



# Tevhids and Münacats: 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 *münâcat* 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, *münâcats* articulate the servant's supplication, plea, and sense of helplessness before God. This entry examines the concepts of *tevhid* and *münâcat* 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, Münacat, Tasavvuf, Tevhid, Türk Edebiyatı

## Conceptual Framework

### Tevhid

In Alevism, the principle of *tevhid*-that is, the belief that God exists as one, without partner or equal-is generally accepted on the assumption that it is grounded in a Qur'anic foundation. Researchers who have conducted independent studies on this subject likewise proceed from this assumption and continue their work with the aim of proving it (Özdemir, 2017: 85-92). The term *tevhid* derives from the Arabic root *vahhede* and carries the meaning of "to make one". In religious literature, it refers to accepting the oneness of God and recognising Him as a unique and incomparable being. From a literary perspective, *tevhids* are poetic or prose texts written on the theme of God's singular

and absolute existence. This genre has been widely employed in classical, folk, and *tekke* literature alike (Köprülü, 1981: 213).

In the *Buyruks*, the conception of God is examined within the framework of the principle of *tevhid*, and it is observed that the name of God is invoked through expressions denoting sublimity and transcendence, such as “Allah Teâlâ”, “Hak Sübhânehü ve Teâlâ”, and “Allah Azimüşşan” (Taşgın, 2015: 18-33). When the *tevhid* texts in the *Buyruks* are subjected to a general analysis, it becomes apparent that the conception of God is addressed in a manner consistent with the structure adopted in classical Islamic thought. In sections where verses from the Qur’an are cited, a language appropriate to the address of Allah Teâlâ is generally preferred. However, the appearance of expressions such as “Hakk Muhammed Alî are said to have declared” may give rise to a perception that this triad is regarded as occupying an equal position in terms of their respective natures (Bozkurt, 2004: 179).

### **Münâcat**

*Münâcat* derives from the verb *nâcâ* and, in its dictionary sense, means ‘whispering’ or ‘speaking secretly’. As a term, it refers to poetic or prose expressions that articulate a person’s supplication to *Hakk*, their sincere entreaty, appeal for refuge, and devotional plea. Some of the earliest examples are the *münâcats* attributed to Imam Ali in Arabic literature. In addition, the fifteen *münâcats* contained in Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin’s work *Sahîfe-i Seccâdiye* constitute some of the most distinguished examples of the genre (Ateş, 1992: 88).

### **Historical Developments**

#### **Early Examples in Turkish Literature**

The earliest example of the *tevhid* genre in Turkish literature appears in *Kutadgu Bilig*, written by Yusuf Has Hâcib in 1070. The work contains various couplets addressing the unity of God, some of which also bear characteristics of the

*münâcat* style (Has Hâcib, 2019: 33-34).

### **The Period of Divan Literature**

In Divan literature, almost every major poet composed both a *tevhid* and a *münâcat*. *Tevhids* were generally arranged as sections titled “tevhid” or “münâcat”, placed before the *teşbib* or *nesib*, which constitute the introductory parts of *kasides*. The *tevhid* and *münâcats* of poets such as Fuzûlî, Nef’î, Bâkî, and Şeyh Galip occupy a significant place in literary history.

An example from Fuzûlî’s famous *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* function not merely as modes of literary expression, but also as important instruments of *dhikr*, instruction, and spiritual guidance used in the moral and spiritual training of dervishes. In these works, mystical concepts such as *vahdet-i vücüt* (unity of being), *vahdet-i şuhûd* (unity of witnessing), *marifet* (gnosis), *aşk* (divine love), and *fenâ* (annihilation of the self) occupy a central position. While *tevhids* explain the intellectual and spiritual dimensions of God’s unity, *münâcats* foreground the servant’s sincere supplication, sense of helplessness, and desire for closeness to God (Gölpınarlı, 1984).

One of the most distinctive features of these genres is their capacity to evoke the relationship between human beings, God, and the universe. Within the mystical tradition, the universe is perceived as a reflection of God’s existence; consequently, *tevhid* and *münâcat* texts establish a bridge between the mystery of creation and divine unity. According to the doctrine of *vahdet-i vücüt*, all existence consists of different manifestations of a single truth. This understanding is powerfully reflected in Anatolian mystical poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The *ilâhis* of Yunus Emre, characterised by an intense and consuming love and the servant's heartfelt supplication, rank among the most striking examples of the *münâcat* tradition. The poet's verses:

"Ben yürürüm yane yane  
Aşk boyadı beni kane."

symbolise both the transformative nature of mystical love and the spiritual burning endured by the dervish in pursuit of divine truth (Tatçı, 2013). These lines by Yunus embody the typical characteristics of the *münâcat* genre: the articulation of divine love, the servant's desire for inner purification, and a sense of surrender before Hakk.

*Tevhids* and *münâcats* are not solely texts of individual contemplation; they also possess a functional role within the *tekke* setting. They are performed in both verbal and musical forms in gatherings where dervishes are trained, in rituals conducted collectively, and in *dhikr* assemblies. In this respect, these texts serve as instructional materials accompanying dervishes on their spiritual journey. Furthermore, their performance in specific musical modes (*makam*) has secured them an important place within both literary and musical traditions (Ocak, 2006).

In conclusion, *tevhids* and *münâcats* are works that simultaneously encompass the literary and religious-mystical dimensions of *tekke* culture; they fulfil a multifaceted function by supporting both individual spiritual development and internal instruction within Sufi orders.

### **Tevhid and Münâcat in Alevi-Bektashi Literature**

In Alevi-Bektashi literature, *tevhids* occupy a highly significant place. Most poems written under the title of *tevhid* within this tradition display characteristics of both *tevhid* and *münâcat*. These poems are recited at the beginning of *cem* rituals and, at times, during the *devran*. In such texts, the following elements come to the fore:

- The unity of *Hakk*

- The doctrine of *vahdet-i vücüt*
- Love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* and emphasis on their guardianship
- The enumeration of the names of the Twelve Imams
- 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.”

In these examples, a plain yet profound mode of expression predominates; the poems are generally composed in syllabic metre.

## Structure

### Literary Structure

While *aruz* metre is generally preferred in Divan *tevhids*, syllabic metre predominates in folk and *tekke* examples. *Tevhids* often assume the character of *methiye*, whereas *münâcats* proceed in a manner that directly addresses God. In *münâcats*, themes such as the servant’s helplessness, the sincerity of devotion, the confession of sins, and seeking refuge in God’s mercy are particularly prominent.

### Thematic Features

The most frequently encountered themes in *tevhid* and *münâcat* texts include:

- God’s power, unity, and attributes
- The significance of servitude
- The weakness of the human ego
- Destiny, sustenance (*rızık*), and trust in God (*tevekkül*)
- Love for the Prophet
- Emphasis on the *Ahl al-Bayt* (particularly in the Alevi-Bektashi tradition)

### Musical Structure

### Modal Organisation of Tevhids and Münâcats

*Tevhids* and *münâcats* continue to exist within oral culture not only as textual compositions but also as musical forms. In many regions of Turkey, these works are performed in specific musical modes (*makams*). The most commonly used modes include:

- Uşşak
- Hüseyinî
- Karcıgar
- Kürdî
- Hicaz

In some compositions, the *Saba* and *Dügâh* modes are also encountered. In addition, there are examples suited to the *Rast* mode, particularly those that resolve on the *sol* pitch (Soysal, 2015: 67).

### **Mode (*Makam*) in the Alevi-Bektashi Tradition**

The *tevhids* and *münâcats* performed during *cem* rituals are bound to specific rhythmic patterns (*usul*) and modal structures. Generally, slow-tempo melodies that convey a sense of depth and high emotional intensity are preferred. This enhances the emotional impact of the text and ensures the integrity of the religious ritual.

### **Example Texts**

#### **An Example in the Classical Style (*Tevhid*)**

“Çün cemâlinden açıldı gülsitân-ı kâinat  
Zâtına yoktur nazîr, ey bir olan pâdişâh-ı zât.”

Such couplets express, within the symbolic language of Divan aesthetics, the idea that creation emanates from divine beauty (Köprülü, 1918: 153).

#### **An Example in the Folk Style (*Münâcat*)**

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

This mode of expression represents the plain and sincere style of folk mysticism (Tatçı, 2013: 88).

## Conclusion

The genres of *tevhid* and *münâcat* should be regarded as more than merely literary texts; they are multifaceted sources that deeply reflect a society's world of belief, aesthetic sensibilities, devotional practices, and cultural heritage. Themes such as the unity of God, the consciousness of servitude, the acceptance of human helplessness, and orientation towards divine power are expressed across different periods and communities with similar sensitivities, thereby forming a shared mystical consciousness. From classical Turkish literature to folk literature, from *tekke* poetry to the Alevi-Bektashi tradition, *tevhids* and *münâcats* have found resonance across a broad spectrum. Through the diversity of their language, style, metre, and modes of expression, they have made significant contributions to the aesthetic richness of Turkish literature.

Furthermore, these genres have functioned within a wide range of cultural practices extending from oral tradition to written culture, from music to *cem* rituals. They have served as spiritual guides in both individual acts of worship and collective religious ceremonies. In this way, *tevhids* and *münâcats* have become important bridges that mediate cultural continuity, the transmission of belief, and the intergenerational circulation of mystical thought. For these reasons, the study of these genres occupies an indispensable place in understanding the history of Turkish literature and culture.

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