



Tevhids and Mûnacats: A General Overview

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Summary

Religious-Mystical Turkish Literature is a deeply rooted tradition that took shape with the acceptance of Islam and, over the centuries, has functioned both as a means of worship and as a vehicle for aesthetic expression. As Islam gradually expanded its sphere of influence, various structural transformations occurred within the Alevi belief system. For this reason, and owing to the influence of pre-Islamic Central Asian mystical disciplines, many scholars have categorised this belief system among syncretic religious formations (Melikoff, 2006: 25-27). The various developments that emerged within the belief system created the conditions for the formation of the genres of *tevhid* and *mûnâcat* within the tradition. Through both verse and prose examples, these genres have reflected a profound theological, literary, and cultural accumulation. While *tevhids* focus on the existence and unity of God, *mûnâcats* articulate the servant's supplication, plea, and sense of helplessness before God. This entry examines the concepts of *tevhid* and *mûnâcat* through their historical examples, their position within Turkish literature, their place in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, and their modal (*makamsal*) structures.

Keywords: Alevi Müziği, Edebiyat, Halk Edebiyatı, Makam, Mûnacat, Tasavvuf, Tevhid, Türk Edebiyatı

Conceptual Framework

In Alevism, the principle of *tevhid*-that God exists and is one, without equal or partner-is generally accepted on the assumption that it has a Qur'anic foundation. Researchers who have conducted independent studies on this subject have likewise proceeded from this assumption and continued their work with the aim of demonstrating it (Özdemir, 2017: 85-92). The word *tevhid* derives from the Arabic root *wahhada* and means "to make one" or "to affirm oneness." In religious literature, it refers to accepting the unity of God

and recognising God as a unique and incomparable being. As a literary genre, *tevhids* are poems or prose texts written about God as the one and absolute being. This genre has been widely used in classical literature, folk literature, and tekke literature (Köprülü, 1981: 213).

In the *Buyruks*, the conception of God is examined within the framework of the principle of *tevhid*, and the name of God appears together with expressions of exaltation and transcendence such as “Allah Teâlâ,” “Hak Sübhânehü ve Teâlâ,” and “Allah Azimüşşan” (Taşgın, 2015: 18-33). A general examination of the *tevhid* text in the *Buyruks* indicates that the conception of God is treated in accordance with the structure adopted in the classical Islamic intellectual tradition. In sections that quote verses from the Qur’an, a form of language appropriate to the address of Allah Teâlâ is generally preferred. However, the expression “Hakk Muhammed Alî has declared as follows” may create the impression that the three are regarded as equal in their respective natures (Bozkurt, 2004: 179).

Münâcat, meanwhile, derives from the verb *nâcâ* and literally means “whispering” or “speaking secretly.” As a term, it refers to poetry or prose that expresses a person’s supplication to *Hakk*, sincere entreaty, appeal, and prayer. Some of the earliest examples in Arabic literature are the *münâcats* attributed to Imam Ali. The fifteen *münâcats* of Imam Zeynel Âbidin in the work *Sahîfe-i Seccâdiye* are also among the most distinguished examples of the genre (Ateş, 1992: 88).

Historical Development

The earliest example of the *tevhid* genre in Turkish literature appears in Yusuf Has Hâcib’s *Kutadgu Bilig*, written in 1070. The work contains various couplets concerning the unity of God, some of which also display the stylistic characteristics of *münâcat* (Has Hacib, 2019: 33-34).

In Divan literature, almost every major poet composed both

a *tevhid* and a *münâcat*. These were generally arranged as “tevhid” and “münâcat” sections preceding the *teşbib* or *nesib*, the introductory section of a *kaside*. The *tevhids* and *münâcats* of poets such as Fuzûlî, Nef’î, Bâkî, and Şeyh Galip occupy an important place in literary history.

An example from Fuzûlî’s well-known *tevhid*:

*Ey ki hep mazhar-ı ihsan-ı Hudâsın sensin / Bir olan Hazret’e
çok olmakla şerîk olmazsın.*(Necatigil, 2000)

Tevhid and Münâcat in Folk and Tekke Literature

In tekke literature, the genres of *tevhid* and *münâcat* constitute not only fields of literary expression but also important means of *zîkr*, instruction, and spiritual guidance used in the spiritual education of dervishes. These works generally centre on Sufi concepts such as *vahdet-i vücüt*, *vahdet-i şuhûd*, *marifet*, love, and *fenâ*. While *tevhids* explain the rational and spiritual dimensions of God’s unity, *münâcats* foreground the servant’s sincere supplication, sense of helplessness, and desire to draw closer to God (Gölpınarlı, 1984).

One of the most distinctive features of these genres is their capacity to evoke the relationship between the human being, God, and the universe. Within the Sufi tradition, the universe is understood as a reflection of God’s existence. Consequently, *tevhids* and *münâcats* establish a connection between the mystery of creation and divine unity. According to the idea of *vahdet-i vücüt*, all existence consists of different manifestations of a single truth. This understanding was reflected particularly strongly in Anatolian Sufi poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The intense love and sincere supplication of the servant found in Yunus Emre’s hymns are among the most striking examples of the *münâcat* tradition. His verses:

Ben yürürüm yane yane / Aşk boyadı beni kane

symbolise both the transformative character of Sufi love and the spiritual burning experienced by the dervish for the sake of divine truth (Tatçı, 2013). These verses by Yunus display the characteristic features of the *münâcat* genre: the articulation of divine love, the servant's desire for inner purification, and submission before *Hakk*.

Tevhids and *münâcats* are not merely texts of individual contemplation; they also have a functional place within the tekke environment. They are used in both verbal and musical forms in circles of conversation where dervishes are educated, in ceremonies collectively performed by the congregation, and in gatherings of *zîkr*. In this respect, the texts function as instructional materials accompanying the dervish's spiritual journey. Their performance in particular *makams* has also enabled them to acquire an important place in both literary and musical traditions (Ocak, 2006).

Consequently, *tevhids* and *münâcats* are works that combine the literary and religious-mystical dimensions of tekke culture. They perform a multifaceted function by supporting both individual spiritual development and education within the religious order.

Tevhid and Münâcat in Alevi-Bektashi Literature

Tevhids occupy a highly important place in Alevi-Bektashi literature. Most poems composed under the title *tevhid* within this tradition possess characteristics of both *tevhid* and *münâcat*. They are also recited at the beginning of *cem* ceremonies and, at times, during the *devran*. The following elements are especially prominent in these poems: the unity of *Hakk*; the idea of *vahdet-i vücüt*; love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* and emphasis on their succession; the enumeration of the names of the Twelve Imams; and references to the creation of the universe and the history of the prophets.

An example from an Alevi-Bektashi *tevhid*:

Bismişah Allah Allah deyü geldim meydana / İmamların aşkına döndüm semaha.

These examples are characterised by a simple yet profound mode of expression, and the poems were generally composed in syllabic metre.

Structural and Thematic Characteristics

While the *aruz* metre is generally preferred in Divan *tevhids*, syllabic metre predominates in examples from folk and tekke literature. *Tevhids* usually possess the characteristics of praise, whereas *münâcats* proceed through direct address to God. In *münâcats*, the dominant themes include the servant's helplessness, sincerity in servitude, confession of sins, and seeking refuge in God's mercy.

The themes most frequently encountered in *tevhids* and *münâcats* include God's power, unity, and attributes; the importance of servitude; the weakness of the human self; destiny, sustenance, and trust in God; love for the Prophet; and emphasis on the *Ahl al-Bayt*, particularly in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition.

In oral culture, *tevhids* and *münâcats* survive not only as texts but also as musical forms. In many regions of Turkey, these works are performed in particular *makams*. Commonly used *makams* include Uşşak, Hüseyinî, Karcıgar, Kürdî, and Hicaz. Some works also employ the Saba and Dügâh *makams*. There are, moreover, examples compatible with the Rast *makam*, particularly those resolving on the pitch *sol* (Soysal, 2015: 67).

The *tevhids* and *münâcats* recited during *cem* ceremonies are connected to specific rhythmic and modal structures. Slow-tempo melodies that evoke a sense of depth and possess strong emotional intensity are generally preferred. This enhances the emotional effect of the text and ensures the integrity of the religious ritual.

Selected Examples from Tevhid and Münâcat Texts

*Çün cemâlinden açıldı gülsitân-ı kâinatZâtına yoktur nazîr,
ey bir olan pâdişâh-ı zât.*

Classical couplets of this kind, classified as *tevhid*, address the idea that creation emerged from divine beauty through the symbolic language of Divan aesthetics (Köprülü, 1918: 153).

*Gözlerim yolda kaldı yâ Rab
Kapına geldim affeyle
Kulunam
derdime derman
Sensin şâhım, sensin Mevlâ.*

This mode of expression, classified as *münâcat*, represents the plain and sincere style of folk Sufism (Tatçı, 2013: 88).

Conclusion

The genres of *tevhid* and *münâcat* should not be evaluated merely as literary texts. They are multifaceted sources that deeply reflect the religious world, aesthetic sensibilities, worship practices, and cultural heritage of society. Themes such as the unity of God, consciousness of servitude, recognition of human helplessness, and orientation toward divine power have been expressed with similar sensibilities in different periods and communities, thereby contributing to the formation of a shared Sufi consciousness.

Extending across a broad range from classical Turkish literature to folk literature, and from tekke poetry to the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, *tevhids* and *münâcats* have made important contributions to the aesthetic richness of Turkish literature through the diversity of their language, style, metre, and discourse.

These genres have also functioned within a broad field of cultural practice extending from oral culture to written tradition and from music to *cem* ceremonies. They have served as spiritual guides in both individual worship and collective rituals. In this way, *tevhids* and *münâcats* have become not only literary genres but also important bridges facilitating cultural continuity, the transmission of belief, and the intergenerational transfer of Sufi thought. Their study therefore occupies an indispensable place in understanding Turkish literature and cultural history.

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