



Evdıl Musa (Abdal Musa) in Raa Haqi Belief and Folklore

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Summary

This entry examines the place of Evdıl Musa—also referred to in various sources as Avdel Musa, Avdel Mursa, Avdıl Mursa, and Ewdali Muse—in Raa Haqi belief and folklore. Evdıl Musa is a figure believed to inhabit the keyw, a layer of the otherworld populated by jinn and peris. He is regarded as the ruler of malevolent jinn and the commander of a roaming army composed of these beings. As the keyw is considered the layer of the otherworld closest to the world inhabited by humans, it provides the cosmological setting for encounters between his army and human beings. The local classification of jinn into the Sipelay, Surelay, and Kewelay groups also indicates the scope of Evdıl Musa's authority. His position in local narratives, however, is not unambiguous. While some accounts portray him as the leader of jinn that harm human beings, others regard him as a saintly figure who keeps these beings under control, prevents them from entering this world, and thereby protects humanity. The offering of sacrifices in his name and invocations addressed to him as "Saint Avdel" are associated with this latter interpretation. The confrontation between the army known as Taburé Evdıl Musa and sacred powers such as Duzgı and Tujik Baba reflects the belief that the struggle between good and evil in this world also continues in the unseen realm. Evdıl Musa's name appears both in protective prayers and in curses expressing fear and threat. These oral expressions position him between a dangerous power from whose harm people seek protection and an authority expected to restrain malevolent beings. The title "Abdal" in his name and his resemblance to the historical Bektashi saint Abdal Musa have led to the suggestion that the figure may have been reinterpreted through historical associations originating in the late medieval and Ottoman periods. This connection, however, should be treated cautiously as a historical interpretation rather than a definitive identification. Narratives about Evdıl Musa reveal that the boundaries between jinn, saints, protective figures, and threatening powers are not always clearly defined in Raa Haqi cosmology.

Keywords: Abdal Musa, Beddua, Cin, Curse, Dua, Duzgı, Evdıl Musa, Gebet, Kurban, Mılaket, Opfer, Prayer, Raa Haqi, Tujik Baba, Verwünschung, Xeyw

Keyw and the Order of Unseen Beings [1]

In *Raa Haqi* narratives, the human world is not entirely separate from the unseen realm. The otherworld, known as *A Dina* or *Haq Dina*, consists of three layers: *xeyw*, *botın*, and *axiret*. Of these, *xeyw* is the layer closest to this world and is regarded as the dwelling place of jinn and peris. It is believed that the night belongs to the inhabitants of *xeyw*, while the daytime is reserved for human beings. The proximity between the two worlds provides the cosmological framework that enables jinn and peris to encounter humans, while also allowing certain dervishes and individuals endowed with miraculous powers to receive knowledge or assistance from the unseen realm (Gezik and Çakmak 2010; Gezik 2008, 4-25).

The terms *milaket* and *mileke*, used for these beings, denote a broad category encompassing various unseen entities such as angels, jinn, and fairys (*peri*, *jiare*). In oral accounts, the male beings are referred to as jinn and the female beings as *peris*. Jinn are divided into the *Sipelay*, *Surelay*, and *Kewelay* groups, each associated with the colour of its clothing. The *Sipelay*, described as dressed in white, are the most numerous group and the one most feared by humans. The *Surelay* and *Kewelay*, by contrast, are portrayed as beings who remain closer to humans and sometimes assist them. *Evdıl Musa*'s authority is exercised particularly over the *Sipelay*, who are believed to be capable of harming human beings (Gezik and Çakmak 2010; Gezik 2008, 4-25).

An Ambivalent Figure Between Jinn and Saint

In one strand of narrative, *Evdıl Musa* is the leader and commander of the malevolent jinn inhabiting *xeyw*. He is believed to command a constantly roaming army composed of jinn and, as its commander, to be capable of mobilising the malevolent forces of the unseen realm. This portrayal rests on the idea that the struggle between good and evil in the human world also continues in the otherworld. Within this framework, *Evdıl Musa* is a feared power whose

attention people do not wish to attract and from whose army they seek protection (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

His position in local narratives, however, remains contested. According to another interpretation, *Evdıl Musa* is not an authority who directs malevolent jinn against human beings, but one who keeps them under control. From this perspective, he prevents jinn from crossing from xeyw into this world and limits the considerable harm they might inflict upon humans. The jinn that attack humans are not all the beings under his command, but rather those that have escaped his control. In such narratives, *Evdıl Musa* is regarded less as a jinn than as a saintly figure endowed with the power to restrain dangerous beings. The offering of sacrifices in his name is likewise associated with the recognition of this sacred and protective status (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

This interpretation is clearly expressed in the following invocation addressed to him: “*Ya Ozız Avdel, to qada qusır ma u aza mare dürbere, bébextu oğire ma u az u uze mare dürbere.*” In this prayer, Saint Avdel is asked to keep accidents and transgressions away from the community and its descendants and kin, and to protect people from the ill-fated and the dishonourable. The use of the title “Saint” indicates that *Evdıl Musa* is not regarded solely as a feared jinn. Addressing him through sacrifice and prayer points to a relational understanding of sacredness in which his power is acknowledged and is expected to be directed towards protection (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

Taburé Evdıl Musa, Duzgı, and Tujik Baba

In some narratives, the world of unseen beings is imagined as possessing a military organisation resembling that of human communities. *Evdıl Musa*’s unit of malevolent jinn is known as *Taburé Evdıl Musa*. Benevolent jinn, by contrast, are said to be under the command of Duzgı Baba and Tujik Baba. The beings inhabiting xeyw are thus classified not only according to their different colours and characteristics, but

are also conceived as units governed by opposing powers (Gezik and Çakmak 2010; Gezik 2008, 4-25).

A significant proportion of the narratives concerning *Evdıl Musa* focus on his struggle with Bava Duzgı. Duzgı is portrayed as a sacred power who fights for the triumph of good in the otherworld and prevents *Evdıl Musa* from harming humanity. It is believed that when *Evdıl Musa*'s jinn launch an attack, Duzgı disperses them with his cannons. According to one narrative, the cannon fire released by Duzgı turns *Evdıl Musa*'s army into earth and scatters it. For this reason, *Evdıl Musa* attempts to avoid being seen by *Kemerê Duzgı*. Duzgı's identification with a sacred mountain and pilgrimage site gives this cosmic struggle a corresponding place within the sacred geography of Dersim (Aksoy 2000, 22-66; Gezik 2000, 15-28; Çakmak 2008, 26-37; Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

Tujik Baba is also among the sacred figures feared by malevolent jinn. It is believed that *Tujik Baba* fought these beings with his cannons in the past and that invoking his name when encountering jinn provides protection. In older narratives, *Tujik Baba* is depicted holding a cannonball in one hand and a staff in the other and is described as the foremost of the 366 sacred sites. The cannons attributed to Duzgı and *Tujik Baba* become folkloric symbols of the sacred power that disperses malevolent unseen forces. Within this narrative framework, *Evdıl Musa* appears both as the commander of these forces and as a contested authority responsible for keeping them under control (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

The Language of Prayer, Curses, and Protection

The fear and uncertainty surrounding *Evdıl Musa* are reflected in everyday formulas of prayer and cursing. The expression "*Heq vere Avdil Musay ra hete to kero*," uttered when wishing harm upon someone, means "May God turn Avdel Musa's direction towards you." Similarly, the expression "*Tavura Avdel Mursa to de vejiyo*" invokes *Evdıl*

Musa's regiment to strike the person concerned. In these expressions, *Evdıl Musa* is imagined as possessing a vast and organised force capable of harming anyone towards whom it is directed (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

To keep the same force at a distance, people pray, "*Haq tavura Avdıl Mursay mara dūrbero*," meaning "May Haq keep Avdıl Mursa's regiment away from us." *Evdıl Musa's* name is therefore invoked both in curses that direct malevolence towards another person and in protective prayers asking that the same malevolence be kept away from the community. The offering of sacrifices in his name may be understood within a similar relational logic: the aim is not merely to demonstrate devotion to a sacred being, but to bring a dangerous and unpredictable power into a sphere of control, reciprocity, and protection. The folkloric significance of *Evdıl Musa* cannot, therefore, be reduced simply to the category of a "malevolent jinn" (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

Name, Historical Memory, and the Connection with Abdal Musa

The figure's name is recorded in the sources in several forms, including *Evdıl Musa*, *Avdel Musa*, *Avdel Mursa*, *Avdıl Mursa*, and *Ewdali Muse*. The epithet "*Abdal*" in his name has given rise to various interpretations concerning the figure's historical origins. One of these interpretations links *Evdıl Musa's* name or some of his characteristics to Abdal Musa, a Bektashi saint who lived in the late medieval period. According to this interpretation, the image of Abdal Musa—associated with Bektashism, the Ottoman military establishment, and the Janissaries—may have been transformed into an antagonistic and malevolent figure in the memory of *Raa Haqi* communities that experienced repression at the hands of Ottoman forces (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

The similarity between their names, however, is not sufficient to establish a direct historical identification

between the two figures. It remains unclear whether *Evdıl Musa* represents an older embodiment of evil that subsequently came to be known by a new name, or whether he emerged at a later stage as a figure of historical memory. The connection with Abdal Musa should therefore be treated not as a proven explanation of origins, but as an interpretation that draws attention to a possible relationship between name, political experience, and religious memory. The capacity of local narratives to reinterpret individuals, institutions, and conflicts from different historical periods through their own cosmological language makes it possible to consider this possibility (Gezik and Çakmak 2010).

Conclusion

Evdıl Musa is an ambivalent figure in *Raa Haqi* belief and folklore who cannot be placed within a fixed and immutable category. As the commander of the malevolent jinn inhabiting *xeyw* and the leader of *Taburé Evdıl Musa*, he inspires fear. At the same time, he is also interpreted as a saintly figure who keeps these beings under control, prevents them from reaching human beings, and receives sacrifices offered in his name. Narratives of his struggles with *Duzgı* and *Tujik Baba* situate the confrontation between good and evil within both the unseen realm and the sacred geography of *Dersim*. The invocation of *Evdıl Musa*'s attention against someone in curses, and prayers asking that his regiment be kept away from the community, demonstrate the place of this power in everyday language. The proposed connection with the historical Abdal Musa suggests that the figure may have been reshaped through political experience and social memory, but it does not permit a definitive historical identification. Narratives about *Evdıl Musa* reveal that the boundaries between jinn, saints, protective figures, and threatening powers are fluid within *Raa Haqi* cosmology. They also show that sacredness may be constituted not only through goodness, but through practices of acknowledging, appeasing, and controlling a feared power.

Endnotes

[1] This entry has been adapted to an encyclopaedia format on the basis of the entry "Avdel Musa (Mursa) / Ewdali Muse Ring" in Erdal Gezik and Hüseyin Çakmak's *Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi / Dersim Aleviliği İnanç Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Raa Haqi - Riya Haqi: A Dictionary of Terms Relating to Dersim Alevi Belief), together with supplementary information from the entries "Mılaket(e) / Mıleke," "Xeyw," "A Dina / Axiret," "Duzgı / Dızgun (Nexar, Rast)," "Tujik Baba / Ziyareta Tujikê," and "Botın / Batın."

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