding the autonomies of religious and judiciary domains in favor of state control.

Another significant aspect of this process was the overlooked resistance from the *ulema* against state interventions in Bektaşî lodges. The *ulema* and the pro-Bektaşî wing of the government employed various strategies to protect lodges and their properties. They limited the definition of apostate and advocated for individual rulings for all dervishes, as well as protecting certain religious endowments, such as the one in Kırşehir, and delaying confiscations with various excuses. On the other hand, the sultan was cognizant of the *ulema*'s agency and employed cautious language in the decree concerning the destruction of Bektaşî lodges. Both the *ulema* and the government engaged in legal discourse, delving into intricate details, including exempting lands registered as private properties under the lodges. The *ulema*'s resistance bore fruit, as several Bektaşî lodges were safeguarded under different pretenses.

Despite the state's efforts, Bektaşîs continued to maintain a presence in the cultural and intellectual life of the empire. In contrast, the *ulema* and other sufi groups gradually diminished their economic and political autonomy under the central government's growing authority. This period marked a significant shift in the balance of power between the central government and religious institutions, setting the stage for further transformations in the Ottoman state's religious landscape.

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