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## **Ottoman Islam.. an exoteric Sunni but an esoteric Bektashi doctrine!!**

If the "Bektashi" Ottoman doctrine, that dominated religion in addition to political and social life in Ottoman Turkey for several centuries, can be described, it shall be called a "triple religion", with Islamic, Pagan and Christian tends. However, it is distinguished with a combination of ideas and teachings related to Shiite, Christianity, paganism, and the valid esoteric beliefs, which were imported from Central Asia and Iran to Anatolia by "Haji Bektash Veli".

Ironically, it is not realized how the Ottomans were able to bring together Sunni Islam, to which they unjustly claimed to be its protectors and sultans, and the Sufi Bektashism, whose doctrinal origins are based on the Shiite Twelver Jafari doctrine. Upon holding its thoughts and following its ways of worshiping, we find it is an esoteric Sufi order that relied on the Sufi Haidari and Shia Qalandariyya orders.

However, Ottoman Islam claims itself as a Sunni Hanafi, its Bektashi teachings intertwined and dominated its spirit, thoughts, and ways of worship. Indeed, the strange combination was met with acceptance by the Ottomans because it linked them with their ideological origins from which they migrated in Central Asia.

Verily, a weird combination produced what could be called the Ottoman religion that appeared in Central Anatolia then spread later among most Turks, meanwhile it gave the Ottoman politician a religious flexibility and a romantic cover without literally adhering to the traditional teachings of Islam. In the end, the policies of the sultans became exoteric Sunni but it is an esoteric Bektashi doctrine.

When defining the Turkish Bektashiyya, many sources agreed to the fact that it is a Sufi order attributed to Haji Bektash Veli; it spread in Anatolia at the beginning, then in the rest of the Turkish regions. The Bektashiyya derives its teachings in its structural and ideological form from the Twelver "Al-Mashrab", especially, the teachings of the Qalandari and Heidarian orders, in addition to social and pagan beliefs derived from the ancient religions in which the Turks believed before their conversion to Islam.

Mamdouh Ghalib Barri says in his book **"History of Sufism in the Ottoman State"** when describing the Bektashiyya and its relation with the Ottoman Empire:

**"However, the Ottoman Empire preserved the popular religiosity that accompanied it from its first stage, it was limited to the Sufi orders, including the Bektashiyya, the combination with ancient religions, philosophies, doctrines, and legacies of the Anatolian and Khorasan civilizations as well as Christianity and Judaism.**

Later, the Ottoman sultans used the Bektashiyya order to be the doctrine of the Janissary army, which is basically a group of mercenaries and kidnapped orphans from Christian families. Moreover, the Christian teachings in the Bektashiyya helped a lot to involve the Janissaries to the Ottoman army, to the extent that it completely controlled their lives, encouraged them in fighting, and kept them under the control of the Bektashi guides and the Ottoman sultans who were able to direct them to commit all the "heinous" crimes of killing, intimidation and extermination of the Ottoman Sultanate's opponents. Thereupon each Janissary barracks had its own guide - as mentioned in the historic sources -; in other words, the Bektashiyya order became the first dominant over the military doctrine of the Janissaries.

As for the political application of Bektashiyya, it was the justification of the princes of Bani Othman in controlling and ruling over peoples and occupied regions. Perhaps the most prominent thing that Bektashiyya had done, was unifying most of the Sufi orders and the esoteric religious schools of the various Ottoman sects under one new belief, the "Bektashiyya" order, to transform it from multiple competing orders to a new religion under the name of Bektashiyya.

In fact, Bektashiyya in its esoteric reality is not a Sufi Mashrab or taste, as the new Ottomans claim in order to defend the tolerance of the Ottoman sultans, however, it is immersed in the special beliefs that distinguish it and form its hidden inner worlds, especially the idea of the God-man, as well as the holy trinity of "God - Muhammad - Ali", which makes it so close to Christianity.

Moreover, the Ottoman Sultans preserved the Bektashi belief within the Ottoman Sunni Islam, but they presented themselves in the Arab world as Sunni Muslim Hanafis; they knew that the doctrinal caveats among the Sunni Arabs are highly critical. Therefore, the Turkish Ottoman religion had two different sides, one of which is esoteric that nourishes the Turkish Uighur spirit with the beliefs of Khorasan and Central Asia pagan, and the other side is related to the Arabs, especially the Arabian Peninsula.

Although the Bektashi order spread in a limited way in some regions and appeared in the Levant, Egypt and Algeria, it failed to gain any support in the Arabian Peninsula, where the reformist call led by Imam Muhammad bin Saud was a solid wall of resistance by which the Turkish beliefs fell on the borders of Anatolia. Therefore, it might be the reason of desperate trails of the Ottomans to topple the first Saudi state that struggled against the Ottoman ambitions adhering to valid beliefs.