

# SEYYİD ALİ SULTAN OCAĞINDA ÇAMLICA SÜREĞİNİN İKRAR RİTÜELİ\*

Seyhan KAYHAN KILIÇ\*\*

## Özet

Bu makelenin amacı Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı ikrar cemi ritüellerinin içerik, amaç ve fonksiyonlarının ortaya konulmasıdır. Araştırmamın saha çalışmasının düzenlendiği ortam özellikle Kütahya'da yer alan Çamlıca Bölgesi ve Aydoğdu Köyü'dür. Çamlıca Bölgesi Okçu Mahallesiindedir ve idari olarak Okçu tarafından yönetilmektedir. Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı'na bağlı talipler ve dedeler kendi kültürlerini cem ritüelleri yoluyla devam ettirmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Katılımcılar birlik, dayanışma, barış, bereket ve ocaktan ayrı düşmekten kaçınmak için cem ritüelleri yürütmektedirler. Bununla birlikte, cem ritüelleri ile katılımcılar karşılıklı kabulü ve taliplerin yılda bir kez kontrol edilmesini sağlamak isterler. İkrar cemi ritüelinde talip olmayan kişi Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı'nın kurallarına uyacağına dair dedenin ve diğer taliplerin karşısında söz verir. Bunun üzerine içeriden biri haline gelir. Bu ritüelden sonra eğer karşılıklı rıza sağlanırsa kişiler kendi pozisyonlarını içerden biri olarak sağlamlaştırırlar. Kişi Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı'na girdiğinde ocağa bağlanır ve talip olarak bilinir. Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı talipleri amaçlarını ve isteklerini gerçekleştirmek ve topluluk içerisinde birliği sağlamak için cem ritüelleri aracılığıyla birbirleriyle ve spiritüel dünya ile iletişim kurarlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı, Çamlıca, cem, ikrar cem ritüeli

## INITIATION (İKRAR) CEM RITUAL OF THE SUREK OF CAMLICA IN THE SEYYİD ALİ SULTAN OCAK

### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to introduce content, purposes and functions of the initiation (*ikrar*) cem rituals of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı*. The setting of my research fieldwork is especially in the Çamlıca Region and Aydoğdu Village where are the location of *Kütahya*. The Çamlıca Region is in the *Okçu* District and is governed locally by the *Okçu* in Çamlıca. *Dedes* and *talips* of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı* in the Çamlıca surek still try to carry on their culture through *cem* rituals. Participants perform *cem* rituals for unity, solidarity, peace, fertility, and to avoid becoming an outsider from their *ocak*. In addition, the participants of the

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\*\* Dr., Yeditepe University, Antropology Department, Istanbul/Turkey, seyhankayhan@gmail.com  
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*cem* rituals want to maintain mutual consent and control of their *talips*, once in a year. In the *ikrar cem* ritual, the individual is not a *talip* who promises to obey the rules of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* in front of the *dede* and *talips*. Then, the individual becomes an insider. After this *cem* ritual, if individuals maintain mutual consent, they may consolidate their own position as an insider. When an individual is initiated into *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, they belong to an *ocak* and are known as a *talip*. *Talips* of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, through a *cem* ritual, communicate with each other and their spiritual world to realize their goals and desires and maintain unity in their congregation.

**Key Words:** *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, Çamlıca Region, *cem* ritual, *ikrar cem* ritual

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I have focused on the initiation (*ikrar*) *cem* ritual of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* in the Çamlıca Region and *Aydoğdu* village. The Çamlıca Region is in *Okçu* district and is governed locally by the *Okçu* in Çamlıca. Çamlıca is also known as *Tekkeşinler*. However, I believe this name refers to the tomb of *Seyyid Ali Sultan*. *Tekkeşinler* is a both a nickname and local name. So, Çamlıca or *Tekkeşinler* is officially located in *Okçu* district. In addition, the residents of *Okçu* are Sunni.

The *Seyyid Ali Sultan* tomb is located in the Çamlıca Region (Photo 1, 2). There is a worship place (*cemevi*) in the Çamlıca Region. In 1990, the *cemevi* (Photo 3,4) was established in the Çamlıca Region. Both the *talip*, who were initiated into *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* and the *dede*, who are the *talip*'s religious leaders, live together in the Çamlıca or *Tekkeşinler* Region. *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*'s *talips* live in the villages of *Aydoğdu*, *Körs* and *İnli* in the *Kütahya*. In addition, *talips* immigrated either to *Okçu/Güvecci*, *Kütahya*, *Eskişehir* or to major cities such as *Ankara*, *İstanbul*, *İzmir*.

## 2. *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*'s Çamlıca Sürek

In rural areas, rituals of the Alevis were organized through *ocaks*<sup>2</sup>. Each *ocak* had a religious leader. *Seyyid Ali Sultan* was one of these. In other words, an *ocak* is formed as part of the *dede*'s families. It is the fundamental organization of Alevis today. An *ocak* is established in one Region. However, the *ocak*'s thoughts and beliefs radiate from the centre. For example, the dervish lodge of *Seyyid Ali Sultan* was established in *Dimetoka*. However, the two Regions, *Kütahya* and *Malatya* both have official tombs. The religious leaders (*dedes*) and their believers (*talips*) may live in different Regions. Each of these Regions is called a *sürek*. In other words, the *sürek* refers to unique forms. The *dedes* and *talips*, who believe in *Seyyid Ali Sultan*, settled in Western Thrace, *Ankara*, *Eskisehir*, *Malatya* and the *Balkans*.

According to hierarchical structure, the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*'s *süreks* in *Kütahya* (Çamlıca Region, *Aydoğdu*, *Körs* and *İnli* villages) belongs to the *Hacı Bektaş Veli Ocak*. *Talips* and *dedes* of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* in the Çamlıca *sürek* still try

to carry on their culture through *cem* rituals. For instance, The *Muharram/Aşhura cem* ritual is act of remembrance for the Ahl-al Bayt and Twelve Imams - especially the Imam Hussein and his followers. This memorial ceremony is based upon the Kerbela Massacre and indicator of the common memory of Alevis-Bektashis. On the other hand, if *talips* are initiated into the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, their relatives would make a sacrifice, cook and distribute food and at the time of their death, perform yet another ritual. The ritual was called the deceased (*dar kurbanı cem*). The interrogation (*yıl/görgü*) *cem* rituals are performed for each year for each talips in the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* of Çamlıca *sürek*. When I consider the *erkan* in their *cem* ritual, I observed two main groups of *cem* rituals; the *birlik* (union) and the *görgü* (interrogation). Even though they are neither initiated nor interrogated, many people are allowed to participate in *cem* rituals. The *Muharram*, *birlik* and *Abdal Musa cem* rituals are examples of union *cem* rituals. The *ikrar*, *görgü*, *dar* and *düşkünlük cem* rituals relate to the interrogations of the *talips*. These two groups of *cem* rituals illustrate why *cem* rituals still remain. The group of union *cem* rituals function to educate youth and children. Participation requires no prerequisites. On the other hand, the group of interrogation *cem* rituals maintains strict control over the group members.

### 3. Liturgy Descriptions And Explanations For The Initiation (İkrar) Cem Rituals in The Çamlıca Region

I observed the initiation (*ikrar*) rituals in the Çamlıca Region on January 31 through February 1, 2014 and in the *Aydoğdu* Village on February 15 through February 16, 2014. This ritual is dependent upon an individual, who must feel ready to be initiated - both psychologically and economically. The individual must make personal sacrifices. When an individual is initiated into Alevism, they belong to an *ocak* and are known as a *talip*. In the Alevi belief, if an individual wishes to become an initiate, he must find a fictive brother (*musahip*)<sup>3</sup>. It is a kind of imaginary relationship. Couples must take economic and social responsibility for the moral values of each other's family. However, in the case of Çamlıca Region, I determined, during the in-depth interviews, that they have not applied this rule for approximately thirty years - not since the mid 1980s. On the other hand, the *ikrar cem* ritual is very important to the *sürek* of the Çamlıca Region, in the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*. According to my in-depth interviews, the *ikrar cem* ritual is performed by those in the Çamlıca Region, *Aydoğdu*, *Körs* and *İnli* village. The participants in the Çamlıca Region, started to celebrate the *cem* ritual on January 31, 2014 at 19:00 p.m. The *cem* ritual ended on February 01, 2014 at 02:00 a.m. This *cem* ritual had three services; the initiation (*ikrar*), a celebration for the deceased (*dar kurbanı*) and the interrogation (*görgü/yıl kurbanı*). There were two *aşiks* in the *ikrar cem* ritual in the Çamlıca Region; the *dede*, *Hasan Hüseyin Kayıhan* (1956) and the minstrel (*aşık*) *Muharrem Şen* (1947). Both of the *dedes*, *Ali Ordukaya* (1944) and *Hasan Kayıhan* (1945), are from the Çamlıca

Region and participated in the *ikrar cem* ritual. However, *dede Remzi Ulusoy* (1956) sat on the *post*. *Remzi Ulusoy* (1956) is the *dede* in *Hacı Bektash Veli Ocak*. The *Hacı Bektash Veli Ocak*, is at the top of the *ocak* hierarchy in the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, *sürek* of the *Çamlıca* Region. *Ercan Ordukaya* (1983) and his spouse, *Elif Ordukaya* (1990), were initiated to the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* in the *ikrar cem* ritual during the period from January 31 through February 1, 2014. This was managed by *Remzi Ulusoy* (1956). *Ercan Ordukaya* (1983) draws his lineage from *Seyyid Ali Sultan*. There is a general structure in all *cem* rituals in the *Çamlıca sürek*. Hence, in this paper I shall focus on the *ikrar cem* rituals.

After the *çırağ* service, the *seccade* (prayer rug) is spread over the *erkan kilimi* on the *meydan*. This indicates that there are certain rules of conduct. In fact, participants may create an even more sacred space within this area. The *seccade* is rectangular. Hence, there are four sides to the *seccade*. Each of sides symbolizes each of the four doors. The *dört kapı* (four doors) are the *Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, *Marifet* and *Hakikat*. Evidently, the door is rectangular. Hence, there are four sides to the door. Each of sides is named as a threshold in their belief system. This is because four sides of door simultaneously called as the four doors (*dört kapı*). *Dört Kapı* symbolizes four levels are *Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, *Marifet*, *Hakikat*. *Şeriat* is to respect and follow orthodox principles of Islam. *Tarikat* is the spiritual path that is to be followed in everyday life. This term was explained by an interviewee whilst I was in the field;

“*Tarikat is our way. Tarikat comes from Tarik. Tarikat means way. You enter your way. You must initiate. You must offer kill a sacrifice. Each year, you must be questioned by the dede before the congregation. According to these rules, you mustn't tell a lie or break anyone's heart. You must never take away someone else's rights!*”

“*Tarikat bizim yolumuzdur. Tarik' den gelir. Tarik demek yol demektir. Yola gireceksin, ikrar vereceksin. Kurbanını keseceksin. Her yıl da o dedeyi göreceksin, cemaatin huzurunda. Ona göre de yalan söylemeyeceğin, kimseyi kırmeyeceğin. Kul hakkı yemeyeceğin.*” (Ali Ordukaya (male, 1944) 27.11, 2012. 15:15, *Çamlıca* Region, Seyhan Kayhan Kılıç).

The *Marifet* describes the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. *Hakikat* means spiritual truth;

“*When you arrive at the Hakikat door, you become one with Allah. You reach unity with divine reality. It is difficult to pass the Hakikat stage. Whoever passes though that door, is truly exceptional that takes the cake.*”

“*Hakikat kapısına vardın mı Allah ile bir olursun. Gerçeğe ulaşırsın. Bu kapı zordur. Geçebilene aşk olsun!*” (Ali Ordukaya (male, 1944) 27.11, 2012. 15:15, *Çamlıca* Region, Seyhan Kayhan Kılıç)

Individuals must be married to initiate into the *ocak*. However, there may be exceptional situations. For example, if a female or a male is not married and if they are considered mature, they are allowed to be initiated into the *ocak*. It is preferred that individuals be initiated. That is to say, it is preferred that individuals be part of the congregation. If the individuals are married, both spouses must initiate to the *ocak*. However, procedures of initiation ritual are different for males and females. Before the *ikrar* rite, all those who want to initiate to the *ocak* must perform an ablution. There are two positive poles of an ablution service. The first pole of an ablution service refers to the symbolic and ritualistic cleansing of the participants. The other pole, metaphorically and simultaneously cleanses the hearts of the participants.

During the *ikrar* rite, both spouses are accompanied by a *rehber*. Moreover, after both spouses are initiated into the *ocak*, they are accompanied by the *rehber* in both the actual and ritualistic life of couples. First, both spouses take the ablution. Then, the *rehber* hangs the *tiğbend* around the neck of the male. Both spouses and the *rehber* must be barefooted. Females must always have their head covered, but this is not a necessity for the males. Both spouses are forbidden to wear any jewellery. They enter the *cemevi*, after the *niyaz* but before the *eşik*. They step over the threshold, i.e., the doorsill, thereby entering into the building where this initiation *cem* ritual is performed. This literal passage over the doorsill into the building will become, during the ritual which follows, a metaphoric passage into insider status as an initiated member of this *Ocak*. So the liminal period which is used by Turner (1969) begins when candidates cross over the threshold and enter the building. During these rituals, *talips* stay between a position of insider and outsider. This is the “liminality”. It means, “Neither here nor there”. After these *cem* rituals, if they maintain mutual consent, they may consolidate their own position as an insider.

While the *rehber* and the two spouses enter the *cemevi*, the *rehber* keeps the end of the *tiğbend*. The *rehber* keeps the *tiğbend* until the *dede* takes the *tiğbend* from the male’s neck. The female waits on the left side of the male, during this rite. She stands behind the male and holds his waist. This position has its roots in their story of the creation. The settlements of the Çamlıca Region believe that God formed Eve from the left rib of Adam. If there is only a male or female candidate, they enter the *cemevi* with only the *rehber*.

After the *niyaz* but before the *eşik*, they step over the threshold and enter the *cemevi*. Then, the couple and the *rehber* take three steps. The *rehber* says;

“Peace be upon you, O Saints of the Şeriat!”

“Hü! Esselâm-ı Aleyküm ehl-i Şeriat Erenleri!”

The *dede* replies;

*"Peace be upon you too, O Saints of the Şeriat!"*

*"Aleyküm Selâm, ehl-i Şeriat Erenleri!"*

Then the couple and the *rehber* take three steps. The *rehber* says;

*"Peace be upon you, O Saints of the Tarikat!"*

*"Hü! Esselâm-ı Aleyküm, ehl-i Tarikat Erenleri!"*

The *dede* responds;

*"Peace be upon you too, O Saints of the Tarikat!"*

*"Aleyküm Selâm, ehl-i Tarikat Erenleri!"*

Then, they take three steps. The *rehber* says;

*"Peace be upon you, O Saints of the Marifet!"*

*"Hü! Esselâm-ı Aleyküm, ehl-i Marifet Erenleri!"*

The *dede* says;

*"Peace be upon you too, O Saints of the Marifet!"*

*"Aleyküm Selâm, ehl-i Marifet Erenleri!"*

Then, they take three steps. The *rehber* says;

*"Peace be upon you, O Saints of the Hakikat!"*

*"Hü! Esselâm-ı Aleyküm, ehl-i Hakikat Erenleri!"*

Once again, the *dede* reiterates and answers;

*"Peace be upon you too, O Saints of the Hakikat!"*

*"Aleyküm Selâm, ehl-i Marifet Erenleri!"*

Metaphorically, the *rehber* declares that he brought the spouses, like a ram or lamb, as an obedient member of the congregation of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*. So, the *rehber* asks both the participants and the *dedes*;

*"I brought a ram or lamb as sacrifice for the Seyyid Ali Sultan. Do you take them (as a sacrifice)? Do you accept?"*

*"Seyyid Ali Sultan'a koç kuzu kurban getirdim, aldınız kabul ettiniz mi?"*

The *dede* sits on the *post* and replies;

*"If the cem itself takes and accepts them, we shall also."*

*“Ayn-ı cem aldı kabul ettiyse biz de kabul ettik.”*

The *Ayn-ı cem* states their agreement in chorus;

*“Allah, Eyvallah!”*

The *rehber* recites the same questions again. If a person were disgruntled or aggrieved, the *dede* would try to find a solution for the ill will. During the *ikrar cem* ritual, no one expressed any disagreement or feeling of wrong doing. Then, both the *rehber* and the candidate lay prostrate on the *seccade*. The prostration consists of several steps; one kneels on the floor on the *seccade*, then, one places their two hands on the *seccade*. Finally, one kisses the four sides of the *seccade*. This is both a very symbolic and ritualistic position. The four sides<sup>4</sup> symbolize the *dört kapı*, following the *Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, *Marifet* and *Hakikat*. Then, the male kneels on his two knees, before the *dede*. The *dede* takes the *tığbend* from the male’s neck and binds it around the waist of the candidate, three times. The *dede* says; “*ya Allah*”, “*ya Muhammed*”, “*ya Ali*”, once for each turn. Then, the male binds another *tığbend* around the waist of his spouse, three times, in the same way. The *dede* recites, “*Ya Allah! Ya Muhammed! Ya Ali! Şah Hasan, Şah İmam Hüseyin, Pirim Hacı Bektaş Veli!*” The *rehber* recites the *Teslim* prayer; a verse from the Qur’an. This prayer is about surrender to God. Then, the candidates kiss the *post*. The *rehber* says, “*My dede, I hand over the candidates*”. (*Dede’m teslim!*) The *dede* says;

*“Did you accept to be obedient to the way of Muhammed Ali and Seyyid Ali Sultan, like a ram or a lamb?”*

*“Seyyid Ali Sultan’a koç kuzu kurban geldin, Muhammed Ali yoluna kurban geldin, değil mi kuzum?”*

The talips agree;

*Allah, Eyvallah!*

The *dede* says;

*“May be your agreement be eternal”*

*“Allah, Eyvallahımız kadim olsun”*

The *dede* reminds the spouses of the principles of the *ocak*;

*“O Allah. Thanks! If you poured something, you should then fill it up again; If you made somebody cry, you should make them laugh. If you break a heart, you should conciliate. You should walk in the right way. Do not hurt your friend. You should be willing to devote yourself to the guide. Do not lie. Do not eaten forbidden food. Do not commit adultery. Do not take up a thing which your hand has not laid*

*down. Do not tell what you have not seen. Come not, come not, turn not, turn not; the property of those who come, the soul of those who turn. In your worship, do not associate anything or anyone with God (şirk). This is impossible in the way of Muhammed Ali. Are the Four Doors<sup>5</sup> and the Forty Duties<sup>6</sup>, true?"*

The most important issue of this *gülbeng* is that the *dede* reminds the spouses about the principles of an *ocak*. They should not come as an initiate into the *ocak*, if they predict that they may turn away. When individuals belong to an *ocak*, if necessary, they must be ready to sacrifice their life and their possessions.

*"Allah, Eyvallah! Kapısında döktüğünüz varsa doldurun, ağılattığınız varsa güldürün, yıktığınız varsa kaldırın, doğru gezin, dost gönlünü incitmeyin, Mürşidimize teslim-i rıza olun. Yalan söylemeyin, haram yemeyin, zina etmeyin. Eliniz ile koymadığınızı almayın, gözünüz ile görmediğinizi söylemeyin. Gelme gelme, dönme dönme, gelenin malı, dönenin canı. Şirk ile ibadet olmaz Muhammed Ali yolunda, Dört Kapı, Kırk Makam hak mı?"*

The participants state their agreement in chorus;

*"Allah, Eyvallah!"*

The *dede* states;

*"Your (spouses) performed the niyaz before the eşik to the Four Doors; Şeriat, Tarikat, Marifet, Hakikat. Our seccade is the place where the Forty Assembly (Kırklar Meydanı). Is the mourning for the Twelve Imams true?"*

*"Dört Kapı'ya niyaz ettiniz. Şeriat, Tarikat, Marifet, Hakikat. Seccadenin üstü Kırklar Meydanı, On iki Matem hak mı?"*

The participants state their agreement in chorus;

*"Allah, Eyvallah!"*

The *dede* declares;

"We shall fast with all our body during the month of Muharram and (in other words) during the mourning of the Twelve. The month of Muharram is the month of mourning. Are the Four Ancestors true?"

*"On iki Matem'de, Muharrem ayında On iki orucumuzu bütün vücudumuz ile tutacağız, Muharrem ayı matem ayıdır. Dört Ata hak mı?"*

The participants state their agreement in chorus;

*"Allah, Eyvallah!"*

The *dede* continues;



“Our ancestors are your ancestors, as yours are ours. You should have regard for those that Ahl-al Bayt loved. You also do not respect those that Ahl-al Bayt did not love. (You should love who is loved by Ahl-al Bayt or you shouldn't like who is not loved by the Ahl-al Bayt. (Be friend of Ahl-al Bayt's friends.) Do you promise to take responsibility for each other? Do you promise to support each other during good and bad days?”

“Birbirimizin ataları atalarınızdır. Ehl-i Beyt'in sevdiğini sevip, sevmediğini sevmeyeceğiz. Birbirinizi taşımaya söz veriyor musunuz, iyi günde kötü günde birbirinize destek olacağımıza söz veriyor musunuz?”

The participants state their agreement in chorus;

“Allah, Eyvallah!”

The *dede* continues;

“If the devil has his way and you break your promise, do the swords of the Twelve Imams cut your neck?”

“Eğer şeytanın şerrine uyar da ikrarınızı bozarsanız, On iki imam'ın kılıcı boynunuza olsun mu?”

The participants state their agreement in chorus;

“Allah, Eyvallah!”

Meanwhile, the *dede* reminds the spouses of all the principles. Each participant puts their forefinger of the right hand on the *meydan*. When the *dede* completes the recitation of the principles, each participant kisses their own forefinger. The spouses then kiss the *post*. This is called performing the *niyaz*. Then, the *tövbe* (confession) starts. During the *tövbe*, participants recite, “We are sorry for all our sins and omissions...”

The participants repeat this prayer three times;

“There is only one Allah. Allah is one. Mohammed is his prophet. Ali is his saint. A saint is a spiritual guide; *Allah* may not separate us from the group of perfects; *Allah* willing!”

“Eşhedü en lâ ilahe illallah ve eşhedü enna Muhammeden abduhü ve Resullullah (Hak birdir. Muhammed Resulullah) Aliyyül Veliyullah, Veliyül Mürşit, Mürsid-i Kâmillullah, kâmiller katarından ayırmaya Allah! Ayırmaz insallah!”

Then, the *aşık* recites a *düvaz* (Photo 5)

Every day, we make mistakes. To err is human

We repent and ask Allah for forgiveness  
We dedicate ourselves to *Muhammed Ali*  
We repent and ask Allah for forgiveness  
*Günü günü hata etmek işimiz*  
*Tövbe günahımıza estağfurullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*  
*Muhammed Ali'ye bağlı başımız*  
*Tövbe günahımıza estağfurullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*  
Imam Hassan came to help us  
Shah Imam Hussein is our remedy  
Praise be to God! We saw Zeynel Âbidin  
We repent and ask Allah for forgiveness  
*İmam Hasan geldi bize yardımcı*  
*Şah-ı İmam Hüseyin derman derdimize*  
*Şükürler Zeynel Âbidin'i gördüğümüze*  
*Tövbe günahımıza estağfurullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*  
Imam Bakır comes brightly  
Imam Cafer received God's blessing  
We bless Musa, Kâzım and Rıza  
We repent and ask Allah for forgiveness  
*İmam Bâkır'dır balkıyıp gelen*  
*İmam Cafer'dir elimizi alan*  
*Musa, Kâzım, Rıza'ya niyazlar kılan*  
*Tövbe günahımıza estağfurullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*  
Tâki and Nâki do not shed our blood in vain  
Hasan-ül Askerî does not waste our labour  
We have as many sins as we have hairs on our head.  
We repent and ask *Allah* for forgiveness

*Takî, Nakî vermesin kanımız cemiye*

*Hasan-ül Askerî etmesin emeğimizi zaiye*

*Saçımızın sayısı ettigimiz kov, gıybete*

*Tövbe günahımıza estağfirullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*

I am *Hatayî*, I (*Hatayî*) have received the heavenly light of God

I kept an eye open, I am also awake to the truth of God

I ask for the help and goodness of you (*Mehdî*), I trust you

We repent and ask *Allah* for forgiveness

*Hatayî'nim Hakk nuruna boyandım*

*Gözümü açtım hem gafletten uyandım*

*Medet müriüvvet dedim Mehdî sana güvendim*

*Tövbe günahımıza estağfirullah, estağfirullah, estağfirullah*

The *dede* recites a *gülbeng*;

*"Let us say for the love of Ahl-al Bayt Allah Allah! Ya Allah! Ya Allah! Ya Allah!..."*  
Then the *dede* continues to pray and calls upon God, the Prophet Mohammed and his spouse Hatice, the Imam Ali and his spouse Fatma, the Twelve Imams, *Hacı Bektas Veli* and *Seyyid Ali Sultan* for their help."

*"Diyelim Ehl-i Beyt aşkına, Allah Allah, Ya Allah! Ya Allah! Ya Allah! Ya Muhammed! Ya Muhammed! Ya Muhammed! Ya Ali! Ya Ali! Ya Ali! ekber-i ümmet Hatice Fatma analarımız, Hasan, Hüseyin, Zeynel, Bâkır, Cafer, Musa, Kâzım, Rıza, Takî, Nakî, Askerî, Mehdî, Hünkâr Hacı Bektas Veli yardımcımız ola, erenler evliyâlar yardımcımız ola, külbünde bulduğumuz Seyyid Ali Sultan'ın da himmeti üzerinize ola, gerçeğe Hü! İkrarımız kadim ola, muradımız hâsil ola!"*

Then both spouses drink sherbet. The sherbet is named *aşk dolusu*. Participants of the cem ritual believe that sherbet (*dolu*) comes to them from God and from all of their ancestors. It is a tradition. The sherbet is drunk in the *Kırklar Meclisi*. They offer the story of *Kırklar* to explain why sherbet is sacred.

A person brings sherbet in a glass. The *dede* takes the sherbet in his hand and offers a blessing. After the prayer (blessing) both spouses share and drink the sherbet. Then, a very important part of *ikrar cem ritual* starts. It is called *Âl-i âbâ Pençesi*/Pençe-i Ali Aba/pençe çalmak. This means the hand of Ahl-al Bayt. Each of the *dede's* fingers symbolizes each person of Ahl-al Bayt; the family of the Prophet Mohammed.

Both spouses kneel before the *dede*. The *saçlı bacı*<sup>7</sup> must kiss the *dede*'s right knee. The *taçlı bacı* must kiss the *dede*'s left knee. Again, this is called *niyaz*. While both spouses assume the *niyaz* position, the *rehber* places a big piece of cloth around both spouses (Photo 6). According to their belief system, this cloth is called an *aba*. It resembles a shroud. Metaphorically, it reminds them that the *meydan* is a place to die before death (ölmeden önce ölmek). They must be ready to be interrogated, at the *meydan*, by the *dede* and before all of the *talips*. The *ikrar cem* ritual is a pilgrimage for the individuals. The *aba* is white, like a pilgrim's clothes. So, at the end of the *ikrar cem* ritual, the *dede* recites, "May your Miraj be accepted".

While both spouses kneel before the *dede*, the *dede* recites the *fetih* prayer which is a chapter in the Qur'an. First, the *dede* puts his left hand on the head of the *taçlı bacı* and his right hand on the head of the *saçlı bacı*. Then, the *dede* moves his right hand clockwise on both spouses and touches their backs. While the *dede* moves his right hand clockwise, the *dede* says, "Bismi Şah", "Ya Allah!", for the first time. The *dede* continues to say the following words, each time he moves his right hand on both the spouses, "Ya Muhammed!", "Ya Ali!", "Shah Hassan!", "Shah Hussein", "our ancestor Seyyid Ali Sultan!", "our Pir, Sultan Hacı Bektash Veli!".

After the *Pençe-i Ali Aba*, the *dede* recites a *gülbeng*;

*"In the name of the Prince, Allah Allah. Let your services be accepted and your desires be fulfilled by Allah. Let saints be your helpers. May Allah answer both the desires you say aloud and those which you keep in your heart. May Allah prevent your impoverishment. May your agreement be eternal. Let the Twelve Imams be your helpers. May Muhammed Ali answer your desires. Let the services be registered in the Dervish Lodge of Hacı Bektash Veli and the Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak. Attention to the truth!"*

*"Bism-i Şah, Allah Allah, hayır hizmetleriniz kabul ola, muradınız hâsıl ola, erenler, evliyâlar yardımcınız ola, Cenab-ı Allah, dilde dileğinizi, gönülde muradınızı vere. Allah, diplere yatırıp kapılara baktırmaya. Allah, verdiğiniz ikrarda sabit kıla, On İki İmamlar yardımcımız ola, isteğinizi dileğinizi Muhammed Ali vere, hizmetiniz Hünkâr Hacı Bektaş dergâhında, Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocağı'nda kabul ola, gerçeğe Hü!"*

While the *dede* says "Ya Allah! Ya Muhammed! Ya Ali! Our Pir and Sultan Hacı Bektash Veli!" the *rehber* removes the *aba* from over the spouses. Then, the two spouses must perform the *niyaz* before all participants. They start with the *dede*. The spouses kiss the hands of the participants, if they are older than the two spouses. This is called *sefalaşma*. Lastly, the spouses perform the *niyaz* on the *seccade*. They kneel continuously. After the *sefalaşma* and *niyaz*, the spouses are allowed to stand up. They assumed the *dar* position. The *dede* recites the *gülbeng*;

*“In the name of the Prince, Allah Allah. Let your services be accepted and your desires be fulfilled by Allah. Let saints be your helpers. May Allah answer both the desires you speak aloud and those which you keep in your heart. Let Allah be sure about vassals who have been interrogated. May Allah allow us to perform this service of Ali Aba Pençesi in the upcoming years. Attention to the truth!”*

*“Bism-i Şah, Allah Allah, hizmetiniz kabul ola, muradınız hâsıl ola, Erenler Evliyâlar yardımcınız ola, Allah, dilde dileğinizi, gönülde muradınızı vere, Allah, sorgusu sorulmuş, suali verilmiş kullarınızdan emin eyleye. Allah, yeni yeni yıllara erdire, böylece Ali Aba Pençesi çalmak nasip ve müyesser eyleye, gerçeğe Hü!”*der.

Then, the two spouses are named *talips*. The *talips* perform *niyaz* on the *seccade*. The *talips* kneel before the *dede*. The *dede* recites a *gülbeng*;

*“Allah Allah, Allah Allah. May your apology, prayers, all services, especially the service of Âl-i âbâ Pençesi bring good luck! May God, Mohammed, Ali be your helpers. Attention to the truth.”*

*“Allah Allah, Allah Allah, övrünüz, niyazınız, namazınız, hizmetiniz, Âl-i âbâ Pençeniz hayır ola. Hakk, Muhammed, Ali yardımcınız ola, gerçeğe Hü!”*

The *talips* perform the *niyaz* on the *seccade*. Then the *saçlı bacı* and the *taçlı bacı* hold the *seccade* above their waists. The *saçlı bacı* and the *taçlı bacı* assume the *dar* position<sup>8</sup>. The *dede* recites the *gülbeng*;

*“In the name of the Prince, Allah Allah. May Allah accept your service. Let your Miraj be accepted. Let your face be unblemished. Let your heart be light. Let saints be your helpers. May Allah answer both the desires you say aloud and those which you keep in your heart. May the seccade absolve your secrets. Attention to the truth, Hu!”*

*“Bism-i Şah, Allah kabul etsin, miracınız kabul olsun, seccadeniz hak ola, yüzünüz pak, kalbiniz nur ile dola, erenler, evliyâlar yardımcınız ola. Cenab-ı Allah, dilde dileğinizi, gönülde muradınızı vere, seccadeniz de sır perdeniz ola, gerçeğe Hü!”*

Then, the *saçlı bacı* and the *taçlı bacı* kiss the *seccade*. The *ikrar* rite is complete.

#### 4. Conclusion

An individual initiated into the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* must wait at the threshold to pass from self identity to the group's identity. In the *ikrar cem* ritual, the individual is not a *talip* who promises to obey the rules of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak* in front of the *dede* and *talips*. Then, the individual becomes an insider. During this ritual, *talips* stay between a position of insider and outsider. This is the “liminality”.

Liminality means to wait at a threshold, to skip to another status. Turner (1969: 95) explained that liminality is “neither here nor there (or neither living nor dead). They are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial”. After this *cem* ritual, if individuals maintain mutual consent, they may consolidate their own position as an insider. When an individual is initiated into *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, they belong to an *ocak* and are known as a *talip*. The ritual maintains control over the members of community. In addition, it maintains their identity.

There are very verbal and nonverbal ritualistic, symbolic and metaphoric examples found in the *ikrar cem* ritual. I have observed that the participants assumed many symbolic and ritualistic positions. The *aşık* says that the candidate take three steps toward the *meydan*. However, the most important issue is that initiate comes to the *meydan* to declare to sacrifice them self, like a ram, for the correct way. The candidates drink the sherbet. It is called the drink of love (*aşk dolusu*). Regarding the results, there may be a relationship between *aşk dolusu* and how minstrels drink wine in their dreams. That is, when *talips*, candidates or minstrels drink, they are reinforced with divine support. Religious power is enthral and helps them. My hypothesis allows us to confirm Rappaport’s (1999:287-290) “ultimate sacred postulates”. These include many publicly accepted Alevi beliefs. When candidates are initiated during the *ikrar cem* ritual, the initiates are reinforced, internalized or “verified” by their numinous experiences. For example, these include drinking a sacred beverage, a sherbet, known as *aşk dolusu*. As noted previously, participants of the *cem* ritual believe that sherbet (*dolu*) comes to them from both God and their ancestors. These religious or emotional experiences, which Rappaport (1999:371-374) calls “numinous”, convince both initiates and believers that the gods or ancestors reward, support or teach them. This is because they believe that they have chosen the right path by becoming initiates. Rappaport recognized this process of mutual reinforcement. This reciprocal interaction between the group’s religious beliefs and personal religious experiences is a fundamental part of the lifelong process by which *talips* consolidate and reinforce their position as insiders (Fikes, 2010:36).

When individuals are initiated into an *ocak*, they must not come to the *meydan* without the *tığbend*. In each *cem* ritual, the *tığbend* is coiled three times, next to the *talip*’s upper belly; whilst their spouse says “Allah Muhammed Ali”. If the initiate is not married, a *saçlı bacı* from an *ocak* coils the *tığbend*. I mentioned that the *rehber* stated that he brought the spouses, like a ram or lamb. The *rehber* then asks both the participants and the *dedes* if they take them (as a sacrifice). Metaphorically, the question asks if a person has dedicated them self to the way. As I observed, the *tığbend* is a very ritualistic part of the *ikrar cem* ritual. The *tığbend* indicates entering

the way of *Allah Muhammed Ali* and the decision to dedicate oneself to the way of *Allah Muhammed Ali* and the *ocak* itself.

At the same time, settlements in the Çamlıca Region believe that each person of the Forty, when they performed the *Kırklar Semah*, was girded by a *tiğbend*. According to the story of *Kırklar Meclisi*, the Prophet Muhammad dropped his turban and suddenly the turban split into forty parts. Each participant of the Assembly of Forty took one of the forty parts and bound it around their waist. Hence the *tiğbend* is an index to the story of *Kırklar*. Through gesture, the *dede* takes “the *tiğbend* from the male’s neck and binds it around the waist of the candidate, three times. The *dede* says; “*ya Allah*”, “*ya Muhammed*”, “*ya Ali*”, once for each turn.” It seems that the *dede*’s gesture of tying the *tiğbend* around the candidate’s waist implies a non-verbal confirmation or preparation of their new identity as a *talip*. This comes as a direct response to the candidates’ prostration and the placement of a kiss on the four doors.

After the *ikrar cem* ritual, mutual rights and responsibilities start for each *talip*. For example, once a year, each *talip* must be interrogated by the *dede*, in front of the participants of the *cem* ritual. If the *talip* does not perform annual interrogation (*görgü/yıl*) as part of the *cem* ritual, they may be denounced by the *ocak*. After the *talips* verbally agree to become initiates, the rules of conduct required of members in this *Ocak* are explicitly proclaimed by the *dede*. The *dede* reminds the spouses of the principles of the *ocak*. Clearly, there are both verbal and non-verbal manifestations of this stage in the initiation *cem* ritual. At this point, it is essential to explain the meaning and purpose of the *ocak*’s principles of acceptance; tying the belt, prostration and kissing the four sides of the *seccade*. This non-verbal expression of reverence indicates publicly to the congregation that the candidate, who is being initiated as a member of the congregation, accepts the four basic paths that lead to spiritual maturity. These are symbolized by the four doors or sides of the *seccade*. The placement of a kiss on the four doors shows a candidate respects and intends to become what every initiated *Ocak* member wishes to become; a devout Alevi.

I have tried to describe the initiation (*ikrar*) *cem* ritual according to their causes and purposes. This ritual has tried to demonstrate how group members, or *talips* of the *Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak*, through a *cem* ritual, communicate with each other and their spiritual world to realize their goals and desires, abiding by rules which guide their conduct and maintain unity in their congregation.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> While I was writing this text, the chapter “Initiation (İkrar) Cem Ritual” in my PhD thesis entitled “Ritual Communication: A Case Study in Seyyid Ali Sultan Ocak’s Cem Rituals” was used as a reference. KAYHAN KILIÇ, Seyhan. (2014). Ritual Communication: A Case Study in Seyyid Ali

Sultan Ocak's Cem Rituals. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Istanbul: Yeditepe University, Institute of Social Science, Department of Social Anthropology.

<sup>2</sup> See more information; ERSAL, Mehmet. (2013). Alevilik Bektaşılık İnanç Sisteminde Hiyerarşik Yapı: Çubuk Havzası Aleviliği Örneği. Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi. İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Türk Halk Bilimi Bilim Dalı. s.60

<sup>3</sup> See more information BAL, Hüseyin. (2004). *Alevi İslam Yolu*, İstanbul: Cem Vakfı Yayınları. s. 67

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<sup>4</sup> The four sides symbolize the dört kapı, following the Şeriat, Tarikat, Marifet and Hakikat. Each of sides is named as a threshold in the belief system of Alevis-Bektashis. This is because four sides of door simultaneously called as the four doors (dört kapı). Dört Kapı symbolizes four levels are Şeriat, Tarikat, Marifet, Hakikat. Şeriat is to respect and follow orthodox principles of Islam. Tarikat is the spiritual path that is to be followed in everyday life.

<sup>5</sup> The Four Doors are Şeriat (religious law), *Tarikat* (religious practices), *Marifet* (mystic knowledge of God) and *Hakikat* (immediate experience of the essence of reality).

<sup>6</sup> The Four Duties describe the degree of development in order to be a perfect human being in the belief of the Alevis in the Çamlıca region. It also describes the obligations that accompany each successive stage. The Alevi Bektashi doctrine or faith consists of both the Four Doors and the Forty Duties

<sup>7</sup> In the cem ritual, women are known as saçlı bacı, or those who have hair. Men are known as taçlı bacı, or those who have a crown. Bacı means sister. In addition, the dede refers to all participants as siblings (or fellows) of ayin-i cem (ayin-i cem kardeşler) or souls (canlar).

<sup>8</sup> Each of the participants passed the threshold and then came towards the dede. They place their right foot over their left. They also place their two hands over their heart, right hand over left. Each person stands in this position and bows their head, in front of the dede. This position is called the "Dar-ı Fatma" "dara durmak", "ayak mühürlemek" "peymançe". They believe that this position is similar that which a person would assume for questioning whilst before Allah. The background behind this position is based upon a short story. It was explained to me by an interviewee;

*"One day, Mohammed wanted to drink water. At this time, Hussein was near the door and stood up. While he stood up, he stubbed his left big toe. His left big toe began to bleed. Hussein did not want to upset his grandfather Mohammed. He put*



*his right big toe on his left big toe. So he hid his left big toe and his grandfather did not see the blood. Hussein waited for Mohammed, in this position, as he drank the water. Hence, this position is called Fatma Dar-ı or Peymançe."*

Birgün Muhammed su istemiş. O anda Hüseyin kapıya yakın olduğundan hemen kalkmış, kalkarken sol ayağının baş parmağını taşa vurarak kanatmış. Dedesine suyu verirken, ayağındaki kanı görmesin deyi, yavrun, sağ ayak başparmağını sol başparmağın üzerine komuş (mühürlemiş). Dedesi su içesinceye kadar öyle darda beklemiş. Ondan Fatma Dar-ı demişler. (Hasan Kayıhan (male, 1945) 26.11, 2012. 13:31. Çamlıca Region. Seyhan Kayhan Kılıç).

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### Interviewees

- Ali Kayıhan, 1940-2013, Kütahya/Çamlıca, elementary school, *dede*
- Ali Ordukaya, 1944, Kütahya/Çamlıca, elementary school, *dede*
- Hasan Kayıhan, 1945, Kütahya/Çamlıca, elementary school, *dede*
- Hasan Hüseyin Kayıhan, 1956, Kütahya/Çamlıca, elementary school, *dede/aşık* Muharrem Şen, 1947, Kütahya/Aydoğdu Köyü, elementary school, *aşık*

## Photos

**Photo 1.** *Tomb of Seyyid Ali Sultan*



**Photo 2.** *Grave of Seyyid Ali Sultan*



**Photo 3.** *Cemevi Building in the Çamlıca Region*



**Photo 4.** *Dinner in the cemevi*



**Photo 5.** *Aşık recites düvaz*



**Photo 6.** *Two dedes move his right hand clockwise on both spouses and touches their backs (Âl-i âbâ Pençesi/Pençe-i Ali Aba/pençe çalmak)*

