Güruh-u Naci The Creation Myth in Raa Haqi (Dersim Alevism)

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Summary
In Raa Haqi (also referred to as Dersim Alevism or Kurdish Alevism), the Creation Myth constitutes a fundamental narrative and symbolic universe through which the cosmological foundations of Dersim Alevism can be understood. While it shares similarities with the “Güruh-u Naci” and “Şit” narratives found in the broader Alevi-Bektashi tradition, it also exhibits distinct features rooted in the cultural geography of Dersim. The versions collected by Erdal Gezik from Pir Nesimi Kılagöz (Gezik 2022, 363–88; 2009, 4–34), when read alongside Mircea Eliade’s conceptualizations of cosmogonic myth and sacred history and Joseph Campbell’s motifs of heroism and transformation, not only shed light on the lesser-known cosmogony of Raa Haqi but also provide a framework for understanding Dersim’s conception of the sacred and its human–material world relations. Ultimately, it can be seen as reflecting a worldview that also shapes the religious practices and beliefs surrounding jiare (sacred places) (Gültekin 2019; 2025a; 2025b). At the center of the myth stand Haq, angels (especially Gabriel and Melek Tawus), Adam and Eve, as well as Naciye, Şit, Naci, and their descendants, the “Güruh-u Naci” (the community of Ocaks and their followers), distinguished from the God motif in Abrahamic religions. This lineage is conceived in the Alevi-Bektashi system as the seventy-third community destined for salvation or enlightenment. Alevis thereby define themselves as standing beyond the seventy-two other “sects” (i.e., the rest of humanity), as carriers of light and truth. A striking feature in Raa Haqi versions is the principle of duality, emphasized as a cosmological order of creation and reflected in social institutions such as musahiplik (spiritual brotherhood). The myth functions as a bridge explaining the transitions between the hidden (Batın) and the visible (Zahir) worlds and their mediating figures. Through sacred sites (jiare) and dreams, it generates an epistemology in which non-human actors influence everyday decisions. Thus, the Creation Myth in Raa Haqi may be read not merely as a religious narrative but also as an archetypal set of characters and stories that symbolically construct Dersim Alevism’s collective identities, emotions, interpretive frameworks, and practices from the past into the present.

Keywords: Adem, Ali, Cebrail, Dersim, Dersim Aleviliği, Dersim Alevism, Güruh-u Naci, Güruh-u Naciye, Muhammed, Raa Haqi

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Introduction

The creation myth in Raa Haqi may be understood as a foundational constellation of narratives that jointly articulate the cosmological thought, sacred history, and social institutions of Dersim Alevism. These narratives not only offer a cosmogony of how the universe and humankind came into being; they also constitute the Batin-Zahir dialectic, the modalities of religious and political authority, and the legitimacy of social order. Read together with field data, oral tradition, and devotional poetry (*deyiş*), the Dersim-specific variants appear to converse with the broader Alevi-Bektashi creation repertoire while developing a distinctive line in the hierarchy among non-human beings (especially Haq, Gabriel, and Melek Tawus), in the emphasis on "duality/twoness," and in the cosmological grounding of *musahiplik*.

This entry approaches, in particular, the extended narrative collected by Erdal Gezik from Pir Nesimi Kılagöz (Gezik 2022, 363-88; 2009, 4-34) and systematised in four parts-(i) a cosmogony centred on Haq, Gabriel, Muhammed/Ali (two heads attached to the same body) and Melek Tavus; (ii) Adam-Eve-Naciye; (iii) Şit and the prophetic lineage; (iv) allegorical teachings and institutions-through the lens of Raa Haqi epistemology (Gültekin 2025a; 2025b). Within this narrative, Gabriel's association with "intellect" and "guidance," the prominence of the principle of duality as a constitutive element of cosmic order, and the emergence of Alevis and other human lineages through the interactions of Haq, Gabriel, and Muhammad/Ali-conceived as two heads in the same body-may be noted as localized features distinguishing this schema from others in the Alevi-Bektashi written corpus. Read alongside Mircea Eliade's reflections on cosmogonic myth and sacred history (1959; 1963) and Joseph Campbell's treatment of transformation/action motifs in myth (1968a; 1968b), the creation account appears to both institute the cosmic order and legitimate ritual-social institutions (*musahiplik*, *rayberlik*, the *pir-mürşid* hierarchy).

In Raa Haqi narratives, Güruh-u Naci together with the

figures Şit/Naci seems to constitute a main axis that bears the notion of "the seventy-third community destined for salvation." This axis appears to operate as a mechanism of identity formation in the Alevi-Bektashi world, linking lines of descent, light, and esoteric knowledge (*ilm-i Batın*). The myth enables communities to position themselves as "carriers of the Muhammad-Ali light" and "holders of the right path," while producing a performative language that marks "others" through the terminology of mythical history (Yüksel 2022, 307-330). In the Dersim variant, this founding lineage is directly related to *musahiplik* via Gabriel's institution of the "brother of the hereafter," such that the cosmic principle of duality is translated into a durable moral-institutional bond at the social level (Gezik 2022, 365-67; 2009, 4-34).

Methodologically, studying Raa Haqi cosmogony requires careful analysis of an oral memory whose reflections in the written *Buyruk* tradition are limited and which has been weakened under modernization and urbanization. In Alevi Studies, work on Alevi cosmology remains relatively limited and tends to focus on social transformation, diaspora, and Alevi politics, while the need for interdisciplinary approaches and the collection of primary oral sources continues. This entry reads the oral material together with Dersim's sacred places (*jiare*), the realm of dream-experience, and the permeability between Batin and Zahir; under the forthcoming section "Duality and Authority across the Batin and Zahir Realms," it aims to discuss how cosmic duality articulates with the distribution of authority and regimes of knowledge. In this way, the creation myth ceases to be merely an "origin" account and is positioned as an epistemology that structures world-human-sacred relations and orients contemporary practices within Raa Haqi.

Cosmogony and Mythological Framework

In Raa Haqi, creation narratives-similar to those in many other cultures-function not only as cosmogonic myths explaining how the universe and humankind came into

being, but also as oral “sacred history” that establishes the origins of social institutions, social structure, public status and roles, sacred places, and moral order. According to Mircea Eliade’s classic distinction (1959; 1963), cosmogony, the creation of the universe, represents the “absolute beginning” for human communities and, by extension, the source of sacred order. Every ritual, belief, and social institution derives legitimacy by returning to this beginning. The creation myth of Raa Haqi as narrated in Dersim fulfills this function: through Haq’s power, the roles of the angels, and the story of Adam, Naciye, and their descendants-the lineage of the Güruh-u Naci/Naciye (i.e., the Alevis)-it provides a primordial model for both the natural order and social relations.

Joseph Campbell’s approach to mythology, particularly the motifs of the “hero’s journey” and “transformation” (1968a; 1968b), is also relevant in this context. The sequence of events shaped by the roles of Gabriel and Melek Tawus in the Raa Haqi creation myth serves as a transformative bridge between human beings and the sacred. As Campbell suggests, in myth the hero or sacred figure represents the passage from the unknown to the known, from chaos to order. In the Dersim narratives, Gabriel’s identification with “intellect and guidance,” his connection with the two-headed being Muhammad/Ali, and the creation of Adam as Gabriel’s “brother of the hereafter” before his descent into the earthly world, correspond to Campbell’s theme of transformation. Creation is thus perceived not only as an initial act but as a continuous process in which humanity exists in constant transformation between the realms of *Batin* (hidden) and *Zahir* (manifest).

This theoretical framework also indicates that the creation myth functions as a kind of “social contract.” For Eliade, the retelling of sacred myths continually re-establishes collective existence. In Dersim, the recitation of creation narratives-or of other accounts serving this role, such as those concerning Duzgı, Xızır, Munzur, and other figures of the great *wayır* category-within cem ceremonies, gatherings, or at *jiares*

serves precisely this function: the community's moral codes, collective memory and emotions, symbols, patterns of behavior and discourse, authority relations, and institutions such as *musahiplik* are continually reproduced as part of an order established from the beginning of creation. For this reason, the cosmogony of Raa Haqi is not simply a "story of the past" but must be regarded as a living epistemology that continues to guide the flow of social life.

Creation in Raa Haqi Mythology

At the center of Raa Haqi cosmology stands the concept of *Haq*. This concept differs markedly from the notions of "God" or "Allah" in the Abrahamic religions. In Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, God is imagined as a transcendent authority who constantly intervenes in the world and humanity, sets laws, and governs directly. In contrast, within the Raa Haqi belief system, *Haq* is not a figure who issues direct commands or intervenes in every matter; rather, *Haq* is the principle that brings existence into being, initiates the universe, and then leaves the process to multiple agents operating across the realms of *Batin* and *Zahir*. In this sense, *Haq* is perceived more as a "cause" or "source": the principle that sets existence in motion once, then entrusts the cosmic order to its own dynamics. The order initiated through the power of *Haq* is made manifest through the angels, especially Gabriel and Melek Tawus. In Raa Haqi narratives, Gabriel is not only the angel of revelation but is identified with "intellect" and "guidance" as a cosmic force. Under his guidance, the first human (Adam) is sent down into the *Zahir* realm, maintaining a bond with the divine order of the *Batin* world (Gezik 2022, 363-88; 2009; Çakmak 2013).

Within this dual structure, Melek Tawus appears at times as Gabriel's counterpart and at other times as his complement, representing the continuity of cosmic balance. Following this, Adam is created in relation to Gabriel through the bond of *musahiplik* (spiritual brotherhood), and Eve is created so that worldly life may begin-both acts shaped by Gabriel

together with the two-headed being Muhammad/Ali. Yet, when Eve resists bearing more children, the narrative recounts how Naciye, a divine being, is brought by Gabriel to Adam. From their union is born Şit, whose lineage produces the prophets, the Ocaks (and their followers), that is, the "redeemed community" (the community of light/truth). In this way, the multiplication of Alevis and of humanity more broadly is grounded in the principle of duality. This duality extends beyond biological pairing to function as a cosmological archetype embodied in social institutions and moral order. In Raa Haqi society, the institution of *musahiplik* is based directly on this archetype: no individual is regarded as complete alone, and everything gains legitimacy through "duality" (Gezik 2022, 363-88; 2009; Çakmak 2013).

As creation progresses, *Haq's* direct role recedes, and the relations between *Batin* and *Zahir* are mediated through various sacred figures and actors. Chief among these, alongside Gabriel, are Xızır, Duzgı (Kemerê Duzgı), Munzur, other *jiares* of the *wayır* category, and the mythic ancestors of the Ocaks. Within this constellation, Xızır holds a privileged position as the wandering and saving figure who appears in times of need; Duzgı functions as the protector of Dersim, both mythologically and politically, a kind of guardian; Munzur embodies the sanctity of Dersim through the metaphors of river, human, and sacrifice. The Ocaks, meanwhile, represent the institutionalized form of this cosmic authority on earth: the earthly counterparts of power transmitted from *Haq* through the *Batin*.

Thus, the Raa Haqi creation myth establishes itself through *Haq* as the "reason for existence," initiating the cosmos and then delegating the process to a layered network of actors-Gabriel, Melek Tawus, Xızır, Duzgı, Munzur, and the Ocaks. In this framework, followers in the *Zahir* realm remain in contact with the sacred through both the Ocaks and the *jiares* (sacred places and objects personified as beings), walking the "path" under their guidance and practicing belief through these mediators. This indicates that, instead

of a single ever-intervening God figure as in the Abrahamic traditions, Raa Haqi centers on a conception of multiple and delegated authority. The creation narrative, for this reason, functions as a fundamental cosmological model that establishes permeability between *Batin* and *Zahir*, the principle of duality, and the distributed nature of authority.

"Güruh-u Naci" and the Notion of Salvation

One of the most critical junctures in the Raa Haqi creation myth is the tension between Adam and Eve regarding the birth of children. Although Alevi communities preserve different versions of this theme, the underlying motif remains the same. In one version, Eve eventually refuses to bear more children from Adam. At this point, Adam turns to a *jiare* (sacred place) and speaks with Haq; Gabriel intervenes by bringing Naciye, a female angel. From the union of Adam and Naciye, Şit is born, and his descendants are considered the Alevis. In this way, Alevis trace their origins not solely to the biological lineage of humanity (the so-called "72 nations") but to a divine genealogy, distinguishing themselves from others. This cosmological differentiation functions as a key foundation for the notion of Alevis as the "chosen community" (Çakmak 2010; Gezik & Çakmak 2010; Yüksel 2022, 307-30; Gezik 2022, 363-88; 2009, 4-34).

Here, the Güruh-u Naci is identified within the Alevi-Bektashi system as the "seventy-third sect" destined for salvation. According to traditional discourse (reminiscent of the story of Cain and Abel), seventy-two sects went astray, while the seventy-third-Güruh-u Naci-remained on the "path of truth." Through this mythic genealogy, Alevis define themselves as the bearers of truth and the righteous path. This belief also mirrors the dual structure between *Batin* and *Zahir*: in the *Zahir* realm, all humanity shares the same biological condition, but in the *Batin*, only the carriers of the Naci lineage possess the capacity to attain salvation-that is, union with Haq (Yüksel 2022, 307-30; Avcı 2024, 262-73).

In the context of Dersim, this mythological differentiation is projected onto geography. The imagining of Dersim as "sacred land" corresponds to the same logic of distinction as the separation of Alevis from other peoples. In the *Zahir*, Dersim appears as a region of Anatolia, yet in the *Batin* it is conceived as an exceptional land imbued with divine power and protected by figures such as Gabriel, Xızır, Duzgı, and Munzur. The spatial differentiation of Dersim thus parallels the chosenness of the Naci lineage in the *Batin*: both the community (the Alevis) and the land (Dersim) are set apart from the ordinary world and acquire sacred distinctiveness. In other words, Dersim is conceived as a cultural and sacred geography (Gültekin 2025a; 2025b).

For this reason, the figures of Naci and Naciye in the Raa Haqi creation myth signify not merely the origin of a lineage but the foundational argument of Alevi identity. The union of Adam and Naciye generates a genealogy that in the *Batin* carries Haq's divine power, while in the *Zahir* it establishes the source of social order and difference. The idea of Güruh-u Naci, therefore, simultaneously explains the sacred lineage that distinguishes Alevis from others and reinforces the spatial sanctity of Dersim: the sacred lineage in the *Batin* corresponds to the sacred land in the *Zahir*. This cosmological and spatial duality provides the mythological ground for Alevis' historical self-perception as "the other," while at the same time imagining themselves as "the carriers of truth." Thus, the creation myth emerges not only as an origin story but as a comprehensive framework that binds together community identity, spatial sanctity, and the notion of salvation.

Duality, Authority, and Local Actors in the Batin and Zahir Realms

In the Raa Haqi belief system, the creation myth functions not only as an account of origins but also as a model that sustains the ongoing relationship between the realms of *Batin* and *Zahir*. *Haq* initiated existence as the "reason for being," but subsequently delegated the order first to Gabriel

and other sacred actors within the *Batin*. With the emergence of the *Zahir*, the continuity of this order passed into the hands of the Ocak lineages descending from Şit. This principle of "delegated authority" represents one of the most distinctive features of Raa Haqi: authority is not concentrated in a single transcendent being but is shared and sustained through multiple actors across *Batin* and *Zahir*.

Within this framework, the principle of duality is foundational to both cosmic order and social institutions. The lineage that descends from the union of Adam and Naciye-the origin of the Alevis-embodies the cosmic model of this duality. On the social level, the institution of *musahiplik* is its counterpart in the *Zahir*: no individual is regarded as complete alone; all meaning and legitimacy emerge through the principle of "two." In this way, the creation myth establishes continuity between cosmic and social order (Gezik 2022, 363-88; 2009; Çakmak 2013).

The *jiare* figures inhabiting the *Batin* act as mediators between the two realms, embodying this order in tangible form. Xızır is the ever-wandering savior who appears in times of need, representing the boundlessness of the *Batin* while guiding the lives of followers in the *Zahir*. Duzgı (Kemerê Duzgı), personified both as mountain and as young shepherd, commands benevolent beings in the *Batin* and symbolizes protective authority in the collective memory of Dersim in the *Zahir*. Munzur, through his combined identities as human, river, and sacrificial figure, represents the flow of abundance from *Batin* to *Zahir*, embodying the sanctity of nature as carrier of truth itself. Female figures such as Buyer and Zel, associated in the *Batin* with fertility, beauty, and attraction, provide cosmic legitimacy to the social and ritual roles of women in cem ceremonies and communal life in the *Zahir*. In the Raa Haqi order, authority is not centralized but constructed through multiple relationships: Gabriel as the guide of intellect, Xızır as pathfinder, Duzgı as protector, Munzur as source of abundance, and Buyer and Zel as cosmic symbols of gender.

In the *Zahir*, this distributed authority becomes institutionalized through *musahiplik*, the *pir-rayber* hierarchy, cem rituals, and *jiare* practices.

Thus, the Raa Haqi creation myth and the subsequent Batin-Zahir order highlight not a singular absolute authority but a dualistic system constituted by multiple actors. This duality is continually reproduced through sacred places (*jiares*) and social institutions alike. The imagining of Dersim as "sacred land" represents the spatial reflection of this order: while in the *Zahir* it appears as part of Anatolia, in the *Batin* it endures as a chosen and protected geography marked by sacred difference.

Conclusion

In Raa Haqi, the creation myth is not merely a cosmogonic narrative about the origin of the universe; it also functions as an epistemology that grounds the identities, sacred geographies, and social orders of the Dersim communities. The fact that *Haq* initiates existence as the "reason for being" and then delegates the process to multiple actors indicates that at the center of this belief system lies not a singular transcendent God but a conception of distributed authority. This authority circulates between the *Batin* and *Zahir* realms through figures such as Gabriel, Melek Tawus, Xızır, Duzgı, Munzur, Buyer, Zel, and the Ocaks, and becomes institutionalized in the social order through *musahiplik*, the *pir-rayber* hierarchy, cem rituals, and *jiare* practices (sacred places and/or objects).

One of the most distinctive elements of this mythology is the intervention of the angel Naciye in the episode of Adam and Eve's struggle over childbirth, and the identification of the lineage born from this union with the Alevis. This narrative enables Alevis to link themselves to a sacred genealogy that sets them apart from other human beings. Thus, Alevism conceives of itself not as an ordinary community in the *Zahir*, but as the heirs of the "Güruh-u Naci," the seventy-third community destined for salvation. This lineage myth also

produces a spatial differentiation that aligns with the imagining of Dersim as “sacred land”: both the community and the geography are set apart from the ordinary world. In a sense, a new world is created within the world.

By establishing a multilayered system of authority through the duality of *Batin* and *Zahir*, the Raa Haqi creation myth generates a wide sphere of influence extending from individual religious experience to collective memory. Dreams, rituals at *jiares*, and oral transmission continuously renew this mythology, reproducing communal identity. Even in the modern era, the practices of memory and resistance rooted in Dersim’s sacred unity of nature demonstrate that the creation myth continues to function as a living epistemological resource.

In conclusion, the creation narrative in Raa Haqi is more than an origin story: it serves as a foundational text for collective memory and identity formation, for the shaping of emotions and behavioral patterns, for shared frameworks of meaning, for the perception of sacred places, and for a collective memory of resistance. This myth provides an indispensable key for understanding both the communities’ ties to the past and their strategies of existence in the present.

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