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Çepni Alevis

Date Published: **July 2, 2025**

Summary

The Çepni Alevis, a significant sub-group of Anatolian Alevism, emerged on the historical stage as part of the Çepni tribe, which belongs to the Üç-Ok branch of the Oghuz Turks. From the 13th century onwards, through waves of Turkmen migration into Anatolia, they settled in various regions of Western Anatolia, the Black Sea, and Southeastern Anatolia, adopting the Alevi belief system in interaction with local religious and cultural structures. The historical relationships they established with charismatic religious figures and movements such as Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli and the Safavids played a decisive role in shaping Çepni Alevism. While they incorporate classical Alevi elements such as the institution of the dede, cem ceremonies, musahiplik (spiritual companionship), and the twelve services, they are distinguished by their unique rituals and practices integrated with local culture. Subjected at times to pressure during the period of Ottoman–Safavid rivalry, the Çepni Alevis struggled to preserve their identity. Today, they continue to exist in a limited number of regions and hold a distinctive position among Alevi communities in Turkey in terms of both their historical and religious characteristics.

Introduction

The Çepni Alevis are a community that constitutes a significant branch of Anatolian Alevism and continue to exist today in certain regions of Western Anatolia, the Black Sea, and Southeastern Anatolia. Historically considered one of the tribes of the Oghuz Turks, the Çepnis are distinguished by both their Turkmen identity and their Alevi faith. The Çepni Alevis played an important role in the transformation of Anatolia’s socio-cultural structure, especially through Turkmen migrations to the region from the 13th century onwards. While they adhere to the core principles of the Alevi belief system, they also diverge from other Alevi groups through their distinct traditions, rituals, and historical experiences. Although they share common Alevi elements such as the institution of the dedelik (religious leadership), cem rituals, and musahiplik (spiritual brotherhood), their locally embedded and culturally blended practices are noteworthy.

Historical Origins

The Çepnis are described, in terms of their origins, as a tribe/clan belonging to the Üçok branch of the Oghuz Turks. This classification appears consistently in both written sources and oral tradition. In historical records, the name Çepni is also encountered in variant forms such as “Çetni,” “Çipni,” and “Çetmi.” These variations stem from the usage of the word across different regions and time periods. Etymological interpretations in written sources describe the term with definitions such as “always at war with the enemy” or “swift to fight, raider” (Sümer 1992, 241). In oral tradition, however, the term Çepni is linked less to an ethnic origin and more to a religious identity. Especially in ethnographic studies, it is observed that the term is often used to mean “Alevi Turk” (Yalman 1977, 165).

Çepnis are generally known to have led a semi-nomadic way of life. As a result of this lifestyle, their primary economic activity centred on animal husbandry. According to historical records, the large population of the Çepni community implied the presence of sizeable herds of livestock. To prevent these herds from mixing with those of other tribes during migration, the Çepnis used distinctive tribal brands, as did other Oghuz groups (Çetin 2008, 483). Today, examples of these brands can still be seen on rock surfaces in villages such as Üçyol and Kuyucak in the Mesudiye district of Ordu, where Çepnis are densely populated (Demir 2012, 83). Moreover, this brand is still used as a symbol by contemporary Çepni associations. The origins of this mark are linked to the totemic animal tradition of the Oghuz tribes, whereby each Oghuz tribe was typically associated with a specific animal, often a species of bird. For the Çepnis, this bird is the sungur, a type of falcon described as an “ongun” (tribal totem) in written works such as the *Divânu Lügâti’t-Türk*. However, other sources also claim that the Çepni totem may be a mythical bird known as Hümay or Umay, also referred to as the “state bird” (Sümer 1992, 8).

Speech practices and Linguistic Identity

While the language structure of the Çepni Alevis predominantly contains elements of pure Turkish, historical sources also include remarks suggesting that this community used a “different” or “unusual” form of Turkish. These statements offer striking external observations on the Çepni communities’ use of language. Contemporary research suggests that this linguistic distinction arises not only from ethnic or geographical factors but also from faith-based sociological influences. Çepnis adhering to the Alevi faith have historically been subjected to exclusion, pressure, and at times discrimination—particularly in regions dominated by Sunni majorities. This condition led to the need for concealing their identity in public spheres, which, over time,

prompted the development of a distinct, more closed mode of linguistic communication within the community. Some scholars have described this phenomenon as a “secret language” that developed either consciously or organically (Sevinçli 2009, 1924).

Oral interviews and field research conducted in Çepni settlements in the Gaziantep region have revealed that the dialects spoken by this community differ markedly from other commonly spoken Turkish dialects in the surrounding areas. While these local dialects largely consist of Turkish vocabulary, there is also limited use of words of Persian origin. Another notable feature is that pronunciation patterns differ across the four Çepni villages studied—Miseri, Sarılar, Köseler, and Milelis—indicating that the Çepni community does not possess a homogeneous linguistic structure, but rather a dialectic form marked by micro-variations at the village level (KK3, KK6, KK5, and KK7).

Geographical Distribution

The migration of Oghuz tribes into Anatolia began particularly in parallel with the Seljuk conquests and gradually evolved into permanent settlement. During these migrations, Oghuz groups came to be known as “Turkmens,” a term that functioned as both an ethnic and social identifier. Although the exact date of the Çepni tribe’s arrival in Anatolia is not definitively known, several historians have provided assessments on the matter. Scholars such as Faruk Sümer suggest that the Çepnis may have been among the earliest Turkmen groups to settle in Anatolia (Sümer 1992, 9).

The second major wave of Turkmen migration into Anatolia occurred in the early 13th century, particularly following the Mongol invasions of the 1220s. The influx of large populations fleeing Mongol pressure led to a significant increase in the Turkmen presence in the region (Çelik 2022, 40). As a result of this demographic intensity, some Islamic geographers and historians of the time began referring to the region as “Turkey.” During this migration wave, a segment of the Çepni tribe was settled in and around Konya by the Anatolian Seljuk Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad I, in accordance with his political strategy. This settlement represented a major turning point both in the Turkification of the region and in the Çepnis’ transition to a more sedentary lifestyle (Yavuz 2022, 43).

Early data regarding the presence of Çepni communities settled around Konya by the Seljuk administration is largely derived from hagiographic sources. Within this context, the *Vilâyetnâme* written about Hacı Bektaş Veli, one of the prominent 13th-century Sufi figures, recounts his contact with the Çepnis upon his arrival in Suluca Karahöyük (Gölpınarlı 1958, 26). According to the narrative, Hacı Bektaş is hosted by Yunus

Mukrî, a respected elder of the local Çepni community. The same text also states that one of Yunus Mukrî's four sons, İdris, was married to Kutlu Melek (Kadıncık Ana), a key figure in Bektashi history. According to legend, Kadıncık Ana, who had been unable to bear children for a long time, conceived through the prayer and spiritual grace of Hacı Bektaş. This event is considered a significant turning point in both Bektashi tradition and the religious history of the Çepnis (Kardaş 2018, 249). Çelebi Cemaleddin Efendi, a member of the Çelebi Bektashis, refers to the child born from this union as "Seyyid Ali Sultan" in his work *Müdâfaa*. In light of these narratives, it is understood that the Çepnis were among the earliest disciples of Hacı Bektaş Veli and thus played an active role in the early development of the Bektashi order (Melikoff 2010, 120; Noyan 1998, 27–30).[1]

These early relationships between the Bektashi belief system and Çepni communities profoundly shaped the Çepnis' place and religious identity within Anatolian Alevism in the centuries that followed. Therefore, the distinct characteristics of the Çepni belief system and its multilayered ties to the Alevi-Bektashi tradition merit further examination.

Resettlement to the Black Sea and the Principalities Period

Around the year 1240, as Mongol incursions once again gained momentum in Anatolia, the Seljuk administration, for strategic and security reasons, redirected a significant portion of the Çepni population from Central Anatolia to the eastern and central Black Sea regions. As a result of this resettlement process, Çepni communities came to be concentrated in areas such as Trabzon, Giresun (referred to in historical sources as "Vilayet-i Çepni"), Sinop, Canik, Kastamonu, and Amasya (Clavijo 1993, 75; Bostan 2013, 43).

At the same time, the weakening of Seljuk authority paved the way for the emergence of new principalities in the Black Sea region. In this context, the Danishmendids were among the first powers to fill the political vacuum in the area. The Çepnis lived under the rule of this principality until they established their own political entities. Following the fall of the Danishmendid Principality, the Çepni communities appeared on the historical stage for the first time under their own name, founding independent principalities: the Hacıemiroğulları and the Taceddinoğulları (Demir 2002, 63).

With the establishment of these principalities, the Çepnis emerged as a regional power and became a decisive force in the socio-political structure of the Black Sea region. However, following the region's incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, administrative and religious policies implemented over time led many Çepnis to abandon their traditional Alevi beliefs and adopt a Sunni identity. This transformation is understood

as a result of both the central authority’s efforts to homogenise religious belief and long-term assimilation policies.

The Çepnis among the Halep and Boz Ulus Turkmens

Another significant group belonging to the Çepni tribe was composed of three distinct branches living a semi-nomadic lifestyle under the broader Halep Türkmenleri (Aleppo Turkmens) confederation. The earliest written records concerning these groups are found in Ottoman archival documents and date back to the 16th century (BOA, TD, nr. 1040, 1524–1530, 97). According to these records, the first of these three branches was settled around the Rumkale region near Antep. The second branch, under the leadership of a figure named Tuğrul Kethüda, was based in the town of Gündüzlü, north of Antakya. The third branch appears to have been part of the Boz Ulus Turkmen tribal confederation.

In the 1520 tax registers, the Çepnis residing around Rumkale were recorded as comprising 53 tax households. By the 1570s, this number had risen to 397, indicating a significant increase in population and settlement density. In contrast, the number of tax households recorded for the other two branches—those in Gündüzlü and the Boz Ulus region—were 29 and 16, respectively. In Ottoman sources, these two groups were referred to collectively as the “Başım Kızdılu Çepni” (Sümer 1992, 17).

By the 17th century, it is understood that the main group centred in Rumkale continued to reside in the same region. This community was subdivided into obas (tribal units) such as Korkmazlu, Sarılu, Köseler, Karalar, Kasaba, and Şuayyıblu. On the other hand, the other two branches known as “Başım Kızdılu” are recorded to have migrated westwards during this period, settling in the regions of Manisa and Aydın. This westward migration appears to be directly related to their forced resettlement to the Rakka region around the year 1690 (Sümer 1992, 17).

Another large and influential Turkmen confederation, alongside the Halep Türkmenleri, was the Boz Ulus Turkmens. Initially based in Diyarbakır and its surroundings, this group launched a mass migration towards Central Anatolia at the beginning of the 17th century due to mounting political and administrative pressures in the region. Among the migrating groups was a notable Çepni branch referred to in the sources as the “Kantemir Çepnileri.” Like the Halep Çepnis, the Kantemir Çepnis were also intended to be resettled in the Rakka region by the Ottomans. However, in an effort to avoid this forced relocation, they instead migrated towards Western Anatolia, particularly to the areas of Bergama, Manisa, and Balıkesir. Today, as a result of this migration, these Çepni communities continue to live in four villages in Bergama, eleven in Manisa, and thirty in Balıkesir. These communities have largely succeeded in

preserving their historical Alevi belief system (Şimşir and Sevgili 2023, 271).

A notable spiritual connection exists between the Çepni communities of Western Anatolia and those of Southeastern Anatolia, specifically Gaziantep. It is understood that both groups are affiliated with the Musa-i Kazım *ocak* (lineage of religious leadership). One of the key indicators confirming this connection is the recurring visits made several times a year by Çepni dedes from Gaziantep to Çepni villages in Manisa, Balıkesir, and Bergama (KK1, KK2, KK4). These visits are important not only for spiritual guidance but also for the continuity of historical identity and ocak affiliation.[2]

In addition to the major Çepni communities discussed in the previous sections, there are also smaller Çepni tribal groups scattered across various regions of Anatolia. Examples of such settlements include Sivas (Sümer 1992, 17), the Sarıçam district of Adana, the Elbistan region of Kahramanmaraş, the village of Çepniyazı in Yozgat, the village of Buzluk Çepni in Çorum, the Gölhisar district of Isparta, the Koçhisar region of Ankara, and the Gölyaka district of Düzce (Halaçoğlu 2009, 527–537). The religious profiles of the Çepni groups in these settlements are not homogenous; while some communities have maintained allegiance to the Alevi tradition, others adhere to Sunni Islam. This variation demonstrates the extent to which Çepni identity has diversified over time—geographically, socially, and denominationally.

Today, Çepni Alevis continue to exist across different regions of Turkey. In particular, Çepni communities located in Balıkesir, Gaziantep (Aslan 2024, 82), İzmir, Amasya, Tokat, several districts of Sivas, and around Kırşehir (Çelik 2007, 1170) are notable for their adherence to the Alevi belief system. The Çepni settlements in these areas have taken shape as a result of historical migration movements and settlement policies.

Çepni presence can also be found beyond the borders of Turkey. In particular, during the Ottoman period, Çepni-origin communities settled in parts of the Balkans—most notably Dobrudja—and succeeded in preserving their cultural heritage to a certain extent (Ocak 2002, 66–67; İnalcık 2005, 21). This distribution indicates that Çepni identity is not confined to Anatolia but extends across a broader regional and international geography.

The Historical Development of Religious Identity

Before settling in Anatolia, the Oghuz tribes had already adopted Islam, yet they also carried with them many cultural elements of their pre-Islamic belief systems. During this period, certain Sufi groups—most notably the Vefaiyye, Kalenderiyye, and Yeseviyye orders—played a significant role in shaping the religious outlooks of these

nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkmen communities (Ocak 1999, 60).

Two historical figures stand out among those who had a profound influence on the religious world of the Çepni communities: Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli and Sarı Saltuk. Both were regarded as central figures in the religious transformation of Anatolia and in the shaping of Çepni religiosity. The discourses and practices of these Sufi leaders were especially formative in the development of the Çepnis' religious identity.

The religious structure of the Çepnis and its connection with these two Sufi figures can be understood through the historical relationships established between them. In this context, Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli must first be mentioned. Believed to have participated in the Babai Revolt (Âşıkpaşazâde 2003, 298), Hacı Bektaş is thought to have taken refuge in Suluca Karahöyük—a Çepni settlement area—following the suppression of the uprising. Given the significant participation of Çepni tribes in the revolt (Ocak 2002, 66–67), it is likely that Hacı Bektaş had already been in contact with them prior to the rebellion.

Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli's relationship with the Çepnis was not limited to the period of the Babai Revolt and his subsequent stay in Suluca Karahöyük; he also maintained these connections by sending *halifes* (spiritual deputies) to various Çepni communities. Among the most well-known of these deputies was Güvenç Abdal, who is believed to have been sent to the Çepni populations in the Black Sea region (Kökel 2005, 55). In the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, Güvenç Abdal is remembered as a prominent *dede* figure who held the role of *bâbcı* (gatekeeper) among the "twelve services." With his settlement in the region, the Güvenç Abdal *ocak*—structured along the Çepni tribal line—was established and eventually became a defining spiritual centre among the Alevi Çepnis of the Black Sea region (Yalçın and Yılmaz 2005, 9).

Following Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, another prominent Alevi leader who influenced the Çepni religious structure was Sarı Saltuk. Historical sources suggest that Sarı Saltuk served as both a religious and political leader of a Çepni clan (Sümer 1992, 120). Recent academic research has clarified several claims regarding Sarı Saltuk.

One such important study is by Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, who draws attention to the resettlement of Turkmen communities in Dobrudja around 1263–1264. According to historical sources, Sultan İzzeddin Keykavus II of the Anatolian Seljuks requested settlement land from Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos for some of the Turkmen tribes accompanying him. Although the emperor's response is unknown, it is documented that approximately twelve thousand Turkmen households crossed over to Dobrudja via Üsküdar. There are strong indications that this group belonged to the Çepni tribe (Ocak 2002, 66–67). This settlement movement becomes more meaningful

when evaluated in its historical context. The Çepnis are known to have played a key role among the Turkmen groups that actively participated in the Babai Revolt of 1240. In the aftermath of the revolt and the ensuing state repression, many Çepni clans withdrew to peripheral regions such as Western Anatolia and Sinop. It is thought that the group that settled in Dobrudja was one such Çepni community that had distanced itself from the centre (Yavuz 2022, 84).

Another significant factor in shaping the spiritual and religious identity of the Çepnis was the emergence of the Safavid order. During the 15th and 16th centuries, when the rivalry between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavids intensified, certain Çepni communities that maintained contact with the Safavids drew the attention—and suspicion—of the Ottoman central authority. In Ottoman documents of the time, Çepni tribes who leaned towards the Safavids were labelled with terms such as “rafizî” (heretic), “those in misguidance,” and “bandits” (BOA, A.}MKT.NZD. 268-55, 1858).[3] Notably, Çepni groups residing in the Kürtün region and affiliated with the Güvenç Abdal *ocak* were among those directly affected by the Safavid-Ottoman conflict. Some groups belonging to the Güvenç Abdal *ocak* migrated to Safavid-controlled Iranian territories as a result of the growing pressure (Yavuz 2022, 86).

Conversely, a portion of the Çepnis who remained in the eastern Black Sea region began to align with the Ottoman administration, particularly following the conversion of local beys to Sunni Islam. This alignment paved the way for a gradual sectarian transformation within Çepni tribal structures. In contrast, many Çepnis residing in areas such as Western Anatolia and Rumkale—where the reach of Ottoman control was more limited—continued their allegiance to the Alevi-Bektashi belief system. This divergence illustrates how the Çepnis’ religious structures evolved in response to geographical, political, and social factors.

The earliest contact between the Safavid order and the Çepnis, as far as available sources indicate, began during the era of Sheikh Junayd. After losing a leadership dispute with his uncle Sheikh Jafar, Sheikh Junayd crossed into Anatolia to continue his activities. Initially, he requested settlement lands from the Ottoman and Karamanid rulers, but these requests were denied on the grounds that his religious and political influence posed a threat. Subsequently, Junayd turned to proselytising among Turkmen tribes in Anatolia, with a particular focus on groups largely composed of Çepnis. He quickly gained a substantial following among the Halep Turkmens, Dulkadirids, and members of the Üç Oklu tribal branch (Yazıcı 1993, 123–124).[iv]

The close ties between the Çepnis and the Safavid order continued during the leadership of Sheikh Haydar, who succeeded his father Sheikh Junayd. During this

period, sources note that a large number of Çepnis from the eastern Black Sea region migrated to Iran, where Safavid influence was more pronounced (İnalcık 2016, 116; Gündüz 2008, 451–457).

From the reign of Sultan Selim I (Yavuz Sultan Selim) onwards, the intensifying Ottoman–Safavid rivalry led the Ottoman administration to take measures aimed at curbing Turkmen migration to Safavid lands (BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d.5-1401, 1566). Within this framework, the state granted considerable *tımar* (fiefs) to Çepni communities residing in Anatolia and implemented incentive policies to encourage the return of those who had migrated to Iran. However, despite these efforts, a large segment of the Çepni population opted to remain under Safavid rule.

Throughout the 16th century, the increasing spread of the Kızılbaş movement prompted the Ottoman administration to adopt harsher measures against the Çepnis. During this period, particularly those Çepnis who persisted in their Kızılbaş faith had their property confiscated—a policy clearly reflected in archival documents (BOA, A{DVNSMHM.d.12-606, 1571). Conversely, incentives were introduced to encourage Çepni communities to adopt Sunni Islam, including privileges for those who participated in mosque and congregation activities (BOA, TT.d. 52, 1516, 620).

Another dimension of these policies involved the prohibition of Çepni presence in military fortresses located along the Safavid-Ottoman frontier. Orders were issued from the central government to provincial authorities forbidding the assignment of military duties to Çepnis and instructing their removal from existing military posts (BOA, A{DVNSMHM.d.12-606, 1571). One document dated 1568, for example, records a decree to expel the Çepnis from the Erciş Fortress on the grounds that they were involved in surrendering it to the enemy during a war with the Safavids. Similar orders were issued for their removal from the fortresses of Ahlat, Bitlis, and Adilcevaz (BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d.7-2281, 1658).[5]

Despite the administrative and religious policies pursued by the Ottoman state in the 16th century to break the influence of the Safavids among the Çepnis, the desired outcomes were not achieved. As a result, punitive measures such as imprisonment and exile were also enacted. One striking example is a report from 1566, which states that Çepnis in the Kürtün region maintained links with the Safavids and that some had migrated to Iran. The report warned that if precautions were not taken, these migrations would continue to increase. Consequently, the central authority ordered covert surveillance of individuals suspected of maintaining contact with the Safavids, and for those found guilty, the imposition of severe penalties (BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d.5–1401, 1566).

Similarly, another document reveals that groups such as the Çepnis, Kurdish Sarılıs, and Tats, who still held *dirliks* (land grants) in the Basra region despite regulations requiring such lands to be held by Rum youths, were to be investigated for potential ties to Kızılbaş ideology. Any individuals whose religious affiliations were deemed suspicious were to be identified, reported to the central administration, and punished. Furthermore, their *dirliks* were to be revoked and reassigned to eligible Rum candidates (BOA, A.{DVNSMHM.d.61–104, 1586).

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the Safavid–Ottoman rivalry played a major transformative role in the Çepnis' religious landscape. In the early period, Çepni communities showed affinity with heterodox religious structures and charismatic Sufi leaders, thereby becoming closely aligned with Alevi-Batini belief systems. Over time, however, with the consolidation of Ottoman control and the state's institutionalisation of Sunni Islam, sectarian shifts began to take place within the Çepni population (Aslan 2022, 171–189).[6]

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Endnotes

[1] Although Bedri Noyan claims that Seyyid Ali Sultan was the son of Horasan saint Hüseyin Ata, there is no such information in Seyyid Ali Sultan’s velayetname or in historical documents. According to his velayetname, he was one of the saints from Horasan and visited the lodge of Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli during the reign of Yıldırım Bayezid. For detailed information, see: Haşim Şahin, “Seyyid Ali Sultan,” Islamic Encyclopaedia, Turkish Religious Foundation, vol. 37, 2009, pp. 48–50.

[2] For example, Çepni dedes from Gaziantep such as Bektaş/Bekto Dede (see Appendix 4) and Demani Dede continue to travel several times a year to Çepni villages in Manisa and Balıkesir to lead cem rituals. In 2018, Bektaş Piroğlu passed away from a heart attack during a cem ceremony in the Çepnidere village of Manisa. According to his will, his funeral was not held in his home village of Köseler, but in Dilek village, Manisa.
(https://pirha.org/bektas-piroglu-dede-deyis-ve-semahlarla-dilek-koyunde-sirlandi-video-140181.html/02/10/2018/)

[3] BOA, A.}MKT.NZD. 268-55, H.05-04-1275 (1858). During the mid-16th century, when the Ottoman Empire sought to reinforce its Sunni identity, Alevis suffered severe discrimination. Although they were considered Muslims, Alevi women and children were at times captured like war slaves and sold in slave markets. One such record can be found in the 12th Gaziantep şer‘iyye register, which documents a ten-year-old child named Kızılbaş Yusuf being sold for 45 kuruş. See: Melahat Arıkan, Transcription and Analysis of the 12th Ayntab Şer‘iyye Register (H. 1027–1028 / M. 1618–1619), Unpublished MA Thesis, Gaziantep University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of History, Gaziantep, 2017, p. 102. For further records on Kızılbaş slaves, see Murat Çelikdemir and Melahat Arıkan, “Slavery and Concubinage in Ayntab According to Ayntab Şer‘iyye Registers (1608–1619),” in Proceedings of the 3rd International Eurasian Multidisciplinary Studies Congress: Social and Human Sciences Volume, eds. Ümran Türkyılmaz, Atabek Movlyanov, İksad, Gaziantep, 2019, pp. 440–452. Also note that the prominent şeyhülislâm of the time, Ebussuud Efendi, issued a fatwa permitting the enslavement of Kızılbaş people. See: Ertuğrul Düzdağ, Fatwas of Şeyhülislâm Ebussuud Efendi, Enderun Publishing, 1972, p. 139.

[4] Sheikh Junayd, together with his followers, met Mehmed Bey of the Taceddinoğulları principality—founded by the Çepnis—and in the 1450s carried out successful expeditions against the Empire of Trebizond. However, upon being perceived as a threat by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, who sent a military campaign against him, Junayd fled to Uzun Hasan, the ruler of the Akkoyunlu. After staying there briefly, he summoned many of his disciples and engaged in conflict with the Shirvans in the Caucasus, where he ultimately died in battle. See: Tahsin Yazıcı, “Cüneyd-i Safevî,” Islamic Encyclopaedia, Turkish Religious Foundation, vol. 8, 1993, pp. 123–124.

[5] Numerous documents related to this issue exist in the Ottoman archives. For instance: A{DVNSMHM.d.7-2072, H.21-03-976 (M.1658), states: “When Erciş Fortress was previously besieged, it was reported that the local Çepni group inside the fortress killed the sancakbeyi and handed it over to the enemy. Therefore, the Çepnis currently residing in the fortress are to be expelled; furthermore, the departures and returns of azap and hisar-er troops must be regulated, and any who depart without permission or fail to return on time are to have their dirliks reassigned.” Another record, A.{DVNSMHM.d.7–2140, H.03-04-976 (M.1568), mentions: “It has been reported that Gazi bin İskender, a müstahfız (garrison soldier) at Kemhıs Fortress since its conquest, falsely accused dizdars leading to their dismissal, persistently lied and caused unrest, and conspired with other guards. Other müstahfızs in the fortress have become helpless in the face of their abuse. It is ordered that these individuals be inspected, their confirmed offences documented and sent to the Imperial Court. It is also reported that some Çepnis are present in the fortress; these individuals must likewise be identified and reported.”

[6] The Ottoman state’s policy towards Alevi Çepnis and other Turkmen tribes was not solely driven by their alignment with the Safavids. From the perspective of the state, these non-Sunni communities—considered untrustworthy since the Babai Revolt—were targeted for transformation. This was not a spontaneous or temporary policy but rather one that matured over time, culminating in its full implementation in 1826. The period discussed here can be regarded as the starting point of this transformation. For further detail, see: Mustafa Aslan, “An Assessment of Religion-State Relations in the Ottoman Empire with Particular Reference to Bektashism,” in City, Society and Commerce in the Ottoman Empire II, eds. Erkan Işıktaş, Muhammet Nuri Tunç, Ankara: Sonçağ Akademi, 2022, pp. 171–189.

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